

NIEMAN REPORTS

THE NIEMAN FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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Five Dollars

Eroding Freedoms: Secrecy, Truth and Sources



Truth and Falsehood

Journalist's Trade:
Training Journalists in Foreign Countries

International Journalism:
Darfur's Silence and Russia's Restrictions

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

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

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WATCHDOG

WATCHDOG

The Nieman Reunion: A Time to Talk and Listen

'I understand better our obligation to expand communication about the program through the tools of e-mail and the Web.'

By Bob Giles

Nieman Foundation reunions are many things to those who attend: a chance to see old friends, experience a taste of Harvard, and find out what's new at Lippmann House and the Nieman program. For this gathering of Nieman Fellows in early May, the focus on talking and listening was especially important.

A conversation with the Curator during the Sunday morning brunch at Lippmann House offered a clear picture of what was on the minds of fellows in the room and suggested ways of opening new lines of communication about the Nieman program. The alumni seemed particularly to want assurance that the addition of weekend seminars and the narrative journalism program had not taken anything away from the fellows' core experience. Many told me later or sent e-mails to say that, having now seen Lippmann House and heard from current fellows, they were satisfied that the program is serving its mandate.

The alumni also asked about the origins of the narrative journalism program. They sought full details on the construction of Knight Center at Lippmann House. They were interested in the reasoning behind a reorganization of the Nieman Foundation staff.

Members of the class of 2005 joined the discussion with stories about the enrichment they had found in the weekend conferences and the narrative experience. I offered evidence that the original purposes of the fellowship program remained the first priority of the foundation and that the core mission was solidly in place. One alumna wondered why we had weekly shoptalks on journalism, suggesting that the fellows come here to get away from journalism for a year. I replied that there had been a thread of journalism running through the program since the beginning and that it seemed unlikely that 24 journalists could come together and not want to talk and think about our craft.

A fuller and wiser response came by e-mail a few days later from a recent international fellow. She noted that the criticism had come from a U.S. fellow and wrote, "I think it's important to remember how different the priorities of international fellows can be. Many of us come from countries where there is no ongoing conversation about journalism I feel that I benefited a great deal—more than I expected, to be frank—from the discussions at Nieman journalism events I am still very much using the memory of those discussions in talking to the people with whom I work."

The topic that produced a spark of strong feelings was the foundation's plan in partnership with the Fairbank Center

and Asia Center at Harvard to provide an educational experience for 40 Chinese officials assigned to work with the press during the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. I explained it was not our intent to provide instruction on how to do things—the definition of "training." Rather it would be an educational and informational program designed to give the Olympic representatives an accurate understanding of the history and traditions of the U.S. press under the First Amendment, plus a picture of the wide variety of topics the press will want to report on when it goes to China during the games.

The voices raised in opposition said it was not appropriate for the Nieman Foundation to meet with representatives of a repressive regime that, among other things, had imprisoned journalists. Others worried that the program would prepare the Chinese officials to manipulate the press or that these officials would use the Nieman name as a cover for whatever they might in managing news coverage during the Olympics.

News of the issue in the days following drew comments from others who sent e-mails, some with opinions favoring the idea but most expressing concern. During a long meeting with the current Nieman class, it became clear to me that the continuing furor was putting the reputation of the foundation at risk. The issue was no longer whether it was acceptable to have a dialogue with Chinese Olympic officials; the imperative had become one of withdrawal in the interest of protecting our name. The response to this decision from Nieman alumni and others—even those who thought that such a program might make a small contribution to transparency in China—was decidedly positive.

The reunion offered a rare opportunity to talk and listen and left me with a much clearer sense of the deep loyalty and commitment of the Nieman alumni and the intensity of their desire to make sure the fellows' experience remains faithful to the original purposes of the program. I understand better our obligation to expand communication about the program through the tools of e-mail and the Web. The Nieman Advisory Board, with a strong representation of alumni, can serve an important role as a point of contact for fellows, particularly as board committees help us develop strategies for the direction of the Nieman Foundation. ■

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Words & Reflections: Eroding Freedoms

Among the casualties of the invasion and occupation of Iraq have been truth and trust, according to **Sig Christenson**, military affairs writer for the San Antonio Express-News. After working as both an embedded and independent reporter in Iraq, he writes about the “propaganda war within Gulf War II,” explaining that “Its roots are in Ground Zero, and I have been a willing participant. So, too, were many other reporters.” As president of the Military Reporters & Editors association, Christenson monitors the increase in improper restrictions placed on journalists’ ability to report on the military. A letter of protest, sent to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, accompanies his article.

Frank Greve, assistant national editor in the Knight Ridder Newspapers Washington, D.C. bureau, tracks the rise in the number of public relations officials working for the government, examines the impact of their advocacy efforts on news reporting, and alerts us to some media movements appearing on “the propaganda front.” His conclusion: They do “not bode well for journalism.” In an excerpt from a chapter he wrote for “The Press” (Institutions of American Democracy Series), National Public Radio Senior News Analyst **Daniel Schorr** examines the long-standing tension between the press and government that he finds now exacerbated by a secrecy classification “activated more by fear of personal embarrassment than by a threat to national security.” In defending objectivity as a worthy journalistic standard against threats it faces from journalists who reject its applicability, **Stephen J. Berry**, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter who teaches investigative journalism at the University of Iowa, argues that it is “precisely because we understand our [human] frailties, we insist upon maintaining the pursuit of objectivity.”

Former long-time Washington Post reporter **Morton Mintz** criticizes the unwillingness of journalists to reveal corporate funding sources behind “think tanks” whose experts they quote on policy issues. He cites the case of ExxonMobil’s financial backing of the Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI) and shows how reporters often quote CEI “flacks” on topics such as global warming without informing readers of this industry connection. “The success of a propaganda campaign such as ExxonMobil’s depends heavily, of course, on the cooperation—or complicity—of news organizations,” Mintz writes. Journalists’ complicity in “Spin Alley” remaining as the primary site for after-debate political reporting is the subject of Web blogger **Lisa Stone’s** article. Stone sets forth an “undeniable truth” in observing that Spin Alley’s success depends on journalists being “willing to disseminate spin.” She looks, with a modicum of hope, to the actions by some newspaper reporters and bloggers who either boycott these post-debate events or add or substitute genuine fact-checking and analysis of the candidates’ claims.

The (Baltimore) Sun’s editor, **Timothy A. Franklin**, describes his newspaper’s ongoing legal case with Maryland’s Governor Robert Ehrlich, Jr. about whether a government official has the right to prohibit a reporter’s access to public officials, as a response to receiving unfavorable coverage. The Sun argues that “its two banished journalists have less access to government than a private citizen.” He also explores implications this case holds. In Youngstown, Ohio, The Business Journal’s editor and publisher, **Andrea Wood**, faces a similar situation and legal case. After scrutiny by The Business Journal, the mayor “banned city employees from speaking with any of our reporters,” Woods writes.

Walter Pincus, a national security reporter for The Washington Post who has been a subject of a prosecutorial probe into information leaked to the press about CIA operative Valerie Plame,

describes how he and his newspaper reach decisions about publishing information from a confidential source. **Dan Olmsted**, senior editor in UPI's Washington bureau, worries that at a time when more aggressive "snooping" by the press is needed, the combination of diminished public support for the press and the threat of jail time for reporters involved with government leaks, is leading to "a return to the 1950's style of reporting . . . that might politely be called 'stenographic.'" **Lucy Dalglish**, the executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, writes about the importance of protecting reporters who protect sources, and she explains why "in the past, failure [among journalists] to agree upon a federal shield law strategy has doomed any effort to create a statutory privilege." And in excerpts from a recent Nieman Foundation reunion panel discussion, **Karen Stephenson**, a Harvard scholar in the field of trust, shares insights about various dimensions of trust that involve news organizations.

"The Seduction of Secrecy: Toward Better Access to Government Information on the Record" was organized by **Geneva Overholser**, professor of public affairs reporting in the Missouri School of Journalism's Washington bureau, as a symposium to discuss reasons for the use and abuse of anonymous-source reporting and the rise in government secrecy and how journalists might respond to these trends. We are publishing a series of excerpts from this discussion. In a time of media consolidation and public ownership, with a focus on maximizing profits, University of Iowa law professor **Randall P. Bezanson** and emeritus professor of journalism **Gilbert Cranberg** explain why they believe that a new concept of "institutional malice" should be applied in libel cases, thus creating a different standard of liability for news organizations.

As public confidence in the press wanes, the Pew Research Center's associate director, **Carroll Doherty**, shares findings that after 9/11 "Americans have become considerably less supportive of the press's watchdog function in security matters." University of Connecticut professor **Ken Dautrich** and Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation Vice President **John Bare** ponder what it means (and what can be done) when nearly half of U.S. high school students surveyed "entertain the idea of newspaper censorship" by government. University of Missouri journalism professor **George Kennedy** reports on the complex coupling of findings about public attitudes—combining respect for and skepticism of the press—from a study he conducted. Journalism professors **Lee Wilkins** and **Renita Coleman** report on results of testing journalists' ethical decision-making that appear in their book, "The Moral Media: How Journalists Reason about Ethics."

In his business travels throughout the world, **Ron Javers**, assistant managing editor of Newsweek International, encounters wide disparity in how journalism is practiced. In struggling to understand and report on their times, Javers writes, journalists "cannot escape being part of their times." In the United States, Javers worries about a press agenda that "sometimes seems in real danger of becoming one gigantic special advertising section." During one of the Philadelphia Inquirer's buyouts, **Huntly Collins** left her long-time job as a reporter. She now reports on her four years and three jobs "on the other side" and shares her realization—and appreciation—of "just how special is the role of journalist in a free society." ■

WATCHDOG

Truth and Trust: In Iraq War Coverage, They've Become Casualties

'How to counter the drip-drip-drip of the dead and the maimed? Blame the media.'

By Sig Christenson

Before you do anything else, turn on your TV. Go to CNN, Fox News, MSNBC and the big three networks. Read your newspaper, especially the letters to the editor. Log onto www.dvidshub.net, the Army's slick new Web site that provides video and still images of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan to news organizations nationwide, free.

Now try to figure out whose truth is true.

Welcome to our generation's battle for hearts and minds, born in the shock and awe of America's invasion of Iraq. It's driven by politics, ratings, the sheer number of news outlets and Web sites available these days and, most importantly, the unquenchable thirst for power in Washington. This is the propaganda war within Gulf War II. Its roots are in Ground Zero, and I have been a willing participant. So, too, were many other reporters. A month after the terrorist strikes on the East Coast, I sat in the cargo hold of a C-17, its bay door open and our crew wearing oxygen masks as the Air Force dropped crates of humanitarian rations in the dead of night from 25,000 feet over Afghanistan. A few weeks later I was in Kuwait with a 1st Cavalry Division brigade.

These military events were legitimate stories, but also our coverage of them contained an obvious rah-rah component. We were, after all, reporting on events certain to reinforce the patriotism of Americans already supportive of President Bush and the war. It harkened back to the simpler era of Ernie Pyle journalism, and I relished it as any patriotic American at war would—especially with an enemy as easy to hate as al-Qaeda. But I also knew it couldn't last as I stepped on the bus that took NBC's David Bloom, The Washington



Not long after an all-night battle during the Iraq invasion, Sig Christenson (center) holds a Republican Guard sweater and stands with Air Force Captain Shad Magann (left) and a 3rd Infantry Division soldier outside the al Qa Qaa weapons plant, south of Baghdad.

Photo by Dan Housley.

Post's Mike Kelly, and a dozen other journalists to our assembly areas in Kuwait's northern desert.

Three months after Bloom and Kelly died while reporting from Iraq during the 2003 invasion, the positive stories had begun to fade, replaced by an increasingly combative media that saw in Iraq disturbing parallels to the war in Vietnam. Then came the whisper, "Why aren't you reporting the good news stories?"

Embedding, I soon realized, had spoiled all of us.

Embedded With the Troops

Before the war, 775 journalists went into the field, including San Antonio Express-News photographer Bahram Mark Sobhani and me. We lived with

two Air Force close-air support teams attached to a 3rd Infantry Division battalion that spearheaded the invasion, saw combat in five battles, and had too many close calls to count. Our work appeared in newspapers nationwide. Mark's pictures were shown on "Nightline," in Time, even in Field & Stream. (That was the shot of a soldier fishing at one of Saddam Hussein's palaces in Baghdad, the one with a big lake. Call it Ernie Pyle photography.)

As in any new relationship, both sides were nervous. In the run-up to the war there were a series of highly publicized media "boot camps" sponsored by the Pentagon. I was at the first one, in Quantico, Virginia, and recall journalists in a bar wrestling with the issue of whether to wear gear supplied by the Marines for a five-mile march the following

morning. We were told that 35 media outlets would be on hand to record our march along a hilly, tree-lined path that cut through the base. A New York Times reporter, among others, worried about that, but I wasn't bothered. Launched in the shadow of the coming war, our boot camp was bound to be a big news story. It sure enough was, and I found the incestuous nature of the event surreal. At dawn, some reporters wore blue bulletproof vests with "TV" taped over them while being interviewed by their own networks.

In the northern desert, Air Force Capt. Shad Magann, Senior Airman Dan Housley, and Staff Sgt. Travis Crosby were leery of taking on embeds. They wondered if they could talk about the war, its politics, and other matters without getting in trouble with their commanders. They soon found that these reporters, while indeed dubious about the war, nonetheless could be trusted. Our job was to report on American troops in combat, and we knew it was a great privilege and the adventure of our lives. We would protect our sources, as they certainly would defend us from the enemy. Determined to do it right, as Ernie Pyle had, I lived by a few rules, and just a few, for if you had too many you'd never remember them:

- Make it clear when they were being interviewed.
- Report only what I observed—not what I thought I saw.
- Check with them or the battalion's commanders if I had questions about revealing details that could help Iraqis target our positions.

The romance blossomed. We were enthralled with the prospect of covering a war, the biggest story any reporter will ever get, and the troops began to like the media spotlight. A bonding began. I walked through the sprawling assembly area interviewing soldiers as they worked, played and slept. One day we caught a ride and happened upon a touch football game. Each night, after watching the beautiful desert sunset, I'd trek to one of the mess tents and talk with soldiers, who so often struck me as being too young. But then, at 46, I was old. The only man my age whom I met in the battalion I embedded with was its top enlisted man.

There were moments when I could almost hear Ernie Pyle's voice as I filed stories under a camouflage net, my Toughbook computer resting on a small, rickety wooden table. Each morning I lined up with the troops to get prepared meals called T-rations, walked back to

the tiny tent city we called "Air Force Village," got pancakes specially made by some of the close-air support crew as they played heavy metal music, and then went to work. We could walk or catch a ride with someone, do our reporting, and then file. After turning in our work, we'd sit in a tent with other troops and watch DVD's on television. One night I realized I didn't want it to end. That's how much I liked this life in Kuwait's desert.

Mark and I had more experience with the military than many embedded reporters, but you could see the barriers fall with each passing day. There was the sense that we were in this together, but the troops lived by Ronald Reagan's axiom, "trust but verify." Some had computers, too, and carefully scoured the Internet to find our stories and photos. As they did, those soldiers came back and talked more.

I slowly got to know Housley and Magann, an A-10 Warthog pilot, by asking the usual Ernie Pyle questions. We had something in common: I'd worked in Shad's hometown of Jacksonville, Florida and Dan's hometown, Huntsville, Texas. Both trained at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio. Dan, a typical trooper in the theater, was two years old when I started my career at The Huntsville Item. They were impressed as they saw an overweight middle-aged guy eat meals-ready-to-eat and learn to sleep on the Humvee's hood, fighting off the cold.

The War Begins

Our first taste of combat came on a West Texas-like plateau defended by dug-in Iraqis, some regular army, others Republican Guard, and a militia wearing black pajama uniforms—the fedayeen Saddam. Shad drove like a madman to get to the plateau, rushing past several captured fedayeen next to a group of soldiers on a skirmish line. A pair of A-10's circled like buzzards a few miles away after dropping bombs that from the distance looked like the tips of a ballpoint pen. Dust and debris blew high into the air as the bombs hit, the sound of their explosions reaching us seconds later. My heart was in my



Sig Christenson interviews Air Force Captain Shad Magann during the invasion of Iraq.
Photo by Dan Housley.

throat. It worsened when we got into the middle of the fighting, the air filled with machine-gun fire and the earth shaking as mortars exploded. Housley negotiated a particularly difficult dune as we raced to find a spot to call in air strikes.

“Young Housley,” Shad smiled, “the force is strong in you.”

Almost catatonic from fear up to this point, I managed a hearty laugh and soon settled down, taking notes while they led pilots on bombing runs. We lived that day only because an Iraqi gunner’s bullets fell 20 yards short of our truck.

Life with an Army at war was like this for weeks on end. Often I’d hear Pyle’s voice, and finally I understood the meaning of his words. There were long, boring days on the road, too many meals-ready-to-eat with the same, metallic taste. No showers for weeks and weeks. Crapping in the desert outside Najaf hoping the snakes, scorpions and Iraqi sniper who killed one of our tank gunners one day were in hibernation. Dying like *that* just seemed too low. Pyle loved the infantry, especially the lower-ranking troops, and I knew why. Living like this broke down the final barriers, as did the media’s mounting death toll. There was no lack of respect for the courage reporters displayed or the fact that they had volunteered for this, one of them being Kelly’s elderly friend George Wilson.

Shad, Dan and I endured four more battles. One, the taking of a bridge southwest of Baghdad, was so dangerous that Dan and I were certain we would not survive and said a prayer before we crossed. That night, during a counterattack, they grinned broadly as I phoned descriptions of the battle to my editors back in Texas. They then returned to the business of calling in air strikes that lit up the night sky, braving the bullets and rocket-propelled grenades that flew over our heads. Two days later we rolled into Saddam International Airport flush with victory. On a cool, star-filled night after the fall of Baghdad, the group that Sobhani and I were embedded with gathered next to the big lake at Al Faw Palace, broke out cigars, and told our favorite stories.

The brotherhood was complete, but my journey had only begun.

Returning to a Different War

Seven months later I was back in Iraq with Express-News photographer Ed Ornelas strapped into the cargo hold of a plane diving into old Saddam International with a gut-churning corkscrew landing. It was just after Thanksgiving, and the insurgency was heating up. The road from the airport to downtown already was the most dangerous in the country. The danger at Camp Anaconda, an hour north of Baghdad, was from mortars. In Baghdad we drove around town in a small, inconspicuous sedan, the threat coming from drive-by shootings and car bombs.

This was a much different war. Embedding, as we’d known it, was history. Reporters no longer were married to their unit for the duration, if only because this conflict had no discernible end. We stayed at Anaconda to interview AH-64D Apache Longbow pilots for a series, but broke off from them when we were ordered to Tikrit to report on Saddam’s capture. While there, we endured a hostile grilling from an American officer until he was

convinced we really were reporters for Hearst Newspapers. Once nervous G.I.’s, fearing the specter of the car bomb, nearly fired on us when our Iraqi driver unwittingly drove too far at a checkpoint. After the Nabil Restaurant was blown up on New Year’s Eve, shaking the superstructure of my hotel miles away as the clock neared midnight, the cordon of troops that circled the ruins had the look of cops on the cusp of a big-city riot.

The euphoria of Baghdad’s fall that spring of 2003 had evolved into a struggle on the part of our occupation troops to survive the Iraqi winter. The following July, in 2004, Ed and I were back at old Saddam International. We rode an armored bus into town, the driver wearing a Kevlar vest and helmet. I sat on a long, rectangular block of ice and waited for an ambush like the last one, at the end of the invasion. The Green Zone was a prison, scarred by terrible suicide bomb attacks and the constant threat of mortar fire. Going anywhere required getting two soldiers to drive you around in a Humvee. Setting up stories turned out to be even more difficult. The 1st Cavalry Division’s public affairs office didn’t tell Ed and me about a raid on Haifa Street until



During a blinding sandstorm outside Najaf, Sig Christenson writes in his notebook as he sits in the back seat of a military truck. Due to the extreme dryness, the skin on his hands cracked open and bled as he typed his stories. *Photo by Dan Housley.*

afterward, ensuring there was no story. Efforts to spend an extensive amount of time at the combat support hospital were rebuffed by a public affairs office that at best was indifferent and at worst hostile to us. No explanation helped our cause. One public affairs officer caustically told me, “Maybe you’ll get lucky and someone will come here and die today.”

Marine Corps Times reporter Gordon Lubold, who flew out of Iraq on the same C-130 as Ed and me, found similar tension. He said things were “uneasy everywhere” and had heard of reporters who had been kicked out of units. “Military commanders have become extremely sensitive: A quote here or a sentence there that they don’t like or that they perceive paints them in a bad light can send them over the edge,” he said. “They’ve become increasingly suspicious of our motives.”

To be sure, there were many good moments. Our time with the U.S. Central Command’s No. 2 man, Lt. Gen. Lance Smith, led to the building of new bridges. We hung out a lot with troops from the Arkansas National Guard in Baghdad, guys who didn’t hesitate to tell you what they thought. Doctors and nurses at the 31st Combat Support Hospital were quick to talk with us and saved my life, treating me when my blood pressure spiked into the stroke zone. As with the first two trips, we’ve endured terrible danger and made lifetime friends. Somewhere out there, Ernie Pyle and his war correspondent buddies are smiling.

Blaming the Messenger

On the whole, however, I fear the mood has changed two years into the occupation. Media bashing is back with a vengeance. Quoting a columnist who talked of embedded reporters’ negative Iraq War coverage, Lt. Gen. James Conway told a Navy League conference last spring, “Remember, these reporters were being stuffed into wall lockers in high school by the types who now run our military. They’re just trying to get even.” I chuckle over that one; I was a defensive nose tackle with a Marine’s hardheaded attitude in high school.

Civilian Pentagon leaders, military commanders, and journalists at a 2003 Cantigny Conference hosted by the McCormick Tribune Foundation found the atmosphere between troops and media in Iraq much better than the bitter aftermath of Gulf War I in 1991, when tempers flared over limited access and specially chosen pool reporters who never saw a battle. But the conference participants wondered if embedding would work in a longer, more drawn-out war with greater casualties, a logical question that already has been answered by Gulf War II, now in its third year with no clear exit strategy.

How to counter the drip-drip-drip of the dead and the maimed? Blame the media. Accuse us of overlooking the good news stories of Iraq. Moan, as conservative commentators often do on cable TV, about “liberal” newspapers like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* that are out to get the President. None of this is new. We heard it all from Richard Nixon, who often went to the well of his “silent majority” to marginalize opponents. Of course, conservatives have reason to be paranoid, for some of their critics would be after them no matter what. The same goes for liberals who feel under attack from the right. That isn’t new, either. Indeed, the “Crossfire” nation is really a cottage industry, not a political movement. (Just look at the clowns who’ve cashed in, using cable television to sell their books and perpetuate their existence as celebrities.)

What is new, and worthy of a serious conversation among politicians and their constituents, is the Digital Video & Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS), the Army-run Web site that feeds positive news and images to TV stations in the United States—at no cost. Technology is taking us where no American has gone before. The Army and its proponents say DVIDS provides a view of the war as captured by military public affairs that isn’t reported by the news media. They’re almost certainly right. Propaganda experts, including the University of Houston’s Garth Jowett, however, worry that the melding of technology, politics and lazy rip-and-read news outlets not given to crediting their sources

deserves a Surgeon General’s warning. They’re right, too. Will people know the difference between news and official spin? The carping is as bad from the left, which has found fault with the national media for not challenging the administration during the run-up to the war and demands ever more critical coverage of the occupation. These folks make essentially the same supposition as those on the right: that the media could find more bad news stories if they just did their jobs.

I’m not saying journalists do everything right or that we couldn’t do better. But this is life in today’s supercharged environment, made possible by the glories of a society besotted by conspiracy theory and satisfied not with thoughtful answers that lead to solutions but scoring points against the opposition, rallying the base, pumping up cable TV ratings, and selling newspapers, magazines and books.

These are perhaps issues upon which reasonable minds can disagree, although I am deeply troubled at how quick Americans are to pick a fight with each other rather than find commonsense solutions on civil terms—a notion from my parent’s generation that seems to have little utility today. When I returned from the invasion, I channel-surfed from the rediscovered comfort of my living room couch for days on end and concluded that the country had lost its collective mind. A month after that stunning victory, we were at each other’s throats—again.

Yet even more disturbing is the Fort Bragg, North Carolina court-martial of Army Sgt. Hasan Akbar, sentenced to death in the killings of two fellow troops in an attack early during the invasion. Fort Bragg this past spring required reporters to sign an “agreement” pledging not to talk to soldiers or civilians on the base without permission. Believe it or not, public affairs officers even followed reporters to the restroom. The post’s attempt to force reporters to trade their First Amendment rights for access to its courtroom sparked a confrontation between the Army and journalism groups led by Military Reporters & Editors (MRE), an organization I cofounded in 2002. [See letter

Military Reporters Protest Restrictions in Court Coverage

In coverage of the court-martial trial of Army Sgt. Hasan Akbar, a soldier accused of killing other American soldiers with a grenade attack, officers at Fort Bragg required reporters to sign a restrictive agreement. For example, as a condition of gaining access to the court proceedings, Jeff Schogol, a reporter with the Express-Times of Easton, Pennsylvania, said he had to agree to 14 conditions. This situation, along with other related military-press situations, prompted the Military Reporters & Editors (MRE) association to send a letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to express concern and ask that similar constraints not be imposed on members of the press who cover military court proceedings. To see the Army's response, go to www.militaryreporters.org. A copy of the MRE's April 27th letter follows.

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

We write on behalf of Military Reporters & Editors (MRE), a professional association of journalists that advances public understanding of the military, national security, and homeland defense; represents the interests of working journalists to the government and military, and assures that journalists have access to places where the U.S. military and its allies operate. The Society of Professional Journalists, the

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, the Coalition of Journalists for Open Government, Associated Press Managing Editors, American Society of Newspaper Editors, and the Society of Environmental Journalists support this letter.

We have grave concerns about restrictions imposed in the Fort Bragg court martial of Army Sgt. Hasan Akbar. The most troublesome is an "agreement" that reporters were required to sign before gaining access to the proceedings, which includes a pledge to not interview soldiers at Fort Bragg about the case or ask legal advisors in the media room to speculate on the outcome. To ensure compliance with the agreement, reporters were escorted everywhere while on base, and some were monitored as they went to the restroom. The agreement and the Army's actions under it are an affront to the First Amendment rights of free speech and press.

By this letter, we request that the Department of the Army rescind these constraints and assure that similar restrictions will not be imposed elsewhere. Press access to U.S. courts, including military courts, is protected constitutionally and is essential to public confidence in government. For these reasons, the Manual for Courts-Martial United States recognizes that openness of court-martial proceedings is the default rule.

We understand the right of access is not absolute. When presented with an appropriate compelling interest a judge can, upon notice to the public and an opportunity to be heard, order limited closure of a courtroom. This can be done only after finding no reasonable alternative will safeguard that interest and after providing for a narrow closure based on specific findings that can be reviewed on appeal.

The purported "agreement" does not meet that test. No public hearing was held, no showing was made, and no judicial findings were rendered to justify press restrictions of any sort. We therefore implore you to immediately renounce the constraints this document places on the press, so that we are not forced to bring this issue to a court's attention.

We attach to this letter a story about the restrictions by Easton, Pennsylvania, Express-Times reporter Jeff Schogol. In the spirit born in the embedding of journalists with U.S. forces during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, we trust your review of Mr. Schogol's story and this petition will lead your administration to work cooperatively with the press in resolving our concerns.

Sincerely,
Sig Christenson
President, MRE

sent to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld by MRE above.] We've vowed to go to court the next time that happens.

Trust Evaporates

That's where we stand today, nearly four years after 9/11.

MRE supported embedding because it ensured that the media would gain access to the troops. But despite our gains, many of us who have worried about the relationship between the military and media fear we're on a treadmill. Vietnam-era antagonism between the

media and military is back. It's especially strong in the Pentagon, where some I know among the press corps long ago lost faith in the integrity of Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and other top civilians.

The hostility is mutual except for the symbiotic relationship between the administration, Fox News, and conservative talk-radio hosts. Our critics, most of them Bush backers, contend that the news media have deliberately tilted their coverage toward the negative side of the conflict. Many of us point out that news usually gravitates toward the bad. Car

accidents, stabbings and shootings are the staple of local TV broadcasts. It's a bit odd that people believe reporters risking their lives aren't doing enough to find "good news" in a war zone—especially one as infested with insurgents, crime, corruption and decades of neglect as Iraq. It sounds downright crazy that a few think the reporting is politically driven.

Ernie Pyle found those "good news" stories in war-torn Italy and France, as have many of us in Iraq. But read his book, "Brave Men," and you know that as much as Pyle loved the common sol-

dier, he also hated the carnage of war and often wrote about it. Pyle would have been one of the original Iraq embeds, and he would have returned to the theater. Integrity mattered to him, so Pyle would have addressed the whining about a lack of good news, as we should today. He would have asked if our battle to win hearts and minds in a war many think has questionable origins and no clear end has exposed us to the very virus that led Saddam and pitiful

Iraq to its ruin—an institutionalized indifference to the truth. And so in this land of the wedge issue it's a good bet that Pyle would have been beloved by the troops and, ironically, reviled as a traitor in some quarters of our flag-waving nation, as well as the government that tacitly endorsed him. ■

Sig Christenson has been the military affairs writer for the San Antonio Express-News since 1997 and was an

embedded reporter for Hearst Newspapers during the invasion of Iraq. He has returned to Iraq twice since then, working as both an embedded and independent reporter. He is president and cofounder of Military Reporters & Editors, a nationwide group of journalists specializing in coverage of America's armed forces.

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Journalism In the Age of Pseudoreporting

As fake news surfaces on TV and government public relations staff sizes increase, there are questions worth asking about the impact on journalism.

By Frank Greve

Richard Nixon got it right when he said in his memoirs that modern presidents “must try to master the art of manipulating the media ... at the same time they must avoid at all costs the charge of trying to manipulate the media.” Following his counsel takes real deftness, however, and when lots of administration officials try to manipulate the press, it's inevitable that some will make a hash of it and expose the puppet strings. Hence the recent spate of media infamies known by the names Armstrong Williams, Maggie Gallagher, Jeff Gannon, and Karen Ryan.

President Bush seems to recognize that these cases can't be defended. But he's also as determined as any predecessor to gain what he can from government-paid P.R. and more intent than anyone since Nixon on the related mission of bringing big and critical mainstream media to heel. (What other President would have said, as Bush did after Senator John Kerry cited media reports in one of their debates, “In all due respect, I'm not so sure it's credible to quote leading news organizations.”?)

It helps only Bush that Webloggers, Web-based magazines, and trade publications have outpaced traditional Washington news bureaus on several big bad

journalism stories. Among them: Dan Rather's reliance on fake documents in his “60 Minutes” story on Bush's military duty-dodging, which PowerLine.com led, and the exposure of Gannon's provisional membership in the White House press corps, which bloggers forced traditional media to address.

Thus far at least, Bush has gained lots of recognition in mainstream media—MSM in blogger-speak—for deploring pseudojournalism. At the same time, he's been quietly making it easier for more than 5,000 federal employees—who work in jobs involving public relations—to serve up what by the common man's standard is propaganda. Having deplored media manipulation, in other words, the President has gone back to doing it.

Pseudonews Survives

His problem/opportunity began in January when USA Today broke the story of the U.S. Department of Education's \$241,000 pay-for-play deal with African-American commentator Williams to promote the President's top education initiative, the No Child Left Behind act. White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan deflected questions to the

Education Department. Bush said nothing for two weeks, then offered only a bromide: “There needs to be a nice independent relationship between the White House and the press.”

In April, Bush expressed the same sentiment at a news editors conference in Washington and was again widely quoted. What he said next, however, the MSM mainly missed. It is “legal” for government news agencies to make video news releases (VNR), Bush told the editors, “but it's incumbent upon people who use them to say ‘This news clip was produced by the federal government.’” In other words, it's up to the news outlets that use the puffery—not the government P.R. shops that make it—to identify its source. (It is the case that VNR's and direct satellite news feeds to local TV stations have been used in a similar fashion by prior administrations, though they were on the wane during the Clinton administration.)

It's hard to imagine a local news anchor fessing up. It's even harder when you recall that the original rap on government VNR's was that they were produced with agency credits deliberately made easy to delete. Behind Bush's new assertion about “legal” government propagandizing lay an old problem for

MSM, made larger by a new opinion from the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. In brief, policing of government propaganda relies on a 1913 law against spending taxpayers' money "to pay a publicity expert." In addition, appropriations bills include a boilerplate warning against unauthorized spending for "publicity or propaganda purposes."

The problem: No agency monitors this or enforces the prohibition. And Congress hasn't defined the terms. About all that a lawmaker can do right now is get a ruling from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on specific material. When asked by a member of Congress to review some VNR's, GAO Comptroller General David Walker opined in February that he considered one made about Medicare and another about the Office of National Drug Control Policy to be "covert propaganda."

Why? "In neither case did the agency include any statement or other indication in its news stories that disclosed to the television viewing audience ... that the agency wrote and produced those news stories," Walker wrote. Susan Poling, associate counsel of the GAO, observed, too, that "we noticed that these are not isolated practices ... that it's really across the government." Walker then sent a memo to government agencies reminding them of the "constraints imposed by the publicity or propaganda prohibition."

Walker's warning received more press attention than its quashing did, when the memo was essentially voided on a Friday afternoon—a dormant news slot—in March. It was then that the President's lawyers in the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) sent a memo of its own to the general counsels of all federal agencies. In this memo OLC principal deputy Steven Bradbury declared that VNR's are a legitimate means of "informing the public of the facts about a federal program," whether or not their government sponsor is identified. The ruling might be different, Bradbury wrote, if the government's public relations' efforts included "advocacy of a political viewpoint."

But who is going to determine whether the P.R. is factual or it is ad-

vocating "a political viewpoint," and thus qualifies as propaganda? Bradbury, who reminded agency lawyers that the OLC's order trumps the GAO's, didn't elaborate on this point. This means the Bush administration will be the arbiter. The ruling is certain to be used to defend other forms of government self-advocacy, including agency Web sites and promotional material for new programs, such as Medicare prescription drug benefit and the Clear Skies initiative.

The Government's Spin Machines

All this debate about propaganda—not to mention the discovery of paid practitioners—made a lot of reporters start to wonder about what's going on in all of these government agency P.R. offices. It turns out that contracted-out government P.R. is booming, despite the congressional prohibitions. The Clinton administration spent \$128 million on outside public relations in its first term, compared with \$250 million during Bush's first term, according to an investigation done by USA Today. (The Congressional Research Service, which counts advertising outlays as part of its total figure, puts the amount at one billion dollars, but lacks a comparative Clinton figure.)

Employment of public relations personnel within government agencies is up nine percent since September 2000, from 4,327 to 4,703 people, according to the federal Office of Personnel Management. But that figure does not include political appointees who are not fully counted in any reliable tally. Enough of them, however, turn up, in what's called the Plum Book—a directory of senior executive branch officials and their top career and political subordinates—to show the same upward trend. In Jimmy Carter's presidency, for example, the Commerce Department had two political P.R. jobs, according to the 1978 Plum Book. By the first Bush presidency, that number was up to 11. In this Bush administration, that department has grown to employ 27 people.

Certifying the actual figures gets

tougher, since these numbers suffer from the iceberg effect, according to Luke Hester, a senior career public affairs official who retired last year from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). There's a lot of folks connected to these operations who just aren't visible in any personnel flow chart. At the EPA, for example, which is a political hotspot in any administration, the most recent Plum Book shows 11 political P.R. appointees. Hester estimated that the actual number of people who got their jobs through political connections and serve political ends by working in P.R. at EPA is closer to 50.

Numbers do count, it turns out, when politically connected government agency P.R. systems create burdensome approval networks that slow down potentially negative stories. These systems actually slow down everything except what the administration wants to get out. Hester said that's one of the main pastimes at EPA, where "how fast they respond depends on whether they want to get the answer out or sandbag it—or need to check with the White House." Among other pastimes are maintaining and burnishing the agency's Web site—a good-news billboard, clearing speeches and congressional testimony, building support among interest groups for EPA programs and fielding reporters' questions.

A large part of the business done by these offices is the communications efforts that are designed to get information directly to the public by going over the heads, around the backs, and between the legs of MSM. Among the tactics, Hester said, are briefings to which only supportive reporters are invited; teleconferences for reporters in which there is a one-question rule (hence no follow-ups) and, when the daily beat reporters grow hostile, leaks to outlets outside of Washington.

The proliferation of bloggers, news channels, Web news sites, and trade and specialty publications gives P.R. officials more options. Web sites and bloggers are great outlets for spin because they're understaffed and grateful. They also move faster than MSM and are therefore excellent as agenda-setters. MSM news cycles still tend to be daily, and that al-

lows reporters time to check out spin more thoroughly. And while they still enjoy an advantage in numbers, MSM reporters tend to be older; their ranks, in many cases, decimated by Washington bureau cuts.

So it might have come as a surprise to MSM journalists when PowerLine.com led the campaign that took down Dan Rather for flawed journalism. MSM are not supposed to be surprised, especially in their bailiwicks, but that's been happening a lot recently. When Talkingpointsmemo.com exposed racist remarks made by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and other bloggers took up the story, MSM had to quickly move to cover this as a news story. And they were just as surprised when bloggers forced CNN news chief Eason Jordan to resign because of his odd claim that American soldiers in Iraq had targeted journalists. For that matter, Dailykos.com, Wonkette.com, and Kausfiles.com have carried more information about the administration's pseudoreporting than MSM.

What's Ahead?

Given the trajectory, it's not hard to imagine what's ahead on the propaganda front. And it does not bode well for journalism. What follows are a few media movements to watch for:

- The broadcast industry is too loosely organized, ethically challenged—and strapped for money—to stop the unacknowledged airing of government P.R. Expect this habit to continue and, likely, to grow.
- Hiring campaign strategists, pollsters and ad firms to do government P.R. is no doubt ahead, if not already happening. The presidency is a permanent campaign now, and besides, campaign pros need work in the off-season.
- Surreptitiously financed bloggers who devour “spin” are coming (in fact, some most likely already exist), whether financially supported by the government or interest groups.
- Criticism of MSM will grow, as more

news gatherers work from the outside rather than as MSM insiders. Some criticism will be dead-on.

- Propaganda will seem more plausible, as MSM seem less credible.
- Audiences will fracture more into red and blue perspectives and then select the news media option that most closely represents their point of view. It's already a big selling point for digital news. And no matter what side a reader, viewer or listener is on, many will end up agreeing with President Bush when he says, “In all due respect, I'm not so sure it's credible to quote leading news organizations.”

Perhaps the most worrisome thing of all is that future administrations will know this and act accordingly. ■

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WATCHDOG

Journalism and the Public Interest

‘... an old-time journalist finds it a matter of sorrow that the press, at the height of its influence, is at a depth of its public approval.’

In the spring of 2005 Oxford University Press published “The Press,” the most recent installment in its ongoing series “The Institutions of American Democracy” that examine various democratic institutions. For this book, National Public Radio Senior News Analyst Daniel Schorr wrote a chapter entitled “Journalism and the Public Interest.” What follows are excerpts from his chapter.

By Daniel Schorr

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of

the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”—The First Amendment to the United States Constitution

The First Amendment, ratified in 1791, its reach extended to the states by the 14th Amendment in 1868, makes the press the only private industry afforded specific constitutional protection. It was intended to protect printers and pamphleteers like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Paine against censorship imposed by the politicians they criticized. The framers of the Constitution, who regarded a free press as vital to a democracy, could not have conceived that one day this cloak would embrace vast empires of newspaper chains, radio and television conglomerates, and

Internet outlets that stretched the very meaning of journalism.

The press (now more commonly called the news media) continue to insist on constitutional shelter in the public interest while primarily serving substantial private interests and sometimes being accused of acting against the public interest.

The guarantee of press freedom has, since the 18th century, been subject to attacks, legal and otherwise [The U.S. Supreme Court has] generally heeded the advice of James Madison that “a popular government without popular information or the means to acquiring it is but the prologue to a farce or tragedy.” And the advice of Woodrow Wilson, “Everybody knows that corruption thrives in secret places

and avoids public places, and we believe it a fair assumption that secrecy means impropriety.”

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the government has found other ways of influencing the press. One way is to appeal to patriotism at a time when the nation is engaged in a war against terrorism. In October 2001, Condoleezza Rice, then President George W. Bush’s national security advisor, arranged a telephone conference call with six television news executives, urging them to limit the use of videotaped addresses by al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, which might have a negative effect on the American public and might even contain coded messages to al-Qaeda followers. Never mind that bin Laden’s statements are available to anyone with a satellite receiver. Most of the news executives agreed to cut back on the use of such tapes.

The tension between press and government about keeping secrets is heightened by the knowledge that classification goes far beyond real need, activated more by fear of personal embarrassment than a threat to national security. J. William Leonard, a National Archives official, testified before a House committee, “It is no secret that the government classifies too much information.”

Pressures on the media are enormous. Walter Isaacson, the former president of Cable News Network (CNN), has commented on the media’s constant whipsawing between “the Patriotism Police,” demanding support of the government, and “the Lapdog Police,” complaining of a too compliant attitude toward the government.

“In this war we need to return to our nation’s tradition of cooperation and self-defense,” said Attorney General John Ashcroft in a speech in June 2003.

The battle between secrecy and disclosure has generated periodic clashes over leaks and confidential sources. For the news media, freedom of press

implies freedom to use information from confidential sources. The Supreme Court, in a 1972 decision [*Branzburg v. Hayes*], recognized a limited reporters’ “privilege” but said that it had to yield to the needs of grand juries for information that they could not acquire any other way.

In the early 2000’s, two major “sources” issues were being fought out before the courts. In Washington, five reporters representing *The Associated Press*, *CNN*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *The New York Times* had been cited for contempt by a federal judge. They refused to answer questions about confidential sources in a civil defamation suit brought by Wen Ho Lee, a Los Alamos nuclear laboratory scientist who claimed he was wrongly accused of espionage. In another such controversy, reporters for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *NBC News* were subpoenaed by a special

The tension between press and government about keeping secrets is heightened by the knowledge that classification goes far beyond real need

prosecutor investigating the leak in 2003 of the identity of Valerie Plame, a CIA undercover employee.

Hostility to the press often emanates from the Oval Office itself and sometimes with good reason. At least three recent Presidents could attribute their greatest woes to journalists and journalism. Richard M. Nixon was embarked on the road to disgrace in June 1972 because of reports in *The Washington Post* followed by those of other media organizations. The *Post* linked a break-in into Democratic headquarters in the Watergate office building to the Nixon campaign committee. There followed disclosures about disbursement of campaign money for illicit purposes and, in the end, a draft bill of impeachment in the House forced Nixon to resign. William Safire, a Nixon speechwriter then, quoted Nixon as saying, “The press is the enemy.”

Ronald Reagan, who once said, “I’m up to my keister in leaks,” was damaged by the Iran-Contra scandal that started, oddly, with a story in a little weekly magazine in Beirut, Lebanon, called *al-Shiraa*. Obviously planted by the Iranian authorities to embarrass the Reagan administration, the story revealed that former national security advisor Robert McFarlane had flown to Tehran with a planeload of antitank missiles, which he hoped to barter for the release of American hostages held by pro-Iranian terrorists in Lebanon. Subsequently it emerged that the proceeds of the arms sale were to be used to arm the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, something that Congress had specifically forbidden. The prestige of a popular President was shaken by the revelations that started with that little Beirut weekly.

Bill Clinton was started down the road to impeachment by the news media—in this case, the Internet. On the

night of January 17, 1998, gossip-monger Matt Drudge posted word on his Web site that *Newsweek* magazine was working on a story of the President’s relationship with a White House intern.

Drudge was quoted the next morning on ABC television, and within days the story was all over the print and electronic media, and the ordeal of President Clinton had begun.

In making Presidents accountable for their misdeeds, the press clearly served the public interest. Yet an old-time journalist finds it a matter of sorrow that the press, at the height of its influence, is at a depth of its public approval. Protected by the Constitution as the guardian of the public interest, the news media are not regarded by most Americans as dedicated to the public interest as they strive for circulation, ratings and profits.

One Roper–Freedom Forum poll found that fewer than 20 percent of respondents rated journalistic ethics as high. Sixty-five percent thought that there are times when publication or broadcast should be “prevented” in the

public interest. Did we win the fight over prior restraint in the Supreme Court only to lose it in the court of public opinion?

In the television world of today news has come to occupy a corner of a vast entertainment stage, sharing the techniques and values of entertainment. It is perhaps because of the blurring of the line between reality and fantasy that several journalists have tried to build careers on invented stories. In 1980 The Washington Post had to return a Pulitzer Prize awarded to Janet Cooke for a made-up story about an eight-year-old child hooked on drugs. Two-thirds of the stories written by Stephen Glass for The New Republic between 1995

and 1998 turned out to be fabricated. The champion liar was Jayson Blair, who filed many stories for The New York Times using false datelines naming places Blair had never been. In 2004 Jack Kelley resigned from USA Today after a series of dramatic but untrue stories, such as witnessing a suicide bombing in Jerusalem.

Opinion polls beginning in the late 1990's have registered growing public distrust of the increasingly concentrated, profit-driven news media. In 2002, 46 corporations controlled more than 50 percent of the news media—an array that included some 1,800 daily newspapers, 11,000 magazines, 2,000 television stations, and 11,000 radio

stations. All of the principal television networks are extensions of large corporations—ABC's parent company is the Walt Disney Company, NBC's is General Electric, Viacom owns CBS, and Time Warner, CNN.

On February 22, 1971, more than a year before Watergate, President Nixon, his words recorded on Oval Office tape, remarked to his counsel, John Dean, "Well, one helluva lot of people don't give one damn about the issue of the suppression of the press"

Cynical, but perceptive. Yet no one demonstrated better than Nixon that, for all its faults and failings, the press, at crucial moments, is there to defend the public interest. ■

WATCHDOG

Why Objectivity Still Matters

'Precisely because we understand our [human] frailties, we insist upon maintaining the pursuit of objectivity.'

By Stephen J. Berry

The notion that reporters should be objective is taking a beating these days, and the assault couldn't come at a worse time for the public. With the proliferation of devil-may-care bloggers and the facts-be-damned TV cable shout fests, the culture of our profession is trending toward a journalistic Woodstock, where everything except disciplined reporting is considered cool.

In the Winter 2004 issue of Nieman Reports, Geneva Overholser of the Missouri School of Journalism and a highly respected professional, denounced objectivity as "worse than useless," even harmful. She called for "a forthright jettisoning of the objectivity credo." Objectivity, she wrote, has become "an extremely effective cudgel" against the press for anyone who disagrees with its stories. "The anticipation of these bludgeonings," she said, "has produced a yet more craven media."

Wow! What a pathetic lot these journalists are. There's only one thing

left to do. The editors of The New York Times, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and other leaders of mainstream media should wave the white flag and announce, "Henceforth, we are *not* going to be objective." That ought to satisfy the critics.

It wouldn't, of course. It would only excite the current media-bashing frenzy. And the public would still be the losers.

The State of Objectivity

So much of news these days is all about throwing anything and everything out there—half-truths, distortions, opinion news, and the "tell-it-like-it-is" rantings of the contentious bullies who run the talk shows. More and more, reporters who still view objectivity as our guide and goal stand out like someone wearing a suit at a Metallica concert. Some journalism schools and textbooks don't mention objectivity any longer, except as a topic in an editorial problems semi-

nar. In 1996, the Society of Professional Journalists, without fanfare, dropped the term from its code of ethics.

The fact that some reporters permit superficial he-said/she-said reporting to define objectivity spawns much of today's criticism. In 2003, Brent Cunningham, managing editor of Columbia Journalism Review, wrote in an article, "Re-thinking Objectivity," that "our devotion to what we call objectivity" played a role in our failure to cover some of the Bush administration's shortcomings. While he didn't suggest tossing it, Cunningham acknowledged that journalists let "the principle of objectivity make us passive recipients of the news, rather than aggressive analyzers and explainers of it." Other critics subscribe to Overholser's belief that objectivity "often produces a report bound in rigid orthodoxy, a deplorably narrow product of conventional thinking," in which officialdom is given too much legitimacy and the voices of others given too little.

Objectivity has been on the ropes before. From the 1920's through the press's cowardly response to Senator Joseph McCarthy's demagoguery in the 1950's and into the Vietnam era, events and critics raised questions about objectivity. Yet the standard persisted. In 1978, Michael Schudson, author of "Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers," marveled at its hold on journalism. Noting its problems as a journalistic standard, Schudson asked, "Why ... should objectivity still be a serious issue? Why hasn't it been given up altogether?"

Reclaiming Objectivity

So what is this shackle that roils our profession decade after decade and now seems to have reporters cowering in fear and passivity?

Objectivity is a standard that requires journalists to try to put aside emotions and prejudices, including those implanted by the spinners and manipulators who meet them at every turn

Objectivity is a standard that requires journalists to try to put aside emotions and prejudices, including those implanted by the spinners and manipulators who meet them at every turn, as they gather and present the facts. They recognize objectivity as an ideal, the pursuit of which never ends and never totally succeeds. Walter Lippmann, the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner and the intellectual guru of journalistic objectivity in the 1920's, viewed it as a discipline inculcating scientific principles that can guide one to "victories over superstitions of the mind."

Lippmann would say Cunningham and Overholser are right about the failings of the press, but wrong to blame objectivity. Objectivity, as Lippmann wanted it practiced, does not exclude "aggressive analyzers and explainers." Nor does it ban investigative journalism or interpretative reporting, as Overholser argues. Curtis D. MacDougall, the

father of interpretative reporting and renowned textbook writer, made that point in every edition of "Interpretative Reporting," starting with the first in 1938. In the fifth edition (1968), MacDougall invoked the "scientific method"—the essence of the search for objective fact—in teaching interpretative reporting. And in his seventh edition (1977), he wrote, "As is true of no other profession, his [a reporter's] entire training is devoted to overcoming or sidestepping his prejudices. He is encouraged to be as open minded and objective as it is humanly possible to be and to be aware of any emotional obstacles that he may have to overcome."

In investigative reporting, as in no other genre, is the effort to devise strategies and methods to deal with personal biases and external manipulation more

crucial. The variety of strategies is infinite, depending on the demands of each inquiry and the creativity of the journalists. For example, they devise interview techniques to gain information, to help "unspin the spin," and to determine whether sources know what they are talking about. They identify tangible criteria and evidence, such as documents, written policies or guidelines, the law, statistics or codes of ethics against which to measure or gauge the actions or practices they are investigating. They seek viewpoints and information from diverse sources. And they devote much reporting time to vetting and testing their findings.

The ultimate purpose of this method is to help the journalist see the facts as accurately as human frailty allows.

Some journalists and news organizations are more conscientious in the pursuit of objectivity. At times, even good journalists get off track, but not

because objectivity failed as a standard. Consider the following:

- When The New York Times proffered alleged facts about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction from unnamed sources with a stake in a U.S. invasion, it was not the *standard* of objectivity that failed. But the pursuit of it certainly did.
- When CBS journalists aired bogus documents from "unimpeachable sources," they let something—perhaps the scent of a hot story, their preconceived notions or fear of getting beat—blur their view of the evidence that would have helped them to determine whether the alleged documents were genuine and the source unimpeachable.
- When political reporters allowed the presidential candidates to get away with lies and distortions, the culprit was not objectivity but the failure to challenge and verify, which are imperative in its pursuit.

Those of us who value objectivity as an essential standard of journalism approach its use by first recognizing our humanness—our subjectivity. Precisely because we understand our frailties, we insist upon maintaining the pursuit of objectivity. "As our minds become more deeply aware of their own subjectivism," Lippmann wrote in 1922, "we find a zest in objective method that is not otherwise there."

The pursuit of objectivity is what separates us from our audience and from pseudojournalists. Rather than cower to those who would use objectivity as a cudgel against us, we should reclaim it, use it, and reveal how we pursue it. More importantly for the future, we should teach it. ■

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WATCHDOG

Why Won't Journalists Follow the Money?

By not revealing the funders behind 'think tanks,' the information they provide shouldn't be considered credible by readers.

By Morton Mintz

Imagine being ExxonMobil's CEO, and you have a problem. Independent scientists overwhelmingly agree that consumption of your company's products produces gases that cause average global temperatures to rise. Your goal is to discredit the scientists. But if news reports say that ExxonMobil is doing the discrediting, it will be recognized as an obvious party with an interest and regarded skeptically. The solution: fund think tanks that will faithfully express the views of the world's largest oil company as their own. ExxonMobil's hand will be well hidden; indeed, the company will be a source so anonymous that news organizations will not even call it one.

The solution has roots going back nearly 30 years, as documented by Chris Mooney in a superb investigative report on the huge "disinformation campaign" waged by antiregulatory think tanks against the scientific consensus about the causes of global warming. Mooney explains in the May/June issue of *Mother Jones* magazine how in a 1977 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed "the influential neoconservative Irving Kristol memorably counseled that 'corporate philanthropy should not be, and cannot be, disinterested,' but should serve as a means 'to shape or reshape the climate of public opinion.'"

The success of a propaganda campaign such as ExxonMobil's depends heavily, of course, on the cooperation—or complicity—of news organiza-

tions. Specifically, they must treat the think tanks as if they are independent, neutral, scientifically qualified, even scholarly. Unfortunately, too many news organizations have obliged too often. More bluntly, they have—knowingly and willfully—misled their readers, viewers and listeners time after time, year after year. And to the benefit not just of ExxonMobil, but also to the satisfaction of other funders of antiregulatory think tanks, such as tobacco companies, pharmaceutical houses, motor-vehicle manufacturers, and foundations funded by corporations and right-wing ideologues.

Why Transparency Matters

No matter where think tanks are on the political spectrum, news organizations are duty-bound to signal clearly when funding sources may bias them. Take the

criticism of populist Democrats as far-left extremists." Mainstream news consumers, too, need consistent alerts to such factual connections.

My primary case in point is the Washington-based Competitive Enterprise Institute (CEI). Between 2000 and 2003, Mooney disclosed, CEI "received a whopping \$1,380,000 from ExxonMobil." Yet CEI is only one of "some 40 ExxonMobil-funded organizations"—including journalism and race-based and religious groups—"that either have sought to undermine mainstream scientific findings on global climate change or have maintained affiliations with a small group of 'skeptical' scientists who continue to do so." For their labors, again between 2000 and 2003, ExxonMobil gave them, by the magazine's tally, more than \$8 million. The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) received \$960,000. ExxonMobil Chair-

man and CEO Lee Raymond is vice chairman of AEI.

As of 2002, when CEI had a \$3 million annual budget, its staff included not one scientist or health expert. Myron Ebell had a master's degree—in economics. His title: director of global

warming and international policy. Angela Logomasini had a master's degree, too—in politics. Her title: director of risk and environmental policy. Perhaps reporters and editors will someday explain why bloated titles magically transform flacks whose degrees are in economics and politics into must-be-quoted experts on global warming and

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Democratic Leadership Council (DLC). In December, *The Nation* reported that "multinationals like Philip Morris, Texaco, Enron and Merck ... have all, at one point or another, slathered the DLC with cash. Those resources have been used to push a nakedly corporate agenda under the guise of 'centrism' while allowing the DLC to parrot GOP

the environment.

In a November 2002 story quoting Ebell on climate change, The New York Times called CEI “a private group that opposes regulatory approaches to environmental problems.” Vague and incomplete though this description was, it was better than most, and enough to send me to CEI’s Web site to find its funding sources. None was named. So I wrote then-Times Executive Editor Howell Raines to suggest that the Times become the leader in identifying financial backers of quoted think-tank “experts.”

News Editor William Borders replied and with extraordinary grace. My suggestion “responds to the best instinct of good reporting to tell the reader *why*

this person might be saying these things,” Borders wrote. “I will pass your thoughts along to the responsible editors Whatever you can inspire us to do to make our news columns more credible indeed, more honest, is welcome.”

I guess I’m not very inspiring. In the year ending in mid-May, 10 Times articles have mentioned CEI. Five described it simply as “libertarian” and one each as “business libertarian,” a “libertarian group opposed to regulation as a solution to most environmental problems,” and a “regulatory research group.” One contained no description. One and only one muted the presumptive high-fives at CEI by hinting at *why* this person might be saying these things: CEI is “aligned with industry.”

Tracking the Coverage

Nine months before I contacted the Times, unbeknownst to me, Elliott Negin, who is Washington communications director for the Natural Resources

Defense Council (NRDC), a former managing editor of American Journalism Review, and a former editor at National Public Radio, had prepared an unpublished “backgrounder.” In it, Negin commented on the “seemingly independent think tanks ... [that] in effect serve as public relations arms of corporations, representing the corporate position under the guise of being neutral, albeit conservative, observers.” Negin went on to observe that “Reporters often quote spokespeople from these think tanks when covering public policy stories. But rarely, if ever, do they cite where these

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think tanks get their funding.” (NRDC has zero corporate funding.)

Negin’s “case in point” echoed what I’d been tracking in the coverage of CEI. “Over the last year a number of news organizations cited CEI spokesmen in stories on energy and global warming,” Negin wrote. “I found only one story ... that alluded to the group’s industry connections.”

In an April 2, 2001 column, Negin pointed out, Washington Post media columnist Howard Kurtz wrote that “the paper’s reporters are now being told to routinely ask about funding.” Kurtz explained that the Post had “recently quoted David Ropeik of the Harvard School of Public Health’s Center for Risk Analysis as questioning a government study on the presence of pesticides and metals in American bodies. Last week, reporter David Brown wrote the school’s dean that he was ‘extremely surprised’ to learn that the center ‘is heavily funded by the chemical, pharmaceutical and pesticide industries It never occurred to me to ask I will

not make that mistake again.”

“Apparently,” Negin commented, “not all Post reporters have gotten the message. A February 6th story ... referred to the ‘free-market Competitive Enterprise Institute.’ The story quoted CEI founder Fred Smith, who supports the Bush administration’s voluntary approach to reducing global warming pollution.” Negin cited similar accurate but misleading passes by other news organizations:

- CEI is “a Washington, D.C., think tank” (Charleston Daily Mail, February 12, 2002).
- CEI general counsel Sam Kazman, a foe of motor-vehicle fuel efficiency standards, is “with” CEI (substitute host Mike Barnicle on MSNBC’s “Hardball with Chris Matthews,” January 2, 2002).
- Ebell—referring to President Clinton’s decision to create new national monuments and exclude nearly 60 million acres of national forests from development and slamming “the abuses and excesses of the Clinton years”—called the CEI “a free-market think tank that advocates limited government.” (Gannett News Service, December 31, 2001)
- Negin wrote that on December 6, 2001, The Denver Post called CEI “a conservative think tank” in reporting CEI Senior Fellow Christopher Horner’s attack on an energy plan proposed by Senate democrats. Horner was CEI’s “lead attorney” when it sued the government in 2000 and again in 2003 to prevent it from disseminating “a Clinton-era report showing the impact of climate change.” Mooney reported in Mother Jones that Horner “is paid a \$60,000 annual consulting fee by CEI. In 2002, ExxonMobil explicitly earmarked \$60,000 for CEI for ‘legal activities.’”

In the same time frame, in contrast, two newspapers did link CEI to industry, one explicitly.

- On February 5, 2002, Boston Globe reporter Beth Daley quoted CEI spokesman Paul Georgia—then a doctoral student in economics—as blessing President Bush’s plan “to cut the Environmental Protection Agency’s budget and shift enforcement from the federal level to the states.” Clearly, if implicitly, she made CEI’s primary source of funding evident by pinning on it the label “industry think tank.” “That,”

Negin said, “is exactly what CEI is.”

- Nine days later The New York Times published a front-page story in which Ebell claimed that a supposedly voluntary Bush plan to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide “will actually be coercive.” Reporter Andrew Revkin called Ebell’s employer “a private group whose free-market views are frequently embraced by industry.” The implication was less clear than Daley’s.

A trend this was not. As Kurtz wrote in 2001, Washington Post reporters were expected to “routinely ask about funding.” Ask, maybe, but—with one splendid exception—not necessarily include this information in their stories. Two examples from 2004 may have earned the Post more high-fives at CEI:

- A November 6th story on new Food and Drug Administration drug-safety initiatives described the CEI as “a nonprofit public policy organization dedicated to the principle of limited government.” (Such a description might be accurate, but it is wholly misleading.)
- Last year’s heat wave in Europe was blamed for the deaths of more than

35,000 people. Nature, the highly respected scientific journal, reported that the risk of another such heat wave has more than doubled. A December 2nd Post story led with the study but then devoted nearly half its space to Ebell’s “caterwauling,” as Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-N.J.) called it in a letter to the editor. The Post did “an injustice to its readers,” partly by ignoring the “shameless conflict of interest,” Lautenberg wrote. He went on to write that the story was an example of “‘he said, she said’ treatment of

The story is an example of “he said, she said” treatment of what reputable scientists say is one of the greatest threats to the human race. Even worse, the article countered the findings of the world’s top climate scientists by quoting an oil industry-funded economist. Such reporting is not credible, nor does it illuminate a subject of significant importance.’

what reputable scientists say is one of the greatest threats to the human race. Even worse, the article countered the findings of the world’s top climate scientists by quoting an oil industry-funded economist. Such reporting is not credible, nor does it illuminate a subject of significant importance.”

Lautenberg could have saved his breath. An April 11th story headlined “Painkiller Decision Suggests Shift in FDA’s Risk-Benefit Equation” featured, high up, a statement by CEI lawyer Kazman. There wasn’t a clue given about CEI’s funders. One, the Eli Lilly & Company Foundation, had given \$35,000 to CEI by 2002.

“If the statement attributed to Kazman had been attributed to Eli Lilly,” I told the Post’s Managing Editor Phil Bennett in an e-mail that included the Negin memo, “I would have no complaint; that’s journalism. But it is misleading and unfair to imply to the reader that a quoted source is independent, as

today’s story does about the CEI, even if inadvertently, when the source is, in fact, not only conflicted, but long known by the Post to be conflicted.”

I received no response.

Again, it’s not just newspapers. I’m a fan of National Public Radio’s Diane Rehm show. Ebell was a guest in April. He expressed his “libertarian” views; the national audience heard not a peep about CEI’s funding. I complained in two e-mails. Only automated replies came back.

Now the splendid exception. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

published information about undisputed scientific links between soaring obesity rates and death. The Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF), as it calls itself, spent \$600,000 on ads falsely ac-

cusing the CDC of “hype.” In April, Post reporter Caroline Mayer revealed that Philip Morris, owner of Kraft, a maker of cookies, crackers, and macaroni and cheese, had started the CCF. Its own spokesman admitted that the restaurant and food industries fund it. A May 2nd Post editorial praised the story and denounced the ads. One advertisement had filled a full page in the Post.

Let me end with a tip: Oodles of information about the funding of CEI, the AEI, and other think tanks are available from The Foundation Center (<http://fdncenter.org>). ■

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Spin Alley: A Microcosm of Journalism's Struggles

Will reporters end this ritual and regain the trust of their audience in their 2006 and 2008 political coverage?

By Lisa Stone

When comedian Jon Stewart accused journalists last October of being “part of the problem” by reporting canned campaign rhetoric from Spin Alley after presidential debates, he won huge points with a howling audience. “Jon Stewart is a god!” wrote Weblogger Cary Is A Geek. “In what could well be the strangest and most refreshing media moment of the election season, ‘The Daily Show’ host Jon Stewart turned up on a live broadcast of CNN’s ‘Crossfire’ Friday and accused the mainstream media—and his hosts in particular—of being soft and failing to do their duty as journalists to keep politicians and the political process honest.”

What viewers, and even some journalists, might not have known, was that just such a movement—undeclared, unorganized and born of individual frustration—was already afoot among leading journalists and media critics. The plan: to bulldoze Spin Alley or, at least, to invalidate what happens there. During the past eight years, a growing number of journalists have publicly decried the ritual of Spin Alley, according to research I’ve done into its origins and practice. My research was done at the request of New York University professor Jay Rosen for his blog, PressThink. These reporters and media watchdogs point out the hypocrisy of journalists who participate: By stepping into Spin Alley, they set themselves up to be, at best, receptacles of spin and, at worst, its recyclers. As a measure of this movement’s gathering strength, Adam Nagourney, chief political correspondent for The New York Times, boycotted Spin Alley during last fall’s presidential debates, calling it “degrading.”

Nagourney’s decision was not the only underreported media innovation that occurred during coverage of the



Presidential candidate Howard Dean speaks with the press in the spin room following the ABC News debate held at the University of New Hampshire Durham campus, December 2003. Photo by © Meryl Levin/Primarily New Hampshire.

2004 election. It appears that the quality of election year coverage available to consumers improved as a result of unprecedented competitive pressures and audience criticism, spearheaded by bloggers and blog readers and assisted by the development of Web-based fact-checking sites. As a result, and as I describe below, some members of the often-maligned mainstream media did usher in a higher level of transparency in their campaign reporting, particularly in coverage of the debates.

The question now is what journalists and their newsroom managers will retain from this experience. Will we codify the rejection of Spin Alley and move into the 2006 and 2008 election seasons with higher standards for political coverage in place? Or will we earn more well-deserved heckling from two-time Peabody Award-winner Jon Stewart?

Encountering Spin Alley

What is spin? The most widely linked and commonly accepted definition of spin belongs to William Safire. His “New Political Dictionary” describes it as “deliberate shading of news perception; attempted control of political reaction.” While spin has to be as old as our species, politics has given the word a second career. Long before spin had anything to do with politics, its practitioners sought to win at sports such as pool and baseball, according to Graeme Donald’s “Dictionary of Modern Phrase.” Donald, who wrote about words for The Courier-Mail, does not provide dates for these historic uses, but notes that spin, as in “slant” or “interpretation,” dates from about 1984.

Indeed, spin, as we know it today, was reinvented in 1984 at two key events—one journalistic, one political.

Researching Donald's term, "spin doctor," led me to The New York Times's archive and an article in which Jack Rosenthal, a former assistant managing editor, launched spin into the political lexicon. What follows is an excerpt from what Rosenthal wrote that October in "The Debates and the Spin Doctors."

"Tonight at about 9:30, seconds after the Reagan-Mondale debate ends, a bazaar will suddenly materialize in the pressroom of the Kansas City Municipal Auditorium. A dozen men in good suits and women in silk dresses will circulate smoothly among the reporters, spouting confident opinions. They won't be just press agents trying to impart a favorable spin to a routine release. They'll be the Spin Doctors, senior advisers to the candidates, and they'll be playing for very high stakes. How well they do their work could be as important as how well the candidates do theirs."

I Googled Rosenthal's piece and learned that National Public Radio (NPR) correspondent Linda Wertheimer tackled the history of Spin Alley in November 2002 as part of her

station's "Present at the Creation" series. Her piece opens by recalling events that led to Rosenthal's description, and she unveils the original "spin doctor," at least according to legend. "Many reporters remember the late Lee Atwater, who worked for the Reagan campaign, as the superstar of spin, rapping out quotes for reporters looking for a dose of spin from the doctor," Wertheimer reported. "Lyn Nofziger, who was a senior advisor on the Reagan campaign, says Atwater was the first person he heard use the term spin. That was before the first debate [1984, in Louisville] . . ."

Fixing the precise birth date of Spin Alley is likely impossible, but from the mid-1980's on journalists began to recognize that spinning by political operatives was becoming an accepted part of reporters' debate ritual. In doing so, the nation's leading journalists appeared to acknowledge Spin Alley

as a necessary evil, as they urged readers, viewers and listeners to trust them to filter the spin out and offer "real" news. Those operatives who worked the system well, such as Atwater, were considered worthy adversaries by journalists. Regarded as "superstars," they performed at peak level in spin situations and were much admired for their skills. With them, word-to-word combat was intense, since the better the spinner was, the better the reporter (listener) had to be to "catch" the master.

Spinning Outed as 'Lying'

During the past three election cycles, however, opinions about Spin Alley have shown gradual signs of a shift. In 1996, a countervailing perspective began to form, one that treated Spin Alley not as

These reporters and media watchdogs point out the hypocrisy of journalists who participate: By stepping into Spin Alley, they set themselves up to be, at best, receptacles of spin and, at worst, its recyclers.

a necessary evil—just as an evil. In the minds of many, spinning had become tantamount to "lying," and journalists had begun to publish columns and books complaining about spin and denigrating "spinners."

In October 1996, former CBS and CNN correspondent Deborah Potter inaugurated the Spin Alley counter-movement with her op-ed, "Wanted: Less Spin, More Substance," in The Christian Science Monitor. Potter complained that spinmeisters' verdicts were "as irresistible to the news media as a sold-out fundraiser to a cash-strapped candidate." She warned her colleagues, "What's missing in debate coverage is not speed, but reflection. Replacing the snappy sound bites of the spinmeisters with the pseudoscientific results of an instant poll adds none of the context viewers need to understand a debate."

Journalists' condemnation of spin took a leap forward when Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel published "Warp Speed" in 1999. Their book quoted Washington Post executive editor emeritus Ben Bradlee's bald definition of spinning as "lying" and criticized mainstream media from the inside out, calling for a return to high-quality standards in journalism. Soon other journalists were echoing these sentiments. Even though USA Today's political reporter Chuck Raasch didn't stay away from Spin Alley during the 2000 presidential election, he was among those who trash-talked it as "the most absurd exercise in American politics." He aired his concerns about its effect on the campaign trail when he wrote: "Little of it bears any resemblance to the truth. It would be more amusing were

it not so symptomatic of a who's ahead at this very moment political culture that is about to let big questions go unanswered on Election Day 2000."

Such comments went largely unheeded by newsrooms. Attendance at each successive installation of Spin Alley grew larger and more popular, as debate

sites were forced to accommodate more live satellite trucks and more local, national and international media, along with more pundits for reporters to interview. Scrambling to compete for "eyeballs" with new media technologies, such as 24/7 live cable television and the Internet, many news organizations eschewed the relatively genteel environment Rosenthal had described and competed fiercely with each other to be first with the sound bites—the spin.

While a growing number of journalists continued to be more than willing to point fingers at the anointed spin doctors and cry foul, most of them, unlike Potter, stopped short of proclaiming an undeniable truth about Spin Alley: Its success required journalists who were willing to disseminate spin.

As George W. Bush began his reelection campaign, bloggers and some journalists began to point accusatory fingers

at those in the press who participated in Spin Alley. Origins of this accusatory movement can be traced to blogger Rosen's November 2003 essay called, "Raze Spin Alley, That Strange Creation of the Press." After pointing to Raasch's excoriation of the ritual during the 2000 election, Rosen suggested what ought to be done to Spin Alley. "Blow it up," he wrote on his PressThink blog. "... by now critique has done its job. The absurdity is well known, admitted to by journalists. Spin Alley goes on. Yet it would be easy to abandon it by the time we gear up for the big debates in fall 2004. A major candidate could say: 'No one from my campaign will show up. The American people don't need my people telling them who won.' Unlikely? Then how about this: Journalists just don't show up."

In the fall of 2004, Adam Nagourney, chief political correspondent for The New York Times, did just that by staying home to cover the first presidential debate between Bush and John Kerry. Nagourney explained his decision to a reporter for The Miami Herald (then later the Columbia Journalism Review), by saying that Spin Alley was "degrading" and "a waste of time" and "essentially a disingenuous exercise." Soon after this, Rosen wrote: "When the lead correspondent of The New York Times won't play in your game, your game has been downgraded some Nagourney says there is no pride for anyone. The better you are at spin, the less hope there is for you, friend. You improve as a journalist when you stop. So why don't they stop?"

Fact-Checking: Bloggers vs. Journalists

During the 2004 election cycle, most political journalists kept showing up at Spin Alley. Meanwhile, other bloggers joined Rosen in trying to decertify Spin Alley and, as they did, more members of the mainstream news media picked up on the idea—or, at least, they arrived at the same conclusion: Spin should be replaced by fact-checking what the candidates actually said.

Journalists and bloggers began to



Team Edwards speaks with the press in the spin room following the UMUR/Fox Debate, held at Saint Anselm College, Manchester, New Hampshire, in January 2004. *Photo by © Meryl Levin/Primarily New Hampshire.*

fact-check the Democratic and Republican presidential campaigns in earnest. Many television, radio and print outlets placed a renewed emphasis (and resources) on this newsgathering effort. On the blogger side, notably Eschaton, INDC Journal, DailyKos, and my blog, Surfette, devoted many hours in pursuit of gathering this information. Though mainstream and not-so-mainstream media continued to cover the debates, Spin Alley started to be treated as a suspicious game.

When Washington Post columnist/blogger and Nieman Watchdog deputy editor Dan Froomkin compared blogging and mainstream reporting in this regard, he decided that mainstream media won hands down over bloggers. "I challenged bloggers in yesterday's column to help fact-check the debate, and from what I can see this morning, blogger fact-checking looked shallow and strident by comparison to the press corps'—although there were some good catches," Froomkin wrote in the Post on October 1, 2004. "So if you thought for a minute that trained, professional journalists had lost their value in the Internet age, today's coverage proves that when it comes to helping the public

assess the veracity of politicians, there is simply no substitute."

The next week, following the vice presidential debate, I blogged on Surfette an analysis of its coverage, noting that "reporters, editors and producers are describing debater behavior with headlines, words and clichés that are stunning in accusation and tone" when compared with the descriptive language used in prior election coverage. This surprised me. Though I expected to see the use of such critical language in blogs, I had not expected to find such direct hits from political reporters with the Los Angeles Times, Newsweek and NPR. In the Los Angeles Times, Janet Hook wrote these words: "Throughout the 90-minute debate, Vice President Dick Cheney and Senator John Edwards each frequently overstated his case, stretched the truth or ignored facts that did not suit his argument"

Not everyone agreed with what Froomkin or I was saying. In a story Tara Weiss wrote for The Hartford Courant, she quoted Peter Hart of Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting as saying that CNN's fact-checking was "pretty poor." In Weiss's article, three Web sites—Spinsanity.org, Factcheck.org

and the Columbia Journalism Review's campaign desk—were positioned as alternative news sites devoted entirely to fact-checking presidential campaigns and filling the void left by mainstream journalists, who had neglected their bread-and-butter task. In this same article, Brendan Nyhan, one of the three founders of Spinsanity.org, was quoted as saying, "The debates are one of the few things that the press actually fact-checks. [But] it's like, can you do this the other 364 days per year?" And he added, "The explosion of spin has outstripped the media's ability to counter that. Sites like ours are a response to that."

Leaving Spin Alley

Fact-checking and getting correct information to voters is so fundamental to election coverage that it's rather surprising to suggest that these changes in focus represented an innovation in election coverage for many news outlets. But by adding this fact-checking to—and in some cases substituting it for—what had become traditional talking-heads banter after debates, news reporters were able to demonstrate the core value they bring to this coverage—context. And by reading and sometimes quoting from bloggers and their interactive community—on the debates and about news coverage of them—journalists began to place a higher priority on serving the needs of their news consumers.

This new tone and approach of news organizations in reporting on the 2004 presidential election stands apart from their coverage during the past 20 years in some small but very encouraging ways. I say encouraging because this is happening at a time when recent studies about the news media reveal that their consumers want more transparency in the reporting they receive and more ability to interact with those who report the news than ever before.

"In effect, the era of trust-me journalism has passed, and the era of show-me journalism has begun," cautions the

State of the News Media 2005 report, published by the Project for Excellence in Journalism on March 14th. "Journalists aspire in the new landscape to be the one source that can best help citizens discover what to believe and what to disbelieve—a shift from the role of gatekeeper to that of authenticator or referee. To do that, however, it appears news organizations may have to make some significant changes. They may have to document their reporting process more openly so that audiences can decide for themselves whether to trust it. Doing so would help inoculate their work from the rapid citizen review that increasingly will occur online and elsewhere."

Spin Alley might represent just such an opportunity, if journalists will tackle it in a unified way rather than by relying on lone whistleblowers. Nagourney

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took his stand, and now perhaps others will follow, particularly as recent surveys tell us that journalists are increasingly dissatisfied with the job they now do.

Should journalists stop going to Spin Alley? Can they stop? Some excellent challenges have been offered:

- Raze Spin Alley, as Jay Rosen suggested.
- Boycott Spin Alley by following Adam Nagourney's example.
- Replace Spin Alley with voters whom journalists could interview about what they learned, as Deborah Potter suggested.
- Replace Spin Alley with actual experts in the specific fields, such as tax and health care policy, as Peter Hart suggested and the State of the News Media 2005 report echoed.

- Raise funds to expand Web sites such as Spinsanity.org and Factcheck.org in scope and format, for easy syndication into video, audio and print.

The opportunity to debunk Spin Alley comes at a time when public trust in journalists is bottoming out, as many reporters are agonizingly aware. Consumer faith in news media is so bad that publisher Rupert Murdoch won praise from journalists and bloggers by voicing a warning at the American Society of Newspaper Editors in April: "Newspapers as a medium for centuries enjoyed a virtual information monopoly—roughly from the birth of the printing press to the rise of radio. We never had a reason to second-guess what we were doing," Murdoch said. Then he added, "But those days are gone. [U]nless we awaken to these [audience] changes ...

we will, as an industry, be relegated to the status of also-rans."

As midterm election coverage approaches in 2006 and consumers' interest in getting their news online represents the strongest area of audience growth, one thing seems certain: Campaign debates will need to be reported differently. How

differently depends upon our ability as journalists to absorb lessons we learned last fall and transform them into improved, fact-oriented news that serves voters. If we are to succeed, it seems highly unlikely that journalists can continue to participate in this absurd non-news event. ■

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WATCHDOG

Can Government Prohibit a Journalist's Access to Public Officials?

Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich, Jr. and *The Sun* are arguing this in federal court.

By Timothy A. Franklin

Since the beginning of our Republic, politicians have viewed the press with respectful skepticism at best and utter disdain at worst. “Journalists are a sort of assassins, who sit with loaded blunder-busses at the corner of streets and fire them off for hire or for sport at any passenger they may select,” opined John Quincy Adams.

To listen to Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich, Jr. these days, it's clear that he believes *The (Baltimore) Sun* is a modern-day assassin. So last November the first-term Republican governor fired back, using what he said was the only arrow available in the quiver of a public official—cutting off access to information. His administration issued a written directive banning all employees in Maryland's executive branch of government—potentially tens of thousands of taxpayer-paid state workers—from talking to two *Sun* journalists. Why? He said the two journalists, then-State House Bureau Chief David Nitkin and metro columnist Michael Olesker, were “failing to objectively report” on his administration.

In the history of our nation, angry politicians have employed many tactics to try to manipulate journalists. They've deliberately leaked stories to competing publications. They've personally frozen out certain reporters by refusing to talk to them. They've ridiculed their work in public. They've protested bitterly to publishers. Those tactics are all part of nature's order in the give-and-take political jungle of American politics. But rarely, if ever, in our nation's history has the chief executive of a state gagged an entire branch of government from speaking with two specific journalists—just because he didn't like what they wrote.

Ehrlich, the first Republican elected governor of Maryland in 36 years, has said that he did so because he was upset by stories and columns that called his integrity into question. His critics have suggested that the ban was nothing more than a cynical, politically calculated act designed to capitalize on public skepticism of newspapers and to divert attention away from his own missteps.

Issues Raised By the Governor's Actions

Whatever his motivation, there is no doubt about this: Ehrlich's order raises a number of profound questions, with implications for journalists and, indeed, all citizens. In the next year or so, some answers likely will come from the federal appeals courts where this case is now being argued, and they could alter the relationship between government officials and the press.

Here are just a few of the questions being considered:

- Is it a violation of the First Amendment for a government official to retaliate against any citizen based on what that person writes or says?
- Does the government effectively get to pick and choose who covers the government?
- Can an elected official blacklist individuals—business people, public interest groups, political foes, journalists or others—from getting information from taxpayer-paid public employees?
- Does a journalist deserve the same right of access to taxpayer-paid government officials as any other citizen?

The *Sun* believes these questions all are raised by the curt, one-paragraph gag order issued by the governor's press office last November 18th.

What had Nitkin and Olesker done to provoke such an extreme reaction?

On October 14th, Nitkin broke a story about the Ehrlich administration's plan to sell 836 acres of prime conservation land to a politically connected Baltimore contractor, a deal that could have netted the developer millions in tax breaks. The *Sun*'s revelation of the proposal, which was masked in public documents as a deal between the state and an “unnamed benefactor,” created a political firestorm that will burn into next year's governor's race.

On November 16th, columnist Olesker chided the governor for playing the starring role in taxpayer-financed television ads intended to promote Maryland tourism. Olesker opined that the \$2.7 million ad campaign was more about promoting Bob Ehrlich than tourism.

Two days after that column appeared—and the same day the paper published a follow-up story from Nitkin on the administration's possible sale of 3,000 acres of other public lands—the governor's press office issued the ban.

The day on which this extraordinary directive was issued, I called the governor's press secretary, Greg Massoni, to try to set up a meeting to talk about the governor's concerns with our coverage. He said the governor would not meet with senior editors of the newspaper until *The Sun* apologized for a 2002 editorial in which it endorsed Ehrlich's opponent. In that editorial, *The Sun* criticized Ehrlich's selection of running mate Michael Steele, saying the

African-American lieutenant governor candidate “brings little to the team but the color of his skin.”

The newspaper refused to apologize for expressing its view in an editorial, but The Sun’s attorney continued to talk to the governor’s lawyer to try to

tor on a specific day. We decided that it was critical to have the newspaper’s public editor, Paul Moore, investigate each of the governor’s grievances. In this position, Moore reports directly to the publisher—not to the paper’s editor or its editorial page editor—and,

has resulted in Nitkin’s calls going unanswered. Moreover, The Sun was concerned that the governor’s action, left unchallenged, could embolden other politicians in Maryland and the rest of the nation to create their own enemies list and ban journalists deemed to be unfriendly.

Speaking on a talk-radio show, [Governor] Ehrlich said that he intended for his gag order to have a ‘chilling effect’ on the two journalists’ coverage of his administration.

set up a meeting. After two weeks, the governor’s office still wouldn’t even agree to set a time for a meeting. In the meantime, Ehrlich launched a series of scathing attacks on the newspaper, accusing The Sun of publishing “serial inaccuracies” and “volumes of fabrications.” Chief among those attacks was that Olesker had fabricated a conversation he had last spring with Steele. After hurling that allegation for days on radio and television, the governor’s press office suddenly and stunningly reversed itself, acknowledging that Olesker had, in fact, talked to Steele for his column.

In leveling these broadsides against the paper, Ehrlich was outspoken about his motivations for the ban. Speaking on a talk-radio show, Ehrlich said that he intended for his gag order to have a “chilling effect” on the two journalists’ coverage of his administration. In response to a question about whether he should have ordered all government officials not to talk, Ehrlich responded forcefully, “That’s my government. That’s my government. I’m the chief executive.” In a February interview, Ehrlich told The Washington Post that he “intensely” dislikes the banned journalists.

At an off-the-record meeting held on December 17, 2004, the governor’s staff gave The Sun a list of 23 grievances with the paper’s coverage during the past three years. The list included complaints about stories, headlines, editorials and even the balance of letters to the edi-

tor, thus, has the independence to conduct a credible review.

After a thorough investigation, on April 21st The Sun published a lengthy report with the public editor’s findings. And in an effort to be as open with readers as possible, The Sun posted the governor’s unedited grievance list on its Web site, with the evidence Moore unearthed and his findings regarding each complaint. As a result of his investigation, The Sun has published two corrections and two clarifications. Moore’s overall conclusion was: “While there is no doubt that some mistakes have been made in The Sun’s coverage of the Ehrlich administration, there is no evidence of the grievous, purposeful mistakes publicly referred to by the governor. As I see it, those claims are grossly exaggerated.”

The Newspaper’s Response

With the banishment of Nitkin and Olesker showing no signs of ending, The Sun had three basic options, none of which was desirable.

1. Do nothing and hope that the ban would melt away over time. But there were drawbacks with that course. The Sun’s veteran state-house bureau chief would be forced to cover an impending legislative session with one hand tied behind his back, unable to communicate with one of the major branches of government. And, indeed, the ban

- 2. Reassign Nitkin to a beat that didn’t involve coverage of the governor.** That, too, was simply unpalatable. Nitkin had built a deep reservoir of sources and expertise in state government and politics, which we were not eager to jettison. Even if we moved Nitkin out, there was no guarantee that the governor wouldn’t just ban the next Sun reporter he didn’t find sympathetic to his cause. Our bottom line: The government shouldn’t get to pick and chose who covers the government. (Nitkin was promoted to Maryland political editor and has begun his new job in the paper’s Baltimore offices. In this position, he is involved with coverage of the governor and will play a critical role in coordinating coverage of the 2006 governor’s race.)
- 3. File a First Amendment lawsuit.** This was our last resort, and we understood the inherent risk of going to court and potentially getting a bad ruling that could affect other journalists.

After carefully weighing all these options, The Sun opted to challenge the governor’s directive in court. We did so with the support of virtually every major print and broadcast professional organization in the nation. We did it to stand behind our journalists. We did it because of our belief in this fundamental principle of the First Amendment: The government cannot punish, or discriminate against, any individual because of the content of his words.

There’s considerable case law to back up that proposition. In 2001, a federal court in Chicago sided with a reporter from The Chicago Reader who was denied access to a jail because officials didn’t like a story she wrote about strip searches. The court concluded that denying the reporter access to the jail because of the content of her story

violated the First Amendment. The court wrote, “The DOC [Department of Corrections] may not have a legal obligation to admit [her]. But it may not refuse to do so because she exercised her First Amendment rights.” And there have been many other federal court rulings upholding the notion that government cannot discriminate or retaliate against individuals—not just journalists—based on their viewpoints.

Despite those precedents, Baltimore U.S. District Court Judge William Quarles, Jr. ruled against *The Sun* in February. In his opinion, he wrote that the paper was seeking a special access to

government “beyond that of the private citizen,” a privilege for which journalists have no Constitutional guarantee. In our view, Judge Quarles got it wrong. In fact, *The Sun*’s two banished journalists have *less* access to government than a private citizen. They can’t get a phone call returned from a state employee. One would like to think that if any other citizen called a taxpayer-paid government employee, that person would be able to get an answer to a question.

Having the ability to question government officials and, in turn, hold them accountable to the public they serve, is at the core of this case. James Madi-

son once said, “A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to farce or tragedy—or both.” If left in place, Ehrlich’s ban is both a farce and a tragedy that could reverberate for journalists and citizens well beyond the boundaries of Maryland. ■

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WATCHDOG

All Is Silent at City Hall

After a local publication challenges the Youngstown, Ohio mayor, city employees are prohibited from speaking with reporters, and the case goes to court.

By Andrea Wood

Our argument is simple: The mayor of Youngstown, Ohio, George McKelvey, doesn’t like what *The Business Journal* wrote about him personally or our coverage about how the city spent \$1.5 million in federal funds. His response: He banned city employees from speaking with any of our reporters.

In a lawsuit brought before a U.S. District Court, our lawyers argued that the ban is based on nothing more than the mayor’s personal animus and constitutes retaliation against us for exercising our First Amendment rights. Such retaliation is illegal, the pleadings claimed, according to Section 1983 of the Civil Rights statute, enacted in 1871, that prohibits governmental entities from depriving citizens of their constitutional rights.

This situation began in August 2001 when our newspaper, a locally owned publication with a circulation of 10,000, criticized the mayor for calling 911 to report a possible “sniper” hiding on “a grassy knoll.” Multiple sources confirmed for us that when the mayor called

the city’s emergency dispatch center he knew the “suspicious character” was, in fact, a political activist armed with a pair of opera glasses, who was hiding near a closed-to-the-public restaurant, where the mayor was attending a private luncheon.

The activist, also the host of a weekly radio show, was jotting down license plates as the mayor and other guests arrived. A few dozen local officeholders, bureaucrats, judges and business leaders were attending the weekly gathering of the Cafaro Round Table (so named for the politically powerful family who had hosted similar luncheons for more than 40 years). Outsiders long suspected that important who-gets-what political decisions are made at the Cafaro luncheons, which is why the activist had taken it upon himself to compile a roster of participants.

That day the mayor made two 911 calls—the second call just five minutes after the first. He also wrote an incident report, included in the official police record, stating the person he saw hiding “was in the prone position, *holding*

a large black and shiny object in his hands (possibly a gun), pointing said object directly at the lounge window of the restaurant.” (This word emphasis is present in the original filing.) And he later described his actions as those of a “prudent public official.” On a local talk-radio show, he explained how he feared for his safety and told the same story to newspaper and TV reporters.

Our news organization was the only one to spoof McKelvey’s account in a political cartoon and to question its veracity in an editorial, in which we opined the activist’s “opera glasses, pen and paper posed more of a threat than had they been an Italian carbine with a telescopic sight like the one Lee Harvey Oswald fired (but not from the grassy knoll).”

The Mayor Responds

The mayor was furious. “Your editorial mission was to attack the integrity of the mayor of Youngstown,” McKelvey wrote in a letter, which we published in its entirety. “[But] the victims of

your Journal Opinion were the *truth* and your journalistic *integrity* May your journalistic integrity rest in peace.” (Italicized words were emphasized in his letter.)

Our coverage of this incident was the first instance McKelvey cited in an affidavit provided to the federal court, in which he explained how he determined our newspaper is “untrustworthy” and “irresponsible” when he banned city employees from speaking with our reporters. Much of the city’s defense against our First Amendment claim is, in fact, based on a 2004 federal court decision (Raycom National Inc. v. Jane Campbell) in which the mayor of Cleveland was found acting within the law when she determined that reporters from WOIO-TV were “untrustworthy” and “irresponsible,” and banned them from city hall.

In response to McKelvey’s affidavit, The Business Journal provided the court with an affidavit from a retired president of the Ohio Senate, Harry Meshel. He swore that he was with McKelvey when they recognized the man spying on the Cafaro Round Table “and confirmed for ourselves that he was not brandishing a gun. Mayor McKelvey clearly knew that

there was no sniper but made a call to 911 anyway,” according to his affidavit. “At no point did Mayor McKelvey express any security concerns, and I specifically tried to dissuade Mayor McKelvey from making a public issue of the incident.” The city’s lawyers ignored Meshel’s affidavit in their reply brief to support their motion to dismiss our First Amendment complaint, although they continued to cite the Cleveland precedent.

McKelvey copied certain phrases from the Raycom decision in his February 2005 letter notifying us of his ban on city employees speaking to our paper. That letter arrived within days of The Business Journal’s reporting that the city was using federal funds to defend a lawsuit we filed against it on October 31, 2003. And that lawsuit claimed that city officials improperly withheld public records related to land it had purchased for a federally funded project.

In February 2003, we’d begun publishing a series of articles that questioned why the city had spent \$1.5 million to buy former steel-mill land for this project without an appraisal of its value. This was a parcel of land that the previous administration had refused to buy for environmental reasons, when it

had been repeatedly approached by a political operative who is now in prison for bribing judges.

In December 2004, a magistrate for Mahoning County Common Pleas Court found the city had withheld public records and awarded The Business Journal its legal fees (the only remedy provided by Ohio law when officials do not comply with public records’ requests). A judge overturned the magistrate’s decision on March 17, 2005, and the newspaper has appealed to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

In the case our paper filed against the mayor, in May, U.S. District Court Judge Peter C. Economus refused The Business Journal’s request that a preliminary injunction be ordered against the mayor, and he dismissed the case. Economus explained his decision by finding that the Journal is “not likely to succeed on the merits” of its claim of First Amendment protection. ■

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WATCHDOG

Anonymous Sources: Their Use in a Time of Prosecutorial Interest

How are decisions made about publishing information from confidential sources?

By Walter Pincus

The traditional government concern about leaks of information has taken a new turn. Journalists, including me, have been put in the middle of highly publicized criminal investigations and civil cases based on leaks. On July 12, 2003, an administration official, who was talking to me confidentially about a matter involving alleged Iraqi nuclear activities, veered off the precise matter we were discuss-

ing and told me that the White House had not paid attention to former Ambassador Joseph Wilson’s CIA-sponsored February 2002 trip to Niger because it was set up as a boondoggle by his wife, an analyst with the agency working on weapons of mass destruction.

I didn’t write about that information at that time because I did not believe it true that she had arranged his Niger trip. But I did disclose it in an October 12,

2003 story in The Washington Post. By that time there was a Justice Department criminal investigation into a leak to columnist Robert Novak who published it on July 14, 2003 and identified Wilson’s wife, Valerie Plame, as a CIA operative. Under certain circumstances a government official’s disclosure of her name could be a violation of federal law. The call with me had taken place two days before Novak’s column appeared.

I wrote my October story because I did not think the person who spoke to me was committing a criminal act, but only practicing damage control by trying to get me to stop writing about Wilson. Because of that article, The Washington Post and I received subpoenas last summer from Patrick J. Fitzgerald, the special prosecutor looking into the Plame leak. Fitzgerald wanted to find out the identity of my source.

I refused. My position was that until my source came forward publicly or to the prosecutor, I would not discuss the matter. It turned out that my source, whom I still cannot identify publicly, had in fact disclosed to the prosecutor that he was my source, and he talked to the prosecutor about our conversation. (In writing this story, I am using the masculine pronoun simply for convenience). My attorney discussed the matter with his attorney, and we confirmed that he had no problem with my testifying about our conversation.

When my deposition finally took place in my lawyer's office last September, Fitzgerald asked me about the substance of my conversation about Wilson's wife, the gist of which I had reported in the newspaper. But he did not ask me to confirm my source's identity, which was my condition for being deposed. My original understanding with my source still holds—to withhold his identity until he makes it public, if ever.

Confidential Sources

Protecting confidential sources, who provide me with material for many of the intelligence stories I write, is a key factor that enables me to write the stories I do about national security. Sometimes I am given or sent a document that is classified, or sources—either on their own or through answering questions—provide information that is classified.

How do I decide when to publish such information provided by a confidential source?

There are at least three issues involved, and they include:

1. Determining whether the information is credible and verifiable.

The most important issue involves my analysis of why the source provided the information in the first place and, of course, verifying its accuracy. Many times during the past 40 years, a source wanting confidentiality has provided information and sometimes even documents that have proven to

Protecting confidential sources, who provide me with material for many of the intelligence stories I write, is a key factor that enables me to write the stories I do about national security.

be untrue or taken out of context. Information that is to be attributed to anonymous sources has to be checked more closely than any other type of material.

2. Determining whether the material is newsworthy.

Just because it appears to be a secret and the source wants anonymity doesn't mean it is worth printing.

3. Determining whether in the case of classified information it truly harms national security.

And based on that analysis, there have been times at The Washington Post when we have decided not to publish such information.

When we do publish stories based on leaks, we risk getting subpoenaed. If that occurs, a reporter might have to confront questions about the nature of the reporter's privilege. It is called a reporter's privilege, but once I publish information from a confidential source who has risked firing or even jail to give me the information, I believe the privilege of keeping his or her name secret belongs both to the source *and* to me. That source, after getting a confi-

dentiality pledge from me, can disclose that same information within hours to another reporter for attribution. The source could also go to a prosecutor in private, disclose that he or she has talked to me and provide the substance of the conversation. I could hardly claim the privilege to that same prosecutor, if I am directly assured that the source is releasing me from my pledge.

In states in which shield laws apply, reporters may not have to face questions about revealing sources, and sources may be protected. This includes even those who pass along wrong or inaccurate information, and I am concerned about that possibility—which exists in other privileges recognized by law to serve the public interest. Shield laws do prevent lawyers from freely subpoenaing reporters to do their investigative work for them. And such laws certainly prevent harassment of journalists.

But no matter what legal protections exist, journalists should pause before handling information received from people who demand anonymity. Reporters should avoid promising anonymity to sources if it is being offered simply to encourage the source to say something in a dramatic or damaging way that the source would not say on the record. This use of anonymity harms the profession and diminishes the value of the confidentiality given to those who are whistleblowers—people who risk their jobs and jail for what they may believe is a higher cause. ■

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WATCHDOG

Reporters Weigh the Value of Information Against the Threat of Legal Action

‘... no one should underestimate the ability of fear and sophisticated sound bites—otherwise known as propaganda—to shape the public mood.’

By Dan Olmsted

Reduced to its essence, the ethic of all enterprising journalism is this: Don't commit a crime or a sin, at least not a mortal one, while pursuing information. But also don't think too much about whether the person giving you the information is committing one, either. When put this way, such an approach to our work sounds bad, and in the view of much of the American public, it is bad. Yet I endorse this ethic, even though carried to its logical extreme it is a standing invitation to our sources—meaning our fellow citizens—to break the law, betray confidences, and tattle on rivals for petty motives.

Not that there's anything inherently wrong with any of this. Journalism is, after all, an unruly business and, at least until recently, its practitioners have been constitutionally protected from getting into too much trouble for being too aggressive. Often, as the gates have swung closed on some allegedly vital state secret, journalists have been there to pry them open by means that are not always authorized by the gatekeepers.

“The extraordinary freedom of the American press is dependent on the handful of journalists willing to dig for the facts that officials would prefer to keep hidden,” wrote Thomas Powers in the introduction to “The Search For the Manchurian Candidate,” the 1991 book by investigative journalist John Marks about the CIA's long and sordid history of experimenting with mind-control drugs on American citizens. “In effect, freedom of the press is also the wild card of American democracy, since there is no predicting what journalists

will take into their heads to pursue,” Powers went on to say. “John Marks, asking no one's by-your-leave, decided he wanted to know why ‘an employee of the Department of the Army’ had been dosed with LSD and then handled so casually he was allowed to jump from a 10th-floor hotel window in New York in 1953.”

In digging for such evidence, a journalist might witness a crime or be on the receiving end of someone else's decision to commit one. For example, if federal law forbids release of information on CIA operations, then whoever leaked it is a criminal, and the person who received this information thus becomes a witness to a crime and subject to criminal inquiry.

Daring to Be Bridled

This is certainly the set-up—and I use that word advisedly—involving a special counsel looking into accusations that someone leaked the name of Valerie Plame as an undercover CIA operative. Of course, the actual leak was to columnist Robert Novak, but Judith Miller of *The New York Times* and Matthew Cooper of *Time* might or might not have been told the same thing by the same person or persons. They won't say, so they might be serving time in jail as these words are published.

We've now reached the point at which journalists who inadvertently witness a crime—being told, unbidden, that someone was a secret CIA operative and not even using the information in a published story—are at risk of going to jail for not coming clean. By this standard, as citizens, we should probably

be tackling jaywalkers and performing citizen-arrests. Or we should be arrested when we don't. As a consequence of this, and of other journalistic trends of our time, what we are instead witnessing, in too many cases, is a return to the 1950's style of reporting (a time perhaps not coincidentally when the CIA was on the loose in America) that might politely be called “stenographic.”

At United Press International (UPI) where I work as an editor, investigative reporter Mark Benjamin, who recently left to work at Salon, and I worked on a number of stories in which we needed to weigh the ethics and motives—and legality—involved in being given certain information, particularly involving stories we worked about soldiers' health and the military. In general, we believed that the value of making the information public outweighed the value of adhering to an administrative rule or trying to determine if a statute had been broken by someone who gave us information.

One situation gave me pause and that involved our use of leaked medical records of an individual, including his psychiatric history. Someone showed these records to us, and I am very sure this person was not in a legal position to do so. (I certainly wouldn't want my medical records being eyeballed by anybody but my doctor.) Ultimately, however, we felt the information in those records—and the disturbing pattern they showed in a specific institution's quality of medical care—trumped these legal and privacy issues. (How we used this information, I don't want to say, but I believe we made the correct decision.)

I am sure some people will read this account of our work and conclude that it is exactly the problem with American journalism today. But I'd contend that the true problem we, as journalists, confront today is the failure of much of the American press to play John Marks's "wild card"—and with nobody's permission, start snooping into whatever needs looking at and doing so as aggressively as they can.

It seems unnecessary to recite the lapses in the press's probing of the weapons of mass destruction claims before the war in Iraq and its piling on afterwards, when the risks of being "tough" were low. (A notable exception is the Washington bureau of Knight Ridder Newspapers, which should have won a 2003 Pulitzer Prize for its consistent investigation into the administration's statements.) And what news reporters were going after Vioxx, given the early reports of heart attacks and strokes and a company that some believe dragged its feet in acknowledging them? Wouldn't it have been better to obtain a damning internal company memo sooner rather than later, regardless of what company policy or statute regarding propriety information any potential leaker was violating?

Future Implications

Yet it appears that the public—American citizens who have the most to lose when journalism dulls its cutting edge—is all for dulling it. A ghastly poll of high school students recently found that "nearly half of the students said newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories." [See article about this poll on page 49.]

When half of the upcoming population of adults in this nation think prior restraint by government on the press is just fine, we need to consider for a moment the implications of this finding. Will this next generation be willing, perhaps in the wake of future terrorist attacks, to dispense with freedom of the press altogether or limit it to stenography of official pronouncements? That's unlikely, of course, but no one should underestimate the ability of fear and sophisticated sound bites—otherwise known as propaganda—to shape the public mood.

And if I'm reading it right (and I am, unfortunately), the U.S. Supreme Court recently refused to stop a lawsuit against a Pennsylvania newspaper for printing defamatory comments by a public of-

ficial. The case involved the Daily Local News in West Chester, Pennsylvania, which reported that a member of the Parkesburg council called the former mayor and current council president homosexuals and criminals. The council president had responded (effectively, I'd say) that if the council member made comments "as bizarre as that, then I feel very sad for him, and I hope he gets the help he needs." He and the former mayor did not feel quite so sad for the newspaper. They sued it for printing the offending comments; the Pennsylvania Supreme Court found no neutral reporting privilege exists, and the case proceeds.

This raises the specter that a journalist could commit a crime by quoting Senator X as saying Senator Y is selling military secrets to al-Qaeda. Of course, this circumstance might tell us more about Senator X's mental stability than Senator Y's patriotism, but isn't the public interest served by knowing this, even if the reporting of this contention breaks the law? I vote yes. ■

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WATCHDOG

Protecting Reporters Who Protect Sources

Strategic disagreement among journalists has stymied attempts to pass a federal shield law.

By Lucy Dalglish

Thirty-five years ago this spring, 30 aggravated New York and Washington journalists gathered at the Georgetown Law school library to form a "reporters committee" to stand up for the rights of reporters to protect their sources. Former CBS and Associated Press reporter Murray Fromson said the meeting was called because "journalists were under attack."

The attack was serious. The U.S.

Justice Department under Attorney General John John Mitchell had launched a campaign to turn some of the nation's best reporters into investigators for the government. Fromson and the late investigative reporter J. Anthony Lukas were joined at the first meeting of what would become the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press by prominent journalists Jack Nelson, Fred Graham, Mike Wallace, Ben Bradlee,

Eileen Shanahan, and others.

American journalists have long believed that ethical reporters protect confidential sources, and in the 1970's that principle was catching on among journalists overseas. Most journalists assumed that the First Amendment provided reporters a privilege against being subpoenaed to testify before a court. But the Nixon White House aggressively sought grand jury testimony

from reporters who had written stories about two major issues of the day: the emergence of the Black Panthers as a political force and the rise of the drug culture. Three cases in which journalists refused to testify eventually made their way to the U.S. Supreme Court in a consolidated case called *Branzburg v. Hayes*.

The Branzburg Decision

In 1972, after the Reporters Committee had been operating from the desks of steering committee volunteers for two years, the Supreme Court addressed the issue for the first time. The *Branzburg* decision was one of those exasperating 4-1-4 decisions that can only lead to confusion and creative lawyering. Four justices said there was not a First Amendment privilege, four said there was, and the final justice, Lewis Powell, Jr., said he could foresee situations where there might be a privilege, but not in the case before them in which journalists were being asked to testify before a grand jury.

As usual, journalists and their lawyers looked for any sign of hope in the decision. They found two possible bright spots. First, the court said that while there was not a First Amendment-based privilege in these cases, states and Congress were free to pass statutes (i.e. “shield laws”) that provide such a privilege. Second, enterprising media lawyers reasoned that since Powell’s vote was needed to come up with a majority, Powell’s concurring opinion saying such a privilege might exist in some circumstances should essentially be treated as the guiding law in these cases.

While a handful of states had shield laws before 1972, the next few years saw intense legislative activity on the

state level. Today, 31 states and the District of Columbia have shield laws that provide a dizzying array of protection from compelled testimony.

The dusty file cabinets at the Reporters Committee, which today has a full-time professional staff of 11, contain dozens of case files from the 1970’s in which journalists dealt with the aftermath of *Branzburg* by refusing to testify in a variety of court cases. A few reporters went to jail. But some cases were resolved by convincing state and local courts to follow the Powell concurrence by requiring that, before a journalist could be compelled to testify, the party seeking the information must demonstrate there is a compelling need for the information and that alternative sources of the information have been exhausted.

Shield Laws

Congress made numerous attempts to address the issue. From 1973 to 1978, 99 shield laws were introduced.



Attorney Floyd Abrams, center, with New York Times reporter Judith Miller and Time magazine reporter Matt Cooper outside federal court in Washington, D.C., in December 2004. *Photo by Susan Walsh/The Associated Press.*

None made it very far, and the media were as responsible for these failures as Congress. Journalists simply could not agree on two things: the need for a statute and, if there was a statute, should it be “absolute” (that is, allow

journalists to protect confidential sources in all circumstances) or should it be “qualified” by allowing those who seek the testimony to succeed if they meet Powell’s multipart test.

The antishield law contingent believes the First Amendment should be enough. Taking this issue to Congress, they argue, gives government the opportunity to decide who is a journalist, and thus it is the first step toward “licensing” the media in this country.

Those who support shield laws fall into two camps: supporters who will back absolute protection for sources or nothing at all and those who are willing to accept a qualified privilege. In the past, failure to agree upon a federal shield law strategy has doomed any effort to create a statutory privilege.

Although a federal shield law was not adopted in the 1970’s, the U.S. Department of Justice issued guidelines—largely successful—for when U.S. attorneys may subpoena reporters. The guidelines largely paralleled Justice Powell’s concurrence in *Branzburg*.

When an attorney general conscientiously followed the guidelines, the number of subpoenas on reporters in federal criminal cases tended to be low.

For 30 years, this mixed bag of federal protections only occasionally failed. With the new millennium, however, the atmosphere changed. In 2001, freelancer Vanessa Leggett spent 168 days (a record) in a Houston jail for refusing to identify confidential sources to a federal grand jury.

In the summer of 2003, three journalists from Chicago writing a book about terrorism in Ireland were ordered by a U.S. District Court judge to turn over to the Irish courts their taped conversations of a witness in an Irish criminal

case. When the Seventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals refused to issue a stay of the judge's order, the journalists turned over the tapes. What happened next sent chills down the spines of First Amendment advocates. The case was essentially over. There were no briefs submitted, no oral arguments before the courts, yet Seventh Circuit Judge Richard Posner wrote an opinion—in a case not before him—in which he said anyone who had been reading *Branzburg* for the last 30 years as providing for a reporters privilege against compelled testimony was wrong. *Branzburg* does not provide for any type of First Amendment-based privilege, Posner declared. Period. Courts around the country began to cite Posner's decision in *McKevitt v. Pallasch* as justification for denying a privilege.

Journalists' Promise of Confidentiality

These developments did not change journalists' behavior. They still promise confidentiality, perhaps too frequently. But prosecutors and civil litigants have gotten the message that journalists are now fair game as agents of discovery. Media lawyers do a disservice to clients if they fail to tell them the risks associated with promising to protect their sources.

In spring 2005, the Reporters Committee calculated the number of journalist subpoenas pending in federal courts at about 30. That far exceeds the reporters' privilege crisis of the Nixon years. These cases include:

- Two journalists, Matt Cooper, of *Time*, and *The New York Times*'s Judith Miller have been cited for contempt for refusing to identify confidential sources who might have identified Valerie Plame as a covert CIA operative.

- Six journalists have been cited with contempt in civil court in Washington, D.C., for refusing to identify sources of information about former government scientist Wen Ho Lee.
- More than a dozen newsrooms have been subpoenaed in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., for the identities of government employees who might have released information from the personnel file of govern-

... prosecutors and civil litigants have gotten the message that journalists are now fair game as agents of discovery. Media lawyers do a disservice to clients if they fail to tell them the risks associated with promising to protect their sources.

ment scientist Steven Hatfill, who was suspected of involvement in the anthrax scare in the fall of 2001.

- A federal prosecutor in Chicago subpoenaed phone records of two *New York Times* reporters (one is Miller) to identify their confidential sources in a story about Islamic charities.
- Rhode Island television reporter Jim Taricani recently was released after four months of home detention for refusing to identify the source of information about a federal grand jury that indicted Providence's mayor.

The list continues.

It's ironic that at the same time federal judges in the United States have been less willing to recognize a privilege for American journalists, the number of countries providing shield laws for reporters is increasing. In Sweden, for example, it is illegal for a journalist to identify a confidential source.

These countries have recognized the basic truths about confidential sources: First, providing reporters with a privilege from compelled testimony ensures the independence of the media—citizens might better trust information if they know the reporters are not operating merely as an agent for the government. And second, the public

will ultimately receive more and better information that we all need to make decisions in a democracy if whistleblowers are protected.

In the meantime, news organizations are fighting for their employees in the courts. Unlike the early 1970's when the Reporters Committee was formed because editors and publishers were not stepping forward to protect their reporters, employers are working hard

on these issues. They understand that you can't operate a successful business if your employees are thrown in jail merely for doing their jobs.

Congress is again considering a shield law. It will

be a long, difficult battle. The first task is to come to some sort of agreement among journalists regarding the need for a privilege. Many journalists believe the First Amendment should be enough protection. Unfortunately the U.S. Supreme Court does not agree. Barring an unlikely change of heart by the justices, the only alternative is a shield law. And the Reporters Committee will continue to fight on the side of reporters who need to protect their sources. ■

Lucy Dalglish has been executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press for five years. She was a reporter and editor at the Saint Paul Pioneer Press from 1980-1993, and a trial lawyer in Minneapolis from 1995-2000.

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Trust: What It Means for Journalism

‘For people to have trust in this profession, to whom do they look for various standards, for professionalization, of the journalistic craft?’

Karen Stephenson is an anthropologist at Harvard University and a scholar in the field of trust. Her research focuses on how the issue of trust affects institutions such as news organizations. Stephenson appeared as a member of a panel at the May 2005 Nieman Reunion whose task was to speak to the challenges journalists confront today. The panel was moderated by Alex Jones, who is director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics & Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. Edited excerpts from this discussion follow.

Alex Jones: Karen Stephenson, your area of study is trust, and that is something that we in the media have been perplexed by for quite a long time because our credibility is something that seems to be on the decline. And yet we don't seem to be able to either do much about it or to even understand quite what's going on. What is the chemistry of trust, and how does it apply to news organizations?

Karen Stephenson: Thank you for asking that question. I've always said that journalists are like anthropologists, only they write a hell of a lot better. I've been very perplexed by what I've been seeing, the change in the industry, both nationally in the United States as well as globally. The use and abuse of trust and people not understanding it very well are notions of conflict of interest. Even though there are laws and legislation in this country and in others, I'm not sure they really understand that either. And we have lots of examples about how trust has been abused.

So we can have the laws, and we can have notions of fair and balanced reporting, but we can just walk right over those. That's what I want to talk about, because that's a challenge to credibility. I look at trust at basically three levels—the individual, corporate and community levels. And I look across the world at journalists and try to wonder what their standards are. How are they professionalized? Do they just become journalists by excellent writing and by being hired?

What are the standards of professionalization?

Now all of you have something to say about that, but let's be frank. There are different standards all around the world. For people to have trust in this profession, to whom do they look for various standards, for professionalization, of the journalistic craft? That's one thing. I think it's a slippery slope. So when you look at what Fox News is doing, going from analysis to opinion, I think people are entitled to opinion, but they need to do their fair due about critical analysis and critical thinking. In many instances, we are seeing a shortcut where people bypass analysis and go straight to opinion.

The second level is at the corporate level. This touches upon the news media and the organizations dealing with corporate trust. How can you expect someone to go forth out into a field where there might be great danger, for them to go forward when they have to watch their back? If they feel that they don't have a family that supports them and that they can go forward, then I think that compromises individual journalist's ability to be able to fairly, honestly and analytically report on what they're seeing.

I'm not pointing the finger of blame to executives who have to conduct layoffs and other more slash-and-burn man-

agement techniques. I understand that there are shareholders to report to and there is profit to be made. But we all know that when you slice and cut off heads that that is probably the least effective way of

You really have to have a receiving audience or a consumer who is a critical thinker or who demands this kind of analysis. And if people grow lazy and don't want to think, then you're right: The people who are weak and who won't do real analysis, who will just have the appearance, will win the day.

doing things. And I would make an argument for leaders of these news media that there are other alternatives. But often when the platform that you're standing on is burning, you do what is expeditious. And that is an expeditious technique. But I think that when layoffs occur and trust is betrayed of the people who are working for you, then it compromises their ability to be able to go out and fairly and honestly report. I think that is an outcome we're dealing with now.

Finally, the third thing is really about community trust, about our global community. That stretches beyond the organizations and beyond national boundaries. And here it is very

interesting to look at the role of bloggers. In my interviews with them, I find that this rise is very interesting—some have called it a democratization, but I think they are the canaries in the mineshaft, and they are telling us something that’s going on in the industry.

Not that it’s a demise at all; in fact, I don’t think so. Quite the contrary, I think it’s in the middle of a sea change. But where it goes depends upon our ability to work together, to demand accountability, to uphold standards of trust, and to build back that credibility. So I’m very curious as to what will happen in the next couple of years.

I do think that media and particularly television really uses and abuses trust. Because as an anthropologist, I can tell you that the oldest, the most old-fashioned way of forming trust is face-to-face contact, whether it’s in a room like we have today, or whether in a virtual way it’s across a television screen. Because the oldest form of forming trust is the primordial form of forming trust, which is you look like me, you think like me, you walk and talk like I do, you have the secret handshake, you’re a part of my network. And the converse of that is you don’t look like me, you don’t think like me, you don’t walk and talk like I do, you’re not a part of my network.

And so being able to go from you don’t look like me, you don’t think like me, you don’t walk and talk like I do, but I want to know you because I’m going to learn something new, is an appreciation and a full understanding of diversity—not the political little “d” diversity, but the big “D” of diversity. And I think that the ability to do that rests with just a very few people, mature adults, and the number that I know I could count on one hand. So there’s room for improvement.

Jones: That’s a frightening kind of prospect. Let me ask you a follow-up question. Most people associated with news organizations live by the code that not only can there not be a conflict of interest, but there must not be the appearance of a conflict of interest. The appearance of a conflict of interest is now something that can almost be manufactured at will, especially with blogging and the kind of politicized environment that we’re in in terms of news coverage and criticism of people who don’t agree with your reporting, with what you have said as a journalist in some fashion. Is this environment one that makes it almost impossible for people to have confidence in information that does not comport with what they already believe? Because there are almost certainly going to be efforts made to undermine the credibility and that is the thing that is going to carry the day.

Stephenson: I think that’s a well-placed question and comment because I think it really is a dilemma. When you get into appearances, then you’re sliding down another slippery slope called political correctness. You really have to have a receiving audience or a consumer who is a critical thinker or who demands this kind of analysis. And if people grow lazy and don’t want to think, then you’re right: The people who are weak and who won’t do real analysis, who will just have the appearance, will win the day. But I do think that after a

while, when that happens, and if you have increased transparency, and the ability to open up in some ways—and we can get into some details about this, about how people can look at where people are getting their information—I think that the people who fake it, who have the appearance, in the long term can’t last. But in the short term, they do.

When you are in charge of a group of people or running an organization, you do have strategic decisions to make and whether they’re short term or long term. If they are short term, you will, I think, be seduced by appearance and the appearances of authenticity. But I think in the long term, authenticity does bear out. But call me an idealist.

Jones: Let me ask you this. You’re the editor of *The New York Times*, and you find out that one of your reporters, an African American with talented writing skills, has been making phony comments and piping quotes and doing things. The stories that he’s been writing for the most part are trivial. There have been some that are relatively important. But this is a genuine piece of reportorial dishonesty. And you are going to deal with it. What is the proper way? At what has recently been the greatest moment for journalistic credibility, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and others faced with these kinds of crises seem to have gone to the limit in being transparent, in acknowledging what happened, and trying to acknowledge what they did wrong. I have the sense that in the short term this has been very damaging to them rather than something that has helped them.

Stephenson: That may be, but I think a lot of people admire what they did in terms of chastising and firing the person. And I also think that people like that, who lie, should be exposed.

Jones: No question, but do we go overboard?

Stephenson: Not in my opinion, but it’s just my opinion. I think in the long term, it will bear out. There are hits that you take in the short term. Anybody who stands up and tries to do the right thing, you can line them up, ask them to turn around, and you can count the same number of arrows in their back. Anybody who does that has to be able to take a stand. ■

WATCHDOG

‘The Seduction of Secrecy: Toward Better Access to Government Information on the Record’

In a symposium held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. on March 17th, Washington, D.C.-based journalists and media observers came together to discuss the use by journalists of anonymous sources at a time of increased secrecy by government officials. Geneva Overholser, the Curtis B. Hurley Chair in Public Affairs Reporting in the Missouri School of Journalism’s Washington bureau, organized and moderated the event, cosponsored by the National Press Club and the Missouri School of Journalism.

Overholser began the symposium by asking Bill Kovach, a former Curator of the Nieman Foundation who is chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, to put into a broader context the past and present use—and misuse—of anonymous-source reporting and to analyze its benefits and detriments to journalism and the public interest. Excerpts from his talk follow. Then there will be a collection of edited remarks made by symposium participants on various topics: the ability of government officials to control how the press does its work; surveys tracking reporters’ practice and public opinion; how reporters function in a time of heightened concern about anonymous sources, and whether reporters offer sources anonymity too easily.

A copy of the full transcript from this symposium, as well as photographs and a podcast of it, can be found at <http://journalism.missouri.edu/news/releases/2005/related/burley-symposium-2005.html>.

Anonymous-source reporting and our national government were born together. In George Washington’s first administration, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson were financing newspapers so they’d have someone to leak to. The practice took root and thrived as the first three Presidents found it necessary in their maneuvering to shape and establish the new government. Since then every President, especially the most powerful, extended and perfected the art of leaking information to favored outlets. Some might even suggest the current President has found it useful to control the flow of information to the public from time to time. They have done so, as Lincoln pointed out, because they need public sentiment to succeed—a true fact that President Kennedy reconfirmed in his own words 100 years later when he described the “ship of state” as the only ship he knew that leaked from the top.

The advantage to the government of reaching the public mind behind a cloak of anonymity seems pretty obvious. But what’s the advantage to the press? I’m sure your own reading of history—maybe even your own experience—has answered this, too. Leaked information has proven a sure road to personal career advancement. But, in fact, the mutual-

interest nature of the relationship—the kind of relationship in which Franklin Roosevelt called the White House press into the Oval Office for a not-for-attribution seminar on what economic change was good for America, or Eisenhower provided a detailed policy briefing to a national columnist—was breaking down even as Kennedy spoke.

It was breaking down because, after World War II, Washington had become the most important source of daily news in the country, if not the world. The size of the Washington press corps had exploded as the government provided the new medium of television a convenient center around which to attract its national audience. And a new wave of cold war secrecy shut down access to whole agencies of government.

In this new atmosphere officials at all levels in all departments—some of whom had never seen a reporter before—were regularly visited by several reporters as government news became a cauldron of competition for career-making stories. American journalists eagerly accepted British press baron Lord Northcliffe’s dictum that real “news is something that someone, somewhere wants to keep secret; everything else is advertising.” Inside information was no longer limited to the head of state and trusted columnists but available to diligent reporters who worked the lesser corridors of power to break important news.

The best of whom, like [The Washington Post’s former diplomatic correspondent] Murrey Marder, were developing techniques to tease out a bit of inside information here and a bit there to create a rough mosaic of previously secret policy initiatives. Others like Izzy Stone were meticulously reading obscure official documents to refute government claims and assertions with its own words. Government response was to create more categories of classified information and institute group “backgrounders”—a practice that appealed to print reporters because “no camera” rules stripped the upstart television reporters of their biggest competitive advantage.

Anonymous-Source Reporting and Secrecy

The power and the public service impact of the anonymous-source Watergate reporting shaped the next generation of journalists, and anonymous-source reporting followed by expanded secrecy became the conditioned reflex that has defined life in Washington.

How the two are related, whether one results from the other, are questions on the table here today. When I came to Washington after the 1972 election, news reports were liberally sprinkled with reports provided by an unidentified briefer at a “backgrounder,” or stories with anonymous, pejorative quotes, even ridiculous unidentified self-promoting quotes

of the don't-use-my-name-on-this-but-I-think-the-President-is-doing-a-good-job variety. Much of the work of the Washington bureau of The New York Times was governed by a need to recover from our embarrassing competitive weakness, which the Post's Watergate work had exposed. Investigative reporting was our new watchword, and we were digging deeper and deeper for anonymous sources.

But this reporting came in conflict with another of our goals: to help readers learn more about how Washington worked. We did this on a new "Washington talk" page and came face to face with this problem: To explain how Washington worked, we would have to explain how the press worked in Washington. The more we looked at that, the more we realized that anonymous-source reporting put us in the position not just of withholding information from our readers, in the sense of withholding the source, the source's access and possible bias in some stories, but sometimes giving them misinformation from these sources. As we tried to correct this problem, we learned the hard lesson that I suspect the Washington press corps still confronts today.

One example: We found an anonymous source had given us misleading information that we published and decided it provided a good look at how the Washington press worked. So we wrote about the leak and named the leaker. As a courtesy, we called three other reporters who had written a similar story to ours from the same source. They all agreed the leaker should be exposed, but they were not going to do it.

Administration officials up to the vice president and the counsel to the President tried to stop the outing. One of the arguments they used was that the other three reporters had called them and assured them they would protect the leaker's identity. We ran the story and, as you can guess, the word was put out among White House staff not to talk to the Times.

Another example: Shortly after, we learned that some industrious foreign reporters, including reporters for the TASS News Agency, were reporting the name of government officials doing briefings that we published on a background basis. This posed the obvious problem: If foreign leaders and foreign audiences knew the names, how could we justify keeping our readers in the dark? A few other reporters joined us at first, when we asked that the briefings be kept open, and left the room if they were not. But the support didn't last long. The main argument from other journalists was that they would surrender their independence if they took part in such group actions.

Instead, we were ridiculed for "showboating." Support that beat reporters in the bureau had given the idea began to erode. Our competitive disadvantage began to have an effect. In the end, concern over a loss of independence made coalition-building to keep briefing rooms open too tough a nut to crack, and I was brought into line.

The Effect of September 11, 2001

But that was then and this is now, and we are deep into another turn of the competitive wheel. The situation you face today has been made even more acute by the greatly expanded

outlets for information, the accelerated competition, and the post 9/11 national security atmosphere. On the issue of journalistic independence that has served to limit previous efforts to discuss our contribution to the culture of secrecy, I'd like to just take a minute to remind everyone how radically the world in which we operate has changed.

For openers, we have now helped create a world in which Lord Northcliffe's dictum is standing on its head. No longer can we feel so sure that what we expose is truly news. As we've all seen to our regret, much of what has been reported from anonymous sources as news was, at best, nothing more than advertisement and, at worst, designed to mislead public opinion with deceptive and even false information.

Tom Rosenstiel and I reported on the growth of this problem in some detail in our book, "Warp Speed." "In the new world of competition and a never-ending news cycle," we wrote, "we are turning over our most trusted value—our independence—to anonymous sources who are gaining power over journalists to assume the role of editors in deciding when and often in what form information will be published."

That reporting described Washington press coverage during the Clinton-Lewinsky affair. The record since then suggests that we've failed, both as individual journalists and as an industry, to recognize the degree to which we've allowed ourselves to be controlled by people we report on. And we have failed to accept the fact that the independence we fear to "lose" is not really ours to lose in the first place. It is given to us by the people. Time after time, the courts have told us that while we have the constitutional right to publish freely, we do not have any constitutional right to access to the news. That right of access flows from the people.

It's time we asked ourselves whether each time we publish an anonymous-source story that maybe we are forcing our public to read a code when they don't know what the code is. Worse still, as anonymous-source stories become more routine, do we make routine and even delegitimize the sourced stories that will truly be vital to the public?

I think any fair assessment of press behavior would conclude that some elements of the culture of secrecy are, in part, a thing of our own making. How much has anonymous-source reporting worked to the benefit or the detriment of our journalism and of the American people? We may rightly argue that some of the very best anonymous-source reporting is of the highest public service value. But how do we explain that to a public that can at any time withhold its support of our access to the seats of power because they no longer trust or value what we do?

Given the depth of knowledge and experience in the room here today, we have an opportunity to seriously address these questions and others they may suggest. And perhaps we can come out of this with some new ideas that can reopen closed doors in Washington, some new ideas that will allow us to show and not just tell the public how the government is working. And maybe, if we're lucky, we can find that cooperation and collaboration are not threats to our independence, but are the key to strengthen the value and the appeal of a journalism of verification to the American people. ■

The White House: Can It Control the Press?

With secrecy on the rise, what is happening in Washington, D.C. is having a wider impact on how government officials relate to the press.

Geneva Overholser: Does the White House have enough power that it can simply dictate to us all the terms?

Mike McCurry (White House press secretary for President Bill Clinton): Apparently now, yes. I used to think that if I ever tried to control the message as effectively as the current White House does I would have been run out of the press briefing room, but clearly I misjudged the temperament that exists. If you are disciplined, and if your view of the press is that they are caged animals brought out once a day to be fed appropriately and digest whatever it is that you have to say and send them back into the little cages that they live in at the White House, then you can do a pretty effective job of keeping control of the story line in the face of all the blizzard that is out there in the world. To be coherent, some would argue you almost have to do that in order to communicate effectively about the story line of what a presidency is about today. So yes, they have enough power if they are disciplined enough to control themselves and not to talk off the reservation. And this White House is very effective at that. Of course, that's a contrast to the previous White House, which I would say leaked like a sieve most of the time.

Overholser: Jack Nelson, you've looked at this topic for a long time. How do White House off-the-record briefings these days look compared to when you first became involved in the issue?

Jack Nelson (former Washington bureau chief, Los Angeles Times): It varies with the President. President Carter, for example, ran a very open White House. You could walk down the hallway in the Carter White House without being bothered by anybody. And the first President Bush talked to reporters much more so than the current President Bush. He held—the people in his administration held—many background briefings. It did leak, sometimes officially, sometimes unofficially. President Reagan's administration was much more open than the current one. I've been a reporter for over 50 years and an investigative reporter much of that time, and this administration is by far the most secretive administration I've had any experience with. They have no shame in doing things in the dark, and I don't know how we really combat that except to just keep battering away and filing Freedom of Information lawsuits, talking to people on Capitol Hill and to every lower official we can get to talk to us who is interested in the people knowing what their government is doing. What we need to do is to emphasize that this isn't just a Republican administration; this is your government,

all three branches of which happen to be controlled by one party, which makes it even more of a responsibility of the press to try to delve into it.

Overholser: Paul McMasters, is it worse than ever? Not just briefings, but secrecy.

Paul McMasters (ombudsman, Freedom Forum First Amendment Center): I do think that secrecy is much worse today, and it's the result of a combination of things. Obviously every administration since Johnson has resisted the Freedom of Information Act and has installed as much secrecy as they think they can get by with, but because of 9/11, and some of the Bush administration officials, it really became something that had to be done. The implementation memo for the Freedom of Information Act that the new attorney general usually issues was already in the works before 9/11, and it turned openness, the presumption of openness, on its head. That predisposition for secrecy, which I think is the worst since the Freedom of Information Act was passed in 1966, has been compounded by a real sophistication of news management by public officials. It started in the Reagan administration with Michael Deaver, but it's been perfected more and more by each administration, and this one has really perfected it.

Overholser: Tom Curley, does The Associated Press (A.P.) feel manipulated by all these powerful forces of secrecy?

Tom Curley (president and CEO, A.P.): I wouldn't say manipulated, but obviously there is a lot of pressure. People have gotten more sophisticated at getting the message out, and there is no question that in the aftermath of 9/11 a number of things have occurred. We have a credibility problem, and there are a number of things that we have to do. We have to be able to walk out of a room when somebody wants to go off the record. We have to have the courage to hold the story, perhaps to get it on the record, perhaps to get a fuller context. We can't rush to print, rush to hit the send button at the A.P. And we have to shine a spotlight on this issue, cover it more aggressively. We have to understand that there are people out there with agendas, with motives, who are trying to advance their cause, and we have to put that under a spotlight. We have to cover it, and frankly we have done a poor job at that in recent years.

Overholser: This matters not only in Washington but obviously has an effect on secrecy issues throughout the

country. Charles Davis, can you tell us something about that impact?

Charles Davis (executive director, Freedom of Information Center, Missouri School of Journalism): I've seen in the last few years a modeling of federal behavior at the state and local level, not only in terms of official secrecy in terms of records and meetings—and surely that is a problem we confront every day—but in acts of official intimidation of the press. The sort of thing that the A.P. has fought in Hattiesburg, Mississippi when Justice Scalia's marshals confiscated a tape recorder, we see more and more of those instances at the local level. In the last two or three days, I've had calls in which local officials are centralizing communication, for example, by issuing edicts that look a lot like the one made by the governor of Maryland, whom we all are aware is in sort of an immature little match with The (Baltimore) Sun. [See page 24 for a story about this situation.] That behavior is trickling down. The behavior we see in Washington is trickling down. At least five American cities in the last week have centralized communications. In other words, they have issued an edict that says all city employees will speak to our public-relations people first, and our public-relations people will clear the story, and then we'll speak. To me, that is a muzzle, a direct gag order on taxpayer-funded employees, and it's a huge problem. I'm glad we are talking about this because I think we have to initiate some solidarity on this issue.

Pamela Johnson (former newspaper editor in Phoenix, now executive director of the Reynolds Journalism Institute, Missouri School of Journalism): This isn't just a problem in Washington. Editors at papers across the country are trying to connect with their readers and have more transparency about the coverage in their papers. So they may have a very sincere discussion with members of their community and then the editors see all the anonymous sources being used in wire stories or supplements coming out of Washington. So it looks like the editor is talking out of both sides of his or her mouth. This hurts the credibility, even the handling of that discussion. The broader context is that our journalism isn't being trusted. One level of activity so important to rebuilding trust is establishing that connection to the local community.

Ted Gup (Case Western Reserve professor, writing a book about the culture of secrecy): This isn't just happening with government. It's in corporations, in HMO's, and it grants a license and an attitude and a kind of preemptive willingness on the part of the public to reduce their expectations and lower the bar. It really is ubiquitous. I know we are focusing on government, but it is more far-reaching. I think it represents a kind of paradigm shift within the context of a democracy in which everything is predicated on the willingness of the citizenry to assert themselves. ■

A Downward Trend in Use of Anonymous Sources

Surveys of journalists and public opinion place the use and need for anonymous sources in a broader context.

Tom Rosenstiel, who directs the Project for Excellence in Journalism, spoke about some findings on the use of anonymous sources that are in the 2005 State of the Media report issued by his project.

We examined 16 newspapers of varying sizes and, in that sample, seven percent of all the stories contained at least one anonymous source. That is down from 29 percent that we found in a similar sample a year ago. With front-page stories, it's 13 percent, also down from last year. The bigger the paper, not surprisingly, the more prevalent anonymous sourcing is. If we examined just Washington stories, my hypothesis is that the number would be even higher. In looking at other media, something interesting emerges. In network television, more than half of the stories contain anonymous sources, and when we looked at packages on TV—eliminating the stories that the anchor reads, which are very brief—the number goes up to 68 percent. Is that because those stories are more investigative and include more secret material? I'm not sure that's the cause. We've been told by people in network television that often they eliminate attributions

simply because of the compression of time. It's convenient to just say, "Administration sources say . . ." If we went back and looked at the tapes, I suspect a lot of these references to anonymous sources would not be on stories where the information was somehow closely held. In cable, which is a more extemporaneous medium with very few news packages and most of the time is spent in live interviews, only nine percent of the stories have anonymous sources. On the Internet, where the stories are largely from print sources—very heavily wire copy—we looked just at the Web page's four or five lead stories and 19 percent of the stories contained anonymous sources. What I think this tells us is that the format, and not always the journalism, determines how much transparency there is about sourcing.

Gene Policinski, who is executive director of the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, described findings from a recent public opinion survey about the use of anonymous sources and also from a questionnaire that was given to journalists to determine the frequency and utility of their use of these sources.

Since 1997, we've taken samplings through our annual State of the First Amendment reports to look at how the public feels about the use of confidential sources. We found that public support for the right of journalists to have, as part of their toolkit, the use of the confidential source, remained very high—70 percent. That's down from 85 percent when we began the surveys in 1997. A few months ago, working with the Investigative Reporters and Editors and the Radio-Television News Directors Association, we asked reporters to fill out a form about how they use sources. We had 711 journalists, reporters, editors and news directors who responded. Fifty-nine percent told us they'd used confidential sources in less than 10 percent of the stories they had written. When they were required to use anonymous sources on

stories that would have not come to their attention in any other way, the number goes way up. Reporters told us that 60 percent of the stories they'd gotten from a confidential source would not have come to their attention had that source not had that protection. So journalists want to reserve that right. It's interesting, however, that nationwide as opposed to Washington, the number of stories using such sources might be less. That might be hopeful for those who would like to limit that use—that the problem isn't as big across the country as it may be in Washington. It doesn't speak to whether government secrecy is creeping up. I also wonder whether those numbers will change upward as state and local governments model themselves more on the federal government and insist on that kind of behavior. ■

Reporting in an Era of Heightened Concern About Anonymous Sources

'If you push back, you can get results, and we need to push back more collectively.'

Ken Paulson (editor, USA Today): We're all kind of decrying the seduction of secrecy, but the bottom line is that some things have to come to us in secret. It's our obligation to keep an eye on government and serve as a watchdog, so some information needs to come to us confidentially. People who are going to be whistleblowers are not going to go on the record. What we strive to do at USA Today is have a policy that says we use confidential sources but for all the right reasons and with all the right safeguards. The judicious use of confidential sources allows us to live up to our constitutional responsibility, but also enhances our credibility.

Geneva Overholser: How many stories do you miss because of your newspaper's remarkably stringent policy? I bet Susan Page, your White House reporter, could give you lots of leaks if you would take them.

Paulson: The policy at USA Today basically says that if you want to use a confidential source, you have to go to a managing editor (M.E.) and identify your source and explain why the information is valuable, why that source is trustworthy, and why we can't get it on the record. If all those tests are met, the M.E. simply has to answer the question, "Does the value of the information outweigh the issues involved in anonymity?" What this policy has meant is that the big stories, the important stories, get in the paper. We lose some color and some dimension occasionally. This morning I asked Susan, "Have you ever known us to lose an important story?" She said, "We lose a paragraph or two, and that's O.K."

Overholser: Phil Taubman, what about your response to

the statistics about the use of anonymous sources that we've been hearing?

Phil Taubman (Washington bureau chief, The New York Times): I would respond by talking a little about what we at the Times are trying to do and just say that the USA Today policy is a model for a lot of institutions. A reexamination of our practices is a major focus of what we are trying to do. I am involved in a subgroup of this effort that's looking at how the Times can rely less on anonymous sources. We understand that it is eroding our credibility, as it is the rest of the American press, and that it is a particularly acute problem in Washington. So we are developing some new practices that we're going to be proposing to Bill Keller with an expectation that within a month or two we'll move on to the next phase of our effort. The current policy is great, but our execution of it has been very erratic. So we are trying to crack down in this area.

Overholser: When editors crack down, Stephen Labaton, do you dread the crackdown or look forward to it?

Stephen Labaton (New York Times reporter, co-chairman of the National Press Club Freedom of Information committee): I just file the story, and if they don't want to run the story that's O.K.. Having been at the paper for almost 20 years, my experience is that the principles are often well-intentioned and well-articulated, but then in the practice is when you get into some really difficult areas. It's great to talk in the abstract, but you have to weigh both the quality and the nature of the information, which is what the USA Today

policy rightly tries to do and what we're struggling to do. When we wrote in the thick of enormous competitive pressures during the Clinton impeachment proceedings about how Monica Lewinsky had turned over the President's gifts to Betty Currie just as the investigation was going on, we got that from confidential sources. The reporter and I who worked on that story—while we couldn't reveal and even had a hard time characterizing the nature of where it was coming from—called up the executive editor and said, "Listen, these are who our sources are, and you need to know this because it's going to be possibly attacked, it's a very potentially explosive story. You need to know this so that you can defend this story, you need to know this because if you don't want to run it that's your decision. But you need to know it." Often the best reporters will do that in order to get the institutional support they need for those stories. There are times it's thoroughly inappropriate to use anonymous sources, but I do think that they're vital in certain instances. In the current climate, I think most thoughtful news organizations do strive to balance those interests.

Overholser: Jack Shafer, you've been writing about this issue in Slate. Can you give us some particularly awful examples of anonymous-source use?

Jack Shafer (editor at large, Slate): I'm glad you asked, because I want to puncture the pep-rally quality of this discussion by pointing out that we in the press are not quite as scrupulous and combating of anonymous sources as we'd like to say. We're not always victims. In many cases we're collaborators. Today's New York Times has a news analysis piece by Todd Purdum. I single out Purdum not because he's a hack but because he's one the better journalists working in Washington. And The New York Times is one of the better papers. He writes about the nomination of Paul Wolfowitz to the World Bank, "One of Mr. Wolfowitz's associates, speaking on condition of anonymity so as not to steal the spotlight, said he expected Mr. Wolfowitz would continue the anticorruption efforts of the departing president, James D. Wolfensohn, and demand fresh accountability from governments that receive aid." This is a brand new anonymous-source description, and I've looked at a lot of them. Then there is a long quote from this anonymous source that basically says that Wolfowitz is going to stamp out corruption and do fantastic things. "One of his first passions"—this is the anonymous source speaking in quotation—"was development, and when he was ambassador to Indonesia in the Reagan years, he was out there with the chicken farmers, and he's kind of made for this job in some way." Why was this person given anonymity, and why did Todd even write this story and make the source anonymous?

Taubman: I edited that story. First of all, what you don't know is that actually we eliminated a number of anonymous sources and information and quotes in the package of stories about Wolfowitz. I excised them and went back to the reporters and said there is really no reason to include this, and if we are going to live by our own policy we are going to have

to do better. In Todd's piece, my feeling about that comment was that as self-serving as it was in terms of Wolfowitz and his reputation, it enlightened me a bit about what his plans were for the World Bank, to understand that he was going to emphasize combating corruption and some other things. To me, it was not an example of a useless, trivial anonymous source that added nothing to the story.

Shafer: Do you mind if I quarrel with you?

Taubman: Yes, please.

Shafer: Why wouldn't he be against corruption? It would have been news if he had said he expected Mr. Wolfowitz would encourage corruption.

Taubman: I know I'm going to be on the losing end of this exchange, but I will plunge ahead anyway. Not all heads of the World Bank by any means have made an effort to combat corruption. Corruption is a huge issue in the development world. It might be the single biggest problem in getting development aid out in effective ways to the people who need it. To me it's not a kind of, "Well, it's so obvious, why did you bother putting it in?" I would have much preferred to have had it on the record, but I think the whole comment told me something, and I hope it told our readers something about what his priorities would be.

Shafer: This justification that "so as not to steal the spotlight," doesn't seem to me to be that urgent or credible of a reason to give a source anonymity.

Overholser: I think reporters say, "Look, you know, if this is what you want to say, and you want to brag about your boss, that's fine, but I've got to have a name by it." How hard is it to ask for a name when you're bragging about your boss? Ron Hutcheson, you represent White House correspondents.

Ron Hutcheson: (Knight Ridder reporter and president of the White House Correspondents Association): It's easy to say the Bush administration has taken all this secrecy and anonymous sources to a new level, because it has. But we, in the media, have let this whole thing become institutionalized. Last year I led a spectacularly ineffective walkout at a background briefing. When I walked out, I turned around and nobody was behind me, and my seat was filled before it was even cold. But recently—and this shows how you can make a difference, and I give both The New York Times and the A.P. credit since they've been pushing hard on this deal—we've recently had two of what were supposed to be background briefings end up on the record because they got sick of people saying, "Why is this on background? Why can't you talk to us on the record?" If you push back, you can get results, and we need to push back more collectively.

Overholser: Collectively is a key word. I read recently that Ann Marie Lipinski, editor of the Chicago Tribune, said,

“Realistically speaking, unless all the major papers—or the TV networks most importantly—decide to shun these briefings, they’re not going to go away.” Janet Leissner, would CBS decide to shun these briefings?

Janet Leissner (CBS News Washington bureau chief): We have to have a camera in that room, but we have, as networks, taken a stand, saying, “Unless you let an editorial person in as well—whether this is an Oval Office photo op, whether this is a background briefing—we don’t do them.” Historically, and much more so with this White House, we have fought over the fact that they will let print reporters in and then they’ll say, “You can send a camera.” For us to have something on the record, people have to see it, people have to hear it, that’s what they expect from television. So this is something that we “push back on” on a daily basis. It has worked. We’ve had similar situations in foreign countries. When the President goes on a foreign trip, there are ground rules for the White House press corps and ground rules for the foreign press corps. Lo and behold, we’re again told to send a camera, and the foreign press can send a camera and an editorial person. We have fought over this on trips, saying that we have to have our reporters or our producers in addition to the cameraman, who will just basically roll on what’s being said without putting it in context.

John Cochran (ABC News, chief Washington correspondent): It’s always bargaining. A year ago I got a call from the press secretary about four o’clock in the afternoon, “Could you come up to my office in about 15 minutes, and would you wear a coat?” This was a tip-off that something was up. Went up and was joined by four of my other broadcast colleagues, from CBS, NBC, Fox and CNN, and we were escorted into the President’s office. We were informed we were going to have an off-the-record session with the President and, while the President is sitting there, we start bargaining with Dan Bartlett, his communications director. “It’s off the record,” he says. The best we could do was deep background. The President just sits there and twiddles his thumbs. I can talk about this because apparently only a few minutes after we walked out, one of my colleagues went back to a friend at The Washington Post, and the next morning the Post reported everything that was in the background. I still don’t know what the motivations were. I don’t know if he was trying to say, “You can’t get away with this,” or what. You can take the contrary view that he didn’t keep the promise that we’d made.

Regarding the use of senior administration officials, I think there is a little less of it now than there was 30 years ago, when I came to this town. When I was a young broadcast reporter, [Bob] Woodward and [Carl] Bernstein were doing it. It was cool to talk about senior administration officials or officials or to have anonymous sources. I remember doing stories in which late in the afternoon I’d say, “I think we can get somebody to say this on camera, it won’t be somebody in the administration,” but—and somebody would say, “It sounds better if we just say, sources.” It was cool during that period. You could go on the air or get in the paper easier

if you had an anonymous source. I think it’s less so now; I don’t think it’s nearly as cool. Now I think it’s an admission of failure when we have an anonymous source.

Tom Curley (president and CEO, The Associated Press): As John just said, the rules of engagement are changing. Now most of us are at a different point. We’re saying it is a failure. It is wrong. But there’s a bigger issue here. We have a credibility problem, and we have to understand it. And more of us—and even at a news agency where we are driven to hit the “send” key first—we have to have the ability to say, “Wait. We want to get more. We want to do more reporting. We’re not going to take the easy way and go with the source.” We’re pushing that message throughout the A.P.

Andy Alexander (Cox Newspapers Washington bureau chief, Freedom of Information chair, American Society of Newspaper Editors): I’m not at all hopeful with this White House. What we see as public interest, they see as self-interest. And they’re all about spin. I don’t think they have the same view of the role of the press in society as we do. I find it very disheartening. I think we can make marginal progress, and I do think we need unified action, but I’m intrigued by the definition of what that is. I’m more concerned with the Times and the Post and the Los Angeles Times, which are very important players in this town, in how they conduct themselves on a daily basis. For me, unified action can be having standards and holding your ground individually, and that contributes to the collective good. So I think we need to do that. I think we can get only so far with meetings at the White House. And also, it’s very complicated. It’s easy to say everybody get up and walk out. But it’s a difficult thing for TV when they put somebody on the record but don’t allow cameras in. We haven’t won anything when we do that.

Cochran: I was stunned yesterday to find out that there have been in Afghanistan and Iraq 24 deaths regarded as homicides among people held in custody by coalition forces. That material has been out there for a long time. The Department of Defense wasn’t keeping the information back. All a reporter had to do was go get it. Finally somebody asked, and they came up with the number 24. Sometimes that stuff is just out there, and a lot of it is that we’re just lazy.

Overholser: Are we lazy? Should you have a secrecy reporter, Phil Taubman?

Taubman: The answer I think is probably yes, and when I get back to my bureau we’ll talk some more. We’ve talked about that, and it’s a fair idea. The problem that we all have, and I don’t offer this as an excuse, but it is a reality, is that the competitive forces in Washington and volume of news have quickened and increased to the point even in a big bureau like The New York Times Washington bureau—we’ve got 35 reporters based here—it’s very hard to say, “O.K., I’m going to take one of them and assign him or her to do a secrecy beat.” But I am going to think seriously about it. ■

Offering Anonymity Too Easily to Sources

‘In the past few weeks reporters have called, and the first thing out of their mouth is, “You want to go off the record?”’

Mike McCurry (President Clinton’s press secretary): I want to speak some truths here. I’ve had probably thousands of conversations with reporters in 25 years as a press secretary, and I’d say 80 percent of the time I am offered anonymity and background rather than asking for it. I rarely have to ask for it, and I don’t ask for it, because I prefer to keep on the record as often as I can. If you’re going to get on a hobbyhorse about this you better be very careful in how you’re going about it. First, I’d teach your reporters that they shouldn’t offer background, and they should only get background when they really need it. Sometimes you do need it. I made a list of reasons I think sources would want to go on background and would need background to deal with you. Sometimes, genuinely, they believe in the public’s right to know, and they want to get more information out to the public. When you’ve got a White House that’s very stringent in the way in which officials can talk to the press, the only way in which you can engage in the conversation is to be granted some anonymity. So you better figure out how you’re going to protect that as you clamor for everybody going on the record. Second, if you want to provide any kind of nuance beyond the talking points that exist, you have to be able to flesh things out sometimes and put a little bit of context in the picture. That’s very important.

I’ll give you an example. I was a very strong advocate of doing most of our briefings on the record. But there are times when you just can’t do that. Middle East ambassador Dennis Ross taught me that he couldn’t brief on the record, because if he briefs on the record then he is speaking as an official of the United States government, and that diplomatically has much different meaning than a senior administration official who is speaking. So you better preserve some rights so that the government can function as governments need to do when they’re conducting diplomacy. Lastly, we need to separate out moments of real drama at the White House, in which there are times in which a White House does need to come out and provide additional information, from what is more routine. If you focus your efforts on the routine briefings and say: “Look, we’re never going to detract from the words of the President. It will help us to identify and know who these individuals are who are speaking and makes the information coming from government more authentic. And when you see a sub-Cabinet quoted who’s an expert on a subject, I don’t believe that has ever taken away from the ability of the administration to articulate its side of the story.” If you can help the White House understand that, you might make some progress.

But at the heart of it, going back to the assertion vs. verification, you’ve got to get back into the hard-news busi-

ness, reporting facts to the American people. In the face of the accelerated news cycle, the blizzard of information, the competitiveness stories have moved so much over the last 25 years to analysis. The front page of The New York Times is so very different from 20 years ago in the number of facts vs. interpretive analysis. And I think that’s a change in the culture of journalism that really has nothing to do with evil people in the government trying to be secretive.

Tom Blanton (director, National Security Archive): The culture of secrecy is so strong, and there are so many interests pushing for it. What I’ve heard today is that there is a spectrum of secrecy on sources: some of it’s necessary to protect whistleblowers, and some of it is really indefensible, which are the regular routine briefings that government officials give and the press by colluding robs the public of knowing who’s saying what. It’s in the middle that you’ve got the toughest job. The policies people are talking about are heading in the right direction, but I would even suggest a further step—an obligation of the media to actually report about the process. I would love to have seen in the story about the Wolfowitz nomination to head the World Bank something about what the campaign is like to get Wolfowitz approved. Who’s putting out the talking points? Are there copies of talking points you can get and publish? Who is being sent down to brief? Which White House counsel lawyers are coming down to talk about the Executive Order on Secrecy in Presidential Records? Who’s really responsible? C-SPAN has become the most credible journalism outlet because it shows us the process. The way news is defined today in Washington, you don’t show the process, and you need to show more of the process.

Pete Weitzel (coordinator of the Coalition of Journalists for Open Government): There clearly has been an increase in secrecy in the government, and the question we are wrestling with is to what extent are journalists complicit in that process. To what extent do we contribute to it, allow it to continue, and perpetuate it in some way? What kind of a dialogue can we begin among ourselves that might change this? We might not be able to reach a formal agreement of some kind, but can we agree that we need to elevate our standards? Can we take some of these best practices and spread them more broadly through our newsrooms and enforce them in our newsrooms and create a standard that journalists who are involved in the coverage can live with? Part of the problem is that we’re looking at the short term, not looking at the long term. We’re taking a very bottom line to today’s story approach to it, rather than saying, “What is

the long-term good for our own industry, our own profession? What is the long-term good for our own readers and our audience? How do we work toward that in a way that still allows us to do our jobs every day?" It's a very difficult problem, but part of it is saying, "We've got to set higher standards for ourselves if we believe that we are headed in the wrong direction."

Lucy Dalglish (executive director, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press): There is no doubt we would have an easier time convincing judges, members of the public, and members of Congress about the need to protect anonymous sources if there were fewer of them to protect. It has run amok. I got a kick out of what Mike McCurry said, because he's right. In the past few weeks reporters have called, and the first thing out of their mouth is, "You want to go off the record?" In one week I got probably half a dozen phone calls from very prominent reporters saying, "I want to ask you off the record, has Bob Novak been subpoenaed?" "Well, I don't know." "Well, you can be off the record." "No, I'm on the record. I don't know." It was kind of startling, actually.

But we are fighting right now to protect these sources and to protect these journalists. We're fighting very hard. As media lawyers, we don't make the judgments. We kind of clean up afterwards. We can give advice. We can say, "You really shouldn't promise this," and we can make recommendations, but we are always out there cleaning up the aftermath. At the Reporters Committee, one of the first things I learned when I took over was that we don't really do ethics. That's not to say every legal problem stems from an ethical problem, but the point is that somebody has to be available to use the law in ways to protect the flow of information to the public. What media lawyers have been striving to do for the last several months is to convince the journalism community, the political community, and judges that this is not about journalists' rights to have special privileges. This is all about maintaining a mechanism so that, in certain circumstances, information can continue to flow to the public. [See Dalglish's article on page 30.]

Jane Kirtley (director, Silha Center for the Study of Media Ethics and Law at the University of Minnesota): Maybe it's because I don't live here in Washington, D.C. anymore, but I find this discussion a little quaint, and let me tell you why. Other media out there, the bloggers of the world, would be laughing, because they are delighted to be the recipients of leaks. And they are delighted to promote an agenda. In fact, many of the general public would say, "Why shouldn't the Bush administration have an agenda?" So to the extent that we fail to address what's really pernicious about this and emphasize only the thought that secrecy *per se* is bad, I think we are losing our audience, and we are losing the competition with those in this new media who do not have the standards that we traditionally have.

Jack Shafer (editor at large, Slate): I think more newspapers should take the USA Today pledge. I did a Nexis dump

of the coverage of the President's European tour and charted the number of times each one of what I consider the top six dailies cited a senior administration official. The L.A. Times finished first, or last depending on how you look at it, with seven such stories. The New York Times was second with five, The Washington Post three, Chicago Tribune two, The Boston Globe one, USA Today zero. And I read these stories, and coming away from it I thought that the USA Today's coverage was at least as good as any of the other papers' coverage. It's not as though they missed an important aspect of the story because they didn't quote such stirring statements as, "We are hopeful, but until we know exactly what the Egyptian government is embracing, it is too early to declare that it is a major change." There is no information content there, yet the Chicago Tribune and The New York Times and the L.A. Times are all carrying these anonymous quotations. So I'd really steer us away from, "Woe, woe. Pitiful journalists, so put upon, so pushed around by these briefers," and say "No, reporters, this is a great way for reporters to fill numerous column inches."

Overholser: Susan Tiff, do you have any sense of whether this matters to the public?

Susan Tiff (professor, Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University): The public knows very little about all the things we are talking about today. Despite the cheerful poll results about how the public is perfectly O.K. with some of our practices, I am always kind of astounded when I talk with members of the younger generation about what they know and don't know about the press. My students are actually astounded to learn that the Freedom of Information Act is not just for the press—that it is, in fact, for the public. That disconnect is something that we've got to fix. We talked about modeling behavior and about the Bush administration and the trickle-down effect to the state level having to do with open records and so on. But there is a modeling behavior going on as well about distrusting the press. We have, of course, helped that along, to a certain extent, ourselves. But what's happened with the trickle-down effect has been that the public doesn't trust us. They've taken their cues from the top, and we've really got to make a much better case.

Alex Jones (director, Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics & Public Policy at Harvard University): Secrecy and the effective control of information, in terms of keeping it out of the media, is just one part of a much larger and more pernicious process of taking the principles and talents of very sophisticated public relations and using it in all kinds of ways. Video news releases (VRN), for example, are a perfect modeling image for what has happened over time to the principles of public relations, which began in a self-serving way. Public relations people have been the handmaidens, to a certain extent, of the media. Now they are increasingly becoming entwined with what we do report and what we don't report. And secrecy is a part of that on the not-reporting side. The power of public relations, as it is infused into the news report

taken as a whole, is a gigantic story that the media have simply turned away from. Many news organizations have interests in terms of television and in terms of the distribution of VNR's and things like that. And now the President rejects the idea that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is saying that VNR's being used to drop into news reports to look like serious news reports are propagandistic. Though the GAO says they are propaganda, the Justice Department has said they are not. I have heard very little screaming and crying and complaint. It seems to me this is a lot more important than whether someone is off the record or on the record as far as The Washington Post is concerned.

Tom Curley (president and CEO, The Associated Press): Where is the sense of outrage? How does it get kindled or rekindled? A quick example—there are 550 people being held at Guantanamo Bay; 50 are in maximum security, 500 are not in maximum security. The government has said that none of them has intelligence value. There are two processes to determine their standing. We filed a FOIA request, and we've gotten nowhere. We've covered this and yet our stories virtually have gotten no play. This is an important issue. The stakes are high. The world superpower is under a spotlight here. There have been known abuses. What do we do to get people's attention?

Andy Alexander (Cox Newspapers, Washington bureau chief, Freedom of Information chair, American Society of Newspaper Editors): We need to do a better job of identifying the specific people in the government who have made those decisions—not the agency, but the individual—not simply to rat them out, but to try to get them to explain why. That's one way of engaging the public. In a broader sense, we really have a responsibility. It's frightening to say that people look to us for setting the standards. When you're on the inside of this, it can be pretty frightening to watch in this town, but we need to do a better job on all levels of setting the standard here to prevent this culture from creeping throughout America.

Jack Nelson (former Washington bureau chief, Los Angeles Times): The media pay relatively little attention to secrecy. If you want to know about secrecy in this country, you don't read it in the daily paper very often. You read it on the Internet when you go to see the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press Web site or the Federation of American Scientists and their secrecy project. They put out three or four instances every week of more secrecy in this administration. We just don't cover it in the main media. Tom, you say there is no sense of outrage. That's one reason there's no sense of outrage—we don't cover the story.

McCurry: While you're all so concerned about secrecy, can I make an appeal for the information that's in plain view? It's amusing to hear you all shocked, shocked that there are video news releases going out from our government. Well, our government employs hundreds of people, spends mil-

lions of dollars trying to get you interested in the work the government does on behalf of the people who pay for it. And you don't cover it. If Charlie Peters were here, he would scold all of you for the decline in coverage of government agencies and the work of government over the last 20 years, as you go chase after stories that are hidden somewhere in the secret closets of the White House and other agencies. Why don't you try covering the things that the government really does? And report on things that work, instead of assuming that everything is waste, fraud and abuse, which is, by the way, what most Americans think. I think they'd be pleasantly surprised and find it newsworthy that sometimes government does what it is supposed to do. [See story about this issue on page 11.]

Nelson: Mike, you are not defending what this administration is doing in sending out these videos that do not look like they come from the government and look like they are done by a reporter and that some television stations are running without any acknowledgment that that's the source. It's government propaganda.

McCurry: The news about video news releases on the front page of The New York Times was that the local news stations were putting these things on the air unattributed, not that they were being developed and produced by government. I know and assume the agencies in the Clinton administration made B-roll material available. We tried to give people access to interesting things that we think government has done to get them to do stories on it. I think that is perfectly legitimate. Now it is up to all of you on your side of the relationship to define how you use the material.

Nelson: Are you saying that in the Clinton administration it was not labeled that it came from the government?

McCurry: I don't know the answer to that. I'll bet you we did. I know that we did video news releases, I know we did satellite feeds of B-roll material to try to get local stations to pay attention to this stuff. It's public information, and we have a responsibility to get it out there in some fashion that it will get used. And if they did this to try to get someone to put it on the air so someone might know what these various agencies are doing, it's because all of you aren't covering it yourselves.

Overholser: Tom Rosenstiel, you get one last word.

Tom Rosenstiel (director, Project for Excellence in Journalism): The notion of sort of covering secrecy is fine, but I think you need to balance that attempt against two realities. One is the press's credibility problem and the defensiveness and sort of loss of confidence that exists among news organizations, and the second issue is our complicity, our collaboration in the culture of secrecy. Your attempts to cover this as if it's entirely the government are going to be undermined if we don't acknowledge that role, too. ■

Introducing a New Concept Into Libel Law

‘We think that institutional malice will make the libel inquiry more attuned to the real world.’

In their article, “Institutional Reckless Disregard for Truth in Public Defamation Actions Against the Press,” published in Volume 90, number three of the Iowa Law Review, page 887 (2005), University of Iowa law professor Randall P. Bezanson and University of Iowa emeritus journalism professor Gilbert Cranberg explain in depth why they believe the new concept of “institutional malice” that they propose be applied in libel cases will be able to withstand judicial scrutiny on constitutional grounds and how this concept relates to aspects of tort law. In the article below, they touch on some of the ideas contained in that article in which they propose a different standard of liability be imposed on news organizations.

By Randall P. Bezanson and
Gilbert Cranberg

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan* turned 40 last May. While the ruling is far from ready for the scrapheap or to be traded for a new model, we believe it is due for an overhaul. A major reason why this overhaul is needed is the dramatically changed media landscape since the U.S. Supreme Court in 1964 crafted its landmark rule on libel.

When that ruling was issued, only one newspaper company was listed on any stock exchange, and therefore publicly traded, and that company had gone public only the year before. Nowadays, publicly traded companies account for a substantial chunk of daily and Sunday newspaper circulation, while media ownership generally has become much more concentrated. It would have been unimaginable to the justices in 1964 that a single broadcaster would own nearly 1,300 radio stations, as Clear Channel Communications does today.

The combination of consolidation and public ownership has powerfully concentrated the minds of media managers on maximizing profits. The upshot of these changes has been the emergence of management styles at

ing instructs that the key element in a defamation action by a public official is actual malice—that is, the state of mind of the reporter or editor at the time the damaging falsehood was published. The central questions involve whether the

Journalists do not work in a vacuum. If cutbacks encourage turnover or leave a newsroom shorthanded or not properly trained, that can seriously erode the newsroom’s ability to ride herd on error.

news organizations that mean they are today indistinguishable from any other business by their focus on profit margins, stock price, and stock options. As we (with John Soloski) wrote in “Taking Stock: Journalism and the Publicly Traded Newspaper Company,” published in 2001, “By and large, so little attention is paid [by corporate executives] to a company’s brand of journalism that it is possible to study a [compensation committee] report of how top managers are rewarded and not realize that the enterprise discussed is engaged in journalism.”

The belt-tightening that goes hand-in-glove with public ownership has done serious harm to journalism. As *The Washington Post*’s Leonard Downie, Jr. and Robert Kaiser wrote in their book, “The News About News: American Journalism in Peril,” a couple of years ago: “Most newspapers have shrunk their reporting staffs, along with the space they devote to news, to increase their owners’ profits. Most owners and publishers have forced their editors to focus more on the bottom line.”

The justices who decided *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan* could not have foreseen these developments, let alone their impact on libel. The rul-

ing instructions were that the key element in a defamation action by a public official is actual malice—that is, the state of mind of the reporter or editor at the time the damaging falsehood was published. The central questions involve whether the

journalists were aware it was false or had serious doubts about its accuracy but published in reckless disregard of the doubts. As a consequence, when a charge of libel is filed, everything about the editorial process is autopsied and minutely examined to reconstruct what the journalists knew and when they knew it at the time they did the story. Everything is examined, that is, except the part played by corporate headquarters and publishers by the budgets, and thus the working conditions, they imposed. Journalists do not work in a vacuum. If cutbacks encourage turnover or leave a newsroom shorthanded or not properly trained, that can seriously erode the newsroom’s ability to ride herd on error. Nevertheless, it is the reporter or editor who bears the brunt of the actual malice inquiry.

Corporate Managers and Libel

We believe that when libel suits are brought against media corporations, as distinct from their journalist-employees, the courts should recognize the concept of “institutional malice.” We mean by this term the corporate decisions made knowing that they would

Institutional Decision-Making As a Part of Libel Law

The excerpt that follows appears in the conclusion to the Iowa Law Review article written by Randall P. Bezanson and Gilbert Cranberg.

The very premise on which the current actual malice rule rests is that of a functioning press engaged in journalism and its aims of truthful and important and professionally judged information widely disseminated to a public audience—a press in which judgments about coverage, editorial processes and policy, and organization are made with journalism and its values in mind. Such policies may be controversial. They may involve the sacrifice of long-embraced editorial processes or journalistic standards in order to preserve a news organization, to strengthen it in the long run, or to participate in its constant and dynamic changes over time.

But what about changes in process, production, organization, or incentives in the newsroom that have nothing to do with journalism and everything to do with the parent company's financial interests in the stock market, or the value of options, or the unbroken string of quarters and years in which revenues and margins have increased? What about decisions about process and production and incentive and newsroom resources that take no serious account of journalistic quality (or the consequences of its loss), and that are made with awareness of and indifference to the sacrifice of truth? Should decisions

about the newsroom made in the face of known and material increases in risk of error and with indifference to journalism be protected by active malice, an ill-fitting standard that focuses on the particular story and not on its systematic cause, and that rests on the incorrect assumption that the institution to be benefited by actual malice's protective shield is one devoted first and foremost to journalism?

It is our view that actual malice does not fit such "institutional" choices to foster falsehood by corporate policies or processes instituted in reckless disregard of truth and of the values and standards of journalism. We believe that the First Amendment itself would be better served by a rule of liability for institutional reckless disregard for the truth. It would require that journalism and its values be placed in the balance when business decisions are made by news enterprises. It would allow editors as news professionals to be full participants in such choices, not simply designated implementers of decisions made elsewhere. It would permit persons harmed by institutionally reckless falsehoods to seek compensation for corporate acts that bear no relation to the First Amendment. It would require institutional decision-makers to internalize—to feel directly—the costs that their decisions impose on the press and the values of the First Amendment. ■

produce a journalistically unjustified heightened risk of false and defamatory publication.

To be sure, media companies are no strangers to such defamation suits. They are made parties to the actions because, like the banks Willie Sutton robbed, that's where the money is. But seldom, if ever, are they held to answer in any direct way for the slipshod

journalism their management policies produce. If a damaging error slips by an undermanned copy desk because copyeditors spend much of their time paginating, it will be the reporter (and perhaps the copyeditor) who made the error who will be grilled in depositions, not the company's chief executive officer or chief financial officer, or even the publisher, whose reckless business

decisions decimated the copy desk.

Under our proposal, cases challenging the editorial decisions of individual journalists to publish a possibly false and defamatory story would be decided the old-fashioned way—using the actual malice standard. A news organization's liability, on the other hand, would depend on proof that its business decisions were made in reckless disregard of the likely risk of defamatory publication.

We emphasize that this is not intended as an end-run around the actual malice standard, set forth in *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*, which protects the press effectively. Rather, it is intended to fill a void that allows key corporate behind-the-scenes players in libel to avoid being answerable directly for their conduct. Nor will any plaintiff who attempts to establish institutional malice find it an easy road to traverse.

We think that institutional malice will make the libel inquiry more attuned to the real world. And if it should give media managers pause as they prepare to ax a newsroom budget, so much the better. [See accompanying box.]

If, instead, liability based on actual malice is all that exists, then errors spawned systematically by corporate policy choices will remain free from liability because the errors will not, by definition, be assigned to the writers' actual knowledge about truth. A further consequence will be that actual malice, and the defamation tort that accompanies it, will operate perversely to absolutely immunize—and thus to encourage and reward—unacceptable choices at the corporate management level. Such an incentive to compromise journalism and its quality is tragic for it jeopardizes the very purpose and promise of the First Amendment. ■

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The Public Isn't Buying Press Credibility

'The seeds of public distrust were sown long before the recent round of scandals.'

By Carroll Doherty

Normally, journalists can't get enough of public-opinion polls. During election campaigns, small shifts in opinion can dominate the news cycle for days. Journalists reach for polls to support an anecdotal lede or to win over a skeptical editor on a feature idea. But opinion surveys on the news media's performance and credibility—that touch on the practice of journalism itself—are a different matter entirely.

Most journalists suspect that the public doesn't have much of a clue about what they do, so they don't put a lot of stock in polls on the press. When surveys reveal that Americans have a poor view of the news media—a routine occurrence these days—reporters tend to chalk it up as a shoot-the-messenger reaction. And when public attitudes were shown in polling to take an unusually positive turn immediately after September 11th, journalists didn't know what to think. Not to worry, opinions of the news media quickly returned to their normal low levels a few months later.

It's true that most of public-opinion polls about journalism bear little relationship to how the average reporter or editor does their job. But surveys on media credibility should matter to journalists—a lot. Lose the trust of your viewers and readers, and you might soon be losing *them*, if you haven't already. Even if news outlets maintain their audience, out of habit or inertia, their impact and effectiveness will be lessened.

Rising Mistrust of the Press

Surveys of public attitudes towards press credibility present a depressing picture. The General Social Survey, a massive national poll conducted by the National Opinion Research Center

at the University of Chicago, has been measuring public confidence in institutions for more than three decades. From the 1970's through the mid-1980's, confidence in the press was as high as it was for other major institutions—the military, Congress, religion and education, to name a few. But in the late 1980's, ratings for the press began to slip, and by the 1990's the slip had become a slide. In 1990, 74 percent of Americans said they had a great deal or some confidence in the press. A decade later, that number had fallen to 58 percent. During the same period, confidence in other institutions remained stable.

Credibility ratings for individual news sources also have declined since the mid-1980's, according to surveys by the Pew Research Center. In 1985, just 16 percent of the public gave low credibility ratings to their daily newspaper; by last year that number had nearly tripled to 45 percent. Public trust in the three broadcast networks, leading news magazines (*Time* and *Newsweek*), and CNN also fell. The percentage saying they could trust little of what they saw on ABC News rose from 13 percent to 36 percent, CNN from 15 percent to 28 percent, and so on.

So what's behind rising mistrust of



"Media: More Voices, Less Credibility," published by the Pew Research Center.

the news media, in general, and leading news outlets in particular? It would be tempting to lay this problem at the feet of Jayson Blair, Jack Kelley, and some of the other high-profile news plagiarists and fabricators of recent years. But Blair and Kelley, and other media miscreants, barely registered with the public. Nor did Americans find the reports about Blair's creative writing particularly shocking: They merely confirmed their suspicions. When the Pew Research Center asked in 2003 how often news organizations make up news stories, a la Blair, 58 percent said it occurred at least occasionally.

The seeds of public distrust were sown long before the recent round of

scandals. In 1985, Times Mirror asked Gallup to conduct a survey on issues that even then were being characterized as indicating a credibility crisis in the news media. But the headline finding to emerge from that study was that—surprise—there was no crisis. The Times Mirror report on the survey, released in early 1986, was unequivocal on this point: “If credibility is defined as believability, then credibility is, in fact, one of the media’s strongest suits.”

Yet that two-decade-old survey also revealed clear warning signs of public dissatisfaction with the press, its performance and, more ominously, its independence. A slim majority said the press was often influenced “by powerful people and organizations.” Even higher percentages believed the news media was often influenced by the federal government (73 percent); business corporations (70 percent); advertisers (65 percent), and labor unions (62 percent). Many Americans also doubted the news media’s fairness and journalists’ willingness to admit mistakes.

It shouldn’t be forgotten that this survey was conducted long before the media mega-mergers of the 1990’s, the sharp cutbacks in news budgets, O.J. and Monica, and the rise of the nightly cable shout fest. By the end of the 1990’s, surveys were finding that public attitudes of the press had turned much more negative; not only were Americans found to be cynical of the media’s standards and performance, many questioned its values.

In 1985, Americans overwhelmingly viewed the press as “moral” rather than “immoral” (by 54 percent - 13 percent). By 2003, the percentage who called the press immoral had nearly tripled (to 32 percent), though a plurality (45 percent) still viewed it as moral. Not surprisingly, credibility ratings declined sharply during the same period.

In recent years, another powerful factor has dragged down public evaluations of press believability—partisanship. Public perceptions of bias in the media are not new, and Republicans have long been more likely than Democrats to view the press as biased. But since 2000, Republicans also have become decidedly less trusting of most individual

news organizations—the three major networks, CNN and local newspapers, and TV. In Pew’s most recent press credibility survey, in 2004, the partisan gap in believability was striking—Republicans even expressed much less trust in C-SPAN than did Democrats.

What Journalists Think

Journalists are painfully aware of the credibility crisis. Through the years, the Pew Research Center has conducted many surveys of national and local journalists, and credibility is consistently mentioned among the leading problems that they face. Our 1999 survey found that the journalists believe that the loss of public trust is a leading cause of declining news audiences. In our most recent journalists’ survey, conducted last year, lack of credibility was viewed as less of a problem—but only because business and commercial pressures have become so onerous. Still, national print reporters and editors cite credibility as the main problem; more than twice as many pointed to declining public trust, as opposed to shrinking news audiences, as the biggest problem facing journalism.

The growing public mistrust of news outlets is not the only—or even the biggest—factor behind the erosion of news audiences in recent years. The exploding number of news sources, changing demographics and work schedules, and young people’s growing disenchantment with traditional news outlets has fractured news audiences. In fact, a more important consequence of the credibility crisis might be best seen in how this has affected public attitudes toward the press’s watchdog role.

One of the few bright spots in recent Pew surveys on the press has been increased public acceptance of the news media’s watchdog role, but only when it comes to reporting on politicians. In 2003, 54 percent felt that press criticism of political leaders “keeps political leaders from doing things that should not be done;” 29 percent think that such criticism impedes political leaders from doing their jobs. That represents an improvement from the late 1990’s, when the public expressed its anger

about coverage of President Clinton’s impeachment. In early 1998, 39 percent believed the press was preventing politicians from doing their jobs.

But since 9/11 and the Iraq War, Americans have become considerably less supportive of the press’s watchdog function in security matters. The public is split over whether press criticism of the military keeps the United States prepared or weakens the nation’s defenses: 45 percent contend that it keeps the nation prepared, while 43 percent disagree. On six previous occasions, dating back to 1985, majorities or pluralities said press criticism kept the United States militarily prepared.

This is a disturbing shift, particularly coming at a time when many journalists believe they are increasingly hamstrung by tighter government restrictions on press freedom and access due to constraints imposed as part of the war on terror. Such restrictions become more politically palatable—and easier to impose and maintain—when the public is, at best, ambivalent about the news media’s watchdog role. However, given what we have learned through the years about public opinion of the press, it shouldn’t be surprising that Americans are now reluctant to trust the news media in this regard. After all, more and more citizens each year don’t think they can trust the press at all. ■

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Why the First Amendment (and Journalism) Might Be in Trouble

‘Only 51 percent of 9th to 12th graders agree that newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories’

By Ken Dautrich and John Bare

Our first-of-its-kind exploration of the future of the First Amendment among American high school students—a highly visible study of 112,000 students and 8,000 teachers in over 300 high schools—suggests a fragile future for key constitutional freedoms while also pointing us to potential remedies. This study, “The Future of the First Amendment,” which was released earlier this year, arrived at a timely moment in American history, on the heels of a national election and amid a war the President is using, by his account, to spread democratic freedoms. The results drew remarkable media attention, which tended to focus on one of the more fearful statistics to emerge from the study: Only 51 percent of 9th to 12th graders agree that newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of stories—in other words, nearly half entertain the idea of newspaper censorship.

Beyond that flashpoint finding, the study allows for a more thorough understanding of today’s high school students and can point us to potential remedies. The research also suggests ways to improve support for the First Amendment. While many of the findings raise concern, some are not so bad. Some are even encouraging. Most of all, the results should be viewed within the context of the history of the First Amendment, which faced challenges—some would say it was compromised—as soon as it was adopted.

First Amendment Challenges

One of the first acts of the first Congress in 1789 was to append a Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution, which, among

other things, explicitly denied Congress the ability to tamper with Americans’ rights of free expression. Indeed, through the course of our history, Americans and their leaders have proclaimed a commitment to freedom and liberty. Most recently, President Bush, in his second inaugural address, justified the Iraqi and Afghani military operations as a vehicle to spread freedom and liberty throughout the world.

Despite a long history of veneration to these values, freedom of expression has met with a number of challenges. Not long after adoption of the First Amendment, President John Adams and the Federalist Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, severely thwarting the freedom to speak out against government. Abraham Lincoln’s suspension of habeas corpus, the internment of Japanese Americans during Franklin Roosevelt’s administration after Pearl Harbor, Senator Joseph McCarthy’s “red scare,” and Attorney General John Ashcroft’s aggressive implementation of the USA Patriot Act represent just a few of the more notable breaches to liberty in America.

Like any value in our society, the health and vitality of freedom and liberty are largely dependent upon the public’s attention to, appreciation for, and support of them. When Americans are willing to compromise freedom of expression in return for a sense of being more secure, then government officials can more readily take action to curtail freedom. Public fear of Communism allowed McCarthy to tread on people’s liberty, just as fear of terrorism allowed Ashcroft to curb freedoms.

The real protection of free expression rights lies not in the words of the

First Amendment. Rather, it lies in the people’s willingness to appreciate and support those rights. That idea led the Freedom Forum’s First Amendment Center to commission an annual survey on public knowledge, appreciation and support for free expression rights since 1997 to gauge the health and well-being of the First Amendment.

If public opinion is a good measure of the First Amendment’s well-being, then its annual checkup has been fraught with health problems.

- While more than 9-in-10 agree that “people should be allowed to express unpopular opinions,” a paltry 4-in-10 believe that high school students should be able to report on controversial issues in school newspapers without the consent of school officials.
- More than one-third say the press has too much freedom.
- Fewer than 6-in-10 say that musicians should be able to sing songs with lyrics that may be offensive to some.

These annual checkups have shown over time that half of adults think that flag burning as a method of protest should not be tolerated. In general, the surveys have revealed that the public holds low support for, a lack of appreciation for, and dangerously low levels of knowledge of free expression rights. Is it no wonder, then, that the suspension of liberty in this land of freedom has been so readily accomplished by its leaders from time to time?

It was these rather anemic annual checkups that convinced the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to commis-

sion this unique survey of American high school students and to begin a wider discussion about how to strengthen the polity's commitment to the democratic ideal of freedom and liberty.

What follows are some findings from the Knight Foundation survey of high school students that explain, in part, why Americans should be concerned about the First Amendment's future.

- Thirty-six percent of high school students openly admit that they take their First Amendment rights for granted and another 37 percent say they never thought enough about this to have an opinion.
- Seventy-five percent incorrectly believe that it is illegal to burn the flag as a means of political protest, and 49 percent wrongly think that government has the right to restrict indecent material on the Internet.
- A source of the lack of support for free press rights might be due to the fact that only four percent of students trust journalists to tell the truth all of the time.
- Thirty-five percent say the First Amendment goes too far in the rights it guarantees, and 32 percent think the press has too much freedom to do what it wants.

Proposing Some Remedies

This is a bleak picture of what may be in store for the First Amendment as this group matures into adulthood. More importantly, however, a number of findings from the study suggest policies or actions that might better prepare students to value and use their constitutional freedoms. While the suggestions below grow out of findings that are based on correlations, not causation, the logic of the policy ideas holds up against both our experience and our understanding of the data.

1. **Instruction on the First Amendment matters.** Education works! Students who have taken classes that deal with journalism, the role of the media in society, and the First Amendment exhibit higher levels of knowledge and support for free expression

rights than those who haven't. The problem, of course, is that the strong trend toward math and science and "teaching to the standardized test" has crowded out instruction that could help students develop good citizenship skills. The less the schools focus on developing strong citizens, the weaker our democracy becomes. The positive lesson to learn from this is that through enhancements to the high school curriculum, students can become better prepared to value and use their freedoms.

2. **Use leads to greater appreciation.** When students are given an opportunity to use their freedoms, they develop a better appreciation for them. The Knight project found that students who are engaged in extracurricular student media (such as school newspaper, Internet sites, etc.) are more aware and much more supportive of free expression rights.
3. **School leaders need lessons, too.** Most high school principals need to be reminded of the value of experiential learning and its implications for the future of the First Amendment. While 80 percent of principals agree that "newspapers should be allowed to publish freely without government approval of a story," only 39 percent say their students should be afforded the same rights for publishing in the school newspaper. Granted, principals have many issues to deal with (like parents and school board members calling and asking how they could have ever allowed a story to be printed in a school paper). But if we are to expect students to mature into responsible democratic citizens, they should be given the freedom to express themselves and act responsibly while in school.
4. **Place the issues in the context of their daily lives.** The project suggests that, as with most people, when issues affecting one's freedom are brought close to home, students are best able to discern the true meaning and value of freedom. When asked if they agreed or disagreed with this statement—"Musicians should be allowed to sing songs with lyrics that

might be offensive to others"—70 percent agreed (only 43 percent of principals and 57 percent of adults agree with this). Music matters to many young people. When this form of free expression is challenged, most students come to its defense. The lesson, of course, is that in teaching students about the virtues of free expression, showing how it relates to things important to them will best instill in students why it is so important to the life of a democracy.

The future of the First Amendment is, at best, tenuous. As the current group of high school students takes on their important role as citizens in our democracy, their lack of appreciation and support for free expression rights will provide a ripe atmosphere for government to further intrude on these freedoms. Many institutions in society should shoulder part of the responsibility to ensure good citizenship skills for our youth. Parents, religious institutions, the media, as well as leadership from public officials, just to name a few. But the public schools play an especially important role in socializing youngsters in how to be responsible citizens, and through the schools the future health and vitality of the First Amendment might be restored. ■

Ken Dautrich is chairman of the department of public policy at the University of Connecticut. He directed the Knight study, along with David Yalof, another professor at the university. Dautrich and Yalof's book, "The First Amendment and the Media in the Court of Public Opinion," was published by Cambridge University Press in 2002. John Bare is vice president for strategic planning and evaluation at the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation in Atlanta. Findings from the First Amendment Center's poll are available at www.freedomforum.org.

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Loving and Doubting Journalism at the Same Time

A University of Missouri survey of public attitudes toward journalism reveals a complex pattern of responses.

By George Kennedy

Americans have a more positive—and more complicated—set of attitudes toward journalism than the recent wave of criticism would suggest. A study from the University of Missouri School of Journalism shows that the consumers of U.S. journalism respect, value and need it, even as they are skeptical about whether journalists live up to the standards of accuracy, fairness and respect for others that the profession sets for itself.

A few contrasting responses that emerged from a national telephone survey of 495 people, chosen at random and interviewed during the summer of 2004, illustrate the competing sentiments that form this complex relationship:

- By 75 percent to 12 percent, survey respondents agreed that “journalism helps me understand what is going on in America.”
- By 65 percent to 26 percent, respondents also said that “journalists often invade people’s privacy.”
- By 62 percent to 19 percent, they agreed that “in general, American journalism is credible.”
- By 85 percent to 13 percent, they said they see “social or political bias in news coverage.”

What these and other responses to our survey’s 50 questions indicate is the public’s sophisticated appreciation of journalism’s strengths and its shortcomings. Americans’ understanding of the press begins with nearly unanimous support for its fundamental role in sustaining the democracy. Ninety-three percent agreed that “the freedom of the press is important to our system of government.” Only four percent disagreed. [See story on page 49 for a survey of high school students on this same question.]

In this survey, the public also strongly supports the role most journalists see as their most important—as watchdog over the holders of power. Eighty-three percent of respondents agreed with the statement that “it is important for journalists to press for access to information about our government, even when officials would like to keep it quiet.” Eight percent disagreed. Two-thirds told us that newspaper and television journalism is “valuable” or “very valuable” to them. However, 70 percent said journalists are “often influenced by powerful people and organizations,” and 77 percent believe that the news is “too negative,” while half labeled it as “too sensational.”

It struck us as interesting that the largest single group of respondents was made up of people who hold *both* strongly negative and strongly positive attitudes. One of these people, who agreed to a follow-up interview, was Kimberly Huggins, 25-year-old owner of a candy store in Georgia. One of her comments spoke for a view we found held by many: “There are a lot of outrageous things, but how do you curb the outrageous things without getting in the way of things we need to know? It’s good to know what’s going on.” By significant margins, these consumers of journalism are saying that they want and need to know what’s going on, and they generally trust journalists to tell them. But by similar margins, they’re also saying they want journalists to do a better job.

Surveys taken of journalists’ views on their own work have shown consistently that the core values of American journalism include accuracy, fairness and respect. And on those values, journalists and consumers agree. The criticism—both internal and external—arises from a widespread belief that those values

are too often honored in rhetoric but not evidenced in practice.

Bias and Negativity in News Coverage

Journalists could, but seldom do, offer explanations to the public for aspects of their work that are most likely to lead to perceptions of both bias and negativity. The explanation of bias, which more consumers identify as liberal than conservative, lies in the widely accepted description of what journalists do. Their watchdog role, which requires them to question authority, report on social inequities, and give a voice to the voiceless, can lead those who consume and observe their work to ascribe liberal-leaning ideological motives to their reporting. However, seen from another perspective, journalism in America is also conservative, given that most journalists accept—and integrate into their coverage—the status quo of two-party politics, free-market economy, and the prevailing myth of social mobility. In fact, the ideological spectrum of mainstream politics and journalism in the United States is much narrower than it is in most developed societies.

The complaint of negativity also arises from how “news” is defined. Efficient government, honest business, and safe streets are things that journalists are trained to see as usual and, therefore, not newsworthy. When government fails, when business people cheat, when crime erupts—that’s news. It is hard to envision that consumers of news reporting would prefer this dynamic to be turned around.

These findings from this study—and explanations that arise from them—point to several actions journalists could and, in our view, should pursue.

1. **Journalists should adhere to ethical standards.** Journalists should remember what they say they value and practice what they profess about maintaining respect for those in the news and in the audience. They should, as their ethics code requires, pursue the truth, maintain their independence, and minimize harm.
2. **Journalists should explain themselves.** Objectivity, the long-time creed of American journalism, requires that journalists bring open-mindedness and transparency to their work. Journalists seem better at the former than they are with the

latter, yet consumers of news would benefit from knowing more about how and why journalists do what they do. The relationship between practitioners and audiences would benefit, too.

In the end, though, this study affirms that journalism still occupies a central and valued role in America. David Hudson, a 47-year-old computer network manager in Alabama, put it this way: "Journalism may be slanted, but it's the best way to get the news. If you take away journalism, you'd want it back with whatever flaws it has." ■

George Kennedy is a professor of journalism at the University of Missouri. He codedigned this study, which was conducted by the Center for Advanced Social Research at the University of Missouri. Given the sample number, there is a 95 percent chance that the results are accurate to within 4.4 percent, plus or minus. This study is part of a book project, with the working title "What Good is Journalism?" that is expected to be published in late 2005 by the University of Missouri Press.

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Ethical Journalism Is Not an Oxymoron

In ethical decision-making journalists compare 'very favorably with those who work in other professions.'

By Lee Wilkins and Renita Coleman

Journalists and their news organizations often find themselves under attack for ethical lapses. But at this time, when such accusations seem more frequent and intense, we decided to test journalists' ethical decision-making. The results of our study offer a much needed reminder that the notorious and well-known practices of Jayson Blair and Stephen Glass are more than counterweighted by good decisions made daily by reporters and editors who are less well known and who work a lot closer to home.

These good decisions and the people who make them are at the core of our look at moral development in journalists. These findings appear in our book, "The Moral Media: How Journalists Reason about Ethics." After testing a national sample of journalists we found that those who do this work are both able and subtle moral thinkers. Their ability to reason about ethical questions in a sophisticated way compares very favorably with those who work in other professions. Only philosophers, theologians and medical doctors show

better results than journalists when given the Defining Issues Test (DIT), the one we used in our study.

Developed in the 1970's by a Minnesota psychologist, the DIT presents respondents with six ethical scenarios, asking them to make a choice and then to rank the reasons for that choice. For example, the DIT asks whether you would report a neighbor who has lived an exemplary life for more than a decade to law enforcement if you learned about an old but significant crime. In this test, it is not the choice but the reasons for making it that matter most: Those who rank self-interest and conformity above more universal ethical principles generally score lower than those who think for themselves and apply ethical principles evenly to all people. In the three decades since it was developed, the test has been given to more than 20,000 people and the results reported in more than 400 published studies across a wide range of professions. (A compendium of these results is at the University of Minnesota so scholars can compare their findings

with those of others.)

Until we began our research, no one had ever given the DIT to a large sample of journalists. Those whom we tested represented a cross-section of journalists who are close demographically to the most recent random survey of working journalists conducted by researchers at Indiana University. The 249 journalists who participated in our study worked at print and broadcast outlets. They averaged 14 years of on-the-job experience, were geographically distributed throughout the nation, and were ethnically diverse in proportions that represent the profession as a whole.

Not only did these journalists generally do well on the paper and pencil portion of the test, but when asked to give reasons—in their words—it was apparent they were thinking hard and balancing competing ethical values, such as truth-telling and privacy as well as the harm done to individuals compared with the good that news stories can do for both individuals and society. Journalists, this test showed, considered the law important, but they also told us

about other duties and obligations. For example, they thought about community, about their sources and subjects, and about their news organizations as they made these decisions.

We asked journalists about their personal beliefs as well as their professional experiences to see if certain aspects of their life and work histories influenced their thinking. Women and men showed themselves equally strong when it came to ethical thinking, as were broadcasters and print journalists. Those who said they placed less emphasis on religion scored better than those who said they placed more importance on religion, as did those journalists who said they viewed the law and news organization policies as very important compared to those who said they placed somewhat less emphasis on these two elements.

A dividing line surfaced when journalists who said they had a strong internal sense of right and wrong scored better, as did those who described their work environment as including a significant element of choice. These findings suggest that critical thinking, and activities that promote it, are crucial to sound and high-level ethical thinking whereas strictly following the rules—whether they are in the form of corporate policy or legal opinion—does not always produce high-quality thinking.

The Defining Issues Test allows researchers to develop and use two original scenarios in place of two that come with the DIT. The rationale is that dilemmas rooted in the work a person does will produce higher-quality ethical thinking. So we constructed journalism scenarios—one about using hidden cameras to uncover neglect and abuse of home health patients; the other asked journalists to decide whether to run a controversial photograph of children pretending to inject IV drugs as they had seen their parents do. By introducing journalism-specific scenarios to the DIT (which already has one journalism scenario), we were able to conclude that the journalists reasoned better when confronted with ethical questions about journalism than when faced with ethics questions on other topics. These findings suggest that being a good journalist demands more than just learning

nonlinear editing or writing an inverted pyramid story. It means learning to think through ethical questions related to the job's daily practice, as well.

With one of us (Renita) having worked as a newspaper designer before becoming a college professor, this experience informed a novel element of our study. We theorized that visual information might also have an impact on ethical thinking, so we designed a sidebar study to test how the use of photographs affected this. Again, we used the two scenarios described above plus two others related to issues involving homeless families and another about prostitution. Half of the participants received high-quality photos to go along with the stories, while the other half received only the stories. As we expected, by adding the visual images, ethical reasoning was improved to a degree that chance could not explain.

While these results ought to hearten journalists, our study also uncovered some problems, such as when journalism students were asked to think about race as a component of ethical decision-making. In follow-up experiments with them, information about race—whether given in the form of a visual image or inferred from strictly word-based questions—tended to lower the level of ethical thinking. When the students who were white saw photographs of blacks, they made ethical choices based on poorer quality reasoning than when the people in the dilemmas were white. While it might be argued that students are not full-fledged practitioners, psychologists have tracked this kind of automatic stereotyping for decades in various studies, many of which are not focused on ethical thinking. This sobering finding about race is one we intend to explore further.

These findings, and the results of a survey of how members of Investigative Reporters and Editors reason through questions involving deception, can be found in our book. Investigative reporters, for example, said they found it unacceptable to fabricate information that was part of a news story, but they were much more willing to accept the use of flattery as part of the newsgathering process, a practice that some

scholars suggest is essentially deceptive because it can mislead sources about a journalist's sincerity as well as his or her intent.

When our study was released, we found ourselves responding to a core set of questions from journalists reporting on its findings. "Were you surprised at these results?" we were often asked. Both of us have worked as journalists and responded that we'd often seen good ethical decisions being made, and we continue to believe that journalists, in general, most often make sound, ethical choices. The journalists we tested had, on average, earned a bachelor's degree, and since the level of education achieved is one of the best predictors of how respondents will perform on this test, in this sense, these results were surprising. Journalists scored better than those who work in professions that require a great deal more education than does newsroom work.

Another question we often heard is perhaps more significant: "If journalists do so well on this test, why does the profession continue to make such horrible mistakes?" The issue of why people seem prone to say one thing and do another has evaded an answer for millennia, but we believe that more often than not, journalists make good decisions in the face of difficult circumstances. The exceptions are the decisions made by people who become notorious examples of journalistic practice. But these should not detract from our central findings: Journalists are good ethical thinkers; visual information helps inform their choices, and a work environment that provides choice coupled with strong internal values supports this type of thinking. ■

Lee Wilkins is a professor at the Missouri School of Journalism, and Renita Coleman is an assistant professor at the University of Texas-Austin School of Journalism. Their book, "The Moral Media: How Journalists Reason About Ethics," was published by Laurence Erlbaum Associates in 2005.

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Looking at American Journalism From the Outside In

‘As journalists struggle to report on and understand their times, they cannot escape being *part* of their times.’

By Ron Javers

I returned from Mexico City to find that spring, reluctantly, had sprung in New York. The city’s journalistic tom-toms were beating out their ritualistic tattoos: Mayor Bloomberg’s future; the market’s fall; a subway fare hike; the Yankees’ chances. And from farther afield, The New York Times, in her gray but still somehow glorious way, deigned to examine in detail the conclave to pick a pope; the significance of more hostage taking in Iraq; the condition of nukes in North Korea, and the fallout in friendship between China and Japan. All on Page One, thus setting much of the agenda for the rest of the nation’s roiling news media and, for that matter, for a great deal of the world’s.

It was good to be back home. And good to be reading the Times which, for all its pretense and its post-Jayson Blair faux humility, remains perhaps the best daily newspaper in the world. Yet at the Times, as at every other American newspaper I know, there is a lot of headscratching and nail biting going on right now. Many readers are abandoning newspapers, and newspaper editors have begun asking why. Magazine editors are not far behind, as shifting tastes and the Internet are making inroads into their own readerships. And pity the poor network news, now struggling to reinvent itself as Rather, Jennings and Brokaw fade to black. So what’s going on here in the nation that invented all of these suddenly embattled genres?

Looking With Different Eyes

As an American journalist who spends a great deal of his time outside America working with foreign journalists, I have a great window to view the American media market from the outside in. The myopic handwringers in New York and

Washington newsrooms and on the TV news sets might be surprised to find that journalism’s problems are indeed worldwide—and in many countries journalism is in worse shape than it is here and for a variety of reasons.

Consider Mexico, my last journalistic port of call. Even Reforma, the cream of a small crop of revitalizing papers, is no match for the mighty Times, not to speak of other top-notch and even middle-notch newsrooms up North. But the paper is trying, and so are many Mexican journalists on many papers and magazines, despite a weak economy, persistent poverty, shifting standards, implicit and explicit journalistic corruption, and an audience that often seems mugged by TV soaps and unable or unwilling to read.

In Tokyo, where I spent a week this spring, the problem with the news is not so much circulation: it’s stultification. In that wealthy country the political and journalistic poverty is a poverty of the imagination. The huge, mechanized shimbuns of the world’s number two economy turn out vast wastelands of dry, statistical reporting and dependably dull commentary, graced here and there by the odd scoop or superstar correspondent having a good day. Tokyo’s notorious “press club” rules insure that all reporters behave responsibly if they want to remain members of the club. Most are inveterate belongers.

In China not long ago, I met with one of the brightest and most talented young journalists in the country. But sadly, both for him and for China, he was busy editing a glossy celebrity magazine. There weren’t really that many “real” jobs in Chinese journalism, he explained ruefully, so he was doing the best he could, waiting for “the great opening” now some thousands of years in the mak-

ing. (When it comes, I thought, it had better be good.) Meanwhile, he assured me, the money to be made covering the lifestyles of China’s newly rich and famous wasn’t so bad.

I work for Newsweek, and my job is the editorial oversight of all of Newsweek’s foreign-language editions published outside the United States. Right now, that means magazines in China, Japan, South Korea, the Middle East, Latin America, Poland and Russia. It’s a fair-sized piece of territory, so I travel a lot. Wherever I go, there’s still a great deal of respect for American-style journalism, although foreign journalists are sometimes better at finding its flaws than we are here at home.

The problems we wrestle with in our “mature” and gigantic media market—the commoditization of news, the sameness in the way we tend to tell stories and report events, the wavering line between reporting and opinion, the rise of personality journalism—have not yet surfaced in some of the markets I visit. In others, particularly in Western Europe, editors and producers have some of the same worries, but hardly the angst. Journalism in Europe, particularly in England, Germany and France, still retains much of the verve and excitement of the Great Game. American journalists are sometimes viewed as taking themselves just a tad *too* seriously in places where “sell papers and raise hell” remains the object of the game.

In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, journalists are trying to develop standards for reporting in societies where, for more than 50 years, no real reporting existed at all. In those places young men and women with an inclination towards journalism often have found themselves shunted into

government-ministry mouthpiece jobs or to obscure niches in academia. Only now are some of them starting to come out, and for many it is too late. Forward-looking publishers are turning to the young. The average age of our staff at Newsweek-Russia is somewhere in the early 30's. In Poland it's the mid-30's.

What I've learned in nearly a decade of talking to foreign journalists, sometimes hiring them, a few times firing them, always trying to listen to them, is that there is no such thing as state-of-the-art journalism, some world-class, shining example that all practitioners can be held to. Instead, there are many *journalisms*, all of them flawed, though some, at least on the surface, might appear more advanced. In navel-gazing America we sometimes miss the point that in other places the stakes for journalists are quite a bit higher than who will replace an aging anchorman or whether to hire an ombudsman.

In Moscow last year, our very young top editor took an excited call from the switchboard. "Come quick! Someone's shot the American editor of Forbes-Russia and he's bleeding in the parking lot!" Two of the editors from Newsweek-Russia then rushed downstairs from the offices they share with the Forbes-Russia staff, found the wounded American, Paul Klebnikov, and rode with him in the ambulance to the hospital. Too late. He was dead. Both his friends and the Russian authorities suspected it was because he had written a lot about the grimy intersection of government and organized crime in today's Russia. The crime remains unsolved. And a lot of people are still working on what remains a very important, difficult, dangerous story.

The Changed American Press

American journalists like to think of themselves as people interested in looking beneath the surface, in righting big wrongs, in speaking truth to power. And often, after a hard day at our corporate, hydra-headed, deeply conflicted offices, we may even feel good about some of the work we do. As I've told so many prospective journalists in so many countries: It still beats banking. But beneath

the self-satisfying surface, there may be more similarities to a cruder commerce than many of us think.

During the last several decades, American society has moved steadily to the right and so has the journalism that reflects the society. Too many reporters and editors seem to have become "embedded" in the nation's present way of viewing the economy. The French, who have their own term for everything, call this "capitalisme sauvage," an extreme set of economic arrangements that in the name of economic realism secure the future not only to the Darwinian "fittest," but also often to the most brutal practitioners of the doctrine of Me First.

Many in the American media seem to have embraced, or at least failed to question, this extreme form of capitalism. They've become market watchers, wide-eyed observers of the corporate world, pitchmen and women for The Next Big Thing. Consider the burgeoning areas of media and technology reporting, which in many cases are closer to product promotion or to celebrity watching (Hello Messrs. Gates, Murdoch and Diller!) than to any hard-eyed analysis of what may be behind the wizard's curtain. The journalist's agenda, historically tinged with the need to sell papers and court power, today sometimes seems in real danger of becoming one gigantic special advertising section. Following the economic dictum of supply and demand, young reporters who write about subjects like business, personal finance and technology have become far more easily employable than those who want to cover wars or world hunger.

The very language we use to describe our world which, increasingly, is the world of life's winners, has changed to reflect a changed point of view. Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable? That notion seems to have gone out with trade unionism and the pension system. What was once routinely called a corporate "pension grab" by editorialists in the 1950's or 60's has become "pension reform" in today's journalistic parlance. "Layoffs," which once connoted pain and unemployment, have become "restructurings," the cool, disinterested, business-school-prescription

for most corporate woes. "Pay" is what a worker gets. And this year it will keep him or her just behind the growing rate of inflation. "Compensation" is what an executive gets. And last year, for many executives the increase was many times, often shockingly and unexplainably many times, the rate of inflation.

As journalists struggle to report on and understand their times, they cannot escape being *part* of their times. This is true in any society and under any system. In Guangzhou, China, not long ago, I met a very successful, rather progressive newspaper publisher—who also served as that city's Communist Party propaganda director. "How in the world do you do it?" I asked. "Simple," he replied. "I wear two hats!" (Actually, it might have been three: About a year after I interviewed him he was jailed for corruption.)

Yet when I read a Chinese or a Russian or an Arab newspaper—always in translation, unfortunately, though I have very good translators—I still thank heaven, not only for the Times, but also for Newsweek (and, yes, Time, too). We've got flaws, but it is hardly midnight for journalism in America. And for much of the rest of the developing world, it's barely morning.

I am grateful, too, for some of the amazing foreign journalists I've met, many of whom seem to accomplish a lot under a lot more strait circumstances than most American journalists face. In my conversations with aspiring, young foreign journalists, like any good reporter, I try not to let my biases show. I try to point out to them that in the United States, as in the rest of the world, there are many journalisms, all imperfect, all developing journalisms. I suspect that right now, while we Americans are biting our nails over the circulation numbers, some new Woodwards and Bernsteins—Chinese variants maybe, or even Russians—are slouching their slow way towards their very own Watergates. ■

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When the Beat Does Not Go On

A longtime journalist reflects on reinventing her life outside of a newsroom.

By Huntly Collins

My last day at The Philadelphia Inquirer is something of a blur now, but one image is embedded in my brain: Susan FitzGerald, my friend and colleague of 17 years, standing on the loading dock and waving goodbye as I packed my beat-up Toyota station wagon with the files and memorabilia of a long and distinguished reporting career and drove off to an unknown future.

I left on a steamy day at the end of July 2001. It was by choice—sort of. Like scores of other reporters and editors who left the Inquirer in successive waves of buyouts, I could not bear to watch the paper I loved eviscerated by the bean counters at Knight Ridder, Inc., its parent company. In the interest of ever-higher profit margins, the ascendant Ridder side of the corporation embarked on a slash-and-burn strategy that eventually stripped the Inky of its foreign bureaus, closed most of its national bureaus, shrunk the news hole and reduced the physical size of the paper, giving it the look of a tabloid.

The writing was on the wall: No longer would my colleagues and I be given the time and space to pursue the news in depth wherever it led. And what was happening at the Inquirer was happening almost everywhere in American journalism: Profit was now the driving force, not public service.

My departure from the Inquirer marked the end of a 30-year career in print journalism—first at The Oregon Times, a scrappy magazine of investigative reporting; then at The Oregonian, where my reporting played a key role in overturning a one-way desegregation plan, and finally at the Inky, where I had the adventures of a lifetime. Among them were reconstructing a 46-day strike at my newspaper; witnessing the devastation of the AIDS pandemic in inner-city American and in the developing

world, and trekking by camel into a tiny village in the desert of northwestern India to cover the global campaign to eradicate polio virus.

All was a labor of love. But with American journalism going south, it was time to get out before I became another one of those defeated souls who were all around me—once fine reporters who were now simply putting in their time before they could collect a pension.

I was at once terrified about the future—and excited about taking a risk and putting my professional passion to work in another arena. Still, there was a mourning period—actually, many moments of mourning—as I shed a professional identity that spanned three decades. I'll never forget the emptiness I felt as an immigration official in Nairobi demanded to know my profession. Consultant? No, too bureaucratic. Teacher? Well, I was helping to train journalists in developing countries, but teacher was something of a stretch. Writer? Pompous, but I went with it anyway.

I am now four years out on “the other side.” Ironically, the more work I do in the nonprofit arena, the more I realize just how special is the role of the journalist in a free society.

Take the philanthropic world. For a time, I worked for a large, public-spirited foundation doing excellent work in both the United States and abroad. I will not name the foundation, because I don't want to generate public controversy that would undermine its mission. But suffice it to say that even foundations have their limits. What I discovered was an intolerance of internal criticism, the kind of critique that news editors do of their newspapers every day.

Next came a couple years working for a small nonprofit organization with all the right values. But when it came to the fundamental value that I most care about—an unwavering dedication to

the truth—I discovered a curious reluctance to present the unvarnished facts for fear of hurting “the larger cause.”

Finally, I had a short stint in academia, working for a distinguished president at a prestigious university. Wasn't truth-seeking what it was all about in the academy? Maybe among the students and faculty, but not at the top. At the pinnacle, it's all about raising money, lots of money. For a good cause, mind you. A cause that will rebound to the good of all society if the next capital campaign is successful. But along the way, there are compromises to be made, trustees to please, image to maintain, and rhetoric to spin. At what point does the center not hold? I don't know—and I didn't want to stick around to find out.

If I were a rich woman, I would renovate an old warehouse, call in the Inquirer diaspora, and put out the best damn newspaper in America. Alas, it is not to be. In May, I began a new job overseeing communications for an award-winning public-private partnership that provides mental health services to poor people in Philadelphia. I have hopes of building a public education campaign that enables people to seek help before a crisis occurs. We have too many children getting killed in the crossfire of drug wars, too many homeless mentally ill freezing to death on city streets, too many young gay men getting infected with HIV because they don't care enough about themselves or their future to wear a condom.

Once again, I am reinventing myself. This time, it feels right. But deep inside the journalist is still alive and well and wanting to use the power of words to change the world. ■

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Words & Reflections: Books

It's as much the "nitty-gritty of the journalistic enterprise, the 'how-do-I-do this' quality of reporting in Iraq" as "the life of the society he is covering" that **Edward A. Gargan**, Newsday's Asia bureau chief, finds in reading Jon Lee Anderson's book, "The Fall of Baghdad." Anderson reported from Baghdad for *The New Yorker* before and during the invasion of Iraq, and Gargan observes that the author "leaves us almost in despair for, as he writes, a year after the invasion, 'it seemed as if Baghdad had not really fallen at all—or perhaps it was still falling.'"

Alissa J. Rubin, who is Vienna bureau chief for the *Los Angeles Times*, has reported from Iraq, and she revisits some challenges of being an embedded war correspondent, as seen through Katherine M. Skiba's account of covering the invasion of Iraq in "Sister in the Band of Brothers: Embedded with the 101st Airborne in Iraq." Rubin believes that Skiba is at her best in describing "how embedding works—its opportunities and limitations" and as she writes about "bonds that form between embedded reporter and soldier . . . [as] skepticism and objectivity [become] casualties of the embedding experience to greater and lesser degrees."

In reflecting on "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death," a book by syndicated columnist Norman Solomon, former *New York Times* columnist **Tom Wicker** points to the author's severe indictment not only of a "war-minded U.S. government," but also "of an American press all too willing, even eager, to go along," and a gullible American public that was "ill and misinformed by [its] pliant press." Though Wicker agrees with most of Solomon's ideas, he writes that he deplores "the frequent excess—as I see it—with which he expresses them," and he embraces "the old journalist's creed, so often abandoned—'just the facts, please.'"

John Maxwell Hamilton, dean of the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University who is writing a history of foreign news, applauds former CBS News foreign correspondent Tom Fenton for highlighting the neglect of foreign news and its consequences in "Bad News: The Decline of Reporting, the Business of News, and the Danger to Us All." Hamilton also explores "the true golden age of foreign correspondence" (between World Wars I and II) and suggests how foreign coverage might be revived. "Its survival," he writes, "lies in thinking about foreign news differently."

"The End of Poverty," by Jeffrey Sachs and "Mountains Beyond Mountains," by Tracy Kidder belong on the essential reading list of all news reporters and editors, particularly those whose path might one day cross with coverage of issues involving global poverty, according to **Chris Waddle**, who is vice-president/news of Consolidated Publishing Company, publishers of *The Anniston (Ala.) Star*. Waddle's hope is that the experiences portrayed in these books can help to better inform the decisions news organizations will make "in the years ahead about coverage of the world's poor and their problems."

Wilson Wanene, a Kenyan-born freelance journalist, writes about how Howard French, a senior *New York Times* writer who served as West and Central Africa bureau chief from 1994 to 1998, in his book, "A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa," brings the reader "along on his hectic journalistic journey through Africa" and "offers an unflinching look at his beat." French contends that Western reporters sent to Africa need to be better prepared to cover this vast and complicated continent without relying too heavily on "Western diplomats." ■

Seeing What Others Failed to Notice

Reporting from Baghdad, Jon Lee Anderson 'offers a profound antidote to the simplistic impulses of American television news'

The Fall of Baghdad

Jon Lee Anderson

Penguin Press. 389 Pages. \$24.95.

By Edward A. Gargan

As many readers of this book will know, Jon Lee Anderson was hunkered down in Baghdad before and during the American assault on the Saddam Hussein regime filing powerful and compelling reports for *The New Yorker* each week. While American and European newspaper correspondents were reporting daily from the Iraqi capital during the late winter and early spring of 2003, Anderson was blessed with weekly deadlines that allowed him to wander more, to explore byways of the capital, within the constraints of the ever-monitoring secret police, to linger over conversations with people he met.

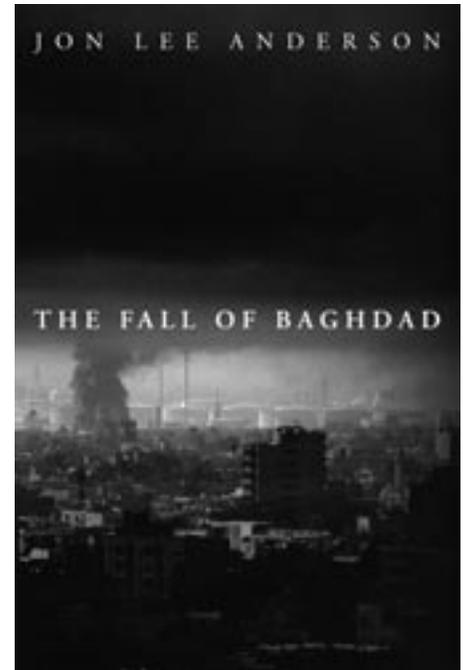
A year or so later, Anderson has taken those experiences and has woven them into a journalist's narrative, a tale, at times harrowing, at times hilarious, at times troubling, of how one reporter works day-to-day in Iraq. Unlike his *New Yorker* pieces, here Anderson pays equal attention to the nitty-gritty of the journalistic enterprise, the "how-do-I-do-this" quality of reporting in Iraq, as he does to the life of the society he is covering. Indeed, the culture of foreign reporting in Baghdad, a city under growing physical and psychological siege during Anderson's stay there, forms much of the framework for his book, sometimes distractingly so.

In the months leading up to the American invasion in the spring of 2003 Anderson, convinced that war was inevitable, sought out academics and, when possible, government officials in Iran and Iraq for their thoughts on what a postwar Iraq would look like. Almost invariably, the men to whom Anderson spoke were more prescient about the probable aftermath of the war

than were the Americans huddling in a resort in Kuwait. Indeed, during the months leading up to the war, I spent a good deal of time in Kuwait interviewing the American officials plotting the organization of post-Iraq, and it was abundantly clear that they knew nothing about Iraqi society, whether it was the structure of the Baath Party, the nascent power and determination of the majority Shiite population, or the reception that American troops would receive; much was still being made in those preparatory months of Paul Wolfowitz's insistence that the invasion forces would be treated as liberators.

Far more keen-eyed was a political scientist Anderson encountered, Wamid Omar Nadhmi, who told him before the war, "I can't imagine seeing Western troops walking in the streets of Baghdad. I can't imagine this being accepted by the Iraqi people, and I think if there is, we will see a growing resistance in the future." How right he was. But then, as we know now, and was clear from the clownish efforts in Kuwait to create a postwar governing structure, the Americans only talked to Iraqi exiles like Ahmed Chalabi, the sort of men who told the Americans what they wanted to know: that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and that Iraqis would welcome American soldiers with bouquets and kisses the way Parisians did in World War II.

Of all those he interviewed, no one was as central to Anderson's reporting as a man named Ala Bashir, an artist and doctor, and not just any doctor, but one of Saddam Hussein's personal physicians. Stretching back to 2000, three years before the war, Anderson's



friendship with Bashir, and that is what it was, accorded him an access and insight into the mind of the regime and to Saddam himself. As American and British war forces assembled in Kuwait, Bashir expressed a fatalism about his country and explained to Anderson with a rare, and possibly dangerous, candor why Saddam was not preparing for war. "The whole country, and even the Baath Party members, are weary and apathetic, as if they don't care what is coming and are resigned to whatever happens," he told Anderson. "You have to remember that every Iraqi has had someone in his family in prison, either here or in Iran, as a prisoner of war. Or else someone in his family has been killed in war or by the regime."

It is in this almost gentle allusion to the thorough barbarism of Saddam's regime that Bashir identifies the distress and anguish that pervaded Iraq. Confined in large measure to Baghdad as the war tempo accelerated and, once the invasion began, absorbed in describing its impact on the people in the capital,

Anderson leaves to others the task of chronicling the extent of Saddam's savagery towards his people. For many reporters who were, as the military so aptly put it, "embedded" with coalition forces, Iraq was seen through the lens of invading warriors. But for some of us who roamed Iraq alone in the close wake of the invading armies, the tales of torture, imprisonment, disappearances, executions and the obliteration of a culture and society—the marsh Arabs—became the first real pictures of what living under Saddam was truly like.

Unquestionably, Anderson and his Baghdad colleagues were in great danger during the assault on the capital. And he recounts in riveting detail the bombing, his shifts from hotel to hotel, the struggle to communicate with his office in New York on his handheld satellite phone. At times, for the nonjournalist, his accounts of the nuts and bolts of reporting clutter the broader mosaic of Baghdad life he so carefully and strikingly assembles. Even so, Anderson, perhaps a little too merrily to endear himself to some of his colleagues, delights in baiting foreign reporters for what he sees as their obtuseness, obliviousness, or general ignorances. High on

his list of targets are French reporters who, Anderson writes, in the buildup to the war would squire a senior official from the Iraqi press office to dinner where they "arrayed themselves around him in respectful postures, their eyes shining with the rapt gazes of a guru's apprentices."

On occasion Anderson stumbles slightly, insisting in one passage that Iraq had never experienced democratic government and then later suggesting that the United States invasion would *restore* democracy. And he suffers as well, although less so than many reporters, from his lack of Arabic, a language that has allowed reporters such as Anthony Shadid, of *The Washington Post*, and Mohamad Bazzi, of *Newsday*, to file startlingly intimate accounts of Iraqi society.

In the end, though, Anderson, never content with facile explanation, offers a profound antidote to the simplistic impulses of American television news, observing that "there was no single defining moment of national catharsis that signified a break with the past. The toppling of Saddam's statue in Firdos Square had symbolized a great deal to people abroad and perhaps especially to Americans ... but to most Iraqis ...

the event had been a largely irrelevant sideshow. Meanwhile, they were being forced to watch, as passive spectators, the wholesale looting and vandalism of their capital city. Their liberators, the Americans, watched passively along with them."

This deep sense of disquiet pervades Anderson's book, a sense that by some measures "liberation" has brought not the wealth of "freedom" promised by the Bush administration but has instead unearthed the fragility and violence of a society torn by forces neither it, nor the American-led coalition, truly understand or can control. Anderson leaves us almost in despair for, as he writes, a year after the invasion, "it seemed as if Baghdad had not really fallen at all—or perhaps it was still falling." ■

Edward A. Gargan, a 2005 Nieman Fellow, is Asia bureau chief for Newsday. During the past four-and-a-half years he has worked in war zones, including the Afghan war, the American invasion of Iraq, and the Palestinian uprising.

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Getting an Up-Close View of the Military in Iraq

'For the first time it has been possible for large numbers of journalists to observe closely the behavior of U.S. troops and how it refracted among Iraqis.'

Sister in the Band of Brothers: Embedded with the 101st Airborne in Iraq

Katherine M. Skiba

University of Kansas Press. 320 Pages. \$29.95.

By Alissa J. Rubin

The vast majority of journalists covering the war in Iraq—well more than 500 of them—chose to do so through participating in the U.S. Department of Defense's embedding program. This was the most comprehensive effort to date by the American military to show journalists its operations by including them at every stage, from preparation

for battle to the war. By contrast, relatively few stayed in Baghdad or entered the country on their own.

In her book, "Sister in the Band of Brothers," Katherine M. Skiba, who was an embedded correspondent for the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, describes the program as generally working well. In most places journalists, Skiba

included, obtained unprecedented access to military operations. It was not easy to do so, and she observes that journalists often had to wrestle with two mistaken and conflicting assumptions on the part of military officials: that the journalists, as fellow Americans, were on the soldiers' side and sympathetic to them or, alternatively, that the journal-

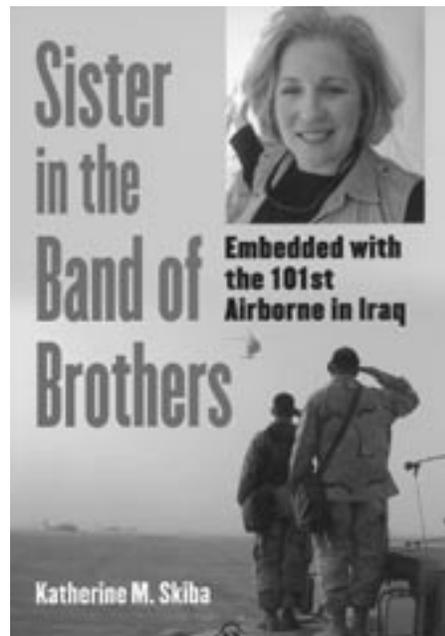
ists were the enemy trying to disgrace the soldiers in the media.

Portraying the Embedded Experience

However, as Skiba's book shows, the greatest problem that confronts embedded reporters and their editors is that the journalist's view of the war is limited. Skiba describes her inability to see much beyond what was happening in her unit and acknowledges she had little sense of the overall prosecution of the war. Nor does she have a sense of the impact the war is having on the "enemy." She also has little access to the kind of information that might shed light on military decision-making. Indeed, Skiba makes no grand claims about the scope of her reporting role and describes her coverage as giving a "'keyhole' view of the war—richer, deeper, three dimensional, and colorful, but infinitely narrower, never much beyond the activities of the 2,300 strong 159th Brigade."

Hers is a modest book that makes no pretense of telling the complete story. But for readers interested in understanding how embedding works—its opportunities and limitations—her depiction offers a close-up look. She was able to do what the rank-and-file foot soldier doesn't have time to do: write down what life is like day-to-day in the midst of battle.

The most compelling aspect of her book is her vivid, "you are there" description of life with the 159th Aviation Brigade, a helicopter unit within the 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army. She describes the initial stages of a sandstorm that threatened to maroon the bus on which she is traveling; the soldiers rip apart boxes used for ready-made meals to fortify the ceiling hatches and the rear emergency door where the sand is seeping in. Later, when the unit with which she is embedded is barely nine miles from the Iraqi border, it comes under a missile attack. A soldier shouts "Gas, gas, gas." Suddenly we are there with Skiba as she anxiously tries to put on the gas mask, can't get the elastic bands to work properly, and then runs for the foxholes with the other soldiers.



After several more putative missile attacks through the next evening, Skiba's words allow us to share the soldiers' exhaustion at having to rouse themselves time after time to put on their gas masks and run for cover.

Skiba's book is also about the bonds that form between embedded reporter and soldier. Although Skiba does not explore the consequences much, it is clear that skepticism and objectivity are casualties of the embedding experience to greater and lesser degrees. She is honest about the longing for companionship and the loneliness of being in the midst of a battlefield as an outsider and, therefore, the need to find kindred spirits with whom to talk about the experience. When sharing a life and death experience—such as the risk of being under attack from chemical weapons—the journalist is closer to being one of the soldiers than to being a detached observer.

Skiba is a careful observer; she describes the military with an outsider's eye and a reporter's attention to detail. As a female correspondent, she brings an added sense of herself as being separate from those she is covering. The vast majority of those operating in war zones are men—whether in the military or the correspondent corps. As I have also learned covering the war in Iraq, to be a woman is both an advantage and a disadvantage. You are not party—for

the most part—to the "one of the boys" jokes or their shorthand comments. But there is a presumption that you, as a woman, will be empathetic. In the eyes of one soldier, you become a daughter; to another, a sister, and through the eyes of yet another, a wife and confidante.

These associations mean that some soldiers respond in a different way than they would with male reporters, and some of the best bits of Skiba's book are snatches of conversation in which young men describe loneliness, fear and frustration, or show off their prowess with weapons. She quotes Private 1st Class Chad Weins, a 22 year old from St. James, Minnesota, shortly after the war has begun, saying that it was good because "We need to get Saddam out of power." But as she describes the way he says what he says, Skiba notes that, "he punctuates almost every sentence with a nervous 'I guess.'"

The View From the Trenches

Her observation of the young private's uncertainty speaks volumes about the day-to-day sense most soldiers have of being cogs in a wheel. But this view from the trenches is a story we know pretty well by now. Since the Civil War, journalists have been able to travel with the troops, and many books have been written out of those experiences, including Michael Herr's "Dispatches" about the war in Vietnam.

The remarkable change in coverage that occurred during and after the invasion of Iraq had little to do with the U.S. military's embedding program. Rather, for the first time journalists had unprecedented access to the theater of war both during and after the invasion itself. From Kuwait, unilateral journalists followed the U.S.-led coalition of troops into Iraq, and as soon as the statue of Saddam Hussein was pulled down in Firdos Square, Western journalists were roaming Baghdad's neighborhoods, their movements restricted, if at all, only by their own aversion to risk. Most past wars involving American troops have offered few, if any, of these kinds of reporting opportunities. For example, the U.S. press corps did not

interact with the North Vietnamese or the North Koreans. In recent wars, the press has had similar access only in the Balkans. In Bosnia and to a lesser degree Kosovo, reporters could talk to people on all sides, but in those situations the U.S. role was less prominent, and it was not operating as an invading force.

Iraq, by contrast, has been open ground for journalists. For the first time it has been possible for large numbers of journalists to observe closely the behavior of U.S. troops and how it refracted among Iraqis. When U.S. troops opened fire on speeding cars and killed civilians or raided neighborhood homes, journalists were not limited to reporting the military's own account but could get to the scene and interview eyewitnesses. Such reporting presented its own set of problems, since it was not uncommon to encounter conflicting "eyewitness

accounts" and to find out that some were completely fabricated. Those of us trying to verify the basic facts of these shootings—and listening to the ways in which Iraqis described them—came away with considerable insight into the nature of war including the resentment the U.S. military presence was increasingly reaping.

These widespread sentiments of resentment among Iraqis and their sense of being treated as "the enemy," even when they had not done anything, have fed the nascent insurgency. By the summer of 2003, a few months after the invasion, it was clear that one of the key aspects of the ongoing violence in the country was the disjunction between Iraqis' perception of the American military's behavior and the U.S. military's own view. While it is certainly important to know how the

soldiers perceived and experienced the battlefield—and Skiba's reporting provides a close-up picture of the 159th Brigade's world—this is only one part of the larger mosaic. And from a public policy perspective, it is hardly the most important piece since the key questions remain: Why are we in Iraq? And what have we accomplished? ■

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Passionate Criticism of Iraq War Coverage By the American Press

A journalist longs for a more 'dispassionate discussion' of U.S. war policy.

War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death

Norman Solomon

Wiley. 256 Pages. \$31.99.

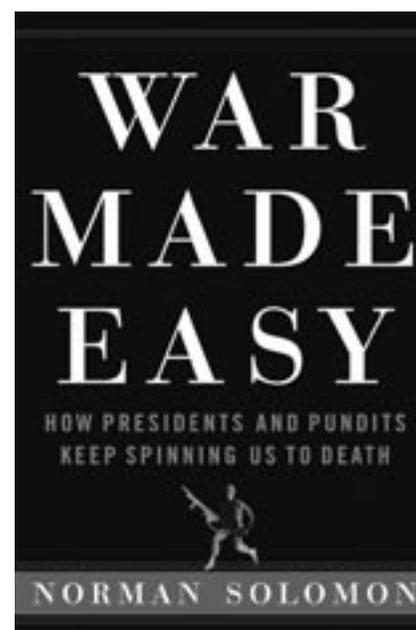
By Tom Wicker

"War Made Easy" is a severe indictment of a war-minded U.S. government—not just the current Bush administration—and of an American press all too willing, even eager, to go along. Ultimately, it's also an indictment of the American public as gullible, ill- and misinformed by that pliant press, and predictable in the American faith that the President as national and world leader does not stoop to lying and deceit.

Though marred by polemical excess, Solomon's book is valuable particularly, in my view, for its scorching insistence that war, any war, is an explosion of fear, violence, death and destruction—not least of innocent men, women and children—by no means limited to an enemy's armed forces. In the Iraqi invasion, these terrible consequences

are primarily dealt by American troops, and Solomon insists on the truth that the blood is on all our hands.

Nor is it washed away by the high-tech weapons that Solomon rightly sees as endlessly fascinating to the Americans who pay for and take pride in them. Deaths from a "smart bomb," after all, or destruction from 30,000 feet in the air, or bodies mangled by cruise missiles launched hundreds of miles away, are as real and bloody as if caused hand-to-hand with knives or small arms. Solomon does not accept, either, as Americans tend to do, that a Scud missile fired by Iraqis at Israelis is an "evil" weapon of "terrorism" when a far more explosive rocket launched from a U.S. ship against Iraqis—or anybody—is a legitimate weapon of



war, which is sometimes quite all right to send as a mere “message” from us to them, however many noncombatants it might maim or kill on delivery.

Solomon insists—rightly I believe—that the Pentagon’s brilliant public relations scheme for “embedding” U.S. journalists into military units in Iraq served military needs far more than it provided the public with necessary information. (He and I recognize the too few worthy exceptions to the general camaraderie.) For parroting government views or promoting patriotism over factual information, he blasts some journalists by name: Tom Friedman of *The New York Times*, Jim Lehrer of PBS, Dan Rather of CBS, even the generally revered Walter Cronkite, to identify a few among many. He’s scathing about all those retired and beribboned military officers parading across U.S. television screens in the guise of independent analysts who mostly justify with rosy views whatever war might be going on—though he’s not more critical of these talking heads than of the networks that employ them (sometimes after Pentagon clearance).

Solomon’s unabashed j’accuse about the disgraceful eagerness of the U.S. press to “play on the team” whenever the President or the Pentagon brings on a war should cause some faces to turn red at the networks and at leading newspapers and magazines—particularly the

faces of those publishers, editors and reporters most voluble in paying lip service to the First Amendment and to their alleged “watchdog” role. This and most other charges Solomon makes are reasonably well supported, usually by newspaper or television quotations that speak for themselves. Unfortunately, he too often cites authorities like Noam Chomsky and I.F. Stone, sound enough in themselves, who can be expected to agree with most assertions in “War Made Easy;” footnoting less identified sources might have been more convincing.

That observation leads to two other criticisms, the first of which is that Solomon flits back and forth between Iraq and Vietnam, Panama and Nicaragua, Kosovo and the Gulf War—from President Reagan through both Bushes and Clinton and back to Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, with of course a few swipes at Richard Nixon and Lyndon Johnson. Sometimes it’s difficult to know which era, which President, which war he’s discussing; that tends to support Solomon’s thesis that the United States engages in too many wars, too often and too easily, and that the President and the Pentagon, with the aid of the press, justify them all with public relations techniques and well-trying appeals to American arrogance. Still, the absence of a historically defined timeline tends to a degree of incoherence.

The second criticism is more funda-

mental. Solomon holds his ideas strongly and fearlessly. I agree with most of them, but that only causes me to deplore the frequent excess—as I see it—with which he expresses them. I’d like to read a dispassionate discussion of the United States predilection for war as policy, and for the press’s tendency to support policy *and* war, written almost as a lawyer’s brief, without high-powered polemics and dominating assumptions of bad motives, conspiracies, cowardice and power-seeking. All of those things may have been prominent in the recent record cited in “War Made Easy,” and Solomon no doubt would insist that such a horrendous record demands an impassioned response. Maybe so, but I believe in the old journalist’s creed, so often abandoned—“just the facts, please.”

Properly followed, that approach needn’t result in the sterile objectivity sometimes posed as the only alternative to editorializing. And despite his justified indignation, Solomon sometimes demonstrates in this book that nothing speaks louder or with more telling truth than the simple facts. ■

Tom Wicker, a 1958 Nieman Fellow, was a political reporter for The New York Times from 1960 until he became the newspaper’s “In the Nation” columnist from 1966 to 1991.

A Remembrance of Foreign Reporting

In ‘Bad News,’ a retired network correspondent eulogizes the decline of foreign news reporting.

Bad News: The Decline of Reporting, the Business of News, and the Danger to Us All

Tom Fenton

ReganBooks. 262 Pages. \$25.95.

By John Maxwell Hamilton

“I, and scores of my fellow American foreign correspondents, had been tracking stories about al-Qaeda and its allies for more than a decade. But we rarely reported what we knew on network television news—because, much of the time, our bosses didn’t

consider such developments newsworthy.” —Tom Fenton

In his sobering new book, Tom Fenton, long overseas for CBS News, has a new twist on an honored tradition, memoir writing by foreign correspondents. In-

stead of reliving what he has seen and explaining what it all meant, his central theme is what might have been—if only his bosses had the wisdom to care enough about foreign news, if rating-conscious news consultants didn’t have so much influence, if the Federal

Communications Commission had not dropped the requirement for public service broadcasting, and if journalists themselves did not fear offending one special interest group or another.

Instead of celebrating foreign reporting in the time-honored way, he eulogizes it. “On some nights prior to 9/11,” Fenton writes, “the network news shows featured no foreign news at all.”

Fenton’s book is doing just what he professes to want to do—stir up debate on the subject and possibly provoke change. “I would like to give back something to my profession—the sense of responsibility to the public that we seem to have forgotten,” he writes early on in the book.

Already I have praised Fenton’s hard-hitting book in a review I wrote for *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer*. In “Bad News,” Fenton powerfully and usefully dramatizes an urgent problem: Will Americans be equipped with the facts they need to deal with an increasingly interdependent and hostile world? In this more reflective piece, however, it might be worth pondering one aspect of Fenton’s argument that seems not to be getting the attention it deserves: the glorious past to which he alludes.

Changes in Foreign Correspondence

The true golden age of foreign correspondence was not the cold war years, as Fenton and others who did their work then often claim. Rather it was the time between World Wars I and II, also a period when memoir writing by foreign correspondents crested. The most perceptive correspondent of the time was Vincent Sheean, described by a colleague as “reporter, writer, philosopher and prototype of the dashing, almost legendary foreign correspondents of the old ‘I was right there on the spot’ school.” Sheean’s “Personal History,” published in 1935, begat a number of other best selling memoirs by foreign correspondents.

Those memoirs, which were really extended reports of what correspondents were seeing on the ground, warned of the coming global conflict. They also had remarkable literary quality. “To

me the most impressive feature of the story,” said critic Malcolm Cowley of “Personal History,” “is that besides being an extraordinarily interesting personal document, it is also, by strict standards, a work of art.”

This golden age did not come about simply because Sheean, Dorothy Thompson, Paul Scott Mowrer, Negley



Farson, John Gunther, Edgar Snow—the list goes on and on—were blessed with talent. Every age has talent. The difference was the conditions in which those correspondents worked—conditions that do not exist today. Here are a few examples of what was and is no longer:

- The *Saturday Evening Post*, *Collier's*, *Look*, *Liberty*, *Life* and many other magazines fielded their own overseas reporters and made extensive use of freelancers like Sheean. Likewise, the North American News Alliance and the Consolidated Press, to name just two specialized news services at the time, flourished. Those media, which paid correspondents well and let them write at length, are gone. Likewise, the newspaper that pioneered the concept of a comprehensive supplementary foreign news service, *The Chicago Daily News*, is gone, as

are our other newspapers that fielded superb corps of correspondents.

- Technology had not yet reached the point at which correspondents were in touch with the home office all the time. On a long leash, correspondents enjoyed a high degree of independence to roam and take their time on stories.
- The relative cost of living abroad was significantly cheaper than it is today. A young reporter who wandered into Beijing in the mid-1930's lived in “Oriental luxury for as little as \$60 a month.” In the countryside, it was said he needed only half that much. Even adjusting for inflation, there are few places in today's homogenized world where one can live decently on little.
- In addition to being liberated by the strong dollar, correspondents—like much of the rest of America—were not yet fully acculturated to the benefits of corporate life. In 1940, some sort of health plan covered less than 10 percent of Americans. Fifty years later, with the costs of health care escalating, it was just the opposite, and most people acquired that insurance through an employer.
- Finally, Americans were well liked, and this gave correspondents an advantage in seeking news. One of the greatest scoops ever by a foreign correspondent was Edgar Snow's “Red Star Over China,” which revealed in the mid-1930's that the Chinese Communists were not mere red bandits, but a viable political force. It came about because he was allowed to visit the Communist-held areas. It was unimaginable the Communists would have invited a French, British or German journalist to check them out. Leaving aside all the questions about whether the United States *should* still be admired today, we are now viewed the way those imperial nations were half a century ago, as an aggressor.

Even in that golden age, readership interest was problematic. Foreign reporting, Sheean complained, “was substantially useless because the forces of public opinion and of official power

paid so little attention.” Instead of preemptive action abroad, the United States passed neutrality laws.

Foreign Reporting Falters

Fenton suggests we have no data telling us that the public doesn't care about foreign news. Yet later on, he breezily acknowledges that “The instant an anchor utters the word Azerbaijan or Indonesia, he's fighting against a ticking meter of declining viewers.”

For an obvious reason, the amount of foreign reporting rises when the United States is involved in wars abroad. Such conflicts are, after all, local stories: Our neighbors' son or daughter is abroad fighting. But absent U.S. troop involvement in a war, foreign affairs typically occupy a small share of the news hole in most dailies and broadcast reports, as indeed was the case in these earlier interwar years.

In the ups and downs of foreign reporting, Fenton is correct that broadcast media have faltered much more than print. Broadcast news hit its stride at precisely the moment when foreign news became urgent—the outbreak of hostiles in Europe in the late 1930's. Among the radio pioneers were, in addition to the iconic Edward R. Murrow, William Shirer, Eric Sevareid, and Sheean, to name only a few of the print journalists who moved permanently or temporarily to the airwaves. Their expertise at such a poignant time helped radio achieve an extraordinarily high standard.

The reasons broadcast has fallen so far since is rooted in economics. Unlike newspaper correspondents, Fenton notes, broadcast reporters have agents who secure large salaries for them. In the absence of compelling public interest in foreign news, it simply doesn't pay to put those expensive reporters and crews in the field, especially when the broadcast audiences that advertisers want to reach most are ones that tend to care the least about foreign news. Don Hewitt, the long-time producer

of “60 Minutes,” ABC News anchor Peter Jennings, and former CBS News anchor Dan Rather told Fenton that at one time or another each had offered to forego some of his salary so more money could be spread to other parts of the news operation. “That's not the way it works,” Rather was told.

This brief look back into journalism history offers no solace for foreign correspondence practiced the traditional way. The only hope for its survival lies in thinking about foreign news differ-

This brief look back into journalism history offers no solace for foreign correspondence practiced the traditional way. The only hope for its survival lies in thinking about foreign news differently.

ently. And those who really need access to foreign news continue to find ways of getting it, no matter what traditional establishment mass media do. Bloomberg News, for instance, still has scores of reporters abroad; to get news from them, one simply has to be willing to pay a premium. And there is no doubt that the Internet has improved the flow of foreign news for savvy users who rely not only on U.S. publications, but seek out news and commentary from news organizations with local reporters on the ground or from Webloggers.

If old-line mass media are to play a role, their leadership must think in nontraditional ways. Fenton notes that many point to public radio as an alternative model. Public radio is the only U.S. radio news outlet that provides in-depth news, either foreign or domestic. It relies on a mix of subscriber contributions and foundation support, government and corporate funding to support its costly dedication to providing its more comprehensive news programming. This approach needs much more discussion than it is likely to get.

Fenton is less creative in his treatment of news managers, whom he blames for not supporting foreign news more than they do. He dislikes the technique of news packaging in which video shot

in Tanzania, for example, is combined with a voiceover report done by a correspondent in London and fashioned into a story for broadcast. Such packaging might not be optimum. But given the economics now at work, more thinking needs to be done about how to use such techniques effectively instead of fruitlessly arguing for a return to days of yore. I believe those executives deserve praise rather than opprobrium for attempting to find solutions to problems shareholders don't care much about.

Similarly, we need to give more credence to the creative approaches newspapers are trying. They are getting much better at using specialized home-based staff to undertake stories with a foreign angle. The Dallas Morning News, for example, sent two special project reporters abroad to track the whereabouts of Catholic priests who were convicted of crimes and fled the country before sentencing. The Chicago Tribune sent a music reporter to do stories in Panama and Cuba. Newspapers are also doing a better, if uneven, job of exploring trade relationships and other links between their communities and those who live abroad.

I wish the golden age of the interwar years still existed. Journalists like Sheean inspired me to go abroad as a freelance correspondent when I was young. But we live in a very different world, and we have to make the best of it if the public is to be equipped to deal with the global challenges that face them. Somebody has to “make the story,” Sheean said of the need for foreign news reporting, “or there is not going to be one.” ■

John Maxwell Hamilton, dean of the Manship School of Mass Communication, Louisiana State University and a long-time journalist, is at work on a history of foreign news.

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The Global Poverty Beat

‘What choices will news organizations make in the years ahead about coverage of the world’s poor and their problems?’ Two new books provide direction.

The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time

Jeffrey D. Sachs

The Penguin Press. 396 Pages. \$27.95.

Mountains Beyond Mountains: The Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, a Man Who Would Cure the World

Tracy Kidder

Random House. 322 Pages. \$14.95 pb.

By Chris Waddle

What will journalists do about the world’s poor before poverty breaks the world apart?

This question, bordering on accusation, challenges the American media’s role in creating a global civil society. I certainly hear such querulous semi-rebukes from my international Nieman colleagues, as well as from other journalists.

The Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard recently asked me to give a journalist’s reply to the Madrid Agenda. This document emerged in March 2005 as a multinational democratic response to the global threat of terrorism. It defines poverty as an “underlying risk factor,” giving “rise to grievances that are often exploited by terrorists.” In my reply at the Weatherhead Center, I explained that there is no “*the media*” capable of working in any kind of unified, Pan-journalistic program that might seek to spotlight solutions. Yes, many journalists do care that the effects of poverty are causing the deaths of many millions of people each year and pushing others to resort to violence. But in our role—as observers and chroniclers—our caregiving has to come through in how we write, photograph and record about what we see and hear and learn.

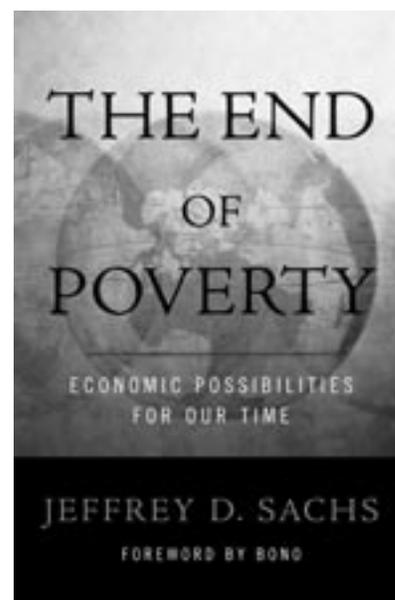
What I didn’t say that day, but often ask myself, is whether the press pays attention to the issues of poverty on an order of magnitude that will make any difference in the back-of-the-hand

response that the poorest of the poor now receive from wealthier nations. The answer I arrive at makes me so uncomfortable that I’m glad to be the one raising the issue instead of hearing this asked by critics.

Now I am asking journalists: Do our broadcast and print news media provide adequate coverage of practices and policies that might move us toward alleviating third-world poverty in our time? I thought not. So I’ve got two books to suggest as essential reading for all news reporters and editors. One is about a physician who works with the poor, the other about a money doctor with a prescription for poverty itself. Both see themselves as practitioners of practicality and not as feel-good sympathizers for those who are most impoverished.

Healing Poverty and the Poor

On the day I encountered Dr. Paul Farmer he was debating a Harvard Business School professor and, in doing so, a giant crack in the earth opened up between their opposing views. Then I watched as Farmer worked to close this chasm by engaging in a human rights argument about drug prescriptions for the poor. This feat of verbal earthmoving would not surprise people who know about Farmer from reading Tracy Kidder’s book, “Mountains Beyond Mountains,” a narrative important for both its style and its content as it docu-



ments Farmer’s successful approach to caring for and curing the world’s poor.

Economist Jeffrey Sachs pulls off a similar feat of earth-healing in his book, “The End of Poverty.” As perhaps the world’s preeminent money doctor—curing the economic crises of poor nations such as Bolivia and India—he presents a plan for improving the world’s social health by cantilevering a bridge of economic revival in the direction of the world’s desperately poor.

Let’s be clear. Reaching out to the poor and the sick is no mere act of feel-good charity to benefit someone else or to assuage personal and corporate guilt. It is, as Sachs explains, in the self-interest of richer nations to do this so the global community won’t explode from the fissures and fractures that increasingly divide the world’s wealthy and destitute

peoples. This strategy is not unlike when Martin Luther King, Jr. reached out to whites of the Southern business class during the civil rights movement. He argued they were also enslaved in their own way, as they were held back from progress by the consequences of racial hatred. Crossing the fault line of segregation produced economic miracles for all ethnicities.

Poverty and race are the never-ending stories. But journalists, at the very least, ought to be trying to open new chapters, just as Sachs and Farmer are doing. All around us there are canyons and crevices, dividing the haves from the have-nots. Journalists are bridge-builders, too, who can contribute to better connecting our divisive world. In doing this, both of these books are needed guides as they grab and shake us with the details of experience, then pull us to respond with a more expansive look at how these experiences fit into the many difficult global issues of our time.

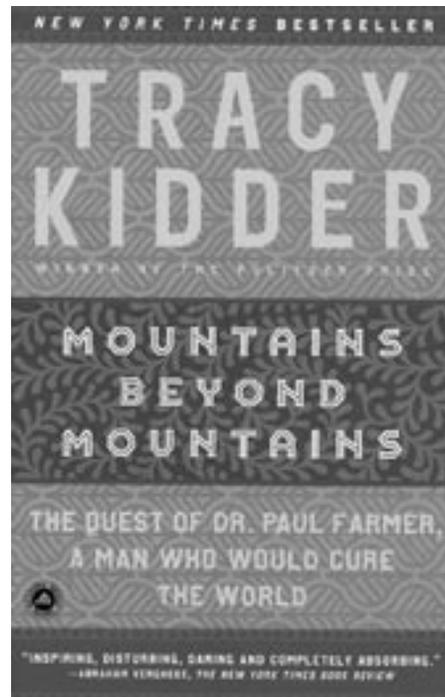
The pharmaceutical debate I witnessed between Farmer and the business school professor summed up the problem and solution, or at least it gave hints of an attitude that could lead us closer to solving these issues. Without patents and profits and private ownership, the professor intoned, new drugs can't be developed to save patients (at least those who can afford to buy them, I say to myself). Without finding ways to provide treatment, the physician replied, people die.

What came next was the chasm closing. Farmer, the renowned Harvard epidemiologist and Haiti-based medical anthropologist, turned out to be well-versed on the contract law of patents. He was not in favor of scrapping them in some either/or social insurrection but suggested creating a differentiated system that would allow for sharing the benefits of medical science and miracle drugs. (As he spoke, I thought of the broadcast law analogy in which licensees provided public service airtime.)

And why would big drug companies, and our society, want to do such a thing? As Farmer explains, the dread diseases of the developing parts of the world—in our era of massive global

interaction—will infect those who live in industrialized nations as surely as HIV/AIDS found its way from abroad. The bridge Farmer offers has self-interest as its foundation.

Germs and infections, even plagues, are the monsters that fill the chasms separating the wealthy and the poor states. Complete homeland defense means keeping an attentive eye on natural killers as well as on human ter-



rorists. Today we hear reasons why we might fear that an avian flu outbreak will arrive at our shores, or the Marburg and Ebola viruses will spread as have drug-resistant strains of tuberculosis. The recent accidental dispersal of an old killer influenza sent mistakenly to labs in a bureaucratic foul-up raised this awareness anew.

Kidder frames Farmer with a wider landscape than simply an engaging portrait of this passionate and compassionate physician who would squash all these bugs. The doctor knows what it is like to grow up poor and emerges as lively and brilliant. He adopts liberation theology's preferential option for the poor. Farmer is, in short, almost too good to be true—our generation's Albert Schweitzer. But in learning about him, we also discover the organizational

success story of Farmer's Partners In Health (PIH), which in these forsaken places manages to overturn problematic world health orthodoxy, solve drug-resistant disease problems, address epidemics one patient at a time, and meet the various economic problems caused by poor health. And PIH does all of this at a cost that is a fraction of conventional U.S. methods, which get a relatively low return on their substantial medical investment.

In a question-and-answer session at Lippmann House, I suggest to Farmer that he dances and plays between the feet of giants as he works to win over big institutions, world health agencies, and governments to his way of thinking and acting. With a twinkle, the tall and angular physician admits he might like to kick the titans in their shins, but that's a way to get trampled. So he moves would-be opponents by kindness and steadiness, closing these chasms along the way.

Books That Matter

Only the naive believe that there are no obstacles or opposition to solving world health and poverty problems. But with books like these available, only the unread will lack the mental images of possible solutions. Journalists like to study the Pulitzer-winning Tracy Kidder for his narrative reporting and writing and rightly so. Now with "Mountains Beyond Mountains," (named for a Haitian proverb that suggests never-ending stories), not only is Kidder's storytelling worth our study, but also its content is vital to our business.

Solutions-beyond-solutions describes "The End of Poverty." Turn quickly through the forward by Bono, the rock star who impels the global antipoverty effort with his pop charisma but adds little more than his name to this important book. Sachs, who directs The Earth Institute at Columbia and advises the United Nations on its Millennium Development goals, harnesses the university's academic and technological expertise with business and government connections to prod forward transnational transformation. Who better to prescribe remedies for what ails poorer

nations? What Sachs has to say is not the stale lessons of Economics 101; it's the real stuff of life and is only boring to those who have not yet opened their eyes to what is happening around us. In his book, Sachs is reportorial about what works and doesn't work in real-world experience. He's been there, and he can explain it well (if not with Kidder's writerly narrative) with his clear thinking and you-are-there results from his travels and work.

From the start, Sachs braces a reader for the exhilarating ride ahead: "Currently, more than eight million people around the world die each year because they are too poor to stay alive. Our generation can choose to end that extreme poverty by the year 2025." And in a similar way, Farmer speaks out of his experience about how untreated disease can cross from poor states into rich. Sachs writes, too, of the dark side of globalization, as effects of rising populations and declining food production, lack of technology and barriers to promoting public health, geographic difficulties and political upheaval, economic shocks and natural disasters (like last year's tsunami) reverberate in developed nations.

Sachs patiently explains that rich countries don't have to transfer their wealth to these poorer ones. What they

do need to do, however, is to invest enough to allow these poorer nations an upward foothold on the ladder, and then the cascade of technological change will do the rest. He suggests that a good place for the wealthy Western countries to start would be to deliver the funds they've already promised to programs that actually provide services to poor people. Instead of funding, as they now do, a vast, inefficient bureaucracy of agencies and advisors (each with a cut of the overhead), Sachs offers a reality-based vision of how to restructure aid programs so money does what it is supposed to do.

In the absence of this kind of restructuring and real solutions, terrorism becomes the return on our misguided investments. The Bush administration launched a war on terror, Sachs points out, while neglecting many of the deeper causes of global instability: "The \$450 billion that the United States will spend this year on the military will never buy peace if it continues to spend around one-thirtieth of that, just \$15 billion, to address the plight of the world's poorest of the poor, whose societies are destabilized by extreme poverty and thereby become havens of unrest, violence and even global terrorism."

It is not fully apparent how good Sachs is at playing among the feet of

giants and, as with Farmer, I get the impression he'd rather kick'em in the shins when they won't listen up. But one comes away from reading his book with the sense that nobody is going to squash him: He's too informed, too experienced, and too right about what he's saying.

What choices will news organizations make in the years ahead about coverage of the world's poor and their problems? Will the effects of poverty on African communities, for example, remain a rarely told story? And how will we assess our efforts in this regard a decade from now? Did we do enough to inform ourselves about these critical issues?

If we didn't start by using these two books as guides, then already I know what my answer is. We didn't. ■

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An American Correspondent Brings Africa Out of the Shadows

'Western reporters in Africa get away with an ignorance that would not be tolerated if they were assigned to other world regions'

A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa

Howard W. French

Alfred A. Knopf. 280 Pages. \$25.

By Wilson Wanene

When American journalists are posted to sub-Saharan Africa—to bureaus in Nairobi, Johannesburg or Abidjan—they confront very quickly human evidence of the daunting reality of just how wide the social and economic gap is between the United States and these countries

that will constitute their new beat. Even before they arrive, a quick glimpse at figures available from the World Bank and United Nations has told them that more people in Africa live on less than one dollar a day than in any other part of the world, and 60 percent of the world's

people infected with HIV/AIDS live in Africa. Statistics have shown them that 34 of the world's 48 poorest nations are in Africa and that 11 percent of the world's population lives in this region but are responsible for only one percent of the global gross domestic product.

And they've learned that the infrastructure is anemic, with just 13 percent of the roads paved and with only three percent of the people having access to a phone line or a cell phone.

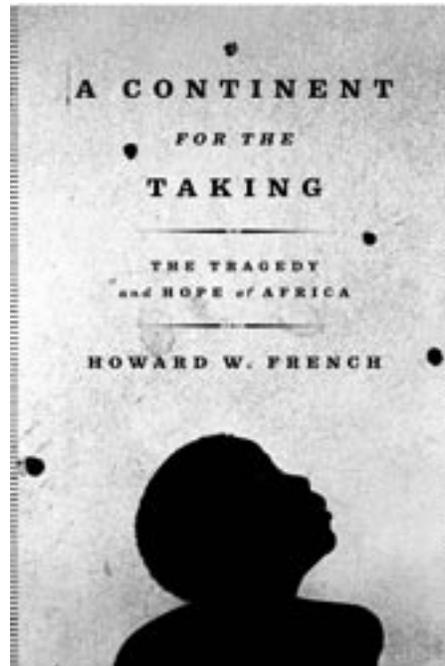
Amid these dire circumstances—each of which unearths innumerable possibilities for stories—the foreign correspondent must, of course, report on major events when and where they happen. This can mean the demise of dictators, such as the 1997 fall from power of Mobutu Sese Seko, the long-time dictator of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or in Nigeria, the recalcitrance of Sani Abacha, a brutal junta leader who tightens his grip on his government's repression. Both stories demand coverage, but the approach a particular reporter takes to covering them will often be different. For one reporter, a news event might result in a feature story that—despite Africa's immense problems—seeks to capture aspects of this situation that are odd, and perhaps even humorous, while another reporter might be more adept at digging behind the hard news.

No matter the approach taken, the question hovering over any story told from Africa is why what happens in the world's poorest region should matter to readers in the West. And then there are some more sensitive questions. Can Africa news compete with the Iraq War or Asian tsunami? Have readers become accustomed to stories of misery from Africa and lost their ability to care? And how are editors to juggle these stories in the global mix of news offerings and budgetary constraints?

In the February/March issue of *American Journalism Review*, Sherry Ricchiardi, a senior writer for the publication, examined African coverage by the American media in some depth. Though she singled out some present journalists for their exceptional reporting on the Darfur crisis in the Sudan, her general conclusion was that the continent received far less attention than it deserved. "As the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide was being observed in 2004," she wrote, "news managers once again were under fire, this time for scant coverage of the bloodletting in Darfur, where millions have faced

torture, starvation, rape and murder at the hands of the brutal Arab militias known as Janjaweed. Up to 70,000 have been killed." [See stories about Darfur coverage on pages 111 and 113.]

After reading "A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa," by Howard W. French, a senior writer for *The New York Times* who served as the West and Central Africa bureau chief from 1994 to 1998, one realizes how difficult these questions are to answer.



In his book French takes us along on his hectic journalistic journey through Africa, offers an unflinching look at his beat, and brings into focus an Africa that is unvarnished and compelling.

It is difficult to closely follow news reporting from Africa without paying particular attention to the correspondents who cover the continent for *The New York Times*, a newspaper with enormous influence and a long-standing commitment to coverage of this continent. But some of the *Times*'s correspondents stand out for what they've written, irrespective of their paper's reputation, and French is one of them. The reporting he did on Mobutu's downfall, for instance, earned him an Overseas Press Club award for best newspaper interpretation of foreign affairs. This change of power was a

major milestone in Africa's postcolonial history due to Mobutu's 32-year reign, as well as his cunning ruthlessness, enormous wealth, amazing corruption, and close ties to Washington, and French's reporting brilliantly wove these elements together.

More of a hard-news reporter than a features writer, French, in his dispatches, conveyed a captivating seriousness as he described a continent whose people were searching for a new definition of their place in the post-cold war world and where autocrats were facing intense pressure to step down. And as his tour wore on, the aftershocks of the Rwandan genocide reverberated far away from that tiny Eastern Africa nation into neighboring Congo and more distant Washington, D.C.. When he wrote for the *Week in Review* section—with leeway for reflection and the fewer constraints in pushing an argument—his insights about the continent seemed tailor-made for a student wanting to learn more about the reality of contemporary Africa.

These *Week in Review* articles brought out the best in French's reporting by showcasing his abiding interest and ability in taking the continent's measure through the illumination of a particular issue. The headlines were, at times, provocative: "Sure, Ebola Is Bad. Africa Has Worse;" "For Africa's Dictators, No Exit Is Graceful;" "A Century Later, Letting Africans Draw Their Own Map," and "Can African Democracy Survive Ethnic Voting?"

Readers familiar with French's reporting will find this same incisiveness in his book. But more than that, in this book he shares his personal background—and how it affected his long-term relationship with this continent. "I had grown up in a strong African-American family, where pride and self-respect were passed on daily and in abundance—together with lots of history," he writes. His father, a doctor, had lived in Cote D'Ivoire where he worked for the World Health Organization, and that is how French was introduced to Africa. In 1976, during summer vacation from college, he made his first visit and, after he graduated, he moved to what was then considered the Paris of Africa,

Abidjan, the country's then relatively well-developed, peaceful capital city. There he tried to figure out what to do next and found jobs as a freelancer, translator and professor. He joined the Times in 1986. His wife is African.

After the Rwandan Genocide

In "A Continent for the Taking," French describes at great length how the Clinton administration played down the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which claimed 800,000 lives, in order to evade intervention after the politically costly deaths of 18 U.S. Rangers in Somalia a year earlier. French argues that in trying to compensate for its inaction the administration then got briefly active in the continent, but with deeply flawed and very costly policies. In telling this story, it is his contention that guilt, rather than genuine concern, should not be what drives U.S. foreign policy towards Africa.

Related to the Rwandan genocide is the internal rebellion that knocked Mobutu from power, and French's account of it makes for fascinating reading. "For more than three decades, Mobutu was not just America's best friend in Africa," French writes, "he was a larger-than-life thief and scoundrel, a man who had bad guy written all over him just as clearly as the spots on his leopard-skin cap." The familiar story line of Mobutu's exit is that the Tutsi-led government that took over Rwanda, following the genocide, could not tolerate attacks from camps based in neighboring Congo. These camps contained Hutu killers who fled Rwanda after the genocide, then mixed in with genuine refugees. As a result, the Rwandan government organized a rebellion to get rid of the camps and Mobutu's government.

But relying on a well-placed intelligence source, French suggests that the dictator's removal most likely involved more than just the rebels of the Rwandan-backed Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire. The United States likely lent a hand—or

even sponsored the rebellion—to oust a leader who had outlived his usefulness now that the cold war was over and Washington no longer needed to prop up leaders who claimed to be anti-Communist. Where French's reporting and insights are most important is in helping us to understand that the Tutsis used the rebellion to also take revenge on the Hutu refugees for the genocide they'd

No matter the approach taken, the question hovering over any story told from Africa is why what happens in the world's poorest region should matter to readers in the West.

committed in Rwanda against Tutsis and moderate Hutus. "As no American diplomat would, John [the pseudonym for his American intelligence source] acknowledged that this war was about one thing alone: counter-extermination," French contends.

Though some Hutu refugees fought back, many were massacred, while the Clinton administration turned a blind eye. Half a million of these refugees simply fled on foot for hundreds of miles across the Congo, a vast country with dense forests. This saga, French observes, was hardly noticed by the rest of the world. To further complicate matters, the rebel government that replaced Mobutu in the Congo, led by Laurent Kabila, was grateful for the help it got from the Tutsis. And Kabila's government prevented U.N. human rights investigators from visiting refugee camps or mass graves. "The United States provided political cover," French explains, "blocking condemnation of the [Kabila] regime in the Security Council and lobbying for the slimmest possible accounting of the massacres." Since the rebellion against Mobutu and the subsequent regional war—with neighboring countries either supporting rebels or the new government—an estimated 3.3 million people have died in the Eastern Congo alone. But he concedes that the figure is still being debated.

By the end of the book—and of his time in Africa—French admits to

feeling burned-out, and he is ready to move on to another assignment for the Times, Tokyo. He confesses to have mixed feelings about his experience, and this should come as no surprise as readers follow his never-ending trail throughout West and Central Africa as he constantly traveled to tell stories and report on events.

For anyone with an interest in Africa, French's book offers a valuable glimpse of the continent. Most U.S. newspapers rely on wire-service reports for their sub-Saharan Africa coverage, since only a few have full-time correspondents such as The New York Times (with three), The Washington Post (with two), and a few other major news outlets.

Though he was better prepared to cover Africa than most other Western journalists, he insists that he still should have had more preparation. Western reporters in Africa get away with an ignorance that would not be tolerated if they were assigned to other world regions, he claims, and adds that U.S. reporters should not rely too heavily on "Western diplomats," which is usually a euphemism for American diplomats. Sometimes these officials have no clue about what's happening, and in the case of the Congo's crisis, the country they represent was supporting one side while not willing to admit it.

One lesson, above all, remains paramount with French. He writes in the conclusion to his book, "In the process, though, I came to appreciate more than ever why it is wrong for us to push African news—and not just the riotously colorful features that one editor once described to me as the continent's 'oogah-boogah'—to the margins." Those who read this book will arrive at this same appreciation. ■

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Journalist's Trade: Training Journalists in Foreign Countries

“Courses that are designed to inspire journalists or encourage creative approaches to the craft are more likely to be exercises in frustration if, at the end of the training, they return to under-resourced newsrooms running on skeleton budgets,” writes **Sue Valentine**, who directs The Media Programme at the Open Society Foundation in Cape Town, South Africa. With her cautionary words, Nieman Reports opens its series of stories that portray the experiences of many Nieman Fellows (and a few others) who have trained journalists in countries other than their own. These journalists also convey what they’ve learned in doing this.

Jacques A. Rivard, recently retired from reporting for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, tells what it was like to work with radio reporters in Rwanda in the months before that nation’s genocidal attacks began. In trying to teach about press freedom, his students told him that if any of them “reacted against the government’s methods of control, they feared for their lives.” In Iraq, U.S. journalists who fear for their safety if they venture out of protective zones train Iraqi translators in how to act as reporters, according to **Patrick J. McDonnell**, the Los Angeles Times bureau chief in Baghdad. In the training, McDonnell writes, “The real challenges are developing journalistic intuition, learning to use initiative to follow a story, asking the right questions, capturing the telling details, and identifying issues that attract Western readers.”

When **Rui Araujo**, a freelance journalist based in Lisbon, Portugal, traveled to Cape Verde to train reporters at the country’s only television station, he found that “most of the television reporters did not know even the basic principles of the trade. Nor were these local reporters capable of doing what we’d think of as independent reporting,” due to government pressures on its state-owned media. **Lucinda Fleeson**, who has authored several international journalism training manuals, worked with 10 Armenian journalists—both in the United States and in their country—in an intensive program that taught the skills of investigative reporting. “As trainers,” she writes, “we coach from the sidelines: It is the reporters and their editors who must decide whether or not to put their organization behind a controversial story. After all, it is they who could be fired or . . . be visited in their offices by heavy-set bodyguards of criminal kingpins.”

John Bare, who is vice president for strategic planning and evaluation at the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, provides an overview of advice and guidance to international trainers about how to constructively think about measuring success and respond to fluctuating circumstances. **Ragıp Duran**, a foreign correspondent in Turkey, has been involved in multinational journalism training groups. While such seminars remind him of “the universally shared principles and rules of traditional journalism,” he writes that “a more futile exercise is to expect that one can impose a certain style of journalism on those who work in a country where the techniques and skills cannot be implemented.” **Jerome Aumante**, an emeritus professor at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, has been involved in many training sessions in former Eastern-bloc countries and other emerging democracies: “What is taught must be tailored to the external circumstances involved with fragile emergent economies and transitional democracies,” he advises.

Despite bureaucratic obstacles and challenges that she faced at Slovenia’s national radio and television network, **Valerie Hyman**, who is a news and management consultant to television and radio stations, emerged from her three-week training experience believing that “strengthening

their television journalism will strengthen their democracy.” Teaching at the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management in Tbilisi, Georgia gave **Karl Idsvoog**, who teaches journalism at Kent State University, a firsthand awareness of the positive effects of offering “compressed and intensive sessions” on specific topics and skills. The students, he writes, learned “by immersing themselves in the doing of it.” In the years before the Ukraine’s recent Orange Revolution, **Peggy Simpson**, who is a freelance reporter in Washington, D.C., went there to train young journalists. “We suspected that if they’d talk with people who were struggling under the policies of their government, then what they wrote and broadcast would be different,” she writes. When Boston Globe reporter **Kevin Cullen** learned about the reality of reporters’ lives in Poland, his thinking changed: “After listening to the real-life stories of real-life Polish journalists, I wasn’t so dogmatic or judgmental.” **Watson Sims**, a scholar in communications with The George H. Gallup International Institute, describes his experience in a Polish village when he was asked to negotiate a standoff between the mayor and the town’s independent newspaper editor. Though resolution wasn’t reached, Sims left Ropczycka with the sense that “press freedom in Ropczycka seemed off to a good start.”

Since moving to Canada as an Indian-born immigrant—with the expectation of finding a job as the foreign editor at a national newspaper—**George Abraham** has experienced a lot of rejection and has tried to understand why. “Newsroom managers have become more insular and provincial even as globalization and immigration transform the world beyond their ramparts,” Abraham writes. “Skills and training acquired in one country appear irrelevant in another . . .” **Tim Giago**, who is president of the Native American Journalists Foundation, Inc., uses his experience as editor of the Lakota Times to demonstrate the ways in which cultural traditions of sovereign Indian nations (inside U.S. borders) affect how newsrooms function and journalists report their stories, and why training helps.

Daniel Ulanovsky Sack, who directs the Center for Advanced Studies in Narrative Journalism in Buenos Aires, Argentina, uses online educational sessions to train Spanish-speaking journalists from many countries in how to construct the context in which to tell a news story. “Even though facts might be objective,” he writes, “reality is a highly subjective web of those facts.” **Doug Mitchell**, who manages National Public Radio’s (NPR) internal and external training of young journalists, went to a university in Chile to teach radio journalism, and he describes how aspects of this experience informed NPR’s approach in establishing its “next generation radio” training in the United States.

Michele McLellan, who directs Tomorrow’s Workforce, went to Cambodia to work with journalists from several Southeast Asian nations and learned to “balance my strong sense of ethical practice with a desire to avoid preaching an ‘American way’ in such a different journalism environment.” After 40 years experience in editing and publishing newspapers in Canada, **Ralph Hancox** traveled to Jakarta, Indonesia to work with employees at an independent publishing house run by a journalist and editor who had been jailed several times for his “liberal advocacies.” He details strategies he proposed. ■

When Journalism Training Isn't Enough

'... our newsrooms are impoverished, and it will take much more than training courses to correct the situation.'

By Sue Valentine

Last year several requests came from two foreign media trainers to help them identify candidates for courses specializing in public health journalism (especially HIV/AIDS) that they intended to offer to journalists in the developing world. In both cases, my reply was that the handful of journalists who cover public health for public radio or various newspapers in South Africa had already been to courses that taught the science of HIV or explored how to "humanize" the AIDS epidemic. Unless the proposed training was going to offer something different, it would be a redundant exercise—at least in our country, where there has been no shortage of journalism institutes and non-governmental organizations providing workshops and seminars on HIV/AIDS and coverage of the pandemic.

The plethora of courses on HIV/AIDS coverage is not to suggest that we, in the South African media, do not need to improve the way in which HIV/AIDS and other public health issues are covered. Far from it. Poor understanding of science and medicine among journalists has contributed to public confusion. Add to the mix unhealthy doses of AIDS denial, allegations of racism, the false dichotomy of treatment vs. nutrition, and the need for well-informed, contextualized reporting, and analysis is all the more acute.

But a handful of health reporters, however well trained, cannot alone address the shortcomings of newsrooms that don't have dedicated health reporters nor influence the way in which political or economics reporters might understand or cover these issues.

Complex Journalism Issues

List the broader issues facing our society, and one quickly realizes that it is

not just in the coverage of HIV/AIDS that the media is failing the public. The challenges confronting journalists in newsrooms in southern Africa are far more complex than can be addressed by preformulated courses based on external perceptions of what journalists in the developing world need.

In a survey of health coverage in print and radio in five African countries (Senegal, Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi and Botswana), the African Women's Media Centre reports that while there was a high demand for quality health reporting and a healthy amount of self-criticism among journalists, the desire for change was offset by a variety of factors that hamper the media, such as the pressure on state-owned media to toe a government line or the pressure on the commercial media to adjust their editorial content to keep advertisers and sponsors happy.

Profitability is a growing factor affecting how newsrooms function and the quality of news coverage. In the case of public broadcasters, the intention to "inform, educate and entertain" might be the stated mandate, but increasingly public broadcasters are under pressure to attract advertisers and audiences. In South Africa, the public broadcaster is as reliant on advertising as any of its commercial rivals. Quality program content on public radio that relies on research and time in the field to collect interviews and sounds is costly to produce. In the past two years, much of this kind of programming has been eliminated from the 16 public service radio channels making way for much cheaper program options such as phone-in talk radio.

Better training of journalists will not address such challenges that are management decisions but that contribute to a diminishing of the role of journal-

ists and a shrinking space for informed public debate.

Bluntly put, our newsrooms are impoverished, and it will take much more than training courses to correct the situation. Beat reporters (with the exception of the political and economics desks) have all but disappeared. A handful of newsrooms retain a health reporter or an education reporter but, more likely than not, stories that require context and background are handled by a thinly stretched, revolving group of young reporters with minimum knowledge of the complexities of health or education policy and practice.

At a leading Johannesburg daily newspaper, the flagship in its group, the night editor can sometimes find himself with only two journalists to call upon to cover the news. Budgets for motor vehicles or drivers to take reporters into the field have shrunk, resulting in greater reliance on the telephone and Internet as principle sources of information. Such working conditions allow for little more than basic newsgathering in the quickest, cheapest way.

In these circumstances, it is unsurprising that "press release journalism" becomes commonplace as newsrooms simply react to events around them without exploring, probing and questioning.

Reinventing Training

Trainers might readily identify the problems with such practices and enthusiastically compile training courses to encourage investigative journalism, specialist coverage, or feature writing. However, in the context of understaffed newsrooms and a perpetual sense of plugging the gaps, there is little space for quality journalism to flourish, no matter how keen young journalists may



South Africa

be. And journalists will remain young, contributing to the “juniorization” of the profession. Poor salaries and the lack of any career path see many talented journalists, often the recipients of costly training, move out of the newsroom and into more lucrative opportunities in government communications, public relations, or the advertising industry.

In this environment, courses that are designed to inspire journalists or encourage creative approaches to the craft are more likely to be exercises in frustration if, at the end of the training, they return to under-resourced newsrooms running on skeleton budgets.

There are no neat answers, but perhaps it is time to consider alternatives to previous definitions of what journalism training courses can provide. We have to address the lack of resources

in newsrooms and find ways to ensure that we keep journalists practicing as journalists so that we reap the benefit of experience and expertise. Concurrent with journalism training that emphasizes ethical, accurate, analytical news coverage, there has to be an injection of funds to hire sufficient staff to produce a quality product.

Does this imply greater focus on the need for innovative management training—not in how to squeeze greater profits from the newsroom—but in how to create the conditions in which quality journalism can thrive?

Are there short-term measures to encourage journalists to stay in the profession but to enjoy a respite from the daily grind through channeling funds into journalism fellowships rather than training courses?

Whatever the approach, it must begin with adequate recognition and understanding of the conditions in which journalists in the developing world are working. It cannot be business as usual. It should not come in the form of preconceived courses that satisfy the trainer but which fail to meet the needs and context of the trainees. ■

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Press Silence Before Rwanda's Genocide

‘If any of my students reacted against the government’s methods of control, they feared for their lives.’

By Jacques A. Rivard

In 1993, some months before the third genocide of the 20th century, the one that left one million people dead and two million in refugee camps, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) invited me to teach journalism to the employees of Radio-Rwanda, the state-owned newsroom in Kigali. This was an experience that exposed the sharp differences between freedom of the press in my country and what was happening with journalists there.

As I was leaving to go to Kigali, the pressure between the Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda was already so intense that CIDA had to buy open plane tickets for me, in case of an emergency return. Contingency evacuation routes by Jeep through Uganda were also planned for, if needed.

Once I arrived in my classroom I found that the Rwandan government had appointed a supervisor to attend my

teaching of journalists, who were both Hutus and Tutsis. Since these groups were already at war with one another, this meant I had to be pretty safe in the approach I took regarding the freedom of the press in front of them.

My surprise came when I asked my Rwandan students to summarize and prepare leads on texts I’d already taught to journalism students at Université de Montréal. I was appalled to learn that in Kigali—unlike in Montreal—these journalists would lead only with what was seen as the “official” news, such as the inauguration of a decontamination process at a packing plant. They would not begin their news stories with information in my prepared text that exposed the political scandal, as did the journalism students in Montreal. These Kagali students, who were working as journalists for Radio-Rwanda, led with the official news. They used not a single word about the scandals.

When I first noticed this, I didn’t react right away in class in the presence of the Rwandan supervisor. I waited to talk to students during breaks. All of the Hutus and Tutsis admitted that they’d seen the real leads—the scandals—but none of them had dared to expose them for fear of adverse, even violent, reactions by the government. Some of them told me that the state’s control was such that in their radio work they had to cancel the news bulletins altogether to read unedited versions of the president’s messages. If any of my students reacted against the government’s methods of control, they feared for their lives.

From then on, I used every moment I had during the class breaks, when the students and I would be away from the supervisor, to tell these Rwandan journalists more about the kind of press freedom we enjoyed in Canada. In talking with them about this, I had to let them know that such latitude still



Rwanda

came with some limitations.

At the conclusion of our time together, the students shared their belief that the violence that had erupted between the Tutsis and the Hutus since the 1950's could have been avoided, or greatly diminished, if members of each group had been better informed

about what was actually happening in their country.

After my experience in Kigali I keep asking myself this question: Would there have been a genocide in Rwanda if journalists there could have done their jobs properly during these decades? ■

Jacques A. Rivard, a 1996 Nieman Fellow, recently retired from the Canadian Broadcasting Corp.

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Training Iraqi Translators How to Act as Reporters

With concerns about safety, 'our interpreters became something much more than translators.'

By Patrick J. McDonnell

“These are not the questions of a journalist,” the wary young man with piercing eyes advised as we sat in the sheik’s house along the lush ribbon of green that brackets the Euphrates, verdant even in the punishing mid-summer heat. “These are the queries of an intelligence agent!”

Such an accusation was nothing to be shrugged off in Iraq’s Sunni Arab heartland, home base of the violent insurgency that was just then gathering momentum. The “I gotcha” look in the eyes of the young man didn’t inspire confidence in a place where mistrust of outsiders was endemic. My interpreter and colleague, Suhail Ahmad, informed me that it was an auspicious time to change the conversation. I put my notebook away nonchalantly, being careful to show no sign of panic to the young man and the equally suspicious companions who had gathered to scope us out. We dropped the topic that had brought us here, a discussion of a religious student from the area who had risen to be imam of a mosque in nearby Fallujah; he had been killed when an explosion ripped through the mosque compound. The U.S. Army said a bomb factory on the mosque grounds had ignited by mistake, killing the young imam and a number of his acolytes. The men at the sheik’s house called them martyrs, killed by the Americans, and weren’t

tolerant of alternate narratives.

Instead, we proceeded to speak at length about the many complexities of Sufi philosophy and its ascetic teachings, which are a major influence in the conservative Sunni hamlets here. We broke bread and partook of the sheik’s okra stew, a sure sign that tensions had eased. Soon the young man with the hostile mien was wondering if I was interested in converting. After another two hours, and after endless glasses of sweet tea and communal goblets of ice water, it seemed finally safe to take our leave. We demurred the young man’s offer that we visit him in his home for a soft drink. Our driver made sure that no one followed us on the lonely roads out, through the date-palm groves, now bursting with multihued fruit, past the turquoise-domed minarets of nearby Fallujah and on to Baghdad.

Reporting: Violence Changes the Way It’s Done

That’s the way it used to work in Iraq, back in the summer of 2003. Foreign journalists felt relative safety in traveling most anywhere, though one always had to be cautious. But generally the Iraqi people were willing to speak, even in the ancient towns along the Euphrates where the insurgency was burgeoning. Our local staffs functioned pretty much



Iraq

like interpreters and fixers in any other foreign news bureau. But lamentably, in Iraq the safety curve always seems to be on the decline. The sense of being under siege only grew; we took more precautions. Night trips were avoided; we began to send scout cars to check out dicey sites before visiting. Everything began to come asunder in March 2004 with the notorious murder of four U.S. contractors in Fallujah and the subsequent Marine attack on the city of mosques, as it is known.

Before long, Fallujah, a place many of us had frequented—I used to make a point of having lunch in Haji Hussein’s, the famous kebaberie on the main drag—became a no-go zone. Then came the steady stream of kidnappings, beheadings, the emergence of insurgent checkpoints where abduction was a likely fate. Most of us in the foreign press corps in Baghdad moved into guarded compounds or walled-off existing residences and hired security guards. Nowadays, many of us travel with two cars, an armed bodyguard in the rear vehicle.

Given these circumstances, our interpreters became something much more than translators. They were transformed into journalists—surrogate journalists. Rather than exposing Western staffers to a bombing aftermath, where tension often reigns, we now typically send an

Iraqi translator/reporter. They conduct street interviews. They arrange meetings and also scout potential interview sites to be sure if the rendezvous points are safe. The danger of taking a non-Iraqi along is two-way: Not only are foreigners threatened, but Iraqis working with us are also at risk.

It is a strange and off-putting way to work, one none of us has ever gotten used to. One colleague referred to it as journalism by “remote control.” And so it is at times. It is also very conflicting: Western staffers remain behind while our Iraqi colleagues go out in the streets and gather the raw information for our stories, risking their lives at every corner. The whole enterprise smacks of some kind of journalistic caste system, and it frustrates correspondents who, by nature, like to get out on the streets. But in my experience, there is great mutual respect between Western and Iraqi staffers. Most every Western news agency in Baghdad has adapted this method of working, to one degree or another.

Reporters try to push the envelope: We visit enclosed and relatively secure settings like homes, political party headquarters, offices and clubs. Mosques, especially Sunni mosques, are more problematic. Traveling through the capital, with its epic traffic jams, regular car bombs, ambushes and permanent aura of latent threat, is always a bit tense. Lately a relative calm in Shiite areas has reopened Shiite neighborhoods like Sadr City to non-Iraqi reporters, though one must always tread carefully. Westerners can work with some caution in the Shiite south, but they have to fly to Basra or Najaf: Driving the principal roads south, routes we traversed without a second thought a little more than a year ago, now means passing through a kidnapper’s gauntlet.

Dangerous Assignments for Iraqi Translators

For Iraqi translators-turned-reporters, training has been largely an on-the-job affair. None of the half-dozen or so translators working for the Los Angeles Times had previous journalistic experience until the U.S. invasion. Few Iraqis

did, in a country lacking a free press for decades. Good Iraqi translators are not easy to find. Arabic speakers from other Arab countries stand out—Iraqi Arabic is very distinct—and also have difficulty working in the culturally and politically charged atmosphere prevalent in Iraq. The translator ranks at the Los Angeles Times have included a doctor, a pharmacist, a university student, an architect, a former professional government translator, and an ex-employee of the information ministry. All have tremendous language skills, intelligence and heart: I credit several with extracting me (and other staffers) from extremely volatile predicaments—possibly saving our lives. None lack for bravery and dedication. After so much time together, we share a bond like infantrymen who have fought a war together. We celebrate their weddings and the births of their children; they send regards to our families on the other side of the world. Sadly, visiting their homes now presents a danger for them. Few tell their friends or neighbors what they do for a living. Working for “the Americans” can be a capital crime here.

For the Iraqi staffs, straight translating of interviews, Arabic-language media reports, documents and other items is easy enough. All are proficient in English. Learning to bring back quotes and descriptions from news scenes is learned quickly as well. The real challenges are developing journalistic intuition, learning to use initiative to follow a story, asking the right questions, capturing the telling details, and identifying issues that attract Western readers. These are very difficult skills to teach; they are instincts that we’ve all developed through the years.

The tradeoffs are many. Recently, one of our Iraqi translators/correspondents volunteered to go to a very dangerous town southeast of Baghdad where dozens of bodies had been washing ashore along the Tigris. We had held off on the trip for a few days until it was relatively safe. He returned without a problem; his files had excellent, and new, information. He interviewed the police chief, medical officials, relatives of the dead, and other crucial players in what remained a murky story of sec-

tarian slaughter. But we needed more texture. And when I spoke with him upon his return, he recounted a moving anecdote: As he was waiting at the police station, a pickup truck arrived with the latest body scooped from the river. Police with plastic gloves and rags tied across their noses and mouths inspected and photographed the badly decomposed remains and looked for identifying jewelry or personal items; they then sent the corpse to the cemetery to be interred according to Muslim tradition. It was compelling material that helped put the story on Page One. It wasn’t in the initial file, but he had the material.

We try to hold weekly meetings for the staff and emphasize the need to think ahead and creatively about issues in the news in Iraq. The newspaper sent two of our translators, including Suhail Ahmad, for a week-long training session in Jordan that was sponsored by the Knight Foundation. Our colleagues and friends are getting better all the time, and all are proud to see their names in the newspaper, either as contributors or as bylined authors. We work as a team. Their loyalty is humbling.

As bureau chief, I stress the need for newly arrived Western reporters to spend time in the translators’ room, discussing possible stories, chatting about what people are saying in this broken nation. Often our Iraqi employees—translators, drivers, guards—are our most visceral link to the outside world of ordinary Iraqis. It’s not an ideal working situation. Nothing in Iraq is especially ideal right now. We all wish it were different. Yet that’s being a journalist in Baghdad these days. Our staffs have learned from us. But more than anything else, we have learned from them. And we are forever grateful. ■

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A Challenging Experience in Cape Verde

'There are journalists who justify their apathy with the lack of [good working] conditions.'



Cape Verde

By Rui Araujo

Just after Christmas last year Luis Laje, the captain of the fishing boat, Intrujao, out of Cape Verde, called me. "You can come," he said to me. "For how long, captain?" I replied. "As long as there are sharks south of ... nowhere," he told me.

"I'll be there tomorrow."

Though I sounded laconic, it was hard for me to keep the satisfaction from my voice when Laje called to let me know he would take me as his second in command of a crew of 23 sailors from the various islands of the North Atlantic archipelago. I flew from Lisbon to Mindelo, Saint Vincent Island, and on the day before we were scheduled to set off, I was sitting at Café Portugal having a drink. From my small table near the door, I could see people walking in the street, and as I sat there a woman walked by, stopped as she noticed me, and then started to shout.

"This is him," I heard her say, "He is the only teacher who made me cry in my entire life"

As I reconnected with this Cape Verdean journalist whom I'd trained, I found myself going back three years in my mind to when I left Portugal for a six-month assignment training television reporters in Cape Verde. It wasn't until this moment that I truly understood the grip that these months together had maintained on the local reporters. I invited her to join me and asked her to tell me the latest news. She nursed a "coffee" for a long time, while we talked. A few hours later I left Mindelo on Intrujao, heading south. On the boat, I had an opportunity to teach Malulula, a fisherman, to read and to

write; I remember very well the day he wrote his name for the first time. He was 40 years old.

Similar strong memories stir in me from those months I spent in Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, when I went there in 2001 to train these TV journalists. In Cape Verde, there are now about 125 journalists, and as of May 2004, nearly half of them (66) had a degree. Thirty-seven percent of them have a high school diploma, and 17 percent do not have a diploma.

The Cape Verdean Experience

When I arrived, Cape Verdean Radio Television (RTC) had only seven or eight reporters (and some of them were working as video editors, too). RTC was the only television station existing in the country. I had been sent there by Portuguese Public Television (RTP) as an experimental journalism instructor. During the past decade I have trained hundreds of Portuguese journalists at Centro de Formacao de Jornalistas (CENJOR) and at RTP in Lisbon. I was also a journalism lecturer at Portuguese universities. The other reason for me being sent to Cape Verde is that the Ministry of Cooperation had decided to launch such a program in former African colonies through its official agencies and RTP. And RTP was completely devoted to government wishes, since its CEO was an appointed government official and the company was financed partially with public funds.

When I arrived in Cape Verde, RTC had one building, poorly constructed,

divided into numerous rooms, and all of the journalists were confined to one of them. Each journalist sat at a desk in a row not unlike a classroom. All of them were young and eager to learn the craft of journalism, though I must confess there were times when I'd want to pack up and leave the country, sometimes twice in the same day.

I was surprised to learn that in addition to doing this training I also was expected to produce (with my fellow cameraman, Luis Monte) a 30-minute, weekend evening news show—on my own. Not one journalist showed up to work on this broadcast. Later I understood more about why: Cape Verde is a poor country, and public transportation is hard to come by, especially on weekends. Cars and gasoline are pretty expensive. But there are obviously other reasons, too.

"There is also a certain amount of apathy," says Filomena Silva, now the editor of the weekly newspaper *A Semana*. "There are journalists who justify their apathy with the lack of [good working] conditions."

One morning I suggested to a reporter I was training that he might do a story about Ana Maria Cabral, the widow of historical Cape Verdean guerrilla leader, Amilcar Cabral. She'd recently arrived here after fleeing a war in Guinea-Bissau, another former Portuguese colony. Not only had she witnessed Cabral's assassination in 1973, but also she was now a refugee in the country her husband had, in part, led to independence more than 30 years earlier.

"I do not have a car," this young reporter told me. To deal with that

issue, I said he could take my Jeep. A while later he was back to see me again. “She does not want to speak with me. She does not give any interviews,” he reported.

I asked him and the cameraman to come with me. We got into my Jeep, and on the way to Ana’s apartment I stopped at a small supermarket and bought some cookies. When we met her, I said I did not need any statements from her. She invited us to come in and share a cup of tea, since she was sick that day. The apartment belonged to the widow of a man whom Amílcar Cabral helped many years ago in the bush. The widow was poor, but concerned. To my amazement we ended up doing a good story that day, and it captured the sense of what seemed tragically romantic about this entire experience.

In this case, I was training these reporters by showing them by example how they might approach such a story. But I used other strategies and approaches as well. Since this was the second time I was training journalists in Cape Verde, I knew that the best way was to tailor my teaching to their particular needs and problems and do so in an informal way. I strongly urged that we should work together as a reporting team and helped them to understand that this is the only way they would succeed. I did this because when I arrived I found that the staff was very divided. In fact, prior to my arrival a reporter had tried unsuccessfully to kill the managing editor. There were reporters who did not talk to their colleagues who worked in the same newsroom. Cameramen and editors were not respected by their fellow reporters. Bringing the staff together—and creating a sense of solidarity among the younger journalists at the station—was perhaps the most important result of my training, even though it is all but impossible to measure the ongoing progress with this effort that took place after my departure.

The next step was to strengthen their background for journalism and to promote and elevate the standards of our craft. These things weren’t happening in Cape Verde, where there is no journal-

ism school, and most of the television reporters did not know even the basic principles of the trade. Nor were these local reporters capable of doing what we’d think of as independent reporting. This was not a surprise to me, since reporters who work in Portugal, my home country, face a similar problem. Without proper training, most tend to mistake propaganda for facts. As Jose Manuel Barata Fayo, a distinguished Portuguese journalist, observed, “Journalists are the portrait of their mediocrity and the portrait of the mediocrity of the powers they reflect. The multiplication of incompetence generates incompetence, as the multiplication of scandals vulgarize scandals.” And with this low level of journalistic competence, their credibility suffers.

After spending some time with these Cape Verdean reporters, I could improve their skills and knowledge—helping them to write and to produce their stories and put a broadcast on the air—but the political constraints remained intact, since most of the journalists had close friends who served in the government.

“Journalists in Cape Verde are comodistas [selfish],” explains Odair Santos, who is one of the Cape Verdean journalists I trained who now works as a radio reporter in Brazil. Silva agrees with this perspective and notes that “there is a lack of motivation and also of professionalism.” From her perspective as an editor, Silva says that “journalism is not a priority in such a poor country. The market is short, but journalists are the real problem.”

What Is Missing?

Commitment is only part of a larger interwoven web of issues. Even with international training programs like the one that brought me to Cape Verde, there exists no political will to improve the situation. “The powers that be use the media at their will. All the government officials in Cape Verde want to control the public media. The opposition is very critical, but they do exactly the same thing when they get back into office,” Santos observes. Re-

porters Without Borders 2005 annual report confirmed this analysis: “The government maintained its pressure on the state-owned media, which did not have complete editorial freedom. But the privately owned press encountered no particular obstacles.”

In 2003, José Carlos Semedo, a TV journalist with the state-owned broadcaster RTC, was suspended for two months along with a producer and an editor, because two guests on the “Press Club” program accused the station’s management of waste while the rest of the corporation was starved of resources and equipment. “Press Club” was dropped.

But on the whole, my sense was that freedom of expression was in good shape in Cape Verde. Several commercial radio stations were started in 2003, and the online press has been expanding and is becoming an important way of reaching the sizable Cape Verdean diaspora. From my experience training reporters in Cape Verde, looking at the situation from an ethical and technical standpoint, I would rate the journalism that is being practiced there as adequate but in need of improvement.

While Cape Verdean journalists will need to find new ways to respond to the many challenges they confront, as they do, those of us who go there as trainers ought to be careful to avoid paternalistic approaches that might satisfy our consciences but do little to provide a solid foundation for positive change. ■

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WATCHDOG

Helping Armenian Reporters Dig Deeper

More in-depth and better-documented stories began to be told after an intensive training program.



Armenia

By Lucinda Fleeson

- *The inside story of a prison murder that took place while guards slept.*
- *Free, life-saving medicine left on the shelf to expire while government cronies sold their own pricey drugs.*
- *Heavy thugs with shaved heads attacking journalists.*
- *A justice system that abuses victims more than punishes offenders.*
- *Forests on state land cut down with impunity to build cemeteries and mansions for favored officials.*
- *Women sold into sex slavery and smuggled to Dubai.*
- *Earthquake victims who were promised new apartments by the government after their own had crumbled in 1988, but who still live in shacks.*

Any investigative reporter would instantly recognize these stories as a rich load of material to mine. Here in the United States we'd be amazed that all of these shocking events are taking place—routinely—in an area the size of Maryland. Yet in Armenia this is only a sampling of the stories pursued by a small number of intrepid, fearless journalists after an investigative training program run by the International Center for Journalists (ICJ) in Washington, D.C. and sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

Thirteen years after breaking away from the former Soviet Union, Armenian journalists readily tell you that their nation's press is not free. They confront almost insurmountable obstacles in a society steeped in government, police and legal system corruption.

It would be unrealistic to expect that any month-long program, no matter how ambitious, would result in major

changes in work practices or attitudes of journalists. Yet this project to improve investigative reporting techniques for 10 Armenian journalists had a remarkable effect in encouraging them to tackle hard topics and to bring their stories to fruition. This was the most sophisticated and intensive training project I have had the good fortune to be involved with since I began teaching journalists overseas on a Knight International Press Fellowship in 1998.

A Training Journey

Before that fellowship, I had only wistfully fantasized about going over to post-Soviet countries to help build a free press. But in 1997 I had just left a job in Hawaii and had no mortgage or car to support. All my possessions were packed up and put in cold storage, so it was a perfect opportunity to travel and live out some of those fantasies. I asked to be sent to Eastern Europe, and Susan Talalay and the other folks who ran the Knight Fellowship Program granted my wish, assigning me to Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic for nine months. I taught seminars and workshops ranging in duration from one hour to four months, reaching hundreds of journalists. My accommodations ranged from a cozy furnished apartment in Budapest to a blur of old Communist-built hotels with less than perfect amenities. Hours were long.

I was hooked. The year was transformative and set me on a new career path. While I'm very proud of the work I did as a reporter at The Philadelphia Inquirer for 15 years, I've found that this later work as a trainer to be perhaps more meaningful—because of the friends I've

made, because it reminds me of the soaring purpose of journalism, despite its rooting in nitty-gritty, grinding details, many of which have to be extracted iota by iota, and because it expands my horizon beyond my comfortable life and wakes me up.

Since 1998, I've been engaged in training assignments in Kosovo, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Macedonia (I had been slated to do a training session for a local television station there, but it was cancelled when the station was bombed that day by Albanian rebels). These experiences became the foundation for a training manual I wrote for ICFJ, which has since been translated into 18 languages and distributed worldwide.

In 2001, I went to Botswana for four months as the first John McGee International Press Fellow for Southern Africa. (I was followed by Nieman classmate Philip Hilts, who became the second McGee fellow.) Now I work with foreign journalists on a full-time basis, as director of the Humphrey Fellowship Program at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism.

Initially I found overseas training too daunting. I've watched many trainers give up, finding the country too corrupt to allow for independent publications, or the resources too puny, so that reporters churn out two or three stories a day. But I began to see even the smallest improvements as significant and to realize that results won't occur overnight. And we trainers have gotten better.

The Armenian Project

Last year's Armenia project, for instance, was so effective because it was intensive; it lasted over several months

and focused on producing high-quality investigative stories. Granted, it was more generously funded than most programs and had the advantage of working with strong local journalists, organized by Edik Baghdasaryan, head of the Armenian Association of Investigative Journalists. His tenacity and bravery in tackling the criminal corruption in Armenia astonished me.

In January 2004, the 10 Armenian journalists were flown to Washington for a week of seminars in American-style reporting. Then each of them, accompanied by a translator when warranted, was dispatched to an outstanding newspaper or television station located in cities around the United States. For two weeks they observed investigative practices, often working alongside reporters at the Richmond Times-Dispatch, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, or KNBC in Los Angeles, among other sites.

My mission was to work with the journalists individually on story projects of their own choosing. While the reporters had promised to send progress reports from Armenia by e-mail to me in the ensuing months, I heard little from them. I feared for the worst. After I arrived in Yerevan in May 2004 and began meeting with them, I found that nearly all had made substantial progress. Some had finished major projects.

Not all 10 of them have completed stories, as of this date. Some suggested that editors at participating news organizations should have been required to publish or broadcast projects or, at the least, have been required to give reporters time off from their regular duties to complete a project, if that was the limiting factor. But I am hesitant to place such demands on any news organization. Investigative reporting is not for everyone. We can't force people into it. Sometimes the obstacles (lack of time, lack of money, resistant editors) serve to dissuade people from stories that they, or their editors, were not ready to take on in the first place.

As trainers, we coach from the sidelines; it is the reporters and their editors who must decide whether or not to put their organization behind a controversial story. After all, it is they who could be fired or find that all the copies of their

newspaper suddenly disappear, and it is they who could have their station suddenly lose its license or be visited in their office by heavy-set bodyguards of criminal kingpins. All of these events have happened in very recent years to Armenian editors who have pushed the unspoken limits too far.

I sometimes fear that our training opened people's eyes and ambitions to the kind of journalism that can be accomplished at some of the best news organizations operating in a free society, but then returned them to their situations with little armor against what the reporters refer to as "the Armenian reality." Yet as repressive and punishing as oppressive forces of government and criminal corruption can be, reporters in Armenia show time after time their agility in getting stories done—perhaps sometimes in less than perfect fashion than might be wished, but nevertheless done. They play a dangerous game of thrust and parry, advance, retreat. Stakes are high. Punishments are visible, swift and serious.

The 10 participants were from a wide range of organizations and included television and print reporters who worked in newspapers, magazines and online. While some of the reporters were already very experienced in tackling investigative stories, others were not. Likewise, the journalism philosophies of their news organizations also varied widely, from meek to crusading. We endorsed this wide range. Journalism training is after long-term results. Training as many people as possible to reach for higher standards increases the possibility of attaining them.

Investigative Journalism

When I was a reporter at the Inquirer, the newspaper's policy was not to have a permanent investigative team. Instead, reporters at every level had the opportunity to pursue an in-depth story if they came up with a good idea. At the Inquirer we shied away from the term "investigative reporting," in favor of "in-depth," "enterprise," or "project" reporting. One reason is that we felt that important, in-depth stories should not always have to reveal corruption or catch

bad guys. Probing accounts of health, environment and social issues can be equally, if not more, important.

In Armenia, everything reporters do could be considered investigative reporting, because they have to fight for every bit of information. Our training aimed not only to foster ambitious story selection, but also to help reporters in their daily work by encouraging them to base stories on facts and documents while aiming for fairness and balance. Many of the 10 Armenian reporters asked for and received government documents, often to their surprise. Some found the documents to be unreliable, but that, too, is a fact that needs to be reported in a country struggling for transparency. Sometimes the reporters had to scale back their original ideas when obstacles proved too difficult, for now. In training we focused on preparing alternative "minimum" stories to do if the "big one" becomes too elusive.

After my two weeks in Armenia, it was all too apparent that this developing country has made great strides but is struggling to hold onto a tenuous democracy, with only limited freedoms and restricted access to information. Yet I left convinced that these 10 journalists are likely to be important players in Armenia's future as an open society. ■

Lucinda Fleeson, a 1985 Nieman Fellow, is the director of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, University of Maryland, which brings outstanding journalists to campus for a year of academic and professional pursuits. Her training manual, "Dig Deep & Aim High: A Training Model for Teaching Investigative Reporting," is published by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and has been translated into 18 languages and distributed worldwide. This article is adapted from her new training guide, "On the Right Track: Investigative Reporting in Armenia," also published by ICFJ, in both English and Armenian.

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Advice and Guidance for International Journalism Trainers

'Until overseas trainers get to know the interests of the particular individuals with whom they'll work, they are unlikely to be able to specify terms of success.'

By John Bare

Sitting in Chad Gordon's social science methods course in the fall of 1966, Phil Meyer, then a Nieman Fellow, realized that he could turn the scholarly methods into tools for newspaper reporting. Combining what he learned from a political science course with the chance to have computers do some of the number crunching, Phil cobbled together what became known as precision journalism. He has carried this notion of reinvention into his present-day journalism classes in Chapel Hill, where he teaches students how to pick the most useful innovations from various disciplines on campus.

I've adapted Phil's interdisciplinary approach to help create planning and evaluation departments at two large U.S. foundations. These experiences have convinced me that journalists preparing for overseas training assignments can heighten the impact of their work by borrowing from the same toolbox.

In starting with risk analysis, for example, three central questions emerge: What can go wrong? What is the likelihood it will go wrong? What are the consequences? Journalists who do this can then work through scenarios to identify the few key variables to track in deciding whether and when to trigger a contingency plan.

Preparing Journalists for Overseas Training

For several years Susan Talalay directed the Knight International Press Fellowship Program for the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ), where she is now vice president. The program sends journalists overseas for intense six- to nine-month stretches in which they

provide training assistance to media organizations and individual journalists. To prep these Knight Fellows for the experience, Talalay and her colleagues developed a weeklong orientation process, using role-playing exercises and scenario-planning to sharpen their skills at dealing with potential risks. She started keeping a list of real-life problems trainers encountered in various countries that she used with new fellows to prepare them better for what they might encounter.

"We've taken situations that have been less than perfect in fellowships and written up composite case studies for use in our orientation sessions," Talalay says. "I don't think there's any benefit in pretending nothing ever goes wrong. That's just not real life. If we've had someone in Uganda and run into problems and we're sending someone else to Uganda, they need to understand what might happen. I think full disclosure is better."

The experience of Knight Fellow Bonnie Huang helps new cohorts of fellows navigate complex cultural sensitivities and free-press norms. A veteran broadcast journalist, Huang spent nine months—from 2002 to 2003—in Cambodia and Vietnam. Her assignment: Train journalists to cover elections. Writing in an International Center for Journalists' publication that reports on the work of the fellows, Huang summed up the barriers she faced in Cambodia:

"From the start, we had many naysayers—chief among them our own team of Khmer journalists. The election unit was supposed to have five reporters, five cameramen, and two

editors. One reporter never bothered to show up at the small cobwebbed office that would become our makeshift newsroom for two months. The others expressed doubts that critical views of the government would be approved by station managers who are state employees answering to the ruling party. 'I'm afraid for my family,' said a reporter in his late 30's who eventually dropped out of the project. Security concerns ran rampant among the cameramen, too. They worried about retaliation for presenting dissenting opinions. And with new incidents of political violence running in the headlines, their fears were realistic. When one member of the group declared, 'I don't want to be seen on camera,' others nodded emphatically in agreement. No one wanted to be associated with the risky venture. I had never before heard of TV reporters refusing face time!"

In just a few months, Huang and her Western colleagues overcame many of the barriers and helped Cambodian journalists introduce independent journalism into the election coverage. Persistence paid off. Early on her team of trainers often lost debates over individual editing decisions, Huang explains, "but we won the war." As they made incremental gains on reporting techniques and a commitment to transparency—eventually airing footage of government guards shoving news cameras out of the way—the public's demand for high-quality election coverage validated the new approach she was teaching. Once station management adopted Huang's "respect for principles of independent journalism," her team could focus on boosting reporters' skills.

To help train new Knight Fellows, the Knight International Press Fellowship Program relies on Gary Weaver from American University's School of International Service. Weaver is an expert at preparing executives who are relocating to new countries. In part, the orientation helps fellows come to see themselves as others see them. That is, to see themselves through the eyes of their foreign colleagues. In their orientation, fellows lead mock workshops in which they are confronted with all of the skepticism and reluctance they might face once they hit the ground.

The scenario and role-play work forces fellows to match contingency plans to various hazards. Some problems, such as language barriers, are common to every group of fellows. The program anticipates this by budgeting for interpreters and providing an orientation session on the pitfalls of hiring interpreters. Other problems illustrate the need to handle surprises. In Moldova, at one point, trainers learned programs should not run past nightfall because there was no electricity to keep lights on. Also trainers who go overseas with spouses have encountered difficulties unlike trainers who go alone. In dangerous or difficult situations, antsy spouses may quickly push for a return trip home.

Evaluating the Preparation

Lee Becker, director of University of Georgia's Cox Center, conducted an extensive evaluation of the Knight International Press Fellowship Program in 1999 and found the approach of Talalay and her staff produced real results. From face-to-face interviews with 531 journalists who had been affected by the training work of 33 fellows in 11 countries in Europe and Latin America from 1994 through 1998, Becker found evidence of the program's impact on journalists' attitudes and their professional practices. Among Becker's findings:

- More than 60 percent said the fellows had a positive impact on their career goals and ambitions and their under-

standing of journalism's basics.

- More than 60 percent reported that the fellows had a positive impact on their view of news and their understanding of the role of the press in a democratic society.
- Seventy-two percent said the fellows had a positive impact on their approach to doing the job.
- Fifty percent reported writing different types of stories as a result of their work with the Knight Fellows, and 7 in 10 said the quality of stories had changed.
- About 2 in 10 journalists believed the fellows' impact was even greater, reporting that the fellows contributed to the economic stability of

As they made incremental gains on reporting techniques and a commitment to transparency—eventually airing footage of government guards shoving news cameras out of the way—the public's demand for high-quality election coverage validated the new approach she was teaching.

media in the host country. Some of this assessment might be the result of fellows' impact on institutions, either by establishing media centers (Moldova, Ukraine) or improving the quality of existing centers (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Russia) or university programs (Poland, Chile).

"The more time the fellow spent with those with whom she or he worked, the more likely there was to be impact," Becker writes in the evaluation. "The more varied the types of interaction between the fellow and the persons with whom she or he worked, the greater the reported levels of impact. In other words, it is better to spend a week with the training program than a day, but it also is better, regardless of amount of time spent, to meet socially with the 'students' outside the session, go with them on assignments and talk one-on-one, than it is to do any one of these things by itself."

Approaches That Work

These findings and Talalay's use of real-life cases force journalists to confront the kind of "outside view" that researchers have found helps people calibrate their expectations to something closer to reality. Writing in the Harvard Business Review, Dan Lovallo and Daniel Kahneman prescribe the possession of an "outside view" as a way to remedy "delusional optimism." Without this kind of reality check, trainers might tend to inflate their expectations for performance.

Talalay's approach yields an additional benefit that goes beyond preparing fellows for specific scenarios. The

role-playing forces fellows to practice new ways of thinking about situations. It's a skill that Karl Weick, a psychology professor at Michigan's Ross School of Business, calls "sensemaking," which he contends is a better predictor of success than one's ability to follow a linear plan. Instead of overplanning—particularly when the context is shifting all around us—Weick suggests using the method of establishing "just enough guidelines to keep people moving." It's not our ability to follow a predetermined script that helps us succeed in unpredictable settings. Instead, it's our "mindfulness" in reacting to all kinds of signals around us, including even the slightest hints that failure lurks around the next corner. In the Harvard Business Review article, Weick says highly effective organizations and individuals are fixated on failure. This concentrated focus permits them to "distinguish themselves by being able to detect incredibly weak warning signs and then taking strong, decisive action."

Experienced journalists are nimble enough to succeed in dicey situations and should resist any temptation to craft an overly precise, linear plan. In fact, the unpredictable nature of overseas situations might require fellows to dodge what is often the key question in any linear evaluation model: How will success be defined? Until overseas trainers get to know the interests of the particular individuals with whom they'll work, they are unlikely to be able to specify terms of success. It's good to show up prepared to teach about free press values, but trainers cannot ignore a discovery that the intended beneficiaries want technology training more than anything else. Or the discovery that journalists exerting free press ideals are likely to be murdered.

These realities place a premium on trainers gathering base-line information on the interests, strengths and needs of the journalists and media organizations with whom they will be doing this training. Using short questionnaires, either on paper or by e-mail, trainers can systematically gain a lot of knowledge about these people's views and expectations, including the journalists' attitudes toward free press ideals, their knowledge of technology, and issues of ethics and press standards. Trainers can also get explicit descriptions of what their clients most want to accomplish and what they fear most.

Gaining this information about current circumstances means that trainers arrive with a base line they can use to compare developments along the way. By making explicit what often remains only implicit also enables better learning to occur along the way. When this information-gathering moment is missed, there is no way to recreate it or to capture retroactively what was understood or expected before the trainer arrived. Doing this shouldn't be difficult for reporters, who by their own nature and training are good at listening, gathering data, and determining its context.

Seeking such information is also a smart approach for two other reasons.

The first emerges out of Becker's findings that show overseas journalists believe they also have things to teach trainers, thus making this a two-way exchange of knowledge and ideas.

... the unpredictable nature of overseas situations might require fellows to dodge what is often the key question in any linear evaluation model: How will success be defined?

When Becker looked at the effects the overseas training had on the fellows, he found that:

- Nearly all fellows said the experience had a "positive influence" on their lives.
- Many pointed to "personal growth" as a primary benefit, which was often the result of learning the history or culture of other countries or learning to deal with new situations.
- For some fellows, the experience led to a second career, either as a teacher or as a volunteer for additional foreign opportunities.
- The nature of the impact was influenced by the fellow's career stage. For many of the younger fellows, the experience was a "turning point" in their careers (as is found with Peace Corps alumni). For older fellows, the experience was less about self-discovery and more about the world and the way journalism functions in other cultures.

Secondly, trainers can have as much impact through natural networks of journalists as they can through direct contact with a few individuals. This insight puts a premium on trainers obsessively tracking contact information for everyone they reach and, in turn, for the individuals these people reach. In popular books, such as "The Tipping Point" and "Linked," the importance of mapping individuals' professional networks to uncover the most influential hubs is highlighted. In gathering base-

line data, trainers should document the journalists' networks and seek out contact information. On whom do these journalists rely for professional advice? Who calls on them for advice? By

connecting with these network contacts—easier today thanks to e-mail—trainers can establish virtual learning communities that can persist beyond the duration of their overseas stay.

In the end, the most apt metaphor for overseas training experiences might come from evaluator Michael

Patton, who observes that being in an emergent situation can feel as though you are walking through a maze where the walls shift with each step. Or when four people are walking through the maze together, and the walls shift again with each step each person takes. When this happens, trainers need to rely on real-time feedback loops to recalibrate the context—and then also their expectations—again and again. It can become more like monitoring a hurricane or babysitting triplets than following a recipe for coconut cake. Principles of rationality are out the window, and no amount of planning will prepare trainers for these circumstances.

Contrary to the usual cautionary guidance, Weick advises that sometimes, at moments like this, a person has to "leap in order to look Once you start to act, you can flesh out your interpretations and rework them. But it's the action itself that gets you moving again." ■

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Trainers Can Remain Foreign to Local Journalists

Due to cultural and language differences, trainers can be ‘regarded as a sort of extraterrestrial as they deliver their advice and lessons.’

By Ragıp Duran

The road to becoming a journalist often travels through some kind of organized training and education in journalism in which a person learns about journalistic values and methods that are universally agreed upon. But the practice of journalism can be a peculiar, subjective, local and original activity. So when it comes to training that takes place outside of one’s own country, the use of language to convey thoughts, as well as the particular aspects of cultural and social concepts, tend to narrow the limits of what can be accomplished through journalistic training abroad. Here are some thoughts I’ve heard expressed in various places I’ve gone to work with journalists:

- Here we have been steeped in the traditions of Anglo-Saxon journalism, and therefore we adhere to the principle of nonintervention in private life. (Nicosia, Cyprus)
- We are broadcasting from Brussels, but our target audience are Kurds, so we cannot exactly decide on what approach to adopt. (Brussels, Belgium)
- There are some Turkish words that we use in Greek also but they have different meanings than in the Turkish you use. (Alexandroupolis, Greece)

I have been giving lectures in media ethics, civic journalism, and radio journalism for nearly 10 years, initially and most of all through Galatasaray University and other various institutions of higher education in Istanbul, as well as at training seminars attended by local radio and television journalists in Turkey. My own training in journalism happened between 1983-84 at Centre

de Formation et de Perfectionnement des Journalistes in Paris within the “Journalist in Europe” program, which has sadly been closed, and as a 2000 Nieman Fellow.

As a media trainer, I’ve worked abroad twice at the training seminars organized in Cyprus by the European Journalism Centre, attended by Turkish and Greek Cypriot journalists, two other times with the Turkish-Greek border correspondents’ group (at Alexandroupolis and Xomotini) and five times at training meetings organized in Brussels and Cologne for Kurdish and Turkish television journalists.

What Qualifies a Trainer?

Without doubt, training seminars abroad are different in a number of aspects from lectures and seminars held at home. Before dissecting these differences, let me share a related experience, conveyed by National Public Radio Ombudsman Jeffrey Dvorkin at the Organization of News Ombudsmen (ONO) meeting held in Istanbul in September 2003. Here is the story he shared with us:

“I received an invitation from the State Department. Its wording was something to the effect of ‘We would like to invite you to participate in a series of training seminars we will organize in Iraq for training local journalists and would like you to share your expertise and journalistic approach with your Iraqi colleagues if you deem it appropriate.’ Upon a first reading of the invitation, I had thought it might be all right. When I went home in the evening I discussed it with my wife, and I think she became

a bit tense at first because of the war situation in Iraq. However, she then said to me, ‘Journalistic training in Iraq, eh? Is that journalistic imperialism?’ When I thought about what she said I tended to agree with her. First of all, I could not speak any Arabic. I didn’t know anything about Iraqi journalism, either. Moreover, considering the fact that the armed forces of the nation of which I was a member had a presence in Iraq, I tried to figure out how I would be perceived by my Iraqi colleagues as a journalist trainer of that nation. I decided to decline the State Department’s invitation.”

The experience narrated by Dvorkin, who is now ONO’s president, is an important one. Putting aside the political-military aspect of the issue, there are dozens of particular, subjective, local aspects of how journalism is practiced in a certain place and time. Hubert Beuve-Méry, the founder of the French daily, *Le Monde*, said “Each country produces the press it deserves,” words well-remembered when it comes to deciding on who will train whom.

Perhaps the most obvious problem is language. Even if the trainees might speak and understand English, they need to think in the language they publish and broadcast in, and not in English. Language is not just a neutral and innocent means of communication; it contains within it the dimension of thought with its ideological content. Add to this the fact trainers do not usually come from the same cultural and educational background as the foreign students they are lecturing, and the chances improve that the lecture will be a solid one but hollow in content to its audience. It will be interesting but not

terribly applicable or of any practical long-term use.

In training journalists, it must be taken into account that the reader is perhaps just as important as the journalist. Therefore, even if trainers communicate with those who are being trained by relying on English as a medium, without a good grasp of the target audience—the psychological mindscape of the readers and their cultural and media literacy level—the trainers run a pretty high risk of being regarded as a sort of extraterrestrial as they deliver their advice and lessons. Local traditions, customs, habits and, in particular, the extent and quality of citizens' relationship with the media of their country (it could be love-hate or love and hate) are all factors a trainer must factor into any training.

When Training Works

Journalistic training abroad is not impossible, nor is it completely useless.

Based on my experience with training seminars involving multinational groups of journalists, students and trainees, there were plenty of opportunities to learn from each other about the press and journalism practices of neighboring countries. And when related foreign experience is perceived and implemented in a deeper and creative manner by the trainees, it can be transformed into a local experience. In areas such as Cyprus or Greece, mixed participant training seminars with journalists from a variety of countries can lead to a camaraderie and solidarity. Being able to get to know the "other" face-to-face is a huge achievement in itself.

Finally, at this time of global media and mixed media, in which the news media, in general, are experiencing a crisis of confidence and reliability, such training seminars held abroad are useful as a reminder of the universally shared principles and rules of traditional journalism. Through them, journalists can present alternatives to

the negative trends in our craft that are observed on a global level. What is a more futile exercise is to expect that one can impose a certain style of journalism on those who work in a country where the techniques and skills cannot be implemented. I was extremely lucky to have experienced the positive side of this training as a Nieman Fellow. It is an opportunity that I wish every colleague could have. ■

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Lessons in Teaching Foreign Journalists

'Issues of press freedom and independence . . . burn into your consciousness and touch your heart.'



Poland

By Jerome Aumente

After the 1989 collapse of Communism in Poland, I was in Warsaw planning training programs to assist journalists when a respected Polish journalist advised me not to just teach new skills but to change attitudes. For too many decades under totalitarian rule many journalists had been "reporting on their knees," he told me. A similar situation was to be found throughout Central and Eastern Europe as Soviet bloc governments crumbled

rapidly, and journalism was reinvented as part of the nations' journeys toward democracy.

Teaching practical reporting and editing skills would be important, but what this person urged me to focus on was getting reporters to abandon their ingrained habit of printing official government releases unchallenged. They needed to learn tougher interviewing techniques and acquire the skills needed to do enterprise and investigative

reporting. It would also be important for them to be shown how to create new laws to help secure the right to bring government information to citizens and to protect reporters' confidential sources. They'd also need to establish protections against the harassing criminal libel and slander suits and develop tougher ethics codes to restore public trust in the news media.

There had been decades of official censorship during Poland's period of

martial law and self-censorship by journalists during quieter times. This was the environment into which students of journalism in the past had emerged from schools that too often were little more than propaganda training mills. Compliant “nomenklatura,” handpicked by the Communist party to run the news media or the journalism schools, had left a rank odor in much of the Soviet bloc’s media. Broadcasting—tightly controlled by governments in the region—had to be overhauled with an infusion of newly licensed independent stations.

In time, Polish journalists did scrap regulations such as the Law of Authorization, which required reporters to submit copy to quoted sources to get signed authorization before publishing or broadcasting the quotes. In this process accurate quotes could be censored by officials with squeamish, second thoughts about what they had said. (It surprised us to learn that some meeker journalists supported this law because it put the onus of accuracy on the source and gave the journalists protection against libel actions. Fortunately, many others opposed or ignored the regulations, and the restrictions collapsed.)

Adapting to Cultural Differences

For Americans to teach journalism successfully in other countries requires them to step back and challenge their own assumptions about journalism training rather than attempt to retrofit a particular curricula. Instead what is taught must be tailored to the external circumstances involved with fragile emergent economies and transitional democracies.

For us, in Poland, this meant not rushing in with grand schemes to “train” journalists in our image, but spending many days in informational visits with journalists and educators. We listened and jointly assessed the needs, agreed upon short- and long-term plans, and recruited indigenous journalists and educators to be actively involved in the training and to assume leadership roles in teaching. Key among our goals was the hope that we could train others as

trainers and thereby institutionalize our efforts. Everyone, we agreed, must commit to this for the long haul and not just sponsor episodic events.

The collapse of Communism opened the floodgates to an outpouring of journalism training, seminars, workshops, exchange visits, fellowships, brand new or retooled university journalism education. It was unparalleled, the equivalent after the cold war of a Marshall Media Assistance plan for newspapers, television, radio and magazines, and university journalism education.

What we learned from our experience in Poland—and what hundreds of other journalists and foundations supporting their training efforts abroad have learned from working in similar situations—has important implications as the climate for independent news media improves with governmental changes being brought about through wars, revolution or electoral transition. Coupled with the communication and information-swapping tools of the Internet and the newer multimedia environment, it’s an opportune time to learn from our successes and from our mistakes, as more opportunities for such training open up in Arab and Islamic nations, as well as in Asia and Africa. [See box on page 86 for strategies for training international journalists.] And there remains a need for training in some parts of Europe, despite some funders’ mistaken assumption to the contrary.

Experiences in Training Journalists

Training of journalists began for me in 1979 when thousands of them came to Rutgers University’s Journalism Resources Institute, which I founded and directed until I retired as professor emeritus from the School of Communication, Information and Library Studies in 2000. Still I remain involved with overseas training programs for journalists and assist universities seeking to modernize their journalism curricula.

In 1989 the U.S. Information Agency in Washington, D.C. asked me to assist nations emerging from Communist

rule in Europe with training of journalists, and that is how I came to work in Poland soon after the election of Solidarity. Since then I’ve taken nearly 100 overseas training or assessment trips to Poland, Russia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia, as well as in Latin America and Western Europe. Now I develop and direct programs in partnership with Arab journalists from seven countries whose work in the United States is supported by the Meridian International Center in Washington, D.C.

It’s been fascinating to track the evolution of these efforts. At first, in Central and Eastern Europe, there was the need for immediate, short-term workshops for print and broadcast media. To respond, we assembled teams of American journalists and educators to crisscross countries to conduct workshops. When more permanent support followed, media resource and training centers were established by various organizations in major capitals, such as Warsaw, Prague and Budapest. Linkages with U.S. universities followed as old restraints fell aside. Stagnant educational ponds were refreshed, curriculum modernized, facilities upgraded, and better linkages were forged with professional journalists. Fellowship programs increased opportunities for foreign journalists to come to the United States, and this gave European journalists closer exposure to American news media and universities.

It is expensive to run ongoing training programs, but the foundations and government sources help. [See accompanying box on page 87 for information on major funding sources.] The opportunity to work overseas in international journalism programs is a special privilege and very different from the benign atmosphere of the more affluent American universities and news media. Issues of press freedom and independence are drawn in vivid real-life examples that burn into your consciousness and touch your heart. Once they do, there is no way to underestimate the value of our First Amendment freedoms.

Reporting in the Resistance

I think of a journalist friend in Krakow, Poland who helped create a university student radio station that evolved from a cable radio dormitory service into a nationally licensed public radio station with hundreds of thousands of listeners. As we walked along a street, she recalled when, as a graduate student during martial law, she pushed a baby carriage with her infant son sitting atop a pile of hidden, freshly printed underground newspapers, until one day she was caught by the police. (She was released from police custody and was not deterred from remaining active in the underground opposition.)

Another excellent newspaper reporter told of working for underground newspapers and using her advanced pregnancy to distract secret police attention from the mimeograph machine provided by a European labor union that she helped smuggle from Warsaw to Krakow. Another journalist who has worked with me in many projects casually pointed to the jail where he was held for demonstrating against censorship. Upon release he chose to work as an orderly in a mental hospital until a free press could be restored. A dean of a journalism school in Prague told me he became a window washer while he waited for Communism to fall. And there is the woman who directed the journalism program at the University of Sarajevo who bravely pedaled her bicycle through sniper alley every day to reach her classes during the Bosnian war. Teaching in basement classrooms pockmarked with mortar shells, she never missed her classes and burned furniture in a wood stove to heat the frozen classroom.

In this line of work it is common to meet journalists who've been jailed or had begun their reporting careers by working for one of the hundreds of underground "samizdat" newspapers, some of which became over-ground successes, such as Poland's "Gazeta Wyborcza" (Election Gazette), now one of that country's preeminent newspapers. Among my mementos from my many trips are tiny, meticulously printed

Strategies for Training International Journalists

Decades of experience in assisting journalists in foreign countries offer insights into what works best. In a book I am writing about training journalists, both in the United States and overseas, I focus on some preliminary lessons learned that have broad implications for international journalism training. What follows are examples of what appear to result in successful approaches to international training.

- Careful needs assessments before the projects are launched and close planning and consultation with the journalists, media associations, and universities in the host country.
- Building on an institutional base to sustain the program with indigenous trained journalists and educators who assume the job of long-term training and curriculum development.
- Consideration of many options for journalist training, including shorter-term workshops targeted to specific skills and subjects; creation of permanent media resource centers; cultural exchanges and visits to the United States; longer-term fellowships at universities, and increased opportunities for hands-on training.
- Longer-term fellowships at universities and news outlets are im-

portant and must be supported by a variety of funding.

- Universities in host nations should modernize their journalism curriculum for graduate and undergraduate study, support faculty exchanges and joint research, and partner with U.S. universities.
- Longer-term assignments, in which American journalists train counterparts in another nation for up to a year, and academic assignments for faculty through Fulbright grants that allow for a semester or full academic year overseas can be very effective.
- Better coordination of disparate programs to reduce duplication and better target resources, without stifling entrepreneurship.
- The Internet and other multimedia information sharing approaches should be increased to train journalists online.
- Programs need to travel beyond the capital centers and increase support to regional news organizations that are often overlooked or underrepresented.

There is still much more research that needs to be done on what works and what fails in international training efforts, and this information needs to be shared with interested parties. ■ —J.A.

banned books that fit in the palm of my hand, given by those who published them in underground presses. Secret libraries in homes allowed many to share these clandestine publications. And so-called "flying" universities flourished underground when journalists weren't free to teach.

Young journalists from this era of resistance worked with us during our early years in Poland when we argued

intensively over what constitutes objectivity or why journalists should give equal attention to all sides of an issue, even when this meant reporting fairly on politicians from discredited regimes who sought rebirth in a transitional democratic society. A tendency to mix polemical attacks with reporting—an instinct of their underground reporting—took years to strip away. We worked with editors to help devise

Support for International Journalism Training

Many organizations contribute to international training efforts. In the past, funding has come from a variety of sources, some private, others governmental. The United States Information Agency (USIA), since folded into the public diplomacy wing of the U.S. State Department, launched major programs in Central and Eastern Europe. The Humphrey Fellowships and the Ron Brown Fellowships also support international journalists through the State Department. The International Media Fund was created to fund major training and resources to newspapers and broadcasters. The International Media Training Center of the International Broadcasting Bureau-Voice of America expanded its workshops in the United States and overseas, as well as its professional development year fellowship for journalists.

Private foundations and organizations have also provided key support for these programs. The leaders in this effort include The Open Society programs of George Soros, the work of the Freedom Forum and its former Media Studies Center, Internews, a California-based media organization IREX, the International Research & Exchanges program and its ProMedia projects,

training centers launched by James Greenfield, formerly of The New York Times, the International Center for Journalists in Washington, D.C., the Meridian International Center, and the National Endowment for Democracy. Other programs that provide education and support for international journalists include the Nieman Foundation at Harvard, the Knight Fellowships at Stanford, the Knight-Wallace Journalism Fellowship at Michigan, the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship at Maryland, and the Jack R. Howard Fellowships in International Journalism at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

In my case, Rutgers University encouraged the school's involvement and provided a nurturing environment for our institute. When our program was in its infancy, I wrote about our efforts in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and that article sparked an offer of help from Bill Moyers, the public broadcaster, who chaired the Florence and John Schumann Foundation. A grant of \$300,000 of seed money allowed me to leverage our efforts and led to other foundation and government projects totaling several million dollars over the intervening years.

■ —J.A.

ethical codes based on their culture and conditions and on ways to draft laws for greater access to government information.

Changing Habits, Facing Dangers

We heard journalists describe how newsroom colleagues now sitting next to them as rehabilitated coworkers once acted as government collaborators and worked with them on ways to establish trust. A radio reporter disdainfully

talked of a broadcast colleague who, during the martial law takeover in Poland, collaborated—saying he could almost “hear him” in military uniform as he delivered censored news.

In Serbia, just before President Slobodan Milosevic was removed from office, we did a series of workshops throughout the country for independent radio and local television stations that were steadily being closed down due to their opposition to his regime. The owner of one station in Niš had to flee the country not long after we left: He ended up a

refugee in the United States and was helped by us and a number of American journalistic organizations.

During the late 1990's, an editor and publisher from Banja Luka in Bosnia I had worked with during one of our many seminars in the United States did an investigative exposé of Bosnian Serb war crimes. Two days before our scheduled reunion in Bosnia, he lost both legs in a car bomb explosion aimed at his reporting. Within weeks he was in a wheelchair at meetings urging young journalists not be scared off by his attack. Later, we helped get him financial assistance for prosthetics and rehabilitation. He was subsequently honored by the Committee to Protect Journalists at its global awards ceremony and has continued to send staff to our programs.

The complications and dangers faced by journalists unfortunately continue to this day. Arab journalists I am now working with tell me stories of censorship. One told of being forced to flee Iraq when he spoke out against a repressive regime. Others share stories of their fathers and uncles being killed in sectarian fighting in the Middle East. Not only do we have the opportunity to offer these reporters training, but also from them we learn much about the dangers many of them face as they try to uncover stories of terrorism when their reportorial targets are not above beheading them. ■

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When Bureaucracy Trumps Excellence

In Eastern Europe, journalists struggle to find their footing.



Slovenia

By Valerie Hyman

It's been two years since I returned from the republic of Slovenia. I still yearn for the scale and beauty of the land and the warmth and strength of its people.

As for the remnants of its Soviet bureaucracy—that I can do without.

The U.S. Department of State invited me to spend three weeks in this East European country as part of its ongoing program to help emerging democracies develop their news media. My assignment was to train journalists at RTV Slovenia, the national radio and television network. I went with a colleague, also a trainer, who was able to stay another month.

We had a lot of success. We could have had much more. Here is what we found when we arrived:

1. The idea to bring Americans to coach the newsroom staff came from a low-level manager who worked outside of the news department.
2. No one poured the foundation required for us to get widespread support inside the organization.
3. The bureaucratic structure of RTV Slovenia is antithetical to the absorption and dissemination of new ideas.

In other words, this assignment was shot through with challenges before it began. In spite of them, we accomplished quite a lot.

We met with 16 managers during our first week. To a person, they opened their hearts and poured out their frustrations about the challenges they face trying to figure out what's going on—much less how to do excellent work—in a system that stymies communication and

discourages innovation. Several wept as they spoke. Clearly they'd never had the opportunity to express their dismay to understanding professionals who affirmed their concerns.

Their stories revealed a work place in which people have responsibility for things they are not authorized to effect, mediocrity goes without consequences, excellence is rarely rewarded, and the organizational structure thwarts even insiders from figuring out who is accountable to whom.

I led seven workshops on how to tell compelling news stories, generate original story ideas, make ethical decisions, and shoot and edit engaging video. In all, more than 60 people participated

in these lively, interactive discussions, from the program director to college interns. In each session we discussed the special responsibility they have to show how the biggest issues of the day connect to the daily lives of citizens, to explain complex subjects through the eyes of people whose lives are directly affected by them, and to search for the stories that hold the powerful accountable and give voice to the voiceless.

Nearly all of the participants expressed enthusiasm for these ideas and many took copious notes. The two exceptions—unfortunately involving powerful inside players—were the senior government reporter and the executive producer of the evening newscast. The

Tips for American Trainers

Regardless of what organization sends a trainer overseas, what follows are suggestions that could make the experience more effective for everyone.

- Before leaving the United States, make sure your U.S. sponsor has communicated directly with the chief executive of the news organization you will be visiting.
- Specify that the organization provide you with workspace, computer, Internet access, and telephone.
- Make sure the organization designates an on-site host to provide introductions, orientation and a point of continuing contact for you.
- Go with another trainer. My colleague and I had the opportunity with each other to vent frustrations, double-check our impressions, and develop plans in response to the special challenges we faced.
- Whenever possible, have a male and female trainer work as a team. Women in Eastern Europe do not command the respect and status they enjoy in the United States. As sensitive and responsive a listener as my male colleague was, the women journalists opened up primarily with me. And though I can chew the fat with the best of 'em, the men clearly were more comfortable with him. ■ —V.H.

government reporter contended our thesis was flawed: “We don’t have the concern the American networks have about how many people watch our newscasts. We get the license fees that support us from every citizen regardless of whether they watch.” That moment was one of the trip’s low points.

The high points were the coaching sessions with individual journalists and managers. I reviewed samples of their work, discussed ways to overcome their greatest challenges, and offered ideas about managing the people who report to them as well as their own bosses. Typically these sessions ended with warm hugs and poignant expressions of gratitude from the recipients.

Communism’s Remnants

A few days into our visit we realized few of the network’s executives were even aware of our presence. We scheduled first one and then a second meeting with the general manager. He cancelled both. Finally we met with a deputy director. His biggest concern was determining who was responsible for bringing us and where the money had come from to pay us. At one point he indicated that after nearly three weeks on the job we might actually have shown up at the wrong location.

“Maybe you are supposed to be at Pop TV,” he said, referring to RTV Slovenia’s competitor. He was quite disturbed and eager to place blame elsewhere for the obvious lack of preparation for our visit. “Are you sure you’re supposed to be here?” he asked.

Clearly we were dealing with the same post-Soviet bureaucracy that created RTV Slovenia in 1994. The organizational structure it built is as different from that of American media companies as it can be. Some of the top executives are elected by Parliament, some by a broadcast oversight committee whose membership is a dizzying array of 25

different union representatives, and some—a very few—are hired by the general manager. All of this is mandated by the federal constitution in an effort to accommodate the country’s various ethnic groups.

Even so, RTV Slovenia manages to produce a spectacular amount of ma-

In each session we discussed the special responsibility they have to show how the biggest issues of the day connect to the daily lives of citizens, to explain complex subjects through the eyes of people whose lives are directly affected by them, and to search for the stories that hold the powerful accountable and give voice to the voiceless.

terial beyond anything an American network would dare attempt: more than 300 programs a year, ranging from children’s fare to national song competitions to daily newscasts to documentary series to feature-length films. It runs two television and three radio channels that include Italian and Hungarian language programs.

With all that investment of time and resources, few of the programs air more than once. The various production units rarely communicate. Efficiencies in production, research and personnel do not occur. There is no cross promotion among radio, television and online. The program schedule changes by the week, and sometimes by the day, so that it is nearly impossible to know when a particular program will be broadcast.

It is the living definition of “Balkanization.”

Next Steps

Enormous potential resides in Slovenia, and Americans have an interest in seeing it realized. The news trends in this country of two million are like those in the United States. People increasingly turn away from newspapers and towards television—and soon the Internet—as their primary source of news and information. Strengthening their

television journalism will strengthen their democracy.

If the U.S. Department of State wants to help this process along, it’s time to develop a strategy to address it directly, country by country.

As things now stand, a small office at the State Department tries to maintain a stable of trainers to respond to foreign government invitations as they are received. A more effective plan would be to identify countries where the news media need support and assertively seek to place trainers there. The State Department could connect the trainers with each other, something that

does not now happen, and create programs to train indigenous trainers. [See box on page 88 with suggestions for American reporters who will train journalists overseas.]

Countries like Slovenia can be more influential than their size alone would predict. It joined the European Union last year, shares borders with Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia, and soon it will be a tourist destination.

My brief encounter with the people of RTV Slovenia deepened my appreciation for the strength and optimism and confidence embedded in the American press. If only for a few moments, that strength gave hope and encouragement to professionals who otherwise are quite forlorn. Perhaps we helped them imagine next steps on their path to journalistic vigor. ■

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Journalism Education That Succeeds

Students at Tbilisi's Caucasus School learn by immersing themselves in the skills and work of journalism.



Georgia

By Karl Idsvoog

Ask about where to find one of the best journalism school educations available, and the answer might be a surprise. It's happening at the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management in Tbilisi, Georgia, where a curriculum accelerates learning, truly develops skills, and produces graduates who work in key media positions in three countries. This curriculum also probably has zero chance of being adopted by any university in the United States. Accelerated, concentrated learning does not fit the American model.

I've taught at the Caucasus School and now teach at Kent State University, a school that takes a practical hands-on approach to journalism education. But no traditional American university has the flexibility of the Caucasus School, an institution designed from the ground up to train journalists. To be educated in the United States means students take a boatload of credits during a quarter or semester, rowing through multiple courses toward a fixed destination, all at the same time. What business would schedule all major projects to be concluded simultaneously, as universities usually do?

A Focused Approach to Learning

The Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management takes a different approach. At the Caucasus School, students don't take multiple courses at the same time. Instead, they focus on specific topics and skills for days and weeks at a time. They learn how to do journalism the same way they learned to ride a bike—by immersing themselves in the doing of it. Topics of focused work included political reporting, business reporting, computer-assisted



Assistant Broadcast Instructor Valery Odikadze trains students. *Photo by Karl Idsvoog.*

reporting, radio reporting, newsroom management, photography and television reporting.

As part of their learning, students turn out real-world products. They publish a newspaper and produce radio stories and TV reports. They design and publish an online news site. Academic director David Bloss sums up the school's philosophy this way: "Whenever possible this is a newsroom, not a classroom." I've seen that as a result of this approach students at the Caucasus School learn faster and perform at a higher level more quickly than do students in American-style programs. And they emerge with a clear sense of the valuable societal role that journalism done right can play.

Started in 2002, the school is a joint effort by the International Center for

Journalists [ICFJ] in Washington, D.C. and the Georgian Institute for Public Affairs. Founding Academic Director Margie Freaney set the tone for school's educational direction. "We treat students like professionals, like reporters, not as students," she explains. There are, Freaney says, two reasons for the topic-focused curriculum structure, one educational and one practical. As she says, "It's much easier to build upon each class with successively more complicated material when the classes are intensive."

Because the school recruits American journalists with significant experience to train its students, the program's structure is also more efficient. Many of these U.S. journalists don't have calendars with semester-free schedules, but they are able to go to Tbilisi to teach a

two-week, month-long or six-week session. Bringing instructors in for these compressed and intensive sessions also saves money. “Having the instructor work all day every day on specific training maximizes the time you have bought,” says Bloss, who was an editor of *The Providence Journal*. This all-day educational structure also provides a more real-life approach to journalism training and eliminates what can be a student’s typical excuse for work not done: “I had an assignment due in another class.”

Photographer John Smock, who is the school’s publication director and layout and design instructor, is a strong proponent of this training model. For teaching practical courses in photography or design, Smock finds that short class periods are “too disruptive to the material.” He believes that longer class periods give the instructor a chance to “build the rapport necessary to teach complicated skills.”

Knight Fellow and Caucasus instructor Jody McPhillips calls this school the “gold standard” in journalism education. [She and her husband, David Bloss, spent two and a half years training journalists in Cambodia before accepting the Tbilisi assignment.] McPhillips observes that the Caucasus model develops in students a work ethic that will be critical to the students’ success once they leave the school. “Sticking to a single topic over an extended period reinforces the work ethic students will encounter in Western-style journalism,” says McPhillips. “There is nowhere to run, nowhere to hide.”

The Value of Longer Sessions

For instructors, too, the longer, more focused engagement with students offers nowhere to hide. Teachers can fake an hour-long lecture, but if well thought through plans aren’t prepared for daylong sessions, the class can easily start to fall apart. When an instructor arrives unprepared, Smock notes that “the students will eat you alive.”

Joyce Barrett, a journalist turned teacher who has taught at George Mason University in the United States and in several other countries, credits the



Academic Director David Bloss converses with students. *Photo by Karl Idsvoog.*

Caucasus model for improving students’ skills, abilities and retention. “In my one-hour 15-minute classes, I barely get into something and I’ve run out of time,” she says, noting that longer sessions she has with students eliminate an annoying problem of clock watching. “With more time students are more relaxed and more interested in getting involved in something,” Barrett says. Longer courses shake students and instructors out of their normal routines. “This forces students and instructors alike to keep the energy level up and be more engaged and engaging,” says Smock.

With the Caucasus teaching model, students get immediate feedback—something that Smock contends is dictated by the subject matter. “Practical material such as layout and design or photography,” Smock says, “requires a lot of one-on-one interaction with students—far more than, say, an introductory lecture in 12th century Dutch painting.”

My seven-week teaching duties involved the television portion of the curriculum—shooting, editing, lighting and producing. None of my students had ever edited video before they enrolled in this course; most had never

shot a camera. Because students focused their entire attention on television, they immediately applied to their projects what was discussed or demonstrated in class. By the end of the first day, every student had used the camera, reviewed their video, and then shot the camera again. By the end of day three, each student was editing. After these ground-floor exercises, they start shooting and reporting news stories. Before the second week of classes started, each had produced his/her first video news report. With an emphasis, too, placed on “media management,” the class also spends time on commercial video production in which they divided into teams and produced 30-second spots about the Caucasus School.

The school’s teaching is also software intensive given that technology is changing the news business. If a computer program benefits the work journalists do—Quark, Photoshop, Sound Forge, Final Cut are good examples—then the students learn it and use it. The longer class time they have to practice these programs—with immediate feedback from instructors—accelerates the learning curve. This means instructors spend less time teaching software and more time teaching journalism.

Those who tour the school, including educators, potential funders and diplomats, emerge with a similar impression. "We get two or three years of journalism education here into 11 months," says Bloss. But don't take his word for it, nor mine. See how these students learn and perform by looking at their work.

Several video projects can be found at <http://classes.jmc.kent.edu/Idsvoog>, and the school's online newspaper is the Brosse Street Journal, www.bsj.ge.

As a visiting American instructor, I found it a joy to work with an institution and students who share a desire and purpose in doing journalism for

the right reason. ■

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Getting Ukrainian Journalists to Ask Ordinary People Questions

'We wanted to get them to report beyond press releases and false assurances of the politicians and bureaucrats.'

By Peggy Simpson

In 1997, 16 young Ukrainian journalists went to the western hinterlands of their country as part of an experiment. The objective: to learn how to conduct small focus groups to try to find out how people were coping in a time of great political and economic turmoil. This was seven years before the Orange Revolution, which took place late in 2004, in which millions of Ukrainians took to the streets to protest a fraud-ridden election for president, resulting in an unprecedented new election won by reformer Viktor Yushchenko.

Back in 1997, Ukrainian wages hovered at about \$35 a month, and often neither wages nor pensions were paid. In nearby Poland, after eight years of rapid change following the election of Solidarity reformers to the Parliament and the Polish Communist government's subsequent handover of power to a Solidarity government, monthly wages had passed the \$200 mark for state jobs, and in the thriving private sector many young professionals were paid \$1200 a month.

But reform efforts continued to go awry in Ukraine. Investors—not just multinationals but also émigré Ukrainians—were stymied. Political leaders, attached to Moscow, held tight to their considerable governing and legal powers. The notion of creating a

"democracy" and civil society there—as some advocates within the country and others from the West wanted to do—remained a hard sell. As a result, with an economy stuck in the past, thousands of Ukrainians went overseas for better jobs. Some found themselves trapped in sex-slavery jobs. Tens of thousands of others became traders, hauling huge plastic bags of goods to sell in other countries' street markets, returning home with cash enough to buy more supplies and set out again.

While abroad, Ukrainians saw the rapid improvement in living standards in the Baltic nations, Poland and Hungary. They also could see what was not happening back home to improve the living conditions of millions of Ukrainians, who despite their situation were showing few outward signs of distress.

Asking Questions

So how were Ukrainians surviving? And what did they think about the economic and social changes going on around them? These are some of the questions that these 16 journalists set out to pose to groups of Ukrainian citizens.

These journalists were part of a training program sponsored by Women in Development Technical Assistance



Ukraine

Project (WIDTECH). I was one of two consultants to this project. By 1997, I had spent most of the decade covering the democratic and economic reforms in Eastern Europe as a freelance reporter for a variety of U.S. and European business publications including *Business Week*, *CBS News*, *European Banker*, and *Media & Marketing Europe*. For five years I had written a weekly column for the *Warsaw Business Journal*. For seven semesters in the early 1990's I taught about the U.S. mass media at Warsaw University. With those students I shared information that was not so much how to report but about the roles that journalists play in a democratic, capitalistic society.

In this Ukrainian program—based in the Western city of L'viv—my teaching colleague was Leslie Snyder, a University of Connecticut communications science professor. Her specialty was using focus groups as one strategy to find out what people were thinking and what they were doing. The 16 young journalists with whom we worked were from a variety of cities in the Ukraine (L'viv, Kiev, Donetsk, Poltava and Chernivtsi). Two of the participants were men, and all were either print reporters or broadcast reporters and producers.

In two intensive days of discussion, we talked about focus-group principles

and role-played an assortment of interviewing styles and skills. One goal was to communicate to these journalists the value of open-ended questions when trying to elicit information from strangers. To make this point, we downplayed a confrontational approach. We also tried to get them to determine in advance the main thrust of what they wanted to learn from these interviews and then worked with them on how to structure and ask questions that might lead those who were being interviewed to give them some helpful answers.

After this introductory work, these journalists conducted eight focus groups in three different locations. No Western consultants were with them when they interviewed the focus-group participants, who had been chosen in advance by another contractor. There were eight to 12 people in each focus group; six of them were comprised solely of women and two of men. In three of these groups, the women were 40 and older; in the others, they were between 20 and 40. One reason for the emphasis on women was that our WIDTECH sponsors wanted us to encourage and enable reporters to rely more on women as sources for stories (since the bulk of government officials were men, and it was a relative rarity for a woman to be profiled and quoted in the Ukraine press). By learning more about women's lives, it was believed that these reporters would discover how families were surviving in these ruinous economic times and also learn how they looked at the economy in general.

One of our goals as trainers was to equip the journalists with tools they could use to talk with strangers who lived in rural parts of the country where few reporters ventured. By doing this, they'd come to understand that ordinary folks had important stories to share and, in fact, were a critical part of the equation of how Ukraine was faring. We wanted to get them to report beyond press releases and false assurances of the politicians and bureaucrats. We suspected that if they'd talk with people who were struggling under the policies of their government, then what they wrote and broadcast would be different.

During our time there, Snyder and I also interviewed local business leaders, a regional director of economic reforms, and half a dozen villagers who were rethinking the concept of collective farming. We found some entrepreneurs were prevailing against great odds. I wanted to share what I had found out in these interviews to help these young journalists discover some lessons in those stories, as well.

Lessons Learned

Inevitably, we experienced some bumps in the road. The focus groups were a hit. The journalists were stunned to hear what these city, town and village folk told them. Nearly everyone seemed to be trying to earn an income, though some used unorthodox, homegrown methods, such as baking breads or cakes in their kitchens, and others bartered what they had for what they needed. In the villages, bartering often meant looking the other way when loggers cut into forest preserves while, in exchange, they trucked in food and other supplies for the villagers.

Perhaps what hit home most with the journalists was the adamant attitude most women had as they told the reporters how they couldn't wait for the politicians to get their act together. They had to find ways to put food on their tables. And the journalists were astounded when these women scolded the occasional focus-group participant who took a "woe is me" attitude—and began to coach them on resources they hadn't yet thought to use.

In our classroom discussions after the focus-group interviews, the reporters were euphoric and amazed at all they had learned. I had less success in selling them on story ideas based on my interviews with business entrepreneurs in L'viv. One of the people I'd interviewed was a physician who'd had a scholarship to a Kansas university course on small business startups. She'd come back and bought a pharmacy (a sector of the economy that was then being privatized), found a storefront space, hired a pharmacist, but was confronted then by neighborhood toughs demanding protection money. It turned out that her

husband had gone to the United States on another type of exchange program, one tailored for police in transition countries. One thing he learned there was how to deal with extortion threats. The two of them had met with those who demanded this payment, and it turned out that by pushing back against these threats, they dissolved; they were local thugs, not affiliated with any national extortion scam. This ability of local folks to stand their ground was something few Ukrainians knew about at the time.

Another story I presented to them was about an economist who'd taken control of a Lvov regional bank that once handled money for state enterprises. She had transformed it into an engine of regional business growth. The bank kept some investment stakes in the most promising of state enterprises in its region but also added private clients and pulled in Western advisors. She'd also hired mostly women for the bank's executive jobs.

When I told the young journalists that these experiences seemed to offer several good angles for stories, my idea was met with an uneasy silence. Finally, one brave person raised his hand. They couldn't write a story about this woman and her bank, they told me, because that would be free publicity for the bank. Nor could they write about her as an example of a woman entrepreneur moving to the top (after decades of state socialism in which women were permanent number two's) because that would be puffery for her. And finally another journalist spelled out the wretched reality: Their editors demanded advertisements before any stories could be written on business people. No ads, no story.

I was appalled at hearing this, and I said so. It wasn't just the corruption of the process or the deplorable conflict of interest. But how, I asked them, could they educate the public about such rare successes taking place if they couldn't mention them? Didn't this pose a dilemma for them, as reporters, and hamper their ability to find out which economic strategies worked and which didn't and to pass that on to their readers in this very confusing time in Ukraine?

They didn't have answers to offer.

But my discouragement was tempered by my thrill at seeing these young journalists get so excited about what they'd experienced in these focus groups. From those interviews, they'd discovered many angles for stories and saw ways in which they could replicate these reporting methods when they got back to their newsrooms. A few wrote stories about this seminar and their work with the focus groups. Oth-

ers went on to pursue such interviews with "real" folks back home, realizing that these voices and experiences could play a key role in helping them to report about how people coped in times of extreme adversity.

And in my book, that's success. ■

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a book about her time in Poland, including the key role played by entrepreneurs—many of them in the media—in fueling Poland's successful transition from a Soviet-controlled satellite country after World War II to a free country with membership in NATO and the European Union.

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Debating How and Why Journalists Do What They Do

'After listening to the real-life stories of real-life Polish journalists, I wasn't so dogmatic or judgmental.'

By Kevin Cullen

When the Poynter Institute asked me in 2004 to travel to Poland to help teach investigative reporting to journalists as part of the International Media Festival in Wroclaw, the significance of the trip immediately crystallized in my mind: good cheap vodka for a whole week.

Once in Poland, however, my cavalier attitude was deflated by one of the first questions directed at me by an earnest young reporter.

"Do you pay your sources?" he asked.

Having served as The Boston Globe's European correspondent, I had been to Poland before, and I knew a bit about Polish history. But I knew little about the tradition of Polish journalism. Still, I reassured myself: It ain't rocket science, it's journalism.

In preparation for the trip, I read about a Polish newspaper reporter, Wojciech Sumlinski, who was risking imprisonment for refusing to name his source for a story that linked mobsters to politicians. On the day we flew into Warsaw, the front page of one newspaper showed the bullet-riddled body of Waldemar Milewicz, one of Poland's most famous television journalists, after

he had been killed in Iraq. Shortly after our arrival in Wroclaw, Maciej Wierzyński, the editor of Nowy Dziennik, a New York-based daily Polish newspaper, introduced me to his old friend, Jerzy Jachowicz, a courageous muckraker whose home had been firebombed by criminals angry over one of his newspaper exposés.

These were familiar, if differently disturbing, reminders of the seriousness of our business, of a common purpose and common bond. And then the Polish kid threw me for a loop with that question about paying sources.

Sharing Reporting Stories

Working as a foreign correspondent, and especially while covering war in the former Yugoslavia, I had met journalists from all over the world and had convinced myself that, language and cultural idiosyncrasies aside, we're basically all the same. But who was I to tell journalists how to do their jobs in a country and a culture I knew little about? I was being asked to teach not neophytes, like the students I'd taught at the Harvard Summer School as part of an idealistic but ultimately futile attempt

to prolong my Nieman year, but working journalists with well-honed bullshit meters. I felt like James Stockdale, the befuddled, retired admiral who served as presidential candidate Ross Perot's doomed running mate, whose 15 minutes consisted mostly of asking: "Who am I? What am I doing here?"

The workshop's leader, Bill Mitchell, a former foreign correspondent who has trained all sorts of journalists in all kinds of settings for the Poynter Institute, advised me to be myself. "Tell them how you do your work," he'd said. "How you cultivate sources. How you structure a story so that something complex is compelling." All of this sounded perfectly reasonable. But I wondered how my war stories about kissing up to the cops so they'd give me gangsters' rap sheets or regaling nuns with tales of my years as a dutiful altar boy at Sacred Hearts Church in Malden, Massachusetts, so they'd feed me information about miscreant priests, would resonate with Polish journalists.

The night before the workshop began, I met with Anna Marszałek, a reporter at the newspaper Rzeczpospolita, who is one of Poland's most accomplished investigative reporters.



Poland

Over some Chopin—the vodka, not the composer—she explained some of the difficulties facing Polish journalists, not yet a generation after the iron curtain collapsed. Reporters weren't paid well, nor widely respected in a society where the cultural hangover from Communism led many people to view journalists as propagandists. More troubling, she said, there wasn't a tradition of independence: Journalists and news organizations were often openly associated with partisan politics. Some journalists who were willing to skewer certain politicians or power brokers turn a blind eye to the misdeeds of their ideological soul mates or sources, who were sometimes one and the same.

The Poles, once invaded and occupied by Germany, long dominated by the Soviet Union, were still getting their democratic, free-market feet under them, gradually learning the importance of robust, independent news media as Poland was taking its rightful place in the league of free nations. As we sat in a brightly lit bar in Wroclaw, a quaint city of 700,000 in Lower Silesia that sits on 12 islands connected by 112 bridges over the Odra River, Marszalek's remarks were interpreted for me by a pair of college students from Krakow who looked up to her, as I imagined a pair of American journalism students would have admired Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein some 30 years ago.

"She's great," Karl Badohal, one of the students, said to me of Marszalek. "She's not afraid of anybody. She's got balls."

Marszalek took no offense at her journalistic credentials being measured in this way, smiling broadly when Badohal gave her the Polish translation of his compliment.

Discussing Ethical Issues

The next day, at the workshop, I told some two dozen Polish journalists that investigative reporters are like cops: No matter how smart or streetwise we think we are or how many incriminating documents we dig up, often we are only as good as our sources, who can point us in the direction of important information and help us put it into context. I

told them that we thrive on tips from dime-droppers, but how we must be conscious of the motives of those who drop those dimes. I also explained how my Boston Globe colleagues and I depended on receiving tips from ordinary readers as we expanded our coverage of the sexual abuse of children by priests from reporting on individual crimes to exposing an institutional cover up, from a hometown scandal to an international crisis for the Roman Catholic church.

To this, the Polish reporters replied that they don't get tips like that. "Nobody calls us," they said. They also let me know that in Poland libel laws favor public figures, not the press. They reminded me, too, that reporters don't have the public records laws, including the Freedom of Information Act, as we do in the United States.

These issues then became the core of what we talked about. Absent a tradition that values public records' access and laws that recognize the importance of a free press to a free society, what can journalists, such as these in Poland, do to persuade whistleblowers and other sources to come forward? And how can those who receive the news come to believe that journalists are independent of the powers that be?

To help us explore these questions, we compiled a list of what Polish journalists could do to earn more trust and credibility. When I asked the reporters which of them identified strongly with or belonged to one political party, many raised their hands. I was stunned to learn that about 10 working journalists in Poland were declared candidates for the European Parliament. After some debate, we agreed that journalists shouldn't run for office or be actively involved in partisan politics, but we could not reach a consensus on whether those who leave journalism to work as spokespeople for politicians or government agencies should be allowed to return to work as reporters.

Some of the journalists explained that they were so poorly paid that they had to have the option of government employment, even as they dabbled in journalism, even though these dual roles might affect the public's perception about the separation between the

state and the press. I'd entered this discussion as a fundamentalist, believing that once a reporter crossed over to work in government, especially for a politician, that journalist forfeited his/her right to return to mainstream journalism as a reporter. After listening to the real-life stories of real-life Polish journalists, I wasn't so dogmatic or judgmental.

"Can't I be just as honest and honorable as you?" asked one reporter who had worked as a government press official.

"Touché," I replied, as the interpreter looked at me with incomprehension. Apparently there is no easy Polish translation for a French word that has become an English idiom.

When a reporter told me about some journalism awards that were handed out by Polish parliamentarians, who decide which reporters cover them best, and police, who do the same, I shook my head as a group of us retired to a bar to debate the merits of such arrangements. Both sides heard each other's argument, but some of the Poles were not prepared to accept that a bunch of high-falutin' American journalists who ensconce themselves in a New York hotel on a winter weekend every year to judge the work of their peers were any less susceptible to bias than Polish cops and cops.

In the end, for me, the alleged teacher, and for them, the purported students, what we'd experienced in talking about what we do was something akin to what it is we do every day, or at least what we should do: listen and learn. And the best teachers I've had share a trait with the best reporters I've met: They are smart enough to accept that they aren't so smart that they can't learn something new and, once they do, they can't wait to tell someone else. ■

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WATCHDOG

Press Freedom in Ropczycka, Poland

An American journalist observes the opening months of a newspaper's birth.



Poland

By Watson Sims

I was consulting at Nowiny (News) in Rzeszów, Poland, when the editor told me that the American embassy had telephoned to ask that I visit Ropczycka, a village of 12,000 near the Russian border, where the local newspaper was having problems.

Zbigniew Dobrowolski, a dark haired, husky man of about 40, met me on arrival in Ropczycka and shared with me his newspaper's history. It started with the Society of Friends, which was founded in 1939 by Jan Zwierz, a young Catholic priest, to improve the quality of village life. This society could do little during 50 years of occupation by Nazi Germany and Communist Russia, but after the Soviet Union unraveled in 1989, it began holding weekly meetings to discuss public affairs.

One attendee at the meetings was Stanislaw Hulek, a 38-year-old industrial worker, who decided to run for mayor on Lech Walesa's Solidarity Party ticket. After being elected, Mayor Hulek told the society that Ropczycka should have its own newspaper, and Dobrowolski, a schoolteacher who had once studied journalism, offered to serve as editor without pay. The paper, *Ziemia Ropczycka* (Land of Ropczycka), would be published monthly. A council was established, with Dobrowolski as chairman and 10 members representative of the village population.

The Newspaper and the Mayor

The first issue was published in April 1990, and immediately the paper was in trouble with the mayor because of a story involving the village's medical clinic. Its director had retired and a



Left to right: Zbigniew Dobrowolski, editor, *Ziemia Ropczycka*; Father Jan Zwierz, founder of the Society of Friends of Ropczycka; Wojciech Furman, news editor of *Nowiny* (News) of Rzeszów, Poland, and Watson Sims, consultant.

contest was held to choose his successor. The contest committee selected a popular doctor, but the regional government rejected the nomination without explanation. *Ziemia* demanded a reason and asked whether it was because the doctor did not belong to the Solidarity Party.

Mayor Hulek, who was a member of Solidarity, asked *Ziemia* to lay off the story, but the paper continued to demand an explanation. The issue had become a scandal, and the post of clinic director remained unfilled.

In the standoff between the mayor

and the newspaper, it appeared that someone telephoned the American Embassy for advice, and I, supposedly an expert on press freedom, was dispatched to try to help resolve the situation.

"Have you given the mayor's side of the story?" I asked.

"He won't discuss it with me or my reporters," said Dobrowolski. "We give him a whole page to use as he pleases, but he won't write about it."

Dobrowolski said the mayor continued to attend society meetings, often complaining about the newspaper.

He filled the page the newspaper had opened to him with a mixture of cheerful generalities about life in Ropczycka and criticism of Ziemia. He was annoyed by an editorial saying a village as small as Ropczycka did not need two deputy mayors. And when the Falcon Restaurant closed after years of operation, Ziemia deplored despoilment of tradition by new operators who appropriated the name, but Mayor Hulek said any new business in town should be welcomed and urged citizens to patronize the restaurant.

Despite problems with the mayor, Ziemia published eight tabloid pages each month, sometimes generating its own news. One of its projects was a Miss Ropczycka contest, which attracted 50 applicants and presented the winner with one million zloties (about \$200). Since Ropczycka had no printing facilities, Dobrowolski drove page layouts 75 kilometers to a printer in Lublin. At 2,000 zloties (about 10 cents), the 3,500 copies of the paper were sold almost as fast as they came off the press. Local advertisers provided support, and the paper was financially sound, so long

as no salaries were paid to its workers, including Dobrowolski.

In a meeting with members of Ziemia's advisory council, I proposed that they seek a meeting with the mayor, since it was he who first suggested the need for a newspaper. Perhaps he could be persuaded of Ziemia's good will and potential for improving the quality of life for all citizens.

Father Zwierz, who at 88 remained a powerful voice in the society, doubted that a meeting would be helpful, saying the mayor was not politically sophisticated. He said the mayor might stop coming to society meetings and perhaps refuse to fill his page in Ziemia. That would make the task of covering village life even more difficult and perhaps drive the newspaper out of business. Still, Dobrowolski telephoned the mayor's office, only to be told he would not attend a meeting.

Since the mayor would not meet with us, Father Zwierz suggested that I visit a sugar factory that employs 1,200 workers and is Ropczycka's most important industry. During a tour of the plant, its director, Roman Krzystyniak, told

Dobrowolski, "I did not like that story about the sugar factory. There were many errors."

"Will you write a letter and give the correct information?" asked Dobrowolski.

"I might," said the director.

"We try not to make mistakes, and we appreciate letters to the editor," said Dobrowolski.

"I'll think about it," the director replied.

Driving back from the factory, Dobrowolski asked, "What else can I do?"

Remembering some of my own experiences with mayors and business leaders in Battle Creek, Michigan, and New Brunswick, New Jersey, I could only advise him to keep trying. It would not be an easy trip, but press freedom in Ropczycka seemed off to a good start. ■

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It's Tough to Find New Footholds in Journalism

'My experience speaks to the barriers that prevent the free trade of journalistic talent.'

By George Abraham

“Richly informed and competently written. A few tweaks still to go.”

The words fell like manna from heaven. They were music and traction, and I hung on to them for dear life, for they let me know I was beginning to make sense to editors in this new country of Canada, where I'd come to study and work. They were telling me to press on, keep the faith, and continue being passionate about journalism. Some of the comfort came from the fact that this e-mailed comment came from

a very accomplished editor, a journalism professor, and somebody whose opinion means a lot to me.

Granted that journalism in Canada was a little different from the craft I'd practiced in my native India and in the Persian Gulf, where my last job, as managing editor, masked my real role as a proxy for government censors. Yet in this long-time democracy, which is justifiably proud of its Charter of Rights and Freedoms, I have found the press acting more as a contented ally than the

watchful adversary of the government that I think it could be.

My opinion did not matter, though. I had a few successes with my reporting, but nothing remotely close to the challenging assignment I had been waiting for. The writing I was doing, based on my extensive experience reporting in Asia, my Nieman Fellowship at Harvard, and a graduate program in my adopted country, were evidently falling short of the Canadian standard.

When I heard my professors talk



Canada

about a writer's voice, I'd wonder whether the problem lay in the fact that I was not convincingly Canadian. As an Indian-born immigrant, I did not trace my roots back to either of Canada's mother-nations, Britain and France. Nevertheless, my editor appeared to be telling me that I was on the road to getting there. Other than for a few minor tweaks, my submission was ready to go, a prelude perhaps to more opportunities. It was a good omen. What could be more satisfying, more exhilarating, and validating for an immigrant journalist trying to find his feet in an alien setting? It looked like the wind was definitely in my sails.

Foreign Journalists' Experiences

Maybe coming to Canada in September 2002 was a bad move for somebody with my background. From afar, Canada seemed an open country, a good citizen of the world, and genuinely more welcoming of immigrants despite its inhospitable winters. It had a good international reputation—something that appealed to my interest in foreign policy—and I knew that one of its prime ministers, Lester Pearson, had won the Nobel Peace Prize for his intervention in the Suez crisis of 1956. There also seemed to be an almost borderless geography between the United States and Canada, reinforced in my imagination by the fact that the two nations often appeared to work in concert on the international stage.

In my mind, there was little to differentiate the American "land of opportunities" ethos from Canada, and so when my family's immigration application was approved almost immediately, it didn't seem like a daunting leap of faith. Eventually, I figured, I would find my calling as the foreign editor at one of Canada's national newspapers.

I just did not visualize newspaper editors not responding positively to my job application, especially since I was willing to accept a learn-the-ropes position before moving on to higher and better assignments. Instead I heard a lot of reassuring words, a lot of silence, too, but no job offers.

Most surprising to me about the professional aspects of my move here has been the little interest shown in what I did before I came to Canada. Perhaps this should not be such a shock. After all, journalism has been defined as a cultural rather than an intellectual industry under global trade rules. And nowhere, it seems, should this exclusion be more relevant than in Canada, where jousting with American hegemony animates the national conversation. Journalists here see themselves as part of the national effort to maintain Canadian sovereignty against American invasion. This perhaps makes it difficult for them to see how somebody from another part of the world could possibly wave their flag as effectively as someone who spent a lifetime absorbing what this battle for identity is all about.

In a nation that measures "Canadian content" through a bureaucratic process much like fractional distillation and appoints a Royal Commission to evolve safeguards against American domination of news media, there are surely those who say "foreign" writers deserve nothing better than a bum's rush. The cynic in me insists there is a more sinister explanation: Newsroom managers have become more insular and provincial even as globalization and immigration transform the world beyond their ramparts. The free trade of goods, services, intellectual property, information, even diseases and pollution, is a daily reality, and professionals in an increasing number of fields find themselves able to compete globally for jobs and contracts. However journalists, who have done so much to advance and trumpet this ineluctable process, seem immune to globalization's otherwise universal impact. Skills and training acquired in one country appear irrelevant in another (except when it involves journalists parachuting into a "hot" news zone and presuming to know the locale like the back of their hands).

My experience speaks to the barriers that prevent the free trade of journalistic talent. Celebrated Canadian writer and editorialist Haroon Siddiqui also has a compelling story to tell about his slow rise within Canada's newspaper industry. Despite arriving with a journalistic

background, his first newspaper job came only after he was forced by circumstances to sell suits at Simpson's in Toronto as a way to outlast unimaginative editors who seemed unable to spot talent in anybody but made-in-Canada journalists. His experience has taught me a lot about the ways of my adopted country.

Finding a Home in Journalism

For Siddiqui, the year was 1967, and Canada was encouraging immigration, as it does today. Then the profile of newcomers was still predominantly white. Siddiqui remembers that teachers arriving in Canada from Australia were receiving five-year tax breaks as a bonus. He traveled to Canada on the suggestion of then Canadian high commissioner to India, Roland Michener, who told the news agency (Press Trust of India) reporter, "Go to Canada, young man." Editors did not queue up at Toronto airport to recruit him when he arrived from India, but Siddiqui's "spunk" made an impression on legendary editor Clark Davey at The Globe and Mail. There was no job offer, though. Davey wanted him to work at a smaller paper first. That was when he had to take up a job as a sales clerk, an eight-month experience that Siddiqui now says, "straightened me out."

On Davey's recommendation, Siddiqui landed a job as a reporter at The Brandon Sun in Manitoba, a prairie town where the temperature plunges to minus 30 degrees Celsius. Siddiqui spent 10 years there, eventually becoming managing editor, directing an 18-person newsroom, and running a paper that had a circulation of about 35,000. The Toronto Star made an offer in 1978, and Siddiqui accepted after becoming the object of a "bidding war" between the Toronto paper and the national Globe. It didn't faze him then that he was hired as a freelancer—without a specific job description—but in retrospect, he realizes the newspaper was hiring him for his potential rather than as a square peg fitting into a square hole. "I cannot imagine that kind of [hiring] conversation taking place now," he says. "The

Star was willing to take on talent and later find a niche for me.”

Siddiqui, who is now the Star’s editorial page editor emeritus, stresses that his hiring had nothing to do with ideology or diversity. “I was putting out a good newspaper [the Sun] and had occasional bylines in *The Globe and Mail*.” And when he first arrived at the Star, he had the luxury of working without a designated beat or title for four months. For him, the tempo picked up considerably with news of the Iranian revolution in February 1979, followed soon after by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. For both of these momentous stories, Siddiqui coordinated the Star’s coverage and, by 1982, he was news editor. In 1986, he became national editor and, eight years later, he was named editorial page editor. As far as he knows, nobody in the Star’s newsroom asked why the paper had named an immigrant as its national editor. “The Star’s philosophy was that you write yourself on to Page One,” Siddiqui explains.

I asked Siddiqui if he believed Canadian newsrooms offer a level playing field for those journalists who come from other countries. “No,” he replied, stressing that had he landed in Canada

more recently his career might have taken a much more unspectacular course. “I would not be able to do it now,” he said emphatically.

When I asked him why, he said he believes journalism has become the “least movable feast” in Canada because of hurdles posed by bilateral treaties with the United States and Mexico. He also blames media corporatism, which has resulted in cutbacks that allow for very little movement of journalists across borders. “There are no openings,” Siddiqui said, and added that “journalists and editors have closed minds to newer kinds of people, despite putting out a new product every day.” Though he believes that immigrant journalists have skills that are portable, what they lack is a “mental library”—the history of Canada and modern Canadian politics, its culture of entertainment and sport, and its long-standing public policy debates—subjects that provide necessary context for any kind of news coverage. “Yes, these can be learned, but who will provide immigrant journalists the time to learn? This issue has not been resolved and hence talent is wasted.”

It occurs to me that there might be another trend at work: Globalization

notwithstanding, newspaper journalism is still local in flavor. David Ljunggren, a Stockholm-born Reuters correspondent now based in Ottawa, says that unlike television, newspapers tend to look at events through “local eyes.” “How can you globalize that?” he asks. Reuters is among the few news organizations that appear to stress the value of communicating across cultures and continents, an aspect of the craft that has all but disappeared from newspaper journalism in its effort to please the lowest common denominator.

In time, I will probably be able to compete for journalism jobs in Canada. My days in the wilderness might lend me the mental library that will eventually qualify me for a position in a Canadian newsroom. But by then it is quite likely I will have lost those elements of my resumé that would have made my more immediate contribution unique. ■

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Respecting Cultural Traditions in a Newsroom

At the Lakota Times, editors help reporters blend their language and ceremonies into their work.

By Tim Giago

Too often the American media overlook the obvious. America is not the melting pot that poets fantasize about. There are nations within this nation that existed long before the coming of the foreigners, called Indian nations, reservations, rancherias, pueblos and reserves. Many have their own governments and are separated from state governments by clearly defined borders and boundaries. They have their own educational institutions including colleges, law enforcement,

and judiciary. They practice religions outside of Christianity. But more than this, these nations govern themselves, independent of federal and state governments. And even though the U.S. government- and church-run schools tried to stamp it out for 100 years, many still retain their own language.

It is in this atmosphere that I started a newspaper I called the Lakota Times to serve the people of a sovereign nation, the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. Many of the people

I brought on board in the early years of publication, starting in 1981, spoke English as a second language. Most grew up speaking Lakota and learned English after attending Bureau of Indian Affairs’ and Indian mission boarding schools.

We faced an additional problem not faced by most newspapers: Our stories had to stand in contrast to the local and national media’s constant misrepresentation of Indian people. And many of our stories did challenge the authenticity of local and national

articles. At the time we started *The Lakota Times*, the trust of the Indian people in the media was at an all-time low. For example, *The Associated Press* (A.P.) had carried an article about a Sioux Indian boy named Little Sun Bordeaux, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. Bordeaux's mother was Jewish and his father Sioux. The A.P. article said that Bordeaux would be taken to Israel and educated, trained and raised there until he reached bar mitzvah age, at which time he would return to South Dakota and assume the role of chief of all the Sioux tribes.

All any non-Indian reporter or editor had to do was to call the Bordeaux family at Rosebud and ask if this was true. Of course it was not true, and yet this story appeared in newspapers across America. In essence, this was a fictional story that made a painful joke of the Lakota people.

We found this kind of irresponsible reporting about Indian lives to be common in the non-Indian media. Since Indians are the smallest of the minority populations, newspaper reporters evidently felt free to write anything about them without fear of exposure. Through the years, many articles about Indians contained errors and misconceptions that became fact after so many years of repetition.

The Lakota Times Experience

Since the *Lakota Times* was located on the reservation and most of its readers were members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, as the paper's editor I allowed reporters to integrate into their news stories Lakota words and colloquialisms common in their schools and in their *tiospayes* (extended families). For example, when a story contained the common slang "ennit," it was allowed to stand. (When spoken on the Pine Ridge Reservation, "ennit" means the equivalent of "isn't that so?") Since we'd assumed the role of being the press watchdog in our coverage, much of the news media in and around South Dakota began to pay a lot more attention to the stories they did on the Indian people. Still there remained differences in our coverage: For example, our newspaper's readers

knew exactly why certain words were included and probably never gave them a second thought.

The flags on the top of my pages often reflected the common usage of Lakota words. For instance, the flag on the obituary page read, "Canku Wakan," which in Lakota means "Holy Road." On the school pages the flags read, "Takoja" which literally means "The Grandchildren."

We often produced stories in two languages. Some reporters would return to the office after interviewing a Lakota speaker, and their text would be almost entirely in Lakota. We would go over the story and translate it into English, but we often left in several of the Lakota words because some of the words in our language are nearly impossible to translate into English.

I also trained my reporters not to be overly aggressive, because this went against those things we held sacred in our culture. Among the Lakota, staring into the eyes of another can be considered aggressive and even rude. Lakota people often avert their eyes or glance off into another direction when conversing with each other and definitely when speaking with reporters. Strangers often interpret this expression as one of shyness or even of deception. They would never consider that it is a cultural convention.

As an example, when the body of Lost Bird, a Lakota woman who was taken by an Army officer as an adopted child after the Massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, was exhumed in California and brought back to Wounded Knee to be buried with her family at the mass grave, my reporter, Avis Little Eagle, was terribly offended by the aggressive behavior of the non-Indian reporters sent to cover the story. "They acted like a bunch of animals," Little Eagle said. "I tried to tell them to put their cameras away while the spiritual ceremony to exhume the body was taking place, but they just kept on shooting." Little Eagle—who is now editor and publisher of the *Teton Times*, a weekly newspaper on the Standing Rock Reservation in McLaughlin, South Dakota—noted that it would be comparable to reporters flooding into a Catholic Church service

during a funeral mass service and then creating confusion by flashing away with their cameras.

Respect and Journalism

Sadly, newspaper and television reporters came to the Indian reservations without being adequately prepared. Often they started by asking questions that a third grader in any of the Indian schools could have answered. They were asking about information that was readily available in any textbook had the reporter been willing to take the time to do a little research.

One day a reporter from one of the larger U.S. newspapers came into my office and told me that he was going to do an article on the Indian people.

"Which facet of the people?" I asked him.

"Oh, I'm not sure, I will just feel my way along as it goes," he responded.

"You are on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Have you done any research on us?" I asked. I then let him know that I would never come to his city to do a story without doing extensive research first. When he shrugged, I ordered him out of my office by gripping his collar and the seat of his pants. This kind of shabby reporting is embarrassing, and it is an insult to the Indian people, and it speaks to the absence of training that U.S. journalists have in reporting on people who share geographic proximity but not a cultural closeness.

Sometimes when I sent *Lakota Times* reporters to interview an elder who was the head of a traditional family, they gave gifts of tobacco or coffee prior to the interview. I recall, however, that when I worked for a local non-Indian daily newspaper as a reporter I was sent out to interview the respected Lakota elder Fools Crow. When I returned to the office and turned in my expense sheet and it contained coffee and tobacco, I was called into the business office and really chewed out for this apparent flagrant misuse of my expense account.

After I explained why I did this they grudgingly allowed the expenses to be paid to me, but I can still hear the head accountant mumbling under her breath as she paid me. This is why I made this

cultural tradition a common policy at my newspaper.

There is an old saying in journalism that an article must be written so “that plumber in Philadelphia can understand it.” Well maybe we had that plumber reading our newspaper, but we never tried to accommodate him. We wrote for the Lakota people and, if anyone anywhere in the world wanted to subscribe to the newspaper, they would have to learn to accommodate us.

The publisher of the Navajo Times, Tom Arviso, Jr., operates the largest weekly Indian newspaper. His newspaper’s region stretches over 25,000 square miles. To put it into perspective, his reservation is larger than New Jersey and is located within four states. Many of the Navajo nation’s inhabitants speak in the Navajo language. Arviso’s huge task is to cover what is essentially a third world nation within the boundaries of the United States. To accomplish this, he has to work with his employees in much the same way I did with mine. And not surprisingly, many of the strate-

gies he employs are ones I used at the Lakota Times, tactics I learned, in turn, from subscribing to the Navajo Times, which mesh cultural considerations with workplace policies.

For instance, when a relative died—even if that relative is a “hunka” relative (one made during a ceremony) and might not be covered in the death policies at most newspapers—I allowed my employees to attend the funerals without restrictions. When a sacred ceremony, such as the Sun Dance, happened at certain times each year, even though it requires that the employee be absent for as many as five days, I gave them permission to attend.

I remember that as I was leaving my Nieman interview at Lippmann House, then-Curator Bill Kovach walked me to the stairwell. As we walked, he asked what I’d thought of some of the reporters who’d gone out to cover the occupation at Wounded Knee.

“Most of them didn’t know an Indian from a gopher,” I responded.

“I was one of those reporters,” Ko-

vach replied.

At that point I figured my chances of becoming a Nieman Fellow had become very much diminished.

When I returned that fall to join my Nieman classmates, I soon discovered that most of them had little or no knowledge about the Indian people who lived in the United States. The lack of knowledge I encountered among these fellow journalists made me recall a comment President John F. Kennedy made when he said, “The American Indian is the least understood and the most misunderstood of all Americans.”

I started a weekly paper to dispel that perception and to convey an authentic sense of the Indian nations’ reality. ■

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New Tools in Telling News Stories

In online workshops, Spanish-speaking journalists learn how to convey news in its broader reality.

By Daniel Ulanovsky Sack

Does the news simply exist, or is it constructed? For a long time many have believed that it existed, and all journalists needed were well-trained eyes to convey it to the public. To do this, techniques for how to describe and structure information were developed. Following these techniques, journalists could obtain similar results; indeed, for a long time press agencies and newspapers did not sign their stories because it did not matter who had written them. What mattered was the method used to do so. That era

was ruled by the five W’s, a pre-made formula in the shape of an upside-down pyramid, and by rigid professional dogmas, such as the ban on subjectivity and the journalist’s perspective.

How does this focus limit knowledge of what really happens? Let’s take an example. In 2003, Spain experienced an unusual heat wave. One of its effects was a series of cases of senior citizens who, alone in their houses, died of dehydration or conditions worsened by the suffocating heat. Their bodies remained in their homes for several days

until the smell of decomposition alerted their neighbors to the situation.

Using the traditional approach, the press presented the story in more or less the following way: “A senior citizen died of natural causes in his apartment last Saturday, possibly due to the high temperatures. Three days went by before, alarmed by the odor in the building, the neighbors discovered the body.” This version includes what happened, when it happened, how it happened, why it happened, where it happened, and to whom it happened. Yet it emphasizes



Argentina

the extraordinary—death—and ignores the “ordinary”—life.

If journalists had approached this information from another perspective, they would have revealed something different: For the unfortunate people (the dead seniors) it was much worse to live in solitude, without any vital connections, than to die in solitude. This was missing in the press accounts, however. Why?

Let's imagine the following scenario: We are in an editing room and we receive a call from someone saying that the body of a senior citizen has been found in their building. What do we do? We send a reporter and a photographer to cover the story. Now imagine that another person calls and, when we pick up, we hear: “I am 80 years old, I feel lonely, I can barely breathe in this heat and I don't have anyone to turn to.” Would we write a story about that person? Would we turn it into news? Or, more likely, would we give the caller the phone number of a social services agency and forget about it?

We return to the original question: Does news exist or is it constructed? This is not a mere epistemological question; it has major social effects. When stories about the deaths of senior citizens appeared, the Madrid city government sought a solution. What was that solution? Give every senior citizen who lived alone a beeper. As soon as the person began to feel unwell, he or she pressed a button on the beeper and an emergency operation to prevent him or her from dying alone was unleashed. Until then, however, the elderly man or woman was left alone.

In this case, it is worth asking whether journalism informed people about the core of the problem and helped them come up with a better solution. I believe the answer is no, not because we lacked desire or concern, but because we work with cognitive tools that are no longer useful.

Learning to Use New Tools

What new tools might give journalists better ways to approach coverage of current events? First, journalists would

need tools to help them place current news in a historical context and let the protagonists' voices be heard. This does not mean only conveying information (an elderly person dies due to the heat ...) but rather telling a story (how the elderly who live alone feel, what their daily routines are like, what, if any, connections they have to life). The consequence—the solitary death—is not as important as what led up to it.

Neither can journalists exclude subjectivity when telling the story of the main players, the neighbors, the family, and the people who design social policy. In dealing with a topic like this one, the bare information says little or nothing. It is necessary to find out how the community assimilates, understands, accepts or rejects the process of making senior citizens into involuntary hermits. Furthermore, since the journalist might feel affected by an issue such as this one, why not also train him or her to communicate on the basis of what he or she perceives and feels?

Creating a space for this type of training in journalism is the idea that gave rise to the Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Periodismo Narrativo (Center for Advanced Studies in Narrative Journalism), which I now direct. Its main aim is to show journalists that the news doesn't only exist but should be constructed.

During the two decades I was working in the leading media before opening the center, some colleagues and I detected a desire on the part of journalists to learn a new way of narrating their news coverage. The challenge was how to design an innovative, useful and sustainable approach. Above all, we wanted to provide a nonelitist space to which journalists from big cities and small towns could have access. We need good journalism in urban areas but also in distant provinces and regions, where highly concentrated power or quasi-feudal systems prevent the development of a vibrant civil life.

For these reasons, we designed an online alternative for Spanish-speaking journalists who work in large media and have access to training options, but also for journalists working for smaller

media who often cannot afford to travel and pay for a course far from where they live. We developed a digital educational platform. This makes sense since interest in the work of this center has spread across a vast geographical area, from Mexico, and even into the United States, to the south of Argentina. And let's not forget about Spain.

In online education it is essential to foster a sense of educational community. To do this, we make great use of the workshop format. Each journalist reads the text of the others and, in a specially designed chat room, discusses the strengths and weakness of each work during a weekly meeting. The professor also develops a personal relationship with each student via e-mail and, in addition, uploads scanned reading material to discuss in the next meeting.

Of the educational techniques that we use, there are three that we uphold firmly because they are essential to the success of the workshops.

1. Write an article each week using a specific guideline.
2. Read the work of participants and be prepared to comment on it.
3. Exhibit great honesty in the critiques.

While indispensable, this honesty can be surprising since writing as a paid journalist tends to be a space of scant contact with peers. It is common to talk to colleagues about things like the weather, kids, relationships, vacation spots, but not so much about work techniques that each person uses or how he perceives the other's techniques. For obvious reasons, our workshops are carried out in a less competitive climate than that of a newsroom and, as a result, it is easier to encourage sharing.

Although the journalists who participate in our courses share the Spanish language, they have very different backgrounds. In one course, “The Informative Story,” for example, the online group of students includes Sara, a journalist from Barcelona, Spain who writes in both Catalan and Spanish; Adrián, who works for the newspaper “Río Negro,” published in the city of

General Roca, Patagonia, Argentina; Augustin, a Mexican reporter for the Spanish-language newspaper “La Opinión” in Los Angeles, and Norberto, an Internet journalist from Panama City.

Differences Enhance the Learning Experience

What do they have in common? What separates them? Clearly, a shared language and a certain common historical background connect them. Yet some work in countries with high Gross Domestic Products and advanced political structures, whereas others are immersed in precarious institutional and economic realities. Some live in large cities (Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Madrid), while others work in small towns (Coronel Dorrego, Argentina and Ica, Peru).

These differences have not presented problems. We always assumed gaps would exist, and we have used them to positive ends. At the beginning of each workshop, we clarify that, in discussing the works, participants keep in mind the text itself but also its context. We ask this because there are topics, vocabulary and ways of narrating that might be too experimental in a given place and would keep people away rather than draw them in. When dealing with sources and research, journalists from the more developed regions and the large cities are more accustomed to demanding information and to invoking, if possible, the judicial system to protect their investigations. In smaller places, because people often know each other, the search for information is bound up in personal ties and complicities that can hinder fully uncovering the facts.

Differences between Latin America and Spain are also important. In the Americas, there is a more recent history of heated struggles for freedom of expression in newer democracies. (Indeed, some Latin American governments and “friendly” media sometimes try to stop the trend towards democracy.) In Spain, there is a sense of a stable democracy that allows for a free press. Being too comfortable, however, can sometimes generate a press that is

little inclined to read between the lines or to investigate, and this can lead to a discourse overly reliant on official sources.

In our workshops, diversity is enriching. And we believe one strength of our approach is not encapsulating the journalist in an excessively homogenous setting, but rather placing him in one abundant in intellectual challenges. This approach varies, of course, when we are commissioned by a given news organization to do a workshop, but even then we try to deal with provocative situations.

All of the activities we engage in, including those we custom design for news groups and schools, place emphasis on narrative and defend the idea that even though facts might be objective, reality is a highly subjective web of those facts. Whether journalists feel comfortable in this role or not (and whether this role contradicts long-held theories of information gathering or not), they are the ones who give life to this reality. The journalist explains it, shows the evident and hidden links, roots those links in a history, and puts together the puzzle of a changing world to which we are often only mere witnesses.

This is where our obsession as educators lies—in encouraging a journalism that fosters a society in which fewer people look from the sidelines without understanding what is happening.

What Can This Accomplish?

Do we believe our work has real effects? Are media today—in an era when training is more highly valued than before—more independent? Do they cover reality more fully? Do they provide better information? I fear that the answers to these questions are complex and covered with a glint of skepticism.

If journalists ask for and often get training, why is the level of the media still unsatisfying?

We cannot give a thorough response to that question here, but we can offer a few clues. One of them is that the training offered, at least in our case, is for working journalists. Can these

journalists make it alone in an environment that is sometimes adverse and that does not always appreciate their contributions? Perhaps, in the case of some journalists, there are media where other, not strictly informational, interests are at stake (corporate, commercial, ideological interests, for example). And we might also speak of difficult work situations, such as when, after years of working as a contributor, a person is finally promoted to staff writer and, wanting to keep this position, does not rock the boat.

These examples offer clues that might open up another query: Is training journalists enough? Or do we also have to address other social actors? Train politicians, for example, and remind them how important a challenging press is to preserving the system that they represent. Or alert media executives to the fact that privileging trivial information is like fireworks: They shine brightly but burn out quickly and leave us in the dark. Wouldn't it also be worthwhile to consider improving the educational system and, starting at school, fortify a critical public?

In sum, in training journalists, they become capable of writing better stories and discerning what's important more easily. It is a first step, and it is not a minor one. But perhaps a broader, more societal approach is necessary to foster a journalism that, above all, defends the idea of the mature, well-informed citizen who is close to the facts but also understands their causes. ■

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Planting the Roots of Public Radio In Chile

'Teaching public radio in a place where people didn't know anything about it was a huge challenge'



Chile

By Doug Mitchell

For nearly 18 years I've worked for National Public Radio (NPR), and during much of this time I've trained young people in the United States who want to pursue a career in public radio journalism. In 1996, I decided that I'd apply for an international fellowship through the International Center for Journalists. I wanted to teach about public radio journalism in another country—Chile—where the students I'd be training would arrive with no real idea about what public radio is or does. In hindsight, if I'd thought more about what I was proposing to do, I probably wouldn't have applied. I shudder now to think about what I didn't know then compared with what I know now.

Not quite prepared but eager to try, I arrived at La Universidad de Católica, in Santiago, Chile in March 1997. It was the first time an American journalist had come to this university to teach. At that point, I'd had only three years of teaching experience at NPR, since most of my experience in radio had been as a producer and director, not a trainer of potential radio journalists. Even so, the training projects I had been involved with had various cultural dimensions to them. At NPR we'd partnered with Black, Asian American, Hispanic and Native American journalists associations and, as part of our partnership, we'd sponsored radio-training opportunities for their student members. We would travel to different annual conference locations each year and immerse ourselves in the culture, issues and languages familiar to the communities we were visiting. It turned out that all of this training had prepared me pretty well for my overseas training mission.

Going to South America and teaching public radio in a place where people didn't know anything about it was a huge challenge, especially in pre-Internet days. I couldn't say to these college students, "Turn on the radio and listen to the stations below 92 on the FM dial," nor could I set up a laptop on my desk and play public radio through the Internet. So I did the next best thing: I brought public radio stories on cassettes and tape reels to them, including a few stories NPR had done in Mexico and others with some Spanish in them, though the students spoke English.

We did a lot of listening. In the beginning, I directed them to listen for style. NPR and public radio, I explained, has a special way of telling stories, so I advised them to listen carefully for the use of sound. I had them keep an audio journal, in which they'd write the first sound they remembered hearing each morning. At first, they thought I was nuts, but the approach paid off. Over time their ability to discern sounds and think about how they could be used in storytelling became very sophisticated. These journals also helped them write copy in which sounds became a key part of the story they wanted to tell.

We spent a few sessions on recording exercises, and we also devoted a class period to doing a mock press conference in which I pretended to be an arrogant U.S. senator on a trip to Santiago to encourage the Chilean government to support multinational companies coming into the country. The students were the reporters. I used the phrase "you people" a lot in an attempt to make them furious. It worked. Even as questions were still being asked of

me, some of the students started to call the United States ugly names. When the exercise ended, we talked openly about how reporters cover such an event and why it is important not to engage emotionally with the person being questioned.

Lots of learning took place that day and not only by the students. I'd done a good job at pushing them toward this behavior, but I was surprised by their intense reaction. For the final project, each student produced an "audio postcard." The assignment: Tell me, as a radio listener, about a place in the city by using only sounds and interviews. The seniors did very well, but I quickly discovered that first- and second-year students didn't quite understand the meaning of a deadline.

Moving Out of the Classroom

The classroom experience was only one aspect of the training. I felt that I also needed to find ways for the students to get on the radio. So I met with journalists and management of the largest radio network in Chile, "Radio Cooperativa." I also spent time at "Radio Tierra," a station with programming for and by women, and I traveled twice to Buenos Aires, Argentina to talk with radio professionals there.

I found out that the challenges in these countries were similar: journalism ethics, salaries and self-censorship. Let me illustrate what I mean.

In Chile, which has the highest per capita income in Latin America, journalists are often among the lower-paid workers. Television people are paid more, which is not surprising. But in

radio, a medium much more important to news than TV, most university graduates are discouraged from going into it because it does not pay very well. I heard stories about people working as on-air radio journalists holding second and third jobs, some worked in radio by day and drove cabs at night. This inability to earn a living wage can also lead to journalistically unethical behavior. It shocked me to hear from journalists (present and former), as well as academic instructors, that well-known journalists were sometimes being paid by government or private entities for interviews that would go on the air or in the newspaper.

Investigative reporting was practically nonexistent, not because of money, but a lack of training in how to do it and self-censorship. This has to do with the country's long history of military rule and political pressure. When I arrived in 1997, Chile was at a crossroads. Progressive-minded people who taught in the universities wanted to learn how to emulate the U.S. press. Yet at press conferences officials went unchallenged in their statements and news reports sounded like press releases.

As I learned more about these issues, I tried to simulate real working conditions in class as much as I could. But I also urged these students to think of themselves, in their role as journalists, as watchdogs who would ensure that those who serve in government do so honestly and openly, even though I knew that external incentives for self-censorship were high. General Augusto Pinochet was running the military and driving around the city in a motorcade with heavily armed guards. People felt afraid, and I didn't blame them, given the intimidation they were made to feel. But this is one reason I like working with young people: With fewer established habits to break, they are often less afraid to try something new.

Building on the Foundation

After I returned home from this training assignment, I was visited in Washington, D.C. by Sergio Gogoy, who had overseen my fellowship and teaches radio

at Catolica. No one from this university had come to visit NPR before, and when he went back to Chile I gave him tapes of stories and reading material about public radio. We also talked about continuing our radio training projects and, as time went by, we exchanged e-mail. I told Sergio that I wanted to return and do more training.

In 2002, Sergio told me of a proposal he'd made through the U.S. State Department in which I would return for a three week "follow-up" visit. It had been five years since I'd been to Chile, so I was delighted to be reminded of the ongoing interest and impact my teaching had on the students at the school. In October 2003, I returned to Santiago. The university had moved from an old convent to a new, gleaming facility downtown, and when I reached the school, I found a corner office with my name on the outside wall.

For the next three weeks, I did a special evening class in radio for students, spoke to students in other classes during the day, and traveled to Valdivia, in the southern part of Chile, to a university that is producing a lot of radio theater. I talked with professionals and students. This time I brought the stories on CD's, and we listened to NPR doing live broadcasts on the Internet. I also left with them a textbook. And on this trip I met Maria Paz Hermosilla, a student in my evening class who asked a million questions and came by my office to speak with me in her perfect English. As we talked, I wondered what she would think about coming to NPR. (It took quite a bit of work with the U.S. and Chilean governments, but in 2004 Maria Paz arrived in Washington, D.C. to intern at NPR. She is now filing reports for NPR from Chile.)

Unlike my teaching at Catolica in 1997, the university radio station in 2003 allowed the students two nights each week (one hour each night) to produce their own shows for broadcast. One Wednesday night I went to the station, and the live call-in program that night was about Chilean cinema. In the studio there were two student hosts and the film critic for *El Mercurio*, the largest newspaper in the country. By cell

phone, two student reporters were at their locations. One filed a live report about a film festival opening in Valdivia, and the other, at a theater in Santiago, interviewed people as they went to an opening of a film. In the studio, one student ran the console, while another served as director. A third one screened calls. These students produced a piece, too, but the editing wasn't very well done and the sound quality was lacking. But it was clear when I spoke with them that they knew what they did wrong and vowed to not let it happen again.

I was impressed with the progress I observed. As I sat in the control room that night, my mind leapt to 1997 and the hours we'd spent listening to those long reels of tape and how students struggled then to explain "high-end" radio. Now, in 2003, students were efficiently and very seriously doing a live radio show on a real radio station. At that moment, I understood that my fellowship in 1997 had been a success; the mission I'd come to perform had extended and grown beyond me.

Since my first trip to Chile, other NPR colleagues have traveled overseas to teach young journalists, and two-way exchanges have followed. What I learned in Chile and brought back to NPR also helped us to establish our "next generation radio" training program that involves young people in this country. In Chile, I'd seen how young people benefited from having a professional pay attention to them and take them seriously and push them, too. And Maria Paz's experience also taught us about the wise investment we are making in our own radio work when we provide training in what we do and how we do it to young journalists who learn from us and then return home to file stories for our listeners. ■

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Teaching Journalism, Finding a Home

A big challenge was balancing ‘my strong sense of ethical practice with a desire to avoid preaching an “American way”’



Cambodia

By Michele McLellan

I don't remember exactly when I started to feel at home in Cambodia. I didn't feel that way when I first arrived in Phnom Penh in October 2002 on a teaching assignment when I had to quickly find an apartment without knowing the language or the customs or even what a reasonable rent might be. I didn't feel at home at the end of stifling hot days when I was covered by a dusty veneer from the city's mostly unpaved streets. Nor when I tried to negotiate grocery prices at the local and very muddy outdoor market or to read newspaper accounts of meetings of top al-Qaeda operatives in Cambodia for years leading up to 9/11.

When I began to feel at home in my new surroundings was when I met my students—16 young Cambodian, Burmese, Laotian and Vietnamese journalists recruited by the New York-based Independent Journalism Foundation for a three-month journalism course. And when I figured out that the fleets of motos that crowd Phnom Penh's streets would simply flow around me if I ventured across a road and when I looked across the sunlit Mekong River from the deck at the home of a teaching colleague.

Along the way, I encountered plenty of bumps, including my great teaching challenge—to balance my strong sense of ethical practice with a desire to avoid preaching an “American way” in such a different journalism environment.

I had taught journalism ethics around the United States and in my own newsroom at *The Oregonian*. I had been the newspaper's ombudsman and had written *The Newspaper Credibility Handbook* for the American Society of Newspaper Editors. I emerged from these experiences firmly believing that



Michele McLellan, center, looks on as students interview a guide at Angkor Wat. The three-month course for Southeast Asian journalists included a visit to the ancient complex of temples. *Photo by Bonnie B. Huang.*

the ability of journalists to make well-considered decisions in the course of their work is central to what we do.

In Cambodia, often I felt whipsawed. My beliefs about journalism—and its ethical practice—held strong, but the context in which it was being practiced was a lot less clear. What could I tell an unemployed Cambodian journalist about bribe taking—a common practice among reporters—when he could barely feed his mother and ailing sister? How could I advise a Burmese reporter to be neutral in writing about the iron-fisted military regime in Myanmar? How could I expect that my inimical Vietnamese and Cambodian students would get

along when their countries had been enemies for hundreds of years?

Often I responded to these dilemmas by deciding not to express my opinion. Instead, I tried to ask my students questions to help them recognize the implications of unethical practices, such as bribe taking and plagiarism. This approach didn't always work. Near the end of the term I had to dismiss three students for plagiarism after each had copied entire stories. One of them ended up getting a better job with a Phnom Penh television station. (She did not list me among her references.) Another returned to his job in Laos, and I never learn what happened to the third.

My sense is that none of them took away much from the class other than upset at their dismissals. But these were unpleasant, heart-wrenching moments for me, in part because the dismissals came even after I'd lowered my standards in the face of the circumstances that these students brought with them. I'd given each of them three strikes while, two years earlier in my own newsroom, I had recommended letting go a longtime employee for lifting a few phrases.

There were also many joys. I still smile when I think of the day when I took my Burmese student to a cramped Internet café to set up his first international Web connection and an e-mail account. I still get e-mails occasionally from him with stories he has written for an antiregime newspaper near the Burmese border in Thailand. And I took my feuding Vietnamese and Cambodian students to write about Wat Champa, a tiny village where Vietnamese and Cambodians live side-by-side. When they had to ask each other for translating help, they started to get along. There was gratification, too, when I saw my students, despite feeling very intimidated, interviewing officials of their governments at a regional conference on malaria.

Students who completed the class are

in touch occasionally. Two of my Vietnamese students have written to let me know they are using interviewing and writing techniques that I shared with them. My Burmese student, despite his opinionated rhetoric in class, seems to be writing fairly neutral news and features. One of my Khmer students who thought he wanted to be a teacher has doggedly stayed with freelance writing despite family disapproval and a bleak job market.

Leaving, To Return Again

After three months, I left Cambodia, looking forward to visiting friends in Bangkok, New Delhi and then a couple of months in Eastern Europe, which I had not visited since 1968. After spending a few days in Bangkok, a Thai friend dropped me at the airport to head to India. A Cambodian travel agent had made the reservation and told me I would get my Indian visa on arrival. Instead I found that my reservation had not been confirmed and that I needed to get the visa in advance. It was Friday night. I was looking at a weekend and then at least three more days to get the visa.

Staying in Bangkok was the obvi-

ous choice, but I found myself asking whether there was a late flight to Phnom Penh, where I thought I might stay a few days with an American friend. When I arrived, my friend was gone for the weekend, but the caretaker smiled and let me in.

In returning, I felt at home. On the street, Western tourists asked me for directions, and I found I could tell them where to go. My visit surprised and delighted Cambodian friends who thought I was gone, probably for good. At first, I thought I'd stay only long enough to get a visa for India. Instead, I stayed for another three months, leaving only after I'd been offered a once-in-a-lifetime job in the United States.

But Cambodia wasn't done with me. The feeling of being at home there would stick with me. The love of the communal and friendly culture drew me back. The transformation to knowing I could make a life as a stranger in a strange land hooked me. Now I was more willing to take risks, to enter a different flow.

And that brings me to the house on the Mekong River. Fast forward to December 2003. A teaching engagement in Kyoto, Japan enabled me to spend a week in Phnom Penh. One night, after an evening of much laughter and wine with an Australian colleague and Cambodian friends, I turned to a Cambodian friend and said: "Will you start looking for some land?"

The next day, this friend, Ses Chorong (a.k.a. "Bo"), picked me up at my hotel. He looked me in the eye and asked, "Did you mean it or was it the wine?" It probably was the wine the night before. But in that split second that morning I knew I meant it as well.

Two months later, Bo e-mailed that he had found a piece of land right up the road from Peter Starr, my Australian friend. It is a deep, narrow strip of land that fronts on the main road through a small farming village south of Phnom Penh. The lot backs onto the Mekong. It has nine mango trees, and Bo brought three geese to live on the property.

Last December, I returned to Cambodia for three weeks, to see the land, hire a caretaker (who will live on the property with his wife and two small



McLellan's house site on the Mekong River. *Photo by Michele McLellan.*

children) and to approve plans for a very tiny wood house with a very large deck. I am a curiosity to the neighbors, and I know that will pass.

In March, Bo e-mailed that the house is finished. Photos of it arrived in April. How often will I go there? Right now, I'm not sure. I have a full-time job, an

interesting career, and a newsroom training project about which I am passionate. But when I do go back, I know this: I will be home. ■

Michele McLellan, a 2002 Nieman Fellow, directs Tomorrow's Workforce, a newsroom training program

that links strategic investment in professional development with improving the value and appeal of quality journalism. More information about this program can be found at www.tomorrowwork.org.

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Sharing Techniques of Publishing

In Jakarta, an admirable venture was in need of organizational training.

By Ralph Hancox

Since the experience of my school days, I have regarded education as a matter of pulling things from, rather than stuffing things into, otherwise preoccupied skulls. With this very much in mind, I embarked on a consultancy assignment in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 1996, from the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. The assignment was organized by the formidably energetic executive director of the International Book Institute, Donna K. Anderton. She had asked me if I could assist Yayasan Obor Indonesia (YOI)—a nonprofit book publisher—to identify its training needs and help develop business strategies to bring the enterprise to self-sufficiency.

Through extensive interviews in the summer of 1996 of people involved in the generally robust Indonesian publishing industry, we established the focus for this training endeavor. Two training sessions were then set up during separate months in 1997, with a concluding off-site workshop in 1998.

Principles of the Training

For 40 years I'd been involved with editing and publishing in newspapers, magazines and books. When Anderton approached me, I was pacing out retirement as the professional fellow teaching in the Master of Publishing program at the Centre in Vancouver, British

Columbia. YOI—a publishing house in this functioning dictatorial state that was dedicated to spreading democratic ideals among Indonesian intellectuals and the literate population—received no internal or government support, especially for any kind of training. Run by the legendary Pak Mochtar Lubis, an international award-winning Indonesian journalist and editor who had been jailed on occasions for his liberal advocacies, YOI was covertly respected by the industry, but it relied on foreign (mainly U.S.) aid for its continued existence.

Despite the favored model of bringing promising candidates to an institution overseas to attend formal courses, the guiding principles I arrived at for this training were relatively self-evident. By adhering to them I was confident we could meet our training goals:

- To have any chance of a useful long-term transfer of “best practices,” a training program would have to begin with a review of generic publishing disciplines and move into professional specialization for promising individual candidates.
- At first, a seminar and workshop approach for managers, followed by one with staff, had a higher chance of success than classroom training.
- Language of instruction had to be in Bahasa Indonesia for generic sessions, possibly with a competent

instantaneous interpreter.

- Visual presentations in on-site generic sessions had to be simple, clear and explicit, with text in Bahasa Indonesia.
- The first, second and third stages of any successful training program must be in Indonesia and tailored to local publishing circumstances.

In March 1997, the first on-site training session, my task was to get immersed in the YOI operation, to learn how its 30-member work force functioned, and organize the managing cadre into an effective team. Language was but a minor difficulty.

As it turned out, YOI is a function-oriented organization, as are many publishing houses worldwide. Publishers dictate. Editors edit. Proofreaders proofread. Production prints and distributes. Salespeople sell and accountants count. As far as I could tell, hardly anyone knew what others were doing in other departments, and there was no job-related interchange among them. Why? (See below on the question of “blame.”)

The consequences of this lack of interaction and communication were typical. Deadlines were missed and publication dates postponed while inventory, unsold copies, backlist titles, and obsolete volumes piled up in the warehouse. Losses accumulated and YOI's rancorous, post-publication analy-



Indonesia

ses were devoted to assigning blame.

Sound familiar?

In proposing a training program, it was an advantage for me to be from Canada. This was perceived to be non-threatening. Managers were able to unburden themselves of the irritation they (possibly unfairly) felt with the bureaucracy surrounding the dispensation of international aid. They were intimidated by what was being peddled as the “Business School” method. Yet I arrived on the scene virtually free from this baggage, since I was proposing a plausible road to detachment and independence.

Seven managers attended the initial organizational seminar in preparation for the staff workshop to follow. It opened with an analysis of YOI’s purpose and mission, as well as its publishing and business strategies. Who did what in their publishing functions? What became clear is that careful team management was required for the entire publishing process to be efficient. I was to get across to these managers the notion that “bad communications” was not a disease but rather a symptom of rigid division of functions and the urge to “blame” others for failure. Our discussions dealt with the publishing *process* from the acquisition of intellectual property to its production and sale and the need for every segment of the operation to fit in the total sequence required to get the publication out on time.

Sharing the necessary historical marketing and accounting data for successful planning and future projections was as useful to the editorial group, in its role in this process, as it was to the sales people in theirs. Similarly, the editorial tasks and deadlines involved had to take an integrated “critical path” approach if sales and marketing were to reach the designated reading public on time. Reducing unit costs by upping the print run was the road to certain perdition.

This exercise was successful and productive, and evidence of this included:

- The alacrity and enthusiasm with which the publisher embraced inclu-

sion of profitability in the purpose and mission statement, and

- The competence and enthusiasm the management group displayed as they conducted the subsequent staff workshop almost unaided by me as the facilitator.

The following staff workshop produced drafts of business requirements and human resource work summaries. It worked up rudimentary but telling job descriptions—with objective measurable standards of performance, personal achievement goals, and the working interrelationships needed for enlightened process management.

Statistical analysis and title break-even techniques were used to determine what sales levels would have been and would, in the future, be needed to cover both fixed and production costs for every title published so far and for those already planned for. The managers also presented a reorganized planning framework to the entire working group for “contribution, buy-in, and commitment.”

Two teams of representatives from a mixture of all departments then convened to suggest their 10 most promising titles to be considered for strong promotion in the next publishing program. They drew on the historical data now available to all, realistic projected sales for new titles and data for pricing decisions. Team leaders presented the results.

It was a promising start.

Looking Back

The training experience with the YOI staff more than offset the drawbacks—the 30-plus hour journey from Vancouver with its many weeks away from home, the tropical temperatures, the less than immaculate accommodation, and the daily 4 a.m. call to prayer that blared across the city from loudspeakers. (I learned later that the mullahs recorded these messages and did not personally broadcast them.) Then there were the pungent back streets, the distressing disparities between rich and poor, the riots, the consequences of an unfamiliar diet

There were, of course, many offsetting benefits. I picked up a useful vocabulary of Bahasa Indonesia—about 500 words—and I met and talked with Gus Dur, Abdurrahman Wahid, who later became president of Indonesia amid the street rioting against the Suharto regime (and, incidentally, against the ethnic Chinese merchant class). The people I worked with were talented, committed, eager for professional development and, I suspect, grotesquely underpaid. Among them were the controversialists, and their sometimes hostile questions and remarks that sparked vigorous discussions and valuable opportunities for guidance.

What I have been unable to determine since my return in 1998 has been the long-term results of the training program. Pak Mochtar Lubis has since died and Ibu Kartini Nurdin, who was the executive secretary of the organization when I was there, is leading Yayasan Obor Indonesia. (This succession confirms another of my conclusions after now 50 years in the business. True secretaries are an ideal source for management promotions: They readily internalize the techniques of process management through the multi-departmental coordinating work they are required to perform in this role.)

Ibu Kartini Nurdin’s e-mail to me in the last days of 2004—some five years after my visit—included the words: “... We always try to increase our production in order to reach our mission. One factor is because of your consultation how to increase our capacity. You have to be proud of it. Thank you very much”

Thank you, Ibu Kartini, for the extraordinary and rewarding opportunity to be of assistance. ■

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International Journalism

Rarely do photographs accompany words on the op-ed page of The New York Times. But earlier this year Times columnist **Nicholas Kristof** connected four gruesome images of the genocide taking place in Darfur with his ongoing reporting about the death and destruction there. In an e-mail exchange with Nieman Reports, he talked about why he decided to use these images and shared his thoughts on why what is happening in Darfur doesn't receive more attention from Western journalists. Kristof observed that "Particularly with issues like Darfur that have an element of the dutiful in them—horrible things are happening in a country that the reader is never going to visit—the tendency is for the reader to skip over them. No reader is going to bounce over a wrenching photo, though, particularly one in a surprising place like the op-ed page."

Ellen Knickmeyer, who reported from West Africa for The Associated Press from 1999 until 2005 and is now The Washington Post's Baghdad bureau chief, explains that the Western news media's inattention to the genocide in Darfur fits a pattern of neglect that is increasingly common with stories out of Africa. When the Darfur killing intensified in February 2003, Iraq was claiming the international news spotlight and consuming newsroom resources. Knickmeyer points out that by then "news agencies and most newspapers in the United States now were becoming capable of looking at major events in Africa, acknowledging they were news, and deciding not to spare the resources to cover them."

In an article originally published in The Boston Globe, **Masha Gessen**, deputy editor of Bolshoy Gorod, an independent magazine based in Moscow, describes some of the very difficult decisions journalists confront in Vladimir Putin's Russia. In writing about her own choices, Gessen acknowledges that "If I lose my job because I write or assign a story that gets the magazine shut down, I may never work in this country again." In a follow-up article that accompanies her globe story, Gessen details the editorial decision-making process her magazine went through with a story involving two verdicts against members of a leading political opposition party.

Alex Lupis, who is the senior program coordinator for Europe and Central Asia at the Committee to Protect Journalists, provides an overview of the increasingly repressive measures the Putin government has brought against journalists in Russia. Now, six and a half years after Putin became president, Lupis writes that "the Kremlin's apparatchiks continue to rely on a multipronged campaign of lawsuits, bureaucratic obstruction, crude intimidation, and hostile corporate takeovers to silence the president's few remaining media critics." ■

When Genocide Is a Story Left Largely Untold

‘The challenge for journalists in a situation like Darfur is to remember that our job is to cover history, albeit on the fly, and not just events or press conferences.’

On February 23, 2005, Nicholas Kristof's New York Times op-ed page column was accompanied by four photographs he'd been given from a secret archive of photos and reports gathered by African Union monitors to document the genocide taking place in Darfur. Usually his words alone appear on this page, but Kristof, who had written many words about what is happening in Darfur, decided the unrelenting death and destruction and the relative lack of news coverage about it made the delivery of this day's message all the more urgent. In e-mailed responses to questions the editor posed to him, Kristof speaks to the impact his column had and to some broader issues related to journalism.

Melissa Ludtke: Why do you believe the genocide taking place in Darfur has not received—and does not receive—more news coverage?

Nicholas Kristof: Journalism has never done a great job in covering genocide, and in that respect Darfur is typical rather than an unfortunate exception. Look at coverage of the slaughter of Armenians in 1915, of the Holocaust, of Pol Pot's massacres, of Rwanda—they were all undercovered. One reason is that the slaughter tends to happen in remote and dangerous places, and the authorities deny access. These days, for example, it's almost impossible for American journalists to get Sudanese travel permits to go to Darfur, and the reality is that by blocking access Sudan has to some extent squelched the story. (That obstructionism makes it all the more impressive that some journalists, like Emily Wax of The Washington Post, have managed to figure out ways to get into Darfur repeatedly, despite



A corpse in Adwa, in Darfur, from December 2004. Photo courtesy Nicholas D. Kristof/The New York Times.

dangerous and difficult conditions, and provide first-rate coverage.) The larger problem is that we in the news business are best at covering what presidents announced yesterday; we're at our weakest in covering ongoing problems that don't actually happen on any one day but that trickle along in remote parts of the world and that don't have a constituency of readers.

Ludtke: In publishing several gruesome photographs from Darfur on The New York Times's op-ed page, you wrote that "it's time for all of us to look squarely at the victims of our indifference." You wrote about how you hope that by "inflicting these horrific photos" on readers, you might cut through "our passivity, which allows these people to be slaughtered." What made you decide that words, by themselves, were no lon-

ger adequate to capture the attention you believe this situation deserves?

Kristof: It's painful for a scribbler like myself to acknowledge, but pictures always grab readers in ways that words usually don't. As a foreign correspondent, I learned quickly that I was often better off with a story on page five with a photo than with a front-page story that didn't carry a photo. Particularly with issues like Darfur that have an element of the dutiful in them—horrible things are happening in a country that the reader is never going to visit—the tendency is for the reader to skip over them. No reader is going to bounce over a wrenching photo, though, particularly one in a surprising place like the op-ed page. I don't believe in using photos idly on the opinion pages, but after 300,000 deaths in Darfur it seemed reasonable

to try a new approach, and these photos had real news value.

Ludtke: Can you describe the reaction these photographs and your accompanying column received from readers?

Kristof: The reaction was huge, because readers were made to feel uncomfortable about sharing their breakfast coffee with a murdered child. Initially, there was a leak investigation to see who gave me the photos, but that collapsed when it was obvious that the public was less concerned with leaks than with genocide. Several U.S. senators promptly introduced the Darfur Accountability Act, which denounces the genocide and calls for sanctions and a no-fly zone, and they cited the column and blew up the photos to display them on the Senate floor; those may have been the grisliest photos ever on the Senate floor. My favorite tribute came from the Sudanese government, which blamed the sanctions legislation on my columns.

Ludtke: What do you think journalists should have done, or ought to be doing now, given the situation in Darfur?

Kristof: The challenge for journalists in a situation like Darfur is to remember that our job is to cover history, albeit on the fly, and not just events or press conferences. It's obviously difficult to get the story these days from Darfur, but it's possible to cover it to some degree from Chad, by crossing illegally from Chad, and by talking to aid workers. And we all know that if the Michael Jackson trial were being held in Darfur, the television networks would figure out ways to get in and provide endless coverage. And the reality is that while there should have been more coverage, the news reports from Darfur did make a real difference. Lots of reporters did figure out ways to get in and get the story out, and the story reached TV and the cover of a news magazine. CNN, the BBC, Emily Wax and Sebastian Mallaby in *The Washington Post*, my colleagues



This is a photo of a man who fled barefoot and almost made it to this bush before he was shot dead. *Photo courtesy Nicholas D. Kristof/The New York Times.*



This photo is of a child killed in Hamada in January 2005. *Photo courtesy Nicholas D. Kristof/The New York Times.*

at the Times—they and many others get credit for pursuing the story in ways that pricked the world's conscience and resulted in a huge humanitarian effort, a reduced rate of slaughter by the Sudanese government, and increased humanitarian access. There are hundreds of thousands of people alive today who would not otherwise be. So if Darfur underscored our weaknesses in the press, it also is a reminder of the power of our spotlight to do good. ■

I'm not showing the photo of his older brother, about five years old, who lay beside him because the brother had been beaten so badly that nothing was left of his face. And alongside the two boys was the corpse of their mother.

—N.K.



A young boy was one of 107 people who died in an attack by a Sudanese government-backed militia in the village of Hamada. *Photo courtesy of Nicholas D. Kristoff/The New York Times.*

Darfur Fits Into a Pattern of Reporting Neglect

‘Newspaper bosses are unlikely ever to return Africa staffing to what it was in the 1990’s.’

By Ellen Knickmeyer

It was a hard number in an opinion piece that pushed my already-guilty conscience on Darfur coverage into high gear: 320,000 people would die there by the end of the year, Nicholas Kristof wrote in *The New York Times* in mid-June 2004, citing what he called a “best-case” estimate by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID).

My colleagues in bureaus around Africa were equally stung by increasingly forceful declarations from humanitarian agency chiefs that Darfur was a full-blown crisis the world was overlooking. So we launched into standard-operating procedure for coverage of remote regions of Africa—we lined up transport, in this case via aid flights with the World Food Program; marshaled our best case for covering, and stepped-up our

pestering of bosses to go.

Arab tribal militias, backed by Sudanese troops and warplanes, were then more than a year into an allegedly systematic campaign of emptying villages in Darfur of their non-Arab residents. More than 100,000 villagers had fled across the border into Chad. More than one million were already displaced in Darfur. Up to one-third of that million could die from disease and hunger alone in coming months, U.S. AID said. It called Darfur the world’s biggest humanitarian crisis.

It was a conflict whose basic components were compelling and easy enough for all to understand. We already had been watching the story develop for more than a year. It was now, without a doubt, the biggest spot

news in Africa.

Our bosses? First response: No. We half-expected that—there was a war on, in Iraq, after all. In second and third tries and beyond, though, the answer was still no. So was what sounded like the final answer: Our organization didn’t have the resources available to spare a staff writer for Darfur. The editors would study it. In the meantime, we should concentrate on covering it as best we could with stringers.

African News Coverage

United States coverage of Africa was turning a corner. The cold war days when Africa news would command headlines among the top stories for months and years at a time, as African

proxies of the East and West did battle in Africa, seemed over. They probably had been since Zaire in the 1990's.

I came to Africa at the tail end of that time, in 1999, during the first-ever coup in the long-stable West African nation of Côte D'Ivoire, when editors still would issue a command for coverage when troops closed the land borders: "Charter." That is to say, charter a plane if you have to, just get there, quick.

During most of my time since, American attention to Africa ebbed enough that assignments generally required preliminary rounds of drawing editors' attention to a topic. We would talk over whether coverage was important enough and safe enough. If those two factors were there, my bosses would almost always agree. It worked for Liberia, in summer 2003, when my news organization kept American staffers in the country to aid our very good Liberian correspondent in covering the bloody last days of Charles Taylor, a cold war-era warlord. Taylor had used his country, which was founded and then largely forgotten by Americans, to stir conflicts in West Africa for nearly 15 years. We, by then joined by a lot of other Western journalists, were there for the end in August, when West African peace troops arrived to secure the capital, U.S. warships shoved into view on the horizon, and West Africa's biggest troublemaker fled into exile.

Events across the Atlantic on September 11, 2001, helped make that kind of coverage more and more an anomaly. Afghanistan, and then Iraq, drained reporters and budget from Africa. I worked for The Associated Press (A.P.) then, but the same was true for American news media across the board. Newspapers drew down staff in Africa to cover Iraq, cutting some positions or leaving them unfilled. Staffing fell to a level where even news agencies like my own sometimes covered only the must-cover news, like wars and coups. This coverage only reinforced the Western perception that Africa was all bad news, dreary and hopeless, with problems that were unsolvable and thus a waste of tears and newsprint. (Few people noticed that wasn't true anymore. Some of Africa's most intractable wars

ended in the first five years of the 21st century, but the good news often went undercover.)

Conversely, correspondents for some of the bigger newspapers often would only do African features when they flew back on breaks from Iraq or Afghanistan. The result was that major events in Africa—the last throbs of the Congo conflict, for example, with a death toll that is at three million and climbing—scarcely made some of the papers of record in the United States for long months at a time.

News From Darfur

News agencies and most newspapers in the United States now were becoming capable of looking at major events in Africa, acknowledging they were news, and deciding not to spare the resources to cover them. And that was the state of affairs in February 2003, when the rebel groups rose up in Darfur, and the Janjaweed rode into Darfur villages on horses, camels and pickups, killing, raping and looting after warplanes had dropped their bombs

It's true there were some obstacles to coverage. Sudan was effective in blocking access from Khartoum, initially refusing visas. Many news organizations normally covered Sudan from Cairo bureaus, which were far too busy with Iraq and the Middle East. Stringers in Khartoum lacked the press protection to report freely on government actions. Entry to the conflict zone at first required sneaking across from Chad and traveling for weeks across the desert with rebels.

But none of the problems were insurmountable, especially for Africa-based reporters. Those who wanted to, and had news organizations that wanted them to, could get in—Emily Wax of The Washington Post, most extensively and with the most dedication, Somini Sengupta of The New York Times, early on and with hard news, and Nicholas Kristof, who hit again and again on Darfur in column after column. His coverage, with Wax's and others who reported on the killing in Darfur, demanded that the world pay attention.

"If the Laci Peterson trial had been

held in Nyala, then everyone from Matt Drudge to all the morning TV shows would have figured out how to get in," Kristof said by telephone, referring to Darfur's southern province. "It's a question of priorities."

"We devoted so many resources to Iraq that other parts of the world, especially Africa, paid the price and didn't get the coverage," he said.

The A.P. did, in fact, wind up sending American staffers to Darfur and not long after all those "no's" were heard. The news out of Darfur spiked at the end of June, with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell almost bumping entourages in attention-getting trips to refugee camps.

But that was the peak. People are still dying in Darfur, but American troops still are dying in Iraq, too. And even when Iraq is over, newspapers still will be trying to figure out how to make money as they confront declines in circulation and advertising. Africa remains a compelling and internationally relevant story, but newspaper bosses are unlikely ever to return Africa staffing to what it was in the 1990's.

A choice forced by finite resources—but once having made it, we all probably lose the right to claim that we still cover Africa responsibly. "It is terrible," Ishmael Haggar, a schoolteacher from Darfur, told my former A.P. colleague Karel Prinsloo in January 2004, who happened to have been on the Chad frontier with Sudan when Sudanese warplanes bombed just across the border.

Prinsloo was close enough to hear the explosions and to speak to the hundreds of refugees, like Haggar, who came rushing across the border with stories of villages being emptied by bombing runs and militia raids, just hours earlier. "They are slaughtering us," Haggar told the photographer. "I need to tell somebody." ■

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Fear and Self-Censorship in Vladimir Putin's Russia

'One bargains with oneself. How much can I sacrifice before I lose respect for myself as a journalist?'

In January 2005, The Boston Globe published an article by Masha Gessen, a 2004 Nieman Fellow, Russian-American journalist, and author of "Ester and Ruzya: How My Grandmothers Survived Hitler's War and Stalin's Peace," published in 2004. In it she described the increasingly repressive climate in which journalists work in Russia. Part of her story focused on a decision she would soon confront at the independent magazine, Bolshoy Gorod, where she works as deputy editor. We asked her to give us an update on what her magazine decided to do and why and explain the consequences. That follow-up article, beginning on page 116, accompanies the reprint below of her original story, with permission of The Boston Globe.

By Masha Gessen

On Monday, December 20, 2004, Russia celebrated Secret Police Day. Once an obscure date, it has acquired a high profile in recent years, with banquets, speeches by highly placed officials, and commemorative banners all over Moscow. This year the celebrations marked the 83rd anniversary of the founding of VChK, which has since had many acronyms, of which KGB is the best known in the West.

That same day, in two different courtrooms—one in Moscow and one in the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk—judges handed down two verdicts. One concerned seven members of the radical National Bolshevik Party, a once-marginal organization that has emerged as the country's best-organized opposition group, who in August took over the office of the minister of health to protest a bill then pending in Parliament. All seven were sentenced to five years in prison—for an act of civil disobedience. In Krasnoyarsk, another member of the same party, Andrei Skovorodnikov, was

found guilty of using his personal Web site to insult President Vladimir Putin. His sentence: six months in prison.

The second of the two verdicts was, in a way, the more frightening. Officers of the FSB (the current acronym for the Russian secret police) showed up at his apartment the very day he created his Web site, in February 2004, before almost anyone had seen it. What's more, the prosecution's case relied not only on content that was actually posted on the site—apparently, a collage of Putin's head atop a naked woman's body, with the caption "Putin is a fag"—but also on articles critical of Putin that were found on the hard drive of the computer they confiscated from his home.

I am the deputy editor of an independent magazine called Bolshoy Gorod (Big City), a Moscow biweekly that covers both urban life and national politics. The day after the verdicts, the editor and I were planning our first issue in the new year, an important one for us because we are launching a redesign. And we had a problem: The two verdicts were the most ominous political events in months, the definitive indication that Russia had entered another age of state terror. How do we give these events their due without risking getting shut down ourselves?

In the last five years, Putin's government has systematically eradicated a variety of political freedoms, turning back Russia's attempts to build a democracy. A report released on December 20, 2004—coincidentally, the day of the two verdicts—by Freedom House, the U.S. human rights organization that monitors and advocates political freedom around the world, downgraded Russia to "not free" status, making it the only country that year noted for its backward movement.

Russia no longer has the usual tools of democracy: a free media (a handful of independent print publications that

rarely reach outside of Moscow cannot compete with the state television monopoly); free elections (Russians are no longer able to directly elect local governors or members of Parliament); or an independent judiciary (in essence, judges at all levels now serve at the pleasure of the president).

The Verdicts' Message and Self-Censorship

The message of these two verdicts is that, in an important sense, we have returned to the late Soviet period, the Brezhnev era. At that point, Soviet terror was not total: Many people read and distributed samizdat publications, for example, and many more listened to "Voice of America" and other foreign broadcasters that used shortwave frequencies to get information to the Soviet people. But every once in a while, someone was imprisoned for one of these transgressions. The late Soviet regime was far more economical than the Stalin regime: Its leaders seemed to understand that, to keep the country in line, they didn't need to imprison tens of millions of people. They just needed frequently to punish a few people at random.

The Putin regime has adopted a similar strategy. Since Putin came to power, the state has taken over all television channels. For a time, print and online media, which reach comparatively few people, were still allowed to function. Recently, though, the editor of Izvestia, the Russian daily of record, was fired on orders from the Kremlin. Crackdowns on newspaper distribution systems have driven circulation down significantly. Individual journalists have been threatened, attacked and, in at least a few cases, apparently killed. The prison sentence for Andrei Skovorodnikov sent the message that no media outlet, no matter how small, is immune to the Kremlin's unfriendly

attention any longer.

So we had a problem. How would we write about the two verdicts handed down on Secret Police Day? We did, after all, want to attract attention to our first redesigned issue. Just not the wrong kind of attention.

The verdicts were covered by other media, including at least one television channel (the most liberal of the three state-owned national networks), and one daily newspaper even quoted the “fag” line. But as a magazine, we would want to do a more in-depth story, one that would analyze the dire implications and consequences of the verdicts. At the same time, there was also a temptation to play the story down a little, so that

only the alert readers would see the significance of it.

This is how self-censorship works. One bargains with oneself. How much can I sacrifice before I lose respect for myself as a journalist? Can I respect myself if I don’t give a story the play it deserves because I’m afraid? Can I respect myself if I kill a story because I’m afraid? Can I respect myself if I force the reader to look for the truth between the lines because I’m afraid?

And does it matter whom I’m afraid of? One can be afraid of the FSB, organized crime, the police. And one can also be afraid of the fears of others—companies who will pull their ads, for example, or investors who will pull

their money because they fear the association with a risk-taking publication will cost them dearly.

Earlier this year, I reported a story that I found both ridiculous and very, very sad. The Russian edition of GQ, the men’s magazine, had run its traditional “Man of the Year” contest. Some 26,000 readers had voted, and the winner was Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the oil tycoon, philanthropist and political activist whose Yukos oil empire has been expropriated and who has been in jail for over a year on charges of tax evasion that are widely seen as politically driven. His well-publicized trial has sent a message to all Russian entrepreneurs, warning them that they will suffer gravely if they

Editorial Dilemmas at an Independent Magazine in Moscow

To get a better idea of our options—when it came time for us to decide how to report on the two verdicts against dissidents—imagine The New York Times Magazine with which our magazine has many similarities, at least in its format. Bolshoy Gorod (Big City) opens with four back-to-back columns, followed by two or three long feature pieces, a photo story, then a personal-finance section, a style section, an entertainment section, and we close the magazine with two more columns.

Essentially, we were left with two choices for covering these verdicts. Either we’d do a large feature piece or a column. But there were two complicating factors: The party in question, the National Bolsheviks, is an organization with a checkered past and an odious name; in addition, this would be our first redesigned issue, and it would be coming out more than a month after the verdicts—meaning that our decision to cover them would be a noticeable statement. And it was a statement that seemed important: The verdicts were a major milestone and, in positioning our publication, it was important for us to show our readers that we’d noticed.

Weighing the Idea of a Column

The option the editor and I initially favored was asking the leader of the National Bolshevik Party (NBP) to write the opening column for this issue. The column’s standing title is best translated as “Sensations,” and in it authors are asked to examine a feeling or use a small incident to illustrate a larger truth of our lives today. We envisioned the party leader perhaps describing what his day had been like as he called the attorneys for 42 young members of his organization currently in detention and awaiting trial, 10 of whom are underage. There were two arguments in favor of assigning this column. First, the leader of the NBP is Eduard Limonov, one of Russia’s most accomplished and best-known writers, who was the author of many bestsellers long before he began his unlikely political career. Second, because of Limonov’s fame as a writer and his increasing notoriety as a politician, the column would attract a lot of readers.

Other editors on our staff—there are seven of us altogether—disagreed,



Mikhail Khodorkovsky on trial in Moscow. Photo by Misha Japaridze/The Associated Press.

and their main reservation concerned Limonov’s reputation. He’d made some extremely nationalist pronouncements in the past, and though now he seemed to tout a strictly pro-democracy line, his name and his party’s still make many people uncomfortable. And in a time when the political lines were shifting, Russians were back to that uncomfortable situation in which all who oppose the regime have to stick together, regardless of their individual political views. But our fear was that by erring on the side of solidarity we would send the wrong message—if we did this, it

ever happen to displease the Kremlin. The publisher of Russian GQ banned the publication of Khodorkovsky's name in connection with the contest, forcing his editorial staff to falsify the results. According to staff members, someone actually had to fly to Italy, where the magazine is prepared for printing, to replace the offending page.

One remarkable aspect of this story is that the magazine's publisher, Bernd Runge, is a German national who has little to fear personally from the authorities: He doesn't even spend much time in Russia, since his turf includes other Conde Nast publications in Germany and Africa as well. But Runge has an intimate understanding of how the

new Russia works. He hails from East Germany, and he went to college in the Soviet Union. Earlier this year, two major German magazines published multipart exposés showing that Runge served as a Stasi (the East German secret police) agent during the Soviet period. Jonathan Newhouse, chairman of Conde Nast International, issued a statement affirming his confidence in Runge and calling the revelations "irrelevant" to today's realities.

Deciding What to Publish

As it turns out, though, the instincts of a former Stasi agent are very relevant indeed in today's Russia. I am not yet

sure how we will solve the problem of covering the two verdicts. [See box on page 116 to learn about the decision her magazine made.] I do, however, know that just a few months ago I would have considered the very question of a story's potential risks, whether to myself or the publication I work for, a deeply offensive one. But I have a personal stake in the decision: If I lose my job because I write or assign a story that gets the magazine shut down, I may never work in this country again.

In the late Soviet period, some people rejected such choices altogether and went to work as street-sweepers and boiler-room operators. Most, however, tried constantly to strike a balance. I

would seem as though we were willing to own Limonov's reputation as well as his words.

As we talked more about our approach to this story, it became increasingly clear that this shifting political landscape—and the place the NBP held in it—was what we needed to focus attention on. This awareness became the solution to our dilemma. For this issue, I ended up writing a piece on the National Bolshevik Party and how it fit into the ever-changing environment of Russian opposition politics. The story ended up exploring what is so wrong with Russia today that allows the National Bolsheviks to embody the role of the government's strongest opposition.

Letters to Khodorkovsky

Reaction to the piece was just what we wanted. People talked about it, and a lot of them clearly felt uncomfortable with it. There was no indication the article irked anyone close to the Kremlin, yet I felt we'd done a very good piece of journalism.

Of course, before long, another dilemma surfaced. We came up with the idea of making the jailed former oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky—perhaps the world's most famous and wealthiest inmate—a regular columnist

in the magazine. We didn't want him writing biweekly political manifestoes (although he has published a couple in other publications). Rather, we'd grown fascinated with the new phenomenon of thousands of people writing to Khodorkovsky in jail. Most simply write to express their support, yet hundreds of women have declared their love for him in their letters, and many people ask his opinion on a variety of topics. In a sense, he has come to symbolize a kind of higher wisdom: People seem to believe that someone who had it all and has lost it and is now alone with his thoughts, yet seems to have held it together and kept his sense of humor, is possessed of a knowledge we all would like to possess.

We approached Khodorkovsky to ask if we could publish some of his correspondence and also start routing our readers' letters to him. He agreed, and we started to fashion a sort of Khodorkovsky advice column. To say this idea made managers of our publishing house nervous would be a significant understatement. One of them threatened to resign if we went ahead with the plan. The fear was that advertisers would flee, distribution would collapse, and the Kremlin would squash us. In the end, though, we were able to convince our publishing colleagues that no di-

saster was in the offing. No one quit, and we started running the column in mid-April.

Readers' reaction has been good. Letters to Khodorkovsky are pouring in. But on the production side, the new column is a nightmare. Each letter, and each edit, requires a ridiculous number of steps to complete. But the biggest problem so far is Khodorkovsky has not turned out to be a very good writer. He gets wonderfully written letters, asking him, for example, to reflect on how many lives he has had, and responds in the stilted manner of a politician running for office. We are hoping he'll relax after a while and hit his stride.

We are also mindful that there is something very wrong with this editorial decision if we are publishing the words and thoughts of a bad writer simply because he is in jail. But the most significant lesson so far has been that in today's Russia, most of us can get away with just about as much as we dare to get away with. The trick is not to rush to censor oneself. ■ —M.G.

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have spent years trying to figure out how they made the balance work and have recently written a book about my own grandmothers' quests for what they often called "a decent compromise."

One of my grandmothers, Ruzya, was educated to work as a history teacher. But when she graduated from college, she decided she could never use her skills, knowledge and charm to lie to children. So instead, she became a censor, telling herself that censorship was mechanical work that someone else would be doing if she were not. When my other grandmother, Ester, was 20, she stood up to the secret police when they tried to draft her. Five years later, when she was out of a job and her young son was suffering from malnutrition, she accepted a job as a translator

for the NKVD (another acronym for the secret police). She then failed her medical exam, which saved her from becoming a uniformed officer of the secret police.

Ester got to have a heroic narrative, while Ruzya, who is now 85, is still deeply ashamed of the work she did half a century ago. But while my grandmothers' decisions were intensely difficult and informed, above all, by a desire to stay a moral course, the choice was hardly theirs at all.

In the book, I concluded that there is no such thing as a decent compromise. When I started researching it, about eight years ago, I never thought my grandmothers' lessons would have a direct application for my own life. But in the days after Secret Police Day 2004,

I face a choice: Commence the search for a decent compromise or go work in a boiler room. This was the nature of choice in the Soviet Union, and it is becoming the nature of choice in today's Russia. If one does anything at all—edits a story, for example, or kills one—one is in some way becoming an accomplice of the regime.

For merely being mindful of the limitations of freedom inevitably makes one also an enforcer of these limitations. But the penalties for not being mindful, for refusing to play by the rules, are too grave. Just ask the young man in Krasnoyarsk, who dared insult the president. ■

Increasing Press Repression in Russia

'... bullying calls from the presidential administration or local governors act as a covert substitute for the rule of law.'

By Alex Lupis

Media freedom emerged as a major theme when senior Bush administration officials met with Russian President Vladimir Putin this spring. Public statements made after these meetings illuminate how little apparent understanding there is of the depth of Russian press repression and the decidedly undemocratic status quo that exists in that country today.

In April, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice traveled to Moscow for what appears to have been a mostly upbeat meeting with Putin, as they talked about America's strategic partnership with Russia in the war on terror and on nuclear nonproliferation issues. And while she criticized the Kremlin's authoritarian policies in its crackdown on independent media, Rice also cautioned in her remarks that it was important not to isolate Russia.

After Rice left Russia, Putin dismissed her comments by telling Israeli television that "If this thesis is used exclusively

as an instrument to implement one's own foreign policy aims, an instrument of putting pressure on our country for the sake of reaching one's own national interests, we will naturally ignore it."

President George W. Bush's February meeting with Putin in the Slovak capital of Bratislava followed a similar script. In a strained press conference after the meeting, Bush emphasized the "constructive and friendly way" in which he expressed his concerns about the Kremlin's growing authoritarianism. For his part, Putin grimly denied that there are media restrictions in Russia. Speaking "absolutely frankly," he said, "we and I, in particular, do not think that this has to be pushed to the foreground, that new problems should be created from nothing." Putin also asserted that he was "not the minister of propaganda"—forgetting, perhaps, that during the past four years national broadcast media has been consolidated under Kremlin authority. Independent

television stations have been shuttered by the government or swallowed up by pro-government businesses.

Broadcast Media in Russia

The state gas monopoly Gazprom carried out a hostile takeover of the national television channel NTV in April 2001. After NTV journalists moved to TV-6 to continue their independent reporting, that station was closed by court order in January 2002. When the journalists moved to yet another station, TVS, the Press Ministry yanked that channel off the air in June 2003.

The country's remaining national television channels—state-run Rossiya and Channel One, along with NTV—have revived the old Soviet approach to news reporting, focusing heavily on Putin's daily meetings with his cabinet and international leaders. These major national television stations portray Putin as a decisive leader and a stabilizing

force while suppressing information about the war in Chechnya, incompetence in the security services, and the government's legal assault against the oil giant Yukos. Perhaps his treatment by the press was related to a January 2004 meeting when Putin summoned influential television executives to the Kremlin to direct their coverage of his reelection campaign. By spring, the Kremlin had purged national television of its few independent-minded journalists and current affairs shows.

The Kremlin has responded to recent foreign criticism over its restrictive media policies with a feeble public relations campaign meant to demonstrate media independence. This February, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a U.S. television reporter that the controversy was merely the result of a media campaign and that he was preparing a CD-ROM with Russian press clippings to prove to Secretary Rice that Russia has a free press.

Dangers to Journalists and Journalism

Rather than preparing a multimedia presentation, Lavrov should call Russian Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov and ask him why law enforcement officials have failed to solve 11 contract-style killings of journalists during Putin's tenure. Many of these murdered journalists were trying to provide critical, in-depth coverage of the widespread government abuses that plague Russian society. The system-wide failure to prosecute their killers has intensified self-censorship throughout Russian media and has virtually halted important investigative reporting.

The foreign minister could also meet with officials from United Russia, the pro-Putin party that dominates Parliament, to inquire about a series of highly restrictive media, terrorism and visa bills currently being drafted that will make it easier for the Kremlin to enforce press censorship. These measures would make it far easier for diplomats to ban critical foreign journalists from entering the country and would provide media regulators with greater latitude to censor news reporting on terrorist

attacks.

The foreign minister could also contact Federal Security Service (FSB) director Nikolai Patrushev and ask him about a broad campaign of persecution against journalists reporting on the brutal war in the southern Russian republic of Chechnya. Authorities in the Volga River city of Nizhniy Novgorod recently charged Stanislav Dmitrievsky, editor in chief of the independent monthly newspaper, *Pravo-zashchita*, with seeking to overthrow the government after the paper quoted Chechen rebel leaders calling for peace talks in articles it published last year.

In some instances, security forces have even manufactured criminal cases to silence journalists reporting on the war in Chechnya. In August, a dozen FSB agents in North Ossetia raided the home and office of Yuri Bagrov, a local reporter for *The Associated Press*. Bagrov was convicted in December of forging a document to receive Russian citizenship and fined 15,000 rubles (\$540). His passport was also invalidated, he said, making him vulnerable to deportation as a convicted criminal. Journalists were convinced that authorities prosecuted Bagrov to stop him from reporting on politically embarrassing information, such as military casualty figures.

In some cases, journalists were silenced through more subtle means. Raf Shakirov, editor in chief of the leading daily *Izvestia* (News), was forced to resign after Kremlin officials, angered by the paper's coverage of a hostage crisis in the southern town of Beslan, pressured the daily's pro-Kremlin owner, Prof-Media. *Izvestia* had published graphic photographs of the hostage crisis and was one of the first to criticize the government for misrepresenting the number of hostages.

Putin's Press Policies

Perpetuating this harsh reality—while publicly denying it—has been a priority for the Kremlin ever since Putin came to office in late 1999. The former KGB agent launched a two-front war as he took office. He sent Russian forces back into the southern republic of Chechnya under the guise of an "antiterror" opera-

tion, while at the same time he tapped government agencies at the local, national and international level to crack down on independent news reporting. The Kremlin's information war involved a two-fold strategy of restricting access to the war zone while punishing independent reporting on a broad array of government abuses.

Six and a half years later, the Kremlin's apparatchiks continue to rely on a multipronged campaign of lawsuits, bureaucratic obstruction, crude intimidation, and hostile corporate takeovers to silence the president's few remaining media critics. In an example of one such corporate takeover—with this intent—in April, news emerged that the state-owned Evrofinance Mosnarbank and a foreign partner were negotiating to acquire a majority stake in REN-TV. At this influential Moscow-based television station, news programs have remained relatively independent, despite its ownership by the state electricity monopoly, UES.

The Kremlin and its allies broadened their informal censorship of news programs from national television stations to some of Russia's regional ones. This change in policy was an effort to keep growing public discontent with some of Putin's policies—welfare reform and the elimination of gubernatorial elections, for example—off the air toward the end of 2004. Officials from the pro-Putin United Russia Party and other senior politicians pressed these TV stations not to air protest footage that would harm the president's image.

The strengthening of the centralized Soviet-style news media management is commonly referred to as *telefonaya prava*, or "law of the telephone," in which bullying calls from the presidential administration or local governors act as a covert substitute for the rule of law. In a broader historical sense, some analysts have described Putin's authoritarian policies as a reconsolidation of conservative Soviet-era officials who were demoralized by the Soviet Union's collapse but remain committed to reestablishing an authoritarian political order. Their prospects for doing so were bolstered by public discontent with the political and economic chaos

of the 1990's.

While Putin has also stacked the federal and regional governments with former military officers and security agents, the Kremlin public relations machine has insisted that all is well when it comes to media freedom in Russia. And during the past several years, representatives of the Committee to Protect Journalists have participated in several meetings at the Russian embassy in Washington, D.C., in which diplomats eagerly have pledged cooperation while simultaneously denying the existence of media abuses.

For President Bush, the inability to get Putin to back off from his assault on Russia's independent press raises questions about the effectiveness of coddling an authoritarian leader without setting minimum standards of conduct. Some foreign policy analysts and journalists have warned that the Bush administration's focus on short-term

military and economic cooperation with the Kremlin might one day jeopardize stability of Russia and Eurasia. The absence of an independent press to watchdog government corruption, to investigate organized crime and police torture, as well as the trafficking that goes on in narcotics, weapons and humans, virtually guarantees that these serious problems will not be addressed by Putin and his allies.

Some members of the U.S. Congress—apparently frustrated by Putin's denials and Bush's soft-pedaled criticism—have called for harsher measures. Senators John McCain and Joseph Lieberman have introduced a resolution seeking Russia's suspension from the G-8 group of leading industrial democracies until Putin demonstrates his government's commitment to democracy, including freedom of the press. While it is true that largely symbolic protests from the West have not had much effect in

slowing the process of press repression going on in Russia—and actions like this one might achieve what words can't—there appears little likelihood that such a suspension will occur. But without such measures linking Russia's conduct with the press to international sanctions being tried, it is unlikely that the environment will change in a positive way for Russian journalists who yearn to report on the news without government interference. ■

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Nieman Notes

Compiled by Lois Fiore

A Berlin Experience for American Journalists

At the American Academy, debate and dialogue lead to changed perspectives.

By Paul Stoop

As transatlantic relations went sour over the Iraq War, long dormant anti-American sentiments surfaced in Germany. Many Germans regard the invasion and occupation of Iraq as the most blatant example of United States unilateralism. As a result, Americans living in Germany—regardless of their personal views—are often confronted with harsh criticism of their country and sometimes hostility.

One group of Americans, however, remains welcomed here—journalists.

Whether sympathetic or critical of the Bush administration, journalists are interviewed and invited to publicly discuss the war and write columns. In sharp contrast to the diplomatic strains and personal reactions, the press in Germany seem curious to learn why the Bush administration acts as it does and what its electorate wants, and so reporters here remain receptive to frank debate on this topic. For them, visiting American journalists serve as interpreters and public analysts.

Since 1998 the American Academy in Berlin, founded by Richard Holbrooke in the mid-1990's, has hosted American scholars, artists, writers, policy experts, and journalists. Reporters and columnists from publications such as The New York Times, The New Republic, The New Yorker, and the Financial Times have been in residence at the Academy's lakeside villa. Each semester the 12 fellows create a mix of disciplines and ages, making the academy's program a bit different from the Nieman Fellow-

ship, with its sole participants being journalists. Yet aspects of this time spent in Berlin strike me as being common to the Nieman experience.

During the four- to five-month residency at the academy, fellows have dedicated time to devote to a study project, which they present as part of their admission proposal. The topics of these projects seem quite similar to those proposed by Nieman Fellows: immigration, tax issues, and environmental policy being among them. For some journalists this fellowship offers a chance to return to Germany, where they reported from years ago, and explore what has changed (or in some cases try to understand the stagnation). For others, this is their first trip to Europe and an opportunity to gain expertise in European affairs after reporting from other parts of the world.

In Berlin, many layers of the last century's dramas remain tangible in the personal experiences of people whom these journalists meet. Berlin offers an instructive laboratory of change—not all of it for the better—in the wake of the disappearance of its dividing wall. Poland is only 50 miles away, so the issues and challenges of a newly united Europe

can be examined more closely.

Not only is a changing Europe ripe for exploration, but also in this German capital the Americans who visit with different backgrounds, interests, disciplines and views have a chance to talk at length with one another. And mealtime debates are often sparked by conversations that a fellow might have had with a German counterpart involving topics ranging from religion to international relations, from cultural to identity issues. Or remarks made by visitors here can inflame arguments and stir controversy. Two days after September 11, 2001, the late Susan Sontag gave a talk at the academy, and her critical remarks about the United States were published in *The New Yorker*, setting off a vigorous debate here and abroad.

This event offered a powerful reminder of how being part of a diverse group of Americans in a different cultural and political setting can be a powerful catalyst for new and deeper insights about one's own country. And there is yet another aspect of this learning experience that, for others, might be an even more valued part of this fellowship: As discussions among Americans are made accessible to Germans, the fellows

demonstrate, by example, the diversity of American thought, something rarely reflected in German media coverage of U.S. politics.

This is something the Nieman Fellowship does, too. Ten years ago, when my Nieman year ended, each of us returned home with a broader view of Europe after our fellow from Sarajevo shared with us his life and reporting experiences there. And we understood Asian affairs more clearly after many discussions with two Chinese fellows, one from Hong Kong, the other from Beijing. And there was no doubt that we all left with greater appreciation for the differing attitudes that exist among Americans.

Now at the American Academy in Berlin, I am fortunate to be able to listen in on similar conversations, remembering well the life-changing effect they can have. ■

Paul Stoop, a 1995 Nieman Fellow, is deputy director of the American Academy in Berlin. More information about the academy can be found at www.americanacademy.de.

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—1962—

Henry Raymond recently presented his book, "Troubled Neighbors: The Story of U.S.–Latin American Relations from FDR to Clinton and Beyond" (New York University Press), at Harvard University's David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. Publicized as "a journalist's observations on the pendulum swings in U.S.–Latin American relations over the past half-century," Raymond's book devotes chronological chapters to the presidential administrations and concludes with an epilogue on the first term of George W. Bush.

Since starting his coverage of Latin America in the 1950's, Raymond has spent 18 years with United Press International and 12 with *The New York Times*. He now works as a syndicated columnist for Latin American newspapers includ-

ing *La Nacion* (Buenos Aires), *Reforma* (Mexico), *O Estado* (Brazil), and *El Panama America* (Panama).

Murray Seeger writes, "Palma and I are in the process of moving from Bethany Beach, Delaware, back to the Washington area. We have had a good five years of beach-bumming, but I have finished my book ["Discovering Russia"], and we want to be closer to our grandchildren and long-time friends."

—1967—

Philip Meyer, class scribe, submitted the following notes:

Chris Icban is editor in chief of the *Manila Bulletin*. "I started working with the *Manila Times* after graduation from college in 1954. That means I've been

at work in media for half a century now," he writes. "The *Bulletin* is 'The Nation's Leading Newspaper.' That's written under our name on the front page, although we have some tabloids with bigger circulations. Anyway, it's good to be at the center of things in our country, and I am grateful for my year with the class of 1967."

Remer Tyson retired as Knight Rider Africa correspondent in 1997, and he and **Ginny** settled in Harare, Zimbabwe. "At the time, Zimbabwe was one of the world's most promising countries," he writes. "Conditions here have deteriorated substantially since 1997, but Zimbabwe remains the only country in Africa where I would settle, and I have worked in about 40 of them.

"We have two acres inside the city that haven't been designated a farm and

therefore cannot be confiscated—yet. For our use, we grow small-scale crops of corn, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, artichokes and herbs. Our specialty is sweet basil for making pesto. Not many people in Zimbabwe know what pesto is and fewer eat it. I supply those who do. We also grow bananas, mangoes, paw paws, and avocados.”

The Tysons invite visitors to meet them in Vilankulos, a seaside town in neighboring Mozambique, which has daily flights from Johannesburg. “Within a few hours you can drive to some of the best African wild game country.”

Jim Whelan lives in Santiago, Chile, with **Isabel Margarita Valenzuela Gomez**, “a comely and delightful Chilean damsel who, putting aside her usual habits of sound mind and common sense, accepted me in Holy Matrimony” in June 2004. Whelan is the author of “Out of the Ashes: Life, Death and Transfiguration of Democracy in Chile, 1833-1988.” “The Spanish version went through two editions and was, my publisher tells me, the only-ever best seller on Chile written by a foreigner.” Whelan is currently at work on a biography of Augusto Pinochet.

—1971—

Jerome G. Kelly died of Alzheimer’s disease at Stella Maris Hospice in Timonium, Maryland. He was 74.

Kelly spent his early reporting years at Indiana’s Fort Wayne Journal Gazette and the Eastern Shore’s Salisbury Times before joining The Evening Sun of Baltimore as a police reporter in 1959.

At The Evening Sun, Kelly covered maritime affairs, the arts, and the civil rights movement, including the 1963 March on Washington and visits to Baltimore by Martin Luther King, Jr.. He worked at The Evening Sun’s rewrite desk and became a political reporter in 1965. Following his Nieman year, Kelly became an editorial writer for The (Baltimore) Sun. After retiring from the newspaper in 1991, Kelly continued working as spokesman for the Baltimore County sheriff.

Of Kelly’s reporting days, long-

The J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project 2005 Awards

Each year the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and the Nieman Foundation honor three exceptional works of nonfiction that exemplify “literary grace, commitment to serious research, and social concern.” This year Evan Wright, Richard Steven Street, and Joan Quigley received the J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project Awards at a ceremony held on May 3rd at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

- Wright received the J. Anthony Lukas Book Prize (\$10,000) for his book “Generation Kill: Devil Dogs, Iceman, Captain America, and the New Face of American War” (Putnam Publishing Group).
- Street won the Mark Lynton History Prize (\$10,000) for his

book “Beasts of the Field: A Narrative History of California Farm workers, 1769-1913” (Stanford University Press).

- Quigley received the J. Anthony Lukas Work-in-Progress Award (\$30,000) for “Home Fires,” a book on the mining town of Centralia, Pennsylvania, and the fire that has been burning beneath the town for decades.

The J. Anthony Lukas Prize Project Awards, established in 1998, honor and continue the work that distinguished the career of journalist and author **J. Anthony Lukas**, a member of the 1969 Nieman class. This year’s submissions totaled 360, the largest ever in the history of the awards. For more information on the awards, go to www.jrn.columbia.edu/events/lukas/. ■

time colleague Carl Schoettler said: “Jerry Kelly knew more about Maryland politics than any other reporter of his generation—and maybe ever. ... As a rewrite man, he could turn a phrase that would snap you out of your socks when you read it. He was simply the consummate newspaper reporter and writer, held in awe by his friends and colleagues.”

Kelly is survived by two children, a stepbrother, and a grandson.

—1973—

Wayne Greenhaw was awarded the 2005 Clarence Cason Award for Nonfiction Writing by the University of Alabama on March 17th. The award, which includes a \$3,000 cash prize, is given only to writers with a strong connection to Alabama and the South. Greenhaw’s work has appeared in regional and national publications including The New York Times, Atlantic Monthly, and Reader’s Digest, and his

books include “My Heart Is in the Earth: True Stories of Alabama and Mexico” (2001) and “Montgomery: The River City” (2002). Greenhaw is currently the author of 17 books and plans to publish his 18th in September. He and his wife, **Sally**, split their time between homes in Montgomery, Alabama and San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

—1975—

Sheryl A. Barnett (Fitzgerald) died of natural causes on April 14, 2004 at her home in Brooklyn, New York. She was 61 years old. Until the early 1980’s, she used her onetime married surname, Fitzgerald. After her Nieman year, Barnett wrote for a variety of sections of Newsday, the Long Island and New York daily, until her retirement in the early 1990’s. She previously worked for the Norfolk (Va.) Journal and Guide and the Chicago Defender. A remembrance gathering was held in May in New York City.

—1977—

William O. Wheatley, Jr. has announced plans to retire from his position as executive vice president of news at NBC. Wheatley, who spent many of his 30 years at NBC as a producer for “Nightly News,” has organized NBC News coverage for major events including the Iraq War, coordinated the network’s relationships with outside news agencies, and written guidelines and standards for the company. Wheatley will retire in June but plans to remain active through consulting, charitable work, and other activities.

—1980—

Jan Collins [class scribe] is the winner of the annual Aging Awareness Media Award from the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) for “top-notch reporting on an innovative program [at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine] designed to improve the care of older adults by matching medical students with older adult mentors.” The article appeared in the January 4, 2004, issue of *Parade* magazine. (To read the article, visit www.jan-collins.com/articles.htm.) The AGS, a nationwide, nonprofit association of geriatrics health care professionals, made the presentation May 13th at its 2005 Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida. Jan, who is a freelance writer and an editor at the Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina, is also the coauthor of the nationally syndicated weekly column “NextSteps,” which covers aging and disability issues.

Judy Nicol Havemann has a new job. Since January 1st, she has been food editor at *The Washington Post*. Judy says she’s trying to focus more on investigative pieces and news stories and not just on recipes. Anyone with story ideas is invited to contact her at havemannj@washpost.com.

Robert Timberg also has a new job after 32 years at *The* (Baltimore) *Sun*. He is editor in chief of *Proceedings*, the flagship magazine of the U.S. Naval

Charlayne Hunter-Gault Delivers the 2005 Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Memorial Lecture

Charlayne Hunter-Gault, CNN Johannesburg bureau chief, delivered the 2005 Joe Alex Morris, Jr. Memorial Lecture on March 10th at the Nieman Foundation. The award is given in honor of Morris, a foreign correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times* who was killed in 1979 while covering the Iranian revolution in Tehran. The lectureship was created in 1981 by Morris’s family, Harvard classmates, and friends.

Previous Morris lecturers include Anthony Shadid, 2004 (*The Washington Post*), **Chris Hedges**, 2003 (*The New York Times*), and Anne Garrels, 2002 (*National Public Radio*). ■

Institute. The institute, Timberg writes, “is an independent nonprofit organization that is based at the Naval Academy though it is not affiliated with it. We have a 99-year lease, sort of like the Brits and Hong Kong *Proceedings* is truly independent. We provide a forum for members of the national defense community, primarily the so-called sea services (Marines, Navy, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine), to say what they think is right and wrong about the direction of national defense policy.” Timberg is a Marine veteran who served in Vietnam. You can check out his publication at <http://www.usni.org>.

—1981—

Michael Hill retired last year after 33 years as an editor at *The Washington Post*. He’s now pursuing some of his other passions, which include trains and baseball. He says he “hopes to ride all the major Amtrak routes before they shut them down and visit all the classic

ballparks before they blow them up.” For the past 21 years Hill was editor of *TV Week*, the *Post*’s Sunday television supplement.

—1994—

Stojan Cerovic, founder of *Vreme*, died of cancer at a Paris clinic on March 21st. He was 56.

Cerovic graduated from the University of Belgrade in 1973, after which he continued to pursue academic interests until the early 1980’s. A well-known antiwar activist, Cerovic began his journalism career as a correspondent for *Radio France International* and later founded the liberal magazine *Vreme*. Upon his death, *The Associated Press* wrote: “In 1990, Cerovic and a group of other liberal journalists opposed to hard-line policies of Serbia’s then strongman, Slobodan Milosevic, founded the *Vreme* weekly, a beacon for many opposed to Milosevic’s nationalism. Cerovic also helped found the Belgrade-based Center for Anti-War Action in 1991.”

Cerovic studied problems of minorities and conflict resolution during his Nieman year and later lectured at the Central European University in Budapest. He published widely read reports on the complexities of the breakup of former Yugoslavia and was frequently consulted on ethnic struggles and politics in the Balkans.

He is survived by his wife, **Tinde**, and three children.

—1996—

Thomas Ashbrook’s WBUR National Public Radio program, “On Point,” won the 2005 Massachusetts Associated Press Award for Best News/Talk Program. Ashbrook arrived at WBUR on September 17, 2001 to host a five-hour talk show, “Special Coverage,” a program aired in reaction to the September 11th attacks.

In early 2002, Ashbrook and frequent cohost Jack Beatty began the live evening talk show “On Point,” which provides context for the biggest daily news stories and serves as a forum for debate and discussion. Ashbrook is

author of "The Leap: A Memoir of Love and Madness in the Internet Gold Rush" (Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

—1997—

Mathatha Tsedu has been named editor of City Press by Media 24 Newspaper, its parent company. Tsedu is former deputy head of news at Johannesburg, South Africa's Sunday Times. Prior to that he held the same position at the South African Broadcasting Corporation and served as editor of The Star.

"I am looking forward to a challenging and exciting time," Tsedu is quoted in a press release from RCP Media. "City Press is an established newspaper with a history of community involvement and support for democratic principles. It has, however, gone through a sticky

patch recently, and one of the key challenges therefore will be to restore public trust and credibility in the paper."

Tsedu has been a recipient of the Nat Nakasa Award for courageous journalism and is a past chairman of the South African National Editors Forum. **Nakasa**, deceased, was a 1965 Nieman.

—1998—

Xiaoping Chen writes: "After completing my Nieman year, I struggled with how I could combine my career as legal researcher on Chinese law and my experience as a journalist. After long and serious thought, including a year to receive an LLM degree at Harvard Law School, I determined that publication of the China Law Digest would be my answer.

"China's current legal and judicial problems are central strategic issues that will greatly influence the country and its future development. The need for legal and judicial reform in China is widely recognized among both political and intellectual figures in the country. The demand for the protection of rights consistent with the rule of law has formed a common language in Chinese society. At the same time, however, China's legal and judicial problems have become a major focal point of international attention. The main issue is, how one can extract and summarize the most important information from the current myriad of Chinese legal news? This dilemma generated a need for the China Law Digest.

"With the help of a group of research assistants at the Harvard Law School, the China Law Digest was officially launched in March 2005. [The digest is published from Cambridge, Massachusetts.] It offers the latest news on politics, legal developments, and judicial reform to both domestic and foreign subscribers interested in Chinese political and legal issues.

"A monthly online publication, the China Law Digest is divided into the following subject categories: Chinese legal news, legislative developments, important cases, regional legal developments, law stories, op-eds on the law, legislative recommendations, the legal profession, Chinese legal information abroad, and prominent figures in the Chinese legal community.

"The link to the China Law Digest is www.chinalawdigest.com.

"All fellows are welcome to visit the Web site, and I welcome any comments or recommendations. Please e-mail me at: xchen15@gmail.com."

Christine Chinlund has been named coeditor of the regional edition of The Boston Globe, Globe South. Chinlund has spent the past three years as the paper's ombudsman. Before that, she was the Globe's foreign editor during the September 11th crisis, as well as a former national editor and head of the Focus section. Chinlund began her new job in April.

War and Terror Articles Available as Special Issue On Nieman Web Site

Following the attacks of September 11, 2001 and into 2004, when the occupation of Iraq was continuing, Nieman Reports asked journalists who were reporting on events connected to terrorism and war to share their experiences with our worldwide audience of leading journalists. By doing this, these reporters and editors, photographers and commentators offered insights and guidance about new arenas of reporting and addressed some of the issues involved in doing so. Many of these lessons remain pertinent and vital today, so we have brought them to a larger online audience in a compiled version. From stories about reporting in Iraq to articles reflecting on whether journalists should testify about war crimes they might have observed or reported on, these first-hand accounts speak to many important journalistic issues that reporters throughout the world confront today. How reporters deal

with the increased government secrecy is explored, alongside the experiences of those trying to report on individuals whose detention and trials fall under more restrictive rules passed in the wake of September 11th.

What is provided online at www.nieman.harvard.edu is a Table of Contents to this virtual edition of Nieman Reports. To read a specific article, click on the article title to download it in PDF format. All of these articles appeared as part of regular issues of Nieman Reports, and those issues can be found on the Nieman Foundation Web site in their entirety.

We hope these articles will inform, enlighten and lead to more discussion and inquiry about the issues and challenges touched upon by these journalists who so generously contributed their words and images. ■ —Melissa Ludtke

Julia Keller, cultural critic for the Chicago Tribune, won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Feature Writing. Keller received the Pulitzer for her series “Wicked Wind,” a reconstructed account of an April 2004 tornado in Utica, Illinois that killed eight people. Keller spent seven months researching the assignment and published a 13,372-word story over three days that recounted the event moment by moment. The cash prize for the award is \$10,000. The series can be found at www.chicagotribune.com/utica.

—2001—

Sulaiman al-Hattlan Al-Kahtani has been appointed the first editor in chief of Forbes Arabia, the Arab language edition of Forbes Magazine based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The focus of Forbes Arabia will be to provide Arab business executives with the tools they need to successfully compete in the Middle East marketplace, according to the press release announcing Al-Kahtani’s appointment. After his Nieman year, Al-Kahtani spent three years at Harvard to finish his post-doctorate from the Center for Middle Eastern Studies and published op-ed pieces in several U.S. newspapers, including The New York Times and The Washington Post.

Mark Pothier has been named senior assistant business editor of The Boston Globe. In this capacity, he will primarily focus on the business of life sciences, which is seen as essential to the region’s economy. He says, “I’m continuing to write whenever I can carve out some time. And still teaching at the Harvard Extension School, too. My former position was senior assistant metro editor, which mostly entailed editing Globe South, one of our zoned editions.”

Kelli Hewett Taylor writes, “I’m now working as a general assignment reporter for The Birmingham News in Alabama. I started in November. It was interesting timing because I got married last summer, bought a condo, accepted the job, sold the condo, bought a house, and moved. My husband is **Daniel Tay-**

The Star-Ledger Wins Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Newspaper Coverage

The (Newark) Star-Ledger received this year’s Taylor Family Award for Fairness in Newspapers for “Last Chance High,” a seven-part series by reporter Robin Gaby Fisher and photographer Matt Rainey on an alternative school for teens in Orange, New Jersey.

Fisher and Rainey captured 10 months of the lives of students and faculty at the Valley School, where teenagers—all with histories of behavioral problems—enroll after being expelled from their neighborhood schools. To complete the series, The Star-Ledger’s reporter and photographer sat in on classes, group therapy sessions, and meetings with the principal by day and visited the student’s neighborhoods at night.

The judges praised The Star-Ledger’s coverage as “exceedingly fair to the students involved, to their teachers and administrators, the educational system, the families and society in a portrayal that was fully dimensional” and noted that none of the stories used unnamed sources or unattributed information.

The judges also recognized two finalists:

- Akron Beacon Journal for the series “Home Schooling: Whose Business Is It?” reported by

Dennis J. Willard and Doug Oplinger.

- The Orange County Register for “Toxic Treats,” an investigative report about lead in imported candy, with stories by Jenifer B. McKim, Keith Sharon, William Heisel, Valeria Godines, and Hanh Kim Quach.

The winner and finalists were honored at a dinner and discussion held April 7th at the Nieman Foundation.

The purpose of the Taylor Award is to encourage fairness in news coverage by America’s daily newspapers. It was established through gifts for an endowment by members of the Taylor family, which published The Boston Globe from 1872 to 1999. The award carries a \$10,000 prize and is administered by the Nieman Foundation.

The judges for the 2005 Taylor Fairness Award were Michael D. Salah (The [Toledo] Blade), **Christine Chinlund** (The Boston Globe), and **Chris Waddle** (The Anniston Star/Ayers Family Institute for Community Journalism). Nieman Curator **Bob Giles** was chairman of the jury.

To read the “Last Chance High” series go to <http://www.nj.com/specialprojects/lastchance/>. ■

lor, a commercial photographer from Queensland, Australia.”

—2003—

Frank Langfitt took a job at National Public Radio at the end of last year, where he will be covering labor and the workplace. His family moved to Montgomery County, Maryland in March, where **Julie** continues her work as a veterinarian while looking after Katie

(four years) and Christopher, who was born last year.

Sue Valentine writes, “As of February 1, 2005 I have changed jobs. I am now the Director of the Media Programme of the Open Society Foundation for South Africa.” Valentine is based in Cape Town.

The Media Programme is the oldest division of the Open Society Foundation, and it works to encourage media

plurality and the use of the media as a tool to sustain democracy, promote development, and reduce poverty in South Africa. It also supports programming and production values in community radio through audience research, technical support and training, and provides assistance in programming production and content for television, video, film, print and performance. (See Valentine's article on page 72 about training of journalists in South Africa.)

—2004—

Laura Meckler reports: "In May I joined The Wall Street Journal's Washington bureau, covering transportation policy and related matters. It's just three blocks down K Street from The Associated Press Washington bureau, which I called home for nine years. As if a new employer and a new beat were not enough excitement in my post-Nieman year, I'm keeping it interesting by

getting married this summer to Nieman affiliate **Paul Brodsky**."

—2005—

Cheryl Carpenter is now managing editor at The Charlotte Observer, where she will oversee a staff of about 250 journalists. Other positions held by Carpenter at the Observer include business editor, state editor, Page One editor, and most recently deputy managing editor. During her Nieman year, Carpenter studied the nature and practice of leadership and unique strategies for business development. Carpenter was quoted in the Observer as saying: "We are recorders of history. We are telling the story of the South, and we are telling the story of Charlotte. ... We stand for democratic principles, and we have to be the stewards of that."

Carpenter has won awards for investigative and breaking-news journalism and has been with The Charlotte

Observer since 1983.

—2006—

Dexter Filkins, Baghdad correspondent for The New York Times, received the Hal Boyle Award for best newspaper reporting from abroad for his articles on the battle for Fallujah. The award was presented to Filkins at this year's 66th annual Overseas Press Club (OPC) Awards ceremony, held in April in New York City. In an account of the evening by the OPC, it was noted that Filkins told the audience that he had "been struck by how the young soldiers fighting and dying in Iraq seemed to all be from out-of-the-way places such as Lodi, Ohio. For these places, the war is a day-to-day reality, not just an abstract discussion." Filkins' colleague, photographer Ashley Gilbertson, won the Robert Capa Gold Medal Award for exceptional courage and enterprise for his pictures from Fallujah for The New York Times. ■

Nieman Foundation Announces U.S. Fellows for 2005-06

Twelve U.S. journalists have been selected for the 68th class of Nieman Fellows at Harvard University. International Nieman Fellows will be announced in June. The names and affiliations of the U.S. fellows are:

Chris Cobler, editor, Greeley (Colo.) Tribune. Cobler is the Donald W. Reynolds Nieman Fellow in community journalism. His fellowship is supported by a grant from the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation.

Mary C. Curtis, executive features editor/columnist, The Charlotte Observer.

Dexter Filkins, Baghdad correspondent, The New York Times.

Cathy Grimes, education reporter, Walla Walla (Wash.) Union-Bulletin.

David Heath, investigative reporter, The Seattle Times.

Margaret Kriz, energy and environment reporter, National Journal.

Jacob Levenson, freelance reporter, Brooklyn, New York.

Jon Palfreman, independent documentary film producer and founder, Palfreman Film Group.

Nancy San Martin, world reporter, The Miami Herald.

Charles Sennott, London bureau chief, The Boston Globe.

Jeb Sharp, reporter/correspondent, Public Radio International's "The World."

Brent Walth, senior reporter, The Oregonian. Walth will hold the Louis Stark Fellowship for journalists who specialize in labor, workplace or related issues. Fund-

ing is provided by the Louis Stark Fellowship Fund in honor of Louis Stark, a pioneer in the field of labor reporting.

The U.S. fellows were selected by: **Lorie Conway**, independent writer and documentary film producer, Boston Film and Video Productions (NF '94 and Nieman Advisory Board); Joseph McCarthy, senior associate dean and director of degree programs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government; Norman Pearlstine, editor in chief of Time Inc. (Nieman Advisory Board); Laura Morgan Roberts, assistant professor of organizational behavior at the Harvard Business School, and **Bob Giles**, committee chairman and Nieman Foundation Curator (NF '66). ■

An Unseen Side of Iran

By Molly Bingham

The commonly accepted Western narrative about Iran is that it is part of the “Axis of Evil,” a society in which women are oppressed and the nation is bursting with extremist Muslims. This is, of course, an oversimplification that misrepresents reality. As journalists, we know the importance of adding flesh to these bare-boned narratives by asking questions, observing and then rebuilding the story with the complexity that any true narrative demands.

In this spirit I traveled to Iran during the winter of 2002 to try to learn how a nation, ruled by Islamic law but also a global thoroughfare in opiate trafficking—that also interdicts 85 percent of globally seized opiates—deals with its own drug addiction problems. The dramatic rise in opiate use, its destructive effects on Iranian families, and the spread of AIDS has caught the attention of the Iranian government, which was making concerted efforts to control the heroin trade that flows from Afghanistan into Iran and on to Turkey.

The photographs on these pages, published for the first time, speak to what I witnessed. What I found in Iran is a society yearning for stability and people hungry for economic security. But I also came across people—from all social levels—who have fallen into drug use and destitution, just as one could find in nearly any other country.

While Iran is a difficult place for Western journalists to work, I believe we need to try to go there and live out our responsibility to do the work that reveals the complex fabric of a nation—even when our government considers the country to be our enemy. ■

Photos by Molly Bingham/WorldPictureNews. Bingham is a 2005 Nieman Fellow.



A heroin addict in the Tupkhaneh neighborhood of Tehran shoots up in a back alley on a national religious holiday commemorating the death of the first imam, Ali, in 661 AD. November 2002.



Reza, 38, right, prepares his heroin with a spoon over a small fire. Mohsen, 32, left, addicted to heroin for two years, struggles to light a cigarette as he falls into a heroin daze after shooting up in his hand. December 2002.

Shanaz (not her real name), 32, exhales after smoking opium in her bedroom in an upper-class neighborhood of Tehran where she says she knows many people who smoke opium. Shanaz has been addicted since five years ago when she went through a divorce and a difficult depression. She has been trying to quit for some time and recently started the 14-step program at the Aftab Society in Tehran, which helps drug addicts become clean over a period of months. Her three children are aware of her drug use and efforts to stop, and she does not hide her opium smoking from them. December 2002.



A drug-sniffing dog, donated by the French government, is used to search a truck by Anti-Narcotics Police at Shahid Sherofat checkpoint near Esfahan, Iran, while a bus passes in the background. Approximately 15,000 cars and trucks pass the checkpoint in central Iran every day. Approximately 500 of them are inspected, using transportation documents for trucks, drug-sniffing dogs, and often gut instinct to choose which cars and people to inspect further. Statistics from the United Nations show that Iran confiscates 85 percent of the opiates intercepted in the world, making Iran a critical link in the drug trade to interrupt. December 2002.

