

# NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Vol. XLX No.1 Spring 1996

FIVE DOLLARS

## Job Cuts Squeeze Newspapers

As Companies Seek Higher Profits

—And TV Goes on Hiring Binge



## The African Media

From Nigeria to South Africa to Kenya

*“...to promote and elevate the standards  
of journalism”*

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

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AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

**Vol. XLX, No. 1**  
**March 1996**

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

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Subscription \$20 a year, \$35 for two years; add \$10 for foreign airmail. Single copies \$5. Back copies are available from the Nieman Office.

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

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

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

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Cover photo of Milwaukee Sentinel Staff hearing of merger with Milwaukee Journal/Benny Sieu, Sentinel

## A Matter of Perspective

Corporate journalism, today's journalism, is a very troubled industry caught in the throes of a long struggle between editorial independence and market demands for a steady stream of mandated profit.

Years ago the profit demand sought to achieve market monopolies. Newspapers traded a competition in the marketplace of ideas for a competition in the marketplace of profit. Now the revolution in communications has driven the search for profit to a dangerous pitch.

The logic of the marketplace is leading to the horizontal organization of "communications" conglomerates that seek to integrate communications in all its forms and exploit talent across media with a goal of "owning" information. This reconfiguration brings together corporations with vastly different cultures, goals and values. These partnerships take corporations once entirely journalistic further away from the basic goals and values of the newsroom.

The newsroom often is no longer a determining factor in the decisions of a company facing competition in a world of constantly expanding channels of potentially profitable communications. The newspaper industry has been sensitive to swings in the economy. But over the past decade many newspaper managers seem to be driven by the fear they will be "left out" in the race for position in the digital future. The profit squeeze underway is dedicated to buying a seat at the merger and acquisition table. Time-Warner, Disney-Cap-Cities-ABC-TV, are models of smart money.

This squeeze has led major newspaper organizations to try to maintain profit margins of the boom years of the middle 1980's despite changing market conditions, which include huge increases in newsprint costs. Some effects of these pressures are insidious. Consider the corrupting result of the wave of "downsizing" such as that which sent New York Newsday onto the dust heap. Editors whose sense of accuracy and honesty is outraged by military use of "neutralize" for kill routinely print stories about "layoffs" to refer to workers who have been fired from jobs at their own company. How can readers trust such self-interested euphemisms?

Other effects are more obviously dangerous. Beats are eliminated, reporting time is curtailed and electronic data-base searches substitute for reporting and the search for new and original information. As a result the news reports grow leaner and less useful. It is, as Alex Jones points out in this issue, a recipe for disaster that farmers call "eating your seed corn." Just as the long-term survival of a farmer means holding on to the reason for being, journalism can survive only by holding on to its sole justifiable purpose.

True competition has never been for the leisure time of people. Journalism first earned its place in American society and can only hold it by providing the kind of new and reliable information that is a vital part of the day. Survival means a report that takes its place alongside eating and sleeping and working. Newspaper reading used to be called

a "habit." The danger now is that profit pressures trivialize a newsroom and push it into producing leisure-time competition with celebrity, diversion and entertainment.

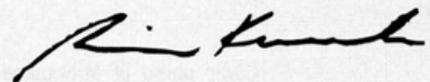
Not so long ago this kind of thinking could be traced only to the door of the business office. But business strategies sometimes now originate in the newsroom in response to bonus-connected management objectives. Editors at major newspapers—sometimes called resource managers—have degrees in business management or have been indoctrinated at business school "intensive" management seminars. These executives urge editors and reporters to get to know advertisers and advertising sales people better in order to find out what kinds of stories the marketplace finds to its liking.

Salaries, expense accounts and stock options have made editors part of the economic elite. The American Society of Newspaper Editors was founded to represent the interests of the newsroom against the publishers' power. Today, of more than 800 active members, nearly 200 are owners, publishers or CEO's. Even more carry double titles as editor of the news department and vice president of the company.

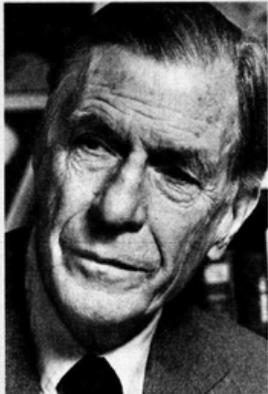
This matter of perspective goes to the heart of the independence of newsroom decisions. Whether a story is seen through a political, social or economic lens has changed as much in the last 30 years as any other aspect of journalism. The recent stories about the revolution in communications technology provide a case in point. The new technology will have profound impact on the social and political systems of the country. It will radically alter the daily lives of each person in the home and in the marketplace. Yet almost universally the subject has been treated as a story of business, finance and economic investment—interests that concern the corporate news organizations themselves. Social, political and consumer impacts are treated only in passing if at all.

Perhaps the most depressing fact underlying the current trends in the newspaper industry is that which John Morton illuminates. All these decisions impacting on newsrooms are driven by a desire of the newspaper owners to increase a profit margin that is already two or three times as high as the average of the Fortune 500 companies to a margin three or four times higher. Robert Hutchins concluded in his landmark study of the American press in 1946 by warning: "If the soliloquy [of the journalist] is that of one of the richest men in town, it is more than likely that it will sound the same political note as other soliloquies in other towns, rendered by other rich men." That is not the conversation that is likely to attract new generations of readers to the newspaper habit.

Unfortunately a press that was originally embedded in our Constitution because it was hoped to be an integral part of the democratic conversation is in danger of becoming a Hutchins soliloquy "of the rich men in town." ■



# What They're Saying



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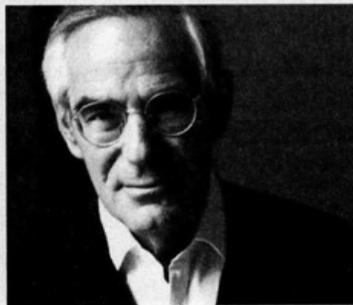
## John Kenneth Galbraith U.S. TV Is No. 1

When people have enough things, they want entertainment. There's a developing artistic interest. There's a developing intellectual interest. So you have a whole increase in your community responding to a different level of activity. We were very reluctant to think of entertainment as an industry like steel. Yet it has become a very considerable share of Gross National Product. And more than parenthetically, one in which the United States is preeminently successful. No other country can possibly compete with us in the production of morally depraved television programs.—*John Kenneth Galbraith, Paul M. Warburg Professor of Economics, Emeritus, Harvard University, at Nieman Fellows seminar, December 13, 1995.*



## Dale Mezzacappa My Mother, My Editor

I have a rule of thumb when I write a story... Would my mother get to the end of this if I hadn't written it?—*Dale Mezzacappa, Philadelphia Inquirer education reporter, at a seminar at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, December 8, 1995.*



BRUCE PLOTKIN

## David Halberstam The Sustaining Force

Really what sustains reporters is faith in the coverage of ordinary people, that they will tell the truth. That if you are [covering] civil rights some person who may even be a segregationist will tell the truth about what he or she witnessed because it's the right thing to do. That's the sustaining stuff—and that this country will over a period of time in some odd, complicated, clumsy way respond finally more to good things than bad. That's what sustains you as a journalist. My god, we don't do it for the money.—*David Halberstam at Nieman Fellows seminar, December 8, 1995.*



THE BOSTON GLOBE

## Mike Barnicle Driving to Success

My career here prospered simply because I was an expert at the single course not taught at the Columbia University School of Journalism: Driving 101. Years ago, I would hang around the office late to see which top editor—either Healy or Winship—either needed a ride home or perhaps had forgotten to pick up the dry cleaning. That, my friends, was my road to success.

Now, decades later, I am staring at this Wall Street Journal article, bewildered by a crew of strangers with sharp elbows jockeying for top position at The Times Company. That post will undoubtedly go to whoever can best convince a board of directors that huge profit and influence can be attained over the next 20 years only by expanding the word "information" beyond the printed page of the paper you purchased this morning.—*Mike Barnicle in The Boston Globe, January 23, 1996.*

# Cutbacks Squeeze Newspapers



MICHI YASUAWA FOR NEW YORK NEWSDAY

*New York Newsday Editor Donald Forst consoles photographer Erica Berger on closing of the paper.*

Newspapers represent a curious anomaly in the American economy.

It is well known that throughout most of this century, starting with the advent of radio as a public medium in the 1920's, newspapers have lost ground to broadcasting. Today, television is not just the dominant news medium; it is overwhelmingly so. Meanwhile, still another competitor, computer on-line services, impatiently pushes forward, eager to

## Editor's Note

lure readers and take a bite at the print press's advertising revenues.

Yet newspapers have remained a lucrative investment, often bringing profits double those of the

average of Fortune 500 companies.

Lately, as a result of continuing sharp rises in newsprint prices and sluggish advertising revenues, newspaper profit margins have plummeted. In response, many publishers have cut costs, often reducing reporting and editing staffs.

The implications and impact of these seminal changes are examined in the following pages.

# Feasting on the Seed Corn

*Media Critic Says That Newspaper Executives Cutting Into News Coverage Are Risking the Future for Short-Term Gains*

BY ALEX S. JONES

**T**he question for the nation's newspapers is as stark as it is simple: will they survive?

In a few years, most newspaper readers will live in homes served by the electronic equivalent of a giant water-main through which will roar a Niagara of information. They will have access to an almost limitless supply of data, seductively presented. To compare today's on-line offerings to what is soon to come is to compare hieroglyphics and papyrus to Time magazine.

So it is little wonder that newspaper companies are worried and confused—even panicky.

Whether the nation's newspapers save themselves—and they can—lies almost entirely in the hands of their owners and top executives, who have the power to decide how money is spent, and in what amounts. These are shrewd and intelligent people, most of whom believe they are journalists, if only tangentially. They are also serious about their business and are guided by reason and pragmatism.

Therefore, it is all the more stupefying that the nation's newspaper executives are engaged at this critical moment in undermining the very thing that is the absolute essential key to their survival.

The newspaper industry is binging on its seed corn.

To use the business jargon that is now ubiquitous from the executive suite of General Motors to the publisher's office of The Daily Bugle, the "core competency" of newspapers—that service that no one else can do better—is reporting the news. Yet throughout the nation, news budgets are being squeezed, news staffs depleted, news travel curtailed, news holes reduced

and the news itself dumbed down.

It is as though General Motors decided to compete with Japan by making a few cosmetic changes to mask the fact that the cars were actually less reliable and less innovative—and at the same time charging more for them. Any businessman would view such a strategy as suicidal, but that essential business plan is now in place at newspapers all over the nation.

For instance, at Knight-Ridder's Philadelphia Daily News, the news staff has been cut and the news budget is so tight that only selected phones may be used to dial directory assistance, according to The Washington Post. The price of the paper, however, just increased 20 percent.

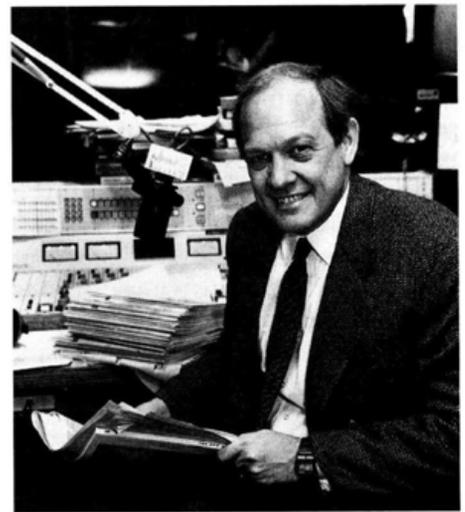
"To raise the price and cut content at the same time is beyond frustrating," Zachary Stalberg, The News's editor, told The Post.

At The Los Angeles Times, where the news budget is under enormous pressure, a sign showing the current Times-Mirror stock price is positioned so arriving employees can see it, the better to understand why it is necessary that reporters no longer travel to sporting events that they used to cover.

But Times-Mirror and Knight-Ridder are hardly alone in seeking increased profits by reducing news costs. A recent survey of the nation's top editors found that the major reason for their increased levels of stress is "lack of adequate staff, budget considerations and a heavier workload," according to The Associated Press Managing Editors Association.

What is being undermined is the newspaper industry's core competency. As management gurus say, a core competency is what allows any business to

exist. It is the product or service that customers perceive to have value. It is what motivates them to spend their money. At a dry cleaner, the core competency is doing a good job cleaning clothes. If you are the only dry cleaner in town, you don't have to be a great dry



*Alex Jones is in the fourth generation of a Tennessee newspaper family that, beginning with his great-grandmother and grandmother in 1916, still publishes the family paper, The Greeneville Sun. After graduating from Washington and Lee University, he served in the Navy, then began his career as a reporter, sending The Sun a weekly column from an African trip. Alex began his career at The New York Times in 1983. His series on the fall of the Bingham newspaper dynasty in Louisville won a 1987 Pulitzer Prize. He and his wife, Susan Tiff, later co-authored a book on the Bingham, "The Patriarch." Alex left The Times in 1992 to work with Susan Tiff on the first biography of the Ochs/Sulzberger family, which is scheduled for publication in 1998. Alex began hosting the local version of the radio show "On the Media" in the spring of 1993.*

cleaner, but if another shop opens down the street, you have to get better fast. In that sense, Mark H. Willes, the Chief Executive of Times-Mirror Co., is absolutely correct in comparing The Los Angeles Times to a box of Cheerios. While brand loyalty can carry a product for a while, in the long-term Cheerios must be better than other toasted oat loops to survive. A lot better, if the rival is much cheaper. The Los Angeles Times and all other newspapers are no different, except that their fundamental product is news.

The real risk within the newspaper business is that smart people like Mark Willes and Tony Ridder, chairman of KnightRidder Inc., and many other industry leaders seem maddeningly blind to the fact that expanded, enhanced news coverage is the *only* thing that assures the long-term survival of the nation's newspapers. They dismiss the concept as impractical, based on an outdated, romantic ideal of what newspapers should be.

But this is not a moral issue. It is a business one.

It is news that will attract customers, who in turn will attract advertisers as well as clients for the vast array of periphery businesses newspapers are

now entering, from delivering magazines and custom publishing to audiotext and fledgling on-line services to selling coffee mugs emblazoned with the newspaper's flag. But without news dominance, these "added-value" ventures will wither.

If this long-term strategy is really so obvious, why don't these people act to bolster and expand their core competency while newspapers are still the premier news organizations in their markets? Why are they willing to waste such an invaluable—but increasingly shaky—advantage?

Because of money, of course.

The glorious decade between 1977 and 1987 may have ruined the newspaper business.

It was a decade of unprecedented profitability at newspapers. The Inland/INFE National Cost & Revenue Study for papers of 50,000 circulation reported average profits of over 20 percent in 1986; the profit margins were double that or more at some particularly bottom-line chains. Owning a newspaper seemed almost foolproof. Newspaper unions had been generally neutralized and high technology allowed huge savings in production costs. Most newspapers were the only one in town, and the

Reagan economy was booming.

Then came the 1987 stock market crash, to be followed over the next several years by the worst-ever advertising recession.

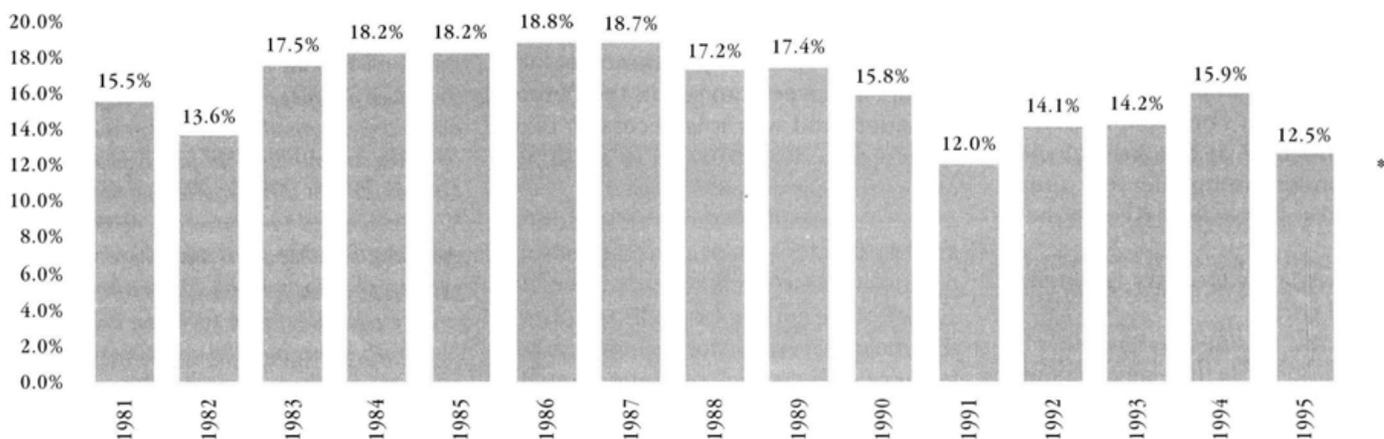
Many of the nation's major newspaper companies are publicly owned and their stockholders had little taste for dwindling profits after a decade of double-digit annual increases. Wall Street's buying analysts considered profit margins short of mid-80's levels aberrant and temporary. Management generally agreed, and the newspaper industry went through five years of belt-tightening in every area, including news.

And public newspaper companies were not the only ones addicted to 20-plus percent profit levels. Many privately held and family-owned newspapers were operated just as voraciously, and often much less competently, than the public ones.

When the crunch came and revenues plummeted, it was only prudent to cut some expenses, including news costs. Newspapers are a business and their owners should not consider them to be nonprofit public services. Solid business success is the surest guarantor of editorial independence.

But a solid profit is not the same

### Newspaper Industry Operating Profit Margins



\*Based on reports from smaller number of papers

Source: Veronis, Suhler & Associates

*Newspaper profit margins normally rise and fall with the economy. According to Veronis, Suhler & Associates, a New York investment banking firm that specializes in the media, newspaper industry margins hit bottom during the recession years of 1982 and 1991. Newspaper profits rebounded strongly in the mid-1980's thanks to an unprecedented boom in classified advertising. In 1995, however, an already sluggish profit recovery was cut short by an equally unprecedented 40 percent increase in newsprint prices. With newsprint expenses expected to rise an additional 20 percent in 1996, publishers increasingly view cost-cutting as the only foolproof strategy for preserving profit.*

thing as a 20 percent profit. And after a long round of stringent belt-tightening, many of the nation's newspapers are engaged in yet another round, this time justified by higher newsprint prices that surged after being artificially low during the advertising drought.

The bitter medicine of newsroom cost-cutting, hold-downs and hiring freezes is nothing new to newspapers. But this time the situation is different, even compared to 1987. This time, the patient might die.

Newspapers are a cyclical business, and newsroom cost-cutting usually occurs when business is bad. Newspapers have been able to get away with squeezing the news product because there was no real competition in that particular area.

There was plenty of competition on the advertising front: from radio, then television, then local cable operations that even the smallest markets could not escape and which made it possible for every automobile dealer to fulfill the fantasy of appearing on television. In recent years, direct mailers have been the most ferocious rival and they have been joined in their assault on newspaper advertising by the U.S. Postal Service. The result has been a price war on pre-printed advertising circulars that has hit newspaper advertising revenues hard. Locally owned businesses are increasingly rare, and that also penalizes newspapers. Some big retailers tend to look strictly at price and have no personal stake in supporting the local paper. Local banks and home-grown industries were prime prospects for support-the-community ads plugging the United Way, but chain banks and wholly-owned subsidiaries often take a dim view of such costly demonstrations of good citizenship.

Add to these woes the surge in newsprint prices that began in 1994 and, in some areas, the still-depressed overall economy, and it is not difficult to see why newspapers are under financial pressure.

To deal with these challenges to their advertising dollars, newspapers have cut costs and found new ways to produce revenue. Traditionally, they

just raised ad rates, but in such a competitive advertising environment, that solution has become very risky.

The new newspaper theory is that circulation must produce more of the revenue, which is why—despite reductions in the news hole and letting newsroom vacancies lie unfilled—many, many newspapers have increased their price in the last year or two. The market would bear it, so they did it.

What the newspaper industry has not yet grasped is that there is a rival looming that is different from radio, television, cable or direct mail. This competitor—the electronic one that is murkily referred to as “the Internet”—directly challenges the “core competency” that newspapers have enjoyed for so long with splendid and unthreatened confidence.

As a local news utility, none of the other media has ever credibly threatened newspapers. The last time newspapers had serious rivals was when there were two genuinely competing newspapers in the same town, and that sort of all-out news battling is well outside the memory of most newspaper executives these days.

Even in the markets where there is competition, the newspapers either carve out different niches of the total audience or participate in joint operating arrangements. There are few cities where two serious newspapers fight it out for the same reader. The New York Times does not really compete with The Daily News or The New York Post. It *did* compete with New York Newsday, but that ended last year when Times-Mirror shut the paper down.

In the rare places where there is genuine rivalry between newspapers, the impact on news budgets is the exact opposite of the current trend.

A wonderfully telling example is the case of The Denver Post, which is owned by William Dean Singleton, one of the most profit-minded and cost-conscious publishers in the nation.

Dean Singleton's Denver Post is in a fierce news battle with The Rocky Mountain News, flagship of the Scripps-Howard chain. Over the past year, The Rocky laid off 17 managers and demoted some others, but publicly

boasted that no downsizing had occurred in the news department. The Post, meanwhile, expanded its news budget as though Singleton took pride in making a lush news operation his signature.

Nothing could be further from the truth. In September, Dean Singleton acquired The Berkshire Eagle in Pittsfield, Mass., one of the most distinguished small newspapers in the nation and one known for its oversized—by industry standards—news operation. Unfortunately, the paper's owners overextended in other nonnewspaper areas. It was not their handsome news operation that forced them to sell, but when they got into financial trouble they cut the news staff to 40 from a high of 62. When Singleton bought the paper, he ordered news salaries cut and the news staff further reduced. An additional 11 editorial employees left or were not offered jobs.

The bulging newsroom in Denver and the decimated one in Pittsfield make the point. Newspapers will spend what they need to spend on news in order to protect their market position. It is good, common business sense. And when they don't have to worry about protecting their news-gathering dominance, they will apply a standard that makes 20-plus percent profit margins attainable.

The potential catastrophe for the newspaper business is that the people who lead it have not yet realized that they are in the position of The Denver Post, not The Berkshire Eagle.

Newspaper executives simply have not been willing to imagine what seems increasingly obvious: that alternative news-gathering enterprises of high quality and great breadth can be created in their own markets.

What is going to be even harder for them to swallow is that the people who report and write and edit for these new news outlets are very likely to be some of their own employees...or, more accurately, former employees. Newspaper executives seem to believe that they have a patent on newsgathering, that because local radio and television and cable are little more than headline services, no one can come into their community and simply take the news away

from them.

They are wrong.

It can be done, and—in some place soon—it will be done.

As an instructive case, think of Bloomberg News. Indeed, Michael Bloomberg is probably one of the people who most fervently hopes that the newspaper industry will continue to cannibalize itself for the sake of short-term profits.

Bloomberg News was created in the last few years as an entrepreneurial venture, virtually out of the air. It is now a serious, and very aggressive, news service specializing in financial news and hungry for a bigger game.

Or consider CNN. It took vision and money to create, and then suddenly it was an international institution. Now the very television networks that could easily have created CNN themselves have declared that they will try to catch up with Ted Turner.

Bill Gates is feverishly spending top dollar to recruit some of journalism's ablest people from both print and television. Is it difficult to imagine that this man, who wants every computer in the world to run on his software, also wants his company to be the prime provider of news—including local news—in every town in America?

Is it difficult to imagine that in Anytown, USA, fledgling electronic newsgathering operations will soon emerge? After all, there is no barrier to entry other than the raw cost of paying the reporters and editors who gather and present the information over the Internet.

Is it difficult to imagine that a local entrepreneur, or an ambitious local television station, or the local version of America Online would hire away some of the local daily's reporters and editors by offering them a 50 percent raise and complete editorial freedom? Make no mistake, local television believes that the electronic future of local news belongs to them, and they are hiring accordingly.

And might this local information and news enterprise become a business? A real business? With no presses, no distribution costs and even better quality reporting than the local paper if that

paper has been squeezing its news?

And might not such local electronic news outlets become franchises in their own right, to be assembled into well-capitalized networks offering first-class local news as an inducement to subscribe to an on-line service? Might Bill Gates be interested in such a network? Or Bell Atlantic? Or America Online? Or The Chicago Tribune Company?

So, how can newspapers save themselves?

They must pretend they are in Denver. They must fight and claw for news with the same unquenchable energy with which they wring every advertising dollar out of their markets.

They must open their news hole, hire good people, pay for quality and vigorously promote the fact that they are doing all these things.

They must get ready to adapt their preeminent news machines to the electronic world, in whatever form or with whatever delivery system is required. But they must never forget that without the preeminent news machine, the electronic delivery will be to no avail.

They must make themselves as profitable and as tightly run as possible, but not by consuming their own muscle tissue. The real fat in newspaper expense is in the category listed on the Inland Cost and Revenue Study as "G&A" for general and administrative. The most recent study shows that between 1959 and 1994, the percentage of the annual expense devoted to G&A—everything from accounting to health plan management to janitorial services—ballooned from 21 to 33 per-

cent. That is more than twice the percentage of any other expense category, including news and newsprint. G&A functions don't put a story in the paper or sell an ad. Some of these functions can be contracted to outsiders, who perform such work as *their* core competency and could do it more cheaply and as well. Certainly, if newspapers need to cut costs, here is an area ripe for the squeezing.

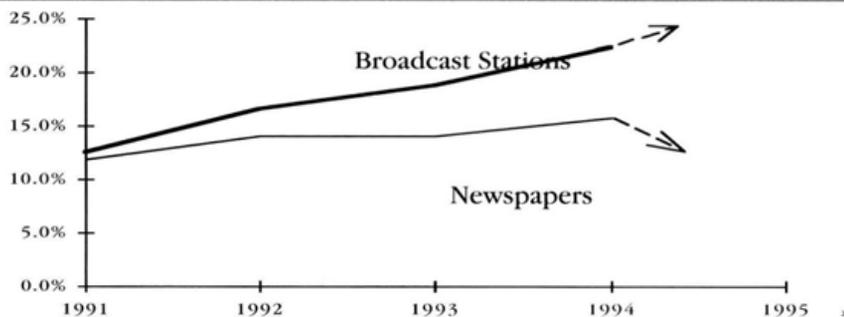
They must draw comfort from the knowledge that their greatest defense is the creation of an overwhelming offense. And they must remember that the absence of an electronic rival in their particular market is not cause for complacency. Newspaper owners have long known that the world is full of people who would love to take their advertising away from them, and now they must extend that wisdom to include the certain conviction that the world is also full of people who want to eat their lunch as newsgatherers.

And they must decide to settle for a long future with lower profit margins rather than a much shorter future with the 1980's-level profit margins that, for the present, can still be wrung out of most newspapers.

Some newspapers will understand where their long-term interests lie and will invest in creating a local version of a news juggernaut. For them the electronic future is not a terror, but a sweeping opportunity.

Instead of feasting on their seed corn now, these shrewd few will be able to gorge later...on the markets of their less-wise newspaper colleagues. ■

**Profit Margins 1991-1995 of Newspapers vs. Broadcast Stations**



\* According to incomplete reports gathered by Veronis, Subler & Associates, newspaper profit margins plunged even further in 1995. In contrast, television and radio profit margins continued to rise as broadcasters enjoyed the benefits of a more robust advertising recovery as well as deregulation and obvious freedom from concern about paper prices. In 1991, all media suffered. Today, newspapers struggle largely without company.

# How Big Should Profits Be?

*Two Times the Fortune 500 Average?*

BY JOHN MORTON

When profits start to sag because of weakening receipts or increasing costs, a rational response for a business might be to cut back on product, employees and other costs. A rational response, though, is not necessarily a smart one.

Newspapers over the last five years made rational responses, first to the advertising recession that beset all media beginning in 1990 and lasting through much of 1993, and then to the sharp increase in newsprint costs in 1994 and 1995. The responses included wide-spread layoffs, reductions in news holes, killing off zoned editions that had been designed to enlarge readership, even putting down entire newspapers. From the news accounts of these actions, which destroyed the economic security of hundreds and perhaps thousands of families, one would think the newspaper industry was trying to pull itself back from some final, life-threatening brink. But no—all the industry is trying to do is increase its profitability from maybe two times the average for the Fortune 500 to three or four times. The newspaper industry truly is besieged, but not from lack of profits. Circulation is waning, readership is weakening, especially among young people, and advertisers increasingly are seeking other ways to reach customers besides advertising in newspapers. The dumbest thing—the least rational thing—that any business can do when faced with so many negative trends is to cut back on quality of product and level of service. Yet this is precisely what many newspapers are doing.

The smart thing to do for a business facing negative trends is to invest some of its profits to improve product and service. For a newspaper there is no

other way to arrest declining circulation and readership, which underlie the disaffection of the advertisers who provide three-quarters of newspaper revenues and all newspaper profits.

If profits are already high by comparison with other businesses, why are newspapers risking their business franchises to seek even higher profits? The answer lies in what I call the inflated level of expectations. In the early 1980's, the newspaper industry on average regularly earned in operating profit before taxes more than 20 cents on every dollar taken in (I use as a proxy for the industry results from publicly reporting companies, which own more than 40 percent of total national circulation). Indeed, if one counts the cash that newspapers keep before taxes—in other words adding to operating profit the noncash charges like depreciation and amortization—the average margin was even higher.

Starting in the mid-1980's, newspaper profit margins weakened for several reasons. The leveraged buyout frenzy of the 1980's sank the advertising budgets of several major department store chains suddenly burdened with high interest payments and, in some cases, bankruptcy. Those retailers not deep in debt were able to trim their advertising because their financially troubled competitors were not spending at usual levels. Also, many advertisers began shifting some of their advertising money to in-store promotions, mailed catalogs, prize contests and various other approaches to consumers.

Then came the 1990 recession, which hit newspapers harder than any previous one because classified advertising had grown to account for about 42 percent of advertising revenues, from

29 percent a dozen years earlier. Classified sags in a recession because it is largely dependent on automobile sales, real estate transactions and job opportunities. A consequence of all these factors was steadily declining average profit margins, which hit a bottom of about 12 percent in 1991, the worst year of the recession.

Newspaper companies are no less sensitive to the concerns of shareholders than other businesses, and what they heard from shareholders during this period was not pleasant. Shareholders had become accustomed to the high profit margins of earlier years—the inflated level of expectations I mentioned earlier. Most of the noise about this was heard from institutional investors in the publicly owned newspaper



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## Profit Margins of Newspaper Segments of Media Companies

	1983	1987	1991	1994	1995*
	Percentage				
<b>U.S. Companies</b>					
A.H. Belo	17.7	12.7	8.6	18.0	16.6
Capital Cities/ABC	22.6	14.6	11.7	14.1	13.4
Cowles Media Co.	N.A.	14.8	5.6	11.3	8.7
Dow-Jones Bus. Pub.	31.8	22.0	11.1	16.4	7.8
Dow-Jones Com.Newsp.	18.4	20.6	11.9	14.3	11.4
Gannett	22.4	23.2	19.7	23.1	20.9
Harte-Hanks	24.8	N.A.	13.1	18.7	20.4
Knight-Ridder	N.A.	17.7	13.6	16.4	12.5
Lee Enterprises	24.8	27.0	27.8	31.5	26.1
McClatchy	N.A.	14.0	11.5	15.2	11.4
Media General	18.4	12.6	0.2	9.7	6.4
Multimedia	22.5	31.3	26.8	30.3	31.4
New York Times	15.7	19.9	7.3	10.0	9.9
Peoria Journal Star	N.A.	17.0	18.2	31.5	13.2
Pulitzer	N.A.	6.6	5.7	14.8	9.4
E.W. Scripps	N.A.	N.A.	13.0	19.8	18.9
Thomson Corp.	N.A.	N.A.	17.2	14.6	13.4
Times Mirror	17.6	18.9	4.7	9.4	8.5
Tribune Company	12.3	13.0	18.9	22.3	19.8
<b>Total Average</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>14.3</b>

\* First nine months N.A. Not available

Source: John Morton Research

Statistics compiled by John Morton show that newspaper profit margins vary substantially by company. Multimedia, recently acquired by Gannett, and Lee stand out as high-margin operators. Newspapers with extensive local competition and/or strong labor unions tend to trail industry averages.

companies, who had made huge investments in newspaper companies in the 1970's and 1980's. But shareholders of many private, family-controlled newspaper companies became just as demanding, if less publicly so, especially at those companies in the third or fourth generation of family ownership. When a business has been in a family that long, there are usually many family shareholders with little connection or interest in the business beyond collecting dividend checks. The managements of newspaper companies could have told their shareholders that, yes, profitability is down for a variety of reasons, including the steady growth in the number of competitors for advertising and readers' attention, and yes, we could cut news holes, fire staff, and retrench on product development. But we don't think that would be a smart thing to do, because we have to do battle with all those new competitors, and the only way to succeed at that is with a bigger and better product.

Of course, most managements did not say that to shareholders (I'll admit

it would not be an easy sell), choosing instead to embark on the cost-cutting we are now well aware of. The cuts combined with unexpectedly strong business volume coming out of the recession put profit margins on an upward path, to above 15 percent in 1993 (the average for the Fortune 500 was about 5 percent) and 18 percent in 1994 (the average for the Fortune 500 was about 8 percent). The price increases that raised newsprint costs 30 percent to 40 percent for most newspapers drove down profit margins in 1995—to an average of about 14 percent in the first nine months of the year. This unusual cost increase will ease this year and largely disappear in 1997, at which time margins are likely to march upward again. Indeed, the chief executives of many companies (two notable ones are Times-Mirror, which has been below the industry average, and Knight-Ridder, which generally has been about average) have vowed to continue emphasizing profit-margin growth with more cost-cutting and, in some instances, by spinning off less profitable properties.

Some of the high profitability of newspapers is inherent in the business. Unlike, say, a retailer who sells finished goods that are the result of a long string of wholesalers, distributors, manufacturers and raw-materials suppliers, all of whom take their own profit margins out of the ultimate selling price of the product, newspapers create most of the value of their product in-house. The only significant raw material a newspaper buys is newsprint (15 percent to 25 percent of total costs, depending on the size of the paper), and that normally is bought directly from a newsprint company without an intervening wholesaler and distributor (the newsprint manufacturer, of course, has a profit margin).

Advertising is received directly from advertisers, with the exception of the small amount of national advertising for which a newspaper pays an agency fee. Circulation revenue (about 25 percent of the total) can be subject to payments to carriers and distributors, but, depending on a newspaper's distribution arrangements, these payments often are paid before the newspaper receives the revenue it reports in profit-and-loss statements.

With so much of the value of the final product—the newspaper—created in-house, a newspaper is relieved of much of the burden of covering the several layers of previous margins faced by most other businesses. This same phenomenon drives the high profitability of other types of media, as well. Television broadcasters, for example, don't even have to buy newsprint, and their profit margins are inherently even higher than newspapers'.

The point is, though, that even if profitability in some significant part is owing to inherent structure and not wholly the result of greed or kowtowing to the demands of shareholders, the profits are there. The question then becomes whether newspapers should be re-investing some of these profits in product quality and service, thereby lowering profit margins, instead of increasing shareholder returns. The answer to that question, at least for now, is pretty clear: risk the future to polish the present. ■

# Remember Your Firepower: Local News

BY EUGENE PATTERSON

**A**t age 21 I sat on my steel helmet in the mud near Mars la Tour. The day before, we crossed the Moselle north of Metz and listened with all the other officers of my armored division to the combat wisdom and the barracks profanity of General George S. Patton.

Not very gently the general told his commanders: Never take counsel of your fears. Let the other fellow take counsel of his. You didn't come here to die for your country. You came here to help him die for his. Look to your own strengths. Look for your enemy's weaknesses. Feint toward his strong points and hit him where he isn't. Hold him by the nose and kick him in the tail. Then break a hole and take his territory while he mills around behind you waiting to be mopped up.

It didn't turn out to be that easy. The first German 88 blast chilled our audacity appreciably. But the speech sank in.

A lot of newspaper people are full of their fears these days and forgetful of their firepower.

Flashy technology has been crackling around us for much of this century. Live radio, wailed the fearful, could broadcast the game, the fireside chats, the Hindenberg explosion. Later, they warned television could show us the game, the political convention, the space launch as it happened. What's left for newspapers to print?

What was left was a hunger among the interested to know not just what and where but how and why. Our sports writers learned to analyze the game. Our political reporters gained the insight to interpret. Our science writers absorbed the education to explain. Baritone Bruce on radio and Horace Hairspray on TV ran out of time right after barking a bulletin into one of our ears and out the other. They could only offer a taste. They whetted the appetite for a newspaper's nourishment. Print

made the space and trained the writers to tell it whole, and then, as Casey Stengel reminded us, you could look it up. We had the local news and the local mass market for advertisers, and we delivered.

So now here's the Net, the nerds, the Web, the Windows, all the cyber-stuff. This is Armageddon?

We lost our afternoon papers to the broadcasters, sure. So we regrouped in the morning cycle with better newspapers and at the least we were spared the newsprint and delivery costs of the p.m. editions.

Television did much worse damage to magazines and radio. But they didn't roll over and play dinosaur. Network radio reconstituted itself as local and each station built a niche. As general interest magazines faded, specialized magazines prospered in fields from sports to business, cars to gardens.

Newspapers already have their natural niche. It's called local news. Not one competitor, present or on the horizon threatens that dominance. Covering the home town and county and region and state, and caring about them over time, is just too hard and too expensive for the entertainers to undertake. Not even Ted Turner can cover a newspaper's community.

There, then, is the print medium's principal strength.

Of course, to ignore the incoming technology would be as silly as sticking to hot lead composition and letterpress printing when computer-composed cold type and offset printing arrived. We can seize and not resist technology that fits. I see newspapers easing into obvious new applications while staying off the panic button and going to their strength.

Still, attention must be paid to our circulation when it flags and our advertising when it thins. My short list has three priorities:

- Neither over-estimate nor ape the opposition. Just be better.
- Re-invent the newspaper business as needed. Risk change.
- Keep faith in the primacy of print to make sense of things in a world overloaded with unexamined information.

The Opposition: We've survived radio and broadcast television. Now that cable on my set offers 60 channels, heading for 500, I surf in vain for much to watch besides CNN and C-Span plus ball games and the evening news. And commercials on the evening network news have signaled its decline even ahead of the Nielsen rating drops. You've seen those age-group ads for denture adhesives and antacids and adult diapers. Dan Rather may promise exciting headlines straight ahead but his audience is dying out.

The young have gone to cyberspace, you say? There's truth in that. But in assessing the commercial threat to newspapers, we have to ask how much. The Wall Street Journal reports that the New York market-research firm FIND/SVP estimates 9.5 million U.S. Internet users have visited World Wide Web sites. But only 12 percent have found anything worth buying from Web-offered shopping services. And the con-



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sulting firm of International Data Corp. of Framingham, Mass., predicts as many as a fifth of frustrated big corporate users will drop their Web sites this year.

Results of the FIND/SVP survey suggest cyberspace is less populated and less interesting, and less attractive as an advertising medium, than has been suggested by such earlier surveys as Nielsen Media Research's August finding that 24 million people use the Internet and 36 million have access to it.

Whatever the on-line outlook may be, clearer and more present threats come from such prosaic competitors as direct mail and in-store promotions that have savaged grocery and retail lineage in newspapers. Have we made our maximum effort to counter those?

Re-invent: Surely newspapers have the advertising brains to innovate more boldly than we've done, with ideas as well as pricing. Better-faster-cheaper is still a rule that works in the marketplace. Measure our strengths, gauge the other guy's weaknesses, then break a hole.

It's not enough to grieve that public ownership of newspapers handcuffs them to Wall Street's insistence on quick earnings even at the cost of quality. Warren Buffett has done all right betting on value and investment for the long term.

If revenue and cost structures have to be reconstituted to arrive at new realities, maybe it's time to downsize profit along with the downsizings of staff and news hole. Anything much above 20 percent profit pretax always has looked a little greedy. Anything much below 10 percent starts edging toward a stall that risks a crash with all aboard. But there's lots of room between 10 and 20 percent operating profit for quality to flower and all to prosper.

In putting a pencil to these things, it's helpful to remember we're in the news business and the news is the last thing we want to cut. News, and especially local news, is what we have to sell. Sell the reader and the advertiser will follow him.

Cutting costs is no way to grow. To survive in emergency, yes. But to take the offensive and win, we have to throw

#### Knight-Ridder Estimated Profit Margins

Newspaper	1995	1996	1997
	Percentage		
<i>Top 6 Newspapers</i>			
Philadelphia Inquirer & Daily News	8.2	10.8	13.4
Miami Herald	15.9	16.3	17.9
San Jose Mercury News	26.5	25.1	25.1
Detroit Free Press	-24.2	2.6	6.3
Charlotte Observer	24.1	23.8	23.1
Leshner Communications		14.8	15.6
St. Paul Pioneer Press	16.1	15.7	17.3
Akron Beacon Journal	18.5	17.3	18.1
Long Beach Press Telegram	13.4	15.4	17.0
Columbia State	20.0	20.4	20.4
Wichita Eagle	19.8	18.6	18.2
All Other Newspapers	17.9	15.4	16.3
<i>Total Newspapers</i>	<i>13.3</i>	<i>15.3</i>	<i>16.7</i>

Source: Morgan Stanley Research

*Margins can also vary significantly within a major group. According to Morgan Stanley, profit margins at Knight-Ridder Newspapers range from single-digit levels in Detroit and Philadelphia to more than 20 percent in San Jose and Charlotte.*

long. That means looking at the revenue side and getting it up.

Milking circulation with damaging price increases is shortsighted. We've wrung our hands long enough over slackoff in traditional ad revenues. I haven't yet seen the aggressive and imaginative thinking we need from print advertising people to break a hole even through such a thin enemy line as junk mail. The kind of creative inspiration that kindles new fires needs to break out in newspaper ad departments, not just to reclaim ground lost but to lay out new bases for the future. If newspaper publishers haven't recruited, and paid for, the advertising talents to do this, the lost battles are their fault. The war is still here to be won.

It's useful to note Lester C. Thurow's recent article about human capital. The 19th Century was an agricultural era with power residing in aristocratic landowners who controlled the acres. The landowners gave way in the industrial era of the 20th Century to capitalists who could finance the plants and engines. In the 21st Century, electronically linked brainpower will dominate, Thurow says.

"The firm's only significant asset goes home every night, decides indepen-

dently how his or her skills are to be employed, controls the effort that is or is not put into the firm's activities, and in a world without slavery cannot be owned."

That human capital holds the power to re-invent newspapers and move them up to the next tier, I believe. Our challenge is to manage and lead it. To do that we must respect and value it.

Keep The Faith: I am convinced the printed word is a necessity for the thinking element in a democratic society, which is to say the ultimate controlling element, if we are lucky. Hitler was not the first demagogue to discover that the spoken word incites political passions that can be led beyond reason, and he confesses in *Mein Kampf* that he did it deliberately, and before the amplifier of television arrived. He played to the howls of the herd, not the reflections of individual minds quietly instructed by written words.

It is not likely that electronic talk shows or computer chat sites can create the rational body of common knowledge that sensible self-government has to be based on. Written examination and analysis of issues and arguments take their appeal to the rational mind which, with luck, will yet wield primary influence over the courses humanity will follow.

Maybe there will be means of delivery beyond newsprint some day. The words must still be written. The new oceans of information now flooding the world threaten to swamp, not lift, all boats. The writer or editor who is trained to identify and convey priorities and meanings bears a gift that is all the more valuable in this tempest. It is what print journalists do. The other media feed off of that.

Taking no counsel of our fears, but relying on our strengths, newspaper people need only make their own path and spurn the way of fluff and froth and superficiality that some other media are heir to. A good newspaper will lead, not ingratiate; challenge, not pacify; educate, not edify; explain, not avoid. And it will give serious and courageous coverage to the news in its own locality first. It is rather important that we do this. ■

# Hiring Explosion at Television Stations

*More New Shows, Expanded Coverage and Competition Stimulate Demand—Producers, Male Anchors Are Rare*

BY BOB PAPPER

When KSHB-TV in Kansas City switched affiliations from Fox to NBC back in 1994, it added 54 newspeople—a total news staff of 72—to expand news from one show a day to a regular news lineup of shows at 5 p.m., 6 p.m., and 10 p.m., along with the weekend.

That's what everyone expected. A station becomes an affiliate of one of the big three networks, and it goes into the news business.

Less expected is what happened across the street, at WDAF-TV, which switched from NBC to Fox. Instead of cutting back on news, the station doubled its news staff—to 110—and increased local news to seven hours a day.

"It took the entire first year just to learn what we were doing," according to WDAF-TV News Director Mike McDonald. "Hiring that many people in that short a period of time, it took time to get people into the culture of the place and get everyone on the same page."

Some people said it wouldn't last, that the station couldn't sustain seven hours of news a day. But a year later, WDAF-TV is up to 7 1/2 hours a day, after adding a half hour at 5:30 a.m. This is television news in the 90's.

The expansion is designed to do more than put additional news shows on the air. Many stations are seeking to improve coverage by hiring producers, reporters, assignment editors, and photographers so they can open new suburban bureaus and set up investigative units. Most in demand are reporters, photographers and producers. The hardest to find are male anchors and good producers.

The intense competition among the stations resembles the rivalry among newspapers in the early part of this century, when even small towns had more than one paper.

We are in the third year of a television news explosion—both in the amount of news on the air and the number of people making it happen. Research still being compiled from the 1995 News Survey sponsored by the Radio Television News Directors Foundation and Ball State University shows that of the TV stations that run news, nearly 60 percent added news staff in 1995—compared to just 7 percent that cut back. The rest reported little or no change.

"More affiliates are doing news, and they're doing more news than ever before. That's clear," according to Jerry Gumbert, Vice President at Audience Research and Development in Dallas, Texas, one of the country's largest station consulting firms. The 1995 survey results mirror figures from the year before, when almost every category of TV news operation, by market size or staff size, increased news over 1993.

"What we're feeling is the effect of what started about two years ago," according to Barbara Frye, Director of Talent Placement Services at Frank N. Magid Associates in Marion, Iowa, another of the country's biggest station consultants. "It was a shot fired when New World [Communications Group] brought a number of large stations in large markets over to Fox."

When New World threw its stations and fate in with Rupert Murdoch and Fox, it completely changed the relationships between stations and their networks, and hardly anything in tele-

vision has been the same since. New World included large and major market VHF (channels 2-13) affiliates in Atlanta, Birmingham, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, Milwaukee, Phoenix, and Tampa. The change meant Fox would, in many cases, move its programs from



BALL STATE UNIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICES

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relatively obscure UHF stations (channels 14 and up) to old-line, powerhouse VHF stations. It would be like having a newspaper column move from a suburban weekly to the big-city daily.

Local stations, which had been seeing declining network compensation, were suddenly being courted by a displaced network. This was high-stakes musical chairs, and every time the music stopped, one of the networks seemed to lose a desirable local television outlet. Group owners started making group deals; networks started buying more of their own stations; local affiliates started seeing lucrative long-term offers from previously-indifferent networks.

The people in Baltimore woke one day to find ABC, CBS, and NBC programming all on different channels. In Baltimore, Fox was the only thing that didn't change.

The game is not yet over, but CBS and ABC have lost the most so far. Between them, one or the other wound up moving from strong VHF stations to weaker UHF affiliates in Atlanta, Austin, Cleveland, Detroit, Greensboro/High Point, Memphis, Milwaukee, New Orleans, Phoenix, St. Louis, Tampa/St. Petersburg and Wilmington, North Carolina.

In less than two years, 98 stations in 49 markets have switched affiliations or are getting ready to do so in the near future. And that's just among ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC. Upstart networks from UPN (Paramount) and WB (Warner Brothers) have signed up more than 150 primary affiliates between them.

The effect on news has been enormous. Observers expected the new ABC, CBS, and NBC affiliates to add or even begin doing news, depending on their previous affiliation. And they did. The new CBS affiliate in Atlanta, WGTX-TV, now has a staff of around 50. News Director Mike Dreaden expects to spend this year working on what's already on the air. He expects more expansion in 1997.

KSHB-TV in Kansas City, the new NBC affiliate, is working on evaluating where it is and where it wants to head, but Station Manager Jim Swinehart says an increased commitment to news at the Scripps Howard station goes with-

The Radio Television News Director Foundation/Ball State University Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 1995 among all 1196 operating, non-satellite television stations. Valid responses came from 679 television stations (56.8 percent).

out saying. He expects to see both the amount of news and the news staff increase again this year.

Ron Bilek, News Director at the new NBC station in Raleigh/Durham, North Carolina, WNCN-TV, says it has been especially tough getting established in news because there's absolutely no history. His station used to be a shopping channel, and the old NBC station didn't do news anyway. Bilek now has a staff of 68 full-time and four part-time—all added in 1995. They started with news at 7 p.m. and 11 p.m. and in the last few months have added programs in the morning and at 6 p.m. More expansion is planned this year.

But it hasn't just been the new affiliates of the old-line networks. The New World stations, which had been ABC, CBS, and NBC affiliates (like WDAF-TV in Kansas City), switched over to Fox with newly expanded news departments.

WJW-TV, the former CBS affiliate in Cleveland, is now running 7 1/2 hours of news every weekday. That's up a half hour from a year ago.

WJBK-TV in Detroit, the CBS turned Fox station there has cut back from seven hours a year ago to 6 1/2 hours a weekday now. The station expanded its news in the morning, but cut out an hour at 4 p.m. (a program which long predated the switch to Fox). News Director Mort Meisner says the station's news is especially strong in the morning and at 10 p.m. "Overall, I think we'll always be looking at opportunities for news," said Meisner. "But I don't expect to expand in '96. We need to grow what we're now doing."

WAGA-TV in Atlanta, the CBS to Fox station there, is holding steady at 6 1/2

hours of news a weekday. WAGA had about 130 people on the news staff a year ago; today, they're at 128 full-time and five part-time, but they plan to add more this year. "A number of people thought we'd fall off the face of the earth," said News Director Budd McEntee, referring to the switch to Fox. "But we've proven them wrong. As far as WAGA is concerned, we'll continue to grow. We wouldn't add people if we didn't believe in what WAGA is doing. There will be no slowing down; we'll continue to grow and grow and grow."

The new Fox station in Memphis, WHBQ-TV, has taken its news staff from 28 to 55 in the last year and a half.

More and more "older" Fox stations are also expanding news or getting into the news business for the first time.

Fox affiliate WTXL-TV in Sacramento, California added people and expanded its 10 p.m. news from a half hour to an hour.

KOKH-TV, the Fox affiliate in Oklahoma City, is hiring its first news department right now. The first newscast is scheduled for Memorial Day.

It's not just bigger stations. Darcy Fauci, News Director at WICZ-TV in Binghamton, New York, says she's looking forward to the station's impending switch from NBC to Fox. She says the change will mean more news, more people, and more resources. The switch, she says, means added compensation from the network, and at least some of that money will go for news.

"I think all this [affiliation changing] has created probably 1,500 to 2,000 jobs that just didn't exist before," says Barbara Frye. That could be right as far as affiliation changes are concerned, but preliminary figures from the RTNDF/Ball State University Survey indicate that total broadcast job growth is even higher, maybe a lot higher.

Don Fitzpatrick Associates in San Francisco is the country's best-known television news talent placement company, handling reporters, anchors, producers, and managers. Fitzpatrick says he's seen more people hired in 1994 and 1995 than any single year in the past decade. "In the back of my mind, a voice says things are slowing up," com-



BOB DEAN/THE BOSTON GLOBE

ments Fitzpatrick. "But it's not."

Not by a long shot. New affiliates adding 20 to 70 staffers at one time get the attention, but the growth in television news is a lot more widespread than that.

KDRV-TV in Medford, Oregon is still running ABC programming and nobody in the market has changed affiliation. But the station added a new morning show and staff this past year. This year, "there will probably be additional growth," according to News Director Renard Maiuri. "The company is in a growth mode, and we expect to increase our presence and expand."

The same is true in Boise, Idaho, another market untouched by affiliation changes. KIVI-TV went from 23 news staffers to 26 in 1994 and added a half-hour morning news. This past year,

it added another half-hour in the morning and public affairs programming on Sunday. The staff is up to 32. News Director Brink Chipman says they're looking at other local programming, and there may be more expansion this year.

Same situation at WIBW-TV in Topeka, Kansas, where News Director Mary Loftus added a new morning newscast.

KVBC-TV in Las Vegas added a newscast and a new investigative unit. While KVBC-TV hired a variety of new people, News Director Roger Bell said it's the behind-the-scenes people who are especially hard to find. "I can advertise for a reporter and get a hundred tapes," said Bell, "but I can advertise for a producer and get five resumes."

That's a common lament from news directors. And with all the stations add-

ing newscasts, producers were an especially hot commodity in 1995.

Don't expect a slowdown this year, either. Nearly half the stations in the 1995 survey said they expect to increase the amount of news they run in 1996; only one station, an independent, expected to decrease its news. The rest expected either no change or said they weren't sure.

What's likely to determine job growth in television news? Keep your eye on five question marks.

1. To the extent that new affiliates spur growth, watch the divorce and remarriage rate among stations and networks. Certainly, the pace of affiliation changes has slowed, but there's no guarantee they're over. Stations have a tendency to stay with or sign on with whichever network is doing well at the moment. Over time, that's been anything but constant. NBC is on top today, but a number of NBC stations defected to ABC back in the 70's when at least some people questioned whether the Peacock could survive. Now, some ask the same question about Westinghouse/CBS. Remember history.

Since most markets have fewer VHF stations than the four major networks that want their programming on them, look for steady changes in line with the ebb and flow of network popularity and the "Let's Make a Deal" nature of network affiliations.

2. Most Fox affiliates run one newscast a day at 10 p.m. (Eastern and Pacific time, 9 p.m. Central and Mountain). Many Fox stations run no news at all. If more Fox stations go into news, that alone could generate a couple thousand new jobs. Maybe. So far, the only stations to go into massive amounts of news have been the former ABC, CBS, and NBC stations now with Fox (along with the enormously successful KTVK-TV in Phoenix,

the former ABC station now operating as an independent). In all of these cases, the stations were one of three popular sources for local news. That won't be the case for other Fox stations which, with a few exceptions, don't have the history in news and will have to compete with three well-established news operations. Behind the scenes, Fox has sent mixed signals on where it's heading in news, so growth in this area remains a major question mark.

3. More and more news on the old-line affiliates. The most popular expansion times in 1995: early morning news (5:30 a.m.-9 a.m.), 5 p.m., noon, and weekend mornings. Many stations haven't filled out all those newscasts yet, so expect strong, continued growth there.

Where or when will this growth stop? "I don't know," said AR&D's Jerry Gumbert. "Look at the history. In the 70's, we ran news at six and late. In the 80's, we added morning news, and stations which didn't have a 5 p.m. news added there. In the 90's, weekend mornings. We're doing news in time slots we never dreamed of."

The easy answer is that there are only 24 hours a day, so we know the outer limits. Not necessarily. More and more network affiliates are programming news on independent stations in the same market and on cable channels. More and more stations are experimenting with web sites. There are more than 24 hours a day of potential news programming.

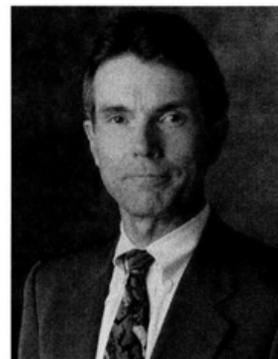
4. In today's highly competitive television news environment, some stations are expanding staff to do a better job with the news they're already doing. In fact, a quarter of the stations which added staff in 1995 did not add any more news on the air. They

added reporters and photographers to improve coverage; they added investigative units; they opened news bureaus in outlying areas. The economy was strong in 1995, and that helped. This kind of expansion is likely to be extremely sensitive to economic conditions. At least this year, watch for continued expansion. Magid's Barbara Frye sees computer-assisted reporting as a real growth area for television news.

1997 may be the real year to watch. With the cash-up-front political advertising of 1996 and the mega-media Olympics out of the way, it could be harder for at least some stations to sustain those large staffs. And by 1997, stations whose new efforts in news haven't been paying the expected dividends may decide to cut back or wipe out news altogether.

5. Keep your eye on cable news and new technologies. ABC and Microsoft/NBC have already announced plans to enter the fray; Westinghouse/CBS must be looking. Even Rupert Murdoch has made rumblings about cable news, although most insiders think he's just tweaking Ted Turner. ABC has actually been there before with the Satellite News Channel (subsequently bought by Turner/CNN and shut down). But that was then. Watch for Microsoft/NBC to be up and running first.

How computers, the Internet, and new technologies fit into all this is less clear. Even the participants aren't sure, and we're still not sure who all the participants are yet. We'll go into the next century on the current technology, but what happens five to ten years or so down the road will determine the long-term job picture in electronic—not broadcast—news. ■



© Mark Hill/CNN

## Earl Casey A Pony in the Barn

*Asked how a merger of print and broadcast enterprises might work, Earl Casey, Cable News Network Managing Editor and Senior Vice President of domestic newsgathering, told a Nieman Fellows seminar on January 18, 1996:*

I think it's all opportunities right now. I'll be looking for the pony in the barn. I think it's all good. Newspapers are burdened with a lot of stuff they don't have to be burdened with—printing plants and paper. God, I've got to own a forest somewhere so I can cut down enough trees to print this thing. I've got to have these 25-ton delivery trucks and a bunch of guys that don't want to drive those delivery trucks some days so I can't get my paper out.

A lot of stuff doesn't have a damn thing to do with journalism. Maybe we can get some of that merged, and maybe get that guy that drives the truck to be managing editor, I don't know. But I don't see the real down sides to it right now. I look forward at every opportunity to getting closer to print. Because print has got depth. Print has got people who can spend a lot of time. Broadcasters have got to move crews around and tape around, and I feel really inefficient journalistically. But I can sure cover a spot news story. I mean, I can be there on a dime.

But where I fall apart is in my ability to research stories, do depth; really dig into a story. And I've got a print partner over here that's doing that already. And if we hug each other a little bit journalistically, we've got a better product for the public. And I think that's the bottom line; that's why we're in this business. ■

## Staff Reductions at Newspapers in 1994 and 1995

*The following reports are based on a computer search of on-line newspapers. The list is not complete; other downsizing took place slowly, without announcements.*

### In 1994

January 13—The Sacramento Union, which, until it went to three days a week in 1993, called itself "The Oldest Daily in the West," ceased publication today, 143 years after it first appeared. The closure was attributed to deteriorating economic conditions and a lack of advertising. Circulation was about 35,000 last year. The Sacramento Bee is now the only general interest paper in California's capital.

January 22—The New York Times announced it would reduce its nonproduction staff, hopefully by voluntary buyouts. The paper said it was too soon to say how many employees would be affected, but Publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. suggested that the cuts would total 10 percent. One estimate put the cuts at 150 to 300 jobs. The Newspaper Guild represents 1,600 Times employees.

March 11—Three Boston Herald editorial employees were laid off and 20 commercial and editorial employees accepted buyouts.

May 1—The Valley News Today of Shenandoah, Iowa, purchased The Shenandoah Evening Sentinel from American Publishing Co. and two weeks later merged the two papers. Shenandoah, population 5,500, had been the smallest town in the nation with two independently owned competing papers. Valley hired nine of The Sentinel's 16 full-time employees.

May 14—United Media, which has

reduced its staff by more than 20 percent in the previous few months, announced that it was laying off 20 more employees. The syndicate is also closing its European office. It sold its Canadian division earlier. But United Media president Douglas Stern said that the downsizing is basically complete and "we're very much in business for the future."

June 16—The 102-year-old Oxnard (Calif.) Press-Courier folded.

June 27—The 90-year-old Ypsilanti (Mich.) Press was closed.

June 30—Ottaway Publications converted The Tri-State Gazette, circulation 5,100, from a daily to a weekly and laid off one-third of its 48-member staff. The paper serves the area where New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania meet.

July 18—American publishing Company, which purchased The Chicago Sun-Times for \$180 million on March 31, said it would lay off about 30 workers, all in the business and production departments. It had set aside \$10 million to finance staff layoffs at that paper and its sister suburban publications.

August 1—The New Jersey-based Journal-Register Co. took over The Bristol (Conn.) Press, shifted printing to its Torrington Citizen paper and laid off 33 employees. The Press, hitherto an afternoon paper, will be published mornings.

August 9—The new owner of The Chicago Sun-Times, American Publishing Co., plans to reduce the staff by 200 workers at The Sun Times and 500 at its Pioneer Press and Star Publications units.

November 11—About 75 composing room workers at The Los Angeles

Daily News have been given 60 days notice of impending layoffs. They are being replaced by a new computer pagination system.

November 15—The Wall Street Journal plans to lay off 11 managers, editors and reporters. its first newsroom layoff in four years. Daily circulation has dropped 38,000 to 1.7 million, financial advertising was down by about 25 percent last summer and newsprint prices were up.

November 22—The Wichita Eagle has eliminated 30 positions and does not plan to fill 24 vacancies, as part of Knight-Ridder's economy moves.

November 25—The Miami Herald plans to eliminate 30 to 40 jobs through attrition and buyouts to compensate for increased newsprint costs. The cuts will affect all departments.

### In 1995

January 18—Journal Communications will merge The Milwaukee Journal and Milwaukee Sentinel April 2 into one morning paper, The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, with the loss of about 500 jobs. The move was attributed to rising newsprint costs and declining circulation. Of the 3,500 full- and part-time employees more than 200 full-time employees must leave, 54 of them from the newsrooms.

March 2—The Fort Worth Star-Telegram will cease publication of its afternoon edition March 31. Maureen C. Hathaway, Vice President of Marketing, said there would be no staff cuts.

March 10 —The San Diego Union-Tribune dismissed six middle managers. Herb Klein, Editor-in-Chief of Copley Newspapers, Inc., said the layoffs were aimed at "cutting down some

layers of management" and would make the newsroom more efficient. "We believe this will allow employees more direct empowerment. They will have an opportunity to make quicker decisions in a more direct fashion."

April 8—The Providence Evening Bulletin will merge with the morning Providence Journal on June 5. The merger was attributed not to the rise in newsprint costs but to a decision to re-emphasize local news. The company expects to save about \$6 million on materials and labor. More than \$2 million a year will be invested in nearly doubling the local news hole. The local news staff will be increased from 32 to 50, the local news hole will be more than doubled and zoned sections will be expanded and appear every weekday, not just on Thursdays. With only one edition, the press run will start an hour later, at 1:30 a.m. Eighteen intern reporters, working on two-year contracts, four photographers and two editors will be hired. The interns, called "bics" because of their limited tenure, will receive about \$40 a week below the Newspaper Guild's \$480 scale. Plans call for gradually cutting 84 jobs, mostly in circulation, through attrition and buyouts, not layoffs, at a cost of \$4 million to \$5 million in severance costs. The net job loss will be about 60, bringing the payroll down to 1,150. The Journal-Bulletin has been an all-day paper since 1988. The two editions have a combined circulation of 182,000 daily, 70,000 of them Bulletins.

(On February 6, 1996, The Journal announced that it was cutting 100 jobs, or about 8 percent of its workforce, because of stagnant advertising and newsprint price increases. The reductions will be made by voluntary retirements and buyouts. One-third of the cuts are in the newsroom.)

April 13—The Rocky Mountain News laid off 17 managers and demoted others in a move to cut costs. No downsizing occurred in the news department.

April 18—The Houston Post printed its last edition today. Its assets were sold to the Hearst Corporation, owner

of The Houston Chronicle, for \$120 million. William Dean Singleton, Chief Executive Officer of Consolidated Newspapers Inc., which bought The Post seven years ago, attributed the decision to rising costs of newsprint. "The Post got hit in the head with a roll of newsprint. As a newspaper man, it's sad.... As a businessman [it] was the right thing to do." Hearst made no promises about absorbing The Post staff. The Post said its 1,900 employees, including 180 in the newsroom, will be paid for at least two months. The Post's circulation was 287,215 daily and 316,852 Sunday, while The Chronicle's was 412,337 daily and 606,707 Sunday. The closure, without any special good-by edition, means that Houston is the largest city in the country without any daily newspaper competition.

May 1—The Los Angeles Daily News plans to phase out about 80 of its composing room jobs and have an outside contractor design and produce advertisements.

May 15—The Los Angeles Times has discontinued three weekly suburban sections, for San Gabriel Valley, South Bay and Southeast/Long Beach.

May 18—Indianapolis Newspapers announced that it would merge the news staffs of The Indianapolis Star and The Indianapolis News in September. Both papers will continue to be published but will no longer send separate reporters and photographers on the same assignment. Each paper will have separate editorials and its own local and syndicated columnists and comics. No layoffs are planned.

May 25—Mary Junck, Publisher and Chief Executive Officer of The Baltimore Sun Co., announced that The Evening Sun would cease publication September 15. The loss will be offset by a thorough redesign and expansion of the morning Sun, she said. She attributed the decision to readers' shift to morning papers. The closure will improve the company's financial position "modestly" after 1996, she said.

June 28—The New Britain (Conn.) Herald laid off three editors and a part-time photographer. A spokeswoman for the owner, The Journal-Register Co., called the reduction "minor" and said it was designed to bring The Herald in line with staffing at other dailies the company owns.

July 14—Mark Willes, Chief Executive of Times Mirror Co., announced that New York Newsday would be shut down. "We have concluded that in spite of its superb editorial content, New York Newsday's opportunities to earn an appropriate rate of return are limited. We will now focus our resources on Newsday's primary market [Long Island], where it has a bright future." Newsday will publish a Queens edition, as it did before launching New York Newsday in 1985. The closing will mean the loss of 700 to 800 jobs, more than one-fourth of Newsday's total work force. About 800 people worked directly for New York Newsday. New York Newsday had a circulation of 230,000; Long Island Newsday, 463,000.

July 18—The Los Angeles Times announced that it planned to cut 450 full-time positions by the end of the year. Editorial employees said that up to 160 would be cut from the 1,300 newsgathering positions. Publisher Richard D. Schlossberg 3d said "although we will use attrition and other voluntary methods, we will have involuntary terminations in some departments." As part of the cutback, The Times will drop some specialized sections, including the weekly City Times, created after the 1992 riots to focus on the central city, and the regional sections Ventura County Life, Valley Life and Valley Business. Also dropped will be the World Report and the Spanish-language Nuestro Tiempo. The twice-a-week Westside section will be reduced and produced by a Times-Mirror subsidiary. In 1990 The Times-Mirror took a number of cost-cutting steps that reduced the staff by 29 percent, from 6,500 to 5,800, many through buyouts. At that time the San Diego edition and three weekly suburban sections were discontinued. This time there will be

no buyout offer. Schlossberg said the cuts were necessary because of the continuing weakness in the area's economy and the rise in newsprint costs.

July 27—The N.C. Beacon, a 5,000-circulation weekly that covered Research Triangle Park in Chapel Hill, halted publication. Park Communications based its decision on insufficient advertising revenues.

July 28—The Times Advocate of Escondido, Calif., was sold to South Coast Newspapers, Inc., which owns The North County Blade-Citizen. Richard High, President, said there will be layoffs but new employees will be hired in advertising and editorial. He said the combined operation would probably employ fewer than the current 523 employees of the two papers. One of the new things the San Diego papers will do is to develop local electronic bulletin boards and hook into the World Wide Web.

August 7—The Daily Californian in El Cajon dismissed 15 of about 150 employees. In addition, the paid hours of the remaining 135 employees have been cut by 10 percent. Earlier the 103-year-old paper dropped its Saturday and Monday editions and dropped most television and movies listings. It continued to provide a Sunday TV booklet and a Thursday movie list. In May it dropped its \$50,000-a-year Associated Press service, but restored the service in August.

August 19—Piedmont Publishing, which publishes The Winston-Salem Journal dismissed 34 employees as part of an ongoing effort to cut costs and increase profits. About 25 of the dismissals were in production departments, the rest in advertising, accounting and building departments. Jon H. Witherspoon, President of Piedmont, said he expected the number of reductions to eventually approach 90. "It could be 78, it could be 91, it could be more than that. I just don't know."

August 25—The Norfolk Ledger-Star published its last edition today. The

resources of the 119-year-old afternoon daily became part of its sister publication, the morning Virginian-Pilot. "We wrestled with this for a long time," Frank Batten, Chairman of Landmark Communications, said. "The thinner the afternoon paper's circulation, the more difficult it is to distribute and the more expensive it is to distribute. It's really only been within the year that we made the final judgment that we would have to close it." The Ledger-Star's circulation had sunk to 41,725; The Virginian Pilot sells 238,000.

September 2—New owners of The Berkshire Eagle in Pittsfield, Mass., have moved to cut salaries and staff, reducing the news staff by more than 25 percent. Eleven of the 40 editorial employees were either not offered jobs or decided to resign when an affiliate of the Media News Group of Denver took control last week. The new reduction followed earlier cuts of the newsroom from 62 to 40 employees.

September 15—The Baltimore Evening Sun ceased publication today. The 85-year-old paper's circulation declined by 100,000, to 86,000, in eight years, while the morning Sun circulation has risen to a record 264,000. Features of The Evening Sun will be incorporated into a redesigned morning Sun, which will begin publishing September 18. The Times-Mirror-owned company said it hoped to limit the number of jobs lost to no more than 36 news and editorial jobs and 14 in production. The company is seeking to reduce its payroll by 50 jobs with a program of buyouts. Staffs of the two papers were merged three years ago.

September 22—The Palm Beach Post is keeping about five positions vacant until 1996 because of rising newsprint costs. Editor Edward Sears says the paper is not as quick to expand its pages, has dropped a couple of comics and doesn't use as much color. But he said the newsroom budget will increase again next year and no staff cuts were planned.

September 27—The Hartford Cou-

rant announced that it had accepted applications from 188 employees for voluntary buyouts to reduce costs. One hundred others who had applied were turned down. Forty-five of those leaving are in the news department. Others are in advertising, circulation, finances, human resources, marketing, information technology and production. In announcing plans for reducing the staff, The Courant said it was being driven by a weak economy, rising newsprint costs and financial pressure from its parent company, Times-Mirror, to increase profits. "This will meet our goal for 1995 and I hope it will serve for 1996," David Barrett, Vice President and Editor of The Courant, told the staff. The Courant has not laid off any worker since it was founded in 1764. "The Courant is losing part of its heart and soul, Clifford L. Teutsch, Managing Editor, told editors and reporters. "But we have to move on." Teutsch said the commitment to produce a compelling newspaper has not slackened. The challenge, he said "is to meet the commitment with fewer people." Among those going elsewhere are three members of the team that produced the 1992 Pulitzer Prize stories on the Hubble space telescope.

September 29—The Greenville (S.C.) Piedmont, a 93-year-old afternoon daily, has ceased publication. Reporters and editors were transferred to The Greenville News, so none will lose their jobs. About a dozen full- and part-time workers in circulation and production will be lost, but Publisher Steven Brandt said he hope the reduction could be achieved through attrition.

October 13—Times Mirror Magazines announced that it would eliminate 125 of 611 jobs by the end of the year. The aim is to increase profitability, decentralize corporate functions and give greater authority to individual magazines. The staff cuts will come mostly at corporate departments. Positions eliminated include Associate Publisher of Yachting, Publisher of Salt Water Sportsman, Editor in Chief of Home Mechanix, Editor of Outdoor Life and Editor of Popular Science. Presi-

dent Effrem Zimbalist 3d said there were no plans to shut down or sell any of the 10 magazines. The goal, he said, was to raise profitability of the group, which he said was underperforming in relation to industry standards.

October 22—The North Jersey Herald and News in Passaic has cut out some of the color and fancy graphics, hired more reporters and editors and raised salaries. "We found ourselves running after TV," explained Ian T. Shearn, the new Managing Editor of the 59,000-circulation daily.

October 24—The Times Mirror Co. reported a \$299 million third-quarter loss, citing costs associated with previously announced restructuring that includes the reduction of 2,200 jobs, newspaper closings and other cost-cutting actions. On an operating basis the company remained profitable. Excluding the one-time charges, net income in the third quarter from continuing operations was \$37 million, or 21 cents a share, compared to \$36 million or 28 cents a share a year ago. Chief Executive Mark H. Willes said that the number of job cuts will exceed expectations largely because certain voluntary separation incentive programs, such as those at The Hartford Courant, attracted more participants than expected. Willes said, however, that no more job cuts are planned. "From a human resources point of view, we've made all the announcements we're going to make," he said in an interview. Times Mirror expects ongoing savings of \$115 million a year from the job cuts, which will total 1,900 among its newspapers, including about 800 at The Times.

October 24—Knight-Ridder said that it would cut up to 250 jobs, nearly 8 percent of the workforce, at The Philadelphia Inquirer and The Philadelphia Daily News. It did not rule out closing The News. The reductions will be effected by offering employees buyouts, cutting part-time hours and reducing overtime. An internal memo and reports of a staff meeting at Philadelphia Newspapers said that Knight-Ridder wanted to raise profit margins at The

Inquirer and The Daily News from about 8 per cent to 15 percent.

November 6—Copley Los Angeles Newspapers laid off almost 40 employees from its three daily publications, The Daily Breeze in Torrance, The Outlook in Santa Monica and The News-Pilot in San Pedro. Another 20 positions have been cut through attrition. The company plans to save about \$3 million in salaries and benefits through the cuts. In the last five years Copley has cut the number of full-time employees from 800 to 480, James Box, Editor of the Los Angeles publications, said, adding that the reductions should be the last for a number of years.

November 15—The Duluth News-Tribune announced it would eliminate 15 full-time jobs, affecting all departments, in the next few months as a result of high newsprint prices. "We hope we can accomplish some of the layoffs by employees who may leave or retire," Publisher Jim Gels said.

November 15—The St. Paul Pioneer Press is likely to centralize its circulation department in Miami in 1996 or 1997 to reduce costs, according to Peter Ridder, publisher. The customer service department has 35 employees. Some may remain in St. Paul. The paper has no immediate plans for layoffs, but it is making "selective hires," Ridder said.

November 15—The Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald intends to reduce its newsroom staff by up to six editors and reporters by the end of the year, Mike Maidenberg, Publisher, announced.

November 30—James Naughton, Executive Editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer, resigned, citing, as one reason, "unrelenting pressures" in the newsroom as Knight-Ridder continued to cut payrolls throughout the chain.

December 1—Citing a sluggish economy, The Quincy (Mass.) Patriot-Ledger began laying off 20 full-time and 30 part-time of its 600 workers. Publisher K. Prescott Low, whose family has

owned the paper for generations, attributed the cuts to "skyrocketing newsprint expenses" and "steadily eroding advertising revenues." The company, he said, will lose money in 1995. Editor William Ketter pledged that the paper's commitment to "first-rate news and sports coverage will not change as we tighten our belts." Ketter, who is President of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, said, "I can't travel anywhere in this country without ending up in discussion about how newspapers are reorganizing to address financial deflation."

December 2—The Baltimore Sun offered a second round of buyouts to 150 employees—108 of them mostly noneditorial unionized employees and 42 editorial and noneditorial employees not represented by unions. Fifteen of the nonunionized employees were told their jobs would end Dec. 29. The Sun also decided to eliminate a weekly Harford County edition. A reporter would continue to cover the county, The Sun said.

December 4—The Wall Street Journal reported that P. Anthony Ridder, Chairman of Knight-Ridder, says his goal is to get the chain's 16 percent profit margin for its newspapers closer to the 20 percent of other chains. At Philadelphia his aim is to increase the profit margin from 8 percent in 1995 to 12 percent in 1996 and 15 percent in 1997. Inquirer Editor Max King said editorial spending at The Inquirer is expected to decline 4 percent next year, after rising 3 percent and 3.5 percent for the last five years. Ridder also said that if Knight-Ridder Financial Inc., the business news wire, does not increase its profit within a year it would be closed or sold. The unit accounts for 20 percent of revenue and only 5 percent of profits. ■

## In New York

## A Death in the Family

BY PEG FINUCANE

I'm bitter about the death of New York Newsday. Many newspapers have died in this century; a number even in this decade, the disposable 90's. But most of them were old, frail, afternoon papers, lingering long past the time for a peaceful end.

Not New York Newsday. It was a young, exuberant morning paper. It had the best young staff in the business, guided by some of the best old hands. It was doing good work—no, great work—against strong competition. How many other 10-year-old newspapers had won 10 Pulitzer Prizes (three by individuals and seven by teams)? And it wasn't struck down by a sudden disease; New York Newsday was killed in cold blood.

Newspaper people know a lot about victims of crime and disease; they're our bread and butter. We've seen enough of them to know that there are stages of victimhood as there are for mourning: shock, anger, denial, acceptance, eventual recovery.

What happened to the Newsday family has been similar to what happens to other families who find themselves sudden victims: we've had to cope both as individuals and as a group, even some of us who never felt like much of a family to start with.

Since *that day* in July, the family has shrunk dramatically. We lost good people in large bunches right away and we lost them one by one through the end of 1995. A mighty good newspaper could be made just with the people who no longer are part of Newsday. Those of us who are left—who stayed for a variety of complicated reasons—miss them every day and still can't accept the decision that they had to go.

Few of us were prepared for the assassination of New York Newsday; I know of no one who was prepared for the coldness of the hit.

We could argue about whether Times Mirror Corporation did the right thing; Mark Willes, now known forever as the cereal killer (he was formerly General Mills president), made the decision and there was no one to whom the victim could appeal. Most of the staff on Long Island and in New York City had been confident that a financial turnaround was near and a boom was coming. We'd all been through cost-cutting and belt-tightening and felt (and were told) we'd made a difference. What followed the shutdown announcement in July was a mushroom cloud of shock, anger and denial.

There were so many questions. There were few good answers. I'm not sure some of the questions will ever be answered. I'm not sure all of us will fully recover a sense of control over our lives and our jobs.

After the first terrible shock and disbelief came anger, then fear. Hundreds of people would be losing their jobs. Some were obvious: union members who had been hired recently. Manhattanites who couldn't imagine a transfer to the 'burbs. Footloose singles who could turn severance pay into an opportunity.

But then there were the rest of us: mid-career types too young to retire and too tired to start over. Homeowners. Families with roots. Two-Newsday couples like my husband and me. Could we go? Would we have to go? Should we stay? Stay as what? Would it be better? Would it get worse? Would we still be a topnotch newspaper or would we slide

out of the major leagues into Triple A? Would the cereal killer go away and leave us alone? Does lightning really never hit the same place again?

We decided to stay. It was not as simple as calculating weeks of salary due under the buyout and dividing by the monthly mortgage payment, although we surely repeated that formula time and again. It had to do partly with hope and partly with a desire to believe that the years already invested still meant something.

The day after the buyout deadline is one I'll never forget. Almost everyone I met asked the same question: did we do the right thing or are we fools to stay? Months later, many of us are still not sure.

I came to Newsday in 1977, long before New York Newsday, before even a Queens edition. But one of the reasons I came in the first place was the tremendous potential of Newsday. It was a healthy, profitable paper poised next door to the Big Apple. It was good, but Times Mirror and the people who ran the paper on Long Island wanted it to be great. It felt alive and lively. We felt that we could help make great things happen.

Those of us who stayed don't feel lively, especially people with sweat equity in Newsday who didn't want to go across town or across the river to a new job. I find myself using medical analogies to describe the lack of morale: we've had a massive, group nervous breakdown. We're the people rescuers find wandering in the field after the plane crash. We're in remission but we don't know if we'll make it until the

one-year checkup.

Meanwhile, we come to work every day. There's no such thing as a normal workload anymore anywhere in the building. Other people's vacations are to be feared, not simply covered. Computer formatting skills are at a premium, as are headline writing and the often scoffed-at copy editing talents. (One test: does anyone know whether anal retentive has a hyphen?) Some departments lost too many people in the voluntary buyout and the vacancies can be felt in the newspaper.

Some of the departed copy editors have been replaced and there are unfamiliar bylines in the paper. But these are new kids, whatever their ages. They haven't become members of the family yet. They don't have any institutional memory and haven't been around long enough even to hear the stories. The weary ones who stayed can't help wonder why these new kids are here; why our old colleagues aren't.

I've gotten through the shock and the denial. I'm not finished with the anger. I guess I've reached a form of acceptance, but probably not in its most healthy form. I've accepted the fact that it's a one Newsday world. Whether New York Newsday should have been killed or given more time, it's gone now. It's a personal loss—I spent five years with New York Newsday, interrupted by my Nieman fellowship, and my husband, Bob Heisler, worked both on the old Queens edition and the new New York Newsday.

However, I haven't accepted that this is the Newsday world as it must be. Newsday and its people cannot remain in this emotional quagmire. Something bad happened to Newsday—to the lives of hundreds of talented, dedicated people and to journalism—and it's not quite coming back together.

We are dealing with the loss of our ideals as well as our friends. The editor has said he believes Newsday will continue to do good journalism, but our daily lives don't encourage us to believe him. We are like mourners who go through the motions of life, hoping to return to normal, without being able to imagine it right now.

Newspaper people know a lot about victims of crime and disease and even corporate bloodletting, but we're not comfortable being among the cast of characters. Cynics might wonder when we're going to get over it, get a life already. I can't say for sure. I stayed at Newsday not just because of inertia or mortgage payments, but because I believed we still have some of the poten-

tial I found attractive in the old days. I stayed because I hoped I'd still be able to grow and maybe because, having helped Newsday grow once before, I hoped we could do it again.

After all, in my mid-forties I'm too young to believe that my career has value only as a blip on some stock-watcher's chart. I'm too young to quit—and I won't. ■



*Columnist Murray Kempton leaves the New York Newsday office after filing his final column for the last edition of the paper.*

NEW YORK NEWSDAY

## In Hartford

## Empathy From Readers

BY ELISSA PAPIRNO

When The Courant announced last August that it wanted to reduce the staff voluntarily by at least 150 people, I braced myself for the complaints. "You just raised the price. The margins are all screwed up and the paper is creased all over. And now you want to make more money from us by cutting the staff?"

The calls never materialized. If anything, readers, many of whom had lost jobs at Hartford-area banks and insurance companies, expressed empathy for Courant employees.

That doesn't mean they've been quiet about attempts to make or save money. Last spring, weekly home-delivery prices went up by 40 cents—11 percent—unfortunately at the same time that editors changed the Sunday TV book and daily crossword puzzle. Even though editors thought that they were improving those two features readers tied those changes and other content issues to the price increase, with stop-giving-us-less-for-more-money arguments.

A subsequent one-inch reduction in the web width to offset newsprint price increases and a further paring in the fall still prompt complaints that the paper looks sloppy and is difficult to read. The decline in production quality gives these readers the impression that the quality of the paper as a whole has "gone downhill."

When the buyout was announced,

newsroom employment already had shrunk through attrition. The results were most visible in the local news coverage that The Courant provides in 11 daily zoned editions. Reporters have been redeployed to meet competitive challenges from suburban dailies and away from towns on the fringes of our circulation area or where readership is low.

A total of 189 employees, including 48 from the newsroom and editorial page—14 percent of the work force—ultimately left in the voluntary buyout. The downsizing was part of Times Mirror's campaign to increase profits under its new chairman, Mark Willes. The people leaving included a few name writers and a half-dozen top editors, including three of the people who worked on The Courant's first and only Pulitzer Prize, for tracking down responsibilities for defects in the Hubble space telescope.

Those remaining in the newsroom are still struggling to pick up the work of their departed colleagues and I can attest that the error rate soared in the early months.

The newsroom now is in the throes of a reorganization that includes a reduction in the number of editors and some changes in beats. As I write this, the changes have not yet been reflected in content.

The Saturday editorial page, meanwhile, was converted into a selection of syndicated cartoons, a pro-con feature and a column from the Washington Bureau that formerly ran in the news pages. Readers seem not to have no-

ticed the absence of editorials on Saturday.

There also have been some new undertakings. A monthly technology section now runs weekly, and there are plans to expand the weekly Calendar section. The buyout—and consequent losses—have forced editors, and staff, to focus on their priorities.

Inevitably, though, reporters will be reassigned and more towns may go uncovered. The intense local news coverage, unless translated into something new, could carry the seeds of its own destruction. Because of early settlement patterns and traditions of local self-government, people in Connecticut cherish their local communities. Readers expect the coverage of their town to be equal to that of their neighbors. As resources diminish, existing disparities could widen, although Editor David Barrett remains committed to comprehensive local news coverage.

Managing Editor Clifford Teutsch, in response, proposes strong stories from a variety of towns (quality over quantity). Such an approach could broaden what can sometimes seem like a parochial definition of community in Connecticut.

But the transformation, if it happens, won't be without pain. And there will always be wistful thoughts of what might have been if today's priorities could have been married with all the talent lost in the buyout. ■

*Elissa Papirno is Associate Editor/Reader Representative, The Hartford Courant.*

## In Sacramento

## That Separate Food Section

BY ART NAUMAN

Impelled by rising newsprint costs and the stubborn unwillingness of the Sacramento economy to rise from its doldrums, The Bee last summer told its readers it would have to reduce its size by more than eight pages a week.

What happened? Scores of readers hit the roof—calling, faxing, and mailing their protests. What angered them was this: their favorite part of the paper, the weekly Food & Wine section, bit the dust.

It lost its separate identity when it was folded into the regular feature section ("Scene"), sharing space with such things as the comics, television listings, Mike Royko and Miss Manners. Gone was its prominence as a stand-alone entity. Also, there were fewer recipes and standing features about food and nutrition.

"I don't give a damn about all the politics and other stuff you write about. It's the food section I look forward to every Wednesday," said one woman, typical of many.

Another complained, "On Wednesdays I go for the food section and my husband goes for the comics. Now they're both in the same section and I suppose he and I will have to argue about it over breakfast."

The loss of the separate food section—which had been six, sometimes eight, pages in size—was the most obvious sign The Bee was cutting back.

Much less evident to most readers were the small cuts the paper made in its "software" sections. For example, certain weekly features were dropped to every other week. A weekly feature page aimed at teen-age readers was eliminated for the summer months. A monthly "weather calendar" giving historic high and low temperatures, sunrises, sunsets, etc., was scrapped, sav-

ing a quarter page. (Instead, the paper now mails it free to anybody who asks.)

Otherwise—except for the late, lamented food section—the paper had simply "cut around the edges," in the words of Executive Editor Gregory Favre.

There was hardly any stir from readers about those cut edges.

"Our goal is to make the changes as transparent as possible," he said. "Hard news will not be affected. We have not planned cuts in main news, Metro, Business, Sports or Scene."

Nevertheless, the complaints about the loss of the separate food section continued arriving at the ombudsman's office into the new year, fully five months after the change. This is despite the fact that the Wednesday Scene cover page regularly has a food-related theme that jumps to two or three inside pages where some recipes reflecting that theme are carried.

Readers may have been incensed,

but they apparently didn't go so far as to cancel their subscriptions. Circulation Director Gene Czarny told me there was no impact on sales.

In addition to newsprint savings, The Bee also eliminated 74 full-time positions, plant-wide, last autumn. Thirty-seven people (four in the news department out of a total staff there of about 250) accepted early retirement offers. Nine others accepted voluntary separation, and 28 jobs that became vacant during the year weren't being refilled.

And on February 1 the paper raised its subscription rate by 50 cents a month—from \$10.75 to \$11.25 in the metropolitan area. Newsstand prices remain the same.

"The increase is necessary to offset the rising cost of newsprint, which has increased 90 percent in the past two years," the paper said in the announcement. ■

*Art Nauman is The Bee's Ombudsman.*

## And in Canada, More Layoffs

Work for The Montreal Gazette, part of Southam Inc., one of Canada's largest media chains. In the past few years the staff here has gone from about 1,200 down to an estimated 725. Last week Southam announced another round of 750 job cuts at its various papers over three years, 85 of which The Gazette will have to absorb.

On the positive side, \$80 million is put aside to buy out the 750 people.

This round of cuts is being blamed on newsprint prices. The last round, three years ago, I believe was blamed on the recession. To my knowledge, it has almost all been done through voluntary early retirement and buyouts. Unfortunately, however, in the most recent rounds, the people taking the buyouts are often some of the best and those who can most easily get another job elsewhere.

The cuts haven't been without an effect. One of the victims has been the three-person investigative team. They still dig, but they no longer have the kind of protection from the daily needs of the assignment desk that they used to. Come to think of it, that applies to most beat reporters too. They have to fight to get the time to go into things in depth.

One tactic Southam is using to reduce reporting staffs at individual newspapers is sharing stories. While it can be interesting to see your story picked up in a newspaper across the country, it also translates into fewer jobs for all of us.—Elizabeth Thompson, legislative reporter, *The Montreal Gazette*, in a message on the Internet, January 23, 1996.

## In Norfolk

## Low-Key Trimming

BY LYNN FEIGENBAUM

Unlike many newspapers, The Virginian-Pilot did not make trade-magazine headlines for laying off employees, dropping sections or angering stockholders. Remedial measures have been low-key and undramatic.

But that doesn't mean that the newsprint crisis hasn't had its impact.

I'm no expert on the business side of things, but it's obvious that our newsroom budget is under tight scrutiny. There was a temporary freeze on non-essential spending and on hiring, except for positions that were revenue producing or essential to producing the newspaper. During that period, we hired an editorial page editor and an education editor.

Both freezes dampened newsroom morale but it's hardly the same as being threatened with a pink slip. I recently attended a service-recognition gathering (for 15 years as a Pilot employee), and publisher Bruce Bradley assured us that company loyalty is not an anachronism at The Pilot. I'm a believer.

But, in exchange, he has put the burden of cost-saving and efficiency on each of us, a directive not taken lightly at a company that vigorously practices team management and what we call CI (continuous improvement).

The only organized staff reduction was a voluntary severance offer to some production employees. It was the second such early-retirement offer in two years and was not directly related to newsprint costs.

The newspaper's price has not changed, though advertising rates were increased 5 percent in September 1995.

But there has been a newspaper-wide effort to save paper. The methods have included cutting the web width from 55 inches to 54 inches, reducing in-house promotions (not enough, if

you ask me), eliminating production waste (too much?) and keeping an eye on the news hole. Most of these steps went unnoticed by readers; one backfired.

An effort to cut eight pages from our tabloid-size television guide drew more reader protests—hundreds, maybe thousands—than any other single issue I've experienced in my two-plus years as Public Editor. They specifically objected to a daytime TV grid that was both hard to read and incomplete. Six months later, we ended up restoring four pages of the section and bringing back a rolling log.

In fact, older readers in general complain that too many areas of the newspaper, notably our stock quotations, are in type that is too small or closely leaded for their bifocal-dependent eyes. I notice that editors are reluctant to increase the type size, perhaps because they know it will cut back on what they can run.

But we have not dropped any comics or other popular features—at least, not yet. In fact, we introduced an additional new panel at the same time that we added a comic strip to replace "Calvin and Hobbes."

Perhaps most dramatically of all, we dropped our afternoon paper, The Ledger-Star. The last issue was printed August 25, 1995. But that had been in the works for years and was accelerated, not initiated, by budget pressures. The two newspapers were already nearly identical, except for their delivery time.

A lot of planning went into this change, and The Ledger's demise drew little reader response. More significant from a business point of view, there was only a slight reduction in total circulation, which in 1995 ranged from 202,556 daily to 239,516 Sundays.

I have noticed an increase in com-

plaints about newspapers that are over-inked or under-inked, have shredded or misfolded pages, or are missing sections. Are we being overzealous in saving newsprint at the production end? Are "spoils" making their way to readers? I don't know the answers here. A production team is looking into this.

I've heard of no stockholder demands for higher-profits—primarily because our parent company, Landmark Communications, is privately owned. It has stockholders but most are actively employed as editors and/or department heads in the company's various newspapers (i.e. The Roanoke Times, Greensboro News & Record) and non-newspaper companies, i.e. The Weather Channel.

The Virginian-Pilot is in the process of re-examining all of its news-feature-sports content, a self-analysis that will undoubtedly lead to content changes in the year ahead. But my sense is that future circulation and readership appeal is the driving goal behind this, rather than the soaring cost of newsprint.

Hopefully, the changes will continue to be subtle and gradual. Readers do not like abrupt change; employees are made uneasy by layoffs or dramatic shifts. I think we've done things pretty well up to now and can learn from our own success. ■

*Lynn Feigenbaum is Public Editor of The Virginian-Pilot.*

## In Winston-Salem

## Efficiency Expert

*Reporters Told How Long It Should Take  
To Gather and Write a Story*

BY SETH EFFRON

When Terry Martin answers the telephone at work, the pounding bass beat of loud hip-hop music reverberates in the telephone. His job, operating Hatley's Roller Rink in Monroe, N.C., is a dramatically different working world for someone who, until October 1995, was one of the state's premier reporters on environmental issues.

For 15 years—since he was just two years out of N.C. State University—he'd been a reporter for The Winston-Salem Journal. The Journal, owned by Media General of Richmond, Va., practically invented environmental reporting in the late 1960's and in 1971 won the Pulitzer Prize for Meritorious Public Service for coverage that saved the natural beauty of the New River—one of the world's oldest—which starts in the Blue Ridge Mountains and meanders over and back across the North Carolina-Virginia state line.

Martin—and a dozen other newsroom colleagues—opted for a severance package aimed at slashing operating costs at the paper and propping up the corporate profit margin. Those who left the paper received two weeks pay for every year they'd worked up to a maximum of 39 weeks, five years added on to their total service for calculating retirement benefits and a health insurance continuation package. The workforce throughout the newspaper was cut more than 18 percent from 468 to 382. A consultant was hired, not just to help develop the workforce reductions but also to review the entire company's operations to find other areas of savings in the operation.

Expectations for reporters and edi-

tors who remained changed. A grid, resembling a restaurant menu where the patron orders a meal by selecting from various columns, was posted in the newsroom. It defined—down to the minute—just how long it should take to report and write a newspaper article. Under the guidelines in the chart, for example, a reporter, in a 40-hour-work-week should produce:

- 8 stories from column A-1 (each 6 inches long or less taking .9 hours each). This type of story comes from a press release and/or one or two cooperative sources and other available material. It requires no travel.
- 4 stories from column B-2 (each 6-12 inches long, taking 3.8 hours each). Each story is based on an event and/or cooperative sources and readily available material. Two or fewer hours of travel are required.
- 1 story from column D-3 (20-30 inches long, taking 18.8 hours each). Each story comes from multiple cooperative and uncooperative sources, more extensive research and five hours of travel.

John Witherspoon, President of Piedmont Publishing Co. and Publisher of The Winston-Salem Journal, is blunt about the workforce cuts at the paper—the state's fourth-largest (circulation 89,893 daily and 102,610). In January 1994 he had been elevated from general manager to publisher of the newspaper company where he had worked for nearly 30 years. Within a year he looked at the bottom line and

saw trouble. "Early last year, when the newsprint prices started taking off, it became clear that it pushed our profit margins down to levels that I didn't find acceptable and certainly our corporate people wouldn't find acceptable," he said.

On the corporate level, profits were no small concern. In the November 1995 issue of Money magazine 20 stock analysts rated Media General as one of a dozen top choices of companies ripe



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WINSTON-SALEM JOURNAL

CITY/STATE/BUSINESS AND ZONES STORY EXPECTATIONS

COMPEXITY	6" AND UNDER A	6" TO 12" B	12" TO 20" C	20" TO 30" D	OVER 30" E
1	*PRESS RELEASE AND/OR *ONE OR TWO COOPERATIVE SOURCES * OTHER AVAILABLE MATERIAL NO TRAVEL  40 STORIES/WEEK 9 HRS/STORY	*EVENT AND/OR * COOPERATIVE SOURCES * READILY AVAILABLE MATERIAL * LITTLE TRAVEL  12 STORIES/WEEK 3.1 HRS/STORY	* LONGER EVENT AND/OR * COOPERATIVE SOURCES * READILY AVAILABLE MATERIAL * LITTLE TRAVEL  10 STORIES/WEEK 3.8 HRS/STORY	* LONGER EVENT AND/OR * COOPERATIVE SOURCES * LIMITED RESEARCH * LIMITED TRAVEL  7 STORIES/WEEK 5.4 HRS/STORY	* MULTIPLE COOPERATIVE SOURCES * MULTIPLE RESEARCH SOURCES * MORE EXTENSIVE TRAVEL  2 STORIES/WEEK 18.8 HRS/STORY
2	* TWO OR THREE PHONE CALLS * LIMITED RESEARCH * NO TRAVEL  25 STORIES/WEEK 1.5 HRS/STORY	* EVENT AND/OR * COOPERATIVE SOURCES * READILY AVAILABLE MATERIAL * LIMITED TRAVEL  10 STORIES/WEEK 3.8 HRS/STORY	* LONGER EVENT AND/OR * COOPERATIVE SOURCES * MORE EXTENSIVE RESEARCH * LIMITED TRAVEL  8 STORIES/WEEK 4.7 HRS/STORY	LONGER EVENT AND/OR * MORE EXTENSIVE RESEARCH * LIMITED TRAVEL * SOME COOPERATIVE AND UNCOOPERATIVE SOURCES  5 STORIES/WEEK 7.6 HRS/STORY	* MULTIPLE COOPERATIVE AND UNCOOPERATIVE SOURCES * MULTIPLE RESEARCH SOURCES * EXTENSIVE TRAVEL  1 STORIES/WEEK 37.5 HRS/STORY
3	* FROM MEETING OR * FROM POLICE CASE THAT REQUIRES MORE EXTENSIVE TIME  16 STORIES/WEEK 2.5 HRS/STORY	* LONGER EVENT AND/OR * SOME UNCOOPERATIVE SOURCES * MORE EXTENSIVE RESEARCH * LIMITED TRAVEL  7 STORES/WEEK 5.4 HRS./STORY	* LONGER EVENT AND/OR * SOME UNCOOPERATIVE SOURCES * MORE EXTENSIVE RESEARCH * MORE EXTENSIVE TRAVEL  6 STORIES/WEEK 6.3 HRS/STORY	* MULTIPLE COOPERATIVE AND UNCOOPERATIVE SOURCES * MORE EXTENSIVE RESEARCH * MORE EXTENSIVE TRAVEL  2 STORIES/WEEK 18.8 HRS/STORY	* MAJOR PROJECT  5 STORIES/WEEK 75 HRS/STORY
	TRAVEL KEY	LITTLE TRAVEL 30 MINUTES TOTAL	LIMITED TRAVEL 2 HOURS TOTAL	MORE EXTENSIVE TRAVEL 5 HOURS TOTAL	EXTENSIVE TRAVEL 7.5 HOURS EACH WAY

for takeovers. A month earlier, the company acquired 29 Virginia newspapers from Worrell Enterprises of Boca Raton, Fla. for about \$230 million.

Since 1991 Witherspoon watched the paper's daily circulation drop 6 percent (95,315 in the 1991 Editor & Publisher yearbook) and 4 percent for the Sunday edition (106,852). He looked across the county line to Greensboro where The News & Record, owned by Landmark Communications, had seen circulation nose-dive 20 percent over the same period (97,100 daily from 116,516). The state's two leading papers—The Charlotte Observer, owned by Knight-Ridder, and The News & Observer of Raleigh, a family-owned newspaper that was purchased in August 1995 by McClatchy Newspapers of Sacramento, Calif., had experienced continued growth over the same period.

Witherspoon knew that to get the bottom line, where he, and his corporate bosses in Richmond, Va., wanted it, meant getting rid of workers. "The only place you can do something about it is with people. I certainly had a sense

we had too many people at many places. But I had no idea where we were over-staffed or how we were overstaffed," he said.

He looked around for help and selected DeWolff, Boberg and Associates of Charleston, S.C. Lou DeWolff, CEO of DeWolff, Boberg and Associates, said his firm has worked for a variety of manufacturers—General Motors, Ford, Chrysler and AT&T for example. The job with The Winston-Salem Journal was the company's first experience working with a newspaper. "This was the first newspaper that we'd been in. But the scenario isn't much different than an insurance company, or MCI, where the climate is very much similar," DeWolff said.

DeWolff and Boberg promise a 3-to-1 return on the investment in hiring the firm. Witherspoon says the company is in the process of saving more than \$3 million. Neither Witherspoon nor DeWolff would reveal the consultants' exact fee—Witherspoon said it was nearly \$1 million while DeWolff said it was in the neighborhood of \$800,000.

The consultants reviewed the entire operation in Winston-Salem. "I guess

the glaring thing that came out—that made us realize what the situation was—was that 10 years ago the company had so-many employees and in 1995 it had 470 and during that period you saw a gradual build up," DeWolff said. Despite the growth in workforce, circulation was declining. "In today's age of computers and automation, it's to be expected that clerical workload would drop—but it didn't. We saw that the corporate organization was fragmented—a lot of managers with little empires built up over the years," he said.

So what of the news story production chart—which became such a strong curiosity throughout North Carolina journalism circles that few newsrooms didn't have a blurred, several-times faxed and photo-copied version of the grid. DeWolff said his consultants had no reporting background. But, for each task, there have to be standards of production—guidelines. On a production line, with machines, the time it takes to perform a task can be calculated down to the second.

"When you start getting into gray

areas, such as writing an article, that's not an exact science," he said. The grid takes into account several types of stories and varieties of lengths and difficulty—developing 15 categories: three levels of difficulty and five columns for story length. In the weeks since the chart was released in the newsroom, say some reporters and editors who work at the paper, angst over it has subsided. It is still in force—but not gospel.

"Certainly it is sending a message," Witherspoon said. "The idea was to get editors to think about what reporters are doing and give them a tool to evaluate what reporters are doing," he said. "One of the things that happened over time is that we got fat and lazy. We've let people get by with less than a full effort."

Ken Otterberg, Assignment Editor for *The Journal*, said the consultants who developed the grid "didn't have any knowledge of how a newspaper worked. I spent a fair amount of time trying to show them how to gather news and how it is different than how you make widgets." He said the chart does "reflect some understanding" of reporting. But, he added, it doesn't take into account the vagaries of journalism and the details. "So much of reporting is not definable. There's a lot of give-and-take that is tough to put down on paper." In the newsroom today it is a "rough standard—and very rough. You know if people are working and if they are not—or at least you should," Otterberg said. "I think people are tired—but the reason they are tired is that people are pressing them to get things done."

The newsroom is smaller. Newsroom management, once a strict dictatorship, has become more democratic where editors such as Otterberg have a greater say in what the paper covers—not merely in the processing of articles. "We're talking about ideas and brainstorming. We never did that before," he said.

Witherspoon said the intent of the downsizing wasn't to "materially affect" the news gathering ability of the paper. "I think we've slipped a bit on our close editing," he said. But, he quickly added,

## Stars & Stripes Tightens Belt

By PHIL ROBBINS

**T**he European and Pacific editions of *Stars and Stripes*, as military-owned and published papers—although with First Amendment editorial independence under civilian editors—are slightly different animals. But they are under similar financial stress as commercial papers and are facing dramatic change.

If a restructuring plan is approved, the European edition, now published in Darmstadt, Germany, and the Pacific edition, published in Tokyo, will be consolidated in part, with some pages made up in Washington and sent by satellite to three printing sites in Europe and three in the Pacific. The purpose is to save funds on editorial staffing and to provide more local theater news for readers.

Troop drawdowns began in 1987 and, with interruptions during the Persian Gulf War, cut personnel in the European paper's circulation area (Iceland to Turkey) from about 325,000 to about 112,000 this year. In the Pacific the drop was less, from about 120,000 to about 100,000. The newspapers' circulation losses about matched troop reductions.

*Stars and Stripes* operated profitable overseas military bookstores to support the newspapers until October 1, 1994, when those operations were placed under the Post Exchange agency by Congress in an act aimed at administrative tightening.

Although the newspapers are now allowed advertising (up to a 25 percent average of total space), they are in the red by some millions—how much depends upon the accounting procedure used—

and are undergoing drastic belt tightening, which will include that proposed experimental consolidation of some editorial operations in a new U.S. office.

So far, most readers have been unable to tell that the belt has been tightened. The papers still average 32- to 48-page tabloid editions daily with color comic sections on Sundays. They still sell for 50 cents (free in Bosnia) with some two-thirds or more of circulation sold at news boxes. The Pacific edition with somewhat smaller circulation has lost some local reporters and theater news has suffered.

Under limited consolidation, however, the expected savings might allow that edition more local reporters in Japan and Korea. The plan, which may get Pentagon approval by mid-1996, is that editors in chief in both theaters will zing their news and photos with instructions about play to an editorial office in the U.S. where common pages (comics, etc.) will be put together along with military theater pages. Both European and Pacific editions will piggyback electronically on the American Forces Radio and Television Services signal from Riverside, California, to satellites which will forward the signals to the remote printing sites—including Darmstadt, Italy and Britain for the European edition and Tokyo, Korea and Okinawa for the Pacific edition.

In spite of the circulation losses, the papers still sell more than 72,000 copies daily and were mentioned in a Pentagon Task Force report to Defense Secretary William Perry as a vital quality-of-life service to the military services. ■—*Phil Robbins is The Stars & Stripes Ombudsman based in Washington.*

the *Journal* is producing a paper with stories that better reflect the interests of the readers in the central Piedmont of North Carolina.

Martin, talking over the roller-rink music, doesn't see it with the same optimism. "Personally, the cuts gave me an opportunity I wouldn't have had otherwise—to work on things I really wanted to—a novel, time with my family and with my business," he said. The grid, he says is an effort to evaluate the

quantity, but not the quality, of the work. "I always felt it was a simple thing—pull a clip file and see how many bylines are there and what they're about."

"The perception of the need for (company) change was not addressed as much as the need for corporate downsizing," he said. "When you pay someone \$1 million to figure out where to cut some \$25,000 jobs, someone is getting suckered." ■

## In Portland, Maine

## How an Editor Handles Layoffs

BY LOU URENECK

**B**uilding a staff is easy. Taking it apart is painful. A layoff teaches tough lessons about what you value in your newspaper and staff. When it was decided to embark on a course of layoffs at my newspaper, The Portland Press Herald, I was assigned a target that represented a 12 percent reduction of staff. I moved as deliberately, openly and fairly through the task as time and circumstances allowed.

I learned that there may be no good way to handle a layoff. The best you can hope for is that you can help the people who leave and preserve the spirit of the people who stay.

For me, planning and conducting the layoff involved extended consultation with senior editors about priorities and an open door to all members of the news staff who had questions or suggestions or who just wanted to talk. I listened a lot and gave a few hugs. It is not a process that proceeds without emotion or tears.

The layoffs at The Portland Press Herald were the result of a decision to cut expenses following two disappointing quarters in 1995 and the prospect, based on weak January revenues, that advertising would be sluggish in 1996. The downturn in advertising followed increases in newsprint prices, increases that we had dealt with through attrition of positions in 1995. Around the company there were plenty of glum looks about the poor health of retailing in northern New England and executive suite talk of a recession. The newspaper was not losing money but it was posting earnings below what it considered acceptable based on industry norms. The newspaper also was earning less than what the owners could get by selling the paper and investing the

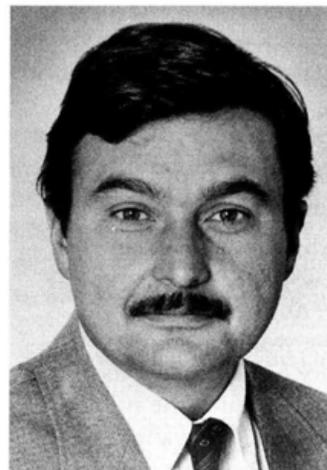
sale money in mutual funds. The Portland Press Herald is a division of Guy Gannett Communications, a family-owned company based in Portland, Maine.

After I learned that we would implement layoffs across all departments at the newspaper, I met with key editors and gave them the news. They reacted to the news with silence. It took time for the questions to emerge. I answered each honestly. Then I called together the entire news staff and informed them of the looming reductions. I took more questions. They wanted more explanation of the reasons for the reductions. They asked about the implications for the quality of the news report and the future of the newspaper. As I looked out over the group packed into the conference room, people I had worked with for years, I saw the faces of people who I knew might be among those who would lose their jobs. People with children, mortgages, older parents who needed care. People with aspirations of careers in journalism. People I had recruited to the newspaper. People who had rewarded me with excellent stories, smart editing and a commitment to hard work. It was a difficult moment.

My personal strategy for coping with events was to focus on the work that needed to be done. I wanted to make the best possible decisions. I contained my own emotion and sought to project confidence in the process without minimizing or trivializing the pain.

Nothing, it has been said, so concentrates the mind as the prospect of being hung in the morning. The same could be said of planning for layoffs. I relied heavily on my group of senior editors to help me make the decisions about where we could cut back. I scheduled

them for four long meetings, four days in a row. Each received a list of all full-time and part-time employees and a breakdown of all casual part-time hours—the extra help we use to handle big papers, heavy sports schedules and busy news events such as election day. We put hours and hours into reviewing our budget. We scrutinized the way we spent our resources, budget line by budget line, and discussed the kind of newspaper we thought we could produce after we reduced the size of the staff. There were no easy choices. We



PORTLAND NEWSPAPERS

*Lou Ureneck is Editor and Vice President of The Portland (Maine) Newspapers. In 1994-95 he was editor-in-residence at the Nieman Foundation.*

had been cutting budgets for several years, since the New England economy turned down at the end of the 1980's, and now each reduction touched a person we knew and valued. Each reduction was a potential click down from the quality we had built into our newspaper. We asked ourselves how to mitigate the impact.

I put forward five questions to the group to help us make our decisions.

1. What is the core of the report—that which is most important to readers? We agreed that it was local news from the towns and cities closest to Portland.
2. What important competencies exist among members of the staff, and how can we avoid losing or eliminating them? For example, we think we need to produce more analysis and trend stories and more in-depth enterprise. So it becomes important to preserve assignment editors who have the skills to support this work.
3. What areas of the newsroom have been tightened up in past cost-cutting efforts?
4. What areas of the newsroom could we consolidate and redesign to be more efficient? For example, should we combine the news and feature copy desks into a universal copy desk?
5. What components of excellence in the newspaper do we want to preserve? At The Press Herald, we believe we do a number of things very well. The layoffs would likely reduce the number of those things. We wanted to carefully manage what components of excellence were dropped. For example, we did not want to abandon our commitment to database investigative reporting.

In addition to these questions, I put in front of the group a bias of mine that I wanted them to factor into the planning. To the extent possible, I wanted us to avoid eliminating reporter posi-

tions. I knew this would be difficult but I believe that value of the newspaper begins with reporters. They carry the coal out of the mines. The rest of us plan, process and package it.

Fortunately, years of dialogue on our priorities and basic objectives along with close working relationships among the editors paid off in a discussion that was mostly smooth and free of rancor. I was extraordinarily lucky to be working with this group of editors. Most of the decision-making was compressed into one week; the whole process took about three weeks. Speed is a virtue in layoffs and surgery.

Eventually we came to a consensus on the reductions. We listed the cuts and their impact on the news report so that we understood the implications of our decisions. In some cases, the impact was easy to describe. In other cases it was not easy. How do you quantify the diminution of a news report? Photos that aren't taken, stories that aren't written, facts that aren't uncovered? How do you describe loss of rigor in your editing? You do your best.

During this period, I met other department heads to avoid working at cross purposes. The paper's marketing and operations vice presidents and I kicked around the pluses and minuses of reducing the number of local editions. In addition, our Human Resources Department provided information and advice on issues ranging from interpreting the union contracts to the best ways to handle bulletin board notices.

A discussion and review with the company president concluded the process of developing the reduction list. We talked of the implications of the reductions. One of the positions I had planned to eliminate would be especially onerous and noticeable to readers. He took it off the list. I was left with a reduction of 14 positions, a combination of full-time employees, part-time hours and vacant positions. Two reporter positions were on the list, but both were vacant.

The final step was individual meetings with employees who will get notices of layoff. Nothing approaches this in difficulty. Nothing.

Now, my job is to keep the staff looking forward—to the good work we have ahead of us. I have faith and confidence in the future of newspapers, especially The Portland Press Herald. We have come through rough weather. Now we need to return to the task of reporting the news as if our lives and careers depended on it. ■



Stephen E. Taylor

## Optimistic About Print

I can't disagree that there's a lot of angst around the industry but I would say that it's not everywhere. There's a lot of us who are extremely optimistic about the future of print even as we are wildly enthusiastic about our on-line enterprises. We've just finished spending \$50 million in upgrading our presses which are worth several hundred million collectively. The Washington Post is about to spend a hundred million on new presses. The New York Times is spending several times that on new presses and printing plants. I think that shows there's no lack of confidence or there's a great deal of stupidity—one or the other—in the future of print, at least among those of us who believe that quality sells. We are certainly not alone in that regard, but I will say those three institutions definitely have that in common.—  
*Stephen E. Taylor, Executive Vice President, The Boston Globe, at a seminar at the Boston University School of Communications December 6, 1995.*

# Two Against the Trend

## Shangri-la in Omaha Omaha World-Herald

BY KENNETH FREED

**I**t was raining hard and the temperature was falling toward a wind-chill 50 below when I crossed over the Missouri River from Iowa into Nebraska. I cued up the car's CD player and heard Waylon Jennings growl about Omaha weighing heavy on his mind. Mine, too.

After 32 years in journalism, much of it as an Associated Press diplomatic reporter and foreign correspondent for The Los Angeles Times, I was about to start work as a writer for The Omaha World-Herald, my hometown newspaper and my first employer (as a delivery boy) more than 40 years before.

As I neared the paper's downtown plant, I had to wonder if I were about to take the first step toward opportunity or a fall from grace.

Before last July 21, the idea of working for The World-Herald would have been laughable, if I had thought about it at all. It had a reputation for being staid, colorless and parochial.

But things have changed. At a time when other dailies were losing circulation and cutting coverage and staff, The World-Herald was moving forward.

With a steadily increasing daily circulation of nearly 250,000 (300,000 on Sundays) and a reader penetration of 66 percent, the paper was profitable and cautiously had decided it was time to expand its coverage and its staff.

In fact, The World-Herald is nearly doubling its physical plant, has hired new staffers in the last few years and plans to add more in the near future.

Reporters are traveling beyond the Midwest to such formerly alien regions as Miami and Philadelphia. International and national coverage is still largely dependent on the wires, but more and more stories are coming from The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times.

Most impressive is the determination to move from the pedestrian and predictable coverage of local institutions

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## Heaven in Oregon The Oregonian

BY BRYAN DENSON

**O**n April 18, owners of The Houston Post shut its doors after 111 years, putting me and my wife of five months out of reporting jobs. It was the first time either of us had ridden one of these dinosaurs into the ground. And, God willing, the last.

We pressed our clothes and mailed resumes as the rest of the world covered the Oklahoma City bombing. We suffered multiple job rejections, general economic hardship and an ego-boosting trip to the unemployment office.

But something far more ominous happened. Editors assured us they were in a buyer's market. The few able to hire were being extremely selective. Most seemed almost eager to prophesy continued closings, layoffs and newsroom cutbacks.

In the midst of these ever-more-grim forecasts, I found one newspaper upsizing. Editors of The Oregonian were attempting to turn the Portland daily into the nation's best regional paper. They had spent the better part of two years adding nearly 30 new faces to the staff, dividing them up into reporting teams, and taking after news like hounds after the pot roast.

Editor Sandra M. Rowe, who came to The Oregonian in June 1993, boosted the roster with only a slight budget increase. At a time when newsrooms were ordered to cut back by as much as 20 percent, Publisher Fred A. Stickel had allowed Rowe to trim where she thought best and apply the savings where they would deliver maximum impact.

"If he's going to let me scoop money off the floor," she said, "I'm going to turn it into staff."

Rowe disbanded an expensive network of suburban stringers, then hired some of them full-time in bureaus. She outlawed the use of temporary clerical workers, put a kibosh on travel not of regional importance and trimmed free-lance budgets for travel stories and book reviews.

The savings brought a lot of experienced hands on board, including me. At the risk of bragging—after 13 years

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## Shangri-la in Omaha

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and use the business, financial and educational resources of the Omaha-Lincoln area to generate staff-written stories about national and international issues.

So when Executive Editor Michael Finney made a pitch that I could be a crucial part of his effort to broaden and improve The World-Herald's coverage, I accepted.

I had been dismissed by The Los Angeles Times on July 21. After nearly two decades as a Times foreign correspondent, I joined 150 other reporters and editors as a victim of the paper's economic downsizing.

So beyond Finney's flattering view that I would enhance his paper was the reality that I had been out of work for six months, had no immediate prospects and no longer had the luxury of being sanctimonious about any paper.

I reached this state of humility unexpectedly on that July 21 afternoon when my Vermont lake-side vacation was interrupted in mid-nap by a phone call from Simon Li, The Times's recently appointed foreign editor.

"Given the economic situation," Li explained in a stilted voice that suggested a script, "there is no room at the paper for someone of your experience and talent." Thus ended 17 years and five tours as a Los Angeles Times foreign bureau chief.

The experience no longer valued by Simon Li had carried me from the blood-letting of the Iranian revolution to the barbarity of Argentina's "dirty war" to the cruelty of El Salvador's Marxist rebellion to the terror of Haiti, with stops to cover aspects of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the uprising against Israel's occupation of Arab land, the American invasions of Panama and Somalia, the Gulf War and dozens of other Third World unpleasanties.

Questions of talent, experience and even bitterness aside, the issue immediately became survival. My 58th birthday fell two days after the Li call, and in spite of The Times's severance package, a two-income household and a less than profligate life-style, I wanted and

needed to work.

My immediate assumption, and one shared by friends who were senior editors at other large dailies, was that given my age and the shrinking nature of journalism, I was unlikely to find a newspaper job anywhere near the status or pay which I had enjoyed at The Times.

As it turned out, with the exception of the Omaha paper, there were almost no other opportunities in direct journalism, regardless of pay and status.

I was not alone in feeling shut out of daily journalism. Of the six Times foreign correspondents dismissed as part of the economy drive, I am the only one at this writing to find a full-time job as a journalist.

Until Finney asked me to consider The World-Herald, I had thought my best chances were in academic journalism and foundations. But an \$85,000 job in a Central Europe journalism program fell through for lack of funds and the dozen or so schools whose advertisements I answered delayed their decisions.

Such uncertainty and delay is an occupational hazard for the jobless, but for me it was just as well. I have been an active journalist for most of my life and given my druthers, I prefer The World-Herald to any classroom. ■

## Heaven in Oregon

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grouching at four other dailies—The Oregonian made for a pretty swell landing.

As a projects writer for The Houston Post, I had toiled for lousy pay at a paper with a skeleton staff, shrinking news hole, severe travel restrictions, declining circulation and morale so low that it bonded us like prisoners of war. In 6.5 years, I got one pay raise.

Mercifully, I have seen both sides now.

The Oregonian is reportedly the second-best paycheck on the West Coast, behind only The Los Angeles Times (journeymen reporters start at about \$55,000 annually.) The news staff totals 328, largest in the daily's history, and nearly twice that of The Houston

Post on its final day.

The Portland paper's news hole has held steadily at 210 news columns daily, 400 in The Sunday Oregonian. Circulation has remained at 360,000 weekdays, 450,000 on Sunday.

Rowe recently announced three new measures to expand coverage: larger metro and arts/entertainment sections and a home-and-garden magazine.

The Oregonian's contrarian upsizing is due, in part, to impending community upsizing. The Portland metropolitan region is girding for a population explosion driven largely by its burgeoning micro-chip industry.

The paper's owners, Advance Publications, Inc., have made a financial commitment to journalism at the same time that peers across the nation have ordered cutbacks on coverage to improve the bottom line.

The Oregonian also has the good fortune of not being publicly held. Rather than cut back at the behest of shareholders, Stickel has given the editors the order to improve the paper.

"I can't say enough about the support given us by the publisher and the owners of this newspaper," said Managing Editor Peter K. Bhatia.

"To have the opportunity to focus on journalism, and the kind of improvement needed to make the paper successful into the next century, without the pressure of budget cuts, is remarkable in this day and age," he said.

The downside of The Oregonian's expanding news coverage is that there is less breaking news to cover in Portland than in towns like Houston.

The Oregonian's news staff, divided into reporting teams, spends the bulk of its time on enterprise reports and analysis, with a strong push for narrative writing. And, as The Post had been, it's considered feisty, fun, a writer's paper.

But there's one huge difference. The Oregonian is alive.

Shortly after I joined the staff, a friend from Houston's alternative weekly wrote to say he had heard I was on The Oregonian's New Northwest environmental reporting team. And by the way, he asked, "What position do you play?"

Employed, baby. Employed. ■

# No Free Lunch for Journalists— And Not Much Pay, Either

BY WILLIAM B. BLANKENBURG

The scene is the Iris Cafe at Silicon Graphics, a software firm in Mountain View, California: "The white-hatted chef is serving up plates of Parma Prawn Pasta with prosciutto and basil, swirling the whole wheat fettuccine in a giant wok with tomatoes, garlic, basil, Italian ham, salt and a little liquid from the prawns that are quickly cooking in a second wok. A large plate of pasta and prawns costs \$4.15."

I'm indebted for these culinary observations to David L. Beck, a San Jose Mercury News reporter whose recent feature story on Silicon Valley corporate eateries was wistful. (In it he tersely described The Mercury News's own cafeteria as "better than it used to be.")

The Iris Cafe is especially affordable when you consider the company's wages. Beginning computer engineers, fresh out of college and possessing a little experience, can command \$40,000 a year at a company like Silicon Graphics, according to Claudia Lindquist, a head-hunter for Techniquist in Santa Clara.

Why such pay, such perks, for nerds? Because they are appreciated, that's why. "In Silicon Valley, engineers are sort of treated like gods," an SGI worker told Beck. "You treat people that way because your success depends on them."

Now think about newspaper journalists. Aren't they also appreciated? Don't publishers depend on them? After all, who puts the news into newspapers? And how are they treated?

Beck reminisced: "I was four newspapers into a career before I went to work for one that had an employee cafeteria. It was The Register, a large

and insanely prosperous newspaper in Orange County, where its cafeteria was run by a biker mama and her chain-smoking grandmother. First thing every day, the two of them would fry up a bunch of hamburgers and toss them in a pan of water. Then, throughout the day, whenever a lower-level employee was foolish enough to order a hamburger, one of them would retrieve a patty from the water, toss it back on the grill to dry off, and serve it."

OK, forget the food. Let's talk money.

I know a young reporter who tried to shame his editor into giving him a raise after his second child was born. The reporter told the editor, quite truthfully, that his older child now qualified for subsidized school lunches. The editor merely shrugged. A reporter in the same newsroom supplemented his wages by delivering papers for another daily. He was nimble at this calling and netted about \$15 an hour, substantially more than his regular pay.

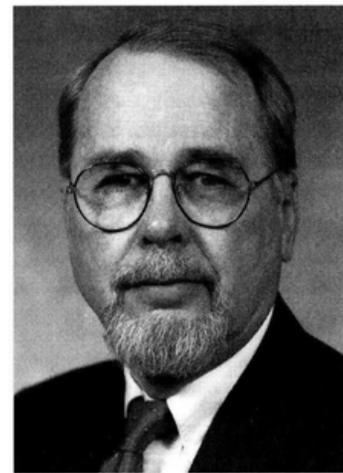
But not all is doom and gloom. A worker in the same newspaper chain received a 44 percent raise in 1994, bringing his income to about \$1.5 million. He's the CEO.

Here's more good news from Editor & Publisher. On September 2, 1995, a cheery headline proclaimed: "Some good news for j-school grads." The good news? For the first time since 1988, pay for new graduates outpaced inflation. In other words, in most years their real wages declined.

Last fall, Michigan State University's Collegiate Employment Research Institute released its annual forecast of recruiting for 1996 graduates. Chemical engineers will draw the biggest pay—\$41,183—while journalists will be of-

fered the lowest starting salaries, \$20,154.

Surely publishers appreciate and respect somebody. Let's see how reporters and editors fare against other newspaper workers. Here are some results from a long-running national survey of newspapers, conducted by an industry association that declined to release the actual numbers because they are embarrassing. The survey asks publishers how much they pay, and how their pay rates have changed from the preceding year. The numbers go back to 1989. The rates of increase are for newspapers that reported two years in a row. The average circulation of news-



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papers responding was about 40,000.

I have adjusted the wages for inflation, and the change over six years is shown below.

#### How They Fared, 1989-1995: Median Total Pay vs. Inflation

Top Advertising Executive	12.9%
Publisher	11.8%
Top Circulation Executive	5.7%
National Advertising Sales Rep.	5.3%
Editor	4.2%
Managing Editor	-1.0%
Creative Services Manager	-6.3%
Beginning Reporter	-6.4%
Advertising Artist/Copy Writer	-7.7%
Reporter, 1-4 years experience	-9.4%

Executives did pretty well against inflation, but journalists languished. Worst off were reporters with one to four years experience—scarcely an inspiration for beginners.

The national average starting salary for reporters, around \$20,000, is less than half the pay of a beginning engineer in the Silicon Valley. The difference owes partly to supply and demand. Electronics is expanding rapidly and needs engineers. Newspapers are declining and laying off reporters.

Is it unfair to compare the prospects of journalists with engineers? Perhaps, except that both have professional training and both believe they can change the world. The difference is, I think, that journalists can change it for the better. What bothers me, then, is the low status of journalists even within their own organizations.

## Circulation Trimmed

At The Wichita (Kan.) Eagle, the cutbacks are most noticeable in our circulation. We have cut back our circulation area from 50 or so counties to just 13. That will cut circulation from 103,000 to 93,000. The cost of sending a newspaper outside the 13-county area exceeds the 50-cent cost of the paper. We are not eliminating any newsroom jobs, but we lost nearly a dozen slots over the last couple of years. ■—*Hurst Laviana, The Wichita Eagle, on the Internet.*

Around Christmas I called The San Jose Mercury to see what it paid beginning reporters. The Merc is a unionized newspaper, and a beginner would get \$548.54 a week. After a year, pay rises to \$624.15. But The Mercury does not hire beginners. It requires a journalism degree and six years experience on a metropolitan daily.

An alternative for the budding journalist is a small daily like the Battle Creek, Michigan, Enquirer, circulation 28,000. It's a Gannett daily, and unionized. Last fall, its starting pay for reporters was \$385 a week, or about \$9.60 an hour. You don't get benefits for the first three months. There is no free lunch at The Enquirer.

My thoughts return to the computer industry and to Silicon Graphics and its employee restaurant, where meals are delicately prepared yet inexpensive. Indeed, at Silicon Graphics, dinners are free to anyone who works late.

I called Iris Cafe's manager, Mark Zammit, and asked him about employee

pay and benefits. He said his workers start at \$8 to \$11 an hour. They immediately receive full medical and dental benefits. He provides them with free safety shoes and uniforms. They also get a free lunch. He is very proud of them. ■

## Warren Buffett More Than a Business

It is so much more than just a business to me. I want to achieve business success in newspapers but will be unhappy unless it is accompanied by journalistic success. ■—*Warren Buffett's affidavit filed in opposition to a 1977 court suit seeking to block his newly purchased Buffalo Evening News from starting a Sunday edition on the basis that he was a money-crunching millionaire intent on driving The Buffalo Courier-Express out of business.*

## The Cub Reporter's Outlook

Suppose it's 1991 and you are a plucky girl who aspires to a career in newspapering. You decide to attend the exemplary Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University for a B.A., and then Columbia University's famous Graduate School of Journalism for a master's degree.

Your parents aren't publishers, so you take a loan for all five years. You eschew waitressing in favor of unpaid career-enhancing internships.

Room, board, and fees at Northwestern total \$21,924 a year, and Columbia costs \$25,732. When you graduate this June, after four years at Northwestern and one at Columbia, your debt will be \$113,428, assuming you have had no social life.

Good news! You land a job on The Bismarck Tribune. This Lee Enterprises daily, circulation 31,000, begins inexperienced reporters at \$19,500 a year.

Now you can settle that debt. Let's say your \$113,428 loan is at 8 percent for 10 years. Your loan payments will be \$16,904.12 a year, leaving \$2,595.88 for necessities such as the car you're required to have at The Tribune. You'll be reimbursed at 20 cents a mile, though the American Automobile Association says it costs 40.3 cents a mile to operate a car in the Midwest. Next, figure out how to cover taxes, food, clothing, and housing.

Cheer up. With less pluck you might have wound up at KXMB-TV, the CBS affiliate in Bismarck. It starts new reporters at \$14,000 a year. ■—WB

## Television Salaries Vary Widely

"Two or three years ago," according to Don Fitzpatrick of Don Fitzpatrick Associates, a broadcast talent placement in San Francisco, "a news director would say, 'it's 35 thousand, take it or leave it.' Now, it's a bidding war—especially for male anchors and reporters. And good producers can just write their own tickets."

Calls made in conjunction with the 1995 Radio Television News Directors Foundation/Ball State University Broadcast News Survey found news directors talking about salary increases in the 4 to 6 percent range with at least some people under contract getting closer to 10 percent if they re-signed with their old station. Virtually everyone labeled 1995 a better year for salary increases than 1994.

Overall, what's been happening is that a lot of big stations in markets with affiliation changes have been hiring everyone they can. As other large and in many cases medium and even small market stations move down the food chain to fill those vacancies, a slew of entry-level positions have been created, especially for reporters, photographers, and producers.

A small sampling of news directors at entry-level stations provide the picture.

Jay Hildebrandt, news director at KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, Ida. (market #163) says most of his people got raises of \$500 to \$1000 a year in 1995. At his salary level, that translates to 3 to 7 percent.

Renard Maiuri is news director at KDRV-TV in Medford, Ore. (market #145). Maiuri says raises were "around 5 percent, maybe even a little more: 5 to 6 percent." That's better than past years.

Mary Loftus said last year was at least marginally better than before. Raises in her news department at WIBW-TV in Topeka, Kan. (market #142) were generally 4 to 5 percent.

That's close to what Bruce Cramer saw, as news director at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, Fla. (market #116). Cramer said raises ranged from 3 to 5 percent, depending on merit, experience, and longevity. "And I've got Florida to sell," said Cramer, and that helps.

The 1995 survey found similar salaries for both assignment editors and producers, with the low end a bit higher for assignment editors:

\$14,000 versus \$11,000. But the high end was a bit lower: \$61,000 for assignment editors versus \$72,000 for producers. Both averaged in the mid-to-upper 20's, but the median salary for assignment editors, \$28,000, is considerably higher than the median for producers, \$22,000. The difference could be based on the number of assignment editors who also serve as middle managers, especially in smaller stations.

Jay Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls/Pocatello says both positions make in the mid to high teens in his market.

In Medford, Ore., Renard Maiuri says both make in the high teens to mid-20's, depending on experience. That's the same figure we got from Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, Fla.

News reporters made anywhere from a low of \$11,000 to a high of \$100,000. The average pay was \$26,500 and the probably more realistic median pay was \$23,000.

Reporters start out between \$13,000 and \$14,000 in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, according to Jay Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV, then move to about \$15,000 in a year. Some anchoring would raise pay into the high teens.

In Medford, Ore., reporters make in the mid-teens to low 20's, according to Renard Maiuri at KDRV-TV. Most do at least some anchoring.

That's pretty close to the numbers in Topeka, Kan., according to Mary Loftus at WIBW-TV. Loftus says reporters who do some anchoring will move into the low to mid-20's.

Around \$18,000, according to Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee, Fla.

The survey found photographers' pay ranged from \$12,000 to \$83,000, with an average of \$22,700 and a median of \$20,000.

At KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls/Pocatello, Jay Hildebrandt says they really don't have photographers—reporters shoot their own stories. Same situation in Medford, Ore. at KDRV-TV.

Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee says photographers start out in the \$16,000 range plus overtime.

Pick your salary, any salary, and there's probably an anchor making that somewhere. The survey found a range (for main news anchors) of \$11,000 to \$600,000, but there are probably 12 to 15 local anchors in the country making more than

a million dollars a year. The average comes to \$60,800, but that's inflated by the high end. A more realistic number is probably the median, which came to \$43,000. Overall, weather forecasters were second, with a median salary of \$36,000, and sports reporters third, with a median of \$32,500.

Jay Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV says main anchors in Idaho Falls/Pocatello make in the low to mid-30's.

Renard Maiuri at KDRV-TV in Medford, Ore. says reporters who do some anchoring make in the low 20's or so. Main anchors—news, weather, and sports—make in the mid-20's to mid-40's.

Mary Loftus at WIBW-TV in Topeka, Kan. gave similar numbers. Reporters who do some anchoring make in the low to mid-20's; main anchors run in the low to mid-30's and up, depending on experience and longevity.

Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee said all the main anchors there make "around 30."

There's one other clear-cut trend that has been developing. More and more stations are signing more and more people to contracts. Larger stations have always had contracts with anchors and reporters. Today, those stations frequently sign producers and assignment editors to contracts, too. So do more and more smaller stations.

"We sign everyone for a couple-year commitment," according to Jay Hildebrandt at KIFI-TV in Idaho Falls/Pocatello. "That makes it worthwhile to go through the effort to train them. They stay for a couple years, minimum." Then most go on to larger markets.

"We got hit real hard a year and a half ago" with three people leaving to bigger markets, said Renard Maiuri at KDRV-TV in Medford, Ore. "After that, we changed our policy: most [on air] people are under contract, and there are no outs in the first year." Maiuri also says he has more multi-year contracts than ever before, "even to three years."

Bruce Cramer at WTXL-TV in Tallahassee says most of his people are under contract—except photographers. "It's very, very hard keeping people." Producers, especially. "They're gold right now. I've got two under contract, but their contracts are coming up, and I expect them to move on and make more money." ■—*Bob Papper*

# Survival Strategies for J-School Graduates

BY JEROME AUMENTE

If you are painting a picture of job opportunities for recent journalism graduates, pick a palette of primary shades of gray. Newspapers, for example, once were a dependable entry point for young journalists. But the layoffs, downsizing and closings in the industry make it tougher for young job seekers competing against more seasoned, out-of-work journalists or hiring freezes caused by skyrocketing newsprint, production and delivery costs and anemic advertising revenues.

And while the most recent national survey of new graduates shows a slight improvement, the first in the last five years or so, with a modest rise in job opportunities and starting salaries, there seems little reason to rejoice.

For at the heart of the turmoil, both for the print and electronic news media and the estimated 431 colleges and universities that offer journalism and mass communication programs, is an urgent need to better understand the fundamental changes taking place in our information-diverse society. And the changes are deeply structural, technological and social, not just economic.

The more savvy publishers and broadcasters know their franchises are under siege and are developing new ways in which their flagship products—news, information and entertainment—can be better delivered to larger audiences, regardless of the format.

The more progressive journalism schools have realized the same thing. Unchanged is their mission to prepare students who can gather, organize, edit and present the news accurately, fairly, ethically and with enough grace and verve to keep people interested. And the journalism curriculum still must total no more than a quarter of the undergraduate credits, while the remaining 75 percent often includes a second major (or even two) in the humanities, social or natural sciences to

ensure a rounded liberal arts graduate.

What is changing is the need to prepare students for not only their entry level or second jobs, but also for a complex panoply of newer media and digitally based demands. Students enrolling today treat computers as second nature, so this helps. What they need are new journalistic skills and flexibility to gather and present news in multimedia formats, to be able to do taped audio and video interviews, along with the text report; to take digital photos; to handle the intricacies of hypertext and multimedia, relational databases, interactive news on demand, or web pages on the Internet. They must master computer-based sources for specialized information searches in, for example, health, medical, business or financial coverage. News piped into homes and offices over fiber optics networks in digital formats via computer and television screens, or on the road with wireless, handheld flat panel screens are no longer a novelty, but an inevitability.

The argument over whether traditional paper-ink or broadcast/cable TV can resist and conquer the new digital formats is a waste of energy and time. There is a place for all kinds of media in the near- and long-term future.

What seems likely is that job growth will be in the on-line and newer media delivery areas of this rapidly changing news and information environment. In recent months, calls to our offices for interns have come from Bloomberg News seeking multimedia, on-line trainees; from Dow Jones News Retrieval; from The Star-Ledger, the state's largest newspaper, seeking interns for its new on-line services; from a new 24-hour news cable television venture going statewide in New Jersey, which could be a hybrid platform for multiple media formats, or from a foundation wanting to publish Internet health information for journalists.

Educators still must prepare graduates for the traditional print and electronic media that are the mainstay of job opportunities for the near future. But not far behind are opportunities for graduates skilled in newer media environments, usually computer based and delivered on line, comfortable and literate in the old and the new worlds.

Today's newer media jobs are filled by conventionally trained journalists. But the need for graduates specifically trained in the newer media presents an opportunity, and a curriculum-wrenching challenge, for journalism programs bewildered, as we all are, by the frenetic changes underway.

Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism has launched an innovative New Media Center to respond to this. Indiana University's journalism program will look at the future of new media curriculum needs with a major foundation grant. Rutgers University long ago brought journalism, communication, library and information studies into one school to look at converging interests while nurturing defined missions, such as our journalistic ones. There are dozens of other similar examples.

Faced with today's turgid growth of employment in the established news media, bleak salaries and little hope of a fundamental turnaround soon, young people may increasingly hesitate to prepare for the journalism field without new incentives. Hopefully, a revitalized profession that embraces the newer technologies without losing sight of the fundamental obligations of quality journalism can help offset this. But both the news media and the schools preparing future journalists must create a whole new action plan while there is still time. ■

*Jerome Aumente is on leave as Professor and Founding Director of the Journalism Resources Institute at Rutgers University.*

## Cyberspace Job Market

BY TOM REGAN

It's a weird sort of synchronicity. In the late 90's, as many papers either cut their staffs, or close their operations entirely, other papers are expanding their on-line editions and hiring more bodies. Could it be that the new media will save the jobs of those who have toiled in the old media?

No. And yes.

On the one hand, the on-line world won't provide much of an umbrella for jobless journalists, unless they possess some pretty specific skills. (And let's not even talk about what on-line publishing means for the people who run the presses.) On the other hand, it will be writers, graphic artists and editors who will determine the success of publishing projects in the on-line world.

Let us look into the dark abyss of the 'Net, however, before we turn our eyes into the virtual blue skies of cyberspace.

Journalists are by nature a suspicious breed, reluctant to plunge into any activity, unless it's investigating the private life of someone running for office. Thus, the journalistic advance toward the Internet has been a cautious one, accompanied by much wailing, gnashing of teeth and renting of clothes. Witness the way the media, particularly the medium of television, covers cyberspace. If one relied solely on TV for an opinion of cyberspace, you would be convinced that nothing of real use can come of it, and most of the people who use it are perverts, child-rapists, or worse, liberals.

Yet many media outlets are making the move on line, and often hiring large staffs to do it. Most on-line papers use between 20 and 30 people to produce a daily on-line publication. Other media companies, like CNN or Wired, use even more. (We've heard reports of as many as 70 people.) Corporate bean counters who battle editors and publishers over the exorbitant price of toilet paper in the employees' washroom, seem ready to part with hundreds of thousands of dollars for on-line projects.

Unfortunately, this doesn't mean that the many talented journalists who have lost their jobs to the rapacious demands of the multinational media shareholders will find a new place in the cybernewsroom. People who struggle with E-mail (and believe me, most journalists do) will have a hard time convincing on-line editors that they know about HTML, or which is the best WYSIWYG editor, or how to make a form work with CGI, or the chances Java has to change the world of on-line publishing.

If old school journalists want to find work in the new media, then they had better make a few fast decisions about "lifelong learning." If not, a generation of younger reporters—who do know how to navigate on line—are waiting to fill available on-line jobs.

Yet not all is sackcloth and ashes.

Right now, most of the jobs available on line require a journalist who is part-nerd, part-surfer and part-artist. If you listen to some "experts," writing will become a minor part of the on-line experience, as "readers" will only want to engage themselves—and reporters—in a sort of virtual parlor talk.

Interactivity will be important—it's one of those new skills that journalists who want to migrate to the on-line world will need to learn. But interactivity alone will not make an on-line publication a success. No, success will be determined by good writing, imaginative use of pictures and graphics, sharp editing and a determination to get the story to the people—all the things that make good papers work today. In fact, these factors, all determined by the quality of the people involved with the project, will far outweigh any other factors. After all, when a multimillion dollar printing press, or a fleet of trucks or a brand new building are no longer the most important items on the balance sheet, journalistic talent will make the difference between on-line success and on-line oblivion.

In other words, those multinational media conglomerates and their shareholders are going to need good solid reporters and editors, or the millions they've spent on line will come to little good.

So the future is mixed. Much depends on the personal initiative of the out-of-work, or up-and-coming journalist. (For instance, why not start your own on-line publication?) He or she will need more precise skills in the future, and must be ready to do their job in a new and challenging way. For the reporter who sees the on-line world as an adventure to be undertaken, however, the future looks so bright, as the song says, they're going to need shades. ■

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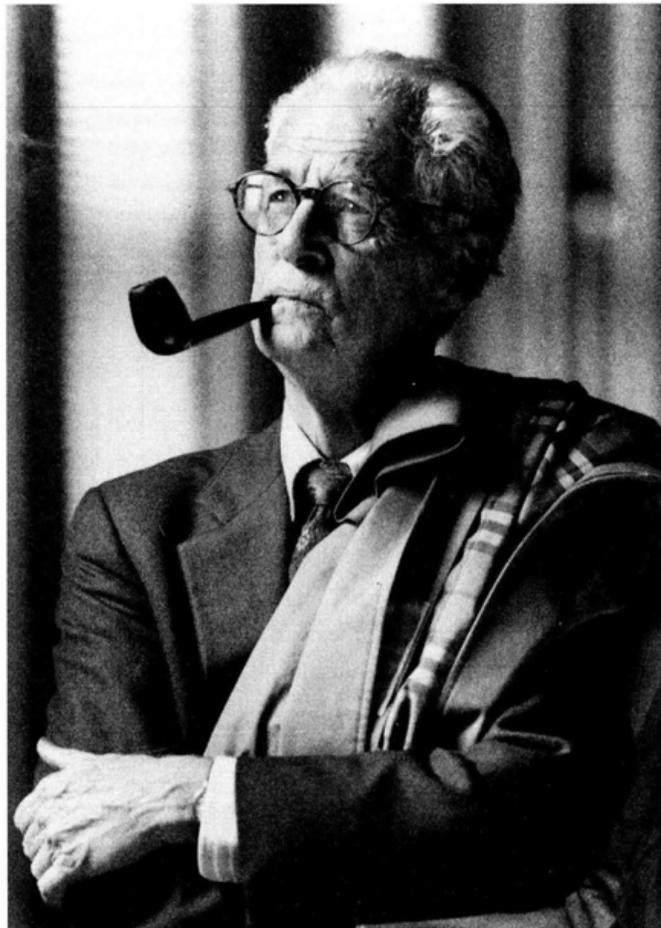
*Tom Regan is the Managing Editor of The Christian Science Monitor's On-line Edition, due to hit cyberspace soon. Tom also writes about the Internet and on-line publishing for The Halifax Daily News and Nando.net's on-line site. You can find Tom's homepage at <http://www1.usa1.com/~tregan/Homel/tom.html>.*

# The Reporter's One Commanding Duty: Look for the Victim

Following is the address by Murray Kempton, the columnist, on receiving the 43d annual Lovejoy Award for conspicuous contribution to freedom of speech and the press at Colby College on November 9, 1995.

I have reflected long upon what I might add to the dosages of enlightenment you've ingested in the years since the first Lovejoy lecture. And I have, I'm afraid, come up rather short in these rummagings, because I cannot think of much to say beyond what most of you already know and that those who don't may have to put up with several surprises in the way of disappointment before they find it out for themselves.

I can't even pretend to the wisdom of the years, since I don't seem capable of growing up sufficiently to acquire enough of it and, even in my wither, I'm embarrassed to have to confess that, if I scoured my head for evidence of better seasoning by age, I would find it instead still poorly stocked with the sober reason of the grizzled and bulging with the romantic illusions of the beardless. I remain one of those who have learned that windmills are not giants and monsters and who, all the same, cannot see Rosinante saddled up without itching for another ride.



It has been said somewhere that the one essential sentence in Holy Scripture is "Thy Will Be Done" and that all else is commentary. Our trade remains for me the story you cover, the bumps you take, the people you meet and the struggle to make sense of it all in the only way we can ever hope to make sense, which is by seeing, touching and smelling. All else is commentary.

I have lately noticed not in myself but in my bosses a tendency to think me too old to go around as I used to, and I find myself sliding further and further away from being a reporter and toward becoming a commentator and commencing to rely upon what's in my head, an under-populated premise not

enough different from Rush Limbaugh's as a resource for public enlightenment and for the stimulations of the self. All my life, when called upon to identify myself to the Internal Revenue Service, the last judgment, I have preferred to enter not journalist, not columnist, not commentator, certainly not author, but simply as "newspaper reporter." And even now, when my entitlement to make that quiet affirmation seems to diminish year by year, a newspaper reporter is as fervently all I want to be as it ever was.

And so I am worse equipped than many of my predecessors in your Pantheon to talk to much purpose about the responsibility of the media for earning the trust of the public. Some of my predecessors were publishers, who are particularly addicted to waxing on the subject of journalism's duty to truth and beauty, although I have lately

had reason to wish that my own publisher had extended its admirable alertness to its responsibilities to the future welfare of its own reporters, who are, when all is said and done, the most precious substance in a publisher's care.

It may or may not be parochial of me to say that I am by no means certain that we reporters ought to worry all that much about the dangers of lying to the public. The public is, after all, an abstraction. We would far more serviceably take care not to lie to or about the people we are covering. For after all, if they can trust us, if not to be fair by their lights at least not to lie to them. We may not be correct about them—who can be assured of being correct about any-

one else?—but we will not be false to them. When we go among humans, we are unable to deal with them as abstract presences; their very faces command us to be honorable, and once you learn not to lie to a face, you're pretty secure from the peril of lying to the generality of the faceless.

I have lately been commissioned to review the two huge volumes of the Library of America's "Reporting World War II," a compilation of the journalism from those days that seemed to its editors fittest to endure, although it would have lain forgotten still without their curiosity and their initiative.

What struck me most in these men and women was not just how magnificently they rose to the occasion but how much more they were able to learn than their editors at the home desk or their audience at far civilian remove.

These reporters had done what Stein told Marlowe in "Lord Jim" that we all must do, which is to "in the destructive element immerse." The destructive element is where the shock of recognition happens to be far more accessible to those who are buffered than to those who buffet. As the back knows more than the lash, the target knows more than the gun.

Because these reporters were stipulated non-combatants, they were certifiably only targeted. And so they quickly learned that war's supremely challenging moments arrive not when the soldier is ordered to kill but when he is called upon to rescue.

The victim, here as everywhere, is a more compelling figure than the victimizer, and that fact of life becomes patent as these chronicles proceed into the summer of 1945, when the Strategic Air Command rode triumphantly above cities tendered helpless to defend themselves, and the balance of heroic opportunity shifted all the way from the bombers to the bombed.

And, in that key, when we reach John Hersey's "Hiroshima," the terminal entry in these volumes, we are confounded to find that it is not just the story of suffering we had originally taken it to be as much as it is a story of coping. In the end, Hiroshima's victims uniting and striving to heal themselves own the

last word that speaks in these pages from the Second World War.

These reporters came upon that lesson in the only place they could meet it, as men and women not of the rear echelon but of the line. Of all this noble company, Ernie Pyle, whom I never had much chance to read at the time, stands above the rest because he most fully incarnated what a reporter ought to be.

Pyle went again and again wherever the wont extremes waited, the unscripted man bound by conscience to the comradeship of the conscripted, and enduring by free will what they were compelled to endure by necessity. By instinct, in the destructive element he immersed, and I have no evidence that he had ever read "Lord Jim" and needed Stein's instructions to do it. But I did.

I do not mean to suggest that our standards have declined from these days. Any of these reporters would have drawn pride and profit from going about with Neil Sheehan and David Halberstam in Vietnam and with Roy Gutman and John Burns in Bosnia and with Peter Arnett just about anywhere.

Then too, almost nothing in our coverage of the Soviet Union provided noticeable illumination before the late eighties and it didn't cast its highest light until David Remnick came to Moscow carrying the treasure of the literary sensibility that forbade him to stop with one or two of the great novels of Dostoevsky but pushed him on to "Poor Folk," which, however lesser a work, manages to tell you most of all you need know about what life was like on the collective farms.

For Remnick knew a secret, which took me so long to learn that I was well down the road before I went to Mississippi and found out that Faulkner wasn't weaving fantasy at all but was instead soberly working off the files of country weeklies. Ever since, I have shunned the researches of social science and depended upon the novelists and have since come across no Sovietologist as useful as Chekhov and no guide to the incorrigibilities of rulers and ruled in Central America as Conrad's "Nostromo."

No reporter, however good, can

avoid realizing that the novelist is his better; but both know that the victim is in the end most of the story. Since the victim is and probably will ever be less and less able to come to us, the reporter who is worth his salt recognizes that his one commanding duty is to go out himself and look for the victim.

And that is why I so much fear that the futurists may be right and that in time to come the accountants will have had their way and the reporter will slip into the category of surplus labor and affliction to the profit margin.

That would be sad. I won't say that it would be tragic, because I have been taught not to indulge in hyperbole, even when it is as true to the facts of the case as I feel it to be in this one. ■

## Homophobic Attacks On the Press

"One increasingly common but often undocumented motive for attacks on journalists and news organizations is sexual orientation: editors and reporters are physically attacked for being openly gay or lesbian, or are slapped with lawsuits for publishing and broadcasting news of concern to the gay and lesbian communities. Not uncommonly, these attacks are motivated as much by hatred of homosexuality as a desire to suppress coverage of a variety of issues that displeases state authorities. In societies as politically and culturally disparate as Canada, Russia and Zimbabwe, censorship is applied selectively against gay and lesbian periodicals...."

"The targets of harassment range from individual reporters from mass-circulation publications who are attacked because of their sexual identity to the publishers and editors of periodicals aimed at the gay community. Few of these incidents, however, are denounced by mainstream defenders of press freedom, despite the well-understood principle that constraints on any current of opinion or minority voice should be combated as an attack on everyone's freedom." ■—William A. Orme Jr., Executive Director, Committee to Protect Journalists, in a preface to a report, "Double Jeopardy."

# Scotty Reston on Newspapering

James Reston, The New York Times columnist who died December 6, pioneered in establishing news analysis as an essential element of a reporter's skills. Here are some of Scotty's thoughts on journalism from his memoir, "Deadline," Random House 1991.

On violating British censorship early in World War II by sending coded messages to New York on the torpedoing of the British cruiser Belfast:

A newspaper gathers more news by trust than by tricks, and while in this case the trick succeeded, we lost the confidence of officials on whom we had to rely for future information.

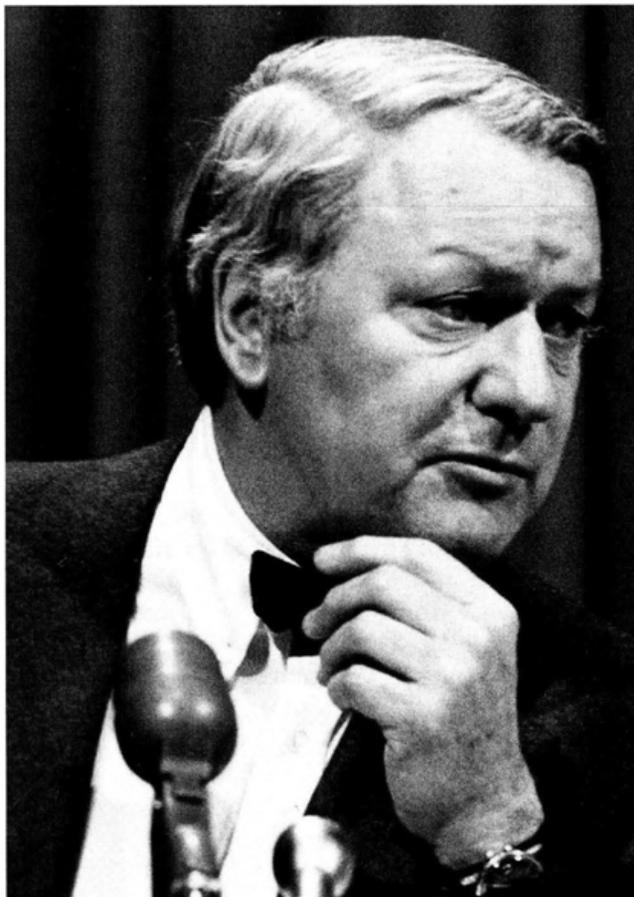
On the decline of newspapers:

I don't agree with those who think the newspaper is in decline, and I don't notice much red ink on their balance sheets.

In fact, I think we are witnessing the greatest expansion of information since the invention of movable type.

On the future of newspapers:

It has never occurred to me that the people would or should like us. We're in the service business. We deliver a commodity every day like the mail, and also like the mail, a lot of what we deliver is junk. Like most people we



*James B. Reston 1909-1995*

rattle along about the bad and the unusual and, I confess, ignore a lot of good news that happens every day. I believe, however, that the American newspapers are adjusting to their new challenges, and will undoubtedly survive in the next century, although maybe a little skinnier and poorer. Meanwhile, they have learned to pay more attention to subjects that are really popular: the latest developments in education, the arts, fashion, and health, including the latest tips on such mysteries as how to make mashed potatoes.

On the use of ignorance in reporting:

I believed in what came to be known as "the dumb-boy technique." This was based on the theory that pretense was the downfall of many reporters, and that ignorance was not always fatal but

could actually be useful, for the more questions we asked the more information we'd be likely to gather. I also believed, and still do, that the best way to get ahead of the news in Washington is to look for it not at the center but at the fringes, where anonymous officials usually tell the big shots what's coming up. This didn't always work, but it was better than sitting around waiting for handouts.

On his private line of communication with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles during the Eisenhower administration:

I was uneasy at first about this confidential liaison. Most of the time, he informed me of his views on important events but did not allow me to quote him. It was a form of compulsory plagiarism, and I feared he might try to use The Times to distribute inaccurate and unattributed information. Accord-

ingly, I sought and received permission from the responsible editors in New York to continue this arrangement. But at no time did I ever have reason to believe that he was using or implicating The Times in a diplomatic fraud.

On his youthful belief that with a free press the people will make responsible decisions:

It may be that I started out with some unjustified and romantic illusions about all of this, fifty years ago. I felt confident that the public discourse would improve: the cream would rise to the top; political leaders who could speak and write and tell the truth would encourage a spirit of toleration in the country. With equal assurance, I believed that the increasingly rapid distribution of news was bound to produce

a more enlightened electorate and a stronger sense of citizenship, and while some progress has undoubtedly been made along these lines, the results have certainly not measured up to my innocent dreams.

#### On Harry Truman's upset victory in the 1948 presidential election:

...I often looked back on that election with a kind of secret pride that we didn't know how it was going to come out; I felt that it was right somehow that we were wrong; that this great act of decision by millions of people was intensely private, and that we were properly punished by presuming to guess how the people would vote.

#### On his relationship with President Kennedy:

I didn't get on with him during his first days in the White House. When he decided to televise his press conferences, I annoyed him by writing that it was "the goofiest idea since the hula hoop," and when I protested that he stop playing favorites with reporters in the White House, he sent back word that Charlie Bartlett of *The Chattanooga Times* and Ben Bradlee of *Newsweek* were old friends and he'd damn well see them whenever he liked.

He assumed I was sore because I was excluded from these private bull sessions, but I never thought there was much mileage in confidential relationships between reporters and presidents. It was common practice in the last century, when big-city editors dined with presidents and even wrote speeches for them, but usually they gave more than they got. If presidents agreed that you could print what they said, fine, but most of the time in my experience, they told reporters little in these back-room parleys, and put it off the record.

#### On Robert Kennedy:

After the president's death, attention turned to his brother Robert, but I write about him with caution, for I never seemed to get to know him. I think it was because I had implicated President Kennedy in the Vietnamese disaster. Bobby naturally protected the memory of his murdered brother, and felt somehow that my report of the

Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting in Vienna was inaccurate or unfair. I offered to show him my detailed notes of the Vienna interview, but he said he wasn't interested and I never saw him after that.

#### On American reporters covering the Vietnam War:

They were vilified for these pains, denounced by the government, sometimes mistrusted by their own editors, condemned by some of their own colleagues in Washington, and even blamed by some officials for the nation's final humiliation and defeat. I thought this was unfair and still believe that these reporters, including the men with their television cameras on the battlefield, did a better job under more difficult circumstances than any other band of war correspondents in my time.

#### On cooperation with the government:

Occasionally I felt *The Times* was too inclined to cooperate with the government. For example, in the 1950's, when neither our government nor our press had any access to the news in China, the Chinese government invited *The Times* to send a reporter to Peking, as it was then called, but our government opposed the move and even threatened to prosecute us under the trading-with-the-enemy act if we accepted. I thought this was an interference with the right and duty of *The Times*, but the paper refused Peking's invitation, and the news blackout continued.

#### On whether to publish the Pentagon Papers:

Most editors were for printing a summary of the papers, but some were opposed to printing the documents. When my turn came, I said I was for printing everything, that if we didn't somebody else would, and if nobody else did, I would print them myself in our little family weekly, *The Vineyard Gazette*.

#### On Richard Nixon:

I saw the young Richard Nixon, and the new Nixon, and the old Nixon, but I don't think any reporter ever saw the real Nixon. He always gave the impres-

sion that he was hiding something, some insecurity or fear that he would be found unequal to the job. It was not a wholly unjustified anxiety.

#### On the rewards of daily journalism:

...I make no modest claims for newspapering, maybe because it's kinder to the reporters than to the readers. The main thing is that it gets a man out of the house and the office, and surprises him almost every day. In a world of increasingly repetitive and boring specialized labor, this gift of variety more than doubles a man's pay....

Many writers in other fields live a lonely life and often die before benefiting from the masterpieces that kill them, but solitary dead geniuses don't have much fun. Others devote ten years to a novel, and after reading the reviews, wish they hadn't. But newspaper writing, like liquor, is quicker, and while what we write today may be condemned tomorrow, at least somebody has noticed that we're alive, and we can start all over the next day....

It is not a popular opinion, but I think honest reporting cuts a man down to size. Out on any important story, he soon learns that truth is a scarce and slippery commodity and that there are not two sides to every problem but maybe ten, held with genuine conviction by serious people who probably know more about the facts than he does. This occasionally makes us consider that maybe sometimes we have been wrong. Also, we have to get our copy past our editors, and while these anonymous lifeguards are regularly denounced as willful tyrants, I think one of them should get the Pulitzer Prize every year.

Finally, if you write for fifty years about the casualties of wars and politics, and about broken lives and promises, you count your blessings, and don't expect to be popular. I don't want the press to be popular, just to deserve to be believed, and in the past fifty years I have come to the not wholly objective conclusion that it has earned more respect than it gets. ■

## Tom Friedman's 'Lessons of Journalism'

Thomas Friedman, the two-time Pulitzer Prize winner who is foreign affairs columnist for *The New York Times*, described the work of foreign correspondents as "an outdoor sport" while reporting in Washington was "an indoor sport."

Delivering the 1996 Joe Alex Morris Jr. Memorial Lecture, Friedman offered lessons he has learned as a journalist for 20 years. He described successful foreign correspondents as "cultural anthropologists" while the "best" Washington reporters are "private investigators." He listed these rules or "lessons of journalism":

1. Never ask your competition to hold the telephone for you.
2. Objectivity cannot depend on who you are; it can only depend on what you write. Success is not having both sides repudiate your product; the trick is to write so that both sides take you seriously.
3. Journalists must like people; the more you like people the more they will share with you.
4. Be quiet: I have missed stories when I was talking instead of listening. There is a time to ask questions and there is a time to wait for answers; you have to respect both.
5. If you arrive empty, you leave empty; you have to know your subject inside out and you have to have a basic angle before you start an interview. Perspective is the organizing principle for a journalist.
6. You can make a point or you can tell a story; always try to tell a story. A story that is only analytical is a test without any pictures.
7. Get it first, but get it right. It is great to be first on a story, but only if you are also right.
8. When you get beat on a story, do not waste time criticizing them; advance the story, beat them tomorrow.
9. Sometime the greatest courage in journalism is to be fair. You can win by writing what you believe is the truth, ignoring the journalistic pack.
10. Remember the difference between cynicism and skepticism. Skepticism is a necessary method for every journalist to do his job; cynicism is a cop-out.
11. It is better to be feared than to be loved. Respect comes from people believing you have the ability to define reality; it is respect-fear to which every journalist should aspire.
12. Be satisfied to have a story 100 percent; do not over-reach, you may be wrong.
13. Sometimes there is more than meets the eye and sometimes there is less; learn the difference. Conspiracy theories must yield to the facts.
14. Write what you know; believe your own eyes.
15. Do not write what you do not know; there is no single explanation for millions of transactions on seven continents over 24 hours.
16. Never try to be smarter than the story. Be sure you understand a story and let it breathe; you can never be smarter than the story. Sometimes Arafat does shake hands with Rabin.
17. More often than not, the real story is in the silence, not the noise. A valuable skill is to understand what the silence is telling you.
18. All good stories come from munchkins. Senior officials always assume they are in the know but information moves down the food chain. The munchkins are in the mid-level of bureaucracies, high enough to know and low enough to get a kick out of talking to you.
19. The best place to look for a story is often with the bureaucratic competitor of whoever you are trying to write about. The best stories about the Army always come from the Navy.
20. Never be afraid to be obvious; sometimes you are so late on a story it seems you are first.
21. Sometimes you have to protect people from themselves—not all journalists will agree with me. I do not believe that everything you hear is necessarily meat for the newspaper.
22. There is no such thing as "off the record." If it is real information and it is important, it will get into print, perhaps months later.
23. The truth is always a one-day story. This could be the Watergate Rule when a stupid indiscretion becomes a huge story because of an attempt to cover up the fact.
24. If you can't take a joke, you shouldn't have come....Even in the darkest moments, and usually because of them, people caught up in a conflict or a crisis will never forget how to laugh, and you shouldn't either.

Friedman was the 15th presenter of the lecture sponsored by the Nieman Foundation to honor Joe Morris Jr., Middle East correspondent for *The Los Angeles Times* and a Harvard graduate who was killed in Teheran in 1979. The lectureship was established by the *Times*, the Morris family and friends in 1982.

# Bringing News to Kids Via Computers

BY KATHERINE KING

**K**ids of all ages love computers. Unlike many reticent adults, young people seem to treat computers, cyberspace and the information superhighway like big fun toys to be explored and enjoyed.

At a kids' multimedia news project in Denver, Colorado, Reuters NewMedia has teamed with a cable company, TeleCommunications Inc. (TCI), to bring together youth, computers and journalism. The goal is to get kids excited about news of the world around them and to incorporate traditional standards of quality journalism into a generation that is likely to get much of its information from cyberspace.

The joint venture, called Ingenius, is 50 percent owned by Reuters and 50 percent by TCI. Ingenius publishes three news, information and communication products for young readers.

The first product, launched in May 1995, is called What On Earth. Currently delivered to the user's computer over cable television lines or through the Microsoft Network, What on Earth will also soon be available as a downloadable publication through the Internet.

A daily delivery of six multimedia pieces that vary from hard news to fun features to sports, What on Earth aims to use the allure of multimedia to focus kids' attention on world events.

The news stories are enhanced with sound (quotes from interviews or speeches, music, word pronunciations), video, animated characters, graphics, maps, text and pictures. We use the multimedia elements to bring home what the conflict in Bosnia means to young people, to illustrate environmental destruction in Brazil, to make relevant—yes, and fun—news about a transportation strike in France.

According to second grade teacher Sylvia Strubel, who uses What on Earth in the classroom, her students are already familiar with the keyboard and were immediately comfortable exploring the news in a multimedia presentation. "They think it's fun and they don't realize they are learning," Strubel says.

JAMZ! is the second kids' news and information publication developed by Ingenius. While What on Earth uses the subscription-based broadband cable delivery model as its principal delivery mechanism, JAMZ! has been conceived and designed as a World Wide Web product driven by advertising revenue.

JAMZ! will be a place on the web where kids can safely gather to talk about everything from world events to their school events and find news stories and web links to supplement their conversations.

The third Ingenius product is Xchange, a cable-delivered collection of 20 U.S. and international wire feeds—including Reuters General News and Spanish Language News feeds—that kids can use to research current events.

What these Ingenius publications have in common is that they are driven by the belief that kids' fascination with computers can provide an avenue for learning through news.

"The biggest potential in new technology and journalism is that it is creating a whole new class of news users," said Tomicah Tillemann-Dick, one of seven members of the What On Earth Youth Bureau, a team of young multimedia journalists who submit stories to What On Earth.

"People—kids—who wouldn't otherwise be interested in news events will get excited about seeing them in multimedia format. It's a primo way to get the news," said Tillemann-Dick, who at 16 years old is a seasoned reporter.

He says many of his peers in Denver are so involved in the web that it has become a major part of their everyday lives. They use it mostly to talk to each other, he says, but also to look for information for school and for fun. "I think the only danger is that some people may miss the wave," Tomicah said.



*Katherine King currently works as Editor-In-Charge of the Reuters NewMedia Ingenius project in Denver, Colorado. Katie, a 1994 Nieman Fellow, is a 10-year veteran of Reuters, working as a foreign correspondent in Panama, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and Brazil. She is a native of Seattle, where she graduated from the University of Washington with degrees in Spanish and Journalism. Fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, she holds an M.S. in journalism from Columbia University and has worked as a freelance writer and television documentary producer in Spain. Katie moved to Denver after completing her Nieman year.*

## How the Kids' News Journal Is Put Together

### Who puts it together?

A team of 16 puts What On Earth together each day—one editor-in-chief, four digital journalists, four education specialists, five multimedia authors, one video/sound editor, and one multimedia librarian. Two software engineers create the learning challenges for What On Earth. There is one computer artist.

### What content and tools are used?

Reuters text wires, RTV video feeds, Reuters Pictures, Bettmann Archives, Reuters Graphics services. Other content includes sound bites gathered through telephone interviews, sound enhancements and art from "clip art" CD's, map software and original graphic rendering by multimedia authors.

Tools include Macromedia Director, Ingenius proprietary development tools and templates, Photoshop, and QuickTime.

### What's the daily schedule?

7:30 A.M.—Daily content gathering by early team scouring the Reuters feeds.

9:00—Morning editorial meeting with entire group deciding on the six stories to develop for the day.

10:00—Multimedia authors begin laying out story pages, developing activities.

12:00—Story text deadline.

3:30—All sounds and video processed by video/sound editor.

4:30—Multimedia authors begin final stage of linking multimedia elements, programming stories.

5:30—Proofread and test all individual stories.

6:00—Flow stories into What On Earth template. Test functionality. Compress files. Test again.

10:00 P.M.—Transmission begins, lasting four to six hours.

### Where does staff come from?

Multi-skilled is the key word to the What On Earth staff background. Digital journalists have expertise in multimedia authoring, children's publishing and photography. Education specialists are marketing specialists and professional dancers. Multimedia authors have backgrounds in theater, zoology, and rock and roll. One computer programmer has a master's degree in journalism. All (for now) are U.S. citizens, but most have international travel and work experience. Languages include Spanish, French, Portuguese and Japanese.

### Why can Ingenius build a CD-ROM quality publication each day when others take months?

Ingenius proprietary software tools, combined with a variety of story and activity templates, cut hours and days from building and linking multimedia elements for publication. Add to that the richness and variety of Reuters news content, and you have a mini CD-ROM software program each day.

### How about a breaking news story?

If the material is in hand (pictures and text), Ingenius can file an update or cover a breaking news story as late as 5 or 6 P.M. ■

The development of the What On Earth Youth Bureau has been key to pursuing the vision of teaching young people how to apply journalism standards in the sometimes glitzy medium of multimedia.

What On Earth Youth Bureau Editor Janet Walters says the effort has been very satisfying.

"What's most exciting about working with the youth reporters is that they are learning how to be careful readers and writers. They learn about sourcing, interviewing and good journalism," Walters says (an experienced children's publisher—and a grownup!).

"It's rewarding to see that kids out there have stories to tell and are eager to learn how to prepare them properly. The Youth Bureau reporters are constantly E-mailing, calling and faxing story ideas to me," Walters says.

Three of the Youth Bureau members report from the United States, and four more report from their homes overseas, including Israel, the West Bank, Milan and London.

New technology allows young people to communicate with their peers and others about important events in their lives. For example, What On Earth Youth Bureau reporter Daniel Shinar, a 14-year-old Israeli, prepared a report on what young people there thought about the Palestinian elections.

Daniel learned how important it was to get all sides of the story, and spoke to several Palestinian and Israeli youth for his report, Walters says. He approaches his stories with multimedia in mind: getting sound bites, pictures, and interviews while keeping in mind possible graphic applications. For a feature on a kibbutz he is preparing to take his own video camera to capture images and sound.

Daniel and the other international Youth Bureau reporters communicate with Youth Bureau Editor Walters in Denver through E-mail, phone and fax. Walters says that the kids end up discussing issues with their peers as part of their efforts to cover their stories. Daniel regularly exchanges E-mail with the Youth Bureau Palestinian reporter Zeina Ashrawi, 14, to share information and impressions of events.

How does journalism fit into the lives of a generation which communicates by computer?

For the first time last year, sales of new computers in the United States outpaced sales of television sets to the home. The market research firm Jupiter Communications recently published statistics that show 6.5 million kids

across the country have access to on-line services and the numbers are growing quickly.

Kids' sites are sprouting across the web in recognition of young peoples' interest in and comfort with the information superhighway. Few of these sites, thus far, focus on news for kids.

There are still huge challenges to

The introductory screen, or front page, with six windows leading to the six stories covered for that day's edition. As the cursor is moved over the pictures the globe spins to show where on earth that story is taking place. Interactive learning games are attached to each story.

publishing on line for kids, including controversy over the role of advertising and ongoing concern over inappropriate material that is easily accessed on the Web.

What On Earth, a publication that is currently targeted mainly for use in schools, is purely a subscription-based product and does not contain advertising. Educators have made clear that advertising for school and education products is a heavy drawback.

JAMZ!, however, will be a user "eye-balls"-driven publication, gaining advertising revenue based on the number of young people who visit the site each day.

For kids consumer on-line publishing, the prevailing view is that tasteful, multimedia ads enhance instead of detract from the product.

Multimedia ads, which you only see

if you make the choice of clicking on an icon that triggers them, are thought to be much less intrusive than television or even print advertising.

Ingenius is also working very hard to tackle the issue of Internet safety. On the JAMZ! site, Ingenius staff will host all chat areas and will check any suggested Web links to other sites for appropriateness before recommending them to kids.

We will also work to educate all our on-line users by linking to important documents such as the "Child Safety on the Information Superhighway" published by The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Interactive Services Association. ([http://www.missingkids.org/information\\_superhighway.html](http://www.missingkids.org/information_superhighway.html))

While multimedia and on-line journalism seems to be exciting adults as

well as young people, the kids who work for What On Earth said they weren't too worried that traditional newspapers, or television or radio news would collapse any time soon.

"Hardly anyone I know uses the Internet or on line. We're not learning computers in school. So right now it's like if you don't have to use it, you won't," says What On Earth youth reporter Amanda Brodjeski, 14, who says she knows "way more" than her dad about computers, multimedia and on-line news.

"I think it's going to be a slower transition than a lot of people think. Multimedia is a more involving news experience. Whether or not more people will take advantage of it right away is the question," Tomicah says. ■

# Ollie Harrington: A View From Eschenbach Strasse

BY LESTER SLOAN

**N**ovember 1989: A heavy yellow haze hangs over the working-class neighborhood of East Berlin a few miles from the historic Check Point Charlie. Oliver W. Harrington, a 79-year old African-American stands on his balcony looking down on tree-lined Eschenbach Strasse glistening from a light rain.

Two weeks earlier, the Berlin Wall came tumbling down, and in the intervening days life for Harrington and his East German neighbors changed dramatically. For both, it marked the end of exile; his was self-imposed, his neighbors', by the iron fist of a repressive regime. The world came rushing in.

Harrington lived in Germany for more than 30 years; for 10 years before that, Paris was his home. During the 1950's and 60's he and friends Richard Wright and Chester Himes were familiar faces along the Left Bank's Boulevard St. Germain. Each had garnered a degree of success and notoriety in America before moving to Europe. Wright was the United States's most highly acclaimed black author and a celebrity in France. Himes was a gifted storyteller who moved to Europe to escape America's white-imposed farm system that only recognized one black writer at a time.

Harrington toiled in a different venue: he was a cartoonist, political activist and social satirist, who created a black "everyman" in his cartoon character called "Bootsie."

Bootsie was an amalgamation of many personalities from the Harlem neighborhood that nurtured Harrington. He gave voice to their combined frustrations; made fun of the white world in which they found themselves ensnared; and with a self-deprecating wit, delivered a debilitating blow to the vacuous notion of white supremacy in which many Americans found solace.

His reputation preceded him. Intro-



"No, it dont make no sense to me neither Bootsie. But white folks jus' wont buy nothin' if it makes sense!"

BY PERMISSION OF M. THOMAS INCE, AUTHOR "DORIS LUCHTER"

duced in the 1930's, he became black America's ombudsman, strutting through the pages of many of the country's leading black newspapers for nearly three decades. During the late 1940's and early 50's, Harrington came under intense scrutiny from the F.B.I. for criticizing what he characterized as America's apathy about lynching and other civil rights abuses toward blacks.

Those were not tolerant times. He chose exile when tipped off that Senator Joseph R. McCarthy's investigating committee was turning its sights on him and the fledgling N.A.A.C.P., where he worked as public relations director. From the Left Bank in Paris, he continued to fight a rear guard action, publishing essays and producing his artfully drawn and stinging political cartoons about issues in Europe, Asia and America. While much of his work was published in leftist newspapers and magazines (the Communist Daily Worker in the States), he steadfastly maintained that he was never a member of the Communist Party.

Harrington remained under the scrutiny of the U.S. Government during his exile in Paris, as did his close friend

Richard Wright and other black expatriates. "All a s.o.b. had to do was write something about what his friends were doing, and he could earn \$25," Harrington said.

France lost its allure for Harrington, and after a series of assignments that took him to East Germany, he settled in East Berlin, and from this outpost he witnessed the erection of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. Though his freedom was not officially impaired, Harrington erected a wall around himself.

I met Ollie Harrington in the early 1980's. Over the years, I made frequent trips to the small flat that he shared with his wife, Dr. Helga Richter, and son, Ollie Jr. From his cozy corner, he regaled me with stories about black and white expatriates in Europe, as well as his take on what was happening back home. From afar, he had a clear and obstructed view. He loved America and never faltered in his insistence that she live up to her promise.

When the wall came down, the world came rushing into his living room. Ollie was again on center stage. In an effort to secure his son's future, he sold access to his collection of drawings, only to learn later that ownership had exchanged hands. Two books, a collection of essays on "Why I Left America," and a book of his drawings, "Dark Laughter," sent him to America in the early 1990's on a lecture tour and a teaching fellowship at Michigan State University.

Ollie died last November in Berlin of a heart attack. His memory and example of the outsider, who calls them as he sees them, is an important part of his legacy. But he leaves us more than that: he reminds us that freedom is not bestowed but earned, and the dignity of every man is measured by his willingness to go beyond the barricades. ■

*Lester Sloan, a Newsweek photographer, was a 1976 Nieman Fellow.*

# The African Media



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*Daily life in Bamako, capital of Mali*

In one of the few continent-wide studies of the news media in Africa, Article XIX, the international anti-censorship center in London, concluded last year that “radio is still the most effective mass medium in Africa.”

“Poverty and illiteracy make the alternatives such as television and newspapers inaccessible to most Africans. The press is generally published in the capital city and hardly distributed outside the main urban centers.... There is both a symbolic and practical link between radio and political power in Africa. For very good reasons, the radio station is always one of the first targets for anyone planning a military coup....

“Even so, this power is sometimes diluted. Radios may be relatively cheap and available, but they still

## Radio Reigns

cost money and require a major outlay on batteries to keep them functional.... The languages used may also limit the audience....

“The influence of radio can be clearly demonstrated by two recent examples, one malign and one rela-

tively benign. A chilling example comes from Rwanda where Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines waged a campaign over several months inciting the Hutu population to genocide against the Tutsi minority and Hutu dissenters. A more positive example is shown by the importance of the western international radio stations, including the British Broadcasting Corp., Radio France International and Voice of America in spreading information about political changes in Eastern Europe as well as in Africa itself.” ■



# Regional Forms of Tyranny

BY KENNETH Y. BEST

The birth of perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Berlin Wall heralded the coming of democracy and freedom in many countries. Hundreds of millions of people, especially in Eastern and Central Europe began to break off the shackles of oppression and subjugation. Africa was not immune from this new wave of freedom.

Journalists were among the first to take advantage of the new dispensation, breaking quickly out of despotic structures of repression under which they had been for so long confined. They began writing in a manner hitherto unthinkable. Never before had media been so free to report the news and publish opinion. Never before, too, had they been so handsomely equipped to do their work from the most remote locations, via satellite telephones, computers, fax machines and the World Wide Web.

Yet journalists today have never faced greater danger of repression and physical danger. From Eastern Europe and Russia across the vast expanse of Asia, down through the continent of Africa and across to Latin America, journalists have been confronted with new, regional and local forms of tyranny to the surprise and disappointment of millions.

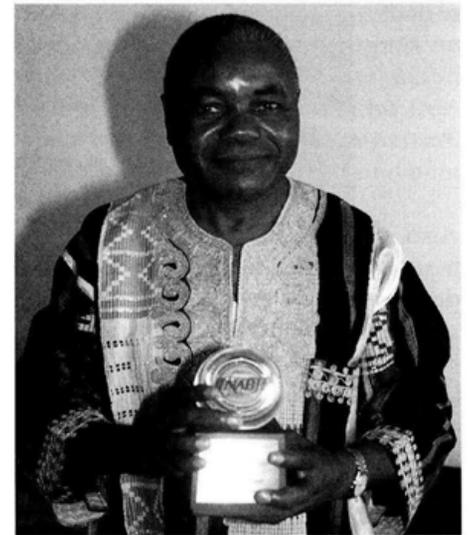
We have seen media practitioners and their organizations undergo arrests, humiliating interrogations, bannings, closures, imprisonment, break-ins and destruction of our facilities, the burning down of our offices, deportations and the brutal murder of many of our colleagues.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), in its 1995 report, recorded 49 specific examples of journalists in 18 countries killed because of their work. Seven additional cases were under investigation. This was a decline from 1994 when 72 journalists in 23 countries were killed while performing their professional duties. The 1994 toll was the largest since the CPJ began monitoring attacks on the press in 1984.

Perhaps most startling about the 1995 report is that well over half of the journalists killed were working on the African continent with Algeria the most dangerous venue. A total of 24 journalists were killed in Algeria last year and another four in Angola, Burundi, Somalia and Uganda.

These cold figures do not include those hundreds of print and broadcast journalists who were intimidated from doing their work by physical attacks or fire-bombings on their plants by official terrorists, threatened with their livelihood by politicians or who disappeared into prison with no trial or public confirmation, as in Nigeria.

Africa was one of those fortunate regions of the world that initially reaped handsome and remarkable dividends from glasnost. In East, West and Central Africa, the end of the Cold War brought to fruition the struggles of the people in many countries for multiparty democracy and an independent and pluralistic press. Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, the Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Central African



*Kenneth Best, a native of Monrovia, Liberia received a master's degree at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. With his wife Mae Gene, a fellow graduate of Cuttington University College in Liberia, Best in 1981 founded The Daily Observer. They managed to publish for 10 years, surviving five forced shutdowns, two arson attacks and a visit to jail for themselves and most of their staff. Following a new military coup and a new, successful arson attack on their plant, The Bests moved to Gambia where in 1990 they started the first professional and daily paper, Gambian Observer. Another military government in 1994 deported Best to Liberia, from where he and his wife and six children emigrated to the U.S. Best is now international journalist in residence at The American University School of Communication, Washington.*

Republic, Togo, Benin and other countries, all bastions of one-partyism since independence approximately 30 years ago, gave in to the clamor for multiparty politics.

This period saw the rise of scores of independent newspapers and other periodicals, opposition party organs, and, in some cases, private radio and television stations. This development was nothing short of a revolution, for in Kenya, despite its long history of free press, and in Tanzania the ruling parties were by law the only permitted mass political movements. In Malawi, whose former "life president," Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, proved himself one of the most repressive and autocratic leaders in the post-independence era, the government had little difficulty switching to a multiparty system after Western aid donors applied the pressure of withholding assistance.

Resistance to multiparty politics and freedom of speech and of the press has been a primary cause of the chaos that has swept across Africa over the last 30 years, leaving the continent in a sorry economic and social state. Africa today is the only region of the world where, with very few exceptions, little progress is being made; three decades after independence, Africa, for the most part, is worse off than it was at independence.

After the early enthusiasm for democratic experiments, many of the tyrants who have ruled the continent for over 15 years, including Moi of Kenya, Eyedema of Togo, Mobutu of Zaire, and Biya of Cameroon, have successfully resisted the institutionalization of multiparty politics and have viciously attacked the advocates of good government and positive change—the press, human rights activists, labor unions and religious leaders.

There have been repeated allegations of widespread rigging in successive Senegalese national elections, bringing that country often to the brink of chaos and confirming the view of many that it is hardly possible to effect political change by the ballot almost anywhere in Africa. In Côte d'Ivoire, which in 1990 embraced the multiparty system for the first time, interim president Henri Konan Bedie, who suc-

ceeded President Houphouët-Boigny at his death in 1993, has refused to give the system a real chance.

The seeming determination of African leaders to resist, at all costs, the anchoring of the democratic process across the continent has created cynicism about the utility of politics, especially among the national military establishments. This has given the men with guns an excuse for intervention in the political affairs of the state. This is, of course, in addition to the naked greed for power and wealth by many of the soldiers who are more interested in their selfish agendas than in improving the political, economic and social situation in their countries.

My wife and I and our staff at The Daily Observer newspaper were early victims of terrorism instigated by Samuel Doe, who seized power in a bloody army coup in Liberia in 1980. He took the country through 10 years of terror leading to a civil war that killed nearly 200,000 people, devastated the country and displaced almost the entire population of 2.5 million. Doe closed down our office five times, sent most of the staff to jail once and me two other times. His agents also attempted twice to burn down our building. After he was captured and killed by General Prince Johnson in the civil war, Doe's fellow tribesmen attacked our building and destroyed it.

We survived another clash with military dictatorship in the tiny republic of Gambia in 1994 when five lieutenants of the country's army, the GNA, seized power, overthrowing the 30-year regime of President Sir Dawda Jawara and his ruling People's Progressive Party. My wife and I were there, having sought exile from the war in Liberia. In May 1992 we launched a second Daily Observer, Gambia's first daily and first professional newspaper. Following the coup the media enjoyed a two-month honeymoon with the new military leaders. But when The Daily Observer began reflecting the concerns of the Gambian people and the international community about an early return to democratic civilian rule, the soldiers became uncomfortable with the paper and deported me back to Liberia.

Since then the press and ordinary Gambians have faced untold harassment. Three journalists from The Point newspaper, a biweekly, spent several months in court after being sued by the government. Fortunately for them the court threw out the cases. But other journalists have been beaten, held for several hours under interrogation and jailed. Another Observer journalist, who had sought exile from Sierra Leone, was deported in October to his war-torn country.

The African landscape is not entirely bleak. There are two or three bright spots, all of them in Southern Africa, where democratic pluralism is developing. One, Namibia, enjoys freedom of speech and of the press. A second is Botswana, which has six leading political parties and five independent weekly newspapers while radio and television are state-owned and controlled. The third is South Africa, the model of press freedom in Africa, where newspapers and magazines exercise independence and where control over broadcasting has been liberalized. ■

## A Different Perspective

In Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), La Voie published a headline that said the presence of President Henri Konan Bedie brought bad luck to the home team at an international soccer match. The editor and two reporters were sent to jail for two years and the newspaper was suspended for "offense to the head of state."

This incident and others generated this response from Venance Konan, Editor of Ivoire Soir, a pro-government tabloid: "Our small nations are still fragile and require a lot of serenity to develop. Liberty of the press, as seen by a Westerner, is different from what we see as Africans. We still have ethnic problems that can explode at any moment, for example, and when a journalist incites tribal hatred, it is better to put him in jail."—*The New York Times*, January 14, 1996. ■



# Nigeria: The Polarized Press

BY OLATUNJI DARE

The Nigerian press boasts some 40 daily newspapers, each with a Sunday edition, some 20 weeklies devoted to business, sports and entertainment, six weekly news magazines and a dozen other periodicals. The best among them are very good. The Guardian was rated by diplomats in Nigeria as one of the finest newspapers anywhere. The weekly news magazine *Newswatch* and *Tell* have won international awards. Some of the publications are just passable. A good many are poor imitations of supermarket gossip sheets that are dismissed here as "junk journals."

Only in the broadest sense, however, can one speak of such a thing as "the Nigerian press" for there are profound regional and ideological differences. The press in Western Nigeria is basically privately owned; it is the most successful financially and the most liberal in outlook. The press in the North is conservative and consists largely of government-funded publications that cannot survive in the competitive market. The press in Eastern Nigeria is betwixt and between.

Religion and ethnicity are also significant factors in press outlook. The press in the predominately Christian East and the West is secular. In the predominately Muslim North, the press is pro-Islam. In all three regions, what operates for the most part is an instrumental press that tends to espouse causes that advance the interests of its proprietors or their ethnic groups, oftentimes with scant regard for the larger public interest.

These divisions are almost as old as the Nigerian press itself, but rarely have they been as deep as they are today. So

polarized has the press become that the Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria split into two factions when proprietors in the North broke away.

Nor does the press speak with a common voice even on issues that threaten its very existence. In 1993, when the federal government first set up a Newspaper Registration Board to license newspapers and regulate their operations in ways designed to emasculate them, the press as a body could not mount a legal challenge. Understandably, government-funded newspapers could not take the government to court. But even most of the supposedly independent newspapers could not be moved to join in a class-action suit. Their excuse was that they preferred to have a dialogue with the government on the issue rather than engage in "confrontation," as if the decree itself was a product of a dialogue. In the end, *The Guardian* alone challenged the decree in court, and it was declared unconstitutional, null and void. The decree was then resurrected by the simple expedient of suspending the provisions of the Constitution it conflicted with in its earlier form.

For all its rich profusion, however, the combined daily circulation of newspapers in Nigeria was less than one million even before the ban of the *Guardian*, *Concord* and *Punch* publications. For Sunday newspapers, the combined circulation was about 1.2 million copies. The combined sales for weekly news magazines is less than 200,000 copies.

Some 20 years ago, *The Sunday Times* of Lagos alone sold 500,000 copies weekly. Cover price was a mere five kobo (about 3 cents) and the reader

could conveniently buy as many as six different newspapers a day to get a broad sweep of developments. Even six years ago, the price was an affordable five cents. Today, the cost is 40 times higher and rising. Few individuals can now buy a newspaper every day.



KEIS SUIBBLE

*Olatunji Dare was awarded the 1995 Louis M. Lyons Award for Conscience and Integrity in Journalism. After undergraduate training in Nigeria, he was awarded a master's degree in journalism at the Columbia University School of Journalism and a doctorate in mass communications at Indiana University. He was Editorial Chairman of the Guardian Newspapers in Lagos until forced to give up his position for refusing to apologize for writings critical of the military government of Nigeria. After receiving his award, he wrote the Nieman Foundation: "I leave for Nigeria on Sunday, knowing that tough and probably dangerous times lie ahead, but optimistic that change—beneficent change—cannot fail to come soon."*

So, also, is it with the magazines. Over the last five years, cover prices have gone up more than tenfold. The cost of a copy is just slightly less than the national minimum daily wage (about 63 cents) and few patrons can buy regularly.

The economy has been in a deepening recession. Failing businesses (including newspapers), closed factories and collapsed banks litter the economic landscape. Advertising support for the media, never very strong, is shrinking. The continuing

fall of the national currency, the naira, relative to major foreign currencies has meant ever-spiraling costs.

To survive in a tough, competitive and shrinking market, newspapers and magazines have had to devise new strategies that have obliterated or rendered very faint the line that traditionally separated news from advertisements. News is no longer what an editor considers significant, but what a sponsor can pay for. And the sponsor is not always identified. News reporters often double as advertising canvassers; sponsors invariably prescribe how their material is to be featured in the news. Television and radio bulletins are full of reports of annual general meetings, turnover, profits and dividends presented as indicated by a sponsor in a most uncritical manner. Thus, apart from blurring the line separating news from advertisements, the economic conditions of today have eroded the autonomy on which editors have always prided themselves.

Despite these constraints, the news media are locked into the "bigger-is-better" syndrome that has vitiating much of the thinking and planning for development in Nigeria. Every newspaper wants to be seen as "national." Several years ago, an editor actually lost his job because he described his own newspa-



*Nigerian youths, many of them unemployed, listening to radio.*

per, accurately in my view, as a "provincial" journal. Scarce resources are dissipated in ambitious and misguided efforts to cover the entire country. Giant radio and television networks providing little autonomy for affiliated stations take the place of community stations that the public can relate to or even participate in programming for.

To restore a sense of proportion, some community newspapers have been established lately. Though well-conceived, most of them are poorly executed. Publishing mainly in English as weeklies or monthlies, they are local or regional digests of the metropolitan newspapers. Some community-based radio and television stations have recently been sanctioned, but their impact has been felt thus far more in music and entertainment than in news and public affairs programming.

The estimated 80 percent of Nigeria's population of 98 million who live in the rural areas and are not literate in English are poorly served by the print media. Those literate in Hausa—the predominant language in Northern Nigeria—can have the *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo* three times a week. Those literate in Yoruba, predominant in Western

Nigeria, can read two newspapers in that language each week. Those literate only in Igbo in Eastern Nigeria are served by just one paper a week. No indigenous language group is served by anything that can be called a news magazine.

The range and quality of media in English are far superior to those of the indigenous language media, which are for the most part devoted to the sensational

and bizarre, the type that rural folk are presumed to prefer. The level of education of newspapers in the English-language media is far higher than that of newswriters in indigenous languages. Typically, the former has a university degree in the arts, social sciences and mass communication or a diploma in journalism obtained from a polytechnic; the latter rarely possess such qualifications.

The bulk of newspaper advertising goes to the English language press. Consequently, indigenous language newspapers for the most part are miserable adjuncts to the English language press. They are locked into a vicious circle. Because it is presumed that only a small audience exists for them, they are produced only as weeklies or periodicals. Consequently, they attract little advertising and are not self-sustaining. Because they are not self-sustaining, because they are held to constitute a drain on resources, little effort is made to develop them or to widen their appeal. Because such effort is lacking, they continue to stagnate.

The electronic media do break down the literacy barrier, but there again, programming in English is far superior in range and quality to programming in indigenous languages. English language news bulletins are broadcast far more

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frequently and are more comprehensive than news bulletins in indigenous languages, which suffer the disadvantage of being frequently distorted through translation errors arising from the modest educational and professional backgrounds of the newswriters.

### Training

Opportunities for training and retraining abound in Nigeria. Some 12 universities offer degree courses in journalism. Four of these institutions offer graduate courses in communication, two of them at the master's level and two up to the doctorate. The Nigerian Institute of Journalism, and the Times Journalism Institute provide training programs for working journalists. Six polytechnical schools offer diploma programs in journalism. Class sizes are large and few instructors have significant practical or professional experience. Typically, the curriculum has a large dose of reporting, writing and editing, but laboratory newspapers or studio facilities on which students can sharpen their skills are the exception rather than the rule.

### Legal and Political Constraints

Perhaps the greatest single threat facing the news media in Nigeria is the reflexive resort by government to arbitrary measures to muzzle criticism. This tendency has been particularly strong in the 25 years that the military has governed Nigeria since it won independence from Great Britain 35 years ago. Under the military, journalists have been flogged and brutalized and detained without trial; newspaper houses have been shut for long periods. In 1971, Segun Sowemimo, a television reporter, was brutally beaten up by soldiers on the orders of a military governor. His leg had to be amputated, and he died subsequently. In 1986, Dele Giwa, founding editor of *Newswatch*, was blown to death by a parcel being delivered to his home by suspected agents of the government.

It was under the military that a decree was promulgated that held journalists to a higher standard of accuracy

than is required even in the physical sciences. If a report was not correct "in every material particular" or was judged capable of embarrassing any government officials, its author stood to be arraigned before a special tribunal and, if convicted, faced up to a year's imprisonment without option of a fine. Truth was no defense and no appeal was allowed. It was under the military that a decree was made that empowered the head of state to close down any newspaper if he was satisfied that it was working against "the national interest." He did not have to show any proof and his determination could not be challenged.

[The government of General Sani Abacha in 1994 closed 25 publications including eight published by the Guardian Group. In 1995, the Guardian papers and magazines were permitted to resume publication after the publisher and individual journalists made abject apologies "for any transgression" they had made as individuals or as a group to the general and his government. Olatunji and another editor, Sully Abu, refused to apologize and resigned.]

[Four other editors were tried in secret by a military court on charges of participating in an alleged coup against the government. Without access to attorneys or to their families, the four and other "plotters" were sentenced to death and then reprieved by General Abacha and given undetermined sentences. A few months later, Ken Saro-Wiwa, a well-known writer and political activist, and eight other members of the small Ogoni tribe were executed after another secret trial on dubious charges of murder.]

Under civilian government the press has generally fared better. Harassment usually took the form of prosecution on a charge of sedition. Since the 1980 Court of Appeals ruling that sedition has no place under Nigeria's republican constitution that came into effect in 1963, no conviction on that charge has been made. Still, it remains a useful holding charge under which journalists can be kept temporarily in police custody.

Threat to security of tenure, especially in government-owned media, is

another constraint on the press in Nigeria. Fearing that they will lose their jobs if they publish anything that the government may find disagreeable, editors go to great, sometimes absurd, lengths to censor themselves and to put the most positive construction on the news even when the facts warrant the precise opposite. In the process, they erode whatever credibility they still possess.

In Nigeria, government is almost everything. It is a ubiquitous presence. It is the biggest dispenser of patronage and favors. In a country where poverty is widespread and pay and conditions are not among the most attractive, government finds it easy to secure complaisance from journalists. It can secure the same end of invoking its awesome regulatory powers and directing other kinds of pressure against publishers who, invariably, are engaged in other businesses that are highly vulnerable to such measures.

Nigeria is a federation of 30 states encompassing more than 200 distinct ethnic groups, some of which have populations as large as 30 million and some numbering less than one million. Like most African countries, it is a pastiche of different nationalities at different stages of development brought together by the force of imperial arms. There is as yet no Nigerian nation and only a hazy sense of national identity at best. There is no national consensus on values and goals and means.

### The West African Scene

Throughout West Africa, political democratization has for the most part brought about a proliferation of new titles and the opening up of the electronic media to private operators. From 1982 to 1992, when a military government ruled Ghana, there were hardly any private newspapers. Since the return to democratic government three years ago, however, the press has blossomed. Until recently. As in Nigeria, a few of the journals are good or just passable. Most of them just manage to survive. In Senegal, a country that has never come under military rule, the press is alive even if staid and sedate.

The autocratic paternalism of Presi-

dent Felix Houphouët-Boigny kept the press in Côte d'Ivoire in check for the 30 years he was in power. His successor has continued more or less in the same tradition. In Liberia, the five-year-old civil war has virtually emasculated what was never a vigorous press. In Togo, most of the newspapers that sprang up during the two-year program of democratization collapsed with the opposition to continued rule by President Gnassingbe Eyadema. The newspapers that sprang up in Benin Republic in a similar context have collapsed, too.

The 50 percent devaluation of the CFA, the currency of Francophone West Africa, has meant a huge increase in production and distribution costs, and a loss of purchasing power. Consequently, the press in the sub-region is operating under severe economic constraints. Nor can the media take advantage of the economies of scale, because most of the countries have small populations.

The publishing climate is generally less illiberal than in Nigeria, however. The kind of arbitrary closures to which the Nigerian press is subjected is rare. Cases of prolonged detention without trial are fewer, as are instances of laws made specifically to emasculate the press. But there are pressures, nonetheless. Entire editions of some publications are sometimes confiscated by the authorities.

In Ghana, where The Free Press was needling the government much of the time, some unidentified persons one night plastered the newspaper offices severely with human waste. It took four days to clean the mess. In Sierra Leone, the authorities one day seized two editors of an opposition newspaper and deported them to Liberia on the ground that they were illegal aliens. In Côte d'Ivoire, the editor of an opposition newspaper was marched recently to the office of the Minister of Information and there given a severe flogging under the watchful eyes of the minister himself for public material the minister considered slanderous.

Journalism education is provided up to the master's level in Ghanaian universities and at the diploma level at the Ghana Institute of Journalism. A

UNESCO-sponsored institute based in Cotonou, Benin Republic, provides practical training for working journalists in the sub-region.

The electronic media, hitherto a state monopoly, has been opened up throughout the region. But emphasis has been on music and entertainment. These are considered much safer territory than public affairs where even innocuous slips may incense the government.

National news agencies in the region are for the most part adjuncts of the ministries of information and wholesalers of news from the international news agencies to the local media. The Pan African News Agency, set up almost two decades ago by the Organization of African Unity to improve the flow of news through the continent and to the world, has been mired in financial problems. Designed to serve as a clearinghouse for information from national news agencies, it has very little newsgathering capability of its town.

### Looking Forward

Among soldiers, politicians and the general public in West Africa, freedom of the press is regarded not as a social good that belongs to the public and society itself but as a special privilege belonging to journalists and the media. And so, national constitutions contain no specific provisions to protect freedom of the press. Even when the constitution speaks about press freedom, it is hedged in with all kinds of provisos that blunt whatever cutting edge the law may have. When governments descend heavily on the press, the public hardly feels any sense of injury. Only the news media and human rights organizations put up strong protests.

The public will have to be educated to recognize that freedom of the press belongs in the final analysis to the public, and that when it is eroded, the public is the loser. The public will also have to be mobilized to demand stronger safeguards for press freedom in national constitutions.

The press will have to be more enterprising. There is too much emphasis on political reporting and too little atten-

tion to other areas of social life. Reporting on business and the economy in particular needs to be strengthened. At present, the training institutions provide little preparation in this crucial area.

In a large country like Nigeria, the resources put into publishing "national" newspapers could probably yield better results if put into producing regional or local newspapers. Whatever may be lost in national advertising could be gained through classified advertising, a much-neglected revenue source in the West African press. Besides, huge savings would be made on distribution costs.

The indigenous language press needs to be strengthened through training and retraining of newswriters, and through subsidies, as in the case in India where 15 percent of government advertising expenditure goes to the indigenous language press.

Many newspapers have large printing plants that lie idle most of the time. To keep starting and operating costs down, centralized printing arrangements for newspapers that have no plans of their own will have to be devised.

Throughout the region, each publishing firm organizes and maintains at huge cost its own distribution network. If production schedules could be coordinated, a central distribution system that would reduce costs significantly could be designed.

New technologies could help reduce costs in the long run, too. But the costs of acquiring new technology is nearly prohibitive. Foreign assistance would be most helpful in this area, and in the training of technical personnel. ■

# Nigeria: Democracy and a Free Press

To honor Olatunji Dare as winner of the 1995 Louis M. Lyons Award the Nieman Foundation organized a seminar on "Nigeria: Democracy and a Free Press." The speakers were Harvard Professors K. Anthony Appiah, Department of Afro-American Studies, and Robert H. Bates, John F. Kennedy School of Government; and Omo Omoruyi, Visiting Fellow, Harvard Law School Human Rights Program and Professor of Political Science, University of Benin. These are excerpts from the seminar.

**K. ANTHONY APPIAH**—People nowadays often exaggerate the difficulty of living in societies with many languages and traditions. After all, people have been doing this for a very long time on our planet, in many places. But the fact is that developing institutions that have political legitimacy in a society with tens or scores or hundreds, as in the case of Nigeria, of languages and traditions, of people with differing notions of traditional political legitimacy, was an enormously challenging one and continues to be throughout the continent. It was the first of the great challenges of nation-building. State-building in Africa comes from something that is also one of our great riches and resources, which is our enormous diversity.

The difficulties of doing that in circumstances where there was no common political vocabulary, no shared set



*K. Anthony Appiah*

of traditions for thinking about what were the legitimate functions of the state was not sufficiently appreciated by those who set out on that path. That was the first large problem.

One of the interesting things that has happened in Nigeria, and in other parts of Africa is that there has developed a national sense among some people, not everybody. I'm not sure there's a national sense among everybody in the United States. But there has developed increasingly across the older identifications of language and custom and tradition, among people like our distinguished guest today, a real sense of obligation to the new state and to trying to develop it in a democratic direction.

That task, and that challenge, is made enormously difficult by the fact that there are always people who in politics will use whatever resources they can to challenge those with whom they are in contest for the resources of the state. It is true to say that in Nigeria as elsewhere it continues to be possible to invoke ethnicity, what we call tribalism in West Africa, to invoke these older loyalties in order to pursue contemporary political projects. This stands in the way of those who are trying to develop countries like Nigeria in the direction of a national debate, a national discourse, organized around the idea of the equality of citizenship rather than the differences of ethnicity. This sort of plural, complexity of societies like Nigerian society means that the symbolic resources available for state-

craft are enormously restricted.

If you have the notion of a long tradition of our people doing something or other, or if you have as [Kwame] Nkruma [of Ghana] did in the sixties, a future-oriented project of African unity, you can organize your people around a project and use the symbolic resources of the power and appeal of those projects, or of that history, to bring the nation together. In Nigeria, the powerful histories that make sense to people have not been, until recently, national histories. Indeed, the trauma of the Nigerian civil war that is well within the memory of most of the people in Nigeria today is a reflection of that difficulty.

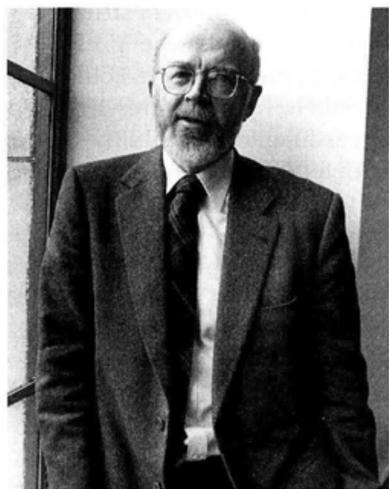
The other problem of statecraft in contemporary Nigeria, as in much of Africa today, is that the other obvious resources that the state has to mobilize are of the carrot and the stick. States, if they have resources, can buy the support of citizens by delivering things to them, or buy the support of the majority by redistributing resources produced by minorities. Or the state can proceed to maintain itself, not by establishing legitimacy, not even by buying legitimacy, but simply by coercion and by the use of force.

That is a great problem in Nigeria today—how the government that does have some resources uses those pretty effectively to buy off some people, but it doesn't have enough resources to distribute something very substantial to most of its citizens. So it uses force a great deal of the time in order to maintain itself in place in the face of increas-

ing material difficulties and circumstances of life of everybody in the country, and in face of the increasing sense among many of its citizens, that it is the state—the particular government of today—that is one of the major enemies.

I put this deliberately in a way that might seem paradoxical in terms of the challenge of statecraft, in talking about a government that I deeply do not admire. In order to think about how we can help, and more importantly, to help Nigerians think about what they can do, we need to recognize the difficulties of the situation of those who are at the head of African States, and to think about what is needed in order to create the basis for developing legitimacy.

Here, the role of journalism is enormously important because it's going to be through the development of a vigor-



MARY LEE

Robert H. Bates

ous national debate, a debate attentive to the facts about the economic and political circumstances of Nigeria, through the development of a vigorous discourse of that sort that the possibility of forms of legitimacy underwritten by some common sense of purpose can be created.

I think one of the great challenges of journalism in Africa today is to recognize the importance of using the technologies of radio and, less importantly, of television, but certainly of radio journalism. One of the great reasons why the enormously vigorous Nigerian

press—vigorous in its political dimensions and vigorous and lively in its discussion of anything—doesn't translate into the kind of public discourse and powerful constraint on government that might develop through the articulation of a national debate about politics is because of the limitations of access.

We don't think of newspapers as expensive things in this country because in relation to our incomes our daily newspapers are not expensive. But in relation to the per capita incomes of most African states, newspapers and magazines are enormously expensive. The fact that people still seek after them shows how important they are to them. Along with the great problem of the cost, there's also the great problem of linguistic access.

We Africans use English, French and Portuguese as our national languages for government purposes, but many of our citizens, especially in the rural areas, have limited access to the official languages, especially as it relates to the difficult and important questions of politics that we need to talk about.

I think that one of the things that is desperately needed is to think about how the vigor that we see in the print press in a country like Nigeria can be extended into the potentially more democratic medium, more democratically accessible medium, of the radio. The great challenge here is very simply stated—hardly any African states have shown the slightest inclination to allow anybody except the state to control the radio. We in Ghana have a constitution now which requires the government to allow private radio stations. That constitution was in operation for a considerable amount of time before anyone was able to actually get a license. It's still enormously difficult to operate private radio in Ghana.

**ROBERT H. BATES**—In 1991, only 40 percent of Africa's people lived under presidents that had been elected. Only 11 percent of Africa's people lived under heads of states that had faced a rival candidate. Less than half of Africa's people lived in governments with legislative assemblies. And the major reason

for the downward revision of our estimates of the level of democracy in Africa is Nigeria. The biggest of African states remains under a military government.

I could go on and attempt to explain why some countries have democratized and others haven't, but I won't. Rather, what I want to do is to switch from discussion of empirical practice to some theoretical work that some of us are doing; that's why we are at Harvard, that's why we're in universities rather than elsewhere.

We play games, and some of the games I play with have to do with theory, and models of politics. We build little toy models and we see how they run. Models that I've been playing with address the possibility of democracy and the implications for the role of the press in a democracy.

Models that I build on rest on the premise of rational choice. Put short, this approach assumes that people possess long time notions of their own interests and that they choose actions that maximize those interests. Now, I learned to love rational choice in Africa, because one of the things I loved about my experiences there was the joyful pursuit of wealth, power, property, by people who were enjoying the chase.

I have learned, tragically, sadly, about the limits of the pursuit of these kinds of values, or the pursuit of those kinds of values in that way. But the pursuit of self-interests leads to the defeat of collective interests. In particular, citizens encounter threats by their governments only if they treat the government's threat against another system as a threat against themselves. Governments are powerful enough to overawe individual citizens, or individual groups of citizens. They must know that if they attack one they're going to face a response by the many. Otherwise, they'll do it. They'll threaten to kill, become predators on their own people.

The government that is powerful enough to create rights is powerful enough to violate those rights, unless the citizens sense a commonality of interests that transcends their own immediate self-interest and leads them to oppose the government's collective

action.

I think that is where the press and the media play a particularly important role. Because they can transcend, just by the technology of communication, they can communicate across groups that you and I can't unless we keep meeting people, one by one, to educate them and try to organize politically at the grassroots. We need something more than dedicated and energetic grassroots organizers. We need mass media communication, helping to cement these relationships, so that our pursuit of our own self-interests doesn't force us to live in tyranny.

**OMO OMORUYI**—Based on what the military said in 1993, is there any prospect for realization of democracy in Nigeria?

My answer is no, emphatically no, for three reasons—one, inherent instability in the armed forces. Second, a decline in civic competence and efficacy of the political class. And third is the built-in land mine of what I consider to be the political land mine which will make the realization of democracy not possible for those who are over 40 in Nigeria today. Only those who are in their 20's may look forward to democracy, but definitely not those who are over 40.

The general does not need another three years to...embark on a mission impossible. He demanded an additional three years, at the end of which a democratically constituted government at the federal level would be in place.

These extra three years is based on the unknown. Stability in the armed forces, no one can guarantee that; he, himself, cannot. I cannot count the number of coups, or attempted coups, in Nigeria. But I can count the number of political generals who have successfully become heads of state or president. Of the ten heads of states or heads of government since 1960, seven generals. One is a civilian appointed by the military; two were elected civilians deposed by the military.

So if we come to the issue of change in attitude of the armed forces, they view the civilian political class with utter contempt. The officers who look

forward to becoming president, or governor—that has not changed.

I was at the airport, going to London, where I saw four Nigerian politicians



*Omo Omoruyi*

debating over their complimentary tickets. These politicians go out to plead for the military; they, too, no longer believe that they are rightful successors to the military. That is why I call it the decline of civic competence among the political classes.

Many years of destruction of political life has led to a drastic reduction in the political efficacy of members of the political class. Civil society is disrupted, the middle class is crushed and members of the political class no longer have confidence in themselves. They do not believe that free, fair and credible elections will ever again happen in their lifetime since the June 12, 1993 election was annulled.

The government re-introduced the role of tribalism through the system of divide and rule. The military is recycling them in political offices, giving them money contracts, and so on.

The military is further divided through the promise of a rotational power sharing with the opportunity for them to form their private political parties. Some politicians are promised that states will be carved out for them, little governments will be created for them. Why should the political class now believe that their salvation lies in the military and not in themselves? This is the crisis of democratization in Nigeria to-

day. One sees these politicians running from one capital to another preaching against the election of June 12, 1993, and for extension of military rule.

The third point—the built-land mine, or booby trap. This military government buys the presidential system of government, yet it withholds the number one quality of a presidential system of government, unity in the executive. It now has the four parts for the presidency—president, vice president, prime minister, deputy prime minister. Also, the senate president and the house speaker.

What the press should do is educate. It's not to go to war with the military, because you cannot fight, cannot win. But there are many ways in which you can go about it, and I would rather say, educate. The press of Nigeria is aware of developments elsewhere and defend democratization with all diligence. If you read all the newspapers a few months before the military struck, December 31, 1983, all the press was preaching for the military to come. The press should never repeat this. It should be the cardinal responsibility of the press to defend a democratically elected government.

I hope under the leadership of Dr. Dare, the Nigerian press will commit itself to the defense of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other covenants. Our press should let our people know the developments in other parts of the world, especially in Europe, in Russia or Paris, for a new Europe. Now, it serves us alone to know that participating states in the commission of security and cooperation in Europe shall ensure that the candidates who obtain the necessary number of votes required by law are duly installed in office until their term expires. That is what they are using and teaching people in Bulgaria, in Eastern Europe and so on. Why can't we?

So that kind of education is a kind, I think, the press should talk about. ■

# The Anguish of Covering Africa

BY LIZ SLY

Covering Africa is hard, especially for a Westerner raised in a country where certain journalistic necessities are taken for granted, such as water, food, phones, electricity, planes and cash.

Reporting a breaking news story in a trouble spot can sometimes resemble a survivalist camping trip more than a journalistic assignment, with bottled water, food, flashlights, candles, mosquito nets, sleeping bags and an array of medicines and pills among the essential items that must be assembled before even beginning to think about what stories to write.

Practicalities such as these are just some of the more mundane problems a reporter has to deal with; for a run-down of the full gamut, anyone who was there would agree that a Rwandan refugee camp at Goma in Zaire was about as bad as it is ever likely to get for one who has chosen to earn a living as a foreign correspondent.

Weighed down by most of the aforementioned items, and more, two colleagues and I descended late one night in 1994 from a UN cargo plane onto the unlit runway of the airport at Goma as a cholera epidemic was starting to rage.

There was no room at any of Goma's hotels, but luckily we had had the foresight to bring a tent. A small patch of grass alongside the airport terminal was already crowded with journalists' tents, and there we headed to make our home for the night.

Then came the first of many dilemmas that would arise in covering the story. Only two spaces large enough for pitching a tent were available: one was currently occupied by a large rat, which showed no sign of budging, and the other was immediately adjacent to a wire fence, against which were stacked

three corpses. Which spot should we choose?

I favored chasing away the rat, while my colleagues preferred the spot alongside the bodies, arguing that they at least would not bother us during the night. The rat settled the matter by refusing to be chased away and, after struggling in the dark with the instruction manual for our new purchase, we erected the tent alongside the corpses.

When day dawned, the pointlessness of the debate became clear: there were bodies everywhere, heaped along the roadside, piled in doorways, sprawled in fields. It was just the beginning of a journalistic nightmare in which every day was a blur of ghastly encounters with corpses in all manifestations, and every evening a logistical struggle to file; to write, usually sitting outside on the ground in the dark, to gain access to a satellite telephone and to obtain an acceptable line. Everyone fell sick with nasty respiratory infections, induced by the ash that spewed relentlessly from the nearby volcano, and many came down with bad stomach complaints.

After four nights in the tent, I managed to get a room at one of the hotels. To file, I had to dash around the corner to the other hotel, where the AP satellite phone was located. The first night, I was nervous as I set off in the dark, clutching my Tandy computer under one arm, because there were reports of banditry at night. But the streets were deserted.

A couple of hours later, I headed back. There was still not a living soul in sight, but I counted seven corpses strewn along the short route back to my hotel. Luckily, the moon was high, making it possible to pick out the bodies before I stumbled over them. It was

an eerie feeling, walking back among those bodies, knowing that in the short time it had taken me to file my story, seven people had followed in my footsteps and died.

That is the real hazard of reporting stories such as Rwanda or Somalia: not the risk of malaria, or tummy bugs, but in dealing with human misery on a scale that defies comprehension, let alone description in the bland, formatted style of a newspaper story.

Though conditions were tough, I know of no one who even attempted to



THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

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write about the logistical difficulties or physical discomfort, and even now it seems churlish, except in the context of a piece specifically on the practice of journalism.

It is not just a question of hardening one's heart to the suffering of others. You could cover your nostrils against the horrible smell and blur your vision against the disgusting spectacle of a pile of rotting corpses.

But no amount of mental armor could keep at bay certain small moments, those fleeting expressions of suffering, that were too painful to write but which will stay with me forever.

The real dilemma lies, however, in the big moral questions that arise when attempting to explain immeasurable levels of human suffering that are caused by human cruelty. These are by no means questions confined to Africa; nor is human suffering exclusively an African phenomenon, but for sheer scale, few events in recent history have surpassed the genocide in Rwanda or the famine in Somalia in terms of the numbers of people affected.

How do you write with objectivity about the circumstances under which up to a million people were slaughtered by their neighbors? How do you walk through streets lined with the pathetic heaps of dying children and remain emotionally uninvolved?

The answer is, you don't. Africa is a continent that inspires extremes of emotions, and that is particularly challenging for journalists raised in countries where the courts can usually be relied upon to call to account those who commit crimes and where public opinion is the final arbiter of the fortunes of political leaders.

All too often life in Africa is fundamentally unfair: with a few exceptions, this is a continent where the weak perish and the strong trample upon them. But responding with raw emotion is not always the answer, either.

Take Somalia for an example: at the peak of the famine, the crumpled little bundles of dying children lay thick upon the ground. It was heart-rending, awful, shocking. I was disturbed by the absurdity of a world in which little children die for the simple reason that

they don't have enough to eat, while television networks charter planes to fly in and broadcast their suffering live, using the latest in satellite technology.

Yet the famine in Somalia had less to do with food shortages than with complex social and political problems that, once probed, raised other disturbing issues. Fighters looted the food that originally belonged to those who died, and then looted the food the world brought to try and save them. Red Cross workers pilfered food meant for starving children. Fathers grew strong and healthy on free food handouts but didn't bother to take their starving offspring to feeding centers.

On another memorable occasion, in 1992, I joined a small group of UN officials on a mission to the war-stricken town of Bardere. Because of fighting, the aid community had evacuated the town three weeks earlier and no food had arrived since then.

It was one of the worst scenes I have ever witnessed. People were dying all over the place. As we drove away, a desperately emaciated woman clung onto the car door pleading for food and I stuffed some notes into her hand. But my translator, a Somali employed by UNICEF, curled his face in disgust. "Why did you do that? Did you not see how pathetic she was?" he said with contempt.

"But she was hungry," I replied in amazement.

"She wasn't hungry, she was just pathetic," he answered, spitting out of the window. "You would never see a Darod begging like that," he added, naming the clan of which he was a member.

At that moment, we came across a woman lying on the edge of the dirt track we were driving along. It was not clear whether she was dead or alive. The driver of our vehicle, also a UN employee who appeared to share the translator's contempt for the local people, swerved sharply and drove over the woman's legs. He flashed a proud grin at the translator, who clapped his hands in approval.

It was just a tiny insight into the difficulties of passing judgment on other people's problems, other people's cul-

tures. Yet I don't think those problems have been fully appreciated, and nor has the considerable power of the Western press in these situations.

Most Western journalists responded to the starvation by crying out with genuine compassion: "The world must do something."

And the world did do something, by dispatching 30,000 U.S. Marines, mountains of food and billions of dollars. But all that failed to make things better, and may have made matters worse. The world has gone home now, but clan fighting continues, and the risk of another famine is high. I doubt whether anyone in the media will pay half as much attention next time, however, even though innocent people who never harmed a soul will again be the ones to suffer.

I can already hear many people protesting that I am painting a skewed picture of a continent where most people are not fighting one another or dying in their thousands. And they would be right.

The Western media are criticized for paying attention only to Africa's crises and not to positive developments, thereby creating a false impression of Africa as a continent teeming with chaos and mayhem.

Up to a point, these criticisms are valid. I felt them keenly as *The Chicago Tribune's* only correspondent in Africa during three of the most newsworthy years Africa has seen in a long time.

Between 1992 and 1994, I hurtled between covering the major story of famine in Somalia and the subsequent U.S. military intervention there, the major story of South Africa's transition to democracy, and the major story of genocide in Rwanda. I couldn't ignore the election in Angola and the return to civil war, and I managed to squeeze in trips to Mozambique and to Zaire. But I simply did not have time for stories about Ghana's economic recovery program, or democratization in Zambia, or developments in the other 40-odd African countries not afflicted by headline-grabbing disaster.

Most American newspapers, with the exception of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles*

Times, assign only one correspondent to Africa, usually based in South Africa. If news is happening on the scale of a Rwanda, or a Somalia, that is where that correspondent will be.

Sometimes, we were in a no-win situation. Overlook a particular conflict or crisis, and the accusation would be leveled that African lives count for less than European ones. Smother a crisis with attention, and we were painting a negative picture of the continent.

I can't help feeling that the former is a greater sin than the latter. One story that was completely overlooked by the Western media was the massacre in 1993 in Burundi of at least 100,000 Tutsis and Hutus. The story coincided with the shooting down of a US helicopter in Somalia. With 18 U.S. soldiers dead and President Clinton's foreign policy on the line, it was hard to justify breaking away to cover a little-understood ethnic conflict in a country few Americans had ever heard of.

But many people in the region are in little doubt that the lack of world attention paid to those killings encouraged the government in neighboring Rwanda to believe it could get away with a plan to wipe out its minority Tutsi population a year later.

But the news pendulum swings around the world, and happily last year offered a respite from major tragedy in Africa, giving me the chance to visit many of those countries where major news is not happening.

There is indeed a different Africa, one of largely peaceful enterprise and vigor, with relatively decent hotels where you can enjoy comforts that most Africans will never experience. Telephones are a serious problem everywhere, but in the absence of breaking news they are less essential. And most Africans never mind one dropping in unannounced.

It remained, for me at least however, an Africa beset with huge problems, and even if war, famine and genocide do not feature in a majority of countries, poverty and deprivation do.

It certainly does not seem fair to judge Africa by Western standards, for how can those of us born to a world of five- and six-figure incomes even at-

tempt to pass judgment on societies where average incomes can be measured in only three figures?

But does that mean we should hold Africa to a lower standard and congratulate people for not slaughtering one another? That doesn't seem fair either to the millions of ordinary, decent, hardworking people living in Africa who are yearning for better lives, not in terms of luxuries or consumer goods but basics such as drinking water, health care and education.

On this, I took my cue from the ordinary Africans whose opinions I increasingly relied on for insights into life in a part of the world so very different to mine. I found ordinary Africans eager to discuss their continent's problems with me, and even those with the scantiest levels of formal education readily offered up detailed analyses of what they believe has gone wrong in Africa—such as the beggar who approached me as I sought quotes from ordinary people in Lusaka's Soweto Market and announced that he wanted to “make a contribution” to my story.

He launched into a long diatribe: “It is government that is the problem in Africa. It is always the problem. We need strong and courageous leaders, who are not selfish, to serve the people, someone like Nelson Mandela. But that is something we have never had in Africa. We have to blame our own leaders, the present leaders. We have to have leaders who think of the future of their country, and not only their own power.”

It was a theme I heard over and over, everywhere I went. Most ordinary Africans don't like being poor, they don't want their problems to be ignored and they are in little doubt as to whom to blame for their lot: their leaders.

That said, I conclude my assignment in Africa with cautious optimism that a better future is on the way. Perhaps that is only because Rwanda and Somalia were so awful my imagination cannot stretch so far as to believe anything worse can happen.

But even those tragedies, I believe, were symptoms of an Africa in flux. Dictators are being kicked out everywhere, and that is causing problems for

some countries. But in others it is signaling the start of a new era of openness, and the chorus of complaints I heard everywhere I went was an encouraging reflection of that new spirit.

A free press is playing a major role in these changes, and in many places pioneering newspapers are starting to instill in Africans some of the values and expectations that Westerners take for granted, such as accountable government, transparency and the right to know what's going on. They are exposing corruption and analyzing government performance, facilitating a climate of debate and entitlement that can only be healthy.

Some of those journalists are doing so at considerable risk to themselves, because even in countries that have supposedly shifted to democracy, some leaders are still unwilling to permit the genuine freedom of speech that democracy implies.

But a door has been opened, voices are being raised and I would like to think it is only a matter of time before African governments get the message that it would be wise to listen to them.

I would also like to think, although perhaps this is fanciful, that it was the other major news story I covered during my assignment that points the way to the future, and that is the unmitigated “good news” story of the election in South Africa.

The day of the inauguration of President Nelson Mandela was certainly not the most extraordinary day I spent in Africa. But the simple dignity of the occasion, the goodness and the hope that sprang from resolution, made it easily the most moving experience of my assignment. I'm actually glad to be leaving, because I don't think I could face any more dead bodies. But I suspect the worst has passed, and I hope I'm right for the sake of everyone. ■



# South African Broadcasting: Desegregation at Top

BY BARNEY MTHOMBOTH

The changes currently taking place at the South African Broadcasting Corporation are breathtaking, even for a country that has witnessed such a miraculous political transformation. For decades an apartheid propaganda mouthpiece, the SABC has been turned on its head in a matter of two years.

Its role and its culture have changed; even the faces at the top have changed. Two years ago, there was not a single black face in the upper echelon of the SABC. Today there is only one white male left.

There is perhaps no organization or body in South Africa that has over the years done as much damage to the country as the SABC. In warping the minds of ordinary people, the corporation ensured that apartheid not only triumphed but endured as well. With its two television channels and 23 radio stations, the SABC was a formidable propaganda tool in the hands of apartheid ideologists. It ranked in the same league as the police and the army as a tool of the system.

But the changes have been so dramatic that the SABC is unrecognizable from the organization of two years ago. The impetus for the transformation of the SABC, of course, comes from the changes taking place in the country as a whole.

The SABC is headed by a board which sets broad policy guidelines and also appoints the agency's chief executive. Over the years members of the board were chosen for their loyalty and service to apartheid and were assigned the role of making sure the "correct" message was relayed to the public.

Soon after the release of Nelson Mandela from prison in 1990 and the start of negotiations, government opponents identified the SABC as the one organization that had to be transformed if the public was to be properly informed about the transition. Mandela's African National Congress and its allies in the labor movement called for the appointment of a new representative board as a first step toward transforming the SABC.

A selection panel of eminent jurists was appointed to interview nominees to the board. The interviews were shown live on national television and caused something of a stir because of the grilling members of the outgoing SABC board got from the panel. There were accusations from government supporters that the interviews were reminiscent of Nuremberg.

New members of the board were appointed but not before another storm caused by then President F. W. de Klerk's refusal to accept certain nominees who he felt were either too close to the ANC or were not proficient in Afrikaans—the language of the Afrikaner establishment.

After the dust had settled Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Cassaburri, a feisty campaigner for gender equality, was appointed board chairman. Board members, like the government that was to be formed later, came from right across the political spectrum. The first objective of the new board was to find a new SABC chief executive who embodies the new vision and values, who would turn around what was essentially an apartheid mouthpiece into a credible indepen-

dent news organization.

That man turned out to be Zwelakhe Sisulu, who came with impeccable credentials and political connections. A respected newspaper editor and Nieman Fellow, he is from a well-known family whose involvement in the anti-apartheid struggle goes back to the 1940's. His father, Walter, was Mandela's



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political mentor and the two spent years of imprisonment together on Robben Island. His mother, Albertina, besides raising the family on her own while her husband was in jail, was also involved in the internal resistance to apartheid



*Dr. Ivy Matsepe-Cassaburri*

and suffered harassment as a result.

Zwelakhe, like most of the Sisulu sibship, did what comes naturally in the family. He spent numerous times in detention because of his political activism and for years could not even be quoted by SABC radio and television.

For such a man to be at the helm of the SABC is something that some people find hard to believe even to this day. It's almost like Mandela, the prisoner, becoming president of the country. Unthinkable only a few years ago.

Sisulu's appointment to lead the SABC was a master stroke. It signaled a clear break with the past and overnight changed people's perception of the corporation. For years credible journalists refused to work for the SABC. Sisulu's arrival opened the floodgates with black journalists clamoring to join the corporation. Working for the SABC no longer carried a stigma.

The name of the game was change, change of the culture and mindset of the organization, from a state broadcaster to an independent public broadcaster. For years the primary objective of the corporation was propaganda and profit. The board had to chart a new course for the corporation. This came about after an extensive consultation

between staff, management and the board as to what kind of an organization the SABC should be.

A clear preference was that the SABC should be a program-driven national public broadcaster independent of government whose sole objective was to inform, educate and entertain the South African public. An ethical code drawn up by staff commits all SABC journalists to editorial independence, non-disclosure of confidential sources of information and a commitment to the public's right to know, among others.

The SABC is unique in that although it has pretensions of a public broadcaster it gets most of its funding from advertising. That was fine in the past as there was no competition. Now the industry is entering a deregulated environment.

At the same time as the changes were taking place at the SABC, the government set up the Independent Broadcasting Authority through an act of Parliament to facilitate and encourage competition and also to determine and enforce guidelines in the industry.

The IBA has since recommended that the SABC sell most of its commercial radio stations in order to make room for new entrants and that it be restricted to only two television channels, instead of the three that the SABC feels it needs to satisfy its public-service mandate. The third television channel will have to be privately owned by 1998.

More than 80 new licenses have already been granted to community radio stations by the IBA and these have already begun to eat into the SABC's advertising cake. The authority will begin issuing commercial radio licenses later this year.

But these new stations pose more than just a financial threat to the SABC. Because of the fact that it has for years been a monopoly, the corporation is the only repository of skilled personnel in the electronic media in the country. Any new entrant in the industry looking for manpower will raid the SABC. This could see key journalists and technical people leaving for greener pastures especially as the new commercial sector is likely to offer better salaries.

In anticipation of such a likely exodus, the SABC is putting more emphasis and resources into recruitment and training, especially of black journalists. The majority of the employees are still white. The SABC, however, has committed itself to achieving a 50-50 racial balance by mid-1997 and every manager is expected to be fully committed to affirmative action.

The recruitment of black journalists and technicians is, however, hampered by the poor state of the country's educational system. Years of apartheid education has produced a generation that is semi-literate and untrainable.

But one of the most difficult problems facing the SABC is changing the mindset of its white employees, most of whom have never worked with blacks as equals in the past, let alone work under a black boss or manager. For them, working for the SABC was simply an extension of their privileged life in society. Now both society and their



*Zwelakhe Sisulu*

work environment have changed in a way that has negatively affected their lives.

The SABC has introduced generous retrenchment packages in order to make it easier for those who feel uncomfortable in the new SABC to leave. This will also help to reduce the number of administrative staff from the current 36 percent of the workforce to below 15 percent.

But the reduction of staff will be difficult to achieve since the IBA has

also mandated that the SABC absorb the broadcasters that were established under apartheid to serve the so-called independent homelands.

The changes at the SABC are significant in another sense. The corporation remains the only media organ in the country that has come under black control and which is trying to adapt to and reflect the changes in the country since Mandela became president.

The rest of the media and the entire press is still controlled by a small white clique that has been in charge throughout the apartheid years, and has shown little desire to march in step with the changes in the country. What's more, about 60 percent of the English-language newspapers are in foreign hands, in the person of Tony O'Reilly, the Irish tycoon who heads the Heinz group and owns the Independent Newspapers in Ireland. Press ownership remains a sore point among black people in the country. Although black people have assumed political power, there is annoyance at the fact that the political agenda is still set by a media in white hands.

The majority of the press, reflecting the views of most white South Africans, is hostile to the changes within the SABC. The Afrikaans press is obsessed with the fate of the Afrikaans language within the SABC. With the collapse of apartheid, Afrikaans has lost its status as the language of power and within the SABC it has had to take its place alongside all nine African languages. That has not gone down well with the Afrikaans establishment and there have been threats to refuse to pay TV license fees. The English press has expressed concern with what it perceives to be the lowering of standards at the corporation.

What is encouraging though is that, unlike the old government, the new élite has so far shown no inclination to control or dictate to the SABC. It will be very difficult for them to do it even if they wanted to. There are all sorts of constitutional mechanisms to block government interference. Besides, the South African public wouldn't have any of that.

But the most pressing problem for the SABC in the coming years will be funding. With more competition ahead



*Journalism students in class in Burkina Faso.*

and the consequent shrinking of the advertising cake added to the IBA's insistence that the corporation get out of the commercial arena, it will be difficult to find the money to run the SABC especially at a time when its public responsibility is increasing.

The IBA has recommended that part of the funding come from government; but with scarce resources needed for social reconstruction, it is doubtful

whether this country can find the money to pay for public broadcasting.

In the end, though, it will be what people see and hear in their TV and radio sets that will convince them that the voice of apartheid has finally changed. And should the corporation succeed, it will set a fine example to other organizations in a similar position in the country on how to unscramble an apartheid omelette. ■

### 3 Journalists Jailed in Ghana

Nana Kofi Coomson, Editor in Chief of The Ghanaian Chronicle and 1994 Nieman Fellow; Ebenezer Quarcoo, Editor of The Free Press, and Tommy Thompson, Publisher of The Free Press, were arrested in Accra in mid-February and charged with "publishing false news with the intent of injuring the reputation of the State," a carryover from a colonial law designed to protect the Queen of England from bad publicity. If convicted, each could face a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

Summoned to the police station, they were questioned, then released on \$6,700 bail. A few days later Judge Nuhu Bila revoked the bail without explanation and they were remanded into custody. The Chronicle and The Free Press had printed an article from the New York-based African Observer about the arrest in Geneva of Frank Yaw Benneh, a Ghanaian diplomat of the country's United Nations mission, who was charged with drug smuggling. The article also alleged that the government of President Jerry John Rawlings had used proceeds from illegal drug sales to buy arms.

The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists sent a strong protest to President Rawlings. ■

# South African Dailies: Tensions Abound

BY HENNIE VAN DEVENTER

**K**en Owen, Editor of The Sunday Times of Johannesburg, posed this question in a column: Is the new South Africa killing the press?

He referred to the decline in circulation and readership of the English-language press since the dawn of the new dispensation. English dailies are especially hard hit, suffering circulation losses of up to 20 percent over the last two years.

Ironically, as the trade magazine Marketing Mix was quick to point out, the white nameplates have not only lost black readers to the emerging black press, but also readers from among their own genus.

Afrikaans newspapers, on the other hand, have bucked the trend. Amid drastic change in the political landscape and media environment, such as shifts in ownership, foreign intervention in the marketplace, the disappearance of certain papers and black empowerment, the major ones are showing consistent growth, not only in the readership race but also in market share.

These changes are occurring in the face of bleak pronouncements, inter alia by advertising executives, that their demise is imminent. "You are history," one ventured not long ago. However, Mark Twain's famous cable to The Associated Press seems appropriate as far as they are concerned: the news of their death is greatly exaggerated.

Reasons for both developments are intensely debated.

English newspapers are brushing off the decline in their circulations as a consequence of higher cover prices. There may be some validity in this belief. There is also a view that, in trying to

be "politically correct," these newspapers are chasing their primary buying audience, the literate white reader, away.

Advantage, an advertising magazine, shares this theory. It says: "The problem is that they are now trying to be politically correct and appeasing those who they think are their buyers. Well, black readers are not buyers to the same degree as the white readers. By playing Arthur and Martha they are diluting the value of their product, and a weak product will always lose sales. The Star (white-based), for example, cannot compete with The Sowetan (black-based) when it comes to reporting on events in the black community."

At least part of the unexpected success (to some) of the Afrikaans papers also emanates in the new South Africa.

They seem to provide a kind of "psychological homeland" for Afrikaans speakers, "a place where the language is still treated with appropriate respect," is the explanation offered by Marketing Mix.

One has to agree—to a degree.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation goes out of its way to put up barriers between itself and Afrikaans TV viewers, both in the presentation of South African news and in its arrogant attitude towards Afrikaans speakers. The new government is actively promoting English as lingua franca.

In these circumstances an element of linguistic nationalism (or patriotism) is not strange.

The realistic political approach of the Afrikaans newspapers and the way they go about informing their readers, debating the issues, influencing opinions, criticizing or giving support and

encouragement on a daily basis, probably contribute in no small way to their credibility and the loyalty of their readers.

The steadily increasing support for a newspaper such as Die Burger of Cape Town in the Afrikaans-speaking colored market can also be largely attributed to the political changes of the last year or so.

Die Burger and its sister papers are wide awake watchdogs, guarding ever the values of their readers. Beeld of Johannesburg has at the same time



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been praised by no less than President Nelson Mandela himself for its positive involvement in nation building.

In the cadre of the so-called black press, The Sowetan of Johannesburg, the first black-owned and controlled newspaper with a mass circulation in South Africa's modern history, commands the position of South Africa's biggest selling daily, and the national Sunday newspaper City Press of Johannesburg has far outstripped the competition in growth rate. Over the last three years the circulation growth touched on 94 percent.

A black company, New Africa Investments, obtained the controlling share in The Sowetan just over a year ago, while Nasionale Pers, owners of City Press—a financial burden for 11 years, heavily cross-subsidized by the publishers as an act of faith—have often indicated their commitment to share the fruits of their labors in this field with black partners as soon as a deal can be struck.

Most of the other main newspapers already employ journalists of color to an ample extent, even up to the level of the boards of directors and senior editors. Special efforts are made to draw black talent and to give them the best training.

The truth is however that black papers still occupy a relatively small portion of South African readership. That fact, as well as the continuing domination of white ownership of publishing companies, are thorns in the flesh of the ANC-led government, black journalists and the black community in general.

Critics say that the concentration of press ownership in South Africa rates amongst the highest in the world with four groups controlling close to 90 percent of the daily circulation of newspapers in the country.

The biggest of the four press groups, Argus Holdings, and its main shareholders sold their controlling shares in Argus Newspapers to an Irish conglomerate, Independent Newspapers, in 1994. They indicated that this transaction was a result of Argus's commitment to deconcentrate ownership of the South African press. The step was

therefore in line with ANC policy, but, as communications expert Lucas Oosthuizen points out, in real terms it transferred ownership to another conglomerate which also owns 65 percent of the newspapers in Ireland and in addition has interests in Australia.

There are signs of acute discomfort in influential black quarters over the result of that transaction. There is also black criticism that, because of their white origins, the majority of South African newspapers are failing to provide an African perspective. This leads to the failure to realize the historic mission to build a new South Africa.

"What agendas are these papers following?" a letter writer in The Mail & Guardian demands to know. "Do they wish to see this fragile new era fail?"

At a conference held at Arniston (Western Cape), a senior spokesman for government departments asked Deputy President Thabo Mbeki to establish a task group to investigate the South African media. Among other issues, they requested that the ownership and implementation of affirmative action in the press be part of the task group's wide-ranging brief.

The Star reported that repeated allegations that the English press in particular was monopolistic led to demands from the floor that the monopoly should be broken up. Foreign ownership of the media was also criticized, most notably by Thami Mazwai, Editor of Enterprise magazine.

Oosthuizen concludes that with this type of public agenda-setting, and given the position of the ANC on these issues, the formulation of policy to curtail concentration and foreign ownership seem to be in the cards.

Since Arniston many thousands of words have been written and spoken about affirmative action in the media. Suggestions are even made that the government should use its advertising as an incentive to stimulate affirmative action in the industry. The idea would be to direct advertising to newspapers that have implemented affirmative action policies.

Khulu Sibiyi, Editor of City Press, who was compelled to resign as chairman and member of the predominantly

white Conference of Editors by pressure from the Black Editors Forum (which has no white members), was quoted as saying at that time that black ownership of the media has become more important than press freedom—a view that white colleagues find hard to share.

The major press companies support the ideal of media diversity unconditionally, because a diversity of voices is essential to the preservation of a sound democracy. There is widespread understanding that the ANC should have a viable, competitive newspaper(-s) expressing its views and philosophy.

But what is becoming increasingly clear, is that the critics desire much more than moral support for black empowerment and the extension of co-ownership in a variety of joint ventures which are on the agendas of these companies. The points at issue are also not the training, appointment and promotion of journalists from historically deprived communities.

What it does boil down to, is the dismantling of white or "big business" control of the media, substituting it with black control. Fears exist that pressures in this regard will mount as efforts continue to consolidate and expand the ANC's power, control and influence.

Where this will lead to is anyone's guess. One only hopes that a new season of high tension between government and press can be avoided. South Africa had enough of that in its previous incarnation.

Up to this moment relations have been healthy. The Mandela government has delivered on press freedom, and the charisma of the new President has carried him through in the few events of adversity thus far encountered. What a pity it would be if the energetic pursuit of more power by less generous members of the new black ruling élite should spoil it all. ■



## Namibia Press: Under Attack

*So Are Critical Newspapers in Zambia, Angola, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Malawi*

BY GWEN LISTER

Namibia's media has come a long way since the advent of independence in 1990, when the country finally rid itself of the shackles of apartheid and South African domination, but like many countries in southern Africa which have moved towards democracy, the government is becoming increasingly hostile to a free press.

Prior to independence, much of the media in Namibia was in the hands of the South African authorities, including radio and television. These were used to the optimum as propaganda tools against the Swapo movement then fighting for the liberation of Namibia, and whose supporters were depicted as "terrorists" and "communists."

Under South African rule, a climate of repression existed in Namibia in which Swapo members and supporters, as well as other organizations which appeared to support the cause of liberation of Namibia, did not escape the wrath of the military machine. A section of the media was likewise targeted.

The Namibian, a newspaper which came into being at the height of South African occupation in 1985, with the aim of being a "voice for the voiceless" and campaigning for self-determination and independence for Africa's last colony, was subjected to an unremitting campaign of harassment and intimidation, culminating in several acts of arson and the burning of the offices to the ground, as well as the arrest of staff members, denial of passports and never-ending death threats.

Much has changed since independence. The Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and the press in a democracy where fundamental human

rights are enforceable by the courts. Yet a spirit of tolerance towards opposing or dissenting views is often markedly absent and debate and criticism of the ruling party tends to be equated with disrespect and disloyalty towards the government of the day. Unesco's Director General summed it up when he said that "while press freedom is a fundamental right that should be embodied in national law, one cannot legislate for tolerance."

A media academic in South Africa recently maintained that "the bright smoke of election promises is not easily conjured into reality. When journalists begin to peer up the sleeves of the conjurer and intrude behind the curtains, the liberators are soon irritated."

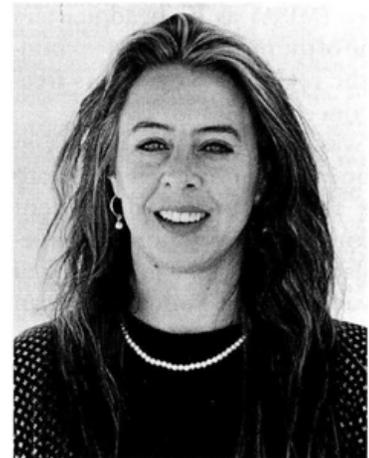
Whereas Namibia's constitution does provide for freedom of speech and expression, freedom of information enjoys no such guarantee and many feel that a freedom of information act would be a means of ensuring citizens right to access to official sources of information and strictly limiting secrecy.

Namibia today has a print media which is one of the liveliest and most controversial on the African continent, but much of it is urban-centered and there is a need for more community-based media, especially radio, in a country where illiteracy is high and the population is scattered.

Because the print media is primarily critical, the Namibian government decided to start its own newspaper, which has been embroiled in controversy since its inception. Critics believe that in a country with least developed status, government has no business ploughing millions into its own mouthpiece at

the expense of needy citizens in a country where unemployment is high and many lack life's basics.

But Namibia's reputation for being a model democracy in the region (President Sam Nujoma was the first African head of state to receive an invitation from President Bill Clinton) is becoming tarnished and South Africa can probably more justifiably lay claim to that



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title. In Namibia the media and public at large still grapple with the concepts of a free and independent press in many ways, and a culture of democracy is slow to take root. Few people are prepared to challenge what they perceive as the unquestioning authority of the country's President, a man who has achieved near god-like status because of his contribution to the liberation struggle. With the overwhelming majority supporting the ruling party, criticism of government institutions and/or the ruling party is often seen as unpatriotic.

The role of the media in Namibia takes on far greater import in view of the fact that although a multi-party democracy in principle, there is no viable political opposition in practice. Swapo rules supreme. The tendency on the part of government to lack of transparency and accountability is therefore strong, and media plays an important watchdog role in this regard.

Namibia's capital, Windhoek, was chosen by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) as its headquarters being one of the most progressive countries in the region as far as press freedom is concerned.

MISA was formed by journalists from the region in 1991 in an attempt to both enhance the status of independent media, consistently monitor press freedom violations and assist in training of media workers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). MISA also encourages media workers to self-regulate and in several countries independent media councils and codes of ethical conduct are already in place. The region consists of 12 countries including South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho, Malawi and Mauritius.

The organization's point of departure remains the Windhoek Declaration, adopted in 1991 by a wide spectrum of journalists from across the African continent, who called on governments to promote press freedom as well as independent press in the interests of democracy and development. The Windhoek Declaration in turn was ratified by information ministers of the

Organization of African Unity (OAU) as well as those of SADC, but many governments have paid mere lip service to these lofty sentiments.

The move towards democratization in many countries of the region does not necessarily promote press freedom. In some cases, quite the contrary. Repressive laws which could be used to curtail press freedom still remain on the statute books.

MISA recorded 89 alerts on media freedom violations in the SADC region from January 1995 to September of last year. In several countries, meant to be among the region's more democratic states, including Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Malawi, governments are resorting more and more to legislation dating back to the era of one-party and even colonial rule in a bid to subdue the media as well as to stifle debate and access to information. Such legislation often violates the Windhoek Declaration as well as international human rights standards and treaties on media freedom and free expression.

The Zambian case would appear to be the most serious. Pledges by the government of Frederick Chiluba to reform repressive legislation appear to have been abandoned as the authorities make more frequent use of these laws. Privately-owned media, in particular *The Post*, bear the brunt of the government's vendetta against what it believes is "irresponsible" journalism, and hopes of government relinquishing control of state-owned media (electronic and print) have evaporated.

Repressive laws still lurk on the statute books of another country perceived to be a shining example of democracy, namely Botswana, and are exacerbated by a lack of tolerance of media and free expression.

In Angola, a country still battling to maintain a durable peace after two decades of war, media continue to face threats and intimidation. In addition poor communications make effective monitoring of this situation more difficult.

Media workers in Tanzania have generally been holding firm in the face of the state's arsenal of oppressive laws, and succeeded in forming an independent media council, a move which,

however temporarily, has laid to rest government plans to introduce its own body through which to control the media.

Swaziland continues to be media-unfriendly with its barrage of outdated and repression legislation and continuing government refusal to ratify international human rights standards.

In Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe still refuses to break the state's monopoly on broadcasting and allow private radio and television to operate, and his crusade against gays has taken on vociferous proportions.

Media in Malawi were perhaps taken by surprise by the transition from life under the aging dictator Hastings Banda to the newly elected democratic government, and found themselves unprepared for it, often engaging in what borders on hate speech. But government too is not devoid of blame, increasingly interfering in the electronic media.

Mozambique and Lesotho experienced a lull in anti-media activity in the year under review, but there is little reason for complacency about this phenomenon.

Just how to make SADC governments adhere to their spoken commitment to promote and uphold media freedom, free expression and other human rights in the region, is a problem high on MISA's agenda. Among others, a resolution to appoint a regional press ombudsman as well as a joint MISA/Article 19 conference on the review of press laws in the region and how to campaign for such reforms, are high on the agenda.

But all these efforts will be largely ineffective if journalists themselves do not become familiar with their rights and how they can be protected.

In many of the countries of the southern African region, independent media is perceived as a sort of Trojan Horse which will undermine governments from within. The sub-continent, which has recently seen the demise of both the scourge of apartheid and several authoritarian one-party states, still has a way to go in democratizing both media and the public they serve. Eventually citizens must exercise their rights or become accomplices to the undermining of these fragile democracies. ■



# Should There Be 'Propaganda for Peace?'

*In Rwanda, more than half a million people were killed in a genocide many observers say was fueled by hate broadcasts on Rwandan radio. Is its antidote what some journalists call propaganda for peace?*

*This question was discussed in a broadcast July 23, 1995 on the Alex Jones radio show "On the Media." Participating were Keith Spicer, chairman of the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission; Sandra Colliver, Law Program Director of Article 19, a London-based, nonprofit organization that promotes freedom of opinion and the free flow of information; Gwen Dillard, head of the French to Africa Broadcasting Service of the Voice of America, and Etienne Karekazi, a former journalist with Radio Rwanda, who is now a Hubert Humphrey Fellow for International Journalists at the University of Maryland. Following are excerpts from the broadcast:*

Spicer—It's really Washington, London, and Paris that are, I think, deciding these things, and I think they could, in case of imminent war, consider what I call propaganda for peace. In other words, propaganda warfare. If a war breaks out, then introduce corrective propaganda. Just set the record straight.

Karekazi—As far as freedom is concerned, in my view [it would not be] a good thing to just come and block [a] station like that.

Jones—Would Article 19 have supported the idea of going in and blocking those radio broadcasts?

Colliver—Yes, and we've taken that position after a great deal of thinking and research of what the international law would allow, discussion with people in Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, with the radio experts. We would

support this only in the most extreme circumstances and we feel that Rwanda is the one example that we could point to. I understand that there is technological difficulty in blocking, but I also understand that if one wants to block with a strong enough intercepting transmission, one can do that. What that would likely do would [be to] suppress all radio, for instance in Rwanda, in order to have a powerful enough signal to block out the Radio Mille Collines. But frankly there wasn't much else being broadcast within Rwanda during the period of the genocide from April to July.

Dillard—Why couldn't you just jam them or take them off the air? Probably technologically you could, if you wanted to devote the resources and the money to it, but it's not the kind of solution, I think, that gets at the deeper problem. Radio, even hate radio, doesn't create hate. It feeds on the hate that's already there. And whatever kind of solution you're going to offer has to get at that kind of situation. The answer really isn't, in my view, to take a voice off the air. The answer is to put additional, reasonable, responsible voices on the air.

Colliver—I completely agree with that, and what needed to happen was to have those positive messages in 1993, in 1992, there needed to be a foundation for an independent radio. But by April 6, 1994, when the killings began, there was not only a clear and present danger of violence, there was actual violence taking place.

Jones—On a horrendous scale.

Colliver—On a horrendous scale. And at that point, and only at that point, we [would] say, "Look, international community has failed to do precisely what they should have been doing, that we should have been doing."

Jones—Well now, who would you trust to make a decision like that?

Colliver—The United Nations, the Security Council. If the Security Council can authorize troops to intervene in countries, they can certainly take the step to authorize to jam.

Spicer—I think she's absolutely right in a situation of crisis where there are hundreds of thousands of people being massacred, I think you have to jam. Nobody likes the idea; it's a detestable idea, and I think in an ideal world of course we'd just like to counter evil voices, not try to silence them. But in the middle of a massacre of proven genocide, you have to put lives before so-called freedom of hate broadcasting. In the long run, we should probably set up a journalistic Marshall Plan and train journalists in the ethics and skills of a free media, but meantime we've got to stop some of these horrific genocidal wars.

Dillard—By the time that you get to the middle of a massacre, which I think is one of the lessons that we learn from Rwanda, it's much too late. What we're looking at now, and by "we" I mean what we're looking at at the Voice of America, is that it's at its most effective when you can start to do things before you reach the point of citizens slaughtering citizens. Media is one of the aspects of an entire conflict prevention program, but it's only one aspect, and there are other things that have to come into play there, too.

Spicer—In a war situation, even before you jam, you should use, and I think the United States has a couple of airplanes to do this, television stations in the sky that can put some programs on the air, and the same with radio. It's very easy and very cheap. Broadcasts are cheaper than a brigade. ■

# The Tragedy of Rwanda and Burundi

BY RATIH HARDJONO

Assignments in Bosnia and the civil war in Rwanda and Burundi last year made me realize how choosy the international world is about the causes it decides to take up. The priority is reflected in the size and concentration of resources the United Nations has spent on its peace-keeping force in both places.

The UN spent roughly \$1-6 billion annually to keep 40,000 people in Bosnia. In Rwanda the UN has spent \$193.5 million a year, with only 5,500 military people there.

More people have died in Rwanda in what has to be the most horrendous ethnic cleansing after the Holocaust this century. Why is there more attention to Bosnia than Rwanda? Does Bosnia deserve more peace than Rwanda? If so, on what basis?

A Bosnian, Serbian or Croatian refugee camp usually had running water, toilets and shower. Meals were served three times a day and nearly always there was a UN water truck. Some refugees were housed in the same kind of temporary shelters that the UN soldiers lived in. Sometimes it got a bit crowded but the shelters protected the refugees from the cold of winter and heat of summer. Other refugees were housed in public buildings, like schools or warehouses.

The tragedy of Bosnia is that the quality of life was reduced so drastically. Before the war nearly all of Croatia and Bosnia enjoyed running water and electricity; the cities also had gas. The bombing and shelling pushed these places back to the dark ages. Children previously received an education in all of Yugoslavia. The war halted this; it was too dangerous to let the kids out. Bosnian mothers never knew where the snipers were.

Because these people had something

before the war, they know rebuilding is going to take a long time and also a lot of resources but they have a vision of a better life to return to.

A Rwandan refugee camp in Burundi or Zaire does not have the services those refugees in the former Yugoslavia received. From a distance these camps are just a blur of blue against a background of naked hills waiting for the next downpour of rain, to start mud slides happening. The color blue are the plastic sheets the UN gives out to the refugees for housing. The plastic tents have no bottom, nor front or back flap. There is no privacy and everyone can see what everyone else is doing. A UN truck comes twice a day, if the refugees are lucky, bringing water. These are the times when the scramble is on, and UN officers try to bring order out of an otherwise desperate chaos. It is heartbreaking to see children with their plastic bottles fighting to get a mere few liters of clean water.

I can't begin to tell you what the stench is like in these camps. The combination of the make-do sanitary conditions around their camps, the smoke of wet and green wood cooking the UN porridge and the constant crying of sick and hungry babies makes you feel that it is some kind of a dream. It's not, it's real.

The poverty of Rwanda and Burundi has always been with these people. It is not something new. The few large cities do have electricity, but there has never been gas. As for water, even in the cities several households have to share a well. In the countryside life is primitive. Children still die of diseases the West knows only by name. Schooling is something of a luxury that most children in the countryside have never received. There is no vision of what their quality of life should be. The women told me they

just want enough to eat.

Since the Bosnian war broke out in 1992 the tragedy has received sustained international media attention, so much so that there is a pool of translators hanging around the hotels in Sarajevo offering services to foreign journalists. Rwanda and Burundi only get mentioned if there is another massacre. Yet the problems of Rwanda and Burundi have not gone away and equally need attention.

Perhaps the developed world still holds a very European oriented understanding of what "civilization" is and whom they consider "civilized." The assumption underlying the lack of interest in Rwanda and Burundi seems to be that it is a hopeless place anyway; why invest financially and politically in it?

Ethnic cleansing occurred in Bosnia and Rwanda and Burundi. The most brutal human rights violations took place in all three areas. The leaders in all three places incited ethnic hatred through local radio and television broadcasts, leading to the tragedies. Yet the international world through the UN and its Security Council have decided Bosnia needs more attention.

I appeal to journalists, especially those from the West and developed countries, to remind their governments of the inequality of their decisions. Covering the tragedy of Rwanda and Burundi might get boring, because wherever one turns one faces the fundamental problem of poverty. But there are many ways to cover poverty. Please don't give up. Everyone deserves peace. ■

*Ratih Hardjono, Nieman Fellow 1994, is foreign correspondent for the Indonesian daily Kompas.*

# East Africa Doors Unlocking —Except in Kenya

BY CHARLES ONYANGO-OBBO

Throughout the 1960's, the '70's, up to the mid-80's, Kenya had the most prosperous and open economy in East Africa.

For all this period, in Tanzania a homegrown version of socialism kept the economy firmly in the hands of state bureaucrats and party officials of the still-ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Revolutionary Party).

Uganda had the worst of everything. A "mixed economy" where governments' incompetent meddling hobbled private enterprise; and vicious military and corrupt civilian rulers, and civil war. By the time the guerrillas of President Yoweri Museveni shot their way to power in January 1986, it is estimated that about one million Ugandans had been killed in the violence of the previous 16 years.

However varied their political and economic fortunes were over these years, all the East African countries suffered one common fate; they didn't have a free press and governments kept an iron grip on broadcasting.

Kenya and Uganda had several independent newspapers, but they steered away from any critical reporting of official policies and actions—or they dared the government and were banned or their editors sent to jail. Most of that is history. Closely mirroring recent economic reforms on the ground, the doors have been unlocked on the media and the keys thrown away, except, ironically, the place where this process would ideally have been most advanced—in Kenya.

Uganda, which easily has the most radical economic liberalization program

in Africa, with the 13th fastest-growing economy in the world according to a June 28, 1995 UN Annual Economic Survey, has walked furthest along the press freedom path. A freewheeling, and often reckless, newspaper industry followed in the wake of President Museveni's National Resistance Movement (NRM) taking office. The real test of the government's commitment to press freedom, however, remained its attitude toward broadcasting.

In a region where functional literacy rates are on average about 50 percent, newspapers have never been a primary source of information for the mass public. Written mostly in English—a legacy of British colonial rule—it is mostly the small educated élite who read them. Even then, many of them outside the capital cities don't get to read the papers simply because poor roads and high transportation costs make it unprofitable to distribute upcountry.

However, nearly every home has a short wave set, giving radio a reach hundreds of times wider than newspapers. Besides, radio broadcasts in the various local languages, in which newspapers aren't published. While millions of people listen to radio, only a few thousands read newspapers. In Kenya, the independent Daily Nation is the highest circulating at about 200,000 daily. In Tanzania, the honors go to Majira, which circulates slightly over 100,000. The figures in Uganda are less auspicious, The New Vision and The Monitor, the two leading newspapers, circulate about 40,000 each.

Not surprising then that the main means of political control and government communication with the country (read propaganda) is radio. In the vari-

ous coups and counter-coups, it has always been the radio station that the putschists try to capture first.

Three years ago, Tanzania and Uganda began opening up the airwaves. Today, there are two privately owned radio stations in Tanzania, both of them broadcasting on FM frequencies—Radio One, a commercial station, and Radio Tumaini, a religious station.

For a long time there was only one TV station in Tanzania, owned by the Zanzibar Island government (Tanzania



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is the generic name of the 1964 union of what used to be mainland Tanganyika and Zanzibar Island in the Indian Ocean. But since 1992 three private TV stations have been set up. Multichoice, a South African-based pay Satellite TV, is also available to subscribers.

However, due partly to licensing regulations, there is hardly any critical content in their broadcasts. The government-owned Radio Tanzania, therefore, still rules the airwaves in the rest of the country.

Uganda has three private FM stations, and by year's end will have seven. In the last three years, two private TV stations have opened up to compete with the government station, and, like Tanzania and Kenya, Multichoice is available by subscription.

Content on the private radios and TV aren't controlled. The Uganda government has gone one further, and by 1997 will have sold off The New Vision, the state-owned paper, and privatized state radio and television.

The government of Kenya's President Daniel arap Moi, out of step with its two neighbors, has refused to license private radio stations. There are 40 applications for licenses to operate commercial stations, but the government, even in the face of donor pressure, has quashed them all.

Yet with all these developments, it is too early to celebrate. The lifting of restrictions on the media has not meant that government control has ended. It has only taken a different and more sophisticated form. The multiplicity of media has made available a lot more information, but that information is not better. What the readers have got is more choice, not more wisdom.

And while the police have reduced arbitrary arrest of journalists, governments have not given up trying to manage the news. They are resorting more and more to what human rights groups have been insisting they do instead of using strong-arm methods—take errant journalists and papers to court. Both the journalists and governments are discovering that while the detention of an editor always made him or her a hero and increased circulations, a court verdict in a fair trial which imposes a

fine equivalent to a paper's quarterly profits is more likely to shut it down—without the government getting the flak for it—than the old methods of firebombing the editor's house.

Therefore amid all the optimism about the dawn of a new media era, there lies as great a danger to the public media as anything there was in the past. The change in readers' tastes caused by the availability of new choices, the new pressures and tactics to influence content and the fact that press freedom—in Uganda and Tanzania—is oddly ahead of wider political freedoms, is posing challenges to the media that publishers and editors in East Africa just don't have the skills to deal with. In most cases, they don't even have sufficient sophistication to realize that a very different type of challenge is facing the industry.

One of the greatest dangers to the press is the euphoria of the last nine years, which arrived in Africa as part of the wind of democracy unleashed by the tremors that led to the collapse of

the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

Governments were forced to legalize opposition parties and remove restrictions on the press. The free press that was born in this period was vigorous, but partisan. The staggering novelty of reading newspapers which were calling the previous one-party tyrant a crook, ensured high circulations.

In Tanzania, about 60 newspapers have sprung up in the last five years. The country tops the regional list in per capita news publications. Most of them, however, lean toward one or more of the 12 registered political parties vying for power. Sheer numbers have splintered the market. The partisanship has driven away readers from publications whose politics they don't share. Analysts expect that over the next year, up to a quarter of the papers will collapse.

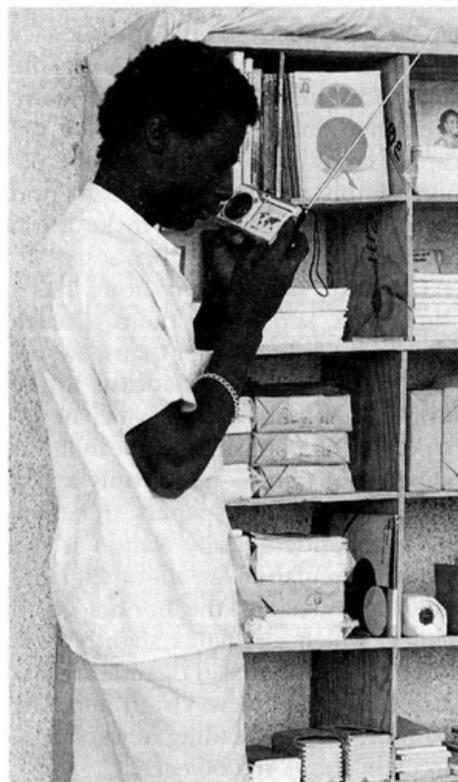
A similar explosion came to Uganda after 1986, and brought on the scene over 30 newspapers and magazines. Four years ago, it was down to about 24 newspapers being published regularly in both English and several of the local languages.

Today there are only two daily newspapers, the government-owned New Vision published in English, and Ngabo, in the Luganda language. The Monitor is the main weekly, published three times in a week. Only four other weeklies are still being published regularly, and they are all partisan with circulations of below 4,000 each.

In Kenya, apart from Daily Nation, the rest of the other papers are in trouble. Its closest rival, The East African Standard, rarely makes a profit and has only about 20 percent of Daily Nation's circulation.

Publications like the Nairobi Law Monthly, edited by human rights lawyer Gitobu Imanyara, collapsed shortly after President Moi was forced by international pressure to call multi-party elections in December 1992, which he won. The opposition allege that he cheated.

The Law Monthly fought a lonely and brave battle against the Moi government to open up politics and restore human rights. Imanyara spent a lot of his time in the dock or jail. His



*Transistor radio brings the news in Kenya.*

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courage brought him a lot of awards, including the Nieman Foundation's Louis Lyons Award for 1991.

The Law Monthly was revived, but remained anemic and largely inconsequential. If the Law Monthly could take such a fall, it is not surprising that other crusading publications like *The People*, *Economic Review*, *Finance* and the oldest of them all, *Weekly Review*, are only carrying on precariously. Their circulations have declined or stagnated.

The government is partly to blame. Publications like *The People* and *Finance* were constantly being harassed with raids by the police, who would lock up their presses. The journalists would be taken to court and charged with all sorts of offenses, including improper filing of tax returns. The publications didn't have the money to fight the many lawsuits.

And because they didn't have their own presses, and were contracting commercial printers, the printers, sensibly, didn't have the idealism to sacrifice other printing jobs for publications that were always in trouble with the government. Today there are hardly any good commercial printers left in Nairobi who will take on a political newspaper or news magazine.

In Tanzania and Uganda, the problem is that there aren't many printers. In Uganda, only the state-owned *New Vision* and fledgling *Marketplace* own their presses. The rest of the newspapers, including *The Monitor*, use commercial printers. Last year, *The Monitor's* printer also printed four other newspapers and a newsletter. Today only *The Monitor* and the newsletter, the *Uganda Confidential*, remain. The other three newspapers have folded.

In Tanzania, one commercial firm prints 10 newspapers. Some of the low circulations are attributed to this. The editor has one hour press time; as the 25,000th copy rolls off, the plate for the next paper is being mounted.

In East Africa, the industry also blames poverty for its problems. The majority of the workers in the towns earn less than \$100 a month. Newspapers cost on average 50 cents. In their priorities, a newspaper doesn't appear even at the bottom.



*Reading The Standard on election day in Nairobi in 1990.*

With all these headaches to deal with, editors still have to find time to sort out their troubles with governments. Sammy Makila, editor of *Majira*, the Tanzanian circulation leader, was arrested in 1995 for breaking the news of a \$130 million radar deal between the Tanzanian government and Siemens 12 hours before the cabinet concluded it. According to *Majira*, a front man for the foreign company selling the radar had promised an unspecified sum as commission to be transferred to the account of Chama Cha Mapinduzi, the ruling party.

Makila was later charged under the National Security Act for refusing to disclose the source of his information. The case has been dragging on. He faces 10 years imprisonment if found guilty.

The group editor of *Express*, one of the most independent Tanzanian papers, is still facing sedition charges for having exposed corruption in government and published an editorial last year describing the country's president, Hassan Mwinyi, as a leader "picked from the garbage bin" and only fit to be flung back where he came from.

In Kenya, in 1994 alone, more than 20 journalists were intimidated, harassed, spent time in custody, were charged in court and sentenced. David Makali and Bedan Mbugua, then editor of *The People*, were imprisoned for contempt of court.

John Lawrence, an expatriate journalist with *The Nation*, was expelled

from Kenya for unspecified reasons linked to a very short but popular tongue-in-cheek complaints column that he regularly wrote or edited.

In Uganda, Teddy Sseezi Cheeye, Editor of the anti-corruption and quarrelsome newsletter, *Uganda Confidential*, had, by the beginning of last year, four sedition cases brought against him by the state, and nearly 12 defamation cases filed by powerful politicians and establishment figures. The courts have awarded damages against his publication in excess of \$45,000. By Ugandan standards, that is too much money. It is the profit *Confidential* expects to make in the next four years.

Since July 1993, the government banned all government departments and semi-official institutions from advertising in *The Monitor*. Advertising from these sources was about 70 percent of total advertising revenues two years ago, but has fallen to about 50 percent as the private sector expands and government privatizes more and more public enterprises.

The publishers in the region take a common view of their problems. They have a large and talented pool of trained journalists, particularly in Kenya and Uganda, to pick from. Computers are affordable, and desktop publishing has made life livable in the newsrooms.

Their view therefore is that if petty official harassment stopped, if the economies could improve and if more newspapers could have their own presses, then every journalist would be

rich and happy. That is a narrow technical view, which might well be wrong. And if there is a country that illustrates the complex situation the media face, that country is Uganda.

The years from 1986 to 1990 were good years for the media. There was hope. Political stability and economic recovery had returned after 16 bloody and difficult years. Everything was exciting and a feisty critical press was something everyone had missed.

But disillusionment soon set in. For the majority of the people, the improvements were not enough. While a few people grew very rich, the majority grew poorer or their conditions remained the same. The response of the opposition press was more negative and doomsday reporting. However, in difficult times, that was not what a depressed people were looking for. They were looking for hope.

The government also adopted a strategy of ignoring opposition papers, and a whole year would pass without it even publicly reprimanding a journalist. It seems when the government ceased to show public interest in the critical press, the readers too finally wrote them off. It is perhaps remarkable that none of the many newspapers that have gone out of business in Uganda have been a result of any direct government action.

A publication that called President Yoweri Museveni an adulterer, murderer and mad, got the shock of its life three years ago when it thought it would sell highly in the north of the country where the government is unpopular. In a town where the government is most hated, it sold only five copies. The government paper, *New Vision*, sold 300 copies. At least *New Vision* had some straight news stories and sports.

*New Vision* continues to do very well. Its formula is simple and smart.

First, the government appointed a British expatriate to be the Editor-in-Chief. Immediately, many readers saw him as being above some of the parochial and tribal rivalries.

Unlike past government papers, *New Vision* never told outright lies or gave unbridled support to the government. It could tell half or three-quarters of the truth. But more importantly, if the gov-

ernment got itself into a scandal, it never waited for the opposition and independent media to get the story first. It would leak the half-true version to *New Vision*, and beat the competition. When the independent papers got on to the story a day or two later, the readers would only take theirs as just another view or a different angle.

*New Vision* in this way built a reputation for speed. And a population that was unused to a government paper being even mildly critical of the state, was caught unawares and taken in by the *New Vision* approach. They came to accept that a lot of what it said was the truth. But often it wasn't.

In this way, *New Vision* dominated the market until 1992, when *The Monitor* was founded. *The Monitor* was the country's first truly independent newspaper, because it was not owned by a political party, a religious organization, or a rich company. It was owned by seven journalists.

In that sense, it was a refreshing development. And the readers loved it. After about a year, it was at par with *New Vision*, and then edged ahead of it. One of the reasons it did that was that it would frequently scoop *New Vision*. Therefore, before the government could organize a sanitized leak to its paper, the story would have broken in *The Monitor*.

The government would have ignored *The Monitor* as it had other independent and opposition papers. But the fact that it was out-circulating *New Vision* meant that readers had become wiser. It is interesting that one of the reasons given by the government for banning official advertisements from *The Monitor* was that it was "leaking government secrets." When *New Vision* leaked the same "secrets" it wasn't a problem, because the government would have put its spin on it.

But interest in *The Monitor* soon peaked and its circulation, like *New Vision*'s, dropped, then stagnated. The sense that the Museveni government was playing at politics as usual, and that his opponents were not any better, had dampened *New Vision*'s circulation and badly hit the opposition press.

But the reasons for the decline in

appeal of *The Monitor* were not easy to fathom immediately. Most readers in discussions with target groups would almost always say, "there is something missing, I can't put a finger on it." With time it became clear that the balanced, middle-of-the-road approach wasn't very attractive to readers looking for answers as to why they were not doing well. If they had rejected the partisan view as biased, they came to view the "objective" view as unfocused.

The Museveni government also chose to deal with journalists in ways that gave the impression that the media had been co-opted. The president instituted regular "press dialogues" with senior editors. These meetings would last a whole day, some of them held in a tent in the president's country home.

The agreement was that the conversations would be off the record. Museveni would then proceed to discuss a wide range of issues, including some that were not legitimate off-the-record material. The fact that these meetings took place would be reported on TV with footage, but not the details. Seeing editors whose publications are rabidly anti-Museveni laughing with him at dinner, then seeing nothing about what was discussed in the papers, led some readers to believe that the opposition and independent journalists were double-faced. And that Museveni was a good man.

It was these readers, hungry for something new, who came to private TV and radio looking for something different. The first private TV station, *Cablesat*, began by relaying CNN broadcasts, otherwise it broadcast a lot of American, British and Australian soaps. It only managed to offer diversion.

The repeat format of CNN and the old soaps with actors wearing unfashionable clothes soon lost appeal. But still CTV and CNN were better than the government's Uganda TV. Viewers watched less of CTV, but did not go back to UTV.

Then Sanyu TV came on the scene. Its news was more interesting than CTV's and UTV's, but only because it had more footage. The owners just did not make the large investments necessary for good TV news coverage.

The soaps on Sanyu TV however were modern and exciting, particularly the American ones like *Hanging with Mr. Cooper*, *Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, *Living Single*, *The Commish*, and *Dark Justice*.

Perhaps because Ugandans suffered for too many years, there are no votes here for the cultural militants who cry about "cultural imperialism." When all your family was killed by security agents, being enamored of *Fresh Prince of Bel Air* rather than the neighborhood theater is fairly harmless.

The leisure sections of the newspapers had to respond to this new standard. The *Monitor's* leisure page, which covers only the local scene, began to look less exciting. It was no longer talked about.

The *New Vision*, a bigger paper with several leisure pages, had always had this section full of stories about American and British movie and music stars. But it could not do it better than CNN Entertainment. When the South African pay TV company Multichoice came to Kampala, it brought a channel offering a mix of sports, children's shows, movies and BBC news.

Though only a few thousand people subscribe to Multichoice, they are still too many because only a few thousand read newspapers. And those who can afford pay TV are the most critical audience for newspapers.

This audience is still looking for a fresh approach to reporting local news, and someone who can make sense of things for them in an interesting way. This is at a time when they have less time to read the papers. So the papers need a crisp, interesting approach that not only interests readers, but also informs them. The editors and publishers however don't yet see the problem that way. This is obvious from the way they edit the foreign news from the agencies. The foreign news sections of the papers are less important these days. Many readers who buy the papers in the morning will have watched later versions of the stories on BBC or CNN, long after the paper has gone to press.

In addition, the two private FM stations—Capital Radio and Sanyu Radio—do Voice of America and BBC feeds.

Since most people, particularly in the southern part of the country, are tuned to the FM stations, more people listen to VOA and BBC than previously when they could only be received on short wave.

The FM stations, since the public has generally shut state radio out in Kampala, could have helped enrich the news spectrum. But they don't have much time for news, doing about 10 five-minute spots in a 24-hour cycle.

In May and June, there was a campaign for voter registration. But the commission put out the registration information only on state radio, where they didn't have to pay. Even with two weeks of the state radio spots, very few voters were turning up to register in the south. When local leaders were asked, they had a simple answer. They said not many people had heard the information because they don't listen to state radio much anymore.

The FM station owners are not doing much about local news for the same reason the TV owners aren't. It costs money, and the returns from financing that from advertising money in a market where there aren't very many rich people and companies who can pay highly for advertising, are too low. The independent radio station owners are business people who are looking for a profit. They know a respectable news program is likely to annoy someone in government. It is a new business, and the government has not been fully tested yet on the limits of what it can permit.

The owners therefore don't want to take chances with their expensive investments. They steer clear of controversy, and play music only—with brief interruptions to read the few safe stories they have picked from the newspapers and a BBC and VOA news feed.

The young people are hooked, and nothing less hip than the American Top 40's, or a BBC feature program to mark the anniversary of the death of reggae legend Bob Marley will grab their attention.

To get and maintain public interest and attention in serious public affairs issues, to attract the new and younger audience, the media in Uganda don't primarily need new printing presses,

state-of-the-art computers, or liberal press laws. They need the intelligence to understand the changing tastes and the needs of the public, and to report the news in ways that grab their attention from the FM stations and new TV stations. Otherwise, very soon, even advertisers will come to believe that no one is paying attention to the non-entertainment media and stop placing their ads there.

For a country and continent that has lived under some of the world's worst dictators, publishers and editors also need to define a new relationship that does not make them look as if they are too comfortable with the new less repressive regimes, or doesn't look like gratuitous hostility toward a government that many people support.

It used to be easier. All an African journalist needed was courage or foolhardiness to say the dictator was a dictator, and the whole country would pay attention. Not anymore.

Journalists in Mali and Burkina Faso might be pointing the way to the future. Through their associations, they prepare a program of seminars and pool reporting assignments every year, then shop around for donors.

When they get the money, they put together a seminar, say, on health issues. After that, the group fans out in the country, talking to communities, and visiting all the main hospitals in the country. Many weeks later, they go back to their various newspapers and each of them writes a well-grounded piece on the state of the country's health services, what has gone wrong, what is being done right, and the various communities' views on what they think should be done. Then they wait for the next seminar on a new subject, and the reporting assignments.

The result is always very rich and refreshing reporting for everybody; the readers and the government. This kind of reporting, where the readers and government agree that journalists have done something for the general good, might be where the future lies for the African media. ■

# Africa News Online

*It Has Been Tough Going to Create a Lane for Africa  
On The Information Highway*

BY REED KRAMER

At the opening ceremony of last year's global telecommunications conference known as Telecom 95, Dr. Salah Mandil of the World Health Organization demonstrated what he thinks will become "a major means of providing equitable access to good-quality health care services." With delegates looking on from the conference site in Geneva, doctors in a major South African medical center consulted with rural colleagues about a case that needed specialized interpretation.

Although Dr. Mandil says the three-way link was a highlight of the session, a second planned demonstration—a consultation between health care professionals in Tanzania and Norway—had to be scrapped "because of inadequacy of the telecom infrastructure at the Tanzania end."

The two incidents could be a metaphor for Africa's problems and possibilities in an increasingly digital age. Computers already have revolutionized access to information even in the poorest countries like Zaire, where rural libraries with CD-ROM's are giving scholars unprecedented access to recent literature in their fields. But, while new communications technologies offer the means to leapfrog over traditional barriers on the road to development, the access ramp is often blocked.

As South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki told a G-7 (the seven largest industrial countries) conference on the information society, "there are more telephone lines in Manhattan than in all of sub-Saharan Africa." The continent has only about one line for each 100 inhabitants, compared to the worldwide average of 12 and 40 or higher in Europe and North America. With phone

lines serving as the backbone of the communications revolution, Africa's scarcity could push the sub-continent further to the margins of international attention.

That reality poses particular challenges for Africa News Service, which has been covering the continent for a quarter century and is attempting to set a place for Africa at the "new media" table. Fortunately, we have the advantage of long experience in adapting technological innovations to journalism, an approach born of economic necessity.

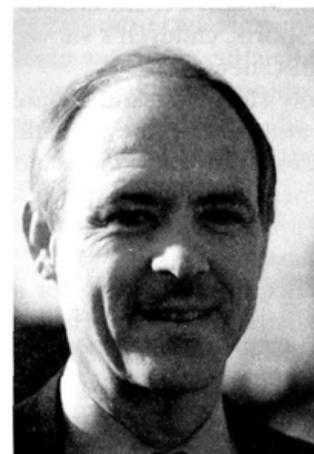
Two decades ago, the search for cost-effectiveness led us to military surplus communications equipment that monitored inter-African wireless transmissions, alerting us to developing stories. Facsimile machines brought a quick, cheap way to get stories from correspondents, with the unexpected bonus that faxes circumvented government censors who monitored telephone conversations and mail in South Africa and elsewhere.

As early desktop publishers, we were able to upgrade the quality of our newsletter and later convert it into a newspaper to reach a larger audience. The miniaturization of recording equipment gave us the ability to produce reports from almost anywhere in Africa, at a time when the broadcast quality of cassette machines and minicams was not yet widely accepted.

Three years ago our newspaper, Africa News, won the International Reporting Award from Utne Reader but, unable to raise the capital to expand circulation to a sustainable level, we bowed to fiscal imperatives—and found ourselves once again on the pioneering

edge of a new media technology. As newspaper consultants were warning of the passing primacy of print, we produced our last issue and plunged into the age of virtual publishing.

Although Africa News Service will continue periodic reporting and production for our traditional outlets such as The Washington Post, National Public Radio and the BBC World Service, most of our current efforts are devoted to an electronic news network, Africa News Online. To make the most of



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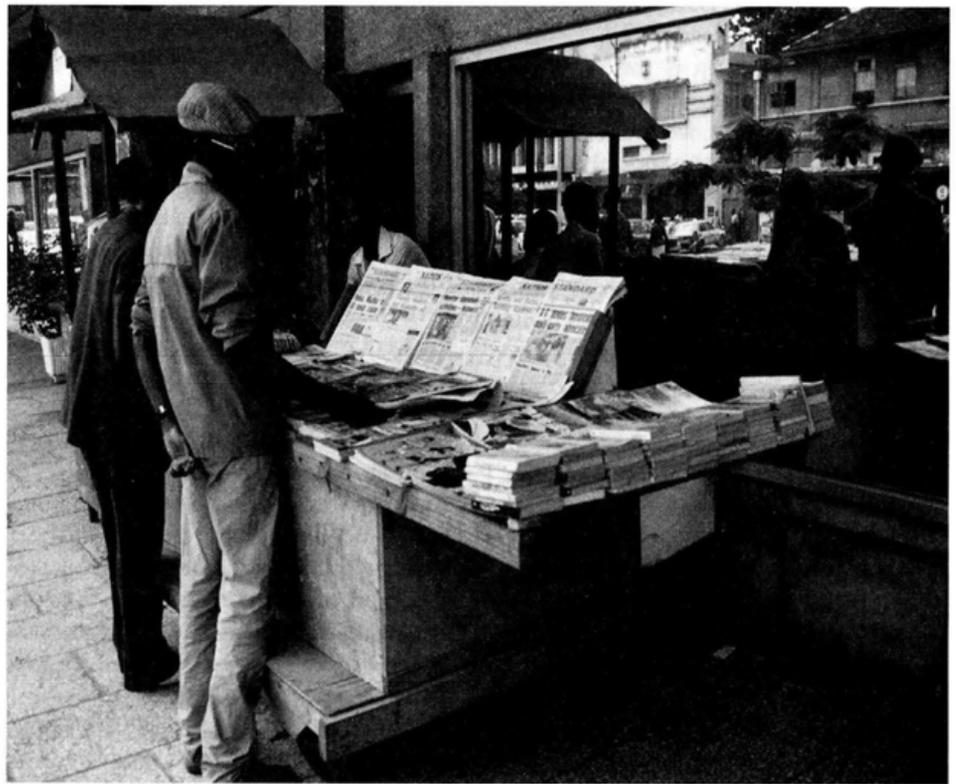
scarce resources—ours and Africa's—we have expanded our partnerships with news operations across the continent to create a substantial African presence on commercial databases and the World Wide Web.

At the core of Africa News Online is a collaboration with the Panafrican News Agency (PANA), based in Dakar, Senegal, and the All Africa Press Service (APS), headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. PANA, a once-moribund agency that relied largely on government-controlled news sources, and APS, an affiliate of the All Africa Conference of Churches, have taken advantage of the spread of democracy and the steady if uneven growth of press freedoms to enlarge their networks of correspondents and modernize their operations, making extensive use of E-mail to gather and disseminate news from across the continent.

Among other Africa News Online partners are periodicals like South Africa's Mail and Guardian newspaper, which was among the first publications anywhere to establish a World Wide Web site, and The Post of Zambia, which joined the company of Web publishers last year. But most participants in the venture are like the Nigerian newsmagazine Newswatch, the Gambian newspaper The Observer, and The Monitor of Uganda, which have scant circulation outside their countries.

In addition to the partnerships with two news services and some two dozen periodicals, we are developing ways to utilize other information sources such as the African Academy of Science and various non-governmental organizations. The Africa News package also includes statements, documents and analyses from official sources such as the Tunisian Press Agency, speeches by President Nelson Mandela and other leaders, economic data and periodic Africa News surveys and interviews.

Tapping the Internet's potential is a risky venture, even for publishers with deep pockets. Popular Web sites like Time Warner's Pathfinder have become what the company's chairman recently called a "black hole" for capital. The Discovery Channel has spent over \$10



*Selling papers from a newsstand in Nairobi.*

million to develop an innovative Web presence.

How to recover those investments remains anybody's guess, and no one yet knows how best to attract the audience and income that publishers need to survive. Prestigious newspapers like The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post have had to undertake expensive repositioning of their electronic products to keep pace with rapidly evolving developments.

For a nonprofit agency like Africa News Service, choosing the most effective way to distribute our information has been critical. For a time we weighed an attractive proposal from America Online, whose rapid growth promised a large but restricted audience. At the same time, in our own backyard, the Raleigh, N.C.-based News and Observer Company was acquiring a national reputation for its lively Internet service called Nando.net, which has become a popular Web site for news and sports. When Nando proposed a collaboration, we agreed.

The strategy for making Africa News Online work is therefore two-pronged.

One arm is distribution to commercial services, which pay fees or royalties based on the number of articles used or on accesses to the material by on-line users. Our outlets include Lexis/Nexis, where Africa News Online this year moved to the "Top News" library and which has Africa News archives dating from 1988; Data Times, another business-oriented service; American Cybercasting, which markets on-line resources to educational institutions and community information systems; and our oldest electronic distributor, Newsnet, which has archives of Africa News beginning in 1984.

Another kind of commercial distributor is Comtex, an information re-seller, which produces "Custom Wires" on business, entertainment, environment, finance, government, health care, high technology, lifestyle and sports, compiled from services like UPI, Agence France Press and Inter Press Service, as well as Africa News. Through Comtex, stories from Africa News Online appear on the CompuServe Information Service for Lotus Notes, IBM's infoMarket Internet search and retrieval service, and Wall Street-oriented services such

as ADS/ISS, Bridge Data, Money Line, PC Quote and Telescan.

The second prong is the Internet. While we do not charge for access to the Africa News Web site, we are recruiting underwriters, using the model of public broadcasting, and expect this to produce steady future income for Africa News, as well as for NandO Net and the participating African news agencies and publishers. Since it will be some time before income matches the cost of either database or World Wide Web distribution, we are seeking funding to finance the service until the revenue stream is sufficient to sustain the enterprise.

What makes Africa News Online attractive to information services is its combination of breaking news and background features from all over Africa, with the Web site adding sound and graphics to the mix.

The partnership between PANA and Africa News demonstrates how two agencies on two continents can pool their resources to create a unique product. With 48 correspondents and six bureaus, plus affiliations with 48 national news agencies, PANA operates Africa's largest news gathering operation. Over the last two years it has been revived by talented management, which has introduced intensive staff training and computerization. PANA already has established editorial independence from the governments that once oversaw its coverage, and this year up to 60 percent of PANA's stock will be sold to private African investors. With support from UNESCO and the European Union, the agency is investing in satellite communications technology linking the entire continent, moving PANA towards its goal of professional, real-time reporting from every part of Africa.

Africa News Service contributes editorial and marketing experience in preparing the news packages and selling them to an international clientele, along with the technological expertise required for successful distribution. Making it work required marrying some very old journalists' methods with sophisticated on-line tools.

For example, to allow the instant posting of PANA stories on their arrival,

Africa News worked with experienced programmers to devise ways to format the copy for both the World Wide Web and for the commercial services, and has worked closely with PANA staff who have had to adopt new procedures for handling and preparing copy.

Since many PANA dispatches still originate on telex machines, we had to find ways to work around the lack of certain characters on teletypes and the idiosyncrasy of the all-caps output of teletype transmissions. We had to create a system of codes that would separate elements like "notices to editors" from stories and could convert lists of statistics into readable tables. A protocol for headlines had to be developed, along with mechanisms for sorting stories by topic—a convenience that on-line users expect and the programmers

demand.

The biggest obstacle in obtaining the news continues to be Africa's limited connectivity. Although the number of African countries directly linked to the Internet rose from five to 12 in the last year or so, and some form of E-mail is functioning in almost all the continent's 54 nations, most periodicals do not yet have the ability to transmit copy electronically. As a result, we must still use costly transmission and transcription techniques for much of what we distribute.

If Africa News Online is successful, it can give Africa a voice it has never had in international media and contribute to a dialogue that will inform and enrich us all. Africa News on the World Wide Web—"gateway to a continent"—is found at [www.afnews.org/ans](http://www.afnews.org/ans). ■

## Icelandic Press Freedom Widened

Agnes Bragadottir of Morgunbladid in Reykjavik has won a long battle to retain the confidentiality of her sources. In doing so she has widened press freedom in Iceland. Until this case there had been some protection but exceptions for refusing to disclose sources.

Bragadottir, Cultural Editor of Morgunbladid and a 1988 Nieman Fellow, went on special assignment to investigate the financial collapse of The Cooperative Movement, a group of many firms—including banking, fishing and shopping malls—owned by thousands of people but run by a few.

After months of investigation she wrote four articles detailing the bad loans that brought the cooperative down. Published in Morgunbladid in March 1995, they "aroused a great turbulence in the Icelandic business life," as Bragadottir puts it. So powerful were her findings that the Icelandic police investigated. They asked Bragadottir to help by disclosing her sources. When she refused, the Reykjavik Court ordered her to reveal the sources. The case eventually wound its way to Iceland's Supreme Court, which in February of this year upheld her right to refuse. But let Bragadottir tell the story in her own words:

"I'm immensely glad to be able to tell you

that I won my case in the Supreme Court of Iceland. The court came to the conclusion that the undercourt, The Court of Reykjavik, had been wrong when it ruled that I would have to reveal my sources of information and that the court was wrong in ruling that the interest of the banking system and of government was in this case of greater importance than the interest of the free press, and the importance of giving the media opportunities to operate and function in order to fulfill its role, i.e. to inform the public of what is going on in society. "Many had expected that we would lose the case in the Supreme Court of Iceland, and that we would have to take the case to the European Court, to refute the Icelandic courts. Fortunately it did not come to that, because it would have been very costly for my paper, it would have taken ages, and it would have been humiliating for the Supreme Court of Iceland to seek its lesson from the European Court. So we can say that this case of mine has a happy ending, and I even dare to maintain that the respect in this country for our justice system has recovered a little, as a result of the conclusion of the case.

"The bottom line is I won the case, and as a result of that journalism as a profession has firmer grounds in this tiny country of the North." ■

# BOOKS

## David Brinkley, His Raised Eyebrow and the Flat Tax

### David Brinkley

11 Presidents, 4 Wars, 22 Political Conventions, 1 Moon Landing, 3 Assassinations, 2,000 Weeks of News and Other Stuff on Television and 18 Years of Growing Up in North Carolina

David Brinkley

Alfred A. Knopf. 233 Pages. \$25.

BY RAYMOND A. SCHROTH

As a literary form, one of the richest is the journalist's autobiography—at its best a sophisticated blend of current history, swashbuckling adventure, social commentary, and perhaps personal insight from men (so far, mostly men) who have overcome obstacles like childhood poverty, narrow-minded editors, and a string of wars and lived to explain it all in a summing-up book. They are a nonfiction variation on the Bildungsroman—a growing-up romance—an account of how life's moral lessons make their way into news columns and broadcasts.

H. L. Mencken's "Newspaper Days," Vincent Sheean's "Personal History," Eric Sevareid's "Not So Wild a Dream," and perhaps Russell Baker's "Growing Up" and "Getting Started," for example, are classics of the genre; and since the Library of America has recently published "Reporting World War II" (two vols.), journalists' memoirs may soon work their way into the American canon.

After all, one of the famous journalist's social roles, from Richard Harding Davis to Dan Rather, has been to both live out the American Dream and to be our eyes and ears on the world, when we can afford only the dollar for The New York Times or the minutes to surf the channels for a trustworthy face to tell us what we don't know and why we should care.

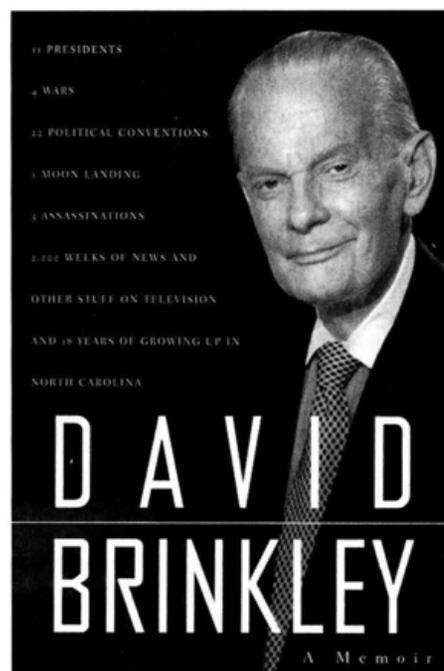
So we should care when David Brinkley writes a book called "David

Brinkley," a title that implies it's a book about himself.

He writes it at 75, a survivor, 10 years older than the age at which his CBS competitors like Eric Sevareid and Walter Cronkite were shoved into retirement, famed as the "witty" half of the Huntley-Brinkley Report from 1956 to 1970, and still presiding over ABC's Sunday morning This Week With David Brinkley, one of the sprightlier weekly TV news-talk-commentary hours.

He joined the National Broadcasting Company in Washington as a radio writer in 1943, at the age of 23, after a variety of reporting stints at his hometown Wilmington, North Carolina, Star News and the United Press. Brinkley has been in television since the beginning. The great radio voices, like H. V. Kaltenborn, he says, failed the transition to TV because they talked *too much*, told us what the pictures *already showed*. And because they *talked* too much, we didn't *listen*. We *did* listen to someone who adapted his *speech* pattern and writing style to our *ear*. Told us what we needed to *know*. And didn't make it *sound too important*. Besides, nothing *is* too important, *anyway*.

A few months ago, Brinkley told some talk show host or other—he clutters his prose with lots of something-or-others, as if he is losing interest in what he says—that his book was a memoir, not an autobiography; he didn't do any research, he just sat down and *wrote* it.



So it seems. Or perhaps talked it into a tape recorder for an assistant, after padding the text with excerpts from previously published material, to type out. His publisher seems to have marketed the text without editing, confident that the title itself would sell the book and demand reviews and talk-show attention.

For a structured account of David Brinkley's career, read Barbara Matusow's "The Evening Stars" (1983), or the 1987 "Current Biography Yearbook." Matusow calls him "one of the most brilliant and original people ever

to have worked in broadcast news;" but Brinkley's own reminiscences on his life, considering what he has chosen to emphasize and hide, reveal a quirky, strange, bitter figure as much as a "brilliant" broadcaster. His account is only roughly chronological, opening with an elegiac but odd portrait of his Wilmington youth, continuing through a string of stories suggested by turning points in his career, holding back basic information on his current (second) wife and family members for the next-to-last chapter. Just when the reader thinks the story is finished, Brinkley climaxes with a hymn for the flat tax, preceded by a long-winded attack on the income tax, which, he whines, is inspired by puritans' and Franklin D. Roosevelt's hatred of the rich, who deserve to keep the gross fruits of their labor.

Although Brinkley does not seem to realize it, that sardonic, off-putting aloofness, which TV audiences of the 1960's read as humor may well be the abiding wound of a lonely, loveless childhood. His father, whom he cherished, died when David was eight; his mother, who bore him when she was 42, withheld her affection because, says Brinkley, her Presbyterian peers thought it improper to get pregnant late in life. Even worse, she disparaged his grade school writing ability! He is confident that if abortion had been legal in 1920 his mother would have had him killed. Yet, on the last page of the book he drives from Washington to Wilmington, determined to buy and restore his childhood home and his Mama's flower garden—only to find it torn down and turned into a parking lot.

The book's Note About the Author tells us that Brinkley was educated at North Carolina and Vanderbilt Universities and served in World War II; yet his memoir never mentions Vanderbilt, says he joined the Army rather than attend North Carolina, and washed out of the service with a bogus bad kidney before the war. Brinkley was thus, like an earlier generation of newsmen, self-taught rather than college-educated, and, unlike his peers, missed the fundamental experience that molded the lives of his generation, that of fighting or covering

World War II.

The stories carry the book. Stories both in the sense of Brinkley's actual reporting experiences and of those second hand "stories" that reporters hear and that may or may not be true. Whether reporters should lace their memoirs with rumors is an ethical question that has not given David Brinkley pause.

The best story is his first. As a 17-year-old high school intern at The Star-News, the young Brinkley was sent to cover the local blooming of a century plant—a Mexican flower which, David discovered with a little research, was erroneously believed to blossom every hundred years. Since not much happens in Wilmington, the plant's owner had convinced the city this would be a big event, and the fire department had blocked the streets and set up floodlights to illuminate whatever bloomed. Young David was smart enough to ask the woman how she knew her plant was a hundred years old *tonight*, and she replied, "How should I know? I'm not a hundred years old." When the fraud became obvious, the woman exclaimed, "I'll never trust a Mexican again." His amusing account of the farce was picked up by The Associated Press and landed the kid three inches in The Los Angeles Times. He was on his way.

A few stories raise a question about Brinkley's ethical attitudes: as a boy he stole a quarter from his sister; in the Army, as a supply sergeant, he cooked the books so that the troops would not be held responsible for lost or stolen equipment; at United Press, asked for a quick story on a traveling Mexican dance troupe, he simply made one up. Since he tells all in the same wry tone, it's not clear whether he sees one of these incidents as more serious than the other. Meanwhile we learn that the Pendergast machine provided whores for all the newsmen covering Harry Truman's return to Kansas City; that during the 1956 campaign Senator Estes Kefauver scouted the crowds for lone attractive women whom he could bed that night; and that "there were stories, never proved," that Joe Kennedy bought the West Virginia primary for Jack.

Next to the author's scorn for his

own mother, "David Brinkley's" oddest mini-theme is its disdain for Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1943, as an NBC White House correspondent, Brinkley is shocked to find that FDR's complexion is "gray," and that FDR is a lousy architect who attempted to personally design temporary housing for a suddenly overpopulated Washington. It did not occur to David Brinkley that this little task was simply FDR's harmless diversion from trying to lead the world through the worst war in human history. An FDR scandal: he received envelopes, "allowance," from his mother when she visited the Oval Office! FDR was a "social snob," says Brinkley, who ridicules his own partner—but not friend—Chet Huntley for leaving his number in the phone book, thus laying himself open to calls from boring common Americans who would invite him to dinner.

Journalism critics—puritans?—who argue that reporters should not play palsy-walsy with the politicians they cover will squirm as Brinkley socializes with the Kennedy clan and even gets maneuvered into picking up a thousand dollar dinner tab rather than tell a Kennedy it was their party, not his. They will wonder as Lyndon Johnson sends a helicopter to whisk the Brinkleys to Camp David for a monologue and calls them at midnight to invite David for a drink. He goes.

When CBS pulled ahead of NBC in the ratings—Brinkley says it was in 1971, other sources say 1967—Brinkley blames the fallout from the 1967 AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) strike where Huntley crossed the picket line and Brinkley did not. But CBS beat NBC because Richard Salant and Bill Small, whom Brinkley denigrates, put together a CBS news team in the Edward R. Murrow tradition—Cronkite, Sevareid, Marvin and Bernard Kalb, Roger Mudd, Dan Rather, and others—who communicated serious professionalism and trust. The Brinkley raised eyebrow had run its course.

But the most startling disappointment in this 273-page reminiscence from a man who has seen so much is its lack of real reflection. There are opin-

# The Seven Topoi of Religion Stories

**Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America**

Mark Silk

University of Illinois Press. 181 Pages. \$19.95.

BY LINDSAY MILLER

When I worked as a producer for CBS News, we used to joke that our cover stories on "Sunday Morning" fell into one of two categories: hope-amongst-doom or doom-amongst-hope. In his interesting new book, "Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America," Mark Silk says stories about religion in the American news media tend to fall into a limited set of categories, and these stories have stock characters and predictable themes. Think of Mother Teresa or Tammy Faye Bakker, and you have an idea of what he means.

His main thesis seems to be that, despite the general perception that American mainstream media are hostile to religion, he says they actually reflect and conserve an establishment point of view about religion. In other words, the secular media are "unsecular."

This book is written in the sort of academic "discourse" that Nieman Fellows can find jarring when they first sit down in a classroom in Harvard Yard. But unlike many academic critics of the media, who spin fine theories based on

nothing but their own assumptions, it is clear Mark Silk knows his way around a newsroom.

He is careful to say he does not belong to, as he puts it, the "sodality" of full-time religion writers and editors, although he has often written about religion as a reporter, editorial writer and columnist for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. He calls himself a "sometimes intellectual historian who, by choice and luck, found himself earning a living in daily journalism."

As a journalist who also, by choice and luck, frequently covers religion, I found this book intriguing but also elusive and impossible to summarize. Its ideas are textured and nuanced, as they say in academe.

Most of the book is devoted to what the author sees as seven types of stock stories about religion and their underlying themes. He calls these themes topoi, which is Greek for "common-places," moral assumptions that everyone knows and accepts.

To explain what he means by topoi, he cites the traditional formula for covering a big academic conference. He

says the lead always lists a few academic papers with arcane or inane titles. Here the stock figure is the egghead, and the underlying theme is that intellectuals are pompous but harmless. In a footnote, Silk says he tried to cover an academic conference in a different way. His editor said his story was fine, but where were the funny paper titles? He put them in the lead.

Silk's seven stock stories about religion are good works (e.g., Mother Teresa), intolerance (the Scopes Trial), hypocrisy (Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker), false prophecy (David Koresh), inclusion (these people may look and act different, but they are really like us), miracles and the supernatural (isn't it amazing? the sun came out when the Pope appeared), and declension (things are getting so bad we're due for a religious revival).

Journalists and the general public, he says, run into trouble when they encounter clashing topoi. For example, David Koresh was portrayed as a false prophet but then, with the fiery destruction of his Apocalypse Ranch, he also became a victim of intolerance. Silk says that being aware of these categories and realizing our tendency to "print all the news that fits" a certain category, journalists can change the way stories about religion are told and understood. We don't always have to put the funny paper titles in the lead. ■

*Lindsay Miller, an independent writer and producer, is a 1988 Nieman Fellow living in Cambridge, Mass. She produced the award-winning "Islam in America" and is currently working on a project about the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick.*

ions—Joe McCarthy was a liar, Vietnam was a waste, politicians are pompous fools—but we know that; and Brinkley's analysis—or whatever it is—sheds little light. Pity. The reader is ready to like him. We mourn his first, divorced wife's final illness, although he devotes several pages to a woman he did not marry while he does not tell us his actual wife's full name. We admire his world travels, but are left hungry for some ethical reaction, which most journalists have, to what the rest of us see when we

travel to Africa, Latin America, and Vietnam—terrible poverty that cries to heaven for a more equitable distribution of the world's wealth. And David Brinkley devotes his entire final chapter to advocating the flat tax. ■

*Raymond A. Schroth, S.J., teaches journalism at Loyola University of New Orleans, writes television criticism for the National Catholic Reporter, and is author of "The American Journey of Eric Sevareid" (Steerforth Press).*

## Going Too Far in Search of a Story

### The Right to Privacy

Ellen Alderman and Caroline Kennedy

Alfred A. Knopf. 405 Pages. \$26.95.

BY JOEL KAPLAN

How often do newspapers or magazines illustrate their stories with a random photograph that the editors hope will powerfully depict the substance behind the article? Several years ago The New York Times Magazine decided to print a cover story on the rise of the black middle class. A photographer took several shots of people walking in Manhattan and blew up one of those pictures for the cover. The picture used was one of Clarence Arrington, a young black man who worked for General Motors. But Arrington wasn't identified or quoted in the story. In fact, he didn't even know the picture had been taken—and he disagreed with the gist of the entire article. He sued for invasion of privacy.

Do you ever feel uneasy when you see one of those Cops shows, following police officers with a camera as they bust in someone's door and arrest him for some nefarious crime? In Los Angeles, television station KNBC-TV was following a paramedic team around town when they were summoned to an apartment where a man suffered a heart attack. Despite their heroic efforts, the man died. His wife, who was present during the incident but did not watch the paramedics perform was later told by the family doctor that he died swiftly and painlessly. She did not know of the camera crew's presence. When she later saw a report of the death on television, she was stunned. Particularly troubling was the realization that they had worked on her husband for over two hours. She sued the station for invasion of privacy.

When is it ever appropriate for the news media to disclose a private fact, like someone's adoption record, without that person's permission? The

Salisbury Post, a small daily newspaper serving Rowan County, North Carolina, thought it had a great story: two ex-carny workers were seeking the baby they had abandoned 17 years ago. Even though adoption records were sealed, the paper went on a mini-crusade to help the couple locate the girl. "It was a hell of a story," Steve Bouser, the newspaper's editor is quoted as saying. "That's why I decided to stretch it across the top of the front page." But when the newspaper printed attempts by the couple to have a reunion with their biological daughter—and then named the girl—she thought the newspaper went too far. "I hate them," the girl is quoted as saying of the newspaper. "They didn't come to us or try to find us to find out if we wanted it printed or not. They just up and put it all in the paper assuming they were doing a good deed, which they weren't. They just hurt us." The girl and her adopted parents sued for invasion of privacy.

Needless to say, the media does not come out looking very good in each of these cases. Although in legal cases involving invasion of privacy the press usually wins (Arrington lost, the adopted girl and her parents lost, the wife of the heart attack victim settled out of court with the television station), in the court of public opinion, most would read the case studies and condemn the arrogant, unfeeling press.

These three case studies are among several detailed in a superbly written, expertly researched book by Ellen Alderman and Caroline Kennedy on the right to privacy. While the book delves into all aspects of privacy from violations by law enforcement to those in the workplace, probably the most in-

teresting aspect of the book deals with the press. And what makes this work useful and insightful is the actual reporting the authors did. They talked to the newspaper editor and the adopted girl. They talked to Charles Arrington and the news director of KNBC.

But there is a bit of disingenuousness here. Though Caroline Kennedy does mention in the introduction that "one of us is a public figure who grew up with little privacy," the vast amount of invasion of privacy she has experienced as the daughter of an assassinated president is not mentioned. What is most distressing is that one of the most famous invasion of privacy cases involved the photographing of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and her children by paparazzi Ron Galella. For the first time in history, a photographer was enjoined from taking pictures of a person in *public*. Ultimately, Galella lost his case not on invasion of privacy grounds, but on harassment charges. Not one word of that case is mentioned in the book.

Nevertheless, the book is useful for both the press and the public. In layman's terms it talks about the four branches of invasions of privacy and how they can affect the press: intrusion; appropriation; true but embarrassing private facts; and false light. In reality, the only area where the press has any real danger of losing an invasion of privacy lawsuit involves intrusion or trespass. The media simply have no right to enter private property in search of a story no matter how compelling.

Still, the authors, Columbia Law School classmates, attempt to show how often the media invades the privacy of the people they write about. In so doing, they tend to equate the right to privacy with the right to a free press. Unfortunately for Kennedy and Alderman there is no explicit right to privacy in the U.S. Constitution. There is, however, an explicit First Amendment. Thus the media should and do win most claims of invasion of privacy.

Most of the cases cited by the authors are interesting. In many of them professional journalists would be upset about what was printed or broad-

# Dreamers and Misfits in Beijing Press Corps

**China Hands**

Peter Rand

Simon & Schuster. 384 Pages. \$25.

BY BENJAMIN WELLES

China, like a skilled if aging concubine, has been luring and deceiving Americans for two centuries or more. A few Yankees in colonial days made fortunes trading pelts or sawdust-packed ice blocks for silks, spices—even opium—in Canton but many more returned home broke and disillusioned. In recent decades, none have had their dreams so shattered as supposedly hard-headed American journalists who let their objectivity, the lode-star of classic American journalism, slide from disgust with Chiang Kai-shek's corrupt, incompetent Nationalist regime into emotional commitment to China's communist-led social revolution.

In a well-researched and consistently lively new book, "China Hands," Peter Rand traces the process through the lives of five idealistic young American journalists ("dreamers and misfits") who went to China during the first half of the century to "seek escape and adventure....All achieved a moment of fame and glory...as China Hands who

wrote about the Chinese people and publicized their struggle." One was Rand's late father, Christopher Rand.

All five fell, to varying degrees, under the spell of Ching-ling Soong, better known as Mme. Sun Yat-sen, widow of the patriot who overthrew the Manchu dynasty in 1911. A left-leaning scion of the powerful Soong dynasty, she detested her dictatorial brother-in-law, Chiang Kai-shek, and her influence on American reporting from China was crucial. A bearer of the true flame, she had unrivaled sources.

Rand weaves skillfully through China's tangled minefield. As Japan encroached on weak, turbulent China—seizing rich, empty Manchuria in 1931, invading China proper in 1937, brutally suppressing all resistance until VJ day—Stalin's cynical dabbling in China's destiny flickers like lightning in the night. For Stalin, the coming enemy was Nazi Germany; and a Japan, emboldened by a quick conquest of China might threaten the USSR's Pacific provinces. In Stalin's eyes only

cast. But that distaste occurs because we become upset with the lack of ethical standards that too many of our colleagues maintain. Nevertheless, we are also very much aware that the First Amendment protects The National Enquirer and Hustler as much as it protects The New York Times and CBS.

And, as the authors quote the New York Court of Appeals in the Arrington case, "The inability to vindicate a personal predilection for greater privacy

may be part of the price every person must be prepared to pay for a society in which information and opinion flow freely." ■

*Joel Kaplan, Nieman Fellow 1985, teaches communications law at Syracuse University's S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.*



Chiang Kai-shek the right-wing warlord—and not the little-known Mao Tse-tung, already suspect as too independent—could hold China together, bogging Japan down in an unwinnable war. Mao and his communists were left to fight the Japanese alone as Chiang hoarded his troops and his American aid during World War II for the post-war struggle he saw ahead.

The first of Rand's main characters, Rayna Simons Prohme, a young Chicagoan with flaming red hair, arrived in Beijing in 1925, succumbed quickly to Mme. Sun's communist ideology and became an impassioned editor and propagandist for left-wing causes. Two years later, threatened by Chiang, Rayna fled to Moscow, fell ill and died.

Harold Isaacs, newly graduated from Columbia and seeking meaning for his life, found it in 1931 during an arduous journey through the Yangtze valley and the Chinese interior. Appalled by the plight of starving peasantry and the brutal repression of Chiang Kai-shek's sa-traps, Isaacs returned convinced that communism, alone, could solve China's social misery. After five years editing China Forum, a leftist periodical in Shanghai, Isaacs quit China, met Trotsky in Norway and eventually, with Trotsky's help, published proof in New York that Stalin, in a carefully suppressed 1934

speech, had admitted betraying the fledgling Chinese communist movement in favor of Chiang Kai-shek.

Edgar Snow became world famous in 1936 when his classic "Red Star Over China" appeared. The first American reporter to visit Mao and his Red Army in their North Shensi hideout, Snow, though no communist himself, won the little-known Red Army international interest and even sympathy through his exclusive account of Mao's struggles, his philosophy and the story of the incredible 1934-5 communist Long March which Mao had personally led. Notwithstanding, Snow, like other American journalists, was barred for years from returning to China after the communist takeover in 1949 and his reputation at home suffered from identification with America's alleged "loss" of the country.

Theodore H. White, fresh from Harvard, arrived in Chungking in 1939, two years before Pearl Harbor. Influenced by his China-born, right-wing boss, Time-Life publisher Henry Luce, Teddy White, too, initially believed that Chiang Kai-shek, alone, could rally vast, sprawling China to resist the Japanese. But then, like Prohme, Isaacs and Snow before him, his growing disgust with Chiang's corrupt, ruthless regime and Luce's orders to quash or distort his critical reporting led to an angry clash. White was fired, rising later to eminence as a Pulitzer-winning author of books on China, on post-war Europe and on U.S. presidential elections.

Rand's spotlight flickers over other famed China reporters: Jack Belden, Keyes Beech, Tillman Durdin, Arch Steele, though, oddly, he overlooks the flamboyant, red-faced Reynolds Packard of United Press, whose delight was to goad Associated Press rivals with fictive stories about a "human-headed spider" in a village near Beijing. When the hoax was revealed, "Pack" would argue that his explanation, however lame, was a legitimate follow-up, but the UP thought otherwise and Pack moved to Rome.

Rand's culminating account of his father is poignant. A "loner and misfit" at Groton, at Yale and in his marriage,

## Freelancing, the Work World of the Future

### Executive Blues

Down and Out in Corporate America

G.J. Meyer

Franklin Square Press. 245 Pages. \$21.95.

BY E.C. NORTON

Jerry Meyer has written a painful professional autobiography that ought to be required reading in every college in the Republic as we slide toward the 1996 election. Despite the 1992 reminder ("It's the economy, stupid"), the Clinton Administration and the present Congress seem to prefer political dogfights rather than jointly tackle the major changes affecting the U.S. economy.

Until recently these changes were reported dryly in the daily press—companies merging and oh, by the way, 12,000 jobs lost—affecting regions, cities and small towns. And individuals. Recently, newspapers have folded and once strong media giants have closed operations and ordered major cutbacks. The economic cold wind has reached

into the newsrooms. It's a new era for journalists. Across the board, companies are lean and mean and they don't give or demand loyalty. And by recent polls employees are worried about their jobs and future. They have good reason to be concerned.

Meyer left reporting in St. Louis after his 1971-72 Nieman year to enter public relations. He writes of his experiences in the 1990's job market after he was "outplaced" by two major companies. These traumas include dealing with disingenuous headhunters and dilatory and absurd hiring practices. Meyer names culprits and firms he dealt with, people and outfits that unnecessarily added to his stress. His theme is how badly one is treated today when unemployed.

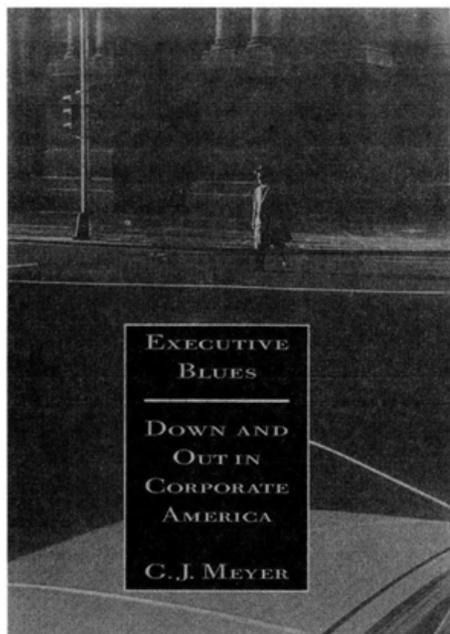
Chris Rand found his *métier* in China as a wartime Office of War Information official and later reporter for The New York Herald Tribune and The New Yorker magazine. He learned Chinese, prowled back alleys, rode ancient buses, camels and even Mongol ponies throughout the hinterland and, periodically, far from family ties, threw himself into "drinking and whoring." With the war's end, China slipped behind the "Bamboo Curtain." The story was over and with it Rand's *raison d'être*.

"My father paid a big price for success because to achieve it," writes Peter Rand, "he had to relinquish his home and his family. Guilt never left him alone for long in the years that followed. He went around the world as a Far Flung correspondent trying to escape from guilt. He took to drugs and

religion to escape it. Finally [in 1968] he flung himself out of a sixth floor window to his death."

Before leaving China, Rand covered the abortive mission of General George C. Marshall whom Truman sent in 1946-7 to broker a Nationalist-communist truce and, hopefully, a coalition government. Unaccustomed to failure, Marshall plowed on, winning temporary cease-fires but, within a year, his efforts were doomed when Chou En-lai, the chief communist negotiator, asked pointedly how he could continue as an "honest broker" when the U.S. was arming and supplying the Kuomintang government. Those urging the U.S. to arm Bosnian Muslims as a step toward peace in former Yugoslavia might well ponder the lesson. ■

*Benjamin Welles, now retired, covered China, among other countries, for The New York Times.*



College students should study this account, as they will probably fall victim to the same practices. The common wisdom is that an educated person will have as many as eight jobs in a career and will change careers three or four times during a work life.

Once upon a time in the U.S. the journeyman journalist was a free rolling stone who stopped in whatever burg would have him and then left when he wanted to. Today, Meyer reports, corporate executives have moved to this rolling-stone mode, mostly involuntarily. The 30-year employee who got a watch to wear while puttering at his Florida retirement home is a thing of the past. Meyer, a careful reporter, shows us that:

- Despite federal and state laws barring age discrimination in the work world, there is rampant age discrimination. Over 50? Forget it. An amazing attitude, when you think that medical advances are keeping all of us alive longer. But not in the hearts of the corporate establishment. It's "equal opportunity discrimination," too, as men and women are equally affected.

- Most of the once-considered safe segments of the economy, for example college teaching, are hiring only temporary workers without benefits. Meyer recounts how a lawyer pal with the Federal Reserve Bank, who he thought

had a real lock on job security, called for job leads because the Fed was rightsizing.

- Most industries, companies and employers are undergoing radical restructuring for a pot of reasons: a) the pressure of the global economy, b) mergers and c) everyone else is doing it and whatever the current fad is (rightsizing, re-engineering) they want to be on top of it.

Meyer pulls no punches in his account of the march across the job-search barren plains. He hasn't stopped being a reporter; he names individuals and companies whose attitudes, practices and conduct are strange at best and despicable at worst. The strangest part of today's work world is that corporations spend inordinate amounts of time and money hiring and little in firing. Hiring can take six months. Firing takes six minutes. He reports interviews where CEO's and other executives asked vapid questions and seemed to know little or nothing about the job under discussion. (Experts explain this by noting that next to firing people, corporate managers dislike hiring people. It tends to shine a spotlight on their ignorance.)

Meyer recounts the present-day "outplacement" limbo in which he and many middle- and upper-level managers find themselves. This outplacement-service industry grew in the 1980's-90's with downsizing. Outplacement, sold as a benign corporate perk, is not pleasant for its victims and it really is a defensive measure against potential lawsuits.

Meyer writes, "...a good many self-proclaimed organizational gurus have been writing and lecturing about how the corporation of the not-so-distant future will have only a tiny, almost vestigial permanent staff. This corporation will meet most of its needs for white-collar work by hiring outsiders temporarily, project by project, inviting them to come aboard long enough to complete some specific, limited task and then inviting them to go away again. Most of the people who until now have had conventional salaried jobs will become a new class of migratory brain workers, moving into and out of assign-

ments as opportunities ebb and flow. Their lives—our lives—will become a jumble of brief encounters.

"If you're careful in choosing the words to describe this scenario, it can sound like a grand adventure. Corporate bureaucrats are transformed into *consultants*. Middle managers become *freelancers*. Everyone goes where the *action is*, and plain old-fashioned work is replaced by *innovation* and *empowerment* and *total quality* and *adventure*...

"But the people who describe this future never seem to wonder what kind of society it's going to be when many of us are skittering not merely from assignment to assignment but from job to job and company to company and city to city." What kind of communities, families will result? Meyer asks.

"Peel away the uplifting rhetoric about the exciting workplace of the future and what you're left with is an America in which stability, continuity, and security—the basic elements of a coherent life—are going to be beyond the grasp of all but an increasingly small, increasingly isolated minority."

After tough years, sad-comic experiences with "increasingly isolated minority" managements, Meyer is employed. His book is a bleak look at the present and future of the American workplace and one readers will pass by at their own peril. We're all in the same boat. It's unfortunate the sea changes in our economy have not been adequately reported in our *sensation-of-the-moment-of-little-lasting-importance* news environment. The world of work is a complicated subject with some intractable elements, but I've yet to speak to anyone recently who isn't aware of this new era and how it threatens to derail their lives. ■

*E.C. Norton, a 1973 Nieman Fellow, has experienced two newspaper collapses and has worked in communications with two global companies where he experienced mergers, rightsizing and re-engineering.*

# A Disappointing Tour of the Information Highway

## The Road Ahead

Bill Gates, with Nathan Myhrvold and Peter Rinearson  
 Viking Penguin. 286 Pages. \$29.95.

BY DAVID DEJEAN

**T**he idea is a natural: a tour of the high-tech future conducted by the Nerd Prince himself. "The Road Ahead" has it all: for its author, a genuine superstar, Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft and Richest Man in the Universe; for its subject, the Information Highway—if you're not on it, you're nowhere. And it must be cutting-edge, because it comes with a companion CD-ROM.

Unfortunately, the product never quite lives up to its concept. As a book it doesn't hold one's interest: as a celebrity tell-all, Gates doesn't even reach for the level of a masterpiece like Loni Anderson's "My Life in High Heels." As a technology explainer, Gates' earnest suburban prose is too much Mr. Rogers, not enough Mr. Wizard. In fact, the book is less interesting for itself than for its context—Microsoft and Gates have taken quite a bashing, and "The Road Ahead" has a definite flavor of spin-doctoring to it.

Finally, "The Road Ahead" becomes most interesting not for what it says but for what it "is"—an artifact of the transition away from print media that it chronicles.

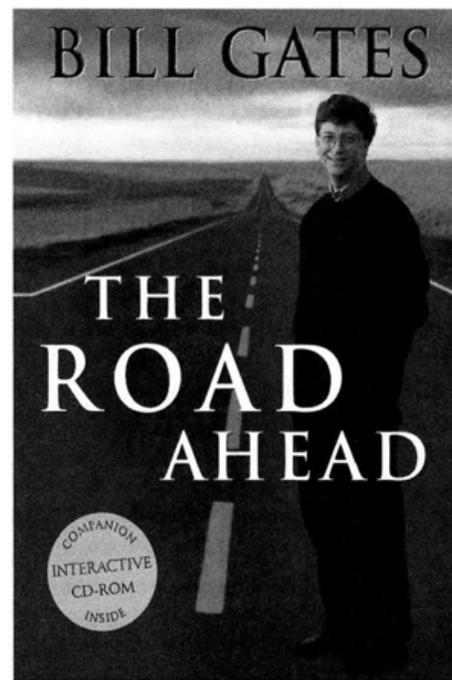
The public has a boundless interest in Bill Gates—his money, his management style, his marriage, his approaching fatherhood, the house he's building in Seattle. But he is a very private person, and "The Road Ahead" does little to change that. It does tell us that when he was a kid Bill Gates was determined to read his way through his family's World Book, and he got up to the P's before computers claimed his attention. Judging from the number of movie references, he's quite a movie buff. And he tells us how much he enjoyed "The Bridges of Madison

County." But he continues to protect his privacy by insisting that he's really a very ordinary, uninteresting person who has been lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. After 200 pages one is almost lulled into agreeing with him.

Just Plain Bill doesn't create much excitement for tomorrow's technologies, either. As a popularizer of technology he stays in the shallows of factoid and assertion and his Highway leads to a place where computers have no negative consequences (in the future, for example, "everyone will have access to most of the world's information"). He's conservative about this Highway—despite the heavy hype, the Internet is not the Highway, he tells us, but will become the Highway when we get better information appliances, smarter software, and much higher capacity in our communications networks.

For a man with a reputation as one of the world's great visionaries, Gates offers a surprisingly pedestrian vision. He foresees wallet PC's that dispense electronic money, interactive TV that plays any show on demand, widespread videoconferencing, and universal access to information in all kinds of forms—sound and video as well as text. This is disappointingly conventional wisdom from a person who should have the ultimate insight—or does it just "seem" conventional because we accept them as inevitable—because Bill Gates is one of the few people in the world with the power to make his ideas into reality?

Gates also uses the platform of the book to sell hard on some ideas that don't have much to do with wallet PC's. Over the past couple of years Microsoft has teetered on the brink of big trouble



with the government trust-busters, and Gates has suffered public relations disasters that ranged from being predatory in the marketplace to being testy with Connie Chung.

None of these issues are raised in his book, but they inform a couple of recurring themes in the text. One is that the modest Mr. Gates is not Superman. He repeatedly says how lucky he feels to have been in the right place at the right time just as personal computers took off. The other is that Microsoft is not the Evil Empire, just one high-technology company that has managed to do well in a very competitive marketplace. The phrase "Microsoft and companies like it" keeps cropping up in variations, begging the question of whether there is actually another com-

pany like Microsoft. And why has Microsoft been so successful? Certainly not by trying to take over the world, Gates tells us. Just the opposite: by limiting its focus to what it does well, rather than trying to compete in every area. It's a message that has the fingerprints of the PR department all over it.

"The Road Ahead" does manage to find some excitement in the future by "being" a piece of the future. Bound in the back of the book is a CD-ROM disk. Slip it into your PC and this flashy multimedia production does as much as anything can to turn the bland, boyish Bill Gates into a theme-park ride. There's a full measure of gee-whiz in the video clips that present Gates talking about some of the key points of his book. There is a multi-episode playlet about a day in the life of Seattle in 2004 that shows off some of the technologies Gates likes best, complete with cameo appearances by Paula Zahn, Harry Smith, and even Oprah. Of course there's the full text of the book in searchable form, and a companion index that links words and terms on the page to a collection of documents and pictures that amount to an encyclopedia of the history of the personal computer. And finally, there's a 3D animated tour of The House—the technology demonstration project-cum-residence that Gates is building on the shore of Seattle's Lake Washington.

The CD makes "The Road Ahead" a transitional document: it's a book that comes with a CD. The printed text is primary, and the new digital technology is eye candy. Maybe by the time Gates writes the sequel it will be a CD that comes with a book—a multimedia learning tool that happens to include a conveniently portable study guide.

That would be in keeping with his views on the importance of the Highway to education, both formal and informal, and on the redefinition of "documents" on the Highway. In the future improved appliances will let us handle intangible data types, audio and video, just as we now handle newspaper and magazine articles—subscribe to them, save them, use them when we want to rather than just when they're available.

Maybe in the sequel Gates will also feel more free to dig deeply into his subject matter. "The Road Ahead" skates over some of the implications of these new kinds of documents: the idea that we might buy the rights to songs stored on the Highway from their performers, so that we could play them back from any computer anywhere. Or that the Highway might tell advertisers enough about our individual behavior that they would pay us to look at their ads.

The idea that the Highway might mean the end of the media as mediators between readers and advertisers, buyers and sellers, is an important one that has been much talked about. I wish I knew more about what Bill Gates thinks about it, because he's evidently thought about it a lot, and despite his disingenuous modesty he is going to have a profound role in shaping how this Highway shapes our lives. But that's the great weakness of "The Road Ahead:" the Bill Gates that I've heard about, the brilliant technologist, the driven competitor, even compulsive reader who takes stacks of books on vacation and can converse on topics as remote from PC's as archaeology and bioengineering, the Bill Gates I really want to meet, isn't the Bill Gates I find here. ■

*David DeJean, Nieman Fellow 1978, works for AT&T New Media Services in Cambridge, Mass., where he develops electronic information products. While this review is not available on CD-ROM, it is available on the World Wide Web, with links to related material, at <http://www.dejean.com>.*

## Out of Touch, Overpaid, in Love With Themselves

### Breaking the News:

How the Media Undermine American Democracy

James Fallows

Pantheon. 296 Pages. \$23.

BY LORIE HEARN

If it's a journalist's job to afflict the comfortable, James Fallows has succeeded in "Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy." The irony is the comfortable people he's afflicting are journalists.

This isn't just another media bashing fest in print. The information Fallows has amassed from his own insider status is at the same time serious, outrageous, maddening and downright interesting.

Fallows, who is Washington editor of The Atlantic Monthly, a National Public Radio commentator and well-known media figure in his own right, takes no prisoners. He names names and gets specific, for example, about how the snap-crackle-pop of talk show banter serves little informative purpose.

The only people who win in the proliferation of shows a friend once described as "screaming men in chairs shows" are the media celebs themselves, Fallows says. They get exposure, name recognition and an opening on the "buckraking" lecture circuit where they can earn fees in five figures for opining on subjects they either know little about or are supposed to be covering as impartial experts.

It's a fairly well recognized mess.

Fallows delves with quotes and other documentation into an explanation of how we got into the mess. He hits a chord when he says that journalism's decline has affected not only the financial vitality of news organizations but also the fiber of American democracy. Journalists are out of touch, overpaid and in love with themselves, Fallows

concludes, striking especially at the high-paid (and philosophically diverse) likes of Cokie Roberts, John McLaughlin, Michael Kinsley, George Will and Mike Wallace. He excoriates shows such as Capital Gang, The McLaughlin Group and Crossfire.

It's a public service, putting these big names on the spot and inevitably goosing some conscience out of journalists large and small.

Fallows gives credit for admirable work to some newspapers, but he gives short shrift to the many words written and aired about real issues by real reporters in the trenches. Fallows's book obviously is aimed at getting the attention of the bigfoots who've done the quick slide down the tubes into a cushy pile of self-aggrandizement. The journalists who have greater name recognition than some movie stars could make a huge difference in a skinny minute if they chose to get down off their high horses and spend time with people who have to walk through life.

It should come as no surprise to the networks, to the cable giants, to the publishing magnates, to the community weeklies that the public has been tuning us out, in what Fallows calls a quiet consumer's boycott of the press.

His descriptions of the blurring of the news should be enlightening for the would-be journalists coming out of school with the dollar-signs of TV anchor positions in their eyes. These are the journalists of the future, Fallows points out, trained by today's journalists who purvey the importance of "being" rather than "doing."

Again, Fallows is on target on when he refuses to call media personalities reporters. That title is earned. The work of reporting on news magazine shows is done by hoards of producers who get the story, try to shake out the credible suspects and line up the interviews for the big names to talk to on camera during a quick trip in an out of Peoria. Who are the real reporters there?

In the broader picture, Fallows points out how the tenor of the media has changed, prompted in large part by the discovery that news can make money. If there's conflict, it keeps people's attention, just like a TV drama.



If there is no tension, it's assumed there's no viewer interest. On TV everything has the same weight, Fallows adds. A celebrity murder case, a potential threat to world peace are equally good at filling the slot of the biggest story of the moment, he says.

Top of the hour, top of the fold—crime, violence, warring in Washington, character scandals. International news, Fallows says, has deteriorated to coverage of one disaster after another. It's no wonder Americans don't want to look past their borders. It's hopeless out there. Isn't it?

And then there is politics. Fallows claims journalists cover everything as if it's a game. He accuses us of simply not caring anymore about what we do.

Issues, like health care reform, he says, often are reduced to their impact on the Republican agenda, Democratic agenda and election prospects for candidates from both parties. The discussion about issues by pundits is reduced to how inside-the-Beltway players are handling a matter rather than its substance.

This observation, borne out day after day, proved true again after President Clinton's State of the Union address in January. On one network, the first post-speech five minutes was filled by two White House correspondents who anticipated the Republican re-

sponse, talked about the poignant moments and said that the substance of the speech (which they did not describe) was more striking in its delivery than it appeared in an advance text.

It is useful on many levels to point out what is wrong and why it is wrong, but Fallows piles on the bad news until the reader is buried, begging for a solution. That solution, unfortunately, needs more time in the oven.

Fallows ends up recommending the practice of public journalism. It's a laudable conclusion, but it's not enough simply to throw it out there and duck. There is great disagreement about public journalism, and Fallows doesn't go far enough—or fuel the debate enough—in committing to specific suggestions, like how it should be implemented on a large scale.

I'm sure Fallows didn't want to get sappy, to go on about constitutional responsibilities or about the fact that many reporters and editors got into the business because they wanted to do something good in society. Ending the book with an anecdote about Jim Wooten, the ABC correspondent who has done much good work in print and on the air, made points sans the soapbox. There is hope in this book, it's just hard to get a fist around it. ■

*Lorie Hearn is the Legal Affairs Editor at The San Diego Union-Tribune and a Nieman Fellow 1995.*

## Correction

The cover photograph of Republican Presidential candidates in the Winter 1995 edition of Nieman Reports was taken by Pat Greenhouse of The Boston Globe, not by Stan Grossfeld.

## Economic Questions Journalists Overlook

### Opposing the System

Charles A. Reich

Crown Publishers Inc. 219 Pages. \$23.

BY CHRIS BOWMAN

Every now and then journalists, particularly mainstream journalists, need a good knock on the head to start seeing issues differently than the Establishment portrays them.

Charles A. Reich, the counterculture legal scholar at Yale, delivers the punch in "Opposing the System." His swift-reading polemic is a respectable counterweight to the political rallying cries of the 1990's—moral renewal, personal responsibility, less government, deficit reduction, welfare cuts and jobs, jobs, jobs.

The reforms, all angry political responses to the anxieties of America's middle class, are misguided and leave people fighting the wrong enemies, Reich argues. They are doomed to fail because they are premised on a "gigantic deception." The myth, at least 30 years in the running, is that the country still enjoys a relatively unstructured market economy with jobs and opportunities for all who earn them.

Reich calls for radically different reforms based on a "new map of reality." This new map shows that after World War II an "economic government" stealthily eclipsed public government as the main driver of social change, especially unwanted change like the surge in homelessness and health-care costs. Newt Gingrich and the Contract with America notwithstanding, "citizens and public government together cannot change the direction of the country if both have ceded power over that direction to economic government," Reich says.

Today, Reich contends, it's big business, not big government, that primarily regulates the lives of ordinary Americans, forcing them to accept less job security and lower pay and benefits

than the country's prosperity would seem to justify. "The System," as Reich calls this new economic tyranny, has created a society in the image of the corporate hierarchy. The steep social pyramid has a few at the top enjoying highly paid and fulfilling work and many near the bottom committed to drudgery. The System also acts as a lottery. It guarantees that many talented and capable job-seekers will end up being losers—no work, no home—no matter how hard they try.

"Democracy is not working," Reich says. "People feel powerless; the economy forces most people into a losing struggle where earnings can never catch up with expenses; rising social conflict is destroying safety and security; and we have lost the ability to imagine a better future."

The solution? Reich says we should pick up where President Franklin D. Roosevelt left off with his New Deal. Roosevelt saw the emergence of the corporate state and the power it held over individual freedom and economic security. In return for holding this power, business organizations must assume a social duty—a New Deal—by upholding the individual's "right" to earn decent wages and to enjoy good health and a good education.

"Roosevelt's proposals were just a beginning for a revision of the social contract that should have been vigorously continued and added to in the post-World War II years as economic concentration rapidly increased," Reich says.

Such sweeping generalizations and far-left solutions are no surprise from Reich, who has made a career of assailing the country's concentration of economic wealth and power. "The System" is basically the same bogeyman as "The

CHARLES A. REICH

## OPPOSING THE SYSTEM

Unless it is stopped, the System will soon cause irreparable damage to the human community.

The great political deception that has long suppressed any effective action must be exposed. We need constitutional curbs on corporate tyranny, a restored social contract that protects economic justice and personal security, and a resurgent protest movement guided by a new map of reality. It is time for the greening of America.

Establishment," the buzzword of the rebellious 1960's, and "The Corporate Mindstate" that Reich railed against in his 1970 counterculture classic, "The Greening of America," where he erroneously predicted that a youth rebellion would replace America's preoccupation with efficiency, advancement and status with a sense of beauty, community and humanity.

"Opposing the System," as the title implies, is an intellectual attack, not a critical evaluation. Reich concedes nothing to those who believe that individual qualities plays a strong role in one's economic lot. He yields no ground to victims of violence who might scoff at his argument that crime "is preventable by a more equitable and human management of the nation's economy." There is no attempt to balance individual will with The System. And Reich cannot expect to win many converts by leaving the key concepts fuzzy. He never

puts any human faces on this "System." He calls for a "science of social change," but does not attempt to describe what that might mean.

Reich is at his best when he rips into the "religion" of economic growth. He challenges assumptions that go largely unquestioned in the press. Economic growth is often cast as "good news." Government deregulation, corporate tax cuts, financial-incentive policies for environmental protection and below-market sales of public timber, minerals and water are pitched and defended as beneficial for corporations and citizens alike. "Corporations receive all kinds of public assistance based on the assumption that they will create jobs and benefit the community as a whole," says Reich. "Yet the same corporations cut jobs to increase their profits and devastate communities by moving their operations outside the United States."

Radio and television channels, all publicly owned, amount to one of these giveaways to corporate interests, Reich argues. "Despite the fact that these broadcast licenses are worth many millions of dollars to the licensees, the licensees neither share their profits with the public (as owners) nor perform any but the most token public services," he says.

Reich raises questions about growth that journalists should be asking all along. How has growth affected workers' pay and security? How does growth affect poverty and pollution? What is the impact of growth on the family and other personal activities outside work? They are the kinds of questions that will help reporters from falling into the trap of seeing reality only as "The System" portrays it. ■

*Chris Bowman, Nieman Fellow 1995, is Environmental reporter for The Sacramento Bee.*

## Nixon's Real-Life Speech

**T**he Watergate tapes are the most famous and extensive transcripts of real-life speech ever published. When they were released, Americans were shocked though not all for the same reason. Some people—a very small number—were surprised that Nixon had taken part in a conspiracy to obstruct justice. A few were surprised that the leader of the free world cussed like a stevedore. But one thing that surprised everyone was what ordinary conversation looks like when it is written down verbatim. Conversation out of context is virtually opaque.

Part of the problem comes from the circumstances of transcription: the intonation and timing that delineate phrases is lost, and a transcription from anything but the highest-fidelity tape is unreliable. Indeed, in the White House's independent transcription of this low quality recording, many puzzling passages are rendered more sensibly. For example, I want the, uh, uh, to go is transcribed as I want them uh, uh, to go.

But even when transcribed perfectly, conversation is hard to interpret. People often speak in fragments, interrupting themselves in midsentence to reformulate the thought or change the subject. It's often unclear who or what is being talked about, because conversers use pronouns (him, them, this, that, we, they, it, one) generic words (do, happen, the thing, the situation, that score, these people, whatever) and ellipses (The U.S. Attorney's Office will and That's why). Intentions are expressed indirectly. In this episode, whether a man would end the year as president of the United States or as a convicted criminal literally hinged on the meaning of "get it" and on whether "What is it that you need?" was meant as a request for information or as an implicit offer to provide something.



Not everyone was shocked by the unintelligibility of transcribed speech. Journalists know all about it, and it is a routine practice to edit quotations and interviews heavily before they are published. For many years the temperamental Boston Red Sox pitcher Roger Clemens complained bitterly that the press misquoted him. The Boston Herald, in what they must have known was a cruel trick, responded by running a daily feature in which his post-game comments were reproduced word for word. ■—*Steven Pinker in "The Language Instinct." William Morrow & Company 1994, \$23.*

## In Gay 90's, When Comics Sold Newspapers

### The Yellow Kid

R. F. Outcault

Kitchen Sink Press. 301 Pages. \$55 hc, \$39.95 pb.

BY PAUL SZEP

**F**ans of comics, historians and newspaper people in general should find this compilation of The Yellow Kid cartoons deliciously informative and historically significant.

The Yellow Kid was a street urchin, a popular comic character at the end of the 19th Century. He was a prize fought over by two newspaper giants, William Randolph Hearst of The New York Journal and Joseph Pulitzer of The New York World. He was, more importantly (and the legitimate reason for such a book) the first comic strip, a fact recognized by a centennial stamp in his honor.

Outcault was born in 1863 in Lancaster, Ohio. He was a successful freelance artist fascinated by New York's street life. Outcault and other artists like George Luks, William Glackens and Stephen Crane (author of the "Red Badge of Courage") would form the nucleus of the Ashcan School and lead the first successful revolution in 20th Century painting with images of the city.

Outcault sold his first cartoon to Truth, a weekly cartoon magazine that ranked a poor fourth in national circulation. Outcault's work at Truth led to a better paying job at The World, which enjoyed the largest circulation in Manhattan and which had begun a new Sunday supplement with color illustrations on May 21, 1893. Outcault's first cartoon in The World was a six-panel black and white on September 16, 1894.

A January 13, 1898 cartoon titled "Aristocracy of the Fourth World" had debuted a diminutive bald figure, a prototype of the newspaper gamin who could outrage and delight New Yorkers but was not the genuine article. The real thing was in an earlier cartoon reprinted from Truth in the February 7,



1895 World titled "Fourth World Brownies." This was the newsprint birth of the Hogan's Alley charmer to be known as the Yellow Kid. This was the nightshirted kid who would emerge in the final design, the kid Outcault would later christen Micky—often spelled Mickey—Dugan.

The question of the Kid's yellow nightshirt apparently has been misrepresented with the lion's share of this misleading folklore attributed to Coulton Waugh's "The Comics." One fact that does seem certain is that the decision to paint the Kid yellow was not Outcault's. He said that "I don't remember who did the coloring—I know I didn't—but, whoever it was colored Micky Dugan's dress yellow—a bright, glaring, golden, gleaming, gorgeous yellow! And that dress has never changed color from that day to this."

Outcault moved over to Hearst's New York Journal in October, 1896, bringing with him the Yellow Dugan Kid, which he had copyrighted and now legally owned. This move would create the "Great Yellow Kid Newspaper War," which has long been mistakenly thought to have led to the creation of the term "yellow journalism" by traditional jour-

nalists. In fact, the phrase was coined by Evrin Wardman, of The New York Press, September 2, 1896 in an editorial leveled against The Journal in response to a national bicycle marathon sponsored by Hearst's California and New York newspapers. Although it was a promotional event, planned and carried out to increase newspaper sales, The Journal carried it as news. The "yellow" in "yellow journalism" refers to Hearst's bicycle riders who crossed the country in relays and wore yellow, and were called Hearst's "Yellow Fellows."

Richard F. Outcault invented what was soon to be called the comic strip with his "Yellow Kid and his New Phonograph," October 25, 1896.

A comic strip is a successive drawing telling a continuing story. The placement of dialogue is irrelevant. The comic strip is a composite art form, half way between drama and illustration. Successive drawings include ballooned dialogue that is crucial to telling a story. The narrative is constructed primarily through the character's dialogue while other sorts of text are minimal or absent. Outcault apparently never realized the significance of his invention. At the time he made no attempt to continue what he had devised.

The Yellow Kid existed until its cancellation in 1898. Outcault created the comic strip Buster Brown in 1902 and drew it for the rest of his career.

This is truly a wonderful book. The color plates are remarkable and for any contemporary cartoonist to experience the miraculous draftsmanship is a treat in itself.

William Randolph Hearst III in his generous forward refers to a golden era when owners of newspapers fought for talent like the Yellow Kid. He says none of that has changed, but I think he is wrong. Times have changed. Comics are now reduced to postage-stamp size and strips do not have to be well drawn. The owners of today's newspapers are in many cases not newspaper people with passion but huge conglomerates only interested in bottom line profits. **The Kid would have a hard time 1996. ■**

*Paul Szep, an editorial page cartoonist for The Boston Globe, was a 1982 Harvard Institute of Politics Fellow.*

## A Superb Example of Reportage

BY MURRAY SEEGER

Books, books, books—the 1995 harvest was generous. Books about journalism, many by sociologists telling us what we should be doing or what we did wrong; reporters' books of war stories and books of reportage.

My nomination for the best book of reportage—a book all journalists can envy—is “Albert Speer: His Battle with Truth” by Gitta Sereny (Knopf, \$35). Few writers combine the talents of historian and journalist as Sereny does. We are all tired of books, movies and television documentaries about Hitler and the Nazis, as we are of re-examinations of Stalin, the gulag and communism. Still, new material continues to appear to describe and explain the horrific pain these evil men wrought on their own people and much of Europe.

The case of Speer is special. As Sereny points out, he was probably the most intelligent and most interesting individual in the immediate Hitler circle and the only one who survived to stand trial in Nuremberg, to serve a long prison sentence and to write a comprehensive, readable memoir.

Still in good physical and mental health after 20 years in Spandau Prison, Speer was willing to be interviewed time and again by the indomitable Sereny. She had access to the raw notes Speer wrote in prison that formed the basis for his “Inside the Third Reich,” and, following his death in 1981, his other papers.

Like any good reporter, Sereny sought as many original sources as possible and re-examined the record of the Nuremberg trials. With new information she reevaluated her earlier conclusions about Hitler, Speer and the other leading figures. But she also talked to the drivers and secretaries of the Nazis as well as survivors of the death camps.

She has seemingly read everything written by or about the Nazis in her three languages and tested the conclusions of other journalists and historians. The result is an exhaustive piece of journalism—757 pages—that is remarkably readable. She is able to describe the ugliest of Nazi crimes in chilling, clear language and is scrupulous in toting up the full toll of Hitlerism beyond the attempted genocide of European Jews.

Speer's conscience is her target—how much and when he really knew about the Holocaust. He escaped a death sentence since there was no direct evidence of his participation in the great crime. Along the way to her conclusions about Speer she turns up nuggets of new, fascinating wide-ranging information. Typically, she relates this 1977 conversation with Christa Schroeder, one of Hitler's personal secretaries:

“I mentioned that one of [Martin] Bormann's former adjutants... had told me that *he* didn't think Hitler knew about the extermination of the Jews. Schroeder laughed.

“Oh, Heimchen—” she said, ‘he's too good for this life. Of course Hitler knew! Not only knew, it was *all* his ideas, his orders.’”

The conversation, which could be reported only after Schroeder's death, is a succinct example of how Hitler would “compartmentalize” his actions so that hardly any of his closest associates knew all of what he was doing, and how his worst sycophants went to their graves defending their fuehrer. He held frequent “foureyes-only” meetings with his toadies who then carried out their orders without compromising their boss. Each of them, with Speer at the head of the class, reveled in his special attachment to Hitler.

Sereny describes the fate of Fritz Todt, Speer's friend and predecessor as chief of the armaments industry. One of the few positive characters in Hitler's ring, Todt in February, 1942, told Hitler that Germany could not win its war and should sue for peace.

Speer met with Hitler later the same night and at 3 A.M. canceled his planned flight to Berlin on Todt's plane. Later that day, after the plane crashed killing Todt and his pilot, Hitler gave Speer authority over war production. Sereny concludes that Hitler had warned Speer about the sabotaged plane and prepared him in advance for the new appointment. Typically, Speer told different versions of the incident without ever admitting complicity. So, too, with the Holocaust.

Sereny argues with good evidence that journalists over the decades have belittled Hitler's intelligence and managerial skills, preferring to write or talk of him as a madman who is beyond explication. This phenomenon started well before World II when political leaders ignored the implications in Hitler's “Mein Kampf” that laid out his surrealistic plans while he was still a provincial rabble-rouser.

“Underrating Hitler has become a norm, less for historians of course than for the media, but it is the media which largely informs the public,” Sereny writes.

Through her knowledge of Speer and her remarkable research, Sereny comes closer than anyone ever has in making sense out of Hitler's skills to manipulate people and his ability to achieve many of his goals. This is more than the story of Albert Speer, a third-rate architect who became a world figure by doing evil things. It is a new history of the Hitler era that ranks with the previous journalistic classics written by William L. Shirer (“The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich”) and Joachim Fest (“Hitler”). ■

*Murray Seeger is Special Advisor to the Nieman Curator.*

# Letters

## Singapore and 'Intimidation'

10 February 1996

To the Editor:

I refer to an article by Professor Stephen Wrage entitled "Singapore, a Model of Intimidation" which was published in your Winter 1995 issue of the *Nieman Reports*.

I had befriended Professor Wrage during his sabbatical year in Singapore. It is therefore with sorrow that I ask for your kind permission to reply to three points in his article.

First, Prof. Wrage wrote that "Students are recruited and required by the Internal Security Department to observe and report on their teachers." I had served as the Dean, the Vice-Dean and the Sub-Dean of the Faculty of Law of the National University of Singapore. In all those years, the Internal Security Department had never requested me to do any such thing.

Second, Professor Wrage wrote that "The film 'Schindler's List' was shown in Singapore, but the government insisted on cutting out scenes." This is untrue. "Schindler's List" was passed uncut in Singapore.

Third, Professor Wrage wrote that the film was shown "in a theater specially equipped with a red light and a bell. When an offensive scene was about to begin, the light would flash, and all good Singaporeans were expected to close their eyes. When the bell sounded, they would know it was safe to open their eyes again." I admire Professor Wrage's power of imagination but I know of no such theater in Singapore. I would be very grateful if he could name the theater which is so equipped.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Tommy Koh, Director  
The Institute of Policy Studies  
Singapore

Professor Wrage's reply:

February 12, 1996

I appreciate the opportunity to reply to the points raised by Ambassador Koh.

I acknowledge with gratitude the hospitality he and many other Singaporeans showed me during my year there, but I don't conclude that his kindness binds me to silence. If that was his intent in taking me to lunch, then he would seem to have acted more out of policy than hospitality, and I don't think that of Ambassador Koh.

Ambassador Koh says that in his years as Dean, Vice-Dean and Sub-Dean of the faculty of Law of the National University of Singapore he was never requested by the Internal Security Department to require students to observe and report on their teachers. If he says that, I am sure it must be true.

I was told by colleagues, by students and by persons who were actually doing the reporting that such surveillance is a regular practice. I conclude that the directive does not come through the dean's office, which is in fact what I reported. I was told, and wrote in my piece, that male students were recruited as observers during their compulsory military training.

E-mail accounts and hard drives were also searched and their contents impounded during my time in Singapore. Those searches were not announced, but no secret was made of them. This gave the searches an added chilling effect. My own desktop computer and C drive was removed from my office without notice when I was away from the university on a short trip.

Ambassador Koh contends that the film "Schindler's List" was shown uncut in Singapore. There I acknowledge a serious error of fact for which I apologize. All films are reviewed by the Singapore Board of Film Censors and

many are cut. For a discussion of film censorship in Singapore, I recommend Stan Sesser's book, "Lands of Charm and Cruelty: Travels in Southeast Asia," (Pan Macmillan Publishers Ltd., London, 1994) pages 52-53.

I was wrong to say that "Schindler's List" was shown in a theater equipped with a bell and light, but Ambassador Koh was disingenuous in making fun of the idea and saying he knew of no such theater in Singapore. I quote from a Reuter's release of April 6, 1994:

Red Light Nudity Warning for Singapore Show

Singapore—A British troupe performing a bawdy comic drama in straight-laced Singapore will flash a red light when a nude appears on stage so bashful members of the audience can close their eyes.

A bell will ring when the "flash of flesh" is over signaling they can resume watching, the Singapore Repertory Theatre, which brought out the theatre group, said Wednesday.

The self-censorship system was the brainchild of Tony Petito, artistic director of the Singapore Repertory Theatre, who wanted to make sure no one would be offended. There has been no government involvement in trying to censor the show.

"The red light was introduced for Singapore because of the issue here about what level people could be exposed to as far as nudity went, whereas in the U.K. there was no problem with it," Petito told Reuters.

"It's very innocent nudity; we're just talking about a couple of bare bottoms," he said.

Ambassador Koh is being disingenuous in pretending no knowledge of the theater since, as a UPI release on the same date reports, "the play is... sponsored by Singapore's National Arts Council" of which Ambassador Koh is the chairman.

Stephen Wrage  
US Naval Academy

# NIEMAN NOTES

COMPILED BY LOIS FIORE

## A Warm Welcome for Bosnian Children

BY ROBERT AZZI

I was watching television at home with my eight-year-old daughter, Iman, when Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel addressed the President of the United States at the dedication of the Holocaust Museum in Washington and, referring to Bosnia, said "Mr. President, I cannot not tell you something. We must do something to stop the bloodshed in that country."

Iman, a Muslim, as I am, turned to me and said "Daddy, will there be a Holocaust Museum for the Muslims of Bosnia someday?"

For months our family had been watching television reports on the war in the former Yugoslavia, witnessing tales of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Whether it was the ethnic cleansing of Croats from Vukovar or of Muslims from Prijedor, the message was clear—50 years after the end of World War II the world was witnessing acts of horror that it had once condemned and had said "never more!"

Iman's question was one that needed to be answered. Obviously I could not predict the outcome of that dirty nasty war, but as a photojournalist I had two choices:

One, I could pack my cameras and go off to the Balkans. There I could take photographs of the horrors while standing alongside colleagues from dozens of other countries who were already there. The photographs would then be published in dozens of magazines, like those from wars before, and be admired for their "truth." But nothing would have changed.

Or I could find another path.

A path that might make a difference in both the lives of Bosnians and in the life of my family.

I would become involved. I would take a position on the war and act on it, setting aside years of journalistic instincts that encourage us to be "detached" or "uninvolved" or "dispassionate."

A family friend from Saudi Arabia, living in Vienna, was assigned by the United Nations to work with Bosnian women and children living as refugees in Croatia. She told me that she had met dozens of Bosnian children, fluent in English, whose lives and education were on hold, with no future.

These children were the answer to the question of how I could help. While there were organizations equipped to help orphans and the medically needy, I felt that by keeping some of the young people safe and sheltered and giving them education I could combat ethnic cleansing and genocide. I wanted kids fluent in English, committed to the idea of Bosnia as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic state, who would return to their country someday to help rebuild it with the skills they had acquired here.

While estimates have varied widely on just how many people died during the war, it was clear that most of the victims were innocent. And while it may be my own paranoia speaking, I feel that if the victims in Bosnia had been Jews or Christians (or even whales or dolphins or spotted woodpeckers) rather than Muslims then the world

would have acted sooner, and more decisively, to end the carnage. Therefore, it was our obligation to act—to try to save lives that appeared to have little value to others.

Eight kids arrived in Exeter, New Hampshire in November 1993. They were from Mostar, Sarajevo, Prijedor and Tuzla and were the first of what was to become by January 1996 more than 70 Muslim students living in towns across the country. They were living with American families, going to American public and private high schools and colleges and learning and playing in an environment free of sieges, land mines and incoming missiles. Some were plagued with nightmares and sweats, some filled with guilt for being here, safely out of harm's way, while their families stayed behind.

There has been no shortage of families wishing to host a child. School districts have been generous in finding space for the students and giving them academic assistance. There have been some private contributions of aid, generated either by my program or by Bosnian coverage. For example, an alumnus of Phillips Exeter Academy was so moved by news reports, and by a column by Anthony Lewis, that he gave \$125,000 to the Academy in the name of a young child killed in Sarajevo. This money is helping to support two students in my program who are at the Academy on scholarship. Other students are at colleges like Stanford, Northeastern, Clark and the University of New Hampshire, all with scholar-

ships, while another has just been accepted for early admission at Georgetown (with no scholarship!).

A report on National Public radio by Anthony Brooks in Exeter connected my kids and program with a family in Petersburg, Virginia. One of my students, a girl from Prijedor, had gone to high school with sisters who were living with the Poarch family. Bill Poarch is a pilot for Continental Airlines, and together we approached Continental with an appeal to provide tickets for more Bosnian students. Continental, as part of a corporate program that encourages its employees to get involved in charitable activities, responded favorably, giving us the ability to bring many more kids than we could have under other circumstances.

The first major corporate support came from Timberland, a New Hampshire-based manufacturer of boots, outerwear and clothing. Timberland is a socially responsible corporation supporting programs like City Year and Americorps, and they gave immediate and continuing support to the program.

A report by Producer Mary Lou Teel on CBS's Sunday Morning resulted in calls from areas like Durango, Colorado and Cincinnati, Ohio and allowed us to set up clusters of kids in those communities. Two brothers, whose Jewish mother was taken from Germany to England as a child during WW II to avoid the Holocaust, called and said they wanted to take students into their homes because "we wouldn't be here today if someone had not taken our mother into their home."

All of us have learned from this program. The Bosnian children have changed the dynamics in the classrooms where they study, bringing first-hand experiences to social studies classes. Families in Bosnia and America now have life-long ties through their children, and when the Bosnian children return to their homeland, as they will when they complete their education, they will know that when the doors of the world were closed to them, there were families and towns and schools throughout this country that said, in those dark days before the Dayton ac-

cords, "We will shelter you, we will care for you, and we will keep you safe."

A recent burst of Nieman activity gave us strong regional and national coverage. Janet Wilson (Nieman Fellow 1995), now living in New Hampshire and writing for *The Boston Globe*, heard about my program from a mutual friend (a non-Nieman) and proposed the story to *The Globe*. While that was in progress she visited classmate Kathryn Kross in Washington, a producer for ABC's "Nightline."

The result was a flurry of activity in and around Exeter in December and January and *The Globe* ran a wonderful page-one story on January 16, 1996 (my birthday!) followed by a *Nightline* story on January 17. I am still receiving calls and letters from those stories and although there have been no overwhelming offers of cash and computers (both are in desperate need) families are still coming forward offering shelter, love and education to future students. ■

*Robert Azzi, Nieman Fellow 1977, is a photojournalist living in Exeter, N.H.*

#### —1951—

**Malcolm C. Bauer** died February 9 at a nursing center in Portland, Oregon. He was 81.

Bauer spent four decades at *The Oregonian*. He was hired in 1936 and, by 1940, at 26, became City Editor. After his Nieman year he returned to *The Oregonian* and was named to the Editorial Board. He retired in 1979 as Senior Associate Editor. Albert McCready, an Oregonian colleague, said in Bauer's obituary: "I worked for him. He was very strict. He was a very good city editor. Everybody loved and feared him."

Bauer is survived by his wife, Roberta Moody, a son, three daughters, and a grandchild.

#### —1956—

**Desmond Stone** is the author of a biography about American composer Alec Wilder to be published this spring by Oxford University Press under the title, "Alec Wilder in Spite of Himself."

Wilder was a popular songwriter from the 1940's who wrote the standards "I'll Be Around" and "It's So Peaceful in the Country." He also wrote "American Popular Song," which is still considered the most significant study of America's great songwriters. Wilder lived a nomad's life, maintaining a small room at the Algonquin Hotel in Manhattan as his only home.

Stone and his wife, Lorraine, emigrated from New Zealand in 1959. He spent 27 years with Gannett's Rochester Newspapers, the last 17 as Editor of the editorial page for the morning newspaper. Stone retired in 1985. He and Lorraine continue to live in Rochester.

#### —1967—

**James R. Whelan** was recently inducted at a ceremony in Santiago as a registered member of the Instituto O'Higginiano de Chile—the parent organization of an international society created to honor the memory of the father of the Chilean nation. He is one of only a handful of Americans to be invited to membership, in recognition of his extensive writing on Chilean history. The ceremony was held just prior to his leaving Chile to take up residence in Mexico, and coincided with the publication of a second edition in Spanish of his history of Chile, "Desde las Cenizas: Vida, Muerte y Transfiguración de la Democracia en Chile, 1833-1988," widely acclaimed by Chilean reviewers. The book, his second on Chile and sixth overall, was published previously in English as, "Out of the Ashes: Life, Death and Transfiguration of Democracy in Chile, 1833-1988." He is now working on a third book on that country.

#### —1968—

**Jerome Aumente** writes that he will be in Spain Feb. 22-March 12 "giving lectures on new media technologies at universities in Madrid, Murcia, Granada, Salamanca and Badajoz. I return to the U.S. in March to run a science journalism awards program and then go to Poland for April and May to run our overseas projects at the universities and in training journalists. I am a visiting

professor at Jagiellonian University in Krakow and helped establish its new International School of Journalism, and also at the Higher Business School in Novy Sacz, which is creating a media center. Through the Journalism Resources Institute at Rutgers I also helped establish a public radio station in Krakow, and a business/journalism curriculum at the Academy of Economics. Since 1989 I have developed and administered nearly \$2 million in media training and journalism education projects in Central and Eastern Europe."

Aumente's telephone is 908-932-7369; his fax is 908-932-7059; and, if you use E-mail, his address is "Aumente@Zodiac.Rutgers.Edu."

—1970—

**Larry L. King** has a lot of work about to come out:

"Still pounding away at the old manual typewriter—as if word processors/computers did not exist. Mark Twain allegedly wrote the first book on a typewriter and I may write the last!

"Out of this ancient old Smith-Corona has recently come my seventh stage play, "The Dead Presidents' Club," to receive its world premiere at Live Oak Theatre in Austin, Texas in May; a collection of articles and short stories, "True Facts, Tall Tales and Pure Fiction," to be published by University of Texas Press in the spring of 1997 and a collection of my personal letters, now being edited by Dr. Richard Holland, Curator of the Southwestern Writers Collection at Southwest Texas State University, to be offered for bids later this year. I'm also hopeful of finishing a long-in-progress baseball novel, "Breaking Balls," in the current year. So there is life in the old machine yet.

"Have maintained fairly regular contact with Nieman classmates Wallace Terry, Barlow Hertzog and Cliff Terry over the years but, alas, have lost touch with the others."

—1974—

**Ellen Goodman**, syndicated columnist for The Boston Globe, will hold the first Lorry I. Lokey Visiting Professor-

ship in Professional Journalism at Stanford University's Department of Communication for the winter 1996 quarter.

Goodman will teach a seminar, "Telling People What to Think," focusing on the journalistic process of writing a column. She also will hold a series of seminars with the department's graduate students in journalism about covering the 1996 presidential elections as a columnist.

—1977—

**José A. Martinez-Soler** once again crossed the Atlantic with his family last October 1995, moving from Madrid, Spain, where he had been executive producer for the highest rated daily newscast of Television Española (TVE), to Larchmont, N.Y. Based in New York City, Martinez-Soler is the new U.S. Bureau Chief for TVE, Spain's state-owned and largest television network.

Over the last three years, after earning a Ph.D in Communication Sciences from Madrid's Universidad Complutense, José has also given graduate courses in what he calls "Medianomics" (the economics of communication). He just published a book titled "Las Autopistas de la Informacion"—you guessed it, the "Information Highways."

Martinez-Soler had been working since 1993 as executive producer for TVE's main newscast, Telediario 1. Previously he had directed and anchored various daily and weekly news programs with TVE.

In 1990, he founded a new daily newspaper in Madrid, "El Sol," as the first of seven executive editors throughout the paper's existence of barely 18 months. He quit within five weeks after differences with the owner-publishers, as did the others after him. Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian press magnate, was one of the original promoters.

But not all of José's creations end in failure. Upon returning to Spain from a brief year-long stint in the U.S. in 1987-88, he founded a national business daily, La Gaceta de los Negocios, where another press mogul, Rupert Murdoch, was one of the owners together with

Spain's press conglomerate Grupo Zeta. This paper is still in good health.

After the "El Sol" fiasco, José returned to Television Espanola, his present employer. José had been the first to introduce breakfast television newscasts to Spain in 1986 as executive producer and anchor of "Buenos Dias."

Until recently, José wife, Ana Westley, had been the Spain correspondent for The New York Times since 1992. She also participated in a weekly news talk show for Spain's public radio, Radio Nacional de Espana. Their three children—Erik, 17; Andrea, 11 and David, 7, all with dual citizenship as Ana is American—are busy adapting to American schools, culture and nor'easter blizzards.

—1981—

**David Lamb's** latest book will be published in May by Random House/Times Books. "Over the Hills: A Midlife Escape Across America by Bicycle" is the story of open roads, a vanishing America—and Lamb's solo journey pedaling from his home in Virginia to the Santa Monica Pier in California, where the famous old road west, Route 66, ends. Lamb saw this trip as a 54th birthday present to himself, to come to grips with middle age. He said he did no training, didn't stop smoking cigarettes or eating junk food, and had a magnificent time. He rode about ten miles per hour on a 21-speed touring bicycle and traveled 3,145 miles. The trip took three months.

The author of "The Africans" and "The Arabs," Lamb is perhaps best known for "Stolen Seasons: A Journey Through America and Baseball's Minor Leagues."

—1983—

**Sonja Hillgren** was elected 1996 President of the National Press Club by Club members in December. Hillgren, Editor of Farm Journal, is the first farm magazine journalist to hold the position since the founding of the club in 1908.

The club, with 4,500 members, is considered one of the most prestigious forums in the world, providing lecture

and discussion platforms for leaders in government, politics, the arts, business, and sports.

Hillgren served on the 14-member Board of Governors for five years. She was inaugurated at a dinner January 20.

Hillgren is only the seventh editor in the 118-year history of Farm Journal. She joined the magazine in 1990 as Washington Editor after serving as a Washington correspondent for Knight-Ridder Newspapers. She also was Farm Editor of the UPI for 10 years and, in that assignment, reported about agriculture on radio stations across the country, including National Public Radio.

**Andrzej Wroblewski** has rejoined *Politika*, the leading political newspaper in Warsaw, to write commentaries, leaving his job as Editor-in-Chief of *Gazeta Bankowa*. He was with *Politika* when he came to Harvard for his Nieman year. Wroblewski will be working at *Politika* with **Daniel Passent**, from the Nieman class of 1980.

**Nigel Wade** was named Editor-in-Chief of The Chicago Sun-Times in January. Wade had been the Foreign Editor of The Daily Telegraph in London before the unusual match with the Chicago paper was made.

But the match may not be as unusual as it sounds: The Sun-Times and London Daily Telegraph are owned by the same company, Hollinger International. The company also owns a large press group in Australia, The Fairfax group, and The Jerusalem Post.

Conrad Black, the company's Chairman, asked Wade in 1994 for advice on what might be done to "brighten up" the prospects of The Sun-Times. Wade went to the Chicago paper several times over the years as a consultant. Things evolved from there, although being editor wasn't originally part of the plan.

"This is the most exciting thing I've done," Wade said. "It's a great paper. We're head-to-head with The Tribune in a situation where in many cities the second paper has disappeared. But The Sun-Times is still in there.

"There is a tremendous resource of talent at the paper, and it's great to see them respond to new challenges. The

paper feels ready to take off."

Wade has already made some changes to build on the news tradition of the paper, broadening its appeal to women and younger white-collar readers while trying to retain their loyal, down-town core. He eventually hopes to start a suburban edition.

Wade sees his new job as "a great challenge and great fun."

The Chicago Sun-Times is the 11th largest paper in the country.

—1984—

**Nina Bernstein** is now a national correspondent at The New York Times, based in New York and officially reporting on legal affairs. She says National Editor Dean Baquet describes the beat more expansively as "legal affairs/criminal justice/enterprise," with the last word an invitation to do the kind of investigative features she did for New York Newsday on a wide range of social issues. Bernstein says: "Newsday's New York City edition was killed on the last day I was on a book leave, itself a six-month extension of a 1994 Alicia Patterson Foundation fellowship. I returned to a shipwrecked newsroom, full of pale-faced colleagues in their interview suits waiting to see recruiters flown in to pick up survivors. I still feel a sense of grief at the loss of the paper and the people who made it such a model of generous, savvy, hard-driving urban journalism. But I'm very happy to be at The Times, and today, with my first story played on page one above the fold of the Sunday paper, I feel particularly blessed.

"I secured my berth at The Times in August, but postponed my start date until October 30 in order to continue writing my book. It's a kind of non-fiction Dickens for our times (well, in my most ambition dreams, at least) about several generations caught in a long class-action lawsuit against New York City's child welfare system. The book isn't finished yet, but now it's far enough along to make my editor at Pantheon both happy and patient.

"Andreas and the boys are fine. Daniel, a freshman at the University of Pennsylvania, signed up to be a photog-

rapher at The Daily Pennsylvanian and made the front page with his first assignment. 'Mama, photo-journalism is looking better and better,' he told me. Must be some kind of hereditary disease."

—1985—

**Edwin Chen** and **Joe Oglesby** were honored by their alma maters as distinguished alumni. Chen was recognized by the University of South Carolina and Oglesby by Florida A&M University.

Chen joins a USC roster that includes Jim Hoagland of The Washington Post and Patrick Tyler, a friend who is now stationed in Beijing for The New York Times. Chen is a Washington correspondent covering Congress for The Los Angeles Times and has published three books.

Chen was specially happy that Oglesby and his wife, Linda Blash, were able to attend the USC awards dinner. Oglesby recently moved from Miami, where he was Assistant Managing Editor-Metro, to Columbia, S.C., where he is Managing Editor of The State newspaper.

Oglesby was given the Thelma T. Gorham Distinguished Alumnus Award from Florida A&M School of Journalism in October 1995.

—1986—

**Madeleine Blais** has been nominated for a National Book Critics Award for her book, "In These Girls, Hope is a Muscle." The book is about a high school girl's championship basketball team. The awards will be announced in March.

**Laura Parker** has won an Alicia Patterson Fellowship for 1996 to report on illiteracy in a small town in Mississippi. Instead of focusing on the struggle of individuals learning to read, Parker intends to illuminate the collective price of illiteracy by writing about the way an entire town copes when a majority of its adult population is functionally illiterate. Parker is on leave from the Washington Bureau of The Detroit News.

—1988—

**Dale Maharidge's** friends called it surreal. Maharidge agreed.

Ten years after "Journey To Nowhere: The Saga of the New Underclass" was published, Maharidge discovered that his book had affected musician Bruce Springsteen so deeply that Springsteen used it as the basis for two songs in his new CD, "The Ghost of Tom Joad." Because of Springsteen's strong support, the book was reissued by Hyperion with an epilogue by Maharidge and an introduction by Springsteen. (Maharidge and photographer Michael Williamson won a 1990 Pulitzer for an earlier book, "And Their Children After Them.")

"Journey to Nowhere" was based on a 1980's series called "Hard Times," written by Maharidge and photographed by Williamson when they worked for The Sacramento Bee. For three years they lived with homeless people and traveled through 27 states with hobos, riding the rails. They tried to document not just day-to-day realities but also to discover where the homeless came from, what experiences led them into shelters, soup-lines, and trains. Their questioning led them to Youngstown, Ohio and stories of laid-off, dispossessed steelworkers.

Springsteen told The Washington Post:

"The book puts faces and real-life circumstances on all the statistics that you read about but that remain abstract to a lot of people. It doesn't really tell you what to think, it just shows you things: This is what we found, this is what is out there.

"And that's kind of what I've tried to do with my record. I don't think you can tell people anything, but you can show 'em something."

In the Post article, Maharidge said that after revisiting some of the original sites he found the economic situation to be worse now than before. "When you visit the shelters and talk to homeless advocates, they're seeing the white-collar worker. I'm sure somebody working for IBM or the Defense Department in 1985 never thought he had anything in common with an out-of-work steel-

worker. There's not any kind of worker—retail, manufacturing, agriculture, blue-collar, white collar—that doesn't know what only a certain segment knew when we first did this book."

In the title song to "The Ghost of Tom Joad," Springsteen sings, "Men walkin' 'long the railroad tracks/Goin' someplace there's no goin' back.../Shelter line stretchin' round the corner/Welcome to the new world order/Families sleepin' in their cars in the Southwest/No home no job no peace no rest..."

—1994—

**Sam Fulwood's** book, "Waking From The Dream," will be published in April. We asked him to tell us something about it:

"During my Nieman year, I spent much of my time writing a memoir. 'Waking From The Dream: My Life in the Black Middle Class' is an examination of why some of us who came of age during the Civil Rights Movement took advantage of expanded opportunities offered us, entered mainstream occupations that had been denied our ancestors and crafted outwardly successful lives. Yet many of us are withdrawing from seeking inclusion into an integrated, color-blind America.

"My book is a personal account of how I attempted to do the right things, aided by a supportive family and community of professional and integrationist black people, but still found it wasn't enough to avoid having race be the central component of my identity.

"The book spans roughly 40 years, from the early 1950's when my parents met and married and established the foundation for my being to the mid-1990's when I enter middle age to be frustrated by the contradiction of racial progress in America. While I never experienced much of the segregationist history of my nation, I am nevertheless confronted and harmed by the subtle racism that continues to be a part of the workplace, community and society I inhabit.

"My hope is that 'Waking From The Dream' is a book that will affirm the duality of middle-class black American's

experience. So often we are seen as examples of progress without understanding the cost and sacrifice of holding up that image. I further hope to arm white people with ammunition that will allow them to shoot down some of the facile notions of black American progress. I think we all need to consider how much more progress is really needed to achieve the color-blind ideal that so many espouse, but so few work to attain."

**David Lewis**, a correspondent with CNN, won a CableACE award in December. It was for his story "Hate Rock," about the resurgence of white supremacist rock and roll. For all you print types, an ACE is the cable equivalent of an Emmy award, and is as good as it gets on that side of broadcast journalism.

—1995—

**Michael Riley** is involved in an interesting new project. After his Nieman year, he says:

"I got back to Time, moved to Washington as a senior correspondent covering digital technology and the environment. But I missed politics, and I was looking for a way to use what I gained during the Nieman, namely a love for digital journalism.

"Now I'm combining both. In December, Time and CNN created a joint venture to put a politics site on the Web. It's called AllPolitics (<http://AllPolitics.com>), and I'm running it, as the Executive Producer (horrible title, great job). We launched January 29, after a few all-nighters, and haven't stopped since. We're based in the Time buro in Washington and in Atlanta, so I've got staff in two places. You should take a look; it's a lot of fun. We have at our disposal all of the excellent journalism and journalists from both places, conventional and digital."

Riley says the site is up for one year, but if it works they'll continue. He encourages "digital Niemans" to get in touch through this Internet address: [michael.riley@turner.com](mailto:michael.riley@turner.com). ■

*Everything that you are and what you think goes into your work. Artists make order out of disunity—we try to make some sense out of the world and, if we're lucky, it comes out in some interesting work. I wouldn't want to exist without my work.*—Eli Reed



This photograph, "Groom with Ring Bearer," was taken in Beaufort, S.C., in 1984 by Eli Reed, Nieman Fellow 1983. It is part of an exhibition featuring over 60 of Reed's photographs documenting the African-American experience. The show, "Eli Reed: Black in America," is at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Conn., through April 7.

A book on this work, entitled "Eli Reed: Black in America," will be published by W.W. Norton & Company in October of this year.

NIEMAN REPORTS

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