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COMMUNICATOR

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Columns:

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A SUCCESSFUL YEAR

My term as chairman of the Radio-Television News Directors Association is coming to a close, and as past RTNDA leaders have prepared me, this is the time when I start to wonder if I accomplished anything. I have been giving this some thought during the last couple of weeks, and it seems an appropriate time to put those thoughts on paper.

When you strive for a leadership position, you do so with high hopes about what can be achieved. Every leader has a wish list of ideas upon entering office. Reality sets in over time, and eventually you realize that while many of those things will be checked off, some never will.

Those who know me have heard me talk for years about the need for greater minority representation in our newsrooms and our association. With that in mind RTNDA set out on a course to show improvement in this area. A series of covenants were agreed to with the minority journalism associations at the start of my term. Since then, your board has worked hard to live up to the agreement. We assisted with training opportunities for minority journalists who had an interest in newsroom management. We also were represented at the minority journalist conventions. As one who attended, I can tell you that those conventions were beneficial for learning about mutual problems, concerns and opportunities for the future. We also provided a job fair booth space for member use. This gave member news directors the opportunity to interview job candidates, even if their station wasn't able to rent space on site. I know some stations hired great employees who will make positive contributions. These are efforts that will continue in the future.

We took our training out on the road in a new format this year. The Spring Training Conferences were well planned, and people came away with ideas they could try in their own shops. The conferences were well attended, and because of your response we intend to continue them. Training is an important part of how we serve our members, and the conference attendance tells us we are on the right track.

Those who know me have heard me talk for years about the need for greater minority representation in our newsrooms and our association.

We also spent a lot of time this year learning more about you. A membership survey was commissioned to determine what you want more of or less of, and how we can best respond. It does RTNDA no good to provide services if there is no demand for them. By the same token, it does us no good if we are ignoring an important need of the membership. This survey has given us valuable information. Incoming Chairman Mike Cavender already is putting it to use as his Program Committee outlines priorities for next year.

We also have made an effort to determine what you want in *Communicator*. This magazine you are reading is the first thing many members think of when considering RTNDA. What kind of articles and information do you want? What is the best form of presentation? Mike Cavender is putting this information to good use, and at some point next year you will see a *Communicator* that is even better than the one you are reading right now.

There are other things we have worked on and accomplished during the past year. Some are internal, but the projects outlined here are what come to mind. None of this would have been possible without the help of a number of people. Thanks go to Dave Bartlett and the staffs of RTNDA and RTNDF. They work very hard on your behalf. Thanks also go to an executive committee and board that gave a lot of their time away from family and work to participate. Thanks also to Lee Enterprises and the great people who work at KMTV. Without them none of this would have been possible. Thanks to my three children, who understood why they had to see less of me this year than I or they would have liked. And most important, thanks especially to my wife, Patti, who helps me do everything I do better than I would without her.

Next month you will read the thoughts of our new chairman, Mike Cavender.

He will do well, and I am glad to leave the association in such good hands.

Loren Tobia

LETTERS

I enjoyed the exchange of opinion in You're On! by Forrest Carr and Mike Cavender in the August 1996 issue of *Communicator*. I know and respect them both and have the pleasure of watching their products regularly, as well as the other newscasts that compete in Tampa/St. Petersburg, FL. In fact, I'm the one who rounded up the news directors for the forum on the Cheryl Barnes story that Professor Jay Black led at the University of South Florida (USF).

Perhaps for lack of space, neither Forrest nor Mike mentioned a couple of aspects of the controversy that I think would be of interest to anybody who reads their columns. These other elements of the story are important to understanding how complicated things can become when competition drives journalists into traditionally off-limits areas.

There was agreement among news organizations (including the *St. Petersburg Times*, owned by my employer, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies) to pool resources and charter a jet for Cheryl's return. But that agreement didn't come about—or come off—smoothly. Another station in the market, neither Forrest's nor Mike's, originally offered a slightly different deal to the Barnes family: Grant the station exclusive access to Cheryl for the trip home, and that one station would pay the entire cost of the charter-jet round trip. At the USF forum later that month, the news director who made that offer defended himself against charges that he had offered to "buy the story." He said that an offer of cash would have been wrong, but an offer of a charter-jet ride was different and acceptable.

The family did not accept, but did agree to the charter when the rest of the local media agreed to go in on it together. That agreement also involved the selection of a pool reporter—again, not from Forrest's station or Mike's—to ride home with Cheryl and her family as a representative of all five Tampa Bay TV stations. He was supposed to provide everything he got to all stations subsidizing the flight, with no advantage to his own. It didn't work out that way. His station made repeated references to him as "the only Bay-area reporter on the flight" and promoted "exclusive" material he got for his own station.

This led to some hard feelings among the competitors-turned-partners, and some felt no obligation to pay their share, as one of the partners had broken the rules. (The stations eventually settled the matter privately, and I don't know the details.)

And one final point about that plane—the one the media said they chartered only in order to spare Cheryl's anxious relatives another day's delay in their reunion with her: It did more than save the family time and money. It also flew on a schedule remarkably well-timed to local newscasts, making possible lots of airport liveshots that might otherwise have lacked immediacy—or have fallen outside of regularly scheduled news programming.

There are lots of lessons in the Cheryl Barnes story for journalists concerned about complications like these. The case study Jay Black and I wrote on the subject is available through The Poynter Institute's Web site (http://www.poynter.org/poynter/) or in an upcoming issue of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* (Volume 11, 1996).

Scott Libin
The Poynter Institute for Media Studies
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Annual Report

For more than half a century, RTNDA has served the professional needs of its members and promoted their interests. RTNDA has pursued this mission with innovative professional development programs and strong advocacy of electronic journalism's First Amendment rights. This year, RTNDA has continued this tradition of service and advocacy with a number of new programs designed to meet the changing needs of a new generation of electronic journalists.

Leading the list is the development and implementation of a new and highly sophisticated membership database that will help the Washington staff handle member requests more promptly and efficiently. In addition, the Board of Directors authorized a comprehensive survey of member needs and interests to help guide the development of a strategy for the association's long-term growth.

For the second year in a row, RTNDA finished with a substantial budget surplus. Active membership grew, thanks, in part, to more vigorous membership development efforts and last year's restructuring of dues.

A very successful new program of Spring Training Conferences brought affordable professional training opportunities closer to members in their local communities. The Edward R. Murrow Awards competition attracted a record number of entries. The New Orleans convention broke all previous attendance records. The communications department was completely reorganized to bring more resources to bear on the improvement of the monthly *Communicator* magazine, the new World Wide Web site and special publications.

As part of its continuing commitment to newsroom diversity, RTNDA offered management training programs for women and minorities, internships for minority students interested in pursuing management careers and published a new minority recruiting resources guide.

RTNDA expanded its commitment to the concept of "community journalism" with a very successful series of seminars and training programs. The foundation also provided financial support to a number of community journalism partnerships that bring together radio and television news organizations and newspapers.

As part of its exploration of the impact of new technology on journalism, the foundation's News in the Next Century project conducted roundtables, published monographs and distributed videotapes throughout the year.

The Environmental Journalism Center, in cooperation with the Society of Environmental Journalists and the Environmental Health Center, created an e-mail and fax-delivered "tip sheet" offering story ideas to environmental, health, science and business reporters around the country.

The German American Journalists Exchange program made it possible for more than 30 American journalists to spend two weeks in Germany and brought a similar number of German journalists to this country for seminars and internships.

Throughout the year RTNDA led the opposition to proposals that television networks give more free air time to presidential candidates, arguing that the public would benefit more from tougher political coverage than from more free political advertising. During the primary election season the foundation provided satellite briefings, videotapes and seminars to help radio and television reporters examine the impact of money on the political process.

After waiting patiently for more than eight years for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to consider our petition for repeal of the personal attack and political editorial rules, RTNDA asked the U.S. Court of Appeals to order FCC action.

Earlier, RTNDA challenged the FCC chairman's legal reasoning in support of children's television programming regulations, arguing that it would open the door to even more wide-ranging program content regulations, including the regulation of radio and television news.

RTNDA challenged proposals to rate television programs for violent content, arguing that such rating systems would be unconstitutional unless all news programming were exempted, which would require the government to define what programming would be considered "news."

RTNDA was active on many fronts in the fight to preserve electronic media access to the nation's courtrooms. Progress was made in the battle for access to the federal courts. Legislative proposals that would have effectively forbidden courtroom camera access in several states were defeated.

Arguing that the practice unnecessarily endangers the lives of legitimate journalists, RTNDA joined with a number of other organizations to protest the government's refusal to forbid intelligence agents from impersonating reporters.

The new year will bring even more serious challenges to the First Amendment rights of electronic journalists. But, just as it has for more than 50 years, RTNDA will aggressively defend those rights whenever and wherever they are challenged and at all times vigorously promote the very best in electronic journalism on radio, television and in new media.

David Bartlett
RTNDA President

AUDITORS' REPORT

We have audited the accompanying statement of activities of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, Inc. for the years ended December 31, 1995 and 1994. This financial statement is the responsibility of the Association's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on this financial statement based on our audit.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statement is free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statement. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In compliance with FASB 117, management has changed the format of this financial statement for the years ended December 31, 1995 and 1994.

In our opinion, the financial statement referred to above presents fairly, in all material respects, the results of the activities of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, Inc. for the years ended December 31, 1995 and 1994, in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

CALLOW, MACHEN & CRANFORD, P.C.

May 14, 1996

STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES

REVENUES AND GAINS	1995	1994
Membership	$ 374,408	$ 326,759
Products/services	52,024	52,955
Communicator	410,340	394,308
Publications/ communications services	58,213	—
Awards	134,914	67,382
Convention	1,284,987	1,075,950
Short courses	72,315	2,315
Spring conference/regions	4,156	4,279
Investments	105,854	32,998
Other administrative	169,240	123,914
Total unrestricted revenues and gains	2,666,451	2,080,850
EXPENSES AND LOSSES		
Communicator	$ 459,698	$ 468,455
Publications/ communications services	89,808	94,085
Awards	151,624	43,047
Convention	485,972	362,387
Short courses	79,918	—
Spring conferences/regions	6,956	4,376
Public affairs/public relations	373,457	170,994
Membership	141,033	91,721
Products/services	77,739	83,415
Governance	169,732	99,293
Investments	8,671	7,396
Administrative	417,918	521,997
Total expenses and losses	2,462,526	1,947,166
INCREASE IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS	$ 203,925	$ 133,684

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT DECEMBER 31, 1995 AND 1994

NOTE A - SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT ACCOUNTING POLICIES

The principle purposes of the Radio-Television News Directors Association, Inc. which was incorporated in Delaware on December 12, 1985, are to promote the achievement of high professional standards for electronic journalism, to foster principles of journalistic freedom, to collect and disseminate information to the public, to ensure the professional, ethical and technical advancement of its members and to enhance public perceptions of electronic journalism as a vital and responsible force in the nation's social, economic and political development.

The Association's financial statement is presented on the accrual basis of accounting. Using this method, revenues are recognized when eamed and expenses are recorded when incurred.

The Association currently receives no gifts or other assets with either temporary or permanent restrictions. Consequently all activity shown on these financial statements is considered unrestricted.

Depreciation is computed on a straight-line basis over the estimated useful lives of the individual assets. Total depreciation expense for the years ended December 31, 1995 and 1994 was $53,155 and $23,716, respectively.

Membership dues and subscriptions are recognized as revenue based on the period of membership covered by the dues or the period covered by the subscription.

Receipts and expenditures relating to conventions and awards are reported as deferred items until the event takes place. Receipts and expenditures are then reported as revenues and expenses of that period.

Each member receives a subscription to the Association's monthly magazine "Radio-Television News Directors Association Communicator." This subscription is provided to members as a benefit without additional cost in excess of their membership dues. There has been no allocation in this financial statement of the membership dues revenues to subscription revenue.

Certain expenses are allocated to the different functions of the Association, using percentages established by management. These percentages are based on either time or space utilization and are reevaluated annually.

NOTE B - LEASE COMMITMENTS

The Association negotiated a new lease agreement which includes additional space on November 18, 1994. On December 20, 1994 the Association leased a phone system which expires December 1999 and a three-year lease for a copier was signed on April 7, 1995. On May 1, 1995 the Association contracted to lease additional phone equipment for 59 months. The minimum future rental commitment as of December 31, 1995, for the remainder of the lease terms is $199,848 for 1996 and 1997, $192,495 for 1998, $190,044 for 1999 and $175,590 for 2000, for a total of $957,825.

NOTE C - SIMPLIFIED EMPLOYEE PENSION PLAN

The Association sponsors a simplified employee pension plan with contributions equal to 3.0 percent of each participant's salary. Annual contributions are payable by the Association after the second anniversary date of the participant. The contributions for 1995 and 1994 were $10,534 and $12,504, respectively.

NOTE D - INCOME TAXES

The Association is exempt from federal income tax based on the provisions of section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code, except for taxes on unrelated business income.

These activities for the past years have resulted in losses which are being carried forward. It is not anticipated that the Association will derive any benefit from these carryforwards as they do not anticipate any tax liability as the result of future unrelated business income.

The Association has elected to pay the proxy tax on lobbying expenditures under Section 6033(e)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code. The amounts for the years ended

December 31, 1995 and 1994 were $1,470 and $6,566, respectively.

On the Move

Doug Ballin named director of affiliate relations for CNN Television, Atlanta, from vice president of news, WTVM-TV, Columbus, GA.

Vicki Liviakis to anchor/reporter and co-host of Travel Update for News Travel Network, San Francisco, from correspondent, NBC's Real Life.

Jairo Marin promoted to news director, KMEX-TV, Los Angeles, from producer.

Kim Barnes promoted to weekend co-anchor, KVUE-TV, Austin, TX, from reporter.

Maria Barrs promoted to assistant news director, KDFW-TV, Dallas, from managing editor.

Casey Clark to producer at KOMO-TV, Seattle, from the same post at WPEC-TV, West Palm Beach, FL.

Mike Cole named managing editor at WFXT-TV, Boston, from senior line producer at WHDH-TV, Boston.

Gerald DeMink promoted to director of affiliate relations, CNN Television, Atlanta, from writer/associate producer, Headline News.

Bruce Halford promoted to news director, KDFW-TV, Dallas, from executive producer.

Shanai Harris promoted to weekend anchor, WIS-TV, Columbia, SC, from reporter.

Maria Henneberry to news anchor/reporter at WMBD-TV, Peoria, IL, from the same post at WJBC-AM, Bloomington, IL.

Jamie Ioos promoted to executive producer, WPRI-TV, Providence, RI, from producer.

Curt Johnson promoted to news director, Minnesota News Network (MNN), Minneapolis, from morning anchor.

Jennifer Kang to news writer, WLS-TV, Chicago, from producer, ChicagoLand Television News, Oak Brook, IL.

Larry Kantor named anchor, WINS-AM, New York, from free-lance anchor.

C.S. Keys to weather anchor at WPXI-TV, Pittsburgh, from the same post at KDKA-TV, Pittsburgh.

Mark Mohr named executive producer/news at KXLY-TV, Spokane, WA, from executive producer/programming at KABC-TV, Los Angeles.

Ethan Morris to producer at KOMO-TV, Seattle, from the same post at KRQE-TV, Albuquerque, NM.

Deborah Takahara to reporter/weekend anchor, KNSD-TV, San Diego, from anchor/reporter, KATV-TV, Little Rock, AR.

Steve Yavner named executive producer at WSVN-TV, Miami, from producer at WCAU-TV, Philadelphia.

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Serious about news?

If We Build It, Will They Come?

Profiling the News Consumer of the Future

By Mark A. Thalhimer

It comes as no surprise that young people generally have little interest in news.

The idea always has been that as people grow older, news becomes more important to them. The threat to journalism, it has been believed, came instead from emerging media like the Internet, which was thought to be drawing viewers and listeners away from their televisions and radios. But new RTNDF research suggests news managers ought to be worrying less about new media and more about their own product.

As news managers look toward the future, the danger of not creating a relationship with young adults may prove detrimental to maintaining a vibrant community of news outlets.

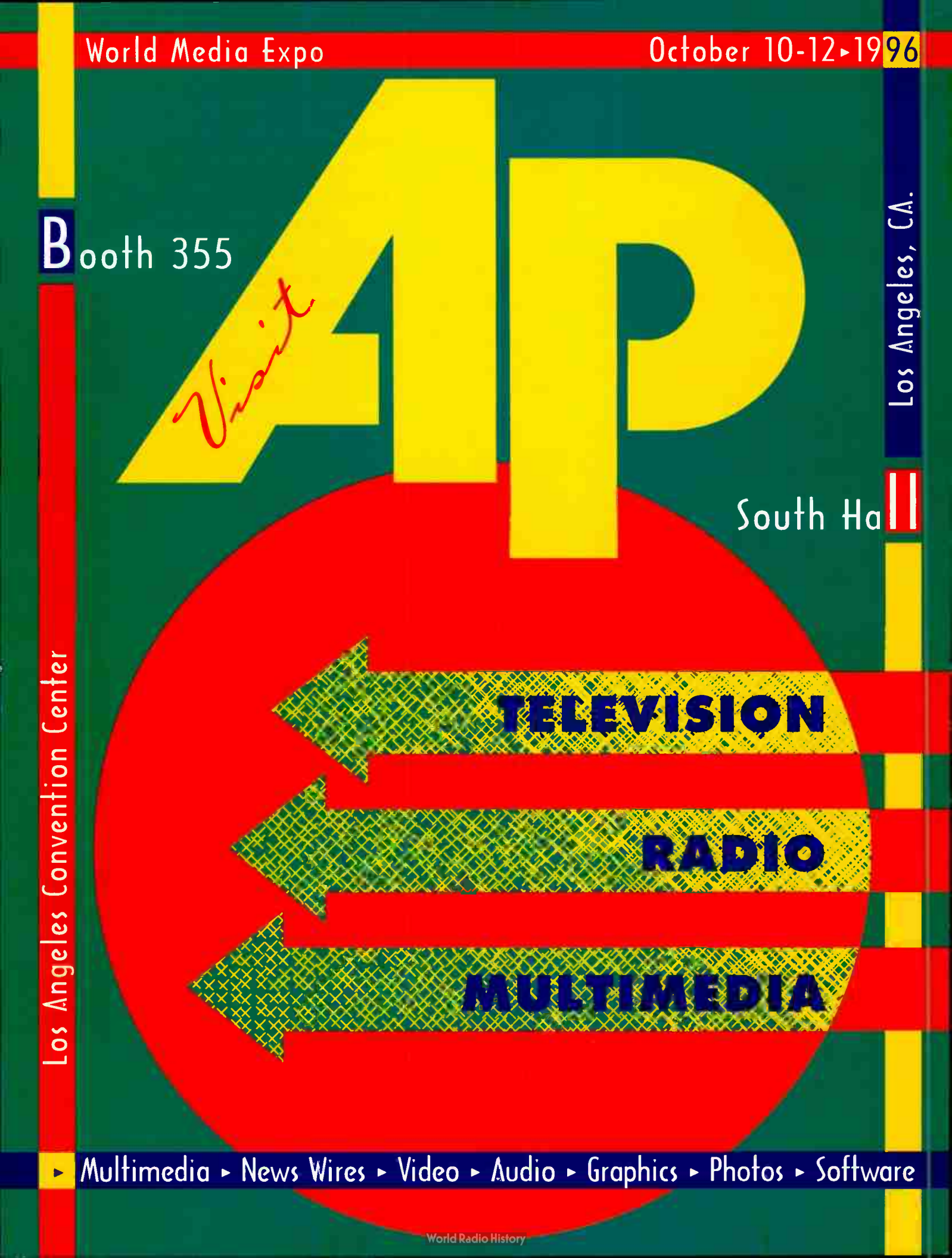
During the past several years prognosticators and pundits have pointed to the looming threat that on-line services and other new media seem to pose to traditional radio and television news audiences, sounding a clarion call to newspeople everywhere. The storyline went something like this: People will be less interested in having news "fed" to them through the traditional media and more interested in new technologies that will allow them to be their own editors and news producers. The underlying assumption, though, was that people will still want news. New research from the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation's (RTNDF) News in the Next Century project, conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates, raises the possibility that this basic assumption may be misguided, at least in part.

The Audience Adrift

The research results suggest that the greatest threat to radio and television news audiences comes not from competition with on-line services and the Internet, but rather, from disinterest on the part of the broad group of 18- to 29-year-old viewers. The essence of the research finds that young adults show a significant lack of interest in mainstream news products, and more importantly, that there is no guarantee they will develop that interest as they grow older. This runs directly counter to the commonly assumed notion that as young adults grow older, marry, settle down and begin to raise families, their changing priorities will increase their interest in the news. The initial findings of this survey highlight what may be a more fundamental shift in what these new viewers want from news organizations.

In addition to the slow ebb of the young adult audience, the RTNDF research found that people who use on-line services and the Internet as a news source are in fact more likely to be broad-based news consumers, looking for news and information across a wide range of news media. Today's on-line news consumers might be described as news "junkies" whose news habits will lead them actively to seek out news content that fills their appetites for both breadth and depth of information. These on-line news consumers are also generally affluent and well educated.

(continued on page 23)



(continued from page 21)

The audience's news habits seem to be evolving, and it is important to consider what this may mean for mainstream media.

Project Goals

The objective of this portion of the News in the Next Century project was to develop a model to describe the trends that are likely to influence radio and television news in the future, as well as to define the role news will play in the lives of the American public. RTNDF wanted to measure the news audience in terms of several variables: news consumption and exposure to information; interest in future technological developments related to news and information; attitudes toward technology; and usage of on-line services and the Internet as vehicles for news. The data collected shed light on the many factors that are influencing the behavior of the news audience today and help to examine the trends that are likely to affect news audiences and news organizations in the future.

An important conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that journalists and news organizations will have to create new ways of gathering and disseminating news to serve a rapidly changing audience. The audience's news habits seem to be evolving, and it is important to consider what this may mean for mainstream media.

News is Important

According to the preliminary results there is a healthy appetite for news. More than half the respondents thought news was very important, and more than 90 percent felt that keeping up with the news was very or somewhat important. Less than 10 percent of those surveyed in either the general population, on-line and Internet service users or young adults (18 to 29) thought news was not important. In sharp contrast, more than half the general population and almost 60 percent of Internet and on-line users said news was not only important, but that they followed the news every day.

Within the subgroup of 18- to 29-year-olds, only 36 percent said they were able to follow the news every day. This group showed almost exactly the opposite behavior of their parents and older siblings: 54 percent said that they were sometimes too busy to follow the news. In addition to asking the randomly selected survey participants how important they thought the news was, the study included a political knowledge index containing a series of questions that provided a good indication of how much basic political knowledge the respondents had acquired—presumably from the news. The findings allow for evaluation of the different groups to compare how important they say news is to them with what they actually know.

Participants were asked four questions that people who pay attention to the news would have a good chance of being able to answer: Which political party has a majority in the House of Representatives; who is the Speaker of the House; what is the name of the Chief Justice of the United States; and what is the name of the person charged with being the Unabomber? The first three questions cover general political knowledge and the fourth concerns an item of information that has been in the news recently.

Young adults and users of the Internet and on-line services skewed directly opposite in their response to the political knowledge index. While almost 80 percent of on-line users knew that the Republican Party holds a majority in the House; only 46 percent of young adults knew that fact. Nearly 60 percent of the general population answered the question correctly. Almost 70 percent of on-line users, and half the general population, knew that Newt Gingrich is the Speaker of the House, but only 38 percent of young adults knew. On-line users had the highest response rate to the final question, with 45 percent able to name

(continued on page 24)

Political Knowledge Index

Percentage of respondents who knew the Republican Party has a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives			
GP	**18-29**	**O-L**	**AOL**
59	46	78	76
Percentage of respondents who knew Newt Gingrich is Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives			
GP	**18-29**	**O-L**	**AOL**
48	38	68	68
Percentage of respondents who knew William Rehnquist is Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court			
GP	**18-29**	**O-L**	**AOL**
6	5	14	20
Percentage of respondents who knew Theodore Kaczynski is the alleged Unabomber			
GP	**18-29**	**O-L**	**AOL**
28	22	45	48

About the Survey

Princeton Survey Research Associates conducted a telephone survey of three population groups selected through random dialing.

- **General Population (GP): 1,062 people, margin of error +/- 3 percent.**
- **Young Adults (18-29): 446 people, margin of error +/- 5 percent**
- **On-line Users (O-L): 306 people, margin of error +/- 6 percent**
- **AOL: 252 members of America Online from a list supplied by AOL, margin of error +/- 7 percent.**

(continued from page 23)

Young adults showed the greatest interest in news about the world of entertainment.

Where respondents who use on-line resources get their news		
	O-L	AOL
More on-line	15	8
More traditional print and broadcast	81	91
Equal	4	1
Since they started getting news on line, respondents say their use of other sources of news occurs:		
	O-L	AOL
More often	5	2
Less often	18	15
Some more, some less	2	6
About the same	75	76

Ted Kaczynski as the Unabomber suspect. Only 28 percent of the general population and 22 percent of young adults could recall that name.

On-line users were consistently better informed about basic issues that people in the United States would be expected to know. The results also seem to dispel one of the myths of the on-line world: that its users are narrowly focused on thin slices of personal content. Users of on-line services and the Internet seem very familiar with general news and specialized information.

Editorial Control

The research also examined people's behavior with regard to selecting their own news content. While this may not come as a surprise to some, more than half the general population said they would like to be able to skip past sports programming, and almost 60 percent of on-line users said they would like to do the same. But sports programming was the most significant item of interest for 18- to 29-year-old males. In a similar vein, while more than half the young adults said they would like to be able to skip business or political news, a significant majority of on-line users said they were very interested in business, political and national news. Likewise, young adults showed the greatest interest in news about the world of entertainment, while more than half the on-line users

(continued on page 27)

On a normal night, percentage of respondents who would skip past indicated topics				
	GP	18-29	O-L	AOL
Sports	51	46	57	48
Political news	44	52	29	34
Weather	14	17	21	18
Entertainment	43	29	55	56
Business	53	62	34	39
International news	33	33	20	27
Human Interest	25	26	33	39
Crime	26	16	31	34

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Young adults and users of on-line services represent a significant unknown for the future of radio and television news audiences and for the scope and content of journalism in our society.

said they would prefer to skip entertainment news.

To explore the role of editorial judgment in news selection, we asked survey participants: "Who do you think would make a better decision about what news you need to know—you or (editors in a newsroom)?" Both the general population and the young adults split on the issue of editorial control, with half of each group saying that editors were better suited to tell them what they need to know. But 65 percent of the on-line users thought they could make a better choice. Survey participants also were asked who they thought would make a better decision about the news they might be interested in, themselves or editors. Two-thirds of the general population and young adults said they could make a better decision. Showing their tremendous editorial independence, nearly 80 percent of on-line service users thought they could make a better decision about what news they might be interested in.

Percentage of respondents definitely interested in:

Having 100 or more TV channels to choose from

GP	18-29	O-L	AOL
29	43	35	26

Having instant access to almost any type of news at any time

GP	18-29	O-L	AOL
41	50	61	57

Being able to find out more information about a news story on TV by clicking a button on a remote control

GP	18-29	O-L	AOL
54	66	75	67

Being able to decide on your own mixture of national news, local news, weather and sports

GP	18-29	O-L	AOL
47	54	62	54

Having a way to look at an index of all the news stories available so you could design your own program of what you wanted to watch

GP	18-29	O-L	AOL
41	50	66	60

Being able to skip past a TV news story you don't like

GP	18-29	O-L	AOL
64	74	81	80

News Surfers

Both the young adults and the on-line population showed an aggressive tendency to actively seek out what interests them, but for what appear to be very different reasons. Among young adults this translates into active "channel surfing," possibly following an impulse that is as much a search for stimulation as information. The on-line news users' behavior also may be described as "surfing," but their interest in news and information seems to be motivated by a desire for content that interests them.

Therein lies the basis for focusing this project on these two segments of the news marketplace. Young adults and users of on-line services represent a significant unknown for the future of radio and television news audiences and for the scope and content of journalism in our society. The intriguing result of this research is the energy and interest in news implied in the behavior of educated, affluent users of on-line services and the Internet. We suspect that on-line news users will grow to represent a significant portion of the future population, particularly as on-demand news delivery systems and digital radio and television become cheaper, more widely available and easier to use. Of particular interest is the behavior of those people who use on-line services and the Internet to get some of their news—what social scientists call the "uses and gratifications" of the medium.

Shift in News Consumption

As news managers look toward the future, the danger of not creating a relationship with young adults may prove detrimental to maintaining a vibrant community of news outlets. While more than half the general population sample surveyed reported that keeping up with the news is very important, only 39 percent of young adults agreed with that statement.

Young adults show the least interest in radio and television news and also exhibit a tendency to change channels in search of something that interests them and away from news programming that does not interest them. They are an audience that does not seem to be developing as strong a news habit as previous generations of

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Journalists and news organizations should be cognizant of the fact that the size, shape, interests and habits of the news audience are changing and will continue to evolve.

Americans. On-line and Internet users exhibit very aggressive behavior toward news content, but their behavior seems to be more proactive. While they also are very likely to change the channel or click their mouse, Internet and on-line service users generally are very aware of current events and also generally exhibit significant use of radio, television and print news resources. Most significantly, users of on-line news consider the news to be an important part of their daily routine.

Looking Ahead

The goal of this project was to develop "empirically based speculation" about the market for news in the future. With all the hype floating around today concerning computer-based on-line services and the Internet we wanted to better understand what role news will play in the use of these computer services. Are users of on-line services and the Internet using this new medium as a substitute for traditional news on radio, television and in print? Much of the accepted wisdom concerning the use of on-line services asserts that their primary use consists of what are described as "interactive" activities, such as sending electronic mail messages, posting to electronic bulletin boards and taking part in real-time electronic "chat" sessions. Members of the radio audience are generally referred to as "listeners," members of the television audience are "viewers" and newspaper and magazine subscribers are "readers." It may be important to remember that members of the on-line and Internet audience are referred to as "surfers," a term that suggests a certain tenuousness.

What does this mean for the future? Our survey results are open to differing interpretation. But the point of the project is clear—to elevate the discussion among news professionals concerning the future of their craft. While we don't think that the audience should necessarily drive editorial decisions or news coverage, we do think that journalists and news organizations should be cognizant of the fact that the size, shape, interests and habits of the news audience are changing and will continue to evolve.

The final evaluation of the survey data will bring forth more information about people's use of and interest in the news, including a further differentiation of the audience's preferences and behavior based on gender, education, income and lifestyle characteristics. Will there be a dramatic fall off in the listeners and viewers of news as these young adults grow older? What part will news play in their lives? And most importantly, is there some way that journalists and news organizations can work to create new means of addressing the news that will peak the interest of our future news consumers? ■

Mark A. Thalhimer is director of RTNDF's News in the Next Century project. The final results of the survey will be released during "If We Build It, Will They Come? The News Consumer of the Future" at RTNDA96 in Los Angeles on October 10.

By Lou Prato

MOVING ON UP

News directors who want to become general managers need more than just good newscast ratings to be promoted. If they can't overcome the myopia, self-importance and defensiveness that is inherent in the newsroom culture, they probably will never make it.

Looking to move into station management? It's a logical next-step for upwardly mobile news directors, right? Well, it can be, but there are a few things a news director aspiring to be a GM needs to learn. Those who have made the switch say it involves more than just learning the mechanics—if not intricacies—of sales, programming, marketing, engineering, etc. The prime factor is an attitude transformation that must overcome the conventional newsperson mind-set.

"You can't only be focused on news," says Wayne Godsey, a former RTNDA president who is now an executive vice president of Pulitzer Broadcasting. "General manager by its definition means you're a generalist. You have to be much broader in your view."

What that means, for starters, is the news director has to be more empathetic and knowledgeable about what's going on outside the news department. It is more than just getting along with other department heads.

"Anyone who aspires to be a general manager needs to really learn all areas of a television station, and learning doesn't mean how mechanical things operate," says Gary Ritchie, a one-time Cleveland news director who is now vice president and GM of WOWK-TV in Huntington, WV. "He or she has to want to help all areas operate, want to solve problems in engineering, want to come up with ideas that will help the sales department sell, want to bring a measure of togetherness to the departments that traditionally dislike each other."

Godsey says that's what "general managing" is all about. "The three things we look for in general managers are how well a person manages vertically, horizontally and laterally," says Godsey, a former GM at two stations in Milwaukee and one in Albuquerque, NM. "First of all, the most apparent is the way they manage up, the way they provide information, provide input, demonstrate cooperation, demonstrate responsiveness to the layer of management above. Then we look at the way they manage horizontally. How well are they able to draw other department heads...people they don't have authority over but people whose cooperation they need in order to succeed? How well are they able to get their cooperation in a way that doesn't entail ordering them to do something but convincing them that they want to do something? And the third aspect is how they manage down. How well do they manage their subordinates? Can they create in the minds of their subordinates a 'want to' in terms of doing their jobs, instead of a 'have to'?"

One way news directors can short-circuit their learning process about the business mystique is to get friendly—but not too friendly—with the general sales manager.

Money managing is also part of the equation.

"The news director who wants to move up has to understand how the money flows in and out of the television station," says John Lansing, vice president and station manager of WXYZ-TV in Detroit and a one-time news director in Minneapolis and Chicago.

"Too many people in the news department don't have the foggiest idea how we make money, and that's a crime in my mind," says Jim Hefner, a news director in Greensboro, NC, Raleigh, NC, and Pittsburgh before becoming a GM nine years ago at WTAE-TV in Pittsburgh.

"Too often people in all departments, not just news, just assume that money is going to continue to come in and (that) they can do anything they want to do, and it isn't going to harm that stream of revenue," says Ritchie. "And it just isn't true."

Mark Pimentel, who moved from news director at WAGA-TV in Atlanta to GM of WAFF-TV in Huntsville, AL, less than a year ago, says learning how to manage the money is the biggest adjustment he had to make. "It's really a new way of thinking," Pimentel says. "As a news director, you're trying to beg, borrow and steal every dollar you can for your news department. Now, I'm concerned about where the money is being spent, being able to control expenses and at the same time educating myself on how to increase profitability."

Fred Young, one of Hefner's predecessors at WTAE and now a corporate news executive for the parent Hearst Broadcasting, believes news directors need better training and knowledge in how businesses operate. "I wish I had had deeper background in cash flow, amortizing, building business, business plans, profit potential, etc.," he says. "These are all things you should know."

Jeff Marks agrees. Marks, a former RTNDA chairman who is now chief operating officer and news director at News 12 New Jersey, got his first GM job at WLBZ-TV in Bangor, ME. "I was least prepared for all of the business issues, from depreciation to how unemployment compensation taxes are figured to all kinds of things that you get insulated from in the newsroom," he says. "You might get allocated costs on something but you don't know how they come about, the whole spreadsheet balance-sheet issue. In the newsroom, you tend to look only at expenses. And you look at expenses against your budget. You didn't look at depreciation."

One way news directors can short-circuit their learning process about the business mystique is to get friendly—but not

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"As a news director you have more exposure to other parts of a station because you have to work with sales, the engineers, the promotion departments and so forth."

too friendly—with the general sales manager. "I would take him or her out to lunch once in a while," advises Hefner, "not to break down the wall between church and state, but to just learn the business side."

Judy Horan, who succeeded Marks in Bangor 18 months ago, says Marks and another ex-news director GM, Steve Caminis, helped change her attitude toward sales. But she says news directors need to learn more than just how commercials are sold for newscasts. They also need to understand how revenue is produced outside of the news department.

"Programming was the biggest challenge to me," Horan says. "I just never had to work with such things as what (product) do you buy, how do you buy it, how do you do the homework, the justifications for purchasing one show over another, working out the costs and how it is played out over the years and how you amortize that. That was a whole different ball game."

Still, Horan and many of the others believe the news director is fundamentally better equipped today to become a GM, more so than the traditional station executive, the sales manager. "As a news director you have more exposure to other parts of a station," she says, "because you have to work with sales, the engineers, the promotion departments and so forth."

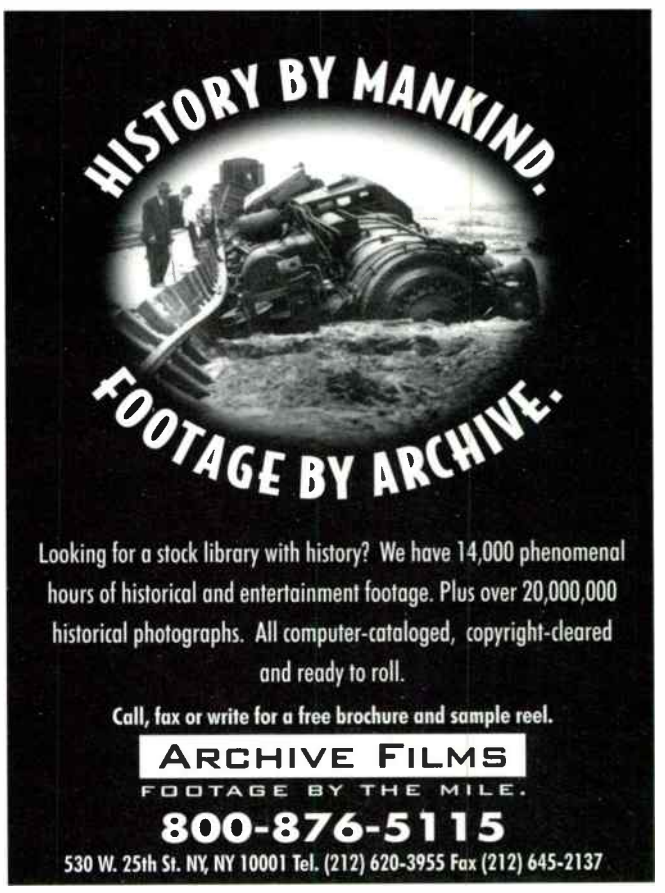
Gil Bittner, now in his second GM job at KDLH-TV in Duluth, MN, says understanding the revenue is about the only thing lacking in the news director's background. "Sales managers work primarily with the traffic department, maybe a little bit with the production department and with clients," Bittner says. "News directors work with clients at their worst, when they are angry. News directors work with the general public, with unions, with engineering, production, promotion, with every other department. And always in every station, the news department is the largest department with the largest budget. So, it stands to reason to me if a sales manager who knows nothing about news, engineering, programming, promotion and so on, can take over a station provided he has good department managers, the same is true of a news director. And a news director who has a good sales manager can take over and probably be much more familiar with the general operation of a television station."

Still, working for a news-trained GM won't guarantee a news director a promotion to the top job. "My job is to find the best people I can to take care of my stockholders and to take care of my properties," says Godsey, who has helped hire two former news directors and two sales persons as GMs at Pulitzer.

Godsey, of course, is right. As he and the others advise, news directors who want to become GMs need to take care of themselves. ■

Lou Prato is a media consultant in State College, PA, and serves as RTNDA's treasurer.

Don't miss "Moving Up the Ladder...Is the GM Job For You?" on Saturday, October 12, at 3:30 p.m. during RTNDA96 in Los Angeles.



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Does Bigger Equal Better for Radio News?

By Condace Pressley

Illustration: Gary Edward Blum • Design: Joshua C. Chen, Eben Design Associates

With Infinity Broadcasting soon to be under the Westinghouse umbrella, many have voiced concerns about the **future** of radio news. The **proposed merger** would give Westinghouse a **dominant position** in many markets—a situation that some feel will lead to reduced competition. But others say **consolidation** is a way of life, and that **it's about time** radio has gotten on the bandwagon.

This past March the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) gave the green light to bring radio into the corporate age of journalism. The new rules from the FCC removed all limits on the total number of stations any one company may own and also raises the same-market station ownership limit to 25 percent of a given market.

Less than six months after deregulation, Westinghouse Electric Corp., recent purchaser of CBS Radio and Television, announced plans to buy Infinity Broadcasting Corp., for $4.9 billion. The union will bring together the two largest players in radio. The merger is subject to approval by the FCC, but that's expected by the end of the year, and this resultant radio group will operate 83 stations in 16 markets. Sixty-nine of the stations will be in the country's top 10 markets, including New York and Los Angeles, and as a group, will control nearly one-third of all national advertising revenues.

What will this mean for radio news? One source inside CBS who requested anonymity thinks it's too early to say. "There may be some budget cuts—there were some in the other merger—but not so great that the impact was crippling." Markets where there may be some concern include New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. But in each of those cities the Westinghouse and Infinity stations are making money.

Competition will be good, says the insider, because the stations will end up making even more money for the company. Besides, Infinity doesn't do local news, so it really may not be an issue and should not impact the way stations cover news locally.

And there are benefits. The CBS/Westinghouse merger led to marriages of radio and television newsrooms, but it is not the situation where radio news departments are being cut in favor of using television reporters on the radio. Instead, the philosophy is that the union creates a more powerful news operation.

Greg Moceri agrees. Moceri, the operations manager for WSB-AM and WCNN-AM in Atlanta, says consolidation in certain cities is expected and is part of any cluster ownership. "This may result in the top-notch regulars working for a news/talk outlet (and) also working for a music station that offers news and information," Moceri says. "It is an instant boost to the FM product."

"The advantage of doing local news (is) it's local, it's local, it's local."

Moceri says expanded ownership may cause a decline in the number of stations that do news, talk or information programming, but the stations that are information focused, he says, will not feel the impact of deregulation because they will continue to do what they've always done well.

"There could be some downsizing," Moceri says, "but that is part of a trend that has continued for the past 10 years. It is not the sole result of expanded ownership."

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For radio news operations to survive, stations must remain committed to local coverage—news that networks and satellite services cannot provide.

And he is right. Radio news, once a staple in the kitchen, car and office, has battled to compete with broadcast and cable television and satellite networks. In 1982, there were more than 6,000 radio news operations with nearly 20,000 employees. Ten years later those numbers had fallen to 5,770 and 15,700, respectively.

For radio news operations to survive, stations must remain committed to local coverage—news that networks and satellite services cannot provide. "The advantage of doing local news," Moceri says, is that "it's local, it's local, it's local." A radio station's local involvement in a community usually comes through its news and information programming.

"Regardless of what is going on with deregulation and with fewer owners owning more properties," Moceri says, "the successful entrepreneur will continue to find success in the benefit of providing news. It is still a community service. It would be to a station's disadvantage to stop providing that service, especially if the service defines the station's image."

Other stations are finding success with niche programming. The days of full-service radio are gone. Now the objective is to target a specialized audience, and that is where the Westinghouse/Infinity merger may find its greatest success. For amid all of the doomsday talk about the demise of radio news, whenever there is severe weather on the way, radio always will be the medium that can deliver the information as it happens. Portable transistor radios can go with a listener into a storm shelter. Cable television cannot.

To show the FCC that the Westinghouse/Infinity merger is in the public interest, the company filed papers in July with the FCC and the U.S. Department of Justice indicating it would sell two radio stations in Chicago to minority owners and that it would provide on-air radio program guides for the CBS children's educational TV program schedule.

Infinity Broadcasting also manages and owns a stake in Westwood One, the number one syndicator of radio programming. The merger will bring the likes of Don Imus and Howard Stern to the network of Dan Rather and the late Edward R. Murrow.

Will the two mix? Probably like oil and water. But the combination will allow the two companies to assemble clusters of radio stations in large markets. That structure, most believe, should lead to a string of more efficient and more profitable stations.

"This is the right deal, with the right partner, in the right industry," said Westinghouse Chairman and CEO Michael H. Jordan at the time of the announcement.

Infinity CEO Mel Karmazin, who will lead the newly combined radio groups once the merger is approved, said at the time that "this is the kind of deal that was intended when the Telecommunications Bill was signed. For radio to grow and prosper, we need this kind of critical mass."

"While there will be some combination of resources in administration and on the sales side, I don't think it will cross over to the editorial side."

In fact, Karmazin said the legislation directly influenced the decision to merge. "When that bill passed, the first call I made was to Westinghouse/CBS. There was no question, there was absolutely no question, that the transaction that made sense was a combination of the Infinity company with the Westinghouse/CBS company."

Karmazin told a group of New York broadcasters in July that big is better. He said larger groups receive more respect, earn more money and provide more diverse programming.

"If a company has one station," Karmazin said, "there's pressure to make it the best. With four or five, you can offer more."

And niche marketing makes advertisers happy because they can target specific demographic groups. For example, in Boston the merger will give Westinghouse, which already owns WBZ-TV Channel 4, a dominant position in Boston media.

Westinghouse owns oldies station WODS-FM and news/talk WBZ-AM. With the purchase of Infinity, it will add modern rock on WBCN-FM, classic rock on WZIX-FM, adult album rock on WBOS-FM and jazz on WOAZ-FM.

But because each of the six stations offers a different format, they compete with other stations in town, but do not battle each other.

Still, critics argue larger companies will be intensely focused on the bottom line—especially when they are paying premium prices for radio stations. Another fear is that local management will be replaced by management teams in charge of large swaths of territory. And there's talk that programming will get bland, with less of a local edge and more stations simulcasting the same material.

But not everyone feels that way. "I don't think it's going to be the monopolistic disaster that everyone thinks it's going to be," says Robert Garcia, general manager of CNN Radio in Atlanta, which is distributed by Westwood One. Will bigger be better for the listener? Garcia says it's not necessarily better, but it's not necessarily worse either.

"The CBS/Westinghouse merger had dual stations in markets. The old Westinghouse stations and the old CBS stations are competing as they always have," he adds. "Consolidation is a fact of life, and radio is no different."

Garcia says he does not anticipate any significant changes. He says the stations' formats are different. "The fears that some homogenous radio product will result are not justified," he says.

Where Garcia does think there could be some resource sharing is in the administration and sales departments. "The complaint has been about the product, and I don't think there will be any impact," Garcia says. "While there will be some combination of resources in administration and on the sales side, I don't think it will cross over to the editorial side."

Karmazin has been mum about the future of radio news in a Westinghouse/Infinity family. The companies have said that by owning clusters of radio stations in the larger cities, they will become more efficient with greater reach and lower costs. Westinghouse added that it plans to continue building on its advantages in markets where there are both radio and CBS television stations.

The most interesting area in the Westinghouse/Infinity merger to watch may be news at the network level—specifically, different types of network programming. A Westinghouse/Infinity union may result in a stronger competitor for the other networks. With all those stations and all of those news resources, this new company will have an expanded news base and could provide different types of news updates for its stations. But only time and the balance sheet will tell. ■

Condace Pressley is assistant news director of WSB-AM in Atlanta and a regional director with the National Association of Black Journalists.

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By Judy Flander

MAKING HISTORY: KTLA REPORTER STAN CHAMBERS

In Los Angeles, KTLA's Stan Chambers is a living legend. He has covered the major events of almost a half a century, and after all those years of reporting he's still "like a kid in a candy store." And more amazingly, Chambers has spent all that time at KTLA, giving the news to generations of Californians.

Greg Nathanson, general manager of Los Angeles' KTLA-TV, likens the spirit of his 73-year-old star reporter Stan Chambers to that of a former baseball announcer who used to exclaim exuberantly, "It's a great day for a game, let's have two!"

Chambers, who is going on 50 years with KTLA, has yet to be jaded. He's covered car wrecks, plane crashes, crime, conventions, elections, Vietnam War protests, earthquakes, fires, floods, an early atom bomb test, two riots and the assassinations of two Kennedys, along with countless other stories that have come his way. A member of the KTLA News at Ten team who also appears regularly on other KTLA news broadcasts, Chambers thrives on the late shift, from 3 to 11 p.m. "I really like being in the field," he says. "That's where the world is." Nathanson relates that when recent flooding occurred in the Los Angeles area, Chambers cut short a vacation and was the first to arrive in the newsroom. "Stan's like a kid in a candy store; he doesn't want to leave the candy store; we never want him to leave the candy store."

Chambers' enduring delight in his job is just one reason he's lasted a probable record-breaking half-century in an industry notorious for rapid turnover and dumping aging newspeople.

He's been around virtually as long as KTLA-TV, the first commercial television station west of the Mississippi. The Tribune Co.-owned independent celebrates its 50th anniversary in January 1997. Chambers' first broadcast, a television version of the University of Southern California's *Campus Magazine*, aired in April of 1947, while he was still a graduate student following his service in the Navy in World War II. In

December, 10 months after the station went on the air, he was hired full time.

From the beginning he did whatever was needed, whether serving as a stage hand or as the nonskating host of the Frosty Frolics ice show, which once aired a real wedding on skates with the bride, groom and attendants gliding toward the minister. His good-natured pratfalls were all part of the Frosty Frolics' follies. Movie-star handsome with an unself-consciously relaxed on-air persona, he established an immediate rapport with the viewers. It has distinguished his broadcasting ever since.

Chambers and the station got jump-started in news in 1949 when KTLA went live for 27 1/2 hours of continuous coverage of what was to become the unsuccessful attempt to rescue 3-year-old Kathy Fiscus, a local girl who had fallen down an abandoned well. The station's founder, the pioneering electronics expert Klaus Landsberg, dispatched a crew and studio camera to record the event. Chambers and another reporter, Bill Welsh, reported throughout the agonizing event. They were inventing television news coverage as they went along. After that incident, taking cameras to news scenes became the norm. For a long time Chambers rode in a vehicle that resembled a bread truck with a studio camera strapped to the top.

Chambers revels in the technology that's revolutionized his job: "I never dreamed I'd have my own satellite dish." And he even extols the beeper, a tool that drives others mad. "I love the sound of the beeper," he says. The call "could be anything—or nothing."

KTLA was first established by Landsberg for Paramount Pictures and was subsequently owned by cowboy star Gene Autry, who launched one technological first after another, according to Chambers. In 1959, KTLA was the "first in the world with a helicopter...a flying television station." And to everyone at KTLA's amazement, it was the only station in Los Angeles to have one until the early 1970s. As Chambers explains, that was because news was considered a "loss leader." The FCC required 15 minutes of news daily and that was all most stations bothered with. The networks didn't want to interrupt their soap operas, and independents preferred entertainment shows to news. But KTLA, partly because of the Kathy Fiscus drama, which gave the station its impetus for covering news, has the reputation to this day for being first on the scene when there's breaking news.

The arrival of CNN, to which KTLA is a subscriber, was another major breakthrough. "It's what really revolutionized

(continued on page 41)

You can quote me!

"We picked Gil Jimenez to design our set because of his reputation," says Ken Jobe, News Director, WMC, Memphis, which dominates its news market.

"We also selected GJBD because we had seen Gil's designs work for many others, and because his approach was the best.

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(continued from page 39)

One of Chambers' greatest strengths is his ability to bring viewers into a dramatic scene.

our local broadcasts," Chambers says, "transforming them from local to national." CNN has used a KTLA material, giving Chambers national exposure.

One of Chambers' greatest strengths is his ability to bring viewers into a dramatic scene, telling a running story of events as they happen with authority but without hype or hysteria. Jeff Wald, KTLA news director and Chambers' boss for nine years, recalls the day in 1986 when Stan called in to say they had the most incredible pictures he'd ever seen. A light plane had gotten caught upside down in high tension wires, trapping the crew of two inside. Chambers and Cameraman Jon Fischer were on the air three hours nonstop with the scene.

"He's a man of great humility, honesty and integrity," says KTLA's longtime News at Ten Co-Anchor Hal Fishman, who has set some kind of a record himself as an anchor since 1960.

"Stan was like a second father to me," says Jon Fischer, who worked as cameraman with Chambers for 12 years. During those years Fischer says he "never heard a foul word (from Chambers). He took very good care of me and helped guide me." Fischer, now technical manager, Western News Bureaus, ABC Television, was 19 when he started at KTLA as a messenger and desk assistant. Chambers encouraged Fischer in his wish to become a cameraman, recommending patience. A year and a half later, Fischer was teamed with Chambers.

Chambers has an enormous edge as a reporter because he knows everyone in town. Politicians, police and firefighters wave him in behind the yellow tapes. They'll say, "Hey, Stan, come over here. Here's a great shot!" One time, Fischer remembers covering a drug bust with Chambers where then-L.A.P.D. police Chief Daryl Gates was viewing the scene. Chambers asked Gates if they could have a tour of the drug house. "Nobody says no to Stan Chambers," Fischer says. "So the chief says, 'Well, sure, Stan.' And the chief takes us in and points out cocaine and firearms. Everyone else is sitting outside, their jaws dropped."

It would seem that life always has been as smooth as a skating rink for Stan Chambers, but he's had his rough times. In the early days KTLA was a do-it-yourself station with a small staff, and often Chambers handled two or three jobs at a time. For several years he was national sales manager by day and news announcer in the evenings. "But as the station got bigger, I was asked to make a choice between news and sales," Chambers says. He chose news, because it's always been news that's gotten his juices going. Still, the loss of the sales position was a blow. Eventually he was named news director, became a member of RTNDA and served on its board.

That set him up for an even more devastating "emotional low" in 1970; after seven years as KTLA news director, he suddenly was removed from the position. He admits it was a long run while it lasted, and that the station has had more than a dozen news directors, but he'd relished the job and by then was L.A.'s senior news director. Every news director feels a similar letdown when bumped from that key news job, he says.

"It hurt."

Offered a full-time reporting assignment instead, he took it without question. Chambers could have gone elsewhere. He has had offers. But he regards any place other than Los Angeles—"the best news city in the country"—as a step down. Besides, he has 11 children (now ranging in age from 26 to 46) and he and his first wife, Beverly, were not about to uproot them.

Raw ambition was never Chambers' driving force, anyway. "I've always been a team player," he says. "I like being part of what's happening. Sometimes it's a small part and sometimes it's a big part. Sometimes I play shortstop and sometimes I play first base."

Chambers was honored on the Hollywood Boulevard Walk of Fame in 1982.

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Chambers has been a fixture in KTLA's newsroom since 1947.

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The entire Chambers family was sometimes commandeered for service to KTLA. When the station needed "talent" for features on Thanksgiving and Christmas, cameras were sent to the Chambers' house; viewers saw Beverly stuffing a turkey and the Chambers' kids opening their presents on Christmas Eve.

Elizabeth Chambers, 26, the youngest of his children and a free-lance television producer, is the only one who followed him into the profession. She never liked her dad working nights, but she and her mother would always watch him on News at Ten. Elizabeth says she used to "go up and kiss the TV screen."

"All 11 children are like spitting images of their dad," says Jeff Wald. "Every one of them is a sweet carbon copy of Stan."

The greatest tragedy of Chambers' life was the death of his wife, Beverly, in 1989. He has since remarried, and friends say his wife, Gege, a warm, vivacious woman, has revived him. His work has continued unabated, and he has no thoughts about retirement.

Being such a tender fellow, Chambers has never become inured to human suffering. "The sad part of news reporting is seeing family members trying to be brave when, say, their daughter is missing and then the blow of finding the body. It's hard to take. I bite my lower lip a whole lot." Plane crashes are particularly devastating. "You go in the hangar and there are all the family members. You can tell by their eyes those who want to be interviewed. They do it for some release." He doesn't even try to interview anyone who doesn't want to be interviewed.

But Chambers feels that reporting disasters also can have a cathartic effect. "The great thing about our business," he says, "(is) we share with the whole country. We share the victories. We share the defeats. There is something ennobling about it, like these earthquakes. People want to share. There's a lot of tragedy, but there are highlights, too. Dispelling rumors is the important thing: You do it in a controlled manner. You don't want to stir people up."

Chambers was up in the news helicopter during both the Los Angeles riots—in Watts in 1965, and after the Rodney King verdict in 1992. The latter was the most emotional event Chambers says he's ever covered. He'd reported the trial; he'd lived in those streets; he'd seen the painfully slow rebuilding of the burned out sites during the past 20 years or so; he knew the people. The culprits were the few: "Ninety-nine percent of them were the ones that suffered." He'd been there before. "We were up in the 'copter a long time and it just got worse and worse. It was time-framed. Twenty years, and boom—in one fell swoop—ashes."

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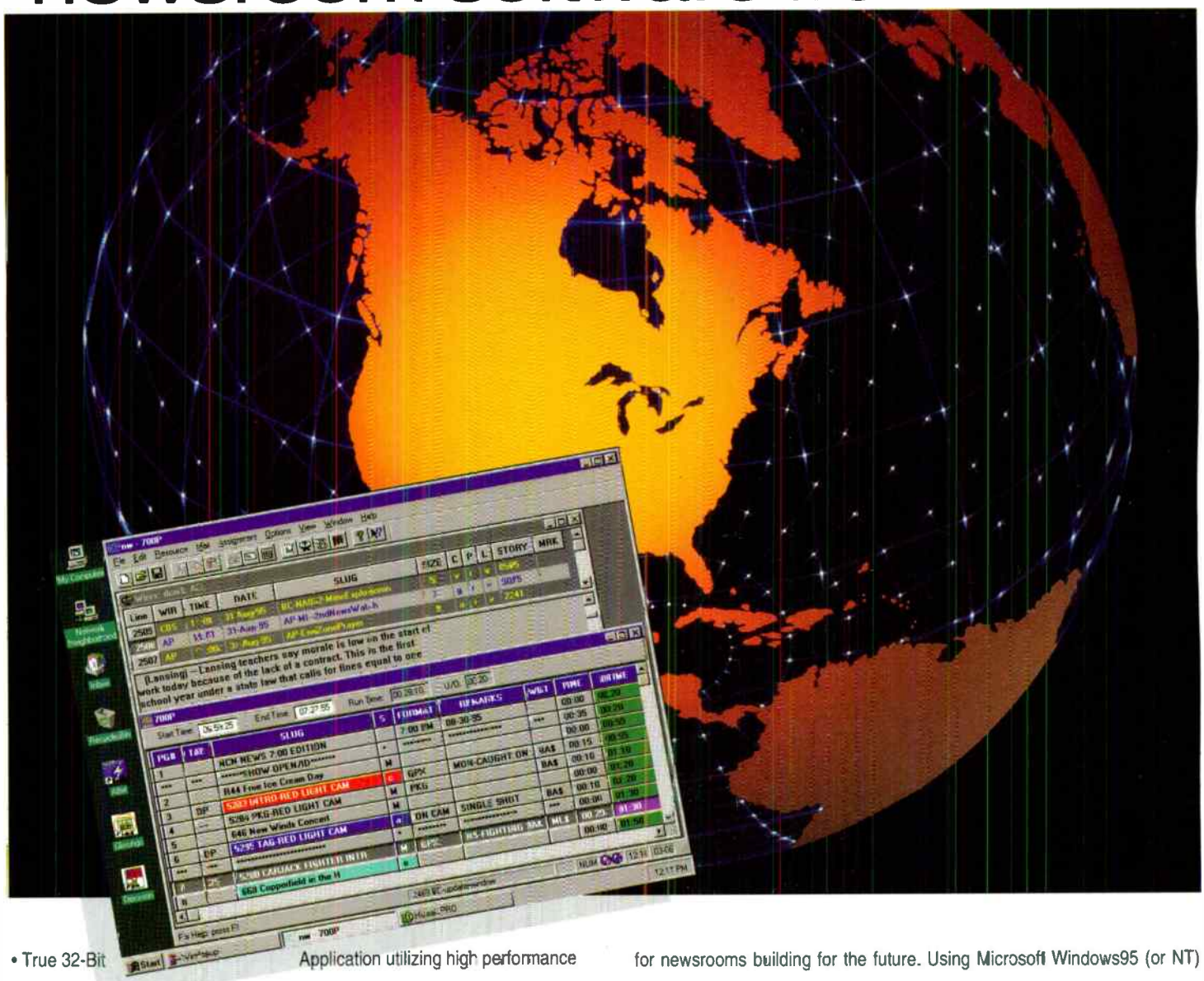

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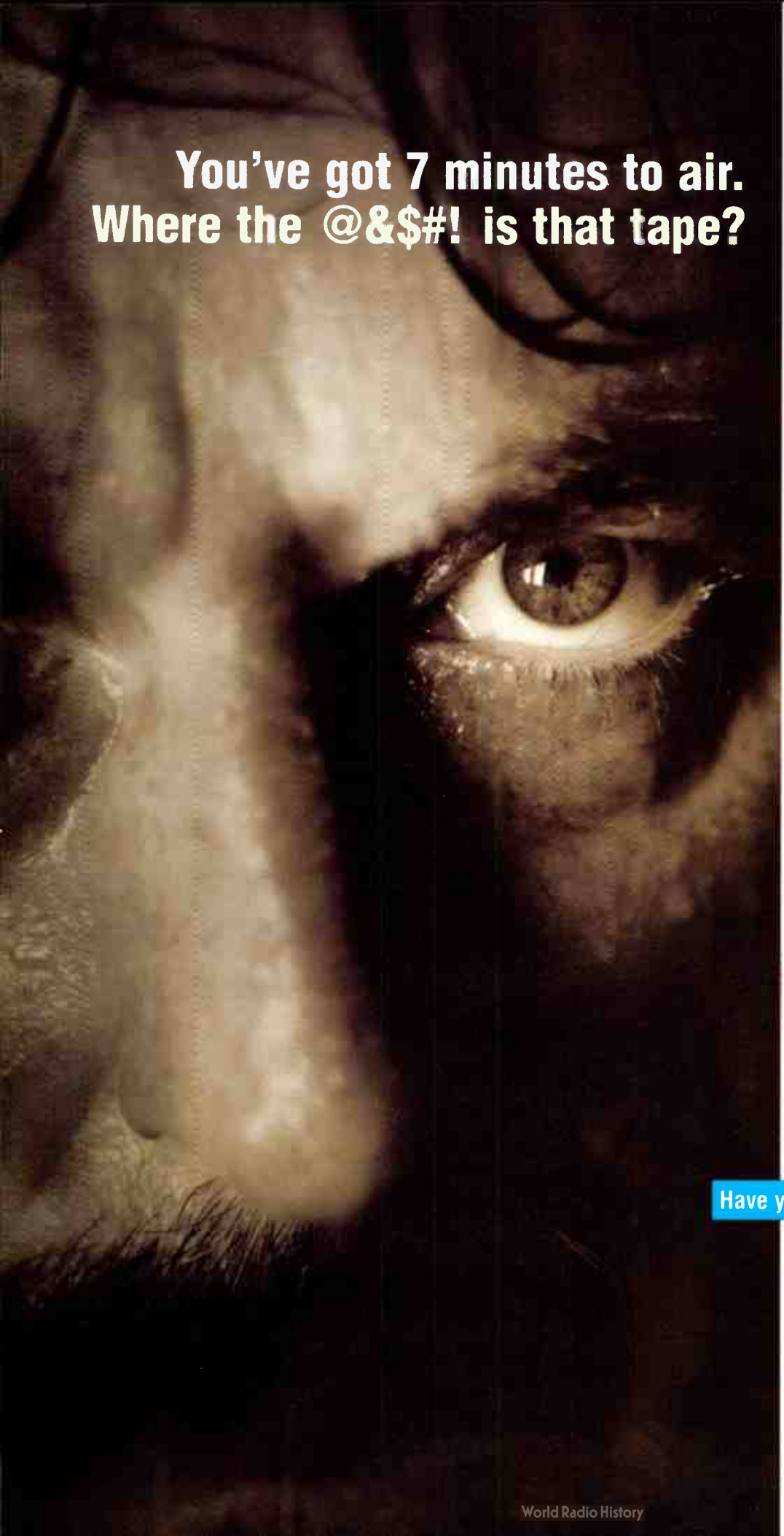

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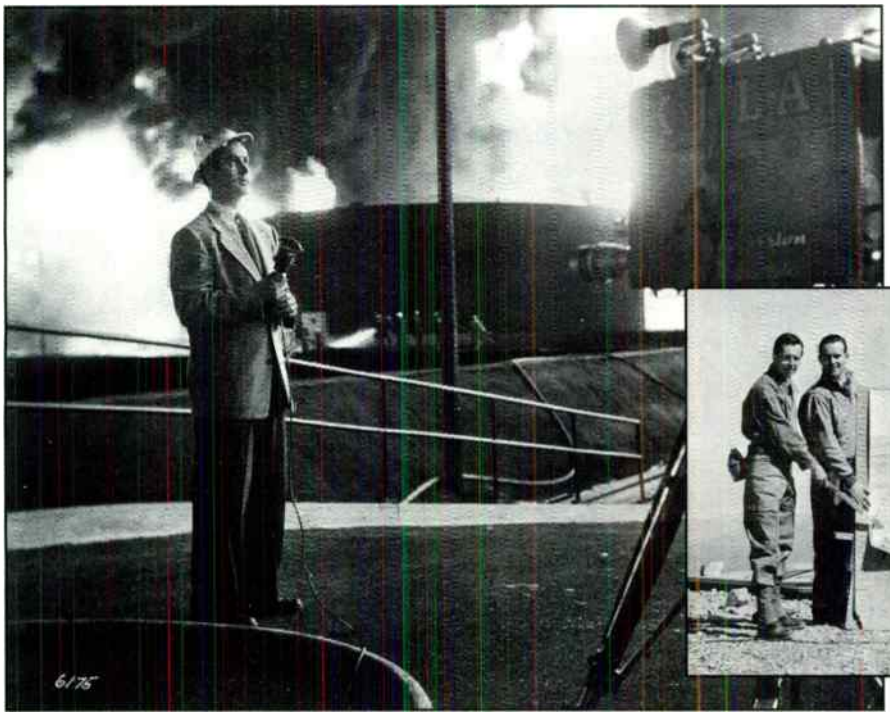
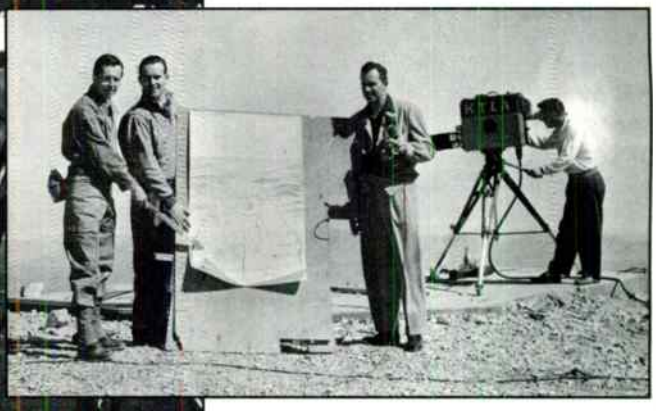
(continued from page 42)

The circumstances that converged to give Chambers his enormous historical advantage as a television reporter will probably "never happen again," says Joel Tator, executive producer of KTLA's The Morning News. "Companies change management so often no one thinks in the long term. It's become a young peoples' business. If you're over 50, they shoot you."

But Stan Chambers has never taken anything for granted, including each new day. "I take those few moments in the middle of chaos and say, 'Isn't this something?' It's fun, for instance, to be on the floor of a convention, in the midst of all those balloons and singing and horns. Who would think that you would be there to observe and share the moment with yourself. You are actually there." ■





Judy Flander is an independent journalist in Washington.

◀ Chambers pictured reporting from the scene of a 1951 refinery fire in Wilmington, CA...

...and an atomic bomb test at Yucca Flats, CA, in 1952. ▼

Photos courtesy of KTLA-TV

By Rob Puglisi

AN INSIDE LOOK AT MSNBC

Starting a news operation from scratch is never easy, but doing it amidst what may have been the biggest news month of the year is another thing entirely. MSNBC did both.

The fledgling MSNBC cable network had been up and running for less than 72 hours. Then it happened. Wednesday night, July 17. TWA Flight 800 exploded off Long Island and fell to the water in pieces. A major disaster—and a big local news story for a hungry worldwide audience.

Employees at the operations center in Fort Lee, NJ, were still trying to figure out which hallways led where, which desks were whose and what jobs were performed by which people. This wasn't just a few new staffers trying to learn the ropes. It was everybody who worked there. With few exceptions, everybody was new to the building, new to their jobs and new to each other. But together, just two days earlier, they had put MSNBC on the air.

"Launch day is always exciting, but the plane crash was the ultimate test for us, and we were on hour after hour,"

By Rob Puglisi

MSNBC.COM

The MSNBC experience is only partially attained by clicking your remote control. The other part is realized by clicking your mouse and going to MSNBC's World Wide Web site (www.msnbc.com). On July 15, the same day MSNBC debuted on cable systems across the country, MSNBC on the Internet launched into cyberspace.

"It's been exhilarating, exasperating, frustrating...everything that comes with a new venture, but ultimately, very satisfying," reports Merrill Brown, editor in chief of the Internet service, at the end of the first month.

The same big stories that confronted MSNBC on cable in its first weeks also had to be tackled by the MSNBC journalists who provide the Web site content.

"To have all that news happening around us, I'm just very proud of how we handled it," says Brown. "Would I like us to have reacted a little faster, do I wish we were fully staffed? Yes. But we're finding a voice, and every day we're creating an enormous amount of product. I think we're doing more original journalism for the Net than maybe anyone else in the world right now."

A popular misconception is that the Web site simply contains text and pictures that aired on the cable channel, just as many local stations' Web sites might have a news summary taken from the evening news. MSNBC tries not to do that.

"This is the first news organization set up on this scale to cover news on the Net. We hired someone from the *Far East Asia Economic Review* who's now traveling through Asia, filing reports. We hired a guy from *American Banker* magazine who's covering finance on the Net. We have national news correspondents and we have a sports desk," says Brown. "We want our news to be compared favorably to the world's existing news organizations."

MSNBC on the Internet can do things other news organizations can't, and Brown is perhaps most excited about the special software applications that help people personalize the news.

Most of the journalists who work for the MSNBC Internet site work in Washington...but way outside the beltway. Their newsroom is in one of the Microsoft buildings in Redmond, WA, and they're led by News Director Andy Beers, a former Seattle TV news director. The rest are in MSNBC's newsroom in Fort Lee, NJ.

The collaboration extends beyond NBC and Microsoft to local NBC affiliates. Stations can do local cut-ins during MSNBC's news programming and can provide local news for the Web site. At the end of MSNBC's first month, there were 12 stations doing news summaries.

"We were one of the beta sites. We have an MSNBC producer who dedicates his entire day to it," says Chere Avery, news director at WBBH-TV in Fort Myers, FL. "I'm very pleased that we're in on the ground floor. It's new technology...and it's the wave of the future." ■

recalls Mark Harrington, vice president and general manager of the new Microsoft/NBC News cable venture. "Everybody worked, everybody took part and we did a year's worth of growing in a couple days."

"Every problem we had became apparent to us," says Kathy Schiere, executive producer of The News with Brian Williams. She was in the control room for five hours that night, helping Williams navigate as bits and pieces of information trickled in.

"It was a blessing and a curse, but mostly a blessing. We learned overnight what otherwise would have taken months to find out," she says. "Mostly, we figured out just how many people it takes to do a big story 24 hours a day." And as those who have done it for even one newscast know, it always seems to take just a few more than you have.

Harrington says he quickly saw that MSNBC's overnight coverage needed to be beefed up and that a couple more employees needed to be added in the videotape area. He also discovered that no matter how many people worked at MSNBC, it would be the people who worked at the local news operations who could make the big difference.

"We learned the value of how to look to our affiliates for help. The network-owned station in New York was invaluable that night," Harrington says. "When a big story breaks now, we know to get up the newscast of the affiliate in that market, because they'll be all over it. Our Dallas affiliate broke the Michael Irvin story to the world, and we were the place they broke it."

The plane crash was only one of several trials Harrington's people would be put through during their first month. The Olympics, the bombing at Centennial Park and extensive live coverage of the Republican Convention in San Diego were also top stories.

"The first month was like a freight train. We had a short time to get up and get on the air, and on top of that, to have tough stories made it a remarkable time," Harrington says. "We took these people from all over the journalistic community, all the different networks, different parts of NBC, from CNBC and everywhere, and they forged themselves into a team."

Harrington himself came over from CBS. He had been vice president of news, a vice president of sports and most recently, senior vice president of CBS Media. When it came time to hire someone to shepherd Brian William's newscast, he tapped Schiere, who had worked at CBS as a 60 Minutes producer and as

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By Allison Gilbert

ONE WRITER'S PERSPECTIVE

An inside look at MSNBC's launch from a writer who worked the first newscast.

July 15, 1996

4 a.m. ***First Day***

The writers arrive. There are six of us—more than we've ever had in rehearsals. We're all very excited—and a little nervous. But mostly, we're thrilled to get into the real thing. We've been doing practice newscasts for a month now. The next 45 minutes are spent getting up to speed with what's making news that morning.

4:45 a.m. ***The Pep Talk***

The producers call the morning meeting. They've been here since 3 a.m. mapping out the show. Cathy Stevens, the morning show senior producer, gives a pep talk. She says we have support today all the way to the top of NBC news, and she means it. All day we will be live with NBC correspondents all over the world: Jim Maceda in Moscow, Kevin Tibbles in Belfast, Ireland, and Ed Rabel in Cuba.

5 a.m. ***Unusual Arrivals***

While we're still meeting, people are pouring into the newsroom that we usually don't see until much later in the day, including NBC's Director of National News Robert Dembo and MSNBC Daytime Anchor Jodi Applegate.

5:30 a.m. ***A Potential Disaster***

The 9 a.m. rundown, the first lineup for the first newscast, is frozen. Not good. No one can file their scripts. No one can format the show. Within moments, however, the computer specialists fix the problem. It was a brief but scary example of how our internal system was coping with hundreds of new users.

7:30 a.m. ***It's Official***

Virtually everyone stops working to watch as Jodi Applegate prepares for a cut-in on the Today Show. As Katie and Matt toss to her, there is silence in the newsroom. We are mesmerized by ourselves. It was the first time we saw our studio set on TV. When Jodi was cleared, she returned to the newsroom to a spontaneous explosion of applause. We are all pumped. Only 90 minutes to go.

8:59:50 a.m. ***The Final Moments***

Final countdown to air. The channel MSNBC was taking over (America's Talking) had been playing back-to-back promos. In the final hour a clock appeared, counting down to the launch of MSNBC. With 10 seconds to go, everyone in the newsroom joined together in roaring out the countdown. Five more seconds...4, 3, 2 and....

9 a.m. ***Launch!***

Silence falls over the newsroom. We are glued to the tube. The excitement of watching all of our work, our planning for this very moment, has finally been realized. For the next three minutes I felt I was watching a show with which I had no association. I just sat there, immobile. I was jolted back to action when I realized my deadlines were rapidly approaching. Back to work.

11:05 a.m. ***"30 Rock" Calls***

Current assignment: the 11:30 a.m. news summary. A compilation of six to 10 top stories (V/Os, SOTs and packages) for the news anchor to read. I'm about five minutes from filing when Cathy Stevens runs from the control room. She tells me she got a call from NBC senior management in New York. They say newswraps are too long. With only minutes until deadline, Cathy tells me to make them shorter. Kill stories, cut out copy—whatever it takes. A few tense minutes later, it made air. Deep breath.

Noon ***Debrief and a Look Ahead***

In about half an hour we will meet to go over what went well and what didn't. Overall, the show went smoothly. A few glitches, but we made it through and did good TV. If only we knew what was looming just around the corner: the crash of TWA Flight 800.

Our coverage catapulted MSNBC onto the national scene as a serious news service. We proved we could serve it up on TV and on the Internet. And just weeks later, we did it again with the Olympics and the Republican and Democratic National Conventions. ■

Allison Gilbert is a morning show writer for MSNBC.

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"A lot of the people you see on our air now are really interesting people who have something new and different to say."

a senior producer on the CBS Evening News.

"It's aways away from where I want to take it, but we haven't had a real normal time yet," says Schiere, as she prepared to take the show to Chicago for the Democratic Convention. "The key principle guiding me now is to be flexible and loose, not to be so rigid that we get locked into something. An hour gives you a lot of freedom."

The Williams show, which airs at 9 p.m. Eastern time, is a loose mix of taped reports, live debriefs, analysis and live interviews woven throughout the hour. It ends each night with a look at tomorrow's headlines from some of the major U.S. dailies, something many affiliates already have been doing on a local basis.

Comparisons with CNN are unavoidable. And while there are similarities, there are also big differences. MSNBC's day basically begins with a simulcast of the controversial Don Imus radio show, then from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. MSNBC programs news. The style is unique, more along the lines of Headline News than CNN, but it's more freewheeling, relying on contributors and analysts who are noticeably hipper and younger than most others.

"There's not exactly a show like ours on CNN," Schiere says. "The closest thing right now is Prime News, but it's a lot more tape driven than we are."

"A lot of the people you see on our air now are really interesting people who have something new and different to say," explains Steve Capus, who's the senior broadcast producer of MSNBC's dayside schedule. "That was the mandate. We've all seen the same faces on TV who have their debates on Sunday morning, and we all know where they stand on the stories. We all know where Jack Germond falls.

"So we put out a net looking to scoop up these new folks. Some of them, we had no idea if they could do television. These are just people who were out there, who are expressing interesting points of view."

Capus and dayside Executive Producer Bob Epstein oversee three news teams made up of a senior producer, two or three line producers, an on-air host who does most of the interviews and live debriefs and a news anchor who handles most of the straight news. The first team is up until noon, the next team goes to 3 p.m., and the third team takes over until 7 p.m.

"NBC has become a leaner and meaner news operation because of what's happening here," says Capus, who had been a supervising producer for Today. "Yes, we've bulked up, but for a very specific purpose...to be more aggressive in our daily news coverage as stories happen incrementally. We are breaking stories every hour, literally. We're out there pushing them forward and tracking them.

"The NBC news desk has even been moved from 30 Rock to Fort Lee, and that's a huge cultural change for this network. The whole desk is here; my office is 15 feet away from all the domestic and foreign editors," Capus adds.

Once the dayside news blocks are over, MSNBC turns to some of its high-profile talent during the first part of the evening. At 7 p.m., Jane Pauley hosts

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(continued from page 49)

"At the moment, we don't exactly know who our audience is. We're doing that scary thing of trying to be a little bit of everything to everybody."

Time and Again, a one-hour visit to the NBC News archives. One night it's an opportunity to see all the old interviews Jerry Garcia did, another night it's a chance to see the 1968 Democratic Convention, and on nearly every night, it's a chance to see Tom Brokaw with dark hair again.

At 8 p.m. it's back to the present, as Brokaw, Bryant Gumbel, Katie Couric, Bill Moyers and Bob Costas all take turns hosting Internight, an hour-long interview show.

"Look at some of the guests the first month, beginning with President Clinton the first night; then we went down to Atlanta and immediately started doing shows out of there," says Executive Producer Phil Griffin, a former senior producer at Nightly News.

"In Atlanta, we had the Carters on with Tom, and one of the great moments is when they talked about writing their book and...how it nearly split up their marriage...and they were serious."

While still broadcasting from the Olympics, Internight did an hour on cancer with well-known Georgians Brett Butler and Hamilton Jordan. Bob Costas interviewed Carl Lewis for an hour and devoted another hour to Phil Knight, the CEO of Nike.

"We match the guest with the host. I go over to 30 Rock all the time, and I'll say, 'Hey Tom, we want to get Phil Knight, you want to do him?'" says Griffin, whose staff is made up of a senior producer, four bookers/producers and four researchers/production assistants.

"The NBC news desk has even been moved from 30 Rock to Fort Lee, and that's a huge cultural change for this network. The whole desk is here."

After Internight and Brian Williams, and before the prime time programs start repeating all night long, the broadcast day concludes with The Site, an innovative program produced and taped in San Francisco by MSNBC and Ziff-Davis Publishing and hosted by newcomer Soledad O'Brien. It's a show about computers, technology and the Internet that doesn't take itself too seriously and features a studio full of contributors who sit at their PCs, Macs and laptops while O'Brien walks among them, gleaning the latest information about Web sites, software and equipment.

"At the moment, we don't exactly know who our audience is. We're doing that scary thing of trying to be a little bit of everything to everybody," explains Executive Producer Kathy Moore, another former CBS newsie who rose to senior producer of the CBS Evening News before taking a breather in 1994.

"When I quit CBS I bought my second computer, a Mac, and joined an online service thinking there may be something to this computer thing. So, when the NBC people called, I said, 'Well, I have a computer,'" Moore says.

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(continued from page 50)

"Everybody has risen to the challenge editorially, and they're doing it with imagination and with high journalist standards."

"Actually, they saw that as a bonus, because I know television, and when the scripts come in and they're not quite in English, it's easy for me to say, 'Wait a minute, not everyone knows this term.'"

At the same time Moore is overseeing production of each night's show, Suzanne Stefanac is in a nearby office, supervising the staff of The Site's Web site (www.thesite.com). Viewers are directed to the Web for more stories about computers and more in-depth stories about subjects from the TV show.

It's a microcosm of how the whole MSNBC concept works...the broadcast journalists of MSNBC, based mostly in New Jersey, dovetailing with the cyberjournalists of MSNBC, based mostly in a newsroom at Microsoft's campus in Redmond, WA.

"Andy Lack (NBC News president) came up with this idea in the first place. He gets the credit for conceptualizing it," says Harrington. "I just get to be the person on this side who draws everybody together."

And at the end of MSNBC's first month on the air, how did he feel everybody was doing?

"Everybody has risen to the challenge editorially, and they're doing it with imagination and with high journalist standards," Harrington says. "And we all still like each other." ■

Rob Puglisi is executive producer at WTEN-TV in Albany, NY.

Note: MSNBC Vice President and General Manager Mark Harrington is the luncheon speaker at RTNDA96 in Los Angeles on Thursday, October 10.

By Rob Puglisi

CYBERFEEDBACK

To find out what "real people" think of MSNBC, I went on line and had some cyberchats with people who said they were familiar with the all-news channel. Here's what they said...

"Time devoted to substance of stories is still not adequate. I had high hopes that MSNBC would de-emphasize raw political analysis and move more toward issue analysis. They analyze the horse race of the politics of health care and ignore things such as 'Why does health care cost too much?' So they are like mainstream TV...."

Gregg M. Gaylord
42 years old
Indianapolis

"Thoughtful and provoking. The guests were refreshingly new faces in the discussion round, a little young to have solid opinions. Then the review of the '60s I saw had some fantastic guests, although they repeated the show only hours later. I thought that was boorish."

Carola Pfortner
39 years old
Pardeeville, WI

"I entered the Web site strictly as a curiosity. It was nice, full, but seemed rather overbearing in the amount (of news). I'd give it an '8' on functionality and looks. After one visit I'm not amazed by it, nor disheartened by it...just impressed with its general content, assembly and offerings."

Shane Immelt
42 years old
Oak Lawn, IL

"We don't get MSNBC in Seattle, but their crash coverage preempted CNBC, so I was able to flip back and forward between it and CNN. They seemed just like CNN in that they had absolutely nothing to say except 'A plane had crashed,' but they had to say it for several hours. Live coverage is sort of like seeing sausage being made."

Andrew Carlon
15 years old
Seattle

"CNN with exposed brick. Very slick sets, but same...talking-head propaganda. I would watch it again as an alternative to CNN if something were going on...I'd be curious to see if they could get the video on as fast as CNN does."

Ralph (Last name withheld)
41 years old
Fairfax County, VA

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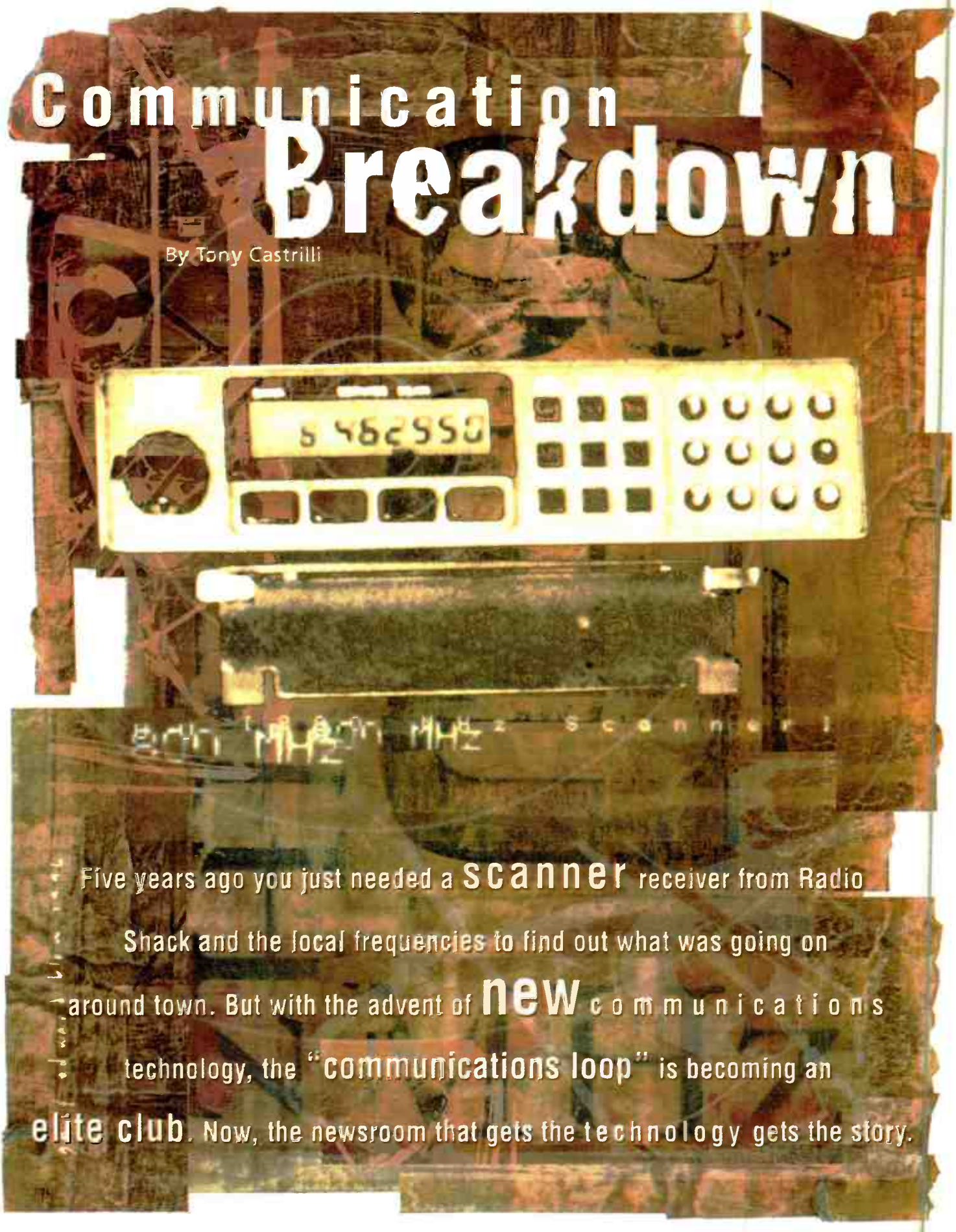
Communication Breakdown

By Tony Castrilli



Five years ago you just needed a **scanner** receiver from Radio Shack and the local frequencies to find out what was going on around town. But with the advent of **new** communications technology, the **"communications loop"** is becoming an **elite club**. Now, the newsroom that gets the technology gets the story.

Illustration & Design: Gary Edward Blum, Chen Design Associates. Scanner Photo: Joshua C. Chen

In a flash, thousands of police radios erupted with activity. A moment later, fire and rescue communication systems throughout the region exploded with chatter. Next came federal government radio traffic, quickly multiplying the commotion. The chaotic scene was triggered by an early morning explosion in Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta on July 27. But despite the intense volume of radio activity, only a fraction of the communication was picked up by conventional scanners in Atlanta newsrooms.

The dawn of 800 MHz trunked radio systems has arrived, and your news operation better jump on board fast before your newsroom is left in the dark. Atlanta is just one of the many metropolitan areas that has almost entirely converted to trunked radio systems. So when the bomb went off, it was the stations with pre-programmed 800 MHz talk-group radios that were able to listen to the authorities during the emergency.

Unfortunately, the inexpensive and versatile staple of every newsroom, the scanner receiver, may become extinct sooner than expected. Therefore, a clear understanding of what 800 MHz trunked radio is—and the best way to monitor it—is essential, because a trunked system is certainly coming to a town near you.

First, a few points to refresh your memory. Conventional radio systems are comprised of one- or two-way channels (communication paths). A transmission between the base station and units in the field takes place when the dispatcher keys the microphone, communicates a message and a mobile or portable unit does the same to reply. Conventional users also may communicate with each other, portable to portable, if they are all on the same channel. However, to change channels, operators on both ends must make a manual switch. A big problem with these conventional systems is that large governments have some exceptionally busy channels and some that are hardly used. Also, government departments may even share a single frequency, thus creating interference with one another.

As a result of these problems, a more efficient communication method was developed. Now for some history. According to Ray Carlson, Lewisville, TX, was the first local government to implement an 800 MHz trunked radio system in 1983. Carlson was an engineer on the Lewisville project and has been the radio systems manager for Orange County, FL, for the past seven years. Carlson says all the top 50 markets have at least one jurisdiction on the trunked system, and that most governments are heading that way.

The list of reasons for the 800 MHz trunked radio push is lengthy: better communication range for large regions; exceptional audio quality; efficient use of limited channel space; low maintenance: the ability to send data with transmissions; security against hackers; and simplified cross-jurisdictional communication. Cpl. Chris Malinowski, the 800 MHz liaison officer for Baltimore County, MD, says his department converted to 800 MHz trunked radios in 1990 and their "communication flexibility is 200 percent better." Malinowski points out that the 800 MHz communication system coverage exceeds the county's 610-square-mile boundary.

So how does trunking work? In simple terms trunking is a system of frequency utilization controlled by a computer that routes transmissions to any one of a finite number of channels. In a trunked radio system all fixed stations and mobile units share a particular group of frequencies, and each transmission within the group can be assigned to any available channel. The entire system is managed by a computer, with one channel assigned as the control channel. When a microphone is keyed, the computer selects an unused channel to transmit and switches all the radios in the talk group to that channel.

Greg Guise, a veteran photographer at WUSA-TV in Washington, describes 800 MHz trunking like this: Old scanners were like McDonald's—you have to choose a line, get in and then wait for your cashier to take your order. Trunked line systems are like going to a bank—everyone gets into one line and is assigned to the next available teller.

(continued on page 59)

How To Be A Wall Street Producer

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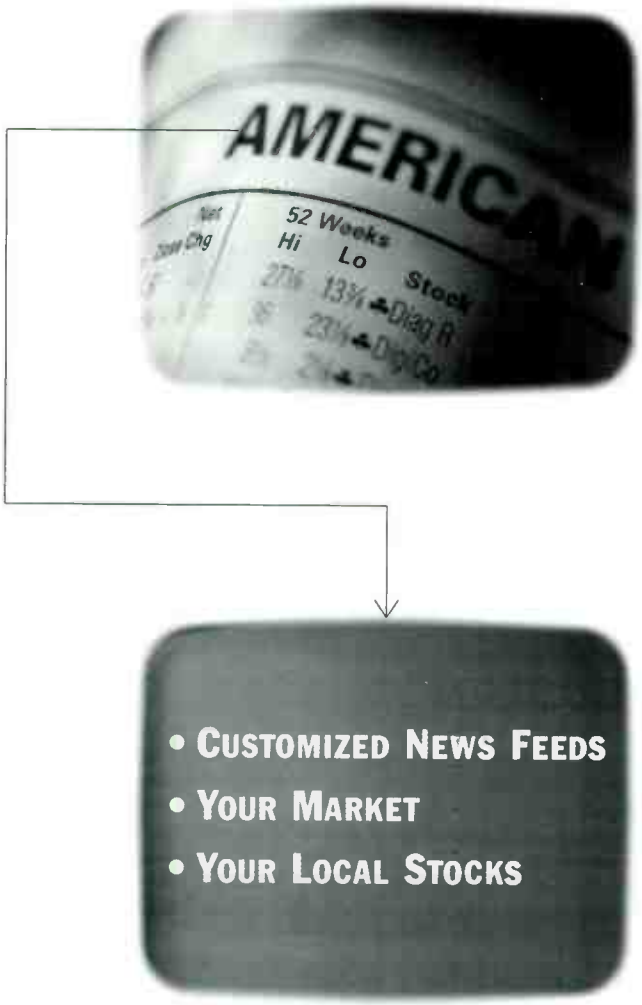

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"The result has been an exclusive story almost every day, because the other local stations haven't invested in the technology yet."

Those are the basics, but it's more complicated than that. There are two types of transmission possibilities. In the first type a delay keeps the transmission channel open for several seconds so the reply can be heard on the same channel. Scenario number two is more complex. In the microsecond that the transmission is completed the system automatically goes back to the control channel. Any reply will be reassigned by the computer to the next available channel.

Finally, all the radios on the system are programmed with multiple sets of instructions, which vary from radio to radio. As a result, units may need to be divided into talk groups.

So how can your station get back into the communications loop? Conventional 800 MHz scanners are available and inexpensive. These are basically the same old scanners newspeople have been using for years. They will monitor the trunked radio systems, if you know the frequencies, but when the controller radio jumps transmissions to a different frequency, you won't be able to follow. You are at the mercy of a computer that selects what you hear and are forced to listen to everything going on in the region, including highway maintenance and the dog catcher..

With an 800 MHz trunked radio receiver, you will be able to follow the communications effortlessly—provided the radio is programmed properly. Simply put, the media use the same radios as the public safety agencies do, without the microphone. This system enables you to hear exactly what the dispatcher, mobile and portable units are saying without any interruptions or interference. The preprogrammed radio automatically will receive every transmission made from any talk group that it is programmed to monitor.

Here are the basic steps to getting set up. First, you must buy the radios. Then sit down with the government agencies and acquire permission to monitor their communication. Next a plan needs to be worked out to determine what type of access will be granted. Finally, the media must have their own radios programmed, either by the public safety agency or a separate contractor.

WFTV in Orlando, FL, just started monitoring talk groups earlier this year, according to Photographer and System Coordinator Wayne Murphy. Murphy says his station has more than 20 radios that monitor dozens of 800 MHz talk groups. He adds, "The result has been an exclusive story almost every day, because the other local stations haven't invested in the technology yet." Murphy notes that it was a good relationship with the local agencies that granted them access to the best talk groups, plus a financial obligation from the station to buy the equipment that gave WFTV the edge.

Now for the pitfalls. A solid relationship with the agencies you wish to monitor is a must, because they determine which talk groups you will be able to monitor. The best plan of attack is to organize all the local media and to negotiate extensively with the government for the most complete frequencies list. Legally we have a right to monitor everything, but since the agencies are programming the radio, the media are at their mercy. The courts ultimately may have to sort out this complex issue.

Another pitfall: The 800 MHz trunked radio receivers are expensive. A single radio may cost $2,000, and multiple radios to monitor various talk groups are a must. In addition, once the programming agreement has been granted most governments will charge the media to program the radios. No one wants tax dollars going to program radios used by the media. If the government agency won't program the radio, you are forced to go to a private programmer such as Motorola. This process also can be costly.

Finally, this technology is sneaking up in areas across the country very quickly. Your local police and fire department may convert soon. To continue to be successful and competitive at monitoring emergency calls, news departments need to be dedicated to training their employees, negotiating with the agencies and spending some money.

It's clear that the familiar crackle of a newsroom scanner is quickly yielding to complex forms of communication. For the immediate future, it appears that 800 MHz trunked scanners are going to be the norm, but beyond that, it's impossible to say. But one thing is for sure, we will all be listening. For now, aggressively embrace 800 MHz trunking systems, and you won't miss a thing. ■

Tony Castrilli is assignment editor for WUSA-TV in Washington.

By Catherine Cowdery

THE INTERNET: EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

Many radio stations are finding innovative ways to use the Internet, and some are actually making money from their cyberventures. A Web site is rapidly becoming a standard for broadcasters, but the true trailblazers are expanding beyond a simple home page into unique business ventures. More importantly, these stations are helping define the new medium.

Remember Union Pacific Railroad? In 1896 Union Pacific was one of the biggest companies in the world, says Craig Hahn, Internet coordinator for WSOC-FM and WSSS-FM in Charlotte, NC. "They practically owned everything. They were huge....Well, now they are a very small portion of the market." Their problem? "Union Pacific saw itself in the train business instead of being in the transportation business."

Hahn says his stations don't want to see that happen to them. "We're not just in the radio business; we're in the communications business." That's why they've decided to commit precious resources to developing and maintaining a Web site.

Richard Rieman, vice president of Radio Data Group in Fairfax, VA, uses a more contemporary example: FM radio. He remembers when general managers were unwilling to purchase new equipment to launch FM stations because they couldn't foresee the return on their investment. "There is a parallel on the Internet," Rieman says. "It's a new medium that's available for radio stations for their talent and their formats." When new technology makes real-time audio and video possible over the Internet, radio should not be sitting on its hands, notes Rieman.

"The people who are pioneers in this industry are investing time and effort right now to make sure they are there when those doors open. Now is the time for radio stations to get a presence on the Internet and find out what's out there. The cost of a web site is extremely small and getting smaller," Rieman adds.

Peggy Miles is president of Intervox in Washington, a company that helps stations develop their Web sites. She says you can spend anywhere from $200 to hundreds of thousands of dollars. "The question to ask is 'Why am I doing this? What is my strategy? Am I using the Web site as a business card, or is it a promotional source that I can relate and brand and develop as a relationship with my listeners or users?'"

"Our real sales effort started at the beginning of this year. Since then, we've made over $20,000 revenue. That's not bad for nonradio."

But the stations that pay big money for Web sites are usually getting more out of the medium. For most stations, smaller investments will be made.

"I've heard of broadcast companies paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for a Web site, which is very, very overstated. Literally, you can put a Web site on, cost-wise, for $6,000-10,000 and do a phenomenal job," says Hahn. He ought to know. WSOC and WSSS are relatively new to the Web.

Hahn, Rieman, Miles and Dean Sakai, Internet director for KMPS and KZOK in Seattle, all have the same advice: Make sure you keep the Web pages fresh, and put one person in charge of the effort. A Web guru, if you will.

Miles is emphatic about the need for a Web champion, someone who has the authority and vision to pull it all together. "Otherwise, it's going to be disjointed from 'imagineering,' to the programming to the technical department." She says you can do things internally, externally or a combination of both.

"If a station has to hire a full-time person to do this, it would definitely not be a money-making proposition," warns Rieman. After all, says Sakai, "Radio stations are cutting people. It's hard to justify hiring anyone right now." The key? Sakai believes you should "distribute the duties among the staff, and you can also try to automate as much as possible. There are people out there making software programs for that, and that's one of the questions that has to be solved: How do I make my site almost run by itself without a lot of cumbersome procedures?"

WSOC has figured that one out. Hahn says he spends about half an hour a week in terms of actual site management for both stations. "We've got about three different areas we update weekly, and those have been farmed out to a promotions manager."

Hahn thinks updating a Web page is vital. "Remember, just like you're not going to run commercials that are outdated, just like you're not going to run news stories that are outdated, you've got to keep the Web page current," he says.

Which means local content is king and will keep people coming back.

"There will be thousands—*thousands*—of Web sites out there that offer national and international news," says Rieman. "But the number that offer local news, in your local community, will be as limited as the number (of local media outlets)." Rieman believes radio Web sites need more than fresh music, promo-

tions and ad content. For instance, "Every Web site should have links to local weather maps," he says. "It becomes a natural extension of what a newsroom does to put their content on the Web site."

Intervox's Miles says, "The news department has one of the best abilities to integrate their activities on the Internet." She offers several examples, including a special on latch-key children. Imagine, says Miles, being able to offer your audience all the information you've gathered on the story. In addition to the short piece that runs on the air, the news department can make more information available on the Web site. "You're allowing your listeners to get further news information on demand, when they want it and when it's very interesting," Miles says. "When they're using your Web site, you can promote upcoming stories that you know are pertinent to their needs." It creates a symbiotic cycle, sending the listener from the Web site to the station and back again.

And while general mangers anxiously watch their bottom line, Hahn has some important news: Their Internet revenue has definitely offset the costs they have in it. Hahn admits that it's a "minimal amount, compared to what we do for commercial schedules. But that's just because...we're learning."

Sakai says, "Our real sales effort started at the beginning of this year. Since then, we've made over $20,000 revenue. That's not bad for nonradio."

Rieman estimates that radio stations can make conservatively about $2,000 a month through a Web site. It all depends on the size of the market and the commitment. Definitely not a way to get rich quick, but it is a way to earn while you learn.

Stations currently are making more money on the Internet in three ways: selling banner ads and station merchandise, constructing Web sites for advertisers and serving as Internet service providers (ISP). Serving as an ISP means the stations are selling accounts that allow companies or individuals to connect to the Internet.

Banner ads are reminiscent of magazine ads. They simply appear on a Web page, instead of a magazine page. However, they're causing a revolution of sorts in broadcast advertising, which always has been point to multipoint. Banner ads on a station's Web site now allow for point to point advertising, which is still in the developmental phase.

Software is now available that allows stations to rotate ads on their site and also

KZOK created a partnership with Sprynet, a national Internet service provider, to help generate revenue.

to track exactly how many people see each ad, notes Rieman. The software helps an advertiser decide whether to run the banner ad for a set amount of time or until a certain number of people see it.

Banner ads come cheap. "It's a certain amount of cents per view or a few more cents per click-through," says Sakai. The more expensive click-through is when users "click" their mouse on a banner ad and are sent directly to the advertiser's Web page.

Building Web sites is where the profit is right now, says Hahn. "There are all those advertisers out there who've seen all the TV ads with WWW addresses on them, and they want them, too. We're here to provide them with the means to get on the Web." He believes it will be the biggest growth area for the next few years. Hahn says advertisers pay WSOC to build and maintain their Web pages. To make money this way, some stations are building the Web pages themselves while others are contracting out the work and taking a part of the profit.

Fewer stations are experimenting with becoming an ISP. To make it easy, Rieman says that they have set it up so that radio stations work with an existing large Internet service provider such as CompuServe's Sprynet.

KMPS has taken the leap. Says Sakai, "You don't have to answer technical calls, and you don't have to do the sign-up because it's on line. You're doing what you do best: You're a marketing company."

KMPS buys the start-up disks from Sprynet and gives them out to listeners. When those listeners sign up, KMPS gets part of their initial sign up fee, then a residual from the monthly user fee.

"So it's a revenue stream," says Sakai, that involves minimal effort. "You're being paid for your loyal listeners."

It's also a good deal for the ISPs. "It costs a lot of money for an individual access provider or on-line service to send all those disks out and get somebody to sign up," Rieman says. "So working with a radio station that has a huge built-in audience is a real advantage for them."

Tom Draper has taken the idea one step further. He calls Web pages "a piece of cake." He adds, "You're going to make no money. It's just exposure and bragging rights." He's earned his right to say that: He's president and owner of Draper Communications, which includes WBOC-TV, KGBT-TV and an on-line service.

"We wanted to, in a sense, have a bit of control of our own destiny. We are in a small market, and we wanted to create a second channel of information over the telephone, if you will. We decided we would like to have our foot in two different camps," Draper says. So he spent about $400,000 on equipment and created DelMarVa OnLine. It's an ISP and an operating division of WBOC. "We are very similar to an America Online or Prodigy or CompuServe," he says. "We

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"You don't want to be left in the dust. I guess you can overcommit and spend too much money on something that's not entirely proven yet. But if you're totally out of the game, as something starts happening, you're behind."

provide the access to the Internet, but we also provide the 'content community' wrapped in our home page."

DelMarVa employs 10 people full time and three people in the newsroom to constantly update the information pages. Draper says, "It's not a get-rich business." Yet he proudly points out that DelMarVa has a positive cash flow, with 2,300 subscribers.

He's philosophical about his future prospects, though. "It may be that AT&T will blow me out of the water," he says. But the goal was to fully utilize WBOC's resources. "I have the ability to reach people frequently with a good message. Why give that away? Why not integrate that?" he asks. "This is my foray into a second channel. A different medium. It hasn't cost me a lot. If you buy another television station the size of WBOC it'll cost you up to $30 million. I'm spending $400,000 to $500,000. There's no comparison."

Sakai's advice? KMPS' web guru says, "You don't want to be left in the dust. I guess you can overcommit and spend too much money on something that's not entirely proven yet. But if you're totally out of the game, as something starts happening, you're behind. You want to be in there enough to actually be learning some things." He points to a concrete payoff: U S West signed a contract with Sakai's stations because of their Web site.

Hahn says that's as important in Charlotte as it is in Seattle. Being known as the technological leader "allows us to get beyond the cost-per-point game, which is what we all try to do. We're able to command a premium for our product because we're an information and technological source."

Miles puts it in perspective: "A station can ignore the Internet and continue doing business as usual." Which means that station is following Union Pacific's lead and turning a blind eye to the information revolution.

"As we move from a manufacturing age to an information age," says Miles, "you're seeing a shift in the way people do business. Industry giants like AT&T, MCI and Microsoft are investing billions of dollars in new technology that will revolutionize the way we communicate and do business with one another. It means there's going to be a change in the way broadcasters do business."

Broadcasters are in an excellent position, she adds, since "they have superior content and programming because they've done it over the years. They also still have control of the most influential marketing and communicating device on the planet, which is free broadcast radio and television. As we move into the next phases, they can use that power, that influence, to use the Internet as another tool." ■

Catherine Cowdery is a radio correspondent/anchor for ABC News in New York.

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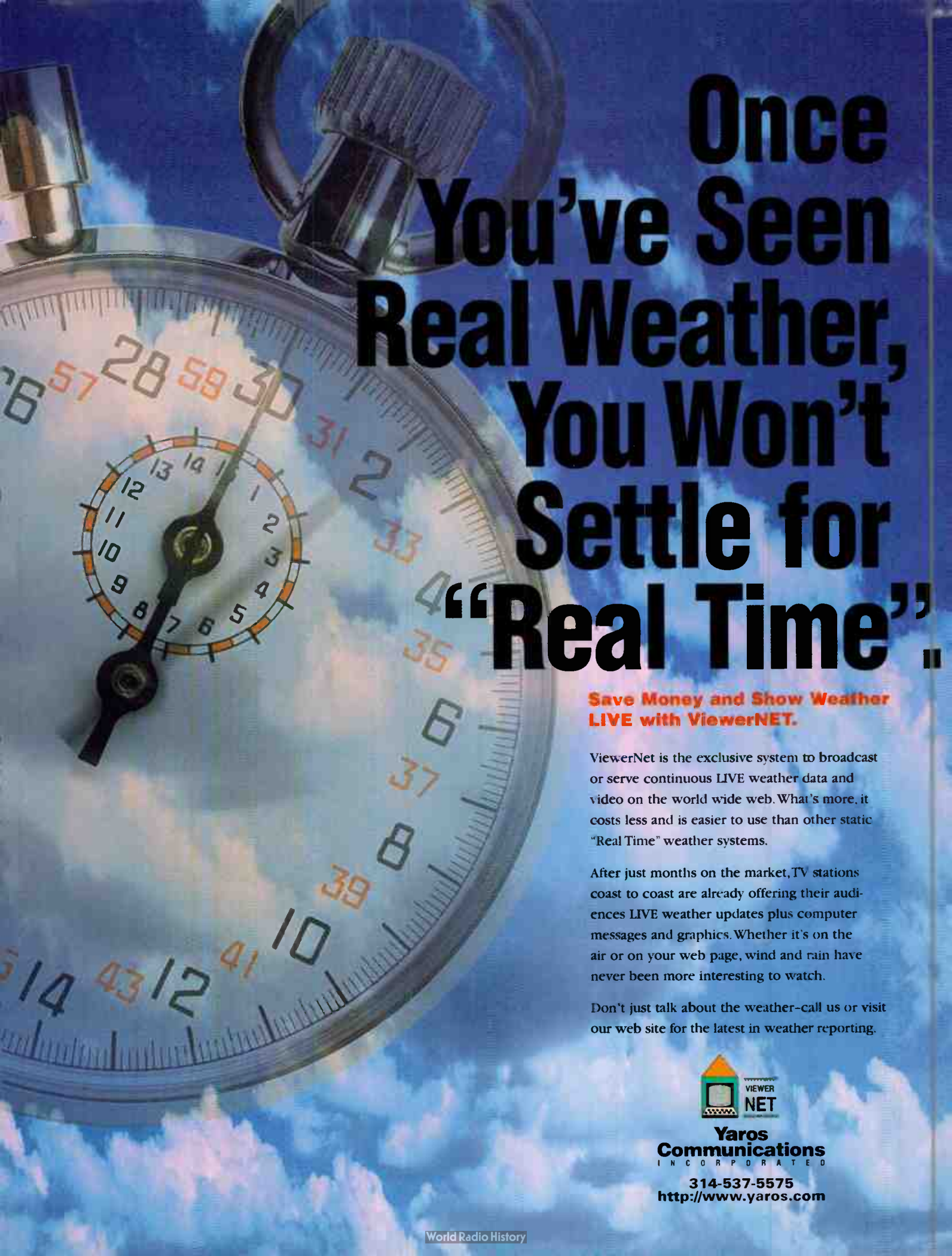

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By Adam Clayton Powell III

WNBC GEARS UP FOR THE FUTURE

With the lightning-fast advances in newsroom technology, news organizations are facing the challenge of bringing their newsrooms into the 21st century. For most news managers the question is no longer *whether* to upgrade, but *when*. WNBC-TV in New York made that decision a while ago and is currently operating out of its newsroom of the future.

On July 8, WNBC-TV in New York went on line with the first phase of its new computerized "newsroom of the future." The assignment desk was incorporated into the new newsroom on July 11, and the station's new flash camera for bulletins and updates was installed on July 15. On July 17, WNBC's newsroom was christened by a breaking local story: the crash of TWA Flight 800 off Long Island.

"Baptism by fire" is how that night is remembered by Joe Berini, WNBC's director of broadcast operations and engineering.

During the following weeks WNBC aired live specials every day, extended regular newscasts, started new 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. news updates and produced daily live coverage of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) briefings on the TWA crash.

They also had to work around NBC's schedule of Olympics coverage, which delayed WNBC's late news from 11 p.m. to midnight and stretched the newsroom's normal day into the small hours of the morning.

A difficult accomplishment by any standard, but even more so while working out the kinks of a new computerized newsroom that WNBC hopes will take the station into the digital age.

With the lightning-fast advances in news technology, WNBC faced the same challenge as all other news organizations: when and how to make the move into the 21st century? WNBC decided to tackle the problem full force and is nearly midway through a phased shift to a completely digital computerized newsroom.

The heart of the new newsroom is a circular assignment desk, with editors facing out toward the different departments that radiate from the desk like spokes of a wheel.

Face one direction and you see a bank of desks for managers. Rotate slightly and you are facing the writers and producers for the different newscasts. Just beyond the writers are glass-walled offices for WNBC's anchors. Next to the anchors' offices is the "flash cam," a robot camera used for bulletins, hourly news updates and breaking news coverage. And just to the right, on the far side of the flash cam, is a conference room that temporarily houses the computers that power WNBC's Internet site.

"All incoming feeds are available to all producers, so they can write stories (in one window) while they are watching the feeds (in another)."

Now turn 180 degrees, with the flash cam behind you. A few years ago, you would have faced the familiar story board; today, you are facing two banks of monitors, more than three dozen altogether, some split to show four or 16 feeds on a single monitor.

One bank shows the continuous feeds from WNBC's Skycam network, remote robotic cameras stationed throughout the station's coverage area at key traffic and transportation points. The other bank shows every feed coming into the plant. Wondering whether a story is ready or if a feed is in-house yet? Just look at the board—or rather, at the bank of monitors.

Next to the monitors and just a few steps from the assignment desk is a glass-walled playback room. Yes, that's playback to air. And with nine edit rooms a few yards away (and three more under construction), there is no more running down the hall with late-breaking tape, as memorialized in the movie "Broadcast News."

Just beyond playback—still within 10 yards of the assignment desk—are office areas under construction for reporters, for sports and for the specialized consumer and medical production units. Those are all scheduled for completion by the end of the year.

How is it all working?

When the new newsroom was tested by a huge breaking story on July 17, the new layout proved just as important as all of the new technology.

"I'm not saying there wasn't any shouting," said Paula Walker, vice president and news director of WNBC-TV. "But there was no calling to find out if the feeds were coming in. Anyone at any desk could look around to see the feeds coming in."

Everyone in the newsroom also can look around and watch the new technology coming in, month by month. WNBC decided not to buy all new equipment but to phase in new computer and production gear during the next few years, which allows training to extend "PC by PC."

In the minutes after the TWA crash, according to Walker and Berini, it was essential that most newsroom staffers were working on the old, familiar hardware.

"If we had all new PCs," said Walker, "it would not have been pretty."

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In WNBC's new newsroom, users will be able to call up live video right at their desks.

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When the new newsroom was tested by a huge breaking story on July 17, the new layout proved just as important as all of the new technology.

(But across the Hudson River in New Jersey, WNBC's corporate cousin, the all-news MSNBC cable service, faced exactly that challenge on July 17: a brand new newsroom with all new hardware, much new software and a completely new staff.)

In 1998, when the newsroom is finished, there will be all new PCs—150 of them. Anyone anywhere in the newsroom will be able to call up video and graphics from anywhere in the building to the terminal on his or her desk, view multiple video sources on multiple windows on the computer screen, build a story and then send it back to the computer system for review and playback to air.

A glimpse of the future is already at the assignment desk, where everyone has a large monitor running multiple windows. And on the desks of the managers and producers, all of the "dumb" terminals have been replaced by new Pentium PCs with video cards capable of delivering live video from any feed in the building to a window on the computer screen.

"All incoming feeds are available to all producers," said Berini, "so they can write stories (in one window) while they are watching the feeds (in another)."

"You can even watch while they are building your graphics," added Walker.

But the technological backbone of the new newsroom is not the new terminals on top of the desks; it's under the floor in the form of cabling, linking all of the desks to deliver text, graphics and video on demand to every location in the newsroom.

"The real problem is the network," explained Berini, and that problem is becoming increasingly common: bandwidth.

WNBC has installed Category 5 computer cabling throughout the new newsroom, with four Category 5 lines to each desk. A Category 5-rated cable is one of the fastest cables available for transferring digital information, and can transfer large amounts of information at very fast speeds. But Berini does not like to talk about limits or even routine operating loads because no one really knows what the requirements will be just a few years from now. Instead, Berini uses a metaphor of Manhattan traffic for the new system, but the flow of data in the newsroom is presumably somewhat more efficient than Manhattan's streets.

"We are putting in a system of traffic lights," said Berini. "One way to speed up the network is to segmentize it."

By installing so many redundant lines, the network can be organized into different segments and then reorganized as demands shift. All of this is in preparation for the day when WNBC plunges into the nonlinear, video-on-demand phase of news production. But that day is not today.

"We have chosen to wait until nonlinear becomes viable," said Berini, but he expects his wait will be over sometime next year. "The question is how far (data) compression is going to go. Today you can get a server with a hundred hours of video, but if everyone wants to access video, the system will crash."

By late next year Berini expects to have compressed video on every desk. Journalists will be able to call up video, compile decision lists and then send the decision lists back to the central computer system, which will "assemble" the story for review and playback to air.

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The price tag is not small. WNBC's total renovation is budgeted at $18 million—but that includes a new studio, new control room and a new master control. The newsroom alone is a multimillion-dollar project.

Of course nonlinear "assembly" does not involve tape any more than using a computer word processing program involves typewriter ribbons and copy sets. Different writers, producers and editors can "assemble" different versions of the same story, sharing the same source video, without having to pass cassettes back and forth—and without altering the original.

But for now, cassettes are the rule of the day. WNBC is still using its familiar M-II videotape equipment for acquisition, editing and playback. But Berini said the days of M-II are numbered in his shop.

The demise of M-II could come as early as next year after the station moves to server-based production. But that transition will cause a big bottleneck of video waiting to be dubbed to the server, much like a detour in City Hall Plaza backs up traffic to the Brooklyn Bridge.

The reason: M-II tape must be dubbed at real time over to the video server, and real time—while quick for us humans—is fast becoming the slow lane of video production.

As a result, buying a video server next year will force WNBC to buy new field equipment as well, and Berini is looking at tape formats that can dub video at four times normal speed or faster. And that means the capital budget might need to increase at more than normal speed or faster.

"It's like my mother used to tell me," said Berini. "There's no free lunch."

One controversial decision in the new newsroom was to remove the editing terminals from the edit rooms, which means everyone has to go from the edit room to a nearby desk to write copy.

"I want to encourage people to get out of the edit rooms," said Walker, but she conceded she may need to reconsider the move.

Meanwhile, demands on the news operation continue to grow. This fall WNBC starts local news cut-ins every half hour for New York area cable systems carrying MSNBC, adding another set of daily deadlines to the rhythm of the newsroom.

By midsummer the newsroom already was providing coverage of local news for MSNBC, initially just on MSNBC's on-line computer service, serving a worldwide Internet audience at http://www.msnbc.com/wnbc.

And as one might suspect from that Web address, the New York local news site is running on a server not in Manhattan but at Microsoft headquarters in Redmond, WA, where two dozen NBC affiliates will have their home pages by this fall.

The text, audio and video for the new site are all fed from WNBC's newsroom in Rockefeller Center. In the Web site's first few weeks, a three-person staff was preparing about five stories a day, drawing on video and audio gathered by WNBC crews.

From the start, the site included a daily sports story—anything from local athletes doing well at the Olympics to the latest Yankees trade. And local weather was on line, with plans to add WNBC's new Doppler 4000 weather images later this fall.

On the cost side, the price tag is not small. WNBC's total renovation is budgeted at $18 million—but that includes a new studio, new control room and a new master control. The newsroom alone is a multimillion-dollar project, but Walker and Berini are hesitant to quote an exact dollar amount, at least in public.

As for economic benefits, Walker said they cannot yet be quantified, because the news department was producing so much more programming during those early weeks.

"It is much more efficient than the old newsroom," said Walker, "and editing is much easier."

Increased efficiency was definitely a goal. Going into the renovation, everyone at WNBC knew they would face additional demands on the news operation just as the new newsroom opened, with the Olympics underway and the political conventions and election night just ahead. But they say they have no regrets about the timing or even having a huge breaking story test them on the newsroom's third day.

"Sometimes when you are waiting for 'the right time,'" said Walker, "you end up thinking about it too much." ■

Adam Clayton Powell III is vice president of technology programs for the Freedom Forum in Virginia.

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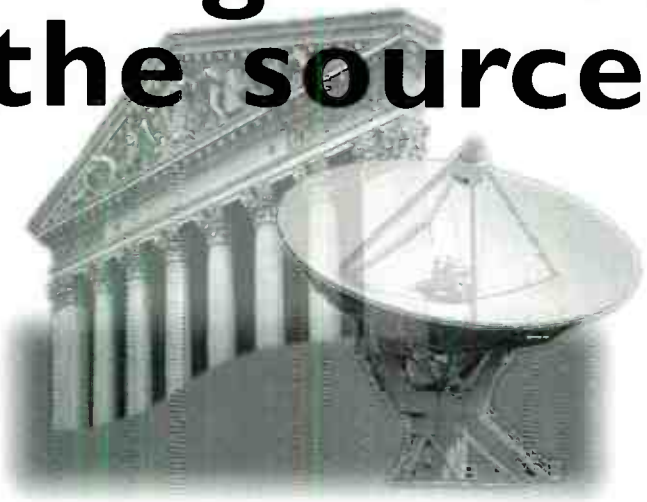

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NBC NEWS

By Roy F. Meyer

REGIONAL NEWS CHANNELS CHARGE AHEAD

In the past 10 years, regional all-news channels have been emerging all around the country. Most news managers at these operations attribute their success to providing an alternative to mainstream television news, and the balance sheets are beginning to prove them right.

"We're only a toddler; we're only four years old," says Phil Balboni, president of New England Cable News (NECN). "And our best work is in front of us."

In New York, News 12 Long Island's Norm Fein feels his regional news operation has "carved out a niche in what was once a vast vacuum of nontelevision news coverage."

During the past decade, in fact, regional news has been following a steady, if not yet profitable, growth curve. Since News 12's debut in December 1986, more than a dozen regional news channels have sprung up across the country. In addition to News 12 and NECN, there are New York 1, News Channel 8 in Washington, Orange County News (suburban Los Angeles), ChicagoLand Television News, Northwest Cable News (Seattle), Bay TV in San Francisco, Sarasota News Now (Florida), Pittsburgh Cable News Channel, the Arizona News Channel and RNN-TV in Stamford, CT. In the Midwest, the Ohio News Network plans to be on line with a 24-hour news service during 1997 and aims to add another in Indiana.

News 12 was the first of the regional news channels, and Fein credits Cablevision Chairman Charles Dolan with having the vision to give cable viewers an important service while enabling cable operators to develop an editorial voice and offer a significant program element.

During the past 10 years, Fein, who is vice president of news development for the Rainbow Programming Division of Cablevision, has seen News 12 grow from a staff of 80 and a reach of 525,000 homes in two Long Island counties to a total of four individual networks employing more than 350 people and reaching 1.2 million homes in 19 counties in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The goal by the end of next year, Fein says, is for News 12 to reach 3 million homes.

Since News 12's debut in December 1986, more than a dozen regional news channels have sprung up across the country.

Neither Balboni, who is chairman of the Association of Regional News Channels, nor Fein see the growth or expansion of national news services like MSNBC, Fox News Channel, the All-News Channel, CNN and others as a threat.

"We serve entirely different audiences," says Fein. We consider ourselves "local, really local, and they're not."

Balboni agrees: "We're a totally different animal. We're focusing on our 'home' market, and the reasons people come to us are different." Balboni says that more channels will make for more competition, but he says that 50, 60, even 70 channels are already competing for the viewer's time, not just news channels.

He says NECN won't be making any major defensive changes to counter the national network services. In fact, he talks about continued growth, with NECN spinning off new networks in the form of new interactive news services, probably by early next year. And Balboni says plans are underway to provide even more local news by zoning and customizing NECN's service in partnership with newspapers and television stations around New England.

Currently NECN has a full-time staff of 120 and has grown in reach from 600,000 homes to 1.8 million homes since opening for business in 1992. While declining to cite exact figures, Balboni says his operating budget has increased 40 percent in four years. One news executive estimates that a full-fledged regional news operation in a major market costs about $10 million a year to run.

National vs. Regional

Outside the nation's capital, News Channel 8's (NC8) Wayne Lynch, who is vice president of news and programming, sees the growth of national cable news services as a signal for regional channels to go back to their roots of being local, local, local.

"Why would we want to be like (the national channels)?" Lynch asks. He feels regional channels are at their best when they deal with "backyard kinds of issues," and he feels viewer expectations have gone up for cable news since NC8 was launched five years ago.

Lynch believes "community-based, service-oriented news" is what distinguishes his operation from the local Washington stations and the networks.

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Since its highly publicized start four years ago, NY1 has expanded into all five boroughs of New York City, into Westchester County and even into the state capital in Albany, NY.

Moreover, NC8 is unique in that it already delivers separate zoned news reports for viewers in Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia via simultaneous "triple-casts" in the early evening hours (6-9 p.m.).

Also unique is NC8's rebroadcast of five ABC news-oriented programs on a delayed basis. Still, Lynch, whose staff totals 135, notes his station produces 10 hours of original programming each day and has a reach of 1 million homes. Although NC8's audience has been growing, Lynch says his operation is not yet making money. "We are pretty much on course with our business plan," he says, "and we continue to feel this is a very good developing business."

Another news channel that already has dramatically changed the face of local news coverage is New York 1 (NY1) in New York City. Since its highly publicized start four years ago, NY1 has expanded into all five boroughs of New York City, into Westchester County and even into the state capital in Albany, NY.

Steve Paulus, NY1's vice president of news, feels his station gives viewers a "glimpse of the real New York rather than the New York traditionally seen in other newscasts." Says Paulus: "We are content driven. We care about stories; we're always there."

Paulus is especially proud of NY1's recent coverage of the TWA Flight 800 disaster, which he says continued for more than 48 hours almost nonstop. "If anything moves in New York City, we cover it," says Paulus, who has a staff of 120 and up to 24 reporter/photographers on the street every day. And there's a good chance people will be watching, since NY1 reaches 1.4 million homes.

Automated News

Clearly, technology has helped regional news grow. It has been only six years (September 1990) since what was then a new "state-of-the-art" news operation, employing robotics, automated equipment and computers opened its doors in suburban Los Angeles. It was called the Orange County News Channel (OCN), and from the start OCN did news a different way. Machines cut and pasted together the coverage once the tapes came in from the field. Opens and closes were added, changed and rotated. Packaged bites were altered and alternated, all by machine, using a library filing/retrieval system. Live anchors did read the copy and introduce packages, but the coverage was admittedly very much a mechanical process.

Since those days, OCN has changed ownership (from Freedom Communications to Century Communications), slimmed its staff by a third and added seven or eight affiliates, according to Wayne Brown, the channel's news director. OCN reaches 530,000 households in Orange County, which constitutes all of the cable households in that county.

And, more changes are on the way. Brown plans to retool his format, shifting

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Regional operations are hopping on the digital bandwagon. In New York, NY1 is converting its High 8 cameras to tapeless, DVCPRO digitized cameras.

from 60:00 to 30:00 "wheels" and taking a step back to become "more personal; less automated." He says his research indicates that viewers want "straight-forward, no-nonsense, accurate coverage, but also want to feel as though they are part of the news process."

Still, Brown says OCN's mission won't change. "In no way do I want to become Los Angeles," he says. "We have identified our niche, and we will stick to it." Brown says his viewers tell him they are turned off by the style of coverage on the L.A. stations, and they see OCN as "a more traditional" sort of news. "They come to us for a reason," he says. "They don't come to be entertained, they come to be informed."

Looking ahead, Brown predicts regional news will continue to expand. He forecasts that large communications conglomerates, such as Tribune, Time Warner, Providence Journal and others will be getting into the regional news business. And he sees cable operations, after years of investment, beginning to turn the corner and move toward the break-even point. Like most regional news executives, Brown feels profitability is a goal.

Regional operations are hopping on the digital bandwagon. In New York, NY1 is converting its High 8 cameras to tapeless, DVCPRO digitized cameras. After that, Paulus foresees a step that will "revolutionize" his operation with the installation of a nonlinear, server-based platform in the newsroom. Everything will be digitized, he says, resulting in cost savings that eventually may lead to a boom in regional news operations around the country.

In Sarasota, FL, and in Seattle, new "state-of-the-art" operations recently have gone on line. In Seattle, Northwest Cable News (NWCN) is up and running with the first fully digitized (nonlinear) newsroom currently in operation (a system first developed and tested a year ago at sister station KHLN-TV in Honolulu). In cooperation with Avid Technology, NWCN developed the system and put it on line in December 1995. NWCN now employs 100 staffers and delivers regional news to 1.4 million cable subscribers in Washington, Oregon and Idaho, according to President and General Manager Craig Marrs. By year's end, Marrs projects NWCN will be in 2 million homes.

Local Edge

When asked what impact the new national news services might have on his operation, Marrs says he does not see them "as a primary competitor to us." He feels the new national services are more an alternative to CNN than a threat to regional news, which he feels has "the power to provide a more localized perspective in covering the news in our own backyard." Marrs says, "There's enough room for everybody." Although he thinks viewing will become more fractionalized, he believes viewers increasingly will turn to regional channels for their local and regional news.

"It's tremendously exciting. The stations that have gotten into it early on and have established a beachhead are truly going to occupy a unique position in people's minds."

At the other end of the country, Sarasota News Now (SNN) in Florida has been in operation since July 1995, employing a fully integrated, computer disk-based processing system. The station digitizes field tapes, reporter packages and anchoring segments, then stores them in a server before calling them up and playing them back on the air. At SNN, General Manager Frank Verdel says, "We are in the business of providing more local news than any other source, and we are (doing) it 24 hours a day." Verdel sees SNN as "an addition, not a replacement for network news," and he says local news will continue to be his primary focus. SNN currently has a staff of 32, but gets a big boost from the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune's* 130 employees.

In the Midwest, ChicagoLand Television News (CLTV) opened its doors January 1, 1993, and is now completing its fourth year in business with a staff of 130, including 65 in news. CLTV reaches 1.5 million homes in up to eight counties in northeastern Illinois and northwest Indiana. CLTV News Director Jim Disch talks about his channel's commitment "to always be there—24 hours a day. We want to be seen as the first-class operation in the region," he says, "to show good taste in what we do and to stress information."

CLTV's mandate is to provide broad-based coverage of the suburbs as well as Chicago—"news that the O&Os don't cover," according to Disch. He cites the use of *Chicago Tribune* newspaper correspondents, who add insight and expertise to CLTV's coverage, providing up to 2,500 appearances since the channel was launched.

Wave of the Future?

Underscoring the "always there" theme, Disch points out that his channel recently provided six and a half hours of continuous coverage of major floods in the area as well as extended coverage of a recent primary election. What we look for, he says, "are issue-oriented stories that cross suburban jurisdictions and are of interest to viewers throughout the region."

NY1's Paulus says, "So far, we have seen only a harbinger of things to come." With new digital technology and its accompanying cost savings, Paulus believes there will be a regional news channel in every major market in the country. NECN's Balboni is also "very bullish" on the future of regional news. He predicts there will be five or more additional regional news start-ups within the next year.

NWCN's Marrs puts it this way: "It's tremendously exciting. The stations that have gotten into it early on and have established a beachhead are truly going to occupy a unique position in people's minds. They're going to serve people in their local markets in a way that is better, and they are going to find more and more ways to enhance their service to viewers." ■

Roy F. Meyer, a longtime TV news executive, is currently a news consultant and free-lance writer based in suburban Washington.

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A Communications Service from General Motors

By Joe Courson

THE DARKER SIDE OF THE PROFESSION

Being in the public eye is all in a day's work for many newspeople, but sometimes the attention they receive is not always positive. Harassment—and even death threats—can be a part of the job for investigative journalists, but the problem can affect anyone in the spotlight. These taunts and threats often amount to nothing, but each incident should be treated seriously.

It is a fact of the business that reporting sometimes makes people mad. It is also a fact of life that those mad people sometimes attempt revenge. More often than not, that revenge takes the form of an angry or even harassing phone call to the journalist in question, which is usually ignored or forgotten. Some reporters feel the taunts are just another part of the profession. Others write them off as harmless jokes. But while most threats usually turn out to be harmless, managers should treat them all with the same level of seriousness.

A recent query in Don Fitzpatrick Associates' electronic newsletter *ShopTalk* brought numerous war stories from journalists around the country who have experienced harassment or death threats as a result of their work. Some turned out to be almost humorous, but many others were anything but funny.

Dangerous Duties

At KIMT-TV in Mason City, IA, no one takes threats lightly anymore. The station employees continue to hold out hope that Jodi Huisentruit, morning and noon news producer and anchor, will walk into the station one day and end more than a year of mystery and fear. She disappeared June 27, 1995, as she was coming to work, and police believe she was abducted.

Amy Kuns, Huisentruit's friend and fellow morning producer, remembers that morning well. She called Huisentruit's apartment because Huisentruit was late coming to work. It happened occasionally, and each time Kuns would provide a friendly wake-up call. That morning, however, it was different. Huisentruit never made it to the station. Fellow station employees sensed something was wrong and called the police.

The police never found Huisentruit.

"They found personal items such as her keys, hair dryer, earring and one shoe beside her car," Kuns says.

Huisentruit wasn't working on anything controversial, but in retrospect, friends remembered something that had happened previously that seemed nonthreatening at the time.

"She reported to the police that while roller blading, someone was following her about a year before the abduction. Six months before her disappearance, nothing had happened out of the ordinary," says Kuns.

A reward fund was established with more than $35,000 in hopes of trying to get information on what happened, but authorities have few leads. The station has devoted a World Wide Web site to their missing co-worker. The address is http://www.kgan.com/missing.html.

The Huisentruit case is an extreme example of the dangers broadcast newspeople sometimes face. While it is not certain that whoever may have abducted Huisentruit knew her from her job, it certainly is a possibility.

Ben Roberts, an anchor at WALB-TV in Albany, GA, had a different type of harassment experience one night after anchoring the 11 p.m. news, and this was definitely based on his popularity as a newsperson. As he was leaving the station, a car followed him home.

"When I pulled into a parking place, the car pulled up right behind me, and I couldn't drive away," Roberts remembers.

Two females had followed him home and one approached his car wanting to see where he lived. He was stuck, especially since he couldn't drive away.

"I offered to sign an autograph if they would leave, but she and her friend wanted to see my apartment. They wouldn't leave," says Roberts.

It was a standoff with Roberts feeling trapped for a while. He eventually eluded the women.

"It (made me) mad, more than anything, to have to go to my back door, sneak into my own house," says Roberts.

When Investigative Reporter Brian Karem worked at KLDO-TV in Laredo, TX, he had people following him, too.

Karem had just finished reporting on a land rip-off scam and started looking into the local bail bonding business. He began noticing that he was followed home on several occasions by persons unknown. Karem vividly remembers the particularly harrowing experiences that ensued.

"People would drive by our house very slowly at all hours of the night. (One time) I saw someone stick something out of the window of a passing car. I heard a bang," remembers Karem.

A firecracker caused the loud bang, not a bullet, but it scared him. It concerned Karem and his wife to the point that they moved out for several nights.

Karem's problems didn't end there. Later in his career he was threatened by policemen in San Antonio for his story about a man falsely accused of killing a police officer. Karem says he was harassed repeatedly by cops who "threatened me with a good deal of bodily harm." They wanted him to

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"People would drive by our house very slowly at all hours of the night. (One time) I saw someone stick something out of the window of a passing car. I heard a bang."

back off the stories, but he didn't. Subsequently, he was jailed and threatened by an inmate "named Big Huey who offered to 'tune me up' for a couple of his friends on the police force."

While pursuing the story, Karem remembers being separated from his family for weeks, receiving obscene and abusive phone calls nearly every day and constantly being threatened with bodily harm and lawsuits.

It's not only veteran reporters who receive scary threats. Mary Zaggers started her war story file on her first day as a reporter at WCJB-TV in Gainesville, FL, with her very first story.

Zaggers was doing an investigative piece on a prominent local company that habitually broke environmental laws. At first she only received calls of encouragement for her work, but then things changed.

"I got about a dozen calls to watch my back," she says, and since she lived alone, she felt a bit vulnerable.

"I got a little nervous. I was a little on edge for a while. I was taken a little aback," she says.

Others in the newsroom were aware of the unwanted calls and occasionally joked about it.

"Those jokes kind of calmed me down....They said if I didn't show up for work they would check the construction sites," Zaggers says.

Reporter Mike Lawrence of WJAR-TV, Providence, RI, was working on a story about the smuggling of license plates out of a state prison when things turned ugly.

He had information that prominent local people, including a judge, a state policeman and others had participated in the scheme, and as he pursued the story, Lawrence became a target.

"My car was set on fire a block from the newsroom and the license plates were spray painted blood-red WJAR-10," says Lawrence.

The story gets darker.

"A few days later, a marked station news cruiser was shot up and a cardboard message, 'Mike Lawrence—your [*sic*] gone,' was attached with bullet holes in it to a shattered window," says Lawrence.

He received police protection for a few weeks, and armed detectives escorted him to and from work while cruisers patrolled near his apartment.

The story aired, and later he left for the Midwest, as he says, "older and wiser."

"My car was set on fire a block from the newsroom and the license plates were spray painted blood-red WJAR-10."

When Paul Daffinee left the Northeast, he was wiser, too. His investigative story about hotel owners who bent the rules to their benefit apparently ruffled some feathers. After his report on the developer's questionable activities, a banker friend of Daffinee's told him that someone was "nosing around" in his credit. Within two weeks, someone made a very lucrative offer to Daffinee's bank seeking to buy the mortgage to his home.

"The bank never let go of my loan," Daffinee says, "(but) it made me very, very nervous. It made my wife nervous."

Information Overload

Where do these people get their information? They may not have to dig too much, but if they do start digging, public records provide a wealth of information, as every reporter knows. However, most reporters forget that these same records have information on them as well. With the emergence of the Internet, people don't even need to make a trip down to the county courthouse. All it takes is an Internet account and some powerful search engines.

The search engine Switchboard (http://www.switchboard.com/) found Ben Roberts' name, street address, apartment number, city, state, ZIP code and phone number.

A quick LEXIS-NEXIS database search for public records about me (Joe Courson) provided more information: my full name, month and year of birth as well as the same information for my wife; present and previous addresses; the value of our home; my airplane, complete with year, model and serial number; and of course, my name, title, address and office phone number and office fax number were public information as well. Some information was inaccurate, but overall, it presented a pretty good picture of Joe Courson.

Officials with LEXIS-NEXIS say they get their information from public records and court documents, as reporters do, so the information is already out there for anyone to collect if they want to spend the time and effort to find it. Frequently, local libraries offer LEXIS-NEXIS searches. However, this doesn't include all the database services. But even without sophisticated computer database searches, all of these records are available to anyone who wants them.

Lessons Learned

If threats come with the profession's territory, what can be done to lessen the impact? The chill of Jodi Huisentruit's disappearance remains in the newsroom; her co-workers have changed their routines.

"All women carry pepper spray and a Wildcat key chain that has two sharp plastic points to defend ourselves, and some health clubs have offered self-defense classes," says Kuns.

Routine visits have become less routine.

"We go out in groups and not alone. If we need to meet someone, we have someone who knows where you are. We look at the surroundings. (There are) security cameras and two locked glass doors at the station. And we try not to be too predictable," Kuns says.

She watches closely what she says on the air. If she plans to attend an event, she doesn't say when she will go.

"I don't want to let anyone know where I'm going," Kuns says.

The changes also involve the rest of Kuns' life. "My husband brings me to work at 3 a.m., when I use to drive myself to work," says Kuns.

Zaggers, who now works at WOTV, Battle Creek, MI, also has learned lasting lessons.

"Now, I have an unlisted phone number. I don't put my name on my mailbox, just the apartment number. I

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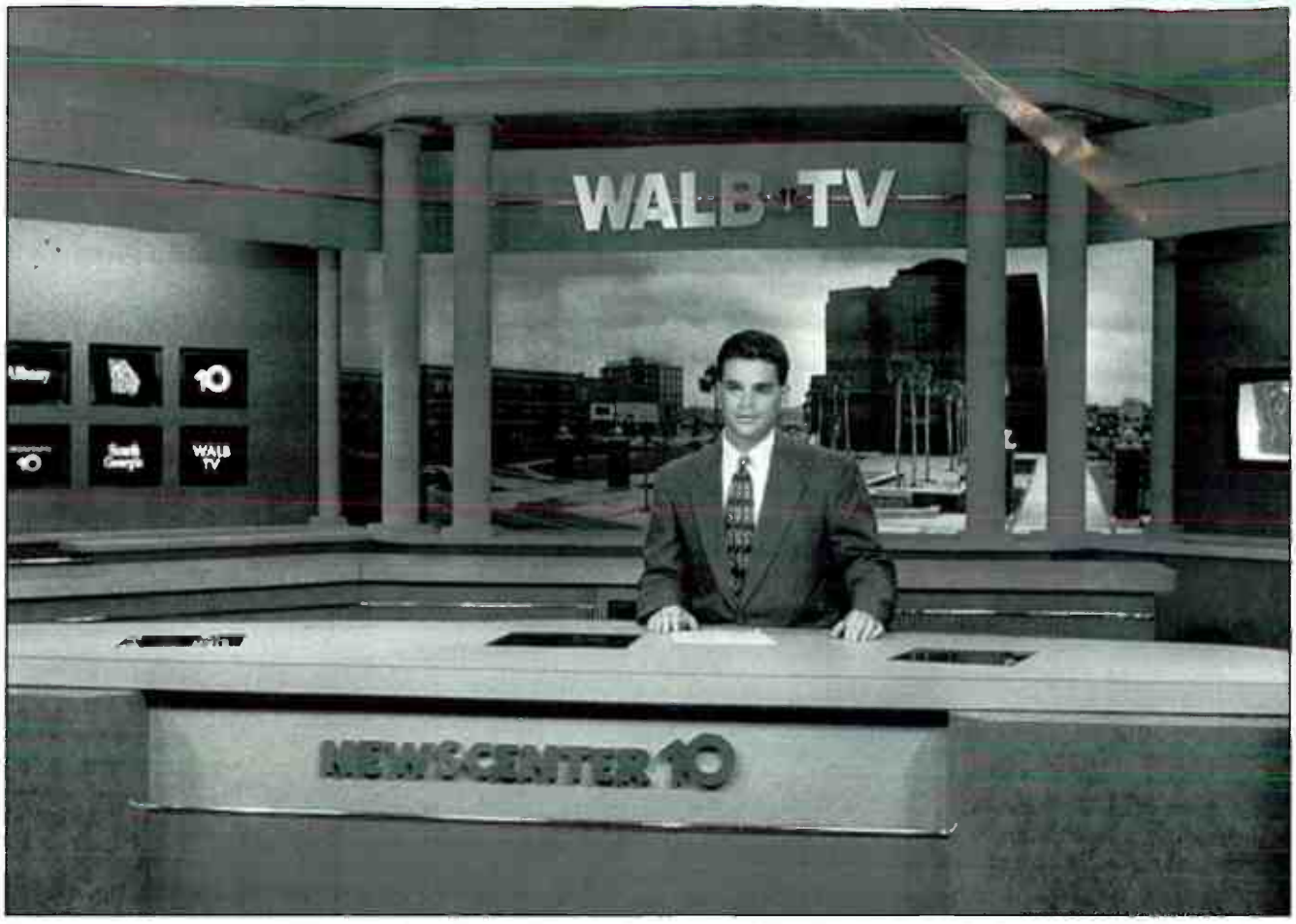

Ben Roberts, an anchor at WALB-TV in Albany, GA, was followed home one night by two women and had to sneak into his own home.

(continued from page 78)

Another way to increase protection is for reporters to develop close working relationships with the local police if they suspect the story requires delving into sensitive information.

don't want to go through what I went through the last time," says Zaggers.

Other reporters such as Dawn Hobby, Roberts' co-anchor, firmly believe in using a maiden name on air and not having a listed phone number.

"While working, I'm Dawn Hobby, but when I'm not working, I'm Dawn Tripp. All of my records have my legal name of Dawn Tripp on them," she says.

A LEXIS-NEXIS search shows that she may have a successful strategy for hiding her identity. After searching the databases for 30 minutes, nothing was found about a Dawn Hobby that lives in Albany, GA.

Handling Situations

What do you do if you or one of your employees receives a threat?

"Call the police right away," says Dan Rosenblatt, executive director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

"Try to preserve in any form answering machine messages, letters, notes, etc.—do your best to preserve information," he says.

Another good option is to get caller ID for your home phone. "It could track, deter or help in an investigation," Rosenblatt says.

He says reporters often are able to help authorities in such cases because they are trained to pay attention to details. Rosenblatt advises reporters to document the incident if harassment or threats occur.

"Take more and complete notes. Have a good eye. List contacts, people met on the story and maybe a brief physical description if you don't know their name," he says. Rosenblatt also stresses the importance of having an unlisted phone number and advises having the number changed if any incidents arise.

Another way to increase protection is for reporters to develop close working relationships with the local police if they suspect the story requires delving into sensitive information.

"Maybe it would be a good idea to sit down with law enforcement before you start working on a piece. Get some local perspective," Rosenblatt says. "Ask them 'What should I check out?' It could mean they respond quicker if something happens because of this visit, and it would develop better working relationships." ■

Joe Courson works for The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service. Dan Rahn of The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service contributed to this story.

ATTENTION NEWS PROFESSIONALS

New from

News in the Next Century

to be Released at the RTNDA International Conference & World Media Expo October 10th in Los Angeles

New Technology, Old Values...And a New Definition of News

An essay by Michael Schudson, scholar, sociologist and author of "The Power of News." Drawing from the *News in the Next Century* roundtables and other resources, this essay offers perspective on the future of news and journalism in a world dominated by change. Schudson examines and challenges a number of basic assumptions affecting the future of news as they regard the transition from a world of transmission scarcity to a world of abundant bandwidth, the relative importance and definition of certain technologies as they relate to news gathering and transmission, and what threat these technological and economic concerns pose to traditional journalistic values.

Changing Channels: Young Adults, Internet Surfers and the Future of the News Audience

This groundbreaking new study by *News in the Next Century* and Princeton Survey Research Associates examines the news consumption habits of young adults and users of Internet and on-line news services. This report examines the changing news audience and explores the impact that interactive technology and changing audience habits may have on the news.

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By John Dillon

TOGETHER AGAIN: CO-LOCATION ON THE RISE

In the early '60s most TV stations were scrambling to establish their own newsrooms after moving out of the corners of big radio newsrooms. Since then, separate operations have become the norm. But with the recent rise in co-ownership, radio and TV journalists are once again finding themselves shoulder-to-shoulder.

As the megadeal merger trend continues, Westinghouse/CBS has emerged as a titan—now reaching about one-third of all American TV households—while the Tribune Co. has paired with Renaissance Broadcasting and Rupert Murdoch has swallowed New World. CBS' pending acquisition of Infinity Broadcasting created a radio behemoth of 83 stations, and the Time Warner/Turner plan may spawn the media industry's largest gorilla. And with these ownership changes, electronic journalism also changes.

In some cases ownership changes have meant new collaborative arrangements between print and electronic journalists, as at ChicagoLand Television (see *Communicator*, December 1995), while other agreements have permitted a single news staff to serve two separate network-affiliated TV signals, as is the case with WBBH-TV and WZVN-TV in Fort Myers, FL. But some parent companies, notably Westinghouse, have taken the collaboration one step further by putting their co-owned TV and radio operations in the same building—or even the same rooms.

Few intra-medium (within the same medium) and inter-media (between two media) partnerships are alike, so it is difficult to generalize about the characteristics and virtues of such reorganizations. However, broadcast executives recognize the desirability of shared radio-TV newsrooms: They can optimize local news coverage through the switch-hitting of reporters on both sides of the broadcast fence, and owners need not worry about competing against themselves within the same medium.

The return to unified newsrooms is in some respects "back to the future" for both local and national broadcasters, who in the late '60s and early '70s peeled their TV operations off from radio. Now the trend is toward togetherness again, which is a welcome sight for some news workers. "At one time we had a joint radio-TV newsroom," says CBS' Charlie Kaye, "and now we have separate newsrooms down the hall from each other. I'd kill to go back to the original system." Many top-market stations are headed that way.

Long known for their quality newscasts are WBZ-AM and WBZ-TV in Boston, now under Westinghouse management. The shop has been working since 1992 toward co-location of newsroom facilities, and it's tough to find anyone at WBZ who thinks it's a bad idea. According to Ed Goldman, former WBZ general manager and now national VP of CBS-AM radio stations, the synergy has allowed radio and TV reporters to provide more comprehensive news coverage than before, with "more depth and breadth, more efficient use of people in the field, a better product all around." He says the arrangement is a purely "win-win" situation: "When one reporter can serve both TV and radio...the sum of the parts becomes greater than the individual components." Thus, Goldman says, the station's bottom line improves through cross-applied marketing and promotions, while news consumers continue to receive accomplished news coverage.

"At one time we had a joint radio-TV newsroom...I'd kill to go back to that system."

For example, when news breaks quickly, radio reporters can be debriefed on WBZ-TV to add detail and thoroughness to the televised report, while in some situations TV journalists provide live cell-phone reports for radio. "Cross-pollination works very well for us, with each side taking advantage of the strengths of the other," Goldman says.

WBZ-TV I-Team Reporter Joe Bergantino agrees that the joint endeavor has benefited the Beantown news consumer, and says that the arrangement has enhanced both the substance and the profile of WBZ news. *Boston Globe* TV Critic Fred Biddle says the joint enterprise has engendered "a strong community feeling....WBZ radio has been especially helped."

Although they complement each other, radio and TV staffs remain separate editorial entities with autonomous assignment desks. Gone, however, are the days that a radio reporter could count on being strictly a voice and not a face—all on-air personnel are contracted with the understanding that they may have to feed both stations.

Similar designs have been implemented at other co-owned enterprises. The most common model allows radio and TV to pursue their individual journalistic agendas with relative editorial independence. For example, the well-established radio operation at KYW-AM in Philadelphia has "synergized" the television side at KYW-TV. Pat Farnack, morning drive anchor at KYW Newsradio, notes that the newsgathering orientations of radio and TV often differ due to each medium's needs, but that both media benefit from collaboration. Assignment desks are separate, but story logs are shared.

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With cooperative news alliances, ever-increasing news air time, the expansion of stations on the World Wide Web and experimental ventures into cable and news-on-demand, some staffers are asking: "Hey, what about the journalism?"

Symbiosis or Inbreeding?

The most common term used to describe the cooperative practice is "working closely together," as at KPIX-TV and KPIX-FM in San Francisco, where news staffs share not only newsroom facilities—such as pencils and linked computers—but story ideas and sometimes news sources themselves. Assignment desks are "within yelling distance," weathercasters get double-barreled exposure between media and portions of the broadcast day are simulcast on both radio and TV.

This is where the collaboration element comes into question in the minds of some media watchers: Does cooperative newsgathering promote journalistic sameness, reducing the healthy diversity of media voices in a given market? News nepotism?

Media Analyst Joe Turow of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania believes the question is a theoretical one that begs a realistic solution. "In the abstract, it's always better to have more media voices in a given community," he says. "But in practice, there isn't an overabundance of substantive issues dealt with by local broadcasters, and conscientious owners of behemoth media groups actually stand the chance of improving journalistic balance."

In larger markets, even within-medium co-ownership can inspire diversity. Westinghouse-owned WINS-AM and WCBS-AM in New York gladly compete for different listeners according to WINS General Manager Scott Herman. "Westinghouse has been at this for a long time, and they know how to do it," he says, noting that the two stations continue to duke it out as genuine rivals on the AM dial.

Former TV News Director Jim Thistle, now director of broadcast journalism at Boston University, sees the urge to merge as a natural evolution of the industry. Although concerned about where concentration of ownership may eventually lead the business, he says that news consumers are far from being cheated in the marketplace: "They're continuing to see diversity, although in new ways such as more channels, different media systems and new technologies like the Internet." And, he says, cooperative news ventures in some markets have put new life into ailing radio operations.

Questions Remaining

Indiana University's Cleveland Wilhoit and David Weaver polled hundreds of practicing journalists for their book, "The American Journalist in the 1990s." When the authors compared survey findings to those of 10 and 15 years ago, they found flagging enthusiasm on the part of both print and electronic journalists on the topic of job satisfaction. More workers now wonder about the redrawn lines of corporate ownership and the emphasis on profit over process. Some news professionals feel crimped in their day-to-day work, citing less journalistic autonomy and a greater push toward commercial interests and "boosterism." A few charge that powerful ownership warps their ability to do some social good and to tell the uncorrupted truth—the reason they got into journalism in the first place.

A more immediate concern of many broadcast newspeople today is how to cope with the increased demands of their trade in "serving many signals."

"The major question," says Wilhoit, "is whether corporate culture will sustain traditional journalistic altruism."

A more immediate concern of many broadcast newspeople today is how to cope with the increased demands of their trade in "serving many signals." With cooperative news alliances, ever-increasing news air time, the expansion of stations on the World Wide Web and experimental ventures into cable and news-on-demand, some staffers are asking: "Hey, what about the journalism?"

Consolidation and the Worker

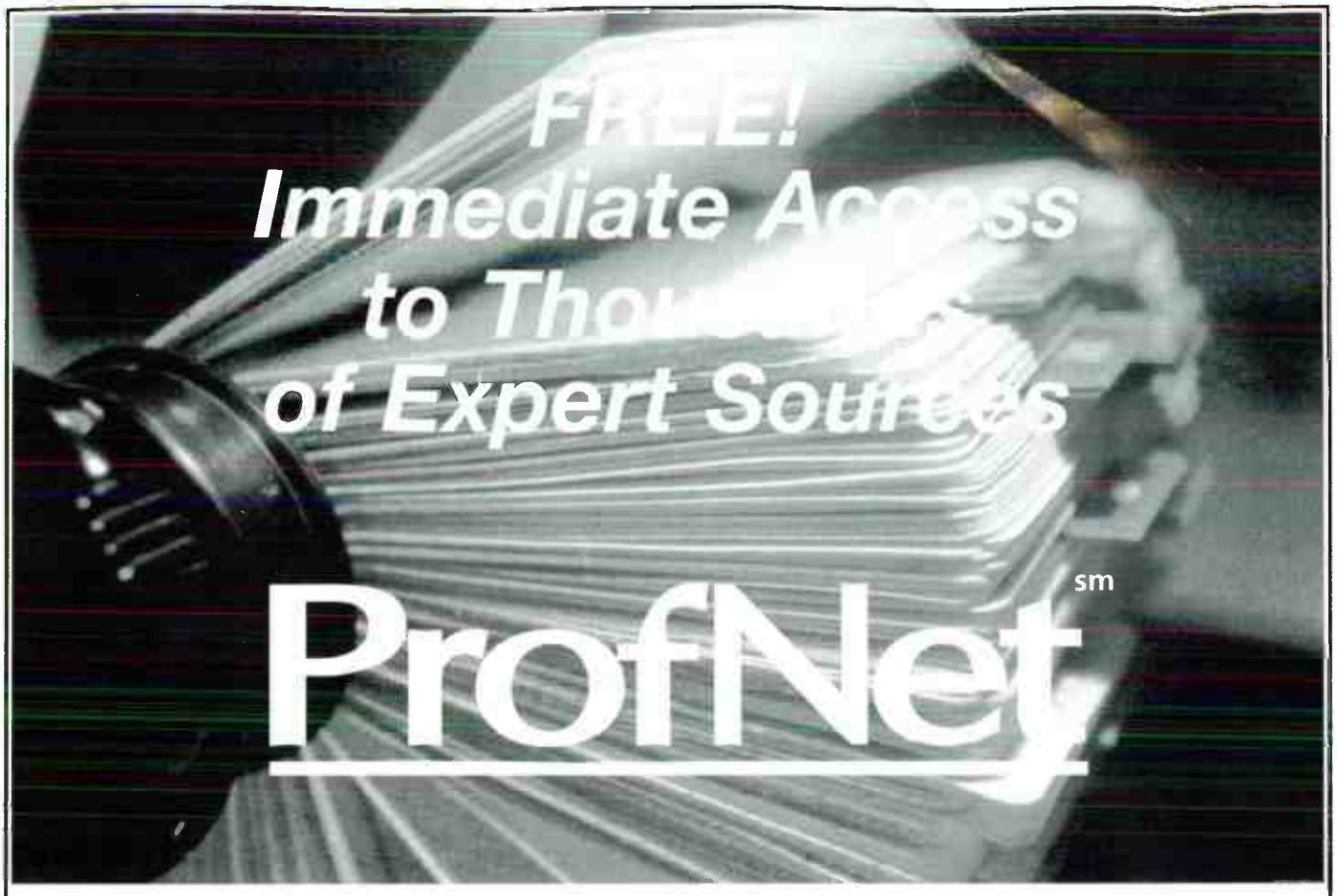
Another seemingly logical consequence of newsroom collaborations would be a reduction in work force, although American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) media watchers haven't noted any mass layoffs due to radio-TV consolidations. (It should be noted that more radical station reorganizations—such as leased marketing agreements—have also cost jobs in some markets.)

"At the moment, it's more of a downsizing through attrition, where some people aren't being replaced when they leave," says Kim Roberts, AFTRA national assistant executive director, broadcast division. "The situation could worsen for workers, who are already working longer and harder."

Indeed, a common byproduct of cooperative radio-TV newsgathering is an expansion in the volume of news generated for each channel; however, most broadcast executives explain this as a benefit of having more resources than as the derivative of sweatshop practices. At the very least, Roberts says, new ownership rules contribute to "an environment of instability" for workers. Also undergoing redefinition are unions' traditional jurisdictional boundaries since work roles for talent can cross into areas once considered technical.

Former AFTRA executive John Armstrong worries most about the news consumer, saying that industry takeovers reduce journalistic pluralism within communities, much in the way that monopolies always have tended to squelch alternative viewpoints: "We're seeing reduced corporate responsibility for journalism—neglect both for the worker and the public." Media managers, however, are quick to disagree. "Responsible journalism is good business, and in the end, only good businesses succeed," says Brian Whittemore, architect of the WBZ newsroom partnership and now VP and general manager of KDKA radio in Pittsburgh. "It's a new (media) world, and you can either be a part of it or get into another business." ■

John Dillon, a former television news producer, is an associate professor of journalism at Murray State University in Murray, KY.



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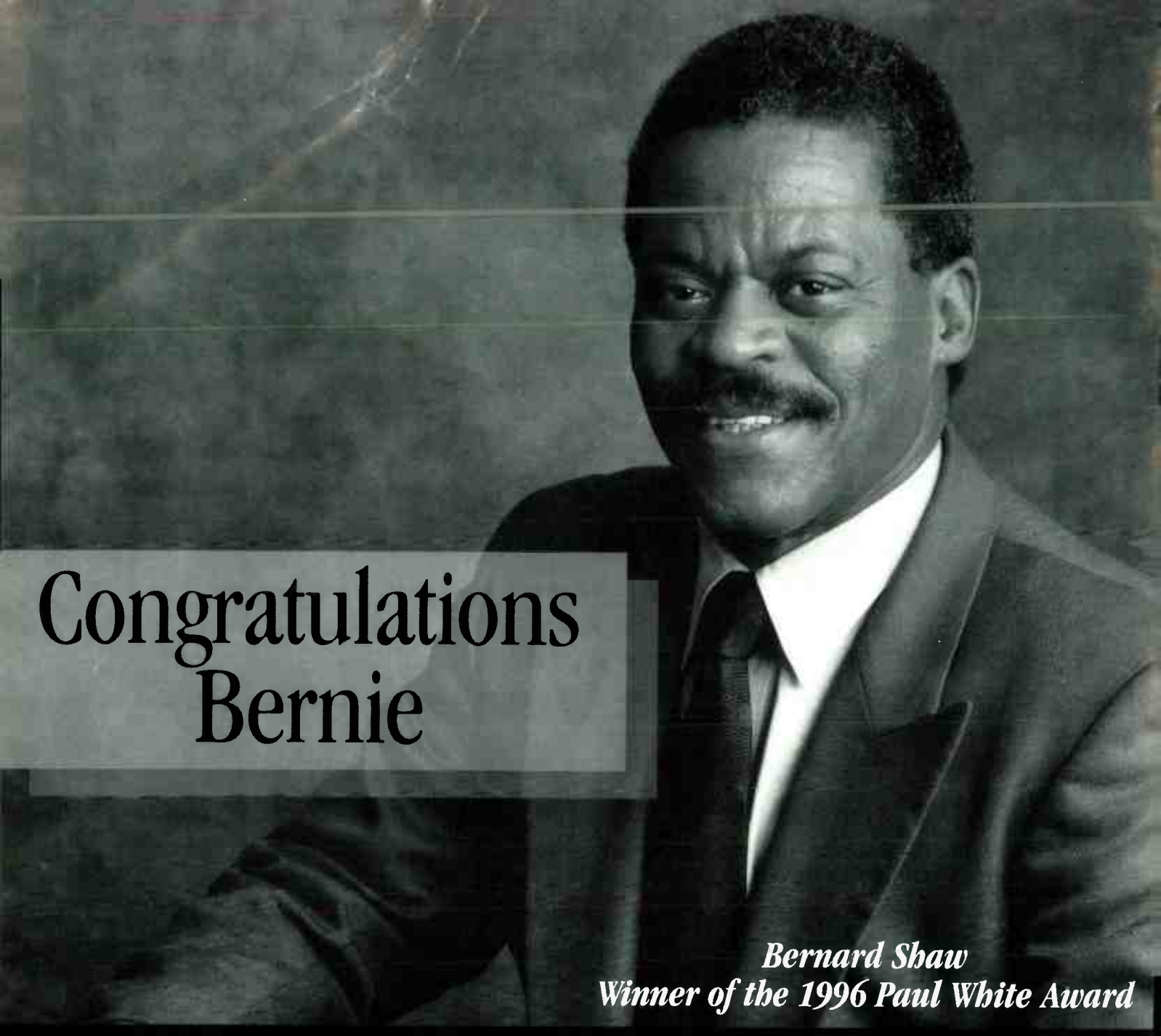

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THE WORLD'S NEWS LEADER

By Edward M. Fouhy

GIVE 'EM WHAT THEY WANT

Political coverage in recent years increasingly has focused on the political process. Many news organizations have fallen into covering the poll-chasing, mudslinging political trap that only provides people with water-cooler gossip and the latest barrage of political attacks. The director of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism offers some suggestions on how to give viewers campaign coverage they can use.

Whew. The longest political campaign in American history is about to end. And none too soon. It hasn't been a thriller—no suspense, no real battles since Pat Buchanan faced the inevitable and Steve Forbes tucked away his wallet after the New York primary.

We've known since March that the two candidates for president were Bob Dole and Bill Clinton. The only suspense was whether Ross Perot would get in the ring again, and no one who has ever encountered that small man's large ego had any real doubt about the answer to that question.

While the end is in sight for those of us who have been following the campaign coverage for the past year, the story is just beginning for the vast majority of Americans. They don't follow politics; it's background noise in their lives. They are the "5 in 10" who don't really start to focus on who they are going to vote for until the leaves turn yellow, the lawn signs start to sprout and the baseball season reaches the playoffs.

So here are some suggestions for news directors weary of the campaign, running low on ideas or desperate to see the whole thing end:

Frame the story as a job interview.

If you think of political coverage in unusual ways—not as an athletic event or a race between two candidates—but rather as a job interview in which the politicians are the applicants and your viewers are the decision makers, all sorts of new ideas will start to flow at your morning meeting. A series on, say, the election for governor might start with a package that outlines what the governor actually does—as opposed to what people think he does—what the job is really all about. How does a governor spend the day? What is it we expect from our governor? Are our expectations consistent with the powers and duties that go with the job? What are those powers?

Put yourself in your viewers'/listeners' shoes.

What do they want to know; what do they need to know? This is where your polling money can be used best. Instead of buying another and probably meaningless poll to find out who's ahead (more about that later) spend some money asking real voters what they are interested in learning about the candidates. The answers are likely to surprise you. Real people won't care much about the candidate's first wife but care a lot about where he stands on issues touching their lives. Take an example: If the average viewer lives in a suburb (as most Americans do), is married (as most Americans are), believes in God and goes to church regularly (as most Americans do) and sends her kids to public schools (as nearly all of them do), then the issues they care about become obvious. They are likely to be transportation, school funding and maybe school vouchers, kids' TV and, even in this year of widespread prosperity, job security.

Knowing what your viewers' real concerns are gives you the moral authority to demand answers.

Control your own newscasts.

By framing your coverage as a job interview, avoiding distractions and listening to voters, you can come up with a pretty good game plan for covering the last few weeks of the campaign, which is when ordinary viewers are finally paying attention. By skipping the staged photo ops the candidates and their handlers have planned for you to use to deliver their message, and instead, putting your resources into exploration of the issues viewers say they really care about, you take back control of your newscast.

Just picture this: A promotion campaign for the next few weeks that positions your station as the only one in town where the citizens' concerns, not the politicians', come first. Next, picture campaign coverage viewers can relate to, with a daily or weekly schedule of stories on issues viewers have told you they care about, with the candidates responding to those concerns. That turns the old system that has driven people away from television coverage of politics on its head. Planned and promoted that way, you have put people's real concerns—not the insiders, not the politicians—in the forefront of your newscasts.

This approach allows you to promote stories on, say, education one week and crime the next. After you have explored the issue you can demand, acting as a surrogate for your viewers, that the candidates respond with their plans for making the schools better and the streets safer. Armed with the agenda of issues your viewers have told you they want the candidates to respond to, you can hold their feet to the fire, asking for specific solutions, not generalizations, and you can press them to say how they would pay for whatever they propose to do. Knowing what your viewers' real concerns are gives you the moral authority to demand answers and avoid coming off as the arrogant, obnoxious local equivalent of the widely disdained Washington talking heads.

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Politics is played with bare-knuckled ferocity most everywhere these days.

Avoid Greeks (or political consultants) bearing gifts.

Political consultants have latched onto the latest trend in political reporting—campaign ad watches. Some consultants are producing commercials aimed strictly at getting journalists to analyze their claims. They know that to do the job right you have to show the ads to your viewers. That's free exposure for them, and if the ad is produced well enough, it will make a bigger impression on the viewer than the reporter's analysis. When shown in the highly credible context of a newscast, it creates a more powerful message than it would standing alone. Another "gift" is to leak the results of private tracking polls in the weeks just before the election. Tracking polls are taken nightly among a very small sample of voters and are used primarily to measure the impact of ads and the trends those ads produce. Leaked selectively, they can be highly misleading and since the only thing they are designed to show is who's ahead, they aren't of much interest to viewers anyway. The only time most viewers really want to know who's ahead is when it counts—on election night.

Watch out for last minute bombshells.

Politics is played with bare-knuckled ferocity most everywhere these days. There was a time when states like Indiana, Louisiana and Texas could claim to be the wildest politically, but single-issue groups and highly charged ideologues have altered those old rules—and in most places, there aren't any rules anymore. That's why it's wise to be more suspicious than ever of the political insider who whispers to your political reporter some scandalous allegation about the political opposition and implies your competitor is working on this story and may indeed be almost ready to break it. The source usually claims to be just trying to protect you from getting beaten, but what he's really doing is setting you up to broadcast an allegation that sounds bad and is probably not checkable in the few days remaining before the election. This year one of presidential candidate Phil Gramm's political rivals leaked a story that Gramm invested a modest amount of money, years ago, in a movie a relative hoped to make that might have turned out to be a bit on the racy side. What might have been an act of kindness or charity, or maybe even a business investment, was made to sound like a way of condoning pornography. Of course it was nothing of the kind, but it caused a brief flurry while Gramm struggled to overcome the charge. However, by the time the facts came out, the damage already had been done.

Listen to what people are saying.

As college graduates, most television newspeople have lifestyles quite different from the people they serve. Their salaries are usually above average and their jobs allow them to live in upper-class neighborhoods, send their children to better schools and spend

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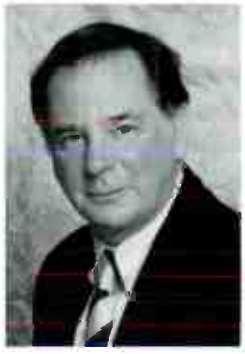
Beyond Election Day: The Continuing Story of Money and Politics

October 11, 9-10:30 a.m. in room 403 A&B, Los Angeles Convention Center

Panelists:

Jim Fry Washington Bureau Chief WFAA-TV Dallas, TX	Sheila Kaplan Special Products Producer MSNBC Redmond, WA
Charles Lewis Executive Director Center for Public Integrity Washington, DC	Steven Rosenfeld Money/Politics Reporter Monitor Radio San Francisco



Moderator: Eric Engberg
Correspondent, CBS News

Joining Forces: Creative Election Coverage Using Civic Journalism Partnerships

October 11, 10:45-12:00 in room 308 A&B, Los Angeles Convention Center

Panelists:

Mark Boardman News Director WKSU-FM Kent, OH	Marci Burdick Director News & Operations KYTV Springfield, MO	
Felecia Church News/Public Affairs Director WAOK/ WVEE Radio Atlanta	Ted O'Brien News Director WABU-TV Boston	Will Robinson Senior Producer KTTV Los Angeles

Moderator: Deborah Potter
Director, *The Poynter Election Project*
The Poynter Institute for Media Studies

Presenter: Edward Fouhy
Executive Director
The Pew Center for Civic Journalism

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For More Information Contact:

RTNDF

The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation
Cy Porter, Project Director
Phone: (202) 467-5219 Fax: (202) 223-4007 E-mail: cy@rtndf.org

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Some news organizations, aware they are isolated, now require everyone in the newsroom to talk to 10 people a week they wouldn't ordinarily talk to.

their leisure time at the golf course instead of the bowling alley. That means they are cut off from many of the problems, concerns and frustrations of ordinary Americans. Some news organizations, aware they are isolated, now require everyone in the newsroom to talk to 10 people a week they wouldn't ordinarily talk to. That may mean getting on the phone and making random calls. In Dallas, WFAA-TV News Director John Miller goes out to community meetings and makes sure others do too. And they go to listen, not to talk. They have learned that ordinary people have extraordinary things to say. Miller even gives people his private phone number. In Boston, Ted O'Brien's WABU-TV recruits people from focus groups and invites them to confront candidates in televised conversations that cut through the ads and puts his viewers and the candidates on the same level playing field. Al Holzer at KRON-TV, San Francisco, has perfected the idea of going into neighborhoods and listening to the questions and worries of the many ethnic groups that make up that city's colorful tapestry.

Americans have been turning away from politics on television for years. Ratings for this year's party conventions were low. But maybe it's not because people hate politics. They don't, according to a recent Times/Mirror study. It showed that 66 percent of Americans "completely agree" it is their duty to always vote, up from 46 percent a decade ago.

Maybe the reason they have been tuning out is because they hate the way we have been serving their need for information to help them make up their minds. Maybe this is the year and this is the plan that allows your news department to satisfy that need. ■

Ed Fouhy is the executive director of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism in Washington.

CIVIC JOURNALISM: GETTING STARTED

Getting from A to Z in civic journalism can be complex, and before you profess your intent to practice it, you need to develop a game plan. One way to start is by forming partnerships with other media outlets in your area. Just keep in mind the citizen's voice must stand out in your community coverage.

To help unravel the thoughts of residents, many media partnerships start with a poll of the community. The survey results will arm your news team with the information to drive the project and will reflect residents' attitudes on issues including elections, crime, health and education. Once these attitudes are known, media partners working together can then put on a concentrated effort to blanket the community with important information over the airwaves, in print and via the Internet. The strengths of each partner become evident while the public's perception becomes favorable toward the goals of civic journalism.

As long as media partners remain committed to providing a forum for residents to address complex issues, the battle is won. But getting to this point may include using the resources of the following national organizations available to assist start-up projects:

Radio and Television News Directors Foundation—Cy Porter, project director, (202) 467-5219

Pew Center for Civic Journalism—Ed Fouhy, executive director, (202) 331-3200

The Poynter Institute for Media Studies—Deborah Potter, director, (813) 821-9494

Project on Public Life and the Press—Jay Rosen, director, (212) 998-3793

Kettering Foundation—Bob Daley, associate, (513) 434-7300

Study Circles Resource Center—Martha McCoy, executive director, (860) 928-2616

See you at the town hall meeting! ■

Cy Porter is project director for Community Journalism and the 1996 Election Project at RTNDF in Washington.

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By Patricia Seaman

FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE FOR JOURNALISTS

Often for electronic journalists, "being there" is the only acceptable way to report news. But for journalists covering news events from a foreign country or reporting from one, physically being there can be a difficult or confusing task. The RTNDF German/American Journalist Exchange Program has helped many journalists by giving them the means to actually be there.

On August 1, 1996, the front page of *The Washington Post* featured a story on President Clinton's pledge to sign a new welfare reform bill. Inside that same edition was a story about a Washington-area woman with eight children who recently had lost her husband to cancer and her house to fire.

The latter, tragic story seems at first glance unrelated to the front page. But keep reading and you learn that the woman, Patricia Wilkins, has been on public assistance since 1987 and that at least four of her children were born since then. She was estranged from her husband, who contributed money "once in a blue moon." Now the link between the stories becomes obvious, highlighting an important part of the American social welfare debate.

"Yes, we covered (Clinton's pledge)," says Wolfgang Aigner, editor in chief of B5 Aktuell, the all-news station of Bavarian Public Radio. "But our bureau in Washington didn't tell us about this other story. This is what you only get while you are there, to see for yourself." Aigner will visit the United States this fall under the new Senior Editors Program of the Radio and Television News Directors Foundation's German/-American Journalist Exchange. It is his hope to discover the stories of America today for himself, the way journalists always have discovered stories.

With funding provided by the RIAS Berlin Commission, the exchange program debuted in 1994 with the primary aim of giving German and American electronic journalists firsthand exposure to each other's countries. To date, 84 German journalists have visited the United States and 79 American journalists have visited Germany under the program.

The new Senior Editors Program premiering this fall follows three years of highly successful programs for younger German journalists, each lasting almost two months and incorporating extensive briefings in Washington and New York, as well as university seminars and radio/television fellowships. The new program will be condensed to two weeks in Washington, New York, Los Angeles and the RTNDA International Conference.

"I'm interested to know about people and situations that take place besides the election campaigns."

The senior group, which will be in the United States from September 28 through October 13, includes numerous political editors from major German stations and networks. Aigner, for example, covered the '92 campaigns while a correspondent in Washington for the German ARD network, and wrote a German bestseller titled "Bill Clinton—A Portrait." Andreas Pawlouschek, head of North German Broadcasting's news department, and Susanne Gelhard, anchor of the weekly political newsmagazine show Auslandsjournal, seen on ZDF network stations throughout Germany, also will participate.

"I've read about the campaign," says Aigner, "but it is all secondhand. I want to walk around in the streets and see how things are, if things have changed. I was in Washington under Republican administrations. I think things have changed because the Clinton administration must have made some differences."

Claudia Schreiner, senior editor for the daily newsmagazine show Brisant at MDR television in Dresden, Germany, says, "I'm interested to know about people and situations that take place besides the election campaigns, topics which do not touch the political arguing, the certain topics of election '96 which touch human problems." Her bureaus in Washington and New York "do not suggest enough topics," she says. "We are interested in side topics...such as the new debate on security in airports. I would like to learn about the topics of interest to a German audience." Schreiner also will participate in the new Senior Editors Program.

The entire German/American exchange program arose from the obsolescence of the old RIAS (Radio in the American Sector) broadcasting system in Germany. RIAS was established in 1946 and broadcasted news and information after World War II and throughout East German Communist rule. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, RIAS broadcasting was disbanded and subsumed into Deutsche Welle and DeutschlandRadio, and the new RIAS Berlin Commission was born in its place. The commission funds more than 90 percent of the cost of the German/American Journalist Exchange.

Patricia Pantel, a reporter for ORB's Radio Fritz in Potsdam, Germany, typifies the exchange of younger German journalists (usually age 25-40) who attend the seven-week program: "I've got a good overview of America, society, people and the differences between country and cities. It was a very good chance to meet a lot of people and talk with them about Germans and

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9 STANDS FOR NEWS

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"What didn't surprise me is that (the Germans) knew more about our political system than most Americans do. They know the system, the personalities, the structure...they know everything."

Americans, the politics and the media. It was also very interesting to see how some of your prejudices are right and for some...it's really not the way you thought before."

The U.S. program incorporates political, social and economic briefings ranging from White House and State Department officials to Wall Street and the American Jewish Committee. David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, has met with three groups of visiting German journalists.

"As an organization committed to writing a new chapter in Jewish/American history, we value each new contact with important personalities in Germany with whom we can further develop this unique dialogue," Harris says.

The journalists also sometimes attend the amateur night performance at New York's Apollo Theater in Harlem and ride along with New York City Police on narcotics surveillance.

In their station fellowships, the Germans dig into their host communities and sample space shuttle launches, Native American reservations, Fortune 500 companies, rodeos, the Tennessee Valley Authority and a former World War II POW camp for Germans in Alabama. One group sat out the 1995 Pensacola, FL, hurricane. Station hosts include both public and commercial television and radio news in communities of all sizes.

"The program gave access to different institutions and staff you normally would not get," says Katrin Schlenstedt, a reporter/editor for MDR's videotext division in Leipzig. "Lively discussions—therefore getting to know their point of view—provide a good basis for me to go on dealing with U.S. politics and culture. I made a good deal of meetings and contacts I hopefully can keep up."

Robert Garcia, general manager of CNN Radio in Atlanta, met with four groups of visiting German journalists while he was at CBS Radio in Washington. "What didn't surprise me is that (the Germans) knew more about our political system than most Americans do. They know the system, the personalities, the structure...they know everything. International journalists are much more aware of the world than we are—we are nationally egocentric. For so many people, the world does not extend beyond the borders of the U.S. That's what makes this program so good—the exposure American journalists get while the Germans are over here."

RTNDA96 will feature a first-time confluence of past and present participants, both American and German, in an effort to extend the benefits of the program beyond the trip itself. The governing board of the RIAS Berlin Commission will meet in Los Angeles during the convention, and the first alumni meeting of 1994 and 1995 American participants will also take place.

"The idea is to keep the American journalists interested in Germany," says Rainer Hasters, executive director of the RIAS Berlin Commission. "The program is a starting point to wake up their inter-

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"The idea is to keep the American journalists interested in Germany."

est, and then we would like to build on that and keep their interest in German/American issues alive. We want to bring these participants together at regular intervals to update them on events in Germany, let them talk to each other, to talk to German journalists, to stay in touch and to promote the German/American relationship."

The alumni meetings will include briefings on current media trends in the U.S. and Germany and an update on the crisis of the German welfare state. Nearly 50 past participants are expected to attend.

"I've gone to Germany on this trip and others, but this is the one where I felt I formed the most solid links with people in my profession over there," says Joe Householder of KTRH Radio, Houston, who participated in the fall 1995 RTNDF program to Germany. "Getting back together with the group here and with folks affiliated with the RIAS program will help me keep a tie with Europe that is going to pay off down the road, if not professionally then personally. It's an interest that thrives and will continue to thrive with that interaction."

The American alumni will be joined by 24 German journalists attending the conference as part of their U.S. program—12 senior editors and 12 young journalists. The visiting German journalists will arrive early in Los Angeles to attend additional briefings, including meetings with local politicians, media companies such as MCA, Inc. (which just signed a $2.5 billion television distribution deal with Germany's RTL) and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Both German and American journalists agree that discussions of their respective journalistic standards and practices are the greatest benefits of the exchange program. "The trip was fascinating. It provided me access to people I would have never been able to reach on my own. But more important was the cultural exchange; meeting German journalists and seeing how they do their jobs. What a great, once-in-a-lifetime trip," said June exchange participant Maggie Lineback of WXIX-TV in Cincinnati. ■

Pat Seaman is the former director of programs for RTNDA and is currently program coordinator for RTNDF's German/American Journalist Exchange Program.

LEARNING WHILE DOING

As the project director for the RTNDF/RIAS German/American Journalist Exchange Program, I always told participants that the program was so much more than a junket for journalists. To learn for myself, I accompanied 12 American radio and television journalists on their two-week study trip to Germany this past June.

Beginning in Bonn, Germany, the journalists dove into learning the structure of the German government (the Bundestag) and familiarizing themselves with the leaders of various political parties whom they met first hand. Our meetings there were timely as we were exposed to a variety of controversial debates including the building anxiety over the move of the German capital from Bonn to Berlin, pending budget cuts in social programs and the ongoing discussions of expanding the restrictive hours of operation for most German stores.

Ever heard of a welfare program that provides funding for your pets? What about a grocery store that closes at 6 p.m. or a health plan that pays for spa visits? These are just a few of the facts participants learned about Germany's social structure.

Fresh from our lessons on Germany's political system, we moved to the next chapter of our study trip: Strasbourg, France. With a behind-the-scenes introduction to the new functions of both the European Union and the European Council, the journalists began to see the bigger picture of how business is conducted an ocean away. After several days of briefings with members of the European Union press office, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission for Human Rights, the journalists gained new insights that only first-hand experience could bring. "It's one thing when you're just reading a story on a screen or a piece of paper about a country and its personalities, its leaders, its form of government," says NBC Radio Newscaster Charles Van Dyke, "but it's quite another when you see the lay of the land, the people, the buildings—it adds a dimension that you can't get any other way."

With much anticipation, we arrived at our third destination: Berlin. Evidence of the changing Germany was all around us—in the faces of people we passed on the street and in the miles of construction that have torn through the city. Our itinerary took us back into Germany's not-so-proud history and into its uncertain future. Our group traveled through the former parts of West and East Berlin, where we had lunch with retired Germans, met with German journalists from both private and public stations and talked with the head of the Federal Commission for Stasi Documents. It was through these meetings and many others that the participants were able to analyze the ever-present divide that still exists between the two halves of the unified Germany.

Our last days in Germany were spent exploring the former east city of Leipzig, Germany, and the surrounding territories. A dinner with local journalists provided the group with an abundance of background information about current issues and the history of the area, which proved to be excellent preparation for the next day's meeting with the mayor of Leipzig. Concluding the trip with a visit to the Buchenwald concentration camp may have seemed odd at first, but it brought our trip full circle.

Clearly one of the highlights in the program was the opportunity that participants had to interact with their German counterparts to exchange stories, ideas and histories. Andrew Finlayson of KTVU-TV in San Francisco, wrote in his essay that, "there is a school of thought that says tourists look for trinkets and T-shirts to take home...but travelers look for truths to take into their hearts. This trip was for travelers." I couldn't agree more. ■

Colony Brown is the RTNDF senior project director for the German/American Journalist Exchange program.

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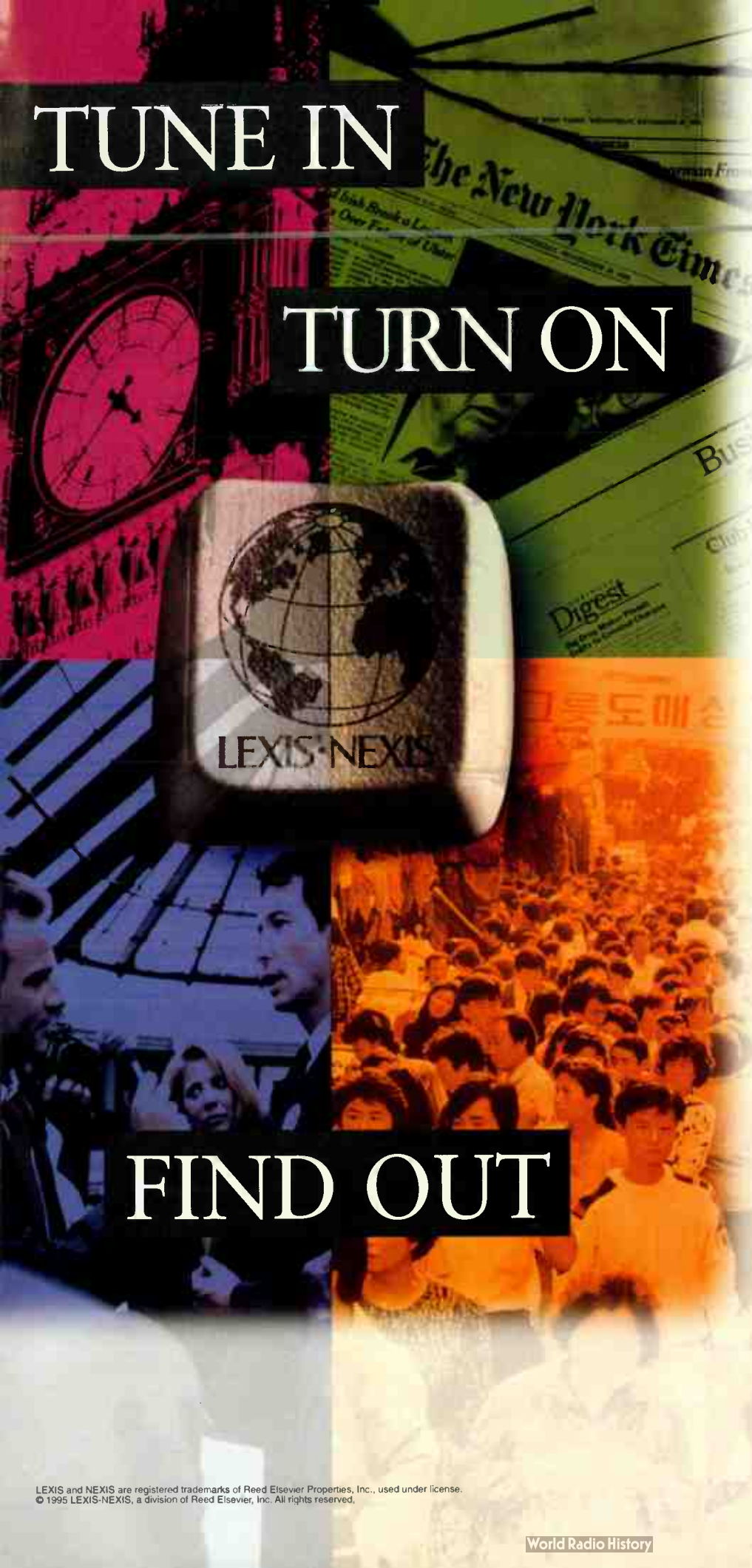

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Book Beat

By Bob Priddy

"The Murrow Boys," Stanley Cloud and Lynne Olson, $27.95.

They were what we are, but they were the first. They were driven, committed and professional. They were egoists, phobics, insecure and more. They sought success—and often exposed their personal flaws when they achieved it. They created broadcast journalism.

They were the Murrow Boys, "pioneers on the front lines of broadcast journalism," as co-authors Stanley Cloud and Lynne Olson describe them in a book that gives balance and humanity to broadcast journalism's most legendary group of reporters.

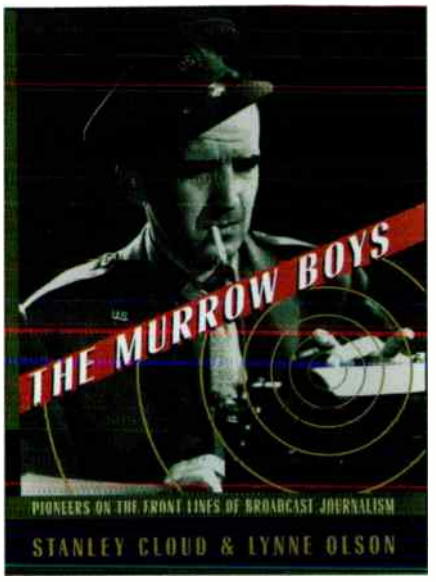
The book is less about Murrow—others have written at length about him, after all—than it is about those around him and their times.

"The Boys' story of triumph and disappointment has all the sweep and drama of epic fiction. But there is no fiction here," write the authors. It is more than a collection of war stories; it is the story of the roots of our industry, of the quick demise of journalistic purity in the face of commercial reality; of rivalry and perceived betrayal; of fact that became myth that became hollow device. Even as the exciting stories of the Boys are recounted, there is a brooding melancholy that seems to lurk in the background.

There were 11 Murrow Boys. One was a woman. One was a spy for the Soviet Union. Another was a dandy. All were distinct individuals, but, say Cloud and Olson, "Ed Murrow aside...legends rarely seem all that legendary to their contemporaries....The 'team' was a collection of individualists...each interested in advancing his own career, each chasing his own stories, each competing for a finite amount of air time."

To be one of the Boys was a distinction accorded to these 11, but claimed by many others. Cloud and Olson determined that the real group of Murrow Boys was Bill Shirer, Larry LeSueur, Howard K. Smith, Winston Burdett, Richard C. Hottelet, Eric Sevareid, Charles Collingwood, Bill Downs, Thomas Grandin, Cecil Brown and Mary Marvin Breckenridge.

It was Hottelet who said, "The only one who could have managed this team



of horses with any success was Ed Murrow." The authors say that in time, "The Murrow Boys, as much or more than anyone else, wanted to believe in their own myth." But they were—during the war and afterward—competitors, their brotherhood built on collective accomplishments achieved separately from one another, and at times in cutthroat competition with each other. They were bound together by their reverence for Murrow. Ned Calmer, who was hired by Paul White and thus not a Murrow Boy, said the Boys "worked for Murrow first and CBS second."

The book is the story of the creation of broadcast journalism as it is still practiced—or at least as we want to think it is still practiced. It reminds us that nostalgia for the good old days when the profit motive did not corrupt the business of journalism is misplaced. Indeed, if there ever was such a time, it was brief. It puts human faces on landmark figures and gives us the context we have forgotten about the times and conditions in which they worked.

Above all, it is the story of mortal men. Others scooped them. Murrow's post-war attack on Sen. Joseph McCarthy was late in the game. Winston Burdett, the spy, gave the names of 23 former colleagues who had been fellow Communist Party members when all were young and idealistic in the '30s.

In those days, CBS News was the CBS Special Events Department. Paul White, hired from United Press, and Ed Klauber, a former night city editor for *The New York Times*, presided over it. The department also included a secretary, White's assistant and announcer Robert Trout, who read news when he wasn't doing station breaks or the organ reveille that began the day.

In 1937, CBS sent Ed Murrow overseas as its European director to book acts for broadcast back to the states. But Murrow saw that world conditions required him to be more. He hired an unemployed newspaperman, William L. Shirer, and the two began to report Europe's plunge toward war. Olson and Cloud say those two men "were, for a few intense years, closer to each other than either would ever be to anyone else, wives and lovers included." The rarely given description of that deep friendship makes the more widely told story of the unhealable fracture of that friendship after the war even more tragic.

For seven years, Murrow and the Boys fought military censors and narrow editorial thinking by White and others at CBS. At first, CBS would not let Murrow and Shirer on the air to tell in person what they were seeing. Until late in the war, CBS refused to allow prerecorded sound to be used to bring the war closer to home.

It was a time we almost cannot fathom in our satellite era, a time when the Boys broadcast back to the United States on short-wave radio, not knowing for days or weeks if anyone had heard them in New York. And that was assuming they could even find a station from which to broadcast.

White quickly saw Murrow as a rival over whom he had little or no control because of distance and primitive communications systems. In time, Murrow would be promoted past White and would fire him.

They fought about objectivity, a standard Klauber brought with him from *The New York Times* to establish at CBS. But the authors say White's and William Paley's version of objectivity was different and especially troublesome for the Boys because the former seemed to equate objective facts with their own opinions. The Boys often found ways around this problem as they fought to tell a complacent America what was happening in Europe.

It was an era in which women were not wanted by White and CBS News. Mary Marvin Breckenridge lasted only a short time under those conditions.

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"Edward R. Murrow and the Boys had created something brand new out of thin air, but the age in which they did their greatest work lasted less than 25 years."

The Boys' success created broadcast journalism and made it a saleable commodity on radio. And with those sales came pressure from sponsors and an increasing desire to control the information the Boys dispensed. The heady early days of, if you will, "pure" reporting were quickly over.

Some already had left CBS by the end of the war. Murrow became increasingly distressed at the course broadcast was taking and the back seat it had taken to entertainment.

After the war, the Boys wanted nothing to do with television, which the authors say they referred to "as inconsequential and inherently demeaning for anyone who wasn't an entertainer or pitchman." It was Howard K. Smith who referred to it as "up-to-date, streamlined, jet-propelled electronically operated, plastic-insulated modern journalism" in which the reporter was the least important piece of equipment.

Times changed, to their discomfort. Fred Friendly's partnership with Murrow created a gap between Murrow and the Boys.

"Edward R. Murrow and the Boys had created something brand new out of thin air, but the age in which they did their greatest work lasted less than 25 years," Cloud and Olson say. "As much as they may have wished otherwise, CBS News was not, after all, a higher calling; it was just a business.

"Commercial television at once trivialized and corrupted what they did. Then it tired of them and tossed them aside," they write. "It is discouraging...that CBS tilted the balance so quickly and now so completely away from a commitment to news and public affairs and towards lowest-common-denominator programming."

Only four of the Boys were left at CBS when Murrow died in 1965.

By 1978, when Burdett retired, only Hottelet was left, and he was lopped off the company list by budget cuts in 1985. When Eric Sevareid died in 1992, only six of the Boys were still alive. Only one attended the funeral, Larry LeSueur, and he was there because he saw a newspaper article about it, not because CBS thought to invite him.

He listened gloomily as today's CBS figures eulogized Sevareid. Cloud and Olson say they did not mention Sevareid's essence—his work—in a service LeSueur called "a production."

The authors quote former network correspondent Sander Vanocur: "It drives me up the wall when I hear people at CBS invoking the name of Murrow...CBS is now like a cult. They're pagans praying to idols. They invoke these deities to justify their present base claims...they both want to illuminate and erase the traditions."

Many in the business, from the networks to the teakettle radio stations, will identify with the Boys, the profession they created and the industry that took advantage of it and them. This book makes legends real, and we need that to understand that mortals created broadcast journalism's first finest hours—and mortals, not legends, must create more.

When reading this book, perhaps readers will see something of themselves in it. The Boys were what we are—the good and the bad. But they were the first. ■

Bob Priddy works for Missourinet in Jefferson City, MO. He is an RTNDA past chairman of the board and is writing a comprehensive 50th anniversary history of the association.

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PHILIPS

WordWatching

Mervin Block

More and more, newscasts tell us less and less. Not all newscasts carry less news, but too many do. The problem is newscasters who misspend time by telling us what they think. Or what they think we think. Or, even worse, how to think. Here are some network excerpts that give us something to think about.

"Good evening. We begin tonight with news that millions of people throughout the world will think is long overdue."

Whatever that is, it's not news. Most of what we hear on newscasts may strike millions of people as long overdue. But the population of the world exceeds five billion, so those *millions* (two million or 200 million?) are only a small fraction of the total. If it makes sense to describe the expected reaction to news not yet reported, why not use even bigger numbers to beef up a script: "Billions of people in the world will be indifferent to this news. Or will think it premature, or right on time, or somewhat overdue."

What is long overdue there is the delivery of news. It's best to just tell what happened today, *the facts*. But don't try to describe how people *will think*. Or might react. The news is the action, not the presumed reaction. Also, the anchor needn't announce that he's beginning. As soon as he says "good evening," we know he has begun.

Same newscast: **"Here's a sad piece of news from overseas about health. At a meeting in Malawi, in Africa today, the news for Africa's senior defense officials must have been devastating. International health officials have told [why not the simple past tense *told*?] them that in some African armies one of every two soldiers is infected with the AIDS virus."** Much of the news we hear is sad, but an anchor shouldn't tell us a story is sad. We can figure that out for ourselves. We don't have to be cued.

The script said the officials *must have been* devastated. That's speculative. Who needs speculation? Or devastation? Or characterization of news? What we need is news—unadorned, unadulterated, unadumbrated. (Of that last word, Emily Dickinson would have said, "There's a word you can tip your hat to.")

Next in the newscast came this: **"In California, the horror caused by children. An attack so brutal that authorities are groping for an explanation."** No light. Just fright. *Authorities*? Authorities in child behavior? Medical authorities? Police? In his lead-in, the anchor told of "an infant victim and the suspects who are not much older." *Not much older*? The correspondent said the victim was one month old and the suspects in this beating were three boys—one six years old and two eight years old. Figure it out: The six-year-old was 72 times as old as the victim, and the eight-year-olds were 96 times as old.

The correspondent said the boys had walked into a home "to steal a bicycle." Did they break in? Did they find the door unlocked? And *did* they steal a bicycle?

The next night, the newscast carried another piece on the beating but for the second time did not mention that the two eight-year-olds were brothers. Twins. The anchor tagged the piece: **"Violence and sadness in California."** That's a big help to listeners who fail to realize that the beating of a newborn is violent and sad.

Another network newsmagazine on another subject: **"When we come back, new discoveries about what really happened that night. And what we found out, many doctors and hospitals may not want you to see."** Sounds like one of those ads for an insider's newsletter: "What your grocer doesn't want you to know." Or "Bagels! What's *really* in them."

Some network scripts have other holes: **"Then the doctor gave her the terrible news, but at first, she didn't understand his meaning."** *She didn't understand his meaning*? That passeth all understanding. Perhaps the anchor meant "she didn't understand what the doctor told her."

"For companies, domestic violence also hits the bottom line hard, up to five billion dollars lost annually...." That *up* to makes the total as elastic as a bungee cord. How was that number arrived at? In fact, it's an *unk-unk*: unknown and unknowable.

"On Capitol Hill, it's now a six-pack of Senate Democrats calling it quits for re-election—six and counting." A *six-pack* of senators? And a 12-pack of representatives? Or *half a case*?

"Captain Tony, who ran for mayor here as a self-confessed gambler, adulterer and gun smuggler and won, says a clean, orderly themed Key West is no Key West at all." *Self-confessed*? Who can confess for you but you? No one can confess for someone else. So *self* should be put on the shelf. Although the script is not about a crime, many lawyers consider a confession a *written* instrument. In any case, that excerpt needs rehabilitation: "Captain Tony ran for mayor here as an admitted gambler, smuggler and adulterer—and won. He says a clean, orderly theme-park Key West is *not* Key West." (Yes, things are seldom what they theme.)

"For travelers trying to get home for the holidays, it's been nothing short of frustrating." If it's nothing short of frustrating, it's frustrating.

"The accused in this case is a Georgia man named Ellis Wayne Felker, who was to have died [better: *was to have been executed*] last month for the murder 15 years ago of Evelyn Ludlum." An inmate on death row is no longer labeled *the accused*. Right after the crime, he's a *suspect*, later the *accused*. But when the accusation is proved in court, he's found guilty—and thus *convicted*. So he's no longer the *accused*.

Also: Why give the murderer a middle name—but not the victim? Broadcast style calls for the elimination of middle names, except when there's a possibility of confusion with someone else. Or when someone of substance has long been identified with a middle name: Harriet Beecher Stowe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, George Washington Carver. All of them made their name in another, more leisurely time. But nowadays we have far less time and can't afford to misspend time—while telling listeners less.

Mervin Block is the author of "Broadcast Newswriting: The RTNDA Reference Guide." He's also the author of "Rewriting Network News: WordWatching Tips from 345 TV and Radio Scripts" and "Writing Broadcast News—Shorter, Sharper, Stronger." His books are sold by RTNDA to members at a discount.

RTNDA History

Jack Shelley

Looking toward Las Vegas and away from Canada. And fighting fishing expeditions for confidential sources.

The RTNDA board got its first good look at Caesar's Palace, the luxurious entertainment and gambling center in Las Vegas, when it held its winter meeting there. Caesar's was to be the site of the 1979 convention. Its large exhibition area delighted Exhibits Chairman Eddie Barker, who predicted a major increase in exhibits over the 1978 show in Atlanta.

It was at that meeting that the board unanimously reaffirmed RTNDA's push for deregulation of radio and an end to the so-called fairness doctrine and equal-time restrictions. It also approved a drive for federal legislation that would protect all innocent third parties against search warrants. And it encouraged efforts to establish a shield for reporters' confidential sources.

The board also endorsed a move away from RTNDA's long-established practice of holding its international conferences in Canada with some frequency. Growing trade differences between the two nations had no effect on the cordiality between U.S. and Canadian RTNDA members, but customs problems had produced deep concern among potential U.S. exhibitors about their costs. So, with reluctance, the board voted against holding the 1982 convention in Canada. Canadian members urged the association to return to a convention site north of the border for years afterward, but exhibitor uneasiness could not be overcome.

In the spring of 1979, RTNDA and NBC News teamed up to form a Freedom of Information Internship. The idea had emerged at the Atlanta convention when NBC News President Les Crystal told RTNDA it should establish "a clearinghouse of information" in Washington to deal more effectively with press freedom. He put actions behind his words. The internship was formed with the cooperation of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and supplementary financial help from the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB).

George Washington University law student Jeff Tobias became the first FOI intern. He was assigned to respond to phone or mail inquiries from news directors encountering court or police problems in coverage. He also was to prepare special reports for *Communicator* and materials to be mailed periodically to board members.

The man called the "Godfather" of RTNDA's Washington office, Julian Goodman, retired from NBC in the spring of 1979. He'd been with the network for 34 years and for 14 of those years was either president or chairman. But Goodman never forgot his bone-deep commitment to the news profession. It was he who had made the historic offer on behalf of NBC in 1973 of $10,000 to help meet the costs of establishing an RTNDA Washington office if other broadcast organizations would do the same. CBS and ABC later joined the effort. The April 1979 *Communicator* paid tribute to Goodman with a major retrospective article written by Ray Scherer, himself a veteran NBC Washington and foreign correspondent who later became a vice president of NBC's parent corporation, RCA.

RTNDA was highly visible at the March 1979 NAB convention in Dallas. At NAB's request, RTNDA organized and ran two workshop panels. Paul Davis moderated a session on news and research. Regional Director Fred Young (Hearst Broadcasting) presided over a session on TV investigative reporting. Both panels had full houses.

RTNDA's modest exhibit booth, measuring 10 by 20 feet, might have been overlooked in the 145,000-square-foot exhibit area. But as Len Allen reported later, "Some guardian angel planted (it) right at the foot of the escalator, which provided the lone entry to the lower level."

A gratifyingly large number of NAB registrants stopped at the exhibit, asked questions and picked up applications or publications. "One young woman requested we ship a 'Small Market Radio News Handbook' to her in New Guinea, some 15,000 miles away," Allen reported.

Later, when the comparatively young National Radio Broadcasters Association held its annual convention in Washington, October 9-10, it also provided complimentary space for RTNDA. Members of the Washington staff operated the booth and distributed publications.

President Paul Davis at times seemed as busy as the proverbial one-armed paperhanger during those months, trying to fend off new threats to reporters' freedoms. In early spring he fired off a letter to U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell, asking him to change the Justice Department regulations that allowed prosecutors and investigators to get records of long distance telephone calls made by reporters. Davis pointed out that with such records, investigators easily could identify the reporters' confidential sources.

Another alarm was sounded by a Supreme Court ruling in *Herbert vs. Lando*, a libel suit brought against CBS Producer Barry Lando by former Vietnam War Col. Anthony Herbert. The effect of the court's ruling was to allow Herbert's lawyers to try again in lower court to prove that a 60 Minutes segment had been put together with "actual malice." Journalists promptly labeled it a dangerous move to try to probe the "state of mind" of reporters and editors doing their jobs.

Not long afterward, Davis and Larry Scharff took the initiative in a letter to the judge heading the federal judiciary's standing committee on rules. RTNDA called for changes in court procedure that would discourage so-called "fishing expeditions" by libel claimants.

Soon another Supreme Court decision had journalists worried. In *Gannett Co. vs. De Pasquale*, the court ruled that if the defense, prosecution and judge all agreed, pre-trial hearings could be held in secret. Davis warned that this could lead to serious abuses or even the closing of jury trials to the press, and shortly thereafter, there were indications that a number of lower courts were using the *De Pasquale* decision as an excuse to bar the media from proceedings that previously had been conducted openly. As a result, RTNDA joined other media organizations to monitor the record of courtroom closings since the Supreme Court ruling. It also asked the court to reconsider that decision. ■

Next month: The first Vegas convention.

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By Kitty Felde

SPIN DOCTORS, SERBIAN STYLE

Johnny Cochran would have been proud. The scene was straight out of the O.J. Simpson trial: There was a high profile case with a flamboyant defense attorney providing his spin on the day's events and reporters pushing and shoving, trying to get their microphones a few inches closer to not miss any pearl of wisdom that fell from his lips. There was even a crowd of protesters providing a bit of local color—interrupting the press conference with shouts of "Karadzic, murderer! Karadzic, murderer!"

The popular defense attorney this time was from Belgrade: Igor Pantelic. His client: Radovan Karadzic, wanted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for genocide and crimes against humanity. Pantelic showed more media savvy than anyone else at the Tribunal. With his geometric haircut and Italian designer suit, Pantelic outmaneuvered the ICTY and stole the spotlight on the first day of a hearing designed to pressure world leaders to bring Karadzic and military commander Ratko Mladic to trial. He made himself available to reporters all day long. Pantelic oozed charm, flashing his soap-star smile, spouting an endless stream of empty answers. He even answered questions from a dozen journalists who followed him into a revolving door, cramming themselves together as if trying to duplicate the 1950s fad of stuffing fraternity boys into a phone booth.

Once is never enough when it comes to feeding the hungry press. Two weeks later, Karadzic sent a pair of glib California lawyers to argue his case. Once again, the Tribunal was upstaged.

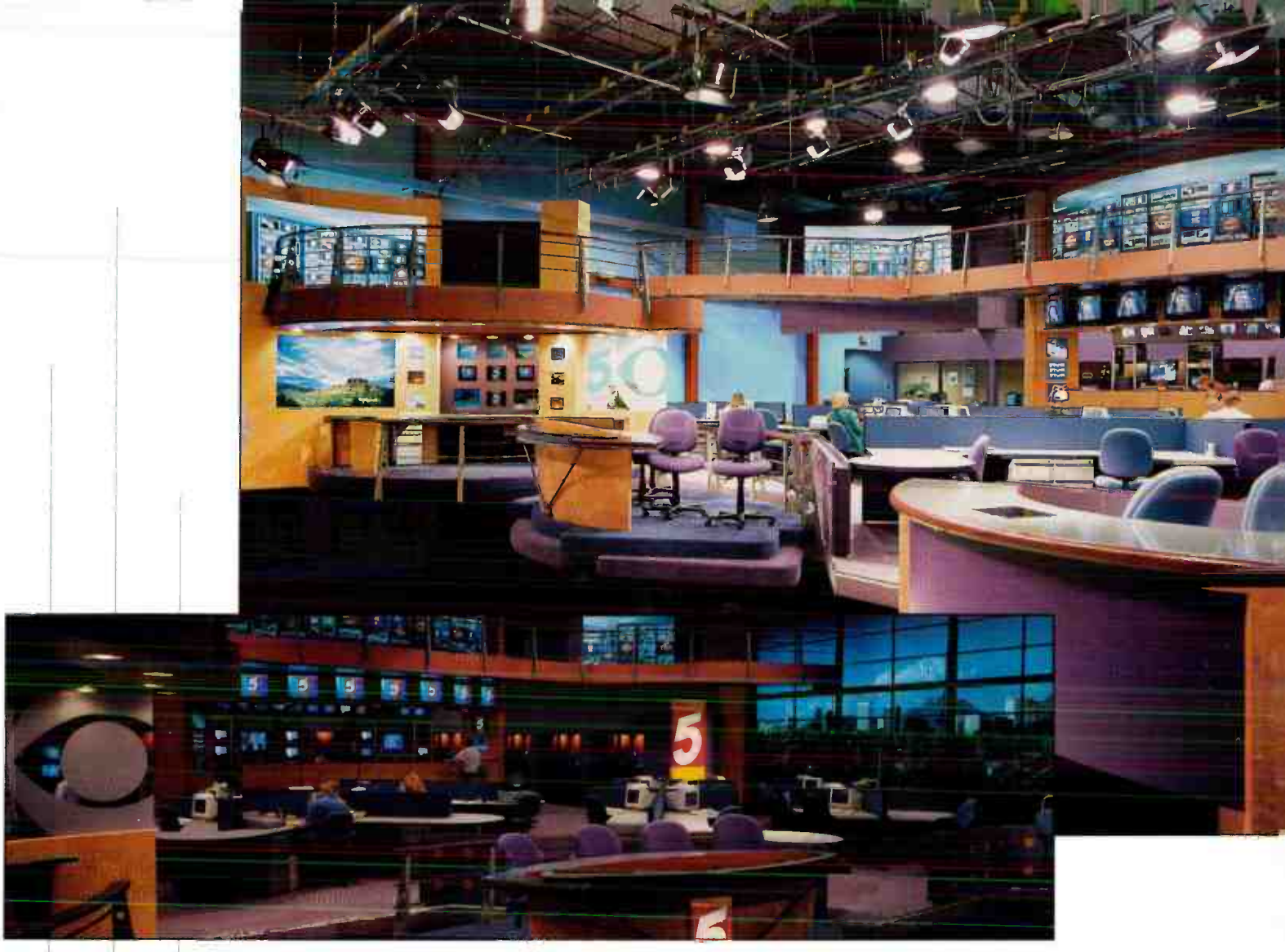
But it was the earlier performance of Igor Pantelic that managed to overshadow arguably the most historic indictment of the Tribunal: elevating sexual assault to the status of other crimes against humanity—the first time a war crimes indictment had dealt only with sexual crimes. But Pantelic stole the show. And why not? Pantelic provided drama and color. The Tribunal provided pieces of paper and a press spokesman whose French accent is so strong that my news desk won't use him on the air because they say they can't understand him.

The Tribunal could take a lesson from this trio of attorneys—or from American prosecutors who've learned how to play the game: providing one-stop shopping for lazy reporters. I've attended U.S. Attorney's press conferences in Los Angeles that included the attorneys handling the case, the FBI agents who'd done the dirty work, photographs or videotapes of the accused and even a victim or two who put a human face on the indictment. Props are helpful. Money-laundering indictments are never complete without a table stacked with bundles of hundred-dollar bills. You need pictures.

Tribunal prosecutors—many of them veterans of the U.S. Attorney's office—must share the blame for the lack of media coverage of the proceedings in The Hague. If they were making their case before a jury, they would have begun with their most dramatic stuff—something that would stick in the jury's mind throughout the many weeks of rather slow evidence. But because these prosecutors are presenting their case before a panel of judges, they began with the groundwork needed to meet their legal burden, which meant days and days of testimony about the political history of Yugoslavia. By the time they got to their most dramatic evidence—the stories told by victims who survived the atrocities in Bosnia—most of the world's press had gone home.

The purpose of this Tribunal is not to provide "good TV" for the folks back home. It's to slowly and methodically bring those accused of war crimes to trial—and perhaps serve as a deterrent when the next Bosnia happens somewhere else in the world. But it would be wise to remember there are two courts at work here: the Tribunal itself and the court of international opinion. What good will bringing criminals to justice do if no one in the world is watching? ■

Kitty Felde is covering the International Criminal Tribunal for Monitor Radio, the worldwide broadcast edition of the *Christian Science Monitor*.



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