

# NIEMAN REPORTS

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## 1992 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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# Shaping the News

*Politicians and Military Block Information—  
But Fault Lies With Press Itself*

BY BILL KOVACH

If there were ever any doubt that press manipulation poses a threat to the notion of a free press, that doubt should have been dispelled by the 1988 Presidential campaign and the war in Iraq.

In each case enormous amounts of personnel and money, space and air time were invested by the press to provide the public with objective, balanced coverage of issues and events. In each case the best journalists found themselves cut off from meaningful access to information, able only to react within an elaborately controlled environment. During the Presidential campaign vested interests focused press coverage on one set piece "media event" after another. In the war it was a briefing room in Riyadh or the Pentagon.

Reports reaching the public had been shaped in advance. The principles

involved in the campaign and in the war selected the issues or events that would be covered. They made themselves the primary editors of the news.

The 1988 campaign reports, in the main, focused on "symbolic" issues preferred by the candidates: flags, landscapes, prison cells. For the first crucial month of the war the press was kept on a diet rich in Star Wars pyrotechnics and military speculation but was denied access to the true dimensions of the cost and consequences of the war.

This control and manipulation took advantage of the nature of the press. It is a reactive enterprise. The press does not create news. The press observes events and issues as they unfold and describes and explains them. But at least since Woodrow Wilson created the Creel Commission to harness the press to the war effort, a major industry has

grown in the United States devoted to control of public actions and opinions by controlling press behavior. Since the 1960s, when television began to influence the practice of journalism, few interests have worked so methodically as have the industry of electoral politics and the military to control the press.

Hollywood actors taught Dwight Eisenhower how to shape a campaign persona for television. John Kennedy made public opinion polling an integral part of campaigning. From these seeds grew a political consultants industry devoted to the study of ever more effective ways to control public attitudes through the press. The high cost of political campaigns is a direct result of the millions invested in this industry. The decreasing value of the information provided the voting public during political

*continued on page 36*

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### *New Look*

With this edition Nieman Reports signals a slight change in appearance, with a resulting increase in space.

The nameplate and department headings are now set in Goudy Handtooled; the bodytype and article headings are in Garamond. Although old-fashioned, they are handsome and easy to read.

In addition, the contents listing has been moved from Page 3 to the cover and the publisher's notice from Page 3 to 2. Also, the back cover is now open to textual material. With these changes we have picked up nearly two pages of additional space.

# Print—Setting the Agenda

*Many Drastic Changes Are Needed if Newspapers  
Are Going to Affect The Campaign*

Memo

To: The Staff.

From: JULIUS DUSCHA

Subject: The 1992 Campaign

When meetings get boring, when I am stuck in traffic commuting to and from the office, when I can't get to sleep, and then when I wake up in the middle of the night, I have been thinking about how we should — and shouldn't — cover the 1992 Presidential campaign. I start from the premise that no one, absolutely no one — journalists, politicians or readers — is very happy with past coverage. My own memory of Presidential campaigns goes back to Roosevelt and Willkie in 1940. My active involvement in campaigns began in 1948 when all the journalists, politicians and, I suppose, voters knew that Dewey would defeat Truman.

Recalling that 1948 upset I want to emphasize that our newspaper will not assume that George Bush has already been re-elected because of the wide acclaim he has received for the quick victory in the Persian Gulf War. Winston Churchill was ousted from 10 Downing Street after magnificent leadership in a war with far greater consequences. The issue was domestic policies. The United States is not Britain, but there are serious domestic issues in America this year, not the least of which is the economic recession. And what if the Democrats should nominate Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf for President? Would that reduce Bush's advantage? Sure Bush is stronger than before the war, but we are not going to lay our plans by picking the winner in advance.

First let me impress on you the fact that the whole staff is getting this memo because many of you will be involved in the coverage. That doesn't mean that all of you are going to spend the next

year and a half on the campaign. It means that from time to time we will call on many of you to use your fresh eyes to look at the candidates and you specialists to analyze what the candidates propose in your field.

Second, we are going to cover the campaign in a far different way. For example:

- We are going to do much to set the agenda, not let the candidates' media mavens or television do it.
- Some days there will be no stories of the candidates' appearances. Why bore the readers?
- Some days there will be stories somewhat repetitious of earlier articles—even though some editor growls that "we've had that before." Why? Because events make the article relevant.
- Polling will be drastically reduced, especially in primaries.
- Instead of loading the columns with inside politics, let's surprise the readers (and ourselves) by giving them (and us) more of the fun.
- Few of you will go to the national conventions because about the only decision they make is to pick the Vice Presidential candidates and you all know what VP John Garner said about that office.

So you see that we won't be going back to those good old days when campaigning was on trains, when the political press corps was small, when important decisions were still made in smoke-filled rooms and when television was not yet there. What do we do when Presidential politics is played primarily for television, the primaries select three-

fifths of the convention delegates and the general election stretches over interminable months? How do we keep ourselves, but especially the voters, from boredom?

## Goals Not Simple

We all profess that our goal should be an informed electorate able to make intelligent choices based on facts, not whimsy. The truth is that 80 percent or so of the voters know before they read a word of ours how they will vote. These are the convinced Republicans and Democrats, many of whom have inherited their voting ways from parents and even grandparents. But elections are

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*Journalism Center. Among his honors is the Sigma Delta Chi Award for Distinguished Washington Coverage. He has written for magazines ranging from The Atlantic and Harper's to The New York Times Magazine and is the author of two books, 'Taxpayers' Hayride and Arms, Money and Politics, and has contributed to several others. Now living in San Francisco, he is Western correspondent for presstime.*

often close, and the remaining 20 percent is awfully important.

And what if President Bush decides that he can realign the parties by bringing Gen. Colin Powell, one of the heroes of the Persian Gulf War, into his administration. Would blacks, now heavily Democratic, flock to the GOP?

Let's tell the voters all that is relevant, but not bore them with excessive coverage; with meandering stories that often end up nowhere; with trivia, some of which is of marginal interest even to political reporters. And let's surprise them with different approaches and change-of-pace stories about some of the funny things that happen to the politicians, the candidates and the reporters.

There are too many horse-race stories. Less is more. There are too many polls — horse-race ones in particular — including those by this newspaper and by the syndicates we support. Less is more. There is too much "inside baseball" coverage. Less is more. Sure, we have to keep track of the candidates and what they are saying, but we don't have to waste valuable space on "day" stories if nothing of importance happened. Less is more.

No, I don't want to run political reporters out of their cushy existences. I want them to do different things. I will provide space for these different stories because we will save so many columns by not publishing all the boring, repetitive and meaningless stuff we now shovel into the paper. Yes, less can indeed be more.

We don't tell readers enough about who the candidates really are. We don't get behind their glossy resumes, clever press releases and self-serving statements often enough. We also need to talk more about the genuine issues facing the nation and what the candidates say they will do about them. We must not let the candidates set the political agenda. We owe it to our readers to help set that agenda through polling, interviewing and sometimes simply using our common sense.

Every election is different. If the 1992 campaign evolves in ways different from what we expect, we'll not be locked

into a certain kind of coverage. We'll change — fast.

### **Behind TV Faces**

The most important thing we can do in 1992 is to give our readers a true sense of the candidates. Who are these men and women? What are their values, their interests, their goals? Who has influenced them over the years and who influences them today? Do they truly listen to people? How do they make decisions? How do they spend their time? Are they good thinkers? Good administrators? Can they carry on intelligent conversations? What do they really know about economics, business, science, the real world? Do they take advice? Or are they stubborn know-it-alls? What about their religious beliefs, if any? And their superstitions?

Some of this kind of reporting has been done in the past, but not nearly enough. I did not, for example, know how inarticulate George Bush was until he became President. Was I asleep for the eight years of his Vice Presidency, or was the press asleep? Inarticulateness tells you an awful lot about a man. Nor did I ever expect him to pull us into the biggest United States war in 40 years.

But, you say, we reporters and editors are not psychiatrists. We're on dangerous ground. I don't think so. It can be done through exhaustive reporting and skillful writing. I am not talking about gossip. I am talking about verifiable information.

We should talk to both friends and enemies of the candidates, to colleagues and former colleagues, to family, to college pals, to people with whom the candidates worked on the way up, even to reporters who knew them way back when. We need to get behind the facades, the public relations, the phoniness that surround so many public figures.

What about personal habits? Sex! Drinking! Drugs! Womanizing! Here we obviously must be very careful. How much drinking is too much? Is marijuana use during college days 25 years ago a relevant issue today? I don't think so. Forget about personal peccadillos unless they are absolutely crucial in understanding a candidate. Rather, con-

centrate on what a candidate's record can tell us about what kind of a President he or she would be.

When I started this memo I decided not to mention possible candidates because who, at this point in 1975, ever thought Jimmy Carter would then be our next President, or in 1987, thought that Michael Dukakis would be the 1988 Democratic candidate? It is much too early to speculate or predict, except that barring death or serious illness we are about 99 percent sure that the Republican nominee will be George Bush. Yet after more than two years in the White House how little we know about him. How does he actually spend his day? What does he read? What is he really interested in besides the Persian Gulf? Whom does he listen to?

Candidate profiles should be done more than once. We need profiles at the time of the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary. They should be updated before the conventions, probably again right after Labor Day and finally the last week in October. There's nothing wrong with repetition. Political reporters are excited when the primaries begin, but most readers don't get interested until late in October, when reporters and editors have become bored and the candidates supercautious as they try to stay in the middle of the political spectrum.

### **Covering TV**

Newspaper reporters and editors still don't like to acknowledge it, but 99 percent of the Presidential campaign today is television. Practically all campaigning is done with the television cameras and the evening news in mind. That's why we get a visit to a flag factory and pictures of a candidate posing as a tank driver.

I will assign a reporter to cover the television coverage, with perhaps daily stories, and certainly two or three pieces a week. He or she will work closely with our reporters covering the candidates so our readers will know what has been phoned up for television pictures and what has some substance to it. The television coverage should also assess the work of the anchors and correspondents. Are they fair? Excessively

negative? Are their "closers" personal editorials? Sports department coverage of how television covers sports and the games themselves sets a good precedent for us.

We made a good start In 1990 in covering political commercials, examining and dissecting them and seeking their truth quotients. The checking had an effect on the consultants who prepared them. They began looking at commercials not only as slick campaign devices but also in terms of how they would play the next morning in the newspapers. Such coverage may even get rid of some negative campaigning. In 1992 we'll continue this tough and valuable kind of reporting. We must never forget that commercials are the cannons of the campaign and that reports on the evening news are the campaign rifle shots.

Can we as a print medium do anything about the sorry state of campaign debates? As we all know, at present debates are no more than replays of stock, bland, often meaningless statements honed on the campaign trail. How can we get some intelligent conversation out of the candidates? My favorite solution is to set them down all by themselves in a television studio — no interrogators, no reporters, no interlocutors, no audience — and have them go at it. The conversations would be broadcast live. An hour? Maybe just half an hour. Maybe we should have three or four of these conversations on various subjects. This has been done in Germany, and perhaps elsewhere. Such sessions would tell us a lot about what the candidate really knows, who he really is.

### **Polls — Whoa!**

At least we could do a good takeout of this idea, find out how it has worked where it has been tried, and lay out the proposal. People with whom I have talked about this idea say it's great but neither the candidates nor the networks — who want to showcase their talent during the debates — will go for it. Well, there's no harm in trying.

I like polls — in moderation. In recent years we have had far too many. Newspaper ombudsmen tell me that

readers are extremely skeptical of them, often feeling that the polls are part of a newspaper's effort to affect the election, to skew the results.

Let's think hard and long about our own polling, and go real easy on reporting other polls. In primaries particularly polls can be notoriously misleading because the historical basis is often so shaky.

We will take some of the money we spend on polling and put it into more focus groups and interviewing voters. I will organize a team of reporters to talk to real people in person, not over the telephone the way the pollsters do it now. I think we can learn a lot by knocking on doors and asking questions, or even by just talking to people at the malls on an evening or a Saturday afternoon.

### **Ah, the Issues**

I know, I know. Whenever issue stories are mentioned, eyes glaze over. Political reporters positively hate issues. They love personalities, fights within a campaign organization or between handlers of candidates. They want candidates to do some name-calling. They deny it, but they love negative campaigning.

We are going to do a much, much better job on issues. How we handle issues is an important part of the agenda-setting process. It is too important to be left to the candidates, their handlers and the special-interest and single-issue groups.

How do we help set the agenda? We will use polls, focus groups and interviews to find out what people are concerned about. Also, we'll use our new telecommunication toys. If readers can get sports scores and stock quotations from our new hot lines, surely we can rig the phone lines up so readers can tell us what they think of the campaign and our coverage and what the real issues are. The differences between people's genuine concerns and agendas of the campaign may also tell us a lot about why so many people are turned off by politics and don't vote.

After we find out what the major issues are I will assign issue stories to our specialists — education, economics,

health-care, drugs, the environment, energy, and so on. I will insist that the stories be written so that they will be read. Some of these issues can be turned into people stories, some can be written in a dramatic fashion.

We won't do an issue story just once. We will come back to the issues, as the candidates do. And if they ignore important issues or flannel-mouth them, we will point that out, too.

### **Money, Money, Money**

Money, like issues, can lead to some boring reporting, but it doesn't have to be that way. The Presidential elections are financed for the most part with Federal funds equally apportioned between the two major parties, but there are many so-called independent committees that raise money from private sources. Who are they? Whom do they represent? There are a lot of interesting stories here.

In the primaries money is perhaps even a bigger story. The candidates have to be out there all the time raising money from private sources to get more dough from Uncle Sam. I will assign a reporter to the money story, and I don't want him just to total up money-raising efforts and campaign spending. I want him to dig deeply to try to find out who is trying to buy what from the candidates. Also, I would like some behind-the-scenes stories about how candidates go about personally raising money and how their aides do it, too.

### **Numbers Cruncher.**

I have been talking a lot about numbers — polling, issues, the cost of solving them and campaign financing. We need a numbers cruncher in the newsroom, and I intend to find one. He or she will be a person we can run all sorts of statistics, figures and numbers by to get the hokum out of them.

Far too much coverage over the last 20 years has been "inside baseball" stuff of limited interest to readers. It all began with Teddy White and his *Making of the President 1960*. His account of the Kennedy-Nixon campaign was marvelous because he was on the inside of the winning Kennedy campaign. His books on the 1964 and 1968 campaigns were rather flat, but his determination to give

readers the inside dope spawned a whole new generation of political reporters. Well, I have gotten awfully tired of their trivia.

Sure, I want to know who the handlers are as well as the pollsters and other hired guns. But spats within the campaign organizations are news only if they deal with significant issues or major matters of strategy. Let's keep our readers informed about who is important among the campaign consultants and hangers-on, and let's tell the readers who the key campaign aides are and their background and penchants for nastiness and/or fair tactics, but let's be sparing in all of this kind of reporting.

### The Phonies

While we have been doing too much "inside baseball" we have not done nearly enough on the campaign advisers who are likely to end up in the white house or the Cabinet. The role of genuine advisers ties in with the reporting we will be doing to try to get to the essence of the real person who is the candidate. In the past I think we have often given too much space to people who are only window-dressing advisers, members of committees who maybe met once or twice with the candidate and then largely for photo-opportunity reasons.

Let's remind readers that when voting in a Presidential election they are choosing a package, not just a man or woman. With Bush you not only got Jim Baker and Dick Darman but also John Sununu. If it is pretty obvious who is going to go to the White House with the candidate if he is successful, then we ought to tell our readers a lot about those people. If the candidate isn't sure whom he is going to take along with him for the four-year rollercoaster ride, that's quite important, too, for what it tells about the candidate.

### The Speech

Some attention has been paid to basic campaign speeches in the past, but not nearly enough. Reporters get bored with the basic speech and the basic answers to questions about where a candidate stands on major issues. But The Speech and canned answers to questions tell us

a lot about candidates.

I want to see more than one story on The Speech during the campaign. How did it evolve? What was dropped? Added? Why? If the appeal of The Speech is not obvious, let's dissect it and show it up for the shorthand it may be or for the phony appeal the candidate may be trying to make with the speech.

We ought to pay more attention, too, to the speechwriters and the day-by-day dribbling out of paragraphs for 30 or just 15 seconds on the night's television news. Who decides on these "factoids" and what is the rationale behind issuing them? Why was this one issued here, and that one there? Are they primarily for local audiences or for the nightly news?

One other matter concerning speeches. Are the candidates involved in the speech-writing process? If so, how much and in what way. I still remember that in 1952 and 1956 Adlai Stevenson found time — perhaps too much time — to do a good deal of his own speech-writing.

### A Picture Is Worth...

In all phases of our campaign coverage we need to think much more about graphics. I will put both a reporter and an artist on the "graphics beat." Most of our readers today have been weaned on television, whether we print folks like it or not. So graphics must be an essential part of our coverage. Pictures, maps, diagrams, bar charts — anything that can simplify, explain or dress up a story, should be used, and should be large enough to get readers into them.

I am leary of a lot of off-beat political stories because I don't think we should trivialize as important and crucial an event as a Presidential election. But I also like change-of-pace and unexpected stories. Some ideas:

- Ten questions you will never get straight answers to from a candidate . . . because of his ties to interest groups, because of his hopes to snag a certain group or because a straight answer is too embarrassing.
- How our television critic sees a

couple of days on the campaign trail, how the campaign uses techniques stolen from "Cheers," "The Bill Cosby Show" or even "Roseanne."

- Maybe we should also let our drama, movie and rock music critics take a look at the campaign, and see how they think it relates to or compares with their usual venues.
- What are the batting averages of our columnists and other resident gurus, as well as the radio and television talk-show know-it-alls? We might check them out a couple or three times during the campaign. And we might also assess our own coverage — in print — from time to time. This could be embarrassing, but our readers are entitled to know.

### East to West

There will be thirty-something primaries again, and even before they start Iowa's caucuses will be over-covered and over-emphasized, as will the primary in New Hampshire. Primaries are an ideal time for reporters to get to know candidates, to get the feel of them, because primaries are retail campaigning while the general election in the fall is wholesale campaigning. But primaries are as full of pitfalls for the press as for the candidates.

As I said before, we need to be aware of all kinds of polls about the primaries because the primaries are so volatile, so few people vote in them and often there is no reliable historical basis for primary polling. We will restrain our polling and, for heaven's sake, not run polls leaked to us by candidates.

We need a story or stories about the organization of the campaigns for the primaries and something about strategy and tactics, but go easy on the inside stuff.

Extreme caution needs to be used in interpreting the results, particularly of the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary and other early primaries. When candidates are bunched up with, say, 23, 20 and 18 percent of the vote there really is no winner, is there?

If there are debates during the primaries, as there surely will be, we

will report them in an analytic way and not try to pick a winner. Why does there always have to be a winner? For God's sake, I don't want to see quotes from the spin doctors and other handlers saying how well their candidate did. They're paid to say that, but we as editors and reporters are not paid to publish those self-serving post-debate statements.

### Conventions . . . zzz

All of us want to go to the conventions for the same reason that the whole sports staff wants to go to the World Series and the Super Bowl. They are social events, gatherings of the clans. But the conventions have become meaningless. The last time a convention was an important political event was in 1952 when Taft and Eisenhower battled it out in Chicago.

I am going to cut convention coverage way back and save the space and money for all the other things I have been talking about. A handful of reporters and a couple of editors can do the job.

I will also all but ignore the platform. The politicians pay no attention to it so why should we spend time, money and effort on it?

Vice-Presidential nominees, who are usually announced at the conventions, need some coverage, but even here we can restrain ourselves. We certainly don't need 15 reporters at a convention to cover the only real story there.

### The Fall Campaign

September and October are the cruelest months for political reporters. Those who have been on the campaign trail since January and editors who have been involved over all those months are generally sick to death of it. But our readers are just getting interested, particularly in the last two or three weeks of October. That's why we should be repeating our candidate profiles and our issue stories, expanding and refining them wherever possible so that we are telling our readers when they are interested what they really need to know about the candidates.

As for the campaign itself, the candidates have now moved to the middle of the political spectrum, trying to

appeal to the largest possible number of voters instead of merely appealing to the partisans who vote in the primaries. This change makes campaign coverage difficult. The candidates don't want to say anything at the very time our readers are sitting up and paying attention.

What do we do? We must cover the candidates but, as I said earlier, we don't have to devote much space to the daily activities if the candidates are saying little or nothing of importance. Instead, we will devote our space to the kind of special reporting and stories I have outlined above, from profiles and issues and how rallies are organized and who goes to them and why.

September and October are also good months for basic stories putting the campaign and the candidates into some historical perspective. What are the chances of the winning candidate's accomplishing what he is promising? Will Congress let the candidate do what he or she wants to do? Does it really matter who is President? Do polls affect the outcome of elections? How important is a candidate's image?

Probably the best way to fight fall campaign ennui is to switch reporters and editors regularly. I don't think we should keep any one with a candidate

more than a week. A reporter can drop off and retrace the campaign trail to see what if any effect a candidate's appearances have had. We might even put some nonpolitical reporters out there to give us a fresh view.

Then there are the fall debates. Let's follow the same suggestions as outlined above for debates during the primaries. Again, let's refrain from picking a winner and instead spend our time analyzing what was said, evaded or not said.

### The Election

In covering the results we must emphasize analysis because television beats us badly with the results. Let's do some thinking between now and election night about how many tables of statistics we should run. How many readers actually look at them? Do we need all that agate? I am not sure that we do.

After we have all rested up from the election night let's quickly put together our post-mortems while our triumphs and disasters are still fresh in our minds.

We'll share the post-mortems with our readers. Some of our second- and third-thoughts may be embarrassing, but our readers are entitled to know what we think about what we did — as we go about thinking and planning for 1996. □

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# TV — Break The Rules

*Big 3 Networks Admonished to Innovate on Political Coverage or Let CNN and PBS Lead the Way*

BY EDWARD M. FOUHY

Roger Ailes, the Republican media-meister, was at a conference at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government shortly after the 1988 Presidential election. The topic was television news and the campaign. In the audience were campaign managers for all of the Democratic and Republican Presidential candidates as well as a handful of political reporters.

Ailes was complaining about TV's coverage of his candidate. "What it comes down to is the orchestra pit theory of television news," he said.

What's that, Roger?

"If my candidate gives a speech outlining his stand on an important issue like foreign policy or the environment; something well written, well thought out, and important and at the end of the speech as he's leaving the stage he trips and falls into the orchestra pit, what do you think is going to be on television that night? You're damned right. His fall into the orchestra pit."

Ailes's story was part of a discussion of television's coverage of the Presidential campaign. The generally accepted theory of Presidential politics that emerged from the Kennedy School conference is that unlike the pivotal role they play in other political campaigns, television commercials have little impact on public opinion in a Presidential race. Shifts in public opinion during a Presidential campaign — and only in a Presidential campaign — are effected primarily by what's on the network evening news programs. If the theory is correct, and the polling data suggest that it is, the network news divisions have an enormous responsibility. Their news specials and convention coverage but, most of all, their flagship evening news programs, are the most important sources of information for voters who

select America's national leadership.

Add to that the generally accepted wisdom that in 1988, for the first time, television set the agenda for the campaign. Newspapers, particularly *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, which have set the agenda in the past, were seen by many political professionals as having relegated themselves to a secondary role, critiquing the candidates' performances in the televised debates or in their television commercials. Says Kirk O'Donnell, a key Dukakis strategist and one of Washington's most respected Democratic thinkers: "The newspapers were the major players in the primaries. But they got on the bus [in the general election campaign] and became TV critics watching how the candidates fared on the network news programs."

If there is one point the political pros at the Kennedy School conference agreed on it is that the 1988 campaign established a new low point in American politics. There is no need to recite the Willie Horton, Read My Lips mantra. Even the winners felt the campaign was disgraceful. Who was responsible? The politicians were inclined to blame the press; the press blamed the politicians.

Television news executives are now trying to figure out how to avoid the errors they committed in 1988 as they look ahead to 1992. The trouble is there is little new thinking at the big three commercial networks beyond a general desire to avoid past mistakes. Two of the three have new, untried leadership. Furthermore, the recession and accompanying dip in advertising revenues and the staggering cost of covering the Persian Gulf War have drastically reduced the dollars available for campaign coverage.

## PBS an Early Starter

Public television through its Voters Channel project is first out of the gate with ideas for changing Presidential campaign coverage. At this writing plans are still being formulated. What seems likely is that PBS will offer free time to the major candidates and may carry a weekly program focusing on the substance of the campaign. Plans are also underway for a National Issues Convention early in the campaign cycle. If the plan is funded, PBS will carry live, prime-time coverage over the course of two or three nights. The idea is to bring candidates together with a scientifically

*Edward M. Fouhy was the executive producer of the Presidential debates in 1988. Earlier that year he was a fellow at the Kennedy School of Government's Institute of Politics.*



*"Before going astray in Cambridge" — his words — he was in network news for 23 years, working at all three major networks. He was Washington senior producer for CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite during the Watergate affair, Saigon Bureau Chief for CBS in the late '60s and finally Vice President and Director of News with responsibility for all CBS bureaus. He was also ABC News Vice President and Washington Bureau Chief and, for three years, executive producer for prime-time news programs at NBC News. He is now Executive Producer of Concord Communications.*

selected cross section of ordinary voters for a weekend discussion of issues culminating in an endorsement. Nationwide exposure would presumably be the lure for the candidates. The idea is modeled on the successful Grenada 500 programs on British television.

When discussing television coverage of the Presidential campaign it is useful to make a further distinction between the coverage offered by PBS and the big three TV nets. PBS's MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour consistently offered the most comprehensive coverage of the last two Presidential campaigns by emphasizing two elements: issues debates and candidate profiles. Elizabeth Brackett, Judy Woodruff and Roger Mudd, talented political reporters all, explored the issues in lengthy reports. In 1988 MacNeil/Lehrer had the almost revolutionary idea of broadcasting each candidate's standard stump speech several times during the course of the campaign, giving their viewers the opportunity, rare on television, of actually hearing the pitch the candidates were giving voters.

Unfortunately PBS is short of money as well as audience. The impact of its campaign coverage has been minimal in the past, although there is a chance the Issues Convention, planned for early in the campaign cycle, may have some influence on press coverage of the selection process by forcing the candidates — and the press — to focus on issues.

But any discussion of coverage plans of the commercial television networks must be conducted against the new realities of television news. Consider just a few from the rapidly shifting world of television:

- About 65 percent of American homes will have cable television by 1992.
- The average American home equipped with cable television is now receiving 31 channels.
- The audience for the network evening news programs has, until the war broke out in the Persian Gulf, been steadily eroding. This trend reaches back to 1981.

Perhaps the most important development is the new importance of CNN. On the night of January 16, 1991, televi-

sion news changed in a way so profound that it will have a major impact on the 1992 Presidential election campaign. That was, of course, the night war broke out in the Middle East. Cable News Network with three correspondents on the scene, including its best known anchor, Bernard Shaw, and finest foreign correspondent, Peter Arnett, dominated the story. Using an expensive voice circuit called a four wire, they stayed on the air providing riveting accounts of the first allied air raids on Baghdad while their giant rivals, particularly CBS, sputtered and fumbled. A *Wall Street Journal* headline writer later summed it up, "CBS News, Born in the Blitz, Died in the Desert." Never in memory had a major breaking news story been so dominated by one network. By late evening NBC had given up all pretense of competition and begun interviewing Shaw.

### CBS Rookie Scores

CBS recovered some of its prestige when a rookie reporter, Bob McKeown, freshly arrived from Canadian television, raced into Kuwait City ahead of the Allied troops. Veteran CBS News technician David Green performed a small miracle and got McKeown on the air for a spectacular, if short-lived exclusive. CBS's recovery occurred too late, however, to dim the widespread realization that on breaking news stories, CNN is the place to be.

Irrelevant to the way the Presidential campaign is covered? No. The significance of CNN's victory the night the war broke out is that CNN has now become an important and respected news source. Its performance in covering the war legitimized the network once derisively referred to as "Chicken Noodle News".

President Bush talked of following the war on CNN. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney spoke of learning a great deal from watching CNN. Peter Arnett, CNN's man in Baghdad, became a household name as millions of Americans debated the wisdom of his presence in the Iraqi capital. *The New York Times* printed story after story crediting CNN with scoops on war news. Frames taken from CNN video coverage of the war graced the front page of *The Times* and other

newspapers day after day.

Some of the finest television stations in the country including NBC affiliate KRON, San Francisco, and ABC affiliate WFAA, Dallas, as well as a dozen CBS affiliates dropped their traditional network coverage in order to carry CNN when their own networks faltered. How much of this newly won sanctification by the journalistic *cognoscenti* will remain after the war ends is, of course, impossible to say. But consider for the moment two facts: Based on present plans in 1992 CNN will broadcast television's only daily 30-minute news program focusing on the day's political developments, and Ken Bode, formerly of NBC News and arguably network television's best informed political reporter, will be covering the '92 campaign for — who else? — CNN.

In every campaign there is a trend setter. For years it was the political staff of *The Washington Post* and particularly that newspaper's distinguished political editor, David Broder. But television news has gradually taken on that role. That used to mean CBS, the network where Bruce Morton, Warren Mitofsky and Marty Plissner labored. Mitofsky, the preeminent network numbers man, has left to head the consortium that was started in 1990 to do all of the vote collection and election day polling for the cash-strapped networks. Plissner is writing a book but telling his friends he will be back in harness soon. Morton is off on other stories.

The capable Hal Bruno will again be running things at ABC where Peter Jennings did a superlative job anchoring ABC's Gulf War coverage and is flying high in the weekly evening news ratings. That all means ABC will be an important political player but it lacks the air time CNN will have. NBC has always run third in political coverage, though it was a close call in the days when the politics-savvy John Chancellor anchored its coverage. NBC has relegated Chancellor to a secondary role and is struggling with financial problems that were the worst of the big three even before the war.

That leaves CNN positioned to play the pivotal role in the '92 campaign by

virtue of its new-found prestige, its large and expanding audience and the air time it can devote to the campaign. Since it is not bound to the rigid demands of the thirty-minute evening news program with its concomitant appetite for minute-and-a-half correspondent reports, the dynamics of television coverage of the campaign will be altered dramatically. To what effect it's hard to say.

## Manipulation

At their best the big three networks have always been easy marks for manipulation by political consultants and media advisers. The most egregious example is the political analysis role on NBC's Today show shared by the pre-eminent Democratic mediameister Bob Squier with the aforementioned Roger Ailes. The network pays them handsomely to offer their wisdom on the course of politics in America. The arrangement is surely the first time a television network has *paid* someone to advertise himself on their networks.

Savvy media men like Squier, Ailes, Stu Spencer, Bob Haldeman, Doug Bailey and Michael Deaver learned long ago that television news has an insatiable desire for fresh visuals. Republican Presidential candidates have always relied on media-wise advisers and advertising men in their campaigns. They learned early that television news stories share some characteristics with television commercials. They must be short, simple, and beautifully illustrated. It's no coincidence that they are both referred to in the jargon of the business as "spots."

The Democrats have been late catching on to the rules of the politics-television game, perhaps because their media handlers are invariably inexperienced. Instead of learning from mistakes made in the last cycle, they spend most of their time jockeying for a government job after the election. By contrast the Republicans just want to elect their man and get back to their main business of making money.

Perhaps this was illustrated best back at the dawning of the age of television and politics, 1968. The scene was the Benson Hotel in Portland, Oregon.

Richard Nixon, Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy were staying at the hotel in the week prior to the Oregon primary. The candidates and their trailing press corps left the hotel about the same time every morning. But the Nixon group was usually back at the hotel by 3 p.m. McCarthy's entourage would come trailing in about 8 p.m. The Kennedy campaign bus would return around midnight. Asked about this apparent discrepancy, a Nixon aide snorted and observed, "There's room for only one Nixon story on the evening news. Why knock yourself and the candidate out doing more than one event? The press is just going to get angry and confused." Republicans learned long ago how to manipulate the demands of television and politics.

## The Ailes Plan

In 1988 Ailes exercised the ultimate control over the press. He persuaded candidate George Bush to announce early in September that there would be no press conferences for the balance of the campaign. Instead the campaign provided a simple setting and theme for each day. Of course the day Ailes chose to send his candidate to the flag factory he went too far. The press called him on it and he dialed back somewhat on the visuals for the rest of the campaign. Bush, however, paid no political price for refusing to answer the questions of national political reporters. His preferred venue was the so-called satellite tour in which he sat in a television studio and spoke serially to local anchormen around the country, most of whom could be depended upon to ask easily anticipated questions.

The Democrats in 1988 had become savvy to the press manipulation the Republicans were so sophisticated at practicing. But knowing the techniques and using them proved to be two entirely different matters. Michael Dukakis, an articulate and intelligent man who delighted in the rough and tumble political coverage in the highly competitive Boston media market, hated the 'theme of the day' routine and bridled at delivering the sound bite line in his daily campaign speech. Thus he could only grin and bear it when his tone deaf

handlers put him in a tank to try to persuade voters he wasn't really opposed to spending money for national defense. The press made fun of that visual and the Republicans turned the television footage into an embarrassing commercial.

Late in the campaign, after the second debate, when it had become clear, even to Dukakis, that he was not gaining on Bush, he changed his strategy, rejecting the sound-bite approach favored by his handlers and sought every interview he could find. Months of careful control were tossed out and he approached every microphone thrust in his face. Town meetings with sometimes hostile audiences were not only televised by the Dukakis campaign, they were also sent up to a satellite for any television station to excerpt for its news programs.

Dukakis paid a price for this accessibility particularly in his face-off with Ted Koppel on Nightline. Koppel had invited both candidates to appear but when only Dukakis accepted he went after him like a starving man going after a pastrami sandwich. Dukakis, whose campaign was probably mortally wounded at that point anyway, pursued the openness strategy to the point that Bush was eventually forced to modify his strategy of availability without accessibility.

One can only assume that President Bush, if he is a candidate, will be even less accessible in the 1992 campaign, given the genuine threat of Iraqi-inspired terrorism, and will let the Secret Service take the rap for keeping the press at bay.

## How to Improve

What's to be done? How does television news avoid being suckered yet again by the media mavens? Are we condemned to yet another Presidential selection process devoid of substance?

There are several ideas that should be considered. Some are new, some are reiterations of old journalistic practices. They all start from the same premise: the business of political reporters is to report. There must be an affirmation that for once in a Presidential campaign, the correspondents will not simply sit on the bus and wait for the handouts,

be they in the form of staged photo opportunities, inside information about who's up and who's down in the campaign organization or the latest blip in the tracking polls. Reporters should cover the daily events, of course, but instead of serving as transmission belts for the sound bite *du jour* and as narrators for the photo opportunity of the day, they should do hard-nosed reporting on the substance of the candidates' daily themes. If the boys on the bus can't do that sort of reporting, and logistics and time make it difficult for them to do so, then senior political reporters ought to be taken off the bus and put on the phone, while junior reporters take over the body watch.

Equally, executive producers, who make the news judgments on the network news programs, ought to resolve to use the daily photo op only when the candidate says or does something that is genuinely newsworthy. No more should there be the mindless acceptance of whatever the media manipulators have decided will be the daily picture and accompanying sound bite. Executive producers ought to take a vow to ignore the contrived daily story unless it is real news. And they should feel no compulsion to balance every day's coverage. If the Republican candidate makes news and the Democrat doesn't they should ignore the Democrat. If the Democrat makes himself available for press questioning and the Republican doesn't, the network news programs should cover the Democrat and force the Republican to pay a price for his isolation.

*The Post's* Broder suggested at a conference on Presidential politics last spring in Washington that the press should attempt to force each candidate to hold one thirty-minute news conference a week. Broder is onto something and television newsmen ought to support him. For every day that goes by without the candidate making himself available to the press there ought to be a line in the anchor-man's copy saying simply, "This is the thirteenth day since the last press conference by the Republican candidate for President." No drama, no histrionics, no Dan Rather-style portentousness, just a

straight statement of fact. Let's see how long a candidate could withstand that sort of pressure.

How about the newly fashionable practice of critiquing the candidates' TV ads? As noted, the Presidential race is the one major political campaign in which television commercials have minimal impact. No serious student of politics thinks TV political ads are more than background noise in a Presidential campaign. There is no evidence that they "move the numbers," as the professionals say. Nonetheless they are a public manifestation of a campaign and they cost a fair chunk of the money the public puts up to fund a Presidential campaign, so they ought to be looked at and reported on like any other facet of the campaign. But that reporting should be confined to the facts in the ads.

Are the claims true? Are false or misleading charges made against an opponent? Are the pictures as well as the words what they purport to be? Some newspapers that have taken up the cry against misleading political ads have failed to serve their readers because they have considered only the words, spoken or seen on the screen. As with all of television, it is the picture that leaves the strongest impression with a viewer, not the words in the voice-over. But it is the total impression formed by the words, picture, music, editing and image juxtaposition that inspires emotion and moves a voter. Newsmen should leave the role of critiquing the ads, their effectiveness as well as their production techniques, to advertising professionals. Few newspaper reporters or network correspondents are qualified to play that role.

### **Check Records**

Investigative reporting is essential if television news is to live up to its responsibility as the leading source of information about politics. Every candidate for President has recorded views on issues of interest to the voters. If the candidate is a governor or a legislator, as most Presidential candidates have been in modern times, there is a long record of that candidate's stands on every conceivable issue. Television newsmen

ought to find out what they are.

If Joe Jones, candidate for President, takes a position on an issue different from the one he took as a U.S. Senator, viewers should know about it. Consistency in politics may indeed be a symptom of a closed mind but TV newsmen should look case by case to find out. After all, a Senator from a rural state may take a position against Federal funds for mass transit, but reverse his position as a candidate for national office. That's legitimate. But when a candidate takes one position on a deeply emotional issue like abortion during a statewide race, and reverses his stand when appealing to a national constituency, that becomes a matter a voter might want to consider when he casts his ballot.

If cash-strapped public television can come up with an innovative idea like an Issues Convention and give it live, prime-time exposure, commercial television ought to tap the ideas of some of its bright producers and develop its own innovative programs. Granted there are producers, including at least one now producing a major network's evening news program, who think politics is boring. But this ennui may spring from the fact that Presidential candidates have understandably sought to minimize risk and appear only in comfortable television formats. But where is it written that television networks can't devise their own formats and invite the candidates to participate? While the networks have far too many corporate matters pending before the various agencies of the executive branch of government to appear as clean-handed sponsors of Presidential debates, there are other ways and other program formats they might utilize to report the campaign. The televised biography based on hard digging and thorough reporting is certainly one such program form. Interviews with the candidates and investigative pieces on issues appearing on the highly rated prime time news magazine programs like *60 Minutes* and *20/20* would also reach millions of viewers who don't watch the evening news.

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# If I Were Press Czar

*First Ukases Deal with Debates, Polls and Clichés  
Some Violators Would Be Flogged*

BY RUSSELL BAKER

If the press had an absolute czar, and if the czar were I, the first three ukases that would be issued at the start of the next Presidential campaign would read as follows:

1. Henceforth no person employed in the journalistic trade shall participate in any televised so-called "debate" between Presidential candidates by acting as interlocutor, moderator, spear bearer, clown or human furniture of any variety whatsoever.

Such appearances constitute performance in a theatrical spectacle, which alone should be sufficient reason for journalists to shun them in disgust, journalism's duty being to create an informed citizenry, not an entertained public.

These particular performances, the aforesaid "debates," are doubly loathsome to our trade, for they are drenched in fraud, not being debates as they are billed, but merely competitive displays of the candidates' ability to command the services of high-priced flunkeys, especially dental cappers, tailors, blow-dry hair stylists, acting coaches, masseurs and sunlamp aimers.

Participation in such deceptions betrays the honor of journalism by making it a conniver in schemes to dupe the citizenry into supposing that politicians involved in aforesaid competitive displays of grooming accessories are, in fact, engaging in debate.

The medical profession forbids doctors to conduct executions of condemned felons, the reason being that the doctor's calling is thought to be higher than the hangman's. In like manner, journalists must recognize that it degrades our calling when even one is seen on a hundred million television sets lending our dignity to the caperings of an image-making circus.

2. There shall be no publication of any poll purporting to disclose who will win the election "if it were held today," or who is ahead "at this stage of the race," nor shall any such poll be taken,

conducted or commissioned, lest its contents become known privately within the trade, thus damaging the press's ability to cover the campaign from a perspective uncorrupted by the dispiriting sense of certainties created by polls.

The evil consequences of this vile poll habit are visible in:

a. the alarming decline in voter participation in elections, a natural result of telling people in advance of Election Day how the voting will turn out, leaving the voter to infer that a trip to the polls is unnecessary; and,

b. polling's tendency to diminish the press's traditional role as teller of the news and pushing it into the center of politics by making it an important maker of news, this unwholesome development being evident in the swiftness with which press polls create profitable bandwagon effects for candidates with good numbers while crushing spirits and cutting off financial lifeblood to the others.

To preserve its honor, the press must get out of the way and let citizen and candidate settle their destinies without an intrusive, busybody press constantly interfering. This requires breaking the poll habit. Your czar recognizes the difficulty, for he is also a humane and understanding czar.

He knows that the polling vice results from the press's natural surrender to the modern delusion that society, politics and human behavior can all be readily explained by empirical science.

How tempting it is to believe that running mathematical data through a computer can fulfill the journalists' duty. Yet art, and man, and the construction of his works are infinitely more uncertain than statistics can reveal. Journalists used to know that their work would always be a doomed attempt to solve gloriously impenetrable mysteries. Now this polling habit has led them astray into the dangerous notion that the world can be covered like a gigantic multiplication table.

The poll habit must be broken.

America has broken its dependency on cigarettes; the press can break its dependency on polls.

At once!

3. Use of the terms "the race," "front runner" and "dark horse" to report the immensely complicated process by which the public decides who is best fitted to govern the United States is hereby forbidden, having been entered on The Czar's Index of Hopelessly Exhausted Clichés. Journalists wishing to degrade or trivialize the campaign by likening it to an athletic contest are still permitted to do so, but only in fresh athletic metaphors.

This ban will be enforced by severe punishment, offenders to be flogged with a wet knout and deprived for up to thirty days of the right to quote such authorities as "veteran Capitol observers," "White House insiders," Nelson Polsby and Norman Ornstein, and the right to attribute their own campaign jokes to "one wag." □

*The publicity sheet put out by The New York Times says that Mr. Baker once wrote on a book jacket: "Russell Baker was born in 1853, aboard a schooner in the Maylay Straits,*



*served as a bag man for the railroad during the administration of Ulysses S. Grant and graduated eight years later from the University of Heidelberg." The Russell Wayne Baker who went to school in Loudon County, Virginia in the 1930s, graduated from The Johns Hopkins University, won a Pulitzer Prize for his Observer column in 1979 and a second Pulitzer for his book Growing Up in 1983, must therefore be a reincarnation or a remarkably well preserved 137-year old.*

# A Key To Political Reporting

*By Delving Into the Past, the Press Should Help Voters Predict How Candidates Will Perform in White House*

BY JAMES DAVID BARBER

Voting is prediction. Winning the Presidency is not like winning the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize, a badge to take home and hang on the wall. For a President, the win is the start, as if he had been set forth on a horse with a sword and a helmet, step one in the mission yet to come. So the voter has to think where the President will go, what he will do, how he will make the government future happen. What a mental challenge! But thinking by voters does have to happen, unless we are ready to scrap democracy and slide back into the dismal ditch of aristocracy or monarchy.

Think of Bush, that candidate predicted as “wimp” or “pastel President,” who instead triggered war after sending half a million young Americans across the sea to the desert. Retrospective prediction is a much easier game than voting: now, no doubt, some historical analyst will note that, as George Will pointed out, Bush admired “sacrifice” as a value in his inaugural address and, long before the war, said that “Maybe I’ll turn out to be a Teddy Roosevelt.” (George Will, *Suddenly: The American Abroad and at Home 1986-1990*, Free Press, New York, 1990). True, my own predictions about Bush included one that he would indeed take on a mission. But what? I wrote that it might be a mission like Harry Truman’s Marshall Plan — or one like Lyndon Johnson’s Vietnam adventure. The best grade I get for that is 50 percent.

Precise, detailed predictions — by voters or the rest of us — are not likely to work out. Think how you guessed what your kid was going to do in college. But rough predictions are highly important. It *did* turn out that Bush’s problem was not primarily character or style but worldview, that is, his

“mission,” a factor peculiarly vague and switchable in his case as a candidate. And it *did* turn out that the current, popular climate of expectations in 1988 — the emphasis on conscience — helped guide his Ailes and Atwater manipulators to victory, and that the power situation, both at home and abroad, helped provide a rough prediction of crisis development. So at least one highly significant aspect of predicting performance in the White House is success in identifying where to focus attention on a President-to-be and the office of today he will occupy tomorrow.

Journalism is crucial to that task — as to the whole task of democracy, called “government by consent of the governed,” consent meaning choice by the reality of logic and evidence, not an ignorant guess. Nearly every citizen depends on news for whatever is to be known about the candidates. And I suppose there are few journalists who would prefer to write bankruptcy analysis or obituaries rather than stories about the run for the White House. How to hit that opportunity?

Mistake #1 is the priority to go see the candidate and judge him by his visible persona. Such was the mission of the “Boys On The Bus,” who thought they could learn best about the candidate by watching and listening as he ran in the field. Such was the mission also for those photographers who thought that what you see is what you get.

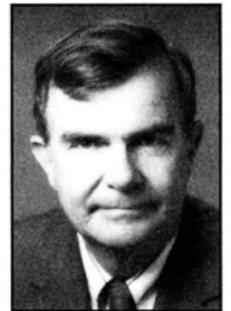
One time a state official, on a morning after a hotel party, made it out to the backyard pump, where he met a politician and offered him a chew of tobacco. The politician viewed him and thought, “Gee, what a good-looking President he’d make.” Twenty-one years later it happened. Good-looking he was:

tall, white haired, rosey faced, with a straight back and well-gesturing arms. And he had a virtually royal voice, which he could waft off to the back of the auditorium. In other words, he came on as the epitome of the Presidency. When he died in office he was worshipped by masses, but then, as the truth of his Presidency ultimately came out, he was rated as America’s worst. So lasted the rating of Warren G. Harding for years, until Richard M. Nixon replaced him as the bottom-line President.

Such observations are not only old stuff. They also happened, for example, after the debates in 1988, when reporters commented not on what they had learned of the candidate but on

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*James David Barber is author of the widely praised *The Presidential Character*, which has had an important influence on writing about Presidents, and *The Pulse of Politics*, a new study*



*of Presidential elections. He grew up in Charleston, WVA, received his B.A. and M.A. from the University of Chicago, and his Ph.D. from Yale, where he taught for twelve years. Now James Duke Professor of Political Science at Duke University, he teaches courses in political leadership and political biography, and is the co-director of Duke’s Center for the Study of Communications Policy. He lives with his wife, their two sons and five Welsh ponies near Durham, NC.*

# Forcing the Issues

*Select Four or Five and Day After Day Make Candidates Explain Their Positions in Detail*

BY JOHN HERBERS

A generation ago, *The Nashville Tennessean* was one of the few surviving newspapers to wear its partisanship on its sleeve; so much so that it would try, often with success, to dictate to the candidates it supported the stands they would take on the issues. As Wendall Rawls remembers it, he was assigned to cover Senator Albert Gore, Sr., in his unsuccessful 1970 bid for re-election with instructions to lead every story with what Gore had to say about the national economy under the Republican administration of Richard M. Nixon. *The Tennessean* figured that was Gore's best bet to deflect charges of his opponent, the conservative Bill Brock, that Gore was a "radiclib" as defined by none other than Spiro Agnew, then the Vice President.

One day, however, Gore failed to mention the economy in a series of stump speeches. Rawls chose another lead, filed his story and went to bed. Soon the desk was calling: never mind that the candidate chose not to mention the economy; wake him up, get him to say something on the issue and reread the story. Rawls did, and that was that.

No one as far as I know would have newspapers go back to the days when they dictated to candidates, based their coverage on partisan interests and distorted campaigns at will. But the fact is the pendulum has swung in the other direction to the point where the coverage of issues by newspapers, and certainly television, is both sterile and timid if you exclude the personal behavior of the candidates. That is a separate issue to be discussed here later.

It is time for news organizations individually to decide which issues of the many floated in every campaign are the most important and make them an integral part of campaign coverage — a

kind of modified version of *The Tennessean's* sledge-hammer use of the economy. Aside from partisanship, *The Tennessean* at least was trying to inject some thought and analysis into a mindless and emotional campaign of the kind that has characterized our recent Presidential elections.

First, let me dispose of the argument that news organizations have no business imposing their own judgments about the importance of issues in news coverage. Without much attention to priorities, we already make those judgments in editorials, which in their splendid isolation are largely ignored by the candidates. We seem content to let the campaigns run amok without any attempt to inject our judgments. My definition of "we" is the editors and reporters who shape and produce the coverage, in cooperation, of course, with the editorial boards and the publishers. Each organization to be effective must speak with one voice.

Nothing about politics or its media coverage can be described as objective or even fair. Those terms have no meaning under the flawed system of elections that has become our albatross. Someone needs to inject judgments about issues into the campaigns that in recent years have deteriorated into mindless posturing, innuendos, half truths fought out mostly in broadcast commercials. I do not know of anyone in a position to do so less likely to be swayed by private and partisan interests outside the elective processes than the reporters and editors concerned with reporting campaigns and elections. Our greatest sin — broadcast commentators and panelists of biased views notwithstanding — is one of being manipulated by the candidates through their managers, consultants and pollsters in their efforts to

ignore or gloss over the important issues. That sin is not one of imposing our personal opinions on the public, as is often charged. Going on the offensive to force a more thorough treatment of the issues is a proper function of a free press.

Identifying the most important issues and ranking them in importance is crucial because there are now so many issues being promoted by so many different groups they cannot all be fully discussed, no matter how long the cam-

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paign. Wise public officials know this and draft an agenda for government with only a few proposals if they hope to accomplish any of them. News organizations should do the same. What has happened in the recent past is that some of the more serious newspapers and broadcasters draft a long list of issues and seek to explain all sides of each during the course of the campaign but without making them a part of the regular coverage. The public cannot focus on one before the next is presented.

It is common for editors to sit down with reporters and draft a schedule for publishing issue stories. No rigid schedule should ever be planned. Invariably the situation changes or the stories have an obvious connection to the campaign underway. A good example of this is a format used for years by *The New York Times* called Issue and Debate. It always followed the same formula: a brief introduction, the pros, then the cons and, lastly, a conclusion — usually inconclusive — about what might happen. Reporters hated to write them and I doubt they ever had much of an audience. We could never be accused of ignoring the issues but there was no evidence these kinds of pieces had any impact on the campaigns.

Rather than meeting to plan a schedule and assignments for covering the issues, the time could better be used to focus on which issues are important and finding ways to integrate reporting of them with the day-to-day campaign coverage. How this might work can be seen at looking back on the 1988 campaign. The general election campaign opened with many believing that the most important issue was what role George Bush played in the Iran-Contra affair. For a time some journalists pushed for an answer. But when none was forthcoming the press gave up. Toward the end of the campaign, the question was hardly ever asked and there was little effort to uncover new information that Bush would have had to respond to. In campaign coverage it was rarely mentioned. It appeared that the press was part of official Washington's disinclination to push the matter because few had

any stomach for attacking a popular President with only a few months left to serve. Reporters, in any event, got tired of trying in the absence of interest from their home offices to keep the issue alive. But political campaigns do respond to constant drumming from the press if continued long enough. Reporters cannot awaken a Presidential candidate in the middle of the night to get a comment, but a little of the kind of aggressiveness shown by *The Tennessean* in 1970 might have helped.

### Fear of Partisanship

There are many ways to keep an issue alive when it appears to be vital. But many news organizations treat most policy issues as if they are unimportant or exist in a vacuum separate from the turmoil of the campaign. One problem is the fear of appearing partisan if an issue is pressed too hard. But there should be no need for that. The idea is to force an issue to be examined and discussed to the extent that voters have some concept of where the candidates stand on that issue. For example, say that going into the 1992 election, there are signs that inflation will soon be on the rise. The Presidential candidates, of course, come forward with what they think the remedy should be. But a newspaper finds serious holes in their remedies and decides it should make inflation the major issue in its campaign coverage, even though the candidates prefer to talk about patriotism or give their superficial set speeches.

The candidates should be pressed daily for explanations. What segments of the population would be hurt and which helped by the proposed remedy? What would be the long-range effects? How would the new policy be put into effect? Would Congress go along with it? And on and on. Never mind when the candidates will not answer the questions. Say so, along with a background explanation about the flaws in the proposed remedy. Do not hesitate to repeat the process. Max Frankel used to say that important information had to be repeated at least three times before readers would take note of it. He was

right, but we still get the refrain, "Oh, we've had that." Explanatory and analysis pieces on the issue can be run at the same time, but the main push for answers lies in the live campaign coverage, with frequent reminders of why the issue is important.

Every Presidential candidate has a stable of specialists who explore various issues and put out policy statements. Bush complained in 1988 that he was constantly being urged by the press to say more on the issues but that the press ignored issue statements being cranked out in wholesale lots back in headquarters. He was right because those statements are of little more use than the party platforms that everyone ignores, especially candidates. They are usually drafted by volunteer experts who may be looking for a job in the next administration and are likely to be sanitized and glossed by campaign aides to where they avoid the hard questions. There is no substitute for statements coming directly from the candidate.

### Flexibility Needed

For inclusion in campaign coverage, it is wise to focus on no more than four or five issues at a time. Any more would lead to more confusion than that already existing. But it probably is wise to list those issues by priority, depending of course on the circumstances at the time. The list of issues and their priorities should be flexible, subject to change at any time.

The need for flexibility can be seen in a hypothetical case. Suppose that a Presidential candidate broadcasts a commercial charging that his opponent, when governor of a Midwestern state, ignored the warnings of experts and permitted the dumping of toxic waste near a residential area, resulting in the deaths of seven people. That should immediately become the No. 1 issue until the matter is resolved one way or the other. In addition to pressing the candidates as to the truth of the charge, all of the background involving the incident should be laid out to be seen in perspective. In 1988, the Willie Horton commercial involving the furlough of a

rapist by Massachusetts was allowed by most news organizations to fester like a dead fish for days or weeks before it surfaced as a major issue and was explained as an incident that could have happened in a number of states, not just the one where Michael Dukakis was governor. By then the damage was done.

Injecting issues into regular campaign coverage promises, too, to crowd out some of the rubbish of political reporting that invariably creeps in. Say that a reporter for several days has been following a candidate who has said nothing during that time that is new or newsworthy. So he or she looks for something else to report. The most overused story is "how's the campaign going" — it's faltering, it's picking up, it's being hampered by the candidate refusing to follow advice, and so on — when the entire picture is likely to change in a few days. Then there's the new, meaningless look at the candidate's stump style, or the reporter wandering through the crowd quoting what people have to say about the candidate even though the campaign may have trucked them in to pad the audience. A little pressure from the home office on finding something to say about major issues might produce copy of significance regarding leadership and policies for the future. There should, however, be constant communication between reporters and editors with give and take on both sides, both as to the substance of reporting and how prominently stories should be played.

While the news organizations have been too timid about issues concerning public policy, they may have been over-aggressive about the issue of the personal character of candidates. Certainly we do not want a President who is a drug addict, an alcoholic, a wife beater or a criminal. It is important to examine and write about the character of a candidate, but we have been too severe in recent years in using personal behavior in an effort to score a knock-out blow. Gary Hart was properly run out of the Presidential race because he lied about his adultery and asked to be caught, although that story should never have been allowed to dominate the news the

way it was. But look at how Bush was hounded about the wimp factor. *Newsweek* did a cover story on it questioning his electability. Yet as a war President Bush turned out to be far less wimpish than many would have liked.

### How Strict A Standard?

We simply do not know how behavioral traits in a candidate will affect conduct as President or even the ability to be elected. The press has a long history of misjudgments, my own memory as a participant going back to how most everyone laughed when Senator Eugene McCarthy entered the New Hampshire primary to knock out the mighty Lyndon Johnson, the sitting President.

As society has become more lenient about what personal behavior is permissible for the general population the press has held political candidates to the stricter standards of the past. Unless a candidate's behavior is outside the norm for acceptable behavior in the private sector, I believe the press should be more lenient than it has, a little more forgiving in the spirit of an earlier age when America was a place of new beginnings. The press should publish what it can prove about questionable behavior of candidates, but it should do so only under extraordinary circumstances, with restraint and as a peripheral part of the coverage. This would open new avenues for more aggressive coverage of public policy issues.

In deciding which issues should have priority, editors and reporters should, of course, consult the polls; but they should make their decisions primarily out of their own knowledge and instincts. The press, along with the candidates, has become far too dependent on the polls, which have serious flaws however they are conducted. There may be issues that journalists feel to be important but that have not emerged sufficiently for the majority of people to have formed firm or enlightened opinions about them. This is important in an era when political leaders usually base their policy opinions on what the polls tell them rather than using their

own insights to stake out an independent stance and persuade the public to follow them. If journalists do not fill that role no one will. Also, I would advise journalists in forming their judgments on issues to stay as far away from the hired managers and consultants as possible. Their opinions are limited and tainted because their interest is only in winning and their advice has led to the downfall of many high-minded candidates who would have been better served following their own instincts.

Although I am arguing that many issues can and should be ignored during a campaign, the press must take notice of any issue that is prominently discussed by the candidates. But those issues can be tagged for what they are and not be allowed to get in the way of the major issues. For example, Presidential candidates have a way of intruding into issues that belong primarily to state and local governments, and the press has let them get away with it by treating those issues seriously. Much of the talk about "law and order" that has gone on without ceasing since Richard Nixon used it as a boost to the White House in 1968 falls into this category. Some issues such as gun control and abortion have been ground so fine over the years that there is little point in making much of them.

Once again in 1992 a multitude of interests will each be pushing its own special issue. If news organizations feel compelled to deal in some way with the minor ones there is no better way than showing briefly and quietly how they impact real people, just as the press has done with major issues in the past while the candidates have been permitted to wage issueless campaigns.

The press has the power to bring back policy issues to Presidential campaigns if it chooses to wield it. □



# Swearing off Polls

*They're Unreliable and Lead Press and Public Astray  
— Bury Them in Agate With Other Trivia*

BY MARTIN F. NOLAN

If the polling business awarded its own Oscar, Tony, Emmy or Grammy, my nomination for a favorite performance would be the verdict delivered by a public opinion survey conducted by NBC and *The Wall Street Journal* in October, 1989. One question asked respondents whom they voted for in the Presidential election 11 months earlier. A total of 33 percent said that they voted for the losing Democratic nominee, Michael Dukakis. In fact, Dukakis received almost 46 percent of the vote.

People lie. This is one of the distressing manifestations of human nature discovered in the accursed trade of newspapering. If public officials lie and newspapers catch them at it, glory and honor await. If polling respondents lie, the policy is to coddle the mendacious little rascals, to condone their behavior and grant them further indulgence under that most generous amnesty program, "margin of error."

One of the most famous headlines in the 20th Century was brandished by a grinning Harry Truman, an early edition of *The Chicago Tribune* on the day after the 1948 Presidential election: "Dewey Defeats Truman." Newspapers are notoriously poor learners. Relying too much on polls in 1948, they learned a lesson only briefly. The pollster George Gallup called the 1952 Presidential election "too close to call," even though Dwight Eisenhower defeated Adlai Stevenson, 442-89 in the Electoral College, and by a popular plurality of 6.6 million votes, 10 percent of the total.

The press swore off polls and predictions only briefly. Demon rum's lure was too strong. American newspapers are now besotted in the pseudo-science of polling. Journalism has lost both its soul and its work ethic to pollsters, consultants and all those whose aim is to

squeeze the life — and the independent judgment of reporters — out of politics.

Newspapers excel at telling readers what happened yesterday. They are dim and cracked crystal balls about tomorrow, but that has not stopped them from relying on polls as a substitute for insight, experience and shoe leather. Polling-gaffe stories, usually underplayed, are numerous, though not as plentiful as pollsters' excuses.

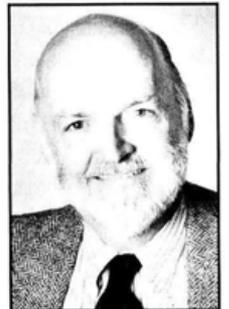
Newspapers lose both uniqueness and a position of leadership when they follow too closely the marketing techniques of other businesses. In many newspapers nowadays, the shadow government is "graphics and demographics." The art and marketing departments carry more clout than such old-fashioned enterprises as news and features. When newspapers competed against each other, news was paramount. When competing in a monopoly market for the reader's time and attention, it is, as we say, a different story.

The "Dewey Defeats Truman" headline coincided with *The Lonely Crowd*, a study undertaken by David Riesman, the Harvard sociologist. He suggested that the American character was changing from an "inner-directed" personality like Truman's, defined by traditional values acquired in the family or through reading or religion, to an "other-directed" personality influenced by society's norms. The "other-directed" personality coincided with the rise of marketing. In popular music, disc jockeys stopped asking "Do you like this music?" and started asking "Do you think it will be a hit?" Surveys, polls, best-selling and box-office rosters have proliferated.

In politics, the "other-directed" personality is addicted to polling. The most remarkable debate in Congress in years,

before the Persian Gulf war, was characterized by dignity, sincerity and an absence of posturing. It is no coincidence that few debaters cited polls, which they readily cite on other matters. Politicians love to cite polls when they are lopsided. That is an axiom of politics: when an issue is closely divided, complicated or important, polls and pollsters are of little use. All politicians prudently follow poll numbers but some, successful and otherwise, use them not as a tool of leadership but of followership. A sizeable caucus of politicians gets in and stays in office because of public opinion polls. The question

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*on a wide range of subjects. Born in Boston in 1940, Nolan is a graduate of Boston College and a veteran of the U.S. Army. He joined The Globe in 1961. He was assigned to the Washington Bureau in 1965, where, the next year, he was a member of The Globe team that won the Pulitzer Prize for Meritorious Public Service. In 1969 he was named Washington Bureau Chief. For his White House coverage of the Nixon Presidency he was named to the President's "enemies list." Nolan has written for The Atlantic, The New Republic, National Review and Washington Journalism Review.*

remains: do they manipulate the polls or do the polls manipulate them? The same question must be asked of newspapers.

A poll by definition is not news since it reports a consensus of what everyone is thinking. This is the basic conundrum about the news value of polls. A poll is analogous to a stretch of temperate weather, not a blizzard or hurricane. A poll is not the plane that crashes, but a survey of airplanes taking off and landing safely (sheer volume sometimes makes polltaking the O'Hare Airport of journalism). The most elaborate way a poll can make news is to be wrong. In the 1988 election for instance, had a poll in late October shown Michael Dukakis 20 points ahead of George Bush, the poll would be re-taken or the pollster fired.

In *The Wall Street Journal*-NBC followup in 1989, some 13 percent of respondents were afflicted with either amnesia or shame about voting for Dukakis or perhaps brazenly lied to the pollster. Are they reliable witnesses on behalf of 16 million Americans on other issues? Whatever, this massive fib hardly invalidated the poll in the eyes of the poll takers.

Mistakes in Presidential contests, President Dewey notwithstanding, are rarer than mistakes in local elections. A survey of 250 million people is more valid than a survey of 250,000. Mathematics conspires against the usefulness of polls in local politics, where the margin of error is more than marginal.

If Dewey felt betrayed by pollsters, how about Harvey Gantt, who polls strongly suggested would be representing North Carolina in the U.S. Senate instead of Jesse Helms? "The recent good news in American politics has been the growing number of strong black candidates who are running against and often beating strong white contenders, suggesting a decline in the racism that has colored politics lily-white in most parts of the country," Richard Morin, director of polling for *The Washington Post*, wrote after the Gantt-Helms election. "Yet the bad news for pollsters is that these contests

invariably feature polling results that vary considerably from the election outcome."

The solution? Distribute black and white votes differently. "In a biracial general election, the black candidate's share of the vote is usually no more than one percentage point higher than his support level in the final poll . . . which some private pollsters call 'what you see is what you get,'" according to Lawrence J. Husic, vice president of Gallup, who presented a paper to the American Association for Public Opinion Research. According to Morin, Husic recommends this solution: "Allocating the undecided vote in the poll between the candidates on the basis of race, giving all of the black vote to the black candidate and all of the non-black vote to the white candidate." This is science?

### Polls Like Popcorn

The excuses for the time, money, reportorial energy and newsprint devoted to polls are charmingly other-directed. "The people want to know who's ahead," I've often heard. The people or the people at the paper? Editors and reporters pounce on the polling results like Tank McNamara on a fumble. Inner-circle pseudo-science is seductive and also widely shared. Leaking of poll results is a notorious hazard; many political campaigns know the results of a newspaper's poll before readers do.

"Yeah, they're sometimes wrong, but you know they're like popcorn — a manageable habit," I've also heard. Journalism's popcorn intake could not stand a nutritionist's shakedown. The budget line-item for popcorn has also been known to cause indigestion among accountants.

During one of the many internal debates about polls at *The Boston Globe*, I once suggested that since they were assuredly opinion, they belonged not on the news pages, but on the editorial or op-ed page. That venue was actually tried for awhile, but the normal mercantile pressure sent the poll results back out front: "Why are we paying all this money for a poll and burying it inside?" Later, when I became editorial page editor, I did not seek to have the polls

on those pages nor did anyone offer them.

I like many pollsters and don't want to see them put out of business. I just want to see their work placed in perspective. A Harvard Kennedy School survey of major papers in October 1988 showed the amount of news attention paid to poll results. Poll data were included in 37.91 percent of campaign stories in *The New York Times*, in 53.45 percent of *The Washington Post*'s coverage and 54.48 percent of *The Boston Globe*'s. What would be lost if that percentage should shrink and more space is devoted to what candidates say?

### Exit Polls Hurt Papers

One innovation of polling especially counterproductive for newspapers is exit polling. An exit-poll alliance is to the network's gain and the newspaper's loss. Television needs a matrix of instantaneous numbers, a demographic ouija board that can "call" the election milliseconds before competitors. The next day, these numbers — which have already aired on television — are spread in a newspaper chart that categorizes voters by age, sex, race, religion, income and self-confessed ideology. In *The New York Times*, the CBS exit poll gets more space than the actual vote by county or Congressional district, relegated to agate type. Readers once relied on newspapers to analyze what the actual vote meant, with real numbers from real places, not guesswork from faceless pigeonholes. Too many newspapers have surrendered this important task to hired pollsters and demographers.

Polls proliferate and with them margins for error. *The Los Angeles Times* conducts one of the best surveys, but has polled so many times that mistakes are bound to occur. In 1976, *The Times* conducted 1,000 interviews. By 1988, the number had risen to 88,000 interviews. On Sept. 18, 1990, the Times Mirror Center for the People & the Press said that 51 percent described the Republican Party as favoring the "rich, powerful, moneyed interests," up from 18 percent three years earlier.

With the White House and Congress involved in negotiations over reducing the federal budget deficit, *The*

*continued on page 37*

# Investigators' Checklist

*Every Campaign Adds Another Important Item  
—What Will It Be This Time?*

BY ANN MARIE LIPINSKI

A year before the 1988 election, *Wall Street Journal* reporter David Shribman delivered a detailed and delicately written profile of TV minister Pat Robertson, one of a series on the Presidential candidates that appeared on the *Journal's* back page.

About a third of the way into the piece — “Robertson’s Conversion From Rakishness to Faith Culminates in His Crusade for the White House,” it was headlined — Shribman quietly corrected some of the dates in the Virginia Republican’s biography.

“While in law school, Mr. Robertson attended a party and saw a young woman lean over some candles, catching her hair on fire. He put the fire out, winning his introduction to Adelia ‘Dede’ Elmer,” Shribman wrote. “They were married secretly on Aug. 27, 1954, in Elkton, Md., known as a venue for quick marriages. Their son was born 10 weeks later.”

Two days after that story appeared, *The Washington Post* reprised *The Journal's* revelations and put them on page one. The story, written by T.R. Reid, pointedly detailed “a number of exaggerations and misleading statements” about Robertson’s life that the Southern Baptist minister had been forced to correct, “that most painful” stemming from *The Journal's* discovery.

*The Post* went on to catalog several inconsistencies in Robertson’s statements about his education and business experience, all of them under the dramatic headline: “Painfully, Robertson Corrects Record; Marriage Date, 10 Weeks Before Birth of Son, is Acknowledged.”

The two stories provide fitting bookends for the library of investigative campaign reporting, a collection whose curators and contributors have yet to settle on

a definition of their pursuit, let alone a style.

As the investigative discipline evolves from a tradition of spectacular revelations of corruption to explorations of complex systems and personalities, journalists competing on the campaign trail are faced with important decisions. Do we cast our net for personal wrongdoing and corruption or pursue the broader profile? Do we investigate character as vigorously as campaign finances? Does evidence of a moralizing minister’s pre-marital relations merit bold page one treatment or make more sense as a detail in a reflective assessment of “a modern-day Elmer Gantry,” as Shribman wrote?

While many of the central questions are similar to those posed in most newsrooms considering any investigative pursuit, they are exaggerated during campaigns by the highly competitive nature of the story.

Some of the quandaries were neatly summarized in a lecture at the University of Missouri School of Journalism in 1987 by Gaylord Shaw, then a reporter for *The Los Angeles Times*. Shaw, now *Newsday's* Washington bureau chief, was explaining that in preparation for the 1988 election, *Times* reporters were traveling around the country interviewing Presidential scholars about their studies of former Presidents, looking for guideposts to help prepare profiles of the candidates.

“The scholars said that the first thing you should do is find everything that they’ve ever written and see how that has changed,” Shaw recalled for Missouri’s students and faculty. “So we looked up a lot of what Gary Hart had ever written. Two reporters found that Gary Hart had written that once he had been stranded in the woods out on the

prairie somewhere — in Kansas, I think — and he was confronted by timber wolves a few feet away from him. He stared down the timber wolves and he survived.

“Well, you take that and you talk to some biologists and wildlife experts and you find that timber wolves have been extinct in that area for a hundred years . . . So this is where we were on the story. But our problem was, looking back on it, we were in the library looking up things about timber wolves and stuff like that, and *The Miami Herald* was in the bushes. They got the story and we didn’t, although we quickly recouped.”

Each campaign, it seems, adds a new item to the investigative reporter’s checklist. Before Hart, questions of marital fidelity were rare. Before Geraldine Ferraro, a spouse’s business dealings were given passing notice. Reporting on plagiarism, military service, drug use and psychiatric health — each traces its lineage to a specific candidate or campaign before which it seemed improper

Ann Marie Lipinski directs the Chicago-based investigative reporting team at The Chicago Tribune. Lipinski was one of a group of three Tribune reporters who won a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting in 1988 for a series of stories on corruption in the Chicago City Council. She was a member of the Nieman Fellows class of 1990. She is married to photographer Steve Kagan.



or irrelevant to raise the question.

Brooks Jackson, a correspondent for Cable News Network's Special Assignment staff and a former investigative reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, recalls a time not long ago when reporters neglected the most basic public records checks of candidates — the kind of research that today is integrated into even routine investigative reporting. Jackson cites the stories that followed Richard Nixon's 1970 Supreme Court nomination of G. Harrold Carswell.

### The Carswell Story

A reporter checking the courthouse in Wilkinson, Ga. turned up a copy of a 1948 *Irvington Bulletin* and the text of a campaign speech in which Carswell said "segregation of the races is proper." Moreover, Carswell edited *The Bulletin* at the time the speech was published on page one. Following the disclosure, the Senate rejected Carswell's nomination.

"For whatever reason, a reporter went down and looked up that speech," said Jackson. "At the time, that kind of research wasn't really on the reporter checklist. But today, partly as a result of that story, the first thing you do [in investigating a candidate] is run a Nexis search. That's an example of the kind of thing that we sort of learn as we go along."

Two decades after the Carswell stories, Christopher Drew, an investigative reporter in *The Chicago Tribune's* Washington bureau, follows the example of Supreme Court nominees to illustrate how far beyond checking old newspaper clips we've come in investigative pursuit of candidates.

"When I went up to background [Douglas] Ginsburg when he came up for the Supreme Court I raced all around Boston, making the important checks, looking through courthouse records, finding his ex-wife. I was thinking mainly of money corruption and legal ethics. It never occurred to me in 1987 that I should be asking his colleagues at the Harvard Law School if they'd ever seen him take a puff off a marijuana cigarette," Drew said.

"In the past several years, the requirements for checks on candidates has increased exponentially, all in the direction of personal behavior. Looking

toward the Presidential campaign, it's worth considering how many things are on the investigative reporter's checklist that not so long ago weren't there."

Jackson adds: "With each political campaign we find something we should have had on our checklist and didn't. The reporter who figures out what that is first, gets the story."

In recent conversations about preparing for the 1992 Presidential election with about a dozen editors and investigative reporters, "checklist" is the word that surfaced most often. The word, it seems, defines the gap between the event-driven inclinations of most political reporters and the methodical, often tedious, requirement of investigative work. It also hints at the bias that several editors revealed for divorcing political reporters from background probes of the candidates. "The investigative types don't fall prey to the kinds of claims about which political reporters are much more naive," said James O'Shea, *The Tribune's* assistant managing editor.

Reporter Steve Weinberg, editor of *The Investigative Reporters & Editors Journal*, said he is often called by campaign reporters looking for the "magic bullet" to pierce a Presidential candidate. "It's never that simple," Weinberg explains. "These kinds of stories are a long process. There are lucky reporters but no lazy lucky reporters."

Weinberg said that after President George Bush named Dan Quayle as his running mate he got "about 30 calls an hour from journalists wondering what they should do and where they should go for background." Many of them wanted to know the "trick" to obtaining college transcripts and were disappointed to learn from Weinberg that he had never obtained such records without careful cultivation of a source.

"Journalists in general fail to practice anticipatory journalism," Weinberg said. "Sometimes that's difficult but in Presidential campaigns it's a little easier. You almost always know with some advance notice who the main candidates or even nominees will be. To wait until the night before the convention to start checking out candidates is inexcusable, especially for the major papers . . . I would make sure I had done at least the superficial

investigative checks on everyone ahead of time."

Weinberg lists voting records, campaign donors, financial and ethics disclosures of the candidates and their staffs, special interest group ratings, and speaking fees and honoraria as the first level of checks, followed by research of court records, real estate and business ties, education, health, birth and marriage records, and a thorough exploration of background, friends, family and character.

Tempted by the sensational impact of the Hart sex scandal or the leak that led to the Joseph Biden plagiarism flap, some reporters forget that most worthy investigative stories are much harder earned.

William Alfred, a playwright and Harvard professor, tells the students in his dramatic writing class about the importance of building what he calls "police files" — dossiers he keeps on each of his characters as he's writing a play. The files contain detailed information on their childhoods, families, friends, habits, and (a particular of Alfred's) their first memories. Most of what he collects in the police files does not appear in any literal sense in his plays. "But you need to know the character so well that you can hear the way he speaks," Alfred says. "When he does something, you need to understand why, given his background, that was the only way for him to act."

I kept thinking of Alfred as Weinberg talked and, oddly, how suited the playwright's advice is to the reporter investigating a candidate. *Newsday's* Shaw, recollecting *The L.A. Times* experience, cautions that "you can't spend all your time looking up what kind of grades these folks made in junior high school and not be tuned into more current, potentially explosive stories." But, like Alfred, Shaw says it is that kind of background information that often leads to or explains a larger truth. "Those kind of details tell you a lot about a person and set the foundation for more specific instances, like the one that did Gary Hart in."

Adds Weinberg: "You do a mini-Robert Caro, that's the ideal. And almost always along the way, those checks yield specific stories. But even if they don't, you're

hopefully ready to explain why a certain contribution has come in or why a certain person has been added to the campaign or why a candidate is voting a certain way. Build files on these people and have them ready when the time comes to spin off a story along the way."

Daniel Biddle, who won a Pulitzer Prize in investigative reporting for *The Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1987 and was part of that paper's massive and controversial investigation of Ferraro and her husband (what Biddle calls "the journalistic equivalent of the American build-up in Saudi Arabia") said he thinks that one of the problems in subjecting candidates to truth squad inspection is that we never tell readers when they come up clean.

### **If Candidates Are Clean?**

"It would be great if every single campaign claim, promise, and statement about one's experience and what one has accomplished could be put to the test," said Biddle, explaining how he would direct an investigative reporting team during the campaign. "But what if we find out good things? What if we subject these people to unbelievably rigorous standards and they come up clean? Given the historic lack of super-straight, super-clean, public-interest-minded leadership, a Presidential candidate who withstands a scrupulous background check is a good story. That's real news . . . But we usually don't print a story if they come up clean. I've got to think that one through."

As the election year approaches, the recession may limit the investigative work envisioned by some journalists. Financial cutbacks at many news organizations, especially after high outlays for coverage of the Persian Gulf War, are threatening to limit the pursuit of such labor-intensive work. Small or medium sized news organizations, where the breadth of research proposed by journalists like Weinberg is rarely tolerated, are unlikely to undertake any such projects.

Short of the "police file" approach, however, reporters could still provide an important service by giving up time-consuming candidate-by-candidate investigations in favor of broader issue-oriented investigations that hold the

parties or candidates accountable.

Coinciding with the last campaign, *The Tribune's* O'Shea wrote an excellent investigative series on the disaster of the savings and loan industry that told readers a great deal about the Reagan-Bush record as well as the record of the Democratic leadership. The series exposed more political and governmental failures than did any of the paper's candidate profiles and, in an indirect way, did more to advance campaign debate.

O'Shea believes there is a similar investigative series waiting to be done on the banking industry that could illuminate some of the major players of the 1992 campaign. "Campaign finance is another one," he said. "How much more evidence do we need that the system is corrupted? We report that this guy got this much and that guy got that much, but no one has ever gotten to the core of the institutional corruption of the system. It's a great campaign story." It's also a story that might reveal more about the incumbent than another profile revisiting Navy pilot Bush's brush with death over Chichi Jima.

### **The Bush Challenge**

One of the greatest challenges of investigative campaign reporting this season will be faced by those covering Bush. Reporting on incumbents in general requires a different approach. With Bush, who twice submitted to the media's scrutiny in running for President and surfaced repeatedly as a subject in investigative probes of Iran-Contra, an argument to skip the return trip on a thorough investigative profile will prove persuasive in many newsrooms. The press corps, having become familiar with Bush, becomes comfortable with Bush. Moreover, early signs that the President's perceived success in the Persian Gulf has insulated him from serious political challenges may distract reporters from viewing the candidate as a job applicant rather than an heir.

Shaw, of *Newsday*, said that while "you take a whole different approach with a sitting President," the review of the incumbent's record should be no less painstaking or critical than that of the newcomer. If anything, he said, the White House record provides a back-

drop against which to measure and reconsider previously known dimensions of the President's life.

"Do we make a full-fledged effort, as you do with a first-time candidate, to see if there are any skeletons left in his closet?" said Shaw. "There are a couple of areas that I personally want to make sure we look at, including a look at some old friends of Bush's and how they may or may not be operating within and alongside government . . . We're also devoting some considerable effort to the question of how and why we got into the war because a lot of that reflects on George Bush and reveals him in ways we haven't seen before — decisions he made, how he handled the crisis. I think there also needs to be a very thorough examination of other critical points of his first term, such as how we got into the recession and what is being done to get out of it."

Rep. Newt Gingrich, speaking of the President's inflated approval rating, recently observed: "The number of people who don't like George Bush is almost down to the number of people running for the Democratic nomination." Around the same time, Sen. Sam Nunn, once considered a likely Democratic contender, explained his political intentions thusly: "I cannot visualize any circumstances under which I would run in 1992. Southerners don't like to make Sherman-like statements, but that's pretty close to one."

With coronation sentiments building on both sides of the aisle, the temptations to take a pass on time- and budget-consuming investigations will be irresistible in some newsrooms. In others, one hopes, reason will prevail.

"Public attitudes notwithstanding, this is our job," said Shaw, speaking of the value of investigative campaign reporting in an election year. "If the media doesn't do it, who's going to? If we don't do it, voters are left with the candidates' presenting their own picture of things, colored and flavored the way they want it. This independent look at the people who want to be President gets to the very heart of what we're about. Talk about public service — this is it." □

# Making Voters Believers

## *10 Ideas Offered for Newspapers to Combat Electorate's Apathy and Hopelessness*

BY GENEVA OVERHOLSER

As a proud old political junkie, I hate to say this. But pondering the subject of what role we play in America's disenchantment with politics has forced me to conclude that American political coverage is as good an example as you'd want of all that we're doing badly in newspapers today.

We write politics dull, we write it long, we write it for insiders. We fail to show readers why they should care. We do it without art, we do it without graphics. We do it so badly, in fact, that most of it is boring even for us. It's as if we're all paying obeisance to the serious-newspaper god. As long as he approves, to hell with whether anyone reads it.

Little wonder that they *don't* read it, then. Or that political reporters, who know that, are increasingly wanting out. Or that the American public believes nothing is ever really said in politics.

I know, I know. You're thinking what I thought when I first sat down to write this piece. How much responsibility can newspapers take for the political mess we're in?

American political discourse today is a disgrace. Most Americans are thoroughly disenchanted with the electoral process. Leaders is largely a misnomer. Congress and other public bodies are all but paralyzed. And citizens generally can't figure out why any of it makes any difference to them.

Better political reporting won't resolve the role of PACs or the decline of political parties or the mixed results of Congressional reform or the tyranny of incumbency, or whatever your favorite explanation for today's political ills may be.

All true. But draw back and look at the unhappiness with politics and government, and ask how much we've

had to do with it and how much we could do to improve matters. And I think you quickly come up against some fundamental ills in newspapering.

If we haven't made it happen, we've helped make it so. By our rote treatment of political news, we affirm voters' feelings that none of it makes any difference anyway, we let citizens know that their hopelessness about anyone ever solving anything is well-placed, and we generally contribute to Americans' declining sense of community — and to our own declining readership.

I think that we not only can do a better job in the nation's interest, but also, must do so, in our own self-interest. Everything we do to correct apathy, hopelessness and disconnectedness with the political process helps us directly, even as it serves the political process and the country.

How do we do it? Plenty has been written about how to improve political coverage. We must do less horse-race journalism. We must not let polls tyrannize political coverage, we must cover broadcast coverage of politics, we must critique political ads.

Yes. But I think we need to go beyond this level of thinking and look at Americans' disaffection for the political process, and at the deep-seated loss of belief in community — in common goals. With this in mind, I offer some ideas I hope could help, including some I never thought I'd hear myself espousing:

### Spotlight Solutions

The tenor of the times is a sense that problems are too big to solve, that politicians get elected for avoiding problems rather than confronting them, that things are generally out of control.

In such an atmosphere, the old news-

paper tenet — that good news is the usual, bad news is the unusual — sometimes needs turning around. Nowadays, the problem that *is* resolved, the crisis *successfully* handled, may be man biting dog.

One specific example: Are we likely to give as much thought — and ink — to a proposed solution with significant upfront costs, but which is persuasively documented to save money over the long haul, as we are to the cost of some existing problem?

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*page operations. Tracing her career backward, she returned to Iowa in 1988 after writing editorials on foreign affairs and national security for The New York Times. Before that she was a 1986 Nieman Fellow and before that she was Deputy Editorial Page Editor of The Register. She joined The Register as an editorial writer in 1981 after working as a reporter for The Colorado Springs Sun, traveling for five years and free-lancing from Kinshasa, Zaire, and Paris, and putting in a stint as a Congressional Fellow with the American Political Science Association. She is married to Michael Schaffer, a teacher, and the mother of two daughters.*

Helping people to believe in solutions is a notion we'd have to keep in mind as we report, and as we use opinion pieces, throughout the year. When a neighborhood group springs up, or a coalition of them turns a crime problem around, we should believe in the newsworthiness of these events, just as we would in that of the problems they rose to confront.

### **Tools for Action**

Along the same line of thought, if we write a story about a problem, we must let people know where they can go to do something about it. Stories should enable them to act, whether it's running a list of candidates for office or information on how to contact the Legislature. And we can do more stories on how to get involved in politics, for that matter. If people are turned off because they feel powerless, we can give them the means to take power.

### **Local Is Everything**

Local news counts. Local is where people care, where America's 1,600 daily newspapers can make a difference. When we cover the issues that affect life in our own communities, citizens have some sense that news matters. That means we must use local breaking news, when citizens' attention is focused on an issue, to examine issues. Let's say two women are bludgeoned to death in our town in a case of domestic violence. That's the moment to assign a reporter, or a team of them, to domestic violence. How many cases are there? Who is dealing with them? What sort of judicial actions follow?

That's when our editorial pages ought to do their best to see what solutions need to be sought. And then, when the candidates come to town, there's a context, a level of awareness, of concern, in which questions of crime — and what the candidates' thoughts about it are — can be put.

### **Say What's Unsaid**

Candidates think they're better off avoiding tough issues than confronting them. We must make the opposite true, by spotlighting times when a candidate avoids something, describing his discomfort when an issue is raised. We

must come up with the vehicles for getting the absence of an opinion on record. Boxes with all the campaign stands of various candidates are one way.

Good stories, probingly written by thinking reporters, are a better one. What do you tell your spouse when you go home after a meeting with a candidate? You talk about just what question it was that really made him unhappy, which issue she sailed through methodically, what really struck him. You tell whether she dwelt on flag-burning or abortion, whether you had to keep calling him back to health and education.

Is this getting into our stories? We should tell where they blink and where they squirm, and where they really get fervent. We should send good reporters out and tell them to tell all, and then yes, label the story analysis. But we should get it all in.

### **Fresh Eyes On It**

We're so dulled by our dutiful talk of bringing more women and minorities into positions where they aren't that we forget one of the great advantages of diversifying our workforces: Former outsiders, if we give them their heads and tell them we believe in them, will ask different questions. They'll note that the emperor has no clothes. They won't assume that, because the system has been ever thus, this is the way it always must be. They'll ask why it is.

Here's a little personal example. For years, I've been told by every editor I ever had, that it was unprofessional and irrational to think of things in guns-vs.-butter terms. You should never ask a candidate, "But if one of your arguments about this war is that it represents a resurgence of our military strength, what should we make of its impact on our economic strength?" You should never put S.D.I. (Strategic Defense Initiative) in a sentence with W.I.C. (Women, Infants, Children) because it is not intellectually honest.

But that ignores the way real people think. And, really, it ignores the way the world works. People are forced to make choices. Not confronting politicians with choices when they're running is

part of why they get away with not making choices later. And confining ourselves to asking the same old, insider-knowledge, detail-specific, reality-constrained questions produces the same old boring stories, the same old lack of imagination in campaigns.

Politics is the ultimate closed system, and political reporters are the worst sorts of insiders. There is no more oppressively lockstep atmosphere than that of a campaign. That's part of why we write so many stories about process. That's part of why so few voters think any of it has anything to do with them.

### **Let the Voters In**

Get other voices, especially voters' voices, into political reporting. Yes, go to experts to have them judge someone's position on an issue. But go to a panel of voters, too. Make the panels representative of a broad spectrum — sex, age, race, socioeconomic background, work. And have them assess candidates. Do pictures and quotes. And come back to them again and again.

Consider even a panel of kids. George McGovern said the best questions he was asked consistently came from high-school classes. Candidates actually *say* something, sometimes, when confronted with the direct, unrehearsed, genuine emotions of a student.

### **Create the Agenda**

Go ahead. We're failing in one of our greatest responsibilities — missing one of our greatest opportunities — by our lack of leadership. Everyone says there are no political leaders. Newspapers are an important part of the leadership vacuum.

Of course there are complex ethical issues here, but there are also demands and possibilities and roles that fall to us naturally by virtue of our good fortune to be newspaper editors. We set agendas by how we report. We create a potential for change in our editorial pages. And we too seldom take full advantage of, or accept full responsibility for, either.

What matters to our communities? Our views of the answers to this question should be guiding our reporting

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# Fun on the Trail

*Don't Let TV Image Makers Steal the Show —  
Reporters Can Still Enjoy Campaign*

**BY BILL BOYARSKY**

**B**ill Stall rode the political bus for many years covering campaigns for The Associated Press, *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Hartford Courant*. He'd even looked at the political process from the other side for a year as press secretary to Gov. Jerry Brown of California. Now, he was an editorial writer for *The Times*, working hours regular enough for him to take L.A.'s new commuter train, the Blue Line, to Long Beach. No more campaign planes, no more dashing off stories while trying to make room on his lap for a computer and a notebook.

Then he got a call from the boss. One of the paper's political writers had been appointed Seattle bureau chief. That left *The Times* with just one state political reporter to cover California's hot campaign for governor. Would Stall return to the bus as a member of *The Times*'s political writing corps? Without looking back, he gave up weekends and the comfort of a private office, moved to a three-person pod work station in the crowded newsroom and checked out a laptop for his return to the road.

The decision caused a bit of discussion in the inside world of California politics and political journalism. Stall is in his 50s and many people that age lose their taste for asking questions and writing under daily deadline pressure. His return came while others were dropping out of the political writing craft, some because of the hard life on the road but others because they didn't like covering today's political campaigns. For more than a decade, television has driven politics and now influences even print coverage. The staged-for-television campaign event — a controversial innovation in Richard Nixon's 1968 Presidential campaign — has become a staple of national, state and

even local politics.

Image making has always been part of politics, long before there was such a phrase. Now politics is dominated by it. The win-at-all-cost philosophy that spawned the Republicans' powerful Willie Horton ad, unfairly blaming Michael Dukakis for the release of a black rapist who committed another crime, has been replicated in state campaigns around the country.

Reportorial revulsion at covering this sort of politics surfaced in a January news story by Tom Rosenstiel, who covers the news media for *The Los Angeles Times*. He reported that some of the nation's top political writers "are saying they want off the bus." He noted that political reporters dropped off the beat at *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, NBC News and *The Washington Post*. There, Paul Taylor traded the political beat for a job reporting on children and family issues

*The Los Angeles Times*'s John Balzar, whose decision to change his career direction left the opening for Stall, said "I desperately needed to run off and talk to someone who believed what they were telling me." He went on to say "reporters are drawn to the vital places and the vital things. So is it any wonder they are joining with other citizens in searching for ideas, for leadership, for consensus, for what is vital in America's future, in places other than behind a rope at a staged event where a politician is applauded by a hand-picked audience for saying nothing?"

I've had these doubts myself. Periodically, I've dropped out of political writing, tired, like Balzar, of being herded behind a rope by some image maker. But I'm pulled back by an incurable addiction to political cam-

paigns, an affliction I caught in 1962 when I first encountered traveling political reporters swinging off the bus with their portable typewriters. That, I decided, is what I wanted to be. Now, writing a column about politics and government, I have a wide choice of subjects but always find myself drawn to campaigns. "Oh, I see someone's been skipping his Politics Anonymous meetings." Press Secretary DeeDee Myers said when I showed up at a Dianne Feinstein press conference last summer after an absence from the trail.

*Bill Boyarsky started his newspaper career the way all reporters and editors used to — as a copy boy. He ran copy and got coffee at The Oakland Tribune while attending the University of California at Berkeley. Then he went on to the staff and, after putting in his licks on general assignment and the police beat, moved across the bay to the San Francisco bureau of the Associated Press in 1960. His next assignment was the AP's Sacramento Bureau. He covered Richard Nixon's and Ronald Reagan's campaigns and in 1970 joined The Los Angeles Times, reporting on politics. Stints in Washington, on general assignment and as chief of City-County news were followed by his appointment as a columnist in 1989. He is the author of two books on Ronald Reagan and co-author, with his wife, Nancy, of Backroom Politics. The Boyarskys have two children.*



In February, as I began this exploration of political writing in the image-making age, I talked with Stall about his decision.

I walked from my pod across *The Times*' newsroom to the pods occupied by Stall and his political writing colleague, Cathleen Decker, half a city block away. It was mid-afternoon and they were at their desks, gathering information about next year's campaigning, when a President will be chosen and California will elect two senators. The unusual Senate situation results from Pete Wilson's election as governor in the middle of his Senate term.

I found them enthusiastic and full of ideas on how to challenge the campaign image makers. Both Decker and Stall are friends, Stall from when he was my A.P. bureau chief in Sacramento in the 1960s. I used to be Decker's boss when I was in charge of local government coverage. She was a terrific general assignment reporter and high-speed rewrite person but I persuaded her to become a political writer. She covered local politics and in 1988, the paper assigned her to the Presidential campaign, where she excelled in her coverage of George Bush. Now, Decker is an addict, too.

### Free to Wander

I asked Stall if he was finding his recent assignment satisfying. "Would I be here if it wasn't?" he replied. "I came on last June." He had heard that the atmosphere was dominated by television, but he and Decker were given enough flexibility to chart an independent course, focusing on issues and situations they considered important rather than those selected by the campaign image makers. "We had a lot of freedom to wander," said Decker. As Stall said, "the editors here were more interested in serious journalism than writing about TV ads."

Still, they said, the politics of image making was changing political reporting. I also talked to other reporters and editors and thought of my own experiences. I found that the changes were profound, influencing the personal and professional lives of the men and women on the press buses and campaigns. Most significantly, they have

devised responses to the challenges. The political writers and editors aren't collapsing in the face of the image-making assault. The influence of television commercials has spurred new ways of presenting the news, both in print and on television, itself. The fact that television is such a powerful medium has forced print to come up with better, more interesting ways, of presenting the news.

On the personal level, the print reporters, once dominant, have had to reconcile themselves to the fact that they are overshadowed by television reporters more familiar to people on the street than some of the candidates. In this *People Magazine* age, when a celebrity is so important, newspaper political reporters are becoming the unknown soldiers of the business. "I recognize that I don't have the impact of television reporters," said Decker. "That doesn't bother me. But there are people in our ranks who are dismayed."

Agreement on that point came from Lou Cannon, columnist and former White House correspondent for *The Washington Post* who now covers a wide range of news in the West. Print reporters are less celebrities now," he said. "We're more in the shadows." That, he said can be difficult for some to accept because news people "want or need ego gratification." But for reporters who don't mind going about their work in relative obscurity, life in the shadows can be rewarding, he said. It's back to the basics, reporters armed only with a notebook, sources and smarts, working quietly, digging out the news. "That's what we're supposed to do anyway," said Cannon.

And even though the local TV reporter is better recognized at the market than a print counterpart, print has plenty of power. "I dispute that 'overwhelmed by television' thing," said Ben Bradlee Jr., *Boston Globe* metropolitan editor, who was in charge of the paper's 1990 political coverage. "It is depressing to have to read these various studies that the majority of people get their news on television and we are becoming less of a reading culture. We still exert enormous influence on opinion leaders and television executives. We see the local television stations

picking up on what they read in *The Globe*. We set the agenda for this election."

### The Personal Problem

There's also a growing realization inside the business that the life of the traveling political reporter is incompatible with today's society, where married couples work and child-rearing and other obligations are divided between spouses. When I hit the road in 1965, my wife, Nancy, then a housewife, manned the homefront, caring for our daughters while I was away for long periods of time. That life continued for more than a decade. I doubt if a marriage could hold up under those conditions today. As Michael Oreskes, former *New York Times* political writer, now metropolitan editor, told *The Los Angeles Times*'s Tom Rosenstiel, "a lot of us have put off having families and are trying to figure out how, in our mid-thirties, to start doing some of those things . . . while balancing our high frequent-flier-mile careers."

And there's the psychological factor of the press, in general, not being very popular any more. The immediate post-Watergate lionizing of the business is long past. We may not return to the days of being members of sort of a raffish business composed of vulgar snoopers, but polite society may be reluctant to invite us inside. Vice President Dan Quayle's managers neatly capitalized on that feeling when they successfully made the press the villain in the tumultuous days after his nomination.

Professional challenges are as great as the personal ones. Today's politics is much more complicated to cover. Take the television commercials. After the 1988 Presidential election, Dave Broder and others began a campaign for truth in political advertising. That spurred the invention in 1990 of the "truth box," a short, punchy analysis of television commercials. The boxes were usually written by the political writers in terse, lively prose, and illustrated by the papers' graphic designers. They were well received, and will be continued in 1992.

"I found that once David Broder spoke out on the need to cover adver-

tising in more of a systematic truth squad manner, the pressures from within [to do something different] became almost unbearable," said *The Globe's* Bradlee. I resisted it for a while because we had been doing it de facto. Then we formalized it with the box approach . . . it was quite effective."

*The Los Angeles Times* was one of the first to use the truth boxes. California is famous for ballots loaded down with voter initiatives as well as candidates and 1990 was no exception. Because of the large number of voter initiatives and candidates conducting television advertising campaigns, the paper found it was overwhelmed with them. "There wasn't enough room in the paper, that's the biggest lesson," said Leo Wolinsky, who headed the paper's campaign coverage. "When it got down to the crunch, there were so many commercials that you would have literally had to take the entire news hole and fill it with truth boxes." As a result of that, Wolinsky and Managing Editor George Cotliar agreed that in 1992, the paper will be more selective, running truth boxes on races that are especially newsworthy. "I think you'll find there are some we pass up because they're not interesting," said Cotliar. *The Globe*, too, was inundated with commercials. "The economy is bad, classified is really down, the news hole is shrinking quite substantially," said Bradlee. "At the height of the campaign, we would tilt in favor of getting the substantive commercials in there."

During the 1990 campaign, strategists, who didn't especially like the truth boxes, were able to trick the editors and reporters. Wolinsky said that on a couple of occasions, a campaign manager would release a commercial to the press, and *The Times* would run a truth box, only to find that the ad had run only briefly, and in a small-town market. The truth box had given the commercial much wider- and free-exposure. That means the paper must find out the extent of a campaign's television buy, a difficult task given the reluctance of stations to talk.

The dependence on television has raised the cost of campaigning making it more important than ever for political

reporters to cover fundraising. "Next time, I'd have somebody do nothing but follow the money," said Wolinsky.

### Computer Skills Needed

Coverage of campaign contributions is an example of how political reporters are developing new skills. Increasingly, they are working with computerized data bases to follow campaign contributions. That calls for skills never envisioned when I first started. My first experience with this occurred in a city election 10 years ago. A colleague, Henry Weinstein, and I were attempting to find out how many campaign contributors were in businesses regulated by the city. Although such information was required by law, campaign managers usually ignored the poorly enforced statute. That meant we'd have to call the contributors. And even if we could find time to do that we'd be unable to analyze the vast number of reports to learn percentages of construction companies, land developers and other financing the campaigns.

One frustrating afternoon, Weinstein looked up and said "Let's go talk to Bud." That was the late Bud Lewis, then head of *The Times* Poll. It turned out that Lewis had a computer program capable of sorting out the information. And he had poll personnel to make the phone calls. That was the beginning of an extensive and growing data base used by *Times* reporters to track local campaign contributions. I knew nothing of computers or data bases. But to work with Lewis, I had to learn at least the basics.

When journalists have this type of information, it's a blow to the image makers. Candidates like to present themselves as being financed by many small donors, asking for nothing. The truth is that most big contributors — both business and labor — make hard judgments before sending money to candidates who can help them with legislation. Stories spelling out these interests tilt campaign coverage in the direction of truth.

Another example of new techniques is the increased use of polling.

Papers and television stations have been doing that extensively with poll-

ing. In the past, image makers would feed political reporters campaign polls, sometimes of doubtful validity. That trick loses its punch when the media finance their own polls.

The media can do much more than polling. Much of campaign strategy, and image building, is based on marketing techniques of picking out certain demographic groups and sending them appealing messages. Marketers break down neighborhoods by income, ethnicity, political party, past voting behavior and other factors. From this breakdown, strategists pick out their most likely voters, and target them. So, if potential backers include white, Republican suburbanites, a good percentage of broadcast advertising might be allocated to radio stations with that audience.

A few years ago, *Times* political writers got together with our marketing department, which helped us with a sociodemographic breakdown of the state. With the help of a consultant, political science professor Bruce Cain, we merged that with voting data. With that information, we analyzed campaign strategy, describing specifically the voter groups being targeted by the candidates. That also permitted us to look at the changing demographics of California in a new, and interesting way, illustrated with graphics.

### Street Smarts, Too

The business has to guard against getting carried away with technology. The familiar old tools of getting out on the street, assessing communities and interviewing voters, are still valuable. "We've got to make more of an attempt to cover politics backwards, more from the people to the candidates, get off the bus, get on the ground, look at it through that end of the telescope," said Cathleen Decker. When Bill Stall returned to the political beat, he kept hearing that there was no difference between gubernatorial candidates Republican Wilson and Democrat Feinstein. He wrote a story pointing out deep divisions, which began a series of stories on issues, the overwhelming majority of them played on page one.

And, political campaigns are amusing.

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# Eastern Europe's Magazines

*Periodicals, Ranging From Literary to Raunchy,  
Struggle Against Economic Odds*

BY PEGGY A. SIMPSON

It's not just Eastern European newspaper editors and reporters who are struggling to keep their publications afloat in a sea of high costs and shortages brought on by the collapse of Communism. Their magazine counterparts are running into the same difficulties as those detailed at last July's Warsaw conference on the emerging press (NR Winter 2, 1990). Despite these difficulties, the periodicals fight on, showing remarkable flexibility in adjusting to their new roles as entrepreneurs. While many magazines are forced to fold, new ones appear.

"There are so many magazines, you can't read them all," says Andrzej Kaczynski, who wrote under the name of Leon Bober for the Polish underground journal *Kultura Niezalezna*.

Worrying about sagging income for a magazine is a new concern for journalists because in the past "it was subsidized, overall, from the top," said Andrzej Notkowski, a press historian on leave from the Polish Academy of Sciences to serve as press spokesman for a government commission that liquidated RSW, the Communist Party's media concern in Poland. "Ninety percent of the media didn't deal with things like buying paper. They were completely free from activity of publishing. Because of that, they're now in a critical situation. Now they have to deal with the marketing initiatives."

These are some of the questions the new journalist entrepreneurs grapple with:

- How are operating costs to be calculated? Who locates designers and printers of supplies of paper and ink?
- How can advertising be marketed when the telephones are notoriously

unreliable in virtually all of the former Soviet satellites?

- How should salaries and royalties be set to reward talent and effort, as countries grope with yet another bit of debris from a system where everyone made the same — or, if anything, manual workers earned more than "intellectuals" such as writers?
- How can circulation be predicted in the midst of an economic freefall, where people who used to buy three newspapers a day and four or five magazines a week have cut back sharply?
- How can a fledgling magazine or newspaper cultivate a public of its own, when the only sales outlets are the crowded kiosks — and where they have to compete for attention not only with dozens of other publications but with condoms and cosmetics?
- How can today's journalists be weaned from commentary and be persuaded to provide facts and let the readers form their own opinions?
- Is there life above ground for the once-vigorous underground and *samizdat* publications? Most of the 1,200 Polish underground publications that appeared during the past 15 years were fueled by a fervor for change. When the revolution succeeded, most were robbed of a reason to exist.
- And, far from last in significance, who will own what? Is a workers' cooperative viable or a pipedream? If workers can't underwrite all operations once subsidized by the Communist Party, how can their publication survive?

There were no clearcut answers to

these questions in the first year after the fall of Communism, when the media ownership picture was still in flux.

Some magazines had earned credibility with the public even during Communism and had a head start on survival under capitalism. One was a Hungarian women's magazine which escaped from its Communist Party keepers in September of 1989, a leading indicator of the grass roots rebellion that would revolutionize Eastern Europe in subsequent months.

The Hungarian Women's Association, an official arm of the Party of Hungarian

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*Magazine in 1988, she worked as national economic reporter for Hearst Newspapers, Washington columnist and contributing editor for Working Women magazine, Washington correspondent and political columnist for The Boston Herald-American, and 16 years as a reporter and editor for the Associated Press. She is currently Visiting Riley Professor at the Indiana University School of Journalism. This article is adapted from a chapter of Revolutions for Freedom: The Mass Media in East and Central Europe that will be published this spring by the University of Georgia. She was a 1979 Nieman Fellow.*

Workers, had begun *Nok Lapja* 41 years earlier, as a vehicle for its views. The magazine played up the association. It played down problems.

"We had a performance of 'sweet cakes' — i.e. 'there are not social problems, only a few individual problems. Sometimes a husband kills his wife but this is not typical,'" recalled a deputy editor of the magazine last summer, Petry Kormiss.

In every Soviet bloc country, there was a similar linkage between the Party's high-level women's association and a women's magazine. Some of the women's groups were healthier than others. In Hungary, said Kormiss, "by the 1970s the organization was like a head without a body. The magazine itself had more force than the Women's Association . . . It was the only activity the association had," he said. "We had gotten profit and it went to finance the Women's Association."

### Struggle for Power

When some editors began to go beyond "women's" issues to write about politics, some writers left in protest. The showdown came when the editor retired and the magazine employees rejected the successor dictated by the Women's Association.

"They wanted the power and we were the power," he said. The new editor would have steered stories "out of politics and policy and toward 'feminine' stories. But we were the members of this army of change in politics and so we wanted to get independence."

In its September 1989 issue, the magazine declared it no longer was the voice of the Women's Association, changed the name from *Women's Weekly* to *Hungarian Women's Weekly* or *Magyar Nok Lapja* and took the subscription list to a newly founded editorial house. "They were glad to have us. We were profitable."

The Women's Association never followed through on its threat to start another magazine, nor did it take legal action. By July 1990, the magazine had formally severed its Communist Party ties and became the property of the new state-owned publishing house.

A sociologist and media analyst, Dr.

Andras Szekto of Budapest, said the magazine succeeded partly because "it was much better than the association. In several cases they were relatively progressive, trying to promote a sociological understanding of women's problems." The public had seen that the Hungarian Women's Association "got huge state subsidies for never doing anything . . . They never cared about Hungarian women, only about their black limos."

The magazine rebels also capitalized on a loophole in the legal system inherited from Communism, where "the law does not recognize 'good will' as anything that has value and it does not recognize subscription lists or advertising as legal goods that can be bought and sold."

The magazine's future was far from secure. New readers had signed on during the nationally controversial fight for independence but the 1990 recession had sent sales plunging to half the 1988 high of 949,000. And it had many new competitors. There had been about 300 newspapers and magazines during Communism but as of mid-1990 there were 2,700 — probably far too many for a country of 10 million.

The Polish science-fiction magazine *Fantastyka* had tried a less celebrated and unsuccessful breakaway from the party's party media monopoly. "It was like serfs against the chiefs. It proved impossible. But we still pursued it," said editor Lech Jeczmyk, who had left a job as English title translator for a publishing enterprise to help start *Fantastyka* in 1982. By 1990 it had Polish newsstand sales of 160,000 and also was sold in other Eastern European and Soviet cities. Its very success made RSW hold it closer. In 1988, the editors and employees registered the *Fantastyka* name as a private company and sought a financial angel to try to take it private. "The old company wouldn't let us out . . . But we were all set, waiting for the possibility."

When Parliament moved to liquidate RSW in early 1990, that looked like the break they needed. Wrong. The new government, preoccupied with closing the basket cases and shoring up weak-

ings so they could be sold, was all too happy to keep hitched to anything profitable. "And we knew we were making money, about 100 million zlotys a month [or \$10,000]," he said.

The writers and editors forced the issue. They put an almost imperceptible "Nowa" in front of the *Fantastyka* name. That got action. They were leased the title until a sale was sealed in July, at a price of 2.5 percent of the profits. The technical editor, who had worked on layouts with the RSW printers, was elevated to manager and put in charge of sales and distribution. Everything else remained the same, especially the logo and the cover artist, in hopes of keeping newsstand identity with readers.

Of the many thousands of new publications launched since late 1989, from serious literary journals to raunchy pornographic magazines, some were major investments, some minor.

### A Bulgarian Example

In Bulgaria, for instance, Rosica Pisheva siezed on the opening to democracy to plan a magazine "about culture, architecture, films, literature." She first persuaded her boss at the state film board, where she wrote publicity for current movies, to let her create a mini-tabloid review "that would make people interested in our films . . . and give us professional work. He said okay, if you do the work and find the ink and the printer." She did that and more. Six weeks later, 5,000 copies of *Kinefikacia* were published. After six more issues had appeared by early July 1990, she was ebullient but cautious: "Now we think we'll do our own magazine. But we'll wait a bit. About 160 new magazines and newspapers have been introduced [since the government changed in late 1989] . . . Some of them will die."

This quick birth-to-death cycle was true across Eastern Europe, as optimism collided with the realities of the marketplace. It wasn't clear what market there might be for what. Pornography sold, often financed by foreigners. Literary journals launched by local name-brand writers went bust.

Czech novelist Miroslav Ivanov was among 120 Czech writers who founded

a club of non-Party members in November of 1989. They started a weekly magazine, *ATD*, with initial circulation of 60,000. The publisher was to take 60 percent of the profits, the writers 40 percent "and we'd guarantee the quality," Ivanov said.

"The first issue of *ATD* was accepted with euphoria," he said. "In the beginning it really looked as if we would make money. But then the market is over saturated." By early July when he was interviewed, *ATD* was down to 35,000 circulation "and the sponsor said that's enough. This week we did the last issue."

There was too much of a good thing. Too many people had the same idea as the *ATD* writers. "If you bear in mind that for 40 years you couldn't do anything . . . Now there are 270 new publishing permits for book publishers and magazines. That's not very easy to carry in the burden of freedom. It's like coming out of a cave and then your head starts turning and you're feeling a dizziness." Ivanov now questions "how culture is going to be accepted in the coming years; how it will act in the new market economy."

Some cultural magazines were being kept alive by subsidies indirectly funded through the U.S. government. The National Endowment for Democracy gave \$90,000 to the Institute for Democracy for Polish publications, for instance. Applications were received from 93 magazines and 42 other publications, for a total of \$590,000. The Institute decided not to fund publications that had not yet appeared or were part of another organization and it rejected appeals to eliminate existing deficits.

One successful applicant was a fledgling Polish-based magazine whose role model is *The New York Review of Books*, called *Ex Libris*, The Polish and East European Review of Books. It asked for \$540 to cover the cost of mailing free copies to key Eastern European countries. It got \$600.

*Ex Libris* reviews books and contemporary authors published in Poland and Eastern Europe as well as Western books about the region. Last June, it issued a high-style 26-page tabloid prototype of

a magazine it expected to publish in October. Then the politically connected editor, Beate Chmiel, got an offer she couldn't refuse: a joint venture with a major daily newspaper, *Zychie Warszawa*. The offer came from the new editor, Kazimierz Woycickim, soon after the government named him to replace a former Party appointee it had fired.

### A Double Gain

Both the paper and the new literary review had something to gain. The paper gained a stable of well-known writers, nearly all of whom had refused to write for it during martial law. The magazine could promise its contributors exposure to the paper's 200,000 readers, a far broader audience than the stand-alone review could have achieved on its own.

"It was a surprise to us. We hadn't expected such swift change," said Monika Agopsowicz, a review editor. "We are independent, as far as the editorial content and that is valuable, but we have their circulation."

For the first three months, starting June 29, *Ex Libris* appeared as a four-page section in the broad-sheet newspaper. A similar arrangement was made with a major daily newspaper in Cracow. By October, *Ex Libris* was to have gone to its original 26-page tabloid, included as a bonus to readers of the Warsaw and Cracow newspapers.

It was an arrangement that any cultural magazine would have relished. Most of them faced bleak prospects. The Polish government continued direct support to only six veteran cultural magazines. Most had small circulations, large reputations and no prospect for survival without outside money.

One of them, *Dialog*, was founded in 1956 and built an international reputation, partly because it managed to keep censors at bay for much of the time. It lost only six issues during martial law.

*Dialog's* foreign editor, Malgorzata Semil, who joined the magazine two decades earlier, worried about the plummeting fortunes of Poland's theater. One-third of the theater companies had been financed by the state, two-thirds by local governments. Those subsidies were unlikely to continue.

How to market the magazine was another dilemma, "one of those terrible crises. But we seem to be weathering it," Semil said. "All these problems of getting into the kiosk. Some say we should sell it on the street. Some publishers are doing just that." The Jesuits were printing the magazine, and absorbing printing costs, and the Ministry of Culture grant subsidized payroll and design costs. Circulation was down from the Communist era high of 5,000. It cost 30 cents per copy.

A different sort of dilemma faced the entrepreneurs at the hundreds of underground magazines that had fought the state-controlled system for decades. Most closed. Some fought the trend and stayed alive, at least temporarily. For many, there was an ironic edge to the reality that when political change occurred, it was at the cost of their survival.

Many of the publications had thousands of readers who had remained loyal for more than a decade. The motivation for the writers and editors, as well as the readers, was fervor for political change, not for money. Now there was a shortage of revolutionary zeal — and still no money.

Of the 1,200 underground or *samizdat* magazines and newspapers tracked in Poland since the late 1970s, about 600 had appeared regularly. Some were written for workers at a specific factory, others were professional magazines, backing the Solidarity union and its challenge to Communism. At the time of the Roundtable talks between the Communists and the Solidarity union in 1989, about 300 were still publishing. A year later, only a handful remained underground, this time opposing the Solidarity government.

One attempting an above-ground reincarnation was a pocketbook-sized literary journal, *Kultura Niezalezna*. *Kultura's* underground survival had been assured for the last decade partly due to an annual grant of \$2,000 from the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe, based in New York, which they no longer rely on.

Through the 1980's, *Kultura* became a small-circulation class act, publishing

some of Poland's best writers who were boycotting party publications during martial law. Each month since 1984, publishers hand-carried 3,000 copies to subscribers.

"Intellectuals had been deprived of a place to put their work. That had been a virtue of this magazine," said Andrzej Kaczynski, the author who wrote under the name of Leon Bober.

### Competition for Writers

But after the political changes in 1989-90, many other newspapers and journals competed for its writers. At the same time, it was as difficult as ever to get the books to readers ("all this is just collapsing now . . . there is no official distribution system") and volunteers were harder to keep.

"Making money . . . that's what will be really mattering to people now, versus being in Solidarity," he said. "This underground was just people. And they've gone on to other things . . . They had been satisfied that they were freedom fighters, now you've got to get on with your life — and you have to make money."

He confesses nostalgia for the time when "the underground or *samizdat* publication was an instrument of a common battle . . . the feeling that you as readers and we as editors shared this common enemy, against Communism. And now we are lacking this enemy . . ." he said.

Now, he said, "the situation is chaotic. It is a very big phenomena for editors and writers . . . to think in categories of getting readers. There are so many magazines, you can't read them all."

*Kultura* registered as a private firm in mid-1990, soon after censorship was ended. The new publisher committed to bankrolling at least three issues, increased circulation and doubled the prices, to about 70 cents, as the per-issue cost increased from \$100 to \$400. The first new issue contained excerpts from the previous 62 underground issues.

"We'll proceed the same way as in the past: we will carry our materials in the bag and on the train. We will not rent any special space. We will do the work

at home. And salaries also are really symbolic ones," said Kaczynski, who supported himself as a foreign desk editor at the national newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

While the publisher pursued potential sales for schools, filling a vacuum left by the collapse of Communism, Kaczynski said that the strong ties forged between authors and the magazine's editors and publishers should be preserved: "Just to continue is a value in itself. A cultural magazine is expensive. Like wine, the older it gets, the better it tastes."

Magazines catering to women also faced convulsive changes. It wasn't clear who their market was, nor what their message could be in the post-Communist era. Westerners unschooled in the ways of the Soviet bloc "command" economy might think this would be the opening for feminist magazines. The opposite may be true.

That's partly because millions of women in Soviet bloc countries think that what they've had for 45 years has been a "women's movement." That was the contention, after all, by the Women's League in Poland, the Women's Association in Hungary and identical organizations in every other Soviet bloc country which were official arms of the party. These women not only talked about gender equality but also had a party magazine mouthpiece of their own to magnify their message.

These Party publications, however, rarely discussed the fact that Soviet bloc nations had permitted few labor-saving devices to be introduced into the economies after World War II (laundromats, supermarkets, telephones that worked — a service sector that would meet consumer needs); rarely debated why there were few reliable contraceptives, leading to dependence on abortion even in overwhelmingly Catholic countries such as Poland; rarely talked about the fact that women had little political power but were used as tokens to fill a quota in Parliament; and rarely addressed the formidable "double burdens" where women worked full-time but did virtually all of the domestic jobs as well.

A recent Polish survey showed the

dimensions of the double burden — a division of labor that was the norm in all the Soviet bloc countries — where men did an average of a half-hour's work on domestic chores a week and women did four to six hours, each night, on shopping, cooking, cleaning and child (and husband) care.

The bottom-line legacy: a cynicism about "women's equality" by millions of grass roots women, who say the rhetoric didn't measure up to the reality of their daily lives.

That association of a top-down "gender equality" with Communism and the ignorance of any bottoms-up democratic form of women's movement as has emerged in the West is a problem for editors who want to fight to keep many of the workplace policies shaped for women in the Soviet bloc: paid maternity leaves, factory-subsidized child care and access to abortion.

These editors — along with individual grass roots women who were enthusiastic about the replacement of Communism with a more democratic form of a political economy — literally did not have a language with which to describe who they were or what they wanted.

It proved to be their own double burden, as they sought to solidify a new constituency while getting glitzy enough to compete for survival at the kiosks or newsstands with the upstart Western newcomers.

### High Glitz, High Fashion

One newcomer in Poland was *Styl*, which began publishing in the summer of 1990, edited by Krystyna Kaszuba. For eight years, she had been the second-ranked editor of *Kobieta I Zycie*, one of three major national women's magazines. She left after the 40 writers and sub-editors there formed a cooperative linked with the new Solidarity government, in late 1989, and began to veto stories she had assigned — including — the threat to legal abortion by laws introduced in Parliament by new right-of-center political groups and by a resurgent Catholic Church lobby.

Kaszuba got Polish money to start up *Styl*, with an estimated \$60,000 cost per issue required for this high-glitz, high-

fashion and full-color magazine. She profiled major cultural stars, wrote much about fashion — but in each issue also included major coverage of newly entrepreneurial women. One such story talked of the “marketplace” training given women at a western-owned Warsaw hotel, where women were learning all jobs and moving up through the ranks.

Kaszuba made another big departure from the norm: she began *Styl* with only four editorial employees, compared to 40 at *Kobieta* and most other magazines, and contracted out for most stories and design work.

It was harder going for magazines that had been associated with the former governments.

### Maxwell In

This was the case for *Fur Dich*, a former party-controlled national women’s magazine in East Germany whose editors had earned a reputation for independence in recent years. By the fall of 1990, ownership was divided equally between British publisher Robert Maxwell and the West German publisher of *Die Zeit*. The editor, Jutta Arnold, had been retained. In a June interview, she said she felt freed, finally, to write about many issues which the censors had blocked under Communism.

“Finally, we can do the journalism we wanted to do. We’ve been fighting for this. We can now write anything. I also think a lot of readers want us. I don’t think that all identify us with the Communist Party. A lot of women sensed that, over the years, we have tried to improve the situation that women are in. A lot blamed us also, called us names. But we are convinced that women in this country are having a very hard time: estimates say that there will be unemployment of four million (out of an eight-million person workforce) and women will be the first ones laid off . . .” She said Western magazines won’t pursue these issues; “that’s why we’re fighting to survive.”

She had been radicalized in 1986 after a series of collisions with censors over “secret” material she had unearthed that showed the disillusionment of young women with dictates from the party on

their choice of career field. “Most of them said they weren’t allowed to study what they wanted to; they were assigned an area. They wanted to be a lawyer but they became a teacher. Her story about why many women decided against going to college — reasons that questioned the core control of the Party over the daily lives of people — was quashed partly because it contradicted the “official party policy: that on an objective level, everything was possible for women but that women did not have the guts to do much.”

In December 1989, as the East German Communists were being tossed out of power, the 1,200 employees of the party publishing house which owned *Fur Dich* and nine other magazines voted overwhelmingly to ditch the Party and go independent. “But we had been highly subsidized by the Party. We had no realistic ideas on what anything costs. In February the subsidies were cut down to zero and we had to raise our prices to three times what it had been.

“We have to finance ourselves — but technologically we are at the level of Gutenberg’s times. To survive, there is not other way but to form a coop or to join a big publishing house in the West.”

By summer’s end, that buyout had occurred. Five months later, the impact was clear: the magazine had very few of the in-depth articles Arnold had hoped to run. Instead, there were one-page and half-page articles on makeup and weight loss.

She conceded, with obvious disappointment, in a November interview that her post-Communist makeover of *Fur Dich* and its warnings about the cutbacks ahead for East German women had not been received well by women readers. Circulation and newsstand sales of *Fur Dich* had plummeted. By November, she was hard put to point to many articles that could still be claimed to be feminist in the bought-out *Fur Dich*.

### Few Print Hard News

Few of the new crop of women’s magazines even attempted to emulate *Fur Dich*’s original pursuit of hard news about problems facing women.

A typical newcomer was a Czech monthly, *Betty*. It was printed in

Moravia with circulation up to 100,000. The goal was 10 to 15 advertisements in each issue.

The male editors assumed that a woman exhausted by the rigors of daily life would relish being urged by the magazine (and its advertisers) to take time for herself — her hair, her skin, her clothes.

“We really want the woman not to feel like a mule,” said Miroslav Ivanov, the writer who chaired the board of the new women’s magazine. “I think that 40 years of Communism made a slave out of women here. When I remember the beginning of the 20th Century and women fighting for emancipation . . . and seeing this kind of emancipation in a Communist regime . . . I think it is pretty clear that a mistake was made somewhere.”

He seemed startled when asked if *Betty* would encourage men to pick up some of the domestic burdens now borne entirely by women, in addition to their fulltime job. He answered indirectly. He had been impressed, on a recent trip to Chicago, to see the vast array of labor-saving devices and consumer services such as dry cleaners and laundromats. The fact that Czech women lack those “is the basic problem.”

And what about urging the husbands to help? “I don’t think we’re looking to see a man at the stove instead of a woman,” he said. He conceded, however, that even “man at the stove” issues could be used to stimulate discussion about the future role of women in post-Communist life.

His top priority, however, was suggesting that a woman should quit the workforce when her husband earns enough to support both. “There are some things that were taboo before . . . Just to doubt if this ‘emancipation,’ this ‘equality’ was reality. These were just phrases. The burning problems were just buried. Officially, there were no problems.”

The editor, Dr. Peter Cermak, had his own firm views of women’s place. He wanted *Betty* to abandon the Communist era stereotypes of women working alongside men and to go home, get glamorous and get culture. Czechoslo-

*continued on page 38*

# Writing and Typing

*In a Few Thousand Words, 'Everything' There Is To Know,  
Including When To Drink Scotch, When Coca-Cola*

*Following is the prepared text of a talk given by John Kenneth Galbraith, Emeritus Professor of Economics at Harvard University, to the 1991 Class of Nieman Fellows on December 12, 1990:*

Twenty years or so ago, when I was spending a couple of terms at Trinity College, Cambridge, I received a proposal of more than usual interest from the University of California. It was that I take a leave from Harvard and accept a visiting chair in rhetoric at Berkeley. They assured me that rhetoric was a traditional and not, as one would naturally suppose, a pejorative title. My task would be to hold seminars with the young on what I had learned about writing in general and on technical matters in particular.

I was attracted by the idea. I had spent decades attempting to teach the young about economics, and the practical consequences were not reassuring. When I entered the field in the early Nineteen-Thirties, it was generally known that the modern economy could suffer a serious depression and that it could have a serious inflation. In the ensuing forty years my teaching had principally advanced to the point of telling that it was possible to have both at the same time. This was soon to be associated with the belief of Ronald Reagan and George Bush and that progress in this field is measured by the speed of the return to the ideas of the Eighteenth Century. A subject in which it can be believed that you go ahead by going back has many problems for a teacher. They were or are caught in a delicate balance between their fear of inflation and unemployment and their fear of doing anything about them. It is hard to conclude that economics is a productive intellectual and pedagogical investment.

Then I began to consider what I

could tell about writing. My experience was certainly ample. I had been initiated by two inspired professors in Canada, O.J. Stevenson and E.C. McLean. They were men who deeply loved their craft and who were willing to spend endless hours with a student, however obscure his talent. I had been an editor of *Fortune*, which in my day meant mostly being a writer. Editor was thought a more distinguished title, and it justified more pay. Both as an editor proper and as a writer, I had had the close attention of Henry Robinson Luce. Harry Luce is remembered mostly for his political judgment, which left much to be desired; he found unblemished merit in John Foster Dulles, Robert A. Taft and Chiang kai-Shek. But more important, he was an acute businessman and a truly brilliant editor. One proof is that while Time, Inc. publications have become politically more predictable since he departed, they have become infinitely less amusing.

Finally, as I reflected on my qualifications, there was the amount of my life that I have spent at a typewriter. Nominally I have been a teacher. In practice I have been a writer — as generations of Harvard students have suspected. Faced with the choice of spending time on the unpublished scholarship of a graduate student or the unpublished work of Galbraith, I have rarely hesitated. Superficially at least, I was well qualified for that California chair.

There was, however, a major difficulty. It was that I could tell everything I knew about writing in approximately half an hour. For the rest of the term I would have nothing to say except as I could invite discussion, this being the last resort of the distraught academic mind. I could use up a few hours telling how a writer should deal with publishers. This is a field of study in which I

especially rejoice. All authors should seek to establish a relationship of warmth, affection and mutual mistrust with their publishers in the hope that the uncertainty will add, however marginally, to compensation. But instruction on how to deal with publishers and how to bear up under the inevitable defeat would be for a very advanced course. It is not the sort of thing that the average beginning writer at Berkeley would find immediately practical.

So I returned to the few things that I could teach. The first lesson would have had to do with the all-important issue of inspiration. All writers know that on some golden mornings they are touched by the wand; they are on intimate terms with poetry and cosmic truth. I have experienced those moments myself. Their lesson is simple; they are a total illusion. And the danger in the illusion is that you will wait for them. Such is the horror of having to face the typewriter that you will spend all your time waiting. I am persuaded that, hangovers apart, most writers, like most other artisans, are about as good one day as the next (a point that Trollope made). The seeming difference is the result of euphoria, alcohol or imagination. This means that one had better go to his or her typewriter every morning and stay there regardless of the result. It will be much the same.

All professions have their own way of justifying laziness. Harvard professors are deeply impressed by the jeweled fragility of their minds. Like the thinnest metal, these are subject terribly to fatigue. More than six hours of teaching a week is fatal — and an impairment of academic freedom. So, at any given moment, the average professor is resting his mind in preparation for the next orgiastic act of insight or revelation. Writers, by the same token, do nothing

because they are waiting for inspiration.

In my own case there are days when the result is so bad that no fewer than five revisions are required. However, when I'm greatly inspired, only four are needed before, as I've often said, I put in that note of spontaneity which even my meanest critics concede. My advice to those eager students in California would have been, "don't wait for the golden moment. Things may well be worse."

I would also have warned against the flocking tendency of writers and its use as a cover for idleness. It helps greatly in the avoidance of work to be in the company of others who are also waiting for the golden moment. The best place to write is by yourself because writing then become an escape from the terrible boredom of your own personality. It's the reason that for years I favored Switzerland, where I looked at the telephone and yearned to hear it ring.

The question of revision is closely allied with that of inspiration. There may be inspired writers for whom the first draft is just right. But anyone who is not certifiably a Milton had better assume that the first draft is a very primitive thing. The reason is simple: writing is difficult work. Ralph D. Paine, who managed *Fortune* in my time, used to say that anyone who said writing was easy was either a bad writer or an unregenerate liar. Thinking, as Voltaire avowed, is also a very tedious process, which men or women will do anything to avoid. So all first drafts are deeply flawed by the need to combine composition with thought. Each later one is less demanding in this regard; hence the writing can be better. There does come a time when revision is for the sake of change — when one has become so bored with the words that anything that is different looks better. But even then it may be better.

For months when I was working on *The Affluent Society*, my title was "The Opulent Society." Eventually I could stand it no longer; the work "opulent" had a nasty, greasy sound. One day, before starting work, I looked up the synonyms in the dictionary. First to meet my eye was the word "affluent."

I had only one worry; that was whether I could possibly sell it to my publisher. All publishers wish to have books called *The Crisis in American Democracy*. The title, to my surprise, was acceptable. Mark Twain once said that the difference between the right work and almost the right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.

Next, I would have stressed a rather old-fashioned idea — brevity — to those students. It was, above all, the lesson of Harry Luce. No one who worked for him ever again escaped the feeling that he was there looking over one's shoulder. In his hand was a pencil; down on each page one could expect, at any moment, a long swishing wiggle accompanied by the comment: "This can go." Invariably it could. It was written to please the author and not the reader. Or to fill in the space. The gains from brevity are obvious; in most efforts to achieve it, the worst and the dullest go. And it is the worst and the dullest that spoil the rest.

I know that brevity is now out of favor. The *New York Review of Books* prides itself on giving its authors as much space as they want and sometimes twice as much as they need. Writing for television, on the other hand, as I learned a number of years ago — *The Age of Uncertainty* — is an exercise in relentless condensation. It left me with the feeling that even brevity can be carried to extremes. But the danger, as I look at some of the newer fashions in writing, is not great.

The next of my injunctions, which I would have imparted with even less hope of success, would have concerned alcohol. Nothing is so pleasant. Nothing is so important for giving the writer a sense of confidence in himself. And nothing so impairs the product. Again there are exceptions: I remember a brilliant writer at *Fortune* for whom I was responsible who could work only with his hat on and after consuming a bottle of Scotch. There were major crises for him in the years immediately after World War II when Scotch was difficult to find. But it is, quite literally, very sobering to reflect on how many good American writers have been

destroyed by this solace — by the sauce. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Thomas Wolfe, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner — the list goes on and on. Hamish Hamilton, once my English publisher, put the question to James Thurber: "Jim, why is it so many of your great writers have ruined themselves with drink?" Thurber thought long and carefully and finally replied, "It's this way, Jamie. They wrote those novels, which sold very well. They made a lot of money and so they could buy whisky by the case."

Their reputation was universal. A few years before his death, John Steinbeck, an appreciative but not a compulsive drinker, went to Moscow. It was a triumphal tour, and in a letter that he sent me about his hosts, he said: "I found I enjoyed the Soviet hustlers pretty much. There was a kind of youthful honesty about their illicit intentions that was not without charm." I later heard that one night, after a particularly effusive celebration, he decided to return to the hotel on foot. On the way he was overcome by fatigue and the hospitality he had received and sat down on a bench in a small park to rest. A policeman, called a militiaman in Moscow, came along and informed John, who was now asleep, and his companion, who spoke Russian, that the benches could not be occupied at that hour. His companion explained, rightly, that John was a very great American writer and that an exception should be made. The militiaman insisted. The companion explained again and insisted more strongly. Presently a transcendental light came over the policeman's face. He looked at Steinbeck asleep on the bench, inspected his condition more closely, recoiled slightly from the fumes and said, "oh, oh, Hemingway." Then he took off his cap and tiptoed carefully away.

We are all desperately afraid of sounding like Carrie Nation. I must take the risk. Any writer who wants to do his best against a deadline should stick to at the very most Coca-Cola.

Next, I would have wanted to tell my students of a point strongly pressed, if my memory serves, by George Bernard

Shaw. He once said that as he grew older, he became less and less interested in theory, more and more interested in information. The temptation in writing is just the reverse. Nothing is so hard to come by as a new and interesting fact. Nothing is so easy on the feet as a generalization. I now pick up magazines and leaf through them looking for articles that are rich with facts; I don't much care what they are. Evocative and deeply percipient theory I avoid. It leaves me cold unless I am the author of it myself. My advice to all young writers would be to stick to research and reporting with only a minimum of interpretation. And even more this would be my advice to all older writers, particularly to columnists. As one's feet give out, one seeks to have the mind take their place.

Reluctantly, but from a long and terrible experience, I would have urged my class to recognize the grave risks in a resort to humor. It does greatly lighten one's task. I've often wondered who made it impolite to laugh at one's own jokes, for it is one of the major enjoyments in life. And that is the point. Humor is an intensely personal, largely internal thing. What pleases some, including the source, does not please others. One laughs; another says, "Well, I certainly see nothing funny about that." And the second opinion has just as much validity as the first, maybe more. Where humor is concerned, there are no standards — no one can say what is good or bad, although you can be sure that everyone will. Only a very foolish man will use a form of language that is wholly uncertain in its effect. And that is the nature of humor.

There are other reasons for avoiding humor. In our society the solemn person inspires far more trust than the one who laughs. The politician allows himself one joke at the beginning of his speech. A ritual. Then he changes his expression and affects an aspect of morbid solemnity signaling that, after all, he is a totally serious man. Nothing so undermines a point as its association with a wisecrack; the very word is pejorative.

Also, as Art Buchwald has pointed out, we live in an age when it is hard to invent anything that is as funny as everyday life; how could one improve,

for example, on the efforts of the great men of television to attribute cosmic significance to the words of George Bush — or J. Danforth Quayle — or to the fiscal conservatism of R. Reagan while committed to deficit financing on a scale that would only be astounding to John Maynard Keynes? And because the real world is so funny, there is almost nothing you can do, short of labeling a joke a joke, to keep people from taking it seriously. A number of years ago in *Harper's* I invented the theory that socialism in our time was the result of our dangerous addiction to team sports. The ethic of the team is all wrong for free enterprise. Its basic themes are cooperation; team spirit; acceptance of leadership; the belief that the coach is always right. Authoritarianism is sanctified; the individualist is a poor team player, a menace. All this our vulnerable adolescents learn. I announced the formation of an organization to combat this deadly trend and to promote boxing and track instead. I called it the C.A.I. — Crusade for Athletic Individualism. Scores wrote in to *Harper's* asking to join. Or demanding that baseball be exempted. A batter is, after all, on his own. I presented the letters to the Kennedy Library.

Finally, I would have come to a matter of much personal interest, one that is intensely self-serving. It concerns the peculiar pitfalls for the writer who is dealing with presumptively difficult or technical matters. Economics is an example, and within the field of economics the subject of money, with the history of which I have been much concerned, is an especially good case. Any specialist who ventures to write on money with a view to making himself intelligible works under a grave moral hazard. He will be accused of oversimplification. The charge will be made by his fellow professionals, however obtuse or incompetent, and it will have a sympathetic hearing from the layman. That is because no layman expects really to understand about money, inflation, Alan Greenspan, or the International Monetary Fund. If he does, he suspects that he is being fooled. Only someone who is decently confusing can be respected.

In the case of economics there are no important propositions that cannot, in

fact, be stated in plain language. Qualifications and refinements are numerous and of great technical complexity. These are important for separating the good students from the dolts. But in economics the refinements rarely, if ever, modify the essential and practical point. The writer who seeks to be intelligible needs to be right; he must be challenged if his argument leads to an erroneous conclusion and especially if it leads to the wrong action. But he can safely dismiss the charge that he has made the subject too easy. The truth is not difficult.

Complexity and obscurity, on the other hand, have great professional value; they are the academic equivalents of apprenticeship rules in the building trades. They exclude the outsiders, keep down the competition, preserve the image of a privileged or priestly class. The man who makes things clear is a scab. He is criticized less for this clarity than for his treachery.

Additionally, and especially in the social sciences, much unclear writing is based on unclear or incomplete thought. It is possible with safety to be technically obscure about something you haven't thought out. It is impossible to be wholly clear on something you don't understand; clarity exposes flaws in the thought. The person who undertakes to make difficult matters clear is infringing on the sovereign right of numerous economists, sociologists and political scientists to make bad writing the disguise for sloppy, imprecise or incomplete thought. One can understand the resulting anger. Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill and John Maynard Keynes were writers of crystalline clarity most of the time. Marx had great moments, as in *The Communist Manifesto*. Economics owes very little, if anything, to the practitioners of scholarly obscurity. However, if any of my California students had come to me from the learned professions, I would have counseled them that if they wanted to keep the confidence of their colleagues, they should do so by always being complex, obscure and even a trifle vague.

You might say that all this constitutes a meager yield for a lifetime of writing. Or perhaps, as someone once said of Jack Kerouac's prose, not writing but typing. □

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# TV — It's Time to Break the Rules

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## The Debates

Ask any Presidential candidate the defining moment of his campaign and he will invariably mention the debates. They are the most important events of the Presidential campaign. They have been held every quadrennial since 1976. They invariably attract the largest television audiences of any event except the Super Bowl yet the gigantic television audiences who attend them are squandered by the networks. With an audience of millions still tuned in to the network news specials that follow the debates, the networks are inevitably suckered into doing interviews with spin doctors lurking just outside the debate venue. The candidates load the press room with their most articulate, most attractive partisans who invariably find enormous and predictable virtue in their candidates' debate performance while decrying the amateurishness and lack of rectitude of their man's opponent. Their musings are nothing if not predictable yet the networks compete for these nuggets as if they were holy writ.

Another staple of the post-debate network news special is the hasty, horseback judgments on each candidate's performance by their political correspondents. Theater criticism is a tough line of work even for the qualified. Other elements of the shows like gimmicky instant public-opinion polls and 900 number call-ins have been used, one might say misused, in the post-debate broadcasts and ought to be consigned to oblivion.

How about a novel idea? What if one network announced it would eschew quickie polls, 900-number gimmicks, shoot-from-the-hip reviews by its ill qualified anchors. Instead it would analyze what the candidates had actually said on the issues. Which one had said something new; who had said something inconsistent with previously stated positions; who had said something in-

accurate? President Carter observed recently that he had anticipated about 80 percent of the questions he was asked at the debates in which he participated. Why couldn't they also be anticipated by the producers of this new model, post-debate show? With all of their sophisticated data bases and hard-working researchers it shouldn't be hard for network newsmen to prepare themselves to analyze the major issues raised at a debate. Such a program would certainly be far better journalism than broadcasting the views of partisans or the empty musings of the anchormen and be of greater service to the huge audiences attracted to the debates.

The most insidious remark heard in a newsroom during a Presidential campaign is, "We already did that story." Network news divisions claim, with some accuracy, that they do issues stories even though there is little public appetite for them. The trouble is they usually broadcast them when no one is watching. Or at least not when voters are paying attention. Study after study has shown that the undecided 20 percent of voters, the people the campaign is all about, don't pay much attention to what the candidates are saying until the final six-to-eight weeks of the campaign. By that time the producers of the evening news have already broadcast their issues pieces.

The producers feel, with some justification, that they have done their duty. After all it is up to the viewers to pay attention. So with just a few weeks or even days to go before election day, they dispatch their premier political reporters to battleground states to take local temperature readings or to watch for changes in the tracking polls as fuel for "who's-ahead?" stories. In other words, they assign stories that are going to be fun to do and require little intellectual effort on the part of either their viewers or their correspondents. Never

mind that we know from the data political scientists have been turning up for years that this is the very time when the marginal viewers are paying attention to the television campaign for the first time.

In 1988 ABC's Good Morning America went against the trend and did a superb issues series late in the fall even though "everyone" had already covered the issues. Charles Gibson, the GMA anchorman, is a politics junkie who has since become the top rated morning anchor. Is there a connection? Hard to say but clearly Gibson's viewers seem to be satisfied with the way he serves up politics.

What these prescriptive ideas add up to is simply this: television news should stop playing by the rules. The candidates long ago learned to play the game of television and politics. The rules are simple: Get your man on the evening news in a setting that complements his message for the day. Fashion a speech with a simple theme and give the candidate a summary sound bite that will appeal to television producers' desire for brevity. Avoid all uncontrolled encounters with the press. Those are the rules that have evolved over the years. But they are rules that favor the candidates not the voters. It's time for television news to break the rules.

Show Roger Ailes's candidate falling into the orchestra pit, of course. Who could resist a newsworthy picture like that? But after he climbs out, let the viewers know what he had to say before the fall. □



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# Shaping

*continued from page 2*

campaigns is another result.

The collapse of public support for the War in Vietnam convinced the military that a more effective control of wartime information was a matter of top priority. Officers like then-Colonel Colin Powell, now Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and a few others made the press their business. They analyzed military press briefings. They studied journalism from reporting techniques to production deadlines. At war colleges around the country they "war gamed" control of the press under combat conditions.

Meanwhile, the press returned from each engagement, political or military, to business as usual, confident that the next campaign or the next war would take care of itself.

By the end of the 1980s the years of study and practice had, to an alarming degree, taken major editing functions out of the hands of the press and placed them in the hands of an elite vested-interest corps. The result has been control that reduces journalists to a role where they focus more and more on less and less fundamentally meaningful information at critical times. The result is a report to the public increasingly devoted to entertaining but relatively useless information on the mechanics of a campaign rather than the issues; on the tactics and technology of warfare rather than the blood and bone.

Journalists have begun to complain about the politicians and the Pentagon indignantly as they chafe against this control. But the fault lies not there but with the press itself. Political leaders assume power to lead, not to inform the citizenry. Military leaders do only their sworn duty when they try to control all aspects of warfare. If the press is to discharge the obligations inherited with its protection in the Constitution it must do so on its own. The press must validate its own claims; clarify and protect its own role in a free society.

There are no more solemn decisions the citizens of a democracy can make than to elect a President or to go to war against another people. It is at such times that a free press is vital to the effective functioning of self government. If the 200th anniversary of the adoption of the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights is not to be remembered as the beginning of the end of a free press, the press must respond to the challenge.

Planning teams such as those which plan long-range business or production decisions should become part of the news operations. These should be full-time activities to arm journalists with improved tactics and strategies to gain effective access to the news. There should be programs to widen public understanding of the press role. There

are resources available: New Directions for News at the University of Missouri, the Gannett Center at Columbia University, the Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg. The Nieman Foundation and its clones at Stanford and Michigan, and the Joan Shorenstein Barone Center already do some work. With direction and support they can do more. What is needed is an institutional recognition of the problem and commitment to a solution from the press.

It remains to be seen if the press is willing to make the same commitment to doing its job as those who seek to control the press have already demonstrated.

What should be clear is that it is no longer possible for journalists to assume that someone else will make it possible for them to do their jobs. □

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# Political Reporting

*continued from page 13*

what they had seen — how he came across. How he came across in the situation far different from the Presidential situation is a distracting diversion.

Concentrating on what we need to know, the journalist can make good use of the visual. Television news makes sense when the picture and the voice-over reinforce one another, rather than contradict and distract attention. Graphics in motion, explained as they move, can teach superbly if thought through in advance.

## Two Kinds of Morality

Mistake #2 is reducing the assessment of candidates down to simple morality. Given the complexity of the problem, that is a natural temptation: the citizen may not know much about governance, but he does know about ordinary family morals. But it makes no sense to judge candidates as St. Peter will at the gate to heaven. The overwhelming significance is their *political* morals. A President who drinks like Winston Churchill

may perform politically without that personal weakness affecting his behavior. On the other hand, a President who lies like Lyndon Johnson has a highly dangerous and significant *political* evil, worthy of election loss. Presidents are far more important politically than ethically, so the moral inquiry ought to take a strong political focus.

Mistake #3 is the horse-race focus, which tends to turn itself into a game of checkers in which nothing new is known of the candidate except his momentary relative poll score. To suppose that is a useful comparison, especially in the early stages, is absurd. Polls of preference are misleading because many people are ready to pick one over the other when they hardly know anything about either of them. Polled for information, such as where Egypt is or who Quayle is, citizens reveal shocking ignorance in this nation of low-rate education. So reporting update polls gives a false impression.

What voters need instead is a *substantive* comparison: candidate X and candidate Y assessed by facts about a genuinely comparative and Presidentially relevant factor. The necessary prediction is not some lucid or numerical prophecy, not some futuristic anticipation merely asserted, but empirical data explored and organized to set forth an evidence-based prediction.

### Other Mistakes, Too

There are more mistakes — as well as highly potential good possibilities. It is a mistake to pop forth little blips by candidates, to be interpreted by critics. Narratives of real events are better. It is

confusing to use abstract or bureaucratic vocabularies which are Greek to the average American. Better is the engaging simplicity of writing in the language of Hemingway or Dickens.

To concentrate only on the present moment is another error — tossing the news of the past into the “morgue.” Dewitt Wallace, founder of *Reader’s Digest*, perceived correctly that readers (and watchers) can be strongly attracted by material from the past that they see as relevant to their present and future. Biography, for example, is one of the most popular forms of literature and it can convey significant understanding about a potential President.

Hyper-individualism is yet another

distortion of democracy. Yes, the candidate himself should be known, but also his connections, his allies, his organization. When a candidate says he will do something, ask him, “You and who else?” And don’t ignore the potential Vice President. Think how many of those secondary, obscure fellows have eventually become Presidents of the United States.

Given the humongous challenges facing the future of this country, the Presidency deserves reporting — the best possible reporting. The excitement is there. So is the potential for enhancing the probability that our grandchildren will get a good, long life, not political disaster. □

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## Swearing off Public Opinion Polls

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*Washington Post* and *The New York Times* emphasized the figure the next day. Democrats, emboldened by the poll result, began muttering soak-the-rich imprecations. A few weeks later, *The Post* explained that President Bush faced “a skillful Democratic campaign to portray the President and his party as interested in only one thing — giving tax breaks for the rich.” The campaign’s skill owed much to that poll’s precipitous rise in presumed resentment against the GOP.

On Oct. 12, the Times Mirror Center released a statement saying that because of a computer error, the previously released figure was wrong. The number of people who identified the Republicans as siding with “rich, powerful, moneyed interests” had not risen 33 points, from 18 percent to 51 percent, but three points, from 18 percent to 21 percent. Ah well, no harm done, save for the stirring in William Jennings Bryan’s tomb and the deepening confusion of Democrats searching for issues. Still, it was my second-favorite poll finding.

### Bury Polls in Agate

Polls, in the end, can cancel out their

own effects. One politician’s bandwagon effect is another’s opportunity to campaign as an underdog. It is the job of newspapers to put polls in perspective. Where is the best place for that perspective? I like the suggestion of John Ellis, former NBC pollster and a fellow at Harvard’s Joan Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy: “Put all your bad habits in one place and in small print.” That’s what the sports pages do. Real fans read stories and sidebars about the local team while junkies strain their eyes in acres of agate looking for that minor-league transaction or key injury that might affect their wagers. That’s where polls belong, along with all the other political trivia that consume full-time political junkies but distract normal people.

Newspapers can not be trusted to find such perspective, but maybe readers will. Readers are often ahead of editors, just as voters are often ahead of politicians. A bipartisan group seeking to free politics from big spending is trying to mobilize voters to be wary of both politicians and pollsters. The Center for National Independence in Politics has, with the help of Common Cause, pre-

pared a “voter’s self-defense manual,” which includes this advice: “Consider refusing to participate in polls during an election. Polls can have a devastating effect on the legitimate campaign process. They allow the candidate to know the price of a public statement before it is made. These polls are often used to draft messages that will appeal to you emotionally but not inform you intellectually.”

Is this defensive maneuver working? We know from NBC and *The Wall Street Journal* that Dukakis voters lie or forget, but even more impressive is a 1988 study by Walker Research, a company that follows trends in the market-research industry. It said that 34 percent of all adults contacted said they had refused an interview request in the previous year, up from 15 percent in 1982. This statistic is encouraging enough to become my third-favorite poll finding even though I must remember it isn’t fact, just opinion. □



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# Voters

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always. We must concentrate on issues on which change is possible, bring information to our readers about the problems, ideas about the solutions. And when a candidate comes to town, we should make sure our reporters ask questions about these issues. We can't come back too often to the things that matter to our communities, the areas in which we can make a difference.

## Innovate

We must exercise our most creative instincts on this, the most traditional of coverage areas. We must make the staples interesting.

Again and again, over 20 years, I've had candidates tell me they just couldn't get their substantive issues into the newspaper; we were too interested in tripping them up. But when they've brought a specific to my attention, I've generally concluded that in fact it had been in there somewhere, over the months — but, all too likely, in boring-as-hell, dutiful coverage.

The fact is that position statements, stump speeches, the standard fare of politics, does matter. We've got to make it accessible, though. We've got to break it up, make shorter stories of it, use graphics. We should figure ways to use speeches, well-packaged, on the op-ed page, and follow them with responses from our panels. We're covering politics the same way we have for years, but our readership has changed. Virtue is not to be found in our fossilization. Nor are readers. We think we're being serious and responsible. We're just being boring and unimaginative.

## Write It Up

We must put our best thinkers and best writers on politics. We must give the space to them to do a gloriously long, beautifully packaged profile on each candidate. With several good photos. With their families in it. With their worst enemies in it, and their mothers.

We're much too timid about this sort of thing, and it's the one thing in political coverage that is *bound* to be well read, and the one piece of political reporting our best writers would kill to do.

## Plan

If we want to do all these things, we've got to lay out a game plan for getting them all done. And we've got to make the space to run the articles. It can't all be done by a few people in the last two weeks before an election. Editors and reporters need to sit down with a calendar six months out, and get everybody's best thinking — and everybody's support — fed into the planning.

If a story looks like it amounts to something, readers will read it. Why else did we all sell so many newspapers at the outbreak of war in the Gulf? We need to show readers that politics does amount to something, that it makes a difference to them. That means, of course, that we need to believe in it ourselves — in politics *and* in community. When was the last time *we* got excited about politics or about our community?

We need to have a vision of our communities, what they are and what they could be, and the roles we can play in making it come about. We need to hire thinking, creative people. We need to believe in the richness of diversity. And we need to put all this to work in the interest of bringing politics and government alive for our readers.

Every time we think to ourselves that the political process is leaderless, self-important, risk-averse, colorless, self-perpetuating, pays lip service to change and avoids action on it — we ought to ask ourselves: Is this politics we're describing? Or us? □

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# Trail

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*The Times's* Wolinsky wants to deal with the lighter side of the campaign more next time. "The public tends to be turned off electoral politics," he said.

"You can get them interested by telling them the human side of it."

There's certainly much more to learn than when Bill Stall and I stepped onto the campaign trail a quarter of a century ago. There's an adversary relationship between the reporters and the campaigns that wasn't there in those easier times. It's warfare now, they with their tools, we with ours. We've had to learn about computers, polling, television commercials, demographics and corporate structure, something that's absolutely necessary analyzing business campaign contributions.

At the same time, we need all the old tricks of the political writers' trade. The story has to be well written. The reporting and writing must capture the excitement of a political campaign, still one of America's great dramas. Reporters must be skilled as interviewers so they can bore into the very minds of their subjects for profiles. The reporter must have the ability to interview people on the street as well as the famous, to charm, con and beguile strangers into revealing themselves. And, as always, a taste for travel. "We're more demanding than we were 15 years ago," said *The Times's* George Cotliar. "We expect more of our political writers."

Keep on demanding, George. As Bill Stall found out, it's still a great job. □

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# Magazines

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vakia lags behind the West "in that we are forcing the women to work and work." He agreed that some women work to earn money but he didn't place much importance on that. "I think money should be supplied by the man, the husband . . . I think the emancipation of women consists in the emancipation of the man as far as money.

"The woman should have more time for the family and herself. And she could devote herself to intellect: she could go more often to the cinema. She could play tennis. I think in this case women would be able to climb the social ladders." □

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# Response

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## The West — A Redefinition

*Prompted by an essay by A.B. Guthrie Jr., NF '45, in the 1990 Summer edition of Nieman Reports, which defended the West he knew against redefinition by a group of new historians of the West, one of the "New Western historians," Patricia Nelson Limerick, associate professor in the University of Colorado at Boulder, sent the following summary of her views:*

New Western historians define "the West" primarily as a place — the trans-Mississippi region in the broadest terms, or the region west of the hundredth meridian. The boundaries are fuzzy because nearly all regional boundaries are.

New Western historians do see a "process" at work in this region's history, a process that has affected other parts of the nation as well as other parts of the planet. But they reject the old term "frontier" for that process. When clearly and precisely defined, the term "frontier" is nationalistic and often racist (in essence, the area where white people get scarce); when cleared of its ethnocentrism, the term loses an exact definition.

To characterize the process that shaped the region, New Western historians have available a number of terms — invasion, conquest, colonization, exploitation, development, expansion of the world market. In the broadest picture, the process involves the convergence of diverse people — women as well as men, Indians, Europeans, Latin Americans, Asians, Afro-Americans — in the region, and their encounters with each other and with the natural environment.

New Western historians reject the notion of a clear-cut "end to the frontier" in 1890, or in any other year. The story of the region's sometimes con-

tested, sometimes cooperative relations among its diverse cast of characters and the story of human efforts to "master" nature in the region, are both ongoing stories, with their continuity unnecessarily ruptured by attempts to divide the "Old West" from the "New West."

New Western historians break free of the old model of "progress" and "improvement," and face up to the possibility that some roads of Western development led directly to failure and to injury. This reappraisal is not meant to make white Americans "look bad." The intention is, on the contrary, simply to make it clear that in Western American history, heroism and villainy, virtue and vice, nobility and shoddiness appear in roughly the same proportions as they appear in any other subject of human history (and with the same relativity of definition and judgment). This is only disillusioning to those who have come to depend on illusions.

New Western historians surrender the conventional, never-very-convincing claim of an omniscient, neutral objectivity. While making every effort to acknowledge and understand different points of view, New Western historians admit that it is OK for scholars to care about their subjects, both in the past and the present, and to put that concern on record.

Does all this add up to a revolution that should alarm Westerners outside the ivory towers? A grumpy columnist for *The Arizona Republic*, responding to news of the "Trails" conference, seemed to think so: "Why can't the revisionists simply leave our myths alone?" Phil Sunkel wrote. "Westerners — and most other Americans, for that matter — are quite content with our storied past, even if it tends to fib a bit." To this writer and others of his persuasion, the Western public is composed of

cheerful fools, people happy to deny their own lived experience out of a preference for appealing and colorful legends.

My own experience, speaking to diverse public audiences around the West, leads to very different conclusions. Far from a region filled with Hollywood's dupes and suckers, the American West in 1990 has a population well-supplied with serious, concerned citizens, people doing the best they can to figure out where they are and who they are. These people are usually quick to accept the New Western history. It takes the region, its dilemmas and its charms, seriously; it restores full human dignity to Westerners of the past and present; by dissolving the greater divide between the "Old West," and the "New West," it simply does a better job of explaining how we got to where we are today. We cannot take ourselves and our present challenges seriously, many Westerners realize, until we take our history seriously. We cannot live responsibly in the American West until we have made a responsible and thorough assessment of our common past.

This is not, by any means, to say that audiences shift immediately into full, unquestioning acceptance of the new approach. The New Western history is not a party line; it is not a set of principles to which all members must swear allegiance. It is, instead, a movement to allow Westerners to take their home towns seriously, to let Banning, California, stand up to the previous dominance of Portage, Wisconsin. But the most fundamental mission of the New Western history is to widen the range and increase the vitality of the search for meaning in the Western past. Thanks to its critics and opponents, as well as to its supporters and advocates, that mission has been accomplished. □

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# Books

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## A Method to Peru's Madness

**Sendero: Historia de la Guerra Milenaria en el Peru. (The Path: The Story of Millennial War in Peru. Volume 1.)**

Gustavo Gorriti Ellenbogen, Editorial Apoyo, 1990. (In Spanish. 399 pages and index.)

by **Kevin Noblet**

Some subjects beg for an adjective. In the case of the Shining Path, Peru's Maoist insurrection, it's shadowy. And in the case of the Shining Path's leader, Abimael Guzman, it's enigmatic.

I doubt if there's a reporter who has covered Peru and who has not employed those battered terms. Although unhelpful to readers, they let him get around explaining just what the Shining Path is about, and just what Guzman is after. The truth is not many people, reporters included, could tell you with precision.

Gorriti can, and he does, in this studious but nonetheless gripping account of the Shining Path's emergence as a guerrilla movement. He strips the group, called Sendero Luminoso in Spanish, and its ruthless chieftain of a kind of mystique born of ignorance and misconception. He takes the organization out of the too-convenient shadows, and aptly places its apparently inexplicable successes in the context of a Peru struggling with badly weakened democratic institutions.

The volume covers 1979 to 1982, when the movement first took up arms just as a military dictatorship was giving way to elected civilian rule. During this critical period, there developed a popular conception of Sendero Luminoso as a pack of deranged

fanatics. It was the result of its more bizarre-seeming actions: the slaughtering of livestock at experimental farms in the countryside, and the hanging of dead dogs from lampposts in Lima, the capital city, with signs around their necks denouncing, of all things, political reforms in China.

But Gorriti shows the method behind the apparent madness. The actions, while reflecting the group's ultra-orthodox Maoism, tended to draw attention away from its carefully crafted plan to drive authorities out of Peru's highlands and give the guerrillas a "liberated zone" in which to operate. By dismissing the Shining Path as a bunch of madmen, many Peruvians — including government officials — failed to see the real danger that the organization represented, and continues to represent, to a democratic Peru. They didn't see that its plan for subversion was calculated, and that its leaders were, more than politically extreme, extremely dedicated and patient.

The author clearly embraces democratic values and wastes no sympathy on the group, or on Guzman, a former philosophy professor who is portrayed as manipulative and messianic. He methodically purges his organization of more moderate Communist elements and pushes it to war, insisting that followers agree not just to fight and to risk death for the cause, but to willingly surrender their lives if called upon. In Gorriti's estimation this suicidal pledge, a key element of the Shining Path's mystique, is a simple ingredient in a coldly measured recipe for blind devotion.

How are Guzman and his followers able to operate without an effective police response? As the book shows, while Sendero attacked, the bungling

and too often corrupted police and military bureaucracies bickered over jobs and favors and graft. Intelligence agencies missed the point, looking for the wrong kind of subversion in the wrong places. Field agents couldn't or wouldn't deliver bad news to their superiors.

When security forces did act, it was with the kind of cruel repression that terrorists anticipate, the throat-slitting, vengeful kind that horrifies society and sent new recruits streaming into Sendero's ranks.

Gorriti tells his tale well, making it poignant while supplying authoritative detail from interviews and documents, both official and private. He is deft in his use of the anecdotal, letting us travel with him into fire-zones where few dare tread, for instance to a German immigrant's rural estate under siege by Shining Path guerrillas. But he never strays into the irrelevant.

In detailing what he calls "the greatest violence, the most calamitous wounds in the country's history," the author focuses primarily on the institutions, on their leaders and the chains of commands and their driving ideologies. Because of this, he left some questions unanswered: Just how and why did this group, so much more radical and methodical than previous guerrilla efforts in Peru and neighboring countries, happen to emerge when and where it did? Was it a function of social or economic conditions, or some peculiarity of Peruvian culture? And exactly who are these young Peruvians who have embraced armed struggle and, too often, a violent death? Gorriti mentions several of them, and provides some background on them. But the reasons for their commitment remain unclear.

Gorriti may already be in the process of supplying those answers. He plans to examine the movement's pre-1979 formative years, as well as its more recent history, in two other books to be

published during the year. Princeton University Press will combine all three volumes in a single English-language translation before year's end. It undoubtedly will be a compelling and important work.

*Kevin Noblet has covered South America for six years for the Associated Press, including three years as AP bureau chief in Chile. He is on a leave of absence as a Nieman Fellow.* □

## Football in Odessa, Texas

### Friday Night Lights A Town, a Team, and a Dream

H. G. Bissinger  
Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1990.  
\$19.95

by Charles E. Shepard

Welcome to Odessa, Tex., a city, writes H. G. Bissinger, "still rooted in the sweet nostalgia of the fifties — unsophisticated, basic, raw — a place where anybody could be somebody . . ."

Rising from nowhere over the plains outside Odessa is the city's field of dreams, a sunken rectangle of artificial turf framed by twin slopes of concrete. This stadium is home to the Panthers of Permian High, year after year one of Texas's most triumphant high-school football teams. And, Bissinger shows us in his new book, this field is a shrine to the highest hopes of a struggling, rough-and-tumble oil city 350 miles west of Dallas, 300 miles east of El Paso, "300 miles from the rest of the world."

Like the stadium lights in his title, Bissinger illuminates the on-field exploits of the Panthers' 1988 football team through its four-month pursuit of the coveted state title. His play-by-play is sparing, used to season Bissinger's sweeping and gracefully crafted treatment of high school football in an American city: the players, their parents, the fans and issues like racism, schooling and money that don't make the Saturday morning write-ups.

Where another city might hang its identity on a shimmering skyline or large university or renowned art museum, a Permian booster explains of Odessa, "when somebody talks about West Texas, they talk about football . . . You take it away and it's almost like

you strip the identity of the people."

If you can somehow measure a city's identity by dollars consider Odessa's spending on football. \$5.6 million for the football stadium, with more than 19,000 seats and topped with a two-story press box. And \$20,000 to get the 1988 Panthers to a game in Marshall, Tex. — by Boeing 737.

"Permian football had become too much a part of the town and too much a part of their own lives, as intrinsic and sacred a value as religion, as politics, as making money, as raising children," Bissinger writes. "Football stood at the very core of what the town was about."

Odessa's obsession cost human capital as well, Bissinger shows us.

When the city considers integrating its schools, football (e.g. assuring plenty of skilled running backs for Permian) seems the school district's supreme consideration.

In the classroom, football players ignore their studies with astounding impunity. One star opens recruiting letters from college football coaches during class, then leaves early so he won't be late to football practice. Another player brags he's discovered how to sleep in English class without being discovered. At an opposing school in Dallas, a star player gets both exam and answer sheet on test day — from his teacher.

Bissinger's lush writing coaxes even the reluctant reader into the world of West Texas, where the colors are vivid, the strokes are bold — be it the landscape, the boom, the bust (a \$13.5 million drilling rig is worth just \$400,000 after oil prices plummet) or the characters of Odessa.

Bissinger sketches the West Texas city with warts and wrinkles, as you might expect from a former *Philadelphia*

*Inquirer* reporter and Nieman Fellow ('86) who emigrated with his family to Odessa to do *Friday Night Lights*. Yet Bissinger's detailed sketches of individual players are drawn with sensitivity, reflecting an affection for the youngsters, feelings Bissinger acknowledges in his closing comments. We meet the team's quarterback, tight end (now attending Harvard College, though not playing football there), tailback, middle linebacker and failed star running back. With their often bittersweet stories Bissinger pieces together a mosaic of the fractured American home, counterpoint to television's saccharine up-close-and-personal images of Home With Joe Athlete.

Bissinger acknowledges that he has chosen an extreme — one of the most competitive high school football leagues in the country, and within that Permian, which he considers one of the country's most successful football dynasties, pro, college or high school.

Given the school's extraordinary devotion to the Sacred Pigskin, can we be so confident, as Bissinger writes, that this same story is played out "any place in this vast land where, on a Friday night, a set of spindly stadium lights rises to the heavens to so powerfully, and so briefly, ignite the darkness." I think not.

Yet if this passion for high-school sport does not burn so bright in other high schools, Bissinger has displayed the seeds of the corruption afflicting collegiate and professional sports today — cash and gifts showered on star players, indifference to academics, disdain for the rules of the game. In *Friday Night Lights*, we behold the toll taken when we try to turn our boys into men before their time — not for their good, but for ours.

"I don't think they realize these are sixteen, seventeen, eighteen-year-old kids," says Sharon Gaines, wife of Permian's football coach. ". . . They are kids, high school kids, the sons of somebody, and they expect them to be perfect." □

*Charles E. Shepard, an investigative reporter with The Charlotte Observer, is a 1991 Nieman Fellow.*

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# The Symbolism of Cape Town

## The Cape of Storms A Personal History of the Crisis in South Africa

Anthony Hazlitt Heard  
University of Arkansas Press, 1990.  
\$21.95

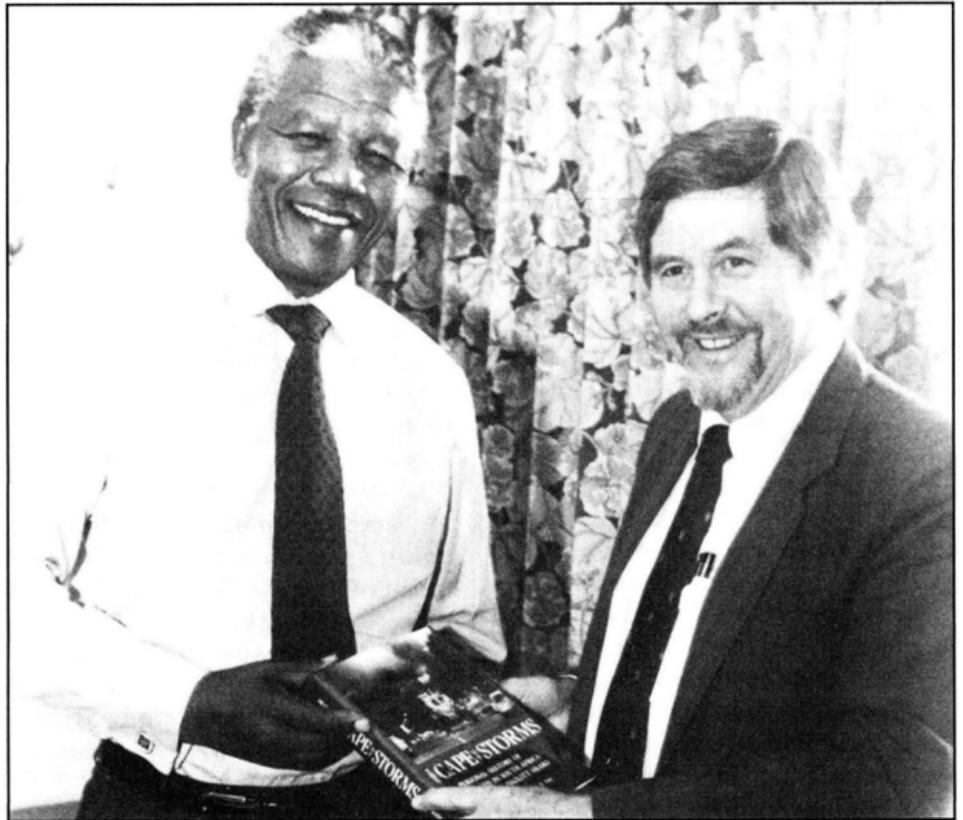
by Joseph Latakomo

What was it that drove Anthony Heard to risk a fairly comfortable, certainly secure, position as editor of one of the major liberal newspapers in South Africa by publishing an article he knew could not only cost him his job, but could also result in being jailed? He did not have to publish the interview with the African National Congress leader Oliver Tambo. After all, everybody knew that the law forbid it, and every newspaper kept on the right side of the law.

Was he seized by the *zeitgeist* that every so often chooses its men of destiny, or had he always been driven by his desire for justice and peace in his country?

Tony Heard's book — the latest on that troubled country — is not just another addition to the books that are critical of South Africa. It is a personal, at times very painful, account of life in that country. Clearly, it was not an easy story to tell. Tony Heard, a 1988 Visiting Nieman Fellow, is a very unassuming person, but it is our good fortune that he has told his story because we not only better understand what motivated him, but also find a superb guiding hand in trying to comprehend the complexities of South Africa.

The book, however, does not revolve around the specific act of *The Cape Times's* publishing the Tambo interview. He was fired after having been charged by South African police. The charges were later withdrawn, but the owners of the newspaper were unforgiving. The book is about his life in South Africa, and more specifically, Cape Town. It is rich in symbolism and dramatic in its expression. Consider the first line in the



Tony Heard presents copy of book to Nelson Mandela

book: "Lombard lay dead in the unmade gutter of a township street amid the beautiful surrounds of the Cape Peninsula."

The towering Table Mountain. The violent weather. The Cape of Good Hope, or the Cape of Storms, depending on circumstances of the day. In all of these, life in South Africa is revealed. Perhaps it was the death of the mixed race *Cape Times* driver that changed the course of Tony Heard's life. But then again, perhaps it was the brave fight by his father, on *The Rand Daily Mail*, against racism and injustices wherever they occurred that spurred him on.

When his father was fired from *The Mail* in 1942, little did he know that he would walk the same route in 1987. Maybe he was shaped by the disappearance of his father soon after being fired, a mystery still unsolved to this day. Or the little racist events that peppered his life, or the big event that finally shook

South Africa out of its inertia, the 1960 Pan Africanist Congress anti-pass campaign. Heard does not make any claims. He simply tells his story, his experiences, his life. In his telling, he weaves himself into South African life. It is not one of those books that try to exaggerate the situation. I think he knows that the situation is bad enough.

He lets events tell the story, and leaves the interpretation to the reader. The Page 1 headline to the story which resulted in Heard being fired was: "Tambo urges: Create climate for talks." It was, of course, long before the government thought it necessary to talk to the ANC. Tambo recently returned to South Africa — legally. And everybody is quoting him. □

*Joseph Latakomo, Nieman Fellow '91, is Senior Assistant Editor of The Star of Johannesburg.*

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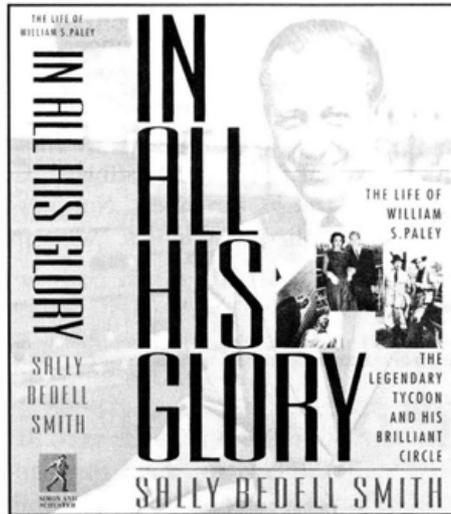
## Dan Rather's Worth to CBS — in 1980

### In All His Glory The Life of William S. Paley

Sally Bedell Smith  
Simon and Schuster, 1990. \$29.95

The misfortunes of CBS and all the talk of ousting Dan Rather as anchor of the 7 o'clock News makes this book relevant. While the focus is, of course, on Chairman William S. Paley, the biography confirms what has often been said about decision-making in the television industry. Nowhere is this clearer than the naming of Dan Rather as Walter Cronkite's replacement in 1980.

When ABC tried to steal Rather, then making \$300,000 as a correspondent on 60 Minutes, CBS News President William Leonard had to act. He agreed to pay Rather \$2.2 million for 10 years. Paley and CEO John Backe were, the book says, "flabbergasted." Backe called



the amount "obscene, indecent and irresponsible" and Paley said, "It's too much money for any one man. Particularly a newsmen." For more than one hour Paley and Backe quizzed CBS Broadcast Chief Gene Jankowski and Leonard. The book recounts how the

decision was made:

"At one point Jankowski scratched on a small piece of paper '1 point=\$5 million,'" which meant that a drop of one point in the evening news ratings could result in a \$5 million drop in profits. He slipped the paper to Paley, who said, 'Is that really true, Gene.' 'Absolutely, Mr. Chairman,' said Jankowski.

"Both Jankowski and Leonard affirmed their support for the offer to Rather. But as was his custom, Paley declined to cast an overt vote. 'It's your decision,' he said to Backe, who knew Paley was maneuvering him toward approving the deal. 'It seems we don't have a choice,' Backe said. 'It's been my experience in life,' responded Paley, in his best oracular fashion, 'that some of the cheapest things turn out to be the most expensive and some of the most expensive things turn out, in the long run, to be the cheapest.' " □

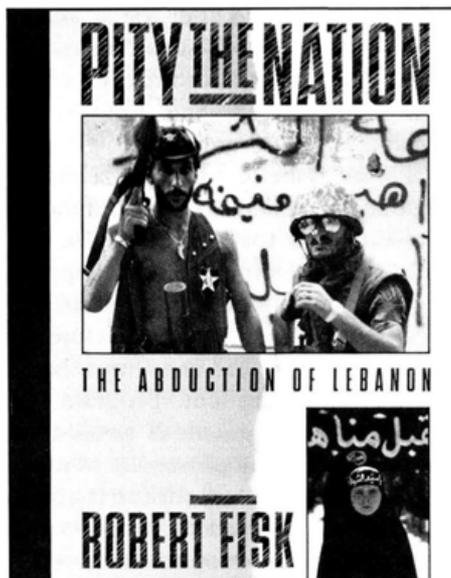
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## No Longer Press, Just Foreigners

### Pity the Nation The Abduction of Lebanon

Robert Fisk.  
Atheneum, 1990. \$24.95

This 678-page chronicle by Robert Fisk, long-time British correspondent in Beirut, recounts in chilling detail the violent struggle for control of Lebanon. Here are the Israeli invasion and retreat, the bombing of the American Marine barracks, the kidnappings, the slaughter of the domestic factions. Vital to Americans, now facing a long-term presence in the Mideast, is the understanding Fisk conveys of West-



erners' lack of credibility. Pick up the vignette of Fisk and Terry Anderson, the Associated Press reporter later kidnapped, covering the Israeli withdrawal:

"From where you come?"

"The gunman was Palestinian, unshaven, red-eyed and suspicious. He was trying to speak in English. Press. 'Why are you here?' Anderson produced his Lebanese press card. Journalists. American and British journalists. 'America kills Palestinians.' No, no. We are journalists, press, *sabafa*, reporters. There were more gunmen round us now, holding automatic weapons, draped with ammunition belts, none of them smiling. A man in black looked at Anderson, 'America kills Muslims.' This

was getting worse. 'Why you want to kill Muslims?'

"This was no place to explain the search for truth. The gunmen were nervous. 'Are you a spy?' I had been afraid of that. We protested. We had a duty to be there. We wanted their help. We wanted to talk to them. We worked for newspapers that were independent of governments. We did not agree with the Americans. Anderson held out his press card again.

"Something had gone wrong. For

years, gunmen like these — hostile, undisciplined though they might be — had respected our jobs, respected the word *sabafa*, on the windscreens of our cars. They had understood what we were doing. Suddenly the connection had dried up. We were no longer journalists to these people. Our jobs meant nothing to them. We were *foreigners*.

" 'Who are these people?' An older man had arrived, a Palestinian. He guessed. '*Ajnabi*, foreigners.' Not press, they had replied. Foreigners. 'Who are

the *ajnabi*?' The man was looking at Anderson but he asked the question politely. Then he turned to his colleagues. 'These are pressmen here to see our victory. You must help them. You have a duty to protect them. Help the *ajnabi*. He smiled. 'You are OK, you can look around but . . . ' he paused. 'Do not stay here too long.' The other gunmen did not smile. When we walked away, the stared at us distrustfully.' □

## The Human Face of Africa

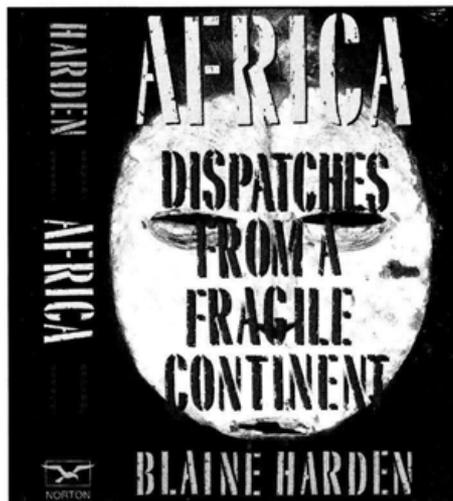
### Africa Dispatches From a Fragile Continent

Blaine Harden  
W.W. Norton & Company, 1990. \$22.95

For four years *The Washington Post* bureau chief in sub-Saharan, Blaine Harden's sum-up focuses on people to explain the social, political and economic currents churning through Africa. In his last chapter he tells why Nigeria is the Big Black Hope:

"Even as things fall apart, pots boil over, signals cross, and bodies rot, Nigerians somehow are managing to meld themselves into that most unusual of black African entities — a real nation. Against all odds, things come together.

"Out of the Biafran war of the late 1960s, which was Africa's bloodiest tribal conflict, has come a lasting tribal peace — a feat of forgiveness remarkable in world history. Out of the berserk corruption of Nigeria's oil boom has come a gritty, sober-minded program of economic reform. Out of the two-time failure of democracy has emerged a moderate military regime that is orchestrating its own dissolution in favor of elective government. Out of six



military coups, and after the assassination of three heads of state, Nigeria has lucked into an extraordinarily beneficent Big Man — the gap-toothed general.

"President Ibrahim Babangida has the most sophisticated economic mind of any leader on the continent. He is a former tank commander who happens to be a nimble politician. He has the good sense not to lock up, torture, or kill his critics. While imposing a hated economic adjustment program on Africa's most disputatious people, he managed to remain personally popular. Most remarkable for an African Big Man, the general promised to step down in 1992 and the promise was believed."

## Nieman Fellows

Tell us, please, what you think of this idea, which we have been discussing at Lippmann House:

The Nieman Foundation would cite outstanding examples of journalistic excellence. There would be four a year, one to be awarded every three months and announced in *Nieman Reports*. The winners would receive a citation, suitably signed by the curator. The citation would carry no monetary award. Its value would be in the Nieman name.

We would cite an individual, a publication, a broadcasting station or a broadcasting network. The winner could be an American or a foreigner. We would ask Nieman alumni to nominate candidates for the award. The current class of Nieman Fellows would pick each winner.

That's about it. Write me a note with your hearty endorsement, caustic comment or whatever. Would it work? Would it be useful? If you were going to make an endorsement right now what would it be?

—Bill Kovach

### *Nieman Authors*

Writing a book? Please let Nieman Reports know of publication date in plenty of time so that we can have it reviewed.

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## White Lies

### Rape, Murder and Justice Texas Style

Nick Davies  
Pantheon 1991 \$23

It is easy to fault this book about the much-publicized case of racial injustice in a small East Texas town. The title is bad--the lies were not "white" in the usual sense of innocuous. Moreover, the subtitle is based on a form of prejudice against Texas and therefore leads the careful reader to raise doubts about British crime reporter Nick Davies's judgment. Nevertheless, "White Lies" turns out to be a remarkable, fact-filled account of the harrowing story of Clarence Brandley, the black man who almost paid with his life for a murder he did not commit. Here is a sample of the material that Davies uncovered in documenting his conclusion that Brandley was a victim of the racism of a small town and its system of justice. In sentencing Brandley to be executed

on January 16, 1986, Judge John Martin had said that he was letting Brandley celebrate Christmas. But Davies writes:

"In the beginning only a few people in the courthouse knew the truth.

"Mary Johnson, the elegant court reporter, knew. She had been sitting next to Judge Martin when the district clerk, Peggy Stevens, had come up, as excited as a schoolgirl at her first dance, and talked to Judge Martin about it. Some of the people who worked in the district clerk's office knew. They had been there when Peggy Stevens had come in and started boasting about it.

"Soon the truth was being whispered all over the courthouse. Judge Martin had got back on the Brandley case because Peggy Stevens had asked him. She had no business doing that, but that was how things were in the courthouse. She had a special reason. It was the date. That was what she wanted. January 16 was her birthday. She wanted the black man to die on her birthday. As a gift. So they could all celebrate. She had asked the judge to fix it for her. And the judge had agreed."

power to make decisions that can increase circulation.

**Portraits in Print.** Helen Benedict. Columbia University Press. A Collection of profiles and the stories behind them.

**Regional Interest Magazines of the United States.** Sam G. Riley and Gary W. Selnow, editors. Greenwood. \$75. This is an expanded index of city and regional magazines with a short history of each.

**The Six O'Clock Presidency.** Fredric T. Smoller. Praeger. \$39.95. Smoller argues that network TV coverage of the White House stresses negativism, which leads to government efforts to manage the news, subverting democratic values.

**Television Access and Political Power.** Joe S. Foote. Praeger. \$42.95. Foote calls for rotation of Presidential TV appearances among the networks and automatic replies by the Congressional opposition to redress the balance of power in Washington.

**The Supreme Court and the Mass Media.** Douglas S. Campbell. Praeger. \$42.95. A handy summary of important libel and privacy cases since the landmark *Times v. Sullivan* of 1964.

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## About Journalism

**American Datelines.** Ed Cray, Jonathan Kotler, Miles Beller. Facts on File. \$24.95. Want to read John Peter Zenger's account of his arrest for seditious libel in 1734 or *The Pittsburgh Dispatch's* story of the Johnstown flood of 1889 or Grantland Rice's "Four Horsemen" of Notre Dame of 1924 or 137 other major news stories? Here they are.

**Foreign Policy and the Press.** Nicholas O. Berry. Greenwood. \$39.95. A study based on content analysis of *The New York Times* reporting of foreign policy disasters.

This study depends on mathematical scoring, plus or minus, on individual sentences. Before denouncing the methodology, look at the conclusion: "We are left with a press that imperfectly, hesitantly, but steadfastly tries to get the story and eventually does."

**A Place in the News.** Kay Mills. Columbia University Press. (\$16.50 pb). This is more than a history of the rise of women from "society" pages to the front page; it is a persuasive argument for hiring more women executives and giving them



# Nieman Notes

—1940—

VOLTA W. TORREY still reads newspapers even though he is 87 years old. *The New York Times* is delivered to his home in Palo Alto, CA, where he has 24-hour home care. Asked to comment on coverage of the war, he says "the newspaper coverage is monotonous." With regard to TV, he feels "it is absurd to have commercials mixed up with the war news." Torrey retired from NASA in 1976 and moved to Palo Alto in 1986.

—1947—

Setting the record straight: We inadvertently omitted CLARK PORTEOUS's novel, *South Wind Blows*, from the list of books written by Nieman Fellows. The novel, written during Porteous's Nieman year, brought him a \$750 advance, an impressive figure at the time. It was scheduled to come out in paperback in 1968, but the plans were cancelled after the death of Martin Luther King Jr.

Porteous retired in 1981 after 47 years as a reporter and political columnist for *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*. He stayed retired for one month, then became editor of *The Collierville Herald*, a weekly in suburban Memphis. After so many years fighting deadlines, Porteous is enjoying the relatively relaxed pace of a weekly. He is there three days a week, writing columns, editing, doing all the things he loves to do — along with playing golf when not at the newspaper.

One of his most recent columns was a reflection on the life and recent death of Danny Thomas. Porteous recalls that Thomas appeared with Elvis Presley early in Presley's career. Presley's manager prevented him from singing that night, but he went on stage anyway, gyrating to the music. Thomas, watching, nicknamed Presley "Dollface." It's a little-known piece of information Porteous gets a kick out of, "still trying to get things nobody else has."

—1950—

CLARK RAYMOND MOLLENHOFF, who

won a Pulitzer Prize in 1958 for his investigative stories linking Teamster president James R. Hoffa to organized crime, died of cancer of the liver March 2 in a hospital in Lexington, VA. He was 69.

All of Mollenhoff's journalistic career was with Cowles Publications. He began as a reporter for *The Des Moines Register* in 1941 and, except for a brief time as special counsel to President Richard M. Nixon, worked for the parent company until he became a professor of journalism at Washington and Lee University in 1976.

Mollenhoff specialized in investigations, and won prizes for exposing influence-peddling by Robert G. Baker, an aide to Senator Lydon Johnson, and improper acceptance of gifts by Sherman Adams, an aide to President Dwight D. Eisenhower. He also wrote 12 books, including critiques of President Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford. He also wrote poetry, a volume of which is to be published in the fall by Iowa State University Press.

Mollenhoff was born in Burnside, Iowa, and graduated from the Drake University Law School in 1944. Surviving are his wife, Jane; two children and four stepchildren. Burial was in Lohrville, Iowa.

—1953—

CALVIN MAYNE retired December 31 after 40 years of service with the Gannett Foundation and Gannett Co. A specialist in grants administration and communications, Mr. Mayne served 14 years with the foundation, the last nine as a vice president. Prior to that, he was an editorial page editor and corporate information specialist with the Gannett Newspapers in Rochester, NY.

According to the news release announcing Mr. Mayne's retirement, during his career at Gannett he read more than 29,000 local and national grant proposals. The foundation gave away about \$128 million during his



tenure.

To commemorate Mr. Mayne's outstanding service, the Gannett Foundation trustees recently authorized grants totalling \$5,000 to charitable organizations of Mr. Mayne's choice in Monroe County, NY. "This is a fitting and selfless tribute to a man who cares so much about people in the Rochester community," said Trustee Martin Birmingham.

Mr. Mayne began his newspaper career in 1948 as a *Detroit Free Press* reporter and joined Gannett in 1950 as a reporter for *The Rochester Times-Union*.

Until November, Mr. Mayne was a vice chairman and board member of Literacy Volunteers of America and is currently on the boards of the Center for Governmental Research and the Boys and Girls Club of Rochester. He plans to remain active as a volunteer. According to Mr. Mayne, there is some writing in his future and, in preparation for that, he is learning to use a word processor. Mr. Mayne's formula to keep happy and healthy in retirement: keep working and keep active.

—1954—

RICHARD DUDMAN and DEAN BRELIS, NF '58 have been working in adjoining offices at the nonprofit South-North News Service in Hanover, NH, as managing editors. In addition to providing articles to about 20 newspapers and turning out *The Third World Weekly*, South-North is offering a new publication, *WorldWise*, which is distributed to schools. It concentrates on a single problem. The most recent issue, keyed to the Persian Gulf War, discusses conflict resolution. *WorldWise* is sold in bulk to schools and includes a teacher's guide. Now used by more than 100 schools, *WorldWise*, with a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, hopes to expand its circulation.

Dudman, retired chief Washington correspondent of *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, handles correspondents' stories from Latin America, the Far East and Eastern Europe. Brelis, former staff correspondent for CBS and former correspondent and bureau chief for *Time* magazine, handles the Middle East, South Asia and Africa. Under the news

agency's system of rotating managing editors, Dudman is on his fifth annual three-month stint, and Brellis is winding up his first tour of duty.

—1958—

For news about DEAN BRELLIS, see item on South-North News Service under 1954.

—1960—

TOM DEARMORE writes: Assuredly, for those of us with the writing habit, retirement should not be an introduction to laziness. There is time for some serious work, which might prove to be our best. Life, young or old, is speculative, but the chance is there. The sea of opportunity awaits, as old Ulysses saw it stretching out from his dull island to the horizon.

One assurance is that the architecture of words is not dependent on lively physique; indeed the diminution of the physical attributes may coincide with the development of more muscular thought. Or so we must hope, as we depart into retirement. I did this recently, leaving *The San Francisco Examiner* after 12 years of editing the editorial pages and writing editorials, taking early retirement at 63 because of an asthmatic difficulty. My wife, Reba, had died the year before. After more than 40 years of pouring out opinions on four newspapers, including the dearly remembered *Evening Star* in Washington, the brave *Arkansas Gazette* in Little Rock, and my family's weekly on the northern fringe of Arkansas, from which I went to the Nieman experience, I have chosen for retirement the model heartland city of Springfield, Missouri, population 140,000. It is near the old hometown; I attended Drury College in Springfield long ago, and Washington is a relatively short jump away on TWA.

I intend to go there, bothering people of influence and erudition, working on prospective magazine and op-ed pieces, and a book, quite likely. And in early notes, I am drawing from the file of the Nieman years, remembering old lessons almost forgotten. And people of majestic quality whose words I still can hear — Lippmann, Frost, MacLeish, Liebling, and buoyant young Jack Kennedy, with whom I traveled in his snowy campaign in New Hampshire, along with fellow Fellows Reg Murphy and V.V. Eswaran. The great minds of media commentary, visiting

Harvard, had told us Jack had scarcely a chance for the nomination, but we were young and naive enough to go up and skid along with him anyway.

And that was part of the beginning of wisdom: Challenge the experts. I hope to continue that occupation, using the microchip communicative tools of a new age in which informational boundaries are vanishing, so that Springfield, MO, essentially is an exurb of Washington, or almost any place else of importance. Unlike old Ulysses, we can sail far these days in pursuit of knowledge without hoisting any canvas or bailing any water.

We don't know if he ever got seaborne, but the trying is what's important, for maturing Niemans and others who, with some mental electricity remaining, might shed more light in their elder years than they ever did in all those years of meeting the deadlines with stuff that sometimes was off the top of the head.

—1964—

*This is a letter that MORTON MINTZ sent to his classmates and the one response he received, from JAMES H. McCARTNEY:*

I begin with an abject apology to all of you in the Class of '64. If we were Marines rather than Niemans, I would have to say — so apologetic am I — that I've been rotten to the corps.

Many, many years ago, as I recall it, Tenney Lehman, then the editor of *Nieman Reports*, asked the chairman of each Nieman class to submit items for "Class Notes," I casually — too casually — accepted the responsibility for the '64s. The responsibility was one that I have left unfulfilled, I confess, for a quarter-century or so. When I heard news of any of you, I was always interested, cheered, or concerned, as appropriate; yet I confess that, incredible though it may seem, it somehow didn't move me, if it occurred to me at all, to pass on the news to Cambridge. The result, as you may have noticed, is that each issue of *Nieman Reports* which brings news of several classes rarely has a word of our class. If I may be permitted to hold up my head long enough to say so, I will dare mumble a whiney, shamelessly self-serving excuse: each of you has always been quite capable of reporting your own newborns, books, triumphs, where-I-am-nows, etc.

Although at almost 69 I am (or think I am) in such good health that I absolutely expect to live forever (if Anita can stand it), I think

it's time to cleanse my soul by owning up to my gross dereliction. What prompted me to come clean was that the executive director of the Fund for Investigative Journalism has sent out a press release announcing in part that I recently became chairman of the F.I.J. Thanks to a handout from an organization I head, might I be crassly celebrated in the Class Notes while each of you may go uncelebrated? The thought burned my conscience.

Surely many among you are more entitled than I to the transient fame offered by *Nieman Reports*. For example, Jerry Schecter, whose latest book, *Khrushchev Remembers: The Glastnost Tapes* (he was co-editor and translator), was published recently. Bob Korengold is the Parisian jewel in the crown of U.S. embassy spokesmen. Jim McCartney is a Knight Ridder columnist-eminence even while in legal retirement. Roy Reed is at work on a biography of former Arkansas Governor Faubus.

By way of penance for my abysmal non-performance, I suggest that each of you — foreign Niemans no less than domestic Niemans — consider coming out of the cold to report that which you may wish to report (your chairman herewith grants a dispensation to Tom Ross, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense, among other things, to announce the details of his new executive post at Hill & Knowlton without disclosure of his compensation package.)

As further penance, I do solemnly swear I will pass on to *Nieman Reports* such items as you may choose to funnel through me and will, if necessary, knit them together — just as I was supposed to have done all these years. Please understand that this is not intended to bar the door at One Francis Avenue to any items that you, or your employers, book publishers or whoever, may prefer to offer independently. Humble though I am, I still feel that the less work for me, the happier I will be.

I should add that I asked the Nieman office for a list of names and addresses of the Class of '64 members, and that one of our colleagues, dismayingly, is listed this way: "Woon-Yin Pang/(Current Address Unknown)." I'm enclosing a copy of the list.

I hope that each of you is in good health, prospering, as happy as the world allows, and forgiving of my trespass.

With Fondest Memories of Our Year Together, and With All Best Wishes!

*And Jim McCartney's response:*

Dear Mort,

I received your letter of apology, and all

I have to say is that I admire your sense of guilt. Some things never change. But it was also good to hear from you and I hope we do have another Nieman get-together soon. And my congratulations on your new chairmanship of The Fund for Investigative Journalism. They couldn't have made a better choice.

But, in response, here is a brief update on what I am up to.

I retired officially effective last August 1, but continue to write a weekly foreign affairs column for the Knight-Ridder Syndicate. My best client is *The Miami Herald*, but I believe the column is used quite regularly by most Knight-Ridder papers and by several dozen others. I have been campaigning — obviously unsuccessfully — for peace in the Persian Gulf.

In addition, I have begun teaching at Georgetown University. In the fall term I teach a class on the media and foreign policy, in the spring term a class on the media and politics.

I won the Knight-Ridder annual "Editorial Excellence Award" last year. It is a \$1,000 prize which goes, supposedly, to the outstanding editorial employee of all the Knight-Ridder papers. Myself and three colleagues also won an "Olive Branch" award from New York University for a series of articles called "The Challenge of Peace."

My son, Bob, is a reporter for *The Washington Post*, based in New York, covering Wall Street. My daughter, Sharon, lives in Minneapolis, raising two children and working for a company that handles health insurance claims.

Now that you have volunteered, you'd better watch out. I'm going to let you know every time somebody likes a column.

—1966—

ALBERT TERTIUS MYBURGH, former editor of *The Sunday Times* in Johannesburg, died in that city last Dec. 2. Myburgh died of cancer two weeks short of his 56th birthday, just after his nomination by South African President FW. de Klerk as Ambassador to Washington.



As editor of a paper of about four million readers, Myburgh was highly respected as one who, more than other editors in that

deeply divided country, "coaxed and cajoled white opinion to the point where it began to abandon its fears and its prejudices and accepted the challenge of change." That quotation, from *The Times* of London, went on to say that "by turning those pages into a public forum in which men and women of widely divergent views first debated the ideas for the new South Africa, he helped to create a climate in which it could come about."

Myburgh was born in Komgha, in the Eastern Cape, in an Afrikaner family with roots 300 years in South Africa. He went to school at Dale College before spending two years at the University of Cape Town. He enrolled initially in a course for broadcast journalism but felt unsuited for radio, so instead became a print journalist with *The Friend* in Bloemfontein. In 1957 he spent two and one half years on a leave of absence as a staff correspondent in England for the South African Argus Newspapers. He returned to South Africa in 1960 to write for *The Star* in Johannesburg, where his coverage of intense political situations brought him international acclaim. One of the most dramatic was his eye-witness account for *The New York Times* and *Time* magazine of the murder in Parliament of the South African Prime Minister, Dr. H. F. Verwoerd.

When named a Nieman Fellow he was political correspondent for *The Star*. After his Nieman year, he was assistant editor of *The Natal Daily News*, then editor of *The Pretoria News* until 1975, when he was named editor of *The Sunday Times*.

A friend and fellow Nieman, Jack Foisie ('47), wrote of a seven-week visit to South Africa: "I talked with Tertius' wonderful wife Helmine, but he was already in the arena of desperation treatment and painkillers . . . Tertius was a delightful mix of froth and depth, making as editor of *The Sunday Times*, the country's only 'national' paper, the biggest and the brightest publication. He was an English-speaking South African but got along with the Afrikaner speakers who dominated government. He was caustic in his criticism of apartheid, yet at times seemed welcome within the circles of those who thought racial tension could only be moderated through evolutionary reform. Then came President FW. De Klerk and the dramatic events of this past February: De Klerk's declaration to end apartheid . . . And what was to become a crowning achievement for Tertius, South Africa's Ambassador to Washington. Alas, that was when what had previously been diagnosed as an ulcer turned out to be a deadly form of cancer."

He is survived by his wife, Helmine, and three children, Phillip, Danielle, and Jacqueline.

—1967—

ALVIN SHUSTER, who has been with *The Los Angeles Times* since 1979, insists that he has the "best job on the paper." He is not hinging that remark solely on the fact that he is in charge of *The Times* coverage of the Persian Gulf War. He is referring to the buildup of the foreign staff on *The Times* to 27 bureaus with 32 correspondents. In the last year and a half (before the economic squeeze hit newspapers — even *The Times*) he has added seven reporters, one each in Budapest, Brussels and Berlin, two more in Moscow and one more in Tokyo and Mexico. In addition, last April *The Times* started a new section, which appears every Tuesday, called World Report, which gives correspondents abroad and in Washington a chance to analyze and look ahead. It has turned into a showcase for their reporting and writing.

—1972—

JOHN CARROLL has been named senior vice president and editor of *The Baltimore Sun* newspapers — *The Sun*, *The Evening Sun* and suburban editions.



"If I had to draw the outline of the perfect candidate for this position, it would be John Carroll," said Michael J. Davies, publisher and Chief Executive Officer, on announcing the appointment. "He knows *The Baltimore Sun* and its values and he knows Baltimore. He's as close to the perfect fit as you can get. He will be a strong voice in the company and in the community."

Carroll is the first *Sun* editor since 1954 to be in charge of all Sunpapers. Reporting to him will be James I. Houck, managing editor of the morning paper, and John M. Lemmon, managing editor of the afternoon paper.

At the time of his appointment, Carroll, 48, was executive vice president and editor of *The Lexington Herald-Leader* in Kentucky. He worked for *The Sun* from 1966 to

1972, first as a city reporter, then as the paper's war correspondent in Vietnam. He covered the Middle East and was the paper's White House correspondent before leaving to join *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. There he became night editor, city editor and finally, metropolitan editor. In 1979 Knight-Ridder hired him as editor of the Lexington paper.

Carroll was graduated in 1963 with a B.A. in English from Haverford College. In addition to being a Nieman Fellow, he was a Visiting Journalist Fellow at Oxford University in 1988. He is married and has five children.

—1975—

JAMES SCUDDER has a dual career with a common thread — religion. For the past two years he has been the Religion Editor at *The Arkansas Gazette*. He has been with *The Gazette* since leaving *The Arkansas Democrat* in 1980. In his other career, Mr. Scudder serves as a pastor of a United Methodist Church congregation near Little Rock where he conducts services every Sunday for 125 parishioners.

Despite the outbreak of war in the Persian Gulf, an amazing amount of international attention focused on Buffalo when the Bills went to the Super Bowl, says THOMAS J. DOLAN, a reporter for *The Buffalo News*. "Buffalo lovers surfaced everywhere. We never had so many friends. Suddenly our reporters were being interviewed and our librarians were peppered with questions about local lore. *Nieman Reports* even called to see how I was doing." Answer: just fine, thanks, he says. Formerly a reporter with *The Chicago Sun-Times*, Dolan joined *The News* in 1987 and has specialized in investigative reporting, including some early revelations about the HUD scandal, which first surfaced in Buffalo in 1985, but was largely ignored by the national media. He was a 1984 winner of the Distinguished Urban Journalism Award given by the National Urban Coalition. Dolan and his wife, Judith, are raising two children, Kate, 6 and Terry, 4.

—1978—

WILLIAM H. HENSON is finally getting the chance to do something that he has wanted to do for at least a dozen years: write a play. The desire, he says, had been "per-

colating for a great while" and was stimulated by a discussion in his Nieman year by Robert Anderson, the playwright.

Now 44 and manager of strategic issues for the Ohio Bell Telephone Company, Henson has the extra time and energy he lacked while deputy editor of the editorial pages of *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*. With four others he is taking a course in playwriting at the highly acclaimed Cleveland Playhouse. He is not ready to divulge any details of the play he is writing but he does say that Anderson's discussion was an "important element" in his decision to go ahead.

Henson joined Ohio Bell in 1988 after years on *The Plain Dealer*. Earlier he had been editor of the op-ed page of *The San Francisco Examiner*, editorial writer for *The Dallas Times Herald* and chief editorial writer for Gulf Publishing in Biloxi, Mississippi.

—1979—

FRANK VAN RIPER and MARGARET ENGEL visited with their Nieman classmate Donald Woods at a rousing gospel choir benefit in Washington for the Mickey Leland Scholarship program in South Africa. Donald not only was the featured speaker, he also played a shortened version of one of his piano compositions. The scholarships are given to pharmacy students. Also in attendance was Alice Bonner NF '78, who is on the board of directors of Medical Education for South African Blacks, Inc., the group which organizes the scholarships. Frank, and his wife, Judith Goodman, photographed the event for MESAB.

MARGARET ENGEL and her husband, Bruce Adams, are the parents of Hugh Wilson Adams, now 10 months old. He joins sister Emily Engel Adams, 3-½. Margaret, who runs the Alicia Patterson Foundation, is serving as treasurer of the Howard Simons Foundation, which is raising money for programs for Native American journalists.

—1981—

PETER ALMOND became the defense correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph* in London on August 1, 1990. He previously held the same position with *The Washington Times* until July.

The day after assuming his new position,

Iraq invaded Kuwait. As a result, Peter spent more than six weeks in Saudi Arabia and reports that classmate David Lamb was also in Saudi Arabia covering the war for *The Los Angeles Times*. In a note to *Nieman Reports*, Peter writes that "fortunately, in these hectic months I have had the strong support of another Nieman Fellow, Foreign Editor NIGEL WADE, from the Class of '83. I believe we form the majority of the Nieman still active in journalism in the UK."

Peter, his wife, Anna, and their children, Nicholas and Jeffrey, reside in the same house they lived in when he was the London/Europe correspondent for *The Times* in 1987.

On January 1, GERALD BOYD became metropolitan editor of *The New York Times*. He was formerly Special Assistant to the Managing Editor.

—1982—

CHRIS, MARY JO and EVAN BOGAN are welcoming spring at their new address in Lexington, MA, where they moved last July from Medford. "The move," they say, "liberated us from an urban neighborhood to a home with woods and a brook."

Chris is still at the TQM Group, a management consulting firm based in Cambridge and specializing in quality improvement. The startup firm is in its second year and is "riding on a roller coaster of highs and lows built around an uncertain economy and a lot of hard work."

A high of 1990 was that Chris led the consulting team that assisted the Federal Express Corporation in winning one of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards, the prestigious national recognition of excellence among American corporations. Chris finds the job "rigorous and rewarding" because it gives him the opportunity to work closely with some of America's best companies.

"No one here is guessing what lies ahead for the long-term future," Chris and Mary Jo say. "All we can say is that the merry-go-round is in motion, our eyes are open, our hearts are willing, and if we pass a big brass ring, we'll be sure to grab it."

—1984—

In the Winter edition, Nieman Notes announced the adoption of a child by the

DERRICK JACKSONS (he is a *Boston Globe* columnist). We also noted that they were awaiting the birth of another child. On October 27, Michelle gave birth to a nine-pound boy, Tano Frantz Azande.

—1985—

*Carol Rissman writes to update her Nieman friends on what she is currently doing:*

The six-hour PBS documentary I've been working on aired in January. Reviews of Making Sense of the Sixties were mostly favorable though one or two were stinkers — *TV Guide* said the series was as "frivolous as the decade." Well, *my* friends liked it a lot. And the series did well in most markets.

My job, beside narrating it, was deciding whom to interview — who could tell the stories we wanted to hear with both head and heart. I do love my characters, and they were a hit.

Now I'm the world's oldest living intern, working at the Portland, ME CBS affiliate. Learning quite a bit about TV's barriers to good journalism, among other better things. It's quite amazing how unconstrained by commercial necessity or video necessity my decade in Public Radio was. Welcome to the world, huh?

Final bit of news: I plan to visit Jerri Eddings in South Africa this spring. Need I say how much I'm looking forward to it?

—1986—

GUSTAVO GORRITI reports the birth of a third daughter, Dafna, on November 22 last year. "She was born like her sister Galia a very strong nine-pounder, and with this the Gorritys believe that their contribution to the survival of the human race is accomplished."

As for Gustavo, his book, *Sendero*, received good reviews and has been the Peruvian best-seller at 5,000 copies, an exceptional number in that country. It is the first of three volumes. A review of the first is in this issue of *Nieman Reports*.

After *Sendero* was published, Gustavo said, he was subject to "subtle pressure from the security forces to disclose the names of some sources for the book, and the Shining Path clandestine paper made a point of mentioning my home address and what was inside the house. Other than that manifestation of voyeurism, we are happy to inform that we continue to be safe and sound."

The second volume, which Gustavo is now working on, should be out in July or August. In the meantime he is free-lancing to help pay the bills.

Another high note for the Gorriti family is that older daughter Edith is scheduled to graduate in July from New York University with a degree in psychology.

—1987—

MARTHA K. MATZKE has been named Associate Secretary of the University and Director of Public Affairs at Yale University. She advises the president and his staff on external-relations matters and oversees the university's community-relations program, press office and campus newspaper. She previously was vice president of Editorial Projects in Education (EPE), the nonprofit organization that established *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. She was also the co-founder and executive editor of *Education Week*, an independent national newspaper started in 1981 by EPE to cover the precollegiate sector.

DOUG and LIBBY CUMMING report the birth of a "real sweet" baby girl on Nov. 11, seven pounds, two ounces. Libby says Sarah Rose Cumming was born "quick and healthy" and that big brothers Daniel, five years old, and William, three and a half, are thrilled with their baby sister. Doug is education editor for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

VALERIE HYMAN writes of the birth of her and husband Mark Howard's first child, "Jocelyn Rose Hyman Howard, two middle names, one last name, no hyphen." Jocelyn Rose was born on Dec 20 and weighed seven pounds. Mark has left *Newsday* to become Executive Business Editor of *The Sarasota Herald-Tribune*. Valerie continues as Director of the Program for Broadcast Journalists at the Poynter Institute, St. Petersburg. Valerie also reports that her class had a three-day mini-reunion in July on Vancouver Island in British Columbia at a rustic resort called "Point No Point", where they watched killer whales from the shore, hiked, biked, picnicked, and went on a sunset cruise in Vancouver Bay.

—1988—

On Feb. 16, Lindsay Miller was married to Peter Ambler at the First Congregational

Church in Cambridge. An enthusiastic group of Nieman class-mates were there to cheer her on: Susan Dentzer ('87) and Charles Alston ('87). Ellie Brecher ('88), Dale Maharidge ('88), Michele McDonald ('88), Eileen McNamara ('88), William Sutton ('88), Barbara Ross ('91), and Callie Crossley ('83), as well as Lois Fiore, Assistant to the Curator at the Nieman Foundation. A honeymoon in Paris. Lindsay is now a producer for World Monitor, a television news broadcast of *The Christian Science Monitor* in Boston.

ELINOR BRECHER of *The Miami Herald* won first place in the American Association of Sunday and Feature Editors excellence in writing competition 1990, for a story about a Fort Lauderdale mini-skirt rape case.

MICHELE MCDONALD of *The Boston Globe* won three prizes in the 1990 Boston Press Photographers competition. She won a first place in the spot news category for a street shot showing a passerby subduing a robbert suspect. This photo was also designated best in show. McDonald's other prize was for third place in the personality category.

EUGENE ROBINSON, *Washington Post* correspondent based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, has informed us of the adoption in Washington of a son, Lowell Edward Robinson, now six months old. Gene reports that he and his family are enjoying their time in South America, where they will be for at least another year. He is traveling a lot; his wife, Avis, is teaching at the American High School, and their older son, Aaron, is playing soccer at the American School where he is in the third grade.

EILEEN MCNAMARA of *The Boston Globe* gave birth on November 9, to Katherine Conrad May. Katherine joins her brothers Timothy, 5, and Patrick 2. Peter May, the father, covers the Celtics for *The Globe*.

—1989—

JOSEPH THLOLOE is one of two staffers of *The Sowetan* in Johannesburg who have been given a year's leave of absence to enhance their skills in newspaper and general management for the planned growth of the paper into the largest in South Africa.

Thloloe spent three weeks at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business studying management development. He will be returning there for two other courses on general management.

He will be coming to the United States for a course in newspaper design, writing, editing and newspaper management at the Poynter Institute in Florida from April 28 to May 24. While here he plans to spend some time observing the operation of an American metropolitan daily.

LIU BINYAN recently completed his fellowship at The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington and is now a Visiting Scholar at Princeton University. During his year at the Wilson center Liu delivered a number of lectures on the Chinese media and its impact on political change. "I have lived through four governments in China, including the puppet government supported by the Japanese invaders," Liu told a Washington audience, "but none of them has ever been so afraid of its own people as the Communist government is now." He said a number of outstanding journalists continue to plod away in controlled new organizations waiting for "their chance of speaking out at the right moment."

*NORMAN ROBINSON writes from New Orleans:*

History records state that Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves with the Emancipation Proclamation. That notwithstanding, as an African American living and working in the 1990's, freedom takes a whole new meaning.

I consider myself 'freed' that day I walked into the President of CBS News office and asked to be released from my contract. Now, I am free of the stereotypes: I am free of the mindless 'rat race'; I am free to pursue what I think is important.

Upon leaving the Nieman Foundation in the summer of 1989, I went to work for CBS News. I was eventually assigned to cover the White House as the No. 3 correspondent. The White House beat is coveted by journalists across the media. And of course, network television from the broadcaster's perspective is the ultimate. That is the image, but it is not the reality.

The ultimate is a quality lifestyle that leaves room for family and friends. The ultimate is a sense of community, a sense of belonging.

If being a Nieman Fellow has taught me anything, it has taught me that there is much more to life than that which can be experienced within the mere confines of broadcast journalism and the true meaning of life is not the quest for the proverbial brass ring. Life

without purpose suffocates the human spirit.

I am at home in New Orleans, as the primary anchor at 6 and 10 p.m. on Channel 6, an NBC affiliate. My position allows me to contribute to a community I know and love. My life has stability and purpose. My family is happier. My children can actually see and touch their father more often than not.

I have chosen to do what I think is most meaningful, directing my intelligence and my energy where I feel they are most needed. The greater N.O. community is one of the most impoverished in the country. Perhaps it is provident that as one of my first, major community service projects since returning home, I was chosen to moderate a debate addressing The Power-Poverty Gap: What is our Notion of Social Responsibility?

The forum is part of a series at Tulane University featuring House Majority Whip William Gary, Political and Business Analyst Kevin Phillips, and George Gilder, Senior Fellow for the Hudson Institute.

How do we solve the nation's social ills? I believe we have to tackle them one community at a time; but, not without first making a personal commitment.

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