

NiemanReports

March 1972

Bad Judgment in Covering Latin America

_____ James Whelan

The Story of The Boston Globe

_____ Louis M. Lyons

The Government and the Press

_____ Turner Catledge

Myths That Beset Journalism

_____ Grant Dillman

"Oh, My, That Nellie Bly!"

_____ Virginia Kelly

NiemanReports

VOL. XXVI, No. 1

Louis M. Lyons, Editor Emeritus

March 1972

—Dwight E. Sargent, Editor—

—Tenney K. Lehman, Executive Editor—

Editorial Board of the Society of Nieman Fellows

Jack Bass
The Charlotte Observer

George E. Amick, Jr.
Trenton Times

William J. Woestendiek
Colorado Springs Sun

Eduardo D. Lachica
Asian News Service

James N. Standard
The Daily Oklahoman

Sylvan Meyer
Miami News

Robert Lasch
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Robert Giles
Knight Newspapers

Smith Hempstone, Jr.
Washington Star

George Chaplin
Honolulu Advertiser

Roy M. Fisher
University of Missouri

Robert B. Frazier
Eugene Register-Guard

John J. Zakarian
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Rebecca Gross
Lock Haven Express

Alan Barth
Washington Post

Ray Jenkins
Alabama Journal

John Strohmeier
Bethlehem Globe-Times

E. J. Paxton, Jr.
Paducah Sun-Democrat

Harry T. Montgomery
Associated Press

David Kraslow
Los Angeles Times

Published quarterly by the Society of Nieman Fellows from 48 Trowbridge Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138. Subscription \$5 a year. Third class postage paid at Boston, Mass.

“Oh, My, That Nellie Bly!”

By Virginia Kelly

(Reprinted with permission from the December 1971 Reader's Digest. Copyright 1971 by The Reader's Digest Assn., Inc.)

“What Girls Are Good For” was the title of the editorial. A respectable girl, thundered the newspaper, stayed at home until someone offered to marry her. If she was unlucky enough to remain a spinster, she would live with her parents or relatives for the rest of her life, serving as unpaid housekeeper or nurse to the younger children.

An 18-year-old girl named Elizabeth Cochrane read that editorial in the Pittsburgh Dispatch and sizzled. She wrote a blistering letter to the editor. The country was wasting the brains and skills of half its citizens, she protested. Girls

should take their rightful place in society alongside men. But since the year was 1885, Miss Cochrane timidly left her letter unsigned. It was the last timid thing she ever did.

George Madden, editor of the Dispatch, was impressed by the logic and style of the anonymous writer. He placed an ad in his paper, asking “the gentleman who wrote a letter criticizing our editorial” to get in touch with him about doing some articles. Soon afterward, Miss Cochrane turned up in the city room.

Madden was shocked. No woman had ever dared enter the inner sanctum of a newspaper office. He told her bluntly that he would never hire a woman. Miss Cochrane reminded him that he had thought her letter impressive, and Madden

(Continued on page 15)

Bad Judgment in Covering Latin America

By James R. Whelan

Mr. Whelan, assistant managing editor of The Miami News, has covered Latin America for more than ten years, first with UPI and more recently, for the Scripps-Howard Newspapers. He was a Nieman Fellow in 1966-67.

The following comments are adapted from a talk he gave at a University of Texas seminar that concentrated on news coverage in this hemisphere.

No conference on the problems of the hemisphere would be complete without an indictment of the U.S. press for ignoring Latin America. Certainly that is true of conferences bringing together professional journalists. This one was no exception. In fact, the issue was joined at the very outset by the very first North American who spoke, and the very first Latin.

My North American colleague described the earthquake-revolution syndrome as he understands it in the approach of the U.S. press to Latin America. Our Peruvian colleague remonstrated with us for not paying the attention to Latins that they say they pay to us.

With due respect to both of these distinguished colleagues, I would suggest that their statements are bum raps.

The North American, both because the facts no longer fit the theory so snugly as once was the case, but much more importantly because the charge rests on a false assumption.

As to the Latin indictment, I think it obscures two realities, which I will return to in a moment.

I think it important to take a much closer look at both contentions, because they are distressingly familiar cliches in the path of understanding, and an even closer look yet at a real affliction plaguing both our reportorial houses.

Let's examine the North American colleague's claim first. Underlying this contention is the premise that Latin America deserves far more attention in our press than it gets. (As it happens, it gets far more than is usually suspected, but we'll return to that point later, too.) The notion that Latin America deserves more attention in our press flows, of course, from the larger assumption that in the total perspective of the United States, Latin America occupies a place of first importance. This is wrong, dead wrong, but you'd never know it to hear us talk.

For as far back as the Monroe Doctrine, in fact, we have been saying as much while behaving quite differently, paying lip service to our southern neighbors while blithely ignoring them. In the process, we saddled ourselves with a burden of unrealistically exaggerated expectations—a credibility gap. The exception to this rule came whenever our vital interests were threatened. At these times we reacted—much as peoples and governments have reacted for as long as nation-states have existed. Except that lately we have also frequently behaved as though we invented the notion of defending our national interests.

There was one other significant and unusually prolonged exception to the rule, and that was following Fidel Castro's introduction of the Cold War into the Western Hemisphere. East-West rivalry was, and to a lesser extent still is, the truly gut issue of our time, the war-and-peace issue involving a precarious peace and an unthinkable war. To the degree that Latin America became a factor in that frenetic equation, we paid attention to Latin America.

For a time last year and early in this year, it was assumed that the advent of a Marxist government in Chile might

produce similar results. These fears have pretty much fizzled, because of the irrelevance of Chile, and because the rivalries have been so muted anyway in the currently fashionable amphitheater of detente. Chile may yet exert critical force in the balance of power, but it may also be hard to determine whether that spindly and remote land was the rock which triggered the avalanche, or just one more rock in the total wreckage.

Fortunately, however, this is not a conference on geopolitics, so that I will simply state my proposition and attempt neither to detail it nor to prove it. (I say fortunately, because I would have to defer in any case to scholars much more erudite than I, a number of whom have, in fact, developed just this theme with increasing insistency in recent months.) And the proposition is that we have badly inflated the image of Latin America in our oratory well beyond the region's realistic importance in world affairs or in our own, special relationships notwithstanding.

And the plea I would make is that we get our imagery proportions straightened out to match our more realistic perceptions. Only then will we apply to our performance with regard to Latin America standards which conform to the true dimensions of Latin America's actual place in world affairs. And by "we," I mean we as a nation, as well as we as trustees of the Fourth Estate.

This adjustment in our focus is, I believe, more vitally needed now just because Latin America IS emerging as an area of genuine significance. This, because it is acquiring an increasingly more monolithic, Latinist personality in its confrontation with the United States and the rest of the developed world. No Latin nation alone could qualify now as a world power. But a united Latin America may yet—even if united, as is the case currently, only in the negative sense of opposing the United States.

If the last paragraph smacks of fudging or hedging my bets, then make the most of it. We Latinists have cried wolf so often to a bored and disinterested world that little credit—much less honor—remains for prophets who would claim that the moment of truth really is at hand this time. Yet the evidence certainly does point in that direction.

Now, as to the claim of my Peruvian friend that they pay more attention to us than we to them: it would be a topsy-turvy world, indeed, if that were not so, inasmuch as the United States is, in fact, decisive in the life of every Latin nation, for better or for worse. Yet this old saw, while less damaging than the first, deserves closer attention too, if only because it is about as enduring as the claim about the U.S. press underestimating Latin America.

For the fact is, that even in these times of relative drought in our coverage of Latin America, around twenty to twenty-five full-time U.S. correspondents are assigned to cover Latin America for approximately a dozen major

newspapers, news magazines and broadcast media in this country. That, of course, does not include the staffs of the international news agencies.

By contrast, at the time when I left Washington last August, there were then two known full-time correspondents of Latin American media stationed in the United States. Two. (There were around fifty Japanese correspondents in Washington alone, around forty West Germans, not to mention around a dozen Russians, etc.) I would submit—and for this I offer a dozen years' experience in Latin America, including close reading of the press in most countries of Latin America—that Latins may indeed saturate themselves with news of the *events* of our country. But there is little, precious little, reporting in depth of the issues, the deep currents. What passes for interpretation is more often homegrown punditry heavily laced with preconceptions, and just about as routinely unfettered by fact or unsupported by research.

I would offer as one example, for instance, the gross lack of understanding in Latin America of the gravity of the economic crisis afflicting the United States. The Latins screamed bloody murder about the import surcharges—although the effect on them is extremely negligible and non-discriminatory, in any case. Their protests might be acceptable as a negotiating position. But the point is that the debate was not projected in the Latin press as simply as maneuvering for advantage, but rather as a capricious and arbitrary act of an insensitive giant, wreaking immense damage in small and defenseless lands. Never mind that the giant was sick, desperately sick, and that upon his cure and sound health depended the ultimate health of all of us. Or that the real damage was actually very slight.

There are other examples, many of them, but I believe that my Latin colleagues know and understand this too well for it to be belabored. Yet the point must be made—not to fix blame nor to identify villains, but to validate a plea for action to unclog the conduits at both ends, for truly effective communications. Unless there is authentic dialogue there can be no understanding.

We have heard much of the fantastic progress which has been made in our capacity to transmit information. We have heard also of the dizzying increase in the complexity of issues. I think, for instance, of the statistic used by the American Association of Colleges and Universities in one of their fund-raising appeals: eighty percent of all the scientists who ever lived are alive today. Our ability to absorb so much informational output obviously is finite, and yet we are bombarded with ever more. We have heard how this is happening in Latin America, as if quantity could ever substitute for quality.

That is my plea, my most urgent plea: for less information, not more. But for better information. In other words,

that we North Americans—and here I address myself to my North American colleagues—not squander our limited space and attention resources on the trivia of events. Instead, that we focus more sharply, more clearly, more intelligently, on the issues and their meaning. This is especially vital when dealing with such complex and unfamiliar concerns as Latin America. I have already argued that we not fall into the trap of believing that we are short-changing Latin America because the attention we give does not match the expectations of superheated rhetoric. But I would argue with at least equal force that the space we do give Latin America be used wisely and well.

At the beginning I mentioned that Latin America actually gets far more space in our papers than is usually suspected. I discovered this while working as a foreign correspondent, thanks to diplomat friends who would occasionally let me see the State Department's press clips. For those unfamiliar with them, the press clips are a daily compendium of major articles appearing throughout the United States on foreign affairs. They are compiled according to regional subject matter, and then distributed to the appropriate American embassies so that our diplomats can remain abreast of U.S. press coverage and comment on the region in which they are serving.

I was continually amazed at the sheer volume of verbiage in the U.S. press on Latin America. I was also continually dismayed at how much of it was sheer verbiage and little more, unless one would count clichés, shibboleths and hoary legends as something more. No one claims a monopoly on truth, but one does have a right to expect of a writer an exertion equal to the complexity and sensitivity of the task. Both of these factors increase in inverse proportion to the level of exposure of the subject in the pages of that publication. I would—after very extensive reading over a number of years—exclude from that trusted band of qualified commentators practically all instant experts, random trippers, and editorial writers. And yet the pages of the American press reek with the superficialities, popular prejudices and banalities of just such merchants of obfuscation. This is not to say that there is not plenty of excellent reporting of Latin America in our media. There is. But it is to say that far, far too much of the space we do allot is given over to opinionated bilge. That may be relatively harmless in the

case of national affairs, or even Europe or Southeast Asia, because there is so much crossfire within the pages of our own papers. But in the case of Latin America, that well-walled editorial is often the only “thoughtful” copy we dispense. And for that, there oughta be a law.

So how do we get better? Perhaps the first canon ought to be that if we don't know it all, don't act as if we did. In other words, leave the reporting of the unknown to the experts. And demand and get better experts. To a certain degree, I believe newspapers ought to be communities of scholars; at worst, more institutionally profound than, say, a tape recorder. For those scholar-experts who are our world-watchers, at the very minimum they should possess the skills most governments and big corporations demand of their people: if not a full-scale immersion in the ethos of the countries they will cover, at least language facility and a knowledge of history and broad social outlines of those countries.

Before closing, I would like to lobby for still another device designed to help us become a reasonable facsimile of a community of scholars. Newsmen often attend meetings with other newsmen. These can be of undeniable value. But of at least equal value, I believe, would be sessions giving us access, in concentrated doses, to the expertise of Academe. Seminars at which we could pick the brains of scholars. The University of Texas, for instance, has an outstanding collection of Latin American scholars, but it also boasts scholars in innumerable related fields—economics, geopolitics, cultural anthropology—the list is long. How about, for instance, a seminar bringing together the appropriate scholars to brainstorm the very incandescent question of foreign private investment in Latin America? Or Russian penetration of Latin America—as the University of Miami's Center for Advanced International Studies did recently to remarkable advantage in fitting Latin America into a global perspective. In my experience, reporting and commentary on Latin America most often fails precisely because we do fail to relate the region to world cross-currents. Such sessions—for U.S. correspondents, editorial writers, columnists—would, I feel certain, work wonders for upgrading the level and quality of our work.

In Latin American reporting, there is plenty of room for that—even within the most realistic of frameworks.

Reflections on Vietnam, the Press and America

By Peter Arnett

Mr. Arnett is an Associated Press correspondent. The following are excerpts from his address at the Pennsylvania Press Conference in Harrisburg.

God knows we are not perfect as professionals. To be honest, after eight years of covering the Vietnam war, after grinding out those thousands of words and seeing many of them build into big, black, bloody headlines; after agonizing over what to write and when to write it; after talking it all over with publishers and editors and senators and congressional investigators through the years—I am still not sure in my own mind whether what we did as reporters in Vietnam was enough or too much, whether we were neophytes or prophets, whether we performed the classic American press role of censuring Government policy or whether we botched the whole job and aided and abetted the enemy. And it might be argued that we never really satisfactorily figured out who the enemy was.

But if I am to be judged, better in the broad context of the American press tradition than the narrow interests of venal politicians or partisan colleagues.

Saigon, 1962. Vietnam then was just a problem in counter-insurgency. You could sit at a sidewalk cafe with an aperitif, ogle the graceful girls strolling down the Rue Catinat, and talk politics into the warm evening hours. No signs that Vietnam would become a word synonymous with ugliness, horror and butchery.

I was 27, a gadfly in the journalistic backwaters of Southeast Asia, expelled from three countries in an area where you have not really made the grade with Old China hands until you have been expelled from at least six.

And here was the cubbyhole the AP called its Saigon bureau, cluttered, smelly. Malcolm Browne was the sole

AP reporter in Vietnam then. He was beating a two-finger tattoo on his old Remington the day I arrived, trying to complete the daily 700 words of copy we used to send then to Tokyo by morsecast—a far cry from the batteries of teleprinters tied in directly to New York that would eventually grace a much expanded AP Bureau.

Mal didn't look up when I walked in. I surveyed the cluttered room. A withered hand hung on a wall, brought back I learned later by our Vietnamese photographer who had been to an ambush scene. Browne had hitched it to the wall to remind visitors that there was a war beyond the casually luxurious life of the foreign community in the Saigon of the early sixties. Hanging below the hand was a bloodied water container picked up at another ambush. I wanted to leave.

Mal looked up and grinned at my queasiness. He introduced himself and tossed across a mimeographed booklet entitled "A Short Guide to News Coverage in Vietnam." He had authored it for the neophytes like me who came into Vietnam from time to time to assist him in his reporting task. What Mal wrote in 1962 applied up to the day I left late last year. Reading about the press problems in covering the Laos incursion, I guess it still applies.

"Coverage in Vietnam requires aggressiveness, resourcefulness and, at times, methods uncomfortably close to those used by professional intelligence units. You can expect very little help from most official sources, and news comes the hard way. Correspondents in Vietnam are regarded by the Saigon Government as 'scabby sheep' and treated accordingly. At the same time the Vietnamese people are friendly and agreeable, and private sources can be cultivated . . ." That from the introduction.

Here are some Tips to Stringers: "Avoid the crowd. Newsmen and newswomen come to Vietnam by the hun-

dreds, and there is a tendency to gather in bunches—in bars, in offices, on operations and so forth. One of the best stringers we ever had never went to the Caravelle Bar, never went out on a story with another person. Blaze new trails, and do it alone. The fresh story, the new angle, the hitherto unreported—these are the things we want . . .”

Here is Browne's advice on first aid. “Battle casualties often die from loss of blood. Belts, ropes and field straps make good tourniquets, and the experts recommend thinking of tourniquets first if you are bleeding heavily. Whenever flying in a helicopter try to borrow a flak jacket from the crew—two, if possible. The second one is to sit on. You won't be considered chicken. All crew members must wear them . . .”

Here is his advice when encountering the Enemy: “Carrying pistols is not condoned officially either by Vietnamese or American authorities, but American officers privately approve of the practice. Under no circumstances try to shoot it out with the Vietcong if you are alone. They also outnumber you, and generally pack Tommyguns. If you are stopped by the Vietcong tell them truthfully who you are and what you are doing. Don't try to throw away your identification papers—identify-less suspects are regarded with great suspicion and are subject to very bad treatment. If you are American and happen to speak fluent, accentless French you might get off with just a brief lecture . . .”

In those early days the war was just an aspect of the story. Like foreign correspondents in other capitals we were obliged to make the rounds of the diplomats, and here is what Browne said about that:

“A resident correspondent in Saigon is invited to three to five cocktail parties a week, sometimes more. It is wise to attend as many as possible because while the faces and the subjects don't change much the most influential people in town often go. People you can't get to interview any other way you often can nail down at receptions. Here are some subjective judgments of news value of the various embassies in Saigon:

“U.S.—Variable, the higher the official the more vague he is likely to be. British—Generally close-mouthed but extremely well informed. Excellent sources. French—Except for the ambassador (who won't talk at all) rather poorly informed. Deeply suspicious of the press, particularly American correspondents.

“German—Very good company, excellent press dinners, good on cultural developments but worthless for any other kind of news. Ambassador useful if German is kidnapped or killed, however. Japanese—Generally well informed and anxious to swap information with correspondents. Indonesian—Fairly well informed, extremely talkative, apt to be inaccurate. Korean—Friendly to press and well informed.

Chinese (Nationalist)—Well informed but difficult to tap because of delicacy of its relations with Vietnam.

“Philippines—Poorly informed, mainly concerned with boosting relations with the Vietnamese Government. Cambodian and Laos—Cooperative, but not kept well informed. Indian—Generally well informed, good on news from Hanoi. Polish—Good parties, little information.”

You could detect in that pamphlet the “probing, questioning, disputatious” attitude towards Vietnamese authorities and the war.

Were these guidelines adequate?

Working in Vietnam over all those years, I could never understand the drumfires of antagonism that reverberated about our reporting. I won't go into the gory details here, because in retrospect they were not important: You stuck by us, you published our material. And that was all that mattered.

The press did not send American troops into Vietnam and is not bringing them out. The official cries of anguish about our reporting was the classic syndrome of blaming the bringers of bad news rather than the news itself. The most famous example in history being Peter the Great, the Czar of Russia, who strangled the man who brought him the news of the defeat of Russian troops at Narva by the Swedes under Charles XII. We were never strangled, and thanks again.

Before making a few remarks about the War as I see it, and where it may be heading, I would like to mention the “new journalism.” This is sometimes called the activist approach which is essentially determining which side is right and then becoming the advocate of that side. A journalism student corralled me last week in Urbana and brought up Neil Sheehan's article in the New York Times Book Review that American commanders might be guilty of war crimes in Vietnam. I was asked, “why didn't Sheehan write about war crimes when he was in Vietnam: why now, four years later?”

I bring this up because the intensity for the “new journalism” disturbed me. I am all for involved journalism, but not for the AP: we deal in facts. So I mentioned that I accompanied Neil Sheehan on some of those military operations he wrote about; I watched hooches burning down; I saw the civilian dead. I didn't write about war crimes either.

We took pictures of those burning buildings, we told of the civilian dead and how they died, but we didn't make judgments because we were witnesses, and like witnesses to robbery, accident or murder surely it was not for us to be judge and jury. I said my attitude might be broadly classed as objective, but I would prefer to consider it more experience, an intelligent approach to our craft. I said that the

way I saw it, if we are to believe in popular decision-making, we have to believe in a responsible press that will provide the information upon which those decisions will be based.

Then how do you remain objective, or better, intelligent, about your copy? That is the test of your professionalism, to be able to observe with as much professional detachment as possible to report a scene with accuracy and clarity. I said it might be called a sense of mission and in the AP it must take precedence over national patriotism in war, regional propaganda or municipal boosting back home. If you fail in this professional detachment you become an advocate, a worthy enough mission but not journalism.

One example of my attempted detachment:

I stood one hot noon outside the Saigon market and watched a buddhist monk in brown robes climb from a taxi and squat on the pavement. He squirted gasoline over himself from a rubber bottle and flicked a cigarette lighter. Here was a political immolation a few feet in front of me. I felt horror and disgust as his body blackened and puffed out like burned pastry.

I could have prevented that immolation by rushing at him and kicking the gasoline away. As a human being I wanted to. As a reporter I couldn't. This monk was one of many who committed suicide to dramatize the iniquities of the Diem Regime in Saigon. If I had stopped him, the Secret Police who were watching from a distance would have immediately arrested him and carried him off to God knows where. If I had attempted to prevent them doing this I would have propelled myself directly into Vietnamese politics. My role as a reporter would have been destroyed along with my credibility.

What did I do? I photographed him burning on the sidewalk. I beat off half a dozen Secret Police trying to grab my camera. I raced to the AP office, wrote the story and sent a

radiophoto. It was on America's front pages the next morning. Three months later, mainly because of the monk immolations, the Vietnamese public unrest and the worsening war, the American Government gave the signal for the Army to overthrow Diem.

What will happen when the Americans leave? The South Vietnamese are doing most of the fighting now. If they kept it up they could hang on indefinitely. But this situation must be looked at in its entirety: compared to North Vietnam, the South is a fragile entity. It is vulnerable to political change, it is economically imperiled. The population is war weary. On the other hand North Vietnam is politically stable and has successfully mobilized the population for us. The occasional rumbles of war discontent from the North are insignificant to the cries of anguish in the South.

So what will happen? The American withdrawal from the war will not end it. What it will end is effective American participation in a political settlement. The Communists have made it quite clear they will fight until a compromise is reached, and that will mean putting neutralists or communists in the Saigon Government. I think the Communists will fight until that objective is reached, that they mean what they say.

I can see the South Vietnamese army after American withdrawal fighting with decreasing enthusiasm, losing control of one remote district after another, until the Saigon Government will have to make a deal or go under totally. Only then will the war end, and it could come in three years or come in ten. And I don't think it can be looked at as a victory for the Communists or the neutralists, or a defeat of America or the free world.

If there is any victory, it will be the victory of Good Sense.

The Government and the Press

By Turner Catledge

Mr. Catledge, former vice president and executive editor of The New York Times, made the following remarks at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He was the first Meeman Distinguished Visiting Professor at the University's College of Communications. The professorship was established by a \$200,000 grant from the Edward J. Meeman Foundation.

The late Kent Cooper, who for many years was general manager of the Associated Press, once made the statement that, "American journalism is the greatest single, original contribution this nation has ever made to the institutions of freedom."

At first blush one would be disposed to write this off as the enthusiastic outburst of a man fired by the joy of his own great record in the newspaper profession. For indeed Mr. Cooper was a giant in his time. But I ask you to put that claim to the test to see if you can come up with a real competitor of American newspapers, and their journalistic satellites of magazines, radio and television, in their fundamental offering to the safety and enjoyment of freedom in this country, and, by example, throughout the world.

By this gathering we are memorializing the contributions made by a man to the substance of Mr. Cooper's remark. That man was Edward J. Meeman. We turn to him in fond memory and gratitude and for a renewal of purpose and courage in meeting the thrusts of change on the institution of journalism.

The journalism of which Mr. Cooper spoke, and to which Mr. Meeman added such lustre, had come out of the previous three-quarters of a century. That was a period when the country was binding up its wounds following the

Civil War, when emphasis was on internal peace and national expansion. It was what my friend Russell Wiggins has characterized as a period of consensus, in which newspapers grew in service and prosperity. During the time journals of wide circulation were able to win and maintain the confidence of large circles of Americans who shared common goals, whatever their differences as to style and methods. It was a time of small government.

But now fate has plopped us down squarely in the roaring present. Every significant institution and tradition we evolved and enjoyed during those years are under attack and the American press finds itself in the middle of an era of controversy, not only as an observer but as a participant in today's fretful storm.

Rarely in our history have people taken such intense positions on such deep-seated issues as they are taking today. Race, youth, the Mafia, narcotics, Vietnam, social maladjustment, environmental pollution—these are only a few of the questions that insistently claim our attention. Our cultural and religious moorings are buckling under the strain. Millions of readers, viewers and listeners are being deeply and painfully touched, and a growing number are becoming advocates of extreme and over-simplified solutions. And those who become advocates react antagonistically to news and opinions that do not reflect their own feelings. Newspapers that bring information that annoys them or attempt to explore more facets of a problem than they can see, arouse their antagonisms all the more. Many people just simply do not like what's happening and in their frustrations blame the newspapers and TV for over-reporting or stirring it all up. Thus the press is finding it more difficult to hold acceptance of its hard won principles of objectivity

and impartiality in reporting events and especially in explaining their meaning.

Moreover, within our own shops we are having trouble in adjusting our practices to the needs of readers beset by today's doubts and fears. Many of today's journalists, especially among the young, do not see their mission as the reporting of unprejudiced news. They see objective news as an outworn convention that obstructs progress toward a better world. They pride themselves on being "activist-journalists" and to many of them the news is not as important as what they think about it.

All this comes at a time when the press should feel freer than ever before. This is my feeling after the outcome of recent libel suits, and after the Supreme Court's ruling in the case of the Pentagon papers.

This certainly is no time for any of us in mass media to relax. For in addition to the winds of changes which are howling around us, we are living in a time of big government and are witnessing the growing urge of authority to abort the functions of a free press, or to divert it into channels which its very freedom is meant to avoid. All of which emphasizes moreover that government and press are unavoidable foes in our type of society. New detail is being added daily to the growing gap between government and the press. This is taking place in every city hall, every county courthouse and every state capital in the country and most dramatically at the seat of national government in Washington.

A collection of some 4,000 newspaper, radio, and television people in Washington have for a long time presented themselves as *The Press*. But there is much more to American journalism than the reporters assigned to the national capital, and there is much more to the issue of government versus press than the sparring between high Federal officials and the Washington press corps.

Yet, the dealings of national leaders, especially Presidents with these correspondents, is a revealing way to look at the relationship of government to the media, and especially to test the belief of the managers of our vast bureaucracy in the doctrine of press freedom. After two score years observing and participating in this relationship, I have come away with the conclusion that in theory our national leaders have wanted and now want a free and independent press as a check on government, but that in fact they have not wanted anything of the kind. This conclusion admits of but few exceptions among our Presidents from George Washington to Richard Milhouse Nixon.

The current tenant of the White House has had his share of trouble with reporters. Like his predecessor (Lyndon Johnson) he has never really understood or accepted the function of a free press or the meaning of the First Amendment. One cannot forget his outburst after his

defeat for Governor of California in 1962. Repeatedly he has revealed the feeling that a reporter should take down what he says, and without questioning transmit it as would a tape recorder. He seems to think that the press should be a kind of soulless transmission belt, passing along without question or explanation anything he chooses to feed into it.

It is quite obvious that Vice President Agnew is the Administration's Goliath in its battles with the mass media. The thrusts have been with the spear of Agnew, but the muscle is the muscle of Nixon. I think Mr. Agnew did all of us some good when he first sounded his battle cry two years ago. But he didn't know when to quit.

I repeat that there is much more to the question of relations between the press and government than exchanges between Mr. Nixon and White House reporters or the strictures of Mr. Agnew. What worries us even more is the clear attempt to make working newsmen the appendage of the bureaucratic establishment which applies governmental authority, even to the point of forcing them to become informers in criminal cases.

We have seen during the last two years a significant increase in subpoenas directed to newsmen in all forms of information media, all for the purpose of compelling disclosure of sources and other confidential information gathered in the course of their professional duties. During the three-year period from 1964 to 1967, there were five such subpoenas, which were alarming enough, but in the last two years alone there were eighteen. No one contends that a reporter should not be called to testify to anything he witnessed in the course of an actual crime. But that has not been the purpose of these subpoenas. They have had the alternating purpose of simplifying work for lazy or incompetent prosecutors or of intimidating the reporters and their sources. It hardly seems necessary to emphasize the absolute necessity for reporters to be able to gather news free of governmental interference and to be spared the chilling feeling that he might have to disclose his sources.

In addition to subpoenas, newsmen have been subject to arrests, police brutality and other forms of governmental force, simply to suppress their newsgathering functions.

Various measures are under study in Congress and other legislature bodies seeking to spell out the privilege of news gatherers. Several already have been enacted in various states, but these are not uniform and leave much to be desired. In fact, I'd rather have no law at all. I'd rather leave it, at least for the present, to our courts to establish the meaning of press freedom, all the way to the point of news gathering.

For if a law is passed, it can also be repealed, and then where are we?

Certainly the most dramatic, and perhaps the most far-reaching, confrontation between the government and the press was the recent case of the so called "Pentagon Papers."

There were actually two decisions. The first decision was by the editors of The New York Times, the Washington Post and other papers to publish the material. Let me here say that I thoroughly approve of their decision and would have joined in it had the matter been put up to me. I could have recalled that one hundred years before, June 1871 to be exact, The New York Times obtained from a source it would not reveal certain highly secret documents from the Office of the Comptroller of the City of New York. The charts, vouchers, receipts, cancelled checks and other materials we received and published exposed to the public the corruption of the infamous Tweed machine, which in turn the public drove from City Hall.

The reasoning of The Times on the Pentagon papers, as expressed publicly on its editorial page, was that it was in the interest of the people of this country to be informed of these papers and their content. Once the material fell into our hands, we felt an obligation to share them with our readers.

The court decision was broader. It said the Constitution of the United States, specifically the First Amendment, permitted no prior restraint on publication. The editorial decision related only to those particular papers and their own timing, and should not be considered a precedent for anything else. The court ruling will doubtless be resorted to as a precedent in cases yet to come.

Although the court's edict was hailed in many quarters as a ringing victory for freedom under law, notably freedom of the press, the hard fact remains that for the first time in our history our government went into court to suppress a freedom. And that I fear could be a precedent for the future. It might try again.

The basic question in the case thus far decided was the relationship of the guarantee and practice of a free press and the government's power and right to prohibit publication in the name of national security. The court did not hold in its decision that the First Amendment gave an absolute *right* to publish anything under all circumstances. Nor did The Times and other newspapers seek that right. What they sought, and what the court upheld, was the right to publish *these particular* documents at the particular time without *prior* restraint by government.

If the documents had involved troop movements, ship sailings, imminent military plans, the case would have been quite different. It would never have arisen for I assure you The Times would not have endeavored to publish them. But, this was not the case. The documents and their accompanying analyses dealt with past history, involving no transaction after May 1968 and, in the view of The Times, were incapable in 1971 of harming the life of a single being or interfering with a single current military operation. That

the disclosures were embarrassing to certain public officials, present or former, there was no question. But similar embarrassments occur every day among officials whose public acts do not seem to be able to stand the light of day. But the court found that such embarrassment was insufficient reason to overturn the extraordinary guarantees on press freedom which is at the very heart of our constitutional system.

Certainly no one at The Times felt that we were *elected* to declassify the material. That's an obligation and a responsibility we voluntarily took on ourselves along with all of the rest. But we felt, as the Court implicitly said, that the public interest is not served by classification and retention in secret of vast amounts of information, ninety-nine percent of which, according to senior public servants, could hardly be prejudicial to the defense interests of the nation. The question of what constitutes national security and national interest was left undefined in the Court's decision and is undefined anywhere else I know. When it comes to physical, military security of the country, definitions can be quite clear and authority can be clear, but under the broad term of "national interest" we can cover almost any kind of action, including the narrowest political move of an official whose principal interest may be perpetuation of himself in office. The meaning of a free press was left obscure, or rather was left for future court definition in such episodes not as simple as the publication of the Pentagon papers.

We should hope that out of this case would come a revision of governmental procedures and practices in the entire area of classification of documents, in keeping with the spirit of the people's right to know. Everyone who had anything to do with such documents knows that for many years the classification procedures have been hopelessly muddled by inertia, timidity, sometimes stupidity and even venality. Under our system a clerk with a rubber stamp and an ink pad can make the crucial decision of what the public shall know or shall not know.

We should hope also that this exercise will induce the present administration to reexamine its own attitudes toward secrecy and toward its efforts, as I see them, to bend the press to its will. The issue touched the very heart of this republic. We of the profession fully realize it is not so much a victory for any particular newspaper or even the press itself. It was a triumph for the basic principles of freedom which the American form of government is meant to protect and the free flow of information which is indispensable to the function of our free country.

Such are the precepts by which Edward Meeman lived and which he did much to evolve and to articulate. I offer these remarks in honor of his memory.

Joseph E. Evans

1919-1971

Editor's Note: Mr. Evans, editor of the editorial page of the Wall Street Journal, died on December 27. A memorial service was held at the Huguenot Memorial Church, Pelham Manor, New York.

The following remarks were made at the service by Vermont Royster, Professor of Journalism and Public Affairs at the University of North Carolina. Mr. Royster preceded Mr. Evans as the editorial page editor prior to becoming editor of The Wall Street Journal.

A man reveals himself in many ways. By what he accomplishes, surely. By what he believes, also. But above all by how well his life, and what he does, accords with what he believes.

What Joe Evans accomplished is well known to his colleagues. He joined The Wall Street Journal in Europe as a young man having just fought a great war against tyranny. It was a time in which the hopes for peace were turning to despair as the land lay desolate and another tyranny was swallowing up half of Europe. He was there and saw it all.

As a journalist, he was among the first to understand that you cannot always show the truth by a mere recounting of events. He took his readers—often at risk to himself—on journeys through the iron curtain so that they could see too what lay behind the new darkness. In those years his articles on the front page of his newspaper won a wide following for both their perception and their prescience.

So it was wherever he went. He was the first of his colleagues to tour the vastness of Russia, to observe the new stirrings in Africa and other distant parts of the world. In each of these places he was persistent in his search for what others would hide, and from each place he sent dispatches to illuminate for those of us here that which was otherwise strange and beyond comprehending.

When in another time he went to Washington he took with him this broad knowledge of the world gained from his own experience, and matched it with a new learning about the affairs of his own country. His was an insight which he shared with us, to our profit.

He earned thereby the respect, not only of his colleagues but of all who read him. Before his journey was over he

had served as his newspaper's chief foreign correspondent, its foreign editor, the chief of its Washington bureau and as editor of its editorial page.

As a man, what he had seen gave him a compassion for the tempest-tossed, for those who are refugees from war, from devastation, from man's inhumanity to man. He had learned that tyranny comes in many guises, sometimes bold and warlike, sometimes bland and tempting. Against all forms he spoke his mind.

Yet from within himself he also found—and kept—a deep faith in mankind and a love of his country. Joe Evans believed in the innate worth of his fellow men, in their dignity, in their birthright to walk upright in freedom.

He believed, and often said, that his own country, for all her falterings, came the nearest to that dream of freedom. He wanted us to work together in those enterprises where one man's effort is not enough, but never to surrender that birthright to those who would say that one man alone is worthless in a crowded world.

Thus believing, thus he lived.

As a private person, he gave of himself to his family and friends, holding kindness, courage, love, gentleness and decency to be among the virtues men should live by. He was especially conscious of his duty to those who would come after him, because he knew so well the trials of those who had gone before. To his own children, to the young men and women met in the day's occupation, he offered patience, courtesy, a wry and gentle humor, as he sought to teach them for a future he would never know.

As a public man, these same beliefs underlay everything he ever wrote, no matter what the subject of the day. He could be sharp and biting about the ideas that possessed men which he thought were wrong. And he could be sometimes lonely, for his beliefs were not always the fashionable ones of the time. But nowhere in his writings, though he would yield to no man on his principles, will you find anywhere an unkind word about any man.

Now his newspaper has lost a voice, sorely needed. His family has lost one beloved. His friends have lost a good companion. But all of us have lost that rare and precious thing, a good and decent man.

Myths That Beset Journalism

By Grant Dillman

Washington is a city in which myth and reality frequently overlap. There is an unfortunate impression, for example, that the Washington Press Corps distrusts and deplores the Vice President. This is not true. We just don't want to play golf with him.

There is another myth that everybody in Washington takes the press very seriously. One of the veteran waiters at the National Press Club put that in perspective when he reached retirement age recently. Asked what he planned to do now, he said he had bought a pig farm in North Carolina. "Do you know anything about slopping pigs?" a member asked. "I should," the waiter replied, "I've been serving members of this club for 20 years."

Another myth is that Lyndon Johnson has retired to Texas. He's still around. But now we call him John Connally.

Seriously, I do want to discuss some of the myths that have grown up around the news business. Much of what I say necessarily will be addressed to Washington since the Capital has been my own frame of reference since 1945.

First there is the myth that the Washington Press Corps destroyed Lyndon Johnson and now is trying to destroy President Nixon. Poppycock! Perhaps Washington reporters do tend to be liberal when you consider the national attitudes. I know there are some knee-jerk critics who believe the President can do no good. But they are a small minority. Most Washington reporters know they have a personal stake in the nation and they want to see it flourish.

The problem arises from the adversary relationship between government and the press. Congressional inquiries often are so delayed as to be little more than post-mortems. In this vacuum, the press has become the day-to-day hairshirt of government. This leads to probing and often seemingly critical questions as reporters try to establish the facts about administration policies, including how they evolved and what their ultimate effect will be. But what is wrong with that if the government is on solid ground and pursuing policies which—if fully understood—would find favor with the American public?

The press isn't always given credit for responsible acts, sometimes because they never become public. Consider a

former president who had suffered a humiliating foreign policy setback. Flying with a "pool" of four reporters on Air Force One, he blows his top. Pacing back and forth, he pounds his fist into his palm and vows never again to trust the adviser involved. Later, having calmed down, he apologizes to the reporters and says it was "all in the family." The reporters write confidential memos to their bosses but do not handle a story, knowing the President spoke out of hurt impulse.

Or an important congressman gets woefully smashed at a small private party. Several reporters are present as old friends of the host. The congressman makes an ass of himself babbling about the secrets he knows but fortunately too drunk to be intelligible. The reporters are aware that the congressman has been having domestic problems and that he seldom drinks so much. Two of them maneuver him to a car and drive him home. So far as is known, he never repeats the performance.

There are those, of course, who would argue that both incidents should have been publicized; that voters are entitled to every available scrap of information about their elected officials. I would agree if either episode had been part of a pattern reflecting the basic character of the man. But I think it's responsible journalism not to pillory a man for an isolated lapse.

That brings up a related myth—that reporters don't tell the reader everything they know; that they hold back information for some vague, mysterious reason. With the exception of situations such as I just mentioned, I can't recall an instance where a reporter withheld information. Yet, following President Nixon's wage-price freeze, I was asked several times by friends, "What was really behind the President's decision?"

Obviously, I could only tell them what we were carrying on the wire: the President's action was prompted by a combination of domestic politics and foreign economic policy—with economic policy probably being the most important immediate factor. But the point is that reporters have no magic access to information which they withhold.

There is another myth that backgrounders or anonymous sources are necessarily evil. As you know, a backgrounder

is a session between a group of reporters—or sometimes an individual reporter—and a government official. Sometimes the official is the President himself. The ground rules permit the reporters to report what the official says but not to identify him.

Critics of the system include some of Washington's most respected reporters and editors. They argue that backrounders enable officials to float trial balloons privately and then shoot them down publicly if the reaction is bad. There is always that danger, of course, and we have been caught at times. But the benefits also can be considerable.

One official who knows he will not be quoted by name can afford to be considerably more candid than he can at a formal news conference.

The anonymous source is also troublesome. But it is often a fruitful source of information. An example: a reporter runs across a whiff of what could be a vitally important story but realizes he needs more information. He goes to a friendly official who vouches for him and passes him along to a second official who deals with confidential information in the area.

The second official shows the reporter material that not only rounds out his story but shows him he was headed toward a wrong conclusion. The resulting story, although lacking any official imprint, helps all sides understand what could have been a touchy thing if the reporter had gone with his original information.

Probably the most important—and most frustrating—myth is that the news media should and can be completely objective. The reality is that complete objectivity is impossible. The fact that an editor or a reporter elects to cover one story and skip another is a highly subjective judgment and one that editors and reporters have to make.

Now the Establishment itself is under attack. And no matter what weight we give the voices for and against it, we are criticized.

We are accused by the radical right of trying to destroy the system. The radical left accuses us of fronting for it. We field telephone calls from angry partisans, accusing us of favoring first one side and then the other. And then there is the Vice President.

It even affects our personal lives. One of our reporters is from New Orleans. She remarked recently with some dismay that when she used to go home, her relatives proudly introduced her as a Washington correspondent. Now, she says, they are almost apologetic about it.

What has happened to erode the wide-spread confidence

and respect the news media seemed to enjoy a few years ago? I think three principal factors stand out.

First, there has been a very real explosion in the volume and complexity of news since World War II. Prior to 1939, most Americans were concerned pretty much with our own domestic troubles. Indeed, our preoccupation with the Depression Thirties left us little time or energy for other problems.

True, we worried about Hitler and the loss of smaller nations on the periphery of Nazi Germany. Our pride was stung by the sinking of the gunboat Panay by the Japanese. And we were titillated by Edward's decision to give up the British throne. But basically we were inward looking.

As recently as the late 1940's, during the height of the so-called Truman scandals, we were cranking out morning newspaper leads running 1,600 to 1,800 words a day about alleged gift deep freezes, mink coats, perfume smuggling and five percenters.

Because of the competition for space—both on our wires and in the newspaper columns—a similar story today probably would be held to no more than half that length. We try to limit stories listed on the Editor's Schedule—meaning our most important dispatches—to 400 or 450 words. Rarely do we exceed 600 words on a single story.

Sometimes that's not enough. You can't always explain a complicated tax bill or give both sides in a heated debate over a Carswell nomination in 600 words. So we summarize, paraphrase and condense. And occasionally we oversimplify and get in trouble with our sources and our readers.

Second, a good many people are sick and tired of problems and they resent us for calling them to their attention. They are weary of Vietnam, the racial problems, the crisis of the cities.

The third—and to my mind the most important—reason the media is mistrusted is the imperfect public understanding of its role in our society. Although some would like it that way, our role is not to report what people, and particularly politicians, want to hear.

We must seek out the warts as well as the beauty marks. That means covering what is important as well as what is interesting, including what is potentially as well as immediately important.

Mr. Dillman is UPI's Washington news editor. The above is a digest of his remarks to the nation's journalism teachers at the University of South Carolina where he gave the annual Kappa Tau Alpha address.

"Oh, My, That Nellie Bly!"

(Continued from page 2)

capitulated. He suggested that she write society news. Miss Cochrane refused. She wanted to do a series of articles on divorce, then an unmentionable topic. Determined to win at least one point, Madden suggested that she write under an assumed man's name. Miss Cochrane again refused. During the resulting impasse over her name, an office boy happened to stroll by Madden's office. He was whistling a popular Stephen Foster tune. The song was "Nelly Bly." Its catchy refrain settled the matter. Elizabeth Cochrane became Nellie Bly. And Nellie Bly became a legend.

Nellie made a career of doing the unheard-of. She poked around sweatshops and factories. She went into hospitals, poorhouses, asylums, mills. She took a job in a bottling plant, where she worked alongside other women six days a week, 14 hours a day, for \$5 a week, with rats scurrying around the floor. No one knew who she was and the women poured out their hearts to her. Nellie listened carefully and wrote an exposé that rocked Pittsburgh.

When she was 19, Nellie went to Mexico for the Dispatch. She was a pretty, baby-faced girl with gray eyes and dark-brown hair, and the Mexican men she interviewed found her attractive. Determined *not* to be a sex symbol, she answered by lashing out at them for the way they treated their women. She wrote about poverty, marijuana, corruption in government. One of her Dispatch stories made its way back to Mexico. She was asked to leave the country. Back in Texas, she began a series of devastating articles on conditions in Mexico and how women there were downtrodden.

Nellie returned to Pittsburgh even more of a celebrity than when she left. She began daydreaming, and announced that she wanted—presumably in ascending order of importance—to fall in love, marry a millionaire, reform the world and work for a New York newspaper. She began by going to New York.

Joseph Pulitzer's newspaper, the World, was one of the best in the nation, and Nellie zeroed in on it. She asked for an appointment with John Cockerill, the editor, but was hooted away. Nellie stuck it out and wound up seeing both Cockerill and Pulitzer.

She wanted to write about Blackwell's Island, an institution for the insane poor in New York's East River. Nellie suggested that the best way to investigate Blackwell's was to get herself committed as an inmate. Pulitzer agreed.

In preparation, Nellie practiced shrieks, grimaces, glazed stares. She went to a lodging house in lower New York, paid 30 cents for a room, and told the proprietor that her name was Nellie Brown. Using the pidgin Spanish she had

picked up in Mexico, she said that she was a Cuban heiress waiting for her trunks to arrive from Havana. She started raving and weeping, calling for her peons and pistols; understandably enough, she was soon trotted off to Bellevue Hospital and then to Blackwell's Island. There, her sharp eye missed nothing—the indifferent doctors, callous nurses, disgusting food, filthy living conditions, harsh treatment. Although this was an insane asylum, not all the inmates were insane. Some were simply old and sick, but all were treated with the same brutality. They were beaten, choked, locked in closets.

After ten days, a lawyer from the World arrived at Blackwell's Island with an order for Nellie's release. She went home and wrote a series of articles, "Behind Asylum Bars," that shocked New York and the nation. They led to a grand-jury investigation and to the appropriation of additional city funds for improvement of conditions on the island.

Next came the sweatshops. Nellie answered an ad for workers in a box factory. She was hired, and locked in a dark, gaslit cubbyhole from seven in the morning until six at night. Some of the workers were 12-year-old girls. For the first two weeks, there was no pay. Some employers customarily hired girls for two weeks, and then fired them without having to pay them anything. Nellie wrote another series of exposés, urging enactment of pioneering laws in the fair-labor-practices field.

Nellie now turned her attention to politics at the state capitol in Albany. She learned that Edward R. Phelps, a powerful lobbyist, was paying certain legislators for their votes. Posing as the wife of a patent-medicine manufacturer, she went to Phelps and pretended to enlist his help in killing a bill that would, if passed, eliminate many of the quack remedies then on the market. She obtained from Phelps a list of the legislators on his payroll, wrote her story and then testified against Phelps at a judiciary hearing. The World provided her with a bodyguard after that.

By now, Nellie needed larger worlds to conquer. In 1872, Jules Verne had written a best-selling novel, *Around the World in 80 Days*. Its hero, Phileas Fogg, circled the globe in a wild series of adventures in less than three months. Nellie convinced the World that she could beat Fogg's record. The World agreed to underwrite her venture, and on the morning of November 14, 1889, Nellie was off.

Despite storms, blizzards, plagues, Nellie kept going—and kept sending her cables and letters to the World. Rarely have the curiosity, interest and enthusiasm of the nation been so thoroughly focused on one individual. Gamblers made book on her. Songs were written about her. Flowers, trains, race horses were named for her. Thousands of people were on the dock to greet her when Nellie reached San Francisco. Suffragettes with banners marched ahead of

her carriage; bands played and the crowds cheered and applauded. On the train trip across the country, every station stop brought out crowds of people, all shouting her name. In Kansas, suffragettes asked her to run for governor.

Seventy-two days, six hours and 11 minutes after she had sailed from a Hoboken, N.J. pier, Nellie was back. She had set a new record. Not until Charles Lindberg flew the Atlantic 37 years later would any American know the adulation that Nellie received.

"The American girl can no longer be misunderstood," thundered Jersey City's Mayor Orestes Cleveland. "She will be recognized as determined, independent, able to take care of herself wherever she may go."

Nellie had made her point. There were now scores of aspiring female reporters all over America. She had also fulfilled part of her Pittsburgh daydream. She had worked for one *World*, and reformed a bit of the other.

In 1895 she fulfilled the remaining part of her dream when she fell in love with and married Robert L. Seaman, a millionaire hardware manufacturer. Nellie was 28 and he was 72. After Seaman died, Nellie, who had no business experience, took over the running of his Brooklyn firm. By 1912 she was rated one of the country's leading women industrialists.

Soon, however, lawsuits, mismanagement and thefts forced her into bankruptcy. She went to Europe and stayed there until 1919. When she returned to New York, she went back to newspaper work—this time for the *New York Evening Journal*.

But now the old crusades were over, and Nellie Bly was a has-been. In 1920 the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote, was ratified. Working conditions for women had improved; sweatshops, if not entirely abolished, at least rankled the nation's conscience. Times had changed, and no girl had to stay at home unless she wanted to. Nellie had helped to fan the flame of the women's liberation movement, and the torch would blaze on.

In those last years before she died of pneumonia in 1922, Nellie often recalled a verse from an operetta, *The Black Hussar*. The lines were written at the peak of her fame, and in idle moments she daydreamed that they might be prophetic:

I wonder when they'll send a girl
To travel round the sky,
Read the answers in the stars,
They wait for Nellie Bly.

Covering the Courts: Problems of Specialization

By David L. Grey

Mr. Grey is assistant professor in the Department of Communication at Stanford University, where the following analysis/commentary started with a seminar presentation at a Stanford University Institute on Law and Ethics two years ago.

In such specialized news fields as the law, the journalist is—like it or not—an educator. He is forced into a role as informational liaison between specialist and layman. He must try to translate often technical subjects for mass and diverse audiences in need of non-technical messages.

Both philosophically and operationally, it is time for the press to recognize that its educational role is not secondary. Newsmen are “teachers” most of the time—providing needed knowledge and understanding about our complex environments. Or perhaps it is better said: they should try to provide such needs (especially if one accepts the view, resurged, that education is a lifetime avocation instead of something practiced over just a few formalized early years).

But instead of capitalizing on its chances to teach, the press often handles such complex fields as law by preoccupation with personalities, drama, action and other often-superficial issues. Time magazine is the institution, of course, which has probably most glamorized news about names; but skimming or scanning most daily newspaper front pages or television newscasts shows perhaps even more preoccupation with who-just-did-what-to-whom rather than the more substantive issues of what-is-going-on-and-why.

So, in analyzing press coverage of the courts and the law, there are many reasons for doubting the “educational value” of such actual news leads and headlines as: “Supreme Court

Convicts Martin Luther King” and “Supreme Court Frees Tim Leary” or “Court Denies Protest by (Chicago 7) (Manson) (Angela).” Such emphasis is usually not inaccurate or “wrong”; it is instead simply stressing too much the actors and the action at the expense of such important legal questions as rights of dissent and of the accused. Over-stressing “human interests” is an understandable news habit but a problem for any journalist who takes seriously the role of the press as a medium for learning. (And it can be added that such habits are unacceptable for those of us in journalism education who intentionally and unintentionally encourage them in our students.)

Editor Wallace Carroll has pointed out (in the Summer, 1965 *Columbia Journalism Review*) that we all are guilty at times of excessive attention to “interesting angles” rather than “important essences” of news events. The practice is bad enough in news coverage of more routine one-time events; it is serious when such significant long-term issues as legal rights are involved.

We need only reflect about such as the Chicago 7, Charles Manson and Angela Davis trials to sense the circus-and-celebrity coverage, with usually only passing or buried words about the major issues of law, justice, culture and society. Concentrating on the actors and the day-to-day boxscore of actions does little to help the public’s needs to know and learn.

Speed is typically the culprit and excuse. Several U.S. Supreme Court decisions help illustrate the problem and may even have helped intensify it. For example, in *Associated Press v. Walker* (1967), the Court talked of General Walker’s role as a public figure and how he had thrust his personality into the whirlpool of important events. It then went on to open up the troublesome practice of haste:

"Moreover, in contrast to the Butts article (Curtis Publishing Co. v. Butts), the dispatch which concerns us in Walker was news which required immediate dissemination. The Associated Press received the information from a correspondent who was present at the scene of the events and gave every indication of being trustworthy and competent. His dispatches in this instance with one minor exception were internally consistent and would not have seemed unreasonable to one familiar with General Walker's prior publicized statements on the underlying controversy. Considering the necessity for rapid dissemination, nothing in the series of events gives the slightest hint of severe departure from accepted publishing standards. We therefore conclude that General Walker should not be entitled to damages (for libel) from the Associated Press."

While the Walker decision may have merits on other grounds, this commentary by the Court is subject to serious challenge. Because: the Court is allowing the AP to say it "must" work with great speed and, therefore, speed is an acceptable practice and can not be criticized. This kind of reasoning might be convincing if it were not for the fact that great haste is a mostly self-imposed standard by the wire services. It is caused partly by the wire services' also self-imposed preoccupation with personalities in action. It encourages erratic, lack-of-depth news coverage. To be "fastest and most used" by newspapers and stations become the primary goals. Quality of content is less revered by the wire services and herein lies much of the problem.

Former Justice John M. Harlan's concurring and dissenting opinion in the *Time v. Hill* privacy case (also 1967) put the question in the context of professionalization:

"Other professional activity of great social value is carried on under duty of reasonable care and there is no reason to suspect the press would be less hardy than medical practitioners for example. The 'freedom of the press' guaranteed by the First Amendment, and as reflected in the Fourteenth, cannot be thought to insulate all press conduct from review and responsibility for harm inflicted."

In especially the more technical and specialized news fields, extra care simply seems essential.

To illustrate, a minor but important example is the word "appealed." The phrase "appealed to the Supreme Court" is often used in the press. But lawyers and judges will rightly point out, "The story is wrong. It said appeal. That wasn't an appeal. That was a writ of certiorari." If the word "appealed" is used in a strictly layman's sense, it may be generally understandable but it may be technically imprecise and misleading because only in certain legal issues is the formal action an "appeal." By far most common is the

writ of certiorari which, in essence, requests a higher court to review a lower court decision.

With certiorari, the Supreme Court has great discretionary power to say whether it wants to hear a case; by contrast, a formal "appeal" nearly always forces the Court to take up the issue because a head-on Constitutional conflict is involved. Such a fine legal line goes a long way in helping to explain how the appellate process works and what may be the meaning of a Supreme Court action. Knowing the distinction helps greatly to explain why only a very few cases ever are heard in oral argument by the Court each year.

To elaborate still further: when the Supreme Court denies a writ of certiorari without comment it is saying nothing about the substantive issues or merits of the case at hand. The high court is simply letting the lower court decision stand; reasons for this denial may have little or nothing to do with how members of the Court feel on the issues. The denial may be on mostly procedural grounds or simply because the Court does not want to review the case at that particular time.

To fail to make the appeal-certiorari distinction or to confuse it is to leave out fundamental news ingredients of what and why—and what does the Court action mean, anyway?

The journalist must watch carefully subtle problems of phrasing and learn how and when (and how not and when not) to use specialists' words and concepts and definitions. As a translator of the technical, he must try to serve faithfully both his news sources and his audiences. Here is where the journalist must often be aggressive—for the sake of both news maker and news consumer—by asking: "What is your evidence for this?" "What exactly do you mean by that?" "Could you give an example?" "How might I explain that for the non-expert?" "What is the significance of this?"

We are back to the concept of the mass news media as one of mass man's most important forums of education. Or, again, potentially most important as a means for lifetime self-instruction.

As with more formalized mass education, one of the major questions for the media is at what level(s) should the content be aimed? The newsman is researching and writing for masses but does this mean each message should be aimed at the mass level? How individualized can the mass news media be?

For such specialized and complex fields as law, science, economics and foreign relations, the best answer is likely for the print journalist to write for those who "count." This means directing news messages at a mostly intelligent but not very informed audience. And also at those with the most interest in the specific subject, greatest needs to know and in positions to pass on their information and insights to

others. Newspapers and magazines, in particular, should not aim their messages at vague masses. Instead of trying to “jazz up” and “sell” complex, technical stories, emphasis should be on trying to convey clarity and meaning.

In some ways this approach is elitist. But mostly it is based on reality and well-established research findings on who reads and watches what kinds of news and which media and on how information flows from the media through so-called opinion leaders and groups. The basic assumption, with considerable supporting evidence, is that there is not a mass audience for news but instead many smaller audiences with usually diverse but sometimes overlapping interests over time. Each reader (and listener) is, in a sense, “a specialist.” He has his distinctive mix of interests and needs which each news item will serve or not serve. In some cases he will know little but care a lot; in others, he may know a lot but care little. The endless combinations in knowledge and interest over time vary across topics and individuals and groups. To try to write to “please” the biggest number is a way, we know, to end up leaving many smaller audiences (often a majority) unsatisfied.

What all this suggests for coverage of the courts and the law—especially for newspapers—is news aimed primarily at

the state-county-city official, the police chief, the union leader, the social worker, the high school social studies teacher, the lay and practicing attorneys, etc., in any community. And, of course, at the man in jail or on probation who has both the right and need to discover his freedoms, constraints and options. By so doing the journalist can help educate and inform many in the community who in turn are able to educate, inform (and persuade) others.

This approach comes closest to the operating philosophy of The New York Times, with the main distinction that The Times is aiming at the very highest levels of regional, national, and international decision-makers and public officials and public figures. But brought down to the realities of most communities, The Times’ approach of writing for “intelligent readers with diverse, specialized interests” may be the part of its quality and success story worth practicing more elsewhere. In covering such stories as the courts and the law, a newspaper has the opportunity to provide a learning experience for many of its readers. At its best, as informal education, the institution of the press over time is a potent means for individual and societal self-enlightenment.

Literature has her quacks no less than medicine, and they are divided into two classes; those who have erudition without genius, and those who have volubility without depth; we shall get second-hand sense from the one, and original nonsense from the other.

Charles Caleb Colton, 1780–1823

Writer's Faith

By E. B. White

Editor's Note: Mr. White's home is in North Brooklin, Maine, and the universe. No one writes better than he. Now 72, he wrote for many years *The New Yorker's* "Notes and Comments." He recently received the 1971 National Medal for Literature, and the following is what he said in absentia.

I accept the committee's award with thanks and with as much vainglory as I can muster at so great a distance. I'm very unhappy about not attending the meeting. Ten years ago they pulled the railroad out from under me, and this almost severed my connection with New York. Then, 16 months ago, I met with a motor accident, and this made the highway a problem for me. As for the skies, I quit using the flying machines in 1929 after the pilot of one of them, blinded by snow, handed the chart to me and asked me to find the Cleveland airport.

The world of letters sometimes seems as remote or inaccessible to me these days as the city of New York, and it would be foolhardy of me to comment at length on that wonderful, untidy, and seductive world. I drifted into it a long time ago with no preparation other than an abiding itch. I fell in love with the sound of an early typewriter and have been stuck with it ever since. I believed then, as I do now, in the goodness of the published word: it seemed to contain an essential goodness, like the smell of leaf mold.

Being a medalist at last, I can now speak of the "corpus" of my work—the word has a splendid sound. But glancing at the skimpy accomplishment of recent years, I find the "cadaver of my work" a more fitting phrase.

I have always felt that the first duty of a writer was to ascend—to make flights, carrying others along if he could manage it. To do this takes courage, even a certain conceit. My favorite aeronaut was not a writer at all, he was Dr. Piccard, the balloonist, who once, in an experimental moment, made an ascension borne aloft by 2000 small

balloons, hoping that the Law of Probability would serve him well and that when he reached the rarefied air of the stratosphere some (but not all) of the balloons would burst and thus lower him gently to earth.

But when the Doctor reached the heights to which he had aspired, he whipped out a pistol and killed about a dozen of the balloons. He descended in flames, and the papers reported that when he jumped from the basket he was choked with laughter.

Flights of this sort are the dream of every good writer: the ascent, the surrender to Probability, finally the flaming denouement, wracked with laughter—or with tears.

Today, with so much of earth damaged and endangered, with so much of life dispiriting or joyless, a writer's courage can easily fail him. I feel this daily. In the face of so much bad news, how does one sustain one's belief?

Jacques Cousteau tells us that the sea is dying; he has been down there and seen its agony. If the sea dies, so will Man die. Many tell us that the cities are dying; and if the cities die, it will be the same as Man's own death.

Seemingly, the ultimate triumph of our chemistry is to produce a bird's egg with a shell so thin it collapses under the weight of incubation, and there is no hatch, no young birds to carry on the tradition of flight and song. "Egg is all," quoth Dr. Alexis Romanoff, the embryologist, who spent his life examining the egg. Can this truly be the triumph of our chemistry—to destroy all by destroying the egg?

But despair is no good—for the writer, for anyone. Only hope can carry us aloft, can keep us afloat. Only hope, and a certain faith that the incredible structure that has been fashioned by the most strange and ingenious of all the mammals cannot end in ruin and disaster. This faith is a writer's faith, for writing itself is an act of faith, nothing else. And it must be the writer, above all others, who keeps it alive—choked with laughter, or with pain.

The Story of the Boston Globe

Editor's Note: *Newspaper Story, 100 Years of The Boston Globe* by Louis M. Lyons, former curator of the Nieman Fellowships, was reviewed in the December issue of Nieman Reports. It was published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (482 pp.).

Following are excerpts describing his professional experiences on The Globe.

Legends to Live By

Legends attach to the life of an institution like ivy on college halls. Some legends are myth, some reality. A real legend of the Globe grew out of the sinking of the *Titanic* April 14, 1912. That White Star liner, the greatest ship in the world, struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic on her maiden voyage and sank within four hours, taking with her 1,513 persons, among them some of the most notable names in New York society. It was a Sunday midnight, April 14, that this greatest of sea tragedies occurred. Confused reports came through the limited wireless waves for the Monday morning papers. The *Titanic* was believed still afloat, though sinking, but several ships were steaming to the rescue.

Monday afternoon the word through the Marconi station at Cape Race, Newfoundland, was that the Cunard liner *Carpathia*, eastbound had reached the scene in time to pick up many survivors. How many was unknown. The range of wireless at that time would not reach the *Carpathia*, 1,000 miles at sea. But about midnight Monday the White Star officials disclosed a message relayed from the steamer *Olympic* that the *Carpathia* had picked up only 675 of the 2,200 passengers and crew. Smaller ships with only short-range wireless might have rescued some. Reports of survivors varied that night between 655 and 866. That is where the news stood for Tuesday morning papers.

On the copy desk, confronted with confused reports, someone said, "If we could only get contact with the *Carpathia*." Someone else recalled that the *Franconia*, a sister Cunard ship, was sailing next morning for England. In 24 hours it would be within wireless range of the *Carpathia* and still within shore range. "If we had a man on the *Franconia* . . ."

Why not? Winfield Thompson, yachting editor, a seasoned reporter who knew all the shipping people, was on

special assignment doing the "War Day-by-Day" historic serial of the Civil War. A 2:30 A.M. telephone call waked him with the word that he was sailing on the *Franconia* at 9:00. Nobody had access to the cashier's safe at that time of night, but Young's Hotel was almost across the street and they always had money in the safe. General Taylor had a luncheon table at Young's, where Globe editors were familiar guests. Thompson needed \$1,200 and Young's had it.

Thompson's instructions were brief: "Get in touch with Captain Rostron on the *Carpathia* and find out exactly how many survivors there are." This was easier said than done, for the *Carpathia* was of course bombarded with wireless messages from other vessels and her operator had more than he could handle. But she was a sister Cunard ship, and the *Franconia* officers knew Thompson and wanted to help. The *Franconia* established contact with the *Carpathia* 500 miles out, at 6:10 Wednesday morning. The Wednesday evening Globe had a 50-word dispatch that was picked up by the wire services for the press of the world. The *Carpathia* had 705 survivors on board and would reach New York Thursday about 8 P.M. The official figure later was 706. That was Thompson's whole assignment. He had a round-trip to England, where he spent some days as guest of his old yachting friend Sir Thomas Lipton.

In the hindsight of half a century, one may ask what difference whether they knew Wednesday or Friday that the number of survivors was not 866 or 655 but 706? Half a century later it made no difference. But it set the Globe vibrating that afternoon of April 17, 1912, to see Thompson's wireless message and to realize that the press around the world would be carrying the story "by Winfield M. Thompson, Boston Globe reporter on board Cunard Liner *Franconia*—special wireless dispatch to the Globe." This was their message to Garcia. The journalistic instinct was to go get the story. This was "news enterprise," the essence of journalism.

Thompson, a Maine man, was then 43, had been 18 years on the Globe, had covered major assignments all over the country, and had been made yachting editor in 1907 and covered America's Cup races, Marblehead Race Week, and maritime events national and international. In 1920 he would leave the paper to go into the steamship business. But first he shared with Frank P. Sibley a long, arduous assignment, in 1916, to the Mexican Border with the Massachu-

setts National Guard when for months the danger of war with Mexico seemed close.

Legends that are myth may become equally real in effect if they symbolize a core of truth. A generation of Globe men stood in awe of Harry Poor, until his death in 1934 night editor of the Globe for 45 years, a man who seemed to express in his every glance and movement the tension and verve of his nightly plotting against the clock to ready his paper for the midnight deadlines. His lithe, lean form moved down the hall on quick step if he needed a word with the city editor, or leaped up stairs two steps at a time to catch a makeup crisis in the forms. His warm brown eyes swept lightly around the news room to light up in quick recognition or to brood darkly over some problem unresolved as press time rolled around. In smile or scowl, his face muscles flexed with the mood of the night and his expression told the story of how the night was going.

Harry Poor's hair was prematurely white. The legend of the office was that his hair turned white overnight, under the strain of sifting out the news the night the battleship *Maine* was blown up. This wasn't true, yet a shorthand for truth of all the nights of strain that had whitened his hair and etched those lines in his plastic countenance. But the drama of that night when the *Maine* was blown up remained with John Coyne, then the copy boy on the night desk, all his life. "I remember Harry Poor taking copy from the telegrapher's typewriter a line at a time, scanning it, sending it up to the composing room, and writing the headlines as he watched the copy. We were on the street a few minutes after the news came in." Of such stuff is legend made.

In his day, Harry Poor sat in the slot at the center of the desk and fed out the copy to the desk editors around its rim, first absorbing its relative importance. He picked out all the pictures for the morning paper, laid out the front page dummy, chose the stories for page one, and ordered the size of heads for them. Then he went upstairs to make up the paper. Rules of the printers' union forbid an editor's touching type, but the rule never applied to Harry Poor. He picked up galleys of type and placed them beside the chases where they were to go. He had time to dummy only the front page. The inside pages were laid out "by ear."

Now these chores are divided among several men. The slot man gives out the copy, the night editor lays out each page on dummies, the picture editor handles the photographic cuts, and there's a makeup editor for each of half a dozen departments. But Harry Poor carried all this in his head, as night after night he created a newspaper from little piles of copy paper. His imagination envisioned the front page from the first urgent bulletin handed him from the

wire, set his plans in motion, started the long night's shaping and changing.

The copy desk had of course its negative function, to avoid libel and errors. It had to cut copy to fit the space. Its function made it traditionally at war with reporters, always agonized at any cuts in their copy. But its function was essentially creative, to see the coherent organization of the story. The copy desk had prime influence on the tone of the paper.

The Globe's editor emeritus, Laurence Winship, long remembered how Harry Poor "saved" him on his first big story, coverage of the 1916 Billy Sunday revival.

I was so carried away with the prominence given my first few stories that I started the fourth day's with: "I have seen many things but nothing like the drama of the tabernacle last night." Harry Poor killed my grandiloquent lead and substituted a matter of fact sentence. I was properly outraged and it was some time before I realized he had saved me from looking like a prima donna. The desk saved me many times but it didn't save me once when I had a brief hitch on the day desk. My first day, Bill Kenney, the day editor, tossed me the story of Harry Thaw's arrest. I wrote the head: "Harry Thaw Held in \$1,000,000 Bail." It went along to the composing room and they called me back to ask if I didn't have an extra 0 in my head.

This writer remembers vividly the only journalism instruction he ever had. It came from Harry Poor. As a cub, he had been handed the monthly report of the Boston Elevated, which then, as ever, was in constant deficit. But the month of January 1920 had been very stormy. People had to ride and their fares wiped out the red in that month. The reporter's story stated, "The Boston Elevated had a remarkable record for January." The night editor brought the copy around to the news room himself to say, "'Remarkable' is an editorial word, not a news word. The thing is to write it so that the *reader* will say, 'Isn't that remarkable.'" This was delivered with a smile and a friendly pat. The lesson stuck.

That same winter brought an extraordinary display of northern lights, spectacular to see but the cause of extensive interference with radio and telephone communication throughout the region. The city editor assigned the reporter to look up Aurora Borealis in the encyclopedia for a box item. Then he suggested the reporter go up on the Common and get a good description. The lights streaked a colorful pattern across the heavens. The reporter had a dim memory of Indian legends about the aurora that he thought Hawthorne had told. He knew the Parker House library would be open at night, so he stopped by and found the

stories in *Twice Told Tales*. Back at the office, more dispatches had piled up on his desk from all over, reporting the strange effects of the northern lights. This accumulation, he realized, disappointed, wouldn't leave any space for his Indian myths. Writing was slow. But he got off a take to the desk to let them know the story was coming. He'd have to hold it down.

Soon a copy boy came by to say, "Mr. Poor says let that story run." This was a thrill that sent the blood tingling. It uncorked all the reporter's excitement. It sped his fingers over the keys as the story, that had now attained a life of its own, ran on and on. It led the paper next morning. But even that meant less than that Mr. Poor had seen the story through a reporter's eyes. He'd said, "Let the story run."

Years later, when the reporter had wired in a report of the funeral of President Coolidge's father on a bleak winter day in Plymouth, Vermont, a message came back from Harry Poor: "'Stark' was just the right word to start your story."

Night Side

The way to a newspaper job half a century ago was mysterious to many who yearned for the glamor—or the vagrancy—of journalism. Some lads almost by chance, right out of school, got on as office boys. This was a chance to learn the ropes gradually to be given small chores and, if they proved proficient, eventually to become reporters. To go directly onto the staff was a chance largely limited to those who had formed an earlier connection as college correspondents or had gained experience on smaller papers. More occasionally, an opening came from knowing someone in a position to "speak to" the managing editor. In 1919 a youth who had been graduated into the war, then briefly tried schoolteaching, found a way to the Globe by this route. But not directly. An old family friend had made him an offer: if he won a commission the friend would give him his first officer's leather puttees. The commission and puttees were realized; this led to several letters from Army camps to the donor. He showed them to his good friend William D. Sullivan, city editor of the Globe, who evinced polite interest. Thus emboldened, the youth applied for a job. But it was too soon. The city editor very kindly said there might be a job; but the Globe must keep open the places for its men who had gone to war and not yet returned. Perhaps in six months, and meantime the youth's sponsor, who was in advertising, might give him some apprentice training. So he learned to write news items, small bits for trade publications, for six months.

Then he went on the night side, where cubs began at \$17 but in view of his pretraining the Globe would make it \$18. It was six months before the neophyte saw the city editor

again. It took that long for him to write a story that anybody noticed. Thus reminded of his existence, the city editor raised his pay to \$25.

The city editor had gone home before the night staff came to work. The night side trick would vary, 4-11, 5-12, 6-1, 7-2. Much of the time it was like a fireman's job of being there, in case. The night side men sat at desks in a barracks-plain room that was occupied by the district men in the daytime. In the first hour or so they rewrote for morning the major stories in the evening paper, telescoping them to short pieces which might get into the paper if there was room. Then there was rewriting of "releases" sent in that might have germs of news in them. Some items would require checking by telephone. Staff would be assigned to such dinners or evening meetings as promised news. More often a new hand was called upon to take telephone calls off the city desk and type out the phoned reports of correspondents around the region. The night side tidied over to mop up loose ends and handle incidents that came up after the day side went home—and of course any real news break that occurred in the evening.

The Globe then operated substantially with a single staff. All the top editors and senior staff worked days, for both papers. All the planning and big stories were done by the day side. The night staff was definitely second string, of new hands breaking in and an odd lot of those who could best be spared from the major assignments of the day. Some were consigned to jobs of the night side that were normally inside, to guard against their weakness for liquor, the bane of journalists of that era.

The night city editor, William Alcott, a straitlaced man who taught a Sunday school class, had less than patience with alcoholic members. A meticulous man, he was inclined to be short with new hands who were careless about middle initials or adequate addresses. He would point to the city directory or the office dictionary as the case required. He was in constant war with the sprawling, casually organized sports department, which never manned its telephones to take the miscellaneous schoolboys' sports items phoned in from all over the area all evening. Their calls spilled over to clog his city desk phones, where they had to be siphoned off among his sparse staff. The night copy desk, already burdened with a great grist of copy from the day staff, was necessarily selective and ruthless in handling whatever unscheduled stories the night city desk developed. It was a nagging job. Mr. Alcott wanted everything to be neat and tidy. He wanted to clean up all loose ends and have nothing left over, an impossibility in the helter-skelter of news. Consequently, when a big story broke in on his precise pattern of work, he was apt to be resistant to its demands until precious time had passed. Then he would have a less than

adequate choice for the assignment. So the night desk was often impatient with Mr. Alcott, who was chewed up with his frustrating job. He had been night editor then for 15 years, after as many earlier years on the staff. A thorough, conscientious, and responsible newspaperman, his high competence had been shown on the great Chelsea fire of 1908. It was he who had alerted the office that Sunday morning, then gone to the scene to take charge of its reporting and to organize coverage and transmission of the story. But that was 11 years earlier, when he was 40. Eleven years of nightly tension to get ulcers. He had begun life as a printer, which had sharpened his eye for detail and started his self-education. But his nervous temperament was miscast in that nightly barrage of harassing telephones. A year later he was out during three months of crisis with ulcers. When he returned he was persuaded to take on the library, which Williard DeLue had been reorganizing. Here his instinct for order, organization, detail, and completeness fitted the job. He developed one of the most adequate newspaper libraries anywhere. Within a year he had led in organizing newspaper librarians and in a few years was recognized in his new profession by election as national president of the Special Libraries Association. Starting at 54, Mr. Alcott was Globe librarian till 81, when he retired in 1950.

But this was 1919. When the Boston police walked off their jobs at 5:45 one night, just as the night side was taking over, of course the strategic coverage had been assigned. But the police strike broke over all anticipations; its chaos spilled into the city room to wreck all schedules, to impose sudden new demands, create new angles. As crisis and confusion built up, the night city editor, faced with an immense amount of copy, realized there would have to be a lead story, knitting it all up. Instead of assigning a reporter for this rewrite, he decided to do it himself. He started to type on the little old-fashioned verticle Oliver beside his desk, used for staff assignment memos. But his phone kept interrupting, so he decided to dictate the story. He summoned the \$18-a-week neophyte, who shuddered—he was just learning to use a typewriter, and not this antique contraption. He was still very slow. Now he would be found out. The night city editor started to dictate and the cub started to type. He fell way behind. But then Mr. Alcott stopped—no, start over. He began again. Another false start. Then his telephone rang. Then “Where were we?” “Oh, yes. Well, start over.” Then he had to read his notes over again and the typist had a breather. Then the phone again. But soon Mr. Alcott saw how useless it was and called in a reporter to turn the job over to him. The cub had a reprieve. Next day he practiced like anything at typing so as not to be caught again.

That same fall the Massachusetts legislature passed the

first daylight saving bill, an issue of sharp contention between farmers and city dwellers. On arriving at the office ahead of others on the night trick, the cub received an abrupt assignment from the night city editor: “Call up Governor Coolidge to see if he is going to sign it.”

Strangely enough, the Governor answered the phone at the Adams House. He said curtly that he hadn’t seen the bill yet, so he couldn’t say. Then he asked, “Who writes the Globe Editorial Points?” The neophyte didn’t know; “why?” he asked. “I thought one today was rather vicarious.” The reporter looked up “vicarious,” then looked up the Editorial Points. The first one ran: “Which holds the most votes for a possible Presidential candidate—daylight saving or no daylight saving?”

When he reported his failure, the night city editor rasped: “Well, I’d say you came out about even. He hadn’t read the bill and you hadn’t read the Globe.” Reporters were expected to have read the paper before they came to work.

Night side work had the advantage of more time than was ever possible for the succession of afternoon editions. Its handicaps included the most obvious condition that public and business activity had closed down. It was hard to reach important people. If you did reach them, they would be somewhat less responsive than to the familiar State House or financial reporter and were unlikely to yield more than the bare bones of the situation. But one of the satisfactions of night work was that when you were through you were all through. There were no distractions. The city was quiet, the phone didn’t ring, you could relax. For men with families night side work wiped out normal family and social life. And one had to live within the area of all-night transit service. But for a cub still fascinated by the atmosphere of the city room, there was no hurry about going home when the night trick was done. For by that time the debate had been launched in the city room. It was never ending. It was on the League of Nations: article ten of the covenant was anathema to the older generation of Irish in Boston, for it implied guarantee of the status quo of member nations. To the Irish this meant the permanence of Britain’s hold on Ireland.

One of the most intransigent British-haters around was old Jim O’Leary, the Globe’s veteran baseball writer. One of the most convinced Wilsonians and League supporters was Willie Alcott.

Jim O’Leary was a big, hearty man of the most open disposition who fitted easily into the relaxed trade of the baseball writer. His affability and good fellowship had won him the affection of the office and the world of baseball. Politics touched the simple pattern of his life hardly at all. Perhaps that explained his becoming so passionately obsessed with what he regarded as the injustice of the League.

When Jim had finished his story for the morning paper he'd come around to bait Alcott, who by midnight would have cleared from the city desk everything that had any chance for the morning paper. And they'd go at it to raise a din that soon brought the late staffers drifting in to sit on the edges of desks and enjoy the show.

Jim would have spread his bulky figure over a desk opposite Alcott's, and his ruddy face would glow bright red under a heavy thatch of white hair as he tilted back the calvary hat he'd worn since the Spanish-American War and leveled a stubby forefinger at the sputtering night editor. Alcott had all the arguments and details of the League at his fingertips, undoubtedly from panels and discussions in church. The church people were the core of League support, as they had been for Wilson in his long-held "keep us out of war" policy. Jim had vehement answers to all Alcott's chapter and verse. It was always a bang-bang affair, spiced with the racy insults that two intensely intolerant, inflexible men can exchange only with equals in taking it and dishing it out. They wrangled with the intimate awareness of each other's weak points and indulged in delicious recollections of each other's failures of judgment in the past. It was an irreconcilable contest of a pair who had known and respected each other for years on every other subject but this one. The argument was joined practically every night. One might marvel at Alcott letting himself in for this night after night; though, stuck at his city desk, he could hardly have escaped the free-wheeling baseball writer. But the explosive arguing must have provided a release of tensions. Doubtless it was homeopathic psychiatry for a nerve-wracked city editor.

Vermont Flood

It had been raining hard for two days and there was water in suburban cellars the morning of November 4, 1927. When commuters reached their railroad stations to pick up a newspaper they read of a disastrous flood that had struck the narrow valleys of northern Vermont. There had been 11 inches of rain in two days, normally about three months' rainfall.

The Winooski, Lamoille, and White rivers had been turned to raging torrents that engulfed the villages in their paths, swept more than 100 people to death in the night, destroyed most of the covered bridges in the state, and worked untold havoc. Houses and mills were washed away, roads gutted out, 7,000 acres of the most fertile fields buried under rock gravel. Power lines were disrupted, water systems smashed, communication broken with most of the state. Rutland was cut off.

The news was sketchy, details uncertain, but the calamity obviously enormous.

In the Globe office the city editor, George Dimond, a Vermonter himself, pored over timetables and maps. He was ready when the first reporter arrived to send him and a photographer to a train going toward Bellows Falls.

Later in the day, as details of the disaster mounted, the managing editor dispatched half the staff toward Vermont. Some never got there, some got lost. In a couple of days most of them had been called back. For ten days the reporter on Dimond's first assignment wandered about Vermont in as near isolation as one could be in the communications industry. His scrapbook kept a record of that experience.

The train could go only as far as Keene, and it was another day before he crossed the Connecticut afoot on a broken bridge and began the problem of exploring the Vermont flood with his photographer. But there was plenty of work on the New Hampshire side, too. The flood was everywhere in the north country, and though the office didn't realize it for several days, it really made no difference where reporters were sent. All the valleys were drowned out.

But the original assignment was to Rutland. The biggest city in Vermont was cut off. Rumors had untold loss of life and destruction there. In Bellows Falls the Globe pair managed to hire a car and driver, after much persuasion of a reluctant garage owner. It was the first of several cars they abandoned in a broken trail up the state, for they soon ran out of roads—or it was impossible to tell which was the road and which the streambed, till a hidden rock made the question academic so far as that car was concerned.

It was a strange, exciting, confusing journey. All the reporter knew for a week was what he could see or pick up from other travelers or in the stricken isolated villages.

The file of telegrams from the office that he picked up at the few points he could find a telegraph working and for some reason saved make a sort of index of that trip. He filed the second day from White River Junction and asked instructions. Winship had taken over the story by then, and his wire read: "Neary going toward Barre from Woodsville, Batchelder from Burlington to Montpelier, Donovan north from Westfield, Mass. Fiske at Greenfield, Merrill at North Conway. You go to Ludlow unless you have other suggestions."

This told him he had penetrated deeper than the rest and was in virgin territory for reportage.

Then a delayed message from the night city editor: "Glad you have progressed so far. Ludlow, Barre and Montpelier main places with which we have no contact. Some Montpelier details coming through AP. Think your best bet would be Ludlow."

A later message from Harry Poor, the night editor: "We

are covered on Montpelier and Rutland but not on Ludlow as yet."

At Ludlow he found relatively little damage. The AP was ahead of him into Montpelier. The AP man, William Chaplin, later a war correspondent, had walked the 40 miles in from Burlington only to find that he had lost the fruits of this energy. The wire had been opened an hour before and dispelled the reports of hundreds dead.

On November 8 the Globe man had reached Burlington and must have queried the office again. A curt wire from Harry Poor: "I have no way of knowing what instructions were sent you, if any. Call Sully in the morning if you are in doubt. Your copy is very late." Next night his wire said: "Better tonight. If you could clear up one half hour earlier it would make things easier all around." And things must have got better, for the wire from Poor on the tenth read: "Thanks. You have all night on the Sunday story."

By November 10 the office knew the score better than their man in Vermont and was aware that he was their only resource there. Sully got into the act with encouraging words: "Your Bolton story this morning was perfectly splendid. Dealing with facts several days old when they are human and appealing makes just as good copy as writing about what happened an hour ago." The Globe pair had begun to record the story of one town and village after another. They were all, as Sully said, human tales of drama, tragedy, heroism, and survival.

There were always choices and perplexing alternatives. The reporter must have asked guidance on one, for Sully wired explicit instructions. The choice was between going on a plane survey of the flooded area with the Red Cross or joining an oxcart relief trek up the Mad River Valley to isolated communities; oxen would make better going than horses where the roads had disappeared. Sully's response: "Not willing you should take any airplane trip. Oxcart expedition up Mad River Valley sounds very promising. Think you could arrange our Burlington man to get us from Red Cross director results of plane reconnaissance. We are very well covered from St. Albans on conditions north of Burlington. Am sure it is more important for you to make your big effort in territory you are now in. Shall expect Mad River Valley story tomorrow night."

Then another wire from Sully answering a query:

Please do not use story showing apparent lack of imagination of Gov. Weeks in emergency, as outlined in your telegram. At time of great nervous disturbance and suffering we don't believe it is helpful to public or the paper to seem to be stirring up the discordant note. Perhaps you can write around visit of Secretary Davis, telling what he hopes to accomplish, without leaving bad feeling. Your stories every morning most effective. Your outlined story tonight sounds most interesting.

Think it would be well if you come home tomorrow unless you vote against it. I intend to leave it entirely to you.

The Globe man didn't return for several more days, for there were untold stories everywhere. If the two were stuck behind a truck loaded with tanks and pipes, it meant a story ahead of restoring the water system and meantime a dangerous health situation from the flooded mains. If they saw smoke curling from a cabin across a gulch where no bridge was left, the smoke told some village family that relatives over there had survived the flood which had carried away their neighbors.

Globe headlines in the old scrapbook suggest the week's travel:

Vermont Towns Still Isolated
Fate of Several Chief Concern of Neighbors

Sunday of Labor All Over Vermont
Task of Restoring Their State Engages All
Tables Spread in Churches Where Hungry Are Fed

Cavendish Saved by Peddler
Arouses Hamlet as Houses Begin to Slip into Chasm
Homes Disappear in Blackness, but not a Life Lost

Shouted Goodbye as Flood Took Them
Bolton Families in their lighted homes swept to death
28 Lost. Roads are being opened

Citizens Fleeing from Waterbury
Forced Inoculation to Stave off Typhoid
Army men in virtual control of Stricken Vermont Town

Zero Feared at Montpelier
Vermont's Stricken Capital Hit by Winter Weather

First Bridge Put Across Winooski
Supplies Coming In—Cold Weather Helps Keep Down
Disease

Save Flood Town from Epidemic
Heroic Work at Waterbury Brings Pure Water into Pipes.
Wild Night Drive After Chlorine

A wire from Sully said: "I will leave word with Harry Poor so name of New Jersey firm will run in your story tonight." That was the firm, the only chlorinator manufacturer in the northeast, whose truck the Globe pair had followed with its life-saving tanks and apparatus and corps of specialists to handle the chlorination.

It was an extraordinary experience with isolation. Some towns, totally cut off, didn't know there had been a flood in the next town. Some blamed the town above for not having warned them. The state was dissolved by the flood into a multitude of separated little commonwealths, each on its

own. Their lives centered on the immediate problem of existence. It did not occur to them that other towns had shared their experience.

In Bellows Falls there was a story that Ludlow was burning. One couldn't communicate with Ludlow from there, but the Globe could and found there had been a small fire in Ludlow. When the men of Stowe responded to Waterbury's call for boats they had to rebuild six bridges between the two towns. It was three months before the Central Vermont Railroad ran a train from St. Albans to White River Junction.

In Montpelier the presses washed out of the Argus office with the back wall. In the hotel they had a paper, brought in from Burlington, chained to a table like a telephone book. There was no food in the hotel and the beds were damp, but they'd let you stay there. The hotel has a bronze tablet, head high, where the water stood in the lobby.

The reporter's scrapbook of the flood closes with this note:

The enduring fact of that Vermont experience was that the one time I produced copy that attracted the largest response was the one time I was operating in practical isolation, beyond direction from the office and

with time to explore the story in the depth it needed. This was and is a rare experience for a reporter. It was luck that on the second day when George Dimond called back all the staffers he could reach, I was out of reach and by the next day the office had realized it might be as well to let me stay there.

It has always been my feeling that among the unnecessary limitations on newspaper reporting are the tight strings to the city desk and their detailed assignments. True, there must be a mobile staff available for the emergencies of disaster and unpredictable events. But for the bulk of the content of the paper, the man on the beat, if he is any good, knows better than any desk can, what is the best use he can make of his time, what situations are worth looking into, where the likeliest stories lie. The desk can fill him in with anything they know that's coming up in his area. But they ought to be asking him, not telling him, most of the time. Half the detailed arbitrary assignments are worth less than the stories the man on the beat lays by till some day when he has time for them, which all too frequently he never does.

Newspapers are the world's mirrors.

James Ellis, 1769-1849

Nieman Notes

1953

Keyes Beech has written a personal history, *Not Without the Americans*, published by Doubleday.

Kenneth Wilson, formerly assistant news editor, has been named news editor of the San Francisco Chronicle.

1954

Richard Dudman, Washington correspondent for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, has been elected to the Board of Trustees of The Washington Journalism Center.

1955

Sam Zagoria, director of the Labor-Management Relations Service, has edited *Public Works and Public Unions*. Published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., it includes chapters by public officials, union leaders and neutral observers who state what is happening to the role of public unions in an era of financial crisis, rebelling taxpayers, and racial conflicts.

1956

Donald J. Sterling, Jr., formerly executive news editor and editor of the editorial page of the Oregon Journal, has been named editor. He succeeds William W. Knight, publisher for the past 19 years, and will be in charge of all news and editorial functions. His late father, Donald J. Sterling, was managing editor for 13 years until his retirement in 1952.

1957

Harold Liston, formerly associate editor of The Pantagraph in Bloomington, Illinois, has been made editor.

Anthony Lewis, see note under 1967.

1958

Peter J. Kumpa, former diplomatic correspondent for the Baltimore Sun, has been named deputy chief of that paper's Washington bureau.

William F. McIlwain, who was Writer-in-Residence at Wake Forest University, has joined the staff of The Toronto Star as a senior editor.

J. Wesley Sullivan, who was news editor of the Oregon Statesman in Salem, has been named associate editor.

1960

Ralph Otwell, formerly assistant managing editor, is now managing editor of The Chicago Sun-Times.

1962

Martin Goodman has been made managing editor of the Toronto Daily Star. He was London correspondent for that paper.

Peter Binzen and Joseph R. Daughen are the authors of *The Wreck of the Penn Central*, published by Little, Brown and Company.

1966

Robert Maynard of The Washington Post is on a year's leave of absence in Hopland, California. He is writing a book which will be titled *Silent Violence*.

Rodolfo T. Reyes, former executive editor of The Manila Chronicle, has been appointed senior vice president, and will be in charge of the full operations of the Chronicle.

1967

Ken W. Clawson, congressional editor of The Washington Post, has resigned to become Deputy Director of Communications for the White House.

Alvin Shuster has been named chief correspondent for The New York Times bureau in London. He succeeds Tony Lewis, who will devote all of his time to writing a column for the Times.

1968

Eduardo Lachica, Tokyo correspondent for the Asian

News Service, is the author of *Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt*, printed by Solidaridad Publishing House. Mr. Lachica, formerly a member of a reportorial team from the Philippines Herald, took part in a six-months investigation of the resurgence of Huk activism in Central Luzon. The resulting articles, which were the basis for the Huk history, won the Rotary Club award for distinguished investigative reporting.

1969

Paul Houston, reporter for the Los Angeles Times, has been assigned to the Washington Bureau to cover national security.

J. Anthony Lukas, reporter for The New York Times, has resigned. He will free lance and write some articles for the Times Magazine during the year.

1971

Ronald Walker, formerly managing editor of the San Juan Star, has been named editorial page editor.

The rule in carving holds good as to criticism; never cut with a knife what you can cut with a spoon.

Charles Buxton, 1823-1871

More re: 30

Historians of the press are hereby invited to take over the whole burning issue of where and how "30" became a part of newspaper parlance. It has become too big for the U. P. I. REPORTER.

Since the question was first raised here on September 3, countless memories have yielded as many recollections and dozens of files have been examined. Space does not permit publication of all of the offerings. What is absolutely clear is that the origin of 30 is not. It is also clear that there are theories far more ingenious, learned and far-fetched than anything mentioned here thus far.

Two journalism educators have sent in clippings confirming that there is a vast and inconclusive literature on the subject. They are Harry Heath, Director of the School of Journalism and Communications at Oklahoma State University, and W. J. Brier of the University of Montana.

In addition to some of the more commonly heard explanations, their clippings offer a few that can only stimulate incredulity. For example:

—"Eighty" means farewell in Bengali. An English officer used the figure at the end of a letter to the East India Company in 1785. Adopting the figures for brevity in dealing, the company mistakenly made them '30.'"

—"The 30 magistrates appointed by Sparta over Athens at the end of the Peloponnesian War were called the 30 tyrants and were overthrown at the end of one year. The end of the tyrants was heralded as '30,' and '30' thus became a symbol for the end."

—"A reporter named Thirteen sent a story with his name signed at the end, the telegrapher rendered it '30'

and the use of the numeral as an ending became established."

The theory that both 30 and 73 (best regards) originated with press rather than railroad telegraphers is disputed by Hartzell Spence, a former UPI colleague whose professional experience dates back to the end of the Morse era. He says he once asked a Morse telegrapher and "he told me that wire service telegraphers had picked up these numbers from the railroad telegraphers who at the time were a principal relay for copy from stringers and on-location reporters."

Any attempt to link these symbols with the Phillips Code will get absolutely no support in the 1923 revised edition of the Phillips Code book. They do not appear in it. Thanks are due to two members of the UPI communications department, F. R. Williams of New York and G. J. Eaton of Washington, for unearthing copies of the 1923 edition. (The frontispiece says the book was first published in 1879.)

A look at the Phillips Code book will surprise those who think the code consisted only of a few dozen easy abbreviations such as TDY for today of POX for police. It contains at least 5,000 entries including such things as QCC for concurrence, QOH for "on the other hand," RLJ for religion, RLJX for religious, YOA for years of age, BAS for "by a score of" and ZCL for sectional. Anyone who thinks YDA is the abbreviation for yesterday has got it wrong. It's YA. YAF is yesterday forenoon and YAM is yesterday morning.

ENH is enough, which seems terribly appropriate.

—From the U.P.I. Reporter

Nieman Library's New Acquisition

A significant addition has been made to the collection of works in the Nieman Library for Journalism. Mrs. Robert L. M. Underhill has contributed scrapbooks of dispatches and columns written by her father, Robert Lincoln O'Brien, between 1898 and 1904.

Mr. O'Brien was one of the nation's most distinguished editors of his generation. He was personal secretary to President Grover Cleveland, and later editor of The Boston Transcript and of The Boston Herald. The Nieman Foundation is deeply appreciative of this valuable addition to the annals of American journalism.

NIEMAN REPORTS

(Editor's note. The following is a statement of the mission of Nieman Reports, a quarterly founded by the Society of Nieman Fellows in 1947. The statement was written by Louis M. Lyons, Curator of the Nieman Foundation from 1939 to 1964, and Chairman of the Society of Nieman Fellows, in his book, *Reporting the News*. This is a Belknap Press Book, published by the Harvard University Press in 1965.)

"It is intended to publish a quarterly about newspapering by newspapermen, to include reports and articles and stories about the newspaper business, newspaper people and newspaper stories.

". . . It has no pattern, formula or policy, except to seek to serve the purpose of the Nieman Foundation 'to promote the standards of journalism in America . . .'

". . . It was the one place a speech or lecture could be published, and, if important enough, published in full. To provide full texts, if significant, was accepted as one of its functions."