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COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW

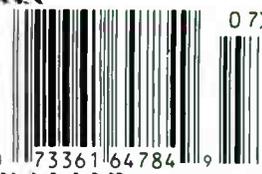
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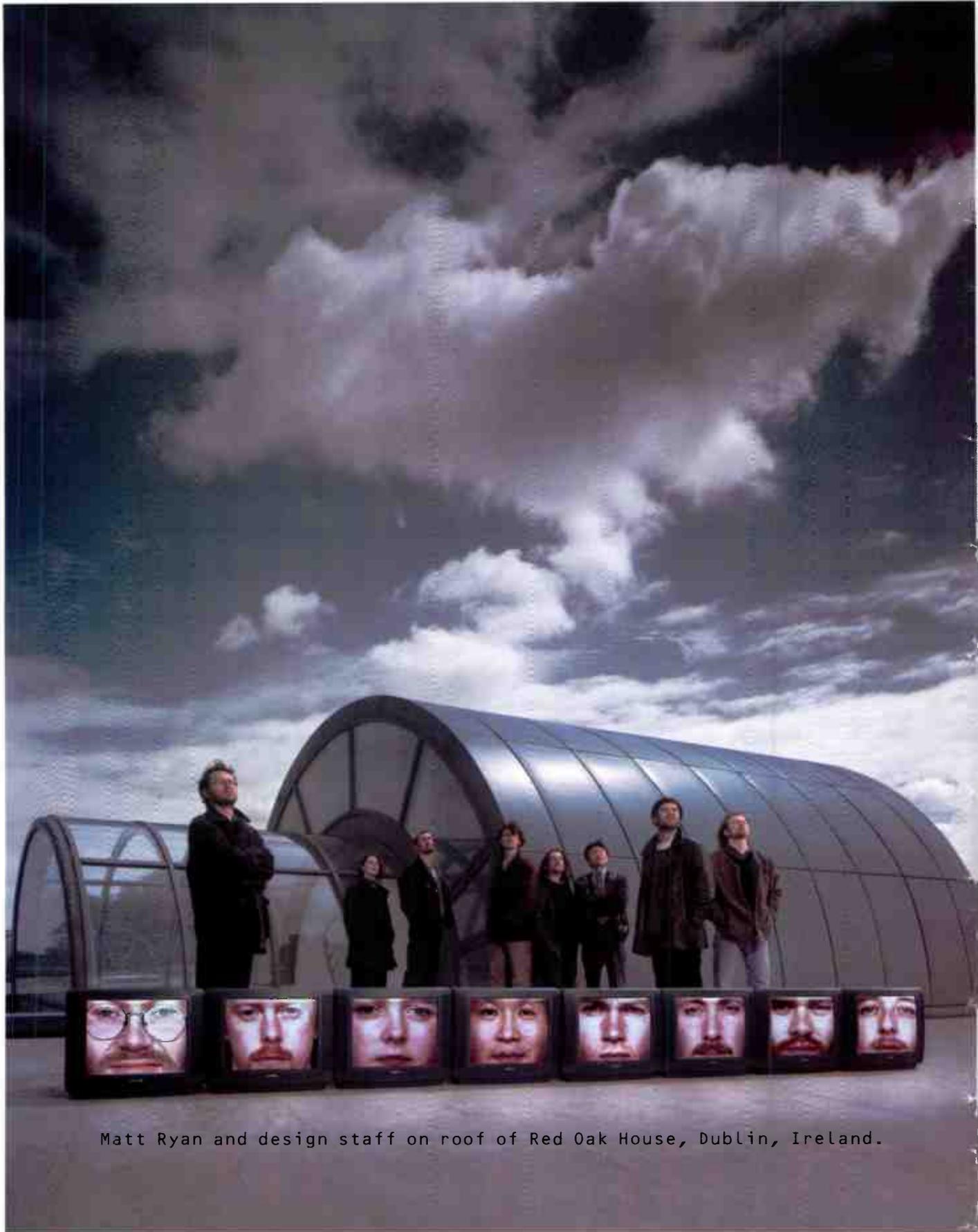


The Journal's
Robert Bartley

*The
Wall Street
Journal's
editorial
page:*

**BARTLEY'S
BELIEVE IT
OR NOT!**





Matt Ryan and design staff on roof of Red Oak House, Dublin, Ireland.

In 1995, LG's annual sales grew 40% to over US\$64 billion.



It's nice to meet you.

It's Matt Ryan's job to listen.

As a Senior Designer at LG Electronics Design-Tech, Matt must intimately understand the different aesthetics of each European country. And then translate that understanding into intelligently designed TVs, VCRs, microwaves and other products. (Matt and his colleagues even helped design their company's Red Oak House headquarters.)

At LG, we listen a lot to our customers. We think that habit explains why our sales grew 40% last year. And why we're already leaders in advanced electronic applications like thin-film transistor liquid crystal displays, high-definition TV, and exciting multimedia areas like computers and video-on-demand.

We're also active in fast-growing areas of business such as DRAM memory chips, genetic engineering, pharmaceuticals, satellite communications, and much more.

But we don't believe our size makes us interesting. We think people like Matt Ryan and his fellow designers make us interesting, because the same dedication and customer focus they bring to their work, our 126,000 other employees bring to our other areas of expertise.

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We may not be opticians.
But we helped our community see color
in a whole new light.

Racial tension in Lexington, Ky. was coming to a boil.



A white police officer had shot and killed an unarmed black youth as he surrendered on an assault charge. While the officer claimed his gun went off accidentally, some people, especially black residents, didn't believe him. A racial disturbance erupted, and 15 people were injured. But while much of the city was in shock, one news source began looking for answers.

The LEXINGTON **HERALD-LEADER** turned to the people who live in its community and published "Voices," a month-long series of front-page columns by Lexingtonians about racial attitudes and how to improve them.

And a 21-part series called "Distant Neighbors" delved deep into the barriers that separate black and white — from

segregated neighborhoods to inequities in the public schools.

The series didn't solve Lexington's racial divisions, but it gave a voice to people who had not been heard and brought facts and perspective to an emotional debate. And the community is moving forward. Several organizations are conducting a "visioning" process to chart a future that includes all people. And the school board has hired an "equity monitor" to make sure all students get the same opportunities.

The Lexington Herald-Leader is one of 31 Knight-Ridder newspapers. All create journalism that digs deeper — written and photographed by people who  push hard. The proof is in the results. **KNIGHT-RIDDER**



Though it found widespread segregation, the Lexington Herald-Leader also found hope in a few integrated neighborhoods and churches like this one in Northside.

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"TO ASSESS THE PERFORMANCE OF JOURNALISM... TO HELP STIMULATE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT IN THE PROFESSION,
AND TO SPEAK OUT FOR WHAT IS RIGHT, FAIR, AND DECENT" From the founding editorial. 1961

Without Fear Or Favor

The ethos of journalism — practiced as a profession in the public interest in a democratic society — is not mandated by code, license, or law. It is an inner oath that emerges from the history of quality journalism as expressed in the words and deeds of publishers, broadcasters, and journalists at all levels — editors, reporters, writers, and producers. That ethos informs the work of all journalists who would call themselves professionals, and it is the commitment that inspires this magazine.

Adolph Ochs (1858–1935) was one of the publishers who helped articulate and set the standards against which journalism continues to be measured. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his purchase of The New York Times, we quote from from his writings and statements:

It will be my earnest aim that *The New York Times* give the news, all the news, in concise and attractive form, in language that is permissible in good society, and give it as early if not earlier, than it can be learned through any other reliable medium; to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of party, sect, or interest involved; to make of the columns of *The New York Times* a forum for the consideration of all questions of public importance, and to that end to invite intelligent discussion from all shades of opinion.

—Signed editorial in *The New York Times*, August 18, 1896

In 1897, Spencer Trask, who supported Ochs in his acquisition of the newspaper, wrote to him demanding final approval on a Times story. This is from Ochs's reply:

I do not recognize that you have any right to expect me to comply with any such request. I do not understand that you have any control whatsoever of the editorial conduct of *The New York Times*. I cannot agree that any publication which is to appear in *The New York Times* or that is proposed for publication should be submitted for your approval other than when it may be entirely voluntary with me. . . .

It would be impossible to avoid publications that do not meet with your approval. Notwithstanding the strict supervision I exercise, it is not an uncommon occurrence that publi-

cations are made which if my attention had been called to them before they appeared, would either have been omitted or materially changed. . . .

If my recollection serves me correctly, you have on frequent occasions coincided with me in the opinion that *The New York Times* will only be a success when it is conducted strictly as a newspaper, free from the control and the influence of anyone except those who are wholly occupied in its publication. In the conduct of a newspaper along the lines on which the *Times* is now gaining favor, it will be next to impossible to avoid mistakes, and no doubt it will happen at times that some of my best friends will be led to believe that in the appearance of some publications I am careless or indifferent to their interests (if they do not go further and even consider me antagonistic) when in truth I may be innocent and the purpose of the publication likewise, but such occurrences are simply incidents of a business that is frequently as embarrassed by its friends as it is annoyed by its enemies.



An enterprising, progressive, fair, and well-conducted newspaper of good typographical appearance, well established in a community, is a more profitable advertising medium than a widely circulated inferior newspaper with circulation ten times as large, gained by bombast, sensationalism, and gift enterprises and guessing matches.

— *Speech to National Editorial Association convention, June 1916*

It is also true that *The New York Times* is not a crusading newspaper. It is impressed with the responsibility of what it prints. It is conservative and independent, and so far as possible — consistent with honest journalism — attempts to aid and support those who are charged with the responsibility of government. There are many newspapers conducted along different lines, some of them vicious, ill-natured, and destructive of character and reputation, and for mere purposes of sensation they frequently terrorize well qualified and well meaning men to the point where they are discouraged from accepting invitations to give their ability, genius, and experience to the administration of public affairs.

— *From a 1931 letter Ochs wrote to a man who had cut off his Times subscription.*

LETTERS

THE BEST SELLER

I am deeply disturbed you have awarded a Dart (CJR, May/June) to myself and the *Philadelphia Daily News* for my December 11, 1995, column devoted to publicizing my recently published guidebook, *Stu Bykofsky's Little Black Book: A Gentleman's Guide to Philadelphia* (\$9.95, Black Tooth Press).

It's my book, my column, and it was my call. I resent having to share my Dart with my paper.

I have no argument with your criticism. I will make only one point. You looked at one column in a stream of columns that has been running four times a week for nine years. That's more than 1,728 columns that comprised more than 10,000 individual items. Several hundred of those items were devoted to reporting on books by *other* local authors.

So, yes, I devoted "twenty-two precious [your word, thank you so much] column-inches" to my own book (over the objections of the managing editor).

That's one reason we love this gritty tabloid: the editors so deeply believe in editorial freedom they allow columnists (and others) to make asses of themselves.

STU BYKOFSKY
Philadelphia Daily News
Philadelphia, Pa.

Editor's note: *Let the record show that in a subsequent column — published in his paper on May 21 — the incorrigible Bykofsky plugged his book again.*

CRIME: DIG DEEPER

I read with great interest Joe Holley's article on KVUE's brave and worthwhile experiment with crime coverage in Austin ("Should the Coverage Fit the Crime?," CJR, May/June). I'd like to challenge them to go even further.

For the past three years, we have been studying local television news coverage of youth and violence in California. We sys-

tematically collected more than 200 hours of local evening news from around the state, watched it closely and carefully, and found what you would expect: few reports contextualized crime or violence in a way that would point toward solutions. What particularly concerned us was the absence of information that we knew would be relevant to the stories.

Imagine, for example, how the public understanding of violence might deepen, if along with the usual five W's, the following questions were reported in every crime story:

1. Did the victim and perpetrator know each other?
2. Was alcohol involved?
3. Where was the weapon obtained?
4. Was the victim insured?

We know from public health data that alcohol is a factor in 50-66 percent of all homicides and 20-36 percent of suicides. We know from criminal justice data that in those murders where the perpetrators have been identified, most were known to the victim. We know that the explosion of gun availability is coincident with the steep rise in youthful death and injury; and we know that 80 percent of the \$1.4 billion in medical costs for firearm injuries is paid for by taxpayers. This type of information is admittedly difficult to connect to specific crime events, yet it would have an impact on how the public thinks about violence and its solutions.

The criteria that KVUE developed — does action need to be taken; is there an immediate threat to safety; a threat to children; significant community impact; and does the story lend itself to crime-prevention — enabled their reporters to think deeply and systematically about crime, which Holley reports led to crime stories with context and perspective. However, some critics worried that their new reporting might lead to cheerleading for local law enforcement. We submit that reporters' questions linked to an understanding of the public health data on violence would prevent cheerleading for one point of view and provide everyone in the

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LORI DORFMAN
Co-director
Berkeley Media Studies Group
Berkeley, Calif.

CAPITAL COVERAGE

Rob Gurwitt is right about the shameful dearth of state government coverage on television ("Comes the Devolution," *CJR*, May/June) — but in New York there is one remarkable exception. For twenty-one years, viewers of the state's public television stations have gotten a tough-minded examination of state issues on the weekly award-winning series *Inside Albany*.

Last July, producing station WMHT in Schenectady pulled the plug on the program, claiming the stations could no longer afford to pay for it. So reporters David Hepp and Lise Bang-Jensen formed their own production company, hired a fundraiser, scraped together the money, and returned to the air in January.

The stations are paying nothing for the program, and money remains a problem, but at a time when many journalists believe quality journalism, print and broadcast, is succumbing to bottom-line pressure almost everywhere, *Inside Albany* offers evidence that such journalism can survive when those who cherish it are determined to save it.

RICHARD WEXLER
Assistant professor of communications
Pennsylvania State University
Monaca, Pa.

THE MORE WE KNOW...

Regarding "Chuck-gate" (*CJR*, May/June): If I tune in to Scarborough's news on WNBC, am I not better off knowing that he is such a supporter of Republican candidates that he writes them checks for \$1,000, than I would be listening to him without this knowledge?

Let's not discourage partisan newsmen from making these contributions. Let's instead try for as much disclosure as possible, so we can judge their work accordingly.

FRANK SCALPONE
New York, N.Y.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Columbia Journalism Review — like many of the newspapers it has long held to high standards — occasionally misses the mark, and in the process does harm to the innocent. Such was the case in the recent "Dart" you aimed our way for publishing the name

of a murder victim before his mother, who was out of town, had been notified.

First, the Boston Police Department publicly released the name. Second, *Globe* reporter Matt Bai interviewed several family members; they informed him that they had chosen not to inform the mother and would do so when she returned home. What's more, they were aware we planned to publish the name and expressed no objection. Also, at least one television station had already identified the victim, based upon police release of his name. Many hours after the public release of the identity — and after our deadline — the police made a request that we withhold publication, though they too understood our decision to go forward.

MATTHEW V. STORIN
Editor
The Boston Globe
Boston, Mass.

LAYOFF AS CATALYST

Your stories on "Is There Life After Layoff" (*CJR*, May/June) were so true! I was laid off in September 1991 from a paper from which I thought I'd retire someday. It was the paper's first-ever layoff. Some of us heard about it on the radio going to work that morning. Never will I forget the shock, anger, and betrayal I felt being called into the managing editor's office and told I had two weeks. There was no severance. My husband and I had just closed on our first home, a handyman's special we loved and bought close to the paper so I'd have a shorter commute.

Like other reporters in your story, I used the time to evaluate my skills, where I was going and wanted to go, and decided I would make the best of my layoff. It was painful and hard, but the end results were gratifying. I still think the layoff was unfair, but I have to admit I never would have taken the chances I've taken in the last four years and grown professionally as much as I have. Having gone from being a hack to flack, I think I'm more appreciative of the role and power of the free press. I seized an opportunity to become a part-time adviser to two local college newspapers. I also serve on our local Women's Press Club board of directors, an activity that has opened my eyes to other communication opportunities out there in the job market. I'm not saying being laid off was the best thing that ever happened, but for me, it was a catalyst to professional growth. There is indeed hope after layoffs. Thanks for letting everyone know that.

MARY PINKANS BURT
Bureau of Community Relations
Albany, N.Y.

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WHO WHAT WHEN WHERE WHY

Three years ago, Sunbeam Television of Miami swept into Boston, taking over a moribund, perennially third-place CBS affiliate. Since then, the new WHDH-7 in Boston has made a horse race out of the ratings competition with the market's consistent leader, the ABC affiliate WCVB-5. It has won broadcast-journalism awards, including "News Station of the Year" in the Boston area in the 1996 Massachusetts Associated Press broadcast awards and a string of prizes at the New England Emmy Awards in May (although a WHDH press release failed to note that both its rivals, WCVB and WBZ, have boycotted the Emmy awards for several years). It has the dubious distinction of having been ranked No. 1 nationally on a kind of mayhem index by a media watchdog group. And it has made both of its competitors nervous enough to try some glitz-and-glitter themselves.

Some of the increase in 7's audience is attributable to a serendipitous affiliate switch in 1994 that brought WHDH to NBC and the lead-in benefit of that network's dominant prime-time lineup. Most important, though, is a bright and brassy news delivery that has challenged TV-news traditions in a city that long enjoyed reasonably good tube



Edmund N. Ansin and Joel Cheatwood

can glitz be good? *shaking up news in boston*

journalism, if not cutting-edge television.

For news people, watching Channel 7 news now can be akin to reading the *National Enquirer*: sensational graphics scream out, stories may be overblown or short and superficial, and there is much self-congratulation. But there is also good reporting whose virtues include creativity, aggressiveness, and immediacy.

"There is a paradox here," says Frederic M. Biddle, chief TV critic for *The Boston Globe*. "Sometimes

channel 7 does very good work on a story-for-story basis. Seven is also guilty of some just plain bad journalism." He mentioned as an example the investigative piece, "Inside the Russian Mafia in New England," broadcast last November. "There is no Russian Mafia in New England," says Biddle. "Seven does like to scare people."

The reputation that preceded the Sunbeam team in Boston frightened many news traditionalists here. In April 1993, Sunbeam's presi-

dent and owner, Edmund N. Ansin, paid \$210 million for WHDH. Ansin's Miami station in recent years had become hugely popular, all the while decried by critics for its throat-grabbing news menu of crime, violence, oddity, and disaster.

Sunbeam news operations, in Miami and now Boston, are under the direction of senior vice president Joel Cheatwood, who has said he "studied MTV and VH1 for ideas." The man ultimately in charge of a recent highly promoted feature called "Celebrity High-School Yearbook Photos" also told the *Globe's* Ed Siegel, apparently in all seriousness, that he considers the work of his news divisions the modern-day embodiment of Edward R. Murrow. (Cheatwood declined an interview request from CJR.)

Central to the Sunbeam philosophy is the definition of local news. At WHDH, a hot local story can happen anywhere if there is a video feed for an on-the-scene Channel 7 reporter, with or without a Boston, or even New England, angle. Michael Carson, vice-president and general manager of WHDH, says, "We have the feeling that there is a stronger connection to a high-profile story if it is by a New England reporter." (WHDH had three reporters in Los Angeles covering the

O.J. verdict, and got the highest local ratings.) Says the *Globe's* Biddle, "These people aren't getting scoops. It's a promotional tool."

WHDH does not run many stories deemed journalistically out-of-bounds by the competition — as happens in Miami — but does use a breathless, throbbing presentation of a story that its rivals tell with more restraint. The approach of a common, end-of-winter storm, for example, reported without fanfare on WBZ-4 (CBS) and WCVB-5 (ABC), was promoted on WHDH with a bold graphic reading, "WILD WEATHER." A health department list of eating-place closings, the kind of thing usually found in the back of newspaper metro sections, provided WHDH with a dramatically unappetizing "investigative" piece, using some ambush interviews, about the "unknown"

dangers of some city restaurants.

WHDH stories are short, to keep the show moving; on some evenings, a *Globe* survey showed, WHDH ran four or five more stories than the competition in a given half-hour. The WHDH approach also includes considerable display of energy by reporters, who talk while walking about in a management-designed choreography. The MTV pace is part of an apparently successful design by WHDH managers to woo a younger, advertiser-friendly demographic.

One exception to the dominant on-air style is political reporter Andy Hiller, a Boston TV veteran whose work is widely respected. On camera, he appears to speak at a more refined pace than many of his station colleagues and uses substantial exposition to discuss com-

plex issues. And he stands still. He says that Sunbeam's recognition of politics as an important, running story in Boston shows "an appreciation of the uniqueness of the market," and that his reportorial freedom is an example of "managerial flexibility," preserving some valued, traditional broadcasting style.

It's clear that the WHDH innovations, and the accompanying jump in the ratings, have had their effect on channels 4 and 5, where more sophistication has gone into graphics, the broadcast pace has speeded up, and self-promotion has intensified, although neither station has adopted 7's bomb-burst approach to story presentation.

If television news in Boston isn't as good as it used to be, no one suggests it's only because Sunbeam has come to town to degrade standards single-handedly.

The Boston Globe's editor, Matthew V. Storin, says he noticed a difference when he returned to Boston in 1992, before Sunbeam's arrival, after working in several other cities for seven years. "The more serious reporters were gone" from television, he says. He also says that "you have to judge television by television — I don't think it does any good for print people to look down their noses at anyone." In that context, he gives WHDH its due. "I credit them, if they're going to go in that direction, with being able to move the numbers. I don't agree with the way they do it, but they hustle."

Ron LaBrecque

LaBrecque, a former Miami Herald staff writer and Newsweek correspondent, is a regular contributor to Boston magazine.



mclibel



a free-speech food fight under british rules

One of the longest-running shows in London isn't in a theater. The venue: Court 35 in the Royal Courts of Justice. The attraction? A libel case pitting the most successful fast-food corporation in the world against a pair of environmental activists. Though the plot is as old as David and Goliath, the cast, costumes, and scenery are superb. A free-speech fight with disturbing implications for journalists everywhere, *McDonald's versus Morris and Steel* — better known as McLibel — has elements of suspense, tragedy, and farce. One critic has called the trial “the best free entertainment in London.”

The case has its origin in 1986, when a tiny group of anarchists known as London Greenpeace — not to be confused with Greenpeace International — put together a six-page leaflet titled “What’s Wrong With McDonald’s?” The group charged that by urging people to eat meat, McDonald’s was wasting resources, exploiting animals, and destroying rainforests; that McDonald’s packaging causes pollution; that McDonald’s food is too high in fat, sugar, and salt and too low in vitamins to be healthy; that the company’s advertising strategy “deliberately exploits children”; that workers in the burger chains are paid low wages. Adorned with a drawing of a cigar-chomping, cowboy-hatted caricature of an American fatcat hiding behind a smiling Ronald McDonald mask, and parody logos “McDollars, McGreedy, McCancer, McMurder,” the leaflet isn’t subtle. But under American law, it isn’t libelous either.

“This case could never have been brought in America,” says Mark Stephens, se-

nior partner in Stephens Innocent, a London firm whose clients include *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. Indeed, says Stephens, it is precisely the difference between American and British law that explains why McDonald’s is suing in Britain for criticisms the company admits “are in the public domain in America.”

Unlike the U.S., where the burden of proof is on the plaintiff — and where a public figure like McDonald’s would not only have to

prove it was falsely libeled, but that the statements were made with “reckless disregard” of their falsehood — in Britain the burden of proof is on the defendants, who must prove the contested statements are true. Another difference is that in Britain, the losing side is liable not only for damages, but also for its opponents’ legal fees. Since a defense lawyer acting *pro bono* could also be held liable for plaintiff’s costs, and since lawyers are barred from taking cases on a contingency-

fee basis, defendants who aren’t themselves wealthy are usually advised to settle. Indeed, three of the five original McLibel defendants have done just that.

“There isn’t the same First Amendment basis in this country,” McDonald’s lead lawyer, Richard Rampton, commented cheerfully during a brief recess. With fees of about \$7,500 a day, Rampton can afford to be genial. Dave Morris and Helen Steel, the McLibel defendants, can’t even afford daily transcripts of their own trial. In Britain, libel defendants aren’t eligible for legal aid. Nor are they guaranteed a trial by jury. Judge Rodger Bell ruled out a jury in McLibel, saying that the issues were too complicated for a jury to understand and that jury trials take longer.

And so, since June 1994, Morris, an unemployed mailman, and Steel, a former gardener, have had to type their own briefs, interrogate witnesses, make sense of 40,000 pages of documents, and match wits in court with Rampton, one of the most successful libel specialists in Britain. Although Morris and Steel are not professional journalists, the same rules — and risks — apply whether or not one carries a press card.

It’s this kind of heavily stacked deck that has drawn an increasing number of Americans criticized in the media into British courtrooms. The drug company Upjohn, for example, recently won a £25,000 judgment against a Scottish doctor who accused it of suppressing negative data about one of its drugs. (The doctor himself won £50,000 from Upjohn for calling him a junk scientist.) What makes the case especially ominous is that Upjohn sued on the

s o u n d b i t e s

“The circle has closed.”

Vicky Sanchez, after hearing that Santacruz Londono, the Cali drug-cartel boss who ordered the murder of her long-time companion, journalist Manuel de Dios Unanue, had himself been shot to death in a gunfight with police in Colombia. De Dios was shot four years ago in New York, allegedly because Londono was displeased with his exposés. Sanchez was quoted by *New York Daily News* columnist Juan Gonzalez.

“I ask forgiveness from God every day.”

John Herald Mena, who helped arrange the killing of de Dios, at his sentencing in May. He got eighteen years, after the prosecutor noted that he had provided valuable information and suffered for it. Mena’s father, uncle, and aunt have all been killed in Colombia in apparent retaliation for his aid.

basis of an article in *The New York Times*, which sells a few hundred copies a day in Britain. Though the *Times* was not named as a defendant — possibly to avoid antagonizing such an influential newspaper — such deference can hardly be taken for granted. Nor, according to Stephens, can free-lancers count on newspapers or magazines covering their costs — in McLibel already well into the millions. “Journalists risk being abandoned,” he says.

Though they may lose on legal technicalities, on questions of fact Morris and Steel have done surprisingly well. They’ve produced evidence showing that beef from former rain-forest land in Costa Rica was shipped to McDonald’s in the U.S., and, on the issue of what happens to the mountains of McGarbage produced by all that packaging, prodded a

soundbite

“Right about here I can hear the editor grumbling, ‘Jeez, get to the point, willya?’ The point is that I don’t want to get to it, but I will. The point is that ‘the luck, she is running good,’ is one of the favored phrases of Ernest Hemingway. The luck, she was running too good, I thought nervously. The point, dear friends and beloved enemies, is also like nothing I’d ever expected to experience. I have lung cancer.”

Herb Caen, the San Francisco Chronicle columnist and 1996 Pulitzer Prize special award winner, explaining in a May 30 column why he would be writing three times a week instead of five, as he has been, with a break for World War II, since 1938.

British McDonald’s executive into declaring: “I can see the dumping of waste to be a benefit. Otherwise you will end up with lots of empty gravel pits all over the country.” Their cross-examination skills have also improved with practice, as shown when they asked Dr. Sidney Arnott, McDonald’s cancer expert, what he thought of this statement: “A diet high in fat, sugar, animal products and salt and low in fiber, vitamins and minerals is linked with cancer of the breast and bowel and heart disease.” When Arnott replied, “If it is directed to the public, then I would say it is a very reasonable thing to say,” they informed him it was a quote from what Rampton had told the court was the “most defamatory” portion of the leaflet, which if proven would be the “kiss of death” for the company.

With McDonald’s legal fees expected to top \$14 million — against defendants whose total annual income is under \$10,000 — does the company have any regrets? “We regret having had to bring the case at all,” says spokesman Mike Love. “We look at this as a long-term question.”

A few months ago McLibel became the longest civil case in British history. Closing arguments aren’t scheduled until the fall, but in the court of public opinion McDonald’s may have a hard time ever recovering from headlines like SEWAGE IN BIG MAC KITCHEN, or, perhaps most damagingly, VET’S FEARS OVER MCDONALD’S BEEF.

A final twist has been added by supporters of the “McLibel Two,” who in February launched McSpotlight, a World Wide Web site devoted to “McDon-

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ald's, McLibel, Multinationals." (It's at <http://www.mcspotlight.org/>. A McDonald's site, which does not discuss the lawsuit, is at <http://www.mcdonalds.com/>.) Starting with the banned leaflet "What's Wrong with McDonald's?" — available in 14 languages — McSpotlight links 25 megabytes of material including 1,800 files, audio interviews with the defendants, and nearly every film clip, cartoon, and article McDonald's has ever tried to suppress. It is an image-conscious corporation's worst nightmare, and in its first week on the Web, it was accessed over 174,000 times.

D.D. Guttenplan

Guttenplan is a CJR contributing editor who lives in London and is writing a biography of I.F. Stone.

the wong affair

a case of ethnic insensitivity, or just the bottom line?

On a Friday in late March a sometimes controversial *Oakland Tribune* op-ed columnist, Bill Wong, was escorted from the newspaper's premises and told to make an appointment if he wanted to come back and clean out his desk. He wasn't so much fired, the *Tribune* said later, as downsized — his column, and his job, were eliminated as an economy measure.

For sixteen years Wong wrote for the *Trib* about local and national politics and other subjects, and since last September has appeared as a

regional commentator on *The MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* and its successor *NewsHour With Jim Lehrer*. But he is known best in the Bay Area as a generally liberal voice who speaks for minority readers.

The Wong affair has had something for everyone, all of it bad. Some Asian-American journalists found in Wong's dismissal a dark subtext: a lack of respect for Asian journalists generally. Some residents of Oakland — 71 percent non-white, with an Asian population of 14 percent — felt betrayed, as a protest rally outside the paper's offices, a drive to get Wong reinstated, and canceled subscriptions (500, Wong's supporters say; a little over 100, according to the 85,000-circulation *Trib*) attest. The affair has been a public-relations fiasco for the *Tribune*, easy to interpret as the action of a typical bottom-line newspaper chain with a don't-give-a-damn attitude toward a community. For Wong, being fired has meant considerable loss of livelihood and the loss of a three-times-a-week platform in the city where he had become a kind of icon for many Asian-Americans in his profession.

Dave Burgin, generally seen as the hand behind Wong's firing, was editor in chief at the time of the Alameda Newspaper Group (ANG), which owns the *Trib* and is in turn owned by the

conservative press baron Dean Singleton's MediaNews Group, based in Denver. Burgin, who has since taken

entrepreneurs who are potential advertisers. They didn't do their reputation or their self-interest any good."

The greed, he says, shows in the *Tribune's* apparent willingness to starve local coverage (except for sports, as staff members point out) and fill the paper's columns with often-irrelevant material from other ANG papers.

Some *Tribune* staff members, all insisting on anonymity, suggest that Burgin did not respect or understand Wong as a journalist; that he resented his liberal politics; that he felt his salary could be better spent on other things, notably sports; and that Wong's role as a voice for a particular community was for Burgin "political correctness of the most negative kind," as one staff member put it.

Few present or former *Trib* people say they believe explicit racism caused the firing. "Tone-deaf to the racist implications is a great way to describe it," says one ex-employee. Stanford Chen, a national vice president of the Asian-American Journalists Association and a reporter with the *Portland Oregonian*, says it's as if Asian-American journalists are expendable because they are off management's radar. "This is symptomatic," he says. "No matter how high you are in the business, you're invisible." Chen's organization, other minority news associations, and others contributed to a flood of protest over Wong's firing.

As for Wong, he says he feels belittled, betrayed, and ambushed, and a little anxious. "I'm fifty-four," he says. "That's a bad age to be today, unless you're a c.e.o. or tenured, which



a corporate job with MediaNews, insists that the firing had nothing to do with race or politics. He says Wong, whose salary, apparently around \$55,000, was high by ANG standards, was the unfortunate victim of necessary cost-cutting. "When Dean Singleton does it, it's madness," Burgin says. "When the *L.A. Times* does it, it's fiscal responsibility. What happened to Bill Wong was probably tragic, but what happened to the *Trib* was something between a nightmare and an outrage."

The media critic Ben Bagdikian, who has followed the paper and the controversy, frames it differently. "Stupidity plus greed" explains Wong's firing, he says. "The stupidity is that they have a high Asian population in their circulation area, including a lot of Asian

leaves 99.9 percent of us." Surprised by the uproar over his firing, Wong also worries that the man, the journalist with a quarter century of experience, may get lost in the welter of symbols. The *San Francisco Examiner* has hired him as a free-lancer to do an occasional column at \$150 apiece. No Bay Area publication has offered him full-time work, "and it's not like I'm so proud I'm not making follow-up calls."

J. Michael Robertson

Robertson is an associate professor and chair of the department of communication at the University of San Francisco, and is at work on a book about the art of the newspaper column.

life as it's lived

a new magazine
with a wide-
angle mission

In last summer's premier issue of *DoubleTake*, a magazine of journalism, prose, poetry, and photography, its editors wrote, "These

days, much of what we know about each other, and much of what we learn — from television, newspapers, and journals — reinforces our separateness and confirms our distrust." According to the magazine's creators and co-editors, Robert Coles, the well-known author and child psychiatrist, and the photographer Alex Harris, the media fail to examine life as it is lived.

The journalism of *DoubleTake* is modeled on the tradition of the Muckrakers and specifically the 1941 book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, in which James Agee and Walker Evans documented the lives of impoverished Alabama sharecroppers. A requirement for this kind of reporting is empathy, the reporters' ability to get a feel for their subjects' shoes.

In this winter's issue, for instance, Eric Bates, a reporter for *The Independent Weekly* of Durham, North Carolina, investigated the "exporting of southern forests." Rather than focusing on "ecological destruction," Bates's article portrayed the lives and concerns of both environmentalists and those who make a living off the forests.

The magazine is also committed to publishing nonprofessional "voices and visions." In a section called "Exploration," everyday people tell of their experiences. In the spring 1996

soundbite

"It was very lucky because it was a designated news day when the stations can submit a newscast for awards. We had a reporter in a chopper and one on the ground. We had the cops blowing this guy away!"

Amy Feller, assistant news director of KXTV in Sacramento, as quoted by Dave Moodie and Zev Borow in "The Sky is Falling," their day-in-the-life portrait of a TV newscast, in Might magazine.

issue, a seven-year-old girl describes, and depicts with crayon, losing her mother in a car crash.

The quarterly, which is published by the Center For Documentary Studies at Duke University, gives word and image equal weight. Photographs are printed on thick, matte-finish paper and tell their own story unsupported by text. Harris calls them "narrative photographs." They are distinct from illustrative photographs or those arising solely from a personal aesthetic, he says, in that they seek to make the lives of those they depict "accessible" to the audience. They are photographs that tell stories.

At times, *DoubleTake* seems so earnest and dogooderly that it recalls the estimation Agee once gave of his own work, that it was for "all those who have a soft place in their hearts for the laughter and tears inher-

ent in poverty viewed at a distance." And while the magazine's concepts may be inspiring, its emotion and earnestness can seem a little overpowering. William Powers, a media critic at *The Washington Post*, says he is "loyal" to *DoubleTake* but that it gives him a "weird, subtle feeling that I'm not good enough to be reading it," adding, "I come away feeling strangely guilty."

A couple of its well-known contributors, though, find *DoubleTake* unusual, maybe even unique, in contemporary journalism, and they sing its praises. Says Susan Faludi, a Pulitzer Prize winner who wrote about laid-off McDonnell Douglas workers for the magazine's fall issue: "You can subscribe to dozens of magazines and not know anything about the lives of the majority of the people who live in this country. Anything that reveals an ounce of concern or passion about humanity is looked at askance." Bill McKibben, who wrote about the near-utopian state of Kerala, India, for the premiere issue, calls it a magazine "for grown-ups." In America, he says, "We shout about everything all the time. I think calm is more useful."

As *DoubleTake* moves into its second year, with a circulation of nearly 30,000, the editors envision the magazine's winning broad appeal. A \$10-million grant from the Lyndhurst Foundation of Chattanooga should guarantee publication for at least five years, and during that time, *DoubleTake* promises to provide a space for those ambitious enough to take on the delicate task of observing and describing life as participants.

Corin Cummings

Cummings is an intern at CJR.

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Applications are now being accepted for the fall program. Interns will work closely with editors on a wide range of research, writing, and production projects.

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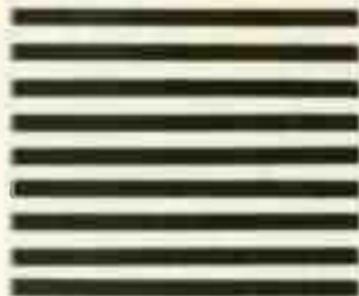
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FOLLOW UP

the web watch

On May 17, the weekly trade magazine *Web Review*, which had been providing news about the World Wide Web to new-media watchers since July 1995, put up a "Dear Reader" letter on the site saying that the magazine would be able to resume publishing in June only if 5,000 readers bought six-month subscriptions at \$19.95 a pop. Within days, several hundred readers had said they would gladly pay for access to the magazine. But industry experts familiar with *Web Review's* situation were skeptical that enough of the Internet's notoriously fickle users would actually pay money to access some-

thing they had previously accessed for free. Visitors to *Web Review's* site in June were able to read only back issues — all that remains of the once-thriving Webzine.

Though publishing on the Web continues to change and grow at an unbelievable pace, the key to making money at it remains as elusive as it was when CJR last explored the issue ("Can the Paperless Magazine Make It?," January/February). Web users' reluctance to pay for subscriptions is only one part of the problem; bringing in enough advertising revenue to turn a profit is another. Web watchers continue to follow the progress of *Feed*, *Word*, and *Salon* to see if an advertising-only model can be made to work.

This summer, all eyes are on two new Web publishing ventures, both backed by big money. *The Wall Street Journal*, which hit the Web in July

1995 with a limited site containing selections from its print edition, launched a vastly larger site — *The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition* (<http://www.wsj.com>) — in late April. The *Journal* plans to charge for subscriptions after a few months of free access. Users who register before July 31 get free, unlimited access to the site until August 31; starting in September, subscriptions will cost \$29 a year for people who subscribe to the print edition and \$49 a year for those who do not.

Meanwhile, the print- and new-media worlds are eager to see what Michael Kinsley, the former *New Republic* and *Harper's Magazine* editor and *Crossfire* commentator, will turn out in his new online magazine for Microsoft. Kinsley has been slaving away on the Microsoft campus since January, and the result of his labors — a Web-

zine of political and cultural commentary called *Slate* (<http://www.slate.com>) — was scheduled to be launched in late June. Like the *Journal* site, it will be free for a few months but will eventually charge for access.

Either or both of these publications could provide a financial model for future Web publishers; each will be attempting to make money through both subscriptions and advertising sales. As in the print world, these two revenue streams could easily feed off each other: as a site gets more subscribers, it will be easier for the site to sell advertising, and the more advertising revenues, the more money the site will have for marketing itself in attempts to attract new subscribers. Or not. As usual on the Web, nobody really knows.

Andrew Hearst

Hearst is CJR's editorial/production assistant.

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Darts & Laurels

◆ **DART** to WLS-TV, Chicago, for stepping on the brakes instead of the gas. On February 8, the opening day of an automobile trade show at the city's McCormick Place, the station aired the regularly scheduled syndicated newsmagazine *Inside Edition* — but bumped a seven-minute segment about potentially hazardous ignition switches on many Ford cars and trucks. The reason, as revealed by media critic Robert Feder in a February 12 column in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, was that the station feared a collision with its auto-dealer advertisers, not to mention with the Chicago Automobile Trade Association, sponsor not only of the McCormick Place show but also of an hourlong infomercial, produced by and featuring WLS newspeople, and rolled out for viewers two days later. (Feder also noted that in taking such action the station was going over familiar ground: on the eve of the opening of last year's auto show, it had killed an *Inside Edition* segment on potentially hazardous rear-door latches on Chrysler minivans.) Fortunately, other stations around the country did not proceed with similarly misguided caution: according to a page-one report in *The New York Times*, it was the decision by a Marietta, Georgia, viewer — who had experienced firsthand the problems she saw detailed in the *Inside Edition* segment — to set up a “Flaming Ford Owners” page on the Internet that helped bring about the recall of 8.7 million vehicles announced by the automaker on April 25.

◆ **DART** to WILX-TV, the NBC affiliate in Lansing, Michigan, and news anchor Liz Talbot, for less than model behavior. Readers of the December 11 edition of the *Lansing State Journal* found themselves face to face with a beauty-shop ad that relied on photos of Talbot taken before and after she availed herself of its makeover services. Brand names of the hair spray, sculpting gel, conditioner, and powder used by Talbot's “esthetician” in “creating” her “present look” also appeared in the ad, as did the name of the shop where she gets her clothes.

◆ **LAUREL** to the Baton Rouge, Louisiana, *Advocate*, and staff writer Greg Garland, for an investigation most real — a March 31 exposé of abuses in a federal Housing and Urban Development program for the poor and homeless. After getting the door slammed in his face when he asked the

government agency for information, Garland moved in on property-tax-exemption records to show how a politically well-connected local woman, who goes by the name of Ambassador Lil Barrow-Veal, had led HUD down the garden path: through a nonprofit corporation she set up called Safety Net Inc., Barrow-Veal had used HUD's special \$1-a-year leasing program to acquire fifty-one houses, in which many of her less-than-impoverished friends and relatives were happily ensconced. She had also managed to sell a number of the discounted houses at a substantial profit. What's more, this was not a one-story situation: as a subsequent report made distressingly clear, the flamboyant “Ambassador” had previously been at the center of questionable financial dealings involving both a runaway-youth shelter and a mental-health rehabilitation service. And, as a related article showed, she was not the only party to be faulted, for lax monitoring by HUD had left the program vulnerable to such abuse. Before the week was out, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the FBI, and HUD announced investigations, and three members of Congress were calling for hearings.

◆ **DART** to *U.S. News & World Report*, for flunking the course in elementary principles of journalism research. The March 18 cover story, a “News You Can Use” ranking of “America's Best Graduate Schools” in such fields as law, business, medicine, engineering — and, not incidentally, journalism — was a study in dubious data. In an instructive letter to the editor published in the magazine's April 1 issue, Ted Glasser, director of the graduate journalism program at Stanford, and Tom Goldstein, dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Berkeley, scored the madness of the survey's methods. “Not more than two dozen universities take graduate journalism education seriously, yet you found 170 ‘recognized’ programs. You do not indicate who recognizes them. After we received our ballot” — academics and practitioners were asked to rate the programs on a five-point scale — the authors went on, “we sent away for catalogs. Some no longer offer journalism or mass communications. . . . Others specialize in such distant cousins to journalism as speech.” Another point: “[You report] that practitioners rate Stanford in the top five in ‘radio/television.’ Stanford does not offer this sequence.” Responding in an accompanying note, the

editors indicated that the list of 170 programs had been provided by Professor Lee Becker of Ohio State University, “the leading expert” in such matters, and that the information about Stanford’s programs had come from a “mid-level administrator” there. Becker has since told CJR that his list was not designed to produce — and in fact could never produce — the kind of survey conducted by *U.S. News*. It also turns out that Stanford’s “mid-level administrator” was a receptionist. (In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that Columbia’s Graduate School of Journalism — under whose auspices CJR is published — was rated by academics as second in the print category, and seventh in radio/television, while practitioners rated the school as first in both.)

◆ **DART** to the Princeton, Indiana, *Daily Clarion*, and to WTVW, the Fox television station in Evansville, Indiana, for loving what Toyota’s done for them a little too much. The automaker’s decision to park a new \$700 million truck-building plant in the Gibson County area appears to have driven local media right over the edge. Unable to stop at just tooting the horn in its special sixteen-page Welcome Toyota advertising section, the *Clarion* devoted its entire front page — which featured a Toyota logo next to its own — as well as most of the rest of its news pages, including eighteen photos and countless pieces by the paper’s editor, managing editor, news editor, and publisher, to an uncurbed celebration of the news. For its part, WTVW, on the day of the announcement, aired a segment of its eleven o’clock newscast from a Toyota showroom. According to a critical editorial in the *Indianapolis Star*, a Toyota truck provided the backdrop for the anchors as they presented the news, which included a “tour” of the truck by a Toyota salesman.

◆ **LAUREL** to *Premiere* magazine’s editor-in-chief, Christopher Connelly, and its deputy editor, Nancy Griffin, for their outstanding performance in a real-life journalism drama. Directed by corporate publisher Hachette Filipacchi to drop from the movie magazine’s July issue an assigned investigation of the financial relationship between actor Sylvester Stallone and the Planet Hollywood restaurant chain, the editors walked off. What’s more, they publicly spotlighted as the reason for their resignations a pattern of interference from the magazine’s joint owners, Hachette and Ronald O. Perelman. Perelman’s other big productions include Marvel Entertainment, whose recent deal with Planet Hollywood calls for Marvel Comics characters to be featured in a new chain of theme eateries. (Hachette has denied that the connection had anything to do with the decision to kill the piece, claiming instead that it was prompted by readers’ distaste for investigative reporting.) Additional episodes cited by the editors of

unseemly corporate interest involved the placement of Perelman’s wife on the editorial masthead and an order to run an Oscar-night party photo featuring Revlon models and executives; just for the record, it should perhaps be noted that Revlon mogul Perelman was not in that picture either.

◆ **DART** to the *Los Angeles Times*, for unworthy promotional performance. When Jim Maiella, who had worked for the paper’s Ventura County edition in 1994, visited a former newsroom colleague and noticed on his desk a handsome 5-by-7-inch lucite plaque commemorating the paper’s heroic coverage of the devastating California earthquake that had won a Pulitzer for spot news reporting in 1995, he yearned to have a similar memento to treasure for himself. After all, he reasoned, although at the time of the disaster he had been working for the *Times* as a full-time freelance correspondent — that nebulous job category that provides no benefits to reporters but plenty to management’s bottom line — the paper had been happy to include his on-the-scene reports in the material it submitted to the Pulitzer judges; it had also been happy to include his name in the promotional book the paper produced after the event. Alas, however, the artifact could not be his. “A decision was made,” said a letter from Davilynn Furlow, an assistant to the editor of the Orange County edition, “that the plaques would be given to staffers only.” The decision, the letter went on, had been based “primarily on the cost involved.” Interestingly, the *Times* was much less tightfisted when it came to Pulitzer recognition of a somewhat different kind. On April 10, one day after the announcement of this year’s prizes, newspaper vending machines all around Orange County were suddenly sporting placards promoting OC’S MOST HONORED PAPER: WINNER OF 20 PULITZERS — TIMES ORANGE COUNTY, and the paper’s Orange County edition was repeating the misleading message in full-page ads. A casual reader might never have guessed that the coveted prize for investigative reporting had just been awarded to the *Times*’s archrival, the *Orange County Register*, and that no prize at all had gone to the *L.A. Times* this year.

◆ **DART** to *Tucson Weekly*, for unwise use of resources. The paper regularly carries reports about Arizona legislation on environmental issues under the byline of one Sidney Philips, a.k.a. Raena Honan, a lobbyist for the Sierra Club. Asked by the alternative paper *New Times* — which revealed the conflict in its February 15 edition — to comment on the deception, *Tucson Weekly* managing editor Dan Huff resourcefully explained, “Why don’t you go fuck yourself?”

This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR’s managing editor, to whom nominations should be addressed.

When It Comes to Chemicals, Is Only Good News Fit to Print?

Why is the *New York Times* Ignoring the Health Warnings of Leading Scientists?

Scores of respected scientists in the United States and Europe are calling for accelerated research into the human health impacts of man-made chemicals in the environment that disrupt the endocrine system.

They warn that a variety of hormone-disrupting substances now in everyday use may contribute to an increased incidence of prostate and testicular cancers, immune system problems, and even behavioral problems like attention deficit disorder.

Their concerns have persuaded the National Academy of Sciences to convene a panel to develop an agenda for further research in this field. But the public wouldn't know all this by reading the *New York Times*.

Times reporter Gina Kolata, in two articles on March 19 regarding the book *Our Stolen Future*, dismisses the widespread worries about endocrine disruption as the concerns of "some environmentalists" and "several biologists."

Ms. Kolata cites a few academics whose views are being promoted by the chemical industry. She fails to mention that more than 4,000 published scientific studies inform *Our Stolen Future*. And she cites none of the 400-plus scientists – including physicians, toxicologists, biologists, endocrinologists and others – who developed that body of work. She also ignores the more than 70 experts who have either directly endorsed the book's call for major new research on hormone-disrupting chemicals or signed consensus

statements supporting the scientific basis of the book.

Meanwhile, the *Times* has repeatedly failed to print letters to the editor by leading scientists protesting the serious bias of Ms. Kolata's reporting.

Times readers deserve to be told about the real level of mainstream scientific concern about hormone-disrupting chemicals. Among the many prominent authorities whose statements Ms. Kolata had available but failed to cite is Assistant U.S. Surgeon General Barry L. Johnson, Ph.D., who writes:

"A compelling body of scientific evidence... indicates that some chemical substances found in the environment may be disrupting normal endocrine functions and causing serious adverse effects on human health."*

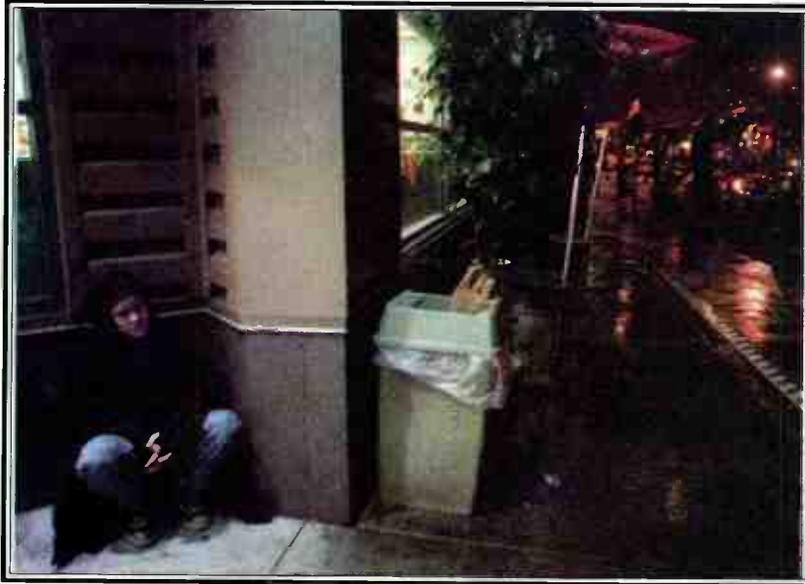
Ms. Kolata also could have cited the views of J. Routt Reigart, M.D., immediate past chair of the Committee on Environmental Health of the American Academy of Pediatrics, who states: "Endocrine-disrupting synthetic chemicals represent a cause for great concern by scientists, policy-makers and the public at large."*

In short, there is a growing body of evidence, gathered and analyzed by scores of respected scientists, suggesting widespread chemical dangers to human hormonal health. The *Times* owes its readers an examination of **all** the news on this subject – not just the good news promoted by the chemical industry.

Hormone-Disrupting Chemicals Deserve Serious and Balanced Coverage

For a detailed analysis of the bias and deficiencies in the *Times* coverage of this issue, contact the Environmental Information Center, 1400 16th Street, N.W., Ste. 330, Washington, D.C. 20036 • Internet: www.eic.org

*From statements prepared for a Washington, D.C. press conference on *Our Stolen Future*, March 14, 1996.



HOW SEATTLE'S "CHILDREN OF THE SHADOWS" HELPED TURN BAD NEWS INTO BETTER NEWS.

Her street name is Bright Eyes. She is 15 and one of the pierced and dyed urchins that haunt every major city. Yet, few citizens who see these street children understand why they are there and what is being done to help them.

Seattle Post-Intelligencer reporter Steve Goldsmith and photographer Robin Layton spent two months with a small band of street kids, gradually winning their confidence.

Their stories did more than profile children and their anxious parents.

They examined laws that clearly benefited kids and others that merely drove them further underground. They moved the community and helped propel passage of legislation that provides for treatment of troubled children like Bright Eyes.

"Children of the Shadows" reflects Hearst's continuing commitment to inform and, ultimately, make a difference.



BARTLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT!

* * *

The Wall Street Journal's *editorial page has plenty of clout.*
But what about credibility?

by Trudy Lieberman

On February 8, *The Wall Street Journal* published a lengthy editorial called "The Clinton Judges," arguing that a Miami corporate litigator, Bruce Greer, should not get a seat on the federal bench. Although he had been recommended in 1993 by Senator Bob Graham, a Florida Democrat, and officially nominated in 1995, confirmation hearings before the Senate Judiciary Committee kept being postponed — from December to January and then to mid-February, the week after the *Journal* editorial appeared.

Greer's deficiencies, as laid out in the *Journal*,

Trudy Lieberman is a contributing editor of CJR. She is senior investigative editor at Consumer Reports. This article reflects her conclusions, not those of Consumer Reports. Free-lance writer Morton Mintz, former investigative reporter for The Washington Post, proposed this project and provided substantial research assistance.



Robert Bartley has been at the Journal since 1962 and in charge of opinion there since 1972. He won a Pulitzer for editorial writing in 1980.

centered on a lot of guilt by association, some of it pretty remote:

- A partner in Greer's law firm had committed suicide some eleven years ago when it was discovered that his client's securities firm had engaged in a massive fraud.
 - The law firm had once employed "radical feminist lawyer Patricia Ireland and Jack Ryan, until recently acting head of the Resolution Trust Corp." and onetime head of banking supervision and regulation at the Federal Reserve, whom the editorial linked to "one of the unanswered questions of the Whitewater probe."
 - One of Greer's clients had been David Paul, chairman of the CenTrust Savings Bank, which collapsed shortly after the savings and loan crisis, who went to prison and was ordered to pay \$65 million for "looting CenTrust."
- The editorial then moved on to Greer's wife, an attorney and real estate developer. "The \$12 million in assets Mr. Greer and his lawyer wife list on

The page is stylish, clearly written, rarely dull, and often fun to read. It is also often unfair, riddled with errors, distortions, and outright falsehoods

their financial disclosure form includes a \$900,000 limited partnership in Cen Office Building Ltd. Public records in Florida indicate that the property was once owned by CenTrust. The details of this transaction should be explored.”

Had anyone explored the arrangement, it would have become clear that the property was never owned by CenTrust Bank nor did CenTrust have any connection to it. The property simply shared an unfortunate coincidence of names. The building had been named Cen Office eleven years before Evelyn Greer’s involvement because of its proximity to Century Village, a large retirement community in Broward County.

The editorial concluded with the Olympian observation that “lawyers are entitled to have clients and those clients are likely to be people in trouble with the law,” and added, “there is no reason to accuse Mr. Greer of anything criminal, and no one has done so.” But it questioned whether someone who might have at one time represented unsavory characters should be rewarded with a “lifetime appointment to the federal judiciary” and concluded, “In that context, his list of associations is far too rich for our blood.”

The day after the Greer editorial appeared, Senate Judiciary Chairman Orrin Hatch took to the Senate floor to denounce judges who were soft on crime, and he linked those judges to the president who appoints them. Shortly afterward Greer got word there would be no hearing; the nomination was dead, and on February 13, fed up with political shenanigans, Greer notified President Clinton he was withdrawing his name.

A month after the editorial, the *Journal* published a letter from Miami attorney Barton Sacher, who as an SEC official in the eighties often opposed clients Greer defended. “Your off-base personal attacks against Mr. Greer and his wife — predicated solely on misleading innuendo and inaccurate facts — bear a striking resemblance to McCarthyism at its worst,” Sacher wrote. That was as close as the *Journal* came to any correction. By then, of course, it didn’t matter.

The *Journal*’s editorial page, written by its staff of thirty writers and editors, is in a class by itself. It is unquestionably influential, serving as a bulletin board for conservative thought and opinion. (The Greer editorial, for instance, signaled a campaign issue for Republicans — the “liberal Clinton judges” — which has resonated through the media ever since.) It is stylish, clearly written, rarely dull, and often fun to read. It has a clear point of view and avoids

equivocation. No “on the one hand” and “on the other hand” commentary here.

Unlike the *Journal*’s meticulously researched in-depth news columns, which many consider a model of journalistic excellence, the editorial page rarely offers balance, is often unfair, and is riddled with errors — distortions and outright falsehoods of every kind and stripe. And when the errors are challenged, the *Journal* is less than eager to set the record straight. The page might stand accused of sloppiness except that the errors always seem to bolster the *Journal*’s point of view. Under editor Robert Bartley, the policy seems to be ideology above all else.

“People complain all the time with good reason,” says Michael Kinsley, who was a *Journal* columnist for three years until 1987. Kinsley himself clashed with the *Journal* a few years ago when, in his *New Republic* column, he criticized its editorials about White House counsel Vincent Foster and the Rose law firm as shoddy and dishonest. The *Journal* later attacked Kinsley for blaming the editorial page for Foster’s death (which Kinsley didn’t do) and implying that the White House put him up to it, which Kinsley says it didn’t.

CJR examined some six dozen examples of disputed editorials and op-eds over the past seven years, and a clear sense of Bartley’s modus operandi emerged. On subjects ranging from lawyers, judges, and product liability suits to campus and social issues, a strong America, and of course, economics, we found a consistent pattern of incorrect facts, ignored or incomplete facts, missing facts, uncorroborated facts. Repeated efforts to discuss the paper’s editorial practices with Bartley were unsuccessful. Absent a conversation with him about the section’s objectives, one can only conclude that affecting policy and changing the course of history matter most.

Greer’s wasn’t the only judicial appointment to feel the *Journal*’s punch. In late 1994 it targeted Peter Edelman, then counselor to the Secretary of Health and Human Services, who was being considered for a seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia circuit. The *Journal* said that when Edelman was director of New York State’s Division for Youth in 1978, he ordered a one-week furlough for a seventeen-year-old who had knifed a girl during a robbery. While on his furlough, the youth was arrested on charges of raping, robbing, and trying to electrocute a sixty-three-year-old woman.

That the *Journal*’s charge was not true was eventually pointed out in a letter, published

about three weeks later, written by J. Thomas Mullen, president of the Catholic Charities Services Corp. in Cleveland, who had worked with Edelman in New York. Under the structure of the agency, Edelman did not order transfers or furloughs, but he could override them, particularly when there was a concern about security, which he did in this case. But by the time he had ordered the boy picked up and returned to the facility, it was too late.

It was also too late for Edelman's nomination. Under pressure from the right wing's judicial attack machine, Clinton got cold feet, and Edelman's name never went to the Senate.

The paper's ruthlessness in assaulting judicial enemies is matched by its zeal in defending (by the same means) friends it thinks the legal system has maligned. Consider the case of Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state in the Reagan administration, who in 1991 pleaded guilty to withholding information from Congress during the Iran-Contra affair. In a short, breezy editorial last summer called "Iran-Contra Epilogue," the *Journal* said "one of the worst abuses to emerge from the Iran-Contra jihad against Reaganites was ended this week: The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled that the D.C. bar association couldn't block Elliott Abrams from practicing law for a year," adding that "the liberal shock troops of the D.C. bar nonetheless insisted on punishing him."

The editorial included three major errors. First, it named the wrong court. The ruling had come from the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, not the U.S. Court of Appeals. Second, the case was brought by the Bar Counsel, an arm of the D.C. Court of Appeals that is appointed by the Court's Board on Professional Responsibility, which is responsible for disciplining lawyers, not the D.C. Bar Association, which does not decide or bring disciplinary actions. Third, the Bar Counsel had no choice but to bring the case; under court rules it must initiate proceedings against any member of the bar who is convicted of a crime that violates disciplinary rules. Hamilton Fox, chairman of the Board on Professional Responsibility, pointed out the mistakes in a letter the *Journal* published nearly one month later.

Such inaccurate portrayals of judicial and legal matters have a long history at the *Journal*. In 1989, *The American Lawyer* published a scathing critique of three editorial-page commentaries by the *Journal's* then assistant editorial page editor, L. Gordon

Crovitz. The article, by Stuart Taylor, Jr., charged that the *Journal* editorials and op-eds, which discussed the 1977 veto by Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis of a bill that would have required teachers to lead students in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, were "riddled with inaccuracies" and "grossly distorted the state of the law," and that "a businessman who relies on the *Journal* may well have concluded from Crovitz's pieces on the pledge that legal precedents supported the law Dukakis vetoed. The opposite was true."

"They were almost indifferent as to whether what they wanted to say comported with dispassionate factual reality," says Taylor, who is now a senior writer at *The American Lawyer*. "If my article caused him [Bartley] any grief, it escaped my attention." (Crovitz went on to bigger and better things at Dow Jones and is now the editor and publisher of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.) Says Taylor: "I think the general pattern of their gonzo attitude continues."

Product liability and fraud suits bring out the *Journal's* highest-octane gonzo response. For example, the day after an *Albuquerque Tribune* reporter, Eileen Welsome, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1994 for disclosing that the government had conducted radiation experiments on unsuspecting citizens without their consent, Max Boot, an assistant features editor for the editorial page, mocked her series in an op-ed, saying there was nothing particularly new to report and that the hype over the experiments "far exceeds their news value." Toward the end of the piece Boot got to his real problem with the series: families of the victims highlighted in Welsome's stories might sue. "It'll be the attorneys — not the alleged victims — who'll receive the most compensation. That's the fallout from the radiation experiments story 'uncovered' by Eileen Welsome," Boot wrote.

A letter from Tim Gallagher, who was the *Tribune's* editor and is now editor of the Ventura, California, *County Star*, was published nearly two months later. In response both to Boot's op-ed and two letters that attacked Welsome's series, Gallagher wrote that Boot had failed to summarize Welsome's work accurately. The *Tribune* didn't claim to be the first to report that people were injected with plutonium, and it credited others who had; the *Tribune* did claim to be the first media institution to identify victims and report that they had never given informed consent for the experiment, and pointed out that the federal government had attempted to hide their identities for fifty years.

The editorial page might be accused of sloppiness except that the errors always seem to bolster the *Journal's* point of view

The editorial page seems to have a policy of waiting for a letter of correction or complaint, which is usually run up to four weeks later — if at all

Last summer, with a bill limiting the ability of investors to sue for securities fraud bogged down in a conference committee, the *Journal* wrote an editorial titled “Brazen Beyond Limit?” that came to the defense of Representative Christopher Cox, one of the bill’s sponsors. Cox had been named as a defendant in a lawsuit filed on behalf of some of the 8,000 investors in a fraudulent investment scheme called First Pension. (Investors lost \$136 million, and the principals are now in jail.)

The editorial brushed off Cox’s involvement as minimal. It argued that as the victim of “lawsuit abuse,” he had to “waste time, energy, and money mounting a defense against baseless charges.” To persuade readers that there was no case against Cox, the editorial emphasized a preliminary ruling by a judge who was no longer hearing the case and ignored the fact that the case had been transferred to the court’s complex-litigation division seven days before the *Journal* published its editorial. (Contrary to the *Journal*’s assertion of baseless charges, the suit is proceeding, and Cox remains a defendant. The paper has carried no news account about court rulings this spring that have kept Cox in the case, although California papers did.) The editorial also implied that naming Cox as a defendant was politically motivated and attacked the investors’ attorney, Michael Aguirre, who the *Journal* said had “repeatedly and unsuccessfully run for political office in San Diego as a Democrat” (he ran twice for nonpartisan City Council office and once for Congress, as a Democrat, fourteen years ago).

The *Journal* also attacked news stories, including the paper’s own, that questioned whether Cox was trying to abolish the kind of lawsuit that was filed against him.

Harry Farrar, one of the defrauded investors in the First Pension case, wrote a letter to the *Journal* complaining of errors in the piece, made numerous follow-up calls, and sent two letters to publisher Peter Kann asking his help in getting a letter of correction printed. When he got no response, Farrar, in frustration, contacted *CJR*. “If they had allowed us to point out the errors, it would have detracted from their thrust to get the [securities] legislation moving,” Aguirre told *CJR*.

In March the paper took another whack at plaintiffs’ lawyers with an editorial arguing that damages in product liability suits should be limited. It noted that a bill making its way through the Senate was the best it was likely to pass, since “most Democrats and some Republicans are deeply dependent on trial

lawyers as campaign contributors.” That statement was a misleading half-truth at best. Ninety-nine political action committees set up by members of the American Tort Reform Association, a who’s who of business and trade organizations that want to limit liability, gave \$26.2 million to members of Congress and candidates during the 1994 election cycle and in calendar year 1995, compared with \$2.9 million given by the Association of Trial Lawyers of America.

Other examples abound of facts not standing in the way of *Journal* logic. Earlier this year Boot wrote an op-ed claiming that Proposition 103, which regulated auto insurance rates in California, didn’t work. Actually, it did: premiums that had been rising faster than the rates countrywide have turned around; in the past five years, the increase was 88 percent lower than rates throughout the U.S. Four months before Boot’s op-ed appeared, the Consumer Federation of America had issued a report and press release detailing the successful California experience. A couple of weeks after the op-ed, the *Journal* published a letter from J. Robert Hunter, the former insurance commissioner of Texas who had written the CFA report, pointing out the *Journal*’s errors.

In an editorial last June attacking subsidies to the U.S. Merchant Marine, the *Journal* claimed that U.S. mariners earn an average of \$125,000 for six months’ duty. If the paper had called the Maritime Administration at the Department of Transportation, it would have discovered that on average a U.S. mariner earns about half of that. The error was pointed out in letters, almost one month later, from a couple of mariners, one of whom wanted to know where he could find those high-paying jobs. The head of the Maritime Administration was sufficiently exercised to make a public statement about the error.

An August 1994 editorial about the Smithsonian Institution’s Enola Gay exhibit said that “. . . it is especially curious to note the oozing romanticism with which the Enola show’s writers describe the kamikaze pilots. . . . These were, the script elegiacally relates, ‘youths, their bodies overflowing with life.’ Of the youth and life of the Americans who fought and bled in the Pacific there is no mention.” Contrary to the *Journal*’s outraged presentation, the quote did not originate with Smithsonian curators; the words were written by a Japanese kamikaze pilot who had survived the war, an attribution the original script made crystal clear. “If they said it was written by a Japanese pilot, it would have

undercut their point," says Tony Capaccio, editor of *Defense Week*, who has written about press coverage of the Enola Gay affair.

In his annual statement to readers last January, publisher Peter Kann proudly described the paper's correction policy. He certainly did not intend to point up the stark contrast between the two branches of the paper, but his comments about the daily Corrections & Amplification column clearly apply only to the news pages. He said it is "a constant reminder of the shortcomings of even the most painstaking reporting and editing process. Last year we published more than 500 items setting the record straight as well as more than a thousand letters from readers often taking issue with *Journal* news or views. . . . Our clear policy, however, is to correct errors and offer opportunity for reader response. We believe this enhances credibility and reinforces reader trust."

The editorial page seems to have a slightly different policy. It appears to wait for a letter of correction or complaint, which is usually run two to four weeks later. Correction boxes on the editorial page are apparently reserved for misattributed quotations, spelling errors and mismatched books and authors on the Leisure & Arts page, incomplete attributions, and misplaced quotation marks.

Delays in publishing letters of correction can undermine the correction itself. By the time a letter is published, most readers have forgotten what the editorial said, the desired goal may have been achieved (as in the case of Bruce Greer), or the disputed information may have been picked up by other media. *The Washington Post*, for example, repeated the inaccuracy in a news story about the Enola Gay exhibit the day after the *Journal's* editorial appeared and used the inaccurate passage to bolster the views of the exhibit's critics.

A letter writer who has an especially high profile may have his or her say within a day or two of the offending editorial, but that's rare. So are correction boxes that admit to the kinds of errors examined for this story.

Other papers are more likely to use correction boxes for serious factual errors on their editorial pages and save the letters columns for differences of opinion. *The Washington Post*, whose editorial page is on an influential par with the *Journal's*, corrects such errors that way. "If we make them, we correct them. We hate to do it, but we do it," says deputy editorial page editor Stephen Rosenfeld. "You have to be more rigorous than the news columns because matters are very contentious."

An error Rosenfeld made recently in one of

his op-ed columns points up the difference between the *Post* and *Journal* approaches. Rosenfeld called former strategic arms negotiator Max Kampelman a "former Democrat." Kampelman was always a Democrat, and Rosenfeld forthrightly corrected his error in a column two weeks later. When the *Journal* made a similar mistake, claiming that Senator Thad Cochran of Mississippi was a member of the plaintiff's bar — in other words, a trial lawyer, one of its regular targets — it waited for him to write a letter saying he was not.

It's impossible to say how many errors go uncorrected. A case in point deals with misinformation familiar to CJR readers. In mid-March, the *Journal* wrote about the health reform bill then making its way through Congress, and attacked an insurance concept called "guaranteed issue" that requires carriers to offer policies to anyone, regardless of health. It argued that when New York required insurers to sell guaranteed issue policies and eliminated most premium variations based on health risk, "500,000 individuals have been forced to drop their insurance coverage." The January/February 1995 issue of CJR showed how that number was false and had been derived from a misleading study by an actuarial consultant employed by insurance interests that had much to gain by discrediting the New York experience. If any letters were sent to the *Journal* disputing that statistic, none ever appeared.

Last summer the *Journal* ran two op-eds and one review critiquing a well-publicized book on wealth inequality by a New York University economics professor, Edward Wolff. But it refused to print a letter from Wolff correcting some errors and distortions that appeared in the pieces. For example, in one, the writer inaccurately claimed that Wolff had used only two years' worth of data and ignored pension wealth. Said Wolff: "They weren't interested in getting to the truth of the matter but more interested in presenting a political position on income equality."

The White House couldn't get a correction after the *Journal* wrote that Hillary Clinton had intervened to suppress allegations of sexual harassment at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a charge the *Journal* had picked up from *The Sunday Times* of London. The White House had denied the allegation before the *Journal* published its editorial. Bartley told *Washington Post* reporter Howard Kurtz that the *Journal* was aware that the First Lady had denied the charge. "We meant to include that," he told Kurtz. But "if you've got 600 words, something has to give." ♦

Other papers are more likely to use correction boxes for serious factual errors and save the letters columns for differences of opinion

THE BIGGEST STORY

BY FRANK HOUSTON

The banner headline on the April 22 *Atlanta Constitution's* front page — SIZZLE OR FIZZLE? — did not have anything to do with the event that was weighing heavily on the city's psyche this spring: the coming of the 1996

Summer Olympics, which one editor calls "the biggest story here since Sherman burned Atlanta." It referred instead to the mass highway bivouacking known as "Freaknik," an annual spring break pilgrimage that draws black college students from around the country to the city. But the anxiety created by Freaknik was naturally projected onto the Summer Games, since the event was something of a dry run for Atlanta hospitality. At under 100,000, attendance at Freaknik '96 was lower than previous years' numbers; the SIZZLE OR FIZZLE? headline called into question not only the low turnout, but also the city's overly aggressive response to the crowds, which many visitors found dismaying: metro-area shopping malls closed early and police choked off traffic by preventing cars from exiting the freeway into already congested streets. Freaknik had everybody thinking about the Olympics, then eighty-eight days away. Beginning in July, more than twenty times as many out-of-towners were expected to descend

Frank Houston is an assistant editor at CJR. A graduate of Emory University in Atlanta, he worked as a journalist there in the early 1990s.

With so many proclaiming all systems go, it's hard not to come to the conclusion that Atlanta is, in fact, not ready

on the city. Traffic — a major headache in suburb-ringed Atlanta for years now, especially in the epicenter, where many Olympic venues were being built — was only going to get worse. As the Freaknikers cleared out, the collective sigh of relief over their departure was just a little too loud, betraying some skittish nerves beneath the city's famously upbeat, self-congratulatory facade. There was a palpable fear that the city's response to the Olympic onslaught could make for a fizzle, too, and on an entirely different scale.

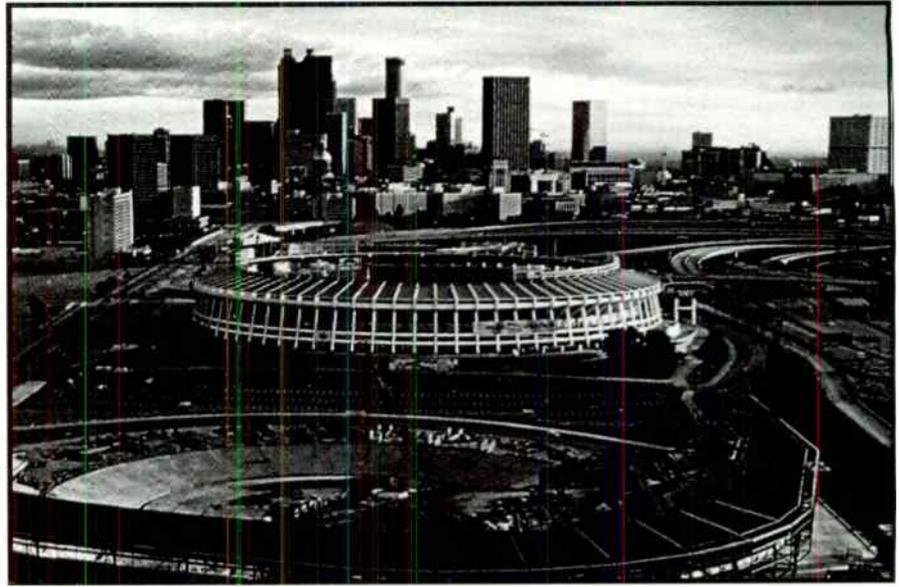


Fear not, Atlanta, was the message delivered the Sunday of Freaknik by the city's own official Olympic station, WXIA-TV. The NBC affiliate, which reportedly paid \$6 million (on top of NBC's own \$456 million) for the designation, had launched a weekly Sunday morning news show, *11 News Team '96*, devoted to the

evolving Olympic story, and on Freaknik Sunday the show opened with a question from anchor Angela Robinson: "What lesson can Atlanta learn from Freaknik '96?" According to the report that followed, Department of Transportation officials were ready for increased Olympic traffic with a new high-tech traffic monitoring system and 30,000 reflective hats made by 3M for safe night-walking. The next story, about a recent fire at a restaurant next door to downtown's Fox Theatre, found local fire department officials ready. Next came a piece on "Operation Olympic Charlie," a mock hostage situation on a Delta jet, demonstrating that, sure enough, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation was ready for Olympic terrorism. Finally, workers were shown completing the Tennessee venue that would host the whitewater rafting trials, just weeks away. "U.S. Forestry officials say they will be ready. They will be ready!" the reporter shouted.

With so many so vociferously proclaiming all systems go, it was hard not to come to the conclusion that Atlanta was, in fact, not ready. The city's tendency to boast has always barely masked a deeper insecurity; Atlanta has been compared to an uncomfortable teenager straining — too hard and too fast — to move beyond an awkward adolescence. "There's an inferiority complex in the South," says the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution's* Thomas Oliver, assistant managing editor for Olympic news. (The morning *Constitution* and the afternoon *Journal* share a common staff.) "One way to deal with that is to strut around. Atlanta has always overclaimed what it

SINCE SHERMAN CAME THROUGH



ATLANTA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU/KEVIN ROSE

Atlanta is getting ready for 10,000 Olympic athletes — and 15,000 journalists

is.” The September 18, 1990, afternoon *Journal’s* front page announcing the International Olympic Committee’s choice of Atlanta as host for the ’96 Games declared: IT’S ATLANTA! Below the fold, under a photo of an exuberant downtown crowd, followed the plaintive “WE FINALLY WON SOMETHING!”

Much of the media is just as guarded as the populace. (Before consenting to an interview, one journalist sought to ensure that I was not out to demonstrate that “these squirrely southerners can’t pull this thing off.”) Covering the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), with its ambitious corporate fundraising and construction projects, might have been a tough task for media sometimes accused of being boosterish and corporate-cozy (see “Georgia Power — and the Politics of Race,” *CJR*, March/April 1988). For the most part, though, the media were succeeding. One measure of this achievement was the fact that ACOG’s feathers were frequently ruffled. When a local radio station played an April Fools’ prank by reporting, in its morning news show, that France, Britain, and Israel had decided to boycott the Games because of security fears, ACOG called the prank “a bit irresponsible and not in good taste.” The station suspended the disc jockeys and ran a recorded apology

the rest of the day, but the impression of a peevish, humorless ACOG remained.



Crawling through downtown traffic, Rick Bragg is trying to find Thelma’s Kitchen. Bragg, who is based in *The New York Times’s* Atlanta bureau, grew up just a couple of hours away, over the Alabama border, and is working on a story lamenting the disappearance of true southern fare from Atlanta. The relocation of Thelma’s — an old-fashioned “meat and three” buffet-style restaurant — to the outskirts of downtown Atlanta is too good a metaphor for the recent Pulitzer Prize-winner to pass up. “This is what it takes to get to Thelma’s now,” he groans. “Fifteen minutes, and we’ve gone two blocks. Up ahead here,” he says, motioning to a construction snarl, “you have the official Olympic pick-up truck blocking the official Olympic traffic.” Bragg isn’t an Olympics enthusiast. “The closest people are going to come to the Olympics is the traffic jams and their television sets,” he says in his engaging drawl.

Billboards along the Interstates hawk one Official Olympic product after another; the ubiquitous hometown soft drink, Coca-Cola, threatens to douse

rather than “refresh” the “Olympic spirit,” and Atlantans have plenty of time to contemplate the meaning of the giant (and official) Swatch draped along the side of a downtown building while sitting in the traffic induced by highway construction that changes location almost daily. Bragg gleefully relates the story of the official “Olympic Weenie,” announced with the unveiling of a 1,996-foot-long hot dog that wrapped around the interior of the Georgia Dome almost twice. The hot dog, it turned out, hadn’t been refrigerated. “They could not eat it. They could only gaze upon it,” Bragg says. Turning to the bureau’s office manager, Susan Taylor, he asks, “Susan, what did they ever do with that thing? ’Cause environmentally, that’s a threat.”

Over collard greens, Taylor, a native Atlantan, says of her hometown, “They bulldoze first, ask questions later. Atlanta’s tradition is change. There’s a real aversion to the old dusty and musty.” For a city that was originally called Terminus, there seems to be no end in sight. Atlanta devours the new.



On a bus tour of new Olympic venues for the media this spring, an ACOG spokesperson told a

camera-ready press corps they wouldn't be going inside the new Georgia Tech Aquatic Center, where a roof beam had fallen only weeks before. "There's nothing for you to shoot when you get in there except tarp," she said. The blue curtain of tarp was precisely the image ACOG did not want going out over the nation's wires and airwaves so late in the game. Giant construction cranes and scaffolding dotted the downtown landscape, where the new Centennial Olympic Park, across the street from CNN Center, was routinely being referred to as a "mud pit" with more upturned Georgia clay than grass. After a construction-related death at the Olympic Stadium a year earlier and news reports that new dorms built to house athletes had sunk several inches into the ground, tardy construction schedules were fraying nerves.

ACOG has worked harder than anyone to put the city's best face forward. The chairman, Billy Payne, brought little media experience to the job, and it showed. "Billy Payne had no concept of the old saw, 'Don't pick a fight with people who buy ink by the truckload,'" says the *Journal and Constitution's* Oliver. "You don't get public support by saying 'no comment' to everything." Carey Gillam, who covers the business and financial side of the Games for the weekly *Atlanta Business Chronicle*, calls ACOG "one big power trip" and notes that "you can't talk to officials." Gillam has pursued stories on ACOG's ticket scheme — in which some unlucky ticket-seekers waited months for refunds while ACOG racked up millions in interest, and even some successful customers were double-billed — and its decreasing rates of minority and female hiring between 1992 and 1994. The *Chronicle* also broke a story in April about the threat of a water shortage in downtown Atlanta during the Games because of construction and renovation delays at the city's main water treatment plant.

The control of ACOG, as well as the U.S. and International Olympic Committees, will make Olympic coverage especially challenging for broadcasters not blessed by the "official" Olympic

designation. Unofficial cameras won't be allowed in venues or at press conferences. "After the rights were awarded, we no longer had the same access, the same degree of relationship," says Carl Ward, Olympics producer for WSB, the local ABC affiliate. While the station was considered by some to be leading the way with its coverage early on in the Olympic story, that changed after rival WXIA became the "official local station" of the Games. WSB cameras will be shut out of official Olympic venues and events, and the station has to negotiate for spots around town where it can

CNN's detachment from the city it inhabits will be reflected in its Olympic coverage

set up cameras and dishes to shoot and edit without having to brave traffic. "In my opinion, ninety percent of what goes on in the Olympics occurs outside of it," Ward says hopefully. "It's one big, gigantic party."

For unofficial local stations and national networks, there are strict limitations on the use of Games footage: two minutes of video can be used three times in a twenty-four hour period, provided they are separated by two hours. Robert Abbott, sports producer for CNN's Olympic coverage, says that his Olympics-accredited staff of four will interview athletes away from venues. Often, he says, that will require making "eye contact" with the athletes at official press conferences to signal interest in an interview on neutral territory.



In most ways, CNN is more connected to the world than it is to the city it inhabits. And while Ted Turner's ties to the community are considerable

— he owns much of it — he is too much of a maverick to follow the city's team-player corporate ethos. Turner has been notably detached from much of the Olympic hoopla, forgoing corporate sponsorship in spite of the fact that the Games will provide him economic gains, from downtown development that will boost his property values to a sparkling new Olympic Stadium for his Braves. The way CNN will cover the Olympics reflects this remove. "As a news organization that happens to be headquartered here, we have more resources here," says Abbott. "But we can't lose sight of the fact that although it's in your backyard, you cover it as if it was New York, or Detroit."

CNN Center, monument to the Turner behemoth, is part shopping mall, part news operation. Its atrium is lined by the Turner Store (stocked with T-shirts and more featuring the cartoon characters of Turner's Hanna-Barbera), the Braves Clubhouse (T-shirts and more featuring "America's Team"), the Omni Hotel, restaurants, a movie theater, fountains, international flags, and a \$7 "studio tour" of CNN. Natural light leaks in far overhead, but not enough to spoil the ambient glow of neon; from somewhere near the ceiling, cascading columns of box-like structures spill downward, suggesting clustered DNA chains composed of televisions.

At one end of the center, CNN's "Talk Back Live," a news talk show that places emphasis on the studio audience, is produced each day from the middle of the floor. Upstairs lies the heart of the Turner empire: CNN Headline News, CNN International (where tourists can peer directly into the newsroom as if window shopping), CNN Airport News, and CNN Interactive. More than 3,000 employees filter in and out of this news machine daily. Beneath the gazes of tourists looking down from a glass-enclosed observation deck, the CNN newsroom looks like Mission Control, with its bays of computers, monitors, televisions, editing terminals constantly in motion — anchors are fed news to read while, behind them, reporters and editors work their

phones and computers and, behind them, producers and technicians scoop up a steady stream of satellite feeds from around the world.



A couple of blocks down Marietta Street, past the giant Coca-Cola bottle being constructed near Centennial Olympic Park, lies the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*. If CNN Center is a news mall, the *Journal* and *Constitution's* dim lobby is more of a museum, decorated with blown-up front pages — from PRESIDENT CHANTS HYMN AS HE PASSES FROM TIME INTO THE WORLD BEYOND (1901) to NIXON QUILTS (1974) — and photographs, like the one of a KKK demonstrator picketing the newspaper, and thumbing his nose at the camera, in 1960. Today's *Journal* and *Constitution* is a different paper, but it might bear more resemblance to its former self than does Atlanta, which has spread out like kudzu since it began booming in the '80s — from 2.2 million to an estimated 3.3 million in 1995.

"I think Atlanta has come a hell of a long way since the Civil War," says the *Journal* and *Constitution's* editor, Ron Martin, who says his mission is to "stay on top of this incredible growth." The *Journal* and *Constitution* has covered the Olympic story extensively and exhaustively. For over a year now it has produced an Olympic Weekly section, and on July 8 it will begin publishing an entire four-section, forty-eight-page daily newspaper devoted solely to the Games.

Thomas Oliver, a former business editor who is overseeing the paper's Olympic coverage, was also in charge of covering the Barcelona summer games in 1992. The staffing needs to produce such output are enormous: 300 reporters, editors, photographers, and artists are on hand for stories. Early on, Oliver and his staff assigned fifty-eight sportswriters to develop specialties and began covering national and international championships. Other reporters cover Olympics stories that fall within traditional beats:

metro, business, international, and features. Most of Oliver's team has been in place for two years.

While the newspaper has clearly gotten excited about the Olympics along with its community, it has pursued stories likely to loom large in the Games with a critical eye. Weeks before the Barcelona Games in 1992, and in anticipation of the issue's significance for the Atlanta Games, the *Journal* and *Constitution* probed the corporatization of the Olympics in "The Selling of the Olympics," tracing the evolution of fundraising and the significant rise in

The Atlanta Journal and Constitution has a staff of 300 journalists on hand for the Games

corporate sponsorship since Los Angeles in 1984. In the spring of 1995, the paper anticipated traffic woes with "The Gridlock Games?," analyzing the city's plans — to rely largely on the under-utilized MARTA transit system — and pointing up weaknesses. It tackled heat next, exactly one year ahead of the Games, with "The Hottest Games Ever?" In seeking the Olympic bid, ACOG chairman Payne had disingenuously claimed the city's mid-summer average temperatures to be a cool 75 degrees; the *Journal* and *Constitution* pointed out that, when factors like humidity and urban (pavement) heat were considered, downtown stadium temperatures could feel like 124 degrees.

In 1993, after another Cox Enterprises-owned newspaper, the *Waco Tribune-Herald*, lost the story about the siege of the Branch Davidian compound to big out-of-town papers, Oliver feared that, in the event of terrorism at the 1996 games, the *Journal* and *Constitution* would also lose out

to the likes of *The New York Times*. So he recruited the *Journal* and *Constitution's* military affairs reporter, Ron Martz, to begin immersing himself full-time in security and terrorism issues. In April, when a raid on a right-wing Georgia militia was erroneously reported by CBS News and others to have uncovered a plot to blow up Olympic venues, Martz and staff writer Bill Rankin weighed in early with a report in time for the afternoon *Journal*: "The raid set off a flurry of news reports that the plot was Olympics-related, but an ATF official in Atlanta said that was not the case." While the militia were in fact building pipe bombs, they were stockpiling them for the advent of the New World Order, not the Olympics, the *Constitution* reported the next day.

The militia story revealed the Southern Gothic underbelly that Atlanta would prefer, understandably, to distance itself from: the backwoods boys from *Deliverance* giddily plotting global destruction. A year ago, in a piece beginning, "Brace yourself, Bubba, the curmudgeons are coming," the *Journal* and *Constitution* had predicted for the city the role of "sitting duck for the world's press," quoting such press accounts of the city as this, from the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*: "While the city has developed a well-honed ability to promote itself, it hasn't shaken its southern roots. It's still legal to marry your cousin. Grown-up men commonly keep little-boy nicknames: Bubba, Billy, Johnny."

Editor Ron Martin calls Atlanta "the de facto capital of the South," and says "you feel and read more of the South" in his newspaper. Martin, who created the prototype for *USA Today* and worked as its executive editor for ten years, is a gracious man who has clearly heard his approach criticized — both at *USA Today* and since he took over the reins of the *Journal* and *Constitution* after Bill Kovach's bitter resignation in 1988. When asked about the disappearance of jumps from the paper's front page, he says the most important question is how to "get the stuff off the page and put it into readers' heads. The question of

jumps, graphics, color, short stories — all that is white noise.” Martin is acutely aware of his readers’ array of news sources: “You’re kidding yourself if you think we can operate in a vacuum.”

The *Journal* and *Constitution*’s critics point out that, as with the vast amount of space being devoted to Olympics stories ranging from the important to the trivial, the paper’s presentation sometimes seems to lack both context and judgment. “It’s not that you can’t find good stories, it’s that you have to look for them,” says one former *Journal* and *Constitution* reporter who fondly remembers Kovach’s short-lived reign. “There’s no way to tell what the paper thinks is good or relevant.” For example, one Sunday this spring found, among the three stories on the front page, an AP story about a fountain pen dating from World War I, unearthed by a French farmer and found to be in working order. Tight space on page one meant that readers had to look inside to find excellent, staff-generated stories about train-depot ghost towns in rural Georgia, the assisted-suicide debate, and an analysis of the resources devoted to fundraising by senators who aren’t up for re-election until 1998 and 2000.

At fifty, the *Journal* and *Constitution*’s local columnist Colin Campbell, with his lanky frame, bright blue eyes, auburn hair, and cowboy boots, looks the part of a southern newspaper columnist. He actually hails from Boston, speaks with no accent, and spent part of his career as an editorial writer for *The New York Times*. But Campbell is also the great-great-grandson of the city’s preeminent post-Civil War journalist, Henry Grady, whose statue stands about a hundred yards down Marietta Street from his office. When it comes to “hyping Atlanta,” Campbell explains, “I know all about it, genetically.” Still, he says, “Bragging needlessly about a city is in bad taste, imprudent, adolescent, dumb, unsophisticated, and provokes journalists to prick your balloon.”

For the most part, though, Campbell feels the *Journal* and *Constitution* has been the paper of record for the

Olympics story. While not technically part of the Olympics staff, Campbell has weighed in with advice for visiting journalists, as well as columns on one of his pet issues, homelessness (in 1995, Atlanta was cited by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty as one of five U.S. cities that are especially “mean” to the homeless), and on lighter subjects such as the Olympic mascot, a strange Smurf-like creature called, appropriately enough, “Whatizit,” or “Izzy,” for short. (“It’s bad. It’s stupid.”)



Homelessness, growth, traffic, heat: these stories will emanate like mantras from Atlanta during the Games; while representative enough, they are issues that could make for stories almost anywhere. But a unique Atlanta story — unique because of the city’s size and status as “de facto” southern capital — is race. It’s a complicated story, one told with conflicting images — the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial, where King’s tomb lies on a promontory in the middle of a pool of turquoise water, for example, contrasted with nearby Stone Mountain, a dome of granite boasting a heroic carving of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson that will be the site of Olympic tennis.

“Atlanta was built on black hope and white pragmatism,” says Gary Pomerantz, a *Journal* and *Constitution* editorial board member and author of the recently published *Where Peachtree Meets Sweet Auburn*. The book explores, through the prisms of two historical streets, Peachtree Street and Auburn Avenue, as well as the lineages of two of its more memorable mayors — Ivan Allen Jr. and Maynard Jackson — the intersection of White and Black Atlanta, an intersection Pomerantz calls “a détente for mutual gain, as opposed to a truly mutual understanding.”

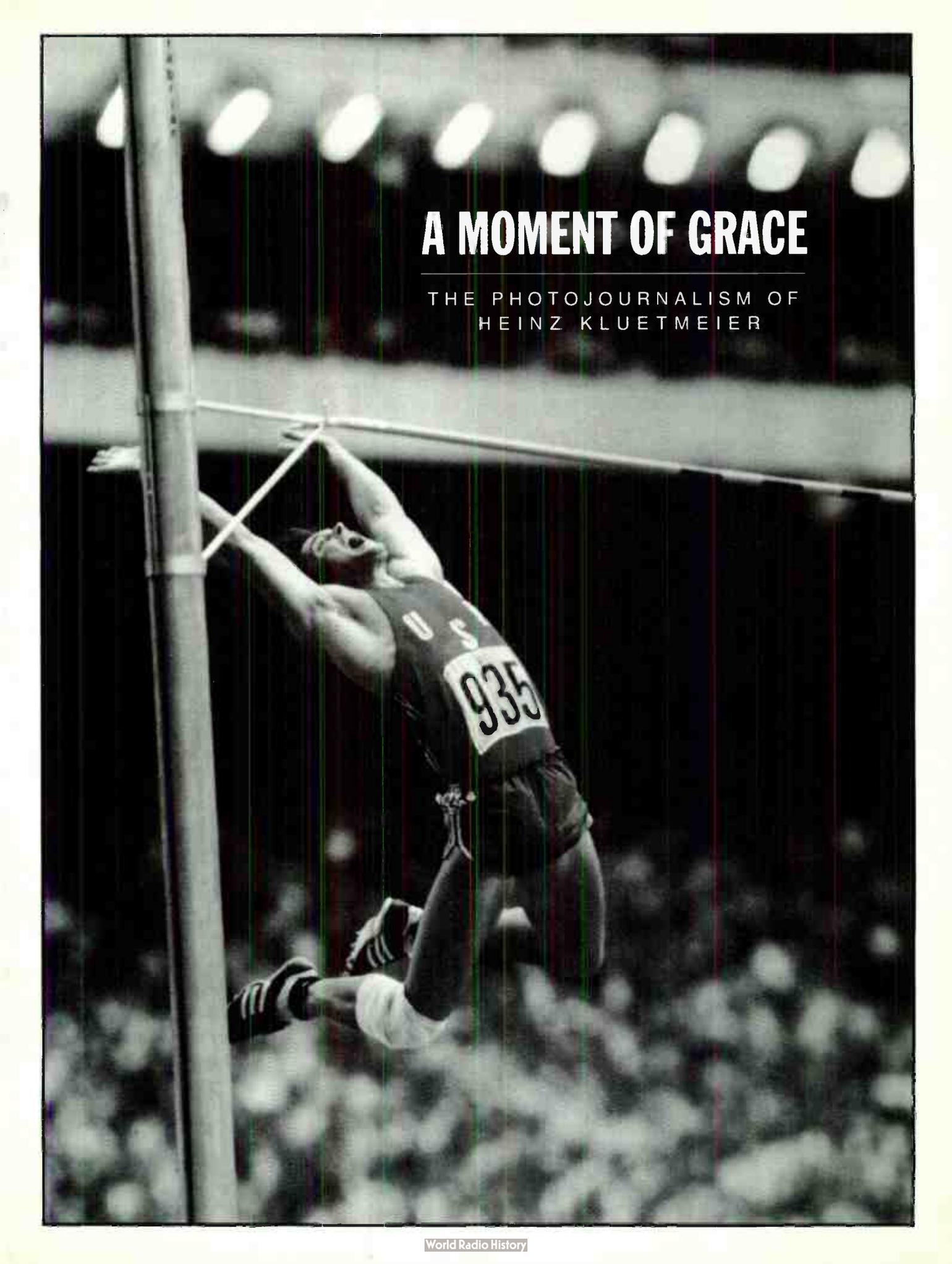
“Atlanta is an integrated city by day,” says Pomerantz. “But in all matters of the heart, it remains largely, not entirely, a segregated city.” Still, great strides have been made for a city whose state flag boasts the Confederacy’s

stars and bars. (That flag was adopted not in Civil War days, but in 1956, in defiance of the desegregation order resulting from *Brown v. Topeka*.)

Pomerantz talks excitedly about race, throwing out phrases like “the great test tube for the black and white thing” and “racial moderation,” and quoting W.E.B. Du Bois (Atlanta is “south of the North yet north of the South”). He hopes the visiting media will take the time to find the Atlanta he researched for his book, to avoid the “quick hit” and the “inevitable inclination to bash the South.” He fondly recalls interviewing Dr. Irene Dobbs, the mother of Jackson, Atlanta’s first black mayor, and hearing her reminisce about her grandmother, a former slave whom she tried to teach to read and write. “Grandma Dobbs was born in 1824, and here I am talking to the mother of Atlanta’s first black mayor 172 years later,” Pomerantz says. His tip for the media: “Recognize that Atlanta’s greatness comes from its people.”



For the 15,000-plus accredited journalists descending on the city in search of the real Atlanta, the one beyond the shiny new Olympic venues and traffic snarls, sorting the three million natives out from the two million tourists won’t be easy. Many Atlantans are determined to keep their distance from the whole extravaganza. Airlines are cashing in on the disaffection of some residents with “Exit Atlanta” discounts during the Games — Delta was reported to have booked more than 20,000 passengers in the first two days of its offer. In any event, those watching from afar will have the better view. Local journalists all speak about the time, fast approaching, when everybody relaxes a notch and lets things happen; when the city sparkles in the spotlight it has so eagerly sought, when trifles like traffic detours and wet paint are but distant memories in the collective swelling of pride. Soon the city will put away its cranes and scaffolding and get down to the business it knows best: becoming Atlanta. ◆



A MOMENT OF GRACE

THE PHOTOJOURNALISM OF
HEINZ KLUETMEIER

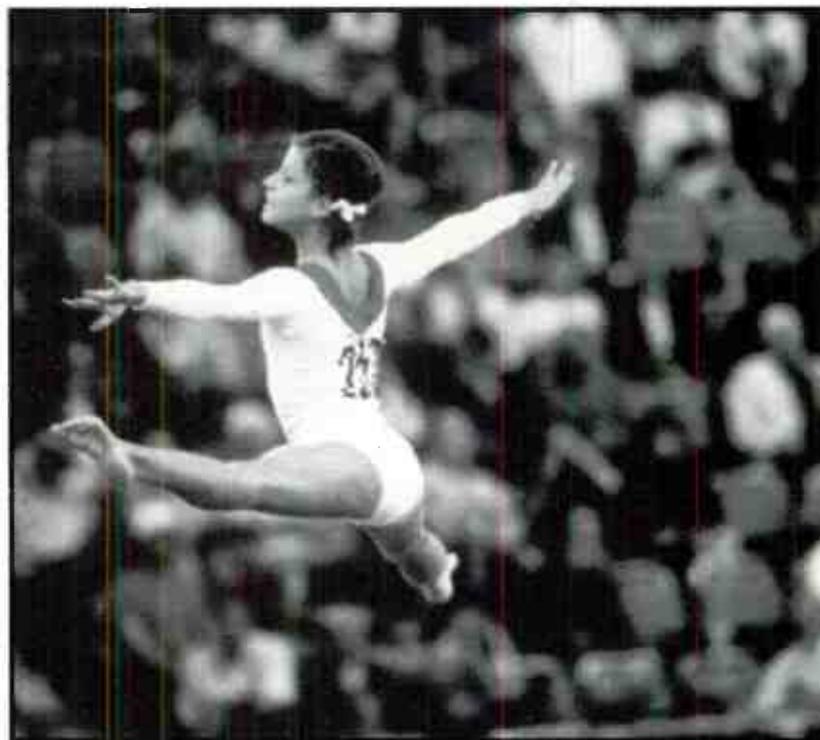


Previous page: Bruce Jenner pole-vaulting in the decathlon at the '76 Games in Montreal. "Clearly, at this point he knew he had reached his goal." The gold medal-winner in the decathlon, says Kluetmeier, becomes the titular "hero of the Olympics." Above: John Walker pulls ahead to win the 1,500-meter at Montreal. New Zealand "had all the great distance runners of the day."

Heinz Kluetmeier first photographed the Olympics in Munich, in 1972, on contract for *Sports Illustrated*, where he is now director of photography. He's photographed every Olympics since, and each has left its unique impression. In Munich, Kluetmeier went from "photographing a sports event to photographing news" when eleven Israeli athletes and coaches were murdered by Palestinian terrorists. The Olympics, he says, have "never recovered, and never will." While Montreal in 1976 was

about exceptional athletes like Bruce Jenner, Nadia Comaneci, and Sugar Ray Leonard, Kluetmeier also vividly recalls the "guards with guns, everywhere."

Moscow in 1980 was an "absolute police state," in which Kluetmeier endured constant security checks and worried that his film would be x-rayed; he found the 1984 Los Angeles games, boycotted by the U.S.S.R., disappointing "because some of the world's best athletes were not there." The Seoul Games



Above right: American Evelyn Ashford at the gold medal ceremony for the 100-meter in Los Angeles, 1984. The scheduling of track and field for television prime time on the east coast provided photographers with "that great California light." Russian gymnast Olga Korbut, in Munich, 1972. "was the first international heroine to come out of the Olympics."

in 1988 seemed "orchestrated and controlled," right down to the daily student riot at precisely 3:30 every afternoon. Poised on a balcony above Greg Louganis to photograph a dive, Kluetmeier was pushed away by a South Korean army guard; it was the dive in which Louganis hit his head on the board going down. In contrast to the "lock-step" of Seoul, Kluetmeier remembers Barcelona in

1992 for its "late-night restaurants" and "laid-back Mediterranean climate."

There is a common denominator in Kluetmeier's experiences: "Ninety percent of every photograph is given to getting to the shooting locations, getting into position," he says. At that point, of course, the sheer athleticism of the Games comes through: "You try to catch a moment," Kluetmeier says. "You find these people, who have great control over their bodies, in a graceful and poetic moment while seriously competing."

— Frank Houston

SHAKE-UP IN PARIS

At 109, the *International Herald Tribune*
is at a crossroads

—
by Michael Balter



Michael Getler (left) takes over from John Vinocur, executive editor since 1987

Atop a marble pedestal on the Place de l'Alma in Paris, just yards from the Seine River, stands a full-sized, gilded replica of the torch from the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor. The flame, an inscription reads, is "offered to the French people by donors from around the world to symbolize Franco-American friendship . . . on the centenary of the *International Herald Tribune*, Paris 1887-1987." The torch is a fitting symbol for an American-owned newspaper that has published continuously in Paris for nearly 109 years, shutting down only during the German occupation of Paris in World War II.

The *IHT*, or *Trib*, as it is also known, has been through a lot of changes in *Michael Balter is a free-lance journalist based in Paris.*

ownership, readership, and editorial identity since the irascible James Gordon Bennett Jr. launched the European edition of the *New York Herald* more than a century ago. Yet the most important changes may be yet to come. For starters, on July 1 the *IHT* will get a new executive editor. Michael Getler, the mild-mannered former deputy managing editor of *The Washington Post*, will replace John Vinocur, a brash, aggressive former *New York Times* reporter and editor whose reign over the *Trib* since February 1987 had been nearly as controversial as his stewardship of the *Times's* metro desk was during the 1980s.

But more dramatically, as the *IHT* grapples with falling profits and fierce competition from other newspapers for its international readership, its corporate owners, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, are beginning to think about the unthinkable: moving the *Trib* out of Paris, in whole or in part. The paper's management insists it would take such a startling step only reluctantly, but the talk is serious and the business reasons are clear. "Paris is an infernally expensive place to operate from," says publisher Richard McClean. "I will leave no stone unturned to insure the longterm viability and growth of this newspaper."

Although the reasons for Vinocur's removal are murky, friends and colleagues say that it was not voluntary, and the decision was made behind closed doors rather than at a regular meeting of the *Trib's* board of directors. The corporate parents, however, are portraying the

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

change of executive editors as a natural passing of the baton, and insist that Vinocur, after a six-month leave of absence, will return to the paper as a full-time senior correspondent.

Most of the paper's staff, who generally applaud Vinocur's accomplishments in energizing the *IHT* over the past nine years, while criticizing what many characterized as an abrasive and bullying management style, are not sorry to see him go. "It's the end of the reign of Darth Vader," says a veteran *Trib* staffer. "But whether the handsome prince who's riding in to replace him can make a difference, only time will tell." Indeed, the Vinocur era has left many of the paper's skilled, highly experienced staff wary of the changes to come and fearful of speaking on the record.

This fear was exacerbated by McClean's insistence that CJR's interviews with *IHT* journalists be arranged through his office and conducted in the presence of the *Trib*'s head of corporate communications — a stricture which, with the exception of interviews with a few senior editors, was ignored by most of the paper's staff. Nevertheless, out of some twenty editors and reporters currently employed at the *Trib* who talked to CJR for this article, more than half spoke only on a not-for-attribution or background basis.

* * *

THE *TIMES* AND *POST* HAVE been part owners of the *Trib* since the late 1960s, when they joined with the Whitney family to keep the Paris-based paper alive after the *New York Herald Tribune* folded. In 1991, the *Times* and *Post* purchased the Whitney share, and have operated the *Trib* together since. The parent papers appear to have been motivated by more than just financial concerns, although they have always wanted the *Trib* to stand on its own two feet. "Is it going to be a big revenue producer? No," says Katharine Graham, co-chair, with Arthur O. Sulzberger, of the *IHT*, which is incorporated in France. "But it's a terribly important newspaper with a lot of influence, and it helps people get to know our correspondents abroad."

This view is supported by Lee

Huebner, who served as the *Trib*'s publisher for fourteen years before McClean took over in 1993. "The owners didn't expect us to have a major impact on the value of their stock," Huebner says, adding that for many years the *IHT* was allowed to reinvest most of its profits, particularly in the proliferation of print sites around the world. (The *Trib* is currently printed in twelve cities — Paris, Marseilles, Toulouse, London, The Hague, Frankfurt, Bologna, Zurich, New York, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Tokyo — and distributed in 181 countries.) Nevertheless, Huebner adds, "the Grahams and the Sulzbergers and the Whitneys wanted the *Herald Tribune* to make sense financially and pay its own way," and in latter years the owners have asked the paper to return a modest dividend to the parent companies.

But recent events appear to have started alarm bells ringing at the *Post* and *Times*. After racking up a record profit of several million dollars in 1994, the *Trib*'s balance sheet changed dramatically. A 28 percent increase in the cost of newsprint, combined with a 13 percent fall in the value of the dollar — the currency in which the *IHT* receives most of its revenues, although most of its expenses are paid in French francs — sent income plummeting.

At the same time, the worldwide recession, combined with increasing competition from other news outlets, has made serious dents in the *Trib*'s still enviable standing as an international newspaper. After a steady rise in circulation during the latter half of the 1980s — reaching a high of almost 196,000 daily copies in 1990 — sales have dipped slightly since, to about 192,000 in 1995. And while circulation in Asia and the Pacific region has continued to increase over this period, this has been more than offset by a painful decline in Europe, which currently represents about 67 percent of the *Trib*'s readers.

When the *Trib*'s humiliating defeat (some say cave-in) in a libel suit brought by Singapore political leaders was factored in — a loss that cost the paper \$678,000 in damages, not to mention court and lawyers' fees — the *Trib* barely broke even for the year. Moreover, although the *Times* and *Post*

have agreed to pump new money into the *IHT*, particularly for the establishment of several new print sites, falling advertising revenues in the first several months of this year mean that 1996 may turn out little better than 1995.

* * *

MUCH OF THE *IHT*'S EDITORIAL and financial success is associated with two men: Lee Huebner, a former Nixon speechwriter who had gone to work for Whitney Communications and became the *Trib*'s publisher in 1979, and Vinocur. Huebner, and later Vinocur as well, labored long and hard to convince the *IHT*'s board that the *Trib*, whose international readership is concentrated in Europe and Asia, ten or more time zones apart, had to be more than just an outlet for *Times* and *Post* articles, that it needed its own identity and its own reporting staff to supplement the news and viewpoints provided by the parent papers.

By the 1980s, the *Trib*, which had pioneered the idea of a global newspaper, began facing new competition for the elusive international reader from a variety of challengers, most notably the *Financial Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Economist*. That was when Vinocur, a former *New York Times* foreign correspondent who had been recalled from Europe and made metropolitan editor by Abe Rosenthal — and who was considered at one time to be a leading candidate to succeed Rosenthal as *Times* executive editor — was named editor.

Vinocur began making his mark on the *Trib* from his first day on the job, when word spread through the paper's headquarters in the Paris suburb of Neuilly that the huge bouquet of yellow flowers on his desk was supposedly a gift from Clint Eastwood. It was well known that Vinocur had befriended Eastwood while doing a *New York Times Magazine* story on the star in 1985, and many thought the two had something in common. "John saw himself as the Lone Ranger," says a veteran staffer, "riding in to save the *Trib*." But within months, many staff members were instead calling him "Mad Dog," a nickname

that would stick for much of Vinocur's time at the paper.

"John is famous for not worrying about the niceties of people's feelings," says Craig Whitney, the *Times's* Paris bureau chief. "But he changed the *Trib* in fundamental and long-overdue ways." In particular, Whitney says, by hiring new writers and reporters, Vinocur narrowed a chronic time gap between when the news happened and when the *Trib* published it — a problem caused mainly by relying on *Times* and *Post* copy.

In an interview, Vinocur said that the newspaper he found when he arrived in Paris "did not have an intellectual agenda, a sense of what it wanted to do. It did not have an activist approach . . . My job was to bring this sense that the *Trib* had to fight to stay alive, to stay on top, it had to be a whole lot more clever and dynamic than it was. Did this jar or discomfort one or two or three people here? I suppose it did."

* * *

MAKING CHANGES IS THE prerogative of any incoming editor, and such a shakeup would be common at any U.S.-based newspaper. But the *Trib*, with its Paris location and expatriate staff, is not just another paper. Its staff journalists, many of whom have well-established lives in France, are particularly vulnerable because of their very limited job mobility. Rightly or wrongly, much of the *IHT's* staff allowed itself to be intimidated by Vinocur.

Moreover, a number of present and former staff members told CJR, Vinocur's biases sometimes caused the journalistic product to suffer. Jim Crate, currently national editor of *Automotive News* and a former business editor at the *Trib* who left the paper after a falling-out with Vinocur, says that "John is one of the world's great newsmen. But he was a real America booster — good economic news was page one, bad news was put in the financial section." Crate says that he was under constant pressure from Vinocur to put a positive spin on U.S. financial news, particularly where the chronically weak dollar was concerned. "John would take any momen-

tary change in the trading cycle and want a story on how the dollar had bot-tomed out," Crate says.

At times, Vinocur would send his reporters chasing after stories whose news value was considered dubious by much of the staff. A few years ago, for example, after he and another editor discovered that the use of their European-issued American Express cards did not entitle them to the same frequent-flyer miles awarded to American customers, Vinocur assigned two reporters to get to the bottom of the matter. The resulting series of articles is recalled with embarrassment at the *Trib*, although Vinocur defends the stories. "It was definitely a news story," he says. "Our readers are enormous travelers . . . it was a kind of injustice to people who had these cards."

Such episodes became much less frequent during the past couple of years, *Trib* staffers say, particularly after the long-running Singapore case, which tarnished the *Trib's* reputation and apparently left Vinocur drained, depressed, and less interested in pursuing his formerly interventionist, hands-on stewardship of the paper.

Much has been written about what many journalists see as a massive cave-in by the *Trib* and its corporate parents (see "Singapore's Grip," CJR, November/December 1995); *The New York Times's* William Safire, in particular, has written strident columns on the subject (which have generally been given a pass by the *IHT's* opinion pages). By most accounts, Vinocur argued with board members against kowtowing to Singapore's rulers, although he signed an unreserved apology for one of the articles. And publisher McClean pleads with critics to appreciate the difficult position the *Trib*, which is printed and read across the globe, finds itself in. "What you need to understand is that we operate in many jurisdictions, and the laws of libel vary from one to another."

Many at the *Trib* believed that the *Trib* should have left Singapore, where it maintains a bureau and a print site, rather than grovel before its rulers. Yet with circulation falling in Europe but growing in Asia, the *IHT's* board clearly believed that pulling out of Singapore would be suicidal.

"A lot of the focus of our efforts has to be in Asia, where most of our growth will come," says Katharine Darrow, senior vice president of The New York Times Company and president of the *IHT* since April 1.

But some staffers believe the paper is now bending over backwards to make amends with Singapore's rulers. As an example, they cite the fact that the *Trib* this spring co-sponsored an international trade conference with Singapore's Trade Development Board as part of a series of business conferences held with various Asian governments. The guest speakers included Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and other government officials.

* * *

WHEN MICHAEL GETLER TAKES over the *Trib* on July 1, he will inherit a paper with a long tradition and a staff that is at the same time wary and hopeful about the changeover. Getler, who was not scheduled to meet with the board until its June 28 meeting, declines to speculate on what changes he might make at the *IHT*, saying that "I won't know until I get there." Nevertheless, he says, one of his first priorities will be tackling the chronic malaise that has infected the staff for many years. "To the extent that I can improve morale and find better ways to do things on the management side, I will try to do so."

As for talk about moving the *Trib* out of Paris, Getler says that, despite the high costs of operating in Europe, "the soul of the newspaper is a crucial element in the equation" and that making a persuasive case for such a move "would be very difficult in my present view." But it is unclear just how much say Getler will end up having in the matter. According to Darrow, the board has already begun preliminary discussions about whether, and to where, the *Trib* should move all or part of its operations, although she says that "there will be no decisions before the end of the year."

So while the torch on the Place de l'Alma can be expected to stay, at this point the future of the *IHT* is anyone's guess. But wherever the *Trib* goes, to borrow Rick's immortal words to Ilsa in *Casablanca*, it will always have Paris. ♦

What's at Stake in the Spectrum War?

Only Billions of Dollars and the Future of Television

by Neil Hickey

“We all watch television. Well, now we may be watching some of our favorite shows disappear,” intones an ominous voice behind a startling commercial.

Accompanying the announcer's narration is a grid of twelve tiny TV screens displaying a shifting mosaic of moving images — *Seinfeld*, *Jeopardy*, David Letterman, Tom Brokaw, the cast of *60 Minutes*, hockey players in action, actors in a TV drama, a weather reporter. What's going on here? “Some people in Washington want to tax local TV broadcasters billions of dollars in order to balance the budget,” the announcer continues. Each of the tiny images flickers to darkness in turn until only empty, black screens remain. Telephone your elected representatives, the disembodied voice advises, and tell them to vote against the “TV tax. Call now — while you still can.”

Those scare commercials, produced by the National Association of Broadcasters, aired thousands of times a week on TV stations all across the U.S., bringing most Americans their only hint — and a bewilderingly alarmist one at that — of the most convulsive change in TV service since American television got started in earnest fifty years ago. Television news and most newspapers — except *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* — have been virtually barren of any

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MOFFITT CECIL

Neil Hickey is a CJR contributing editor.

mention of this transformation, which could be a fait accompli by early next year.

What's involved is a fundamental alteration in the way television signals are transmitted and received, a whole new beginning that will render every television set and VCR in the country obsolete within ten or twenty years. It involves abandoning the analog system of TV transmission that

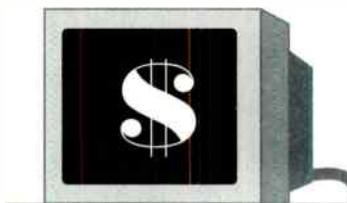
we've been using all along and shifting over to a digital one that will give us TV pictures many times sharper than anything we've ever seen on TV (it's called high-definition television, or HDTV), along with a wider, Cinemascope-shaped screen and CD-quality sound.

And, if the broadcasters choose or the government mandates it, the dawn of digivision holds out the very real possibility that this elegant new technology could bring into American homes more news, public affairs, and political broadcasting than over-the-air television has ever provided. That's because the same science that makes HDTV possible could also lead to thousands of new channels across the country, with or without some version of HDTV.

The road to that magnificent El Dorado, however, is a minefield.

Armies of influence are arrayed against each other: Congress, the White House, TV network and station executives, and a vocal (and often angry) phalanx of consumer activist groups eager to defend the public's rights in all this. As *The New York Times* put it on March 18: “Television broadcasters see themselves as locked in the political battle of their lives.”

Accusations fill the air. Former Senator



Bob Dole and Senator John McCain accuse the broadcasters of greed and cynicism for trying to grab additional channels without paying a fair market price for them, and for throwing up a public-relations smokescreen to confuse consumers. TV people bellow that their God-given right to use the airwaves free of charge is in danger of being snatched away, much to the detriment of TV watchers everywhere. Think-tank theorists of the political left, right, and center are yoked in unaccustomed unanimity, trumpeting to all who will listen that the federal government is, in effect, about to turn over Yellowstone National Park, free of charge, to real estate developers.

"I view this unequivocally as a sellout of massive proportions to a powerful inside-the-Beltway lobby that is managing to steal a Fort Knox worth of spectrum," says Adam Thierer, a fellow at the Washington-based conservative Heritage Foundation. "It's an outrageous giveaway."

Meanwhile, the public is almost totally ignorant of all this, even though billions of dollars of potential revenue is at stake that would help balance the budget, relieving taxpayers of some of that burden. A somnolent press — print and particularly electronic — has failed ignominiously to report the story, either because most journalists simply don't know about it, or don't understand its importance, or think it's too complex to convey or, in the case of TV people, are loath to roil the waters and inflame the public's passions on an issue in whose outcome TV networks and stations have a huge monetary interest. (Television journalists are at pains to insist that no corporate bigwigs at the networks have tried to steer them off the story.)

Only a few voices in the bare ruined choirs of journalism have been audible: in January, the columnist William Safire wrote that the potential "ripoff is on a scale vaster than dreamed of by yesteryear's robber barons." A *Wall Street Journal* editorial warned about a "planned multibillion-dollar handout for wealthy TV-station owners." A *New York Times* editorial declared that the broadcasters' position is "bogus." The television industry countered with a massive lobbying campaign in Washington and the televising of those commercials that warned of a threat to "free TV" and scared the daylights out of practically everybody who saw them.

A little thumbnail history: Around 1987, the Japanese seemed poised to grab world leadership in the development of HDTV, thereby handing the U.S. another industrial black eye and the potential loss of billions of dollars and thousands of jobs in consumer electronics. Quickly, the Federal Communications Commission geared up and created a working group led by a former FCC chairman, Richard Wiley, to make sure the U.S. was not left in the dust. By the spring of 1993, a so-called Grand Alliance had been forged,

consisting of major players in electronics: AT&T, General Instrument, MIT, Philips, Thomson, The David Sarnoff Research Center, and Zenith. The team worked feverishly to create a prototype system, and on November 28 last year delivered the fruits of its labors to the FCC.

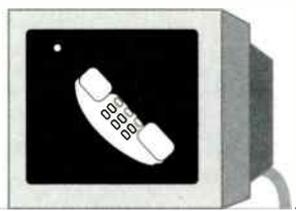
Meanwhile, the FCC had fielded a plan to lend every TV station in the country one additional channel on which to make a smooth transition from old-style standard TV (SDTV) to HDTV. The idea was that the stations would simulcast their programs in both systems for a period of fifteen years, thereby allowing consumers plenty of time to junk their old analog TV sets and buy new digital ones, or perhaps buy a converter as a stopgap convenience.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the future. While puzzling out HDTV, American electronics experts realized that, yes, a single channel of old-style television could indeed be digitized to transmit high-definition pictures. But, *mirabile dictu*, it could also be split up into as many as six separate channels of old-fashioned SDTV television. The very real and very tantalizing possibility suddenly surfaced that each of the more than 1,500 television stations in the country — commercial and public — could become *six* television stations, with mind-boggling potential for profit.

Visions of sugarplums danced in broadcasters' heads. To many of them, an HDTV future suddenly seemed far less enticing than a multichannel future — especially as it became clear that the multiplexed digital channels could be employed for data transfer, paging, and other money-making purposes, as well as for pay-per-view movies, home shopping, infomercials, rerunning old sitcoms, and many other advertiser-supported, over-the-air program formats — including news. Six revenue streams looked a whole lot better than just one. Thus, the NAB began agitating for what it called "spectrum flexibility," which

proposed that broadcasters not be limited to using the new channel solely for HDTV.

That shift in policy struck fear in the hearts of many legislators and consumer activists. They were outraged at the prospect of TV people being handed free of charge a whole new chunk of extraordinarily valuable spectrum to be exploited with no strings attached. (FCC chairman Reed Hundt called the additional spectrum "beachfront property on the Cyber Sea.") TV people should pay for that electronic real estate, insisted the industry's opponents; if they aimed to use it for anything but free service to the public. A precedent was conveniently at hand. The FCC was even then auctioning off sections of the non-broadcast spectrum to wireless companies, and was raising princely sums for the national treasury. (At this writing the figure is an astonishing \$19 billion, with more to come.) A consensus hardened that



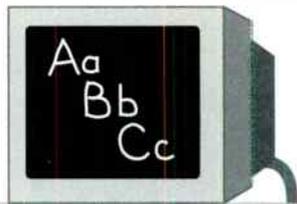
"If the
airwaves are
auctioned
to the
highest
bidder,
your local
television
stations
would be
forced out
of business"

broadcasters, too — and perhaps anyone else with money to invest — should have to bid on the open market for ownership of those channels. Estimates of the haul ran from \$11 billion to \$70 billion. Besides reducing the deficit, some of that money might help fund public broadcasting, allowing it to create more and better news and public affairs programs, or pay for the creation of some quality children's shows.

TV station owners hurriedly circled their wagons. They could not possibly afford, they said, to buy this new slice of the airwaves and, on top of that, expend the \$8 million to \$10 million for each station that it would take to convert to digital. In their news departments alone, the stations claimed, HDTV newscasts would require brand-new field camcorders, switchers, remote electronic newsgathering (ENG) microwave links, monitors, encoders, and decoders. Scores of stations all around the country would go dark, they insisted, and the very survival of free television in America would be cast into doubt. Hence the scare TV commercials aimed at mobilizing public opinion on the broadcasters' behalf. Viewers who called an 800 number to learn more were sent a fact sheet signed by James May, the NAB's executive vice-president:

The spectrum auction . . . would be a tax on free television. . . . If the airwaves are auctioned to the highest bidder, your local television stations would be forced out of business. They won't be able to compete with giant competitors like cable, telephone and cellular companies who — unlike broadcasters — all charge fees for the services they provide . . . local television stations will disappear and the public will be left with no choice but to pay for its television programming.

That was mostly nonsense, said the critics. The commercials "crossed an unwritten line," FCC chairman Hundt told *CJR*. "They are the single best argument ever created for the resurrection of the Fairness Doctrine," which once mandated the airing of opposing viewpoints on controversial matters of public importance. TV people, Hundt said, were "taking the public's airwaves to broadcast for their purely private purposes." Jack Fields, chairman of the House telecommunications subcommittee, said he took "great umbrage" at the ads: they didn't mention that the TV stations, each of which already has one free channel, were seeking control of a *second* free channel to switch over to the potentially more profitable digital transmission. The Consumer Federation of America's Brad Stillman told *CJR*: "Of all the advocacy ads I have seen over the last few years, the sky-is-falling ads of the broadcasters are among the worst. The claims have no substance to them whatsoever." "We stand behind the ads," said NAB president Edward O. Fritts. No network news program covered the ad campaign or used it as a jumping-off point to explicate the controversy.



"If broadcasters
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That does
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The most potent and eloquent voice damning the TV industry for its strategy was that of Bob Dole. It was he who in January threatened to block passage of the historic Telecommunications Act of 1996 unless the FCC promised not to award free digital licenses until Congress could thrash the whole matter out. (That thrashing is going on now and will continue for most of this year.) In an angry speech on the Senate floor on April 17, Dole said:

TV broadcasters have broken their trust with the American people. For more than forty years, the American people have generously lent TV station owners our nation's airwaves for free. Now some broadcasters want more and will stop at nothing to get it. They are bullying Congress and running a multimillion-dollar scare campaign to mislead the public. . . . We are simply stating that if broadcasters want more channels, then they are going to pay the taxpayers for them. That does not kill television.

The TV industry has a scenario of its own for the transition:

Give us the loan of that second free channel and let us decide how to use it. We might do HDTV some of the time, all of the time, or not at all; and we want the option to split the new spectrum into six income-producing channels if we feel like it. Don't mandate that we must provide news, public service programs, quality children's shows, free time for political candidates, or anything else. At some unspecified time in the future — fifteen years, twenty years, maybe more — when most TV watchers own digital receiving equipment, we may abandon the analog channels we now occupy or we may not. If we do, we'll turn them back to the government to be auctioned off, with the money handed over to the treasury.

As it happens, the White House supports that scenario with the essential proviso of a strict timetable: auction the analog spectrum in 2002 and begin full-fledged, exclusive digital broadcasting in 2005. The broadcasters say that is not enough time to make the changeover.

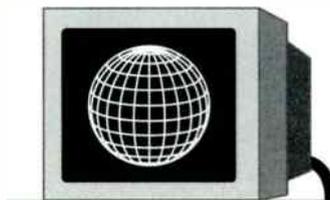
Chairman Hundt and a number of consumer activists have yet another scenario: award the new spectrum free but insist that the broadcasters commit themselves anew to the public-interest standard (especially as regards quality, commercial-free children's TV) — a traditional obligation which, starting in the Reagan-Bush years, has been widely ignored. "I don't think broadcasters will accept mandated" public-interest programming obligations, says Ralph Gabbard, chairman of both the NAB Television Board and the CBS affiliates board. "We don't want Washington telling us how much to do."

Television executives, network and local, vehemently proclaim that if they don't have their way, the American broadcast industry, as the NAB's James May puts it, is

"on a glide path to extinction as a viable business. The whole world is going digital and we're going to have to do the same or become an old-world technology." Richard Cotton, NBC executive vice president and general counsel, points out that in the next five to ten years, the cable and telephone industries will both have a vast digitized capacity to send hundreds of channels of entertainment, news, sports, and data into the home, and says the idea that an old-fangled single-channel system could survive in that environment is "absurd." And Jim Babb, president of Babb Communications, which owns a string of TV stations, says that if the industry doesn't get the new spectrum free, "We're talking about devastating the world's best communications system and replacing it with — what? Nobody really knows what. It would be a tragedy of the highest order."

In election years, politicians develop a special attentiveness to the needs of local TV entrepreneurs, whose goodwill, airtime, and contributions they need to get reelected. Thus, most TV people are quietly confident that no digital auction will ever happen, especially since their nemesis, Dole, no longer wields direct legislative power. They are now training their firepower on two remaining issues: fighting off any and all government ukases for how they should use the expected grant of spectrum; and scotching any attempt to set a "date certain" for the return of the analog channels to the government. Industry leaders, generally, insist they have every intention of vacating the analog spectrum eventually. Industry critics share a suspicion that broadcasters surreptitiously yearn to hold onto *both* analog and digital indefinitely, eventually digitizing the analog channel and thus controlling as many as twelve income-producing channels per station where once there was one.

To increase their chances of ultimate victory, the broadcasters have been making a conspicuous display of public-spiritedness, putting their best and most noble selves forward. Item: All five major broadcast networks including PBS have promised to give free airtime to presidential candidates during the closing phase of the campaign this year. Item: After President Clinton in his State of the Union message invited a platoon of broadcast chieftains to the White House to talk about violence and sex on television, the industry leaders suddenly reversed their bitter, long-standing opposition to the so-called V-chip, a device that will be imbedded in TV sets that can be programmed to protect children from objectionable programs. They thus awarded Clinton the high ground on an important family-values issue in an election year, in return for which he might reasonably be expected to champion their claim to free spectrum — as he has.



Might there be some goodies for TV news in all this? Some new and broader access to the public for journalists? "Heavens, yes!" say the broadcasters

Yet another way for broadcasters to proclaim their worthiness for free digital spectrum is to answer the question: precisely what would they *broadcast* on six channels if they had them? CJR inquired if there might be some goodies for TV news in all this, some new and broader access to the public for journalists. The answer was "Heavens, yes!"

- With multiplexing, says Ralph Gabbard, stations could air their regular news programs on one channel and direct viewers to a second channel where they'd find longer, more detailed reports on stories that interested them.
- James Hedlund, president of the Association of Local Television Stations, says he sees a chance for local TV news operations to create targeted news programs specifically for urban communities and suburbs — zoned editions, in effect.

• Jim Babb says that "by all means, journalism is where it's going to be for the overwhelming majority of broadcasters." How about local, twenty-four-hour all-news channels? "There's no question, that will definitely be a part of it."

• NBC's Richard Cotton says he can envision a kind of advertiser-supported local C-SPAN, with "local broadcasters plugged into the community."

• "We'd love to be able to run programs like *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, *Washington Week in Review*, and the David Frost interviews at other odd hours of the day and night" when additional audiences could see them, says Joseph Widoff, senior vice-president of operations at the Washington-area public TV station WETA.

• Says CBS's Martin Franks: "It's not hard to imagine that on a Super Tuesday during the primary season, CBS One would carry our regular entertainment schedule and CBS Two could offer our faithful CBS viewer Dan Rather covering the elections."

• David Bartlett, president of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, says he can imagine "very localized neighborhood reports on demand, news you can use, the kind

of stuff that has proved itself over and over again to be very popular and profitable. Local news makes money."

The NAB's James May begs to differ. He insists that TV stations "will use this spectrum for HDTV, pure and simple." But what about multiplexed news and those twenty-four-hour local news channels? "I think they are absolutely dreaming," says May. "I have not had a single broadcaster tell me they were going to multiplex. Not one. I know there are a lot of guys out there pipe-dreaming about digital. But I would be amazed to see that there are real live broadcasters who are planning to multiplex. Where the hell are they going to get the programs?"

In fact, the possible uses of the new channels will be limited only by the imagination of their proprietors. An FCC document describes how digital encoding and transmission technology will allow a broadcaster to (1) use the entire 6 mega-

hertz of new spectrum for beaming out a single channel of gorgeous, optimally clear HDTV, or (2) instead, use that same bit stream to “multicast” six channels of old-fashioned SDTV, or (3) at the touch of a button, any permutation of the above: two channels of SDTV, say, and a somewhat-less-than-picture-perfect pay-per-view or ad-supported HDTV movie on a third. A station could send out separate SDTV program streams simultaneously, offering local news, national news, weather, and sports. Similarly, vast amounts of data could go out in an eyeblink: an entire edition of the local newspaper, for example, could be transmitted in less than two seconds. And candidates for local, regional, and national offices might receive free airtime to reach the voters.

Rupert Murdoch was an early and vocal prophet of the promise of multi-channel digital broadcasting, but in April he backpedaled vigorously from that position. “We at Fox have articulated dreams about deploying multiple channels of programming,” he told the NAB convention, but “there is no evidence that sufficient advertising revenues exist to support these dreams.” Still, he’s fully committed to going digital, said the News Corp boss, because “we really have no choice” if conventional broadcasters are going to compete successfully in an HDTV world.

But that world is still terra incognita to virtually every American, mostly because television news for whatever reason has blacked it out, except for one notable night. At the historic moment of passage of the Telecommunications Act on February 1, CNN discussed the issue of giveaway vs. spectrum auction on two broadcasts.

ABC and CBS mentioned it briefly. NBC not at all. In his April 17 remarks to the Senate — not covered by the major networks — Dole noted that TV broadcasters scrupulously keep a watchful eye on bloated government; they’re regularly aghast over “\$600 toilet seats and \$7,000 coffee pots,” he said, but added that “when it comes to billion-dollar giveaways, to them ‘mum’ is the word.”

You never hear about it on television. Dan Rather will not utter a word. Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw — maybe they do not know about it. But I would say to the American taxpayers and the people with TV sets that somebody had better protect the American public. . . . Maybe the broadcasters felt this issue was not newsworthy. But if that is the case, why did the National Association of Broadcasters vote to go on the offensive and launch a multimillion-dollar ad campaign to preserve, as they spin it, free, over-the-air broadcasting? . . . I did not realize that ad campaigns had replaced the evening news.

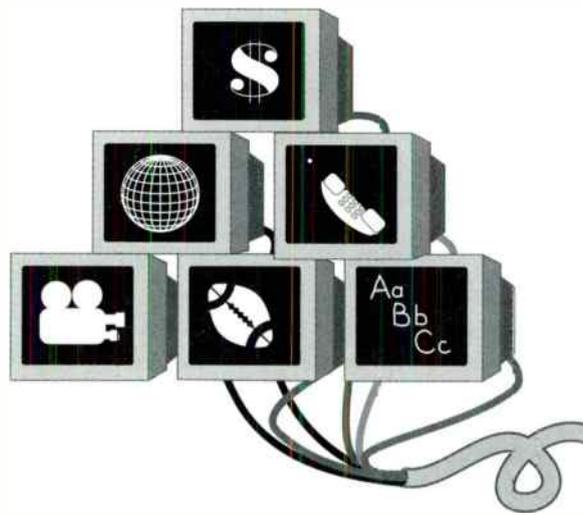
Critics across the board agree with Dole. “It is one of the most blatant instances of failure to cover their own industry,” says Andrew Schwartzman, director of the liberal-oriented Media Access Project. And the conservative Heritage Foundation’s Adam Thierer asks: “Where are the broadcast journalists on this? Where is *60 Minutes*? *Dateline NBC*? I’m not saying it’s a conspiracy, but here’s the greatest taxpayer ripoff of this century, and TV journalists are nowhere to be found.”

In fairness, CNN has offered a few scattered interviews and the *CBS Evening News* on March 20 aired a three-minute report by correspondent Edie Magnus in its Eye on America segment, which invited viewers’ attention to “a hidden battle in the high-tech revolution in your living room.” The CBS piece raised far more questions than it

answered, but it was more than the other networks attempted. Magnus, who runs a boutique inside the *Evening News* covering mass media, told CJR: “We knew it was going to be a herculean task to attempt to make it understandable to a lay audience.” She adds: “All I can tell you is nobody pressured me not to do it.” Her boss, Jeffrey Fager, the *Evening News* executive producer, backs her up: “This is an important beat for us because it’s a rapidly changing area that affects so many people. Nobody has come to me and said ‘Don’t do that story because broadcasters have a vested interest in it.’ That’s not the way we make our decisions and I don’t think the other broadcasters do either.” ABC anchorman Peter Jennings, asked about digi-

vision, made it clear that this technology was not his forte: “I haven’t the vaguest idea about that. I am the worst person in the world to ask.”

With stately gradualness, the great analog/digital debate of 1996 is marching toward closure. Senate and House committees, as well as the FCC, have heard scores of witnesses. The window of opportunity will remain open at least for the rest of this year, allowing TV and print journalists to catch up with the story, if they are finally so inclined, and the public to express itself on a matter in which it has a clear proprietary interest. Under its agreement with Congress, the FCC cannot assign the new digital licenses until the lawmakers give it the green light, and that won’t happen until after Inauguration Day. Contemplating that last sprint to the golden age of digivision, Hundt, with uncharacteristic understatement, says: “There’s a lot at stake here.”



“Here’s the greatest taxpayer ripoff of this century, and TV journalists are nowhere to be found”

WORKING THE TEAMSTERS

*Labor history is being made in the big union,
but its coverage has an Alice in Wonderland quality*

—
by Mike Hoyt

“We’re relevant again!” Steven Rosenthal, political director of the AFL-CIO, crowed recently. And he’s right. Unions are edging back into the news. Some argue that the white-collar press slowly abandoned labor, but on the other hand, it’s been hard to justify coverage of a movement that wasn’t *moving*.

Now that labor finally does seem to be going somewhere — shoving its way to a chair at the national table, where the fare, downsizing and stagnant wages, immigration and trade, is union meat — the press will surely follow. If labor’s leaders deliver half of what they are promising in terms of new organizing, bargaining, and political efforts, there will be real stories to tell. How well will they be told?

If coverage of the biggest labor story to roll down the pike in a while is an indication, there is reason to worry. That story is the struggle inside our largest private-sector union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters — the changing of the guard there and the effort to change the guard back, which will surface at the Teamster convention in Philadelphia in July and culminate in the big union’s national election in November. A serious election campaign has been under way for quite a while now between the incumbent, Ron Carey, the reformer who swept into office in 1991, and James P. Hoffa, son of the man who helped make the Teamsters a national force and a national disgrace.

It’s a real story. But not much reportorial energy has been devoted so far to figuring out what Carey has been doing for his five years as president or what the race between these two men actually means to Teamsters, to

labor, and to the rest of working Americans, so unnerved these days by the complicated forces warping the world of work. Instead, it can be argued, we get sideshows.

The background of the Teamsters story is fairly well known: the union’s major pension fund was a bank for organized crime, many of its locals were dominated by mobsters, and its culture was permeated by self-interest and sellouts. In an effort to finally cleanse the unions the federal government filed a giant civil RICO suit in 1988 and settled it the following year, and under its terms, the Teamsters were forced to choose leaders democratically instead of by the usual convention rubber stamp. In that first one-member-one-vote election, the victor was Carey, a man put forth in Steven Brill’s groundbreaking 1978 book, *The Teamsters*, as the kind of leader who ought to be running the union. He quickly crossed swords with the old guard, and now, as his term comes to an end, his opponents are gathering around Hoffa, the son of the mighty icon who not-all-that-mysteriously disappeared in 1975.

Hoffa and Carey, at first glance, seem an unlikely pair of warriors. Carey looks like the slightly nervous UPS driver that he once was, “a slight, gray man who greases his hair and wears ill-cut suits,” as *New York* magazine put it. Fiery before a labor crowd, he seems edgy and distrustful around the press.

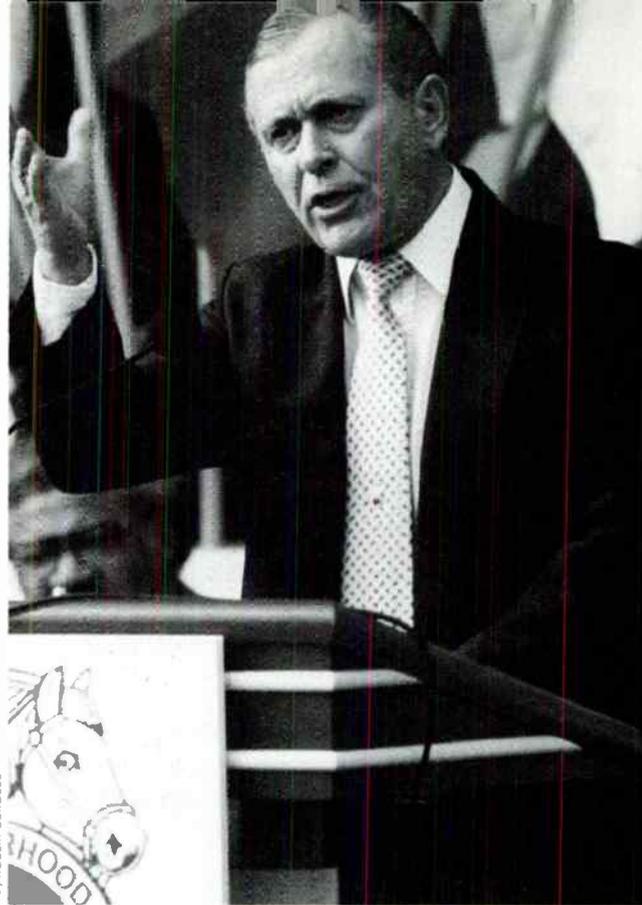
Hoffa is a pudgy Michigan labor lawyer who, like Newt Gingrich, says he’ll move power away from Washington to the grass roots. He’s polished on TV and unafraid to use his main claim to fame: “Hi, I’m Jimmy Hoffa,” he says, over and over again at truck barns and warehouses across the land.

The name Hoffa is electric, of course, conjuring conflicting emotions in labor’s collective memory, and sparking some people-page coverage on TV. In 1994, after the younger Hoffa had begun his long run for the presidency of the Teamsters, the *Today* show’s Jamie Gangel started her

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Jimmy Hoffa's son James is running for Teamster president, stirring conflicting emotions in labor's collective memory



Incumbent Ron Carey's reform record is being challenged by stories that he, not his enemies, is the one who's corrupt

story about his quest with a question: "Does the name hurt or help?" Then, with the rest of her piece, she answered it.

After a few taped scenes of Hoffa senior from his glory days, we see Hoffa family movies — big Jimmy and little Jimmy in a rowboat; big and little Jimmy ice skating; father and son walking hand in hand. Near the end, Gangel asks him her zinger: "What do you think your father would think of your running?" Hoffa smiles: "If he was here today, he'd be smiling and putting his hand on my shoulder, and he would be very proud." The piece includes only seconds of Ron Carey, nervously licking his lips.

CBS's *Eye to Eye* introduced a long Hoffa segment last July with Russ Mitchell saying that although Jimmy Hoffa has disappeared, "We find Jimmy Hoffa in Detroit — Jimmy Hoffa Junior, and he wants back into the family business." We see Carey, but we see a lot more of the two Hoffas, the younger man in full campaign mode: "My father helped build this union, and I'm not going to stand by and watch a handful of people destroy it," he says. Soon we meet his sister, who observes that when her brother "moves through a room, he moves like my dad. His voice is very much like my dad's. When he's making speeches, I can sometimes close my eyes, it's almost as if my dad is speaking." Then we see a clip of the elder Jimmy Hoffa giving a stirring speech that fades, naturally, into another stirring speech, this one by the famous dead man's son.

Assessing Teamsters coverage in print is more complicated. Carey's people point to positive elements in his record — he

has installed trustees to clean up some sixty local unions where the government has found evidence of corruption or fiscal irregularities; he's cut back on the leaders' tendency to accumulate multiple salaries and pensions; he's trimmed the royal trappings at headquarters (selling one of the Teamster jets to John Travolta, for example); he's built up the union's organizing machinery and launched a number of corporate campaigns. Many credit the votes and inspiration Carey delivered with making possible the recent revolution at the AFL-CIO, where the musty Lane Kirkland was finally replaced. "People are used to covering the Teamsters only as a crime entity," says Frank Swoboda, the respected labor writer for *The Washington Post*. "But it's done a lot as a labor union for the last five years." If so, the record has been lightly covered.

Dog bites man — or, reformer reforms — seems not to be news. Man bites dog — questions raised about the reformer's purity — is another story. Where the press has been most excited about Carey during his term has been when charges surfaced that he was corrupt, charges that have not been upheld in subsequent investigations, but which are nonetheless altering the chemistry of the Teamster election and may even play a cameo role in that other November race, the one between Clinton and Dole.

The charges first surfaced, as do many stories, in *The New York Times*. Early on, Carey, who wanted the Teamsters to increasingly police themselves, was criticized by the officials monitoring the union under the terms of the RICO suit. They wanted to keep the govern-

ment involved and to increase the pace of reform. *Time* magazine, in December 1992, and *The New York Times*, in a page-one piece in June 1993, covered this. In the *Times*, however, Jeff Gerth and Tim Weiner added a new dimension. Until the nineteenth paragraph, their piece was tough and measured *Timesian* prose, but there, like a stiletto wrapped in velvet, was a shocker: a suggestion that Carey himself had “dealings” with the mob twenty years ago as the president of Local 804 in Queens, New York, a local made up mostly of United Parcel Service delivery drivers. The piece featured critical quotes from Michael J. Maroney, a labor racketeering expert who had been hired to help clean up a different Queens Teamsters local. The “dealings” allegation was based on statements attributed to Alphonse D’Arco, a one-time acting boss of the Lucchese crime family turned valuable FBI informant. Although D’Arco is in hiding in the federal witness protection program, Maroney was able to interview him. The *Times* reporters were not, and thus relied on a second-hand interpretation of D’Arco’s evidence.

Richard Behar of *Time* magazine, relying in part on a two-year-old FBI debriefing report on D’Arco, soon followed, on November 22, with “A Reformer and the Mob,” a less subtle approach to the same theme. It also mentions Maroney. “Union boss Carey, right, likes to chat with members,” read a caption. “Mob boss D’Arco told the FBI that La Cosa Nostra likes to chat with Carey.”

These were the first of a spate of Carey scandal stories, of which Maroney is ground zero. Maroney, who quit his post at the Queens local in 1994 after losing a battle to expand his purview into a related local, is knowledgeable and aggressive, and he’s long been a source for reporters working on labor corruption stories. After twenty-one years as an investigator, he’s something of a cynic. All labor leaders, he says, “are phonies,” and guilty of something or other. “It’s a matter of degree.” He is convinced that “Ron Carey is a phony” — buoyed by the media, in fact, by Brill’s book and another, *Collision*, by *Newsday* labor reporter Ken Crowe — and that Carey, as he says D’Arco told him, “was associated with organized crime through his career.”

Time’s Behar, for one, trusts Maroney’s judgment. But Maroney is also controversial, a man whose critics call him a zealot, someone who sees corruption everywhere. And the agency set up under the terms of the RICO suit to monitor the Teamsters — the Independent Review Board — was unimpressed with the quality of his evidence. In July 1994 the IRB — whose board members are Grant Crandall, a labor lawyer, Frederick Lacey, a retired federal judge, and William Webster, the former head of the FBI and the CIA, and whose chief investigator is Charles Carberry, who previously had helped put Michael Milken behind bars, among other things — cleared the Teamster president of seventeen allegations that had been brought against him (the IRB did uphold a minor charge that Carey had signed his wife’s name on a real estate document). Seven of those charges, the IRB said, were brought by Maroney; others were brought by people associated with Hoffa and by anonymous sources.

(Maroney claims the IRB listed some “leads” he had brought to its staff as “allegations” in order to discredit him.)

First on the IRB’s list was the D’Arco charge about dealings with the mob. D’Arco’s twenty-year-old memory of “dealings,” the IRB determined, essentially boiled down to this: in his corrupt efforts to shake down employers by means of strikes, D’Arco sometimes sought to keep UPS drivers from crossing his picket lines. He contacted Carey via a corrupt and now dead Teamster leader named Joseph Trerotola, who he claimed “controlled” Carey. D’Arco would request that Carey’s UPS workers not cross his picket lines, and Carey would comply. But the IRB found that, although Trerotola outranked Carey in the Teamsters hierarchy, “there was no support” for the allegation that Trerotola had any dealings with Carey “outside the appropriate union relationship.”

More importantly, the IRB pointed out, respecting picket lines is a basic union tenet. For Trerotola to tell D’Arco “that Teamsters would honor picket lines,” the IRB report said, dryly, “was a safe assumption.”

Does Gerth now have second thoughts? “It’s easy to have hindsight,” he says, “when you write something and it turned out A when you wrote B. But I’m not in the predicting business. It’s not my job to adjudicate. My job is to provide information, and that was a piece of information. What happens if what D’Arco said was true? I’m not in a position to say if it was true or not. But if I had withheld it, would you be calling me up now and asking if I had second thoughts about holding it?”

“We couldn’t get to D’Arco, so we depended on an independent analysis of his information,” he says. “As reporters, we had the choice — not to report this, or to report it in a balanced, fair, and not sensationalized way.” That the D’Arco material was well down in the piece, Gerth says, was a “signal to readers” that “we didn’t want to suppress it and that, on the other hand, we didn’t want to make a big deal out of it. A lot of readers don’t even go past the front page.” Gerth notes that when the IRB cleared Carey, the *Times* ran a lengthy story.

Another allegation that got big play in the press first appeared in *Time* and in *Business Week* in their April 11, 1994, editions. It seems that Carey, whose supporters make much of the fact that he’s not the flashy-suit Lincoln-Towncar kind of Teamster, has amassed a sort of Lincoln-Towncar portfolio of real estate holdings, including Florida properties. Both magazines questioned whether someone who earned what Carey earned in the 1980s could have afforded them.

A QUESTION FOR THE TEAMSTERS’ MR. CLEAN was *Business Week*’s headline. The magazine’s labor writer, Aaron Bernstein, had argued that the sources for the story were questionable and that its implications — that Carey had done something wrong — were not addressed or proven. “But I wasn’t listened to,” he says.

Business Week did its own extensive independent research, and was convinced it was onto something, figuring that in one year, 1989, the carrying costs on Carey’s properties exceeded his salary by some \$10,000. An

accounting firm that the magazine consulted said the properties may have been beyond his reach, and according to Elizabeth Lesly, who wrote the article, the unidentified accountants were more definite in private. She also says Carey damaged his credibility with *Business Week* by misrepresenting how many properties he had (Carey claimed he had not understood her question). "He wouldn't tell us where he got the money, not in any specific way. He refused to provide dates or amounts of who loaned him money. He offered us family loans as a partial explanation with no substantiation." As for the implications of the piece, "Nowhere in the story do we suggest that he got the money from any particular source," Lesly says.

Again, *Time* was less shy. Its version of the story, by Behar and Edward Barnes, began this way: "The Teamsters Union embraced him as a blue collar hero, but lately the troops have begun to wonder if President Ronald Carey is mostly crusading for himself," adding later that "some critics openly wonder whether he has received payoffs" and reminding readers of *Time's* earlier work — that "according to an FBI report disclosed last November, Carey may have ties to a former Mafia boss currently in the federal witness-protection program."

But the former IRS agent who investigated for the IRB, using a sworn explanation of Carey's finances from his accountant, found that Carey — who paid off his primary home in 1972, who receives rental income from some of his properties, who said he inherited and borrowed and was given some money from various relatives, notably his father, and who had an investment partner in some of the properties — "would have had the funds available to purchase and maintain the real estate."

Time and *Business Week* both mentioned the IRB's report exonerating Carey — in their briefs sections — shortly after it came out. But neither magazine reported that the IRB had determined that "there was no proof" that Carey "could not have made these investments from his resources."

Both magazines, in turn, express doubt about the IRB's findings. "We had much better information than was in that report," says Stephen B. Shepard, *Business Week's* editor-in-chief, about the real estate charge. At *Time*, Behar returned to the report in a story in May 1995 that questioned the objectivity of the judge, Lacey, who runs the IRB. He turned up a letter in which Lacey — during his board's investigation — had expressed fear that attacks on Carey's honesty might bolster the Teamsters' old guard and help return them to power. "If Kenneth Starr said something like

that, he'd be out of a job," Behar says. Behar, now a senior writer for *Fortune*, notes that the charges against Carey may hit the news again, since Republican congressmen are preparing for possible hearings on labor and organized crime. Indeed, Maroney says he has spoken to one GOP congressman as well as congressional staff members. And the columnist Robert Novak reported in mid-May that as part of a "massive counteroffensive" against the "newly awakened sleeping giant" of labor, House Republicans are targeting union leaders who are supportive of President Clinton, including Carey, and thus they may take a skeptical look at the IRB investigation, among other things.

At the same time, Hoffa's campaign allies are recycling the *Time* and *Business Week* real estate stories in campaign advertisements under a clever headline: Cash & Carey. And Maroney hints that new allegations against Carey will surface. He continues to investigate Carey even though he's officially out of the Teamster business, and even though he says he is "uncomfortable" that his anti-Carey posture aligns him with the Hoffa forces.

In fact, he takes a dim view of Hoffa, noting, among other things, that Hoffa continues to defend his father's record — "His father was a fucking rat," Maroney says — and that a number of years ago the younger Hoffa was briefly a business partner with Allen Dorfman, one of the worst crooks ever to haunt the Teamsters. As always, Maroney is sure of his convictions and of his own abilities.

"If I was still working" as a Teamsters investigator, he says,

"I'd be the one they'd assign to look into Hoffa. And — call it arrogance, ego, whatever — I'd nail his ass."

As the labor movement shrank over the years, so did the labor beat. Reporters who know unions would not need a large hotel room for a convention, but they are still around, working in places like Cleveland and Chicago and Minneapolis and Long Island. And on the whole, they've not been all that receptive to the Carey scandal stories. Reporters like *Time's* Edward Barnes argue that labor reporters have never had the "taste or instincts to do mafia stuff. They have to go back and deal with these guys every day."

But there's more to it than that, as a memo written in 1994 by a public relations consulting firm for a group of old-guard Teamster leaders suggests:

The press can be divided into two camps: 1) The long-time labor reporters who are reflexively rooting for Carey; 2) Younger and less experienced reporters who remain more open. . . . By adopt-



Big and little Jimmy Hoffa in federal court in 1962

ing the language and message of dissidents, and being open with the media, we have blunted the more cynical long-time reporters — but they will never be on our side. But we are winning over the less experienced reporters through one-on-one discussions and by being a source of information.

Why the anti-Carey forces might want to avoid what remains of the labor press seems fairly clear: on the whole, they seem to respect Ron Carey. One talks of him as a “guy who’s been eating tuna sandwiches at his desk for twenty years,” who it is hard to imagine as corrupt, given a long record that would seem to indicate the opposite. Carey, says another, has been “helping people all his life.” A third casually refers to Hoffa’s people as the “forces of darkness.” Is this a kind of bias, or is it a reflection of experience and knowledge? A bit of both?

In any event, labor writers tended to handle the Carey “scandals” skeptically, although to different degrees. Some didn’t report them at all; others did, but tried to put the charges in context. Stephen Franklin, who covers labor for the *Chicago Tribune*, made clear in his coverage of the real estate charges that they had come up “in the middle of a mud-slinging campaign. I tried to find out where the allegations came from. When I pretty much figured out that the stuff was coming out of Mike Maroney and the Michigan LaRouche folks, I steered clear.”

The “Michigan LaRouche folks” are George Geller and Richard Leebove, and if Maroney is ground zero of the Carey scandals, Leebove and Geller are the shock waves, energetically pushing Maroney’s information throughout the press. Both work for the Michigan Teamster who hired James Hoffa as a local union official in order to make him eligible to run for Teamster president. But it’s their backgrounds that have given labor reporters pause. Both men are former acolytes of Lyndon LaRouche, the nutty fascist (LaRouche once wrote that Jimmy Hoffa’s death was ordered by “the international Zionist community”), and although both portray this period as something from their misguided youth, both were deeply involved. Leebove, now a public relations consultant, and Geller, an attorney, both worked for a LaRouche newspaper, for example, that defended the some of labor’s worst leaders. “Leebove’s specialty had always been the heavy-handed smear,” Dennis King wrote in “Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism,” his 1989 exposé of LaRouche and his followers. Post-LaRouche, in the 1980s, Leebove and Geller both did work for something called BLAST, the Brotherhood of Loyal and Strong Teamsters, which functioned as a goon squad to intimidate Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a reform group. Several of the complaints to the IRB were made by Geller, and the IRB found that none had merit.

“Out of fairness, you’ve got to look at these labor writers,” Leebove says. “Just because somebody’s past doesn’t meet their litmus test, should that deny them the opportunity to present factual stories?” Indeed, that Geller and Leebove were pushing Carey scandals was reason enough, for a few labor reporters, to avoid them. “They

tried to sell me this MAN BUYS CONDO story; they sent me all the stuff,” says Ted Reed, who covers labor for *The Miami Herald*. “I knew what it was — a guy trying to discredit Ron Carey. I could have done it, because the real estate was in Florida. But what was the story? MAN BUYS CONDO IN FLORIDA.”

Swoboda of *The Washington Post* did cover the real-estate story and began his piece on it this way: “For a man of the people, Teamsters President Ron Carey seems to own a lot of real estate.” But while Franklin put the story in a political context, Swoboda tried to put it in the context of his own values.

“I didn’t find a shred of anything illegal or immoral, or anything that you or I wouldn’t do,” he says. “In the 1980s, it was not unheard of to invest in real estate. If you net it all out, one sale against the other, the repurchases and so forth, it’s not a lot of money, not something that makes you want to reconvene the Watergate grand jury. You have to make some judgment of faith, I suppose.”

There may be more people writing about general workplace issues — benefits, health coverage, pay, race and gender on the job — than ever, particularly since stagnant wages and spreading layoffs have finally entered the national debate. *Business Week*’s Shepard, for example, points to “very early covers on wages, on inequality of income,” in his magazine.

What often gets left out, however, is unions, which are still the only voice for American workers, and which have been proving lately that they aren’t yet dead. The excitement of a new Jimmy Hoffa gets lots of air and ink. The journalistic and official investigations into Carey generate headlines and news reports and inconclusive smoke all across the country.

What’s harder to find are the stories about the center ring: What’s Carey’s record? What goals has he reached, and where has he fallen short? Has he weakened and divided the union or is he merely trying to divide the old guard from their powers and perks? What’s happened in all those local unions he says he’s cleaned up? Are the Teamster reformers sticking with him? Has Carey run the union’s finances down, as Hoffa claims, or has he taken steps to shore up a shaky money situation that the old guard left behind? How has he done with the Teamsters’ major contracts, and all the difficult issues that his members face these days? What is Jimmy Hoffa’s program and who are his people? Is he a representative of local union control against the top-down elitists, as he contends, or a stooge for the worst that American unionism has to offer, as Carey’s people maintain? How do both sides finance their campaigns? Will the Hoffa forces be successful at stripping Carey of many of his powers at the coming convention, as many expect them to do?

And, on another level, what are we in the press doing to help all the cops and nurses and guards and brewers and bakers and drivers and the rest of the working Teamsters make a decision in November, when they get their second chance in history to pick a leader? ◆

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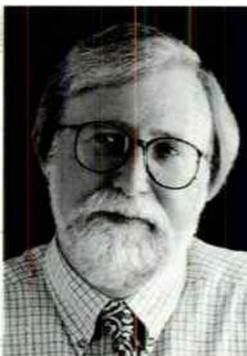
Moment of Truth at IRE

One day in the spring of 1995, staff members of Investigative Reporters & Editors realized that they were looking at a kind of ecological crisis. They were used to rainwater splashing into their basement offices on the University of Missouri's Columbia campus every couple of weeks or so, but this time water came rising through the god-awful floor, toward the computers that in the past two years had become the most crucial and profitable tools of a historically cash-starved nonprofit organization.

Convinced by this and other signs that Missouri was taking it for granted, IRE began looking for a new home. And as in any divorce, the details — like, who gets to keep the car, or rather, NICAR, the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting, co-founded and co-owned by IRE and MU — masked subtler, heavier issues. Besieged and flattered by glittering new opportunities, the premier investigative reporters' organization in the world had forgotten to ask the basic questions, like how changing home base is related to what it is becoming, and what it wants to be.

So now there was a debate within IRE, and its foreground was deceptively simple: Should it accept an offer from the University of Maryland and move to within driving distance from the powerhouses (of journalism, foundations, and power, period) of Washington, D.C., or stay in the heartland backwater of the University of Missouri, which came back with a "please don't go" offer? The argument was a hot one, replete with "a high level of suspicion and backbiting," sighs IRE executive director Rosemary Armao. In Maryland's favor, board chair Deborah Nelson of *The Seattle Times* cited a more convenient and attractive location for staff, conferences, and visitors, "an excellent high-tech environment," and, above all, a hunger that contrasts sharply with "the complacent attitude that has permeated many of our dealings with the Missouri bureaucracy." Missouri loyalists argued that MU runs a top-ranked journalism program that provides IRE with terrific student help, that Missouri was

Mark Hunter is an IRE member and a writer who lives in Paris.



Executive Director Rosemary Armao, "young Turk" Bill Dedman, and "back to basics" advocate Mike McGraw

offering better space, and that leaving Missouri would knock out the crucial NICAR program for at least six months, possibly cripple it if Missouri were uncooperative (a possibility the Maryland side dismissed). Speaking for Missouri, faculty member George Kennedy conceded that the administration "got out of the habit of staying in close touch with IRE, but the current trauma has refocused our attention." Former IRE executive director Steve Weinberg (a *CJR* contributing editor) put it this way: "Has Missouri been a perfect host, day in and day out, for nineteen years? Has anyone, ever? This whole thing is bullshit."

But underneath were the intangibles, and the fact that, as in real estate, location affects not only how you are perceived, but how you perceive yourself. What's emerged is that while part of IRE loved the idea of the organization's becoming a Washington player, another part sensed in such a move the culmination of a long-building and unwanted shift in the organization's character. All those questions remained open as IRE headed into its twenty-first national conference in Providence on June 13-16, which promised to be one of the liveliest on record.

Some ambiguity about goals has been there since IRE was founded in 1975 by a platoon of muckrakers, teachers, and publishers meeting in Reston, Virginia. On the one hand, they agreed that they wanted to set standards and share experiences among the entire profession. Yet researcher James Aucoin, in a recent article for the University of Georgia-based quarterly *American Journalism*, shows that the founders vacillated between a wide-open shop — "It's the guy in Kokomo who needs this," said one — and the desire of heavyweights like Jack Anderson and Les Whitten to "accept only the experienced reporters" and "avoid some yo-yos." The open-door group won. "There aren't

nearly as many full-time investigators as IRE members" — 3,307 at last count — says board member Bill Dedman, Director of CAR for The Associated Press and an advocate of moving to Maryland. Moreover, IRE's most experienced members continually explain to less experienced reporters "how

they did it and what they do,” as former executive director John Ullmann puts it — at conferences, through the bi-monthly *IRE Journal*, and on IRE’s Internet site.

IRE first became widely known through the Arizona Project of 1976-77, when it replied to the murder of a founding member, Don Bolles, by sending a team of reporters into the state “to show you can’t kill the story by killing the reporter,” says Ullmann.

Led by Bob Greene of *Newsday*, the project exposed a climate of corruption and proved that “the people who said lone wolves could never work together were wrong,” says Armao. Yet it nearly shattered IRE, generating high-stakes lawsuits from story subjects and “massive confusion about our focus,” says board secretary and IRE counsel Edward Delaney. To some, IRE became a symbol of Watergate-era adversarial macho; even now, “some

people think IRE is elitist, or run by newsroom hotheads,” says Brant Houston, IRE’s computer guru.

Meanwhile, successive boards never quite resolved the question of who should pay for IRE’s services, which have continually expanded. They now include publishing (a lot of reporters, including this one, learned how to file an FOIA request by reading *The Reporter’s Handbook: An Investigator’s Guide to Documents and Techniques*), a prestigious awards program, and an archive based on the contest entries (which now contains over 11,000 topflight stories and gets 50 requests a day from reporters backgrounding theirs). There has been one financial certainty, however, past and present: “We can’t run an organization on dues, or they’d be too high,” says board member Rose Ciotta, a computer-reporting editor at *The Buffalo News*.

Back in the beginning, small and scattered grants enabled IRE to take off, but the University of Missouri allowed it to fly. “Missouri underwrote *The IRE Journal*, printed it on *The Missourian’s* press, paid the electricity and photocopies,” says Ullmann. IRE staff members took part of their wages in exchange for teaching posts.

Missouri’s support made it possible for subsequent executive directors like Steve Weinberg (1983-90) to take a purist stance toward becoming dependent on outside money. “I thought going to journalism foundations was bad enough,” says Weinberg, “but outside [the profession], I thought there were too many conflicts of interest.”

But IRE’s culture, in board member Jacquie Petchel’s phrase, was “mutating.” The shift crystalized in 1991, when “they voted Myrta out,” says board member Penny Loeb — a reference to Myrta Pulliam of *The Indianapolis Star*, who came up with the idea for IRE in 1975 and symbolized its founding spirit. A band of “young Turks,” as Armao says, dominated the IRE board from then on.

They are epitomized by Dedman, thirty-five, and TV journalists like John Lindsay, vice president of Oregon Public Broadcasting. Amendments to



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the bylaws to set a limit on the number of editors on the board — in an organization that historically “didn’t like editors,” says Dedman — were attempted, but they failed.

These leaders aptly symbolized an organization whose key constituency is not what many had assumed. Researcher Fred Blevens of Texas A&M University recently found that the bigger the newspaper, the more highly educated its editors, the more awards they won, and the closer they were to the coasts, the more likely its editors and reporters were to read the *IRE Journal*. The “guy in Kokomo” is still there, but his sway has diminished.

The young Turks were boiling with ideas — Weinberg remembers getting “absolutely brilliant” thirty-page memos from Dedman — and they moved on them, like a program for minority journalists that provides scholarships to IRE conferences. But their major innovation, of historic importance to IRE and the profession, was NICAR.

It was started in 1989 (as MICAR) by the University of Missouri, a short but crucial step ahead of its time. By 1992, to save the program, the university agreed to share it with IRE. A grant from the Freedom Forum paid for laptops and staff to carry them into newsroom training sessions, and IRE suddenly found itself on the leading edge of an industry revolution. “How many newspapers want to devote resources just to investigative reporting?” comments Ciotta. “But papers are investing in these [computer] resources.” Virtually from the day in 1993 when the grant came in, IRE’s program revenues exploded — from \$153,309 in 1992 to \$296,383 in 1993, according to nonprofit tax forms — and staff grew from three to twelve, as newsrooms opened their doors to NICAR training sessions. That massive success gave the board “a growing confidence that we can build constituencies,” says Dedman.

Then IRE did the unthinkable, for old-timers: It hired a professional fundraiser, Marcie Setlow. The grants she brought in have underwritten admirable goals, but at the cost of a pointed debate over whether grants are chasing IRE, or vice versa. The crunch point was a grant from the McCormick Tribune Foundation to

launch a Mexican Reporting Institute, proposed by IRE after Setlow learned that the foundation was interested in Latin America. IRE had long dreamed about promoting investigative reporting abroad, but “we’d never discussed having an arm of IRE in Latin America,” says Petchel. “It’s putting the cart before the horse.” Counters Dedman: “You don’t get there by deciding it. You get there incrementally, as opportunities present themselves.”

The opportunity presenting itself this spring was Washington, which some of the young Turks saw as “an exceptional

launching pad,” in Nelson’s phrase, or for Dedman, a guarantee of higher “visibility” — more chance to interact with “international journalism organizations, editors, the people who run foundations.” Weinberg disagrees: “Visibility is always nice, but it’s the last of IRE’s problems. IRE is overwhelmed with requests for conferences and seminars that don’t get done. What good is visibility, if you don’t have enough money for that?” And for others in the organization, rubbing shoulders with the powerful is dangerous business for investigative reporters, and the Beltway is not a place



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that fosters independence. "Being located outside the Beltway, say, in Guam, is a positive thing," reads one of IRE member Bruce Selcraig's Internet postings on the move. "IRE has benefited greatly from this, perhaps in ways some of us have never considered before."

The idea of IRE in Washington has grated hardest on the ranking old-timer of the IRE board, Mike McGraw, a Pulitzer Prize-winner and projects reporter at *The Kansas City Star*, who lined up with Petchel and Ciotta against the move to Maryland early in the debate. He worries about a divide in IRE "between the geek-heads and the shoe-leather types" (guess which shoe fits him). When he goes to Washington, "I parachute in for a few days, look at records Washington reporters never look at, and get out before I start to feel like a Washington Reporter."

An IRE member since 1978, McGraw was on the job when the glamour of Watergate soured under the steadily accumulating weight of public disaffection, adverse Supreme Court decisions, libel suits, and the

Janet Cooke scandal. Other board members, like Lindsay, have the distinct feeling that McGraw believes that once again, investigative pride could goeth before a fall. And they think this may explain why McGraw is the strongest advocate on the board, not only of staying in Missouri, but of what he calls a "back to basics" philosophy of IRE's mission, concentrating on training journalists in in-depth interviews and reporting.

In short, this is a gut issue, in an organization founded on gut feelings. IRE was created to combat solitude. Its typical conference audience, board members agree, is made up of younger reporters who get no help from overdriven managers when they ask for time and advice on enterprise projects. Even at the top, a tenacious sense of isolation keeps surfacing — for example, when Dedman warns that IRE's treasured autonomy can "cut [us] off from influencing the profession, from doing more than preaching to the choir." This, perhaps, is what led IRE's board to react so strongly to Missouri's perceived indifference: the

deep-down sense that for all its success, IRE is still alone, still vulnerable.

At Providence, a Maryland delegation led by Dean Reese Cleghorn came armed with a last-minute offer — a \$75,000 grant and a promise of more space. But at 11 P.M. on June 14, as the exhausted board held a final discussion before the vote, the outcome became clear; Cleghorn crossed the room to shake the hand of Missouri's Kennedy, an elegant concession of defeat. The vote was 7-4 for Missouri. Dedman immediately moved that a committee be appointed to monitor the new deal with Missouri, which passed unanimously. The next day he announced he would not stand for reelection.

Just before the vote, the board had tried to open up a discussion of the organization's future, but it focused on means rather than ends. IRE has renewed its lease, confirmed its power and prestige, and returned to an image of unity. IRE is on a "rocket-ship ride," as NICAR's Houston put it. But it has not yet decided exactly where to aim the rocket. ♦

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A Case for National Insecurity

by Anthony Marro

It's been twenty-five years since the government sued to block publication of the "Pentagon Papers," the government's top-secret history of the Vietnam War, and while the issues remain as crucial as ever, time has lessened the angers and fears of that moment, and has healed, as the cliché goes, most of the wounds. Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, H.R. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, Charles Colson, and Richard Kleindienst all have since managed to write books without claiming, despite the company line that they voiced at the time, that the publication of the papers actually caused any damage. Erwin Griswold, the solicitor general and the somewhat reluctant field general in the government's attempt to seek prior restraint on "national security" grounds, wrote in 1991 that "In hindsight, it is clear to me that no harm was done by publication of the Pentagon Papers." And even Kissinger, whom David Rudenstine depicts as the Rasputin behind the government

lawsuits — as the man who threw tantrums, who warned that disasters and embarrassments large and small would flow from publication, and who encouraged and supported all of Nixon's own worst instincts on the matter — can be seen on television commercials these days urging readers to embrace the newspaper he once tried to have censored, cheerfully flacking for *The New York Times*.

The focus of Rudenstine's fine book is mainly on the legal issues involved in the case, not the journalistic ones. His important conclusion is not that no serious harm resulted from the publication, although he says that none

Anthony Marro has been a reporter for The Rutland (Vermont) Herald, Newsday, Newsweek, and The New York Times. He is now the editor of Newsday.

did, but that Nixon probably had legitimate cause to believe that harm could be done. He argues that Nixon may have hated the press, but in this case had good cause to sue it as well. Thus, the case may have been even more important than was thought at the time, if that's possible, because the government challenge was not as specious as many believed. He argues that while the government's

position had merit, its prosecution was flawed, and this made it easier for the courts to side with the press.

In fact, Rudenstine's recounting sometimes makes the Justice Department approach seem absurdly inept, with government attorneys at first being sent forth to argue their case without even having seen most of the papers ("they're secret," they were told in effect, in a prosecutorial Catch-22), or having been briefed in detail on the contents, or having any coherent understanding of what the supposed threats to national security actually were. Much of this, Rudenstine says, was



A page of the Pentagon Papers series is wheeled from a guarded storage area into the composing room of *The New York Times*

THE DAY THE PRESSES STOPPED: A HISTORY OF THE PENTAGON PAPERS CASE

BY DAVID RUDENSTINE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
416 PP. \$34.95.

the doing of Robert Mardian, an important figure in the Nixon Justice Department who insisted that his lawyers argue that the mere fact that the papers were classified warranted prior restraint, without the government's even having to prove that they were properly classified, let alone that any harm would result.

Later, having won one round against the *Times* but then quickly losing two others, the government changed strategy and set about trying to show that harm could result to military, intelligence, and diplomatic activities by the publication of the remaining documents. Eventually it lost at every level, the most memorable conclusion being that of U.S. District Judge Murray Gurfein, in New York, who wrote: "The security of the Nation is not at the ramparts alone. Security also lies in

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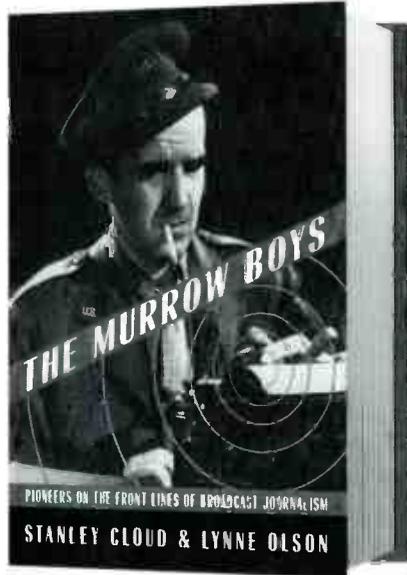
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—GARRISON KEILLOR



the values of our free institutions. A cantankerous press, an obstinate press, a ubiquitous press must be suffered by those in authority to preserve the even greater values of freedom of expression and the right of the people to know."

This was not just a government-versus-the-press debate. There were fierce fights within the newspapers about whether to publish, and also fights within the government about how to respond. Rudenstine captures both of them well. So we learn that Mardian distrusted and disliked Whitney North Seymour, the U.S. Attorney in New York, and thought him weak and inept, and that Seymour, in turn, considered Mardian a bit of a lunatic. The house attorney for the *Times*, James Goodale, ended up at war with the outside counsel, Louis Loeb, who argued that publishing the documents would be both criminal and unpatriotic. Lawyers and editors within both newspapers had harsh things to say to one another. Most of these clashes are recounted in ways that give readers a strong sense not only of the passions of the moment and the intensity of the debate, but also of the pressures that were faced first by Arthur Sulzberger, the publisher of *The New York Times*, and then by Katharine Graham, the publisher of *The Washington Post*.

A jacket blurb from Victor Navasky says that Rudenstine has not only written a compelling book but also "invented a new genre, the litigation-thriller." This is a bit of hyperbole, even by book-jacket standards. This is not *Gorky Park*, and the outcome has been known for a quarter of a century. If there's anyone who doesn't know the ending, I'll happily spoil the suspense. The courts ruled that no prior restraint could be imposed on the press unless the government could show that publication would result in "immediate, irreparable harm." No one is likely to get so caught up in the narrative as to risk an elbow in the ribs from a spouse and a complaint that it's time to turn off the light. But it does move along smoothly and nicely, and the legal clashes are recounted in clear and often dramatic ways.

I read the first installment of the Pentagon Papers at the Post Exchange at Camp Drum, New York, where I was dodging not only Vietnam but as

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much as I could of all military life by hiding out in an armored unit of the Vermont National Guard. I remember thinking at the time that it seemed an odd and quiet play for the story, as though the *Times* was trying its best to hide it in the middle of page one. I also remember thinking that the *Times* either had buried its lede or was challenging readers to find it.

Rudenstine, whose opening paragraph refers to the “understated” headline in twenty-four-point type, is not helpful in describing the logic here, except to suggest that people at the *Times* were nervous about the whole venture, were anxious to make a big splash with their story while angering the least number of people, and wanted to reserve for themselves the highest moral ground that they could. In fact, he sidesteps or scurries past most of the journalistic issues and debates at both the *Times* and the *Post*. (This may be partly because there weren’t many newsroom debates, although there always are some at the *Times*, where both high standards and hand-wringing are so embedded in the culture as to sometimes be confused.) Most of his focus is on the acrimony between editors and lawyers, and editors and business executives, not debates between the journalists themselves. The sense Rudenstine conveys is that most of the debates in the newsroom of the *Times* were over what and how to publish, not over whether to publish. And two other recent books, Ben Bradlee’s *A Good Life* and Ben Bagdikian’s *Double Vision*, make clear that the focus in the newsroom of the *Washington Post* had, as Rudenstine suggests, little if anything to do with national security concerns and everything to do with proving that the *Post* finally was able to compete head to head with the *Times*.

This isn’t really a book about the press or about the ethics of journalism, and that’s fine. Sanford Ungar’s 1972 book was called *The Papers & the Papers*, and focused a good deal on the newspapers as institutions and on the mindsets of the reporters and editors involved. Even after a quarter of a century, it doesn’t need to be replicated. Rudenstine’s book might be

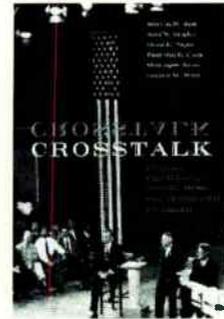
called *The Lawyers and the Law*, and he’s clearly much more at home in the courtroom than the newsroom, and more confident when dealing with legal issues than with journalistic ones.

He’s also likely a better lawyer than reporter. For starters, he seems to have made the rookie mistake of interviewing people before he knew what to ask them, and then not going back for a second attempt. Most of the interviews were conducted between 1988 and 1991, and involved just one session. The book has so many instances where he writes that “it’s safe to assume” that someone “may have felt” this or “probably thought” that or “likely believed” something else, that the reader sometimes wants to grab him by the lapels and shout: “Why didn’t you ask him when you had the chance?” or “Go back and find out!”

More bothersome is his conclusion that legitimate national security concerns were at stake, not because he’s wrong but because, like the government’s own arguments in the courts, he seems unable to clearly explain or quantify the damage. He says that serious damage could have been done if the newspapers had published some of the material that they ultimately withheld on their own, or some of the materials in the full set of papers that they never actually obtained. In at least a technical sense, he’s probably right. A case could be made that some harm to military or intelligence or diplomatic operations had to result from so wholesale a disclosure. But one also could argue that by this point the war itself had become a major, ongoing threat to the national security — that it was tearing the country apart, destroying public confidence in the government, turning whole segments of society against one another — and that against this backdrop any additional harm to the “national security” would have been marginal, and difficult to assess. And that helping citizens understand just how and why the country had gotten this deeply into this war was a real public service and not just a news story.

Nor does Rudenstine deal effectively with the fact that this was an administration that was fast losing credibility in making such claims — an

MEDIA AND POLITICS



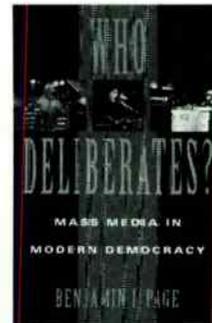
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Who Deliberates?

Mass Media in Modern Democracy

Benjamin I. Page

“Page offers surprising insights into the fate of democratic deliberation in a society saturated by the mass media. His assessment of the media’s ability to facilitate as well as foreclose deliberation makes this book crucial reading for all students of American democracy.”
—Timothy Cook, Williams College

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administration that was lying about everything from the recipe for Tricia's wedding cake to the air war in Cambodia, that was turning even government phone books into classified documents, and that was citing "national security" for just about anything that it wanted to justify or hide.

He does, however, argue persuasively, as have others before him, that the Pentagon Papers led almost directly and inevitably to Watergate, writing that Nixon's anger over the publication, his frustration with the courts, and his determination to stop further leaks all led to the creation of the so-called "Plumbers" unit at the White House, and in turn to the burglary of Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office, to the break-in at Watergate, and to the whole collection of crimes and civil liberties nightmares that John Mitchell would later term the "White House horrors."

And he demonstrates convincingly that the courts responded in ways that not only were wise but were brave, beginning with Judge Gurfein and including the Supreme Court majority

itself, which decided to risk the dangers inherent in a free press "because the alternative resolution — enhancing government power to censor the press — was even more threatening to a stable and vital democracy."

At bottom, this is a useful and important study of a landmark decision. It's not definitive enough to warrant tossing the books by Ungar and Bradlee and Bagdikian into the pile for the next yard sale. And given that the clock now is ticking so quickly — a number of the key players have died in recent years — one wishes Rudenstine had been both more aggressive in trying to force interviews, and more aggressive in the questioning of those who agreed to be interviewed. But when it comes to what actually happened in the courtrooms, and when it comes to examining and analyzing the legal briefs, the verbal arguments, and the court decisions themselves, his work is both rigorous and engrossing, a rich, textured, balanced, and clear-headed recounting of one of the most important First Amendment cases of our time.

Attitude Problems

by Rebecca Pepper Sinkler

There is a new genre of horror story taboring. Call it Nexis-search gothic. An author picks a term, say "political correctness" and feeds it into a database. After a few bone-chilling moments of suspense, the monster looms up from the shadows: 9,000-plus uses of the term in the past two years! Shudder for the fate of the oppressed.

Then the author searches, for comparison's sake, a word like "sexism" — only some 7,000 uses! This drastic imbalance in the use of two terms shows that women and minorities are being muzzled by white men, who, as we all know, hold us in their evil power.

Although I have nothing against heroines, I prefer the tougher-minded contemporary style to the gothic model. Caryl Rivers, who ran the above Nexis search, is a bit of both. *Slick Spins and Fractured Facts: How Cultural Myths Distort the News* reports an unrelievedly bleak picture of how the mainstream press generates,

SLICK SPINS AND FRACTURED FACTS

BY CARYL RIVERS
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
250 PP. \$24.95.

validates, and perpetuates racist, misogynist, and class-biased attitudes by unconsciously slanting and sensationalizing the news. Rivers writes a clean journalistic prose herself and she has done a heroic job of gathering atrocities and statistics, some a bit tired, others fresh. Readers of books like Kathleen Hall Jamieson's *Beyond the Double Bind* or of work by Carol Tavris and Susan Faludi will find much that is familiar here. Others will find Rivers's graceful blend of anecdote and scholarly reference enlightening — even entertaining. But Rivers is guilty of the same sins as

Rebecca Pepper Sinkler, former editor of The New York Times Book Review, is writing a family memoir.

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Terkel □ One of the most respected and honored historians of the media, Barnouw is the writer "from whom the rest of us steal instead of doing our research" according to critic John Leonard. Dubbed America's Gibbon by Norman Corwin and a major national resource by *The Nation*, Barnouw lives up to his reputation in this engaging memoir.

280 pages, 30 b&w photographs,
cloth \$22.95

those she condemns: by choosing and shaping the facts to fit her theory she undermines the complexity of her important subject, and by seeing disaster lurking in every corner, she risks buying into that most gothic of stances — helplessness.

One of Rivers's main villains is the credence given to racist and sexist stereotypes by misleading "trend" stories like the rash of articles a few years back on pre-menstrual syndrome that revived the old chestnut that women are prey to raging hormones.

Trend stories by nature lay themselves open to criticism, if not ridicule. Most are based on one or two studies, a few anecdotes, and a few quotes from "experts" corroborating the trend. Throw in a "to be sure" graph, and you cover yourself: "To be sure, many dogs still like bones, but most now say they are spurning high-cholesterol snacks in favor of high-fiber dog chow."

Caryl Rivers's criticism of spurious trend stories is on target, and she rightly points to hysteria — and worse — on the part of the press in its coverage of such subjects as the violence of black males, the effects of PMS, links between deviant behavior and genes, the "victimization" of white men at the hands of affirmative action, the threat to family values represented by single mothers. Correctly, she documents the difficulty minority editors encounter getting positive images of normal black, hispanic, or gay people into their own newspapers.

Two topics on which she is particularly good are the crazed reporting of rampant political correctness on the nation's campuses, and the date-rape backlash as seen most ludicrously in Kate Roiphe's *The Morning After*, in which Roiphe argued that none of her Ivy League friends had been date-raped so the phenomenon didn't exist. Reporters and editors were suckered in both cases, and it's never wrong to remind them.

But the problem with Rivers is that her argument is studded with inner contradictions and she fails to deal with what this means. To substantiate her arguments about media bias, she quotes the errors and excesses of reporters and editors, and then turns to the

countervailing facts. But where does she find those facts? In large part, right in the mainstream press itself. For example, to counter the hysterical reports of campus p.c. in *New York* magazine and *The New Republic*, she quotes an argument from the *Los Angeles Times*. She calls the positive *L.A. Times* story rare, but in the same paragraph cites a conservative *New York Times* reporter, then zings him with a quotation from *The Boston Globe*. *Newsweek* bombs Lani Guinier (boo!). *Newsweek* corrects misleading

reports on women's inferior intelligence (yay!).

This claustrophobic reporting undermines her point that mainstream journalism is subconsciously reactionary, and thus she calls into question her own judgment or fairness. Though she frequently quotes academic studies to make a point, footnote after footnote cites *The New York Times*, *Newsday*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Globe*, *Newsweek*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and the *St. Petersburg Times*. Sometimes these publications are held up



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Joseph P. Shapiro, senior editor, *U.S. News & World Report*

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In 1997, the Kaiser Media Fellowships Program will again award six fellowships to print, television and radio journalists and editors interested in health policy and public health. Applications for the 1997 program will be available shortly, for submission by March 1997. The aim is to provide health journalists with a highly flexible range of opportunities to pursue individual projects related to health policy and public health issues.

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as the enemies of truth, sometimes they are its friends. A reader is left wondering if Rivers is even aware of the contradiction.

It would be naive to say that every misleading story will eventually be corrected by another story. But let's not credit the press with unbridled mind control: readers are not entirely gullible. Does Rivers really think people believe everything they read in *New York* magazine?

What's more, Rivers never addresses what many see as the media's liberal bias. Although Anita Hill may have been cast as a virago in some news stories, as Rivers notes, Justice Clarence Thomas was equally hammered by the mainstream press, which she fails to mention. Pat Buchanan and Newt Gingrich have hardly gotten a free pass from the news media. And isn't it misleading to quote conservative columnists like George Will and John Leo but ignore the opposing voices of Molly Ivins, Frank Rich, and Ellen Goodman?

As anyone who has been there knows, journalism is neither simple nor static. The book jacket identifies Rivers herself as having written for the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. (She has also contributed to *The New York Times*.) The mainstream press has hardly muzzled her, or if she feels it has, she doesn't say how.

As for Rivers's contention that the bias of white men in suits continues to determine every aspect of news coverage, well, yes and no. There are precious few women or African- or Asian-Americans at high levels in newspapers and electronic media. But there are growing members of both on screen and on staff. The soles of white folks have been held to the fire, mainly by demographics: changing audiences have prompted the hiring of minority and female journalists who, in turn, have been happy to educate the "suits" about their unconscious prejudices.

Interestingly, Rivers takes a sanguine view of her own tribe — academia — pleading (rightly) in its defense that "academia is much like the ground under Los Angeles — always moving

around." I'm sure she's right. But can't she give the same latitude to a profession so fallible, and yet so enormous, so visible, and so protean as journalism?

The Power of the Public

by James Boylan

America has a chronic case of news consumption, but on the whole it has been more a tonic than a disease. So says Thomas C. Leonard, the innovative historian based at the Graduate School of Journalism at Berkeley. He was the author ten years ago of *The Power of the Press*, a study of political reporting that cast a cold eye on its chief tool, the muckrake. Now Leonard, still contrarian, has turned conventional journalism history on its head and, setting aside journalism and journalists, has written of journalism's users — the uncounted (and counted) millions who have given newspapers and magazines meaning by reading them. (Leonard does not deal with broadcast media.)

Trolling his way through seas of

NEWS FOR ALL: AMERICA'S COMING-OF-AGE WITH THE PRESS

BY THOMAS C. LEONARD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
288 PP. \$3C.

historical flotsam, he has scooped up a rough and curious history of readers of news, from the contentious denizens of eighteenth-century taverns and post offices to the members of late twentieth-century focus groups, who give editors a rare chance to see readers face to face. Leonard's work is garnished with engaging vignettes: the portrayal of newspapers and newspaper readers by nineteenth-century painters (unfortunately reproduced here only in drab black and white); the writing of Henry David Thoreau as a journalism reader-critic; the representations of journalists in Hollywood films written by former newspapermen.

James Boylan, CJR's founding editor, is a professor emeritus of journalism, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

There are so many diversions along the way, in fact, that it is easy to neglect Leonard's serious lines of argument. But these are what make the work more than a scrapbook. In each of his major contentions, he rows upstream against commonsense assumptions held by journalists and not a few journalism historians.

First, journalists and historians alike, in their concentration on the so-called profession, have come to regard readers either as passive consumers or mere abstractions, to be invoked rhetorically. Leonard, however, sees journalism as reciprocal, with readers acting, in his perhaps hyperbolic terms, as their own editors. He says: "Journalism . . . may have the life that readers choose to give it and the meaning the public imposes."

What he means is that, far from being passive consumers, readers have actively converted the press to varied social purposes of their own. He notes, of course, that readers

have long used the press as their basis for political argument, but he has found other, less obvious forms of use — as a form of ostentation, to show readers' worldliness; as souvenir (who has not saved clippings?) or greeting card; even as decor. (He has a section on the use of magazine tearsheets on the walls of the southern poor in the 1930s.) At the extreme, readers acting as their own editors can be censors, as in southerners' rejection of news from the North about slavery and race in times of crisis.

Second, journalists often see marketing and marketing forces as an ugly newcomer disturbing the news sanctum. But Leonard finds "church/state separation" of editorial and advertising merely a fetish. Leonard insists that the press has always had to respond to market forces, and the key

question is the nature of that response. To remain vital, he says, the press must constantly seek readers, and he contends that the notorious decline in newspaper circulations has come about in part because newspaper marketing strategies have been less aggressive than those of magazines. The most successful journalists, he asserts, are those who have made sound marketing decisions — e.g., Tina Brown at *The New Yorker*.

One might think that, having made these arguments, he would arrive at passive conclusions — that the press might as well do whatever is necessary to make itself more prosperous. Far from it. While he notes the success of magazines in maintaining themselves through "blizzards" of circulation promotion, he also sees their boutique character, catering to thousands of private interests and recreations, offering what he calls occupational or recreational

"refuge" from broader concerns. In addition, many newspapers and magazines have given up the notion of universal readership in favor of targeting affluent groups that can be offered to advertisers.

However much such strategies add for the time being to the prosperity and survival of the press, they do not maintain its historical function — that of being a central participant in what is sometimes called the "public sphere," more often "community" (although not exactly equivalent terms). This is the core meaning of the title of his book: "news for all" means not only something for everybody, but things in common.

The reader infers that Leonard is by no means calling for revolution. He is mildly encouraged, one gathers, by the



Wagons distributing evening papers at New York's Union Square, 1897

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POSTMARK DEADLINE:
SEPTEMBER 13, 1996

efforts to foster reader participation in journalism — “public journalism,” although he shuns that term. But he implies that the American press is capacious enough, multifarious enough, to accommodate both its thousands of private niches and its public mission, if it will simply take a few more risks in the public direction. These things may happen, and a realistic work such as this one certainly provides guidance.

Even so, it is hard not to be skeptical. Leonard himself has vividly described

historical forces, in motion for much of the century, that point toward the atomization and segregation of news, rather than news for all. And he has scarcely touched on other imposing forces, such as the conglomeration and agglomeration of the media so vividly described by his Berkeley colleague Ben Bagdikian. One hopes for the best, but what one reads in Leonard and senses elsewhere suggests an age of adversity for those who seek a return to a universal press.



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SPICY STORY

I was asleep in my hotel when the phone rang. It was the foreign desk. “We have a

few questions about your Syrian soup story,” said Anne Zusy, then a desk editor.

“About what?”

“About that excellent piece you filed on Syrian soup,” she replied.

“What are you talking about?”

“Your article on Syrian cooking, Judy. Your description of the soup in which all ingredients are mixed together to enable the strongest flavor to emerge.”

“Oh,” I said warily, “that soup story.”

“Abe likes it. He may even put it on the front page, but he had some questions,” she said, referring to Abe Rosenthal, then the executive editor. “Is this a good time to discuss the recipe?”

Anne had been given the thankless task of devising a way to ask me questions she knew I could not answer on the phone. She succeeded, in a way. For the next thirty minutes, Syrian phone monitors were treated to a discussion of Syrian spices and soup ingredients as Anne tried to get me to clarify questions about the power struggle that I had described and that James McManus [a British journalist], as promised, had dictated to the paper. Could I tell her whether the pink-gray-and-green vegetables were more or less dominant in the broth than other, more standard ingredients?

What the censors made of this I do not know. But I was not expelled from Syria. And the story ran without a byline, datelined Washington — and on the front page.

FROM **GOD HAS NINETY-NINE NAMES: REPORTING FROM A MILITANT MIDDLE EAST**, BY JUDITH MILLER. SIMON & SCHUSTER. 574 PP. \$30.



THE ART OF JOURNALISM

The painter Everett Shinn described the education and life of a newspaper artist: "The art department of a newspaper of 1900 was a school far more important in the initial training of the mind for quick perception than the combined instruction of the nation's art schools." . . .

Dispatched to the scene of a murder or fire, the news artist scrawled notes on scraps of paper (or, in emergencies, on a cuff or hat) — the number of stories in a burning building, a detail of a particularly complicated machine — to be worked up into more elaborate drawings back at the



newspaper's office. "Memory and quick perception" were essential to reconstruct in publishable illustrations what the artists had observed on location; experience with the conventions of newspaper art enabled them to transform the specific information in their notes into acceptable pictures. . . . Under pressure to get the information, hand over a drawing, and move on to the next assignment, artists

learned a hasty, standardized style of abbreviating information. It proved quicker to scribble in a cloud of billowing smoke than to detail the buildings behind it, and even more expedient to construct the picture from a description, or memories of past experience, or from the

imagination, rather than visit the scene. Not just the speed but the repetitiveness of the assignments called to mind industrial production, as artists and reporters learned to produce screaming news according to formula. . . . Shinn became especially adept at dramatic, last-

minute sketches of disasters he had never seen, yet which always appeared to have been made on the spot.

FROM **METROPOLITAN LIVES: THE ASHCAN ARTISTS AND THEIR NEW YORK**, BY REBECCA ZURIER, ROBERT W. SNYDER, AND VIRGINIA M. MECKLENBURG, NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ART IN ASSOCIATION WITH W.W. NORTON & COMPANY. 232 PP. \$50.

LOOK AWAY, LOOK AWAY

Absolutely determined that a good time would be had by all, and equally determined to bring down the house, Richard Nixon appeared as the final act at the Gridiron Club's annual spring dinner. The curtain pulled back to reveal the president and Vice President Spiro Agnew seated at two modest black pianos (Dwight Chapin at the White House had requested grand pianos or at least baby grands but the Statler Hilton could only manage uprights). This was the first time a chief executive had appeared on the Gridiron stage, and Nixon opened by asking: "What about this 'southern strategy [of reaching white voters at blacks' expense]' we hear so often?" "Yes suh, Mr. President," Agnew replied, "Ah agree with you completely on yoah southern strategy." The dialect, as Roger Wilkins observed, got the biggest boffo.

After more banter with the "darker"

Agnew, Nixon opened the piano duet with Franklin Roosevelt's favorite song ("Home on the Range"), then Harry Truman's ("Missouri Waltz"), then Lyndon Johnson's ("The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You"). Agnew drowned him out a few bars into each with a manic "Dixie" on his piano, and the Gridiron crew got louder and louder. "The crowd ate it up," Wilkins observed. "They roared." Nixon ended with his own favorite songs, "God Bless America" and "Auld Lang Syne," and here Agnew played it straight. The Gridiron dinner faded with five hundred men suddenly solemn and on their feet, many with tears in their eyes, all singing along, all celebrating their nation.

Even before Watergate, Richard Nixon knew something about scandal; and he knew as well that his boffo keyboard bit was no scandal among the made men of how-it-really-works

Washington. Those Gridiron members and their distinguished guests laughed and sang and cried not because they considered the president's southern strategy in the nation's best interest. Many in fact condemned his politics as opportunistic, divisive, even immoral. They cheered the president because they respected the electoral results. Simply put, southern strategy worked. It put Nixon in the White House. And nothing in the political culture symbolized by the Gridiron Club is more honored than a grand strategy that can carry a man to the Oval Office.



FROM **NIXON'S PIANO: PRESIDENTS AND RACIAL POLITICS FROM WASHINGTON TO CLINTON**, BY KENNETH O'REILLY, THE FREE PRESS. 525 PP. \$27.50.

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New York Post 5/29/96

**Dole hits on crime,
welfare in state stops**

The Press Democrat (Santa Rosa, Calif.) 5/30/96

**Man Freed After 13 Years as Judge
Says Police Withheld Crucial Facts**

The New York Times 4/11/96

Change in store for city during next 30 years

Broomfield (Colo.) Enterprise 8/3/95

**Culver
police:
Shooting
victims
unhelpful**

The Independent (Los Angeles) 4/25/96

**Get tough
seat belt
policy
working**



The Courier News (Bridgewater, N.J.) 1/24/96

Corrections:

■ An April 5 story stated that Mary Fraijo did not return a reporter's calls seeking comment. Fraijo died last December.

The Spokesman-Review (Spokane, Wash.) 4/11/96

Newspaper have lots to worry about

Wisconsin State Journal 4/17/96

**\$100 spent on buildings
in year since bombing**

The Billings (Mont.) Gazette 4/17/96

No dad's better than abusive one

New York Post 5/21/96

U.S. audit clears Moseley-Braun

Chicago Tribune 5/8/96

**U.S. Audit Finds Problems
With Moseley-Braun Fund**

Chicago Sun-Times 5/8/96

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