

NIEMAN REPORTS

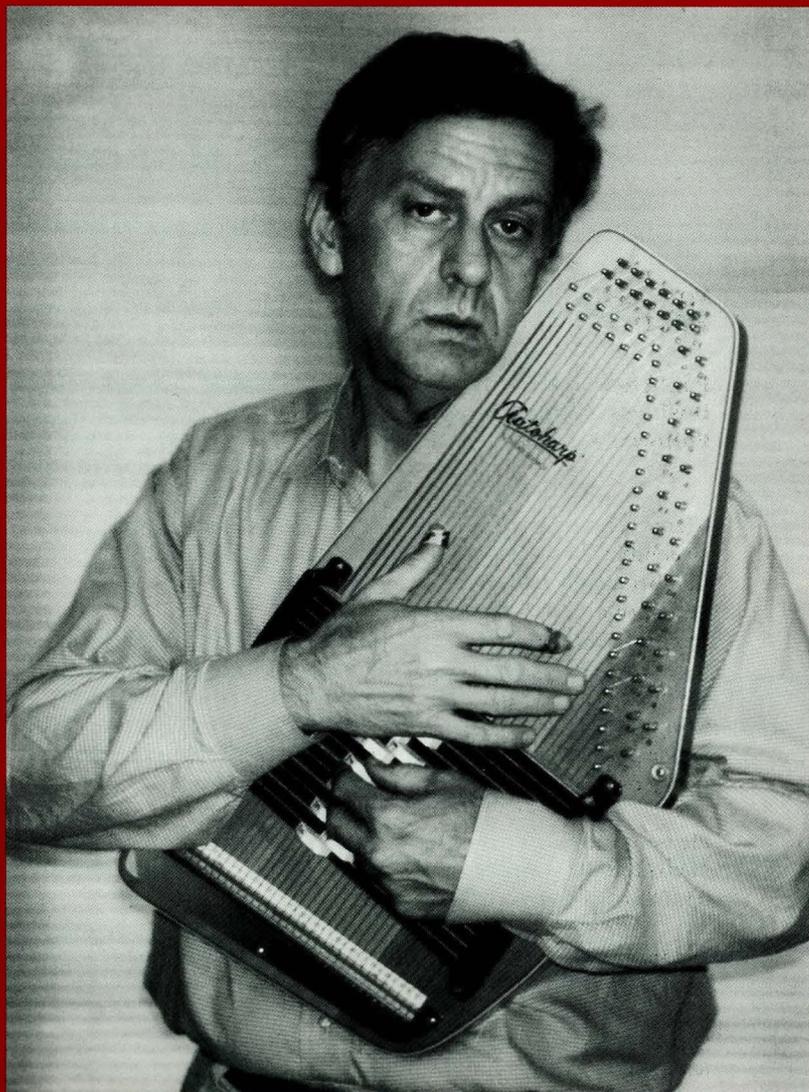
THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. 51 No. 3 Fall 1997

FIVE DOLLARS

The Faith of Journalists

Does Their Religion Help or Hinder
Them Professionally?



Understanding Timothy McVeigh

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

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

NIEMAN REPORTS

AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. 51 No. 3
Fall 1997

Publisher Bill Kovach
Business Manager Susan Goldstein
Editorial Assistant Parker Holmes

Editor Robert H. Phelps
Assistant Editor Lois Fiore
Technology Editor Lewis Clapp
Design Editor Deborah Smiley

Nieman Reports (USPS #430-650) is published in March, June, September and December by the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University, One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2098.

Telephone: (617) 495-2237

Internet Address (Business): nreports@fas.harvard.edu

Internet Address (Editorial): nreditor@harvard.edu

WWW address: <http://www.Nieman.harvard.edu/nieman.html>

Copyright ©1997 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Subscription \$20 a year, \$35 for two years; add \$10 for foreign airmail. Single copies \$5.

Back copies are available from the Nieman Office.

Please address all subscription correspondence to One Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-2098 and change of address information to P.O. Box 4951, Manchester, NH 03108. ISSN Number 0028-9817

Second-class postage paid at Boston, Massachusetts, and additional entries.

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to
Nieman Reports,
P.O. Box 4951,
Manchester, NH 03108.

NIEMAN REPORTS

Vol. 51 No. 3 Fall 1997

The Faith of Journalists

The Pull of Faith	John Dart	5
How Religious Are Journalists?	Judith M. Buddenbaum	8
Revelations	Roy Peter Clark	11
Cheap Thrills	Signe Wilkinson	13
Old Fashioned Jew, Old Fashioned Reporter	Alan J. Borsuk	15
A Cultural Jew Finds Tradition an Aid	Elinor J. Brecher	17
A Seminarian Becomes a Reporter	Chris Hedges	18
Having Fun Doing God's Work	Frank Eleazer	20
A Reporter Becomes a Seminarian	James Richardson	21
Seeing Beyond Politics	Gwen Ifill	24
Truth Without Darkness and Despair	Karla Vallance	25
A Place for a Reporter to Be Faithful	Michael White	27
Good-bye to God	Steve Benson	29
Faith Amid Violence	Eli Reed	35
Giving Bibles to Public Officials	Bill Simmons	36
Achieving Nirvana in the Newsroom	Michael Haddigan	39
Good Stories Make Hope Possible	Sara Ingram	40
American Indian Spirituality	Tim Giago	41
Back to Church Through the Newsroom	Philip L. Gailey	42
Trials of a Jehovah's Witness	Gene Owens	44
The Martin Luther King Jr. Impact	Eugene Patterson	48
Every Journalist Has a Credo	Lindsay Miller	49

The Journalist's Trade

Understanding Timothy McVeigh	Dick J. Reavis	51
Changing Values in the Newsroom	M. David Arant and Philip Meyer	55
Staying Alive	Ronald Heifetz	63

Foreign Correspondence

Spain's Shadows From the Past	José A. Martínez-Soler	71
Hong Kong Story—a Paradox	Richard Read	73
Mexican Press Still on the Take	Dianne Solis	76
Mongolia's Media at the Crossroads	Barry Lowe	78

Curator's Corner	2
What They're Saying	54
Technology	70
Books	80
Nieman Notes	90

Mary Jane Park took the cover photo of Philip L. Gailey with his Autoharp. Story on Page 42.

A Message From Bill Kovach

Since its founding the Nieman Foundation has devoted itself to its mandate to "promote and elevate the standards of journalism."

Harvard President James B. Conant and his advisors, Walter Lippmann and Arthur Schlesinger Sr., dedicated the resources of the university to that purpose when they created what has become the oldest and most emulated program of its kind for journalists in the world.

Archibald MacLeish, the founding Curator, was a moving force in the work of the Hutchins Commission. Their 1947 report on the state of the American press cemented the concept of the responsibility which journalists and owners of the press assumed along with their First Amendment rights.

Louis Lyons accepted the challenge of the Hutchins Commission's report and created Nieman Reports, the first publication in the United States to monitor, describe and critique the work of the press.

Today new challenges face American journalists. Revolutions in technology and in the economic organization of the press they have spawned are redefining journalism for the 21st Century. Cyberspace will herald a golden age or an end of the great American dream of a popular democracy fed by a press in the public service.

Each year international Niemanians who have been goaded, guided and inspired by the rhetoric of the American press have gone away depressed by the gap between rhetoric and practice they found here. Each year a growing number of you believe the time has come for the Nieman Foundation and its network of Fellows to take up the challenge to aggressively "promote and elevate the standards of journalism."

The statement on the facing page outlines a program worked out over the past months by a number of journalists to try to do just that. The Statement of Concern speaks for itself. The program it outlines is an effort to enlist the creative thought and energy of every journalist in America who believes in the mission and purpose of a free press.

With your help this can be the beginning of a process to stimulate a lasting sense of personal and continuing commitment by all journalists to the care, protection and extension of a free press in the interests of a free people.

I hope you'll sign the statement, support the forums, and send us the names of other journalists who should be invited to join us.

Yours for a press in the public interest,



STATEMENT OF CONCERN

This is a critical moment for journalism in America.

While the craft in many respects has never been better—consider the supply of information or the skill of reporters—there is a paradox to our communications age. Revolutionary changes in technology, in our economic structure and in our relationship with the public, are pulling journalism from its traditional moorings.

As audiences fragment and our companies diversify, there is a growing debate within news organizations about our responsibilities as businesses versus our responsibilities as journalists. Many journalists feel a sense of lost purpose. There is even doubt about the meaning of news, doubt evident when serious journalistic organizations drift toward opinion, infotainment and sensation out of balance with news.

Journalists share responsibility for the uncertainty. Our values and professional standards are often vaguely expressed and inconsistently honored. We have been slow to change habits in the presentation of news that may have lost their relevance. Change is necessary.

Yet as we change we assert some core principles of journalism are enduring. They are those that make journalism a public service central to self-government. They define our profession not as the act of communicating but as a set of responsibilities. Journalism can entertain, amuse and lift our spirits, but news organizations also must cover the matters vital to the well-being of our increasingly diverse communities and foster the debate upon which democracy depends. The First Amendment implies obligation as well as freedom.

For much of our history, we believed we could let our work enunciate these principles and our owners and managers articulate these responsibilities. Today, too often, the principles in our work are hard to discern or lost in the din, and our leaders feel constrained.

Now we believe journalists must speak for themselves. We call on our colleagues to join as a community of professionals to clarify the purpose and principles that distinguish our profession from other forms of communication.

Since the change we face is fundamental, it requires a response of the same magnitude. We need a focused examination of the demands on journalism of the 21st Century. We propose to summon journalists to a period of national reflection. First, we ask our colleagues young and old to sign this declaration of concern. We believe the consortium of journalists who share a commitment to common principles is so broad and so significant that it will constitute a powerful movement toward renewal.

Next we will convene a set of public forums around the country over the next several months to hear the concerns of journalists as well as other interested individuals. The forums

should reiterate two simple messages: that journalists of all generations are concerned about the direction of the profession; and that they want to clarify their purpose and principles. We do not presume to enumerate those principles here, but to have them be articulated through the forums. These sessions will include the public. We will publish an interim report after each one. At their conclusion, the group will release a final report that will attempt to define the enduring purpose of journalism, along with its principles, responsibilities and aspirations.

We see this as a beginning, a catalyst forging new ideas and a renewed spirit of conviction. We plan to carry the dialogue forward with a Web site, videotapes of the forums and through other means. We do not intend to propose a set of solutions: this is an attempt to clarify our common ground. Nor is our motive to develop a detailed code of conduct: if journalism is a set of aims, how we fulfill them should change with changing times and be left to each news organization to decide. But if journalism is to survive, it falls to individual journalists, especially in each new generation, to articulate what it stands for. ■

Signature

Address

Comments:

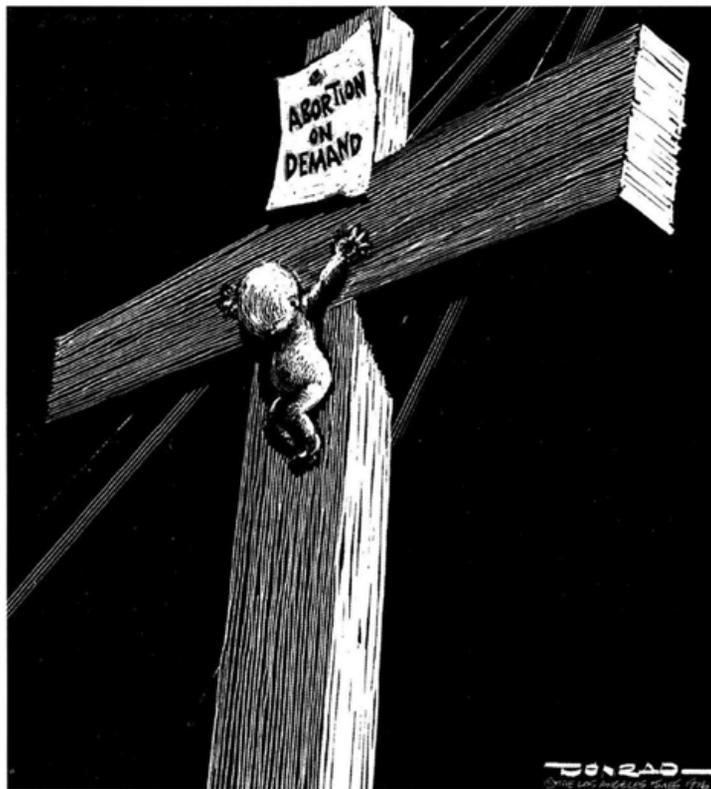
If you agree with this Statement of Concern, please sign it, add any comments and send it to:

Project for Excellence in Journalism
Suite 1110
1875 Eye Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20006

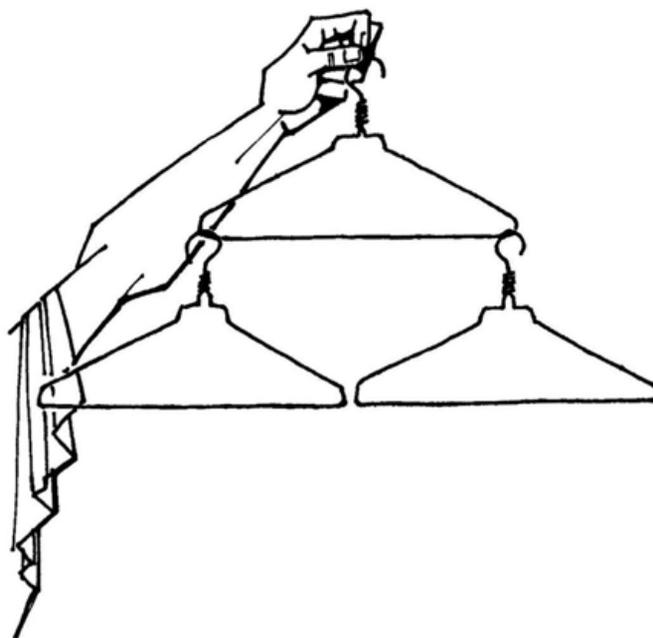
Or fax your response to the Project at (202)293-6946.
The Statement will also appear on the Project's upcoming Website.

And, tell your colleagues about it.

Religion



1976 PAUL CONRAD DISTRIBUTED BY THE LOS ANGELES TIMES SYNDICATE



1989 PAUL CONRAD DISTRIBUTED BY THE LOS ANGELES TIMES SYNDICATE

These two cartoons show how Paul Conrad of The Los Angeles Times Syndicate, a Catholic, changed his mind about abortion rights after 1976.

Religion—Help or Hindrance?

It has long been accepted practice in the United States that journalists should set aside, insofar as possible, their personal views in the quest for objectivity in the reporting and presentation of news. Generally, discussion of this ethical standard has centered on their views of government, business and other public affairs. In the following articles a score of journalists tell how their private religious beliefs affect their professional performance. Does faith—or the rejection of religion—help or hinder them as journalists? The answers of these journalists reveal an aspect of journalists seldom discussed publicly.

The Pull of Faith

Noxious, Negligible or Negotiable?

BY JOHN DART

Reporting on new casinos across the Missouri River in Council Bluffs, Iowa, veteran newsman Robert Dorr of The Omaha World Herald last year consistently used the phrase "gamblers' losses" to describe waging revenues at two riverboats and a race-track casino.

"That's the clearest way to convey what the casino gets," said Dorr. His writing decision, backed by editors and blasted by casino owners, may be an example of how his religious affiliation possibly influences his reporting, he said.

Dorr is a longtime member of the United Methodist Church, which actively opposes the spread of organized gambling. "I've plunked down a few quarters in Las Vegas," he said, "but my belief is that once gambling gets away from Las Vegas and Atlantic City, it does some terrible things to some people." The three casinos take in \$250 million a year alone in "gamblers' losses," he said.

As for the motive behind his word choice, "whether that's my religious belief or whether that's genuinely the best term to reflect what I'm trying to convey, I don't know," Dorr said. "I honestly think it's the latter. I don't think it's biased or unfair." Lately he has used "casino income" as an occasional synonym for stylistic reasons.

Dorr said also that his "tough and skeptical" reporting "happens to coincide" with the editorial stance of The World Herald, whose opposition he credited for voters' rejection of proposed gambling in Nebraska.

Journalists' inability to say precisely if, or how, their religious beliefs affect their news decisions is hardly unusual. Catholic-raised, Buddhist-trained Michael Haddigon, writing in this issue, concedes: "Where Catholicism,

Buddhism and simple news judgment begin and end in the selection process, I have no idea."

This uncertainty arises for at least three reasons. First, journalism credos encourage a detachment on the job from personal interests. Despite his 35 years on The World Herald, Dorr, for one, could not think of another story that he's covered that presented a potential religious conflict of interest.

Second, God-talk rarely surfaces in newsrooms because one's spiritual views and religious allegiances are not grist for casual chatter any more than they are at other workplaces. Additionally, "the ethos of journalism somehow makes people feel they will be taken as lightweights and marginalized if they are too public" about their faith, writes reporter James Richardson.

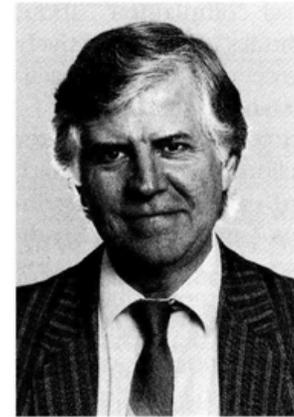
Third, based on my own 30-year experience covering religion, I think that it is very difficult for anyone to determine how influential one's faith is in decision-making vis-a-vis their age, sex, race, social and economic motives, and the basest or purest of individual instincts.

For these reasons, the Nieman Reports examination of how modern-day scribes and town criers deal with their religious perspectives in journalism ought to spur a broader discussion of unexamined religious biases in the newsroom. Research should also look at journalists who are nominally religious or non-believers.

The accounts here by openly religious journalists provide a practical beginning. Skeptics may be surprised how many believers are devoted to the journalistic principles of fairness, honesty and hard-nosed inquiry, even blending it with religious duty. "I regard it as a Christian duty to do journal-

ism that way," attests Arkansas newsman Bill Simmons. Some believe that their faith background is a career plus: Karla Vallance, a Christian Scientist, and Presbyterian-raised Chris Hedges say that their upbringing "informs" their news-gathering craft.

Potential conflicts rear up when religiously committed journalists are asked to express opinions as columnist, commentator, editorial writer or political cartoonist. Gene Owens, a Jehovah's Witness, recounts his difficult decision to quit as an editorial writer at the Roanoke (Va.) Times & World News because of his belief in the futility of human governments conflicted with his newspaper obligation to urge sup-



John Dart was almost a Nieman Fellow in 1972 (he made the finals). Instead he became a National Endowment for the Humanities Journalism Fellow in 1973-74 at Stanford University. Dart has reported religion news since joining The Los Angeles Times in 1967. As such, he is the senior religion specialist on U.S. dailies in terms of service (no one calls him the "dean," however).

port for promising political efforts.

May both reader and researcher beware of overconfidence, however. Knowing journalists' religious affiliations will rarely permit you to predict their beliefs or know how they would handle a given story. Evangelical Christian Kim Lawson says, "I think I'm tougher on my own groups because I know more, including their foibles." Lawson, former Religion Editor for UPI Radio, is news editor for "Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly," a WNET program being offered this fall to other PBS stations.

In addition, denominations typically have liberal and conservative wings with differing interpretations of what their faith means today. Knowing someone is Presbyterian doesn't tell you his or her view of the death penalty; you'd have to ask. Christians to the right of center on theological and cultural issues may be "liberal" on gay and lesbian matters because of their experience with family or friends who are not heterosexual.

Thus, many Americans unapologetically fashion their own set of beliefs, even while claiming to be loyal Baptists, Lutherans or Catholics. The Vatican has complained about "cafeteria Catholics" who selectively agree or disagree with church teachings or public stances.

Changing circumstances can alter beliefs on occasion. Take Paul Conrad, whose editorial cartoons are distributed by The Los Angeles Times Syndicate. His views on abortion rights changed noticeably more than a decade ago, for all to see.

Two much-remembered cartoons that illustrated Conrad's shift in thinking were a fetus hanging on a cross (before) and the figure of Justice holding scales made out of coathangers (after). "This was after President Reagan was expected to start appointing U.S. Supreme Court judges to overturn the Roe vs. Wade decision," Conrad said. "I decided women should be able to decide what to do with their bodies."

Then and now an active Catholic parishioner, Conrad said he favors abortion rights policies but opposes abor-

tion itself. He and his wife have acted on that belief: "Kay and I have taken into our home close to a dozen young women who became pregnant."

The case of Paul Conrad and countless other journalists should be a reminder that "religious" and "conservative" are not always synonymous. It only seems that way at times because conservative religious groups are making much of the religious news today. The religious liberal is so assimilated within secular society, including the secular newsroom, that he or she is often virtually invisible.

David Shaw, media critic for The Los Angeles Times, concluded in a 1990 series that coverage of abortion by major newspaper, television and newsmagazine outlets was "unfair to the opponents of abortion, either in content, tone, choice of language or prominence of play." Five years before, Shaw noted, a nationwide Times Poll of newspaper staffers showed 82 percent favored abortion rights.

Asked recently about that series, Shaw said that he recalled very few people, Catholics as well as non-Catholics, who categorically opposed abortion. "The vast majority that I encountered said that every right-thinking person thought it was a woman's decision," Shaw said. "It was not so much an ideological judgment as a cultural assumption that was absorbed almost by osmosis. Most did not know anyone who was opposed to abortion."

Shaw has critiqued the performance and ethics of the news media since 1974. But he said that only in three major subjects were the religious beliefs of journalists of possible relevance—in the abortion story, a study of religion news reporting and an assessment of how the press covers the Pope.

"Apart from those stories, it's not an issue that ever comes up," Shaw said. "That may be because I am not a religious person myself. My sense is that most reporters are not religious, but I don't know that for a fact because it is not something of interest to me."

In fact, religion news specialists at newspapers, newsmagazines or wire

services are aware of a goodly number of co-workers with religious ties or interests. This is not because religion writers function as newsroom chaplains—far from it. It's just that a religion writer's ears perk up when someone mentions a church or uses religious jargon knowledgeably.

Some studies indicate that newsrooms are not devoid of people of faith. I did a study on religion-news media tensions with the Rev. Jimmy Allen in 1992-93 at the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University that included parallel surveys of clergy, religion writers and The Associated Press Managing Editors Association. Only 9 percent of the editors said they had no religion, a figure comparable to polls of the general public. Thirty-five percent said religion was "very important" in their lives and 37 percent said religion was "somewhat important," giving a total of 72 percent for whom faith held some personal significance. (About 21 percent said "slightly" and 7 percent said "none.")

Many of our findings are in "Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media," which has been distributed free to more than 25,000 people. A couple of questions were pertinent to the relationship between journalists' religiosity and professional performance.

Most clergy agreed with the statement, "Religion is often shortchanged in news coverage because journalists are skeptics or not religious themselves." (Agreeing were 61 percent Catholics, 65 percent mainline and 87 percent conservative Protestant.) Of the editors, 55 percent agreed. Seven of 10 religion writers agreed, but that was not necessarily a self-critical commentary. A high proportion of religion news writers are religious, but they also know that most of what is reported about religion is by general assignment reporters, the court or political beats, columnists or wire services. (The Dart-Allen survey found that even on papers with strong religion specialists the majority of religion news is done by non-specialists—sometimes as much as 75 percent).

At the same time, most religion writers chafe at the notion that religious activity is a prerequisite for the job or even desirable. Only 20 percent of religion writers agreed with the survey statement that "reporters who cover religion regularly should be active in a religion;" 44 percent disagreed, 27 percent of them strongly. Editors backed up religion writers on that point whereas most clergy thought differently. Members of the Religion Newswriters Association tend to cringe at any suggestion that they need to be demonstrably religious themselves in order to do a good job. Becoming heavily involved in church or temple life carries a threat to professional objectivity, many say.

Sociologist John Schmalzbauer has attempted to discover this psychological intersection negotiated by religion writers and other journalists known to be religious. He interviewed nine evangelicals and nine Catholics at major print and broadcasting companies in New York and Washington. Two of the nine in both cases were religion specialists.

At least half of the 18 "mobilize the rhetoric of objectivity and detachment" to draw a boundary between their private views and their professional writing, said Schmalzbauer at the 1995 Conference on Media, Religion & Culture at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He said that Jack Kelley of USA Today, Peter Steinfels of The New York Times and ex-United Press International correspondent Wes Pippert were three who did this when they felt they came "close to violating the borders." But Steinfels and Pippert also found ways to bridge the gap when talking about truth, justice and other concepts of concern in both fields.

In the end, "evangelical and Catholic journalists manage the boundary between objectivity and moral commitment by reframing objectivity as a religious moral commitment," said Schmalzbauer, who is at the Center for Study of Religion and American Culture in Indianapolis, jointly sponsored by Indiana and Purdue Universities.

Taking those ideas a bit further, I'd

George M. Marsden Facts, Objectivity and Religion

Whether one is a teacher of history or an historical researcher, and whether one is a Christian or something else, his value-system plays a crucial role as soon as he begins to attempt to look at "the facts." Although facts no doubt have an objective reality, we never encounter them except as part of our own subjective experience. Hence we do not deal with facts purely objectively, but always in the context of our own experience and of the general meanings we see in things. So, for example, the Christian views all objects as created by God, whereas the non-Christian does not. In the cases of most types of historical judgments this element of subjectivity makes little practical difference. The statement "Washington crossed the Delaware" would be equally true if made by the Christian or the non-Christian, and it seems to make little *practical* difference if the Christian believes that rivers, boats and men are created by God so far as making this statement of historical fact is concerned. In some cases, however, our Christian point of view in perceiving facts may make substantial differences that will affect our subsequent interpretations. For instance, the Christian, in contrast



to many non-Christians, will not view man as merely a high-order animal with no ultimate moral responsibilities. Accordingly when the Christian encounters "the facts" concerning Washington's crossing the Delaware, his perception will include the recognition that these facts have some relationship to God's moral order. The precise character of that relationship will be a question of interpretation; yet the perception of such a relationship significantly separates the Christian's initial view of the facts from the perceptions of his non-Christian colleagues. ■—George M. Marsden, *Francis A. McAnaney Professor of History, University of Notre Dame, in "A Christian View of History," 1975.*

suggest that journalism at its best is a quasi-religion that offers practitioners salvation from the corrupting lures of special interests. Whether dismayed by religious charlatans or devoted to them, personally conflicted editors and reporters have a way out, confessing loyalty to higher canons of balanced, straightforward news treatment.

It is for good reason that some say journalism is a "calling," not only because so many journalists have wages near the poverty level but also because the vocation blesses those who shed light on truth, or a close approximation, and expose sins against the public. That hilltop news cathedral occupying high moral ground is the Fourth Estate, and it is equipped with bully pulpits for sharp-tongued journalists

ordained as columnists and commentators.

Okay, I'm playing with metaphors. All of the above can and is described adequately in secular language.

Yet, ambiguity abounds when we talk about religiosity in journalistic practice. With the subject left unexplored for so long, no wonder news people find it hard to define what influence, if any, the pull of faith has on their work. It's a tough boundary rife with suspicions and stereotypes. Just as virulent are latent anti-religious attitudes that may only surface when hot-button issues flare. Those who have developed tactics to negotiate that delicate frontier need to be heard, and this issue is a good start. ■

How Religious Are Journalists?

By JUDITH M. BUDDENBAUM

In the face of mounting evidence of public distrust in journalists and their work, reasons and remedies for the problem abound. According to one line of thought, the problem stems from journalists who are a-religious at best, anti-religious at worst. It could be solved if only there were more religious people working as journalists instead of so many irreligious ones who are out of touch with and insensitive to the values and interests of mainstream America.

Those who hold that view often point to the work of Robert S. Lichter, Stanley Rothman and Linda S. Lichter for evidence that journalists are an a-religious lot. Findings presented in their 1986 book, "The Media Elite," show that half of the journalists they surveyed had no religious affiliation; more than eight out of 10 said they seldom or never attended religious services. However, those who interpret the findings as evidence that most journalists are similarly casual about religion make the mistake of generalizing from an unrepresentative sample.

Lichter, Rothman and Lichter surveyed 240 journalists from seven media organizations, all located in New York or Washington, D.C. (The New York Times, Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report and the news departments of ABC, CBS, and NBC). According to a 1991 Freedom Forum mail survey of 266 editors who were members of The Associated Press Managing Editors Association, 72 percent said that religion was important in their lives. However, editors—and particularly editors of small-town newspapers—may be just as atypical as the journalists from the elite media Lechter, Rothman and Lichter surveyed.

Because survey results can differ markedly depending on the population surveyed, the best information on all journalists from all media throughout the United States comes from research conducted by Indiana University Professors David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit. Their 1992 survey included responses from 1,156 editors, reporters, columnists and photographers with news responsibility from 574 randomly selected newspapers, news magazines, radio and television stations throughout the country.

Data presented in their 1996 book, "The American Journalist in the 1990s," lends some support to the contention that journalists are less religious than the population as a whole. Whereas 61 percent of the total U.S. population say religion is very important to them, Weaver and Wilhoit found that only 38 percent of all journalists attach similar importance to their religion. Another 34 percent say religion is somewhat important to them.

However, both sets of figures need to be interpreted with caution. Other research indicates that members of the general population overestimate their religiosity; journalists underestimate theirs.

Gallup polls consistently show that about 40 percent of all Americans say they "went to church last week." But efforts to confirm those attendance figures cast doubt on even that somewhat lower estimate of religious commitment. After obtaining attendance figures directly from churches and by "counting the house" in a representative sample of churches, sociologist Robert D. Woodberry concludes that only about half of those who tell survey researchers they "went to church last week" actually went.

According to Woodberry, cultural norms lead people to give the socially desirable answer. For most people, that means presenting themselves as religious. But for journalists, the desirable answer is just the opposite.

In my interviews with church members and working religion reporters, I have found that people who attend church regularly and participate in other church functions routinely describe themselves as very active in their church. Religion journalists with similar activity levels usually describe themselves as "somewhat" or "not very" active. Socialized to professional norms that encour-



Judith M. Buddenbaum is a professor in the Department of Journalism and Technical Communication at Colorado State University. She is a former religion reporter and has conducted media research for the Lutheran World Federation. Her studies of religion journalism and religious influences on the media and media use have been published in scholarly journals and as book chapters. She is co-editor of "Religion and Mass Media: Audiences and Adaptations" (Sage), and the author of "Reporting News about Religion: An Introduction for Journalists," forthcoming from Iowa State University Press. She received her A.B. in chemistry, M.A. in journalism and Ph.D. in mass communication from Indiana University.

age them to avoid or downplay anything that could be construed as detracting from their position as neutral, outside observers, religion reporters purposefully avoid leadership roles that could be construed as a conflict of interest in their professional work. Their answers to questions about religious activity reflect their recognition that they are not as active as they could be, and perhaps would like to be.

Therefore, there may be less of a religiosity gap between journalists and the general public than raw data from surveys suggest there is. But my studies of religion journalists and their work also indicates that the journalists' own religion is at most a minor influence on their work. Religion journalists simply do not cover their own religion more heavily or more favorably than they cover other religions, including those that they find personally distasteful. In deciding which religions to cover, the strongest influence is the strength of a religion in the community. In deciding how to cover religion, the strongest influences are conventional news values and the journalist's perception of the kind of news the audience wants.

Religion journalists, of course, are not typical of all reporters, but neither are they a breed apart. Most worked on other beats before covering religion. Many who now cover other beats at one time worked as religion reporters. Therefore, it is very likely that all journalists are influenced by the same professional norms that lead religion journalists to underestimate their own level of religious involvement and to forego unduly heavy or favorable coverage of their own religion in favor of stories they perceive as better serving audience interests.

The influences on religion news coverage I found are consistent with Weaver and Wilhoit's finding that, in 1992, 73 percent of all journalists said journalistic training was the major influence on their concept of what kinds of stories are newsworthy; 35 percent cited their audience. As influences on their ethics in covering stories, 88 percent of the journalists cited socialization in the newsroom; only 36 percent mentioned their "religious training."

Although journalists' own religion does not appear to be a major influence on the stories they cover, it still may have an important indirect effect. But to find evidence of that influence, one must sometimes read between the lines and interpret the data in conjunction with other related research.

Weaver and Wilhoit found that many journalists see the press as fulfilling multiple, and sometimes contradictory, functions. About two-thirds of all journalists strongly support a surveillance or watchdog function for the press. They tend to be interpretive and investigative reporters. Some of them also favor adversarial journalism. About half of all journalists, however, are really "cautious" disseminators. Like many of the surveillance-oriented journalists, they put a premium on getting information to the public quickly. However, they are considerably more inclined to "straight" reporting than to investigative or adversarial journalism. Their "cousins," the popular mobilizers, place the highest priority on giving "voice" to their audience and its interests.

Politically the interpretive, investigative and adversarial reporters are moderate to liberal; disseminators and popular mobilizers tend to be conservative. Although Weaver and Wilhoit did not examine the connection between religious beliefs and news orientation, political conservatives tend also to be members of conservative religions. Political liberals tend to be members of those religions that are commonly described as "liberal" or to have no religion. Therefore, preference for one orientation over another almost certainly is rooted as firmly in religion as it is in politics.

In his 1927 study of the yellow press, the sociologist Robert Park noted there are two kinds of editors: those who believe it is their duty to protect the public by suppressing information about things they know "God ought not to have let happen" and those who believe it is their duty to report on anything "God would let happen."

Studies of clergy and lay attitudes toward freedom of speech and press, the media and media content dating back at least 40 years consistently show

that conservative Protestants tend to favor the first approach to news. Mainline Protestants, members of non-Christian religions, those with no religion, and increasingly in recent years, Catholics, generally favor the second approach. Where conservative Protestants tend to want news designed to protect and promote their understanding of correct beliefs and behaviors, those who are religiously more liberal want the media to serve surveillance or watchdog functions even when that means attention to things they personally find distasteful or even dangerous.

Weaver and Wilhoit found that 90 percent of all journalists were brought up in a religious faith. Among journalists working in 1992, 29 percent were brought up Catholic, 5 percent were from Jewish homes and 10 percent were from homes where other religions were practiced or in homes that were not religious. Just over half were brought up in Protestant homes.

According to a 1996 American Society of Newspaper Editors survey of 1,037 journalists at 61 randomly selected newspapers, about 37 percent of newspaper journalists are Protestant, 22 percent are Catholic, 5 percent are Jewish, and 15 percent belong to other religions outside the Judeo-Christian mainstream. Twenty percent classify themselves as agnostics or say they do not identify with any religion.

Although that survey is less representative of all journalists than the one conducted by Weaver and Wilhoit, it does suggest that religious affiliations change over time. Nevertheless, other studies clearly indicate that family, along with the church, is the primary transmitter of beliefs and values. Although comparatively few journalists attributed their ethics to their religious beliefs, almost three-fourths of all journalists said their ethics were shaped by their family. That influence most likely lurks behind reporters' decisions about the kind of journalism they will practice. Although those decisions may be subconscious ones, reporters tend to gravitate toward media where a kind of journalism they find comfortable is practiced.

Weaver and Wilhoit found that the larger, corporate (publicly owned media), especially in the big cities on the east and west coasts generally practice surveillance and watchdog oriented journalism. Because those regions are both religiously more diverse and less religious than the South and Midwest, those media most likely attract journalists whose religion (or lack of religion) makes them comfortable living and working there. The more religious and religiously more conservative reporters gravitate toward the South and Midwest, where people are generally more religious. In those regions, the media are more likely to act as disseminators or as the voice of their religiously and politically conservative audience.

At present, journalists who grew up in Jewish, Catholic and moderate to liberal mainline Protestant homes are overrepresented in the profession compared to the population as a whole. Journalists who are from more conservative Protestant backgrounds are underrepresented while those from the fundamentalist wing of conservative Protestantism are seriously underrepresented relative to the strength of fundamentalism in the population as a whole.

Although the research record is not as extensive as one would like it to be, what data there are suggest both that, in general, journalists are more religious than the public believes them to be and that religion does make a difference in their work. However, its influence is probably not what those who see problems in media coverage expect them to be.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that some journalists do make professional decisions based on their religion; others suppress their own beliefs as they go about their work. At present there simply is little reliable social science evidence showing whether or not a journalist's own religion makes much difference in story choice.

There is, however, some evidence that religion affects people's understanding of the role of the media and, through that, their general approach to news. In general, religious conservatives are less inclined to support the

Statistics of Four Surveys

Lichter-Rothman

- Half of journalists surveyed had no religious affiliation
- 86% said they seldom or never attended religious services

(Survey conducted in 1980. Researchers interviewed 238 randomly-selected journalists in various positions at top newspapers, newsmagazines and TV networks based in New York and Washington: The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report and news departments at CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS.)

Study conducted by researchers Stanley Rothman of Smith College and Robert Lichter, now co-director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs in Washington.

Freedom Forum First Amendment Center

- 72% of newspaper editors said that religion was important in their lives

(Survey conducted in 1992. Based on nationwide mail survey responses from 266 editors who were members of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association. Published in 1993 in "Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media.")

American Society Of Newspaper Editors

Survey asked: How would you describe your religious beliefs?

Protestant: 37% total, 35% of females, 38% of whites, 53% of blacks, 10% of Hispanics, 32% of Asian-Americans, 28% of gays, lesbians and bisexuals

Catholic: 22% total, 22% of females, 22% of whites, 11% of blacks, 53% of Hispanics, 19% of Asian-Americans, 10% of gays, lesbians and bisexuals

Jewish: 5% total, 6% of females, 6% of whites, 1% of blacks, 3% of Hispanics, 1% of Asian-Americans, 8% of gays, lesbians and bisexuals

Other religious belief: 15% total, 16% of females, 13% of whites, 26% of blacks, 12% of Hispanics, 26% of Asian-Americans, 28% of gays, lesbians and bisexuals

Agnostic/non-believer: 20% total, 22% of females,

21% of whites, 9% of blacks, 21% of Hispanics, 32% of Asian-Americans, 27% of gays, lesbians and bisexuals

(Survey conducted in 1996. Based on mail responses from 1,037 journalists at 61 randomly-selected newspapers around the country. Published in 1997 in "The Newspaper Journalists of the '90s.")

Weaver and Wilhoit

Religious backgrounds of U.S. journalists compared with U.S. adult population

	Journalists	U.S. Adults
Protestant	54.4%	55%
Catholic	29.9%	26%
Jewish	5.4%	1%
Other or none	10.2%	18%

- 23% of journalists in news magazines and 17% in news services were Jewish
- 29% of Asian-American journalists reported they didn't belong to any religion
- 38% of journalists said religion was "very important" to them, compared to 61% of the overall U.S. population
- 34% of journalists said religion was "somewhat important" to them, compared with 30% of the overall U.S. population
- Journalists employed by news magazines and wire services were less likely to say their religious faith was important to them than were those working for newspapers, radio and television
- 36% of journalists said their "religious training" was influential in shaping their ethics

(Survey conducted in 1992. Based on 1,156 telephone interviews at 574 randomly-selected news organizations including daily and weekly newspapers, news magazines, radio and television stations and wire services around the country. Published in "The American Journalist in the 1990s." The figures from the overall U.S. population were taken from 1992 Gallup polls.)

Study, conducted by the Center for Survey Research at Indiana University's Bloomington campus, led by journalism professors David Weaver and Cleveland Wilhoit. ■

surveillance and watchdog roles than are those who are religiously more liberal. Therefore, the prevalence of news about whatever "God would let happen" that people often take as evidence that journalists are a-religious more

likely is evidence that, together, mainline Protestants, Catholics, non-Christians and people with no religion make up the majority both within journalism and in the population as a whole. ■

Revelations

BY ROY PETER CLARK

Friends would say my religion is eating lunch at Pizza Hut—the breaking of the breadsticks—I do it more often than I attend Mass. I'm a struggling American-Catholic, if that is not a tautology in this day and age. Notice the order of the words "American-Catholic": church wins the noun position; state earns only an adjective, but not without a fight. It is not easy to belong to the most hierarchical of churches in the most democratic of countries. Choice struggles with tradition, freedom with authority, science with dogma.

Only in my writing do these conflicts find a resolution, and not through any conscious practice of my own. I realized this one day in March of 1996, just after The St. Petersburg Times had run my month-long series on a family struggling with AIDS. An acquaintance approached me in Pizza Hut. "I was impressed with how spiritual the story was," she said. "How Catholic." She even quoted a line I had used to describe my protagonist's anxiety while waiting on line to have her blood drawn: "It was like waiting for communion—only it was her body and her blood." But that was just a metaphor, she realized, for my character was not even Catholic. What she found most powerful in the series, she said, were the themes of sin and redemption. This was an unusual response to the series.

Most of the attention went to the form of the story—29 short daily chapters with cliffhanger endings—and to the sexual content: scenes of transvestites, descriptions of the Brazilian Carnival, analyses of different cultural definitions of homosexual behavior. Other chapters were devoted to a church support group, to a hospice ministry, to the character's prayer life, and to the unconditional love of friends and family members. I guess if you did a careful content analysis of the series, you'd find equal quantities of prayer and pro-

miscuity, aspiration and degradation, compassion and passion.

As I approach the age of 50, I now admit, without qualification, that I write with a Catholic voice. (This is a significant accomplishment for a man raised with the help of a Protestant father and a Jewish grandmother.) Readers tell me they can hear that Catholic voice even when I'm writing with the strategic neutrality of the journalist. They hear it in my choice of topics, in my attraction to certain characters, and in my choice of metaphor and allusion. I've tried to imagine what might be the characteristics of an American-Catholic voice, and have come up with this list:

- I write with a moral vision, and I'm attracted to characters who either share such a vision or lack one. I assume that I'm writing for a reason or reasons, and that they are connected to the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount. I don't apply this in a simple-minded way to my analysis of the world. I think an adulterer can make a good president and a faithful spouse a bad one. But I write many stories with moral frames, and I try to make those frames visible rather than transparent. I want people who read my work to conclude that journalism has some higher purpose.

- Part of my training as a Catholic was to believe that we share some responsibility for the poor, starving, ignorant, suffering, imprisoned and outcast. A hunger for social justice is satisfied by a journalism that exposes wrongdoing and celebrates the healers and peacemakers. So I find myself at the end of the second Christian millennium writing about AIDS (the plague of the century), and the Holocaust (the crime of the century), and Vietnam (the defining moral event of my generation).

- I believe in rootedness, not only in a religious tradition and culture, but in a place and time. A particular sense of community and continuity shapes my

journalism. I write about the Lakewood neighborhood of St. Petersburg from the inside out because I have 20 years invested in it. I care about schools and neighbors and girls who play soccer there. I resist a journalism that depends too heavily on technology or on communities of interest. I look for real people, living in close proximity, who depend upon each other.

- Recent surveys reveal that there is actually little disagreement among American-Catholics on social and theological issues. The battle is between rank and file Catholics and the hierarchy. Yet we are not schismatics. We love and need the very club whose rules we're defying. This questioning of authority is in harmony with some of the best kinds of journalism. It requires a practical skepticism but not cynicism, for men and women may be sinners, but they are also redeemed. We reject a Skinnerian universe for one which imag-



Roy Peter Clark at the age of 4 with his mother. She was the daughter of a Catholic father and an Eastern European Jewish mother. Clark, a senior scholar at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in St. Petersburg, Florida, teaches writing.

ines that people can choose good over evil, and should. An old newsroom adage goes, "If your mother says she loves you, check it out." I'd say, "If your mother says she loves you, for God's sake, tell her you love her too, and then send her some flowers."

- I retain a sense of the miraculous in a scientific and mechanistic world. Hey, don't we call publication of the newspaper "the daily miracle?" I pray when my children are sick or when people I love are in trouble. I pray for other reasons, too. Even when the journalist's job is to explain or shed light, I love stories that preserve a sense of wonder or that defy understanding. The chance meeting on the train. The reunion of family members. The dog who saves a child from drowning, or the child who saves the dog.

- As a writing teacher I preach the value of concreteness and specificity: the name of the dog (Rex), the brand of the beer, the color of the rose. These help readers see and remember. They also inspire, I hope, a sense of the holiness of ordinary things, things that are imbued with meaning by the actions, for good or evil, of ordinary human beings.

- I once heard the great reporter Francis X. Clines of *New York Times* say that the purpose of journalism is "to tell the morbid truth" and that we should not apologize for that. To be sure, reading a daily newspaper, (or viewing a newscast!), is like staring into the abyss of original sin. But I believe in the possibility of sainthood in the world, of the transformative power of genuine goodness, embodied in the work of a Dorothy Day or Mother Teresa or Elie Wiesel, and thousands of others who are lesser known—the cancer clinic nurse, the dedicated school teacher—who could and should populate our stories. When I wrote about a Catholic nun who founded the St. Petersburg Free Clinic and Food Bank, I knew that democracy and theology were both being served.

- Few Catholics of my generation can escape without a highly developed sense of sin. And even if we lack the scrupulous consciences that drove us weekly into the confessional box, we

still believe in evil and people's individual responsibility for it. We are less tolerant than most of trying to explain, through journalism or psychology, the social causes of evil. Why did Mike Tyson bite part of his opponent's ear off? Maybe the devil, and not Don King or childhood poverty, made him do it. But we think that goodness has its rewards, and evil its punishments, and that as journalists, when we celebrate charitable work or expose corruption, we may serve—but only with humility—as instruments of justice.

- I believe in the formative power of stories. I've heard it said that among all the great religions, Catholics have the best stories. I don't know if that's true. I've heard some great stories from Jews and Southern Baptists. But not only did we grow up with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, David and Goliath—and the amazing Gospel narratives—but also with the legends of the saints. The stories took many forms: biography, hagiography, homilies, allegories, parables. Whether their meaning was clear, it was always assumed that these stories made us better. Part of the current malaise in journalism is expressed by doubt over whether our stories make people better at all. Some people think they make us worse, that the cumulative effect of telling the morbid truth is, well, morbidity.

- The naughty bumper sticker says that "Journalists do it every day." Jesus said "the kingdom is now." And in the convergence of those two sayings I find my voice. Not that journalism and religion lack a teleology, a direction toward a bright future, either the good society or the beatific vision. But Christ taught, and exemplified, how the divine is experienced in the human moment, the feeding of the hungry child, the consolation of the grieving mother. So, too, the greatest journalism captures and renders the significant moment, the one that reveals where we have been as a people and where we are going. In that sense, the newspaper is a book of revelations.

None of this suggests that members of other religions, or agnostics, for that matter, lack these sensibilities. I am describing what I feel in my own char-

acter and work, and why "Catholic"—make that "American-Catholic"—is the best label for it.

For the first time, I've written about matters of faith directly, in a series titled "Sadie's Ring." In 11 chapters, appearing in several newspapers, I explored what it was like to grow up as a Catholic boy with a Jewish grandmother. I described a journey of faith which forced me to re-examine the meaning of the Jewishness of Jesus and the roots of the Christian ethic in Jewish law.

I was astonished by the response: more than 500 phone calls and messages of support from readers of *The Miami Herald* alone. I thanked them in a brief column that concluded with this observation: "'Sadie's Ring' violates traditional definitions of news. The same can be said of the Torah or the Gospel. Yet both of those works speak about what is enduring and noble in the human spirit, about people's experience of the presence of God in the world. That experience is so powerful that it should, on occasion, command the attention of journalists. Readers, I have faith, will reward the risk."

The series also appeared in *The Minneapolis Star Tribune*, and a Lutheran minister up in the northland used it as the text for his sermon. I scratched my head as I read his words. What is going on when a Lutheran minister praises from the pulpit the work of a Catholic man writing about his Jewish grandmother? America.

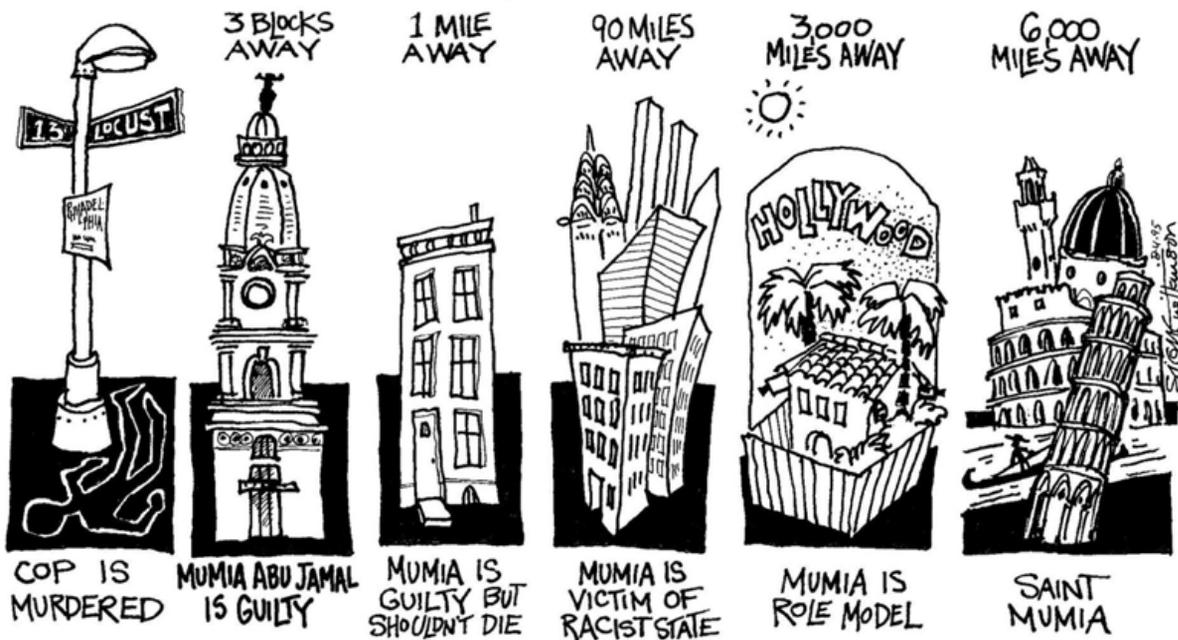
Two stories from the Bible are relevant. The first comes from Genesis and describes the folly of men trying to build the Tower of Babel high enough to reach God, who curses mankind with a confusion of languages.

But this curse is redeemed in the moments after Pentecost, when the disciples, filled with the Holy Spirit, preach to the people from many nations and are understood by all. In a sense, journalists have to choose between these two models. Will we write in a voice that only captures and magnifies confusion through the culture? Or can we write in authentic voices that can be heard across the land and for the benefit of many? And for a higher purpose?



Cheap Thrills

GEOGRAPHY OF A MURDER



BY SIGNE WILKINSON

Many aspects of my Quaker faith have significantly influenced my career but perhaps none more profoundly than the abiding Quaker belief in being cheap. My fellow cultists refer to it as being “careful with money.”

There are obvious benefits of extreme thrift. By being too cheap to pay for cigarettes or psychiatrists, for example, I stay in a state of perpetual irritability, which is the perfect state for cartooning.

Being cheap has worked out well in other, less direct ways. When I got out of my middling college with a middling B.A. in English, my ability to live on the thrifty side allowed me to work for the Quakers near Philadelphia. Because the Quakers paid only \$50 a week, I needed a second job and ended up in the only

profession that would hire an unfocused, marginally prepared graduate with a useless degree—journalism.

I started stringing for The West Chester Daily Local News, which paid \$10 per story. It was there that I got a taste for the power of journalism. For example, I broke the story that the Pocopson Township supervisors were planning to lower the blade on their roadside mower from 20 to 15 inches. When my editors started running little sketches I'd drawn, I realized that cartooning combined my interest in art and politics and my total lack of interest in strict objectivity. Quakers say, “the way will open.” My career opened at The Daily Local News.

Looking around for other opportunities, I was able to find a position that cut my salary to \$25 a week. I joined a

group led by a Haverford College professor who was going to bring peace to Cyprus. Nine months after we arrived, war broke out. In Cyprus, I saw the limits to volunteerism and the limitlessness of history's malignant hold on the present. In countless Quaker meetings, I'd heard messages about “doing unto others.” In Cyprus, I heard a slightly different message. When they learned that the Turks were sending troops, some young Turkish Cypriots of my acquaintance crowed, “Finally we can do unto the Greeks what they've done unto us.”

Cyprus gave me an early glimpse of ethnic cleansing when, after the Greek

Signe Wilkinson, known as the attack Quaker, is the Editorial Cartoonist for The Philadelphia Daily News.

coup and Turkish invasion one week later, I went to the home of the wonderful Turkish leader in the little village where I was living. He and his family were herded past me at gunpoint to the town mosque where they were detained with their other Turkish neighbors. There they prayed to Allah. Down the dusty street, the local Greek Orthodox priest prayed to Jesus over a young Greek Cypriot who was an early casualty of the violence. While the ease with which neighbors slipped into war shocked me, it did nothing but reinforce my Quaker suspicions that organized violence wasn't going to improve the situation any more than organized religion.

Perhaps had I been a truly spiritual person whose belief in peace was backed by courage, I might have seized the moment, gathered all the townspeople together in a Quaker meeting, and let everyone feel the power of a shared divinity beyond name or nationality. The transformed villagers would cry out against the idiocy of the conflict, thus changing that little war's dingy outcome and possibly earning me a discreet paragraph or two in *Newsweek*. Instead, I stayed until the Turks were released from the mosque, caught the last emergency transport off the island (if I'd waited, I'd have actually had to *pay* for a flight), and took with me an abiding sense that a little multi-culturalism goes a long way. *Newsweek* does not use my cartoons.

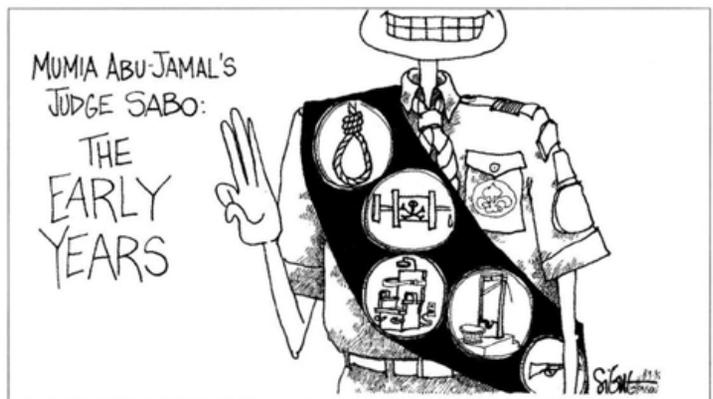
There are, of course, other bedrock Quaker values that have influenced my work. The firm belief in sensible shoes and 100 percent cotton clothing, for example, is shared by journalists of the khaki pants school and helped me fit right into the profession. The ability to deal with boredom, developed over many hours of quiet Quaker worship, is also important. I can sit through an entire Bill Clinton State of the Union address—awake. Finally, Friends' trust in women's ministry, which has given strength to four centuries of uppity Quaker feminists, including five of the seven conveners of the 1848 Seneca Falls Conventions, has made me feel

that my crazed opinions were at least as worthy as a man's.

For a cartoonist, however, there are some distinct downsides to Quakerism. Quakers are not known for our humor. There is no Quaker Borscht Belt. Also, we don't do symbols. Our meeting houses are cross-free zones (Christianity lite, as one Catholic friend remarked) and we don't salute any flag. My vigilant readers, on the other hand, have repeatedly informed me that many of them believe that the symbol and the ideal it represents are the same thing. Draw a picture with Jesus in it and you have drawn Jesus the man. Draw a burning flag and you have burned America. There is no distance, no separation, and no forgiveness for a cartoonist who casually messes with that reality.

The Quaker belief in consensus is of no help whatsoever to a cartoonist. In Quaker meeting, people meet in silence and try to lay themselves open to knowing God's will. When someone rises to speak, it is to express an idea or insight that he or she feels has come from the divine. Before a group of Quakers runs off and does something stupid in God's name, however, the person with the insight must convince the rest of the meeting members that her insight is not just a voice of madness. Quakers are not easily convinced. It took some 60 years from the time the first abolitionist message was given at Germantown Friends Meeting in Philadelphia before that meeting issued its proclamation against slavery in 1788. Shameful, unless one remembers that Ralph Reed only this year figured out the wording of *his* deeply Christian, anti-racism proclamation.

As opposed to a meeting for worship, a cartoonist sits in silence waiting to know the Cartooning God's will. What follows is often a struggle of false starts and half-baked ideas. Occasionally (more often for certain of my more



gifted colleagues) a visual idea appears that perfectly illuminates a strong point of view. At that instant there is no thought of consensus. It must be drawn. The best cartoons seem to flow directly from mind to paper. Bringing the cartoon to a committee would not be constructive.

Even editors who like to control the art on their pages must soon realize that their choice is either to run or kill a cartoon. Fiddling with it to "make it better" inevitably makes it more like most editorials, i.e., not worth publishing. While it is helpful to check my cosmic insights with a trusted colleague or two to make sure they see the same subtle yet effective point I intended to make, I am not open to group discussion. My cartoons don't run without commentary, however. Our letter writers stand ready to correct my heresies. My point of view on a given subject is neither the only nor the last on our pages.

Because of their belief that every person is capable of coming to know the will of the divine, early Quakers treated the Indians with respect, welcomed other faiths to worship freely in their colony, respected the ministry of women, and have long felt it is wrong to kill. (Pennsylvania was the original politically correct colony but made the mistake of never hanging teenage girls for witchcraft so it has been ignored by the historian class.) Quakers believe that to kill someone is to end the possibility that that person could know and do God's will. Had the Egyptians executed Moses for murdering an overseer, for example, the Bible

Old Fashioned Jew, Old Fashioned Reporter

BY ALAN J. BORSUK

would have been a lot more concise. While I generally share these beliefs, life has often intervened to oddly bend my views.

The case of Mumia abu Jamal, the former journalist and spokesman for the radical Philadelphia group Move who was convicted of murdering a policeman, is an example. While I firmly believe the state should not execute abu Jamal and have done cartoons attacking the sinister little judge who has overseen the case, I also firmly believe abu Jamal is guilty of the murder of Officer Daniel Faulkner and have done cartoons that say so. Those cartoons have been a source of comfort and support for Officer Daniel Faulkner's family and friends while pained pacifists have questioned how I could live with myself when a man's life is at stake.

The cartoonists I know don't talk often about their religions. Mostly, they don't even talk about their politics. They're too busy cutting down other cartoonists. But most editorial cartooning supposes some kind of moral and political framework. To satirize corruption and greed is, in effect, to defend honesty and generosity even if the cartoonist never expects to witness those virtues in real life. Few of my brethren would say that they are trying to do God's will, but it seems to me that each has some idea of what a better world, a more perfect union would look like. When a particular player on the public stage falls egregiously short of our ideals, it's time they saw themselves in a cartoon.

The little blank box we are given each day is our pulpit from whence we spouteth off. We commune silently with our readers. There are more powerful ministers, but our little sermons are the ones that get taped to computer terminals and stuck on refrigerator doors. And the best thing is, no one has to go to church to get them. ■

Perhaps I was too flip in my answer to a frequent question. People asked how the editors at The Milwaukee Journal dealt with the fact that I observe the Jewish Sabbath in its most traditional ways, which means, among other things, that I don't work on Friday nights or Saturdays. My standard answer was that it had never been a problem, but I'd find out for sure the day a plane landed nose first at the airport two hours before Friday sunset.

It was 3:21 p.m. on Friday, September 6, 1985, when a Midwest Express DC-9 crashed on take-off at Milwaukee Mitchell Airport, killing all 31 on board. It was 3 1/2 hours until the start of the Sabbath.

As soon as word got to the newsroom, an editor told me to get set to do rewrite on the main story. That was often my role on big stories; I was (and am) pretty decent at handling a lot of information coming at me.

I told him I was good until 6 o'clock. He didn't balk, nor did any of the editors above him.

In some ways, it was hard for me to pull out of such a big story—a major plane crash right here? My adrenaline and reporting style told me to work straight through the night, until the next afternoon's paper was done. And I'm sure it was harder for my bosses to accept my saying it. When duty calls like that, you aren't supposed to say no.

I wrote a story for our late afternoon edition (in fact, it won awards that year for deadline work). There were plenty of good people eager to sit down in my place when I left at 6. I called in after sundown on Saturday night, went back to work on the plane crash and stayed with it steadily, along with another reporter, for almost six months.

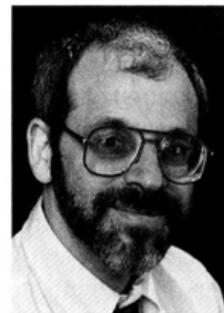
Every editor involved in that decision is gone from what is now The

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, but I am still appreciative for their acceptance and understanding. Every boss I have had since then has followed their example. That is one of the central reasons why I am still loyal to the newspaper.

For the first decade that I worked at the paper, I didn't adhere to the practices of Orthodox Judaism. It's a long story how and why my wife and I changed our ways, and it's not necessary to tell it here. But we are good examples of what is known in the American Jewish world as *baal teshuvahs*—a small but significant wave of people who have become Orthodox as adults.

I admit it's an odd thing for a newspaper reporter or editor to be, for many reasons.

While there are many Jews in the news business, someone who follows



Alan J. Borsuk has been a reporter, a columnist and an editor at The Milwaukee Journal and The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel since 1972. He was Editor of WISCONSIN, The Milwaukee Journal Magazine, from 1986 to 1994. He currently is a reporter, most recently focusing on education and corrections issues. He also was founding president of Yeshiva Elementary School of Milwaukee, which now has 170 students, and a founder of Torah Academy of Milwaukee, a girls high school with 20 students. He and his wife, Robi, have four children.

the traditional religious practices to the degree I do is close to unique. I'm doubtful many news organizations would knowingly welcome a person like me—too many schedule and assignment restrictions would probably be the cited reason—even though I think I provide a pretty good piece of evidence that things can be worked out well.

But my religious life does shape some of the important parts of how I do my job. In some cases, this means some constraints for my editors, colleagues and myself. I would argue, on the other hand, that in significant ways, the impact is beneficial.

Scheduling is the best example of the tangible aspects of working out religious/professional issues. Not working from roughly sundown Friday to sundown Saturday means I wouldn't be a good person to assign to the college football run since the action is almost always on Saturday afternoons. There are plenty of other examples.

Furthermore, I don't answer the phone on the Sabbath or major holidays, so I can't be reached by the copy desk for last minute questions on a piece for Sunday. My editors know that means we need to iron things out by Friday afternoon.

I don't do some other conventional things, like eating out (Milwaukee has only two kosher restaurants). So I'm not much on the lunch scene, either socially or professionally.

But these are practical matters that almost never cause genuine difficulty. If there are 26 hours in a week when I don't work, that leaves 142 when I'm willing to make the newspaper a priority, and at least 40 when I do my best for my newspaper.

The more interesting side to consider is the intangibles.

The worlds of Orthodox Judaism and newspapering have some very different philosophic premises. Journalism's cardinal tenet of laying out the facts and letting the chips fall where they may is definitely in conflict with Jewish tradition's strong emphasis on not saying things that unnecessarily harm others, even if they are true.

American media often relish the kind of tale-telling Jewish tradition prohibits. The neutral or accepting position that the news media take on a lot of social and lifestyle issues is very different from the strong stand Orthodox Judaism takes on many of the same issues. And the media are the principal avenue for letting torrents of information and thought into our homes and lives while, in my crowd, we work hard to insulate ourselves from the bulk of that torrent.

I have not fully resolved the dilemmas posed by being pulled in these opposing directions. But I do know that balancing my two very different worlds would become quite difficult if I allowed a lot of crossover from one to the other. While no reporter or editor leaves personality and philosophy at home when at work, there is a strong virtue to putting up barriers between the two. For me, that is more important than for most people because my two worlds are so different.

So I operate largely with a *mechitza*, to use the Hebrew term, a barrier. At work, I am a journalist. I try to do my job in a constructive, conscientious manner. I regard providing readers with fair, solid and useful information in a literate manner as a public service. I try to stay away from stories that are gossipy or tabloidy and I prefer to work on pieces that are issue oriented. All of these things are in line with both my professional and religious standards.

In my newspaper role, I absolutely don't proselytize. I hardly talk about my personal involvements with most of my colleagues. I don't even wear a head covering (*yarmulke* or *kippa*) at work, although I do everywhere else. With a few exceptions, I don't get involved in coverage of Jewish issues. (Although this sounds easy, it's not. For one thing, from both within the newspaper and from the Jewish community, people often ask me to help or advise on news coverage. I walk a line between being uncooperative and not wanting to get into a conflict of interest. Even if I was completely unaware in advance of something appearing in the paper about anything Orthodox-related in town, some people assume I was behind it.)

I firmly do not want to be treated as the house Jew and internal representative for Jewish interests. On the other hand, there are times when I feel compelled to speak up, at least within our ranks. Earlier this year The Los Angeles Times carried a story, played prominently in many papers, including mine, about a small and uninfluential group of Orthodox rabbis who had made offensive remarks about Conservative and Reform Jews. I made it clear to my bosses what I thought of us and much of the news media engaging in superficial, useless conflict building.

The other side of the *mechitza* is that outside of work, I am very actively involved in the Jewish community of which I am part. A prime example: My wife and I have been key players in the creation of two schools, each of them occasionally controversial and newsworthy. I do accept some restraints due to my job. I stay out of political matters, for example, and I am circumspect about even casual conversations with friends about subjects such as Mideast politics. But I feel I am entitled to my private life, and it's one heavily colored by my Jewish involvements.

There is seepage from my personal religious world into how I do my job; I argue that it is, on balance, to the benefit of my professional performance. In order to justify my work in religious terms in my own mind, it needs to meet what I hope are pretty high standards. I think I do more meticulous work than I used to do. In indirect ways, my religious involvement has motivated me to write better, I think. And I work harder.

I have never refused to do a story on the grounds that its content conflicts with my religious values. On the other hand, there is a religious component to my thinking about some stories I'd sure prefer to stay away from.

There are unresolved dilemmas for me. In chronological order, I was a journalist before I was an Orthodox Jew. If my Jewish involvement had come first, I doubt I would have gone into secular journalism. But this is what I am, and this is how I support my family. Besides, I still like it. It may be paradoxical.

A Cultural Jew Finds Tradition an Aid

By Elinor J. Brecher

I am not a particularly religious person, if “religious” is defined by observance of ritual, adherence to dogma and belief in theology. I curse more than I pray, forego services more than I attend, and put more energy into feeling guilty about my lapses than into remedying them. Yet there is no doubt that my upbringing in a religiously observant family defines who I am, just as it defines millions of American Jews whose ties to the ancient faith and its way of life are less spiritual than cultural.

Tradition—marking Passover, the High Holy Days, Hanukkah and the rites of life passage in the ways prescribed by edicts thousands of years old—offers context and comfort, no matter how conflicted the search for God.

I may not keep a kosher home, as my parents do, but I know why keeping kosher is more than some anachronistic throwback to the days before refrigeration. I may not speak Yiddish, but I’ve heard it all my life and can interpret from context much of what I hear. I may not be a Holocaust survivor or share the uniquely complex experiences of the children of survivors—but I was raised to understand the implications of the Holocaust for all Jews. I may not live in Israel, but I know what its continued existence represents to world Jewry.

I’m fortunate to work in a part of the country with a large Jewish population, heavy on retirees and Holocaust survivors, so there’s never a dearth of material or sources. My stories range from decoding the intricacies of the dietary laws or analyzing the meaning of forgiveness during Yom Kippur to the Holocaust survivors suing the Swiss banks to recover family assets seized by the Nazis. I accompanied a Bergen-Belsen survivor to the death camp where she nearly died as part of a series on ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of WWII’s end.

Profiles of people who happen to be Jewish—whether a bank president, a radio talk-show host, a lawyer couple suing the tobacco industry or a retired high school teacher who donated \$2 million to the University of Miami—were richer because I shared experiences, a world view and a common background with the subjects. And common backgrounds can lead to uncommon lines of inquiry. Or a book.

At the end of 1993, I saw “Schindler’s List” for the first time, in a Miami Beach theater filled with Holocaust survivors. Their reactions to

scenes of the Krakow ghetto and the Plaszow concentration camp fascinated me as much as the film. I was compelled to find several Schindler survivors and write about them. It became clear almost immediately that Steven Spielberg’s film about a heroic Nazi war profiteer and the doomed Jews he saved would cause a sensation and had the potential to profoundly influence the way non-Jewish Americans thought about the Holocaust. Suddenly, the country was transfixed by a subject that few had wanted to talk about—or listen to—for a half-century. Suddenly, survivors who expected that their horrific stories would follow them, silently, to the grave, were willing and even eager to unburden themselves.

I wrote several short profiles of local Schindler’s List survivors for *The Miami Herald*, a package that evolved into the book “Schindler’s Legacy: True Stories of the List Survivors.” Nearly all of the three dozen Polish Jews interviewed for the book asked me the same question: “Your parents, they are survivors? Your grandparents? No? Then why are you writing this book? Why are you interested?”

Had I not been Jewish, and thus able to reassure these understandably suspicious, fearful people of my intentions—had we not been able to converse in the kind of cultural shorthand that members of a homogeneous group use—the project never would have succeeded.

Which brings the discussion full circle: because of the book, I’ve been asked to speak at dozens of synagogues, nonprofit-agency functions, book fairs and schools—junior high through college level—which in turn has expanded my universe of sources for newspaper stories about Judaism. ■



Elinor J. Brecher, a 1988 Nieman Fellow, has been a feature writer for The Miami Herald since 1989. For the preceding 12 years she wrote for The Louisville Courier-Journal.

cal, but I am both an old fashioned kind of Jew and an old fashioned kind of newspaper person.

Several years ago, I went to Princeton to interview George F. Kennan, the legendary American diplomatic thinker, for *The Milwaukee Journal's* Sunday magazine. From Princeton, I drove to Lakewood, N.J., home of the world’s largest yeshiva, a center for advanced study in traditional Jewish knowledge.

In tangible terms, Princeton to Lakewood is an uncolorful 50-mile trip. In intangible terms, it is a trip from a mountain top in one world to a mountain top in another. Each regards itself as existing at the height of the pursuit of wisdom and morality—but each is almost invisible to the other.

Milwaukee is neither Lakewood nor Princeton. But the gap between the culture that venerates Princeton and the culture that venerates Lakewood exists even here. I make a trip across it every time I travel between my neighborhood and the newsroom. I am comfortable making that trip.

Going in either direction, few people are comfortable with that trip. My experience supports the view that newsrooms are not a good place to look for people who are devout. From my perspective, that shows up fairly often in stories that treat the “ultra-Orthodox” (a term I hate) as quaint curiosities or extremists. Too often, these stories are not well grounded.

On some occasions, I am able to provide some grounding for my newspaper when such stories occur. On a more general front and in a more valuable way, my presence means that there is some stripe in our internal culture that runs closer to groups of people—including some non-Jewish faith communities—who otherwise wouldn’t have much presence. These are not roles I relish. But I hope my involvement is constructive.

I wear an unusual pair of hats in my life. As long as I continue to feel that’s what I’m doing in my work as a journalist—something constructive—I intend to keep wearing them both. I intend to wear them carefully, conscientiously, almost always only one at a time. And with my head held up. ■

A Seminarian Becomes a Reporter

BY CHRIS HEDGES

SARAJEVO

My father, a Presbyterian minister, had five small parishes in the Schoharie Valley in upstate New York. As a boy I got up early and drove with my Dad, his black robe laid out carefully on the back seat, from one white clapboard church to another. You could nod off for the second half of the sermon and have a couple more opportunities to catch it before the morning was out.

One does not come out of such a background, even the rather effete intellectualism of liberal Presbyterianism, untouched. And it seemed, despite my early love of reporting, that I should follow my father into the ministry. I was one course short of a religion major at college and I went on after graduation to Harvard Divinity School. By the time it was all over I had finished five years of theological studies and countless sessions of Sunday school, church suppers and Sunday services.

But, upon graduation, I did not get ordained, opting for the precarious existence of a freelance reporter during the war in El Salvador. I was unable to staunch a mounting distaste for the institutional church. I found myself unable to blindly accept basic Christian precepts, such as the divinity of Christ. I also came to loath the personal pietism within the church that often serves as a substitute for the struggle for social justice.

In most cases I have found religion, as defined by many of the overtly religious, to be an impediment to the understanding and honesty that is the bedrock of all good reporting, indeed all honest intellectual thought. Any kind of dogma, including religious dogma, is a hindrance to our work.

I have severed nearly all ties with the institutional church since leaving seminary. But my religious upbringing in-

forms my reporting. It is the prism by which I define my life.

The bridge from seminary to the world of reporting was erected by Robert Cox. I spent numerous afternoons during my second year in seminary with Mr. Cox, then a Fellow at the Nieman Foundation, and the Editor-in-Chief of The Buenos Aires Herald during the dirty war in Argentina. While nearly everyone in Argentina kept silent as scores of people were whisked away by the death squads he printed the lists of the missing on the front page of his paper. Death threats poured into his office. He was briefly imprisoned, hauled to his cell past a huge Nazi flag hung on the wall, and eventually had to flee the country.

How could an aspiring reporter, especially one down the street at the divinity school, not be awed by his example? Here, I thought, was a life worth living. It was his example that

drove me to Latin America and helped reconcile the secular trade of reporting with the calling of the Christian ministry, with the goal of living the "moral life."

Throughout my 15 years overseas I have repeatedly had problems with the stance of religious groups. Religious communities have produced great figures, such as the Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero, but most religious leaders, from Argentina to Bosnia, have neglected the moral imperatives of their faith. And reporting on religious institutions, especially being grounded in liberal theology, has only soured my view of those who direct the faithful.

In Central America I was disturbed by the leftist church people, some of whom I knew from seminary, who flocked to the Sandinistas as well as the evangelicals who supported rightist dictators such as Guatemala's Rios Mont.

The two groups trumpeted the



Chris Hedges, 40, is the Balkan Bureau Chief for The New York Times. He has been a foreign correspondent in Latin America, the Middle East and Europe for 15 years. He has a Master of Divinity from Harvard University and a B.A. in English Literature from Colgate University. He has worked for The New York Times since 1990. He speaks Spanish, Arabic and French. This picture was taken in the Croatian city of Split. It is a tradition in the city to rub the toe of Saint Duje, the patron saint of the city, for good luck.

abuses committed against those they supported and ignored the violations committed by the groups they backed. The tacit belief these groups shared, that the Gospel could be served by an armed movement, was naive, at best. And many of them had a bizarre, and often barely hidden, love of power, especially military power. I was to see this again when American Jews visited Israel to endorse the bashing being meted out by the Israeli army to the Palestinians.

"A religion which capitulates to the prejudices of a contemporary age is not very superior to a religion which remains enslaved to the partial and relative insights of an age already dead," Reinhold Niebuhr wrote.

In the Middle East the Islamic fundamentalists, who have inflicted a terrible perversion on the rich and textured religion of Islam, used the worst clichés to justify bombings and slaughter of innocents. And in the Balkans the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church in Croatia have become nationalist churches. Most of the religious leaders here willingly fueled the racist tensions that led to the Balkan war. And Sarajevo's mosques, as if to catch up, increasingly promote a virulent brand of Islamic nationalism.

The fact that I come from a religious background makes it harder for me to report dispassionately about the terrible moral failings of institutions that have been charged with being prophetic. And any story I write on a religious body must usually sit and cool for a day so I can go back and tone it down. In some ways I think I am one of the reporters least equipped to report on religious institutions. I carry to the story too much baggage and I rage inwardly to see the church, the mosque or the synagogue enslaved to Caesar.

But I remain, despite my alienation, a reporter who has been trained as a minister. I search out the small, personal tragedies, triumphs and struggles that often go unnoticed in conflicts, the kinds of stories that consumed my father's life in the parish.

The last phone call home of a young soldier in the Persian Gulf war to his

wife or the emotional struggle by a Serb father to dig up the coffin of his son before fleeing a suburb of Sarajevo to be turned over to the Muslims capture, for me, the pathos of war.

It is not necessary to get a theological education to report in this manner, but at least the two professions do not seem to be in conflict.

But there are dilemmas and the biggest is my decision to place myself in war zones.

Driving over Mt. Igman into the besieged city of Sarajevo may be professionally laudable, but is it morally correct for a father with two young children? Is the story in Bosnia, where reporters traveled in armored jeeps and strapped on 26 pounds of body armor every morning, worth the 45 lives lost there?

These questions are not unique to a former divinity student. Most war correspondents struggle with them. I do not know many who have successfully resolved the dilemma, unless they have decided against covering war. All of us are haunted by the deaths of those we worked with over the years, especially those who left children behind. And all of us come back to our hotel rooms at times knowing we have been foolhardy.

In seminary we spoke of vocations, of calls. I am not so presumptuous anymore. I do this by choice and I am torn apart by it, believing that it is not worth the risk, but taking the risk anyway.

The most dangerous failing we have, once in the midst of these passionate and bitter conflicts, is being seduced by a cause.

Most reporters eventually learn that the only thing worth caring about is the plight of the poor souls trapped in the middle of the crushing maw of violence. Political groups, even those in the opposition or under siege, are quite content to lie and manipulate people and facts to ensure their own power and survival. And reporters, like priests, who identify with these groups swiftly lose their independence, their credibility and their voice.

What stuns me is how persistent a problem it remains. I have seen reporters, burned by political groups in the

past, latch on to new groups in different conflicts until disillusionment sets in again. And much of my own resistance, I believe, comes from years of studying Christian ethics.

Most of the risks we take and stories we write, when we look back, accomplish little. Perhaps the collective weight of our reporting, as with the Kurds in northern Iraq or the Muslims in Bosnia, prods a lethargic world to act. But most of the time, when it is all done, we don't have much to show for our efforts. This is how it should be. What defines our work and our life should always be the struggle to report fairly and honestly. The result is irrelevant.

But there are moments, however rare, when a report we make manages to do a little bit of good. And this compensates for all the other disappointments and failures.

When I was covering the war in El Salvador in 1984 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was delivering aid to peasants living in areas caught up in the fighting. The ICRC had to inform the Salvadorean military a week in advance before being allowed to make such deliveries.

The Salvadoran military, however, made little distinction between the rebels and their civilian supporters. It was not enthusiastic about such deliveries. The military, on the day of such trips, started to block the convoys, announcing that there was fighting ahead and turning the trucks back. Meanwhile Salvadorean troops were surrounding the unarmed peasants and gunning them down.

The only way to confirm this story was to cross the lines and get to the peasants on the day of a delivery. I went by boat and then by foot with a guide. It was frightening. The killing was horrific. But Washington, after the story came out, waded in to put a stop to the slaughter. As far as I know it never happened again, although it did not put a stop to the killing of unarmed civilians.

It was a small triumph in a very bloody war. But most reporters who have covered such conflicts carry deep within them such memories, memories

Having Fun Doing God's Work

BY FRANK ELEAZER

I was born into the Methodist Church, and by age six was asking questions to which the available answers weren't then, and 74 years later still aren't, wholly persuasive. My father had asked the same questions and had resolved them to his satisfaction, centering his life on good works and the church. Though he never gave up hope for my seeing the light, he accepted me for what he once had been, and inevitably I became, an inquiring newspaperman.

From four decades as a reporter in Georgia, Florida, Virginia and finally— for most of my working life—Washington, I concluded that nobody has all the answers, about God or anything else; that there is another side on most every issue; and that nobody I've known in public office, from station house to White House, was either all good or all bad. Even Richard Nixon may have been a fond father.

The Christian Coalition wasn't around in my day, but I wouldn't have liked (and don't now) its pious certainty and eagerness to impose it on others. But for United Press International at the House of Representatives I covered fairly, and so fully some of my news competitors yowled, earlier evangelicals' attempts to write school prayer into the Constitution. Nobody could agree then, or now, on acceptable language.

One key lawmaker in this running fight (as well as in passage of landmark civil rights legislation on which I also reported) joked to me once that self-righteous bluster on the prayer issue made him say "Thank God I'm an atheist." He wasn't, of course. He was a believer. But he believed even more firmly in the constitutional right to accept God or not. I did, too, and still do.

As an early-day battler against racial and economic injustice, my dad was a Christian if I ever knew one, sometimes

to what I viewed as excess. Years ahead of the lung cancer scare he surrendered his farm's tobacco allotment. And at age 90, when advised by his doctor to sip a little wine before dinner, he refused lest he "fall into the habit" he had seen devastating others.

At 80 I regret not having matched, or even approached, my father's courage, dedication and lifetime accomplishment. But to the extent that the free, fair flow of information contributes to solution of racial, social and other temporal problems, maybe I can plead guilty to having done at least some of God's work.

Besides that, hey! Hasn't it all been fun? ■



In his youth Robert B. Eleazer, Frank's father, worked as a reporter for The Clarksville, Tenn., Leaf-Chronicle and The Rocky Mountain News in Denver. For eight years he was Editor of The Missionary Voice, Southern Methodism's monthly magazine in Nashville. For 20 years he was Education Director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (predecessor of the Southern Regional Council) in Atlanta. Frank, after Emory and Columbia, worked for The Macon Telegraph, The Richmond Times-Dispatch, the Army and then 29 years for United Press and UPI before joining The St. Petersburg Times as an editorial writer.

that allow us to define our worth, if not to the world, then at least to ourselves.

The intrusiveness of reporters is, of course, not always the correct and proper response to human tragedy. And it is this intrusiveness that has most often made a mockery of my pastoral training.

I covered the excavations of a primary school in Mexico City the day after the earthquake. Amid the rubble could be heard the weak and forlorn cries of small children. Parents, wracked by grief and anguish, gathered around the roped-off remains of the building.

I interviewed the parents, nearly all of whom would never see their children alive, but I hated doing it. It is not what I would have done had I been ordained. It was one of the few times I considered quitting. And when I was doing the interviews I was haunted by a brief exchange I had as an adolescent with my father. I asked him what he said to people when he went to their homes after the death of a family member.

"Not much," he said. "Mostly I just make the coffee."

What I did that afternoon seemed a betrayal of everything I had learned about compassion and grief.

There are assignments now, such as the one in Mexico City, I would not take, or at least would handle differently. There are huge swathes of journalism that hold no interest for me. I do not want to go to Washington, for example, and cover politics. I have no affinity with the rich and powerful. I care most about church gossip, about the travails of the local congregation. I remain, I suppose, deep in my heart and despite what I think of the church, a parish minister. ■

Calvin's Hot Breath

"Coming from an old 'Blue Stocking' Presbyterian family which, in my grandmother's time, allowed no cooking on Sundays, except breakfast coffee, I always have had an immense interest in things religious. The hot breath of Calvin always is on my neck, and remorse and sorrow, hot and cold flashes of 'conscience' follow my every dereliction."—*Ralph McGill, in Ralph McGill, Reporter,* by Harold H. Martin.

A Reporter Becomes a Seminarian

BY JAMES RICHARDSON

As I write this, I have just voluntarily given up my job as a reporter at The Sacramento Bee and left the profession of journalism that nurtured me for 21 years. This fall, I will enter a seminary to become an Episcopal priest.

Let me explain how I got here, and offer a few observations about the role of religion in my life as a reporter and, more broadly, about religion—and sometimes the ignorance of it—in our newsrooms.

I have been an Episcopalian all of my life, although like many of my generation I grew disenchanted with the smugness and complacency of organized religion during the Vietnam War, and I fell away from church in my early 20's. Paradoxically, I knew as a teenager that I would be a priest in the second half of my life. It is a feeling that never really left me although I tried very hard to push it away.

Here is where journalism enters the picture:

Beginning in my 20's, journalism was very much a religious calling for me; newspaper reporting has been something more than just producing newspapers. Beginning with The Riverside Press-Enterprise in Southern California as a cops and courts reporter, journalism enabled me to see the world's grimy and cruel underside. I am now convinced that God wanted me to experience the world that way and to see it from outside the Church. I moved on to other newspapers, and I have been a political reporter for 12 years, ending my daily newspaper career at The Sacramento Bee. For me, writing newspaper stories is part of doing God's work.

In my mid-30's I returned to the Episcopal Church, joining a forward-looking congregation in Sacramento,

Trinity Cathedral Church, led by a dynamic priest, Donald Brown.

In my early 40's, my calling to be a priest came back in a big way; I could no longer push it away, and I began exploring it seriously about five years ago. This fall, my bishop has given me the nod to enter the Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley. If all goes well, in three years I will graduate, and a year after that, I will be ordained.

After 21 years, I still believe the central mission of journalism is to "afflict the comfortable, and comfort the afflicted." At its most basic level, journalism—something like religion—is a search for truth however painful that truth may be. Newsrooms are full of journalists still dedicated to that principal even if some do not articulate it quite that way. The corporate edicts for bigger profits can stifle and frustrate



Jim Richardson (the man with the beard) with his teenage work team at the Sierra Service project, summer 1996, Pit River Tribe, Modoc County, California. Students from several churches of various denominations join each summer to repair houses for Native Americans in the West. Richardson and his wife, Lori, have gone on the project for four summers. James Richardson is a fourth generation Californian. His great-great grandfather went to California shortly after the Civil War to found a Methodist mission. A graduate of UCLA, Richardson has worked for The Riverside Press-Enterprise, The San Diego Union and The Sacramento Bee, where he specialized in legislative and political affairs, particularly coverage of political ethics issues. His book, "Willie Brown: A Biography," about the mayor of San Francisco, was published in October 1996 by the University of California Press. Lori Korleski Richardson is a features editor at The Bee.

that mission, but only so far. As long as there are *journalists* in newsrooms, the higher purpose of journalism will prevail.

So far, I have phrased all of this in religious terms. Viewing journalism as God's calling can be a slippery slope to fanaticism, intolerance and the propaganda that goes with it. I write all of this warily.

Journalism in many respects is a most secular of professions and, when done well, demands a rigorous, scientific method that requires sticking to the facts. But if my religious faith is secure, why should that test be of any threat? My religious beliefs are essentially ecumenical; I believe there are many ways of knowing God and doing God's work. The Episcopal Church does not have a monopoly on truth or an exclusive franchise on God. Journalism, with its front row seat on the world and its panoply of faiths, serves to underscore that understanding for me.

Do I set aside my religious beliefs on the job? To be honest, not really—how could that be possible? They are part of who I am and why I am doing this.

However, my reporting is not overtly religious in its tone or method. Indeed, my approach to the nuts-and-bolts of reporting and writing is sometimes brutally secular. And I still like to go to Benny's for a beer after work, and I still cuss like, well, a reporter. Few of my colleagues could tell I was a "religious person" at all during my years as a reporter, which was why it was a surprise to some when I announced I was leaving to become a priest. If anything, journalism has forced me to live something of a double life.

My religious beliefs probably shade the kinds of stories that interest me. But so-called "religious" stories and the "religion beat" have never interested me. It would be hugely unfair and unethical for me to write a story about the Episcopal Church for my newspaper. I am too close, too inside.

I can think of only one story in 21 years that I would consider "religious"—a story I did about twin brothers separated as toddlers who, when finally

reunited in their 40's, found their Jewish faith renewed and strengthened. Writing about them was hugely moving for me, and gave me renewed strength in my own religious life. At 118 inches, it was the longest story of my career.

Mostly, however, the stories that have always interested me are about the political, governmental and educational systems—those very human institutions that are supposed to serve all of God's people (especially those who do not particularly feel like God's chosen people). That sense of calling kept me from complacency.

In my experience, the issues of being both a religious person and a journalist are more mundane—and more institutionally entrenched—than the issues of story selection and ethics.

First, there is a practical problem: newspapers are insatiable beasts and require us to fly off at a moment's notice or work late doing write-throughs until the last edition. It is difficult to work at a newspaper and be reliably active in a church or any other civic organization for that matter. I have served on my parish vestry (board of directors) and as senior warden (chairman), but my attendance was not sterling.

Frankly, being fully a part of a religious community requires letting go of some careerism and giving up some creature comforts (Jesus never promised this was easy stuff). My wife, Lori, and I have used vacation time to take our church's teenage youth group on a project to repair houses on Indian reservations for four summers. I would not have traded any of those experiences for a beach in Hawaii.

More subtly, there is an ethos in American newsrooms against joining anything, much less a religious organization. I once had a managing editor at another newspaper who did not believe in voting because he thought that would impinge on his journalistic objectivity. Religion was simply off the radar screen.

We eschew being participants with good reason, but the difficulty with being such a purist (aside from the fact

that we live in this world with everyone else) is that we detach ourselves from our communities. We become less sensitive to what is important to our readers. How many newspaper cocktail parties have you been to where the only topic of conversation was the newspaper? I was invited to a reception by Time magazine editors on their recent Highway 50 trek across the country that ended in Sacramento. Truthfully, all they seemed really interested in talking about was Time magazine. That sort of insularity makes us poor journalists. It also cuts us off from a tremendous wealth of sources. Some of my best news stories came from tips from my friends at Trinity Cathedral.

Our insularity as journalists also has led us to trivialize the importance—the *power*—of religious belief in the lives of our readers. We send our best reporters to city councils, school districts, the Legislature, the Public Utility Commission, and the rock 'n' roll beat (all with tremendous power over our lives), but how many newspapers devote reporting and editing oomph to covering religion and ethical issues? My former employer, The Bee, devotes talented reporters and senior editors to the specialty but it is an exception among most newspapers other than the largest metropolitan dailies.

Journalism's lack of care about religion shows. And our readers notice.

Newspapers and magazines take extra care to get the titles and nomenclature right when writing about government, police departments, courts, sports and business. But journalists are exceedingly careless—bordering on contemptuous—when writing about religion. We get the titles wrong, the denominational terms wrong. We use minister interchangeably with priest, pastor and reverend when those words have very specific meanings. More than just Roman Catholics have bishops, priests, nuns and monks, but you wouldn't know it by reading some of our newspapers. We wouldn't dream of getting the title wrong on a judge or politician, but we are cavalier about the clergy.

Our ombudsman, usually a stickler for language, recently referred to a congressional candidate as a "Christian minister." Just what was he talking about? The term was used so loosely it meant nothing. We habitually use religious words that are important to our readers, but we show them little respect by not using those words properly.

At worst, American newsrooms have an anti-religious undercurrent. That is not to say there aren't religious people in newsrooms, but often they feel they must stay underground or be taken as some kind of a kook. One of the most revealing experiences I had after announcing I was going to seminary was when several colleagues told me they go to church, too. The Bee is full of religious people—including the executive editor. The Bee is a generally friendly place to the idea of being religious; my colleagues include practicing Christians, Jews, Muslims and Buddhists. But the ethos of journalism somehow makes people feel they will be taken as lightweights and marginalized if they are too public about it. Sometimes I feel our newsrooms need chaplains at least as much as they need Guild shop stewards (who sometimes feel they are doing chaplain duty).

Paradoxically (we Episcopalians seem to like paradoxes), journalism is intimidated by religion, and particularly cowed by religious people on the right with political agendas (Pat Robertson, Ralph Reed, Jerry Fallwell). The reason may have something to do with the biblical illiteracy of journalists, which mirrors our modern society at large.

With little independent knowledge of the Bible, journalists have let the political/religious right dominate the public discussion of the Bible, giving those voices almost complete authority on all things biblical. Giving the religious right a near-monopoly in our public discourse on the Bible is bad journalism and a disservice to our readers. There are others with more moderate and—dare I say?—liberal views about the Bible. But those voices are rarely reflected in the pages of our

newspapers, much less on television.

This is not some debate about how many angels fit on the head of a pin, but a dialogue that goes to the crux of the left-right conflict throughout most of American history. Journalists cannot fully inform their readers about our political debate if they do not themselves understand at least some of the religious debate.

There are theologians and Christian and Jewish leaders today with viewpoints about abortion, gays, feminism and economic justice who are radically at odds with the views of Ralph Reed. But Harvard's Peter Gomes, minister in The Memorial Church, is rarely offered by journalists as a counterpoint to the right although he has a best-selling book about the Bible.

Journalism's lack of care about religion leads us, I believe, to something more insidious than just messing up titles and writing incomplete stories. Journalism's trivializing of religion leads to a level of cynicism that corrupts the core purposes of journalism. By cynicism, I do not mean the hard-edged skepticism and sharp humor which I relish; I mean an attitude that not much can change for the better, so as journalists we should always try to be "realists."

I encountered that kind of cynicism with those Time magazine editors on their Highway 50 project. As part of their discovery of the rest of us, Time held a series of "town hall" meetings on various issues across the country, and I was a panelist in Sacramento on the issue of affirmative action. In the discussion beforehand, I ventured that the debate over affirmative action masked a deeper issue on improving our schools, particularly those serving our poorest citizens. My observation was met not with disagreement by a Time editor, but with the cynical view that the schools will never be fixed so why bother with talking about it.

If journalists do not ask the big questions and widen the debate beyond the supposedly "realistic," who will? It's still God's work. ■

Russell Shorto Jesus in Myth, Jesus in History



PHOTO BY RANDI BARRIS

I am not a biblical scholar but a writer who grew up Catholic, attended Catholic schools until the fourth grade, and did a stint as an altar boy before leaving the church in my teens. Although I never returned to organized religion, my early religious experience has stayed with me, whether I like it or not. Historical Jesus work first caught my attention because of its coolly rational perspective. Here, I thought, was a group of intelligent people taking a hard, critical look at a story that is usually approached with pie-eyed piety. Maybe they would cut through the cant and locate the "real" story: maybe they would finally kill Jesus for me.

Of course, they didn't. As I immersed myself in the subject, I realized that many of these people were ministers or priests as well as authorities in ancient history. Far from trying to undo Christianity, many of them were working toward a new definition of it. They were hoping to make a set of very ancient beliefs digestible to a modern mind so that the seeds of wisdom locked within them could take root. To their way of thinking, they were attempting to save Christianity from the choking clutch of literalness.

This aspect of the work is what seems to account for the remarkable popular interest in the topic. Dense, jargon-packed scholarly books on the subject make bestseller lists. When experts appear on radio call-in shows the phones light up. There are ministers of all denominations who say they have felt a burden lifted from their shoulders by this approach to the gospels, and they are suddenly offering their congregations an entirely new Jesus. ■—Russell Shorto in "Gospel Truth." Riverhead Books. 1997.

Seeing Beyond Politics

BY GWEN IFILL

I was speaking to a colleague and friend on the telephone the other night about a particularly appealing set of career choices he was facing. He had called me for advice, in part because he was contemplating a switch I had made—from print to broadcast journalism—only three years ago.

It was one of those conversations we all have in this business. We weighed the relative merits of the type of journalism he would be practicing, the potential benefit of leaving the newspaper for which he worked and the lucrative financial possibilities of television.

Then, quite naturally, our conversation shifted gears. We talked about what God had in mind for his career. He said that he had been praying about the decision and that he kept returning to the notion that he would just have to “step out on faith” to make this job change. He said he was convinced that, in the words of a popular James Cleveland gospel tune, the Lord “hadn’t brought him this far to leave him.”

We talked in this manner for some time, easily slipping Biblical references into our conversation and ending the conversation with promises to pray for each other. This was not an unusual conversation for me, but I suspect many would be shocked at the notion that two successful journalists might talk with each other in this fashion. More importantly, I’d guess that many of those in my profession and those who watch my profession for signs of evil liberal bias would be surprised to discover that any of us believe in anything at all.

But I do. I consider myself a committed Christian who believes that Jesus Christ is my Savior. And that conviction affects the way I do my job in the same way that everything else that I am does.

That doesn’t mean that I consider it my role to proselytize through my work

or to insert my religious views into my coverage. But it does mean that I bring a different sensibility to my job than many of my colleagues do.

I knew in a way that some other political journalist colleagues did not, for example, that it was a sign of respect to dress up and behave conservatively in the churches that we often visited while covering the Rev. Jesse Jackson’s 1988 presidential campaign. Having grown up in the church as the daughter of an African Methodist Episcopal minister, I knew the liturgy and the hymns. I found the traditions of the black church neither alien nor limiting.

And when I switched over to cover the Rev. Pat Robertson’s campaign that same year, I instantly saw the similarities between the two preachers who were running for President, while others saw only the political contrasts. Both men were bringing moral messages to voters who were hungry for them. Robertson and Jackson may have defined themselves as conservatives and liberals, but the people who came to see them largely did not. Robertson’s followers were mostly white; Jackson’s mostly black. But their politics were more alike than different.

As it happens, I am a black woman working in a profession that does not have many people like me working in visible positions. The word “diversity” seems to have acquired a sour taste for many managers, but I still believe in its importance. Perhaps I just define it more broadly. I believe that everybody brings their own life’s experience to the job. If I were a white male, I might have less appreciation for the arguments favoring affirmative action. If I had been raised in a cocoon of privilege, I might not be able to grasp how people end up relying on welfare.

That is why it is important for newsrooms to have people working there who represent a mix of beliefs and backgrounds. Our responsibility is not necessarily to be objective; it is to be fair.

When I covered the Department of Housing and Urban Development for *The Washington Post*, I daresay I was the only reporter on the beat who had ever lived in public housing. When I covered the 25th anniversary of the passage of Title 9, which was enacted to ensure gender equity, I saw the glass as half-empty. My male colleagues tended to see it as half-full.



Gwen Ifill is a national political correspondent for NBC News. Earlier she was a White House correspondent for The New York Times. She spent seven years at The Washington Post, where she covered the 1988 Presidential campaign and the 1989 scandal at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Ifill also worked for The Baltimore Evening Sun and The Boston Herald American, where she began her career. A native of New York, she is a graduate of Simmons College and was awarded an honorary doctorate of journalism from her alma mater in 1993. She appears frequently on “Meet the Press” and the “Today Show” on NBC, and “Washington Week in Review” on PBS.

Truth Without Darkness and Despair

BY KARLA VALLANCE

My religious convictions affect my work in much the same way. I notice that we don't do enough to capture the contribution that churches are making to keep the frayed public social service safety net from collapsing completely. I am capable of hearing the appeal that many find in the words of Minister Louis Farrakhan, when others cannot get past his inflammatory assessments of whites and Jews.

Bringing a set of beliefs to the job should enhance our work, not complicate it. When I cover abortion, I am more likely to see the shades of gray than the extremes on either side. When I listen to politicians talk about "family values," I am more likely to evaluate what they are saying in broader terms that transcend the politics of the moment.

But many of my colleagues bring the same sensibility to their work as I do. We often believe in different things. But in the newsrooms we inhabit, we are by and large not particularly overbearing or preachy about our beliefs. Yet, they are our undergirding.

What we believe and how we practice those beliefs allows us to do what so many journalists got into this business to do: make a confusing and confused world understandable. And then to take our own stab at exposing what's wrong and fixing it. ■

Early Agnostic

"Since my father was a free thinker, no religious instruction or attendance was ever required of me, though I was exposed early to Baptist and Methodist camp meetings, Negro and white. I occasionally went to church in Glasgow [Kentucky] according to the communion of the girl I happened to be with. Before my teens I found myself with no creed, the mere thought of a creed being totally unacceptable. I was an early agnostic and have remained that way."—*Arthur Krock, three-time Pulitzer Prize-winner and for more than 30 years Washington Correspondent of The New York Times, in "Memoirs." 1968.*

By the time I was 12, I knew I wanted to be in the news business. By the time I was 16, I knew the reason why: because being a reporter, being in news, was the closest thing I could find to telling the truth, at getting at the truth. That seemed to be at the very heart of journalism.

After 20 years in the business, I still find journalism at its best to be truth-telling. But my view of the news business now is part of a far broader panorama of truth and a deeper understanding of what truth is. I think every good newsman and woman brings to his or her work an honest desire to tell or uncover the truth. But truth-telling informed by Christian Science portrays the unvarnished reality of the human situation, yet refuses to leave the reader/listener/viewer at that point of darkness and despair. That kind of truth-telling investigates who is looking for answers to the problems and what those answers might be. Because there is a solution for every problem. And if an answer isn't obvious yet, someone somewhere is looking to find an answer. And that is a key part of any story.

Truth-telling informed by Christian Science also focuses much *less* on the surface evidence—the "face of the sky"—and much *more* on the "signs of the times," to take a riff from Jesus's statement in Matthew 16:3. That kind of truth-telling looks deeper at the thought trends, and puts human events into a deeper, richer brocade of meaning that can come from thought that gives credence to things of the Spirit. That kind of truth-telling doesn't get thrown by the evidence of the moment, although it also doesn't *ignore* the evidence.

Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, writes in her book, "Science & Health, With Key to the Scriptures": "Acquaintance with the Sci-

ence of being enables us to commune more largely with the divine Mind, to foresee and foretell events which concern the universal welfare, to be divinely inspired, yea, to reach the range of fetterless Mind."

She also writes, in that same book: "The term Science, properly understood, refers only to the laws of God and to His government of the universe, inclusive of man. From this it follows that business men and cultured scholars have found that Christian Science enhances their endurance and mental powers, enlarges their perception of character, gives them acuteness and comprehensiveness and an ability to exceed their ordinary capacity....It extends the atmosphere of thought, giving mortals access to broader and higher



Karla Vallance returned to Monitor Radio as Executive Producer in March 1996 after completing a six-year stint as a producer, editor, and writer for television's CNN and CNN International. Vallance began her career as a newspaper reporter, writing features and covering the North Shore for The Chicago Tribune. A graduate of Michigan State University, she also studied comparative political systems in the Pacific Rim, the Indian subcontinent, and Africa while traveling around the world on a ship through Chapman College's World Campus Afloat.

realms. It raises the thinker into his native air of insight and perspicacity.”

So for me, the goal of that insight and perspicacity is to truly get to the heart of things.

My own professional experience has been greatly colored by my faith. I can't yet say that I am so in daily tune with God that I am able yet to see the future, but I hope to be able to. And in the meantime, I do believe it has affected my work in marked and tangible ways. And I would say that my faith affected my performance as much at CNN as it has at The Christian Science Monitor and Monitor Radio.

It would have to. I believe that any newspaper or magazine article, or any television or radio broadcast, is a window into the soul of the person writing and producing it. Every quality, every shard of knowledge, wisdom, insight—and yes, bias—is, I believe, glaringly obvious. And since Christian Science, the laws of God and their operation, is such an integral part of who I am and how I see things, it affects every little thing I do. It informs every little thing I do.

For example, when writing or editing medical stories at CNN, I was always more careful than most to do what every good journalist should do: source my copy. If the story is about someone dying of a disease, the copy *must* say that “doctors believe [the disease] to be incurable” or some other proper qualifying phrase that makes it clear that this is what the medical community *believes*. It isn't necessarily so, because I believe as a Christian Scientist that no disease is incurable, because the root causes of disease are mental, so by changing one's thought, the body follows. Obviously, I won't go into that in a story, but I will carefully source medical comments about a disease and make it clear it is an opinion or a belief, not an unchangeable fact.

In doing a profile or an obituary, the focus is always on what the person contributed that makes a difference in the qualities that made the contribution possible, rather than on personality. For example, I wrote CNN's obit of

Katharine Hepburn, which of course has not run, since she is still with us. In that package script, I highlighted the qualities that made her, in the public's view, more of an independent thinker, her seeming fearlessness, especially of being different. That's what I believe sets Hepburn apart.

As the producer of a radio or TV program, I trust that the tone I set, and the stories I have us cover, tell what the reader/listener/viewer needs to know in order to not only be informed, but also to take action if s/he so chooses. I will not flinch from covering *anything*—but I will insist on covering it in a way that I feel is insightful and helpful. For example, we did a strong Monitor Radio segment on the right to die on the day that such a case was argued before the Supreme Court. Our producers had done everything right—almost. They had an overview piece explaining the issue and its relation to the case. We had a three-way between a show host, a proponent and an opponent of the Washington state law in question. And we had lined up commentary from a person who was ill and taking a stand for his own right to die. What we were clearly missing was the view of someone with the opposing view. So we got a healer (in this case, a spiritual healer, but it could have been someone from the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute or any one of thousands of committed medical healers). The healer commented on the importance of caregivers being totally committed to choosing life. That she would never want someone to give up on her, so she refuses to give up on anyone else. It brought a wonderful journalistic balance, plus insight from both sides of the right-to-die question.

So while I do not set aside my religious beliefs on the job—since those beliefs inform everything we do—I am quite careful to maintain rigorous journalistic standards of objectivity and fairness. At CNN, the fact that I was not raised with conventional medical thinking was the standard enabling me to bring a fresh perspective. For example, I was one of the few people who questioned the fact that the regular daily medical report at that time was spon-

sored by drug companies. I would bring a fresh view to almost any story. Not necessarily a rosy, optimistic view, but one informed by the preponderance of good over evil even when sometimes the opposite seems to be true.

My journalistic experience has never affected my religious belief in the long haul, but in the short-term, yes, it certainly can be challenging. It's easy to be sucked in, to be mesmerized by the evil. Especially in the TV business, where the hypnotic power of the video image—especially at CNN, a 24-hour news network—can be shown over and over and over again. It takes constant watchfulness *not* to be sucked in. I needed to take steps on that front particularly during live coverage—whether at CNN or on Monitor Radio—where the thrill of the news chase and the adrenaline rush of getting the story out *now* can be virtually addictive, whether it's covering the crash of Ron Brown's plane in Croatia or CNN's coverage of the Gulf War or a gunman taking over a schoolbus in Florida or a hurricane's aftermath. What Christian Science teaches about how not to be mesmerized by evil definitely helps me do better news by not getting sucked in.

I do believe religious belief can affect the choice of subjects to cover, i.e., I would not choose to cover, say, much of the JonBenet Ramsay story in Colorado. But *I would* cover that story from an angle such as how beauty pageants for little girls affect those children and the people around them. So again, it's more a matter of *how* the story is covered.

But my goal, in my daily professional life, is to be so clearly attuned spiritually that I will be able to help bring insight to what's going on in the world. And so maybe the reader/listener/viewer feels a little more at peace, or understands a little better. Or, best of all, has a little mental lightbulb flash on, and says, “Ah, *now* I get it. And, I hope, takes some action in his or her private or public life to make the world a little better place.

That would be truth-telling at its finest. ■

A Place for a Reporter to Be Faithful

BY MICHAEL WHITE

A moment comes to mind from the 1994 U.S. Senate race, when I covered Michael and Arianna Huffington's visit to a Pasadena preschool with their two children. Making small talk as the youngsters scampered around a playground, Mrs. Huffington asked if I had any children.

"Six," I replied.

Her eyes widened. "Are you Catholic?" she asked. "Your wife must be a saint."

In response to her second statement, yes, sometimes my wife shows signs of saintliness. As to the former, no, I am not Catholic. As I told Mrs. Huffington, I am Mormon, a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The episode with Mrs. Huffington was amusing. At other times, the confluence of religion and profession has been more challenging. For more than a decade as a newspaper and wire service reporter in Idaho and Utah, I wrote about the Mormon Church.

Religion is a touchy issue in Utah and Idaho. The Mormon Church and its members dominate the politics and culture of Utah—a fact of life that breeds resentment. In Idaho, the church has less influence, but there still exists an "us vs. them" mentality among members and non-members alike.

But the pressures exerted by religious constituencies on the journalist aren't much different than those brought to bear by chambers of commerce, political parties and other groups that have an uncompromising point of view. For the believer—the category in which I place myself squarely—writing about one's own religion presents a more difficult task. One must decide, apart from those outside pressures, where responsibility lies. Does faith obligate the journalist to shape a story

to help build the kingdom? Or is there a place within faith that allows objective, even critical, reporting?

I believe the latter, although doing it has never been a pleasant experience. Eventually, my discomfort with the task was a key factor in my decision to leave Utah and quit The Associated Press. I came back to the AP, but I don't think I would go back to Utah as a reporter. My efforts to be objective were not always appreciated.

"Michael White should change his name to Michael Yellow," one reader wrote in response to a story about an anti-Mormon group.

I mapped out a strategy for covering the church. When the church placed itself in the news, by taking a public stance on an issue, for instance, it was fair game to be covered as aggressively as any other institution. I was more reluctant about probing—pursuing—matters that weren't already in the news that might prove embarrassing.

An early effort involved a popular play that had been written by a Brigham Young University professor and performed on campus. The play, "Huebener," was the true story of a German teen-ager, a member of the church, who rebelled against the Nazis during World War II. Deciding the Nazis were evil, Helmuth Huebener and two friends secretly transcribed BBC broadcasts. They made copies of the transcripts and in the wee hours of morning, posted them in public places. They quickly were caught. Huebener was beheaded for treason and his friends were sent to concentration camps.

I wrote that some German church members who later immigrated to Utah felt the play cast them in a bad light because they didn't oppose the Nazis as well. As a result of their complaints, I

had been told, the author of the play quietly was told not to put it into production again after its initial run. Huebener's two accomplices, who had survived and also moved to Utah, said that as the play ran, anonymous callers accused them of being traitors.

My story came out several years later, when a theater group tried to perform "Huebener" and could not obtain rights to it. The story was used widely outside of Utah. It appeared in The Los Angeles Times and The New York Times, and received attention in Europe. A Times of London reporter came to town to match it.

My motives in writing the story weren't altogether pure. I knew that stories about the church, especially



Michael White covers business for The Associated Press in Los Angeles. Before his recent assignment to the business beat, White covered politics and urban affairs. He holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of Southern California and a bachelor's degree in communications from Brigham Young University.

controversial stories, tended to play well on the national wire. The believer in me recoiled at the prospect of casting the church and its members in a bad light. The reporter gloried in the attention and praise the story brought.

There were stories that had a positive effect on my spiritual life. Writing about the murder and forgery case of Mark Hofmann, a church member and former missionary, prompted me to study church history. Hofmann forged and sold to the church and private collectors a series of documents that appeared to have been written by early church figures, including Joseph Smith, who organized the church in 1830 and is considered a prophet by faithful Mormons. Hofmann murdered two people with pipe bombs in an attempt to avoid getting caught.

His motives appeared to be two-fold: to get rich and to rewrite church history. He nearly succeeded. Before he was unmasked, his forgeries prompted historians to re-examine the early history of the Mormon church.

In the large picture the episode was a terrible tragedy in which two innocent people died. In light of that, I hesitate to claim a positive result, but covering the story ultimately strengthened my faith in the church and its doctrines. Why?

Hofmann tried to present a history that cast doubt on Joseph Smith and his message. As I followed the story, the truth of the church's essential message of revelation and redemption remained clear and, for me, undeniable.

There are other good memories.

I did a story on Mormon services held for felons in the Utah state prison system and was invited back to speak one Sunday at a secured halfway house. It was a moving experience for me and my family.

Mormons are unique not because they profess faith, but because they have great ability to act upon it. When church members worldwide held a special fast and contributed millions of dollars to relieve the famine in Ethiopia and Sudan, I joined them, and covered the story with pride.

The influence of religion on stories not involving the church is more

subtle. Writing about such matters as immigration, racism and homelessness, I am reminded of the injunction, "This I command you, that ye love one another."

During a visit on my own time to Pakistan in 1986, I wrote several stories about Afghan refugees and spent some time with members of a fundamentalist Islamic political party, Jamiat Islami. I found that I admired them not only for their courage in resisting the Soviet Union, but for their devotion.

"For us religion is a burden, an obligation," said Mohammed Eshaq, a sophisticated man who spoke several languages and had traveled widely. "In the West, people are religious because it makes them happy.... You do everything because it makes you happy. You have such a different way of looking at things."

Working for the AP in Southern California doesn't require me to write about the church. I prefer it that way. But I still think from time to time about the potential conflict between professional responsibility and personal faith. I also think about how I would handle it if I were required to cover the church again. Perhaps the answer lies in Christ's answer when he was asked whether it was proper for Jews to pay taxes to Rome's secular government: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Even the faithful have obligations to the secular world.

Done properly, journalism is an essential thread that helps hold together the fabric of our increasingly pluralistic society. If by pursuing a personal point of view the believing reporter were to tear that fabric, contribute to contention, would he really be serving God? The public's faith in the journalist—and the politicians, the police, the bankers and others whose decisions influence our lives—lies in the notion that they do their jobs fairly.

It is legitimate for the believer to insist on unbiased treatment of religion in the newsroom. But he also has an obligation to be an objective messenger even when he personally dislikes the message. If he can't do this, he should step aside.

Another moment comes to mind. I

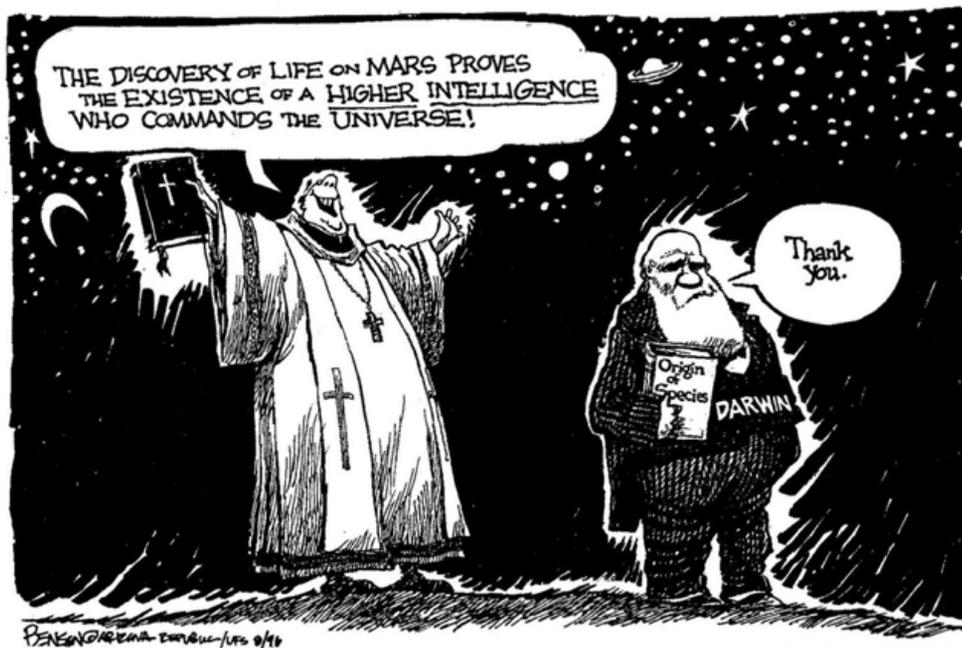
recently interviewed a Jesuit priest who has devoted his life to working with Hispanic gang members in a particularly violent neighborhood in Los Angeles's Boyle Heights area. For more than a decade he has tried to wean them from violence with stern and persistent love. I asked him how he measured success. His answer startled me. Success, he said, wasn't the point. You won't be successful as the world measures success, he said, "but you can be faithful here."

I thought about his answer as I drove home that night, asking myself if journalism was a place where I could be faithful. I believe it is. ■

Michael Drosnin The Bible Code



I'm not religious. I'm an investigative reporter. To me, the Bible code is information, not religion.—Michael Drosnin, in *"The Bible Code,"* the best-selling book that asserts that a hidden code in the Hebrew (Old) Testament predicted the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and many other events and warns of a nuclear world war in the next five years.



STEVE BENSON REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF UNITED FEATURE SYNDICATE, INC.

Good-bye to God

An Editorial Cartoonist's Journey From Jesus to Journalism—and Beyond

BY STEVE BENSON

How does one go from being a born-in-the-bed Mormon to a born-in-the-brain atheist? From a Latter-day Saint to a Latter-day Ain't? From a believer drowning in faith to a skeptic saved by the facts?

Point me to the confessional. I've come to journalism, not Jesus.

Today I can be found among the congregation of secular humanists. It's a significant change of scenery for someone who is the oldest grandchild of the Mormon church's late prophet, Ezra Taft Benson, and who, for most of his life, was a ramrod straight believer.

Going from defender to debunker was a baptism of fire. Luckily, treading the hot coals was made more bearable by my experiences in journalism, which helped burn away the entanglements of illusion, error and fear, leaving me with a clear view of the horizon ahead.

I came from a Mormon tradition that is sometimes referred to, for lack of a better term, as a cult. Even the coach of the Chicago Bulls called it that recently, in response to the National Basketball

Association's slapping of Dennis Rodman with a big fine for making unkind remarks about his Mormon hosts during the playoffs.

Having been a Mormon for some 30 years before seeing the light and leaving the lunacy four years ago, I can appreciate that perspective.

Look at an average group of Mormon followers, and what does one find? People who dress the same way down to the same underwear, follow the same leader, think the same thoughts, believe the same things, read the same books, obey the same commandments, vote the same way, fear the same enemies, oppose the same ideas, condemn the same people who don't think the same way, pay the same church, avoid the same movies, eat the same food, associate with the same people, marry the same kind, and give the same reasons for believing that God and Mormonism are one-in-the same.

Cult or not, if these folks worked for the same newspaper, it would be a pretty stale read. If for no other reason,

I should have left because it was boring.

To understand why I jumped from the Mormon wagon train requires an



Steve Benson, Editorial Cartoonist of The Arizona Republic, is syndicated by United Features. He won a Pulitzer Prize in 1993 and has been a finalist four other years. He has written four books: "Fencin' With Benson," "Evanly Days," "Back at the Barb-B-Que" and "Where Do You Draw the Line?" He is a 1973 graduate of the Art Instruction Schools in Minneapolis and a cum laude Bachelor of Arts recipient in political science from Brigham Young University.

understanding of what Mormons are and how they think.

While Mormons have some quaint, quirky and fanatical ideas, they really aren't much different from millions of poor, guilt-ridden souls who, throughout the march of human history, have hitched their hopes to mass movements of one sort or another. Eric Hoffer, in his brilliant treatise, "The True Believer," explains the attraction of joining a cause:

"A rising mass movement attracts and holds a following...by the refuge it offers from the anxieties, barrenness and meaninglessness of an individual existence. It cures the poignantly frustrated...by freeing them from their ineffectual selves—and it does this by enfolding and absorbing them into a closely knit and exultant corporate whole...."

"Of all the cults and philosophies that competed in the Graeco-Roman world, Christianity alone developed from its inception a compact organization."

Once I realized this, it wasn't much of a leap out of religion altogether once I flew the Mormon coop. I simply wanted to be free from organizational groupthink. I escaped from the stuffy attic of religion's "pray, pay and obey" mentality into journalism's open laboratory of "who, what, where, when and why."

Even as this is written, Mormonism's bicycle battalions of fresh-faced, uniformly dressed and highly organized missionaries are pedaling furiously through the neighborhoods of the world, peddling the notion that back in the 1800's God descended through the treetops and appeared to a 14-year-old New York farm boy/grade-school dropout named Joseph Smith, informing him that the end was near and no one on earth had a clue as to what was really going on.

Not to fear, however. An angel was standing by to lead young Smith to a nearby treasure-trove of buried scripture, engraved on golden plates, containing the long-lost word of God to the world.

Besides, it was a great story and Smith was a great story-teller. He

claimed "The Book of Mormon" got its name from an ancient warrior whose ancestors set sail from Jerusalem in 600 B.C., using a special compass that only worked when they did what God told them to. Other groups embarked even earlier, only in submarines. Long before Columbus, these transplanted Hebrews hit the shores of the Americas, from where they proceeded to civilize the place, then destroy it all in a huge family feud. The story climaxes with a spectacular battle, in which tens of thousands of white-skinned true believers are slaughtered by godless Indians in what is today New York state.

But wait. There's more. Included are a few extra chapters that more than justify the admission price of a lifetime pledge to pay 10 percent of one's income, wages and tips to the Mormon church.

Amid some earthquakes, general mass destruction and special effects that would rival the studios of Steven Spielberg, Jesus himself appears, stopping en route to heaven after his resurrection. To the astonishment of his audience, he gives a preview of his not-yet-compiled Biblical teachings (delivered, coincidentally, in King James English.) Before leaving, he organizes a tax-free church and chooses a handful of goodly men to run it until he gets back.

Unfortunately, within a few years, things go to hell. Thanks to the devil (Jesus's cantankerous brother, according to Mormon doctrine), the church falls apart in America, the Dark Ages envelop Europe and it's time to phone home. That's where God calls in the youngster Smith to pick up the pieces, dig up the gold plates, and restore the truth to the earth.

One hundred and sixty-seven years and 10 million members later, Mormonism is a remarkably successful, multi-billion dollar empire.

If Joseph Smith were alive today, he'd probably be amazed at the number of folks who've actually bought into it and be grateful that the press hasn't kept on it more than it has.

After all, Smith knew his own record better than anyone else. Judging from the way the church has doctored its

past, it's not hard to see why most Mormons, along with much of the media, really don't know the history.

Among other things, Smith was convicted in court for being a money-digging charlatan, was accused by his followers of swindling their cash in a clumsy bank fraud scheme, and was exposed by a group of skeptics that tricked him into "translating" a set of supposedly ancient brass plates that had actually been manufactured in a local blacksmith's shop. Add to this the documented fact that he rolled in the hay with a 14-year-old girl and was both a believer in astrology and a dabbler in the occult, and what you have is a somewhat different picture from the one the church paints of its inventor.

As fate would have it, Smith didn't hang around long to explain the details. He was shot to death by an angry mob while in jail for ordering the destruction of a newspaper printing press that published embarrassing revelations about his secret polygamous affairs.

While he didn't survive, the church he founded has survived both him and his exploits.

Most people still don't know that Mormon prophets have actually preached as gospel truth that:

- People of African or Native American lineage are born with dark skin because God cursed them and their progenitors.

- God lives on a planet surrounded by multitudes of faithful Mormon men and their harems, who are destined to eventually become gods and goddesses, lording over their own worlds populated with countless millions of their own procreated spirit children.

- Jesus was literally fathered by God through sexual intercourse with the Virgin Mary.

- Adam was Jesus's father, who, along with one of his wives, Eve, was transported to the Garden of Eden from another planet.

•The saving blood of Jesus can't rescue murderers unless their blood has been spilled on earth first. That's one reason why Utah is the only state in the union that gives the condemned the option of dying by firing squad. It makes their getting out of hell that much easier.

For Mormons who are conversant with actual church history, doctrine and practice and are tempted to challenge the church bosses about any of it, a remedy has been developed to snuff out dissent.

"The Brethren," as they are called, constantly remind the faithful to do and think as they are commanded. They are admonished that, for their own good, "when the prophet speaks, the debate is over." Obedience is trumpeted as the first law of heaven.

Those who insist on playing a different tune are publicly denounced as arrogant apostates, suffer false accusations, are tagged for expulsion, and end up being ostracized. Such has been the fate in recent years for several Mormon intellectuals, scholars and feminists who dared speak out.

I eventually had my fill of it, too, and, as a self-respecting journalist and human being, left Mormonism with my wife and children.

Sure as shootin', word soon hit the Internet that my real reason for getting out was because I had fathered an illegitimate child by a young woman in Utah and was running from excommunication. (Actually, I was a virgin on our wedding night and my bride was the first and only woman I have ever kissed, not to mention made babies with. It sounds almost as unbelievable as Mormonism itself, I know, but I swear on a stack of Thomas Paine pamphlets that it's true.)

Prior to bowing out, I was ostensibly an ideal Mormon—going to church, paying my tithing and doing my duty. In the eyes of my family and ecclesiastical leaders, I was a golden boy. Everything I was encouraged to touch (or, for that matter, to avoid) was designed to turn me into a better Mormon. And eventually into a god.

Through the years, I served in many church capacities, from Boy Scout leader and Sunday School teacher to bishop's executive secretary and church high councilman. I devoted myself to being a scripture-reading, special underwear-wearing, church-attending, hymn-singing, prayer-offering, faith-promoting, tithe-paying member of the flock.

I was on track to eternal Mormon stardom, reserved especially for faithful men in a church run by men.

At eight, I was officially baptized a Mormon. I remember going under the water in my white baptismal clothes as my dad immersed me in the font. All I could see was a murky light above me. I wasn't too fond of water and prayed it wasn't a near-death experience.

It turned out to be, figuratively speaking, a spotlight that was to follow me throughout my youth, shined on me by an ever-watchful church and family, making sure I didn't wander too far afield, where I might wind up befriend-ing Democrats or going to the high school Sadie Hawkins dance with a non-Mormon.

At 16, I became the first Eagle Scout in my Mormon troop. At about the same time, I earned my special Mormon scout "Duty to God" award, depicted by a cow skull that, when hung on my uniform, was (not surprisingly) bigger than the eagle.

At 17, together with my parents and four younger sisters and brother, I marched off into the mission field, where my father oversaw the proselytizing efforts of a 100-plus army of elders and sisters, who fanned out over the Midwest, combing for converts who might be hiding in the cornfields.

At 19, I was ordained by my grandfather as a "minister of the gospel" and dispatched to Japan to serve a full-time mission. Two years later, only 11 Japanese had taken me up on the offer.

At 21, I met my wife-to-be, Mary Ann, while we both were attending what Mormons refer to as "the Lord's University" (known to the outside world as "Breed 'em Young.") We were eventually married in the Salt Lake temple. Barely nine months into our union, having thrown birth control to the wind on the orders of our leaders, we did our

part in providing physical "tabernacles" for God's spirit children by bringing forth our first baby, followed in quick succession by three more.

Like the obedient Mormon helpmate she had been conditioned to be, my wife stayed home. Like the stalwart Mormon breadwinner I had been raised to be, I continued to work and go to school.

Our marriage was the usual secret Mormon temple rite, in which the bride and groom wore bizarre costumes made out of bulky white material, complete with fig leaf aprons, a puffy hat for me and a veil for my wife. Typical of such rituals, it was off-limits to anyone except Mormons in good standing who had passed a "worthiness interview" prior to being admitted. My grandfather officiated as the high priest.

The ceremony was the celebrated high point of a series of secret temple initiations that included whispered code names, handshakes and symbols borrowed from the Masons, and figurative blood oaths pledging unflinching obedience to God's church in return for the Lord's promise not to kill us, but to allow us, instead, to take a seat in heaven next to Joseph Smith.

I remember how nervous I was a few years later when word leaked to the press that Mormons had removed the bloody oaths from their temple ceremony. I myself had, with other temple Mormons, vowed to let my throat be slit from ear to ear, my heart yanked out of my chest and my intestines spilled on the ground if I ever revealed the secret signs and tokens given me in the temple. I just hoped God didn't mean it literally.

Now I was afraid a reporter would call and ask me what was really going on in there. Sure enough, one did. With palms sweating, I refused to go on the record. I didn't want a big hand reaching down from the sky some night while I was snoring and pulling out the only tongue I had.

While still in the shadow of the Salt Lake City temple and well within monitoring distance by prophets and parents, I kept up the church/family tradi-

tion of drawing cartoons for the BYU newspaper, defending what I was told to defend.

But I was soon to start another life. And it wasn't to go in the direction the church or my family expected or wanted.

In 1980, I joined The Arizona Republic as its editorial cartoonist. There I earned a reputation as a question-raising, justice-seeking, icon-smashing, authority-bashing, status quo-attacking, myth-debunking, doubt-encouraging bomb-thrower. I liked to say that I didn't aim to please; I just aimed.

The split identity arose, in large measure, as a reaction to what became the suffocating control attempted by Mormonism on my intellectual growth and individual freedom. For years I struggled to live in both worlds. It became obvious to me, however, that they were worlds in collision. I decided I could not serve two masters. I had to either follow my head and my conscience, or surrender both to the dictates of little minds who relied on fear-mongering in their claim to speak for God.

Like an asteroid sucked into an encounter with Jupiter, I hurtled toward what I knew would be the final encounter between reason and religion. I was picking up speed and leaving behind an ever-increasing trail of disintegrating pieces of my faith.

But unlike the asteroid that vaporized on impact, I emerged out the other side, relatively intact, suffering from some religious road rash, to be sure, but nothing fatal. I found myself loosed from the gravity of the gods, free to roam the universe in search of new adventures, new beginnings and my real self. For years, my true identity had been smothered by a church which held its stone commandments over my head like a swatter over a fly, warning me that if I took off, I risked being flattened from above.

I had tried hard to resuscitate the dying faith that had for so long ruled my life and defined my destiny, but it proved to be a losing battle.

At work I drew the obligatory "He Has Risen" Easter cartoons, along with the ones bemoaning the commercial-

ization of Christmas. As a holiday gift, my editor—a kindly and deeply religious man—gave me a tree ornament depicting St. Nick kneeling at the side of the baby Jesus, cap worshipfully in hand. Later, after I left Mormonism, he invited me to participate in personal chats with his priest, where the three of us prayed and discussed godly things. After a few sessions, I gave up. My heart—and head—just weren't in it.

I found little value in searching for meaning in what believers joyfully described as the unfathomable mysteries of God. What good was God if his purposes couldn't be understood?

How was I supposed to understand his "plan" if the processes by which he supposedly brought all things into being were incomprehensible?

What meaning was I supposed to attach to my existence if the pain and death of life's cycle could be no better explained than with the pious platitude, "It is God's will"?

I found that scientific explanations based on observable laws of nature made infinitely more sense than the scriptural fairy tales invented around campfires by superstitious shepherds.

I concluded it made no more sense to believe in Christ than it did in Santa Claus or the tooth fairy. God, I decided, was nothing more than an imaginary playmate for older people. As astronomer Carl Sagan observed in what proved to be his last book, "Billions and Billions," shortly before dying of cancer:

"The world is so exquisite, with so much love and moral depth, that there is no reason to deceive ourselves with pretty stories for which there's little good evidence. Far better, it seems to me, to look death in the eye and to be grateful every day for the brief but magnificent opportunity that life provides."

My dissatisfaction with religion grew as I saw the Mormon blue suits attempt to manipulate the facts and hoodwink the public at the expense of truth. My cartoons lampooning and criticizing those efforts were met with fierce resistance from church members and leaders alike.

When Mormons tried to get away with a slippery change in the wording of "Book of Mormon" scripture proph-

esying the future of Indians who converted, I drew a cartoon lambasting the Mormon God as the bigot he really was. The traditional scripture read that Indians who accepted Jesus would become "white and delightsome." The scripture was altered to instead read "pure and delightsome." The change was made despite the fact that racist Mormon prophets had, from the early days of the church, predicted that a change in the red man's heart would result in a change in the red man's skin.

(The cartoon showed a bonneted Native American chieftain tossing away a bottle of "Book of Mormon Eye Drops" designated "to get the red out," while muttering, "Nice try, white man." Shortly thereafter, I received a letter from a Mormon editor in another state, accusing me of being "anti-Mormon.")

I learned quickly that Mormons don't take kindly to criticism, no matter how well-deserved. They think because they have the corner on truth, they can put people making fun of them in the corner.

In a series of cartoons on a Mormon Arizona legislator with a habit of introducing anti-evolution bills, I drew him as a monkey, either swooping through the legislative chambers on a tire or attempting to type up a bill that made sense. He wrote me an indignant missive, huffing that it was my family, not his, that descended from apes. His family, he declared, was made in the image of God. Maybe so, but I hated to think God busied himself around the universe dressed like Bozo the Clown.

A local right-wing Mormon activist sent a letter of protest to my grandfather, complaining that my pro-evolution cartoons were a roadblock to God's plan for returning constitutional control of the schools to his people. Unable to bring me to my senses, she implored him to silence me.

My grandfather gave me a call, asking for an explanation. I told him that so-called "scientific creationism" was nothing more than religion masquerading as science and that if Mormons, or anyone else, wanted to teach it in the public schools, they should confine it

to a course on comparative religions.

By way of information, I added that the official Mormon position on evolution had historically been neutral. He asked me to provide him with proof of that in writing, saying he would consider not only sending a reply to the Mormon complainer, but also think about making it available to inquiring church members in the form of an official public declaration.

I did as he requested, but never heard back from him. Months later, I asked him about the status on the matter. He said the church had decided to do nothing, since publishing the facts would only cause more controversy.

The same local political extremist, in cahoots with other like-minded Mormons, was later involved in a noisy effort to kill a holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr., in Mesa, Arizona, a city founded by Mormons that remains essentially under their political control.

Quoting the anti-King sermons of my John Birch-loving grandfather, they swarmed city council meetings, denouncing the civil rights leader as a moral reprobate and a tool of the Communist conspiracy to overthrow America. I drew a cartoon showing these goofs sitting on the porch of a country store labeled M.L.K. ("Mormons Lynch King"), selling ax handles, Lester Maddox-style. I was subsequently grilled by a local church leader who called demanding an explanation.

In an episode that caused considerable consternation among the Mormon hierarchy, a skilled forger and document collector named Mark Hofmann attempted to alter the official version of the church's beginnings by fabricating documents in which early church leaders claimed a white salamander, not an angel, delivered the gold plates to Joseph Smith.

Before the forgery was unmasked, Mormon leaders, fearful the documents might actually be genuine, desperately attempted to buy them from Hofmann for tens of thousands of dollars, intending to hide them from the prying eyes of historians, the press and other perceived critics, not to mention church

members. Only when Hofmann, in a botched attempt to cover his tracks, blew up some Mormons, along with some of his own fingers, was the scheme discovered.

I drew a cartoon showing a stereotypical Mormon P.R. man, sporting a flat top and conservative business suit, on the phone to his secretary, wailing, "Mad bombers, white salamanders, forgeries, con men! Golly darn, Sister Jones, that does it! Get me a cup of coffee!"

My grandfather called, telling me somberly he had a cartoon in front of him that he wished to read aloud to me. After repeating the punch line, he paused dramatically and asked, "Why?" I was tempted to respond with a "Why not?" but thought better of it. Instead, I tried to explain that one of the best defenses in the face of criticism is an ability to laugh at oneself. My grandfather replied, "I still love you. Just go easy on us."

I really began feeling the heat from the Mormons when, in a fluke election won with less than 50 percent of the vote in a three-way race, a fellow Mormon and used car salesman, Evan Mecham, was picked to be Arizona's governor. He lasted barely a year before being thrown out of office.

Mecham was a small-minded, loose-lipped, vicious little man, with a thinly disguised racist streak under an ill-fitting toupee. His first official act as governor was to cancel the state's Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, declaring that blacks didn't need holidays, they needed jobs. He defended the use of the term "pickaninny," saying he saw nothing wrong with it and couldn't understand why blacks would be offended. He assured dumb-founded Arizonans that he hired blacks at his car dealership, not because they were black, but because they were the best for "the cotton-pickin' job."

He didn't stop there. When asked by a reporter what he planned to say to the Pope when the Holy Father visited Phoenix, he replied that he didn't think the fellow spoke English. He caused another stir in a visit to a local synagogue, where he declared to the Jews in attendance that Jesus Christ was their lord

and savior.

As embarrassment over the governor's burlblings grew, I spoke with Mormon church leaders, including my grandfather, about what they had in mind to do, if anything. They privately expressed the hope that Mecham would shut up, step down, or do both, but were unwilling to say so publicly.

I drew an angel atop the Salt Lake City temple spires blowing his horn, from which fluttered the banner, "Resign, Ev." The newspaper was flooded with letters of protests from Mecham's Mormon minions, some claiming that God himself had orchestrated Brother Ev's election. My sister-in-law withdrew her Thanksgiving dinner invitation to our family.

Mecham supporters held special meetings, encouraging a letter-writing campaign to Salt Lake City, in an effort to stop the cartoon carnage. He was compared by his loyal followers to Jesus, Isaiah and Joseph Smith. They complained that, like God's servants of old, he was being hounded mercilessly by the dogs of Satan. My parents called from Utah and urged me to lighten up on the guy, reminding me he was one of our own.

Eventually, Mecham was impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors. (Maybe there is a God after all.) Quoting the Biblical scripture at a press conference, he vowed, "Vengeance is mine, sayeth the Lord," and promised to return. I could hardly wait.

True to his word, like a bad rash, he came back, running for reelection.

In a cartoon labeled "The Second Coming," I drew him as Jesus descending from above, flanked by trumpet-blowing rats dressed in angel robes, as he held forth a book of scripture entitled, "The Book of Moron, by Ev Mecham," while intoning, "I warned you sinners."

Letters threatening to have me hauled into ecclesiastical court were fired off to Salt Lake City, demanding that my grandfather remove me from all positions of church service. Phoenix's ecumenical council, under pressure from a Mecham henchman, released a statement to the press, denouncing my at-

tack on the Mormons. The local Mormon spokesman compared the cartoon to the work of evangelical Christians who were exposing Mormonism's secret temple ceremonies to public ridicule.

My stake president—the Mormon equivalent of a Catholic bishop—called me into his office and relieved me of my church duties, declaring that I had abused my God-given talents in mocking the sacred emblems of the church. (A Mormon state senator later admitted to me that he had advised the stake president to lower the boom. The stake president himself acknowledged he had received a call from Salt Lake's Commandment Central, but insisted it had nothing to do with his decision.)

The stake president later wrote to commend me for having learned my lesson, saying that since he took his disciplinary action, my cartoons had shown a marked improvement. I replied by reminding him he was not my editor and that, given the opportunity, I would do the cartoon again.

Outrage from the religious community has not been confined only to my cartoons lampooning the antics of Mormon public officials. Cartoons berating Catholic priests for sexually preying on little children or the Pope for condemning women who use artificial birth control sparked formal letters of complaint from the Catholic hierarchy, as well as protest marches around a newspaper in New York, where my work was also published.

When I poked fun at Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin for attempting to justify the ill-conceived invasion of Lebanon by citing Hebrew scripture on the floor of Israel's parliament (the cartoon showed him jetting over the Golan Heights, waving the scrolls and shouting, "Torah! Torah! Torah!"), the protests were predictable.

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith invited me, along with several other cartoonists, including Jules Feiffer of *The Village Voice* and David Levine of *The New York Review of Books*, to Israel, where we had a wonderful time. In a return visit a few years later, however, Foreign Minister Yitzak Shamir

reportedly refused me an audience.

In an episode that helped write the final chapter in my escape from Mormonism's Alcatraz, I went to the press to inform it of my elderly grandfather's deteriorating physical and mental condition.

The church knew of his situation but chose to continue misleading its members. In carefully worded pronouncements, his assistants perpetuated the myth that while he was physically weak, he was still mentally alert and performing his daily prophetic duties, receiving God's revelations and making essential administrative decisions.

Based on my own direct observations, I knew the opposite was the case. I had seen my grandfather enough to know that he was fading fast. He was largely confined to his recliner in his apartment, where he spent his days, wrapped in a blanket, being spoon-fed by his nurses, unable to speak more than a few words and frequently incapable of recognizing visitors.

Rather than risk having their duplicity exposed to the faithful, who had been propagandized to believe God was running the show through his modern-day Moses, church functionaries continued the deception.

In reality, church leadership was rudderless on top and characterless at heart. Lieutenants were filling in for the failing general, all the while claiming that all was well in Zion. (Only later did the press report that a few years earlier the church had secretly transferred authority to run its corporate affairs away from the prophet to his assistants, in the event that he became incapacitated.)

I hoped in vain that church leaders would do the right thing by telling the truth. If nothing more, it would have been the humane and decent thing to allow an old man who had given so much of his life to the church to slip away in quiet dignity, instead of being propped up by his handlers like some store mannequin for publicity shots, all the while making sure the camera didn't catch the tube up his nostril.

Even my young son could see what was going on. One Sunday morning over breakfast, he asked, "Dad, why do they call great-grandpa 'prophet' when he can't do anything?" His guileless

question prompted me to act. I called a reporter for *The Salt Lake Tribune* and laid out the facts. He warned of the repercussions that would follow.

He was right. As they say, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye mad." Mormons denounced me as a tool of the devil and an enemy of righteousness. I was chastised for lacking faith to believe in miracles. I was reminded that if God could part the waters for Moses, he could make Ezra Taft Benson rise, walk and talk.

Counter-claims and rumors began circulating that my grandfather was actually doing quite well, supposedly ordering Christmas gifts in phone calls to the church owned bookstore.

My brother accused me of being a publicity seeker. Even my father called to warn me that the media was the enemy of the church. I reminded him that I was a member of the media. Still, he said if I ever again talked to the press about his father's health, he would see to it that I would be barred from seeing him in the future. It was his duty, he said, to protect the prophet, and he was determined to carry it out. So much for that good ol' Mormon family togetherness.

A few weeks later, my wife and I left the church with a mixture of disgust, disappointment, determination and delight. My bishop called, asking if he could buy our house. To his disappointment, we told him we weren't moving.

A few months later, my grandfather died. Shortly after his passing, I received an anonymous call from a man in California, claiming to be carrying a message to me from my grandfather from beyond the grave. He said my grandfather had appeared to him in a dream and commanded him to tell me he wanted me back in the church.

I figured if my grandfather had regained enough of his wits in the afterlife to communicate with someone in California he didn't even know, he sure as hell could have contacted me himself. After all, he had done it plenty of times before.

As a newspaper editorial cartoonist,

I have worked for several years in the world of journalism, where lying, hypocrisy, intolerance, bigotry, self-righteousness, abuse of power, corruption and downright stupidity are regularly exposed and reported. Sadly, those doing the deeds often wrap themselves in the vestments of the church.

The honest newsperson's response to such shenanigans has always been to press forward with the questions; to continue to challenge, probe and identify the wrong-doers; to inform the public; and to call for reform.

The press—and that includes cartoonists—must never retreat in the face of threats or punishments dispensed by intolerant theocratic terrorists who are more interested in protecting their own power and turf than in serving the needs of humanity or advancing its condition.

Science discovered long ago that carbon is a source of life. The ashes of my faith have prepared the ground for the planting of seeds that have produced new forms of truth, morality and meaning on my own terms, not according to the dogma laid down by religious ruffians or a vengeful God.

If, as believers claim, the word "gospel" means good news, then the good news for me is that there is no gospel, other than what I can define for myself, by observation and conscience. As a journalist and free-thinking human being, I have come not to favor and fear religion, but to face and fight it as an impediment to civilized advancement. Historically, it has been the so-called "men of God" who have committed all manner of evil in heaven's name.

The philosopher Bertrand Russell observed:

"You find as you look around the world that every single bit of human progress in humane feeling, every improvement in the criminal law, every step toward the diminution of war, every step toward better treatment of the colored races, or every mitigation of slavery, every moral progress that there has been in the world, has been consistently opposed by the organized churches of the world. I say deliberately that the Christian religion, as organized in its churches, has been and still is, the principal enemy of moral

Faith Amid Violence

BY ELI REED

My mother was a Baptist, active in her church and beloved in her New Jersey community. She had me attend Jehovah Witness services to expose me to a different religion. She never pushed me in one direction, just opened the doors.

From 1965 to 1970 I worked as a nursing orderly for the Perth Amboy General Hospital—the hospital my mother worked in and died in. I was assigned to the same floor she had worked on, and the people there took care of me and became family.

Through my job as an orderly at the St. Vincent Medical Center in New York City I got to know Jesuit priests who came to the hospital to work with patients on the cancer ward. I liked the intellectual stimulation they provided. They impressed me so much that I thought about becoming a Jesuit.

In 1984 I met a priest, a professor at the University of Nebraska who as a photographer had worked with American Indians. With admiration I watch him do much good with his camera, going beyond just making a living.

Since then I've seen a lot of violence while photographing around the world, and I pray to help me get through it. (I pray also for the victims of the violence.) My faith in a higher intelligence has definitely been a help in these situations, not a hindrance. Many times you face the violence when you're alone.

The violence I've seen has depressed me, but never made me lose my faith or my faith in people. Because you always

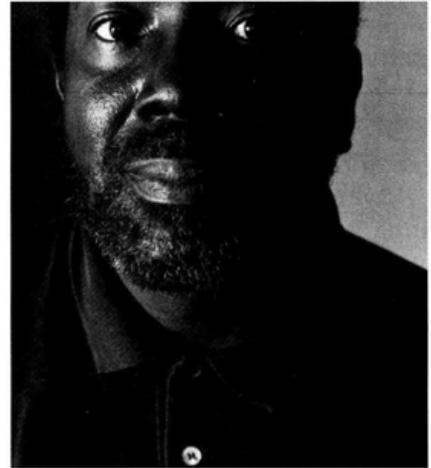


PHOTO BY KAREN LYNES

have a choice—to be ugly or to take the high road. In difficult times, internal prayer helps me stay calm so I can better handle situations.

I definitely choose stories because of my beliefs. My experience in Beirut in September of 1983, when I covered the factional fighting there for Magnum, was a classic example—people being killed for their faith by hired assassins, people being used as chess pieces. Another example was my work covering the war on racism at home. Still another example was my decision to forgo a chance to work with Steven Spielberg to do something for the Save the Children Foundation. My hunch is that if Spielberg ever knew what I did, he would have approved. I know my Baptist mother would.—*Eli Reed, a 1983 Nieman Fellow, is a photographer with the Magnum collective, based in New York.*

progress in the world...

"I think our own hearts can teach us, no longer to look around for imaginary supports, no longer to invent allies in the sky, but rather to look to our own efforts here below to make this world a

fit place to live in, instead of the sort of place that the churches in all these centuries have made it."

To which the cartoonist can only add, "Amen to that." ■

Giving Bibles to Public Officials

BY BILL SIMMONS

One day, investigators were at the White House to ask some of their many questions about some of the many matters into which they have inquired, lo, these many days. During a break in the interrogation, one of them stood reading the titles of the books on shelves lining a wall. One caught his eye—"Knowing God" by an evangelical theologian, J.I. Packer. No stranger to the evangelical faith himself, the investigator opened it, and noted on the inside of the cover a few scribbled words. The book was a gift to President Clinton when he was Arkansas' governor. The inscription named the giver.

I, the giver, am Political Editor of The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, a position that became mine when I took early retirement at the end of 1996 from The Associated Press, where I worked more than 34 years, including seven as Chief of Bureau in Little Rock and 20 as the AP's state Capitol staffer in Little Rock. At some point during those 20 years, I gave Packer's book to Clinton, thinking him somewhat shallow in understanding the Bible and theology. I hoped the book would do him good. He has been a steadfast church-goer through the years as governor and president, so perhaps he has gained theological depth. I hope so.

I am a Christian. I am a journalist. It was as a journalist that I had contact with Bill Clinton. It was as a Christian that I had become familiar with Packer's book. I had a desire as a Christian to give the book to Clinton. But I also had a desire as a journalist to give it to him—to advance my relationship with him. My theory as a journalist has been to know public officials not in a narrow way but as whole human beings, including their religious beliefs. The more you understand them, the deeper will

be your insight into them, and the better you can report on them.

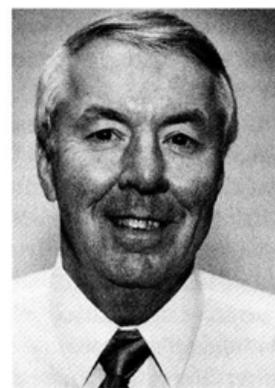
I have made similar efforts with others whose paths I crossed. Isn't that what Christians do—make an effort to advance each person's understanding of the Bible and their knowledge of God? I can't say that I remember all such efforts, so I'm not sure I can defend all of them from a journalistic point of view. For example, I was surprised in 1996 when a Little Rock attorney defending Gov. Jim Guy Tucker in a criminal trial last year reminded me that I had given him a New International Version translation years earlier. I had forgotten doing so.

I am not, however, a Christian-journalist, by which I mean a person who attempts to advance Christian causes by coloring the content of what he reports in print. Some of my Christian friends desire me to be the hyphenated version. They want me to use my access to newsprint to promote Christian causes. I resist them, cheerfully but unequivocally.

There is no higher calling than being a believer, a child of God. There are "Christian causes" with which I heartily agree and which I support with my money and my time and my energy and my advocacy. There are others with which I completely disagree, dismayed that such base objectives could be labeled "Christian." But my attitude toward causes is not translated into the stories I write. I act on behalf of Christian causes through other aspects of my life (things I do in my personal life, including "witnessing" and teaching adults most Sundays at church and counseling from a biblical basis and making donations and praying and handing out quality books that may be useful to acquaintances, such as the book the investigator found on a White

House shelf). Of course, sometimes I do it in regard to "public persons" I encounter in my work as a journalist. I think it helps me as a journalist, and certainly it helps me as a Christian.

My role as a journalist is to do journalism, free of political, religious or other bias, and to do it with independence, balance, fairness, thoroughness, aggressiveness and all the other characteristics with which good journalism should be conducted. I regard it as a Christian duty to do journalism that way. To do any other kind of journalism would be to fail in my duty as a Christian to render to my employer the best that God has equipped me to do.



Bill Simmons and his wife, Jane, live in Little Rock and are active in the Bible Church of Little Rock. Entering newswork as a teenage copyboy with The Arkansas Gazette in Little Rock in 1958, Simmons joined The Associated Press at Little Rock in 1962, served in the AP's Detroit Bureau in 1966-68, then returned to Little Rock. His daughter, Teddi Cole, is an elementary school teacher in the Little Rock public school district and his son, Toby, works in computer programming and service at The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

My faith is ever with me (even when I am laboring under some sinful attitude that results in my neglecting the truth that I embrace as "Christianity;" no human being is always true to his beliefs—the Lord Jesus Christ being the pre-eminent exception; like the Apostle Paul in Romans 7, I find that I do not always do what I think is right, nor do my actions always reflect what I truly love at my core; when I come to my senses and realize in those occasions that I have strayed from what I believe, then I repent and return to a better course).

I was ordained as a minister through an independent Baptist church, which I pastored for years. Now I serve in a lesser role in a nondenominational congregation. I have done the things pastors do—marry, bury, preach, teach, counsel, pray with and pray for and be prayed for and the like. Once, I was even excommunicated (but the church that acted against me later repented of that). I have been involved in biblical studies in more than a passing way. More than 1,500 volumes on biblical matters fill dozens of shelves in my home. I regard the Bible as wholly true, without error. (In my experience, those who fault the Bible's credibility tend to have the least knowledge of what it actually says. And in many cases the alleged discrepancies may be resolved through the use of reasonable principles of interpretation.)

My Bible tells me that it is wrong to lie. That makes it easy for me to answer the question currently being debated in journalism: Is it okay to lie? "No." Although I agree with those who say it makes journalism look bad to endorse the use of lies in our pursuit of truth, my answer isn't based on how it looks. Lying is, simply, wrong, because God (Whose word is revealed in the Bible) says it's wrong.

So, when somebody asks me to go off-the-record, the material is really off-the-record. It can't be used, and I can't reveal who told it to me. If they allow me to use material, but not allow me to attribute it to them, then I will keep my word on that matter, as well. My wife and I reached an understanding many

years ago that the day may come when I find myself caught between a pledge that I made to a source ("OK, I won't reveal your identity") and a demand that may be made by the state ("name your source"), and that my course of action will be to refuse the demand of the state. I will accept whatever consequences ensue, including imprisonment. It is not a prospect I find attractive. I am thankful that so far I have never had to face it. Although I have a duty as a Christian to respect the governing authorities (Romans 13:1, for example: "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established."), and respect certainly implies giving them reasonable obedience, I will be caught between that duty, on one hand, and my duty to keep my word, on the other hand ("Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' 'No,'" (Matt 5:37; etc.). In treating off-the-record material as off-the-record, I am no different from honest non-Christian journalists, except that part of my reason for doing the right thing stems from my faith.

In some situations, my background as an amateur theologian who is a Christian equips me to deal with some prevailing issues with a background that other journalists may lack. For example, on the abortion issue, is there a clear case in Scripture for the proposition that abortion is wrong? And, if so, where is it? And if it is Psalm 139:13 ("For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.") or Luke 1:44 ("As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy."), how do those passages justify a belief that abortion is wrong in a world where millions of ova, fertilized and otherwise, naturally expire in the normal course of life? (In posing these questions, I don't mean that there isn't a case; I only mean that when it comes to that issue as a matter of journalism, I ask the questions that ought to be asked, and can deal with the interpretive issues that may arise, regardless of what my personal views may be on the issue, and sometimes I put believers in

awkward spots with the thoroughness of my questioning of the point of view I would be widely presumed to support.)

Biblical analogies probably cross my mind in journalistic matters more than the minds of others, simply because I so frequently read the Bible. Once, the Arkansas Supreme Court struck down an anti-abortion amendment on grounds that its use of the phrase "unborn child" was deemed to be "partisan coloring" that would mislead people who don't think of the contents of the womb as a "child." It seemed to me that everyone is familiar with the loose use of the word "child" to represent the fetus. I wrote an analysis piece that suggested tongue-in-cheek that perhaps we needed to revise the well-known account of a very famous pregnancy and make it, "Mary was found to be great with fetus."

Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas is both a politician and a Baptist minister. I find myself examining what he says not only as a journalist covering a politician but also a journalist covering a Baptist minister who is a politician. I ponder how his words mesh with principles I know he believes, like, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Luke 6:31) and "men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken" (Matt 12:36).

When Huckabee declined to sign a bill because it referred to natural disasters as "acts of God," I recognized this was a notable news story, regardless of what effect reporting the story might have on him (a professing Christian) and on Christianity in general. We never know the good that God may bring about through the events of life and, therefore, we ought to report them with accuracy and completeness. As it happens, I personally do believe that storms are "acts of God"—though that does not mean they are necessarily acts of wrath or vengeance, because God accomplishes more than we dream, both by what we regard as "bad" and what we regard as "good."

Am I, because of my Christian faith, apt to be a dupe of "Christians" or

Christian “leaders”? I think not. I offer two examples:

When one of the organizations connected with Pat Robertson asserted that The Associated Press had described fundamentalist Christians in a negative way, I thought the claim unlikely, based on my long experience with the AP. But I checked it out anyway (experience with the AP leads one to check things out). What I found was that the offending statement had not been made by the AP, but by a man who was speaking generally about fundamentalists of diverse sorts in an AP story about a university study of “fundamentalism” as manifested in a variety of cultures.

When a group connected with Dr. James Dobson, President of Focus on the Family, a conservative evangelical organization, got some facts wrong in a newsletter that referred to a St. Louis school district controversy over whether a child had been stopped from saying grace at lunchtime at a public school, I wrote the newsletter group and questioned the accuracy of some of the details that had been given. I received a reply thanking me for my interest, but indicating no interest in correcting the mistake. Consequently, I have little trust in that group’s newsletter any more. (That doesn’t mean that Dr. Dobson doesn’t do many good things; it means only that there has been a credibility slip as I view things.)

Sometimes I have to try to help others to understand that my life as a Christian and my role as a journalist are not exactly the same thing.

As I explained to Governor Huckabee on one occasion, as a private individual I may give him every benefit of every doubt, but as a journalist it is my duty to ask, not to assume that I know what motivates him and what the facts are. I am not there to protect or to skewer him. I am there to be a journalist; let the chips fall as they may. Then I will be doing my Christian duty.

Because of my faith, I have no interest in what some editors call “piling on,” pulling together negative stuff in order to pound some public figure. My attitude is, “Do the story; do it right; do it thoroughly; and move on.” That does

not, however, mean that I bypass legitimate stories, nor that I fail to pursue new angles to developing stories. And I don’t mind calling some journalism what it is—shoddy. I feel no obligation to pronounce all that we do “good.”

Being a journalist is not always a way to make friends. Sometimes I have come under attack from subjects of the news (and sometimes from colleagues or even co-workers). When that happens, I aim to bear in mind the admonition of the Lord not to seek revenge. (It can be so tempting to give tit for tat!) My trust is in God and His promise to render whatever vengeance will be appropriate at the time when vengeance is to be administered. I always hold out the possibility that in due course a person may repent of the harmful things he did to me, in which case there should be joy and no revenge at all.

I remember a journalist years ago who left in anger from a news conference at which the governor had publicly confronted him about some of the reporter’s actions. Fuming later in the state Capitol press room, the reporter declared, “That’s going to cost him two—TWO—Sunday columns.” He meant that he would write negative things in two of his Sunday columns about the governor. I told the reporter two things: one, he was foolish to announce such an intention; two, he was wrong to let that attitude of retaliation affect what he would do as a journalist.

Public figures don’t always like what we say about them. We don’t always like what they say about us. But it builds a journalist’s character to feel the sting of reproof now and then. I know that because the Good Book says that when pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom (Proverbs 11:2). I suppose you could say that, too, is a part of how my faith affects me as a journalist. ■

Islamic Identity And America

The American experience forges as well as forces a new Muslim identity that is born both out of the quest to belong and the experience of being permanently depicted as “the other.”

...In order to combat the feeling of defeatism and weakness that may overwhelm the Muslim student and/or immigrant, [the late Islamic intellectual] Isma’il Al-Faruqi recommended the appropriation of an Islamic ideology. Muslims are not in the United States as beggars, he said, but as contributors towards the building of a just society. Faruqi stressed that the adoption of an Islamic ideology or vision frees one from the sense of guilt at having left his or her homeland and achieved some measure of success in a new place. It liberates one from the need to be exceedingly grateful to the adoptive country because success belongs to God. Meanwhile, the Muslim will participate in addressing the ills of American culture by posing the challenge of Islam. “The Islamic vision,” he said, “provides the immigrant with the deepest love, attachment and aspiration for a North America reformed and returned to God.” When this transformation has taken place, immigrants and converts alike will find their lives taking a new meaning and significance “whose dimensions are cosmic....”

From this perspective, Islam is a unique order of life established by God for humanity, where religion and politics must be intertwined to assure justice and freedom. It provides special cohesiveness and communal support to a community going through a troubled time in which it sees itself rejected, the object of hate and fear. For many Muslims, America seems to have been “highjacked” by special interest groups, as a result of which it has departed from the values and the vision that previously had merited God’s blessing. Thus it is in need not only of salvation but of racial transformation that can restore it to its mission as a country living in obedience to God. ■—*Yvonne Yazbek Haddad, Professor of Islamic History, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in the forthcoming book “Muslims on the Americanization Path?”*

Achieving Nirvana in the Newsroom

BY MICHAEL HADDIGAN

Crusty editors and newsroom veterans at the now-defunct Arkansas Gazette taught me as a young reporter that hard work, fairness, concentration, commitment, compassion, devotion to truth and social responsibility are at the heart of smart reporting.

They also taught me to nurture common sense and a sense of wonder.

Those are some of the same lessons I learned years earlier about life and religious practice from shaven-headed Buddhist monks in Thai monasteries.

Personal religious beliefs rarely come up in interviews with sources or in newsroom chatter. But these beliefs are as much a part of my work as a pen and notepad.

Growing up in a working class, Roman Catholic family in Philadelphia, religion gave me a reverence for language and a respect for the power of ideas. I spent much of my childhood in awe of church ritual. Flickering votive candles, towering statues, the fog of sweet incense in the Latin High Mass, these seemed wonderful to me.

Occasionally, my Irish immigrant grandmother led me by the arm to an Armenian Orthodox church in a storefront near her house. Why? I'll never know. But I suspect I learned there was more than one way to regard the great mystery.

Amid the tumult of the 1960's, I fell away from the church and sought answers elsewhere. I saw real-world Buddhism in 1972 as a teenage G.I. posted to a Thai air base late in the Vietnam war.

Then Beat Generation writers led me to Taoism, Chinese poetry and popular writing on Buddhism. After my discharge, I returned to Asia. I visited Buddhist temples in India, Burma and Thailand, and later ordained as a monk

at a Theravada Buddhist monastery in central Thailand.

Young men in predominantly Buddhist Thailand traditionally don the yellow robes, if only for a few weeks as a rite of passage. I followed that custom.

We rose daily before sunrise for a barefoot alms round, met with our meditation teachers and carried out routine temple chores. The monastery's 90 monks also gathered once a month to hear a senior monk chant the monk's rules of discipline in Pali, the canonical language of the Theravada or Southern school of Buddhism.

That's about as far from the raucous scrum of American journalism as you can get. But it was in the monkhood that I decided to become a reporter.

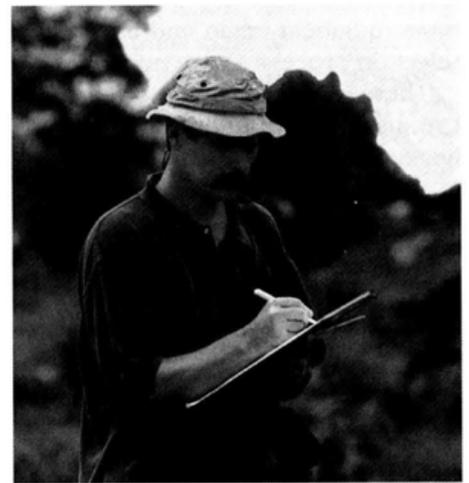
Achieving enlightenment or nirvana is at the center of Buddhist teaching. Nirvana, or nibbana in the Pali, is often taken to mean a supernatural bliss or a Buddhist heaven.

But one of Thailand's most progressive and influential monks, the late Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, taught that nirvana can also be seen as a simpler phenomenon.

"This kind of nirvana nourishes the lives of living things so they survive and don't go crazy," he wrote.

Nirvana is not a place, Buddhadasa taught, but a state achieved through ethical living, mental discipline and the development of wisdom. The path to nirvana involves practicing proper speech, action, livelihood, concentration, and resolve. Isolation and contemplative silence are important. But the Buddhist canon, monastic rules and the cultures of many Buddhist countries emphasize community involvement and interdependence as essential parts of the practice.

Buddhism as I understood it fit nicely with Western democratic ideals. An educated society forms institutions of government to make decisions about community life, based on open discourse and free commerce in the marketplace of ideas. Human greed, hatred and ignorance may corrupt the process, but a free and impartial press in a democratic society compensates by finding and communicating the truth. Call it public service.



Michael Haddigan is an Associate Editor with The Arkansas Times in Little Rock who also writes for The Washington Post and The Dallas Morning News. Haddigan was an Associated Press staff writer in Bangkok and Pittsburgh, a reporter at The News and Observer in Raleigh and at The Arkansas Gazette in Little Rock. A journalism graduate of the University of Arkansas, he holds a masters degree in International Studies from the University of Oregon and a certificate in Advanced Thai from Chiang Mai University in Thailand. He spent a year as a Theravada Buddhist monk in 1977-78 at monasteries in central and northern Thailand.

Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But this system's success—by Buddhist or any other standard—is the measure of an enlightened society.

With this in mind, journalism seemed a natural choice for a lay career when I decided to leave the monkhood. I returned to the United States, went to journalism school and settled into newspaper and wire service reporting.

Theologically, I suppose I stand somewhere between Trappist monk Thomas Merton and the guy I saw recently with an "I-Love-Tibet" bumper sticker on his Geo convertible.

I'm a little weak on piety, I'll admit. On the job, I'm less interested in celebrities, scandals du jours and other stories that simply feed the public's curiosity. Civil rights, criminal justice, the environment, open government and issues affecting the least, the last and the lost seem more important. Where Catholicism, Buddhism and simple news judgment begin and end in the selection process, I have no idea.

There is no "Zen of Reporting" that I've discovered. But cultivation of patience and a "cool heart" certainly helps to deal with the many difficult news-

room personalities. My meditation teacher often said impossible challenges are opportunities to practice mindfulness.

A stateside wire service bureau is as good a place to practice as you'll find for that. I resorted to contemplative breathing exercises while simultaneously juggling phones, collecting high school sports scores, monitoring TV news and handling normal desk duties on solo night tricks in The Associated Press Pittsburgh bureau.

Sometimes principles are sorely tested. Buddhists, for example, are taught to have compassion toward all beings. In the early 1980's, I covered the rise of armed extremist groups that foreshadowed the rise of today's anti-government groups and militias. Often that meant arriving unannounced in the Ozark mountain strongholds of heavily armed groups such as the Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord.

More than once I sat uncomfortably through long, poisonous tirades against blacks and Jews. These guys seemed to have a special venom for "Buddha worshippers." Happily, they never asked if

I was one. In any case, generating compassion for racists with machine guns is a tough assignment.

Religious influences sometimes leave you wrestling with conscience. Covering the executions of three brutal murderers recently, I struggled for balance. As the military reporter for The News and Observer in the late 1980's, I covered the 82d Airborne Division. I remember a large sign on Fort Bragg's Green Ramp, the jumping off point for combat missions. "Think War," it read. In the hustle of daily reporting, it's easy to forget that peace is always possible and preferable.

The South's frequent tornadoes, hurricanes on the Carolina coast, the Pittsburgh USAir disaster, the poverty and racism afflicting the Mississippi Delta, prison rape in Arkansas and the everyday violence of American life—stories like these raise the large questions for reporters.

My beliefs perhaps haven't led me to different conclusions about the moral order of the universe than reporters of other faiths. More likely, we've arrived at similar conclusions in different ways.

■

Good Stories Make Hope Possible

BY SARA ENGRAM

For a child living deep in the Bible belt, it was impossible to discount the influence of religion on daily life. My Alabama town was part of the solidly conservative and Democratic south, so political labels weren't much good in characterizing people.

Church affiliation was a more useful shorthand, and churches exerted enough power to ensure a friendly environment for Sunday School and other religious activities.

In the public schools, days routinely began with prayer, and "Religious Emphasis Week" at the high school gave local preachers a chance to strut their stuff in daily assemblies. No one seemed to think this odd—except, of course, the children from a Jewish family who

were allowed to spend that time in the library.

Three decades later the relationship between religion and civic life is far more complex everywhere in America, and rightly so. The comfortable assumptions that sought to cushion my childhood were much too comfortable.

But they served a purpose. For me and some of my friends, those assumptions inspired a habit of asking questions that must have seemed somewhat perverse to the well-meaning lay-people who volunteered to teach us Sunday School at the First Baptist Church.

One of our favorites was: "If we believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible, then why do we serve grape juice instead of wine when we have communion?" We never got a good answer.



Sara Engram is Deputy Editor for The Baltimore Sun's editorial pages. She has won numerous awards, including—a personal favorite—Honorable Mention (second place) in the 1988 Children's Express journalism awards, a competition judged by children. Engram has a M.Ed. in counseling from Wake Forest University and a Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School.

American Indian Spirituality

As much as anything else, those non-answers began to shape the role religion plays for me: not as a set of answers but as a way of spurring and shaping the questions—especially the big ones.

And since asking the right questions is an essential skill for a journalist, I consider those irreverent Sunday School questions part of my professional training.

After enough years of writing editorials questioning the status quo, the wisdom of a public policy or just the motives of a stonewalling politician, I find there are days when it would be easy to let healthy skepticism turn to outright cynicism. That's where religious values and tradition make an important difference for me.

Respect for the dignity of each person and a fundamental belief in fairness are values that don't necessarily depend on religious faith. But those values alone aren't enough to stave off cynicism. For that, it takes a sense of hope and a belief that even an ugly world can get better.

Yes, religion can be a straitjacket, as can any rigid orthodoxy, including skepticism. For me, religion helps make hope possible, even against the odds.

How? In large part through good stories. The lost paradise, Noah and his ark, the tribulations of Job, the parable of the prodigal son—those old stories and themes provide an endless trove of insights and images for understanding the world. After all, the questions we ask so often in our civic debates are really echoes of the questions at the core of all lasting religions: the yearning for meaning, the quest for values, the need for ways of understanding and addressing the problems we face each day.

At its best, religion doesn't hand us those answers the easy way. For me, it provokes the questions, while offering a framework that helps me make sense of the world and its endless search for answers. ■

When asked to write about the influence of his Native American spirituality on his work as a journalist, Tim Giago—award-winning Founder, Editor and Publisher of Indian Country Today—said it was not possible, that there is no way to separate the two, that his spirituality is too integrated into his life and work. To understand an American Indian's experience as a journalist, it is important to try to understand Indian spirituality. Here are some thoughts from Giago, a 1991 Nieman Fellow.

In Lakota the word "wakan" means many things. It means a spirituality that is either received or transmitted. Wakan means that which is hard to understand because it is filled with such mystery. It means that spirituality is within us, all around us, or sent to us through a vision or through the love and passion of another. These things are all a part and parcel of that great mystery we call our spirituality.

The Lakota and the other Indian tribes of the Western Hemisphere did not have what could be called a religion. Religion is something that is organized, dogmatic and based on the written word. The Bible and Koran, for instance, are written documents that define the parameters to which the faithful in these religions must adhere in order to be saved and served.

Instead, Indian tribes had a spiritual connection with the earth, wind, sky, water, fire, sun, moon, birds, fish and those animals that walked upon four legs. The first white settlers looked upon this spiritual connection with all natural things and labeled it paganism or heathenism. They never saw or experienced the pure natural beauty of the Indian spiritual ways.

Many of the sacred ways of the Indian are based upon interpretation. The holy men and women have the latitude to interpret dreams and actions in a sacred way. This is truly a spiritual way simply because no two holy people interpret things in the same fashion. It is a spirituality with freedom and

independent thought at its foundation. Lakota men often received their adult names because of a dream or a vision while doing a hanbleyceya (vision quest) and having that vision or dream interpreted by a holy man or woman. They could also be named for a great deed or misdeed. These are more than just names such as John or Bill. They are manifested in a physical and spiritual connection to things that are inside of and outside of the person receiving the name.

This is why it is so difficult for an Indian elder to answer when a non-Indian asks, "How do you say 'tree' in Lakota?" The elder will have in his or her mind a tree of pine, oak, willow or another. How do you say "tree" when the word itself is so non-descriptive? A tree must be described from the width of its trunk to the color of its leaves. A tree is a picture to be painted in words.

Is it a tree that played a role in this Lakota person's life? Is it a tree that was cut down to serve as the centerpiece of the sacred Sun Dance? Is it one of the trees used as poles to support the skins that covered the home, the tipi, of this Lakota person? Or is it a tree that one sat under as a child on a torrid summer day, wrapped in the coolness of its shade while dreaming the dreams of children? The tree then becomes more than just a tree. It becomes a physical and spiritual connection.

According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs records, my great-grandmother was named Winyan Wakan. This translates as Holy Woman. A tribal Lakota elder who was also a medicine man, Pete Swift Bird, now deceased, once told me she was given this name because she was a spiritual woman, a holy woman who conducted ceremonies and healed the sick. This was not a profession. It was—and is—a heredity way of life to the Lakota.

When one understands that an Indian's spirituality begins with the morning sun and is then a part of every motion and moment all of that day and night—then one perceives there is no separation between the physical, mental or spiritual being. It is all one all of the time. Even for an Indian journalist. ■

Back to Church Through the Newsroom

BY PHILIP L. GAILEY

I am not sure what influence my religious faith has had on my journalism. As I think about it, maybe it was the other way around. It may be that journalism helped clear up the doubts and confusion that once clouded my spiritual life. Bear with me as I try to explain.

To be a young Southerner in the '60's meant having to come to terms with the failure of the region's white churches to address the great moral issue of racial segregation. It was a time of division, anger, doubt and fear. The Ku Klux Klan long ago appropriated the cross as a flaming symbol of hate, and too few Christians protested this depravity. Christianity, it seemed to me at the time, had lost its way, if not its meaning.

I have heard it said that the church is like Noah's Ark: if it weren't for the flood on the outside, you couldn't stand the smell on the inside. Some of us could no longer stand the smell and decided to take our chances on the outside. I left the ranks of Southern Baptists before I reached the legal drinking age in Georgia, soured on the church and confused about the relevance of Christianity to the social and political upheaval of the time.

I went off to college and for the better part of a decade rarely set foot in a church except for weddings and funerals. I later became a Presbyterian and then, five years ago, an Episcopalian. Still, people don't have much trouble figuring out that I grew up in a Southern Baptist church. On my way out the door, I swiped a Baptist hymn book and haven't stopped singing from it.

A couple of years ago, at a backyard party at my house in St. Petersburg, Fla., I cradled my autoharp and accom-

panied a small choir of Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists—Mary McGrory and William Raspberry of *The Washington Post* and Eugene Patterson, the retired Editor and Chairman of *The St. Petersburg Times*. Like me, they can't resist topping off a good party with a hymn sing, and some of their favorite gospel songs are right out of the Baptist hymnal of my youth. They understand that a good hymn is good writing. "My strongest trials now are past, my triumph has begun," goes one line in "Oh Come Angel Band."

On these happy occasions, when neighbors must suspect that I am conducting a revival meeting on my patio, the years roll back in my mind to Sunday morning at the Silver Shoals Baptist Church, a few miles up a dirt road from Homer, Ga. (pop. 600). The church was a one-room, white clapboard structure. The preacher was required to make a cotton crop on the three acres behind the church to supplement the meager collections. (One preacher who let the grass take over the cotton was flogged by a group of deacons.) The preachers were local men, farmers or textile workers like most of the men in the congregation, with no theological training and little formal education. They were "called" to the pulpit. They paced, shouted, flailed their arms and sometimes foamed at the mouth as they preached against the sins of television, whisky, Elvis and even lipstick.

I later discovered that in the big Baptist churches in the city there was more decorum and theology but not any more Christianity than in the primitive rural church I had fled.

After graduating from the University of Georgia, I landed my first job as a reporter at *The Atlanta Constitution* at a time when the region was convulsed

by the civil rights revolution led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist preacher who set out to emancipate white Southerners, slaves to hate and fear, a hundred years after Abraham Lincoln emancipated black slaves.

I didn't realize it at the time, but reporting this story was, in a strange sort of way, a religious experience for me. The church figured prominently in the civil rights story. Black churches provided the infrastructure for the civil rights movement; most white churches provided a refuge for the racists and haters who perverted the meaning of the cross. Both worshiped the same God, read the same Bible, sang from the same hymnbook. Yet, here they were following their Christian faith in opposite directions, one side committed to nonviolence and redemption, the other preaching defiance or more often remaining silent. Sermons preached in white churches were irrelevant or superficial or worse. With few inspiring exceptions, the South's Protestant churches placed themselves on the sidelines of that great moral struggle.

*Philip L. Gailey grew up on a farm near Homer, Georgia, and graduated from the University of Georgia. He started his newspaper career with *The Atlanta Constitution* in the mid-60's and joined *The Miami Herald* in 1972. He was transferred to *The Herald's* Washington Bureau in 1973. Gailey left *The Herald* in 1977 and moved to the national reporting staff of *The Washington Star*. In 1981, after *The Star* folded, he joined the Washington Bureau of *The New York Times*. After 18 years in Washington, he moved to St. Petersburg in 1991 to become Editor of Editorials and a member of the Board of Directors of *The Times Publishing Company*. He was named Vice President earlier this year.*

To many white Christians, God was “up there” somewhere; Dr. King and his followers drew strength from their conviction that He was “down here”—the ultimate “outside agitator” leading them out of bondage.

It was during this time that I came to know two men—both heroes of mine—who taught me to distinguish between the church, which reflects the best and worst qualities of the people within it, and Christianity, a set of values that crosses denominational lines and transcends the mysteries of religion.

One was Ralph McGill, whose front-page column in *The Atlanta Constitution* was a beacon to people struggling against the racism and fear that poisoned Southern life, including the church. The other was Clarence Jordan, a Southern Baptist theologian who established Koinonia Farm outside Americus, Ga., less than 10 miles from Jimmy Carter’s home and place of business. Both men were reviled and hated by “God-fearing people” who considered them agents of the communist agenda and traitors to their race.

Although they didn’t know it, they were my rabbis. They believed that if man had faith in God he would better steer his life. I learned more about the meaning of Christianity from McGill and Jordan than from all the Sunday morning sermons I had ever heard. McGill, known around the world as the conscience of the South, spoke the terrible truth Southern Christians did not want to hear. Even as far back as the late ‘40’s and early ‘50’s he was preparing his readers for the day of reckoning on race he knew was coming.

“The Yellow Rats of Unadilla” read the headline over his column on April 11, 1950. A small black church outside Unadilla, Ga. planned to honor its 87-year-old pastor, who had been preaching more than 50 years, on Easter Sunday. A program, including a dinner, was planned. Two local white ministers were invited and agreed to attend. There were phone calls, and the black congregation sent word to the white ministers the event had been canceled. One of the ministers showed up anyway and

learned the truth: there had been threats against the church.

McGill thundered: “A few yellow rats had cast their shadow over that of the cross and its meaning. We can forget all the pretty hats—the fine sermons, the eloquent testimony to the meaning of the cross and the empty tomb—until we somehow mobilize the strength of Christianity so that any person who wishes to worship Christ is not afraid of the Ku Klux Klan or anything like it. When Christians are afraid to be Christians—especially on Easter Day—then the cross and the empty tomb have lost their meaning.”

That was a sermon that needed to be preached, and it took extraordinary courage for a big-city newspaper editor to confront the good church people of Unadilla, Ga. with the true meaning of Christianity four years before the U.S. Supreme Court struck down school segregation. I came across that column a decade after it was written and realized how little had changed.

One Sunday morning in 1963 a dynamite bomb exploded in a black church in Birmingham. Four little girls died in their Sunday school room. The city’s churches began a program of noon-day tolling of bells to call people to prayer. McGill wrote: “Those churches that did hear of the murders of the children paused for a minute of silent or spoken prayer. This was done in several Southern cities. The repelling humor of this exhibition was that almost without exception, those who offered such prayers were churches which ruthlessly, and sometimes physically, had refused admission to Negroes appearing for worship.” In those churches, he added, “modern Christianity has become chiefly a civic club ethic, not as well spelled out or promoted as that of Rotary.”

McGill, an Episcopalian who left his own Atlanta church, the Cathedral of St. Philip, after it resisted integration and found another that was open to worshippers of all races, was not what you would call a religious man. But he had a deep and abiding faith in the God of love and believed Christianity should be a force for racial healing and social

harmony. That it had largely been a force for division and racism in the South saddened him deeply. Many young ministers, including some who had been ejected from their pulpits for calling for tolerance, sought McGill’s advice and counsel. He urged them to stay in the ministry and helped them find new forums from which they could speak out.

In the course of reporting the civil rights story in Georgia I came to know Clarence Jordan, who was the closest thing to a true Christian I have ever known. In the 1940’s Jordan founded Koinonia, a racially integrated farm commune that exemplified his vision of a Christian community. Over the years it survived drive-by shootings, dynamite bombings and the boycott of its harvest by local merchants. Jordan was such a pariah that not even Jimmy Carter would go near Koinonia. On Sunday mornings, Jordan would lead an integrated group of farm workers to the front door of local white churches, where they would be turned away.

This gentle man’s Christian perspective sometimes made even his friends uncomfortable. Millard Fuller, his understudy at Koinonia, tells the story of a Baptist minister from Atlanta who went to Jordan with a problem. The minister was concerned that his church was paying its janitor only \$80 a week. The man had eight children and commuted a long distance to work. The minister had pleaded with the deacons to increase the janitor’s salary, but they said there was no extra money in the church budget.

“What can I do?” he asked Jordan.

Jordan asked a few questions. After establishing that the minister had only two children and was paid a substantially higher salary than the janitor, Jordan said, “Well, why not just swap salaries with him? That wouldn’t require any extra money in your budget. You live right here by the church, so you don’t have any commuting expenses, and you only have two children while he has eight. Surely you could live more easily on his salary than he can.”

Sensing his friend’s discomfort, Jor-

Trials of a Jehovah's Witness

BY GENE OWENS

dan asked what was wrong with that solution from a Christian perspective.

"There's nothing at all wrong with it, Clarence, from a Christian point of view," the minister replied. "That's why it upsets me."

A few years before his death, Jordan, appalled by the housing conditions in Sumter County, came up with the idea of building low-cost homes for poor black tenant farmers, including some who lived in shot-gun shacks on Carter's farm. The modest houses, the first of which went up in a pine thicket on Koinonia Farm, were sold at cost, with no interest. The buyers, if physically able, were required to help with the construction.

After Jordan's death, Millard Fuller took the seeds of Jordan's "Partnership Housing" and sowed them around the world. From those seeds came Habitat for Humanity, which has become the world's most inspirational housing program for the poor. Today, its most famous volunteer carpenter is Jimmy Carter, a former president of the United States who still teaches Sunday School at his Baptist church in Plains, Ga.

Clarence Jordan and Millard Fuller, unwelcome in local Christian churches, felt that God had called them not to judge others but to preach brotherhood and to build houses for the poor. They had the courage to act on their understanding of Christianity and make a difference in the world.

I was privileged to know Ralph McGill and Clarence Jordan all too briefly. I do believe I am a better journalist—and perhaps even a better person—because of their examples. They restored my faith. Now, let us open the hymn book. "...once blind, but now I see." ■

From the third grade on, I knew that I wanted to write. From early childhood, when my mother taught me the Lord's Prayer, the 23rd Psalm and the 100th Psalm, I wanted to please God.

It never occurred to me, as a young man growing up in the Bible Belt, that the two desires might conflict. But I learned fairly early that my religious beliefs, while they need not bar me from the craft I loved, might pose obstacles that could preclude my going to the top.

I grew up in a Southern cotton-mill town, Granitville, S.C., about 15 miles east of Augusta, Ga.

Granitville was a church town, with a rich mixture of Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Holiness and Nazarenes. My father never went to church, but he loudly proclaimed his belief in the Baptist faith. My mother's family were Jehovah's Witnesses, and they never missed an opportunity to direct my attention to the Bible and to provide me with Bible literature. I read it avidly, except for those occasions when my father found it and confiscated it. Though he professed Christianity, he had only a rudimentary education and never read the Bible. Yet he hated everything associated with the Witnesses.

In the tug of war between his uninformed beliefs and the well-developed theology of my maternal kinfolk, there was no contest. Though it would be years before I could take my stand as a Witness, my outlook on life was shaped by their teachings.

I was four years old when World War II broke out. Several adult relatives answered the call to arms and served overseas. One, Grady Rains Jr., was an active Jehovah's Witness. He took a stand as a conscientious objector and served out the war in a federal prison.

Growing up in the super-patriotic

atmosphere of a nation at war, I regarded my soldiering relatives as heroes. But I also admired my Uncle Grady's moral courage. Later, when it appeared that I might face the same choice, I found that standing up for an unpopular belief required more grit than following the crowd down the path of glory. I was proud, after the war, to learn of the thousands of German Jehovah's Witnesses who went to their deaths in Nazi concentration camps rather than support the Nazi regime and the armed forces that were slaughtering Allied soldiers and civilians by the million.

I went through high school during the early '50's, discussing my religious beliefs vigorously with my fellow students and developing my love for writing as Editor of the high-school newspaper. I worked an eight-hour shift as a laborer in the cotton mill during my



Gene Owens, 60, has been a journalist in Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama, and is now Political Editor of The Mobile Register. He has ghost-written a dozen books, mostly on business topics. He writes a Southern-flavored column of humor and philosophy as well as a column on English grammar called "Bubba's English." He likes to compile crosswords and enjoys reading history, especially the history of the Civil War era. He can sometimes be seen driving his restored 1956 Buick, with his small dog, Candi, perched on his shoulder.

senior year, except for a one-month stint as a fill-in editor of the company magazine.

I won a scholarship from the mill company and enrolled at the Henry W. Grady School of Journalism at the University of Georgia. There, my faith for the first time posed a conflict with my career interests.

Though my father's intense opposition had prevented me from becoming a practicing Witness, I was nevertheless concerned when I learned that the University of Georgia, as a land-grant institution, required male students to spend at least two years in the Reserve Officers Training Corps before they could graduate. The university informed me that nothing in its military-science program should offend a conscientious objector, and I accepted this assurance.

At the university, I was free for the first time to attend religious meetings, and began to participate in the activities of the congregation. I was baptized in 1955, at the age of 18, as a member of Jehovah's Witnesses.

By that time, I was already a fledgling journalist. In my freshman year, I had been appointed Feature Editor of the campus newspaper and had landed a part-time job covering police court and city hall for the local daily.

I had also learned a great deal more about Jehovah's Witnesses. A brief description of those beliefs might be in order.

Jehovah's Witnesses see themselves as a worldwide brotherhood that transcends national boundaries and national and ethnic loyalties. They believe that since Christ proclaimed that his kingdom was no part of the world and refused to accept a temporal crown, they too must keep separate from the world and refrain from political involvement. The problems of the world will not be solved by human governments, they believe, but by the heavenly kingdom that Jesus taught us to pray for in the Lord's Prayer.

As part of that worldwide brotherhood, I felt that I could not in good conscience participate in military training. I dropped out of ROTC after my

freshman year. That meant, of course, that I could not get a degree from the University of Georgia.

I could have transferred to a number of other schools that did not require military training. But my family had no college tradition, and I soon learned that entry-level pay at most newspapers was the same for a college drop-out as it was for a college graduate. So I dropped out in the middle of my sophomore year and took a job with the Augusta, Ga., Chronicle and Herald at a salary higher than anything my father had ever earned.

I could see little reason at the time for my career as a journalist to conflict with my beliefs as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

And indeed, there were few conflicts at first. As a reporter, and later state editor, of the Augusta newspapers, I had no reason to take sides politically. My job was to provide impartial coverage of political and other events. That requirement fit both my professional and my religious principles.

I found the editors of the newspaper quite tolerant of my religious faith. I remember the time my Managing Editor, John Harper, handed me a letter from a man who had attended a few meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses and therefore knew who I was. He asked my boss whether he knew that I was a member of "a subversive organization known as Jehovah's Witnesses."

I asked John what I should do with the letter.

"I'd throw it in the gutter, where we put all the other filth," he told me.

Later, Louis C. Harris, the Executive Editor of the newspapers, told me: "I don't care if you go out and marry a black woman. That's none of our business, so long as you do your job."

When a staunchly conservative deep-South editor makes a commitment like that in the midst of the civil-rights revolution, you know you've got a lot of job security.

Shortly after going to work for The Chronicle and Herald, I married Esther

Fox, a girl brought up among Jehovah's Witnesses. About a month after our marriage, I was called to Fort Jackson, S.C., for a pre-induction Army physical. I informed the personnel there that I could not conscientiously submit to military service.

One sergeant glared at me.

"Did your father serve in the Army?" he asked.

"Yes sir. He was in World War I."

"What does he think about you now?" he asked.

"He fought for what he believed in, and he expects me to stand up for what I believe in," I told him. Dad's attitude toward the Witnesses had mellowed considerably.

"What do you do when you're covering a parade and the flag goes by?"

"I stand there respectfully," I said. Jehovah's Witnesses don't approve of showing disrespect for the flag.

The military cup was allowed to pass. Within a year, I was the father of a healthy boy, and the Army was not drafting fathers at that time.

The area of news coverage that created the greatest temptation for political involvement was the civil-rights struggle. I sympathized with the black youths who demonstrated for equal opportunity and equal treatment.

I knew that Jehovah's Witnesses taught obedience to human law whenever it did not conflict with divine law, but I also knew that their publications taught racial tolerance and racial equality. So long as state laws forbade mixing of the races, we obeyed them, but at the first legal and practical opportunity, we integrated our meetings, and we now are probably the most integrated religious group in the country.

I remember once when we were going from house to house in Barnwell, S.C., giving brief Bible presentations and leaving literature with the householders. A local lawyer saw us working in a neighborhood of black families and called the police to us. I read the police officer a decision from the South Carolina Supreme Court, which held that our work was legal.

The policeman apparently failed to grasp the distinction between the state Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court.

"I don't agree with a lot of things the Supreme Court's been saying," he said, and ordered us to stop distributing our literature. I appealed to the mayor, who told us we couldn't distribute our literature without a license.

We returned and began speaking with the householders directly from the Bible. Even a segregationist cop couldn't argue with that right. I wrote an article for my newspaper describing the encounter, but John Harper gently turned it down: "You're too close to this, Gene," he said.

Later, I opened a news bureau in Barnwell from which I covered a four-county area for *The Chronicle*. The lawyer didn't recognize me in my journalistic role, and he became a good news source.

My faith and my career finally came into direct conflict after I had migrated to Norfolk, Va., and began working for *The Ledger-Star* and *The Virginian-Pilot*.

After several years as a *Ledger-Star* reporter and a stint as Assistant City Editor, I was offered a chance to move to the editorial page. Executive Editor Perry Morgan wanted to make a dramatic change in the editorial page of the afternoon newspaper. We went to an innovative layout, with signed editorials, written in the first-person singular.

I considered Perry my journalistic mentor, and I accepted the job, even though I knew it would take me dangerously close to a compromise with my political neutrality. Perry never knew about this moral conflict, or I'm sure he wouldn't have played the role of tempter. I had great latitude in choosing the topics I would write on, and I avoided heavy-duty political topics in favor of off-beat subjects and those that dealt with moral questions. Nevertheless, my editorials generated more letters to the editor than those of any of the other writers.

After a year of this, I was placed in charge of *The Virginia Beach Beacon*, a

zoned edition of *The Ledger and Pilot* that went into 65,000 homes. I instituted an opinion page, with my column as the principal conveyer of opinion. Again, I chose my topics carefully. I was an elder in my congregation by then, and spoke regularly from platforms around the Tidewater area. I periodically checked with fellow elders to assure myself that I wasn't crossing any boundaries. But I was on the slippery slope. From *The Beacon*, I went to *The Virginian-Pilot* to become Senior Associate Editor on the editorial page of the flagship publication of Landmark Communications. It involved a substantial pay increase and a shot at the editorship of the newspaper.

I rationalized that, as the writer of unsigned editorials, I was simply serving as a mouthpiece for the publisher, much as a lawyer serves as a mouthpiece for his client.

My editor was J. Harvie Wilkinson III, a former University of Virginia law professor who went on to a position on the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Jay Wilkinson had an incredibly incisive mind. By the time we held our morning editorial conferences, he would already have devoured several newspapers, would have chosen the editorial topics for the next day, and would have specified, point by point, what positions the newspaper would take. Normally, I would have resented this micromanagement, but I was actually grateful to Jay for taking this burden off my conscience.

When Jay left the newspaper to resume his legal career, I was one of the candidates for the editorship. In a memorandum to the newspaper's principal owner, I laid out my religious beliefs as candidly as I knew how. I stated my position as a conscientious objector to military service. I didn't get the job, but was offered a position at comparable pay at *Landmark's Roanoke Times & World News*, a newspaper of 120,000 circulation, on the opposite end of the state.

No one ever told me, but I suspect that the ownership was wary of placing a conscientious objector in charge of its

flagship newspaper in a market that was home to upwards of 200,000 active or retired military personnel. In addition, a candidate with much higher academic credentials was available. Terry Eastland, who was later to serve in Ronald Reagan's administration, got the job. I understood the choice, and was grateful for an opportunity to employ my skills in Roanoke, a pleasant city of 100,000 nestled in Virginia's Blue Ridge mountains.

In Roanoke, I continued to soothe my conscience with the thought that I was a spokesman for the publisher and not an architect of editorial policy.

But I was misleading myself. First Barton Morris and then Walter Rugaber, as President and Publisher, exercised extremely light control over editorial policy. Basically, they established a spacious ballpark and allowed me freedom to take positions on specific issues.

I also wrote a personal column, usually on political or philosophical subjects. The column was well-read and often hotly criticized in strongly conservative Virginia.

My crisis of conscience occurred in 1983, two years after my move to Roanoke. My wife, Esther, had been plagued with emotional problems since adolescence. After 26 years of marriage, she took her own life through carbon-monoxide poisoning.

I married Peggy Conner Bates, my college-days sweetheart. We had been baptized together as Jehovah's Witnesses.

In the aftermath of the tragedy and the early years of my second marriage, I did some intensive soul-searching and decided that to find peace, I needed to bring my life into alignment with my conscience.

I informed Walter Rugaber that I could no longer continue as an editorial-page editor. *Landmark* had no comparable position to offer on the news side.

So I penned a farewell column. In it, I explained the Witnesses' worldwide-brotherhood concept and the basis for our political neutrality:

"For many years now, my life has moved along two tracks—one secular, one religious," I explained. "On nights and weekends, I have been placing my faith in a heavenly government determined to replace all earthly governments with something infinitely better. On weekdays during business hours, I have been pontificating on ways the existing world system can best perpetuate itself.

"Out of the secular side of my mouth, I have been recommending that people put their faith in human policies and the political systems behind them. Out of the religious side of my mouth, I have been telling people that these policies are doomed to failure and the systems behind them are doomed to destruction.

"The two tracks have not been getting any closer, and riding them simultaneously has forced me, emotionally, into a precarious spread-eagle stance. My professional career pulls me one way. My spiritual inclinations pull me another. Something has to give.

"A young man as yet untouched by calamity may cheerfully make the Faustian bargain, trading eternity for the good life here and now. But as the years bring their calamities, he begins searching for sustaining strength. Woe to him if he has bargained that strength away."

I told the story of Esther's suicide and my struggle to regain emotional equilibrium for me and my adolescent son.

"In the lonely hours of self-examination," I wrote, "when all the what-ifs descended like sandbags on already-sagging shoulders, I came to realize that I could not carry the burden alone. I realized the need for a change in my relationship with Jehovah and his Christ. It was a change that would require me to give up something dear to me: my career as an opinion writer, and a profitable relationship with an enlightened, tolerant and honorable corporation."

I left Roanoke for High Point, N.C., where from 1990 to 1993 I became, basically, a ghost writer for professional speakers and consultants. The income was far less than what I had earned in

journalism, but I had expected that. It also left me with far less job security—a source of great anxiety for a man who had never in his adult life worried about where his next paycheck would come from.

To get some security, I took a job in 1992 as City Editor of a small newspaper in Tennessee—at less than half of what I had earned in Roanoke. In the meantime, I continued my ghost writing. But after a year of this, my core client had several projects that demanded my full-time attention, and since I couldn't meet my obligations on the small newspaper's salary, I had to leave newspapers once more.

After another year of ghost writing, I looked for a position that would enable me to build up my retirement nest egg. I would have preferred a high-level writing job, but nothing was on the horizon for a person my age with my salary requirements.

In the spring of 1994, however, an old friend called me from Mobile, Ala., and told me that The Mobile Register was trying to shake off its longstanding reputation for mediocrity and was looking for senior editors. Among the questions asked in my initial interview was whether I would be willing to take over the editorial page. My answer was no.

I joined The Mobile Register as Assistant Managing Editor and writing coach. After 15 years outside a major news department, I felt lost at first amid the new technology and a staff organization I didn't quite comprehend.

Then Stan Tiner, a Nieman Fellow who is The Register's aggressive and imaginative Editor and Vice President for news, began to give me an opportunity to write. At last I felt back in my element.

Stan asked me to take on the job of supervising political coverage for the newspaper. It's a playing manager's job, and a demanding one. Some of my fellow Witnesses wonder how I can cover politics without compromising my political neutrality. I explain that my job description calls for the kind of objective treatment that my religious scruples require.

Stan Tiner has allowed me to de-

velop as a writer even as I put in my time as an editor. As an employee of a Newhouse paper, I enjoy the fringe benefits a large corporation can offer, and the Newhouse pension plan adds to my retirement security. I know that I will never again have the earning power or community status I enjoyed as Editorial-Page Editor in Roanoke, but I don't need it.

Had I chosen to live my life as a non-Witness, participating fully in contemporary society, I'm sure I would have gone further in my career. But I don't look back. I've discovered that contentment involves much more than a big income and public acclaim. You achieve true contentment when you achieve peace with yourself, peace with your fellow man, and peace with God. If I can bring my career to a close with that kind of achievement, I will consider myself successful. ■

A. James Rudin Religious Messages Through the Media



While all religions are surely particular, unique in their rituals, teachings and doctrine, they all seek to influence the larger society. However, the dissemination of religious ideas and any influence stemming from them can be only achieved through the media.—*Rabbi A. James Rudin, National Interreligious Affairs Director, The American Jewish Committee, at the Hillel Foundation, Congregation Beth Israel, University of Missouri, March 26, 1997.*

The Martin Luther King Jr. Impact

BY EUGENE PATTERSON

Martin Luther King Jr. forced us white Southerners to contemplate our Christian claims. He had a dream that left us nowhere to hide in the Bible Belt.

I wasn't the only reader of *The Atlanta Constitution* whose great granddaddy had died in Confederate uniform. But as Editor in the 1960's, and working at the shoulder of Ralph McGill, I labored to help the white man change while the black man struggled to wait.

If God didn't have a hand in certain events, I'm convinced he was looking over Southern shoulders with some interest. For instance:

"I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping." —Psalms 102:9

The Rev. Thomas J. Holmes was a big, rangy Southern Baptist preacher who was called in 1964 to the pulpit of Tattnall Square Baptist Church on the corner of the Mercer University campus in Macon. By 1966, a black from Ghana who had been recruited to Mercer by Baptist missionaries tried to attend services at Tattnall Square Church. The ushers threw him out. The deacons bluntly reminded the preacher this was a segregated church. Tom Holmes reminded them of God's biblical command that "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples," and said he could not consent to deny any person entrance to the altar of his church. The deacons told him he apparently did not understand the nature of his employment and suggested he repent. Tom and his wife came to see me at *The Constitution* in that period and told me what was going on. His doughty wife, Grace, told me the

pastorium at Tattnall Square was the prettiest house she'd ever lived in and she did hate to leave it. But looking proudly at her husband, she said, "I know we can't stay there." He knew it too. He stayed and preached sermons of brotherhood until the deacons fired him. His book, "Ashes for Breakfast," (The Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1969) tells the cruel story gently.

Job

The plain, hard-working cafeteria owner came to my *Constitution* office near tears in early 1963. "You have bankrupted me!" he said. Our editorials had urged owners of Atlanta eating places to integrate voluntarily and show the world they didn't need to be forced to do the right thing by a federal public accommodations law, which Congress, of course, had to pass in 1964.

A few upscale restaurants had opened their doors to blacks. But this man's cafeterias were for working-class folk. And the day he'd decided to admit blacks, segregationist pickets led by a future Georgia governor, Lester Maddox, put picket lines in front of all his cafeterias and the public would not cross them. I tried to comfort the distraught owner by telling him his children would be very proud of him some day for doing the right thing when it was hard to do. Since that seemed to offer him little solace in his immediate crisis, and since I knew him to be a deeply religious man, I suggested he go home and read, that night, the Book of Job. (He later told me, "You know, that Job really DID have problems.") I did not wait for divine intervention, I'm afraid. Instead I telephoned the late Atlanta police chief, Herbert Jenkins, and told him the story. "Oh, I can fix that," the chief said.

"It's a very logical police guess that whoever blew up that church in Birmingham the other day and killed those little Negro Sunday school girls might be right here in Atlanta today. Whether they're in these picket lines or not, I'm going to send uniformed officers with cameras to every one of those cafeterias tomorrow morning and snap close-up pictures of every man in those lines."

Every picket vanished by nightfall. The cafeterias' patronage returned.

Ora et Labora

I'd not really expected to hear from the abbot of the Trappist monastery at Conyers, Georgia, who was a friend of mine, but there he was on the phone to my office at *The Atlanta Constitution*. "The lay brothers want to make the stained glass," he said. I told him that was great.

White night riders in Terrell County, Georgia, had burned down three ramshackled black churches where civil rights workers were registering blacks to vote. I wrote a column suggesting my



Eugene Patterson is Editor Emeritus of The St. Petersburg Times.

Every Journalist Has a Credo

BY LINDSAY MILLER

white kinsmen in the God-fearing state of Georgia might want to build those churches back. I named a prominent Baptist preacher in Atlanta as treasurer, and specified that no rich givers were wanted. Rather, I hoped small contributions from just us little people could give a greater testimony.

The nickels, dimes and quarters came in scotch-taped to tablet paper, many with penciled notes at the bottom. A typical one said: "I got no use for this integration thing. But no man's got no call to burn down another man's place of worship."

The \$10,000 that came in was ample. Atlanta architect Joe Amisano designed the three churches for free and found a contractor who put them up at cost. The monks' stained glass gave them light. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. dedicated them. I would guess the Lord was not displeased.

Suffer The Little Ones

Journalists I've known shy from piety. Yet we learned in covering the century's greatest domestic story that the telling news didn't happen far from a church house. That fact added thump, again and again, as we strove to write, for Southerners, accounts that could bring down home the brute history of the time. When The Atlanta Constitution desk phoned me at home one terrible September Sunday afternoon in 1963 I went to the office and banged out in 30 minutes a column from the heart of a father who had a nine-year-old daughter of his own. It was rough, uneven and overwrought, I can see now, a third of a century later. But Walter Cronkite got wind of it and gave over a huge chunk of his little evening television newscast to a film of me reading the whole thing nationwide on CBS. The hundreds of letters and telegrams that flooded in afterward humbled and educated me on television's capacity to amplify the news, not to mention a church's connection to the better angels of human nature. ■

The precise moment journalism and religion came together for me was my senior year in college. I was in the library, reading The New York Times. There on page one was a story by Edward B. Fiske about a new trend in liberal Protestant theology: "the death of God." *That's so cool*, I thought. To be a reporter and write about religion.

I set my sights on a career in journalism when I was 15 and The Richmond News Leader was paying me 25 cents an inch to write for the youth page.

The attraction to religion goes further back. Born into the Presbyterian church, I grew up loving its ritual, its hymns and its sense of community. My family always sat in the fourth row. We knew everyone around us. This was the dawn of the civil rights era. In my well-off WASP world, the church was one of the few places I actually learned, "Yellow, red and black and white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world."

That winter morning when I read about the death of God in the Wellesley College library, I wrote a letter: "Dear Mr. Fiske, I would like your job someday. Do I need to go to seminary first? Should I take the news assistant's job I've been offered at The Wall Street Journal?" To his everlasting credit, Fiske wrote back. He said seminary could come later, but the best way to be a journalist is be a journalist. He also said, "If you're ever in New York, I'll buy you a cup of coffee." I took the next bus.

Walking into The Times cafeteria, we passed giant photographs of Pulitzer Prize-winners. "Our hagiology," Fiske said. *How cool*, I thought. Using theological language in ordinary conversation. Afterward, I rushed to the dictionary to make sure he was talking about saints.

I never became a religion writer. I learned about religion and television writing from two master craftsmen: Charles Kuralt and Bill Moyers. I don't think Charles was much of a church-going man. For one thing, he put in a lot of Sunday mornings on "CBS News Sunday

Morning." So did I. If I had to choose one word for Charles, I would say decent. Maybe that is a Southernism. I mean he had a good heart. He elevated people instead of knocking them down. He worshipped words.

Moyers, an ordained Baptist minister, is not soft on religion. His view is that religious institutions are a lot like Noah's Ark. If it weren't for the storm outside, you couldn't stand the smell inside. Moyers interviews the scalawags, but he also talks to saints, sometimes embodied in the same person. He taught me that the best questions are often words of one syllable. "How?" "Why?"

The announcement of God's death was premature, at least for billions of believers. Religious intolerance and religious illiteracy have not disappeared, either. Remember the hours following the Oklahoma City bombing, when "terrorist experts" were all over CNN speculating which Muslim group did it. Nieman Reports has asked a provocative question in this issue: Does having a personal faith affect a journalist's professional work? In my view, every journalist has a credo. I remember an editor at The Post whose mantra was "Life sucks, and then you die."

All of us stand someplace to look at the world. We stand among a pile of assumptions about politics, economics, science and religion. If our job is to report how someone else sees things, we have to bend over backwards, listen hard, and *let facts stand in the way* of a good story. Otherwise, we're writing our own propaganda. ■



Lindsay Miller, Nieman Fellow 1988, is a freelance writer and producer based in Cambridge. For seven years preceding her Nieman fellowship, she wrote and produced for Charles Kuralt at CBS News in New York. That doesn't seem so long ago until you look at the electric typewriter.

The Journalist's Trade



FBI PHOTO

In reporting the arrest and trial of Timothy McVeigh for the Oklahoma City bombing, much of the media did not even attempt to answer the major question raised by the crime—why would he commit it? Dick J. Reavis found the answer in the burnout of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas. He was so appalled by the tabloid mentality of journalists covering the McVeigh trial in Denver that he refused to cooperate with them when he testified for the defense. Here is his story.

Understanding Timothy McVeigh

Why a Reporter Would Ignore the Media

BY DICK J. REAVIS

In mid-June I was called to Denver as an expert witness for the defense in the trial of Timothy McVeigh. My role was minor, but it created new conundrums for me. Having become a potential source instead of a reporter, I had to decide how—and whether—to face the press.

My job was to tell the court what McVeigh knew or believed about the 1993 events at Waco, about the raid and siege of the Mt. Carmel complex and the death of David Koresh's clan. My authority did not derive from anything that McVeigh had told me, nor did I know what he thought. Instead, I was to explain what he might have learned, or come to believe, from magazines and video tapes. McVeigh's lawyers had asked me to testify because I was familiar with the literature that had influenced him, and because I had written the definitive book about the Waco events. In Denver I became, in effect, the voice of a defendant who would not take the stand.

Like anyone who still thinks of himself as a journalist—though I am now out of the trade—I flinch when the word “court” is mentioned in connection with my name. Courts usually mean trouble and peril for reporters. When we're not being sued for libel, in court we're usually being pressured to reveal confidential sources. Reporters do not like to cross the bar.

I agreed to testify because journalistic aversions weren't the only factors in mind. During the guilt phase of the trial prosecutors had brought up Waco and had spoken as if the flames over Mt. Carmel were nothing of consequence. Their confidence, I thought, challenged

Waco critics to respond by telling the story as we know it—the story of a needless raid, of draconian lawmen, of propagandists and hacks: a story about how the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms raised its flag in victory over the embers of Mt. Carmel, as if it had taken Iwo Jima from the Japanese. I had never turned down an opportunity to talk to a public forum about Waco, and I didn't think that I ever would. But in Denver, I decided to shun the press.

Reporters had camped under canopies outside the federal courthouse. Photographers roamed the block and sometimes kept surveillance outside the defense team's offices and hotel. They wanted eye candy, scenes to be used as a backdrop for voice-overs. They wanted us to walk down their runway, like models in an Oscar de la Renta show. They wanted to turn McVeigh's lawyers, relatives and friends—and me—into visual props.

Some of them chased and shouted at furtive witnesses. Poor Bill McVeigh, the defendant's father, for example. He'd been pestered for weeks; CNN was showing footage of him riding his lawn mower at home. He and other kinfolk went to court in a van with covered windows, entering the building from a protected delivery bay. I went in the same vehicle because I saw no reason to throw myself to visual wolves.

Before I testified, Stephen Jones, McVeigh's lead attorney, asked me to allow a camera crew to film our preparation, and I had acceded to his request. But when the crew turned on its recording devices, I saw that my testimony would not review television re-

portage of the Mt. Carmel events, because that “coverage” had been too inaccurate and superficial to be of use. After I took the stand, a radio and a television network called. I turned down their interviews.

Though my decision to snub and upbraid my former peers was made in Denver, my attitude antedated the trial. It had taken root in the years surrounding the reign of Carlos Salinas, when I wrote extensively, and against the grain, about Mexico. Salinas, the press told us time and again, was Mexico's savior. I knew most of the nation's Mexico correspondents, and I don't believe that any of them ever really bought that line: editors and investors authored it in offices far from the scene. If I can't prove that charge, still, the facts speak for themselves. The press got Mexico wrong—that is discreetly conceded today—and yet heads did not roll in the



PHOTO BY WILL VAN OVERBEEK

Dick J. Reavis, Nieman Fellow 1990, is a former Senior Editor of Texas Monthly. He is the author of “Conversations With Moctezuma” (William Morrow, 1990) and “The Ashes of Waco” (Simon & Schuster, 1995). He is now a graduate student in English at the University of Texas at Arlington.

newsrooms. Is that because Mexico was inscrutable, or because editors and publishers were partisan to the Salinas myth?

My Mexico suspicions were reinforced by what I learned about Waco in the easiest and simplest way. In 1994, in the basement of a lawyer's office, I found 14,000 pages of documents, transcripts of telephone conversations between Mt. Carmel's residents and the FBI—a virtual book of stuff. These transcripts told a story that was unreported, a story that did not reflect kindly on the handling of the Mt. Carmel standoff by the ATF, the FBI, or the press. I freely told other journalists that I had these documents in hand, but nobody wanted to look at them. For most of those who had "covered" the standoff, Mt. Carmel had ceased to be a story when it burned to the ground—as if the story had been only a visual event.

During the 1995 Waco House hearings, a staged event, the press once again glanced at the Waco scenario. One afternoon an ATF commander testified that he had never heard the phrase "element of surprise" in a Mt. Carmel context until after the February 28 assault. His testimony flew in the face of his agency's evaluation of that bloody raid. It pointed to a cover-up of some kind. When his report was pursued—as it ultimately was, inside the bureaucracy, and by the House, but not in the press—at least one agency executive was censured for lying and eased out of his job. What the commander had told Congress was news: it was important and nobody had heard anything like it before.

But the dailies focused their stories on that day's testimony from a teenager who said that David Koresh had raped her. Keri Jewell's tale had nothing to do with what the Congress was investigating, namely, the abuse of federal power. (The federal government, suffice it to say, has no jurisdiction over child abuse.) The following morning I asked a reporter for a prestigious daily why she had failed to mention the commander's testimony with even a single word. "Well, Kiri Jewell's testimony was more dramatic," she said.

"What is your business, drama or journalism?" I'd demanded. She turned her back and walked away, and I learned my lesson: even among reporters, turning one's back to the press is now a breach of etiquette, but not a breach of ethics.

Had I spoken to the press at Denver, I know what I'd have been asked. The key question would have been: "Do you think that what happened in Waco mitigates the murder of 168 people?" The television network whose interview I declined wanted me to talk about whether McVeigh's death sentence was justified. Those topics involve moralizing, speculating—gossiping. When I was a reporter, my job was to get the facts straight. If the rest of the press had done its job at Waco, there would have been no point in writing my book, no courtroom appearance by me—and, I suspect, no bomb at Oklahoma City. That little bit of speculation and that little bit of moralizing is not what my beseechers wanted to air. After all, it was McVeigh and not the press who was on trial.

A year ago I became a full-time student. I miss being a reporter, and I don't want to offend anyone who means well—but what I miss, I think, has already died. The business of today's press, in real terms, is not investigation, and it is not reporting. It is not making the miserable more comfortable or the

comfortable more ill at ease. It is not the analysis of daily life, or anything as droll as that. Instead, by and large, the business of the press is creating Salinas-like fairy tales and Koreshian monster stories. Even the print media have become an adjunct of Disney, in more ways than one.

I can't explain what I think without concocting clunky terms. What's happening is that the print media are being "audio-visualized" and "profitized." We talk about "tabloid TV," as if television picked up its vices from print, and maybe it did. But today, influence flows in the other direction. Newspapers and magazines are aping Geraldo and Oprah.

As the abandonment of Waco after the burning of Mt. Carmel shows, the print media, trying to hold their own, are adopting the logic of the tube. In a recent "Readings" column in Harper's, former newspaper reporter Gabriel García Márquez tells it like it is: "Jour-



COURTESY OF FIFTH ESTATE PRODUCTIONS

Branch Davidians invoke case of Rodney King, beaten by Los Angeles police. Their flag waves from compound.

nalists have lost sight of, or given up on, their most critical and demanding objectives—the detailed and truthful reconstruction of an event.” Newspaper and magazine stories today, García says, are too often built around interviews, too rarely around legwork.

News is coming less from the street and more from the power lunch, the press conference, the exclusive interview. Our sources have gone upscale. The change gives reporters better lunches, it is true—but its downside is that our readerships are going upscale, too: print is becoming an élite rather than mass media. Print provides detail to fill-in and confirm the broad-brush stories told by television. It gives its readers more information than television—but not information of a different kind, origin, or point of view. The reporter for the print media finds himself, for example, writing down the words whose spoken form television and radio record, rather than leafing through the pages of documents that would be dead on arrival as audio or visual elements. Celebrities dominate magazine content and covers, nobody wants to create a stir. Less often do

reporters find and develop a story on their own; more often, they attend the events where that story is spun. The sovereign, solitary and sometimes idiosyncratic reporter has been replaced by the pack. Teamwork and consensus—pack virtues—are today’s bywords, originality, doggedness and passion are passé.

Trade organs talk about the deleterious effects of media mergers and takeovers by non-news companies, but only infrequently do they name the real consequences. Like doctors whose hospitals have been purchased by HMO’s, journalists are being deprofessionalized: not our conscience, not our instincts, not our curiosity, not our civic concern—none of these can now be our guides. Medicine is becoming the servant of the insurance business, journalism, an adjunct to the entertainment industry. Workers in both fields are beholden to a common master, abstract capital, lines in a quarterly stockholder’s report. No wonder that we have become as standardized, homogenous—accepted and doubted—as the dollar bill.

Our contemporary role is demeaning. It calls for us to amplify scandal and to exemplify hypocrisy. We must cry loudly for punishment when soldiers and sexual shenanigans are linked, or when athletes trample a sport’s ideals. But the script does not require us to clean our own house when the standards of journalism aren’t met—so long as those of entertainment are satisfied. Like greenbacks in an inflationary period, if it’s true that nobody can live without us, it’s also true that everyone doubts what we represent. Even the tradition by which reporters quit their jobs when their stories were spiked—and in so doing, enhanced the value of our trade—has been laid aside; inner-office confrontation is kitsch today. Like the public figures they trail, reporters are losing credibility with every performance. But that’s beside the point. In journalism, wrestling and Hollywood, it’s now drama and not credibility that builds box office receipts.

If what journalists do is less and less in good taste, it is also less and less benign. The difference between Timothy McVeigh and the press is not only the difference between intellectual misdeeds, like the fables of Salinas and Waco, and material crimes. Nor is it that one party takes the stand, while the other exploits his rights: both confess their offenses only in an oblique way. But the Oklahoma bomber has been held accountable. When I went to Denver, justice was in the works for him. Speaking for Timothy McVeigh in court was not dishonorable. Speaking to or for an unrepentant press may be. ■



COURTESY OF FIFTH ESTATE PRODUCTIONS

Plea for help from press hangs from top floor window of compound.

Letters to the Editor

Nieman Reports welcomes letters commenting on the magazine or on any issue of interest to journalism. Please send to Nieman Reports, 1 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138 or by E-mail to nreditor@harvard.edu

What They're Saying



Mike McCurry Too Much Politics, Not Enough Policy

There used to be some real demarcation between campaigning and governing. They were seen as two distinct episodes in our life as a nation politically. Increasingly I think they are not separated so much and the White House is covered by the press as an ongoing political entity. I would describe the White House beat as being a political beat. It is not a substance beat. It is not a policy beat... I worked at the State Department before working at the White House. The extraordinary differences between the two press corps and what they do has really left a personal impression on me. So they really are different entities and I think there is some damage in always covering the White House as a political entity. There is plenty of politics at the White House day in and day out. I'm not suggesting [there isn't]. I'm saying it is not a place that can solely be covered [by] the politics of the moment. The place has probably got different nuances and rhythms and subtleties, too. It ought to be covered with a little more sophistication.—*Mike McCurry, White House Press Secretary, at a seminar at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, March 11, 1997.*

Will Volunteerism Remain a Story?

Asked whether the Philadelphia conference on volunteerism would lead to continuing coverage of the subject, guests on "On the Media," the National Public Radio show hosted by Alex Jones, replied as follows on May 4, 1997:

Marc Kaufman On National Agenda



I think that the subject of volunteerism and community service has definitely been placed on a national agenda, and I think that there are going to be a lot of newspapers and outlets who are going to be looking at it. There are a lot of fairly easy ways now to look at it in terms of "did this company meet the commitment it was going to" and that can lead to some of the deeper kinds of questions.—*Marc Kaufman, The Philadelphia Inquirer.*

James Ledbetter We'll Forget It



My sense is that we'll forget it. That's unfortunate. That may be a cynical view, but I think that... most media organizations are not structured in a way to get at this story in a way that is going to be effective for follow-up. I think that if they are not asking the harder questions when this is in the spotlight they are very unlikely to do so when it's out of the spotlight.—*James Ledbetter, Press Clips columnist, The Village Voice.*

Changing Values in the Newsroom

A Survey of Daily Newspaper Staff Members

BY M. DAVID ARANT
AND PHILIP MEYER

Some scholars see recent pressures on the American news media bringing journalists to a crossroads of ethical practice. For example, Professor Conrad Fink of the University of Georgia, updating his textbook, "Media Ethics," finds that "everywhere are signs of ethical deterioration." Professors David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit of Indiana University note "a rising tide of concern about media ethics."

Newspaper circulations that have been stagnant or declining since the 1960's and the resulting shrinking market penetration have led newspapers to try to reinvent themselves to recapture the attention of the disappearing readers. Marketing pressures have transformed both the design and content of newspapers as they seek to capture nonsubscribers and retain readers. One aspect of the change in the economic climate in which newspapers' income sources are under siege is that news editors can no longer ignore the business side of newspapers. In addition, the trend toward public ownership of newspaper companies has exposed their news and editorial sides to the market's pressures for short-term profitability.

Meanwhile, the public journalism movement seeks to redefine the journalist's role and, in the view of some (but not all) observers, alters journalism ethics. Public journalism casts

the press in a proactive role of presenting information to the readers to motivate community action in order to solve problems and of creating the forum for citizens to become politically active. This role is viewed by critics as a threat to the traditional journalism ethic that calls on journalists to be fair, balanced and detached in their presentation of the news. Journalistic objectivity was central to this perception of credibility.

The economic climate that created the model of the objective, passive jour-

nalist has changed in recent decades. In 1967, about 72 percent of adults in the United States read a newspaper every day. In 1996, according to the General Social Survey, the number was down to 42 percent. Declining market penetration of daily newspapers opened the door for other media to challenge the daily newspaper for advertising dollars.

Accompanying the questioning of journalistic roles and values is the dramatic erosion of public confidence in



Philip Meyer (on the right) is a Knight professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His earlier work on newspaper ethics was published in 1987 as "Ethical Journalism," and has been reprinted under the same title by University Press of America. He was a member of the 1967 class of Nieman Fellows and spent 23 years with Knight-Ridder in Miami and Washington, D.C.

M. David Arant teaches journalism at the University of Memphis. His Ph.D. in Mass Communication Research is from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He also has an advanced degree in theology from Emory University and has served as a minister at several Methodist churches in South Carolina. He teaches media law, ethics and research methods.

news professionals' ethical standards during the 1980's and 1990's. A January 1996 poll by the Freedom Forum found that most people said they distrusted the news media as a whole and only 19 percent rated ethical standards of journalists as high or very high. In a December 1996 Harris poll 75 percent of American adults said that there was political bias at work in journalism and only a third said that the media dealt fairly with all sides. In a 1996 Gallup poll, only 23 percent of the public rated television reporters as having either high or very high honesty and ethical standards, and even fewer respondents (17 percent) rated newspaper reporters as having high or very high ethical standards.

Our study attempts to test by empirical methods whether traditional journalism values have changed in the newsrooms of U.S. daily newspapers. The hypothesis is that U.S. daily newspaper journalists' commitment to traditional newsroom values has eroded. Research questions include: (1) How have values in the newsroom changed? (2) What new values have emerged in the newsroom? (3) Have the business pressures generated from the ownership of newspapers by publicly-traded companies changed values in the newsroom? We found the following:

- Some newsroom values have remained constant and some have shifted. Virtually all of the shifts have been in the direction of greater, not reduced, ethical sensitivity.
- Sensitivity has increased in the same areas where recent highly visible ethical problems have been discussed and cited as examples of falling standards — including electronic eavesdropping and financial conflict of interest.
- Staffs at investor-owned companies are no different in their values, but many of them worry about the effect of such ownership on their ability to implement those values.

Despite the optimistic nature of these results, we worry that present values of newspaper staffs might not be good predictors of the future. As the oldest segment of the mass communications

industry, newspapers are expected to be conservative defenders of traditional values. Whether it is in their power to maintain that defense in the changing economic and social climate is beyond the scope of this study.

Method

As a base, we used a 1982 study, commissioned by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, of the professional values of newspaper publishers, editors and staff members. We have replicated most of the staff segment of that study. In addition to demographic questions, the questionnaire asked journalists to respond to hypothetical ethical situations dealing with issues such as conflict of interest, privacy, misrepresentation and objectivity as well as questions about journalism practice at the respondent's newspaper and more general questions about the respondent's attitude toward journalism practice and ethics.

In sampling, we had to deal with the paradox that most newspapers are small while most readers receive the larger papers. A simple random sample of the 1,514 daily newspapers would over-represent the readers of small papers and exclude many who read the larger papers. A sample design can represent readers or it can represent newspapers, but it can't do justice to both. As in the 1982 study, we chose to represent readers. Our initial sample of 1,000 news-editorial staff members at American daily newspapers was therefore drawn with the probability of selection proportionate to the size of the daily circulation. We did this by taking the circulation numbers in the 1996 Editor & Publisher Yearbook and statistically stacking all the issues of daily newspapers on top of one another for a total weekday circulation of 58,620,032. We chose a random starting point between zero and 58,620 and then pulled a newspaper from the stack at every 58,620th newspaper to yield the sample of 1,000.

Both the 1982 and 1996 samples were in this way designed to be self-weighting, representing journalists serving a random selection of newspaper

readers in the United States. Of course, newspapers with a circulation greater than 58,620 would have the chance of being selected more than once. The Wall Street Journal, the newspaper with the largest daily circulation, was selected 31 times, and surveys were sent to 31 Journal staffers. In the 1982 study, only one staff response was sought from each newspaper, and those with multiple hits were given their proportional representation by replicating responses from the one interview obtained. Because such weights inflate the sample size and artificially reduce the variance, we did separate computer runs when testing the significance of differences between the 1982 and 1996 studies. The percentages we report use the replications, but significance tests were done after reweighting the 1982 sample to give each respondent equal impact.

For the first and second hits at a newspaper in the 1996 sample, we chose at random two names from the 1996 Editor & Publisher Yearbook. For larger newspapers with more than two hits, the third and subsequent staff members were chosen at random from the bylines of local staff writers in a particular issue of the newspaper. The approach to the selection ensured that both supervisors as well as reporters and other staff members would be included in the sample. This method was roughly equivalent to the one used in 1982. In that survey, the highest-ranking editor of each newspaper was interviewed by telephone and asked to name one staff member, based on a rotated list of newsroom job functions. That method also produced a mix of reporters and supervisors.

In November 1996, we mailed 1,000 questionnaires containing approximately 100 variables and coded with identification numbers for response tracking. A total of 617 editors and news-editorial staffers from 375 different newspapers responded for a 62 percent response rate. This was significantly less than the 72.5 percent response rate achieved in the earlier study. Possible causes are (1) the absence of ASNE support for this study which had helped motivate respondents in 1982,

(2) declining support for polls in general, or (3) the undetected disappearance of some of the respondents from our sample frame due to the time lag between Editor & Publisher's data collection and availability of its Yearbook. As evidence that the two samples are comparable, we found that race, gender, and education changes were in the expected direction (more females, minorities and college graduates) and that religious affiliations did not change (both samples were 44 percent Protestant and 23 percent Catholic).

The average age of respondents was 37 in 1982 and 42 in 1996. This shift is consistent with the finding of Weaver and Wilhoit that there was a 3.4-year increase in the median age of American journalists between 1982 and 1992. On average the respondents had worked 18 years in the newspaper business and had worked for their current employer nearly 12 years (not asked of staffers in 1982). Sixty-four percent of the respondents were male compared to 69 percent male in 1982.

While the proportion of minorities grew, the gain was surprisingly small. Whites were 97 percent in 1982 and 95 percent in 1996. A differential response rate might have led to under-representation of minorities in both surveys.

Ethical Sensitivity

As in the 1982 study, we did not presume to judge whether our respondents were answering ethically or unethically. Instead, we asked them to respond to a list of hypothetical journalistic dilemmas, and gave an ordered selection of response choices. In some situations, of course, the most sensitive response could be construed as unethical. Our conceptualization stops short of making that judgment. The percentage of respondents who chose an option is listed, both for the 1996 survey and the 1982 survey. Rounding may cause the total to be one greater or lower than 100 percent.

Question 1

One of the most dramatic changes over the 14-year period involves the use of deception. One scenario involved a case of pure eavesdropping by electronic means:

A just-nominated presidential candidate is meeting with state party chairpersons to discuss his choice for vice presidential candidate. The meeting is closed to the press. A reporter, pretending to be a party staff person, hands a briefcase to one of the people going into the meeting and asks him to leave it on the table for his boss. The briefcase contains a tape recorder, and the reporter retrieves it after the meeting.

Should the editor:

	<u>1996</u>	<u>1982</u>
Admonish the reporter and kill the story.	65%	44%
Admonish the reporter, but use the information as background for conventional reporting.	29%	31%
Admonish the reporter, but use the story.	2%	6%
Reward the reporter and use the story.	5%	20%

This represents a sharp decline in support for concealed electronic surveillance. In 1982, the technology was relatively new. In 1996, the memory of ABC's investigation of Food Lion and the backlash from that episode were still fresh, although most respondents had returned the questionnaire before the jury reached its verdict. Opposition to the use of tools that are more appropriate to electronic media might be one means by which newspaper people differentiate themselves from their visual competitors.

Question 2

Another question on the survey involved a more subtle deception — a reporter concealing or lying about his or her own strongly held political views in covering a story:

A reporter is assigned to find out about the activities of a political action group whose objectives are in sharp opposition to his own strongly-held views. To get the story, he needs the cooperation of group members.

Should the reporter:

	<u>1996</u>	<u>1982</u>
Ask the editor to assign someone else to the story.	20%	26%
Take care to explain his own views to the sources so that they can take them into account in deciding how to deal with him.	2%	1%
Keep quiet about his own views, but be frank and forthcoming if asked.	48%	49%
Adopt the stance of a sympathetic neutral.	29%	24%

(The change is not statistically significant)

Here the willingness to engage in deception is not statistically different from the earlier period. Passive deception, such as masking one's true feelings, has generally been accorded greater favor than active or complex deceptions. Also, supervisors were significantly less willing than the rank-and-file to adopt the stance of a sympathetic neutral. In the current survey, 23 percent of supervisors versus 33 percent of the rank-and-file staff members supported that stance. Nearly half of the respondents would just keep quiet about their views, a traditional journalistic practice.

Question 3

A related question dealt with the integrity of pledges of confidentiality:

Newspaper people have different ideas about respecting pledges of confidentiality.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

	<u>1996</u>	<u>1982</u>
A pledge of confidentiality to a source should always be kept no matter what the circumstances, even if it means a long jail term for the reporter and heavy financial cost to the newspaper.	40%	30%
A pledge of confidentiality should always be taken seriously, but it can be violated in unusual circumstances, as when it is learned the source has lied to the reporter.	54%	61%
A pledge of confidentiality can be broken if keeping it would do serious harm to the community.	6%	9%
Pledges of confidentiality are largely rhetorical devices and not intended to be taken seriously.	0%	0%

Traditional respect for pledges of confidentiality has been maintained and, if it has changed at all, increased. The gain of 10 percent in the absolutist position on keeping promises of confidentiality is marginally significant. One possible factor could be awareness of *Cohen v. Cowles Media Co. (1991)*, in which the Supreme Court of the United States said that journalists might be financially liable for its broken promises of confidentiality.

Question 4

Related to the concern for the privacy of a source's identity is the publishing of large numbers of stories containing private embarrassing facts about public persons. The following question suggests how willing journalists are to reveal private, even sensational information about those in the news:

A prominent citizen is vacationing alone in Key West, and his hotel burns down. The wire service story lists him among those who escaped uninjured and identifies the hotel as a popular gathering place for affluent gays. The citizen says he'll commit suicide if you publish his name in the story.

Should the editor:

	<u>1996</u>	<u>1982</u>
Kill the story	2%	0%
Publish the story, but without mentioning the local citizen.	14%	8%
Publish the story, but without mentioning the gay angle.	54%	48%
Publish the story in full.	30%	44%

Greater sensitivity to issues of gender and sexual preference characterizes today's journalists. The traditional reaction, to publish all the journalist knows, honors the newsworthiness test of publishing what would interest people despite its impact on persons involved in the news. However, journalists do choose to withhold certain information, such as the identity of rape victims. The 1996 respondents were more willing than their 1982 counterparts to respect the privacy of the individual involved by not noting the gay angle or leaving the person's name out.

Question 5

Another huge area of concern in journalistic practice is avoiding conflicts of interest, that is, situations in which one's personal interests or those of one's employer are related to the news the journalist is reporting. A business writer owns stock in a company on which she reports. Or a city hall writer reports a zoning dispute involving land on which the newspaper wants to build its new printing plant.

Four items on the survey measured financial conflict of interest. One question presented to the editors and reporters involved an investigative re-

porter who wrote an article on property tax assessments:

An investigative reporter does a thorough and praiseworthy expose of inequalities in tax assessment practices. In the course of investigating for the story, he looks at his own assessment records and finds that a value-enhancing addition to his property was never recorded, and as a result, his taxes are \$300 less than they should be. He reports this fact in the first draft of his story, but, later, at the urging of his wife, takes it out.

Should the editor:

	<u>1996</u>	<u>1982</u>
Insist that he leave the information in, even though it will raise the reporter's taxes.	60%	66%
Talk to the wife and try to persuade her that the reporter's honesty at leaving it in will be rewarded, someday.	1%	3%
Leave it to the reporter to decide, but appeal to his conscience.	29%	23%
Don't interfere.	10%	8%

(The change is not statistically significant)

A clear majority in both surveys took a hard line against the reporter and would make him tell of his own undervaluation and pay more taxes. Clearly most journalists indicated a strong conscience about "rendering unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." The second option, a bit traditional in its wording, given the large percentage of female as well as unmarried reporters, did not gain many supporters in 1982 and almost none in 1996. This question shows no decline in standards.

Question 6

The next two conflict-of-interest indicators deal with outrageous behavior that is clearly wrong. The only issue is how severe the management response ought to be. The first deals with a newspaper business manager who is offered

a junket, a trip paid for by someone else:

The business manager of the company has developed close friendships with Canadian newsprint suppliers, reinforced by regular hunting trips in the north woods as their guest. The company decides to prohibit managers from accepting favors from suppliers. The business manager continues to take the trips.

Should the publisher:

	1996	1982
Fire the business manager.	28%	18%
Impose discipline short of firing and extract a promise that it will not happen again.	47%	48%
Advise the business manager to pay his own way on these trips or reciprocate by hosting the suppliers on equivalent outings.	23%	32%
Decide that the no-favor rule should not apply to such long-standing and clearly benign activities.	1%	2%

Why were the journalists in 1996 so much tougher on the business manager than their 1982 predecessors? We suspect that one consequence of the breaching of the wall between business and news sides is that the business side is held more accountable to the kinds of conflict-of-interest standards traditional for news people. In 1982, news people were conditioned to neither know nor care what went on on the business side. This could be a sign of movement toward the "ethical wholeness" advocated by Meyer in his 1983 report to ASNE.

Question 7

The next hypothetical case deals with staff malfeasance, using one's position at the newspaper to profit in an outside business:

The chief photographer moonlights as a wedding photographer. The father of a bride calls the editor and says the photographer has made a sales pitch to his daughter and included a sly hint that if he is hired for the job, her picture has a better chance of making the society page. The editor investigates and confirms that this is the photographer's regular practice.

Should the editor:

	1996	1982
Fire the photographer.	41%	48%
Impose lesser discipline and order the photographer to stop moonlighting.	13%	16%
Allow the photographer to continue moonlighting but order him not to use—or pretend to use—his position to gain favored treatment for clients.	46%	36%
Ask the photographer to be more discreet.	0%	0%

(The change is not statistically significant)

This is one of the few items where journalists in 1996 appeared somewhat more lenient than those in 1982, but the appearance lacks statistical significance. A stronger case can be made by combining the tougher lines in options one and two. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of the respondents in 1982 wanted to take a hard line with the photographer, fire him or order him to stop moonlighting, versus only 54 percent in 1996. The comparison still falls well short of significant.

Question 8

Another financial conflict of interest involved speaker fees offered to journalists by a for-profit corporation:

An investigative reporter uses a computer to analyze criminal court records and writes a prize-winning series. A major computer manufacturer then offers to pay him \$500 to speak at a seminar for reporters which it is sponsoring at a university.

Which of the following best describes your view?

	1996	1982
The reporter should not be allowed to make the speech.	8%	5%
The reporter should be allowed to make the speech but not to accept the honorarium.	51%	41%
The reporter should be allowed to make the speech, but accept the \$500 only if the honorarium is paid through the university.	15%	16%
The reporter should be allowed to make the speech and accept the \$500 from computer manufacturer.	27%	38%

Since 1982, increasing attention has been paid to the merging of news and entertainment functions in celebrity journalists. Articles in the trade press have been critical, and we see a corresponding increase in sensitivity toward speaking fees as potential conflict of interest reflected in these numbers.

Question 9

Three conflict-of-interest scenarios involved journalists who get too close to the subjects on whom the journalists have to report. In the first two, a political reporter becomes good friends with political leaders:

Your Washington correspondent has spent years developing friendships with the key people now in power, and it is paying off. He knows the town well, and they are relative newcomers, so he is frequently consulted by the White House staff and the President's political operatives before key decisions are made.

Should the editor:

	1996	1982
Fire the Washington correspondent. ...	4%	1%
Move the correspondent to another city.	18%	11%
Admonish the Washington correspondent to maintain a reasonable distance from sources.	64%	74%
Reward Washington correspondent for developing such a good knowledge of his subject and such loyal sources.	15%	14%

Although the change is not significant, it is in the direction of greater sensitivity toward conflict of interest. Today there are more celebrity journalists who have moved back and forth between politics and journalism, and a larger sample might have shown significant concern over that development.

Question 10

As in 1982, localizing the Washington scenario to city hall produced different results, but the movement over time was also in the direction of greater sensitivity to potential conflict.

Your paper's city hall reporter has gotten so close to the mayor and his staff that they frequently consult him before making major decisions.

Should the editor:

	1996	1982
Fire the reporter	4%	1%
Move reporter to different beat	40%	30%
Admonish reporter to maintain a reasonable distance from sources	45%	61%
Reward the reporter for developing such a good knowledge of his subject and such loyal sources	11%	9%

Conflict close to home is more visible, and by localizing the scenario we elicited greater sentiment for moving the reporter to a different beat. Now the shift from the earlier period is statistically significant. Supervisors, by more

than two-to-one, were more interested in reining in the reporter than were their rank-and-file news people.

Question 11

The respondents were even tougher in a third scenario in which the journalist is involved in a business with the potential subject of his reporting:

The restaurant reviewer at your paper has become friendly with a local restaurant operator and, working without pay, has helped his friend to design and plan a new restaurant with a continental theme—the exact sort of restaurant whose absence in your town he has decried in his column.

Should the editor:

	1996	1982
Fire the restaurant critic.	14%	10%
Admonish the critic not to get so close to sources and ban any mention of the new restaurant in his column.	58%	54%
Advise the critic not to do it again but take no further action.	14%	23%
Do nothing.	14%	13%

Once again, the shift is toward greater sensitivity to the need for journalistic independence and less tolerance for actions that could compromise that independence.

Question 12

The final conflict-of-interest hypothetical situation involved reporting on a sports team which the newspaper company owns:

The company that owns a major metropolitan newspaper also owns a major sports franchise in that town.

Should the paper:

	1996	1982
Sell the franchise	19%	22%
Bend over backwards to be fair and treat the company-owned team with more skepticism and outright criticism than other teams.	2%	1%
Treat the team exactly as it treats any other team.	77%	75%
Try to build up local interest in the team it owns, because it is good for community spirit as well as profitable to the company.	3%	3%

(The change is not statistically significant)

No change here. In both surveys, three-fourths wanted to treat the team exactly as it treated any other team, and one in five wanted to divest the sports franchise. If moral standards were weakening, we would expect greater tolerance for merging news and entertainment functions in a single company.

Question 13

The final scenario covers an issue that has reentered the discussion recently: paying sources for their stories. In the O.J. Simpson era, the tabloids are scooping traditional news media because they pay sources for stories. This scenario presents a range of responses from paying for information to paying a source nothing:

An investigative reporter discovers a former city employee now living in another state who has evidence of a kickback scheme involving the mayor and half the city council. He appears interested in cooperating with your investigation, but indicates that he will want money.

Should the paper:

	1996	1982
Pay nothing.	70%	56%
Pay out-of-pocket expenses only.	24%	32%
Put him on the payroll for the time that he spends working with your		

staff in gathering and documenting the facts, plus expenses.	4%	6%
Pay an honorarium based on the news value of the story.	2%	6%

Checkbook journalism is fading in acceptability. The overwhelming majority of staff members in both surveys opted to pay only the source's out of pocket expenses or pay nothing. The 1996 respondents were even more ethically sensitive about buying information, unwilling even to pay a source's expenses. Seventy percent said to pay nothing versus 56 percent in 1982.

Question 14

The final hypothetical case is based on an incident in Florida where newspaper companies contributed money to a campaign to defeat a referendum that would have legalized gambling. This direct involvement in civic action v. traditional detachment was controversial long before the concept of civic journalism had reached the consciousness of journalists.

Some newspaper companies in Florida donated money to a campaign to defeat a statewide referendum which, passed, would have legalized gambling.

Which of the following statements comes closest to your view on this action?

	1996	1982
A newspaper that takes an editorial stand on an issue has a right, even a duty, to back up its belief with its money.	6%	6%
The contributions are justified if the referendum would have a detrimental effect on the business climate in which the newspaper operates.	4%	4%
The contributions should not have been made because they might lead readers to question the objectivity of the papers' news coverage.	39%	34%
No political contributions should ever be made by newspapers; the news		

and editorial columns are powerful enough already, and adding money only indicates inappropriate hunger for more power. 51% 57%
(The change is not statistically significant)

Direct involvement in civic activity was as frowned upon at the end of 1996 as it was 14 years earlier.

In general, it appears that ethical sensitivity has not suffered in the past decade and a half, at least at the staff level. Before making such a sweeping generalization, we should combine the results described above into a single measure. But first, we must verify that all are indeed measuring the same underlying phenomenon.

The items were recoded so that the end of the scale judged by the authors to represent the greater ethical sensitivity was a 1 and the least sensitive response was a 4. We then inspected the correlation matrix. Two items were a poor fit with the others.

One was the item on the Key West fire. The case of the Key West fire and the protection of the home town person is different from the others in several ways. It is not a good statistical fit with the others. The question may have less to do with any specific trend in journalism ethics than with a general social shift of more sympathetic attitudes toward gays. And the direction of movement—toward not publishing the person's name—goes contrary to the traditional ethic of always publishing the facts without fearing or favoring any interest or individual. Thus a case can be made that this item represents a deterioration in traditional news ethics rather than a heightened sensitivity. Whatever the substantive case, its idiosyncratic statistical behavior justifies dropping it from further analysis.

A different problem arose with the issue of how a reporter should behave when working with sources whose views he or she strongly opposes. The correlation pattern indicates that it is also measuring something different from the other items. Perhaps its five choices lack the clear natural order needed for treatment as a continuous variable. In any event, this item was also dropped

from the scale.

The remaining 12 items formed a reasonably coherent correlation. That gave us some confidence that the remaining 12 items measure the same underlying concept that we chose to call ethical sensitivity. We therefore compared the means (where the lower score denotes the greater ethical sensitivity).

For the 1982 sample, the mean score (on a scale of 1-4) was 2.346.

For the 1996 sample, the mean score was 2.23.

We looked for two possible predictors of ethical sensitivity but fell short of statistical significance.

Better educated journalists report higher sensitivity. The sensitivity scores for the 1996 sample (low scores denote high sensitivity):

Fewer than four years of college	2.31
Four years of college	2.24
Post-graduate education	2.20

Analysis of variance showed the differences between groups to be marginally significant.

The other predictor was working for a newspaper owned by a company whose shares are publicly traded. Journalists working for these companies reported *greater* ethical sensitivity, but the difference was insignificant.

Privately owned	2.26
Publicly traded	2.21

Interpretation And Conclusions

Six of our 12 items in the scale of ethical sensitivity changed significantly in the 14 years and six did not. Those that did change all moved in the direction of greater sensitivity, contrary to the fears and suspicions that motivated our inquiry. How could we have been so wrong? Perhaps we can better understand what has happened by focusing on the six that changed. Ethical sensitivity increased in the following ways:

Question 1.

Electronic eavesdropping: support decreased.

Question 6.

Business-side conflict of interest: tolerance dropped.

Question 8.

Honoraria for speeches: a more restrictive view prevailed.

Question 10.

Closeness to government sources: more red flags at the local level.

Question 11.

Closeness to business sources: less tolerance.

Question 13.

Checkbook journalism: greater disapproval.

Each question represents a traditional value of journalism. There at least is anecdotal evidence that each is under pressure. Do the gains of newspaper staffs in ethical sensitivity mean that there really is no cause for worry?

We think not, and we offer two justifications for our denial. Sometimes the adherents of a cherished value are the most thoughtful and vigorous in its defense just when it is under attack. The ideology of the American revolution was created by gifted philosophers, writers, and orators who saw themselves defending the fading light of English liberty, as Harvard's Bernard Bailyn pointed out in 1967. The fear of losing their cherished Enlightenment-based freedoms heightened their consciousness. Newspaper staff people,

perceiving that both their values and their institutions are threatened by social and technological change, may be more supportive and protective of those values than ever before for the same kind of reason. The baseline survey of 1982 was closer to a time when such values could be taken for granted with relative apparent safety. The data we see now may well represent a reaction to growing awareness of attacks on cherished news values.

The second justification for simply rejecting the null hypothesis and issuing an "all's well" signal is that journalism itself as a unified concept is disappearing. Part of it is merging with entertainment and adopting its values by, for example, awarding celebrity status and pay to its superstars according to their ability to amuse. Other segments are merging with advertising and public relations and adopting the values of those fields. We should expect that the people in our survey, the working men and women at America's daily newspapers, would be the last to be corrupted by business and technological innovation. Indeed, the warnings that are being sounded and that we cite as justification for our research are more about institutional than individual behavior.

The working news people in our survey share this concern. They feel the pressure from changing forms of ownership. The proportion who believe that investor-owned newspaper companies serve their communities differently is up from a 39 percent minority in 1982 to a 51 percent majority in 1996. The proportion who say the pressures of being publicly owned often or sometimes hinders a newspaper's ability to serve its community doubled, from 18 percent in 1982 to 42 percent in 1996. Thirty-eight percent of the news people who themselves work for newspapers owned by publicly held companies say that this form of ownership often or sometimes hinders a paper's ability to serve the local community.

Such an observation makes the content of the call for further research

rather obvious. If institutional cultures are changing in ways that threaten traditional newspaper values, we should be studying the creators of those cultures, the editors and publishers. The same baseline data that we used for their newsroom people exist for them, and we earnestly hope that someone will follow our example and replicate the top-management portion of the 1982 study.

Yet one further step is needed. In the 1982 survey, 78 percent of newspaper readers represented by the sample were served by group-owned newspapers. In 1996, the number was 85 percent. Publishers are no longer autonomous creators of organizational culture so much as transmitters of culture that is the sum effect of decisions made at group headquarters. A fourth group needs to become the object of ethical scrutiny and that is the boards of directors of the newspaper holding companies. Our bottom-up approach for monitoring ethical change is worthwhile, but it needs to be supplemented with a top-down inquiry. Studying the source of ethical change could produce information that is even more interesting and has better predictive power. Only then can we know for sure whether a place might yet be found for traditional values in the new media marketplace or whether the heightened ethical sensitivity of today's newspaper staff people is just an Indian summer for newspaper morals. ■

Funding for Study

The research for this study was funded by the Knight Chair in Journalism at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Appreciation

The authors appreciate the assistance of W. Davis Merritt, Robert H. Phelps, and William F. Woo who offered valuable suggestions in the early stages of this project.

'Staying Alive'

Advice to Journalists and Others in High-Powered Jobs on Coping With Stress



Ronald Heifetz is a Lecturer in Public Policy in the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Following are excerpts from a seminar he conducted at the Nieman Foundation on February 5, 1997.

I'd kind of like to talk about how to sustain oneself not only with stresses of leadership but in the stresses of any high-powered job, what I call "staying alive" in my book "Leadership Without Easy Answers."

The most common reason why people get taken out of action in organizational life or killed in political life is not that people take calculated risks. You've got to take calculated risks in any career when you think there is really something important to say and people don't want to hear it said, or you think there is an important question to raise and people don't want that question raised. You take a calculated risk and sometimes you take a hit and that's part of the process.

But that's not the main reason or most common reason why people get badly hurt in their efforts to exercise leadership. The most common reason is that people don't see it coming. They don't see it coming because they get swept up in what I call "the dance floor." You know, when you dance, the music's pumping fast, you're kind of swept up in the music. You generally only see the people who are dancing right next to you or who you're dancing with. You don't get an overview, you're not able to see, as you might see from a balcony, overlooking the dance floor. Yet, it's really quite life-saving in organizational life to be able to keep reflecting in the midst of action, the capacity to step back in the midst of action and ask, "What's going on here, what am I missing? I hadn't realized that what I was saying was going to be so upsetting. I hadn't even taken into account that there was some faction over here in the organization that was going to get sensitized to this issue and now I've stirred up a hornet's nest, unbeknownst to me."

Well, it's important to be able to get to the balcony, in a sense, or to be able to achieve what the Jesuits call "contemplation in action," the capacity to keep reflecting on what's going on. What are the patterns? What's the politics of this institution that are causing some people to have competing stakes and to take my point of view either well or poorly?

That capacity, in some ways, is an obvious skill. We all know it's important to gain perspective. But it's quite difficult to do. It's really difficult to not get swept up in the music, particularly in the kinds of jobs that many people in leadership have, or, I think, in the kinds of jobs that many journalists have, where you're just swept up into what is pressing at that moment and what just happens to come across your transom, and you're off to the races and lots of people are yelling at you at the same time when you're trying to digest a lot of data and synthesize it quickly. I think it's easy to get blind-sided.

So that's the first idea. Maybe it sounds like jargon. It's not really important to use the phrase, but I do because it's "getting on the balcony," a nice visual image.

The important thing is to be able to step back in the midst of action, even at the end of every day, and de-brief with somebody—to say, "What just happened to me today? I was in this meeting. I thought this was simple. It turned out to be complicated. How come? What didn't I foresee? What didn't I understand?"

Now, that leads me to the second problem with staying alive. A lot of people—this may be true of some journalists—see themselves with leaders as having a heroic self-image. They tend to isolate themselves. They know a lot of people. They're really good at making

allies. They can be surrounded by people. But on some level they are fairly isolated and don't make very good use of partners.

Oftentimes, they almost get gratification in the loneliness, or somehow it confirms their notion that they must be doing something really important because they're out on a limb, all by themselves.

I think that notion, the heroic lone warrior model of professional life or leadership, is suicidal, because the political dynamics of organizational life in a newspaper or in the communities or in the businesses that some of you write about, the political dynamics are too complicated for any individual to be able to assess, particularly because those dynamics are dynamic. They keep changing. So, to be able to keep abreast of them, to keep track of who cares what about these issues, who's going to be upset, what are their stakes, who is going to have to take a loss if they really take into account this initiative of mine, is very hard to do well.

It's quite life-saving, therefore, to have partners, and not just allies but confidants.

A confidant is somebody who you really can pour your heart out to, somebody who can put you back together again at the end of the day, who can tell you why it's worth trying to do what you're doing and taking the hits that you're taking. Somebody who occasionally can pull you by the collar and pull you up to the balcony and say, "Let's take a look at what just happened to you today." Or, "There you are, I know you're wonderful, but you just did the same thing that happened last year."

We tend to live the same patterns. And it is really essential to have confidants like that. Sometimes they'll be within the organization. Frequently, they'll be outside the organization because then they don't have any competing stakes. Sometimes it will be a spouse or a close friend.

One of the big mistakes people make in organizational life is that they confuse allies with confidants and treat their allies as if they were confidants. In

a sense they talk too much with the wrong people.

Confidants are quite precious. To think that you can be an innovator or a leader in organizational life without confidants, without partners, is kind of like thinking that you can survive the winter in New England without a winter coat. You just have to have people to de-brief with, who can see around your own blind spots.

One of the things a partner can help people do is distinguish oneself from the roles that we tend to be in. That's the third suggestion.

Most of us are not that good at that. The idea, itself, is not that complicated. How many of you are parents? I see, not too many of you yet. Well, when I started being a parent a friend of mine, Marty Linsky, said to me, "You know, you'll really know you've made it as a parent when your kid slams the door in your face and you don't take it personally. And it will take you to the second kid before you figure it out."

I found that really to be true. We as parents know that it would be absurd to take it personally when a two-year-old looks you in the face and says, "I hate you," because you refuse to give her another piece of cake. But by the time that two-year-old gets to be eight years old, or 12 years old or 16 years old, it's hard not to take it personally, because they get good at knowing how to make it personal.

So distinguishing your role from the self isn't that strange a notion, but in organizational life people often fail to do so, leading them to make two kinds of errors. The first error is a diagnostic error. Because they take it personally, they don't diagnose accurately what it is that people are upset about. Instead of saying, "Ah-ha, they're upset with me because I'm raising an issue that represents to them a loss," they let the personal attack change the topic on the table from the loss or the challenging issue, to you and your style or your manner.

For example, you all are journalists so I'm sure a lot of you have been accused at some point of being abrasive

or obnoxious or something like that!

Well, nobody ever calls you obnoxious when you're telling them good news. Nobody ever calls your style too intrusive when you're intruding in exactly the way they want because they can't wait to get that story about them put out there. It's when you represent a point of view that they don't like that all of a sudden they've got a problem with your style.

One of the most common of what I call work-avoidance mechanisms, or distractions—ways in which people take the focus of attention off the challenging questions—is by putting you on the table. We see this in politics every day. Before Hillary, Geraldine Ferraro was a dramatic example. The first woman running for vice president—people just started taking her apart, her personal family finances, and she ended up allowing the topic of the conversation to shift from the issues she represented, the challenges she represented to the public, to her own personal life and her own personal finances.

She held this endless news conference. Some of you may remember when she said, "I'll stay here as long as you have a question." There were like 150 reporters to start off with. I don't know how many were left after 2 1/2 hours. But she just stayed there answering any and all questions hoping that she would somehow put the story to rest. Of course it didn't go to rest because the point was never the story.

The points were the issues she represented. When you shift focus and say, "Okay, what challenging issue did she represent that would cause people to want to come after her?" The answer to that gets to be fairly obvious. Twelve years later it is still very challenging to people all across the country to imagine women in senior positions of authority in any organization, let alone the nation. It's challenging for people across the country that the roles between men and women have changed and that many of the dynamics within marriages are changed because virtually everything now seems negotiable. You know, what a woman used to do and what a man used to do

isn't what men and women do so much anymore.

It's a real problem because every negotiation has friction in it. In a group or an organization where everybody knows what to do there's not a lot of friction, but in our modern-day life where roles are changing so dramatically, we're constantly negotiating, constantly generating friction and it's just a lot harder to make life work.

But here's Geraldine Ferraro in '84, representing starkly, quite dramatically, these issues. Women in family life, women in professional life, women in authority. During the campaign, she was told not to speak to those issues, which I think was a real mistake. She was told by presidential candidate Fritz Mondale's people to speak in a gender-neutral way about current public issues, security policy, what you would do about the Russians, poverty policy, economic policy and so forth, as if she were just one of the guys.

But, of course, people put her in a role and they only saw the issues that she represented to them in the role that they created for her. The role they created for her was a woman running for vice president representing all those issues about women in authority.

To think that you can try to work other sets of issues is naive. You've got to work the issues that people see you representing and then get behind yourself and say, "Okay, well look, these are the issues that I represent to you, let's work those issues."

Hillary is having the same problem. She wants to represent the issues she cares about, children and education, but nobody is listening. Now if she were to get up and start talking about what it's like to run a two-profession couple, people would be listening. They would really pay attention because that's what she represents to people. They want to hear what she has to say on that. They don't care what she has to say about children, because that's not the issue she represents.

Maybe Barbara Bush could have spoken about children, maybe she could represent the issue. But Hillary? Hillary represents all of these very provocative issues about powerful women. And she

could speak to those, the viscissitudes, what it's like, how hard it is for all of us, men and women alike.

Anyway, distinguishing self from role is quite life saving because it allows you diagnostically to read what issue is it that people see in you as a product of your role. You can then take yourself out of the way and be focusing on what you mean to people, rather than how they're making you feel about yourself.

The second reason why it is important to distinguish self from role is just personal. It's a lot easier to take the hits if you know that it isn't really you that they're hitting at. It still hurts, but it hurts a little bit less.

Distinguishing self from role is a hard thing to do by yourself. It's another way confidants can help you—allies too, can help—in getting you to step back and say, "Wait a second now, let's not take it personally here."

When John Kennedy, in 1962, found out that there were missiles in Cuba, his immediate reaction was to be personally insulted because he felt that he had been personally promised by the Russians that there would be no missiles put in Cuba. "My God, those bastards lied to me."

His first reaction was to go in and do a surgical air strike on those bases and knock out those nuclear weapons. U.S. intelligence told him that the weapons were not yet armed, and that they would be armed maybe in a few weeks, but they weren't armed right then. Twenty years later we found out those weapons were armed. If we had gone in with a surgical air strike, some of those weapons might have been launched.

Fortunately, Robert Kennedy turned to John Kennedy and said, "Okay, wait a second here. We learned something from the Bay of Pigs. Are you sure that you want to go down in history as Premier Tojo?" the guy who bombed Pearl Harbor and generated destruction for his own country. "Are you sure?"

He got his brother to step back and pull his person out of the equation and then begin to ask, "Okay, what's going on with the Russians, what is going on with the Cubans?"

That brings us to the fourth suggestion for staying alive. In distinguishing self from role, it helps to do what I call "externalizing the conflict." In the ranks of journalists, there is a high percentage of people who are kind of deviants, who like to be creative deviants in a culture, who don't like to be conformists, who come up with an angle, like to be different. That's how the world gets better.

But quite often, creative deviants tend to make it seem as if there is a conflict between their point of view and everybody else's point of view. When you set up a conflict like that you're very easily neutralized, because organizational systems like to see equilibrium, and one of the ways they can restore equilibrium is to neutralize whoever is raising a deviant point of view.

That's why there's a whistle blowers association in America. You have all these whistle blowers in organizational life, including the guys who said, when the Challenger was about to go off, "It's too cold today." They get fired, like those guys did. So they have an association where they lick wounds together, because they got beat up for having the right deviant thing to say and not being able to get it across.

One of the ways to get important points of view across is to not see yourself as the source of the deviant idea, but instead, as the identifier of a conflict that already exists in the organization, between different sets of values or perspectives. And therefore, what you're doing is surfacing a conflict that is already there, rather than creating a conflict.

The most dramatic in American history in my lifetime was the way Martin Luther King Jr. handled the civil rights movement, where over and over again, he would say, "This is not a conflict between you and me. This is not a conflict between black Americans and white Americans. This is a conflict between American values and American reality."

Constantly posing it as a conflict within the American value system gave

him a hold over the heartstrings of average people all over the land, many of whom lived hundreds of miles away from any African Americans, people in Wyoming or Montana, who perhaps had few if any immediate stakes, but did care about the American values of freedom and equality. By constantly saying, "Wait a second, we're not living up to our values," and then finding ways to dramatize that reality—that most brutal side of that reality—dramatizing it and piping it into people's living rooms, uninvited, so that people would have to face that internal contradiction in our value system, he generated social learning.

Q.—But to what extent did that really work? I know that it worked in a lot of ways, but a lot of people thought then and people still think now, that it was not a black or white issue, that this was just about a bunch of angry black people who wanted more rights. To this day, most people see Martin Luther King's holiday as not a celebration of where America has come, how far they've come, but they just see it as a black holiday. They don't think that Martin Luther King or the civil rights movement was about America and diversity and all these other issues, but was really just about these black people not wanting to be treated in a certain way.

A.—Obviously it takes generations to do the kind of social learning that that represents. It depends on whether you see the cup half full or half empty, you know? I think there has been much progress in the land, compared to 1964. But it's not easy to externalize the conflict if the message you're presenting makes a lot of people uncomfortable.

The only way to make progress is to somehow drill or insert that conflict into people's hearts so that they live with that conflict.

Margaret Sanger, who started the birth control movement, found ways to insert the conflict within each constituency. She'd get doctors who were for contraception, fighting with the doctors who were against contraception. She got the clergy who were for it fighting with the clergy who were against it.

LBJ was a perfect example of failing on this in Vietnam. He let it be his war. So the easiest thing to do if you were against the war was to bring him down. The fact was, however, that he was really going with the prevailing trends at the time, and bringing him down didn't end the war because the war was never only about him.

So, when you make it out to be your issue, your hobbyhorse, you get easily neutralized. You've got to find out a way to make it the organization's issue and you just happen to be the person surfacing it.

Fifth, to stay alive, one needs to listen. Now, you guys are pretty good listeners; it's your profession to ask questions and listen well. But many people who see themselves as leaders don't listen very well. They talk better than they listen. Now they hire pollsters to do the listening for them so they know what to say.

I started off in medicine, training in surgery. When I got interested in politics and leadership, I finished my residencies in psychiatry. One of the first lessons you learn in psychiatry is that you don't only listen out there, which is mainly how we listen. I ask you a question and you give me an answer, I'm listening to you. In therapy there is another way of listening that you learn. You listen to yourself as data.

The notion is that none of us is an island. We pick up the emotions and the undercurrents that I call the music beneath the words in what other people are saying. We resonate with certain issues. Therefore, some of the feelings that you end up with when you insert yourself into an environment are going to reflect feelings or currents or themes that are in the environment. And therefore, if you can read yourselves, sometimes that can give you a clue to the trends and subcurrents in the environment.

For example, it's very common that people who are exercising leadership often feel an intense sense of urgency. Usually they are tackling issues in which there is urgency already in the community. They feel urgency because everybody is looking to them to do something about the problem. Many then

behave urgently. So they make a fast decision, they try to speed along a process. They set an early deadline for a committee to finish its work. What they don't do is to step back again, on the balcony, perhaps, or with somebody's help and ask themselves, "Hey, this is curious, I'm feeling awfully urgent, I wonder what's happening around me, I bet there is urgency in the system. Maybe what I need to do is calm people down, buy all of us some time, rather than act urgently and come to a premature closure on a decision.

But many people don't do that. They don't see that their own experience of urgency or frustration or anger or hopelessness is an indication of something among the audience that they're listening to. They need to probe, "Wait a second, what's going on with them? I'm feeling hopeless. I wonder if there is hopelessness here. I'm feeling angry. I wonder if there are some undercurrents here."

I'm suggesting using yourself as a barometer. Of course, people are not barometers. We filter what we hear, and our feelings don't by any means exactly mirror the feelings in the environment. But they can provide clues.

Obviously, listening is life saving because otherwise you're not going to understand people's stakes, what people value and the losses you're asking them to deal with if you're representing a challenging or deviant or creative idea.

Without listening to people's stakes and potential losses you cannot generate a strategy to pace their adjustment process, so that they can then address the question you're raising and incorporate it into their thinking.

Sixth, to stay alive, one also needs a sanctuary. And I don't have any particular sanctuary to recommend. For some people it really is a religious place, a formal institution. For other people it could just be someone's kitchen table or it could be a local bar or it could be a jogging trail or a tree that you sit beneath. But in our own professional lives, when we're moving fast—and I think journalists tend to move fast a lot—you're thrown into action, as is certainly true for people trying to exer-

cise leadership, and we generally conceive of sanctuaries as an expendable luxury.

Sanctuaries are like partners and winter coats. You've got to be able to preserve some place where you can hear yourself think again—to get away from all the noise, from all the music, from all the shouting, from all the different people who are expecting different things from you.

Q.—How different is that from the point you made about having allies?

A.—Well, allies are people you share some interests with but may also have competing loyalties. A confidant is not going to have strong competing loyalties. An ally may be an ally on some issues but also have competing loyalties, so it's not fair to expect an ally to always take your point of view and to work on your behalf. We need both kinds of partners.

It's different from [what] a sanctuary may be—it's a good idea what you're saying. You're saying that sometimes your confidant can be your sanctuary, absolutely. But sometimes a sanctuary is a quiet place where you can be alone.

Seventh, to stay alive we need to manage our human hungers. When you're a person who plugs himself or herself into 10,000 volt sockets of electricity, when you wet your fingers and you stick your fingers in the socket of organizational and political life, you're conducting high voltage emotional currents.

A community in turmoil, an organization in distress, a business with losing market share, a country with a multiplicity of pains and conflicts generate intense passions, and one ends up conducting the electricity, the emotional currents of one's constituents. Those currents go through us and they do funny things to us as individuals because people are not designed to conduct those kinds of high voltages. People were designed to live in communities of 20. That's how we lived for four million years, from the time we first branched off from the great apes. Only in the last 10,000 years have we begun to live in large communities, since agriculture. Before that, we lived in little bands, 15 to 25 people.

So the head man or the dominant female in a small band has a much easier job. The emotional currents they conduct when there's distress are well within our capacity, compared to the emotional current when 10,000 people are staring at you or a million people are staring at you.

Now journalists frequently write for audiences of thousands or millions of people and so on some level you conduct current from those audiences. If there was no audience out there, you would feel differently about the article that you were publishing or the TV show that you were producing.

But because there is a big audience and you know that audience is going to be triggered in lots of different ways, it affects you. Certainly, if you're an authority figure, or you're exercising leadership, then it affects you a lot and it does unnatural things to you. These emotional currents amplify our normal human needs into distorting, self-destructive behaviors.

Let me be more specific. I'll just mention three normal human needs; there are a lot more. First, we each need to feel important in our lives. Nobody likes to feel that they don't matter. Everybody wants to feel that they matter. Pretty basic. But take somebody who is a bit vulnerable regarding the normal human need to be important and plug them into a situation where people are desperate for answers—an organization in distress, a community in distress. Pretty soon that individual begins to start feeling that, "God, everybody is looking for me to have the answers. People are crying out for the answers." And perhaps that individual does indeed have some answers. But before you know it the need for self-importance goes beyond the normal human need for significance. It becomes grandiosity. And then you get people who begin to think that they've got all the answers and "yeah, of course you should be looking to me for all the answers, because I'm Big Daddy or Big Mommy and I know what we all should be doing."

In the end it's often quite self-destructive because the grandiosity generates a dynamic in which people keep

looking to you to pull the next rabbit out of the hat and you keep having to be a better and better magician. Pretty soon there are no more rabbits to pull out of the hat because society is really facing a set of problems for which you don't have any easy answers and then they kill you off.

Marcos was a savior in his day. And for a lot of people, so was Duvalier and lots of other dictators. They didn't come to power just by brute force—they came to power because many people adored them, because they looked like the next hope. And it took awhile before people realized, "Hey, wait a second, we're not reaching the promised land." So the grandiosity is destructive to the community because it breeds an addiction of dependency on the authority figure for answers.

Another normal human need: power. Everybody needs to feel some sense of control or power. There is not anybody who likes to feel powerless in their lives. But you take somebody who has a bit more of a vulnerability and you put them into a situation that is chaotic, where people are desperate for the restoration of order—you know, Peru. And lo and behold, somebody comes along who is going to restore order and people love it for awhile.

The problem is when that power-hungry person doesn't see the restoration of order as simply a tactic in a larger strategy of getting that society back on its feet, they begin to think that maintaining order is the norm that needs to be maintained. And with them, of course, in the power position.

Third, we need to talk about sex. Everybody's got the need for intimacy. Everybody needs to be held. When you take somebody who is very busy serving as the containing vessel of a large social system and they've got to hold it all together, it really amplifies one's own need to get held. People don't know what to do with that craving to be held when they're holding together not just a small band of 20 people but when they're holding 10,000 or 10 million people in a process. It really powerfully amplifies their own need to get very basic kinds of gratification. So extraordinary people sometimes engage in very

self-damaging behavior because they're overwhelmed by their own hunger to get held.

For example, an extraordinary leader like Martin Luther King could not fully contain his own sexual hungers. He knew that the FBI was wiretapping his phone lines and still could not control himself. His own handlers were telling him, "Listen, Martin, you've got to cool it." So I think it's really important for journalists to have compassion at the same time as we might be morally outraged.

Q.—But not all leaders behave like Kennedy or Clinton. Not every leader seems to feel the hunger that you're talking about.

A.—Right, they have different hungers.

Q.—Well, should we respect people who can control that hunger, because the prices of satisfying can be quite damaging?

A.—Absolutely. By compassion, I don't mean that you justify it or legitimize it. I just mean that at least we might understand that they're up against something that's very difficult for them to manage and there are reasons why that's hard to manage, that it not only comes out of their personal psychology but also comes out of the role that they're playing in a system in which they're conducting lots of electricity.

I still think we need to set a standard where they have to contain themselves, their grandiosity, their power hungers, or their needs for sexual gratification. But it's a tough standard for some people to meet.

It's a little different for men and women, from what I understand. Most women seem to know, at least most women that I have spoken to, that you may be momentarily aroused sexually by a position of power in which people are drawn to you sometimes because you are in a power position. But you also know that it's dangerous to let anybody cross that boundary because you're easily discredited if you let anybody cross that boundary.

If a man "takes you," you're "taken," and it's hard to be that person's boss. So women in positions of authority, and in professional life in general, tend

to spend a lot of time, a lot of psychic energy maintaining a boundary, protecting themselves—on guard, always a little bit, from a guy who might come on to them. Because many women spend so much time in a chronically low-grade distrusting state, the challenge sometimes is not how women can contain themselves but how to let the guard down when it's time to go home and it's time to get their needs met. Intimacy, really good quality intimacy, requires trust. You have to open up. Intimacy requires trust, and it's difficult to do if you're spending all your time in low-grade chronic distrust. So I think that women sometimes need help in transitioning from professional role to personal life.

One of the ways in which women can help themselves—men can help themselves in this way, too—is to come up with various transitional rituals. For example, take a bath, change clothes, go for a ride, have a drink, get some exercise, meditate, pray or turn on some rock and roll music and dance—something that helps you come back to your self, which is much bigger than the role that you have been playing, so that you can then operate in your own personal life without being consumed by your role.

Men have a different problem—how do they contain themselves? Women are so used to containing themselves, it's sometimes a challenge to be uncontained. Real joy requires abandon. Men, on the other hand, are often vulnerable to sexual arousal because they are in a position of power and they are conducting a lot of needs of other people. Their own longings get amplified also because some women are attracted to men in positions of power and so they get advances made towards them. And culturally men are just beginning to learn deeply that acting on their desire is going to damage themselves. So the challenge for men, I think, is to maintain the boundary between them and other people in an appropriate way so they don't do damage to women, and so they don't do damage in the work place by sleeping with the wrong people.

How can men help themselves to contain themselves? That's maybe the

\$64,000 question. There actually is no drug for that. Some people in the interface between psychiatry and the criminal justice system suggest that we ought to castrate repeat sexual offenders. But that only works with about 5 percent of sexual offenders because most sexual arousal is not hormonal. The fantasy-generating processes are in your mind; you don't need the hormones anymore to get turned on. All you need is fantasy, or the capacity to construct fantasies.

So, what can men do? It's a real problem. I think one way is to remember the distinction between self and role, to remember that when people adore you or love you or come onto you, it's not you. In the supermarket, you'd just be another middle-aged, balding guy pushing the grocery cart.

Q.—It's hard to convince them it's not them.

A.—It's hard, but it's not them. It's really the other person's mirage, where the other person hopes to get by somehow pairing or mating with somebody in power.

Q.—So you get a 75-year-old powerful man leaving his wife and family for a 20-year-old bimbo.

A.—This is my all-purpose prescription. Men ought to have a photograph blowup poster-size put on the back of their door so they can really see how they look—with a little Bob Dylan phrase at the bottom that says, "It ain't me, Babe, it ain't me you're looking for, Babe."

There is a need to generate some disciplining set of activities that can help a man contain himself so he doesn't destroy everything he stands for. King almost destroyed everything he stood for. It would have been a great tragedy. All of his power came from moral authority, so he was enormously vulnerable to any kind of moral charge.

My eighth and last idea is not so much staying professionally alive as about about keeping your soul alive. One needs to distinguish one's sense of purpose from a specific purpose.

My guess is that you like to do reporting on issues that count, on things that matter, on things that make a difference to people. A lot of people spend a long time in one organization and

then something happens where they come to the end of that line. They have to shift gears. Maybe that organization closes or maybe they get fired. Or maybe they were supposed to retire at 50 or maybe the organization doesn't want somebody doing that job at the age of 50. What happens to many people at that transition point is that they die inside, they shrivel up. They shrivel up because their sense of meaning is lost, and people need a sense of purpose and meaning to make their lives feel rich.

Well there is a difference between having a specific purpose and a sense of purpose. A sense of purpose is more like what we had as teenagers, where we had an amorphous sense that there were lots of ways we could make meaning in life, lots of ways we could do useful and good things and one of half a dozen would have been fine. As a teenager we were asking the question, "What would be worth doing, what would be valuable?" That's a sense of purpose.

By the time you get to be 40 or 50 years old you stop asking that question. You get attached to the particular vehicle and lose sight that there are so many different ways to be contributing. We forget about our capacity to generate real specific purposes. Any more questions?

Q.—Doesn't leadership also require martyrdom or the willingness to be a martyr?

A.—I think leadership does require the willingness to die, but I think martyrdom is almost always futile and is destructive to the public, to progress. King's letting himself get assassinated was a strategic blunder on his part, of major proportions. Martyrdom makes people permanently addicted to you, because you die with the magic and nobody can replace you because nobody else can have the magic and the magic is never then re-owned by the community.

Magic was never in him. He was an extraordinary strategist, an extraordinary speaker, and he was able to speak to the nation's values, American values, in a very powerful way. The words that he used, the soul that he put into them

and his strategy of public demonstration were brilliant. But if he had died a quiet, boring death, other people would have come along. People were already coming along.

Q.—What do you mean by that?

A.—He knew that he should have stopped. A year before he got killed, he said, "I am really tired, I want to take a sabbatical, I want to step down." And the people around him said, "No, you can't do that, Martin. We need you in this role, the country is falling apart, it's 1968, you've got to stay there." He knew that he was in danger. He even talked about it the night before he got killed. I think that people who have very big aspirations, as he did, to make a great difference, operate with the image that martyrdom is an okay thing.

There's a temptation to martyrdom, because when you're burnt out, when you're exhausted, martyrdom almost feels like a relief, a justification. I think that King spoke in those terms. So I think it was an error. I also think it was an error for Jesus to get himself killed, because I think his death became more significant than his message. This message was critically important. Instead, what became most important for the last 2,000 years was the fact of his death.

Q.—But without it, I don't think the message would have been as significant in history. Jesus's death was part of the process.

A.—Well, a whole theology was created around the death that makes the death meaningful. I can't argue with that theology. I'm only trying to be suggestive, maybe a little too provocative. There are ways people are tempted to martyrdom, particularly people who tend to be a bit grandiose, that martyrdom is a way of confirming their significance historically, and also a way out when it looks painful and hopeless, as I think it did for King in 1968.

So, I say that because it's my job to try to say to people, "Look, don't get seduced into martyrdom. Don't throw your life away. Live a nice long life and die quietly and give the magic back to people and let other people succeed you and let the process continue without you. Don't create a canonized addiction." ■

Geneva Overholser Conflict of Interest, Double Standard?



PHOTO BY THE WASHINGTON POST

It's one thing to tell our staff that they must pay for lunch or buy a ticket for a sporting event. But what do we lose when we say they mustn't lead a Girl Scout troop, serve on the local museum board or join other community efforts that would put them in touch with people and cause them to find out things?

Most amazing of all, while we're clear that no copy editor should moonlight by editing annual reports, nor any reporter head his town's United Way, many among us are fine with journalists going on television and pronouncing upon the people and events they cover—complete with nameplates to make sure everyone knows whom they work for. I think the defense is that this is analysis, not opinion. That's baloney. These shows do not seek quiet reflection. They want opinion, the hotter the better. And they get it. Reporters tell viewers how abysmal the House majority leader's performance was, how pathetic the vice president's trip to China, where the latest scandal ranks on a scale of one to 10—and then turn around and report on the hapless official... surely this says we have lost our way when it comes to assuring citizens that our minds are open.

It seems so out of kilter to allow the one and forbid the other that I've groped for an explanation. Perhaps it's this: reporters *want* to go on television. Often they're paid to. They're seen and heard, and get speech and book offers. However clear it is that TV appearances do much more to undermine the appearance of objectivity, it's a lot easier to ask a staffer to forgo the PTA. ■—*Geneva Overholser, Ombudsman of The Washington Post, in her April 27, 1997 column.*

Technology

When Push Comes To Shove

BY TOM REGAN

For several months now, I've heard the mantra of "push" shouted from the mountain tops by on-line media experts and journalists. (Push refers to the method of delivering on-line readers their information through a variety of methods, as opposed to having them come and find it, sometimes called "pull.") Basically, the mantras sound like this: "Push is the publishing method of the future."

I submit that this statement is not entirely true.

There are two reasons why push won't be the phenomenal success most on-line publishers want it to be: (A) It's far too intrusive and bandwidth hungry for the average user, and (B) It depends too much on the TV model and folks, I'm sorry to tell you but the TV model will not work on the Web.

Let's deal with (A). Like most Web lemmings, I downloaded PointCast's push software because there was such a hot buzz about push technology. The download was huge and required quite a bit of tweaking to get the news I wanted. As soon as I finished and actually launched the program, PointCast proceeded to take over my computer. And let me tell you, it was a hostile takeover.

Every time I stopped typing for more than a few seconds, up popped PointCast, slowing down my machine, hogging bandwidth, and taking forever to go away when I wanted to resume work on my desktop. This continued several more times, until I had had enough. All of my co-workers had the same experience. They downloaded the program, tried it, shrieked in horror and then threw it away faster than you can say "empty trash."

Ours was not a unique experience. One company that the e-Monitor worked with on the West Coast ordered all of its employees to take PointCast off their machines because of similar problems.

(To be fair to PointCast, the company has tried to fix some of these problems in its latest version, but how well they've done is a matter of opinion.)

Which brings us to a problem that almost all push technologies face—it may be okay to use this stuff at the office where, if you're really lucky, you might have access to a T-1. But who the hell is going to use it at home? And why would I bother when I can just flick on the tube, turn on CNN, and use my phone line to confer about the latest world event with

my mother? Really fast Internet home connectivity is still three to five years away (if not longer) for the vast majority of the nation, let alone the rest of the world.

Which brings us to point (B.) The biggest reason I like the Internet is that I get to decide where I want to go and what I want to see. And this is what drives publishers and advertisers crazy. Publishers, who have invested lots of money in their Web sites, really don't want to wait until I feel like I want to visit them again. They want to control the visitation rights. Which is why they desperately want to turn the Web into just another hangout for virtual couch potatoes. Thus the push—TV model.

Unfortunately, most of what gets pushed at you on most push engines is rehashed wire stuff and tons of ads. (So in that sense, it really is like TV.) But as I said above, the TV model just doesn't work on line. I believe most people do not want to let someone else in the virtual driver's seat when they're on line.

There is, however, one form of push that I think will succeed—E-mail push. More and more on-line publications offer E-mail editions or features. Once I subscribe, the material gets pushed to my E-mail box. I can look at it when I want to, it doesn't tie up a lot of bandwidth, and with the new HTML E-mail programs available, it is just as rich in graphics and sound as anything that I can get from a Push channel.

To use the paper model, it really is home delivery in the old sense of the word. The "virtual" paper comes to your doorstep, you read it when you want to read it, and you also get to pick what you want to read.

If on-line publishers are smart, they'll spend their time and money looking into E-mail push. The push market will probably attract about 20-25 percent of on-line users. A nice niche, but not the gold mine that so many are predicting. And when push does come to shove, I'll put my money on E-mail push to be the one that goes the distance, long after on-line readers have grown tired and irritated with other forms of push. ■

Tom Regan is the Managing Editor of The Christian Science Monitor's On-line Edition. His homepage is at <http://www.1.usa.com/regan/Home/tom.html>

Spain's Shadows From the Past

—They're Back

BY JOSÉ A. MARTÍNEZ-SOLER

Twenty years ago, two years after the death of Generalissimo Francisco Franco, Spaniards voted for the first time in their lives. For those of us who grew up in the dictatorship that first trip to the polls was like a First Communion, a new sacrament that would hereafter identify us as believers in democracy and members of a larger world community that abided by a general creed of certain rights, freedoms and obligations.

In a national consensus to move ahead, the past was to be buried and forgiven. There would be no reprisals, no war crime trials from the Civil War of 1936-1939. The sins of our fathers from both sides of the war that claimed the lives of over one million people were wiped clean.

Adolfo Suárez, a former high government official during the dictatorship metamorphosed into a champion of democracy and charismatic leader of a newly formed center right party, won the first elections in 1977. The Socialist Party, persecuted during the dictatorship, won the next elections of 1982. The victory of the left, without violence or new coup attempts, was our toughest test of faith. The ghosts from centuries of civil wars, intolerance, persecution and inquisition were finally laid to rest.

Last year, after 14 years of successively elected Socialist governments, we faced our second test with the electoral victory of the right—their first peaceful return to power in Spanish history. Now middle-aged, some of us are starting to get creepy feelings again. Like the warning of the little girl in "Poltergeist," we are hearing more and more cries of "They're back!"

The authoritarian temptation that is so thinly disguised in the new conserva-

tive government of José Maria Aznar, has in just one year since its narrow victory stirred alarm—sometimes outright paranoia—that is only comprehensible within the context of smoldering embers left over from two centuries of civil wars.

Many of us had been looking forward to a conservative victory to consolidate the democratic process and bury forever the fear of ghosts from our fascist past. We were also punishing the arrogance of the former Socialist Party, which despite having modernized both society and the economy over the last 14 years, was shrouded in a dense fog of political scandals and corruption. The winds of change were blowing and many felt we needed fresh air.

But we soon became alarmed with what we interpreted as swaggering abuse of power and were taken aback by the muzzling, purging and persecution of critical journalists and private media groups that were not docile with the new government. The rancorous use of the state apparatus for reprisals and partisan revenge by the legitimate victors of the elections began forcing wider and wider sections of Spain's predominantly politically centrist population to choose sides once again, reluctantly and with a heavy heart.

Bitter accusations fly back and forth across old barricades as an acrid fog of intolerance settles in. Neutrality and impartiality are thrown to the winds both in journalism and in the judicial system, the two main pillars of any democracy.

Once again we are being asked, "Which side are you on?" And fear—we hope unjustified, overblown, or mere paranoia—begins to rustle deep in a forgotten corner of the collective memory of many a middle-aged or anti-

francoist. Again we talk about what we Spaniards have always called the two Spains: the so-called Black Legend Spain of the Inquisition (totalitarian, intolerant and clerical) and the Illustrated Spain (liberal, progressive and Erasmist) eternally condemned to burn at the stake or to exile when the other side is in power.

The Spanish press has sadly become deeply divided. It's again become necessary to buy two papers to read opposing versions of the same event and then figure out a more plausible in-between interpretation. Once again we identify each other by what paper we read. Once again we are turning to the foreign press to get a more balanced view of what is happening in our country.

Some journalists are not even on speaking terms with their colleagues on the other side of the barricade. Political radio and television talk shows



José Antonio Martínez-Soler, a 1977 Nieman Fellow, has been the founding Editor-Director of various magazines and newspapers including Doblón and Historia Internacional, Gaceta de los Negocios and El Sol. While Editor of Doblón in 1976, he was kidnapped and tortured by paramilitary forces four months after General Franco's death. Currently he writes a weekly syndicated business column for the Barcelona based daily, El Periodico de Catalunya.

that used to attempt to present a variety of opinions have become increasingly one-sided, hurling invectives against the opposing viewpoint. Manipulation and purges within the state-controlled media (television, radio and the state newswire Agencia EFE) have become so routine as to be no longer even newsworthy.

A hundred journalists in Catalonia, the northeastern region of Spain, denounced last June "the authoritarian abuse and discriminatory actions of the government" taken against Grupo Prisa, Grupo Zeta and its television network, Antena 3, and Grupo 16, the three media holdings that were born with democracy. The statement, which was also signed by dozens of intellectuals and artists, condemned the "interference, threats, and censorship" against these press conglomerates and warned that "freedom of expression is dangerously at risk in Spain." The first year of conservative government has produced, according to this group of Catalan journalists, "a significant step backward" in the rights and freedoms of journalists to inform the public.

Antonio Asensio, Chairman of Grupo Zeta (which includes the first private television network, Antena 3, and the second largest newspaper of Spain, *El Periódico de Catalunya*), supported Aznar's Popular Party during the electoral campaign and his publications were critical of the scandal-ridden Socialist Party. Last spring he confessed in public that he "was afraid" of the Government, sending shock waves throughout the Spanish press. Before a Congressional committee he testified that the Prime Minister's spokesman had threatened him with prison if he did not follow the government's recommendations in the emerging business of digital television and the retransmission of soccer games. (The spokesman first denied the comment, then said that if he had said it, it was within the context of a friendly conversation taken out of context.)

Asensio had angered the government by sharing his exclusive rights over televised soccer games in an agreement with the Pay-TV of Grupo Prisa, the publishers of *El País*, Spain's leading

paper and liberal symbol of the democratic transition. The government accuses Jesus de Polanco, chairman of Grupo Prisa, of having received privileges and favorable treatment from the former Socialist Government, a vague accusation that many feel may have some basis to it. The paper was seen as pro-government throughout much of the 14 years of Socialist rule, despite its criticisms of scandals and corruption.

Polanco, in turn, has accused the government of unmitigating harassment—including retroactive legislation directed exclusively against the economic interests of his group—which he has described as "an attack against the freedom of business enterprises in general and an intent to cut back our freedom of information."

In a surprising parliamentary coalition with Communists, the right wing government was able to push through parliament legislation governing digital TV directed specifically against Grupo Prisa.

The government required the use of multi-purpose decoders, making Polanco's digital TV equipment already in use in the market illegal, and decreed that the TV venture must share its exclusive rights to broadcast soccer matches that it had already paid for with money that the soccer clubs had already spent. (The Communist party tacked on an amendment insisting that the state would not have to pay any compensation for these lost rights.) Broadcast soccer games were declared by decree to be "in the general interest" and therefore could not be exclusively owned or scrambled on pay-TV.

Meanwhile, the government backed a rival digital TV project led by Telefónica, the recently privatized former telephone monopoly, which will not be operating until the fall. Telefónica's decoders, not yet on the market, fulfill the multi-purpose decoding rules.

Canal + of France, a partner in the Spanish holding presided by Polanco and other private European TV networks, denounced "Spanish violations of European Law." The European Commission initiated procedures to sanction the Spanish Government and asked the European Union Court for immedi-

ate protective measures to prevent "irreparable damage" to the economic interests of the holding.

Undaunted, the government ordered a private investigation of the TV ventures of Grupo Prisa (Sogecable and Canal +) which were leaked to a right wing magazine, *Epoca*. The publication of the investigation prompted an extravagant judicial persecution against Polanco, dragging him to court in front of paparazzi flashlights. (The reporter who wrote the story, Miguel Platón, was later appointed Chief News Director of the state-owned newswire, Agencia EFE. He denied his appointment was due to government appreciation for his article.)

The investigating magistrate, Javier Gómez de Liaño, whose rulings against Prisa were overturned four times by higher courts, and who is a frequent dinner companion of *Epoca's* editor, Jaime Campmany, banned Polanco from leaving Spain. Under pressure from his peers, the magistrate later gave Polanco permission to go to the United States to receive an honorary doctorate from Brown University for his "commitment to democratic ideals."

Critical journalists saw Spanish justice, enveloped in various scandals that have tarnished the judicial reputation, become more of a Latin soap opera than a guarantee of impartiality. Political arbitrariness and judicial insecurity are now additional risks.

Aznar's supporters contend the former Socialist government was worse, and indeed, the margin of misdoing is certainly wide.

The Polanco affair and the bizarre judicial proceedings against his group, has pitted the government and its supporting press against the Prisa press empire and its supporters. With the press entrenched on one side or the other over the affair, any impartiality and objectivity has long evaporated. A more balanced version of the scandal can be found in the foreign press: *The New York Times*, *The Financial Times* and other European newspapers.

Antonio Franco, the Editor of *El Periódico de Catalunya* of Asensio's

Hong Kong Story—a Paradox

BY RICHARD READ

Grupo Zeta, called on journalists "to join in a common front against the Popular Party offensive against the press....The very survival of the independent press is at stake," he warned in a recent conference. "We must understand that we are in a moment of war...in a state of exception." These are powerful words in Spain. Shadows from the past.

Hundreds of intellectuals from Spain and around the world along with European newspaper editors rallied to the Prisa cause signing a protest manifesto against the Spanish government and its harassment of the anti-government press. It was *deja vu*: righteous democratic Europe and left wing intellectuals united against the suspicious Spanish government. "There they go again!"

Former Socialist Premier Felipe González, accused his successor of "breaking the rules of the democratic game on a European level" and has asked Parliament to investigate the "abuses of power" of the executive branch against the press.

Needless to say, the right wing Popular Party quickly demanded a similar investigation of the 14 years of Socialist government, to which the Socialists responded by lengthening the investigation period to the days of the Franco dictatorship. The Popular Party retorted that the Socialist Party does not have any moral authority or legitimacy to even mention abuse of power or breaking democratic rules after all the scandals in their government. They refer to the scandal of rogue Civil Guard and police officers who allegedly used mercenary hit squads to murder suspected Basque terrorists in France in the early days of the Socialist government.

Then the unspeakable happened: the former Socialist Senate chairman called the newly appointed Chief State Prosecutor a "Francoist." This was the first time since the death of the dictator that anyone publicly dug out the past. The "clean slate" consensus that made the peaceful transition possible was broken.

A Pandora's box of historical vendettas was now opened, and Grupo Prisa's publications began digging out the Francoist past of supporters of Aznar. El País columnists dragged out undemo-

When more than 6,000 journalists converged on Hong Kong last summer for one of the century's biggest stories, many expected emotions to run high.

Britain, after all, intended to hand over this budding democracy and paragon of capitalism to China, the authoritarian behemoth still nominally committed to communism. Handover ceremonies at midnight June 30 would close the curtains on the British empire and celebrate a new era of Chinese ascendancy.

Therefore many in the media anticipated a sort of fall-of-the-Berlin Wall in reverse, with panicky citizens, distraught colonialists and grim-faced Chinese soldiers driving Tiananmen-Square-vintage tanks through the Central financial district. All that, plus the handover

cratic details from the fascist past of the Editor of Epoca, Jaime Campmany.

Aznar himself confessed "profound admiration" for his grandfather, a famous journalist and editor of the Spanish Republic, Manuel Aznar, who switched sides in the Civil War to become an ardent (and for half of Spain, infamous) supporter and propagandist of the fascist dictatorship.

Government intervention and official reprisals in the press have provoked divisions among the conservatives as well. Carlos Mendo, a Popular Party Member of the board of the state controlled Televisión Española (IVE), resigned his post saying, "as a conservative it is difficult to support a party that patronizes state interventionism in something as sacred as the media." Mendo, Editor of the International Edition of El País and founding journalist of the paper, was forced to choose between his employer or his party.

There are still minority sectors of the fascist right wing—the so called "Jurassic Park" wing—that have not forgiven history for having condemned forever their parents or grandparents as the

T-shirts, commemorative reporting pads and other cool stuff in the press kits made this one-time event an enticing story.

The reality was less stark, but more interesting. For all of the handover's pomp and ceremony, this was a subtle story layered with paradox.

Those who stuck around (some bailed out for Cambodia) and waded through Hong Kong's flooded streets (some others closeted themselves in the cavernous press room) encountered conflicting emotions, colliding cultures and cherished hopes for this enclave and its once and future ruler.

"Foreign journalists either expect people to be weeping and running around in circles, or they expect people to be jubilant," said Hong Kong legislator Margaret Ng. "But we have been

"bad" or "guilty" side of the civil war, despite atrocities committed by both sides in the fighting. Thanks to the fascist victory, aided by Hitler and Mussolini, democratic freedoms were suppressed for 40 years under a shameful dictatorship that isolated Spain from the rest of democratic Europe.

There are more and more disturbing examples every day that half of the country observes with nervousness. School teachers from various regions of Spain who traveled recently to Madrid for an authorized demonstration against a transfer of State funds from public schools to private Catholic schools were investigated by the Civil Guard. Their names were jotted down on lists, just as in the old days.

We had forgotten the bone chilling shivers we felt when we saw our names, once again, written down in a police notebook for participating in an activity that criticizes the government.

Shadows from the past. The cartoons and comics in the press that joke "They're back!" are starting to make us nervous. ■

living with this for the last 13 years, going to work, paying the rent and getting the children to school."

Ng was one of those with the most to lose from the handover, and one of a dozen people—ranging from a cab driver to a courageous local newspaper editor—whom I followed during handover week. Her situation illustrates Hong Kong's historical crossroads and the international media's approach as the heavily hyped handover loomed.

When voters swept Ng into office two years ago, she eagerly anticipated a four-year term. But on the Monday morning that I spent with her, she entered the legislature's hushed chambers with a brief bow and began the last weeklong session of her truncated term.

I watched as legislators rushed to debate 31 bills in a last-ditch effort to influence life in the territory after the handover. Beijing planned to replace the elected body with a handpicked Provisional Legislature.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. When Britain and China agreed in 1984 on Hong Kong's return, negotiators described a "through train" process. Legislators would begin their ride in colonial Hong Kong and not get off until the end of their terms in China.

But Chinese officials derailed the through train. They felt that London-appointed Governor Chris Patten broke the 1984 agreement. Patten expanded legislative elections amid distrust following the Tiananmen Square massacre, giving Hong Kong a dose of democracy that it had never before enjoyed under British rule.

William Overholt, Bankers Trust managing director in Hong Kong who has long criticized negative coverage of the territory, felt that the media mob in town for the handover slighted China once again.

"There was still a uniform one-sidedness," Overholt said. "Not one article I saw explained to readers why China created the Provisional Legislature. It was just these evil authoritarians, who hate democracy, doing terrible things."

Overholt had spoken last May at a Harvard conference organized by Professor Ezra Vogel for journalists plan-



PHOTO BY ROSS WILLIAM HAMILTON

Richard Read covers international affairs for The Oregonian, the Pacific Northwest's largest daily newspaper. Read, 39, founded The Oregonian's Asia Bureau in Tokyo in 1989. He reported throughout Asia during the Pacific Rim's economic take-off and covered the war in Cambodia, conditions in North Korea and the opening of China and Vietnam. Born in Scotland, Read was raised in Cambridge, Mass. His Nieman year ended at the same instant that Hong Kong became Chinese. Here he is in Hong Kong in the torrential rains.

ning to cover the handover. One of the meeting's main messages was that the Hong Kong story was not two-dimensional. China, the communist Goliath, was changing profoundly. Hong Kong, the capitalist David, contained a wide spectrum of views on the handover.

Some of Hong Kong's most outspoken views appeared in the pages of Apple Daily, a Chinese-language newspaper published in a drab Hong Kong district. The paper has rocketed to a circulation of 400,000 in its first two years, as editors buck a trend toward self-censorship on topics sensitive to China. Media industry analysts say that the newspaper could test not just press freedoms but commercial liberties under Chinese rule, if officials pressure advertisers to withdraw.

Thus the root of the Hong Kong story, on the eve of the handover, came down to Chinese intentions. Would China understand—let alone appreciate—Hong Kong's unique characteristics enough to let it alone?

Answers to such questions could best be found in China. Some of the best-prepared reporters, such as Bob Deans of Cox News Service, visited Beijing and Shanghai during the run-up to the ceremonies.

I spent a day in Guanlan, China, across the border from Hong Kong, to explore one of the region's most fundamental and intriguing issues: not how China would change Hong Kong, but how Hong Kong was changing China. There I met Tony Gong, a young man in a suit who sold memberships in southeast China's exorbitant Mission Hills golf resort.

Capitalists and former communists meet at this emerging 72-hole club to whack balls and seal deals on factories, highways and other projects transforming the developing nation. As a peasant-girl-turned-caddy drove us around the manicured links, Gong interrupted his sales pitch with some honest advice.

"Look," he said, lowering his voice, "you shouldn't play golf when you're young. Make money first, then play when you're older." Or, as Deng Xiaoping put it: To get rich is glorious.

Back in Hong Kong, visiting reporters were discovering the colony's poor people. Sweating Swedish and German cameramen lugged equipment upstairs in rundown buildings inhabited by destitute people in caged-off beds.

The "cage people" became an obligatory stop on the international media

circuit. Other favorites included tattoo parlors, border lookouts and Kowloon shops selling Hong Kong "hangover" T-shirts and other souvenirs.

A minor kitchen fire in the Convention Center prompted a press conference that attracted nine television cameras and about 60 reporters to hear the minute details in English, Cantonese and Mandarin.

Ross Hamilton, the photographer who accompanied me to Hong Kong, dashed across town to ride a promotional hot-air balloon promising spectacular city views. There he found a balloon tethered above a parking lot, dwarfed by surrounding buildings.

Relief from the hubbub could be found at the bar of the Foreign Correspondents' Club. Martin Lee, Hong Kong's leading pro-democracy crusader, spoke eloquently at the club on the colony's last day. Chinese officials, and even Hong Kong business leaders, failed to make their case as effectively to the visiting media.

Covering Hong Kong's return after 156 years of colonial rule was especially meaningful to me, because my ancestors watched from Macau and Guangzhou (then Canton) as Britain prepared to wrest Hong Kong from China.

My great-great-great-grandfather, Russell Sturgis, was one of a handful of Western traders permitted to live in Canton; his wife and children stayed in Macau, as China required. His sea-captain cousin, William, founded a Boston firm that ran much of America's China trade during the first half of the 1800's.

At a Hong Kong secondary school that I visited, teachers expect to have to alter their history lessons, as well as switching instruction from English to Cantonese. Until now textbooks often described the Opium Wars merely as a trade dispute. They avoided explaining that British warships attacked the Chinese in order to force them to continue importing addictive drugs.

Across the Pearl River delta in Macau, where my great-great-great-grandmother wrote letters that remain in the Boston Athenaeum, relations with Beijing are not so contentious. I traveled by jet-foil one hour west of Hong Kong for a day in Macau, the Portu-

guese enclave scheduled for reunification with China in 1999.

Portugal, which began democratic elections in Macau 20 years ago, did not seize the territory originally—an important distinction, in China's eyes. Lisbon offered Portuguese passports to all inhabitants born before 1981, avoiding the emigration and uncertainty that plagued Hong Kong.

And, of course, there is simply less at stake in Macau, a laid-back mini-Las Vegas that lacks a deep-water port.

Media madness won't strike Macau in two years on the scale of Hong Kong. Instead the place to watch is Taiwan, which is steadfastly resisting China's designs of applying the Hong Kong reunification formula.

Hong Kong's handover fireworks shows offered some of the best insights into differences between the territory's successive rulers. The \$450,000 British show lit up Victoria Harbor in style, rattling the windows of my 15th-story hotel room.

The \$13 million Chinese show, promoted as a laser and fireworks extravaganza that would make the Brits look stingy, began with a monotonous parade of dowdy illuminated boats that bored the sophisticated Hong Kong crowd. The lasers and fireworks began with a bang and ended with a whimper, as one of the launching barges caught fire.

I avoided the press pools of the official handover ceremonies. Instead I watched after midnight as the royal yacht *Britannia*, illuminated with Patten and Prince Charles aboard, steamed slowly out of the harbor.

Soon after, China sent troops across the border in a disquieting display of force that coincided with the U.S. network news hour. Beijing apparently intended the display primarily for domestic consumption. But the message was also intended for Taiwan, underscoring China's growing military might.

I had planned to stay up until dawn and take my interpreter to ask people doing their morning tai-chi ritual what it was like to wake up in China. But The Los Angeles Times beat me to the idea in their superb special section. And Hong Kong's first day under Chinese sovereignty began with a riotous down-

pour that drenched all prospects of exercising in the park.

Hamilton, the photographer, opted for bed. The interpreter and I slugged around in the deluge until, not much before deadline, we stumbled into 100 Happy Seafoods Restaurant, a dim sum place in Wanchai.

There I found Au Suicheung, a 30-year cab driver, at his usual table at the back of the second floor, munching flour rolls stuffed with dried shrimp. Au, 70, said the handover sparked a twinge of Chinese pride.

"I'm very happy about Hong Kong becoming part of China," Au said. "After all, the Opium War put Hong Kong in the hands of the British. Previously it was Chinese territory."

Au sat contentedly at one end of the spectrum. At another stood members of a working-class family whom I'd visited a year ago, and saw again this time. They expressed fears over Chinese rule and said they would emigrate if they had the money.

My own conclusion: Hong Kong doesn't have one future, it has 6.5 million futures—one for each of its residents. What you feel about Chinese rule depends on where you sit.

If you're an entrepreneur profiting from China's rise, perhaps holding a second passport as insurance, the future looks bright. If you're a political activist or a church leader, the outlook is less certain.

Many reporters covering the handover were expected by editors to become instant fortune tellers. Each ceremonial flourish, each political statement, was endowed with prophetic meaning concerning Hong Kong's next 50 years.

But some sage advice comes from Ken McGraine, a State Street Bank executive who monitors Hong Kong. He expects change to be subtle in the short term.

"You have to read this the way you would a good Agatha Christie novel," McGraine said.

"Don't assume too much. And then maybe in three or four or five years, you're going to have a real sense of what July 1 has meant." ■

Mexican Press Still on the Take

BY DIANNE SOLIS

MEXICO CITY

As he stabbed at his steak, the news director confessed that a leftist opposition leader's bold retort on democracy to President Ernesto Zedillo would never get air-time. "We got our call from the Interior Ministry," he says.

Translation: The Interior Ministry, run by this country's once-indomitable ruling party, called for censorship. And censorship—and the co-option that greases it—continues as Mexico lurches toward democracy.

Both censorship and co-option have been central to the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, controlling this country and its critics for the last seven decades. Last June, reporters investigating the death of a colleague in a strife-torn southern state found that the editor was actually on the payroll of the governor. In July, as historic elections neared, CNN found its broadcasts cut off in Mexico by its cable operators, under orders from the Mexican government, who cited election law.

Only last year, young reporters say, it was still too common to find older colleagues taking bribes of watches and even cars for fawning stories. And the ruling party admits they still pay expenses of Mexican reporters who cover out-of-town trips by the president of the party. To beef up flattering prose, scribes on a recent trip were given \$50 boxes of frozen steaks.

"With campaign heat on, we always see this problem," says Teresa Gomez Mont, a federal congresswoman from the opposition's National Action Party who's tried to liberalize Mexico's media laws. "Press bribery is one of the pillars of the Mexican political system."

Many hope that the pillar crumbles. Crushing elections defeats July 6 for the authoritarian, often-corrupt PRI mean that it lost control of the lower

house of Congress, the capital and its city council, and two key governorships for the first time in its 68-year-old history. The world's longest ruling party still controls the presidency, the federal bureaucracy, the senate and most governorships.

The power-balance changes have politicians from the two big opposition parties talking up democratizing reforms. Reporters, of course, are rallying around the issue of a free and uncorrupted press—a cornerstone of any democracy. "A corrupt press is the best method for a corrupt government to arrive and hold power," Mexican reporter Jesus Castillo recently told colleagues at the founding conference of the Mexican branch of Investigative Reporters and Editors.

It remains to be seen how audacious the press will become. For nearly three years, newspapers and television have been flexing greater freedom, but self-censorship, intimidation and regulatory pressures continue taming journalists. And the situation is more onerous for the owners of radio and television stations, who operate under an antiquated law in which stations can be shut down for offensive reporting. Efforts to change that law have been continually thwarted by the ruling party's old majority in the Mexican Congress.

Mexico's television and radio broadcasters are regulated by the Communications and Transportation Ministry. The Ministry, whose head is appointed by the ruling party president, enjoys broad discretion over "concessions" granted broadcasters. The concession's award is up to the ministry's "free judgment." Concessions can be revoked for "whatever fault of performance," including un-

specified faults, according to regulations written more than 30 years ago.

"The relationship between the government and the press is a sick one," says Eduardo Ruiz Healy, a radio commentator who's been yanked from the air twice for government criticism. "In many cities, the owners of the radio and the newspaper is a person who had a big position in the PRI."

In the United States, licensing is also discretionary, but the Federal Communications Commission's reviews are based on technical ability and diversified ownership.



Dianne Solis, Nieman Fellow 1990, has been a foreign correspondent in Mexico for The Wall Street Journal since 1991. After reporting on suspicious satellite blackouts during a broadcast of commentary by critics of the North American Free Trade Agreement, she was lambasted by the Televisa network. To make sure she got the message, the president's office had scripts of the broadcast sent to her office. Along with several other foreign correspondents, she was the subject of Mexican advertisement in 1993 attacking their reporting. The advertisements in several Mexican newspapers were believed to have been planted by the Mexican government.

For decades, media giant Grupo Televisa SA served as the ruling party's handmaiden, either vilifying or ignoring the PRI critics. Its chief executive, Emilio Azcarraga, who died this year, openly declared himself a "soldier of the PRI." The 1993 privatization of Television Azteca SA created hopes for stronger competition that would further the cause of political pluralism. For the past four years, TV Azteca's news program, "Hechos," was regarded as a fresh voice in Mexican newscasting.

But during the recent elections, Azteca came under criticism from the watchdog group Civic Alliance. It accused them of "excessive hostility" against the leftist opposition party and "clear preference" for the ruling party. One of TV Azteca's chief opinion tools is a political puppet show that has spiked ratings. The political skits regularly take aim at such opposition candidates as Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, a leftist who's been portrayed as a mop-haired dimwit. (Cardenas, nevertheless, takes office December 5 as the capital's mayor.)

Azteca denies its coverage is slanted. But the show's creators say management prevents them from stitching up a presidential puppet. "The company wants us to respect the presidential figure," producer Hilda Soriano says.

To discourage political bias in television, Mexico's Federal Electoral Institute began issuing reports on television and radio coverage prior to the elections. In the last report, it found that media coverage in the sprawling capital was nearly equal. But in the states it was badly skewed.

Broadcasters here operate with other legal uncertainties. During the elections last July 6, CNN found its signals were suddenly snapped off within Mexico. Cable operators said the Mexican government cited a section of election law that stipulates that pre-election polls can't be aired for eight days before the vote. The problem here, though, was that CNN hadn't violated the law, which prohibits the citing of poll material. Their report three days before the election merely said there

was a probability that the leftist opposition candidate would win.

The signal appears to have been snapped on the presumption that the law was going to be broken. The Mexican Interior Ministry declined comment on the matter.

There are more disturbing areas of media law in Mexico. Take the issue of truth, for example. It's not a defense in criminal defamation suits as The New York Times recently found out. Times bureau chief Sam Dillon could face a criminal trial for a front-page story last February that linked two Mexican governors to drug traffickers. The case is particularly important because it reminds U.S.-based publications that the First Amendment and its protections don't extend beyond the Rio Grande. And it illustrates that the hurdles for a plaintiff wishing to sue a U.S.-based publication for libel or defamation may be much lower overseas.

Consider, as well, the sixth article of the Mexican constitution and its many ambiguities: "The expression of ideas will not be subject of any judicial or administrative inquisition, unless it offends good morals, infringes on the rights of others, incites crime or disturbs the public order."

In the wake of the case, the U.S. Committee to Protect Journalists is pushing to make libel a civil matter under the Mexican defamation law. "This is an anachronism for a country moving into a transition toward democracy," says Joel Simon, Latin America director for the committee.

Aggravating the problem is the fact that Dillon believes his phones are being tapped. Most foreign correspondents, likewise, believe their phones are bugged.

Journalists are also "censored" by choked access to information. The Mexican constitution says the state "guarantees the right to information." But a U.S.-style Freedom of Information Act doesn't exist here. El Norte newspaper has pushed for one for several years, but such efforts were futile with a ruling party majority in Congress. "There isn't a culture among public officials to give information to journalists or to

citizens," says Alejandra Xanic, a Mexican journalist. "Many of us don't even think we have the right to ask—and we do."

At the PRI's sprawling headquarters, a spokesman says the media is much freer now. He denies that the practices of old, or even the practices of the 1994 presidential campaign, continue. In fact, the costs of press courtship are now a fifth of 1994 expenditures, says PRI spokesman Jose Luis Mejia. Besides, Mejia says, "If we didn't pay for the reporters to cover events, we'd get no coverage."

Indeed, many thought that reporters were no longer on the payrolls of PRI-run state governments—a practice widely exposed in 1995 when the National Action Party won a governorship in an interior state. That was until the death of Jesus Bueno in late May in the guerrilla-torn state of Guerrero. As reporters galvanized to investigate the death and suspicions that the government might have been involved, the government was forced to disclose that Bueno had actually been on its payroll.

The government can go to excruciating lengths to keep tabs on reporters. Interior Minister Emilio Chuayffet has reporters "graded" for their "slant." Numerous copies of Chuayffet's reviews, obtained by this writer, show whose criticism is "constructive," who's a negative "recidivist" and who's running an outright campaign against Chuayffet.

Bruno Lopez, Bureau Chief for the U.S. Spanish-language network Univision, says the PRI and its government are fighting a losing battle. Three years ago, when he did a program on press censorship, Lopez asked the Interior Ministry for comment. He was invited to a session where he was shown several of his tapes and told he was violating Mexican media law. He was warned that he could be sanctioned, but he went ahead with the story anyway. The more the PRI tries to co-opt the media, he says, the more "credibility [becomes] a precious commodity." ■

Mongolia's Media at the Crossroads

By BARRY LOWE

When the cold winds from the steppes blow down Ulan Bator's wide streets they set the newsstands fluttering like fields of autumn leaves. Each of the news outlets along the city's main drag, Peace Avenue, contains so many publications they look like monochrome mosaics spread along the pavement.

When the hard-line communist regime that had ruled them for 70 years was ousted, the Mongols celebrated the end of the government monopoly on information by producing more newspapers per head of population than anywhere else in the world. Freedom of expression was a big part of their liberation from totalitarianism.

Since the 1990 pro-democracy revolution, 550 new newspapers have been registered in this land-locked central Asian nation of just 2.5 million people. Many of those 550 disappeared after a few issues while others lingered on, appearing less and less frequently. For those that failed there were always new ones to replace them. The popular ones built up readership, and dozens of them now stand daily in the open air news stalls along Peace Avenue, each reflect-

ing a different vision of the future from among the bewildering range of ideologies and political tendencies now at play in Mongolian life.

Mongolians never had a free press before. They had only just discovered newspapers (their first one, "The New Mirror," was launched in 1911) when a Soviet-sponsored Marxist party took control. A free press was one of the catch cries of the 1990 revolution and the idea flourished.

But the problem facing Mongolia's newly unshackled media industry today is that the quantity is not matched by quality. In their haste to get into print, publishers have neglected the finer points of news production, creating a deluge of poorly reported, poorly written and poorly designed newspapers that many people believe are undermining the country's chances of building a mature and responsible media tradition. Indeed, some commentators are now complaining of an excess of freedom and urging the government to reintroduce some controls.

And that is just what the government is planning. A media law is soon to be drafted and introduced into the great

Hurral of the People, the Mongolian parliament. Its preparation has polarized opinion on the need for media regulations and sparked an intense public debate about what form those regulations should take. Many industry professionals

fear the new regulations could put too much control in government hands, turning the clock at least partly back to the bad old days of communist rule.

"The image of the free press has certainly been damaged by unqualified, untalented journalists publishing newspapers and periodicals of poor journalistic quality," said the President of the Mongolian Free Democratic Journalists' Association, Tsendiin Dashdondov. "The public is unused to thinking and analyzing for themselves. In these circumstances journalists need to publish reports based on hard facts rather than mere rumors or opinions. If we fail to do this we will not only fail to make our society more accountable but we will also give those who seek to control the press a reason for reintroducing censorship."

Leaf through a typical Mongolian newspaper and you can understand Dashdondov's concerns. Most run to just eight pages, with cluttered layouts and smudgy photos. Their content is an inseparable mix of news and comment. Determining where the news ends and the comment begins is as difficult as separating the facts from rumor.

Despite the plethora of newspaper



Barry Lowe is an Associate Professor teaching journalism at the City University of Hong Kong. He is also chief executive of the City University Corporate Communication Center, a media production house and consultancy. He has a background in print and broadcast journalism, and his reporting career included long term assignments in South East Asia, former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. He recently went to Mongolia to teach a course in core skills in journalism for the Press Institute of Mongolia.

titles sold from newsstands, only four are published every day, the rest are tri-weekly, bi-weekly, weekly or of even less frequency. Of the four dailies three are published by government bodies—one by the central government (the market leader “Ardyn Erh” or “Peoples’ Right”), one by the parliament (“Zasgiin Gazryn Medee” or “Government News”) and one by the Ulan Bator municipal council (“The Ulan Bator”)—a situation little changed from communist times. (Even the police force has its newspaper, a weekly called “Vice and Virtue.”)

The fourth daily—“Onoodor” or “Today”—is the only independent organ, owned by a newly created media company, the Mongolian News Company. Onoodor’s Editor, B. Galaarid, who at 32 represents the new post-communist era generation of Mongolian journalists, says the newspaper has built its circulation to 10,000 since its launch last year. “We’re trying to develop standards of journalism that will win us more and more readers. People want better newspapers and we’re trying to give them that,” he said.

It hasn’t been all smooth sailing for Onoodor. The authorities seem reluctant to loosen their grip on the control of information. One method the government has used to restrict the activities of independent publishers is to ration newsprint, imported under a communist-era arrangement from Russia. Onoodor’s owners get around this obstacle by finding newsprint in South Korea and Canada.

The Mongolian News Company has also forged partnerships with two other new independent media players, Channel 25 TV and an FM radio station, to create an independent media group with the clout to promote the independent sector. The TV station is an example of a successful new independent media enterprise, but again there are questions about its standards. Channel 25 has achieved a strong following in the few months it has been broadcasting to Ulan Bator from a low strength transmitter. But it is a shoestring operation with its production facilities based

on the low grade amateur format, SuperVHS. The movie it screens each evening is a pirated VHS copy of a recent Hollywood release dubbed into Mongolian by a single person who does all the voices for all the characters in the film. It is minimalist television at its most basic; maybe excusable for a start-up operation like Channel 25, but cause for concern as an exemplar of independent broadcasting standards.

The general concern is whether the government as a major media player can be trusted to pass a media law promoting a free and independent press. Most people concede there is a need for some form of media regulations. One effect of the lifting of restrictions on the media has been the proliferation of pornographic publications. The Ulan Bator municipal council recently reacted to public outrage by banning pornography from the streets, restricting its sale to the news kiosk inside the central post office. The availability of pornography has led to calls for censorship. But the Free Democratic Journalists Association is opposed to any censorship. “The freer the press the healthier the nation,” argues association president Dashdondov.

Foreign diplomats and aid workers in Mongolia often complain about the professional standards of local journalists who, they say, are careless with facts, show poor news judgment and do not seem to understand the distinction between opinion and information. The journalists counter that they are forced to produce only copy that serves their publishers’ ideologies and prejudices. Many of today’s Mongolian journalists are refugees from the state-controlled news organizations. They have to contend with low wages, often as low as 60 U.S. dollars a month, and defamation proceedings by politicians and business leaders who feel offended.

One initiative to teach local journalists Western values of media responsibility is the Danish foreign aid-funded Press Institute of Mongolia, which runs training programs conducted by Western journalists and journalism educators. Press Institute director Tsendiin

Enkhbat said local journalists needed to be exposed to liberal democratic notions of the role and responsibilities of the media. “They need exposure to models of journalism from democratic societies so they can understand the role of journalists in free societies,” he said.

Journalists attending one of the workshops conducted by the Press Institute complained that government officials were a long way from embracing the spirit of openness in the way they responded to requests for information. Most requests were met with hostile responses and blank refusals to provide the information sought. “It’s one thing for Western journalists to come and talk to us about freedom of information, but what can we do when the officials simply don’t respect this idea?” said J. Erdenetsogt, a reporter with the state TV network Mongol TV.

A journalist from the town of Erdenet, site of Mongolia’s main export earner, a giant copper mine, said local journalists wanted to investigate the high level of pollution and environmental damage caused by the mine but were unable to get information from mine officials and local authorities. Mongolia is suffering from many of the problems bedeviling its former Soviet bloc allies: institutionalized corruption, abuse of official power, organized crime, traumatic economic restructuring and social dislocation. These are the subjects that should be prominent in the country’s media but too often their investigation is stifled and their exposure muted.

“Mongolia has never had a free press. This is a new concept here,” said Journalists’ Association President Dashdondov. “There is a desperate need to change the old concepts of the mass media. I think only professional journalists can develop a truly independent press and handle the responsibility of reflecting public opinion. It is imperative that we train a totally new generation of journalists.” ■

BOOKS

So You're Planning to Write Your Memoirs

BY MADELEINE BLAIS

At a swank literary event in New York City in the spring of 1996 (you could tell it was swank because everyone was dressed formally in black and it was still daylight), Laurie Stone, a critic for *The Village Voice*, was honored for a series of writings about memoir. After she rose to accept the award for criticism from the National Book Critics Circle, she asked the audience for a show of hands to see how many people were currently working on a memoir. She nudged the group, "Come on. I expect to see everyone's hands raised. I mean, who isn't?"

You would have to be living in a cultural vacuum not to have noticed that memoir as a genre is hot, the way the color combination of peach and green was hot at restaurants in the 80's.

It is an endearingly democratic form. Anyone can write one, not that everyone should. It is a truism that generals write autobiographies: public accounts of public valor in public places. Foot soldiers write memoirs.

Novelist Mary Gordon, who recently wrote a memoir, "The Shadow Man," about her father who was a liar and a soft-core pornographer and an anti-Semitic Jew whom she adored despite all that, describes the "cave of memory" as "a tourist trap at high season. Everyone's talking about memory: French intellectuals, historians of the Holocaust, victims of child abuse, alleged abusers. It's a subject of conversation in the academy and on morning chat shows—even on A.M. radio."

Journalists are not immune from the bug. The *New York Times* has been especially bitten, although the results

have not been distinguished with the notable exception of Russell Baker's "Growing Up." Executive Editor Turner Catledge, somewhat in desperation, hired a ghost writer for his memoirs. Catledge's successor, Clifton Daniel, fell back on anecdotes about celebrities and, astounding for a journalist, conceded that the stories might not be true. His successor as Executive Editor, James Reston, produced only a long love letter to *The Times*. A. M. Rosenthal and Max Frankel, who followed Reston, are now writing their memoirs. We can only hope they will do better.

It has taken a publisher to produce a successful journalistic memoir. Katharine Graham of *The Washington Post*, has drawn wide praise for "Personal History," in which she confronts her weaknesses. In "A Good Life," her editor, Benjamin Bradlee, tries to be amusing, but ducks big questions.

Television news anchors are part of the milieu. Walter Cronkite's "A Reporter's Life," David Brinkley's predictably titled "David Brinkley," and Howard K. Smith's "Events Leading Up to My Death" have appeared in the last year and a half.

With the exception of the Graham book, much, though certainly not all, of what you find in these works is either flat or self-serving. Because the form is so tempting to journalists, it would appear to be in our self-interest to get a grip on the current popularity of memoir, some sense of why the form works when it works, the history of the genre, and the rules of the game.

Memoirs work best when they have a certain journalistic integrity, when the reader senses that the author has made every reasonable effort to present

dialogue and setting with authenticity. As they say facetiously in newsrooms in the face of a great quote or killer detail, "The best part is I didn't even make it up." Most of these writers have chosen to tell their story as memoir because they also have a respect for the power of what is real, for "the powder and tobacco loose in the purse," to quote from Judith Hillman Patterson in "Sweet Mystery: A Book of Remembering." It might even strike some of these authors as downright dishonest to present as made-up the real body of one's brother being autopsied in Roanoke



Madeleine Blais, Nieman Fellow 1986, has been Professor of Journalism at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst since 1987. She won the Pulitzer Prize in feature writing while working at Tropic Magazine of The Miami Herald from 1979-87. She is the author of "The Heart Is An Instrument: Portraits in Journalism," and "In These Girls, Hope is a Muscle," a finalist in the category of general nonfiction for the National Book Critic's Circle Award. Blais currently is at work on a new collection of essays.

(Brent Staples' "Parallel Time: Living in Black and White"), or to pretend that the girl with the surgically mauled face is a creature of the imagination (Lucy Grealy's "Autobiography of a Face"). In fact, writers of memoir frequently report (such as William Corbett in "Furthering My Education,") that they turned to the form after repeated attempts to shape the story as fiction failed.

New titles are constantly touted in which a writer is exploring territory which previously was either kept private or, if exposed, took on the mask of fiction. Michael Ryan chronicles his sexual predation in "Secret Life," Richard Rhodes the bizarre abuses of his stepmother in "A Hole in the World," Kathryn Harrison the clandestine affair with her father that began when she was 20 and went on for four years in "The Kiss," Frank McCourt a childhood in which three of his siblings starved to death while his father drank and his mother gnashed her teeth in "Angela's Ashes." Except for diehard fans of memoir (among whom I count myself), there is something a bit discomfiting about this deluge. It appears as if there's a poker game going on in which each new title raises the bid on the preceding one as to whose story is more eccentric or sodden or laden with grief, a contest with one aim, "Top this, top this, top this."

It has been described in some circles, dismissed really, as a feminine genre, because the stories related in memoir are usually not important in any obvious way. In an article entitled "The Naked Truth," published in *The Boston Globe* on April 8, 1997, Michael Kenney mentioned the increasingly high level of candor being required in memoir, citing works such as "The Kiss" and also "Promiscuities: The Secret Struggle for Womanhood" by novelist Naomi Wolf: "Against memoirs like these, ones dealing with mental or physical illness seem rather tame, even unremarkable. Accounts of overcoming illness or disability need the celebrity factor—like television journalist and paraplegic John Hockenberry's 'Moving Violations'—to get more than passing notice in the glut and din of self-revelation.

"The rush of explicit memoirs belongs in what is mainly a woman's field and a woman's market—women writers for a women's audience."

It's true that the very word, memoir, has a dainty, precious, scented sound, like boudoir or bon mot. It's also true that most personal memoirs are about events that occurred in unhailed venues long ago and would be doomed to remain obscure and submerged in the indirect light of the hazy past but for the author's perverse insistence to the contrary. These personal narratives have in fact more moon than sun, more ocean than mountain, and so might be construed as more female than male.

But do not be misled.

There is nothing about a good memoir that is easy. This is not a genre for the faint of heart. Precisely the opposite, for two main reasons.

The memoirist courts an especially invasive form of criticism, because not only the work is being reviewed, but also the quality of the life led by the writer, often from a moral point of view. The publication of Kathryn Harrison's "The Kiss" has attracted praise in some quarters for its icy pristine prose, but also caused other critics to berate her for being the kind of person who would have such an affair in the first place.

Also, the very material that finds its ways into memoir, whether presented by male or female writers, can be heart-wrenching, nearly unbearable.

Does memoir have to be about trauma?

Not necessarily.

Books such as "An American Childhood" by Annie Dillard, "American Girl" and "Manhattan, When I was Young" by Mary Cantwell, "Piano Lessons" by Noah Adams, "Walker in the City" by Alfred Kazin, David Beer's "Blue Sky Dream: A Memoir of America's Fall from Grace," Maureen Howard's "Bridgeport Bus" and Vivian Gornick's "Fierce Attachments" all compensate with low-key elegance for what they lack in fireworks.

Mary Gordon calls memory a cave. Caves are contradictory places, dark and spooky, filled with nothing but

murk and muck, but also inviting, with surprise scrawls on the wall, miraculous rock formations, unexpected streams of cool welcome water. There can be something familiar about that damp density, recalling an old haven. And so a cave is not always the worse place for a writer to retreat. Even when the central theme is a trauma, the books work as literature precisely because the writers know how and when to back off from the pain, to throw a bone or two to the reader in the form of well-timed comic relief, a startling phrase, a metaphor from heaven, some shiny nickel or another.

As Laurie Stone pointed out in her prize-winning commentary, everyone has had it tough. It's in the nature of being alive. But just because you've had a tumultuous life does not mean you can write a memoir simply by spewing forth all the grisly or touching details. There is a prejudice that memoir must be a cinch to write, that anyone who has a life can write one, especially if you happen to possess a built-in plotline, what Joyce Carol Oates has called a "given story," which is to say, an event or series of events in your life that are so dramatic as to automatically constitute a story. Yet if it's such a cinch, why did it take Frank McCourt until his 60's to finally write his in a way that did justice to his story? As Stone wrote: "Most memoirs fail as literature, because the authors mistake their experience for a story rather than find the story in their experience." Or, as Frank McCourt put it in a talk with some high school students on Long Island a few days after winning the Pulitzer for "Angela's Ashes," he was able to finally write his memoir after he "learned the significance of my own insignificant life."

Some would-be readers of memoir are cynical about just how all these writers manage to unearth the wealth of detail that in fact is the flesh and blood of such accounts. Is there a trick or are they really just making stuff up? There is a special kind of creativity that attends the work of a memoirist which had been described by Shirley Abbott ("The Bookmaker's Daughter") as an

amazing process in which memory creates memory, recollections build on recollections, and in due time a vague space becomes a real room. In addition, many memoirists do actual research to fill in the blanks, visiting libraries, interviewing relations, raiding family albums and scrapbooks. As Tobias Wolff ("This Boy's Life"), brother of Geoffrey Wolff ("Duke of Deception"), expressed it, memoirists have to work to reconcile inconsistencies:

"...My mother thinks that a dog I describe as ugly was actually quite handsome. I've allowed some of these points to stand, because this is a book of memory, and memory has its own story to tell. But I have done my best to make it a truthful story."

(Just as an aside, I would like to quote here from Harry Crews's "A Childhood: The Biography of a Place," the all-time greatest opening line of any memoir I have read: "My first memory is of a time 10 years before I was born, and the memory takes place where I have never been and involves my daddy whom I never knew.")

Does it help to be famous first to write a memoir?

There's always a market for the celebrity confession, but these are not generally the same as literary memoir. Sometimes a book makes a valiant attempt to crossover, such as Mia Farrow's recent "What Falls Away." Despite what appears to be a sincere effort to confront the muddle in her life there is, finally, something missing. The book lacks that transforming sensibility, the searing objectivity, that would have propelled it into a realm beyond Force Five gossip. A more recent celebrity memoir which is successful is Katharine Graham's "Personal History." She brings a vulnerability to the page that is totally at odds with her unofficial title as "Mother Superior to the International Community." The passages halfway through the book about her husband, Phil, his descent into mental illness and his ultimate suicide, spare no one, including the author who confesses that the day after his funeral, at the urging of her mother, she and her daughter joined Graham's

mother on a chartered yacht at Istanbul. Looking back all these years later, she seems willing to accept the Cup for Spotty Mothering after a Crisis.

"That decision may have been right for me, but it was so wrong for Bill and Steve and even for Don—so wrong that I wonder how I could have made it. Would my younger boys have been better off going too? Would it have been better if I stayed home for them? This is, for me, the most painful thing to look back on. It's hard to remake decisions and even harder to rethink nondecisions. Sometimes you don't really decide, you just move forward, and that is what I did—moved forward blindly and mindlessly into a new and unknown life."

Children of famous people sometimes offer their versions of life with brilliant but troubled parents generally with mixed results. Two exceptions are the work of Linda Gray Sexton in "Reaching for Mercy Street" and Susan Cheever in "Home Before Dark." Critics lashed at both writers for being ungrateful daughters, failing to see such works as a preemptive strike against future biographers whose own spin might not be mitigated by the love and respect that permeates these two accounts. The really fine memoirs have at their heart a certain courage which it would embarrass their authors to have pointed out.

Lately, memoirs have been coming under attack even by other writers, including Anna Quindlen in an essay for The New York Times Book Review titled, "How Dark? How Stormy? I can't Recall," ridiculing the memoirist's ability to tell a truthful story. While she finds the form vulnerable to a certain fraudulence, other critics find themselves writhing with discomfort brought about by accounts that are considered too graphic. In an op-ed piece in the Sunday New York Times on April 6, 1997, Tobias Wolff came to the defense of the most infamous recent example, "The Kiss":

"I have never met Kathryn Harrison, but I have read her book, thought it remarkably courageous and well-told and have been happy to recommend it."

He thinks that a bad case of political correctness is motivating that rage it has engendered and that the critics who have attacked "The Kiss" are using Harrison as "a target of convenience for their animus against the genre she's working in—the memoir. All of them preface their attacks with expressions of suspicion or downright contempt for the personal writings that have recently found favor with readers. They want to be seen as bucking the trend, when of course they could not be more au courant, for it is now entirely the fashion with our self-deputized Border Patrol to mew in dismay at the wistful appearance of any new memoir at the gate of literature."

"A memoir," writes Wolff, "is not bad because it is a memoir, but because it is a bad memoir.... Writers of all kinds are prone to self-idealization. But the best memoirists have an astonishing capacity for seeing themselves in the round, fully implicated in the fallen creation of which they write."

For a long time, before this deluge, a few classic memoirs stood out: Mary McCarthy's "Memories of a Catholic Girlhood," Frederick Exley's "Notes from a Cold Island," Frank Conroy's "Stop-Time," Vladimir Nabokov's "Speak, Memory," Geoffrey Wolff's "The Duke of Deception," Robert Graves's "Good-bye to All That," among others.

How do you, as a reader, make your way through the thicket of titles? Which are the real McCoy, works of literature that have their roots in a journalistic impulse, an urge to tell the most truthful story that memory can tell and which are not worth reading, the self-indulgent meanderings of preening narcissists?

I have a couple of rules to which I subject the memoirs I really read as opposed to the ones I glance at and dismiss.

First of all, no sentimentality, especially when applied to childhood. Even the most fortunate childhoods are more than just lollipops and licorice, Disneyland, parades and piggyback rides. Memoir, as it concerns childhood, often addresses what it is like when your life, or your soul, or both,

are somehow endangered. If you think childhood is one idyllic trip to the beach after another, join Mary Karr on one especially memorable summer jaunt in "The Liar's Club."

Orwell, whose essay "Such, Such were the Joys," is a model of banished sentiment, warns, "Whoever writes about his childhood must beware of exaggeration and self-pity."

Nor is the author *ever* the hero of memoir. More likely, the author is like Mary Karr in "The Liar's Club," a survivor, but no saint, (saints don't torment their legless grandmothers) or like Frank McCourt, a human tape recorder with a heart, capturing the cadences of laughter and despair in conversations from long ago with uncanny exactitude, but no saint (saints don't steal).

Susan Cheever in "Home Before Dark" writes about the pain of having for her father a man whose own vanity was wounded because she wasn't pretty by his standards.

John Wideman in "Fatheralong" confesses a penchant for visiting the strip joints in Springfield, Massachusetts, while waiting for his father to arrive at the near-by Amtrak station; William Stryon takes us to art therapy in a mental hospital in "Darkness Visible;" Susannah Kaysen reveals the scars from her suicide attempts in "Girl, Interrupted;" Lucy Grealy sleeps around.

All the successful writers of memoir wittingly or unwittingly follow Tobias Wolff's strategy, "Take no care for your dignity. Don't be afraid of appearing angry, small-minded, obtuse, mean, immoral, amoral, calculating, or anything else."

Finally, a bittersweet sense of the doomed nature of the enterprise permeates great memoirs in which the author acknowledges implicitly throughout the text that while one can recreate the past, that doesn't mean that one can repair it.

In 1996, James Carroll's memoir, "American Requiem: God, My Father and the War that Came Between Us," won the National Book Award for its unflinching exploration of father/son territory. In an interview in *Publisher's Weekly* in 1996 he issued this cautionary note:

"I had this fantasy when I was writing "An American Requiem" that by the end of it I was going to feel fine. I kept thinking that I would have worked through all this stuff, and there would be a knot that I'd tie, and I'd be able to put down my pen and say, 'Thanks be to God. This has been a great experience.' But it shocked me to get to the end and just feel completely, to use my father's word, 'heartbroken.' It's very confusing to me, really, because it's a very sad story.

"The single most powerful motive I have in telling this story is that my children can have it. One day, when I watched my children shrink back in fear from my father, who by that time was in the grip of Alzheimer's, I was so overwhelmed with sadness because I knew they would never have a memory of him when he was great. I want them to understand who he was, who my mother was, and what we've been through together."

We have to wonder: why so many new titles now? What in the culture is encouraging writers to loot their pasts with such a vengeance?

A year ago last May, *The New York Times Magazine* devoted an entire issue to memoir. The cover blared, "TRUE CONFESSIONS," and the inside head asserted that "The Age of the literary memoir is now." James Atlas, who wrote the lead essay, cited several cultural markers with which it would be difficult to argue.

First, there's the talk show phenomenon: Atlas described us as a nation of blabbermouths confiding the most intimate details imaginable to strangers via the airwaves.

There's also the pervasive sense of a lack of privacy. He pointed out a world overrun by all those hideous little bar codes that seem to contain not only our addresses and our income, but also our proclivities, our secret pleasures and our demons. The current logic perverts the old cliché: If we all live in glass houses, we might as well be the first to cast a stone. We live in the era when mass communication has cheapened rather than sanctified most of our exchanges.

Atlas also believes that there is a long tradition in American letters for a cer-

tain amount of fiction to be thinly veiled autobiography, books like James Agee's "A Death in the Family." The opening segment, Knoxville: Summer 1915, describes a moment in the evening when Agee is still a child, his father is still alive and the family is outdoors, lying on quilts under the stars: "By some chance, here they are, all on this earth; and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth, lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night." But more than anything Atlas believes that novels, if they lived up to their name, would be delivering the news: "a picture of how lives are actually being lived." But they're often not. "Fiction," he writes, "is falling down on the job." Fiction is failing at showing the sorrow of being on this earth.

All arguably true enough.

Yet there is perhaps one other factor just as responsible than all of the above, and that is the cynicism, or lack of faith in institutions, that pervades how we live and how we interpret our lives. When did this corrosion begin? With Joe McCarthy? The Cold War? Those quiz shows on TV in the 50's with their slippery sense of the rules? When the Pope fired all those saints? Vietnam? Watergate? Nixon's resignation? The lust in Carter's heart? The declaration by Reagan that trees cause pollution? Clinton's alleged failure to inhale? Priests who molest, ballplayers who extort?

For everyone the moment of disconnection may differ, but the conclusion is the same. You can't count on leaders for leadership. It's a feeling, in a way, of being set adrift, orphaned, left to one's own resources. The rise of memoir, a cry of the heart at the end of a century when there is always an urge to settle accounts and scores, is the rise of the individual against the chaos and the confusion. Its prevalence seems to support the conclusion that in the end the most honest, perhaps the only honest, story is your story.

The self is the one enduring institution.

Funneled through the individual, history at last achieves resonance. ■

A Basic History of the Pulitzer Awards

The Pulitzer Diaries: Inside America's Greatest Prize

John Hohenberg

Syracuse University Press. 360 Pages. \$29.95.

BY JACK DRISCOLL

In newsroom parlance, John Hohenberg has "emptied his notebook" in "The Pulitzer Diaries." More precisely, he has "emptied his diary."

What we are left with are really "The Hohenberg Diaries," rather than what the publisher bills as a "rare, intimate examination of the 80-year-old Pulitzer Prizes."

Hohenberg's diaries are thorough, crisply written but seldom revelatory about the inner workings of the Pulitzer system, even though in his introduction he teases the reader by saying that he felt constrained when he wrote "The Pulitzer Prizes: A History" in 1974, toward the end of his 22 years as administrator of the awards and secretary of the Pulitzer Board.

What Diaries provides is a succinct recapping of major news that led to Pulitzer Prizes, along with some behind-the-scenes activities that, oddly, Hohenberg only knows about from second-hand knowledge.

With some occasional personal opinions thrown in, it's largely the work of a historian, who cared deeply about the Pulitzer process and worked hard to keep its standards high. You won't find any smoking guns here, let alone any juicy tidbits for gossip columnists.

Indeed, many of the excerpts from Hohenberg's diaries relate to his work with the Air Force, his reflections on world and national events, his teaching and unrest on campus at Columbia University.

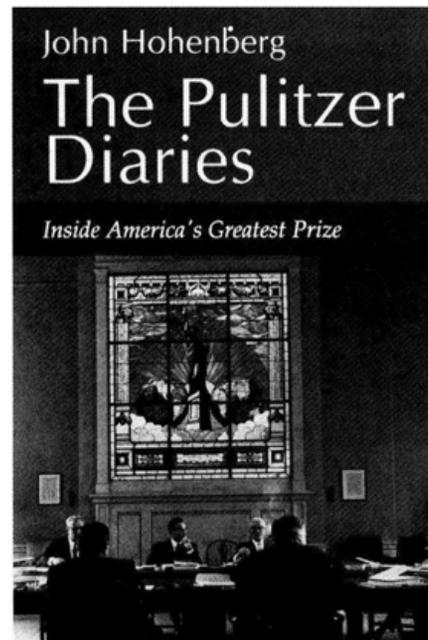
Had the book focused on the Pulitzers, it might have been a lot shorter, although it's pretty short to start with. And we would have lost in rewrite a good deal of a charming chap-

ter—though again mostly second hand—on late Nieman curator Howie Simons. Still, we would have been left with some of the following:

- Hohenberg's notation that "Joe Pulitzer Jr. must have made his grandfather twirl in his grave by leading the fight for a Pulitzer Prize for Bill Hearst and company for their Moscow exclusives" in 1956.

- The assertion by Hohenberg that John F. Kennedy was the author of the book that won him the biography award in 1957 and that it was not ghosted. Hohenberg: "I satisfied myself well before the jury reports came in that Kennedy's work producing 'Profiles in Courage' had been both extensive and laudatory." Rumors after the vote forced Kennedy to produce what he said was his hand-written first draft. Hohenberg never wavered but did propose a change in procedure whereby the board divided itself into small, informal committees "to do more of the necessary investigating, reading, play going and concert attendance to backstop its own juries." (In connection with the 1955 prizes, Hohenberg apparently stepped out of character when he talked the board chairman out of upsetting the drama jury's choice in favor of Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," because no one on the board had seen it. A committee of two attended the play that night, and Williams got his Pulitzer.)

- Dean Edward Barrett's concern as noted in Hohenberg's 1960 diaries "that there have been irregularities in the conduct of the work of the Advisory



Board," although the author gives no inkling as to what Barrett was referring to.

- In 1963 it became known that two board members voted against Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf" without having seen it, leading to a proposal by President Grayson Kirk that "plays had to be seen and books had to be read before the honorable members voted on jury reports." (It would have been interesting to know whether Hohenberg thought that rule had been adhered to, since it is sometimes difficult for "honorable members" to see all three finalist plays. In addition to providing written copies, the Pulitzer staff in the last few years has obtained video of some hard-to-see plays for special viewing by board members at the Lincoln Center).

- A good description—and some soul searching by Hohenberg—of the angst over the failure to give a Pulitzer to Duke Ellington.

- Long-standing friction between the Columbia University Trustees and the Pulitzer Board that peaked in 1972 when the Trustees voted down awards to The New York Times for the Pentagon Papers and Jack Anderson for reporting on policy-making in connection with the Indo-Pakistan War, only to have Columbia President William J. McGill cause a reversal by threatening to resign. Two years later McGill also prevented two other Trustee denials of awards to James Polk and Jack White. Following that, the Trustees refused to reappoint what then was called the Pulitzer Advisory Board. In 1975 McGill and chairman Joseph Pulitzer negotiated what lawyers called a divorce, creating a new entity called the Pulitzer Prize Board with the Columbia president as a voting member, the Columbia journalism dean as a non-voting member and the university trustees being separated from the prize process.

- Some wonderful excerpts of speeches at the 50th anniversary of the Pulitzer Prizes.

My favorite is from Archibald MacLeish, who said:

“We need, most of us, a sign of recognition. Not recognition of our ultimate worth as poets—only poetry itself can give that—but recognition that we exist. That we are there. Among those who went before and those who will come after.”

John Hohenberg was there for a quarter of a century of Pulitzers, and his meticulous, untiring work will be remembered by those who come after. ■

Shortly after the Hohenberg regime, Jack Driscoll was a three-time juror, then a Pulitzer Board member for five years. He was Editor of The Boston Globe for seven years and is now Editor-in-Residence at the MIT Media Lab.

A Southern Tragedy

Faubus

The Life and Times of an American Prodigal

Roy Reed

University of Arkansas Press. 384 Pages. \$38 hc, \$22 pb.

BY SANDER VANOCUR

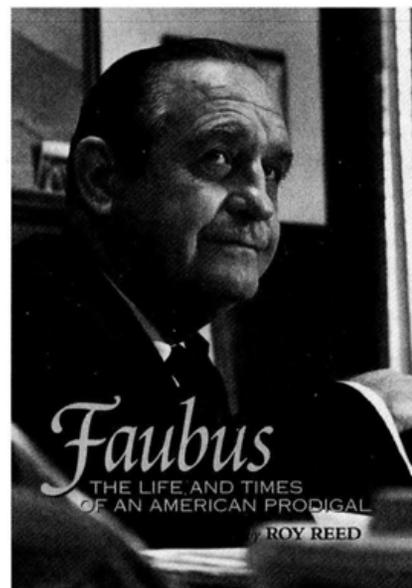
One is dead, the other is barely living. Both were Southern governors. The two of them, Orval Faubus of Arkansas and George Wallace of Alabama, challenged the authority of the Federal government on the issue of school integration and both lost. Wallace has apologized for the harm he did. Faubus, who died in 1994, never did.

Having covered both men, Faubus in the fifties and Wallace in the sixties, I never thought either was a racist. They were opportunists who guessed wrong, not in terms of getting elected time and again but in what the judgment of history would be upon them.

At least Wallace offered a reason for his actions. After losing a governor's race in 1958 to John Patterson, Wallace vowed, as he put it, never to be “outniggered again” in an election. Such a remark might at that time have been expected from a white politician who grew up in the Deep South. But Faubus did not grow up in the Deep South. That was an important distinction in those days of total segregation in the South.

As Roy Reed, a 1964 Nieman Fellow and former New York Times reporter, now Professor of Journalism Emeritus at the University of Arkansas, points out early on in this splendid book, Faubus was not a “lowlander,” did not come out of the South's plantation country where, as Reed puts it: “Black and white whirled together there, tolerating and rubbing each other raw, joined like carelessly attached Siamese twins in something more than a dance and something less, usually, than mortal combat.”

Faubus instead was an “uplander,” part of those who according to Reed



were “never quite Southern in the demonic sense of the word. Lacking large numbers of slaves, or indeed any neighbors who did not look like themselves except for a few Indians, their racial prejudice was not the same as the lowlanders....Bereft of proximity, the uplanders had no deep feelings toward black people other than a strong and atavistic distaste for strangers.”

Therein, I think, lies the tragedy of Faubus. He was not supposed to think or act like a racist. There was no signal in his early political career that eventually he would. Aided and abetted by President Truman's favorite governor, Sid McMath, a Marine hero in World War II, Faubus rapidly climbed the political ladder in Arkansas from his base in Madison County, causing McMath to later tell me: “The sorriest thing I ever did as Governor was to build a paved road into Madison County so Orval Faubus could come down it.”

The son of Sam Faubus, an ardent Socialist, Orval Faubus attended Commonwealth College near Mena, Arkan-

sas, in 1935. Commonwealth had its roots in the Socialist Party dissent that surfaced before, during and after World War I and it was precisely because of its left-wing reputation, or as some perhaps more accurately contended, its communist bent, that allowed Arkansas Governor Francis Cherry to use it against Faubus when he challenged Cherry in the 1954 Democratic primary. Cherry thought he was on solid ground, for this was the age of McCarthyism, though by 1954, McCarthy himself was slipping fast as a force on the national scene. Though Faubus dissembled on the issue of Commonwealth and as Reed puts it, "had been itching to run against Communism from the start," Cherry's charges angered others, notably Harry S. Ashmore, Editor of The Arkansas Gazette, the oldest paper west of the Mississippi and workers in the McCarthy organization like Ed Dunaway and another lawyer, Henry Woods, now a U.S. District judge in Little Rock. Woods and Dunaway persuaded Ashmore to help draft a speech that Faubus would deliver on an all-state radio network, denouncing Cherry, a task Ashmore accepted even though he was "dismayed by Faubus's seemingly abrupt denial and his later dissembling over how long he had stayed" at Commonwealth. The speech helped to defeat Cherry and make Faubus governor. It did something else. It set the stage for a conflict a playwright might have written between Faubus and Ashmore when Faubus, in 1957, defied a Federal Court order that had ordered that black children be admitted to Little Rock's Central High. Ashmore, with the full backing of his venerable publisher, J.N. Heiskell, attacked Faubus for not only defying the court order but also for calling out the state National Guard to help in that defiance. President Eisenhower reluctantly sent in the 101st Airborne to enforce the court order. The black children were admitted. The following year both Ashmore and The Arkansas Gazette were honored with Pulitzer Prizes.

One year later, having won the Democratic primary and about to start serving his third term, Faubus, with the

help of the state legislature, closed the Little Rock public high schools to avoid integration and closed they remained until the fall of 1959. (I remember heading for the legislature the day it passed the legislation closing the schools. With me was Claude Sitton of The New York Times. Noting that the clock on a bank building was playing music as the hands reached 10 a.m. I asked Sitton, "What is the clock playing?" He replied, "Where he leads me, I will follow.")

That fall, Reuven Frank, the producer of the Huntley-Brinkley report on NBC News, called me and said he was producing an hour-long documentary of places that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev should visit on his tour of the United States but would not. Frank said that since I had always said that Little Rock was the last place where this tragedy should have occurred, why didn't I do a segment of the documentary explaining why this was so. I did the report saying it should not have happened in Little Rock and the reason it happened there was squarely the fault of Orval Faubus. The next day, a Monday, people came up to me on the streets of Little Rock with tears in their eyes, thanking me for what I had said.

Little Rock survived, as did Faubus, serving six terms as governor. But at

what price to his state and at what price to the nation. Did he ever pause for a moment, this son of a Populist father, who had started with no racial prejudice, to question whether he had aided and abetted racism not just in Arkansas, not just in the rest of the South, but across the nation as well? Probably not, for as Reed writes in his summing up: "Faubus's actions at Central High might have seemed to him simply a move in the Great Game. He seemed to never recognize that the game of politics has consequences that go beyond winning or losing. While his 1957 moves played to something like applause among the ordinary unthinking white people, it found more cruel sympathy in those who took their hatreds seriously, the hard men who traveled by night."

"Faubus" is a monumental piece of writing and reporting. As well it should be, since its author was and remains to reporting what granite is to monuments.

■

Sander Vanocur, a former NBC and ABC correspondent, now heads his own production company, Old Owl Communications. He covered the battle over school integration in Little Rock in 1958-59 for NBC. He is also the host of "Movies in Time" on the History Channel.

About Journalism

"An Open Courtroom: Cameras in New York Courts. New York State Committee to Review Audio-Visual Coverage of Court Proceedings." Fordham University Press. 243 Pages. \$40 hc, \$20 pb.

"Civil Rights and Wrongs: A Memoir of Race and Politics." Revised Edition. Harry S. Ashmore. University of South Carolina Press. 490 Pages. \$19.95.

"Late-Breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media's Influence on Peace Operations." Warren P. Strobel. United States Institute of Peace Press. 275 Pages.

"Mapping the Cultural Space of Journalism: How Journalists Distinguish

News From Entertainment." Samuel P. Winch. Praeger. 208 Pages. \$55.

"Political Commentators in the United States in the 20th Century: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook." Dan Nimmo and Chevelle Newsome. Greenwood Press. 424 Pages. \$95.

"Sentinel Under Siege: The Triumphs and Troubles of America's Free Press." Stanley E. Flink. Westview Press.

"Spiral of Cynicism: The Press and the Public Good." Joseph N. Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jameson. Oxford University Press. 324 Pages. \$15.95.

The Man Behind the Alger Hiss Case—Who Was He?

Whittaker Chambers: A Biography

Sam Tanenhaus

Random House. 638 pages. \$35.

BY RICHARD DUDMAN

Alger Hiss seemed like anything but a communist spy when I interviewed him 50 years ago for *The Denver Post*, but of course that would be normal for a spy. Hiss, then president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was going around the country promoting the Marshall Plan. He came across as a clean-cut, earnest advocate of the program to put post-war Europe back on its feet.

He did me no favor, however, by praising me effusively afterward to Palmer Hoyt, the Editor. The paper at the time was heavily into exposing red termites and fellow travelers. When Senator Joseph McCarthy denounced Hiss a few months later as having been a Communist mole in the State Department, Hoyt's managing editor asked if I'd ever been a Communist. I hadn't, but at that paranoid time it didn't take much to arouse suspicion.

So much for my personal encounter.

McCarthy's accusation opened the way for what is still one of the great trials of the century. It split the country as deeply as did the O.J. Simpson trial. Hiss ultimately was convicted of perjury—specifically, lying to a grand jury that he never had given any State Department documents to Chambers and that he never saw Chambers after January 1, 1937.

Hiss obviously was covering up something. But the larger question of whether or not he was a Communist spy still troubles many Americans. This book, with its exhaustive research and gripping narrative of Chambers's life, tells a lot about this key to the Hiss puzzle. But for some it will fall short of resolving remaining doubts, because the author so clearly idolizes Chambers and despises Hiss.

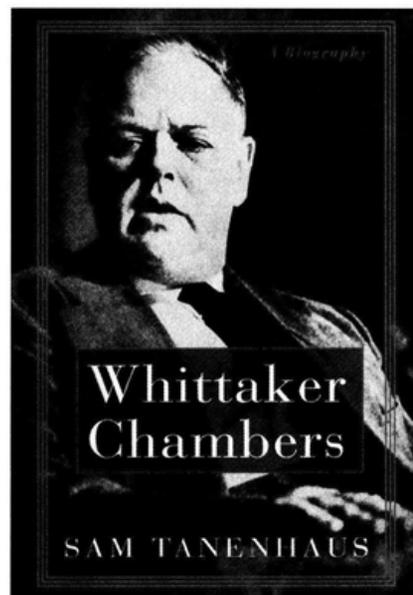
Sam Tanenhaus, a freelance journalist, takes us through Chambers's lonely, unhappy childhood to a career as both a brilliant writer and a true-believing political activist—first as a Communist and then as an anti-communist. He was a lot more than a vengeful turncoat with bad teeth.

Whittaker Chambers was born on April Fool's day 1901 as Jay Vivian Chambers, son of a bisexual father, who eventually abandoned the family, and an ambitious but fanciful mother named Laha, who dressed pudgy "Vivian" in a Lord Fauntleroy suit. High school classmates called him "Girlye," "Stinky, and "Mr. Chamber Pot."

Chambers did poorly in school but largely educated himself to become, in the words of John Kenneth Galbraith, "one of the most avidly intellectual men of the century." He found in the attic barrels of books collected by Grandfather Charles Whittaker (whose surname Chambers later took in place of Vivian) and read novels by George Eliot and William Makepeace Thackeray and biographies of Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln and Henry Clay. His favorite book, which he read many times starting at age 8, was Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables." He wrote later that he found in it "the play of forces that carried me into the Communist Party and [later] carried me out."

At Columbia University, he scandalized some with his sacrilegious and homoerotic writings but impressed two young oral examiners, Mark Van Doren and Mortimer J. Adler.

He joined the party in 1925, seeing it as a refuge from the troubles of the world and the torment of a family that included a crazy grandmother and a brother heading toward his eventual suicide. One of his first jobs for the party was making newsstand collec-



tions for *The Daily Worker* and picking up unsold copies. He soon began writing poems for the newspaper, and before long he became its regular foreign affairs reporter.

His writing ranged from mainstream literature to proletarian fiction and dogmatic communist tracts. His translation into English of Felix Salton's "Bambi" was a quick best seller. His story, "Can You Make Out Their Voices?" became a classic of American communist fiction. Based on an actual event, it told of a martyred organizer of drought-stricken farm workers and his wife, who strangled her starving baby rather than see it starve to death. Its publication in *The New Masses* was a sensation, and a dramatic version played on the radical stage throughout America and worldwide.

As a Communist Party member, Chambers leaned toward Trotskyite dissidence for a time but then became a devout Stalinist. As Editor of *The New Masses*, he warned "all intellectuals"

that they would have to "either aid in molding history, or history will mold you, and in the case of the latter, you can rest assured you will be crushed and maimed in the process."

According to Tanenhaus, such loyalty, plus Chambers's WASP, Ivy League background, impressed Communist Party leaders. In 1932, they assigned him to underground espionage, as a courier and contact man. He worked with a network of New Deal officials who were ostensibly patriotic Americans but secretly subscribed to Earl Browder's Popular Front slogan, "Communism is Twentieth Century Americanism," and supplied information to the Soviet Union. Chambers later listed Hiss as a member of that group.

The party equipped him with a Leica camera, and he soon was meeting cooperating officials on street corners or in coffee shops, picking up documents, copying and returning them, and carrying the film to New York to be forwarded to Moscow.

By 1937, however, Chambers began to brood about Stalin's brutal purges to remove all threats to his dictatorship. The rigged Moscow trials of the "bloc of Rights and Trotskyites" and the fates of several of Chambers's friends in the party showed how suspected dissidents could be railroaded or simply murdered.

Fearing for his own life, Chambers planned his break carefully and gradually eased over from Communist spy to defector and informer to several anti-communist journalists and the U.S. Justice Department and Congressional committees.

He got a job at Time magazine and soon impressed Henry Luce with his knowledge of world politics and foreign affairs. Luce later called Chambers the best writer the magazine every had employed. In 1944, Luce made Chambers his point man in switching the magazine's policy from regarding Russia as a gallant partner in the war effort to castigating it as an implacable enemy of the United States and world peace.

To make the news fit the magazine's new policy, Chambers wrote many of the stories himself, relying on his own sources and changing or ignoring the

work of the foreign correspondents. Cables from John Hersey and Theodore White "went right into the wastebasket."

As he worked for Time, Chambers was torn by fears that Soviet agents were tailing him and that U.S. officials might charge him with espionage. In effect, he turned state's evidence, but by stages. He first described Hiss and others as merely Communist Party members, sympathetic to the Soviet Union, denying that they or he had committed espionage. Later, he added the spy charges, finally producing the "pumpkin papers," film of documents and actual documents that he said that Hiss had given him.

Some of the documents were original "strictly confidential" State Department material. Others were copies that Chambers said Hiss's wife, Priscilla, had typed. Chambers told of a long, close relationship between his family and the Hisses. Hiss's denials formed the basis for two perjury trials. The first ended with a hung jury. The second ended with unanimous conviction, and Hiss served 44 months of a five-year prison sentence.

Besides splitting the country, the verdict was hard on both men. Hiss's career, of course, was finished. He died in 1996 still protesting his innocence. Chambers had resigned from Time when he admitted his own spy activity. After the trial, Luce wanted to take him back, but he dropped the effort when a staff poll showed almost unanimous objection.

Chambers retreated into self-imposed exile and produced a biography, "Witness," which was a main selection by the Book of the Month Club and remained on The New York Times best seller list all summer in 1952.

Although Tanenhaus calls the book Chambers's masterpiece, he complains that Chambers portrays Hiss as his political twin, both of them as principled servants of their opposing causes. Tanenhaus says, on the contrary, that "the salient fact of Hiss's career was not self-sacrifice but opportunism," that "Hiss's desperate measures—the evasions, the lies, the acting, the smears—had the mundane purpose of preserv-

ing an endangered reputation."

Tanenhaus gives the impression that Chambers, for all his life as an admitted spy, played a major role in protecting the United States against a communist plot to destroy it and rule the world.

But with the Cold War ended, the Soviet Union no more, and communism giving way to capitalism even in China, it is hard to recapture the fears and anxieties that made the trial so sensational, Hiss such a villain, and Chambers, to some, such a hero. ■

Richard Dudman, Nieman Fellow 1954, was a reporter and correspondent for The St. Louis Post-Dispatch for 31 years in St. Louis, Washington and abroad. He now lives in Ellsworth, Maine.

Independent Writers

Hired Pens: Professional Writers in America's Golden Age of Print.

Ronald Weber.

Ohio University Press. 300+ Pages.

\$39.95 hc, \$17.95 pb.

This is a book about full-time independent professional writers who somehow have managed to live almost exclusively by selling to magazine and book publishers. They emerged after the Civil War with the great expansion of publishing.

Weber, Professor of American Studies at the University of Notre Dame, has written a lively book of these pens for hire, starting with Edgar Allan Poe, who before the war became the first American who lived by words alone. The most interesting chapter deals with journalists who attempted to cross the line to the literary life. They include such successful figures as Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, James Thurber, Theodore Dreiser, Bret Harte and many others.

But lest the reader think that journalism is good training for creative writing, remember that Willa Cather described it as "the vandalism of literature." And she was not alone. A.B. Guthrie Jr., a 1945 Nieman Fellow who went on to a successful career as a novelist, regretted the loss of "community intimacy" but strongly doubted the value of news experience. ■—rhp

Dividing America

BY MURRAY SEEGER

Where did it start, this slicing and dicing of mass media audiences? The most conspicuous decline was among the large, broad-appeal magazines—*Look*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Colliers*, the original *Life*. They were cafeterias of features, hard news, pictures and fiction that could not compete with the colorful action on television.

The racks at supermarkets and drug stores are jammed with magazines, but they are more and more the narrow-focused, niche “zines.” *Time*, *Newsweek* and *U.S. News & World Report* hang on but they have to fight with *Wired*, *Psychology Today* and a host of others that have strong, specific audiences.

Network radio faded simultaneously with the big magazines, for similar reasons. Where Washington once started its day with such fine newscasts as the CBS 8 o'clock report, we have brief bulletins followed by traffic reports, weather and talk, talk, talk. Even programmed disc jockeys are dinosaurs.

The number of radio stations has multiplied, but their audiences are splintered into ever smaller pieces. Serious news has been ceded to National Public Radio (long may it live).

In contrast, the number of metropolitan newspapers started to decline in the 1960's but their total reading audience has stagnated. These big papers are generally prosperous as quasi-monopolies appealing to omnivorous audiences.

Now television, which started with the widest reach of all mass media, is entering the era of niche-casting instead of broadcasting, joining niche radio and niche publishing. The mass media, thus, are at the heart of the social trend of segmenting American society.

Prof. Joseph Turow of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania has documented the trend of segmenting audiences in his recent book, “*Breaking Up America*” (University of Chicago, \$22.50). He puts most of the blame for the development at the door of the advertising industry.

“I believed initially that mass-media firms were the primary sources of this development, a result of executives' competition for audiences in the face of cable TV, home computers, the Internet, interactive television, CD-ROM and other new technologies of the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's,” he writes. “The more I looked at the issue, though, the more I suspected that the advertising industry, in its influential position as the major support system of U.S. media, was the key force behind this divisive message to America.”

It is certainly nice to find an alternative enemy to television in discussing a trend as ominous as this movement toward separating the American people into ever smaller, more isolated tribes instead of strengthening the encompassing bonds of the whole nation.

But, certainly, advertisers have managed to accelerate the

trend toward publishing the “Daily Me” instead of the “Daily Us,” as described by Nicholas Negroponte, Director of the Media Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The development of computer technology enables agencies to offer advertisers access to narrow audiences and make their spending more cost efficient.

But we cannot ignore the trend when we see figures as ominous as the Nielsen estimate that ABC, CBS and NBC together were watched by only 49 percent of prime-time viewers in the recently ended television season. These companies have reduced their news operations and reach more often for easier, cheaper reporting of “popular” issues, substitute magazine programs for documentaries and buy pictures from freelancers and foreign agencies.

Or, when icons of the print media like *The New York Times Magazine* and the *New Yorker* turn over whole editions to single topics that will bring simultaneous advertisers response. For *New Yorker* readers this trend disguises the reduction of the annual number of issues and follows previous pandering decisions like starting articles on left-hand pages and giving the right-hand pages to advertisers. There is another trend for different divisions of media corporations to feed or promote each other, such as *Time Magazine* correspondents appearing on CNN newscasts.

In such cases, editorial judgment is often suborned to advertisers-interests or managements-financial demands. We do not cover the stories we think should be covered but only those we can find sponsors for or for which the material is readily available. Why send out our own reporters when we can pick up a piece already packaged by our corporate colleagues? Metropolitan newspapers try to have it both ways by publishing sections of major news wrapped around other sections directed to individual zones.

Ideally, we can read *The Times* and then pick up the magazine for owners of four-wheel drive vehicles, or watch first-class network news and then catch a classic movie or favorite baseball team on cable. If we do get 500, or even 200, cable outlets, will the networks survive?

Turow sums up that if “we can afford to pay, or if we are important to sponsors who will pick up the tab, we will be able to receive immediately the news, information, and entertainment we order.” “As an entirety, though, society in the United States will lose out.”

Cutting the American audience into ever smaller slices means that more and more people will be isolated to the detriment of the wider common goals of society. The widespread ignorance of the needs and desires of different communities within America, already an ominous fact of life, will become greater. At the rate the advertisers are driving us, we will soon all be bowling alone, or in small leagues of people just like us. ■

Murray Seeger is a 1962 Nieman Fellow.

NIEMAN NOTES

COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE

Fighting Libel Suit With the Internet

BY YING CHAN

For days, I glued myself to the computer, struggling to build Web pages with the strange language called HTML. Outside, summer fun and frolic were passing me by.

That was June, 1996, the waning days of my Cinderella year as a Nieman Fellow. Mesmerized by the new tool, I secluded myself from morning to night at Lippmann House, our office and home away from home.

"I'm learning to tell stories in cyber languages. The Web is absolutely fascinating. Empowering, liberating!" I told a friend in an E-mail. "I don't know what I'm going to do with this yet, maybe at work, maybe outside work."

I would find out what to do with my new skill soon enough.

In November, I was sued for criminal libel in Taiwan for a story on campaign finance I co-wrote with a Taiwan-based journalist for a Hong Kong magazine. For the next few months, I took my case to cyberspace and created a Web site to tell the world about the bizarre legal ordeal.

As reporter, writer, publisher and Webmaster, I produced more than a hundred Web pages on the suit, networking with friends and strangers far and near. Many responded and came to my aid.

This April, a Taiwan court acquitted us of all criminal charges, which carry up to two years in jail, on the ground that we have written the story with "good intent" and belief in the truth of our story. A \$15 million civil suit was also dismissed.

The decision has been widely hailed as a landmark victory for press freedom and democracy in Taiwan and the region. What is less known is that it is also a victory for the Net. Without the Web, I might still be able to rally support from inside the United States and overseas, but it would be a much slower and more clumsy process.

Our ordeal began in late October when we broke a story in *Yazhou Zhoukan*, a Hong Kong Chinese language weekly. The story reported allegations that a top official of the Kuomintang, Taiwan's ruling party, had offered to give \$15 million to President Clinton's campaign.

All hell broke loose after the story appeared. Liu Tai-ying, the KMT official who allegedly made the offer, charged us with defaming him and damaging the interest of his party and the country. The Central Committee of the KMT met and joined the chorus to denounce us. Some legislators suggested that our story was a plot by the Chinese communists while local newspapers reported that Taiwan's National Security Bureau had begun investigating links to the communists. Finally, Lee Teng-hui, the president of Taiwan, stepped into the fracas and pledged his support for a criminal libel suit.

We had struck a raw nerve. Our story had offended a powerful man in Taiwan. President Lee and Liu had been roommates as graduate students at Cornell University. As head of the KMT's business management committee, Liu oversees the party's formidable business empire, with \$3 billion assets in

seven holding companies and investments in at least 120 companies. Liu is also known as the unofficial foreign minister with a private war chest, the architect and mastermind of the island's controversial "money diplomacy." Every year, he spends hundreds of millions of dollars investing overseas in an effort to secure friends and goodwill around the world.

Our story included Liu's denial of the alleged offer. But we didn't hold



Ying Chan left The Daily News in July after seven years as a reporter. In September she became a Freedom Forum Media Studies Center Fellow in New York City, working on a project titled "Muzzling the Press—a Critical Survey of Libel Litigation in East Asia" (information about the fellowship is at <http://www.mediastudies.org/fellowsnew.html>) Between the end of her job and the beginning of her fellowship Chan worked on various freelance projects, including producing a Website on covering children for the Columbia Journalism School (<http://children.jrn.columbia.edu>). Chan's adversary in her lawsuit, KMT official Lui Tai-ying, has appealed to Taiwan's high court, which is expected to conduct a new trial in the fall.

him in mortal fear. Instead, we followed the story and told it like it was, which offended him greatly. "I've told you the story is not true, and you still print it," he would complain again and again in his briefs and court testimonies later. He also named the source of our story, a political consultant in Taiwan, as a defendant in the same suit.

For days, I pondered my options. My colleague in Taiwan could be jailed while the magazine, threatened with a \$15 million lawsuit, could be in jeopardy. I needed to get support in the most speedy way to buck the vicious attacks on us from half-a-world away. I also had a full-time job and no clerical help. I decided to put together a Web site to let people know what had happened. I had neither money nor power, but I had information and the technology to get it out.

The weekend before Thanksgiving, I got to work turning plain texts into HTML: wire stories, a protest letter to President Lee by the Investigative Reporters and Editors association—the first group to fire off a letter—and an on-line open letter to Lee for people to sign.

To provide some context, I included links to Web sites of free-speech groups and information on campaign finance and reform efforts.

Through E-mail, a few friends offered ideas and editing help. Frederick, my 16-year-old son and a high school junior, helped tweak the codes. A domain name "www.yingchan.com/" my brother, Nicky, had registered for me came in handy. And when the New York company that rented me server space asked for a \$500 fee for hosting the interactive pages, I told the owner to get lost and uploaded the files to the server at Nicky's computer company in Hong Kong. The site went up Thanksgiving day.

On the Internet, geography and distance disappears. All that matters are bytes (digital data size), MHZ (computer chip speed) and bands (modem speed). I kept my site simple and graphic-free to make it accessible even by the technologically challenged computers.

"The cyberattack is on. Check it out

at <http://www.yingchan.com/>," I E-mailed friends around the globe, fellow Niemans and cyberpals whom I've never met.

The message or variations of it then multiplied, being forwarded to E-mail mailboxes and listserv—Internet discussion groups—including the IRE, the AAJA and the Society of Professional Journalists.

Almost instantly, people began signing up on line from as far as South Africa, Brazil, Japan, Sweden and from all over the United States.

Again through E-mail, I alerted media organizations, referring them to the Web site. No Xerox or Fedex documents or annoying phone-tags. People anywhere could get the whole story by going to the Web.

Unlike print or other medium, the hypertext language of the Web allows me to link together files and explain a complicated situation to people, including those who have absolutely no background on the issue and the players. And I have the luxury of infinite space, or news hole, to tell the full story. There is also instant delivery.

Most importantly, the Internet has created for me a community. Friends old and new kept up with developments of the suit and sent E-mail to offer ideas, encouragement or just a few kind words. I would sit in front of my two-year old Pentium 90, updating the site into the wee hours. As a wired woman, I never felt alone.

Everything about the suit went on the Web site: protest letters from groups like the Committee to Protect Journalists, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and the New York City Bar Association; a column by Anthony Lewis of The New York Times and editorials by The Wall Street Journal.

Another day, I woke up and found among my E-mail a letter from the International Federation of Journalists based in Brussels.

It turned out that Linda Foley, national president of the Newspaper Guild, had learned of the suit from her E-mail and alerted the IFJ. Morning coffee in hand, I started adding HTML tags to the IFJ letter. Fifteen minutes later, it was up on the Internet.

And the signatures kept growing, first from friends and colleagues, then from people I didn't know. The word was getting out. A global coalition was taking shape through the Net.

The growing international attention was not lost on the KMT.

"We express deep regret about what Ying Chan is doing," said KMT spokesman Tsai Pi-huang at a press conference in Taiwan on December 9. "The two defendants should argue the case in court instead of trying to interfere with justice by criticizing Taiwan authorities on the Internet."

He promised that the ruling party would put its own open letter on the Internet.

I dutifully reported his displeasure on my Web site, linking it to a story on it by the Central News Agency, Taiwan's official news agency.

"Any time politicians choose to debate reporters instead of threatening to put them in jail, that's good news," said my December 11 Webnotes, an occasional cyberdiary. "...our pages will bring you the KMT letter (through links or repost) once it becomes available."

The KMT was said to have written something, but I never saw their open letter at its official Web site. And I've never heard the KMT talking about a cyberletter again. In two weeks, we turned the table on them.

"Very interesting and fascinating use of the medium," Micah Morrison, editorial writer for The Wall Street Journal, observed in an E-mail. "I've been visiting your Web site and noticed the remarkable thing about it putting the KMT on the defensive."

"The Web page is a great tool and it is serving a noble purpose," observed Bill Kovach, Curator of the Nieman program, in another E-mail.

In April, the CPJ and 10 U.S. media companies—The Associated Press, The New York Daily News, Dow Jones Co., The Times Mirror Co., The New York Times Co., Time Inc., The Washington Post Co., ABC, CBS and NBC—submitted an amicus brief on our behalf. Within days after the brief was filed with the court in Taiwan, its full text, 46 pages long, were up at the CPJ Web site (<http://>

/www.cpj.org). When we were acquitted a week later, the CPJ beat me in reporting the ruling on its site. The Web had become an efficient tool for getting the news out.

Meanwhile, the saga continues. KMT official Liu soon filed an appeal, forcing us into another round of battle. And we are more ready than ever. Information wants to be free. With the Internet, there's no going back. ■

—1943—

William A. Townes died June 2 of respiratory failure at age 88 in Weaverville, North Carolina, where he retired in 1973. Townes was a Cleveland Press reporter when he won his Nieman Fellowship. He went on to become an editor on major metropolitan dailies, including The Baltimore Evening Sun, The Miami Herald, The Detroit Free-Press, The Los Angeles Examiner and others, but he was largely known as a "newspaper doctor," according to Time magazine, long before that term came to mean a bottom-line consultant. Townes's forte was taking failing dailies in small towns and making them profitable by first becoming readable, attractive and especially responsible. Advertisers had no editorial say in Townes's papers; they were attracted by growing readerships. Subscribers were drawn to Townes's papers because his staffs served and respected their readers. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Lucile, and son Brooks of Sausalito, California. A daughter, Alta Lucile Townes, died last December.

—1956—

Julius Duscha married **Suzanne Van Den Heurk** in Las Vegas on June 21. Van Den Heurk is a fashion designer whose clothes, under her name, have sold throughout the country. Duscha, mostly retired, is doing some work for Presstime, published by the Newspaper Association of America. He is former director of the Washington Journalism Center and former Washington Post reporter.

—1965—

Ray Jenkins has a new book out, "Blind Vengeance: The Roy Moody Mail Bomb Murders," published by the University of Georgia Press. The book is an account of the federal, state and local investigations into the 1989 mail bombs that took the lives of a federal judge in Alabama and a civil rights attorney in Georgia. Walter Leroy Moody, Jr., who was eventually arrested and convicted of the bombings, blamed society for his failures.

Jenkins is a Pulitzer Prize-winning former syndicated columnist and Editorial Page Editor for The Baltimore Sun.

A. W. (Alexander) Maldonado's book, "Teodoro Moscoso and Puerto Rico's Operation Bootstrap," was published in June by the University Press of Florida. Maldonado writes:

"In 1934, 36 years after the United States took Puerto Rico from Spain, F.D. Roosevelt cried in exasperation: 'that place is hopeless, hopeless....'

"In the late 1940's and 1950 Puerto Rico experienced an economic miracle. Rexford Tugwell, (the last American governor) wrote in 1953: 'It is not too much to say that a transformation is in progress [in Puerto Rico] which for a long time will be one of the wonders of human history.'

"This book tells the story of Teodoro Moscoso, the Puerto Rican who created and ran Operation Bootstrap. It describes how this miracle was performed.

"Moscoso went on to serve as U.S. Ambassador to Venezuela, and in 1961 was named by President Kennedy to head the Alliance for Progress."

—1969—

Richard C. Longworth, senior writer for The Chicago Tribune, won the Overseas Press Club Award for the second time in four years, this time for a series on the impact of the global economy on the United States, Japan and Western Europe. He is turning the series into a book, scheduled to be published early next year.

Jonathan Yardley has a new book out, "Misfit: The Strange Life of Frederick Exley," published by Random House. Exley was a troubled, dedicated writer, whose reputation was based on one acclaimed book, "A Fan's Notes." Yardley is the Pulitzer Prize-winning book critic and a columnist for The Washington Post. He is the author of four books, including "Ring: A Biography of Ring Lardner," and "Our Kind of People: The Story of an American Family," and is the editor of "My Life as Author and Editor," by H.L. Mencken.

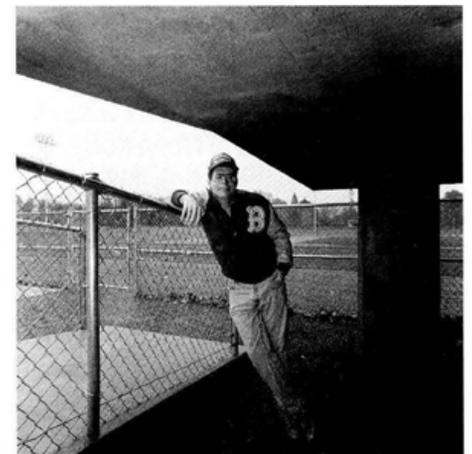
—1970—

Robert C. Nelson died of cardiac arrest on June 6 at his home in Wellesley, Mass. He was 67. Nelson was a retired reporter and Editor at The Christian Science Monitor and was the host of the "Monitor Reports" TV show. He began at The Monitor in 1954. Nelson won a Society of Professional Journalists award for his coverage of race relations in Chicago in 1960 and 1961, and was Managing Editor for features when the paper won two Pulitzer Prizes.

Nelson also played the trumpet and was a member of the Concord Band. He leaves his wife, Darren, two sons, a daughter, and five grandchildren.

—1979—

Frank Van Riper, photographer and writer, sends us "a happy bit of news about the first photograph of mine to be accepted by the National Portrait Gallery" in Washington. The photo-



graph, of novelist Stephen King, will be hung as part of the Gallery's rotating exhibition of new acquisitions.

Van Riper took the photo of King in Bangor, Maine, where King lives. Knowing about King's love of baseball, Van Riper wanted to shoot the photo at the Bangor Little League field King donated to the community. But on the only day and time when King was available, "the weather was cold, dank and drizzly—with the promise of more to come. On arrival in Maine, I rushed to the ball field, still hoping to be able to find some way to make the shot there, and hit upon the space under a concrete ramp leading up to the grandstands. It was still obviously a sports field from the light pole and scoreboard in the background. In addition, the ramp created an interesting angular shape at the top of the frame that I hoped to mimic with Stephen's body....I had a ball. Stephen King was a sweetheart. The picture turned out great. There is a God."

The photograph also appears in Van Riper's new book, "A World Apart/Down East Maine," the sequel to his 1992 book, "Faces of the Eastern Shore," which is a portrait of life on the Chesapeake. "A World Apart" doesn't yet have a publisher, but Van Riper is optimistic about its prospects.

—1986—

Geneva Overholser, Ombudsman for The Washington Post, was elected chair of the Pulitzer Prize Board. She succeeds philosopher and writer Sissela Bok, who is retiring from the board. Overholser was Editor of The Des Moines Register from 1988 to 1995.

—1987—

Charles (Chuck) Alston and **Susan Dentzer** announced the birth of their son, Samuel Hill Alston, on June 25. The family also includes 3-year-old Willie. Alston is Executive Director of the Democratic Leadership Council and Dentzer is a Contributing Editor with U.S. News & World Report.

Hong Kong Reunion

Nieman alumni in Hong Kong last June for the handover to Chinese sovereignty gathered for a brunch of bagels and dim sum during the territory's dwindling hours as a British colony. **Jonathan Ferziger**, '96, his wife, **Miriam Herschlag**, and tots Yishai and Merav hosted the event, which featured a string of 5-minute "mini-soundings." Interestingly, almost nobody was in the same job they had gone back to from Lippmann House. On hand were **Tom Ashbrook**, '96, and his wife, **Danielle**; **Marcus Brauchli**, '92; **Ying Chan**, '96; **Laura King**, '97; **Jenny Lo**, '96; **David Marcus**, '96, his wife, **Migdalia Martinez-Marcus**, and of course, young Benjamin Marcus; **Rich Read**, '97, and his wife, **Kim Kunkle**; **Karl Schoenberger**, '95, and his wife, **Susan Moffat**; and assorted offspring. Prince Charles was a no-show but few seemed to mind.

—1992—

Stan Grossfeld, photographer and Associate Editor for The Boston Globe, has a new book out, "Lost Futures—Our Forgotten Children." The book is based on work that spanned two decades and chronicles the problems of hunger and poverty of children around the world. The book includes some Pulitzer-winning photographs. The original work won a local Emmy, the World Hunger Year award, and received honors from the Overseas Press Club, the Robert Kennedy Foundation and the National Press Photographers Association. Royalties from the sale of the book will go to UNICEF.

—1993—

Gagan Gill's second collection of poetry, "Andhere Men Buddha," (The Buddhas of the Dark), has been published by Rajkamal Prakashan in New Delhi. Her first collection, "Lautegi Ek Din Ladaki," (One Day The Girl Will

Return), came out in 1989. Gill's poetry has been described in a review as "cogitative, ruminative, speculative poetry, sad and sombre in tone and finely honed in execution...." Here is one, "Ants," translated from the Hindi by Harish Trivedi:

"Ants had forgotten their way home.

"They would crawl in a line between our sleep and our body. In their memory lay spread invisible flour, which had been scattered wide in some other time and place. Looking for it they would traverse the earth from one end to the other. They would dig their teeth into anything living or dead. As they crawled on, the sorrows of the earth would become lighter so that the four directions would swirl around, all confused. The north and the south poles would change places. But nobody could know the sorrow of the ants.

"Maybe they were women once upon a time."

Gill is also Guest Editor of "Yatra 6: Writings from The Indian Subcontinent," and Editor of "Ram Kumar: A Journey Within." Ram Kumar, who died three years ago, was a painter and short-story writer.

Michael Skoler and his wife, **Maria Kirsch**, left Nairobi and NPR this summer. Here is an update from Michael:

"I have received a Frank Batten Fellowship, which pays for journalists to get an MBA at the well-regarded University of Virginia's Darden School. Maria and I packed up our life in Nairobi, after spending nearly four years here, which also means we packed up our 9-month-old daughter, Eliza Jasmine Cerise (yes, it's a long, unusual name, and there's a long story behind it.)

"Nairobi has been wonderful for us. My stint as NPR's Africa correspondent has kept me on the road far too much, but the stories have been fascinating and the life and journalism lessons important. Maria, who got her MPH degree at Boston University during the Nieman year, jumped headlong into her new field with a demanding job managing family-planning programs in Kenya and Uganda for the non-profit organization AVSC International.

"In spite of work, we kept up our outdoors explorations, hiking and camping a fair bit in Kenya, climbing a couple of the highest mountains in Africa, spending an hour with the gorillas in Uganda, touring Zanzibar, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Cape Town, South Africa.

"The future is hazy at the moment. I am resigning from NPR—the company doesn't allow staff to take two years of leave at a time. My reasons for getting an MBA are many, from a desire to understand the business culture that is dominating the world to a recognition that someday I might want to run a news organization. Maria plans to spend more time with Eliza, teach natural childbirth classes and perhaps work in a women's health clinic.

"Our new address will be: 101 Ivy Drive, Apt. #3, Charlottesville, VA 22903. We would enjoy visitors and have a guest room. My NPR E-mail address should be good into November, mskoler@npr.org, and, this fall, I expect to have a new account at skolerm@darden.gbus.virginia.edu. We are both really looking forward to being at a university again, as well as closer to home and Eliza's grandparents. This time, Maria wants to get involved in acting, and I'll be the one grinding away for a degree."

—1997—

In 1993, **Myra Ming** began a four-year journey of digging up dusty court files and tracking down reluctant witnesses in the case of Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt, a former Black Panther leader sentenced to life in prison for a 1968 murder in Santa Monica, Calif. She pursued the story even after Chris Harris, her team reporter, died of a heart attack. Pratt, a former Black Panther leader, contended that police and authorities knew he did not commit the crime. His conviction was based largely on the testimony of one man, who asserted that Pratt had confessed to him, and who also denied being a government informant. Ming's television reports examined the issues, setting off a chain reaction that led to the Orange



Tokyo Reunion Shows Nieman Network Works

Tokyo

Nieman Curator **Bill Kovach**, '89, came to Japan to see the Nieman Fellows living in Tokyo. The trip, made together with his wife, **Lynne**, was from July 21 to 27. His Japan tour was an extension of his seven-day visit to South Korea, officially sponsored by the Korea Press Center.

Bill and Lynne had wanted to come to Japan as a fun trip. Unfortunately, however, the Japanese media world did not allow Bill to do so. Instead, he had to give lectures about the Internet and journalism at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, the Japan Newspaper Publishers & Editors Association and the International House of Japan to more than 120 journalists, scholars, researchers, newspaper managers and others. Bill and Lynne also paid courtesies visits to Asahi Shimbun and Kyodo News, my organization.

On July 26, we had a reunion party at the Jupiter Sky Banquet Hall on the 36th floor of the fancy ANA Hotel. In spite of the heavy rain in the evening brought by No. 9 typhoon of the year, a total of 20 old, new and future (or wanna-be) Fellows and Fellows' affiliates celebrated the Nieman networks. The participants included **Kazuo Kuroda**, '57 (who was a Fellow when I was born); **Melvin Goo**, '77; **Atsushi Kuse**, '80; **Mitsuko Shimomura**, '88; **Mary Jordan**, '90; **Atsushi Yamada**, '94; with his affiliate, **Junko**; **Mana Koshio**, '95, with her affiliate, **Hiroto Kawabata**; **Suwendrini Kakuchi**, '97, and my affiliate, **Masako**. Fortunately, **Phillip Martin**, '98, and his affiliate, **Bianca Baggio**, who happened to be in Tokyo, joined us to take advantage of the early start of their upcoming Nieman year. ■ —Hisa Miyatake ('96) miyatake@st.rim.or.jp)

County's Superior Court's overturning Pratt's conviction. On June 10 Pratt walked out of prison after nearly 27 years behind bars.

Ming has won numerous awards for her work.

—1998—

Phillip W.D. Martin spent June and July in Japan as a U.S.-Japan Founda-

tion Media Fellow. He planned to travel to several cities to study and write about Japan's ethnic minorities. Martin is a senior producer for "The World," a public radio show on WGBH-FM, Boston.

The Japan Society is seeking nominees for its 1998 Media Fellowship program. Its address is 333 East 47 Street, New York, N.Y., 10017. ■

Look What's Happening to Lippmann House

BY SUSAN GOLDSTEIN
AND JAE ROOSEVELT

As with many other Harvard buildings, Lippmann House is undergoing construction to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act. We have considered how important the house is to the Nieman experience and have tried to make changes that will improve the use of the building while meeting ADA requirements. The entrance will be made accessible to people in wheelchairs, a handicap accessible bathroom will be built and all fellows' activities will be on the first floor. Phase one of the project is being done during this summer, and the final phase will be completed next summer.

We have been careful to maintain the historic integrity of the house that Ebenezer Francis built in 1836, but there will be some changes in its appearance. The front lawn is being graded into a gradual slope to accommodate a brick path that will wind in an S-shape around the straight walkway from Francis Avenue to the front door. This will require two sets of steps in the straight walkway and an extension of the front porch. Lynne Kovach has guided workmen in saving many shrubs and other plants.

The second staff office on the left as you enter the front hallway is being converted into the fellows' computer room. Elizabeth Tibbitts has moved to the second floor. A handicap-accessible bathroom is being built in the area in front of the kitchen (where the copier was). The basement stairs will be relocated to the back of the kitchen. The apartment attached to the Nieman Foundation on the first and second floors will be incorporated into the public space. The under-the-stairs bathroom will become a closet. The graceful winding staircase will remain untouched. The Curator's office and that of his assistant will remain on the first floor, as will the seminar room and the receptionist's desk. All other staff offices will be on the second floor.

An addition between the kitchen and the seminar room will be constructed over the existing back porch during next summer's phase two. After construction is completed next year, the kitchen and adjoining addition will become a library/meeting area/minimal-use kitchen. ■



PHOTOS BY JAE ROOSEVELT

End Note

J. Anthony Lukas, A Memoir

BY ANNE BERNAYS

I first met Tony Lukas in the fall of the year of his Nieman Fellowship, 1968. He had been auditing, along with a couple of other Niemans, the graduate seminar in biography given by my husband, Justin Kaplan. They were supposed to only listen but they “contributed” so enthusiastically that Justin had to remind them of their special—and no doubt frustrating—status.

Tony was about 35. He seemed both older and younger. Older because of purplish half-circles under deep-set eyes. And younger because of his openness, curiosity, and sense of play. If I were asked to name one characteristic that most belonged to Tony I would say his absolute lack of guile, agenda, pretentiousness. He never tried to impress or mess around with you. Tony was, above all, *straightforward*.

This trait alone made people want to be with him, my husband and I included. We saw a lot of him that year. When he returned to New York and his job at The New York Times, we saw him far less often. But we talked frequently by phone and when he came to Boston to research and write “Common Ground” we picked up where we’d left off. At this point he had discarded several other book ideas, one of them about the troubled city of Newburgh, New York. But he finally decided on a subject that would penetrate to the heart and soul of an even more troubled city, Boston, as seen through the lens of the lives of three families.

The way he pursued the idea for this book was, at least for me, astonishing. Every problem, every contingency seemed upped a notch or two: which families should he choose to write about? How far back in their histories should he go? And so on. He wanted—no he needed—other people’s opinions, and you deemed it a privilege to be in on things as the book took shape. Tony was never on an ego-trip—all the nail-biting and handwringing was about attack and execution. He *had* to write the best book ever about Boston. What emerged many years later was the result of labor so intensive it was almost obsessional. One time he flew up to Nova Scotia—on his own nickel—to visit the graves of one of his families. He went to Ireland to track another family to its source. We thought he was overdoing it a little but it turned out that each time he discovered something that helped make the book incomparably rich. Whenever he noticed a stone, Tony found out what lay beneath it.

Tony was a worrier and you could sense, by his raw reactions to things, that he was delicately balanced. At dinner one night, with him and his then-fiancee, Linda Healey, I said something terminally flat-footed, something I believed then and no longer believe. I said that I thought any good book will find the audience it deserves. Tony reacted as if I’d dumped a pitcher of ice water down his back. For a moment or two I thought he was going to throw something at me. Hitting a nerve doesn’t begin to describe what had happened. I realized too late, that his sharp, well-documented book about the Nixon years, “Nightmare,” which was not a best-seller, had been blanketed by the heavily promoted and spectacular Woodward and Bernstein book of two years later, “All the President’s Men,” same cast of characters, same story. That book had scooped up any stray Watergate fans who might have bought and read Tony’s book.

Maybe I didn’t know him as well as I like to think I did, but Tony came across as affable and always up for fun. What went on beneath this engaging manner—or maybe it was only once in a while that he was severely down and at those times he stayed away from people who would say “Hey, Tony, what’s wrong with you?”—what went on is only conjecture. Linda Healey, whom he married in 1982, was not only crazy about him but seemed able to give him the kind of emotional nourishment he needed. Looking back you can only guess at the solitary pain he must have endured for years.

The last time I saw Tony was in March at a book party given my husband and me in New York by Rhona Kiley, the former wife of another Nieman Fellow, John Kifner, and Sharon Hoge, whom we met years ago through Tony. Tony came to the party with Linda and seemed, as usual, to be enjoying himself. Recently elected President of the Authors Guild, he teased me about The Writer’s Union, on whose advisory board I sit (without ever having been asked for any advice). He said, “the Writers’ Union is a pain.” At that moment we were interrupted and I never found out why he thought so. To say I wish we could continue that conversation—or any conversation at all—is an understatement of the sort used to cover my own pain at the loss of this good friend and gallant writer. ■

Anne Bernays, the novelist, teaches creative writing to Nieman Fellows and at the School of Communications, Boston University.



NIEMAN REPORTS

ONE FRANCIS AVENUE

CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS 02138