Chasing Grief In Littleton | Movie Defangs Mike Wallace | ABC Entraps Cops; *Time* Maligns Sugar Co. | Bold Predictions For Media, 2005 | Our Chimp Matches Wits With DC Pundits

BRILL'S CONTENT™

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INFORMATION AGE

# WAR GETS THE MONICA TREATMENT

**When the Media Machine turns from a sex scandal to life-and-death issues in the Balkans, the result—including bogus scoops from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*—isn't pretty.**

By Steven Brill • Page 98

AUGUST 1999

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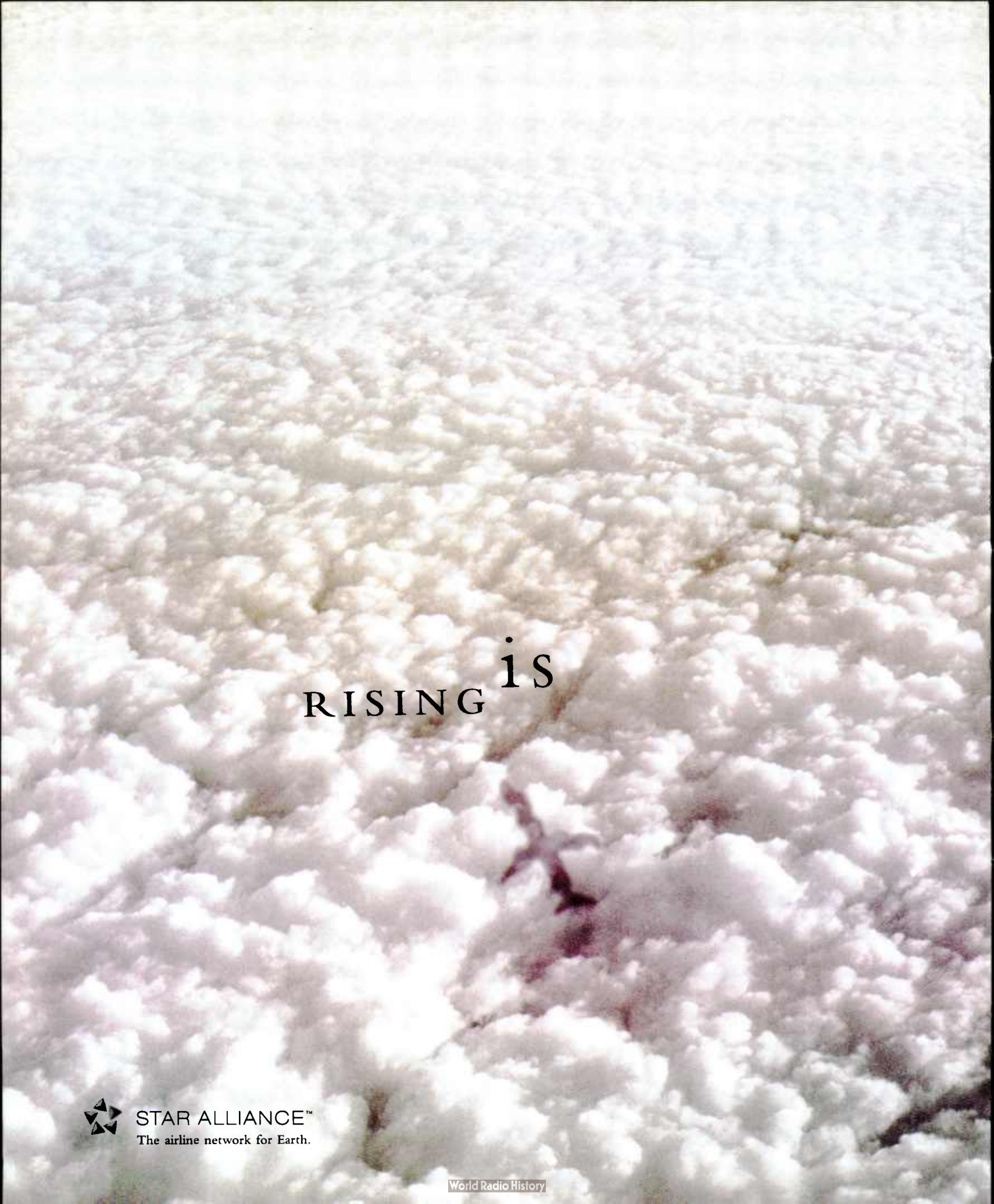

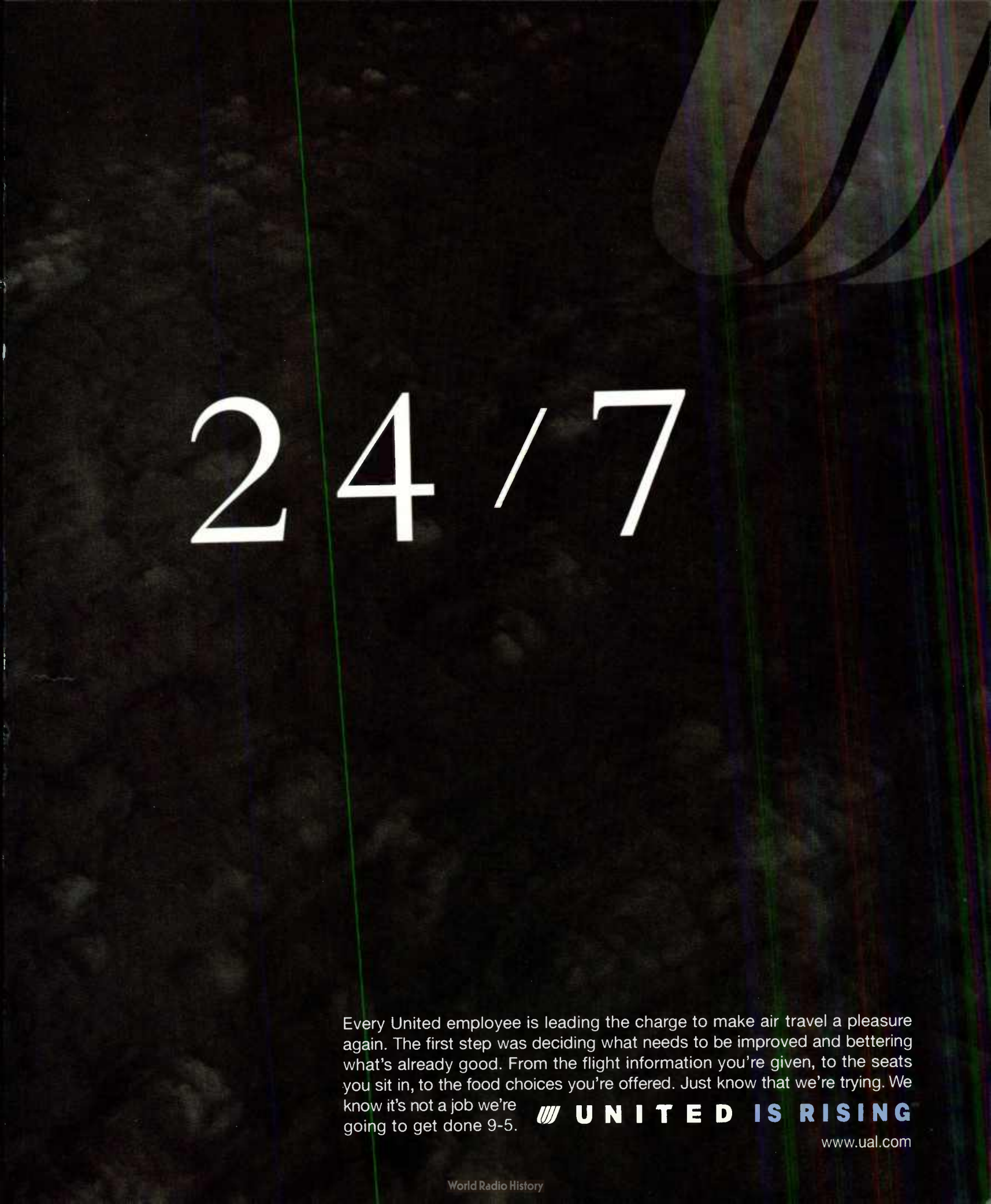

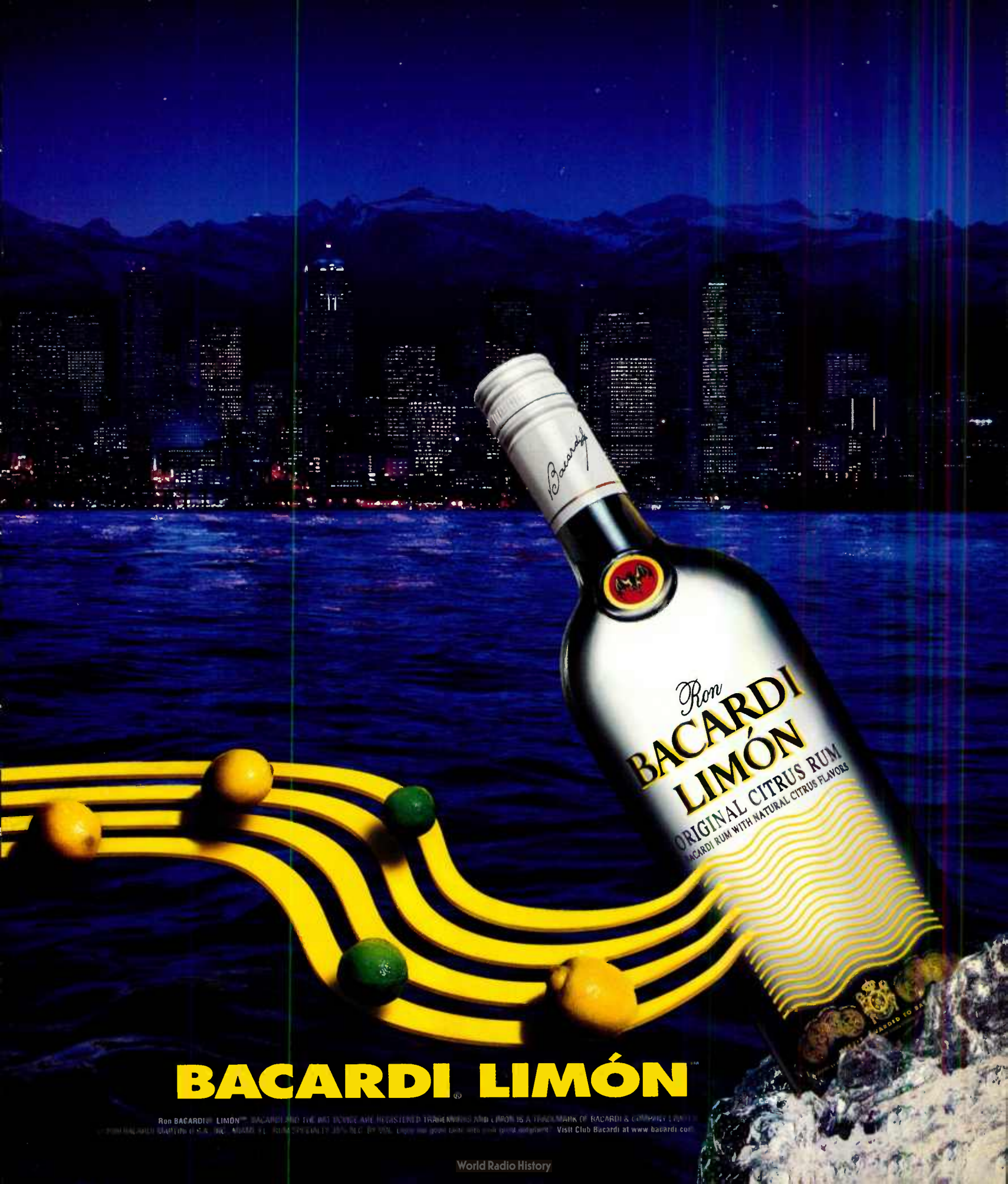


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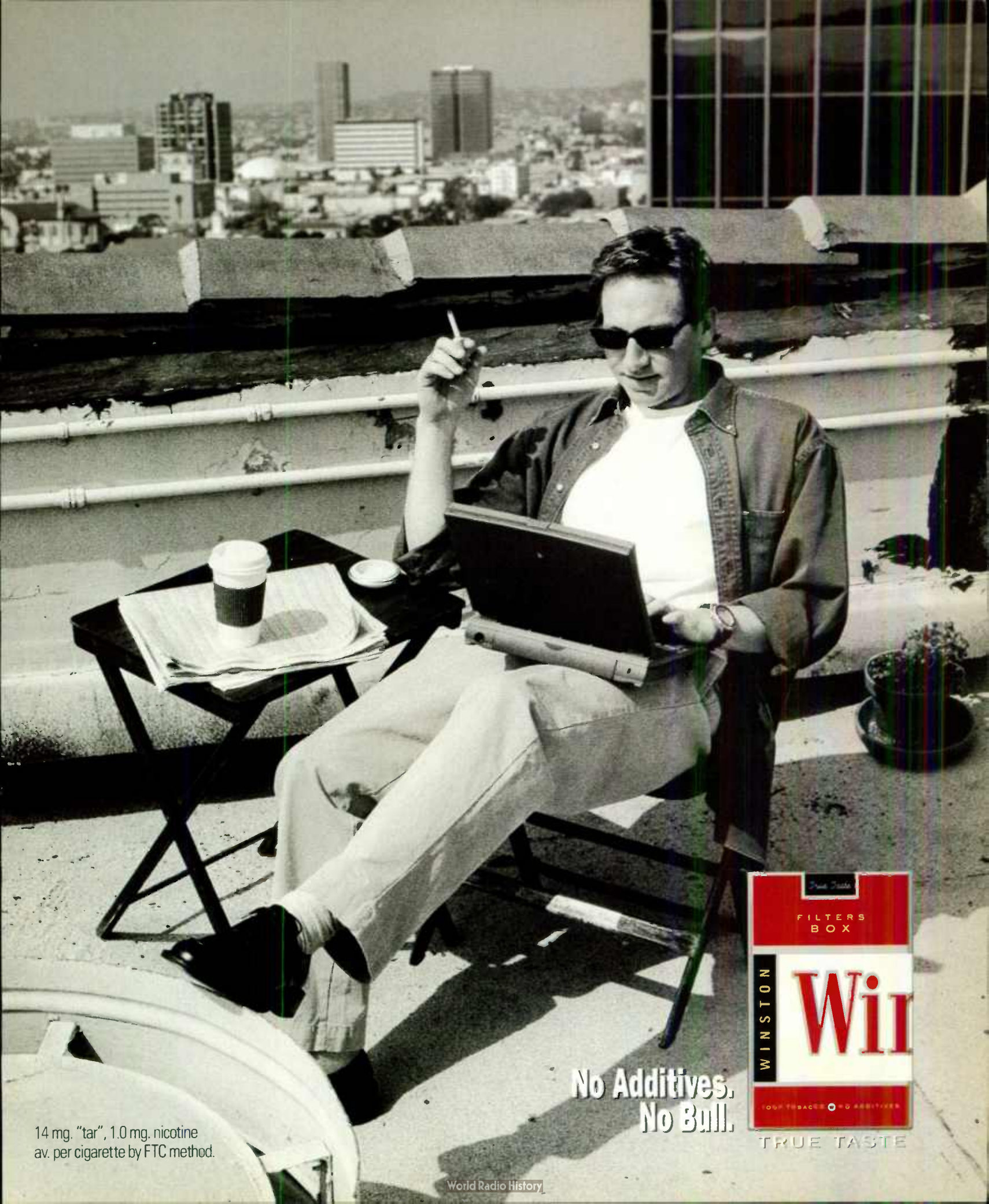


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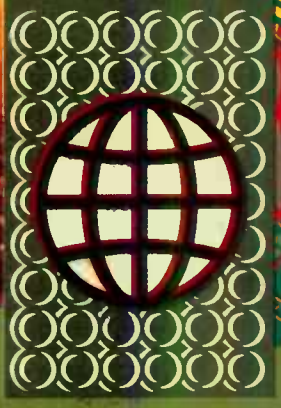

CondéNet

THE NEW YORKER

BRILL'S CONTENT
THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INFORMATION AGE

*Dear Reader:*

This issue marks the first birthday of this magazine, and I want to thank you for having supported us through our first year.

It's been quite a start. Since our first issue, the number of subscribers or newsstand buyers that we guarantee to advertisers has jumped 50 percent, to 225,000, and we expect it to grow by 20 to 30 percent in each of the next three years. You can help us in that regard by continuing to tell your friends about us and even by giving them one of those annoying subscription blow-in cards to fill out.

I'm not at all embarrassed to ask you to do that, because I'm proud of what we are trying to do with this new magazine and of what our terrific editorial team has already accomplished. We've begun to establish a whole new way of looking at all nonfiction media, and we've published dozens of stories that have been widely talked about and debated. They've even led to some new caution in newsrooms and control rooms across the country.

But as anyone who has ever been involved in creating a new product knows, the process really only begins when the first version is produced. If the creators are doing their jobs well, the tinkering and reassessing never ends.

**So, as you've noticed,** our editorial team has continued to make changes along the way. We know that what we write about often demands more space and detail than much of the oversimplified, superficial media that we criticize, and we remain unafraid to challenge you with the length that some articles need. But we also know—and knew better after the first issue—that we have to pay attention to the pacing of everything we write and to the mix of what we offer in each issue. Editor Eric Effron and I and everyone else here have worked hard on that, just as we've worked on improving our design and intensifying our effort to say with pictures and charts what we might have said with lots of extra words.

In the coming months, you will see us continue with those improvements, while adding more coverage of business, science, religion, and arts reporting, more coverage from outside the media meccas of New York, Washington, and Los Angeles, and more ratings of the best and worst nonfiction media of all kinds (of the type we recently did concerning White House reporters).

It's all part of the overriding idea that has not changed at all since the first issue: that this magazine should be the consumer's guide through the Information Age—that it should be a magazine that provides great reporting about the who, the how, the why, and, yes, the why not behind everything purporting to be nonfiction that we read, watch, listen to, or log on to.

**The goal is simple:** to make people who are the enthusiasts of the Information Age—those of us who watch three television shows at once, read all kinds of newspapers and magazines, or already have dozens of bookmarks on our laptops—much savvier consumers of it all, and, in the process begin to make the media accountable to those same consumers.

It should be no surprise, then, that the press hasn't received us as warmly as you have. Few who enjoy unaccountable power like to have it challenged. This does not make them bad people; it only makes them human. Indeed, I think you'll agree that we are hardly the always-snarling "watchdog" that the press has sometimes made us out to be. For example, as of this issue we have now named 40 hero journalists to our monthly honor rolls and have done probably as many stories that praised those we write about, or simply explained how they do what they do, as we have stories where we uncovered significant wrongdoing.

Some of you may even be disappointed at that ratio, just as you may be disappointed to find on page 80 that we say that the media horde at Littleton was largely praised by the families there. But I'm as proud of that story as I am of the one we did calling *Time* magazine to task for maligning a New Orleans doctor who'd been killed in a car accident. (To its credit, *Time* later corrected its story, apologized to the doctor's family, and cited our article in doing so.)

Indeed, what we have achieved for sure in our first year is that we've confounded those who thought we would always favor one political side or the other, or would always be negative about the media. But that shouldn't really be confusing—because it's all consistent with our goal of giving you the straight story about everything and everyone in the Information Age.

You've been amazingly eager so far to be involved in our ongoing creative process by telling us when you think we're doing this important job well, and when we're not. Please keep at it!

Sincerely,

STEVEN BRILL, EDITOR IN CHIEF

BRILL'S CONTENT

THE INDEPENDENT VOICE OF THE INFORMATION AGE

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JULY/AUGUST 1999 • VOLUME TWO • NUMBER 6

# FEATURES

## COVER STORY



**ON OUR COVER:**
Photograph of replica of Monica Lewinsky's blue Gap dress by Matthew Klein.

MONICA ALMEIDA/*THE NEW YORK TIMES* (LITTLETON)


The New York Times

NEW JERSEY PLANS TO FORESTALL SUIT ON RACE PROFILING

Bombing Unites Serb Army As It Debilitates Economy

Yugoslav Rift Heals, NATO Admits

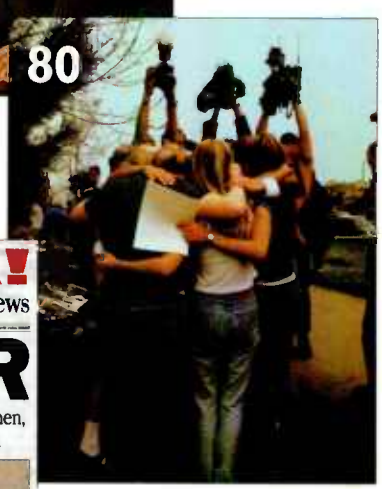
Violence, Real and Imagined, Sweeps Through the Schools

Production Cut in Half, Experts Say

**98** *By wrenching a quote out of context from NATO Supreme Commander General Wesley Clark,* The New York Times *propagated a bogus story that the bombing of Yugoslavia was boomeranging.*


**74**

60 Minutes *icon Mike Wallace is angry that a new movie portrays him as a cowardly corporate drone, unwilling to fight for a major story on tobacco.*

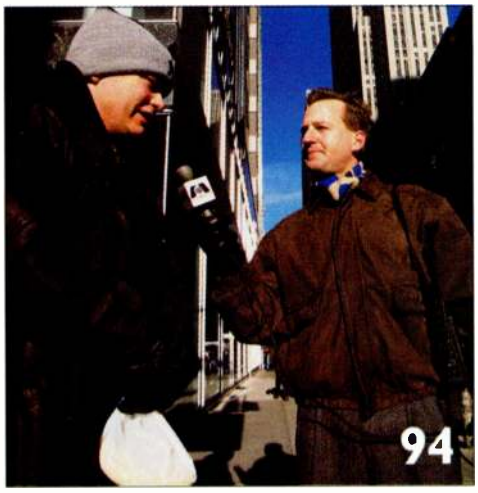



*As students consoled one another near Columbine High School, photographers captured the scene.*


EXTRA!
Denver Rocky Mountain News
TUESDAY
HORROR
Death toll could reach 25, including gunmen, after attack at Columbine High School. 2A

**86**

*The* Denver Rocky Mountain News *had a second "Extra" edition on the streets by 4:15 in the afternoon on the day of the shootings near Littleton, Colorado..*




*Metro Networks reporter Gordon Deal conducts an interview in Manhattan that will then be repackaged to different radio stations.*

## 94 Trafficking In News

BY RIFKA ROSENWEIN

The company that brought you the ubiquitous radio traffic report is now bringing you the news. But you may never know it, because Metro Networks and its reporters keep the Metro name off the air.

## 109 Fearless Predictions: The Content World, 2005

BY MICHAEL J. WOLF AND GEOFFREY SANDS

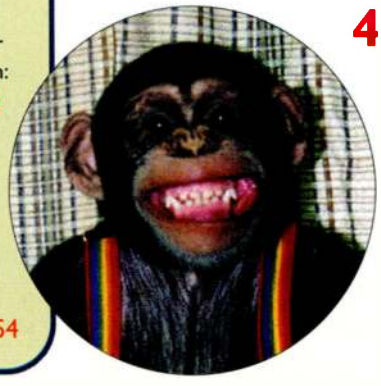
Two partners from the Booz-Allen & Hamilton consulting firm provide a glimpse into the future of news and information.

## THE NOTEBOOK.....40



# COLUMNS

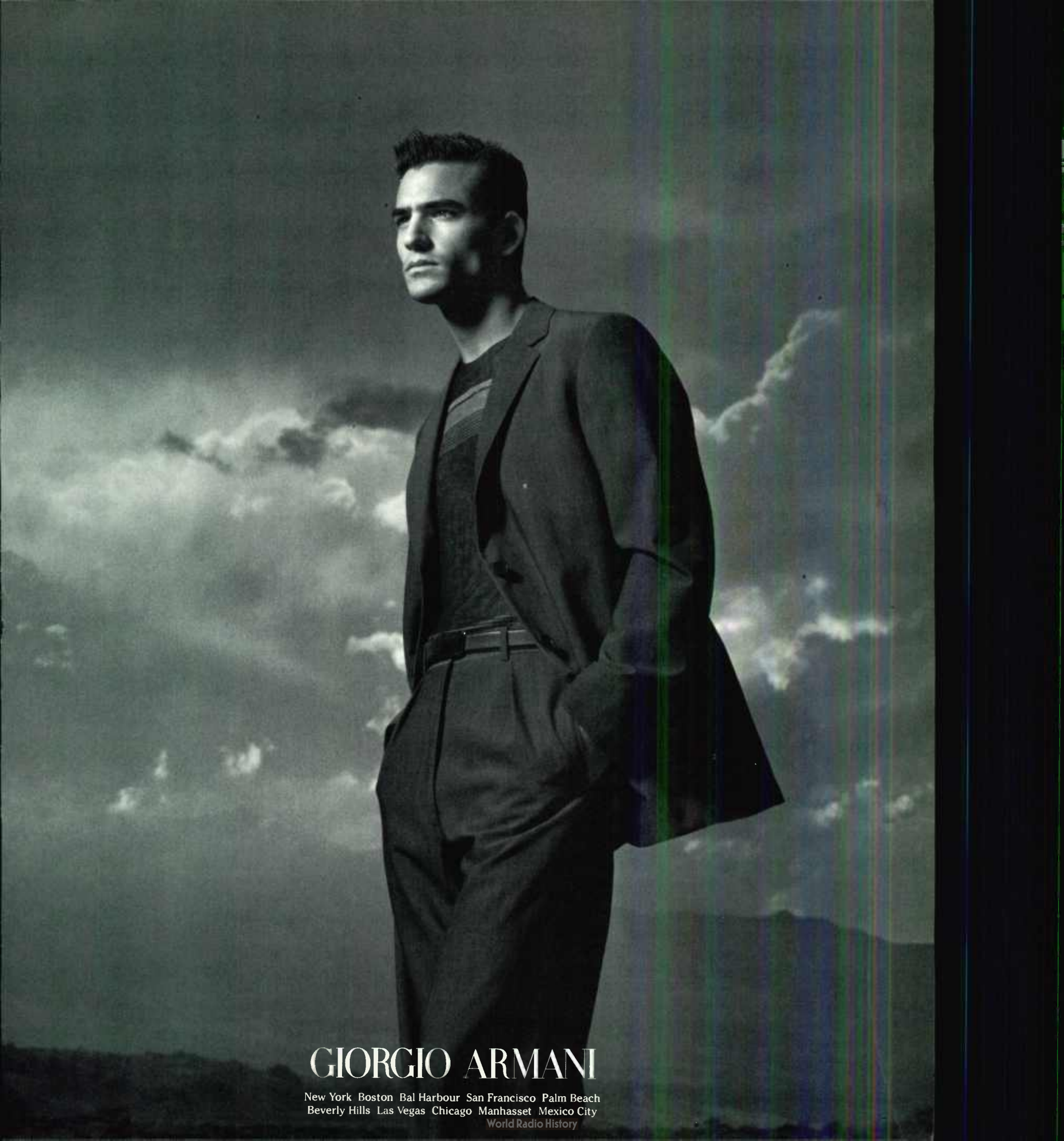


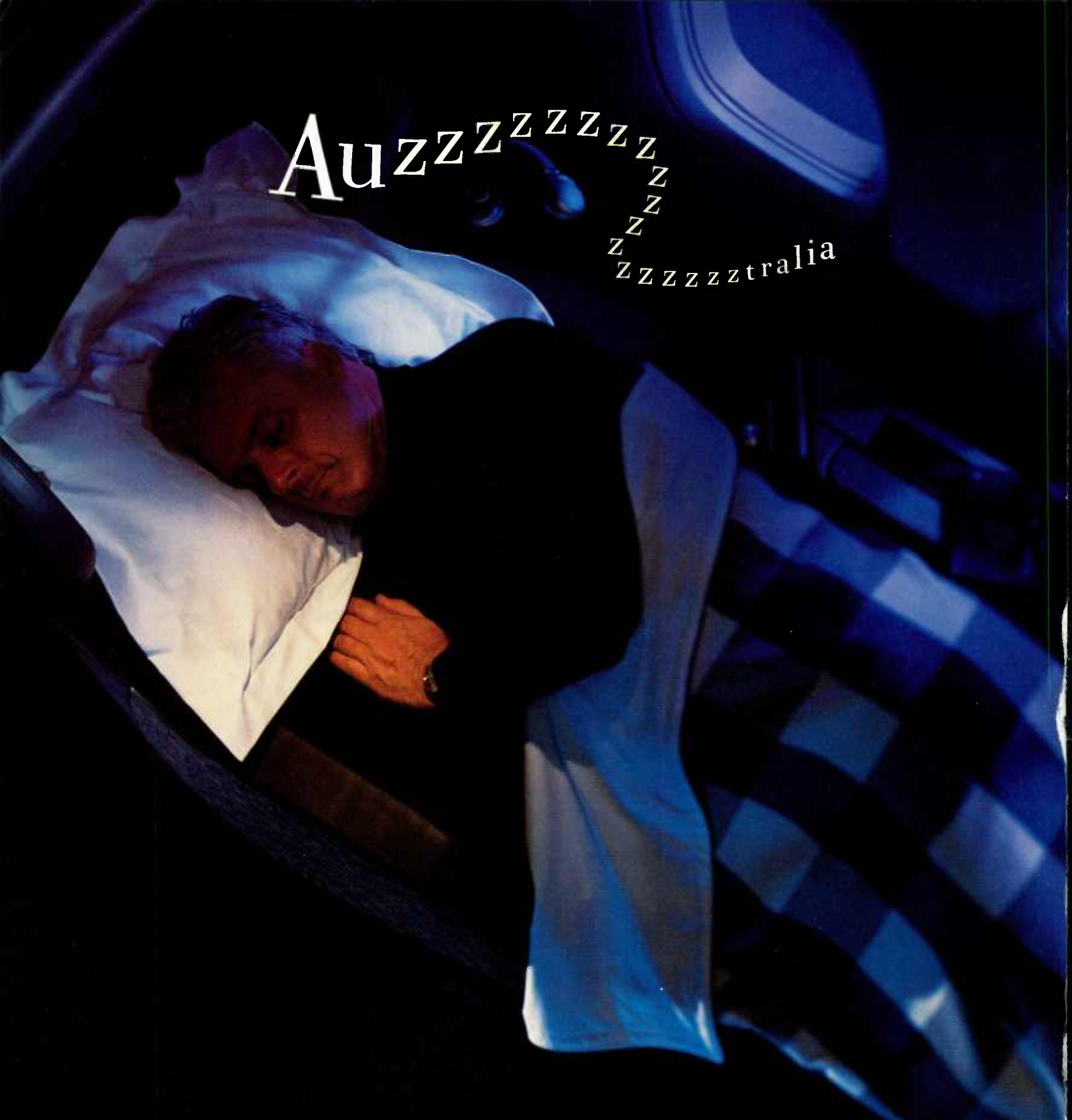


## 41

*Chippy, a four-year-old chimpanzee from New Jersey, takes on the pundits who inhabit the world of Washington, D.C., talk shows.*

LORI GRINKER/CONTACT PRESS (METRO NEWS)



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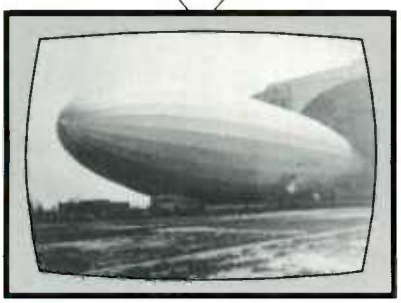
# DEPARTMENTS





**28** *The History Channel's* Modern Marvels *brings the world's greatest engineering feats to life.*


**115** *Looking for some good books? Brill's Content suggests some of the latest nonfiction titles.*


*Learn more about Ella Fitzgerald, the matriarch of jazz, in our experts' recommended "Sources."*






## CORRECTIONS POLICY

1. We always publish corrections at least as prominently as the original mistake was published.

2. We are eager to make corrections quickly and candidly.

3. Although we welcome letters to the editor that are critical of our work, an aggrieved party need not have a letter to the editor published for us to correct a mistake. We will publish corrections on our own and in our own voice as soon as we are told about a mistake by anyone—our staff, an uninvolved reader, or an aggrieved reader—and can confirm the correct information.

4. Our corrections policy should not be mistaken for a policy of accommodating readers who are simply unhappy about a story that has been published.

5. Information about corrections or complaints should be directed to editor in chief Steven Brill. We may be reached by mail at 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10175; by fax at 212-824-1950; or by e-mail at comments@brillscontent.com.

6. Separately or in addition, readers are invited to contact our outside ombudsman, Bill Kovach, who will investigate and report on specific complaints about the work of the magazine. He may be reached by voice mail at 212-824-1981; by fax at 212-824-1940; by e-mail at bkovach@brillscontent.com; or by mail at 1 Francis Avenue, Cambridge, MA, 02138.

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# [ LETTER FROM THE EDITOR ]

YOUR LETTERS AND CALLS STARTED COMING in almost immediately after the terrible news of the Columbine High School shooting broke, and many made the same point: *The media are out of control on this story and you people need to do something about it.*

I took away two important messages from your reactions: that you are acutely aware of the media's role in shaping our view of events (not to mention, perhaps, shaping the events themselves), and that you expect this magazine to have something important and original to say when they do.

It's a responsibility we take seriously, and in the wake of the Columbine shootings—inspired in part by your expectations—we dispatched two of our writers to the scene to monitor the media's work and interaction with the community. And while of course there were excesses and mistakes, you'll be disappointed if all you're looking for here is some easy press-bashing.

Instead, what you'll find are stories that shed new light on how the media do their job—for better and for worse—in an atmosphere marked by intense personal tragedy and a huge public appetite for information.

In "Hugging The Spotlight" (page 80), senior writer Jessica Seigel examines the instantaneous relationship that developed between the press and the families of Littleton and finds it surprisingly mutual. For many families, Seigel observes, the press was seen as the conduit to show the world the horrible consequences of random violence. And maybe, Seigel writes, "students and families simply accepted the axiomatic wisdom of our talk-show culture: Talking heals pain."

Meanwhile, at the *Denver Rocky Mountain News,* editors struggled with how to cover a huge local story in a way that was both thorough and attuned to local sensibilities. The newspaper gave *Brill's Content* assistant editor Julie Scelfo broad access to its newsroom and decision-making process during the tumultuous days following the shooting. In "In Their Backyard" (page 86), Scelfo demonstrates how journalists' values and even their emotions shape the news we get to see.

It was striking to many how when the Littleton tragedy happened, coverage of the NATO bombing campaign seemed to disappear for a while, only to come back several days later. The media's short attention span and apparent inability to focus on more than one "big" story at a time are among the characteristics of our media culture—which came into focus during the Bill Clinton-Monica Lewinsky saga—are part of what editor in chief Steven Brill dissects in his groundbreaking cover story, "War Gets The Monica Treatment" (page 98).

Brill's article begins in an unexpected place, with eye-opening accounts of shaky stories about the war published by two paradigms of old media—*The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*—accounts that then hurtled through a media echo chamber fueled by disagreement and controversy, not necessarily by fairness and accuracy. The provocative questions raised by the piece may leave you thinking differently about the press and its role.

The cover image that illustrates Brill's article may also provoke you. The concept of visually marrying a violent war image with Monica's infamous blue dress was created by our renowned design consultant, Milton Glaser, and developed by associate art director Josh McKible. It has been the subject of considerable internal debate, with some of our colleagues raising concerns that the image could be seen as an exploitation of violence, an exceedingly harsh comment on Lewinsky, or even as an insensitive reference to the Littleton tragedy.

In the end, we felt that, taken in the context of the coverlines that accompany it, the image effectively captures the article's thesis and is visually arresting. We have no doubt that if you disagree, you'll let us know.

ERIC EFFRON
EDITOR

## WHAT WE STAND FOR

**1. ACCURACY:** *Brill's Content* is about all that purports to be nonfiction. So it should be no surprise that our first principle is that anything that purports to be nonfiction should be true. Which means it should be accurate in fact and in context.

**2. LABELING AND SOURCING:** Similarly, if a publisher is not certain that something is accurate, the publisher should either not publish it, or should make that uncertainty plain by clearly stating the source of his information and its possible limits and pitfalls. To take another example of making the quality of information clear, we believe that if unnamed sources must be used, they should be labeled in a way that sheds light on the limits and biases of the information they offer.

**3. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:** We believe that the content of anything that sells itself as journalism should be free of any motive other than informing its consumers. In other words, it should not be motivated, for example, by the desire to curry favor with an advertiser or to advance a particular political interest.

**4. ACCOUNTABILITY:** We believe that journalists should hold themselves as accountable as any of the subjects they write about. They should be eager to receive complaints about their work, to investigate complaints diligently, and to correct mistakes of fact, context, and fairness prominently and clearly.

# how they got that SHOT

A HUNCH AND GOOD TIMING PAID OFF FOR LONDON-BASED sports photographer Bob Martin. On March 8, he was in Meiringen, Switzerland, covering the freestyle skiing world championships. "I was up the mountain looking down at the competition. I wanted to catch a scenic [frame] of a little skier jumping against a big, mountainous background, but then I saw this little spot of red out of the corner of my eye and realized it was a helicopter," says Martin. "I saw it coming, saw the fellow jumping, and switched to a 300 millimeter telephoto lens. As the helicopter got close I did a couple of frames before the helicopter moved on." This frame appeared in *Sports Illustrated*'s April 5 issue.

The helicopter was actually more than 50 meters away from Czech skier Ales Valenta when this picture was taken. It appears closer because Martin made the split-second decision to change lenses and use the telephoto, which makes the center of an image appear closer than it is. (Valenta finished fifth in the men's aerial competition.)

After 20 years of working freelance, sometimes for the London office of ALLSPORT, a sports photo agency where he also worked as an editor, Martin joined the staff of *Sports Illustrated* in May 1998 as the magazine's lone Europe-based photographer. "I do the European beat. I think they think of me as someone who will get a little different picture, look at things from a different angle," says Martin, whom Sport England, a government agency, named sports photographer of the year in March and who was also a 1999 runner-up in the Alfred Eisenstaedt Awards for Magazine Photography, sponsored by *Life* magazine. "Bob is one of the most prepared photographers in the world. He does a lot of scouting," says Steve Fine, *Sports Illustrated*'s director of photography. "Even if that helicopter hadn't appeared, Bob still would have had a great photograph of a skier up against blue sky." —*Miriam Hsia*

PHOTOGRAPH BY BOB MARTIN/SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

# ON DOWD, DISH, AND WHO GETS PAID WHAT


WHILE OUR TWO MOST RECENT COVER STORIES ATTRACTED PLENTY OF MAIL, it was May's "1999 Salary Report" that generated the most response. For those who wondered why we left out our own salaries (more than a few of you), turn to page 138 for our explanation. Meanwhile, in response to letters from several readers, we've dropped the "via e-mail" tag we used to attach to letters that come to us that way. After all, as one correspondent put it, it's what's in the letter that counts, not how it gets here. Letters published with an asterisk have been edited for space. The full text appears at our website (www.brillscontent.com).

## RADIANT

[Senior writer] Gay Jervey's fast-paced, superbly voiced, and radiantly written article on Maureen Dowd ["In Search Of Maureen Dowd," June] deserves a Pulitzer Prize of its own. It was the first story in your magazine, which I have been reading since vol. 1, no. 1, that I didn't want to see end.

TED BACHE
Menlo Park, CA

## DODGING SPITBALLS

*Maureen Dowd "brilliant"? Good grief! I only hope that the people you quoted to that effect were praising her out of fear of being hit with the spitballs she lobs from her corner of the *New York Times*'s op-ed page, while agreeing with me that "puerile," "sophomoric," "mean-spirited," and "lazy" would be far more apt. Now that we know she is "thin-skinned" and vulnerable to insults, we can call her a bully, too.

DIANA SHAW CLARK
Norwalk, CT

## AT THE HIP

*What joins Bill Clinton and Maureen Dowd at the hip is the hallmark of a generation that tends to choose the easy and obvious over the difficult and sublime. Clinton's facile empathy and Dowd's glib facility arise from the same lack of intellectual and emotional rigor. At their best they can feed off the surface of an event and create moments of portent and meaning. At their worst they careen recklessly with no apparent understanding of the impact their actions will have on others.

RICHARD DYSINGER
Nyack, NY

## EXPLORE MORE

*"Katie Vs. Diane" [April], "Gossip" [May], "Op-Ed Vixen" [June]: personality, personality, personality. Your magazine has turned into *Vanity Fair*. Where is your exploration of the media's role in hyping the "war" in the Balkans, their unquestioning acceptance of everything NATO and our government tells them? This situation shows signs of improving, but you seem to have nothing to say about it.

JOHN PHILIP ROBERG
New York, NY

## TO INSOUCIANCE

*Please, *The Daily Show* used to be the funniest, most irreverent send-up of news stories and interviews *ever*. [Former host] Craig Kilborn's insouciant arrogance was nail-head perfect. Jon Stewart, on the other hand, acts like he's embarrassed to be caught doing the show but had to take the gig, and his delivery, oy, makes you long for Craig.

JUDI LAING
Los Angeles, CA

## SATISFIED

Wow! I just got my first issue....Finally, a magazine that thinks like *me*! I've *Newsweek*-ed forever, I've *Esquire*-ed for the past couple of years, and I used to *George*. But now I'm *Content*! Thanks.

JOHN ZINZI
Olean, NY

## CORRECTIONS

IN MARCH, WE PUBLISHED A LETTER THAT contained claims about an op-ed piece that ran in the *International Herald Tribune*. Attached to the letter was an editor's note that said we had contacted "editors" at the paper for their comment on the letter and that they had declined to comment. While our ombudsman, Bill Kovach, and editor in chief, Steven Brill, addressed several issues connected to this letter and note in our May issue, further checking reveals that the person at the *IHT* who declined to comment in the first place was not in fact an editor.

In the May issue, we omitted the author's ID box that usually runs with *Concord Monitor* editor Mike Pride's "Out Here" column. In doing so, we omitted the name of the state—New Hampshire—in which the *Monitor* is located.

In May's "Stuff We Like," we failed to mention that Shad Northshield was a cocreator of *CBS News Sunday Morning*.

Finally, in May's "The Future Of TV Sports Is Glowing," staff writer Ted Rose reported that Fox Sports's David Hill thought up the "glowing hockey puck" concept while watching *Star Wars* "[hurtle] its way toward the epic light saber confrontation between Darth Vader and Luke Skywalker." That confrontation, as noted by a reader, was actually between Vader and Obi-Wan Kenobi. Vader and Skywalker squared off in *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*.

We regret the errors.

Letters to the editor should be addressed to: Letters to the Editor, *Brill's Content*, 521 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10175 Fax: (212) 824-1950 E-mail: letters@brillscontent.com. Only signed letters and messages that include a daytime telephone number will be considered for publication. Letters may be edited for clarity or length.

## EATEN UP

*[Senior writer] Robert Schmidt's "Keeping Dinner Down," in the May issue, is a cheap shot at an easy target. And Mr. Schmidt unnecessarily used an anonymous quote to make a negative point in a way that failed to meet your own guidelines.

For about a decade, the White House Correspondents' Association has been a serious organization that has spent the bulk of its time dealing with issues that affect working White House reporters, working on such important matters as the escalating costs of travel.

In 1996, for example, a set of travel guidelines was developed that for the first time defined which costs should be paid for by the press and which by the White House. And the association has become increasingly involved in planning the logistics of costly trips so that expenses can be held down at a time when soaring costs threaten to prevent midsized and smaller news organizations from being able to cover presidential travel.

The association has also sought to curb the more opulent aspects of [its annual] dinner by limiting the number of tables that can be purchased by organizations that don't regularly cover the White House.

The budget figures Mr. Schmidt included are accurate, but misleading. The 1997 profit was an aberration and was far bigger than in any other year. It occurred because the dinner price was raised for the first time in memory after the event barely broke even the previous year. The dinner is still [among] the lowest priced of all the press dinners, enabling smaller news organizations to participate.

Some of us are rightly concerned that the glitzy aspects of the dinner have tended to obscure the serious purposes and work of the WHCA. On the other hand, more people than the Washington Hilton ballroom can accommodate are eager each year to attend, presumably because they find the dinner a lot of fun. Which hardly seems a bad thing.

CARL P. LEUBSDORF
*The Dallas Morning News*
President, WHCA, 1995–96

GEORGE E. CONDON JR.
Copley News Service
President, WHCA, 1993–94

**Robert Schmidt responds:** I did use an anonymous quote in the piece, but the majority of the criticism of the association in the article was on the record—from the Washington bureau chief of *The New York Times*. The budget figures I used came directly from the association's publicly available tax forms.

## AMUSED

*I read with some amusement Robert Schmidt's article "Keeping Dinner Down," and had some thoughts to share, particularly concerning a passing reference to *Insight*'s invitation to Paula Jones to the White House Correspondents' Association dinner. Schmidt states: "[Jones's] presence at a party honoring the president created a sensation and did not go over well with much of the White House press corps."

I do not know how many of us WHCA members Schmidt interviewed for that story, but I have a hunch he didn't speak to a majority of the "members," as suggested by his phrase "much of the...press corps." Good grief, to interview more than 175 newsies would be too much to ask of any reporter, even one for *Brill's Content*.

Anyway, my point isn't so much about the volume of folks he spoke with but the failure to provide balance to such veiled bitching about the Jones invite, given the hypocrisy displayed by so many of the Washington scribes before, during, and since.

I don't know whether Schmidt was at the 1998 bash but I certainly was, and witnessed firsthand the forked-tongue snakiness seldom exposed in this wonderful and crazy town. Specifically—and I mean literally—there were scores of newsies who lined up to speak with Jones to wish her well, give gushingly positive statements to her about her attendance, and to get their autographs and photos taken with the lady.

And while I don't expect you or Schmidt to get bogged down in rehashing the issues raised by the reporting on the WHCA dinner, I do hope that next time your team mentions *Insight* someone will call to get some comment from me.

PAUL M. RODRIGUEZ
Managing editor
*Insight* magazine
Washington, DC

**RS responds:** I did seek comment from Mr. Rodriguez. He did not return my call.

## FOR THE BIRDS

*I really enjoyed the report on the big guys' and gals' salaries ["Who Gets Paid What," May]. Can you give us some poop on who the big columnists are and why we should give a damn what they think about the price of ice in Alaska?

I wrote to the *San Jose Mercury News* about a George Will article about baseball players' salaries. I pointed out that he was more than "a syndicated columnist," as he sits on the board of

*continued on page 138*

Whoops.

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# REPORT FROM THE OMBUDSMAN

■ BY BILL KOVACH

**MEDIA MYOPIA?** "The main reason I subscribed is because I am interested in newspapers around the country," reads the e-mail from Melvin Shapiro of San Diego. "I want to know how they handle local and national news. I want to know how much influence the publisher has on news content. I want to know what the readers think of their hometown paper....I am also interested in local TV and how they handle the news. But *Brill's Content* is only interested in national TV.

"This month's issue is a good example of your narrow, East Coast focus. In this issue I found three stories about *The Wall Street Journal*, two on *The New York Times*, one on the *New York Post*, and [two] on *The New Yorker* magazine. Does anyone there realize this country goes past the Appalachians?"

Paula Xanthopoulou of Miami, Florida, carries the complaint a step further.

"I wonder why *BC*—with its multifaceted coverage—has not taken regular stock of the 'alternative press,'" Ms. Xanthopoulou writes. "Have I missed something? I refer to low-budget, small circulation, and oft-marginalized publications like *iF Magazine* [a bimonthly investigative magazine published in Arlington, Virginia, by Robert Parry, a former Associated Press reporter. The magazine publishes articles by a network of investigative reporters in print and online, some of which appear at www.consortiumnews.com]...

"Where does *BC* place Robert Parry and his publications [*iF Magazine*] in the journalistic/media scheme of things? [Are] he and his kind just a bunch of misguided, biased wanna-bes, or do they have something very valuable to contribute to the media landscape?"

These two represent a small but steady stream of questions that reflect the frustration of readers with this magazine's preoccupation with the New York–Washington media elite. And I think they make a good point.

The fact is that most media, like most politics, are local. More people get their news first from local TV stations. That goes for national and international news as well, as more local stations are sending their own correspondents farther afield "on assignment." The same thing is true of newspaper readers. Since its inception *Brill's Content* has focused almost all of its attention on the top five newspapers—two in New York, two in the Washington area, and one in Los Angeles. These five have a combined circulation of just over 6.3 million people. That means 1,504 daily newspapers published in the United States with a combined circulation of 50.4 million, not to mention 7,214 weekly newspapers with a total circulation of over 70 million, pass relatively unnoticed. Add to this alternative publications—1,100 of whose publishers, editors, and reporters gathered in New York in 1997 for a "Media & Democracy Congress" to protest, "Celebrity fluff. Talking hairdos. News you can't use, from sources you don't trust"—and you have an enormous pool of journalism from which to dip each month. That's an awful lot of media for a nationally circulating media publication to overlook. (Overlook may be a little strong; maybe underreport would be better.)

To be fair, the September 1998 issue reported at some substantial length on *The News Journal* in Delaware, the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*, and the Tampa media's coverage of a hostage taking. In March, the magazine looked in some depth at the work of *The Greenville News* in South Carolina, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Des Moines Register*. And each month, Mike Pride's "Out Here" column gives readers a revealing look at the inner workings and attitudes of a small-city newspaper.

Then too there are the commercial considerations that have to be taken into account. A successful national circulation publication depends upon a core of material that is of interest to a national audience. For a media magazine, that by definition would be media which itself has a national audience.

But as almost anyone who has judged national prize contests for print or broadcast media will attest, some of the best journalism and some of the most important stories that never find their way into the elite media, are being produced by news organizations of which you may have never heard.

As these two readers suggest, as *Brill's Content* matures as a publication, it would do its readers and journalism itself an important service if it could find a way to showcase some of the quality work and expose some of the abuses taking place every day outside the Northeast corridor.

**TRUTH ABOUT LABELING.** David Steinhardt of Hancock, Vermont, has caught the magazine [April issue] joining the writing-with-attitude craze that pollutes a lot of contemporary journalism. In this case it was the use of a label, "pinko ideals," to refer to *The Nation* magazine. As the reader points out, *The Nation* was founded as an abolitionist publication. It has also throughout its life been a strong advocate of free speech and a defender of those attacked for exercising their rights. Hardly a record of "pinko ideals." Why not be a little more creative and leave obviously misleading labels to do their mischief on soap boxes and canned goods?

**CONSISTENCY PLEASE.** "Bad writing on p. 76 [May issue] paragraph about sentencing was a cacophony:

"You printed, 'Granger was sentenced to four and a half months...his [three] friends...sentenced to 70 days.' I believe you made that harder to read by switching the units of measure.

"I would prefer 4 1/2 months and 2 1/3 months or 135 days and 70 days. When I am reading for facts, I don't like to stop to convert units." Signed: Anne Fuller, Juneau, Alaska.

Good point, Ms. Fuller.

**CORRECTION.** A couple of issues back I inadvertently attributed a quote to Michael Getler, the executive editor of the *International Herald Tribune* that should properly have been attributed to another editor there, Robert Marino. I also referred to a letter when I was writing about an op-ed article that ran in the newspaper. I apologize for the errors and for any confusion they may have caused. ■

## HOW TO REACH HIM

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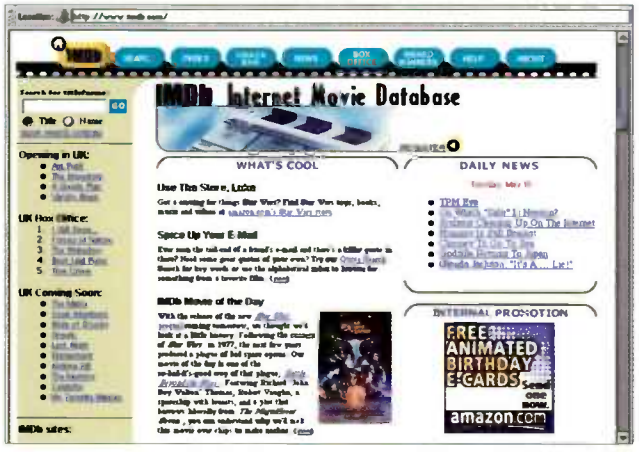
*Bill Kovach, curator of Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism, was formerly editor of the* Atlanta Journal and Constitution *and a* New York Times *editor.*

# STUFF we LIKE

## FILM GEEK PARADISE




THE **INTERNET MOVIE DATABASE** (WWW.IMDB.COM) IS NOT journalism or entertainment—it's simply information, and it's manna from heaven for anyone who ever asked the question "What was the name of that movie...?" Type in the name of an actor and get a complete filmography, including embarrassing early TV work (Harrison Ford appeared in a 1974 *Kung Fu* episode). Or type in the name of a film—say *Mother, Jugs & Speed*, the largely forgotten 1976 Bill Cosby–Raquel Welch–Harvey Keitel comedy—and get a list of cast and crew, a plot summary, selected dialogue, and reviews. With almost 200,000 titles stretching back to 1892, the database—owned by Amazon.com—is addictive, a history of cinema that, like a well-stocked video store, introduces you to long-lost oddities. Forget the Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon—IMDB allows you to pursue the film careers of Dolph Lundgren and Nancy (Davis) Reagan. (Incidentally, the two have never worked together—but there's always hope.) *—Michael Colton*

## PROGRESS COMES TO LIFE


THE HISTORY CHANNEL'S **Modern Marvels** series tells the little-known stories of human ingenuity behind some of the world's most extraordinary scientific, technological, and engineering accomplishments. To build the Golden Gate Bridge, for example, two men maneuvered hundreds of feet above the water, crawling across a single suspended cable in order to connect a mid-span work platform. So far, theme weeks have included "Bridging the Gap" (bridge and tunnel programs), "Take Off!" (aerospace and airplanes), and "KaBoom!" (demolitions and explosives). With captivating tales and rarely seen footage, this original documentary series makes American progress come to life, Mondays through Thursdays at 10 P.M. ET. *—Julie Scelfo*

## NEWSSTAND SHERPA

NEED HELP WADING THROUGH ALL THOSE MAGAZINES AT THE newsstand? Check in with **"The Magazine Reader"** column by Peter Carlson in *The Washington Post*. A quirky and unorthodox reviewer, Carlson writes critiques that are often more humorous than scathing. He called Dominick Dunne's May *Vanity Fair* story about Washington during the impeachment trial "shallow, gossipy and self-indulgent," noting, "This piece is so bad it's good." Carlson's best work comes when he probes the dark recesses of the magazine rack. Recent finds include a *Gadfly* magazine story that detailed a surreal meeting between boxing champ Muhammad Ali and pop artist Andy Warhol, and *Strange Magazine*'s article about the real-life case that inspired *The Exorcist*. "The Magazine Reader" runs every other Tuesday and can also be found at www.washingtonpost.com. *—Robert Schmidt*

The Washington Post

Peter Carlson


# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

IN THE MINDS OF SPORTS FANS, ATHLETES AND THEIR amazing feats are timeless. However, time catches up with everyone, and *Sports Illustrated*'s "Catching Up With..." reminds us how even the best in sport must move on to a permanent off-season. This department in the front of the magazine revisits the subjects of decades-old cover stories and updates their tales, whether it's the pastoral retirement of 1978 Triple Crown-winning horse Affirmed or NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Bart Starr's personal tragedy, the cocaine-related death of his son. Each piece also contrasts a present-day photo of the sports figure with a reproduction of the original cover. While the luster on many of these names may have faded, their stories as told in "Catching Up With..." prove that the lives of athletes can remain intriguing, even when they themselves become mere mortals.

—*Matthew Reed Baker*

## Wit From Washington

IN CONTRAST TO THE WASHINGTON MEDIA ELITE'S MANY INSIPID SELF-PROMOTERS stands **Jake Tapper**, the former *Washington City Paper* writer who recently became the Washington correspondent for *Salon* (www.salon.com). Insightful and witty, Tapper caused a stir in January 1998 with his front-page *City Paper* article "I Dated Monica Lewinsky." What could have been self-serving drivel developed into a—not mean-spirited—account of the one date Tapper shared with "a woman I wouldn't mind bringing home to mom." He complimented Lewinsky's sense of style and was wowed by her lack of anorexic tendencies. "Right off, Monica was different from the standard D.C. date: not a salad-picker, she joined me in appetizers and an actual entrée of her own," he wrote.


Jake Tapper

Tapper's more serious pieces can be poignant and provocative. In December he sketched a vivid portrait of boxer Mike Tyson through interviews with friends, foes, and neighbors. And a recent *Salon* story asserted, "a quick scan of cable news shows will find a lot of the same smug faces from the Monicacophony, now passing themselves off as Kosovo experts, spewing Quik'n'easy sound bites...."

In May, St. Martin's Press released Tapper's magnum opus (so far), *Body Slam: The Jesse Ventura Story*, an unauthorized biography of the Minnesota governor.

—*Bridget Samburg*

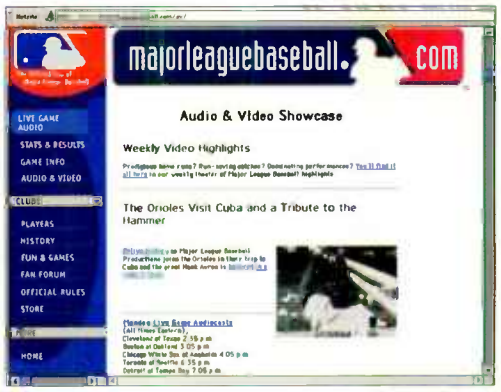
## FAMILY AGENDA


SUE SHELLENBARGER'S **"Work & Family"** column, which appears Wednesdays in *The Wall Street Journal*, is more than an insightful, well-written look at family issues that affect the everyday lives of people in the workplace. Its placement on the front page of the *Journal*'s second section also makes this column an effective platform for bringing these issues and conflicts to the forefront of corporate America's agenda. Shellenbarger mixes her experiences as a working mother with reports on how various companies and individuals deal with family challenges as diverse as caring for elderly parents and talking to teenagers about the Littleton shootings. And she regularly cites specific companies whose innovative approaches to work-family issues make them corporate role models. Ballantine Books recently issued *Work & Family*, a compilation of 100 of Shellenbarger's columns.—*Rifka Rosenwein*

SHANA RAAB (TAPPER); COURTESY OF THE WSJ (SHELLENBARGER)

## When You Can't Get To The Game...

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL'S **"LIVE GAME AUDIO"** WEBSITE (WWW.MAJORLEAGUEbaseball.com/audio) is an invaluable tool for any fan who finds him- or herself far away from the home team. With a quick—and free—download of RealPlayer audio software, fans can listen—also, for free—to any major league baseball game currently in progress. Local TV blocking out the Roger Clemens–Pedro Martinez matchup on ESPN? No problem. But here's a tip: If you're one of those people who screams bloody murder when your team's shortstop commits a crucial late-game error, you may want to think twice before using Live Game Audio at the office. —*Ari Voukydis*



# What's Popping In Pop Culture


A MIX OF ARTICLES ABOUT MOVIES, POLITICS, THE ARTS, TECHNOLOGY, AND MORE, **ELLE magazine's "First" column** keeps its finger on the pulse of pop culture. The seven-page collection of brief articles has the goods on up-and-coming stars, new products, and happenings around the country. Recent columns have included stories about the $5,400-a-night, bulletproof Ronald Reagan Suite at The Westin Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles; the Jaguar S-TYPE's voice activated control system; actor Casey Affleck, Ben's younger brother; and highlights from the Sundance Film Festival. —*Kendra Ammann*

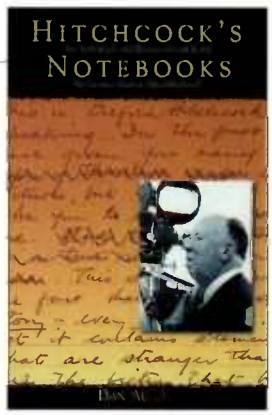
ELLE

# Saturday Night News

IT'S BEEN YEARS SINCE *SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE*'S "WEEKEND UPDATE" HAS BEEN worth watching. But now, with Colin Quinn in the anchor seat, the news show send-up has become relevant and, more to the point, funny. Quinn cuts right to the mordant heart of the week's events. On a mid-May Saturday following days of political turmoil in Russia, Quinn reported that President Boris Yeltsin had called for a "time to heal." Yeltsin, Quinn continued, asked for "a Bloody Mary, two Advil, and three hours of complete silence." That same broadcast, Quinn described the warm greeting that ethnic Albanians had given the first lady when she visited a refugee camp. "It's amazing," he mused, "that with all these people have been through, they can still feel sorry for Hillary Clinton." It's what a lot of us might have been thinking, but wouldn't dare to say out loud. —*Amy Bernstein*


SATURDAYNIGHTLIVE

# Understanding The Master Of Suspense




JUST IN TIME FOR THE CENTENARY OF ALFRED Hitchcock's birth comes a book that delves into the genius behind such movie classics as *Notorious* and *The Birds*. Dan Auiler's **Hitchcock's Notebooks: An Authorized and Illustrated Look Inside the Creative Mind of Alfred Hitchcock** (Spike/Avon Books) examines the director's obsessive filmmaking process.

The "Master of Suspense" was a master storyteller, so it's no surprise that the book's best details are to be found in the chapter "Building The Screenplay." Auiler, drawing on the Hitchcock archives at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, presents screenplays, script comparisons, and notes on 11 of Hitchcock's 60 or so features, including *The Man Who Knew Too Much* and the Thornton Wilder-scripted *Shadow of a Doubt*.

There's lots more, including letters from *New York Herald Tribune* writer Otis Guernsey Jr. that explain the birth of the idea for 1959's *North by Northwest*; storyboards for some of Hitchcock's most famous sequences; and correspondence to and from the likes of actor Hume Cronyn, producer David O. Selznick, and director François Truffaut. —*Dimitra Kessenides*

# Read This Item And Pass It On To 50 Friends

THE E-MAIL FROM "WALT DISNEY JR." and "Bill Gates" promised a free trip to Walt Disney World (or $5,000) if the message were forwarded to 13,000 people. Another, (which must supposedly reach 2,000,000 people by noon on New Year's Eve), offered an electronic coupon for a six-pack from "Miller Brewing Company, Inc." These are examples of Internet hoaxes, electronic deceptions that often clog up in boxes or do something worse—spread viruses (or get your hopes up). Now there's finally some help: The U.S. Department of Energy's **Computer Incident Advisory Capability website** (ciac.llnl.gov/ciac/CIACHoaxes.html) offers hoax and chain-letter web pages where you can quickly check to see whether an e-mail is questionable. Although the website is intended primarily for use by DOE staffers, it provides a real service to everyone. The next time you receive a "good-luck totem," check it out before you spam your ten best friends. —*Julie Scelfo*


COURTESY OF NBC (QUINN)

COMMENTARY THAT HITS

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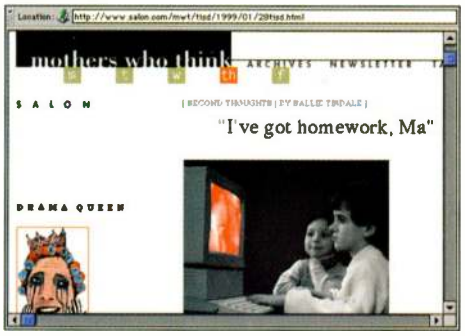
# Giving Kosovo Its Due

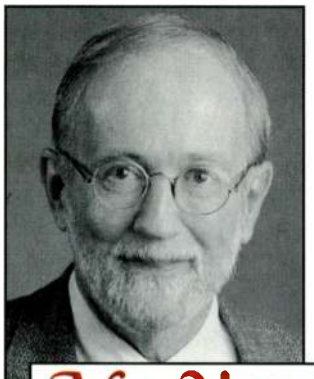

NO TV NEWS SHOW HAS BEEN ABLE TO MATCH THE BREADTH AND INTELLIGENCE OF ***Nightline*'s Kosovo coverage.** The ABC News program has captured what it's like to be a soldier fighting in Yugoslavia and has grappled with the war's geopolitical implications. One night, the program took viewers inside the cockpit of an F/A-18 Hornet as it dropped a laser-guided missile on a Serbian target. Another night, the show assembled former high-level government officials and a studio audience for a frank discussion of the political dilemmas raised by the conflict. Host Ted Koppel kept that show moving with his usual clipped and candid style. But more than the *Top Gun* footage or the top-name guests, it is the show's commitment, night after night, to explore a new facet of the conflict from a fresh perspective that has made *Nightline* an invaluable TV source for coverage of the war. *—Jennifer Greenstein*

# FOR MOMS WITH BRAINS




A MAGAZINE SECTION DEVOTED TO MOTHERS IS not where you'd expect to find a column by Sallie Tisdale, the author of *Talk Dirty to Me: An Intimate Philosophy of Sex*. But her pieces for the **"Mothers Who Think"** department of *Salon* magazine (www.salonmagazine.com/mwt/index.html) are provocative in their own right. Tisdale's essays, which appear on *Salon* every other week (and are also featured in the *Mothers Who Think* book, published in May), are never predictable. In one January column, for example, she raised questions about unfettered access to the Internet in public libraries. The best passages are those in which Tisdale shares personal revelations, such as the sense of discovery in reading her own teenage journals. "It's easier to pretend that past means past and gone," she reflected. "Then we can really believe we are not who we once were, treat our painful condition as a distant echo of someone else's mistakes." *—Kimberly Conniff*

# A TV CRITIC WORTH READING




**JOHN LEONARD**, TV CRITIC FOR *NEW YORK* magazine, is an unlikely small-screen booster. The former *New York Times Book Review* editor finds that television's output isn't such a vast wasteland after all. And his columns offer context that few critics could summon. Here's his lead for a review of a recent TV movie: "How big is Marlon Brando? Not since Rhodes has there been such a colossus: vast, exorbitant, infamous—'too huge for mortal tongue, or pen of scribe,' said Keats—as if, for breakfast, he'd consumed Orson Welles, Burl Ives, Fats Domino, and Sidney Greenstreet like so much porky sausage." It pays to fight through Leonard's difficult, free-associative prose: He likes TV, and the TV he likes is worth watching. *—Jeff Pooley*

# A WORD FEAST FOR FOOD LOVERS

***SAVEUR*** IS THE PERFECT MAGAZINE FOR anyone who regards cooking as a spectator sport. The May/June issue, for example, took readers into the kitchens of two of Paris's finest restaurants, Apicius and Arpège. While *Saveur* is loaded with recipes, they're clearly secondary to the lush writing. The magazine will walk you through preparing "Duck Foie Gras in Classic Apicius Style in Sweet-and-Sour Sauce with Black Radish Confit," but why even try to make that complicated dish yourself? It's much more entertaining to read about how the real chefs do it. *—Amy Bernstein*

**Learned of a company that customizes CDs for consumers.**
***— April 27th issue, pg. 39.***

**Bought a customized CD.**
***— May 11th***

**Bought the company.**
***— June 6th***

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# When a nonfiction book gets reviewed, shouldn't reviewers at least *try* to find out if the thing is true? Plus, the trouble with journalism awards.

## WHAT BOOK REVIEWS DON'T REVIEW

You walk into a hardware store and go to the shelf stocked with lightbulbs. The packaging looks okay, and the manufacturer is a good brand name. So you buy the bulbs. When you get home, you have one simple expectation—that when you put one of the bulbs into a lamp, it will light up.

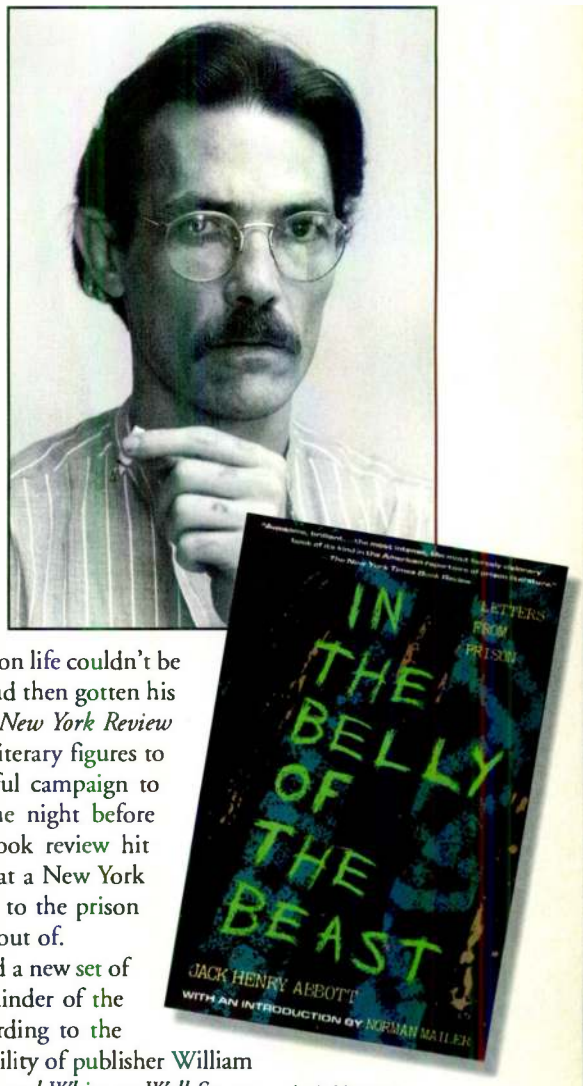
You walk into a bookstore, go to the nonfiction section, and see a book that looks interesting. It's from a reputable publisher, and in this case the packaging, written by that publisher, touts the book as the inside story/gospel truth about whatever. So you buy it. When you get home and start to read it, you probably have the same expectation about the integrity of this product as you had about the lightbulb—that what you're reading is nonfiction.

If it turns out that that lightbulb doesn't work or that it doesn't work for long, you'll feel wronged. But if you're worried about that, you can buy a copy of *Consumer Reports* and find out just how well that brand of bulb does work.

The problem is that if you're worried about whether that book is really nonfiction, you won't get much help from reading book reviews. Reviews of nonfiction books typically deal with almost everything about the book—how it's written, the importance of the subject, the history surrounding the subject, even what the book reviewer thinks about the subject and what he or she thinks about the author. Everything, that is, except whether the book is true.

Bill Kovach, our ombudsman, and Tom Rosenstiel, a former *Los Angeles Times* media critic, have just written a book for The Century Foundation, called *Warp Speed*, which argues that in the new media culture, the "journalism of assertion" has replaced the "journalism of verification." What Kovach and Rosenstiel mean is that in the whirlwind of the never-ending news cycle, in which the feverish competition among 24-hour cable news networks, Internet news providers, talk radio, plus the more traditional news outlets now owned by profit-maximizing corporations, there is a desperate need to report something—anything—new. The result is that an assertion goes on the air, online, or into print, and then gets debated, whereas in the old days the same assertion might first have been verified or shot down before seeing daylight.

Book reviews, however, have long been the province of the journalism of assertion. I remember a book review in the Sunday *New York Times* in 1981 extolling *In the Belly of the Beast* as the eloquent prison memoir of one Jack Henry Abbott. The author, a convicted murderer and undeniably gifted wordsmith, described the torture he had suffered at the hands of his jailers. The reviewer wrote that Abbott's book was "awesome, brilliant...and as an articulation of penal nightmare it is completely compelling."



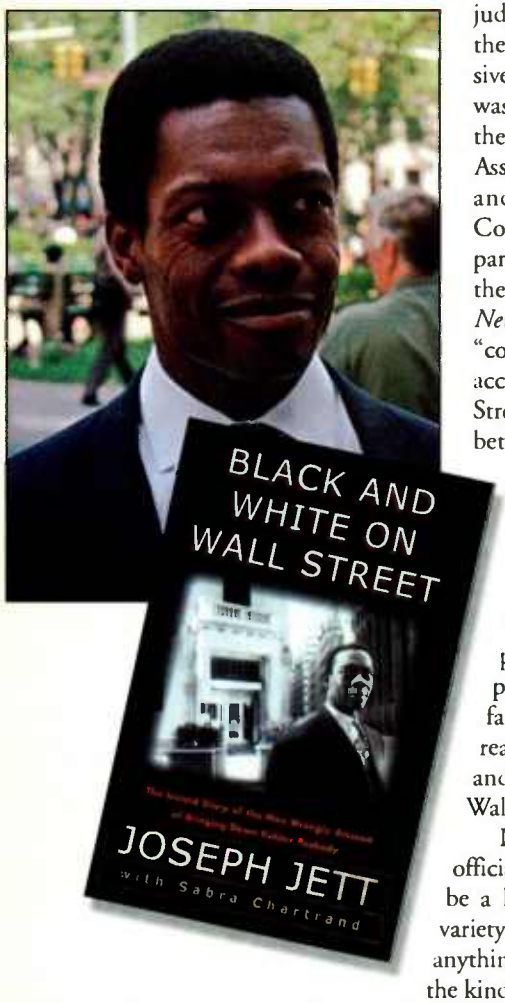

Jack Henry Abbott's book became a cause célèbre, but nobody really checked it out.

PASSMORE/SYGMA (ABBOTT)

I remember the review because Abbott had written the same garbage to me a year or two before in a long letter from prison, and I had checked it out and decided that its account of prison life couldn't be verified and sounded phony. He had then gotten his letter and more published in *The New York Review of Books*, which had moved other literary figures to join Norman Mailer in a successful campaign to get him released from prison. The night before that pre-printed Sunday *Times* book review hit the streets, Abbott killed a waiter at a New York restaurant. He soon was sent back to the prison cell he never should have been let out of.

Lately, there's a new book—and a new set of reviews—that provides a fresh reminder of the problem with book reviews. According to the book jacket (which is the responsibility of publisher William Morrow & Company, Inc.), *Black and White on Wall Street*, by Joseph Jett, is the "untold story of the man wrongly accused of bringing down Kidder Peabody." It is, the jacket continues, "the thrilling story...how one man...coped with the fallout of greed, racism, and character assassination."

According to *New York Times* Sunday book reviewer Johanna Berkman, Jett's attempt to "reverse that hasty




Joseph Jett's Wall Street tale presents Jett as an innocent scapegoat. The record indicates otherwise, but the reviews didn't.

judgment" by which he was "vilified in the press as a brazen rogue" is "persuasive." After all, Jett, writes Berkman, was "subsequently cleared of fraud by the Justice Department, the National Association of Securities Dealers, and the Securities and Exchange Commission"—a sentence that is a paraphrase of another claim made on the book jacket. Other reviews, such as *Newsweek*'s (which called the book "convincing"), focused on Jett's account of racism and greed on Wall Street and drew the same contrast between his original vilification and his purported subsequent exoneration. Most also criticized the book's turgid writing and Jett's extended slog through the swamp of how complex stock trading supposedly works, but the overall point is that this is a guy who was presumed guilty amid much media fanfare, when, it turns out, he was really a scapegoat for the wheeling and dealing that routinely happens on Wall Street.

In fact, any careful reading of the official record in Jett's case reveals him to be a liar who escaped prosecution for a variety of technical reasons, none having anything to do with whether he actually did the kind of scam trading at Kidder, Peabody & Co, Inc., that was at the heart of the accusations against him. Thus, while the Securities and Exchange Commission did indeed dismiss fraud charges against him, the SEC said that was because the only fraud the SEC regulates is fraud "in connection with the purchase or sale of any security..." Jett's fraud, the SEC administrative judge found, involved scam transactions and book entries that were an "intent to deceive and defraud" Kidder by making it look like he'd made money for the firm when he'd lost money. The judge even compared Jett's scam to a pyramid scheme, and ordered him to repay Kidder $8.2 million that Jett had gotten from the firm resulting from his scam transactions, plus pay a $200,000 civil penalty, and be barred from ever being involved on Wall Street as a broker or dealer. Some exoneration.

Asked if she had read the SEC's decision before writing her review, Berkman says, "No, I got what I got from reading the book....I typically expect that when a book is published that people don't lie." Berkman later called back to say she had also relied "on some related news clips."

One reviewer who did read all of the records in Jett's case to check how faithful Jett was to the facts was Roger Parloff of *The American Lawyer* (a former colleague of mine and sometime contributor to this magazine). Parloff's review would make any buyer of Jett's book troop back to the bookstore for a refund. He noted that in defending their client against a possible criminal indictment, Jett's lawyers used "in essence, a stealth insanity defense," in that they argued that "he had not committed fraud because he really believed he was making money." Thus, Parloff concluded, "Jett's book is a vivid and disturbing case study of a man in complete self-denial....As a work that purports to be nonfiction...it is so suspect that one can only wonder how...Morrow...can feel comfortable sending it into the stream of commerce...."

Asked about how he had verified the accuracy of the book or the accuracy of what's on the book jacket, Morrow editor Henry Ferris says, "I don't really know what you are talking about. I checked it with Jett, and we also checked with the lawyers."

Says *The New York Times Book Review* editor Charles McGrath: "In a perfect world, a book review would do everything. It would inform, entertain, be judicious, and, yes, it would ferret out factual errors. But this is not a perfect world, and the truth is that most reviews don't penetrate beyond the text itself....It's difficult to expect someone to do the kind of legwork that would be necessary....The truth is, we can be duped." But, McGrath adds, "This really starts with the publisher. When I came over here from the magazine world [McGrath was deputy editor at *The New Yorker*], where we checked everything, it blew my mind that publishers don't check at all. They just rely on the author."

Of course, not every book reviewer, who typically writes a review for a few hundred dollars at most, can or should plow through the original source materials the way Parloff did. Nor can he or she re-interview people named in every work of nonfiction. But serious book reviews about serious books should try to do some or a lot of that. It's called reporting, and organizations like the *Times* and *Newsweek* have hundreds of reporters.

Another rare example of that kind of reportorial book reviewing was the piece that Jonathan Rauch did in the *Slate* online magazine about former Labor Secretary Robert Reich's 1997 memoir. Reich had quoted verbatim all kinds of conversations he'd had with people, but Rauch went back to them and they convincingly denied many of the quotes. Worse, Rauch—simply by reviewing C-SPAN archives—found that Reich's quotes of his own testimony before Congress were fiction. Now that's a book review.

Even where the review is short or the book isn't seen as important enough to merit that kind of work, reviewers should at least be more careful about what they say so that they don't validate what are only assertions. The Sunday *Times*, in fact, included a note of skepticism in its otherwise positive review of Reich's book, which was published before *Slate* raised the major red flag; the *Times* reviewer noted that Reich "reconstructs meetings and conversations...perhaps too artfully."

The reviews of Jett's book—short commentaries about go-go greed or racism on Wall Street that validated the pri-

ADAM NADELMAN/AP-WIDE WORLD (JETT)

# Are you Obsessed?

- ☐ Do you multi-task in the shower?
- ☐ Do you have to know everything first, if not sooner?
- ☐ Do you check your e-mail and voicemail while you read your snail mail?
- ☐ Is your microwave just "too darn slow"?

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mary assertions of Jett's "I'm the victim" hallucination—were the journalism of assertion.

## A PRIZE FOR WHAT?

We've just been through the season of journalism awards—the Pulitzer Prizes (for newspapers and books), the Peabody Awards (for television), the National Magazine Awards—and they present the same kind of issue that book reviews do.

How do you check your entries to see if the stories were accurate, I asked Marlene Kahan, the executive director of the American Society of Magazine Editors, which gives out the National Magazine Awards. "We don't," she says. "We kind of rely on the magazines to submit entries that were accurate....But we should....We should at least do a fact-checking process of the finalists in the relevant categories. It's something we should do."

This is not a knock on any of the winners. But it does seem logical that if an article wins an award in the reporting or public service categories, for example, someone ought to have taken a pass at determining whether the article was accurate. It's not that an article should be eliminated because someone who was written about harshly has a complaint. It's just that it's absurd that there is not even an attempt to evaluate the essence of what the award is presumably given for: accuracy and fairness.

To take one example, on page 44 we explore some of the perhaps-valid complaints that Flo-Sun Inc., the giant sugar company, has against one of the series of articles that *Time* magazine won the public service award for this year. The point is that these were serious complaints that the awards committee by Kahan's own admission had never heard about, much less checked into.

The Pulitzers are further along than the National Magazine Awards in recognizing this problem. Seymour Topping, the former *New York Times* managing editor who is the administrator of the Pulitzers, explains that the jurors have a process by which they require that the portfolio for any submission for the journalism awards (which covers various categories of newspaper reporting but not nonfiction books) include any complaints that the newspaper received following publication of the story and any corrections that the paper made. In addition, says Topping, "lately, some groups or individuals who have anticipated that an article might be nominated have contacted us on their own about problems they had with the stories." Their complaints, too, are considered by the judges.

> If an article wins an award, someone at least ought to have taken a pass at determining if it was accurate.

But why not send a questionnaire to the people covered in the articles under consideration or at least to those written about by the finalists, asking them to comment about the accuracy of the stories? Wouldn't that be a better way to sniff out problems than relying on the newspapers to reveal complaints, let alone relying on aggrieved people to have taken the initiative to make a complaint in the first place? Most people, after all, think it's futile to complain about a negative story, and few people will complain about stories that don't injure them but are inaccurate.

"That would involve [questionnaires to people involved in stories] for three finalists in fourteen categories," says Topping. "And we've found from long experience that the system we have in place works quite well....We have highly competent jurors who do ask their own questions....When there were some questions that we heard about concerning *The Miami Herald* article"—which won this year in the investigative reporting category—"our jurors went back and asked some of their own sources."

Peabody Awards director (and University of Georgia professor) Barry Sherman says that a faculty and student screening committee and sometimes the jurors who judge the finalists try to validate claims that a television report was an exclusive or had the impact that the prize application says it had. But when it comes to the accuracy of the report itself, says Sherman, "we rely on the integrity of the submitting journalists....We've had numerous discussions about this with the Peabody board, and the board said, 'We judge television programs, not the underlying story.'...We have to use the honor system."

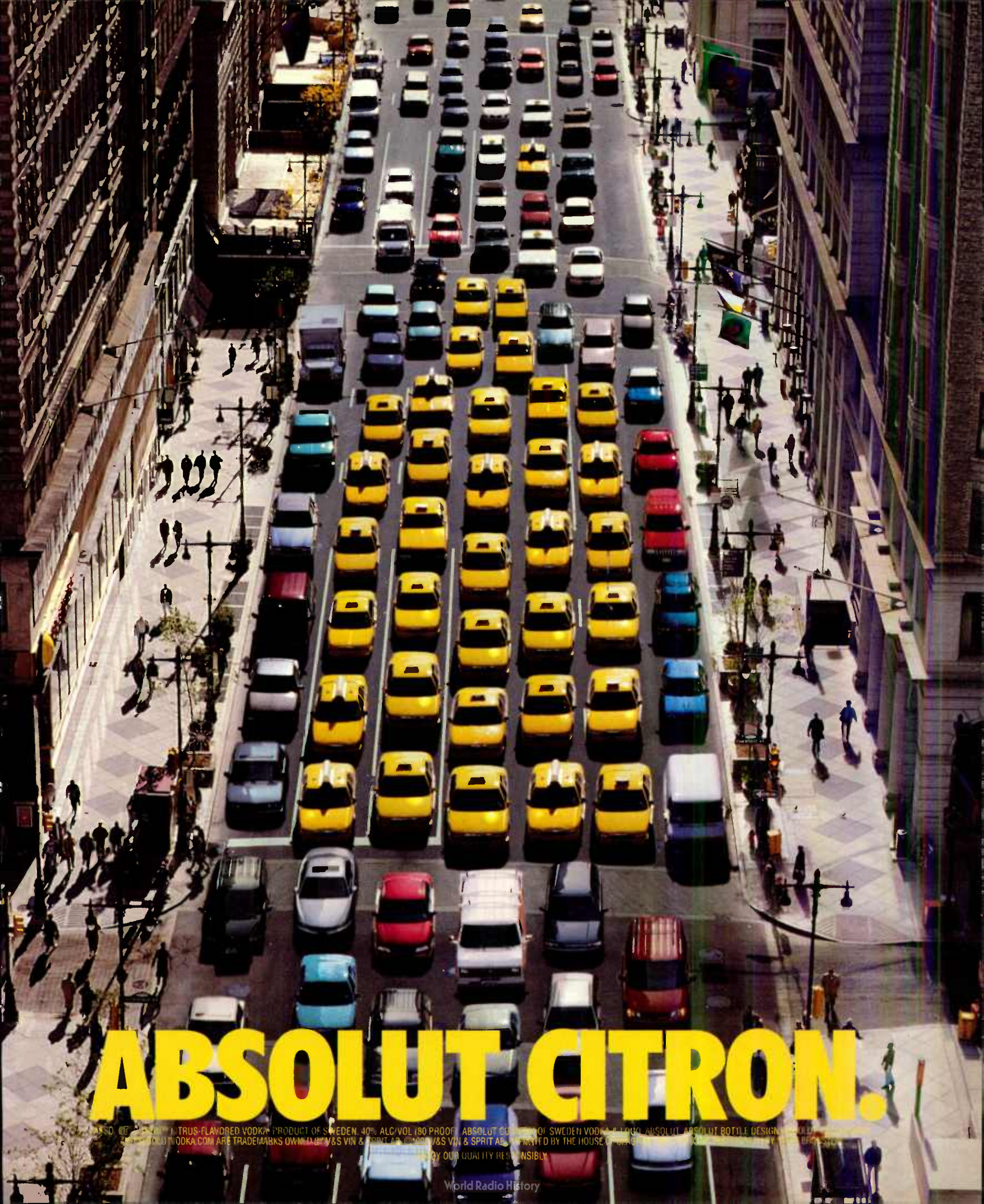
Imagine the fun journalists would have if they found out that a Nobel Prize was given out for a cure for cancer and it was revealed that the people giving out the award hadn't inquired into whether the cure really worked.

Again, this is not a knock on the current crop of award winners. *The Miami Herald*'s award seems to me to have been the result of a magnificent job of uncovering election fraud so convincingly that a mayoral election was actually overturned. And Michael Isikoff and Evan Thomas's coverage of the Lewinsky scandal for *Newsweek*, which won the National Magazine Award for reporting, was on the money, as best I know.

But no one who hasn't tried to reverify the entries can really be sure that all of them are on the money. And anyone wondering why the public is cynical about the press should consider the fact that the press trumpets these awards like they're the Nobel Prizes but, at least when it comes to the magazine awards and the Peabodys, never makes even a cursory attempt to evaluate the core virtues—accuracy and fairness—that the prizes are supposed to reward. ■

The "Ellie" (below) is presented by the American Society of Magazine Editors, which does little to check the accuracy of the winning entries.

COURTESY OF ASME



# Newsbreak Sonata

DECEMBER 16, 1998—when President Clinton announced an attack on Iraq as Congress debated his impeachment—was a dizzying day in Washington. Thankfully, CNN knew how to signal the changing tide. As one White House aide recalls, "I knew something was different when I was working at my desk and heard the unfamiliar 'Strike Against Iraq' music instead of the 'Investigating the President' theme."

If films, sitcoms, and superheroes can have theme music, then why not the impeachment of a president? Or the death of a princess? Or tornadoes in the Midwest? These days, composers work on the same schedules as journalists: "As soon as someone drops a bomb in Yugoslavia or blows something up in Denver, we go full force into creating dramatic content," says composer Peter Fish.

Composers can earn from $1,500 to $100,000, plus royalties, for a package of themes. "There's nothing I wouldn't compose for," says Scott Schreer of NJJ Music. Above the piano in his Manhattan penthouse office is the framed sheet music for his most memorable theme, "NFL on Fox." "Sometimes I write music for news shows that I wouldn't let my children watch. But the positive feelings we get come from the creation of the music, not the end use."

One composer admits to misgivings. "I have trouble with the network that puts a graphic up [for the Colorado shootings] and puts music on it—it makes me nauseous," says Shelly Palmer. "If it's Monica and [President] Bill [Clinton], it's already a cartoon, and it doesn't really matter. But you won't hear music for 'Terror in the Rockies' from my company."

Is it ethical to use music to manipulate viewers' emotions? Richard O'Brien, the vice-president/creative director of Fox News Channel, defends the practice: "You can get people's emotions going with music. You want to be memorable but not really editorialize with it."

Much of the music heard during the news is not custom made but "canned," meaning it comes from a library of generic themes bought in a package from a music publisher. CNN received fan mail for the music it used during the O.J. Simpson trial, but the theme, called "World Conflict," was created by a British composer for a British news program that rejected it.

Custom-made compositions, like the *NBC Nightly News* music composed 15 years ago by John Williams—who has written themes for Steven Spielberg movies—are more likely to stick in one's head. "Any network and any TV program needs an audio identification, or 'idents,'" says Gary Anderson, creator of the familiar CNN *Headline News* theme. "It's the 'kitchen factor': The viewer is in the kitchen, the music comes on and they go running to the next room to see what's going on."

Among NJJ's creations for Fox News is the sultry lite-jazz used on *Judith Regan Tonight* ("It has a sex vibe to it, and it's intelligent," says Schreer). The company has also finished Fox's theme for the 2000 presidential campaign, a slow, regal piece featuring trumpet, tympani, and gong. O'Brien says he asked Schreer for something "grand and heroic, majestic and inspiring, with a hint of patriotism."

The composers often talk like the producers in the film *Wag the Dog*, slickly packaging a war for mass consumption. Fox's O'Brien describes the network's Kosovo theme as "very percussive, almost sounding like war drums...not very melodic." Fish says it's "helpful to know that the conflict in Kosovo involves Balkan nations, which implies European cultures, which implies different harmonies and scales than the Arabic music used for the Gulf War. And it's tremendously different than the Somalia music, which used African instruments." —*Michael Colton*

DANNY HELLMAN

# PUNDIT CHALLENGE:
## CAN THEY BEAT OUR CHIMP?

FOR SIX MONTHS NOW, *Brill's Content* has been monitoring the accuracy of TV pundits. But one question nagged at us: How would the pundits fare against a chimpanzee? We decided to find out.

After considering various candidates, we settled on Chippy, a four-year-old male chimp from Blackwood, New Jersey. Though not a trained political analyst, Chippy does have experience in films, television commercials, and the circus. He also monitors current events: His trainers line his cage with the morning newspapers.

To gauge the accuracy of his political wisdom, we asked Chippy a series of yes-or-no questions. He then replied by nodding or shaking his head. Based on predictions he made that were verifiable at press time, Chippy scored a respectable .500 average, which was good enough to beat John McLaughlin and George Will. He correctly predicted, for instance, that the Russian Duma would confirm Sergei Stepashin as prime minister. On the other hand, he stumbled by predicting that New York City's commuter tax would not be repealed.

Certain subjects provoked emphatic reactions (and predictions that were too early to verify). Asked whether Hillary Clinton will run for the U.S. Senate, Chippy responded with a vigorous yes, jumping up and down, his mouth agape. When questioned as to whether Ken Starr will be cleared on charges of leaking grand jury testimony, he expressed his strong affirmation by clapping both his hands and his feet. And when asked if Kurdish prisoner Abdullah Ocalan will receive the death penalty in Turkey, Chippy went ape.

Though Chippy is mercurial in his predictions, he tends to lean Democratic. Presented with a list of eight potential presidential candidates—including Al Gore, George W. Bush, and Larry Flynt—he declared his endorsement of Bill Bradley by repeatedly stroking his finger across Bradley's name and leaning down to kiss it. (As a resident of New Jersey, Chippy is understandably partial.)

Chippy is not afraid of taking an unconventional stance. He feels we needn't worry about the Y2K crisis—it won't be a disaster. And he believes that in order to change his public image, Gore will cut a rap album.

With explicit lyrics?

Yes, nodded Chippy.

—*Michael Colton*

Chippy picks a president.

**DISCLOSURE:** Although our editorial policy prohibits paying sources for interviews, *Brill's Content* acknowledges that it paid $1,000 to the trainers of Chippy the Chimp. Such checkbook journalism is reprehensible, we admit, but we believe Chippy's predictions were not influenced by money. Those wishing to address the issue may contact our new Ombudsman for Animal Affairs at mcolton@brillscontent.com.

Also, no animals were harmed during the production of this magazine.

## THE SCORE

| | |
|---|---|
| Margaret Carlson, CG (23 for 35) | .657 |
| Tony Blankley, MG (38 of 58) | .655 |
| Patrick Buchanan, MG (37 of 62) | .597 |
| Robert Novak, CG (37 of 62) | .597 |
| Al Hunt, CG (34 of 57) | .596 |
| Bill Kristol, TW (39 of 66) | .591 |
| Eleanor Clift, MG (45 of 77) | .584 |
| Cokie Roberts, TW (14 of 24) | .583 |
| Sam Donaldson, TW (14 of 25) | .560 |
| Michael Barone, MG (24 of 43) | .558 |
| Mark Shields, CG (12 of 22) | .545 |
| George Stephanopoulos, TW (36 of 66) | .545 |
| Morton Kondracke, BB (35 of 68) | .515 |
| **Chippy the Chimp (3 of 6)** | **.500** |
| Kate O'Beirne, CG (14 of 28) | .500 |
| John McLaughlin, MG (28 of 60) | .467 |
| Fred Barnes, BB (33 of 74) | .446 |
| George Will, TW (7 of 21) | .333 |

"BB": *The Beltway Boys*; "CG": *The Capital Gang*; "MG": *The McLaughlin Group*; "TW": *This Week With Sam Donaldson & Cokie Roberts*

**Blankley on the rise**

**Chippy weighs in**

**Will: bested by a chimp**

ELLIS/NEWSMAKERS (BLANKLEY); COURTESY ABC (WILL)

# Rating The Pigskin Prognosticators

PREDICTING WHICH COLLEGE STARS WILL BE PICKED BY WHICH TEAMS COME NFL DRAFT DAY MAY BE AN INEXACT science, but it's grown into something of a cottage industry in recent years. Much of this year's speculation centered on which star of 1999's quarterback-rich class—Kentucky's Tim Couch or Oregon's Akili Smith—would be nabbed by the reconstituted Cleveland Browns, the franchise with the top pick. As it turned out, five of the six high-profile draft diviners whose picks we analyzed after the fact correctly forecast that the Browns would choose Couch; a couple even nailed the top three choices. After those first few picks, though, there was a steep falloff in the accuracy of the prognostications. In addition to a pick-by-pick breakdown for the draft's top 10 slots, we've also provided an overall accuracy rating for each expert's predictions for all 31 first-round picks.

*—Ed Shanahan*





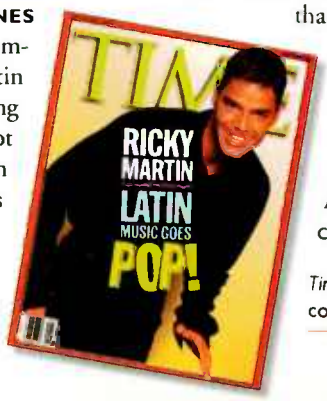

| | Actual Pick | Mel Kiper Jr. (ESPN) | Joel Buchsbaum (Pro Fball Wkly) | Gary Horton (Sptng Nws) | Frank Coyle (CBS Sptsline) | Dr. Z (Spts Illus'd) | Gordon Forbes (USA Today) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| BROWNS | Tim Couch | Tim Couch | Tim Couch | Tim Couch | Akili Smith | Tim Couch | Tim Couch |
| EAGLES | Donovan McNabb | Ricky Williams | Donovan McNabb | Donovan McNabb | Tim Couch | Donovan McNabb | Donovan McNabb |
| BENGALS | Akili Smith | Akili Smith | Champ Bailey | Akili Smith | Donovan McNabb | Akili Smith | Akili Smith |
| COLTS | Edgerrin James | Chris Claiborne | Chris Claiborne | Ricky Williams | Ricky Williams | Ricky Williams | Ricky Williams |
| SAINTS | Ricky Williams | Champ Bailey | Ricky Williams | Champ Bailey | Champ Bailey | Champ Bailey | Edgerrin James |
| RAMS | Torry Holt | Edgerrin James | Edgerrin James | Chris McAlister | Chris Claiborne | Edgerrin James | Champ Bailey |
| REDSKINS | Champ Bailey | Donovan McNabb | Akili Smith | Cade McNown | Daunte Culpepper | Chris McAlister | Chris Claiborne |
| CARDINALS | David Boston | John Tait | Jevon Kearse | Torry Holt | Edgerrin James | Torry Holt | John Tait |
| LIONS | Chris Claiborne | Jevon Kearse | Aaron Gibson | Chris Claiborne | John Tait | Chris Claiborne | Aaron Gibson |
| RAVENS | Chris McAlister | Torry Holt | Daunte Culpepper | Edgerrin James | Chris McAlister | Daunte Culpepper | Daunte Culpepper |
| **Overall Accuracy:** | | 10% | 13% | 23% | 10% | 32% | 16% |

LABRANCHE/ESPN (KIPER); MCCLAIN/*HOUSTON CHRONICLE* (BUCHSBAUM); COURTESY *SPORTING NEWS* (HORTON); COURTESY *DRAFT INSIDER'S DIGEST* (COYLE); COURTESY *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* (DR. Z); BEISER/*USA TODAY* (FORBES)

# POP GOES THE COVER

**YOU KNOW IT'S A *VIDA LOCA* WHEN NEWSMAGAZINES** are competing to be the first to put a former Menudo member on their covers. *Time*'s May 24 edition blared "Latin Music Goes Pop!" across the cover, with a picture of singing sensation Ricky Martin. It turns out that *Newsweek*—not *Time*—had been given exclusive interviews with both Martin and Hollywood bombshell Jennifer Lopez, who's peddling her own Latin music album, according to Leslee Dart, Lopez's publicist. *Time* knew about *Newsweek*'s upcoming piece, says Dart, because she had been shopping Lopez to both newsweeklies. Dart says she cooperated with *Newsweek* because its editors told her that—barring a colossal breaking news event—Lopez and Martin would grace its cover on May 31. (*Time*, she says, refused to make such an offer.) Now, Dart reports that *Newsweek* editors told her they've scrapped the Lopez/Martin cover because *Time* stole their thunder, and Dart says she's "very unhappy." *Newsweek*'s spokesman declined to discuss the magazine's editorial plans. Jim Kelly, *Time*'s deputy managing editor, says he didn't know about the timing of the *Newsweek* story and that *Time* put Martin on the cover when it did because he's the current It Boy. *Newsweek* shouldn't fret. Maybe it can land the Backstreet Boys.

*—Katherine Rosman*




*Time* put Martin on its cover. Newsweek didn't.

JAMES J. CRAMER | HERB GREENBERG | DAVE KANSAS | GARY B. SMITH | BRENDA BUTTNER

*pssst!*

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# *Time* On Big Sugar: A Not-So-Sweet Deal


*Time* portrayed the Fanjuls as fat cats who got rich on government subsidies.

NO ONE SHEDS A TEAR WHEN A CORPORATE GIANT is portrayed in the media as greedy and guilty. That's especially true when that portrait appears as part of a special *Time* magazine series on corporate welfare by one of the most acclaimed reporting duos in the business—Donald L. Barlett and James B. Steele.

So any objections that Flo-Sun Inc., one of the country's largest sugar growers, might have had to a November article that slammed the company were drowned out by the huzzahs in the press and the National Magazine Award that singled out the series.

But a close look at the reporting that went into this story, urged by Flo-Sun vice-president Jorge Dominicis, suggests that the reporters weren't operating at their rigorous best and that a *Time* fact checker got lazy.

What a reader is left with after reading *Time*'s "Sweet Deal," reported mostly by Steele, was a fairly uncomplicated indictment: The Fanjul family, Cuban immigrants who launched their Flo-Sun sugar empire in the 1960s, have gotten rich from U.S. sugar subsidies that artificially hike the price of sugar, while contributing to an "environmental catastrophe" in the Everglades. Barlett and Steele's conclusion was unequivocal: "How did this disaster happen? With your tax dollars. How will it be fixed? With your tax dollars."

The Fanjul brothers are easy targets—almost stereotypical corporate fat cats. They're titans in an industry that has admitted to contributing to pollution in the Everglades. They give generously to politicians of both parties and lobby hard against legislation that hurts their company. They can get the president on the phone—Alfonso Fanjul has the dubious distinction of being the caller who reached President Clinton when he was in the midst of breaking up with Monica Lewinsky.

But are the Fanjuls, in Barlett and Steele's words, "the First Family of Corporate Welfare," milking taxpayers, destroying the environment, and getting off with a slap on the wrist?

Maybe. But an analysis of the story suggests readers weren't given all the facts. Let's run through some of the conclusions:

1 *"Chemical runoff from the corporate cultivation of sugar cane imperils vegetation and wildlife. Polluted water spills out of the glades into Florida Bay, forming a slimy, greenish brown stain where fishing once thrived. [The polluted bay is] the by-product of corporate welfare."*

"This is factually so incorrect that anybody who deals with it is just amazed," says Dexter Lehtinen, the former U.S. attorney who was actually considered Big Sugar's biggest enemy back in 1988. He represented the U.S. Justice Department in its landmark suit against the state of Florida for not complying with its own water-quality laws. To this day Lehtinen's action against the state is known as "the suit against sugar."

It would have been easy for Lehtinen to try to pin south Florida's water troubles on sugar growers like the Fanjuls—certainly, the environmentalists had already found them guilty. But "[t]his idea that they are the entire problem is just wrong," says Lehtinen of the sugar growers. He says pollution from cattle farming, dairy farming, industry, tourism, and urban development is equally—if not more—responsible for harming the Everglades, and as far as the fishing mecca of Florida Bay is concerned, sugar's hands are clean. "That's just not biologically accurate among any of the experts I know," says Lehtinen. "That was just negligent on *Time*'s part...I was just amazed to see Florida Bay's problems dumped on sugar."

"That's about as true as the moon is made of cheese," echoes Ronald Jones, Lehtinen's expert witness back in 1988, who remains the federal government's expert today. "I was working for the side that was trying to say that the sugar farmers were responsible," says Jones. But after exhaustive research in Florida Bay, Jones found that sugar's pollution was limited to the Everglades. Despite his expertise, Jones says he does not recall being contacted by reporter Steele. Neither does Lehtinen, even though, ironically, *Time* ran his picture when he was suing Florida.

Steele says that the Florida Bay pollution "has been written about in the past," and that one of the "major conclusions" of the "Restudy" program, an engineering plan aimed at regulating the Everglades's water supply, was that there are excessive harmful nutrients in Florida Bay. Jones says, "That's more ridiculous than anything else. One of the major complaints about the Restudy is that it doesn't address nutrients in the Bay strongly enough." He adds that the harmful nutrients in Florida Bay are not due to runoff from sugar farming.

2 *"Depending on whom you talk to, it will cost anywhere from $3 billion to $8 billion to repair the Everglades by building new dikes, rerouting canals and digging new lakes. Growers are committed to pay up to $240 million over 20 years for the cleanup. Which means the industry that created much of the problem will have to pay only a fraction of the cost to correct it."*

Sounds like Big Sugar's getting away with paying a measly 3 percent of a hefty $8 billion cleanup bill. The truth is that the $8 billion Restudy project has *little to do with pollution cleanup*. The Everglades cleanup is a $700 million program separate from the Restudy. Sugar growers and other farmers are actually paying what the government determined they owe: one third of the bill. "It depends on how you want to define *clean up*," says Steele. He says the $8 billion Restudy program aims to fix problems sugar is partly responsible for, so it's fair to say they're only committed to paying a tiny fraction of what they wrought. Counters Ronald Jones, "The Restudy has nothing to do with what the farmers have done in the Everglades."

Steele urges *Brill's Content* to weigh Flo-Sun's objections in the right context: "This is a very very strong special interest group," he says. "Every year they are faced with attacks on basically the sugar support program. So they have a tendency to lash out at anyone who criticizes them in any way...they will look at any little thing, no matter how small it is and point to it as an inaccuracy."

3 *"Each year, according to a 1997 estimate, the Army Corps of Engineers spends $63 million to control water flow in central and south Florida. This enables growers to obtain water when they need it or restrain the flow during heavy rains. Of the $63 million, the Corps estimates $52 million is spent on agriculture, mainly sugar-cane farmers, in the Everglades."*

Impressive numbers, but they might have been more accurate if Steele or his fact checker had called their cited source—the Army Corps. They never did. Instead, Steele says, he got the figures from the Council on Environmental Quality, which did, in fact, get the numbers from someone at the corps, but in no official way the corps can now explain or that *Time* tried to confirm independently.

Reporters James Steele and Donald Barlett

When Florida's senators, Bob Graham and Connie Mack, read the *Time* piece, they were so surprised by the figures that they asked the Army Corps for an explanation. Corps Col. Joe Miller wrote back: "My staff has reviewed the November 23, 1998, Times Magazine [sic] article and has found information related to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' expenditures to be totally in error."

Steele says he's written Miller asking for an explanation and hasn't received one. "If these numbers aren't right," says Steele, "I'm at a mystery as to why the colonel hasn't called us back."

Richard Bonner, the Flood Control Project's deputy district engineer for project management, says the annual expenditure for flood control is closer to $9 million or $10 million. And the corps doesn't itemize the cost in such a way that they could know how much sugar farmers benefit. "In my view, this article makes it appear that the bulk of this project is used to subsidize sugar," says Bonner. "And we don't feel that's the case."

4 *Time* describes Alfonso Fanjul's conversation with the president this way: *"The two spoke for 22 minutes. The topic: a proposed tax on sugar farmers to pay for the Everglades cleanup. Fanjul reportedly told the president he and other growers opposed such a step, since it would cost them millions. Such a tax has never been passed. That's access."*

The only wrinkle: President Clinton continued campaigning for that proposed tax in Florida, despite Fanjul's "access" and entreaties. *Time* doesn't mention that or explain that the tax proposal—a state referendum in 1996—was defeated because voters rejected it, not because the president caved to the "subsidy barons," as *Time* dubs them. "The whole point of that exchange," says Steele, "is that the average person can't call up Clinton and get into the Oval Office."

Less egregious but surprisingly sloppy was that no one at *Time* caught the misquoted sugar price cited in the story: it's actually 22 cents a pound, not $22. Steele says that's the only mistake he's aware of. "There was an unfortunate dropping of the decimal point," he concedes.

As for giving Flo-Sun a chance to respond to those charges, Dominicis says Steele assured him, "'Oh, I don't think we're even going to do that story.'" In a second call, Dominicis says Steele explained, "'There is a chance that we may mention you in passing in one of the pieces, so I just want to ask you a couple questions.'"

Dominicis says Steele's queries were focused on the subsidy (about which Dominicis is quoted) and south Florida environmental issues. Dominicis pressed Steele to give him a better sense of other areas he might be covering so he'd have the chance to respond to all charges. "'As a matter of fact,'" Dominicis recalls Steele saying, "'based on these answers, I don't even know how we fit you in.'" When Steele is asked whether he gave Dominicis the opportunity to respond to each allegation, Steele says, "I would have to look at my notes and refresh my memory....You don't run everything anybody says to you. We certainly thought we gave him his say on the principal issue, which is the [subsidy] program itself."

When the article appeared, Dominicis called Steele to object, but, according to Dominicis, the reporter insisted the piece was fair and "not really about" the Fanjuls. Dominicis pointed out that the brothers' picture was front and center. "We weren't just a tiny part of the story," he says. "We *were* the story."

"I think when people see themselves written about in what they believe to be an unfavorable light, that's all they see," says Steele. "[Dominicis] was asking 'Is this just an article on the Fanjuls?' The answer to that was no; it was part of the series."

Dominicis has a list of charges he was never allowed to rebut. For instance, *Time* said an attorney for migrant workers claimed that "of all the growers, the Fanjuls have treated their workers the worst." That kind of charge cries out for some reply, but readers didn't hear one because, Dominicis says, Steele never asked about it.

"I felt it was exaggerated and overdone," says Lehtinen. "Because they take a small factual matter that deals with some sources of pollution and some debates over national policy and then they quite inappropriately attribute all kinds of problems to sugar."

"[W]hat [Dominicis] would like more than anything else is that they would never be written about again," says Steele. "So anytime there's anything like this written about them they're going to go to extraordinary lengths to discourage people."

Dominicis says Steele ultimately told him to put his objections in writing; *Time* published Dominicis's letter to the editor in December, editing out his complaint that the magazine didn't allow him to respond to accusations. (A copy of *Time*'s published version and the original letter can be found at www.brillscontent.com.) "What's hard to live with," says Dominicis, "is that they wouldn't even give someone a chance to give their point of view." —*Abigail Pogrebin*


SWEET DEAL

WHY ARE THESE M[illionaires] SMILING? THE REASON IS IN YOUR SUGAR BOWL

Parents told of children who have been "headed" by the nearby smelter

*Time*'s story about the Fanjul brothers.

JAMES KEYSER/TIME

## GLOSSARY FASHION: DEFINING WOMEN


Fashion-speak can be hard to decipher. So we turned to designer Norma Kamali, *Mirabella* beauty director Rachael Combe, and a fashion magazine editor who wished to remain anonymous to tell us what fashion editors mean when they proclaim, "Orange is the new pink."—*Katherine Rosman*

**"Casual chic":** Often used to describe T-shirts and other basics. It means they look cheap, but are actually outrageously expensive. You never have to feel underdressed because you spent so much.

**"She has reinvented the platform shoe":** A designer has taken an old platform shoe and slapped a new label on it so she can sell it for a wad of dough.

**"Gray is the new black":** Throw out all the black stuff that we implored you to buy last season and buy the exact replicas in gray. (WARNING: Though gray is in fact the new black, this summer, it's all about color.)

**"It's very Donna":** (Karan, that is.) An outfit that is black and shapeless, and hides thunderthighs.

**"Classic":** This adjective describes frumpy, British-influenced pieces that cost upwards of $2,000.

**"Minimalist chic":** Describes black or white clothes that have no real design but cost an obscene amount of money.

**"Boho chic":** Short for "bohemian chic"; describes a shirt, skirt, or pants that look like they've been tie-dyed in your basement but really were made by Galliano, and command a price that could feed a small nation.

**"A return to femininity":** Describes items in pink, orange, or lavender (or any color that is not black or white); the opposite of **minimalist chic** (see above).

**"Downtown chic":** A style that pairs an expensive item, such as Helmut Lang pants, with a ratty T-shirt bought on the street.

**"Fur is back!":** This declaration appears every two years. Means that supermodels are sick of their animal rights shtick (and faux fur), and are now rallying behind the economically depressed fur trappers.

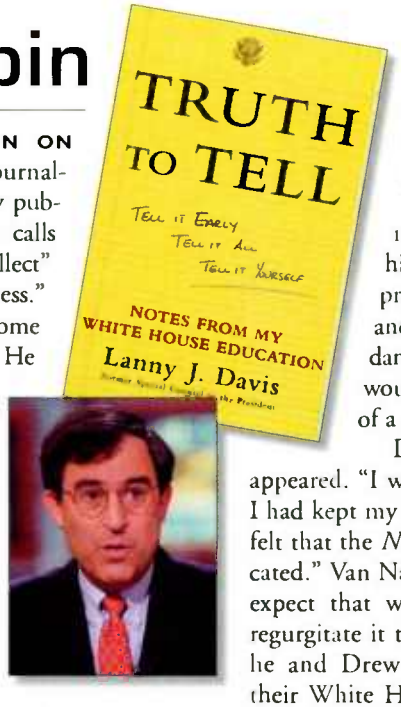
# The Perils Of Spin

**LANNY DAVIS, PRESIDENT CLINTON'S POINT MAN ON** pre-Lewinsky damage control, heaps praise on the very journalists he so vigorously spun. In *Truth To Tell*, Davis's recently published account of his White House tour of duty, he calls *Newsweek*'s Michael Isikoff "feisty, with a razor-sharp intellect" and *Time*'s Michael Weisskopf "one of the best in the business."

But elsewhere in the book, Davis attempts to settle some scores; in doing so he reveals much about the spin process. He singles out *The Boston Globe*'s Michael Kranish as working with a "connect-the-dots mind-set" and implying causation when there isn't any. Kranish broke a January 1997 story detailing a campaign donor's efforts to influence the president's immigration policy, calling attention to the administration's decision to withdraw support for a key bill.

Although Davis admits that the story was basically accurate, he complains that Kranish's language and tone implied the president had changed his policy position, while the White House claimed its retreat was just tactical. Kranish stands by his story. "I think it's extremely balanced," he says.

*New York Times* reporters Don Van Natta Jr. and Christopher Drew have even less patience with Davis. When Van Natta called Davis about Al Gore's fund-raising at a Buddhist temple in June 1997, Davis writes that Van Natta assured him that his story would exonerate the vice-president. Davis then granted Van Natta and Drew exclusive access to potentially damaging documents, hoping the reporters would sandwich the bad news in the middle of a generally positive article.

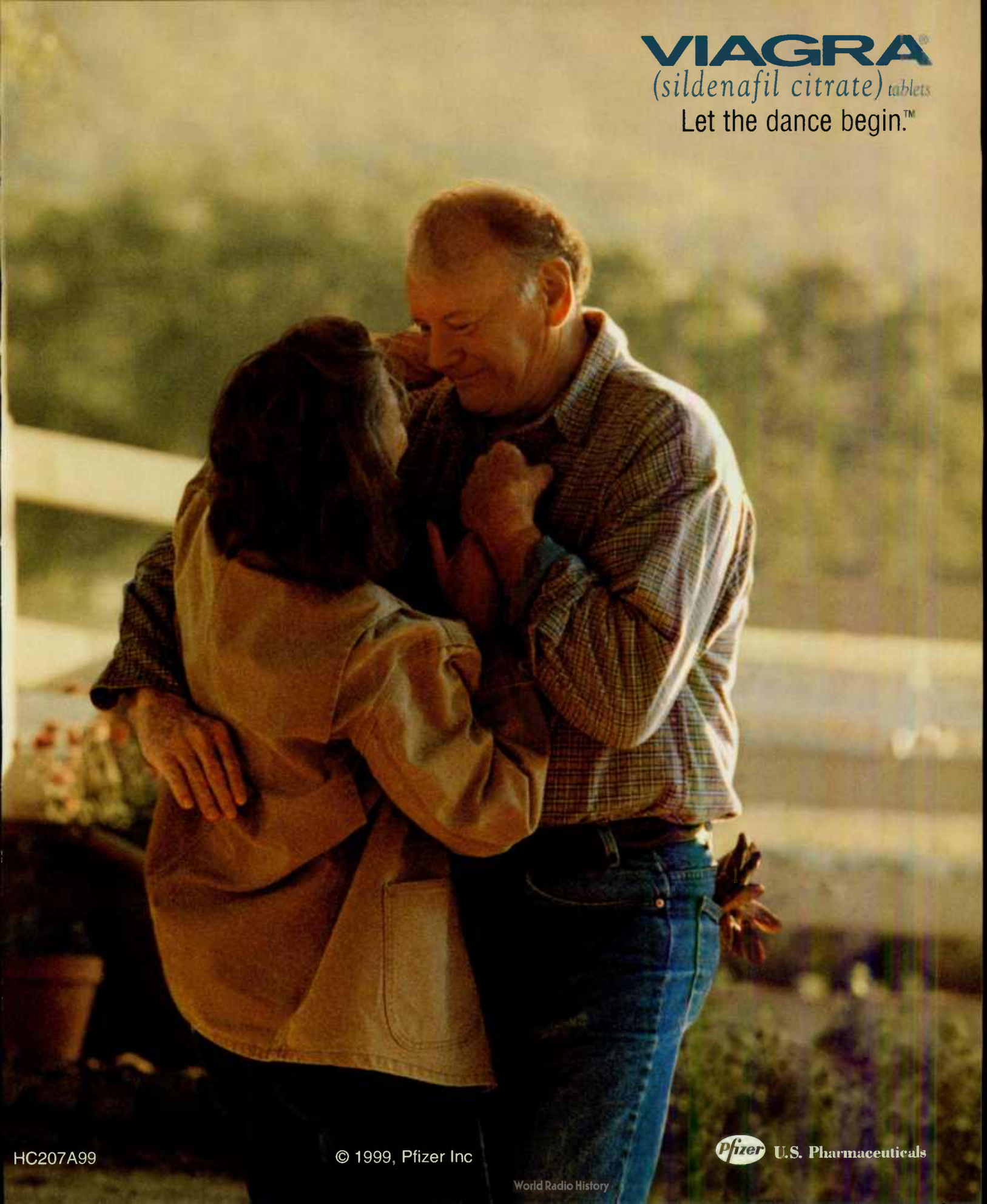



Lanny Davis and his book

Davis was furious when the *Times* story appeared. "I was especially upset," he writes, "because I had kept my side of the bargain, and then some, and felt that the *New York Times* reporters had not reciprocated." Van Natta says Davis was "naive and stupid to expect that we would swallow his spin whole and regurgitate it to our readers." Van Natta explains that he and Drew planned to do more reporting after their White House visit, which they had made "very clear" to Davis. Says Drew: "This is really a case of the master manipulator outfoxing himself."

—*Jeff Pooley*

BETH ADAMS (ILLUSTRATION); ELLIS/NEWSMAKERS (DAVIS)



# Advice Worth Repeating At *The Wall Street Journal*

READING *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*'S WEEKLY "GETTING Going" personal-finance column, you might feel like you're getting somewhere that you've already gone. We studied a year's worth of "Getting Going" columns by Jonathan Clements and found that some advice recurred often enough to give a reader a justified feeling of déjà vu.

| Number of times in 52 columns from May 1998 through May 1999 that "Getting Going" has recommended: | |
|---|---|
| Maintaining a diversified investment portfolio: | 17 |
| Investing in an index fund: | 12 |
| Trying to save more money: | 7 |
| Joining your employer's 401(k) retirement plan: | 6 |
| Holding on to stock investments for the long haul: | 6 |

Clements, who launched "Getting Going" in 1994, cheerfully admits to being a recycler. "I joke to people that there are basically only twenty personal-finance stories" that one can write, he says, "which is a problem since I have to come up with fifty-two columns a year."

The simplicity of Clements's advice—and its mantralike repetition—fit the column's philosophy. Clements says his readers aren't sophisticated investors: They want unflashy, steadily growing investments that will finance home purchases and their kids' tuition, and provide for a secure retirement and a nest egg in case of emergencies. If these are your goals—as opposed to making a killing by picking the next monster tech stock—then investment is simple, says Clements. Put your savings into a diversified portfolio, tinker with it as little as possible, "close your eyes...and you'll wake up in thirty years very, very rich."

The *Journal*'s Clements

So if there really are only 20 investment stories to be written, why not write only 20 columns a year? In part, because the column is a security blanket. "I'm not just teaching people," Clements asserts. "I'm affirming to them that they're doing the right thing." Besides, he adds, "most people hate personal finance, it's a close second to going to the dentist." But readers will absorb the advice, he says, "if you can serve it up in small, bite-size chunks."

Clements says his main themes are also worth repeating because panic and overconfidence conspire to push investors into foolhardy trading decisions. "You want to see the biggest threat to your financial future?" he asks. "Go home and look in the mirror." In other words, if you get the urge to do some impulse trading with your stocks, you're better off letting Clements's familiar advice lull you back into your 30-year nap. —*Matthew Heimer*

COURTESY OF WSJ (CLEMENTS); DANNY HELLMAN (ILLUSTRATION); GEORGE HOLZ/CORBIS OUTLINE (IMUS)

## Weasel Watch

**DON IMUS fans know a favorite epithet of his is *weasel*. On two mornings in May, we watched the I-Man's nationally syndicated radio show on MSNBC (where it's simulcast each morning from 6 until 9) and heard him sling the word at foreign dignitaries, politicians, Hollywood *machers*, and even a member of his own family.—*Ed Shanahan***

### Tuesday, May 11, 1999:

1. "That bag-eyed, noodle-sucking, little **weasel** ambassador."—Li Zhaoxing, China's ambassador to the U.S.
2. "He's a juiceless **weasel** now."—Agent Michael Ovitz.
3. "Get that fat **weasel** on the phone."—Roger Williams, the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Speedvision, a cable network and national sponsor of the Imus show.
4. "God almighty, what a bunch of **weasels**."—Reference to Williams and others connected to Speedvision.
5. "That bag-eyed, rice-suckin', little noodle-suckin' **weasel** ambassador from China"—Li Zhaoxing.
6. "Remember how you **weasel**ed [acre] number one on the original 810?"—Comment to newsman-sidekick Charles McCord. Reference to acres on Imus's charity ranch in New Mexico that is being created as a camp-hospice for seriously ill children.
7. "Get that bald-headed **weasel** on the phone."—Brother Fred Imus, with whom the I-man is extremely close.
8. "You sound like [Energy secretary] Bill Richardson trying to own up to these noodle-sucking little **weasels** up there at Los Alamos stealing our nuclear secrets."
—Reference to alleged Chinese spies at the Department of Energy lab in New Mexico.

### Wednesday, May 12, 1999:

1. "That bag-eyed little **weasel**, noodle-sucking loser ambassador from China."—Li Zhaoxing.
2. "He's a Hollywood **weasel**."
—movie mogul Jeffrey Katzenberg.
3. "He is a **weasel**."—U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, D-N.Y.
4. "You would align yourself with those two **weasels**."—Reference to Schumer and President Bill Clinton.
5. "George W. Bush is a gutless **weasel**."
—Self-evident.

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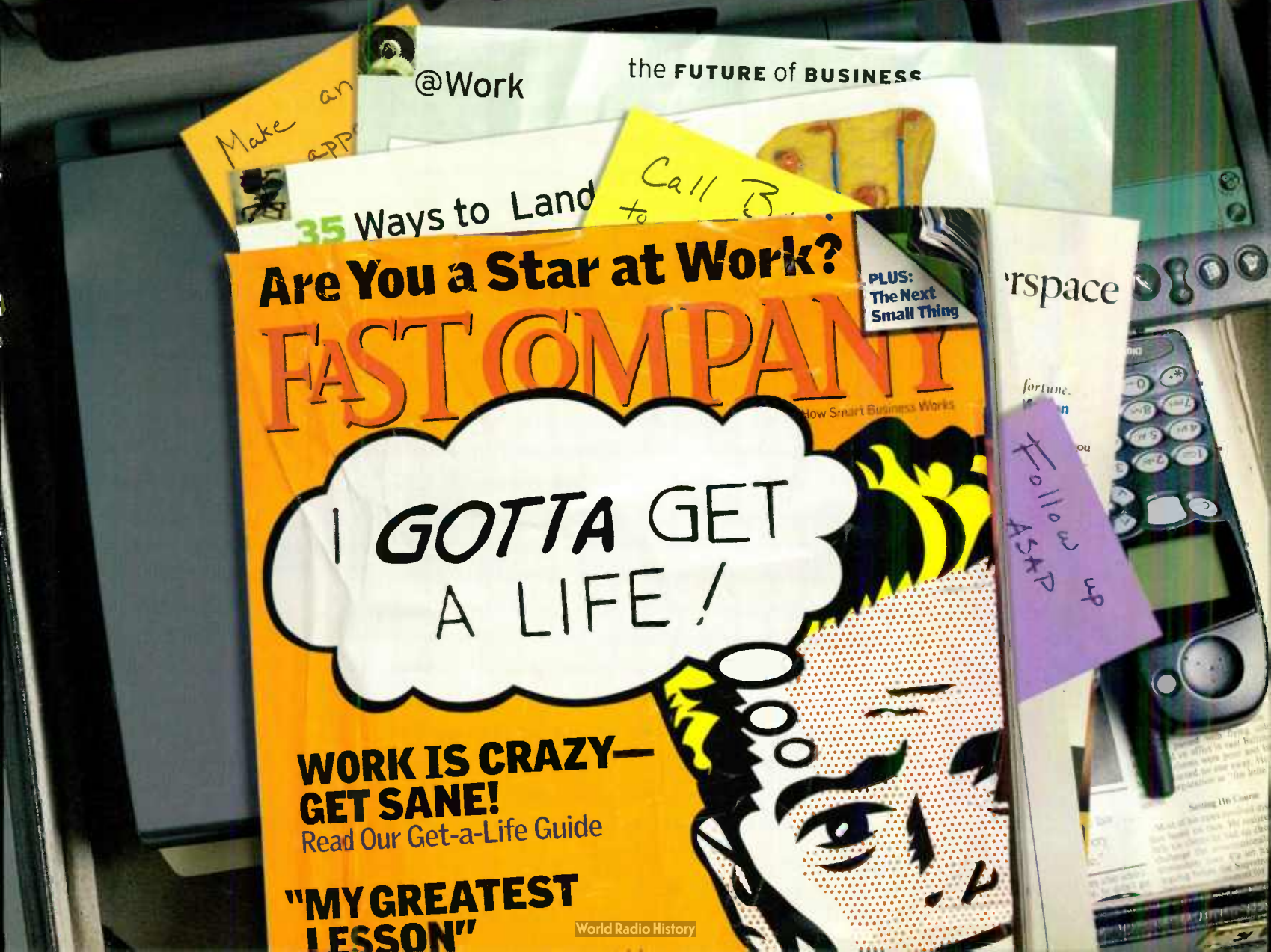


# Them's Ultimate FIGHTIN' Words

## Martial Artists Feel Sucker Punched By *Fox Files*.

THE FIGHTERS WHO COMPETE in mixed martial arts—also known as extreme fighting—tournaments are reputedly some of the toughest men on the planet. Their sport, which combines elements of kickboxing, jujitsu, and wrestling, and often allows combatants to choke opponents and punch them when they're down, is decidedly no place for whiners. But a recent feature on *Fox Files*, the Fox magazine show, has these modern-day gladiators crying foul.

Supporters of extreme fighting complain that *Fox Files* used misleading footage in the March 25, 1999, segment "Caged Warriors," and filmed it with what Carol Klenfner, director of public relations for mixed martial arts league Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), calls an "Oh-my-God-people-are-going-to-die" attitude in order to portray it as a savage, underground death sport instead of as an activity which, she says, is far less dangerous than such mainstream sports as boxing. The producers of *Fox Files* wonder what all the fuss is about.

"Caged Warriors" starts with grainy footage of two men battling in a caged arena. Correspondent Catherine Herridge explains to viewers that "*Fox Files* uncovered this illegal fight in a warehouse near Los Angeles." Over a montage of brutal fight scenes, Herridge describes the sport as "lethal," and "like something out of *Thunderdome*. Two men enter. One man leaves." Superimposed over one scene is the sentence, "An American fighter was beaten to death last March during competition." Later, Herridge refers to mixed martial arts as a "human form of cockfighting."

But it turns out that some of the brutal footage isn't from the L.A. fight that *Fox Files* covered. Mixed in with *Fox Files*'s own footage, say UFC technical adviser Joe Silva and Sal Garcia, manager for fighter Tito Ortiz, is footage from other matches, including *Cage Fight Tournament III*, a 1997 Russian bout that Garcia says was "a different fight with different rules."

*Fox Files* senior producer Pamela Browne says that such accusations are nitpicky and beside the point, which she says is that people are "pummeling the crap out of each other in a ring." She refuses to discuss *Fox Files*'s combat footage, saying that "minutiae analysis, frame by frame, is not what this...is about."

UFC's Klenfner bristles at the labels "lethal" and "deadly," and at the comparisons to the movie *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* (in which "two men enter" and "one man leaves" because the fighters battle until one dies). The death mentioned by *Fox Files* (Douglas Dedge's in 1998) is the only fatality in the history of the sport, and, says Klenfner, it took place in a non-UFC-sanctioned fight in the Ukraine. This makes extreme fighting far less dangerous than boxing (39 "notable" deaths since 1961, according to The Associated Press). "Besides," adds Klenfner dryly, "from a business perspective it wouldn't be terribly intelligent to have our stars get killed."

Herridge states that "forty-six states have banned" mixed martial arts. In fact, at least four states permit the sport. But of the remaining 46 states, only some, such as New York, have laws explicitly prohibiting the sport. Others have not addressed it. The California State Athletic Commission, for example, prohibits certain holds used in mixed martial arts, but does not explicitly outlaw the sport. CSAC executive officer Rob Lynch says that the commission considers proposals for fights on a case-by-case basis, and is in the process of developing regulations to allow the sport to take place legally.

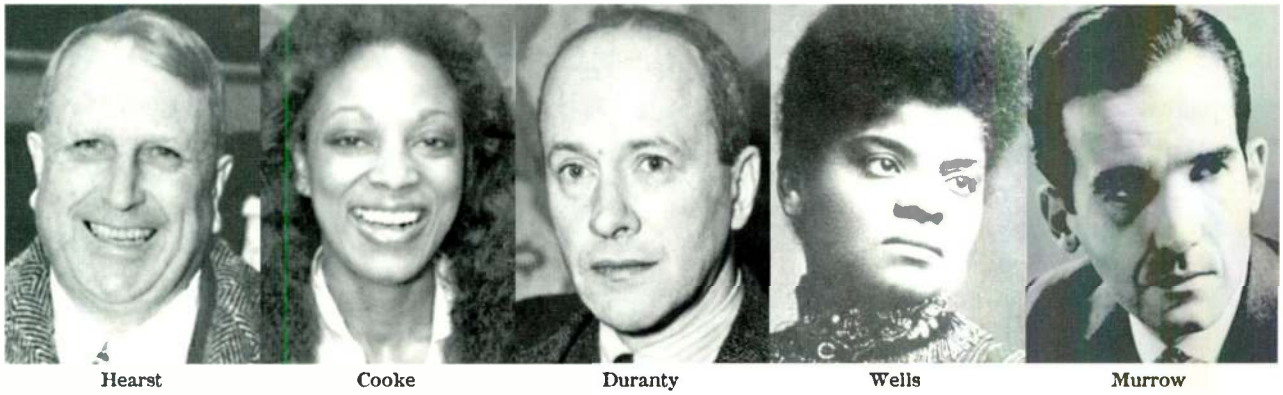


Advocates of "extreme fighting" say that *Caged Warriors* exaggerated the illegality and brutality of the sport.

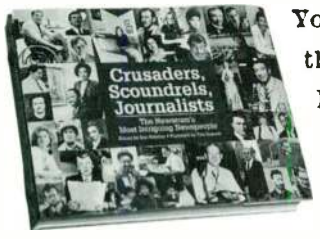
Browne says that Fox stands by the report. "*Fox Files* is about gritty, underground street stories," she says. "We dish it up and put it out there for America to look at and decide. That's what we do." —*Ari Voukydis*

# A. LIAR
# B. CRUSADER
# C. MUCKRAKER
# D. SCOUNDREL
# E. HERO

*Match each one with the appropriate journalist.*



Hearst Cooke Duranty Wells Murrow




You can't, can you? Journalism attracts all kinds — the good, the bad and the in-between. And sometimes newspeople are a little of each. Walter Duranty, for example, was not one of the shining stars of the fourth estate. In 1932 he got a Pulitzer Prize for predicting Stalin's rise to power. A year later, in a special report in which he purposely lied, he denied the existence of a government-engineered famine that the dictator used to kill 9 million people. He wrote the story in order to preserve his reputation as a reporter and his access to Soviet officials.

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# The *Times* Joins The Synergy Generation

STRIKE ANOTHER BLOW FOR CROSS-MEDIA POLLINATION. EVEN THE VENERABLE *New York Times* is getting into the act.

An April 13 front-page story analyzing the U.S. investigation of Usama bin Laden, the man charged with blowing up two U.S. embassies in Africa last year, coincided with the broadcast that evening of a PBS *Frontline* documentary on the same subject—a documentary coproduced by none other than the *Times*.

The paper did not try to hide the connection; in fact, a box at the end of the article (on page A6) alerted readers to the documentary, "The Terrorist and the Superpower," and the paper's television review that day was devoted to the show. The column, written by an outside contributor, gave the show a mixed review.


Scenes from *Frontline*'s "The Terrorist and the Superpower"

This was the *Times*'s first coproduction with *Frontline*. *Times* executives say this will probably not be the last such collaboration, given the paper's new push to branch out into other media, according to Richard Flaste, managing director for television at The New York Times Electronic Media Company.

The *Times* approached *Frontline* about working together and the two organizations together came up with the idea for a bin Laden story—a subject that *Times* reporters had been pursuing for eight months. "We worked on parallel tracks," says Tim Weiner, the reporter who wrote the story for the *Times*. "When I had sources who agreed to appear on camera, I [referred them to *Frontline* producers]. I reviewed the transcripts of all [of *Frontline*'s] interviews."

Did the joint effort influence the editors' thinking when they were deciding whether to run the story on the front page?

"On the merits, the story belonged where it was," says Bill Keller, the *Times*'s managing editor. "It was our first attempt to step back from a year of exclusives on bin Laden" and examine what the United States did and did not know about the alleged terrorist mastermind.

On the other hand, "the timing was obviously planned. We agreed with *Frontline* to run [the story] that day," unless some earth-shattering news broke, says Keller.

Keller acknowledges that promoting the *Frontline* venture was a bit out of character for the *Times*. "We do tend to be a little more self-effacing" than most papers, he says. "We thought about that," he adds. "I don't regard the article as a promotion. The box was. It was a pretty discreet promotion. It's in the same vein as when we refer people in a box to more information on our website."

As for the television review, Keller says he had no prior knowledge of it. John Darnton, culture editor, says he assigned it after getting a press release from PBS. He says he had no idea the *Times* was running a news story that day until just a few hours before the paper went to press.

*—Rifka Rosenwein*


The *Times* story on bin Laden appeared the same day as *Frontline*'s documentary.

## Measuring The Coverage

### Kosovo vs. Littleton

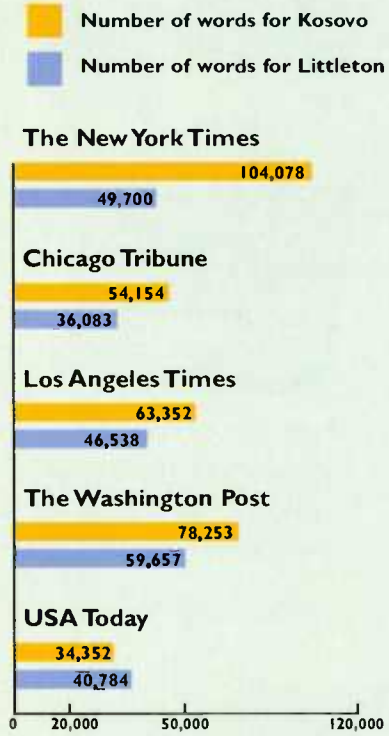
**THE POST-MONICA LEWINSKY NEWS** vacuum was short-lived. In March, NATO launched its air campaign in Kosovo, and just a month later gunfire erupted at Columbine High School.

We decided to compare the volume of newspaper coverage of the two stories. The breakdown below reflects the first week of that coverage: March 25 through March 31 for Kosovo and April 21 through April 27 for Littleton. We looked only at news stories, not editorials.

Of the dailies we surveyed, *The New York Times* devoted the most ink to the two stories, running more than twice as many words on the Kosovo campaign as it did the school shootings.

By contrast, *USA Today*—which prints a single weekend edition—devoted far less space to both stories, and its word count favored the Littleton tragedy. Our tally appears below.

*—Jeff Pooley*



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## Quiz

**CORPORATE FAMILIES** often gather improbable cousins under the same roof. Can you match the products/publications/companies in the bottom column with their corporate owners in the top column? Answers are below. (There are two entities in the bottom column for each corporate parent in the top.)—*Leslie Heilbrunn*

### MATCH THESE. . .

1. The Walt Disney Company
2. TIME WARNER
3. The Seagram Company Ltd.
4. Times Mirror Company
5. News Corporation
6. GANNETT

### . . .TO THESE

- A *Times* (of London) *Literary Supplement*
- B DC Comics
- C *Weight Watchers* magazine
- D *Rocky and Bullwinkle* cartoon

- E *Field & Stream*
- F *Women's Wear Daily*
- G The Golf Channel
- H USA Networks, Inc.
- I *Army Times*
- J *Space News*
- K *Jane* magazine

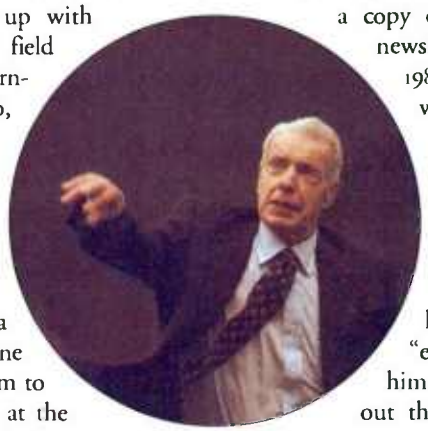

- L Jeppesen Sanderson, Inc. (flight information services, including flight planning information and aviation weather and navigation data)

Answers: 1.(F,K), 2.(B,C), 3.(D,H), 4.(E,L), 5.(A,G), 6.(I,J)

# Say It Wasn't So, Joe

JOE DIMAGGIO's death in March was more than automatic front-page news. It was a chance for writers around the country to swing for a literary home run.

Those who'd actually seen the Yankee great play or, better yet, had met him, took the biggest cuts. In San Francisco, DiMaggio's hometown, Dwight Chapin, a senior writer at the *San Francisco Examiner*, knew DiMaggio, and Chapin's coverage of Joltin' Joe's life and death amounted to a clean hit. But, in a sidebar about meeting up with DiMaggio on a softball field in San Francisco one morning some 20 years ago, Chapin whiffed.



DiMaggio in a tie, which is not how he appeared at the game in question.

In the article, Chapin wrote that a teammate of his on the *Examiner*'s softball team two decades ago suggested—"almost as a dare"—that Chapin phone DiMaggio and invite him to throw out the first ball at the Bay Area Media League's season opener. Chapin wrote that he called Joe, gave him directions to the park, then forgot all about it. On opening day three weeks later, he was stunned to see "a figure eerily walking through the mist out in center field. A ghost-like figure dressed in a black suit. Joe DiMaggio."

After chatting with the journalist-players, Chapin recounted, DiMaggio, in dress shirt and tie, took the mound, tossed the ball to the *Examiner*'s catcher, and left, "through the far, damp reaches of center field, into the fog. Very much as if he were walking into that cornfield like Shoeless Joe Jackson in *Field of Dreams*."

Well, *somebody* was dreaming. I was at that game on August 16, 1980. I had happened onto DiMaggio on the street, and walked with him to the diamond, where Jan Sluizer, a radio reporter serving as commissioner of the media league, welcomed him. I'd always thought that she was the one who got Joe to show, and when I called Sluizer after Chapin's obit appeared, she confirmed my memory.

"It's revisionist history," Sluizer declared. The idea came up among a group of players that did not include Chapin, she said, and it was she who sent an invitation to DiMaggio, in care of a hangout of his, Reno Barsocchini's bar in North Beach. A few days later, Sluizer recalled, Barsocchini phoned for DiMaggio to say, "He'll be there." And he was.

Furious at Chapin, Sluizer sent him a copy of the softball league's newsletter from September 1980. The top story was headlined, "Yankee Clipper Opens Season." In that article, the writer recounted his surprise at seeing DiMaggio on the field. "I'm still not sure what he was doing," he wrote, "except...Sluizer asked him to come by and throw out the first ball." In an accompanying photo, DiMaggio wore a plaid sport coat and an open-necked golf shirt. No tie.

The byline on the account: Dwight Chapin.

In an apology to Sluizer, Chapin denied that he was revising history, and blamed "addled thinking—I hope not brought on by creeping senility."

"I do recall having talked to Joe myself at the time," says Chapin, "probably backing up Jan, after she'd initially contacted him." He admits that he'd "totally forgotten" about his 1980 article. He meant well with the sidebar. "The main intention of the story was to marvel at the fact that he showed up," he says.

What lesson did he draw? Fact check every story, even if you were part of it? Check your files for forgotten articles? Don't be too eager to take credit? "The lesson," says Chapin, "is that even the recall of a journalist isn't as good as it should be after that many years." —*Ben Fong-Torres*

MARK LENNIHAN/AP-WWW (DIMAGGIO)

# Civic Journalism is ...

## About expanding our vision.

Sometimes journalists are seen as being part of an unholy alliance with the powers that be. And we do suffer from a myopia simply because constant deadlines make it hard to get away from the bountiful sources of information that reside in government or corporate buildings.

Civic journalism is an antidote to that myopia. It compels us to go outside and bring our communities into our building.

For example, KQED, with other news organizations in the Bay Area, set out to look at transportation issues. Ordinarily, we get our information from transportation agencies, pressure groups or our own commutes. But we held town hall meetings for a year and we gained a richer understanding of how complex the situation is. It made us smarter, gave us more sources, enabled us to ask the right questions and gave focus to our coverage that I don't believe we would have achieved through more traditional methods. And the people who came out gave us credit for listening to their views.

We don't abandon journalism to pursue civic journalism. We retain the values of critical thinking, skepticism and the desire to search for a better, more accurate story. But we have better tools for making that search. And we gain credibility. People see we're not in an unholy alliance with anyone except those who help in our search for truth.

**Raul Ramirez**

**News Director**

**KQED-FM, San Francisco**

***The Pew Center for Civic Journalism is pleased to present this message, another in a series on how journalists are trying to improve news coverage by involving citizens -- and improve the community through their work. For more information, call 202-331-3200.***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# journalism.commerce

## Websites are linking information and sales in all sorts of new ways, and it's hard to tell what's what. Can publishers agree on a set of standards to sort it out?

*TRANSACTION JOURNALISM.* THAT'S A phrase I had never even heard until recently, but it's starting to creep into the journals of media executives, marketing gurus, and journalism scholars. If you're concerned about the quality and credibility of the news and information you consume online, it's a phrase you should be thinking about, too.

When I first encountered the phrase, all I could think of were some of my favorite oxymorons, like "jumbo shrimp" and "unbiased opinion." Transactions happen when you're being sold something. Journalism is the process of ferreting out and disseminating information. Combining the two may not literally produce an oxymoron, but it sure does raise a lot of interesting and important questions about journalistic standards and, more fundamentally, about journalism's purpose.

Transaction journalism can be thought of as the direct linking of information to sales. To take one example, nytimes.com offers a link to barnesandnoble.com next to its online book reviews, and *The New York Times* gets a piece of the action if anyone buys a book via that route. Because it's the *Times*, we can be fairly sure that reviews aren't skewed to help sales. But it has to be noted that the *Times* now has a financial interest in that book being reviewed that it didn't have before. And it's not coincidental that, as the *Online Journalism Review* recently reported, while most of the newspaper's past articles are available online for just one year and can only be retrieved by paying a fee, the *Times* has made 19 years of book reviews available for free (with the Barnes & Noble "buy option," of course).

Links between products being reviewed and products being sold are popping up all over the place, and they are only one manifestation of this new kind of transaction journalism. Others include the embedding of ad links (not always labeled accordingly) in editorial copy, so the unsuspecting consumer is transported to the advertisers' sites; the formation of alliances in which an outside vendor actually takes over an entire area of content on a site; and the selling of search results, so advertisers' or partners' products pop up at the top of the user's list of "hits."

It's not hard to understand how we got to this juncture. Many publishers flocked to the Web with only vague notions of how they would earn returns on their investments. The old-fashioned advertising model isn't panning out, so lots of smart and creative people are busy trying to fashion a model that does work. The Internet has advantages over older media when it comes to content—speed and personalization, for instance—but some of these advantages are easily abused. The same tools that enable a publisher to determine what I'm interested in and then send me related information also let the publisher "market" *me* to vendors much more efficiently than old media could. As Len Sellers, a cofounder of a multimedia journalism laboratory at San Francisco State University puts it, "When does personalization become the equivalent of telemarketers calling during dinner?"

Backlash against those annoying telemarketing calls (or their virtual cousins) has given rise to moves within the online industry to establish privacy policies and safeguards. And some within the industry are hoping to mount a similar effort to establish standards for separating content from commerce, or at least to make clear which is which. They have a long way


ILLUSTRATION BY TOM COCOTOS

to go, but it's instructive to check out what they're concerned about, if only so we'll know what to watch out for ourselves.

Chris Barr, editor at large of CNET, a well-regarded and popular technology site, says self-interest, not just good journalistic values, should push the industry in the direction of standards. "Sites that have strong privacy policies show they are thinking about their customers," Barr says. "Maybe there are ways to do this with the credibility issue, too."

Barr, in his role as cochairman of the Internet Content Coalition, a trade group of content producers, has created a draft of proposed guidelines aimed at distinguishing editorial content from advertising. Among them: "Any nonbanner advertisement, including portals, windows, buttons, and special advertising sections...must be clearly and conspicuously identified with the words advertising, advertisement, advertiser links, or special advertising section." Another proposal states that "to help the reader discern the difference between advertisements and editorial content, links to editorial content should not be placed within an advertising element." The draft also states that "[i]f an ad button appears within a story that also uses buttons for an editorial purpose, the ad buttons must be visually distinct from the editorial ones." (This is not your father's morning paper.)

Nobody, including Barr, expects these or similar guidelines to be warmly embraced anytime soon by an industry that still is struggling to find a formula for profitability. Indeed, Barr acknowledges that the proposed guidelines are on the back burner at the Internet Content Coalition, although he says a new project, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, is taking up the notion of guidelines and working to give them some real traction.

That project right now consists of a paid consultant, technology analyst Denise Caruso, exploring the feasibility of creating a nonprofit organization to develop and administer a set of standards not only for journalists on the Web, but, as Caruso puts it, for "Internet publishers of all genres, including media providers, portals, search engines, commerce sites, independent artists, universities and researchers."

With an appealing working title, Credible.org, the idea—and it's a big one—would be to give sites signing on to the eventual standards the equivalent of a "*Good Housekeeping* Seal of Approval." They could then embed this seal into their HTML coding, so consumers would find them in a search of "credible" sites. Caruso, who writes a technology column for *The New York Times,* says she has been getting positive feedback from all sorts of big providers, but she acknowledges that the challenge of developing a consensus around specifics is "gigantic."

What I find so fascinating about this effort is that it explicitly acknowledges the existence of a marketplace in which old-style journalists are competing against all sorts of new players in the content business—and that as a result, a new set of rules may need to be established. And it's completely unclear whose standards and traditions will prevail.

Barr thinks the time is ripe for such an initiative. The recent controversy involving Amazon.com—which got hammered after it was revealed that it was selling prominent placements for books to advertisers on its site (and not revealing that to readers)—shows, Barr says, that both the industry and consumers would be well served by articulating standards. "A lot of people are just now coming to grips with the ramifications of credibility, or the lack of credibility," he says.

Meanwhile, an old media group, the American Society of Magazine Editors, recently ramped up its guidelines for new media, which relate to the web offerings of its member magazines (and therefore apply to only a small fraction of online content providers). Under the ASME code, for instance, "[l]inks that appear within the editorial content of a site shall be under the sole control of the editors. No publication may sell outright or make a condition of any advertising sale, either explicitly or by implication, a link from its editorial content to any other site." Another ASME guideline states that any preferential treatment given to advertisers in the performance of search engines or other applications "would constitute a betrayal of reader trust."

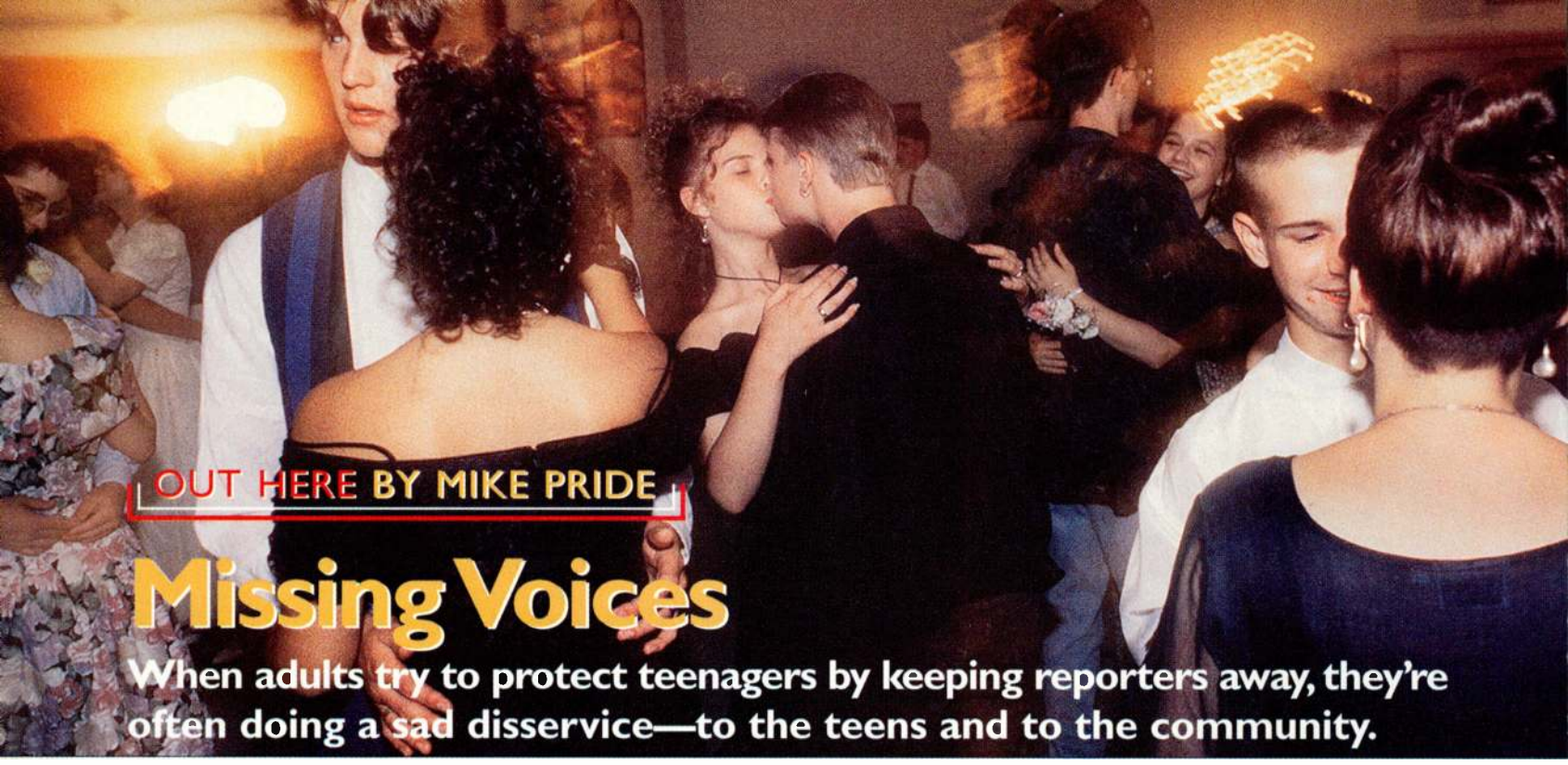
Everyone wants our time, our attention, and our money, and it's often not clear where the sales pitch begins.

There's an obvious shortfall with these and other well-intentioned efforts to tame the World Wide Web; it hasn't earned the nickname Wild Wild Web for nothing, and for every honest information broker and well-staffed news site, there are countless hustlers, hucksters, and copycats. Roles and functions are all mixed up—music magazines are selling us CDs, for instance, while CD makers are providing reviews. Traditional content providers are worried they'll be outflanked by merchants unconcerned about journalistic niceties. Everyone wants our time, our attention, and our money, and it's often not clear where the sales pitch begins.

The good news is that, lately, the push for more clearly delineated lines between content and commerce is coming not just from grumpy journalists longing for an oversimplified past but from business and marketing people who understand that trust, too, is a precious commodity and that their sites just might become more valuable if they pay attention to such practices as disclosure of self-interest and regard for ad-edit separation.

There's nothing inherently evil about transaction journalism. Indeed, done right, it can fill a customer need. But consumers need to jump into the debate by making it clear that we want to know where the journalism stops and where the transaction begins. ■

*Keep those blurry messages coming. E-mail me at eeffron@brillscontent.com.*



OUT HERE BY MIKE PRIDE

# Missing Voices

## When adults try to protect teenagers by keeping reporters away, they're often doing a sad disservice—to the teens and to the community.

In 1993, a *Concord Monitor* photojournalist, Dan Habib, took pictures of teens dancing and kissing at a junior high school prom for a series of stories on teenagers and sex education.

WHENEVER THE *CONCORD MONITOR* tries to show teenagers as they are, the reaction is predictable: Parents and educators do their best to stop us. They believe young people need to be shielded from the media and protected from speaking their minds. Adults want kids portrayed in a positive light, and their definition of positive is narrow.

Having been a parent of three teenagers, I understand the impulse to shelter them. But as an editor, I believe the instinct to stifle kids' free speech in the name of protecting them creates a generation gap that harms the community. Our adult readers here in Concord, New Hampshire, don't know young people as well as they should, which sometimes results in fear and stereotyping. Young people, meanwhile, do not take part in the community conversation that plays out in the pages of the local newspaper. In fact, they pay little attention to newspapers, in part because newspapers—my own included—seldom allow their voices to make it into print.

April's school shootings near Littleton, Colorado, reinforced this view. I have one teenager left at home. The night of the shootings, he and I talked about what had happened in Colorado. During this discussion, I learned that a few students at our local high school wear black trench coats and that they sometimes refer to the leaders of their group as "dons." Some other students look down on these kids and call the poorer ones "scrubs." I also learned from my son about the video game Doom, the entertainer Marilyn Manson, and the Internet netherworld that panders to the curiosity of young males about such topics as explosives and dismemberment.

Most of these subjects, I hasten to add, bubble along only in the periphery of my son's busy existence. The point is that even though I edit the local newspaper, live two and a half blocks from Concord High School, and have had sons in attendance there for most of the last 15 years, I knew little about the cultural specifics behind the Littleton shootings. And I'm sure I wasn't alone. As a consequence of such ignorance, the tendency to generalize is great. Our letters to the editor after Littleton included many thoughtful and caring comments, but they also contained sweeping criticism of two generations—current teenagers and their parents—and contrasts with the rosy past.

Perhaps this is why I put a high premium on stories in which our reporters try to get into kids' lives and report on them as they are. Unfortunately, our success rate is not the best. After three years of covering education for us, reporter Matthew T. Hall summed up our biggest obstacle with these words: "Adults who work in schools may not want you to know this, but sixth-grade boys cry, and say the f-word, and eat pizza more often than apples."

Several months ago, the adviser of a local high school drama group gave *Monitor* reporter Amy McConnell permission to follow the making of a school play, *Our Town*. About three weeks before opening night, McConnell wrote about the drama club's pecking order. Her story began with an anecdote: After rehearsal, several boys sneaked into an area of the school where they weren't supposed to be. Three of them bound the wrists and ankles of a freshman with duct tape and playfully attacked him. This, according to cast members, was a sign that the new boy was "cool" and had gained acceptance in the "elite group" of drama club veterans.

We should have seen the reaction coming. The story upset parents of the players and nearly brought the series to a halt. Among other complaints, the parents disliked the discussion of cliquishness and thought the story portrayed a harmless stunt as a violent and irresponsible act. The drama club adviser and cast allowed McConnell to continue, but only after she met with them and the parents and responded to their concerns.

In retrospect, the problem with this series began with a

*Mike Pride is the editor of the* Concord Monitor, *in Concord, New Hampshire. His column on editing a daily local newspaper appears regularly.*

DAN HABIB/*CONCORD MONITOR*/IMPACT VISUALS (3)

misunderstanding about a reporter's role. When the adviser gave McConnell permission to follow the making of *Our Town,* there were no strings attached. But clearly the adviser believed that in writing about the ups and downs of staging a play, McConnell would focus almost exclusively on the ups. McConnell set out to report what she observed, wherever the story took her.

Matt Hall had even worse luck with his series on a local junior high school's transition to a middle school. Concord's sixth graders were moving from neighborhood grammar schools to a citywide middle school, and some parents were uneasy about the change. With the cooperation of educators, and after notifying parents, Hall set out to write perhaps a dozen stories following the sixth graders through their first year of middle school.

As in the drama series, problems soon arose because of false expectations about the stories Hall would write. His goal in this series was to show the kids as they were and to report on the central issues in their lives. The teachers may have expected him to write about team-teaching techniques or the math curriculum, but his subjects included popularity, the pressures of test taking, discipline, eating habits, and the cultural milieu of 12-year-olds.

Early in the school year, Hall did a story featuring a girl so shy that her teacher, in an effort to bring her out of her shell, allowed her to throw "a hissy fit." The girl stood on her desk stomping and screaming. When the girl's parents saw the story, they were upset that she had been singled out in class as being shy. But they were even more angry that the newspaper had made the event public, and they complained to the school. One of the teachers was already unhappy that Hall's story had barely mentioned the oral reports she had allowed him to sit in on. We tried to repair the damage, but the school was no longer willing to allow Hall the access he needed, so we abandoned the series.

Strangely, the subject of the *Monitor*'s most successful effort to break through the cocoon around the community's young people was the biggest taboo of all: sex. In 1993, we ran a four-day series on a ninth-grade health class's discussion of sex. The series was frank, and many of the students in it were identified and pictured. The series was the talk of the town for weeks.

We had several extraordinary advantages in bringing this project to print. The first was a willing subject—Tom Walton, who taught the course. Walton thought parents ought to know what was going on both in young people's lives and in his classroom. And he was willing to trust Dan Habib, a *Monitor* photojournalist who is now our photo editor, to tell the story.

Another advantage was that Habib informed parents of his intentions from the beginning, got their permission to report and photograph the story, and established clear ground rules with the students—all steps that are difficult to take under the crush of a daily deadline.

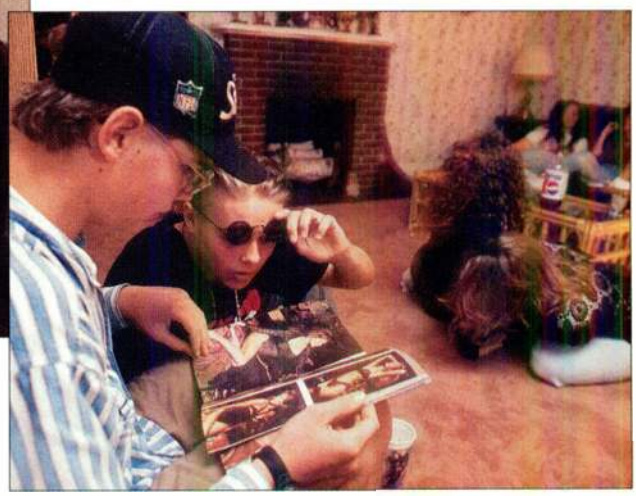
A third advantage was that we did not publish the story as it was unfolding. Unlike the stories about the making of the play and the sixth graders' first year in middle school, Habib's project was finished before the first word or picture ran in the newspaper. Parents and educators could complain, but the series was done.

Habib chronicled the class in diary form. He also did a series of interviews with the students about their experiences—or lack of experiences—with sex. These we ran as edited transcripts, giving the age and gender but not the names of the students. In addition to attending class, Habib spent time with the students at their homes, at dances, and on outings. He photographed them lounging around, goofing off, smooching, dancing, and ogling a Victoria's Secret catalog.

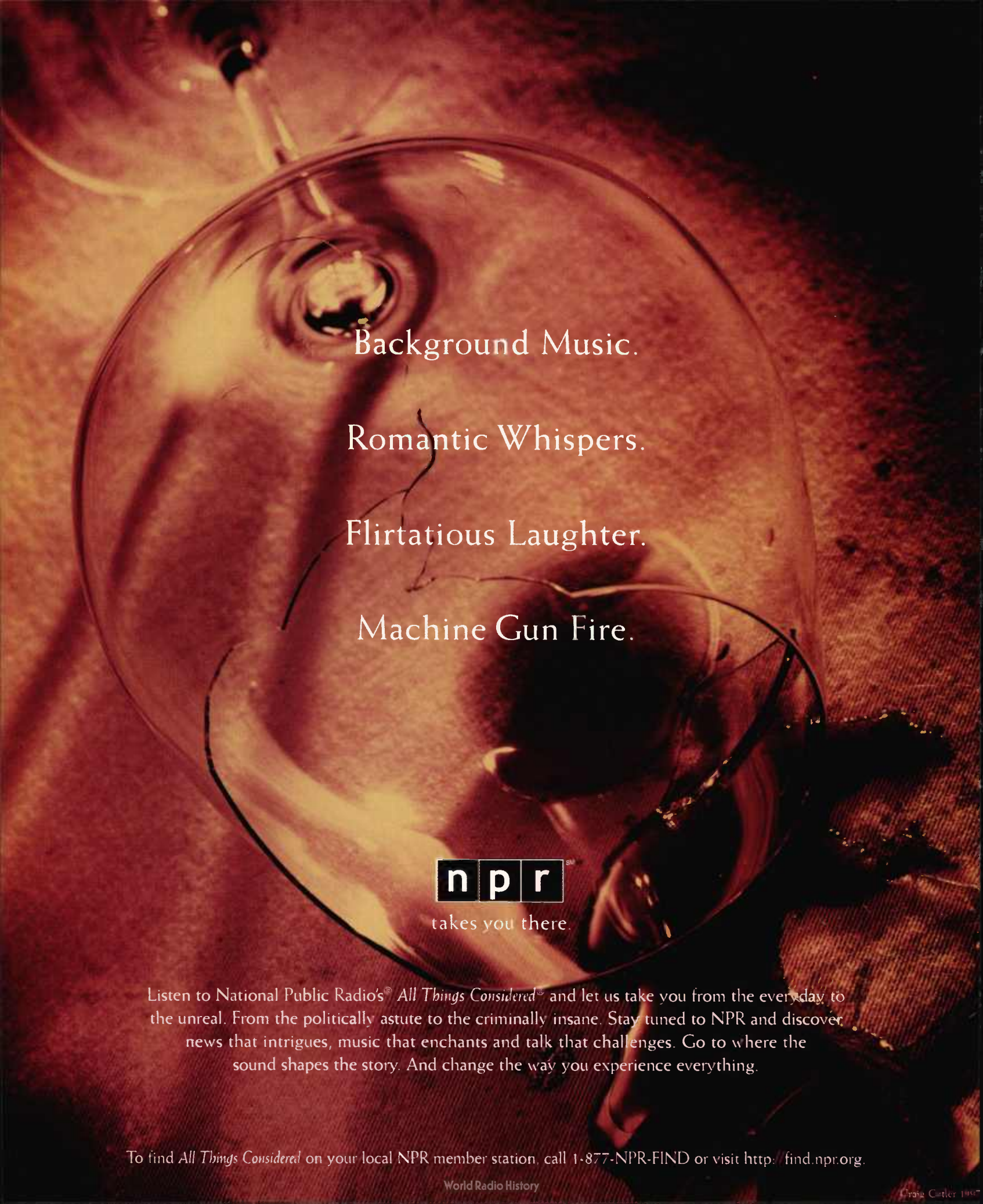
Of all the many comments we heard about Habib's series, the one I found most gratifying came from a young man who called a teen talk show on which I was a guest. What he liked most, he said, was that for once he heard the voices of people his own age speaking to the community—and to him—through the newspaper.

But despite some good efforts, we have not succeeded either in reaching teens as newspaper readers or in making them feel welcome to speak up in the forum we offer the community. The Columbine High School shootings were a reminder of the extent of that failure. The tragedy resonated across the country because people sensed that it could have happened anywhere. Part of the shock it caused came from adults' ignorance of the specific cultural influences on young people today.

The impulse to protect kids from exposure in the media is a natural one, but when parents and educators go to extremes, they're doing their communities—and their teenagers—a disservice. It's our job as journalists to resist the pressure to go along, even if it makes us unpopular. Only by letting young people join the conversation can a community keep track of what they're going through and what's really on their minds. ■



In an effort to bridge the generation gap between young people and adults, the *Concord Monitor* published candid photos of teens in real-life situations—such as two girls playfully kissing goodbye at the end of a party (left) and two boys poring over a Victoria's Secret catalog (below).



# The Lords Of Criticism

## They carp. They cavil. Sometimes they cheer. A handful even enlighten. We offer our list of the most influential arts critics in the land.

"REVIEWERS, WITH SOME RARE exceptions, are a most stupid and malignant race," wrote the poet Shelley. But the best can impart their enthusiasms, opening up new worlds or illuminating ones we thought we knew. When it comes to art, dance, jazz, architecture, and classical music, critics may not sell tickets the way reviewers of theater do. But they can affect the perceptions and fund-raising efforts of institutions, and critics in all six of those disciplines can steer the cultural conversation and tip us off to up-and-comers.

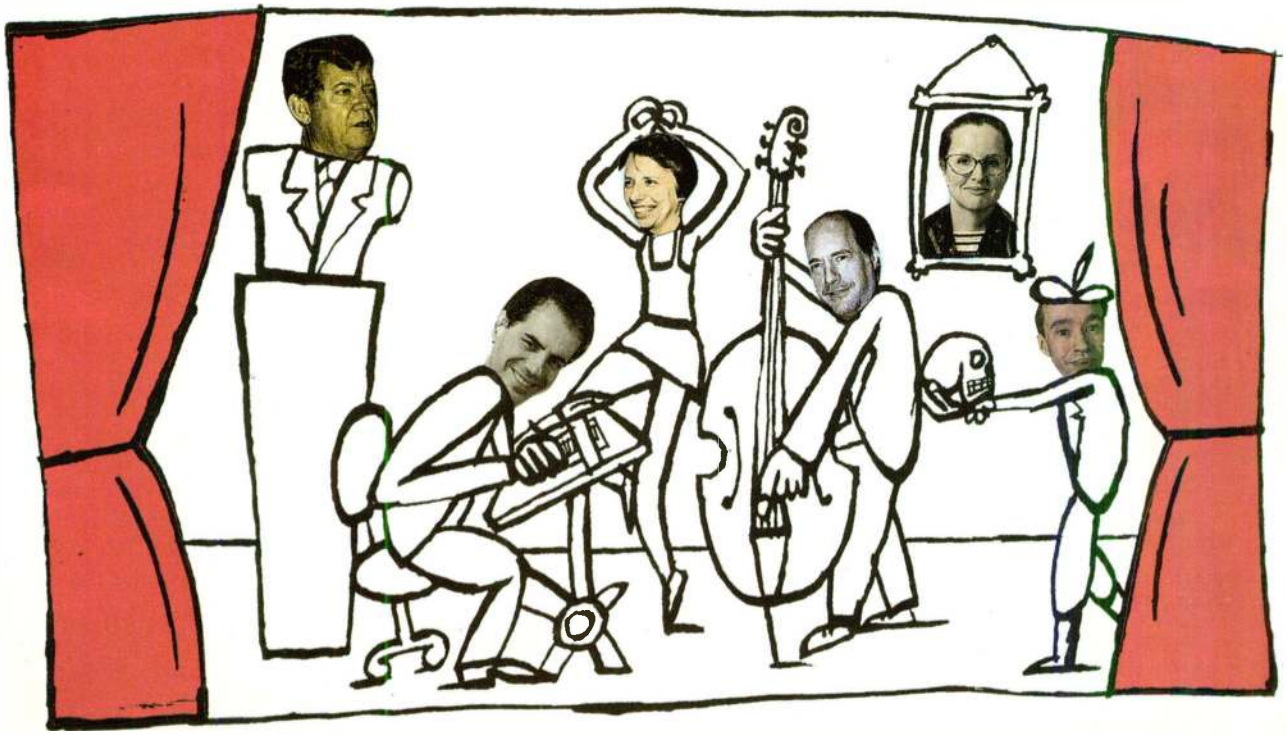
Interviews with four dozen people in the arts, ranging from artists to architects to theater producers, suggest a consensus list of the critics who are the most influential in their respective fields. Given the sheer number of houses of high art in New York and the dwindling of much of the mainstream media's coverage of high culture, it's not that surprising that the bulk of those critics are from *The New York Times*. So, to understand their predilections and their agendas, The Cultural Elite presents a Baedeker of critics.

## ART

**ROBERT HUGHES, *TIME***
**ROBERTA SMITH, *THE NEW YORK TIMES***

The mainstream media's coverage of the art world, like its attention to most of serious culture, has shriveled in our pop-culture-obsessed society. One lonely exception is *Time*, which still devotes space to art criticism at least 25 weeks of the year, largely for one reason: Robert Hughes.

The Australian-born Hughes, 60, is a latter-day boulevardier, his interests far ranging, his voice singular, witty, and (sometimes) deadly. He has penned lauded books on Australia, Barcelona, and American art, hosted a tie-in series



Critical mass (from left): Robert Hughes, Herbert Muschamp, Anna Kisselgoff, Gary Giddins, Roberta Smith, and Ben Brantley

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT MENCHIN; MAIMAN/SYGMA (HUGHES); COURTESY *THE NEW YORK TIMES* (MUSCHAMP, KISSELGOFF, SMITH, BRANTLEY); CHERNIN/AP-WIDE WORLD (GIDDINS)

on PBS for the latter, and has just published a meditation on fishing with the brilliant title *A Jerk on One End*. His art criticism is both learned and accessible. "Hughes is really the preeminent figure right now," says *New Yorker* architecture critic Paul Goldberger, a former arts and culture editor at the *New York Times*. "In Hughes, there is both eloquence and passion."

Hughes gravitates toward big, historical museum shows, through which he can sketch in the art's social context, says his editor at *Time*, Christopher Porterfield. But if you're looking for commentary on the latest conceptual art or reviews of gallery shows by new artists, Hughes is not your man. Nor does he usually weigh in on museum funding, art-world scandals, or the latest auctions. "What I write about is works of art," he says, "not art as stocks and bonds."

Hughes is a stickler for painterly virtues, an admirer of craftsmanship. Again and again, he returns to a first principle: If someone can't draw, he's not a good artist, an equation not universally agreed upon. David Salle's paintings, Hughes has written, are filled with "crudely drawn, emotionally congealed layering of unconnected images," while Francesco Clemente "draws like a duffer."

Hughes is also highly suspicious of trendy, overhyped artists, who often flunk his golden rule. Julian Schnabel, the painter who rocketed to prominence and riches in the 1980s, has come in for some of Hughes's most withering words, thanks to Schnabel's less-than-classical form. "[I]n Schnabel our time of insecure self-congratulation and bulimic vulgarity got the genius it deserved," Hughes wrote in 1987. He added: "Indeed, Schnabel's work is to painting what Stallone's is to acting—a lurching display of oily pectorals."

Such devastating pronouncements have alienated some art-world denizens, who dismiss Hughes as a pugnacious cultural conservative unwilling to accept the shock of the new and different. Counters Hughes: "My reputation of being a killer and slasher of contemporary art is vastly exaggerated." In fact, Hughes has written favorably of newer artists such as R.B. Kitaj and Clement Freud, while his acidic denunciations have become rarer. "Bob would hate to hear me say this, but he's kind of mellowed into an institution," says *Time*'s Porterfield. Concurs Jacob Weisberg, chief critic of *Slate*: "I sort of miss the old Robert Hughes, but I think the new one is a better critic."

But the piss and vinegar has not disappeared altogether. "[S]ometimes it's good to bare one's teeth into some asshole's neck," Hughes says.

Although Hughes's influence is greatest among the general public, for artists, gallery owners, and dealers and buyers of contemporary art, it is the work of the *Times*'s Roberta Smith that resonates most. Smith isn't the chief art critic at the *Times* (Michael Kimmelman holds that post), but she's the one whose words carry the most impact. "There is no question that a review in the *New York Times* is the best thing that can happen to an artist, and a review by Roberta Smith is the best one to get," says painter Kit White. A 221-word review in September on Stephen Hendee's first New York gallery show tripled the monthly traffic at the Bronwyn Keenan Gallery.

Discovering new talent seems to be part of Smith's job description. She frequently writes about new artists, covers a lot of debut solo shows, and reviews artists working in alternative media. "All those things, in the eyes of the art world, give her a sense of credibility," says White.

Smith possesses a straight-ahead reviewing style, letting the reader know what she likes and dislikes, and seldom lards her prose with theory. She seems drawn to work that has a pop-culture element to it. Her review of the Hendee show is a good example: "Imagine a collaboration between the creators of *Spider Man*, the set designers for *2001: A Space Odyssey* and maybe *Star Trek* and the computer artists involved with *Tron*, and you will have an idea of the high-tech, sci-fi impact of 'Inertial Field...'"

Occasionally, a strain of New York chauvinism can creep into Smith's work. "From where I am, out here in Texas, I perceive her as being very New York-centric," says Janet Tyson, art critic for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. In March, the Whitney Museum announced that its Biennial next year will be chosen by six curators from outside New York to lend a national perspective. "Is it really a Whitney Biennial if it is farmed out?" Smith wrote. "Whitney curators have always traveled extensively and talked to local curators and critics in selecting their shows."

Tyson took exception in her own column, calling Smith "provincial": "She thinks the Biennial is about the Whitney Museum of American Art and about what the Whitney says about American art—and that no matter how bad the outcome inevitably is, those things are good."

# DANCE

**ANNA KISSELGOFF, *THE NEW YORK TIMES***

By the early 1990s, the Russian dancer Rudolf Nureyev was as reviewproof as any artist can become. Yet before a performance in 1991, the ballet virtuoso's dread over the attendance of Anna Kisselgoff, the *New York Times*'s chief dance critic, became as theatrical as one of his performances. "If she comes, I will get a bucket of shit and throw it on her head," he ranted, according to Diane Solway's biography of the late dancer, *Nureyev: His Life*.

Such is the power Kisselgoff, 61, and the *Times* are perceived to have in the dance world. Mikhail Baryshnikov even joked last year that, contrary to some assumptions, his daughter Anna was not named after the *Times* critic. "There's absolutely no question that the *New York Times* is the most important comment that any company [could get]," says Ellen Jacobs, whose eponymously named public relations company represents such clients as the Paul Taylor Dance Company and Bill T. Jones.

Luckily for the dancers and their companies, Kisselgoff is one of the kinder critics plying her craft. She seems to understand the effect a *Times* review can have on a dance

COURTESY THE NEW YORK TIMES

# TONIGHT ON PUNDIT TV.

## Pay-by-the-hour windbags, moralists for hire and other assorted dispensers of reddi-whipped political wisdom.

In an age in which politics, journalism and show business have begun to merge, pundits have increasingly become performers, and performers posture and declaim - that's what they do. As long as political commentators, like sports-radio jocks, are hired on the basis of who has the loudest, most obnoxiously nasal voice, we'll be forced to endure their sermons. And as long as those commentators remain drawn from a stagnant, inbred pool, those sermons will be inane next page | www.salon.com/bc

company's box office fortunes, fund-raising, and reputation. "She doesn't take that lightly," says Laura Shapiro, *Newsweek*'s dance critic.

Kisselgoff's first instinct is to be supportive. Since the death of choreographer George Balanchine and the ascension of Peter Martins at the New York City Ballet, such critics as *New York* magazine's Tobi Tobias have not stinted in their criticism of the new regime. Kisselgoff, on the other hand, still thinks the City Ballet is swell. *The New Yorker*'s Joan Acocella has panned Kevin McKenzie's American Ballet Theatre. Reading Kisselgoff's reviews, the ABT's glory days under Baryshnikov's leadership would seem never to have barely faded.

Kisselgoff admires classical form and prizes historical accuracy in performances. Her criticism can turn didactic, transforming a review into a stolid history lesson. In a May review of the ABT's "Le Corsaire," for example, a third of the ten-paragraph article regaled readers with a condensed version of the ballet's perambulations over the years. "It should be noted that the staging differs from the Kirov's last production, which placed the shipwreck at the start, rather than at the end where it belongs," Kisselgoff wrote. "Ms. Holmes turned instead to a 1992 Bolshoi Ballet production by Konstantin Sergeyev. Add the accretions of changes since the French original in 1856 and Petipa's last version in 1899, and one can ask what is left." Sometimes, what's left is an exhausted reader.

# JAZZ

**GARY GIDDINS, THE *VILLAGE VOICE***

In the world of jazz, the battle for intellectual supremacy centers on two camps. The standard-bearer for one is Wynton Marsalis, Grammy Award-winning trumpeter and the leader of the Jazz at Lincoln Center program. The second group coalesces around Gary Giddins, 51, a critic for the *Village Voice*.

That a critic's work is so integral to the sometimes nasty debate that roils the jazz community is testament to the strength and style of Giddins's prose, which make him the one other critics read and follow. "His writing is very elegant and precise," says critic John Swenson, who edited *The Rolling Stone Jazz & Blues Album Guide*. "He has a thoroughgoing passion for the music. And he's a very exacting critic."

The best word to describe Giddins's taste is *catholic*. The jazz audience has consistently balkanized into factions that favor one musical style (bebop, for example) over another (say, fusion). Giddins's capacious understanding of jazz includes not only the blues but also the contributions of Al Jolson, Tin Pan Alley, and pop music. He has a fondness for avant-garde, or free, music, but, he says, worships Louis Armstrong as "close to God, if not God himself." About the only categorical revulsion he displays is toward smooth jazz, the Kenny G sound that keeps lite-jazz FM stations in business.

What galls Giddins most are those self-appointed keepers of a canon of their choosing. "Unlike [Duke] Ellington, who reveled in diversity and abhorred restrictions, the guardians of musical morality...mean to cleanse jazz of impurities," Giddins wrote in *Visions of Jazz*, his 1998 magnum opus on the first 100 years of jazz, which won a National Book Critics Circle award. He added: "My quarrel is with absoluteness and certainty."

The unmentioned target of these lines is Marsalis, who Giddins considers too dogmatic. And Giddins's disagreements with Marsalis can sometimes be searing, as in his review of Marsalis's Pulitzer Prize-winning oratorio on the African-American slave experience, *Blood on the Fields*. Giddins called it "an exercise in unqualified hubris," arguing that "it underscores its composer's most glaring weaknesses—inability to configure a melody, clumsy didactic rhetoric, emotional coldness that arms itself against the sentimentality with self-conscious cleverness."

Even Dan Morgenstern, director of the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University and a fan of Giddins's work, believes that "Gary may have gone a little overboard with the Wynton business." Complicating the Giddins-Marsalis divide is the black-white discord that lurks under the jazz landscape, sometimes bursting upward. Many critics, including Giddins, are white; some have hammered Jazz at Lincoln Center for neglecting white musicians' contributions. Marsalis is black, as are many jazz musicians, and believes that "jazz is the real soul of the Afro-American," as he once told *Ebony*, and that even some of the most serious critics display a white paternalism. While Giddins and Marsalis don't consider their disagreements a racial issue, the charges of racism and reverse racism can still be heard. [For more on Jazz, see "Sources," page 133.]

# ARCHITECTURE

**HERBERT MUSCHAMP, *THE NEW YORK TIMES***

The architectural era in which we live is undefined. No accepted style dominates. And no critic writing today has the impact that, for example, Jane Jacobs had in crusading against runaway development and the car culture. But in this ideologically diffuse period, the *Times*'s critic looms even larger. "By definition, the *New York Times* is first among equals," says Michael Sorkin, an architect and writer for *Metropolis* and the *Architectural Record*.

Herbert Muschamp is not your typical architecture critic. His writing, is, well, quirky. Metaphors abound: He has compared the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao Spain to Marilyn Monroe, and luxury sedans, such as the Jaguar XJ8, to horses.

Few critics, particularly at the *Times*, insert themselves so regularly into their work with seemingly extraneous details. "My hair would have been standing on end if it hadn't been plastered down with so much mousse," Muschamp wrote of his reaction to seeing the new Guggenheim. We've learned that his family drove Buicks and had a horse named Ebony.

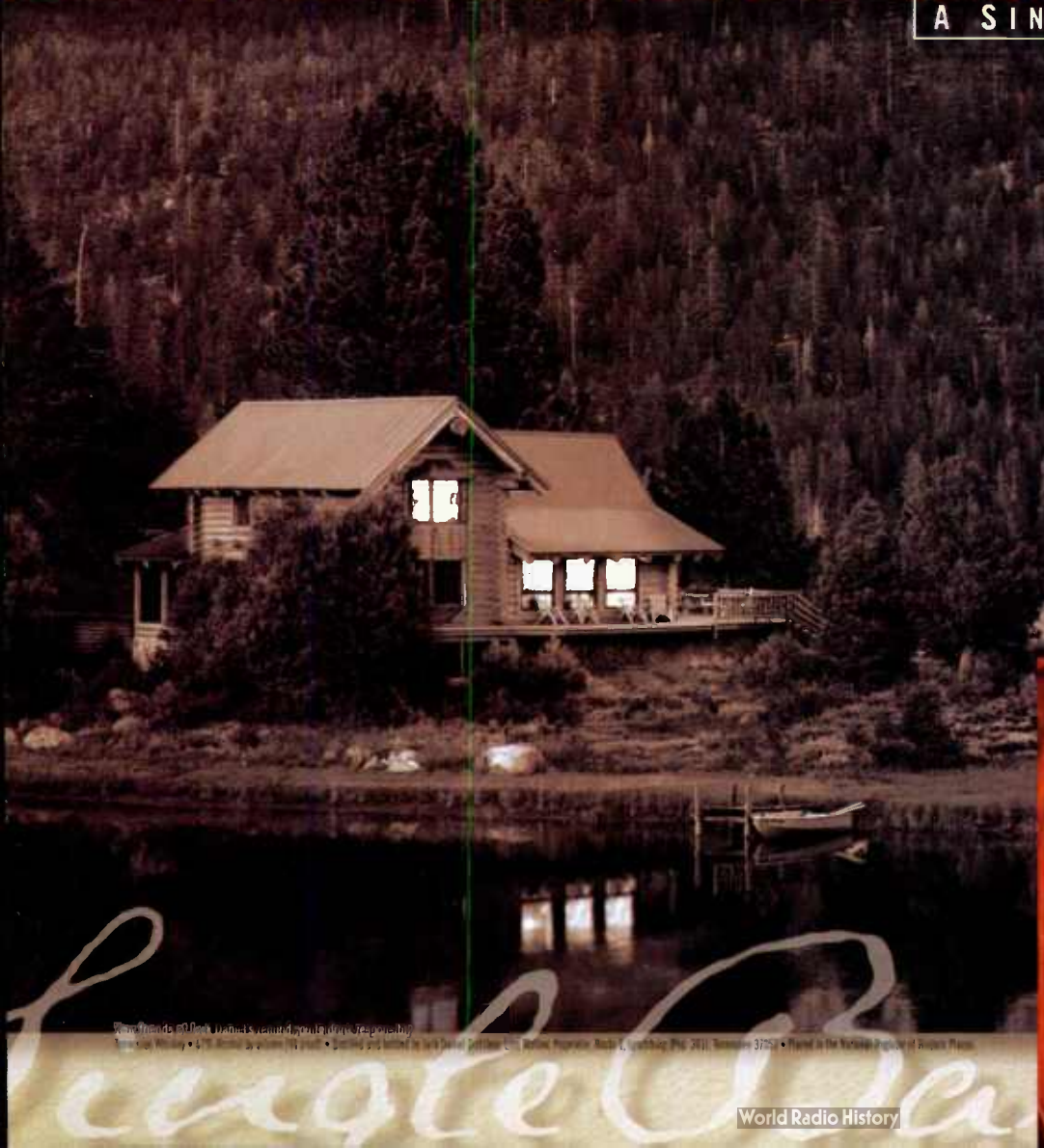
STEPHEN CHERNIN/AP-WIDE WORLD (GIDDINS); COURTESY *THE NEW YORK TIMES* (MUSCHAMP)


IT'S NOT WHAT YOU GET AWAY FROM.

IT'S WHAT YOU GET AWAY TO.

JACK DANIEL'S SINGLE BARREL WHISKEY

A SINGULAR EXPERIENCE



And the best time Muschamp's had in the past ten years was spent floating on a Batman raft off the isle of Capri.

But beyond the confidences shared, Muschamp's aesthetic emerges. He tends to write discursive essays on modern life that place architecture in a larger intellectual, social, and cultural context, rather than homages to specific buildings and architects. And he's one of the first critics writing for the mass market to tackle the social content of architecture beyond the issue of housing the poor, turning to issues of gender and the like. "He's trying to do it [this way] because otherwise architecture becomes too much of its own little world, and no one can get in the door," says Suzanne Stephens, a special correspondent for the *Architectural Record*.

Muschamp's is a late-modern taste. He usually rejects anything that tries to evoke bygone eras without considering the changes in the surrounding context. "Buildings that reflect cultural change can be shocking," he wrote in April, "but providing such shocks, and provoking public debate over their value, are tasks a vital city should perform."

# CLASSICAL MUSIC & OPERA

**ANTHONY TOMMASINI, *THE NEW YORK TIMES***

It's hard to imagine that fewer than 50 years ago, NBC not only had its own orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini, but that the network commissioned an opera for national broadcast. And just 30 years ago, the now-defunct *Washington Star* employed 13 classical music reviewers, according to *Maestros of the Pen: A History of Classical Music Criticism in America*, by composer Mark N. Grant.

As Grant writes, the days when leading columnists such as H.L. Mencken devoted significant space to classical music are long gone. Whether due to philistinism or just a sober judgment of the public's taste, the mainstream media have slashed their coverage of classical music and opera.

With five critics, the *New York Times* is an exception. Although Bernard Holland is the chief critic, Anthony Tommasini's name keeps popping up as the most influential. Unlike most critics today, Tommasini, 51, has recorded two CDs. He has served as musical director of operas and has written a well-received biography of the critic-composer Virgil Thomson. The combination has given Tommasini a store of goodwill in music circles, and his reviews have not depleted the balance. Even at his most critical, he softens his written blows. This March, for example, he lamented a conductor's "uneven performance" of Rigoletto, adding that "the playing of the orchestra lacked incisiveness, and the ensemble with the singers was sometimes off." Then Tommasini got generous: "Perhaps this was just opening-night jitters."

In his opera reviews, Tommasini concentrates more on a singer's performance than he does, say, on the production values. "I try to champion good singing and honest singing," he says. Tommasini also doesn't linger on audiences' reactions as much as Holland does. And, says Barry Cohen, editor in chief of *The New Music Connoisseur*, Tommasini "does tend to feel that contemporary music is being undersold."

# THEATER

**BEN BRANTLEY AND PETER MARKS, *THE NEW YORK TIMES***

It is in the theater where a critic plays the biggest box office role. Most major shows are not part of subscription plans, as they are in the dance and classical music fields. And with theater so concentrated in New York, the *Times*'s role is paramount. "No other critic in any other art form has the power of the *New York Times*'s first-string theater critic," says another New York theater critic.

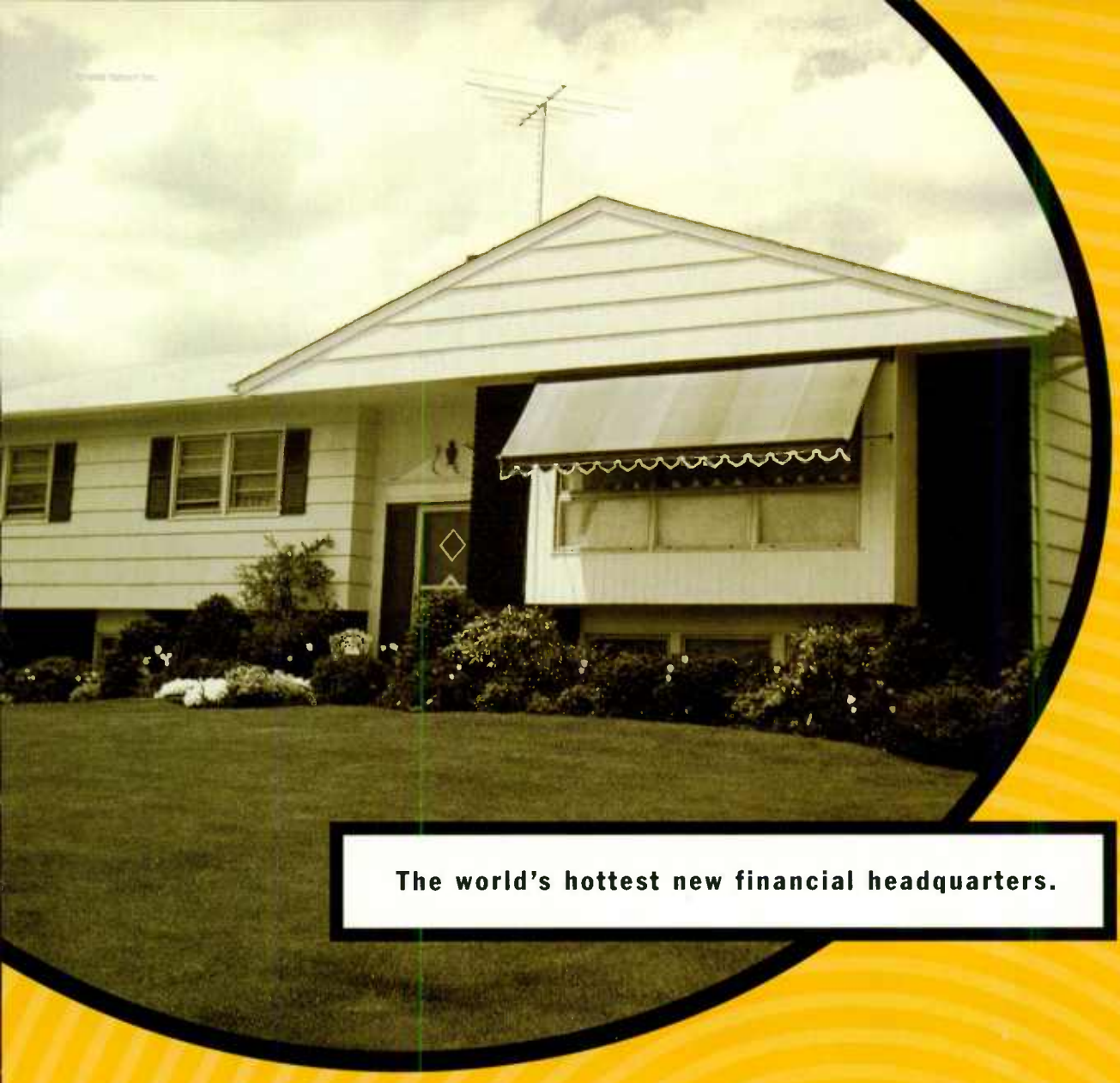
Ben Brantley, 44, who became the *Times*'s chief theater critic three years ago, doesn't wield the same power to brand a show a hit or a failure that Frank Rich did between 1980 and 1993. His more dispassionate approach, coupled with a growing tourist trade and savvier marketing by the producers, have combined to lessen the paper's importance [see "The Cultural Elite," March]. But the *Times* still has more clout than any other media outlet in town or out.

Brantley and his number two, Peter Marks, can still champion small plays (such as *Electra*) or out-of-town shows looking to come to Broadway (like *Death of a Salesman*) and help turn them into hits. Brantley praised *Night Must Fall*, a revival from Tony Randall's National Actors Theatre that otherwise received mostly negative reviews. Nine days after its scheduled run ended, the play began an open-ended run at another Broadway theater. Within the theater community, a positive review from Marks, also 44, is considered even grander. The day Marks exulted about *Electra* in a style reminiscent of the stentorian Rich—"a magnificent new production that represents soul-satisfying drama at its most passionately, intensely alive"—the production sold more than $300,000 worth of tickets, an almost unheard–of amount for a nonmusical, according to the *New York Post*'s theater writer Michael Riedel.

A *Times* rave, however, doesn't always mean a happy ending. *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*, a play by Paul Rudnick, was lauded by Brantley, and the producers moved the show from its not-for-profit theater to a commercial Off Broadway house, where it quickly died.

Brantley has championed plays from small, Off Off Broadway shows (such as *June Moon*). Downtown "is where the excitement is," says Brantley. But shows that tackle social issues on a grand scale, such as *Parade*, often leave Brantley cold. He hasn't drawn the attacks that dogged Rich (aka the Butcher of Broadway). Earlier this year, though, Brantley infuriated some theatergoers and theater professionals when he criticized Broadway audiences in a Sunday *Times* roundtable. "[F]or the most part," Brantley said, "they go anesthetized, they leave anesthetized, and they don't want anything that's going to interrupt their anesthesia." But the tempest quickly passed, a sign that the contentious reign of Frank Rich was but a distant memory. ■

COURTESY *THE NEW YORK TIMES*



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# Revenge Of The Words

## The god who watches over writers may sometimes be slow in doling out punishment, but when he does it's time to run for cover.

I'M SORRY THAT *THE NEW YORK TIMES* DIDN'T CONsult me before doing a story about whether the Condé Nast building, now under construction in Times Square, has been put under a curse. The *Times* piece offered some evidence that such disasters as a collapsed crane and buckled scaffolding and a fire could indicate the presence of what the headline called an "invisible tenant," but readers learned neither the name nor the motive of the malevolent spirit. I could have put them straight.

In 1985, when *The New Yorker* was about to be purchased by Advance Publications, S. I. Newhouse Jr. made two promises designed to calm the concerns of the editorial staff about the magazine's being owned by people whose other magazines were trade journals of the glitz industry—that the editorial department would be consulted before a successor to William Shawn as editor was named and that *The New Yorker* would never be part of Condé Nast.

I'm pretty sure that what happened at that point was this: Zeus dispatched the god of writers, Procrastinatus, to put the fear of the gods into Newhouse about keeping his word. As I imagine the confrontation, Procrastinatus says, "If you break these promises, I will cause your empire to collapse, your crops to rot in the field, and your expensive art to lose its provenance."

"Who are you trying to kid?" Newhouse says. "If you're able to cause crop failures, how come that thug Murdoch is still thriving?"


ROBERT DE MICHIELL

"I've been meaning to get to Murdoch's crop," Procrastinatus says, "but I got sort of bogged down in the research. Also, I've got a lot on my plate these days, what with..."

"The bosses do not fear you, Procrastinatus."

"I could maybe do construction delays," Procrastinatus says. "If you give me a little extra time."

So, according to my theory, that's what he did. Sure, you could find people who doubt that this is the explanation for the problems that have befallen the Condé Nast building. The doubters might point out, for instance, that on January 1, 1999, when *The New Yorker* officially became part of Condé Nast—a day that those of us who persist in keeping a box score refer to as "0-for-2 Day"—nobody at the building site dropped an I-beam or accidentally buried an electrician or two in quick-dry cement. In response, I would argue that when you think about the order of sinning traditionally connected with the proprietors of newspapers and magazines—closing down papers so suddenly that reporters learn about it from the rival daily, firing editors for running critical stories about cronies of the boss, or, worst of all, meddling with the editorial content—construction delays seem to be a proportional retribution for a couple of broken promises.

It is traditional for magazine writers or newspaper reporters to judge the owners of their publications according to a sliding scale of atrocities. Of course, writers rarely have anything good to say about editors, either. In 1986, in the course of doing a *New Yorker* profile of Edna Buchanan, then the crime reporter for *The Miami Herald*, I heard her tell a group of

young reporters in Fort Lauderdale that "for sanity and survival, there are three cardinal rules in the newsroom: Never trust an editor, never trust an editor, and never trust an editor." Around the same time, a friend of mine who had made his living for a long time as a newspaper reporter was appointed the editor of a rather distinguished magazine in Canada. "It never occurred to me that you'd become an editor some day," I told him, by way of congratulations. "But now that I think of it, you have the first qualification: a short attention span."

My friend told me that the opportunity to edit a magazine had come along by virtue of the fact that he and the press baron who had just bought the magazine had a particularly strong old school tie: They had been ejected from the same prep school. The proprietor was kicked out for selling answers to some examinations. My friend, presumably not one of the proprietor's customers, was dropped from the rolls because on a physics examination that counted for the entire year's work he received a mark of 7. Yes, 7 out of a possible 100. His father—apparently trying his best to deal with the situation through rational discussion, staving off the temptation to resort to physical violence—said, "How could you have possibly gotten a 7?"

"I can't imagine," my friend responded. "I didn't think I answered anything."

I've often employed the story of those two old schoolmates as a metaphor for how, in a reporter's view, publishers and editors are different and how they are the same. The publisher is someone engaged in an entrepreneurial project that may or may not be legal. The editor is someone who, trying his level best, can't correctly answer one question out of ten. And both are the sort of people who sometimes have to be asked to leave.

The irritation that writers often feel toward editors, though, is tempered by a writer's understanding that the editor is—or at least used to be—in roughly the same line of work. When it comes to owners, that sort of governor on vituperation is not available. Writers and owners are traditionally bound together by a thinly veiled contempt. To a writer, the owner of a magazine or newspaper is someone who, through inheritance or a deplorable skill at mathematics (the writer's worst subject), owns an institution he can't possibly begin to understand and thus controls the livelihood of people who in a just world wouldn't have to give him the time of day. What owners think of writers is simple: If they're so smart, how come they're not rich? This was expressed beautifully by Abe Hirschfeld—parking-lot czar, occasional political candidate, and all-around meshuggener—when he owned the *New York Post* for a marvelously entertaining opéra bouffe week or so and found himself described in his own newspaper as a "nut" and a "drooling old fool." Most of the reporters who opposed him, Hirschfeld said, "couldn't write a check for $10."

Reporters respond to owners ordering up stories the way Air Force generals might be expected to respond to Bill Clinton selecting bombing targets, and the owner who has the temerity to write the story himself has to be someone who is incapable of recognizing mortification when it is upon him. From childhood, it has been clear to everybody that the kid who gets to play by virtue of having provided the ball and bat is always going to be a figure of fun. After Mortimer Zuckerman, who got rich as a property developer, became the owner of and then a columnist for *U. S. News & World Report*, I tried to imagine the first meeting he held with the editors after he bought the magazine:

"I think we need to find a columnist on world affairs who has a fresh voice," Zuckerman says.

After a long silence among the people whose salaries he pays, someone finally says, "Maybe it'd be good to have someone with real-estate experience."

As the construction of the new Condé Nast building moves along with a number of accident-free days, it should be remembered that S. I. Newhouse is not known for meddling with the stuff that fills up the space between ads in his magazines. On the sliding scale of atrocities as judged by writers, proprietors like Zuckerman are the ones whose crops Procrastinatus might seek to destroy. Given Procrastinatus's record so far, of course, they don't have much to worry about. ■

*Contributing editor Calvin Trillin is the author of* Family Man, *just published in paperback by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. He is also a columnist for* Time, *a staff writer for* The New Yorker, *and a contributor to* The Nation.

# Report From Hell High

## In the wake of the Littleton school shootings, America's alienated kids used the Net to battle the hysterical media.

ANY E-MAIL THAT BEGINS THIS WAY stands out: "I'm a Goth/Wiccan in Alabama, and for the crime of wearing black lipstick, a trench coat, and a Pentagram, I've been a social outcast for four years. In some ways I've had it better than many of your respondents: I'm graduating at the top of my class as a National Merit Scholar with a 1,600 SAT, a finalist for the Alabama All-State Academic Team and a semi-finalist for the Presidential Scholars, among other things. I'll matriculate at Yale University. I hold these things up as talismans to protect me; all my awards are thin paper shields to keep me safe from the hatred that surrounds me and my friends."

The message came from Jennifer Andress, a senior at Bob Jones High School in Madison, Alabama. A self-described Wiccan (the pagan religion commonly associated with witchcraft) and goth (the broody subculture marked by industrial music, black clothing, white makeup, and a preoccupation with death), she is a member of an obsessive, brainy community of oddballs, misfits, geeks, and nerds who know what it's like to be outcasts—the non-normal.

The massacre near Littleton, Colorado, in April hit their world like a bomb. Like many thousands of other kids who don't fit into conventional educational, journalistic, or social notions of "normal," Jennifer found the massacre and resulting media-fueled hysteria appalling.

"It hurts," she wrote. "I'm so glad that Littleton happened at the end of my senior year. I wouldn't be able to endure much more of this. Why do people feel justified in making negative assumptions instead of positive ones? Why do they assume that a kid in a black trench coat must be a psychotic murderer instead of a National Merit Scholar? Or a kid who plays "Doom"? Or wears white makeup? Or listens to Marilyn Manson or industrial music? Or spends as much time on the Net as his or her classmates do on the football or soccer field?"

Jennifer Andress, who says she's an object of hatred because she's different, has used the Net to speak out.

GLENN BAESKE/*HUNTSVILLE TIMES* (2)

FOR GEEKS AND OTHER OUTCASTS, THERE WAS BEFORE Littleton and there was After. Geeks and nerds know about being angry. Although many are happy, well adjusted, popular, or athletic, many are none of the above. They grasp the reality of the alienated, the anger of those who inhabit a world that isn't made for them, doesn't work for them or reflect their values, and sometimes systematically excludes and humiliates them—a brutal fact of life in middle and high school.

The coverage of the shooting and its aftermath was grotesque, even outrageous. Journalism, including its most serious practitioners, accepted and transmitted the idea that two students turned to mass murder because they played nasty computer games associated with the gloomy (but non-violent) goths, or had access to Internet bomb-making sites.

Dumb and demonstrably false as it is (an estimated 20 million Americans, mostly kids, are into video and computer gaming; hardly any commit mass murder), this idea was so widely disseminated and discussed by journalists that most Americans actually came to believe it. The week after the massacre, a Gallup poll showed that more than 80 percent of all Americans agreed that the Internet was at least partly responsible for the Colorado killings.

And who could blame them? CBS's *60 Minutes* devoted a segment to this question: "Are Video Games Turning Kids Into Killers?" *Time* magazine ran grainy pictures of the two Littleton killers under this coverline: "The Monsters Next Door." Hundreds of newspapers and TV stations ran stories linking computer games, goths, websites, and other "aberrant," "abnormal," or "weird" behavior to mass murder.

*Contributing editor Jon Katz is at work on a book called* Geeks, *to be published by Random House in May 2000.*

These messages were almost guaranteed to panic parents and students and stampede educators into overreaction. Instead of being a force for truth, clarity, and calm, many in the media became transmitters of hysteria. The cost of being different—already high—went way up.

Overnight, the geeks and misfits and oddballs became instant suspects in a kind of "geek profiling," a national hunt for the strange.

Three days after the massacre, I wrote a column called "Why Kids Kill" on Slashdot, an open-source website with a large geek following. It was reprinted on The Freedom Forum's website, Free! The column suggested that connections between violence and popular culture were fuzzy at best, and that the causes of these mass killings were still unclear. I wrote two subsequent columns, "Voices From The Hellmouth," and "More Stories From The Hellmouth," reprinting messages I had received in response to the first column, messages that described the cruel reality that these kids face just because they're different from other kids. (The term Hellmouth, a mythological reference for the entry point for all evil into the world, has been popularized by the WB Network show *Buffy, The Vampire Slayer*, in which the local high school literally is one.)

These messages were wrenching and irrefutable. They couldn't be subjected to journalism's noxious and eternal culture of debate, because they were the voices of kids reflecting on their own personal experience. Hundreds more e-mails began pouring in—an electronic river of pain and misery—reporting that kids were sent home for dressing strangely and that schools had installed hotlines to report odd peers. Kids who expressed sympathy or understanding for the Littleton killers were called into counseling, or banned from class.

Ditto for kids who admitted in newspaper articles and class discussions that they had sometimes felt enraged to the point of committing violence. As if being different weren't already difficult enough, it quickly, and with the enthusiastic help of much of journalism, became a nightmare for many. Even kids who played computer games were offered psychiatric help.

The e-mail was powerful and painful: "Help me, please," e-mailed JDT from a high school in Illinois. "My social studies teacher asked if we wanted to talk about Littleton. I said I had some sense of how those two kids might have been driven crazy by cruel students, since it happens to me. I said I had thought of taking my father's gun to school when I was in the ninth grade and was so angry. I was sent home. When I got there, three detectives were going through my room."

School life, reported JaneD, had become insane. "We were all called into an assembly and asked to turn in our friends who were moody, emotional, angry at the way they were treated in school. That's everybody I know!" Another wrote that he felt much safer with the people blasting him on the videogame Quake than he did in his high school hallways.

Hundreds of geek kids e-mailed political comparisons of the hunt for geeks with Selma and other civil rights milestones. "Hellmouth has become Stonewall [the riot that followed a police raid on a New York City gay bar a generation ago, sparking the gay rights movement] for us geeks," wrote Rick. "It marks the point where we stopped running and hiding and waiting, and stopped and stood our ground. From this point on we make our voices heard."

That they did. The Net sent these voices all over the country, into homes, schools, and corporate offices—and into newsrooms. This happened to a degree I'd never seen in nearly a decade of writing online.

Geek kids had taken to their computers to launch a media revolution. Instead of journalists, educators, and therapists telling the world about the state of American kids, the kids were using the Net to speak for themselves. Their voices were compelling.

The columns exploded like a bomb from the center of the Web. Within a week, I had thousands of messages, mostly from kids in middle and high school. Some were like the one from Peter in Boston, who said members of the school football team routinely urinated into his locker when he opened it. He said he was beaten two or three times a week while teachers pretended not to notice.

These voices altered the coverage of the story, balancing those of at least some of the platoons of experts, therapists, and political moralizers who instantly appeared all over TV. The columns quoting the Slashdot kids were read on the radio, discussed at MIT lectures and faculty meetings, entered into the Congressional Record, reprinted and referred to in magazines like *The Economist*, and in papers like *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Hartford Courant*, *The Charlotte Observer*, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the *San Jose Mercury News*, and read aloud on National Public Radio. They had reached far beyond their computers and into the heart of mainstream media.

In the context of media, these kids made big news. They used technology to fight back and speak out, and their voices were loud and clear enough that journalists heard them. The kids writing on Slashdot changed the way media works, and altered their own lives and politics. Kids who were alone had a community. Kids who were voiceless had a voice.

"You speak for us," Jennifer said at the end of her message to me. "Take our stories and let them know what is happening here." Her message was an especially haunting and, in an odd way, unifying one, transcending the killings and their aftermath. For me, it was a reminder of what it really means to be a journalist, new or old. ■

*You can e-mail me at jonkatz@Slashdot.org*

# Finding Babysitters And Lawyers On The Web

**Forget products: E-commerce will discover its true power when it links consumers to providers of personal and professional services.**

WHY ARE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL electronic commerce sites selling mostly products? After all, we're living in a knowledge economy, and the average worker creates services. Many of us, for example, are authors who write for a small readership—a boss or a client. Amazon.com's merchandise catalog and eBay's bidding mechanism allow buyers to find things like books or vintage Tweety Bird Pez dispensers that are too rare (or that appeal to too personalized a taste) to find distribution through the regular, mass-market distribution channels. But those sites haven't yet fully applied their powerful catalogs and bidding mechanisms to the personalized *services* that dominate the marketplace and, by definition, can't be found, sold, and distributed more efficiently in the mass market for tangible goods.


It's so obvious, once you think about it, that your immediate second thought is that there must be some equally obvious problems you haven't thought of yet. And there are. The first is defining the "product" for sale. Beanie Babies are easy to describe. But how do you catalog, for example, a "memorandum on market opportunities in the health sector"? Services have lots of nuances. Personalized services are, well, personalized. The folks at Amazon probably think the company couldn't produce a meaningful catalog of such services. (eBay does offer a limited number of personal services, most of them related to computer consulting.)

Then there's the problem, on the auction/pricing side, with quality control and acceptance. I don't want just any personalized service or memo—I want a good one, at a fair price. But I can't judge whether a particular service or piece of writing will be good enough—much less the best available on the market at a given price—until I've experienced it. So what keeps the consumer of a service from getting the benefit of the goods simply by evaluating them and then refusing to pay? If I pay in advance, how can I guarantee delivery? If the provider of services sets a fixed price, how can I tell whether it is fair?

Problems like these led to the creation of firms. The consumer of the services of an employee (the employer) agrees to pay every day, even if the employee's services aren't always up to par, so long as the employee agrees to show up for work. And the process of "description" and "acceptance" and "quality control" are worked out over a series of repeat transactions—with the right by either party to sever that ongoing relationship if it isn't working out on average. There is no need for precise definition (no need for an Amazon catalog) as there would be if the parties were consummating a one-time deal. Nor is there any need to work out a bidding mechanism to set the market price for

BRIAN RASZKA

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a particular service (no need for eBay's auction algorithm), because the price is set at the average expected value of the employee's (or consultant's) hour—and, typically, the buyer buys enough hours to get that average value.

But we all know that this method of selling our services is terribly inefficient. It's not finely grained enough to allow much higher value spot transactions. When we are bound by long-term employment contracts, we can't find the person who needs just a small portion of our services or expertise more intensely than our employer. Someone who might never be in a position to offer a long-term job might still pay handsomely for a memo we could write quickly (without using our employer's confidential information) or might already have in the can (a "can" we own, reflecting our own professional expertise). If we have a few spare hours and want to earn some money with our intellectual assets, there is little opportunity to find an odd job in our specialized area of expertise. For their part, employers regularly bemoan their inability to find and hire the person with just the amount of expertise and knowledge they need at any given time. And companies that hire consultants often find themselves paying for unwanted services from the junior staff that a firm needs to hire and train to keep its employment-based organization going.

## Reversing The Electronic Market

The electronic catalog and auction have rarely been applied to offers of services because it is hard to describe and price services and to assure their high-quality delivery. But those same devices might work to create a more efficient, finely grained market if we turned the problem around and used them to price the recipient's desire for a service. In other words, if we put the customer's preferences and price in the online catalog—and if we then used an auction mechanism to allow providers of the requested service (at the stated price) to differentiate themselves by pointing out all the reasons why their service is more likely to fill that need, or delivered in more trustworthy fashion, than that of the next guy—then the newest engines of e-commerce might be applied to good effect in the largest sector of our economy.

Here's how it would work. The Acme Service Request Catalog would be created by end users with a desire for personalized service or information and with money to spend. Listings might look something like this: "I'll pay $500 for the best memorandum delivered within 48 hours on the potential for development of the oil industry of Zambia." Or "I'll give 5 percent of the purchase price to someone who provides the best recommendation for an available work of art (of a certain type) that I decide to buy." Or even, "I'll pay $20 to the first person who agrees to show up today to mow my lawn." Using the "buy-side" of the market to describe the product would generate an explosion in diversity and creativity of the catalog—just as using the individual-owner side of the market for goods made it possible to find many more types of rare goods through eBay.

The electronic nature of this market might also reduce the waste of time and expertise involved in job hunting, employment interviews, and the marketing of consulting services. Just as a book buyer can ask to be notified by Amazon when a new title on some favorite arcane subject becomes available, the service seller could ask to get an e-mail whenever someone wants (and is willing to pay enough for) the specific kind of expertise (or personalized service) the seller can provide. The seller could prepackage arguments that differentiate his services and assurances regarding quality and delivery—so that much of the process of bidding could be automated.

There is an old saying that those who sell a product should try to make it seem like a service, and those who sell a service should try to make it seem like a product. Maybe the underlying wisdom is that we really want a mix of the tangible (with its apparent certainty, fairness) and intangible (with its potential for surprise, personalization, care). And maybe the sweet spot in the marketplace can be reached from either direction. Starting with tangible objects (books and collectibles), Amazon and eBay have figured out how to provide a personalized service, automatically. It may be time to use the same tools to make intangibles (the specialized, niche-based, personalized, just-in-time results of our collective intellectual efforts) into concrete product offerings that can find the best places (the most interested buyers, the most attractive price offerings) in the market.

AMAZON REVERSED AN EXISTING MARKET flow—allowing book buyers to trigger the physical distribution of a book to a location (very) near them (rather than waiting for the local book store to guess they might be interested in that title). eBay also reversed a traditional market direction—allowing the sellers of niche-oriented goods to assemble together (under an eBay "category") to find a dispersed but potentially large body of interested buyers, rather than waiting for a critical mass of buyers to assemble in one place at a real-world flea market or trade show. The combination of catalog and auction could be used now to reverse the flow in the services market—by requiring and allowing the party desiring specially assembled information or research to name a fixed price and open that offer to the large, dispersed body of service providers who are well situated to provide a tailored response at low cost. If that happened, and you (like more and more people) are a knowledge worker, you might be free to use that online marketplace to build and sell a valuable line of expertise—or a reputation for providing great service—and never have to look for a job (or fear losing one) again. ■

**Catalogs and auctions could be used to reverse the flow in the services market.**

Starring Al Pacino

*60 Minutes* producer Lowell Bergman

With Christopher Plummer

*60 Minutes* correspondent Mike Wallace

And Russell Crowe

Tobacco whistle-blower Jeffrey Wigand

# REAL to REEL

Lowell Bergman worked in Mike Wallace's shadow for 14 years. Now, with a new movie soon to chronicle *60 Minutes*'s humbling retreat on a major tobacco story, Wallace thinks his old colleague is trampling on him—and the truth.

By D.M. Osborne

MIKE WALLACE WAS STUNNED. THE dean of TV investigative reporters—the one who always has a snappy question for every answer—had the gasping look of a man who'd been sucker punched.

It was May 1998 and Wallace had just read a script for an upcoming movie that chronicles the humbling of the mighty *60 Minutes*, the newsmagazine he has worked for, and symbolized, for 30 years. It wasn't just that the movie was retelling the story of how *60 Minutes* had fumbled the biggest tobacco story of the decade. Over Wallace's heated protestations, the show that is famous for bringing big corporations to their knees had wilted in the face of management concerns that telling the story of tobacco whistle-blower Jeffrey Wigand could expose CBS to a multibillion-dollar suit.

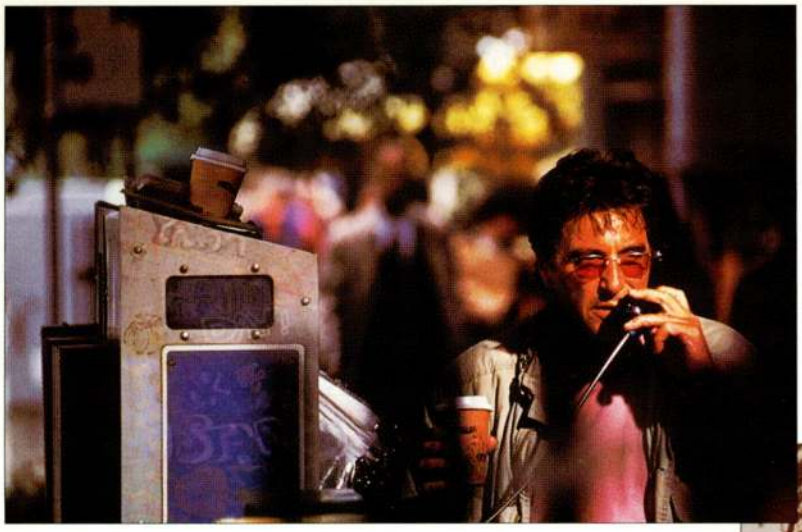
That was humiliating enough. But Wallace was galled to see himself portrayed in the script as one of the cowardly corporate drones, someone who had lost his nerve at the crucial moment. What stung the worst, though, was what the script suggested about Lowell Bergman, a *60 Minutes* producer who had worked with Wallace for 14 years. A talented journalist described by two colleagues as almost a son to Wallace, Bergman had sold his story rights to a movie studio, which had hired him as a consultant. And the script that Bergman had helped create depicted him as the hero of the saga—the one who had done all the hard work and then battled CBS and the world to try to bring the whistle-blower's crucial tale to light, while Wallace and others buckled.

Wallace felt betrayed. Bergman had refused to show him the script, and now that Wallace had gotten a copy elsewhere he could see why. "What's a nice way of saying it?" Wallace says now. "He pissed all over us." A year later—even after the filmmakers agreed to remove some of what Wallace considered embarrassing and inaccurate personal elements about him—he remains angry.

Wallace is not the only one miffed at the creative liberties apparently exercised by the moviemakers. Wigand, a fired Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation executive who earned headlines three and a half years ago for his allegations that tobacco executives lied about the health effects of cigarettes, grumbles that the script "distorts factual events." Even his erstwhile opponent, Brown & Williamson, characterizes some scenes as "false" and "defamatory."

And *The Wall Street Journal*, which earned a Pulitzer Prize for publishing tobacco industry revelations similar to

STEPHANE CARDINALE/SYGMA (PACINO); MICHAEL PERSSON (BERGMAN); GEGORY PACE/SYGMA (PLUMMER); LENNIHAN/AP-WIDE WORLD (WALLACE); ERIC VON SUTHOFF (CROWE); STERNER/AP-WIDE WORLD (WIGAND)



Two heroes? Al Pacino (above) and Russell Crowe (right) in scenes from Disney's untitled tobacco film

Wigand's, is outraged that it may be depicted as a passive vessel that was spoon-fed information by Bergman. The newspaper has asked to have its name dropped from the film. "Fictional movies pretending to be true movies are disturbing, particularly when they come from the company that owns ABC News," says the *Journal*'s spokesman, Richard Tofel, referring to The Walt Disney Company, whose Touchstone Pictures is making the movie.

For his part, Bergman points out, "I didn't write the screenplay," adding that his role as movie consultant was approved by CBS. "I didn't have control over it." He says he'll reserve comment until he sees the finished film: "I may have complaints, but I haven't aired them."

From Disney's perspective, the film promises to be "great entertainment," as a spokesman puts it. Untitled as of yet (but referred to as *Man of the People* in some press reports) and scheduled for a November release, the Disney spokesman says the film is neither documentary nor docudrama: "It's an entertainment."

But the film aspires to be more than that. It seeks to shine a light on a critical social issue: the struggle of a whistle-blower tangling with a corporate goliath to bring important information to the public's attention. Moreover, Disney's mass-marketed movie may well emerge as the generally accepted truth about what happened with CBS and the tobacco story, overpowering the effect of any legal disclaimer noting that the movie is a "dramatization."

Director Michael Mann declined to be interviewed, though he notes that it's unfair to report on the film without first seeing it. "What we publish is the film, not the scripts," Mann says, asserting that it has been revised 97 times. (Disney declined repeated requests, made over a six-week period, to see an early cut of the film or to discuss the draft script.)

As of this writing, the film remains a work in progress—it could still change significantly. However it turns out, though, it's clear that Bergman, played by Al Pacino, will be at its center. A tough, respected journalist with a proclivity for self-promotion, Bergman has helped carve that place for himself by persuasively telling his tale both to a journalist whose article would later form a basis for the film, and to the film's director. Throw in Hollywood's dramatic need to find a hero and Bergman—a key player, but hardly the only one—becomes the driving force. "The movie gives Mr. Bergman a lot of credit for a lot of things he did not do," Wigand asserts. Adds Wallace: "I really, really, really don't want to protest too much, but Lowell did not do this all by himself."

**LOWELL BERGMAN WAS ALWAYS THE** perfect foil for the outsized presence of Mike Wallace. Bergman had an ego that could match Wallace's. Unlike some producers, he wouldn't quail when Wallace launched lacerating attacks on his stories. "He was pretty much an equal partner," recalls a reporter who saw Bergman and Wallace in action. "He wasn't really deferential....It was his piece and he wouldn't let [Wallace] get in the way." Though the two sparred, they built a close, albeit professional, relationship. "They really loved each other," says Bobby Buechler, a private investigator who has also worked with both Bergman and Wallace as a freelance associate producer for *60 Minutes*. "They would bite at each other, but it was extremely rooted in a long-term, endearing relationship."

Bergman, says Don Hewitt, *60 Minutes*'s creator and executive producer, "was a brilliant reporter." A hulking man with an imposing presence, Bergman built a reputation for nailing down stories that less intrepid reporters wouldn't even pursue. It was Bergman, for example, who managed to get an interview in Lebanon with a Hezbollah leader suspected of involvement in the 1983 Beirut bombing that killed 241 Marines. (Of course, it was Wallace who got the glory of doing the on-camera interview.)

The Wigand story was perfect for this tenacious producer. Bergman had built a relationship with Wigand over a year and a half, during which Wigand served as a paid consultant for *60 Minutes* on another tobacco story. Eventually Bergman was able to lure the whistle-blower out of the shadows. "I don't think that there would have been a Jeff Wigand without Lowell Bergman," says one of Wigand's legal advisers.

By August 1995, Bergman had succeeded. Wigand had taped an interview with *60 Minutes* that offered an insider's firsthand confirmation that Brown & Williamson executives had acknowledged privately what they would never admit publicly: Nicotine is addictive. And, more startling, he had revealed that tobacco companies used additives that increase both nicotine's potency and the health risks to smokers.

The scoop was a bombshell. But CBS's top lawyer had her own bombshell for the *60 Minutes* team: As the producers well knew, Wigand had signed a confidentiality

FRANK CONNOR/ COURTESY OF TOUCHSTONE PICTURES (2)

agreement with Brown & Williamson. If CBS helped Wigand break that contract, the lawyer argued, the network could be on the hook for billions of dollars in damages.

The arguments were intense. Wallace, by most accounts, fought hard for the story. But CBS's top management finally decided not to air it. "It tore up our whole shop," Wallace remembers. Instead of running the segment, *60 Minutes* broadcast a story that essentially explained how CBS had capitulated, though it did include some voice-altered audio of the Wigand interview. Some three months later, after *The Wall Street Journal* lessened the potential legal threat to CBS by reporting Wigand's allegations first, *60 Minutes* finally ran a full-blown segment on Wigand's charges.

Bergman had become incensed as the controversy developed at CBS. "He was like a dog with a bone on this story," Hewitt says. "He began to assume more of the credit for this story than he should have. He forgot that it was Mike's story, too." A movie would give Bergman a fresh shot at the story. If the real-life events hadn't shaken out the way he wanted, Bergman would now get a chance to help tell the story the way he thought it should be told.

**IT WAS A 1996 *VANITY FAIR* ARTICLE** about the Wigand case, "The Man Who Knew Too Much," that helped pave the way for the movie. Wallace, it turns out, was the one who put writer Marie Brenner in touch with Bergman. "Wallace elected not to help me," Brenner recalls. "He said, the guy you ought to speak to here, the guy who deserves all the credit, is one of my producers, Lowell Bergman."

At the outset, Brenner focused on Wigand. That changed "once I met with [Bergman]," she says. "I realized that the story was a double narrative. I did a great deal of reporting with [Bergman] because I wanted to tell his story, too."

Even before Brenner's article appeared, though, Bergman had another opportunity to influence the filmmakers. He and Mann—who both attended the University of Wisconsin in the sixties—were introduced by a mutual friend, the *Los Angeles Times* reported. Bergman and Mann began to mull the notion of making a movie about Bergman's reporting adventures. Mann was intrigued by the tobacco imbroglio. "'[W]hat you're living through right now,'" Mann was quoted as saying in the *Times*, "'that's the...motion picture.'"

Thus it was inevitable that Bergman would loom large in the movie. "It's told from the psychological perspective of two main characters: Lowell Bergman and Jeffrey Wigand," says Mann, whose other credits include the TV show *Miami Vice* and 1995 movie *Heat*. But unlike Brenner, neither Mann nor his screenwriting partner, Oscar winner Eric Roth, consulted Wigand before writing. Still, Brenner says, "I have been very impressed with how hard they have tried to be so accurate." Asked whether the screenplay is, in fact, accurate, Brenner emphasizes, "It's a movie. It's not a documentary....It's emotionally accurate." Bergman agrees and goes one step further: "It's emotionally and philosophically accurate."

In compressing events spanning two years into two hours, of course, the movie cannot help but falter in terms of factual accuracy. In a script reviewed for this article (which included changes from multiple revisions), the tinkering with history is evident early on. Bergman, for example, is portrayed as orchestrating a variety of legal events involving Wigand.

In places, the script casts Bergman as a sort of one-man CBS legal department. Faced with the problem of overcoming Wigand's confidentiality agreement, which barred the whistleblower from speaking publicly about the tobacco company, Bergman takes charge. "What if [Wigand] were compelled [to talk]?" Bergman proposes. "Compelled by Department of Justice, in a state court, whatever. Subpoenaed to be a witness. Cuts right through corporate confidentiality agreements, yes?" A fictitious CBS lawyer, clearly less incisive than Bergman, agrees that "you might have something."

Star treatment: Al Pacino on the movie set

ERIC VON SUTHOFF (PACINO)

**The script portrays Lowell Bergman as a sort of combination sleuth and lawyer, orchestrating Jeffrey Wigand's dramatic testimony. But Wigand recalls it differently: "That's absurd. He had nothing to do with that."**

The screen Bergman then rings up two plaintiffs' lawyers and sets in motion one of the most dramatic events in the film: Wigand's offering deposition testimony in a suit brought against tobacco companies by the state of Mississippi. (In reality, that testimony helped Mississippi obtain a precedent-setting settlement.)

The depiction of Bergman as legal puppet master is wildly overstated: Bergman did not set up the deposition (though he did play a role in introducing Wigand to the plaintiffs' lawyers). "That's absurd," says Wigand, whose view on this point is confirmed by two other sources. "[Bergman] had nothing to do with that." In reality, the Mississippi deposition was arranged by the plaintiffs' lawyers, who shared an interest in having Wigand's allegations made public.

Moreover, the screenplay also misstates the timing of the deposition. The actual deposition occurred a month after CBS decided not to air the Wigand story. But the movie presents it as taking place *before* the decision. The timing change is important as a dramatic device. It builds tension and drives the screenplay to the crucial denouement: CBS's decision to ice the Wigand interview. More important, the change creates the impression that Bergman was driving the legal process to bring his story to light.

While the script has Bergman doing double duty as sleuth and legal strategist, it portrays Wallace as beset by doubts. Wallace, who in real life has been described as arrogant more

than once, meekly looks to Bergman for guidance in the movie. And early in the story, the screenplay hints that Wallace may be losing his keen story and interview sense. He confides to Bergman: "I can't hear myself the way I used to."

In other places, the script gives Bergman credit for reporting coups that were actually accomplished by *The Wall Street Journal*, whose ongoing reporting on the tobacco industry has arguably been stronger than any other publication's. The screenplay implies, for example, that Bergman leaked Wigand's deposition to the *Journal*, something that Bergman acknowledges he did not do. In fact, he couldn't have done so because he never had the deposition to begin with.



Better late than never: Mike Wallace (above) introducing *60 Minutes*'s segment on Jeffrey Wigand. At right, *Vanity Fair*'s article

The film also inflates Bergman's role in defusing a B&W counterattack on Wigand. The tobacco company had assembled a 500-page dossier on Wigand that detailed a litany of charges ranging from spousal abuse to shoplifting. The way the screenplay draft tells it, the *Journal* begins gathering information on the allegations. Then, before it publishes it, a *Journal* editor slips the newspaper's uncompleted article (or the dossier; the script is ambiguous on this point) to Bergman. Bergman immediately springs into action. "I've got to refute every f---ing accusation before *The Wall Street Journal* runs," he complains in the script. Bergman and a private investigator pry deep into the charges against Wigand. Soon after, Bergman brings his results back to the *Journal* editor, telling him: "Explanations for about half of the allegations..."

All of this is baloney, according to sources at Brown & Williamson and the *Journal*. The *Journal* did in fact publish a front-page story, which concluded that many of the accusations against Wigand were based on "scant or contradictory evidence" and that the tobacco company was trying to smear the whistle-blower. But Bergman had no contact with the *Journal* before the article ran. Indeed, the notion that a news organization would casually hand a competitor a bombshell document or an unpublished draft of a huge scoop is laughable.

**DEPENDING ON HOW RUSSELL CROWE** plays the part of Wigand, the upcoming film may offer a more nuanced picture of the whistle-blower than those offered by most of the media. Unlike many newspapers, which portrayed Wigand as an unqualified hero, the screenplay depicts him as a courageous and important, yet tragic and flawed, character.

In real life, Wigand is an elusive figure. His accounts of his own saga have twisted and turned over time. For example, Wigand has denied under oath virtually everything attributed to him in *Vanity Fair*. ("Every single quote in that article is taped," counters writer Brenner.) Wigand's sworn testimony is also riddled with contradictions, and he has admitted that some of his most damaging allegations about B&W—notably that the company used rat poison in tobacco products—were wrong.

Even if the movie isn't entirely flattering to him, Wigand (who declined to be interviewed in detail) is unlikely to challenge the Disney account. After discussions with a Wigand attorney, the screenwriters changed dialogue concerning a Wigand family matter, and made a substantial donation to an anti-smoking foundation for which Wigand now works, according to the lawyer, Laura Wertheimer. (During fact checking for this article, Wigand sounded a different note than he had in an earlier conversation, insisting that he now accepts the filmmakers' right to take dramatic license.)

The filmmakers have made no such accommodations for Brown & Williamson. What the tobacco company, which the script identifies by name, finds most disconcerting about the screenplay is the repeated references to death threats that implicate the tobacco company. In one scene, Wigand's wife discovers an e-mail message on Wigand's computer stating: "WE WILL KILL YOU." Next, Wigand finds a .38-caliber bullet standing upright in his mailbox.

In correspondence with Disney, a B&W lawyer asserts that Wigand "fabricated" those threats, adding, "we would hope that such false, defamatory, and absurd statements will not find their way into the movie." Disney maintains that the movie "does not defame" the tobacco company and is a "proper exercise" of Disney's First Amendment rights. For her part, Brenner, who also referred to the threats against Wigand in her story, says she read one of the death threats, "and I had no reason not to take it at face value." (By any standard, Wigand was clearly under heavy legal and financial pressure from the tobacco company.)

Wigand's then wife, Lucretia Nimocks, claims that the scene in which she discovers a threatening e-mail is "total fiction." Nimocks adds that she has since concluded, based on conversations with FBI agents who investigated the threats, that Wigand himself put the bullet in his own mailbox. She also disputes the story line that her marriage with Wigand crumbled under the pressures of his becoming a whistle-blower and fears that B&W might harm her family. "That had nothing to do with the breakup of our marriage," she says.

Just as the screenplay portrays B&W as a corporate demon out to ruin Wigand, it presents CBS and its news management as villains intent on crushing Bergman's

story. In recounting the decision to hold the *60 Minutes* interview with Wigand, the draft screenplay tracks other published accounts of what went on inside the network. It also reflects Bergman's personal perspective, which he shared in on-camera interviews with the PBS program *Frontline*. His recollections, however, are disputed by some key participants.

Though the screenplay includes the fears expressed by the CBS general counsel of "grave" risks of a disastrous suit, moviegoers will more likely be persuaded by Bergman's suspicions that the decision to hold the story was made for nefarious reasons. Immediately after he is alerted to legal concerns about airing a Wigand interview, for instance, Bergman obtains a Securities and Exchange Commission document concerning an offer that the Westinghouse Electric Corporation had made to buy CBS. "It's a sale," Bergman tells his colleagues in the script. "And if CBS is mid-sale and suddenly gets threatened with the liability of a multibillion dollar lawsuit from Brown and Williamson right now, I imagine that sale gets f---ing torpedoed." Bergman reads aloud from the document, revealing that the network brass stand to profit handsomely if the deal goes through. "Are you suggesting that [they] are influenced by money?" asks Bergman's executive producer in the script. Bergman's response is sarcastic: "Oh, no. They work for free. And you are the volunteer executive producer."

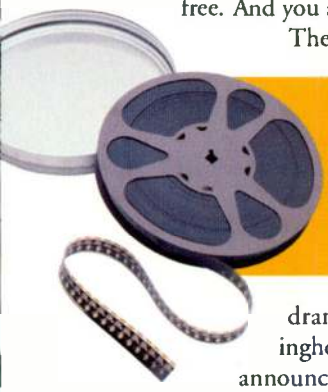
The scene will no doubt make for great drama. Truth is, though, the Westinghouse acquisition had been publicly announced weeks before CBS management ordered *60 Minutes* to hold the Wigand interview. Westinghouse had the right to back out, but according to two people with firsthand knowledge of the negotiations, the idea that the deal would collapse because of a possible suit over the Wigand interview is preposterous. "I was there and it was never discussed," says Robert Kindler, a lawyer who ran the deal for CBS. "It was never an issue."

In addition, the screenplay does not make clear that *60 Minutes* executive producer Hewitt was powerless to alter the management decision. "The impression is given that if either Don [Hewitt] wasn't corrupted by his own complacency or his own material interests, then maybe he could have done something," says a CBS insider.

The screenplay, meanwhile, portrays Wallace as waffling on the issue. In a showdown at CBS headquarters, Wallace is an unqualified advocate for the story at first. But as the meeting progresses, with Bergman and a CBS lawyer dominating the discussion, the legal argument that the story poses a "grave" risk for CBS appears to strike a chord with Wallace. Later he sides with the cautious executive producer. Finally, after a *New York Times* editorial condemns the CBS decision (an editorial for which the on-screen Bergman is a key inside source), Wallace veers back to Bergman's side, telling the executive producer, "you f---ed up."

Wallace, like Bergman, still believes the CBS decision to hold the story was somehow tainted. "The whole tobacco thing is just shot through with conflicts of interest," Wallace says. (Among other things, the then-controlling shareholders in CBS, members of the Tisch family, also control the Lorillard Tobacco Company, which was negotiating a deal with Brown & Williamson at the time.) But Wallace disputes the script's suggestion that Bergman clued others at *60 Minutes* to the executive payoffs from the Westinghouse buyout, and notes that he and Bergman disagreed on how to present those details to viewers. "Lowell wanted the payments to the corporate toppers in the opening," Wallace recalls. "He wanted to nail them. I didn't." On that score, Bergman may have succeeded in the movie where he failed at *60 Minutes*.

As this article went to press, Disney had not yet decided what disclaimer, if any, the studio will attach to the film. That language will serve as viewers' only clue as to how to gauge the movie's truthfulness. It will also determine how rigorous the studio's insurer will have been before granting coverage that shields the studio from claims arising from errors and omissions. As an internal Disney document notes, "The closer the fictional story is to one identifiable event, the more dangerous the situation becomes." Says a First Amendment lawyer: "If the perception of a reasonable person is that this is a true story, and the effect of that is to damage somebody's reputation...it could be a very serious liability."



**While Bergman runs the show in the screenplay, Wallace takes a backseat, looking to his producer for journalistic and moral guidance. "I can't hear myself the way I used to," Wallace confesses in the script.**

Bergman's future with CBS also hangs in the balance. Shortly before his contract expired earlier this year, Bergman visited Wallace at his home to sound him out about working on *60 Minutes II*, Wallace says. He didn't get the nod, and his contract has not been renewed. "Right now Don [Hewitt] and I aren't comfortable having him on this floor," Wallace says. "We'll wait and see the movie. If it's accurate, we'd have no objection to him coming back."

Meanwhile, Wallace continues to be concerned about the movie. After his initial requests to see script changes went unanswered, Wallace wrote to Mann and his cowriter Roth last June, demanding that they either show him revisions or cut his name from the film. Within a week, Wallace says, Mann sent him script alterations. But in a letter published late last year by the *Los Angeles Times*, the filmmakers maintained that they had made no substantial changes to accommodate Wallace: "Neither of us negotiates the content of our work."

Wallace was outraged and fired off another missive. "I guess I simply must have mistaken your profusion of notes to me, which quacked like negotiations, smelled like negotiations, and wound up like negotiations," Wallace wrote Mann and Roth on March 9. Referring to them as "two Atlases, carrying the heavy burdens of creativity," Wallace concluded, "But cripes, fellows...tell the truth. OK?" ■

# Hugging The Spotlight

**In the wake of the school shootings, the people of Littleton didn't seem to mind sharing their grief with reporters. Some even embraced the journalists—until media fatigue set in.**

DAZED AND SPATTERED WITH BLOOD, THE GIRL WITH the pierced eyebrow stood out amid the chaos. Other students who had just escaped the gun assault at Columbine High School huddled together in weeping clumps. But Bree Pasquale wandered around by herself, sobbing.

One of the few local reporters working the triage area before the national media arrived, KUSA-TV Channel 9 reporter Ginger Delgado approached the girl for an interview. Are you Okay? Bree shook her head no, not really. Well, Delgado said gently, could I ask a few questions? Bree agreed.

When the camera switched on, the words tumbled out between the girl's whimpering gulps for air: "Then [he] put a gun to my head and said—asked if we all wanted to die," she said. "I just started screaming and crying and telling them not to shoot me." So, Bree said, the shooter turned to another girl. "He shot her in the head in front of me, and he shot the black kid because he was black, and he shot him in the face."

Bree's hysterical voice, distraught expression, and horrifying story stopped hearts across America again and again as KUSA's affiliated networks, CNN and NBC, repeatedly replayed the interview. Such moments helped drive CNN's viewership to a 1999 high on Tuesday, April 20, the day of the attack. Throughout the week that followed, soaring network news audiences also pumped up ratings for school-shooting specials on *Dateline NBC* and ABC's *20/20*. That Thursday night's massacre edition of *48 Hours*, which included an interview with Bree, marked the first time the CBS newsmagazine ever beat NBC's *ER* in the ratings.

While the top-rated hospital series portrays fictional life-and-death drama, the footage beamed from near Littleton, Colorado, was real: terrified students in T-shirts and shorts running with their hands in the air like POWs;

**By Jessica Seigel**

MONICA ALMEIDA/*NY TIMES*

As students consoled one another across the street from Columbine High School the day after the shooting, photographers captured the scene.

a wounded boy teetering from a second-story window; anguished parents waiting to learn if their children were dead or alive.

The camera caught Bree in a state of emotional trauma, but she and her parents didn't object, because they believe the public needed to understand the true depth of horror at Columbine High School. Many others in the Littleton area felt the same, among them Cathy Dice, who was interviewed on TV while she searched in agony for her daughter Jenny. "It was good someone saw me in such a vulnerable moment if that helps this not happen again," says Dice, who later learned that her daughter was alive. "I felt like the media was there to support me."

At first, the middle-class suburban community seemed to accept the media pack as part of the emergency response team. Some journalists who had covered similar stories expected to face more hostility from townspeople, but were surprised at the initially warm-ish welcome. "It was bizarre," says KUSA reporter Delgado. "When in your life have you seen so many victims and families come forward so willing to talk?"


Bree Pasquale on TV after fleeing the school. "Then [he] put a gun to my head and said—asked if we all wanted to die," she told the Channel 9 reporter.

Perhaps the sheer number of victims and eyewitnesses explains all the willing interview subjects, considering that 1,900 students attending Columbine potentially saw the murder of 12 students and a teacher. Or maybe students and families simply accepted the axiomatic wisdom of our talk-show culture: Talking heals pain.

More to the point, these sources were teenagers, something that was perhaps easy to forget. In interviews after the first rush of terror, they seemed so self-possessed, looking directly into the cameras, spouting pithy sound bites. Garrulous and gossipy, the teens quickly warmed to the undivided attention of so many adults carrying microphones and pens, devouring their every thought and emotion. Soon the kids learned to query reporters, "Are you national or local?"

## A TV Story

The phone at Bree Pasquale's house started ringing with interview requests the day after the shooting. Though some reporters were rude and demanding, *48 Hours* staffers asked nicely and snagged Bree's first national TV interview, which aired two nights later.

The *Today* show also came calling, which is why Bree and her father, Victor, rose before dawn that Friday and headed to the school grounds. It was dark out when they arrived, except for the lights glowing from the cameras of the morning news shows, which were broadcasting from the media encampment in the park next to Columbine High School.

Satellite trucks from as far away as Dallas and Los Angeles crammed the public lot usually filled with students' cars. Dotting nearby grassy areas, open tents protected TV reporters from rain and a spring snowfall when they did their standups; crisscrossing cables tangled the ground. In a disaster such a scene is standard, as are the portable toilets and the Red Cross food truck.

The night before, on Thursday, the sheriff's office had moved its yellow police lines closer to the high school, after clearing the building of bombs left by gunmen Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. And an NBC crew hauled equipment fast, grabbing the best background view—a clear shot of the school's front entrance sign. To the right, a blue portable toilet stood just out of the camera's view.

Under the NBC tarp, her back to the school, Bree sat in a director's chair, staring into the camera and waiting for her *Today* interview to begin. Two tents down at the ABC interview area, the parents of slain student Dan Rohrbough waited to talk to *Good Morning America* coanchor Charles Gibson.

The *Today* segment began by replaying Bree's distraught KUSA interview. Then cohost Katie Couric, speaking from a studio in Washington, D.C., asked questions clearly intended to elicit a graphic blow-by-blow. Bree listened through an earpiece: "What kinds of sounds did you hear, and how did you feel when you heard them?" Couric asked. "They said something particularly callous after they shot Isaiah Shoels. Tell me what they said." Bree described the boy's murder: "...[T]hey shot him at close range with a shotgun, and they're like—Eric was like, 'Dylan, man, look at his brains. Isn't that awesome how it just splatters across the desk?'" ("Nauseating details," commented David Gregory, guest anchor on CNBC's *Rivera Live*, after replaying the clip later that night.)

After pumping Bree for the gruesome particulars, Couric sounded especially sympathetic and intimate. "Bree, I can't imagine witnessing and hearing these things and being so terrified," Couric said. "How are you—how are you doing?"

In contrast to her hysterical appearance after escaping the school, Bree's face showed no emotion. "I guess it really hasn't hit me yet," she replied. "It's going to get worse, and unless I keep talking about it and get help and keep going to church, keep going to counseling, it's—it's not going to go away...."

Bree's father, Victor Pasquale, a UPS truck driver, watched from the side, his heart breaking for his daughter. In today's world, he explained, talking to the media is part


times." *Pleeease,* the reporter begged. "I'm sorry," Bree said sweetly, looking like she might give in, then said firmly, "I'm sorry." A look of anger flashed momentarily across the reporter's face, but he went away quietly. Looking wilted, Bree and her father left the scene.

## In Media City

By mid-morning Thursday, the media encampment resembled a street fair, with a different act in each corner. About every two hours under a central tarp to the north, the press corps gathered for the sheriff's investigation update. Meanwhile, photographers and reporters circled red-eyed mourners flocking to a makeshift memorial that snaked through the park around the media camp. As days passed, remembrances and offerings of cut flowers, stuffed animals, votive candles, handcrafted posters, placards, and cards piled higher and higher. The spontaneous memorial was remarkable for its magnitude and because it made the media's job much easier. Seeking interviews during such tragedies is generally loathsome; locals often view packs of journalists as vultures and try to avoid them. This time, because the memorial was taking shape in the heart of the media camp, the townsfolk ended up coming right to the reporters.

**During such tragedies, locals often try to avoid reporters. This time, because the memorial was taking shape in the heart of the media camp, the townsfolk came right to the reporters.**

Mourners walk past the satellite dishes and vans that made a media city (above, left). Two photographers and a cameraman observe three teenagers consoling one another (above).

of tragedy. "What can you say? When something like this happens, we're overwhelmed with curiosity," he offered. "Because it happened to my family, I can't be hypocritical and say, 'Why are the cameras here?' When it happens everywhere else, I want to know."

The interview over, Bree and her father started to head for the parking lot. By then it was almost light outside. A handful of journalists roving the area trying to procure their own interviews with morning-show guests appeared out of nowhere and converged on Bree.

(Something similar had happened the day before to 16-year-old Sara Schweitzberger after she finished her *Today* interview. A booker from that show tried to stop a CNN booker from arranging to interview the girl. The argument surprised Sara, who couldn't understand why *Today* staffers would not want her to speak with others. "This really big thing happened," Sara said. "I thought that should be the least of their concerns." Better for reporters to focus on serious matters like the police investigation, she suggested.)

When reporters came begging for interviews with Bree after her *Today* appearance, she looked tired, but obliged anyway. First, she gave a few minutes to an *Inside Edition* crew. She also spoke with a CBS team. Same questions. Same answers. Her tone grew increasingly remote and rehearsed.

When a reporter from the Spanish-language Univision Television Network showed up, Bree had had enough. "It's hard," she later explained. "I've said the same thing thirty

The two groups did not always mix comfortably. Some teens lashed out at hovering reporters and photographers, complaining that the park had been their hangout long before the media horde moved in. "You guys are exploiting us," one teary girl screeched at a cameraman who stood a foot from her face. So why didn't the kids leave? "This is where it happened," explained Lauren Beachem, 16. "This is where I want to be."

Still, starting with the dozens of Columbine students who telephoned KUSA the day of the siege, many kids couldn't stop talking. One group even began hanging out in a CNN van once word spread that the twenty-something staffers were

ALAN TANNENBAUM/SYGMA (VANS); CHRIS ANDERSON/AURORA (PHOTOGRAPHERS)

sympathetic listeners—with free sodas. "I like them 'cause they're nice," said Bae Gattoni, 15, a soft-spoken girl who looked like a lost kitten curled up on a seat in the van.

In the days after the shooting, teens like 16-year-old Ben Oakley clung to friends in packs, generally avoiding their parents in the belief that Mom and Pop couldn't understand or handle their trauma. Journalists, on the other hand, made for a willing audience.

On Thursday morning, two days after the shooting, as a sheriff's press briefing began a few feet away, Ben attracted a circle of reporters, including representatives from Fox News, *USA Today*, a local NBC station, and the *Chicago Tribune*. Lured by the crowd, more journalists piled on. "Who is this kid? What is his name?" a Los Angeles *Daily News* reporter asked, joining the pack around the gangly boy with the chapped lips.


The media crowds around a family leaving flowers at one makeshift memorial outside the school (top). A cameraman captures a mourner leaving the Clement Park memorial (right).

Newly arrived reporters repeated the same questions: *Where were you during the attack?* (Math class.) *How are you coping?* (Hasn't hit yet.) *Did you know either gunman?* On that much-asked point, Ben offered that members of the killers' clique, the Trenchcoat Mafia, had acted "weird," a comment quoted in *The Dallas Morning News*. More tantalizing was Ben's revelation that the two killers had created a video in which they enacted a shooting spree.

An *Entertainment Tonight* reporter gripping a microphone leaned closer. "Ben," she asked, "how can we get ahold of the video?" Ben never said, but the *Chicago Tribune* reported that he confirmed the video's existence in an article headlined "Massacre Rehearsal? Teens' Video Portrayed School Killings." The race was on to find the tape. (*Inside Edition* found a different shooting video made by Columbine students, one that was two years old and that didn't include Harris and Klebold, and aired it on May 5. No one ever found the video that Ben mentioned.) Some journalists felt ambivalent about the question-and-answer dance with students. "I'm surprised some of these kids want to talk," said Alicia Acuña, a Fox News producer, as she broke from the pack surrounding Ben. "Sometimes it's hard to listen. You're torn between wondering if it's best for them to talk and doing your job. There's a certain type of exploitation."

In one case, the joke was on reporters. A certain "Mike Smith," who claimed to be a point guard for the Columbine basketball team, regaled journalists at the park with vivid accounts of how school officials ignored the hostility between the trench coat clique and bullying jocks who taunted the outcasts as "gays" and "inbreeds." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *USA Today* prominently quoted "Smith." Then, the *Drudge Report* and *Rivera Live* quoted Smith being quoted.

*Inquirer* national correspondent Richard Jones learned that "Mike Smith" does not play point guard for Columbine from a *Denver Rocky Mountain News* reporter, whose son actually had played that position. In fact, no one named "Mike Smith" was enrolled at Columbine High School. "It was your worst nightmare," says Jones. "The story had the ring of truth. You don't think someone would lie to see their name in the paper."

Instead of printing a separate correction, the *Inquirer* buried a paragraph in its next-day story that read: "One teenager apparently tried to mislead reporters, identifying himself to *The Inquirer*, *USA Today* and a Colorado paper as Mike Smith..." After a query from *Brill's Content* brought the error to *USA Today*'s attention, the paper printed a separate page-three correction branding "Mike Smith" an impostor, but did not address the substance of his quotes.

Because "Mike Smith"'s account was so juicy, at least one news organization went to great lengths to locate him. A *Dateline* associate producer huddled curbside one night under an umbrella in the cold, asking teenagers entering and leaving the park, "Do you know Mike Smith? Do you know Mike Smith?" She never did find him.

## A Warmer Reception

For journalists, the Columbine massacre was literally a walk in the (muddy) park compared to past school shootings. A year earlier, in rural Jonesboro, Arkansas, irate locals threw rocks at reporters. As the worst school shooting in

ANDREA MOHIN/NYT (SCHOOL); ALLAN TANNENBAUM/SYGMA (CLEMENT PARK)

U.S. history, the assault near Littleton attracted a much larger media flock than Jonesboro had, drawing reporters from as far away as Israel and Australia. While the influx overwhelmed rural Jonesboro, the sprawling suburbs south of Denver easily absorbed the crowds.

Suburban affluence in a community where locals and journalists share similar demographics only partially explained the warm reception. "Journalists here seem to be on better behavior," said CNN field anchor Martin Savidge; others who covered both stories agreed. The change wasn't accidental. A staff memo from CNN chairman Tom Johnson taped to the inside of one van quoted post-Jonesboro recommendations of a media industry group, The Freedom Forum, while admonishing staffers to avoid excesses like front-lawn stakeouts and sticking microphones in the faces of grieving families.

Whether the community was more open or the journalists better behaved, the locals at times seemed to go out of their way to make the media feel at home. Mourners who gathered at the Foothills Bible Church to remember 16-year-old John Tomlin welcomed reporters inside. Some journalists at first felt abashed clopping around a church in their foul-weather gear. The parishioners seemed not to notice. "This is God's family," explained congregant Bill Brown, clutching his Bible. "Journalists are people, too."

During the service, senior pastor Bill Oudemolen suggested the same. "Think about all the *good* this week," the pastor said, "brave and protective teachers, courageous law enforcement officers, skilled medical technicians and doctors" and a host of others, including "sensitive news reporters." David Li, a *New York Post* reporter, was genuinely moved: "I wrote it down because I've never seen those two words together—*sensitive* and *journalist*."

**"Think about all the *good* this week," the pastor said, "brave and protective teachers, courageous law enforcement officers, skilled medical technicians and doctors...and sensitive news reporters."**

After the service, the grieving Tomlins remained seated in the sanctuary to answer questions from about a dozen reporters who sat on the altar steps. It was a gentle, 15-minute affair—journalists asked about the family's background, their lost son, and their feelings. As the Tomlins headed out of the sanctuary, a *People* magazine correspondent caught up with the black-clad mourners. "I lost a brother when he was twenty-one," he volunteered. "I'm so sorry for your loss." When the dead boy's father, John Tomlin, offered comfort with a one-handed hug to the shoulder, the reporter slipped in, "Maybe we can talk tomorrow?" The reporter, who did not want his name used, explained, "I offered condolences," and added, "I was a reporter. I was on a job. He and I hit it off. We were talking about many things before I said that."

Waiting was not necessary. Journalists were invited to join the modest church-room luncheon of tuna fish and turkey sandwiches. It was the first time Tomlin had ever dealt with reporters. "They've been great," he said, deploying his comforting hand-on-your-shoulder grip. "I don't want you to write anything bad about the press," he insisted, saying journalists had been kind to his family.

In a Gallup poll taken a week after the shootings, 67 percent of the people surveyed agreed that the media acted responsibly. On the other hand, opinion split about whether the amount of coverage was "too much" or "about right."

## Week Two

As the story moved into the second week, it turned away from basic facts to the search for "understanding" and blame. Unwilling to entertain the idea that some acts may be impossible to explain, journalists wrote aftermath stories that pointed fingers at supposedly bad parents, cliquish students, ignorant school administrators, and do-nothing police. News-analysis stories wondered about the pernicious influence of the Internet, video games, violent movies, and about the prevalence of guns.

All along, TV and radio talking heads had been encouraging the community to find "meaning in the sadness," as one Los Angeles TV reporter put it on the air. Tensions between "experts" and regular folk erupted in an emotional off-camera scene at *The Montel Williams Show* after a taping in the New York studio. As eight Columbine students and their families waited backstage, the show's consulting psychologist, kept on hand to soothe distraught guests, offered advice that struck some of them as accusatory. "She said something like, 'Kids have to take responsibility,'" recalls Johnny Norman, who was there with his son. "I think the kids thought she was saying that they were responsible."

Students began to cry. Parents shouted. Finally, Williams appeared, apologized, and diffused tempers by offering to treat his guests to a night on the town, according to accounts from six parents and students who were present. Williams refused comment, except for a brief fax from his spokesman, Gary Rosen, apologizing for "any perceived miscommunication with any of the guests on the Columbine show." The consulting psychologist did not respond to phone calls.

As preachy advice and aftermath reporting continued unabated, the media wore out its welcome—perhaps an inevitable ending in an era when people's emotions are commodities for round-the-clock news.

Finally, an act of God intervened. The national media unclenched from the story when twisters swept through Oklahoma on May 3. The storms eventually left 44 people dead. Two nights later, not a single satellite truck was left in the makeshift memorial park near Columbine High.

"You knew they would leave when the next tragedy hit," says Steve Schweitzberger, whose 16-year-old, Sara, appeared on the *Today* show, CNN, CNBC, and in *The New York Times* discussing the shooting. But the eye of the Littleton storm had passed—and Sara and her father were watching another one on TV. A news flash on the Oklahoma twisters beamed on screen: "3,000 homeless." "Oh, how sad," said Sara, a news junkie who dreams of working as a sportscaster. "Yeah," her father muttered. "At least now we're off the national news." ■


*Denver Rocky Mountain News* editors debate the next day's front page. From left: Jack McElroy, Deb Goekin, and John Temple

# In Their Backyard

**While most news outlets could cover the Columbine school shootings and go home, the *Denver Rocky Mountain News* already *was* home. Here's how the editors mobilized for—and agonized over—a story that tested both their journalism and their humanity.**

**By Julie Scelfo · Photographs by Jeffrey Lowe**

ON APRIL 20, WHEN THE NEWS OF THE COLUMBINE High School shootings broke, John Temple's instincts were similar to those felt by many parents: He wanted to get home and hold his kids. But a stronger instinct kicked in, the one that makes Temple, the 46-year-old editor of the *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, the kind of journalist colleagues casually describe as brilliant and competitors regard warily. It was the instinct of a newsroom leader who faced some of the toughest challenges that exist in journalism.

A huge, awful, tragic story was breaking, a story that would dominate the national media for weeks. For Temple and his 200 editorial staffers, another adjective would define the story—*local*—and in the days that followed, the editorial decisions they made, the judgments they reached, their scoops, and their mistakes were all informed by this personal connection to the story.

Journalists often like to think of themselves as objective observers, above the fray, certainly not part of the story. But for Temple and others in the newsroom, when two teenagers went on a murderous rampage in a suburban Denver high school, any pretense of dispassion evaporated.

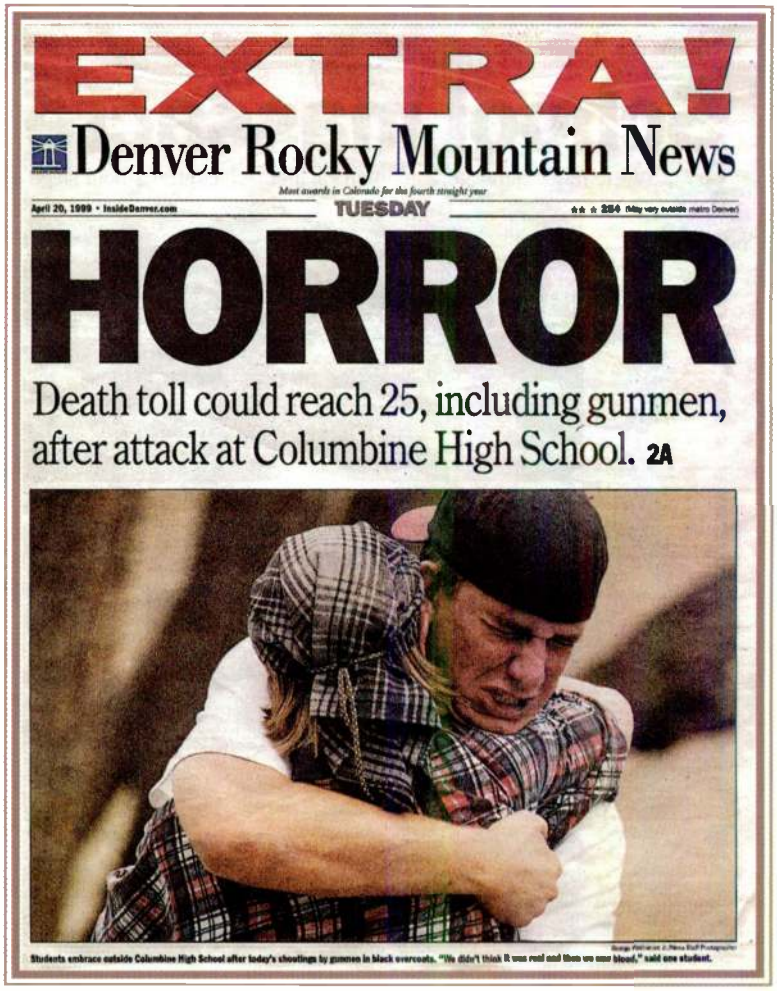
In the week after the shooting, the *News*, a tabloid-format daily newspaper, gave a *Brill's Content* reporter broad access to its newsroom, editors, reporters, and photographers. The picture that emerged was that of a news operation marked by intense emotion, a willingness to confront hard decisions and admit errors—and a lot of really hard work. Watching the coverage unfold and the decisions being made, it became clear how the skills, resources, competitive pressures, and values of journalists affect what eventually becomes the news.

Temple, who has been at the *News* for seven years and who became editor a year ago, says he decided almost immediately that while his paper's coverage of the Columbine shootings would be as deep and broad as his staff could make it, it would also be especially mindful of the emotional devastation experienced by the community.

"When you're the hometown newspaper in a story like this, it's very sensitive to the community," explained Temple, contrasting the *News* with the many national and out-of-town media outlets that flooded into Colorado that day. "This is our community, and there's a tremendous commitment to getting it right."

Some members of the editorial staff say the 140-year-old newspaper went so far down the sensitivity road that it underplayed the terrible bloodiness of the scene at Columbine High School. Others say the paper was so eager to help bring the community together and promote healing that it paid insufficient attention to the hatred and racism behind the attack.

But the second-guessing would come later. First, Temple and his top deputies had to come up with a strategy for covering a breaking story that was simultaneously a crime story, a school story, a culture story, and, of course, a source of intense local anguish. In a highly competitive environment (the *News*'s crosstown rival, *The Denver Post*, would no doubt be mobilizing just as feverishly, in what quickly became the latest battle in one of the country's last newspaper wars), reporters needed to be dispatched and assign-


EXTRA!

Denver Rocky Mountain News

Most awards in Colorado for the fourth straight year

April 20, 1999 • InsideDenver.com TUESDAY

HORROR

Death toll could reach 25, including gunmen, after attack at Columbine High School. 2A

Students embrace outside Columbine High School after today's shootings by gunmen in black overcoats. "We didn't think it was real and then we saw blood," said one student.

The *News*'s second "Extra," revised to include a possible death toll, was on the streets at 4:15 P.M. the day of the shooting.

Editor John Temple (foreground) and deputy managing editor Tom DeFao make critical decisions about which stories should run on the following day's front page.

ments made. But perhaps more important, a tone needed to be set. Temple would do exactly that in a matter of minutes.

JUST BEFORE 11:30 A.M., ALMOST IMMEDIATELY after the shooting began, word of it came to assistant city editor Judy Wiley via a "Randy Gram," newsroom parlance for a call from Randy Lynch, a Littleton resident who regularly monitors local police, fire, and paramedic scanners. After quickly dispatching a few reporters and photographers, Wiley ran into the conference room where Temple and other editors were holding the regular 11 A.M. editorial planning meeting.

The editors immediately abandoned the meeting and ran into the newsroom, instructing several more reporters to head to the scene. Then they took an unusual step that spoke to the exceptional nature of the *News*'s approach and that helped set the tone of its coverage: The assistant managing editor/Sunday, Sue Deans, who had started at the paper just that day, was asked to seek advice from other newspapers that had confronted similar stories.

Deans's calls yielded important counsel and insight: Treat the situation as a disaster, not just as a crime; put the victims first; consider the entire community a victim; and resist rushing to judgment about causes. "[The national media] tended to go more for the villain, and they also tended to be more sensational," says Temple. "What the community was looking for was meaning and recognition of the value of the lives of the people that were lost and wounded and hurt by this."

Already the newsroom was operating in high gear—and that's how it would continue to function for the next two weeks. While city editor Steve Myers shouted out orders from the center of the newsroom, his assistants quickly organized reporters into three teams, "Victims," "Police Investigations," and "Suspects" (known internally as the "Bad Boy Team"). While three experienced writers were put on rewrite duty—a process reserved for big stories where the actual writing is built on information called in from reporters in the field—others were asked to coordinate calls from reporters phoning in notes. Soon, the newsroom would also be fielding the seemingly endless calls from the national media frantically in search of information and photos.

As if the daily pressure of the story wasn't enough, Temple decided to produce an "Extra," an additional paper quickly released for downtown street sales on the same afternoon as major breaking news. Although most U.S. cities haven't seen one for years, they are relatively common in Denver, which is considered the most competitive newspaper market in the country.

To print and distribute the Extra on time, the editors had to get the paper to the printers by 3 P.M.—just three and a half hours after the shoot-out began. This posed a big challenge for reporters who were confronting such basic difficulties as getting to Columbine via a maze of closed streets and emergency vehicles. Even more tricky was retrieving film from staff photographers who had made it to the site but were unable to leave because of traffic congestion. Editors eventually sent other staffers to find photographers and collect film; Steve Dykes, a photo editor, received three traffic violations on his trip back to the office.

Once the film—a key component for the Extra—was in hand, director of photography Janet Reeves faced the first of many tough judgment calls she would make over the next two weeks. Sorting through hundreds of compelling and graphic photos of kids strapped to gurneys, she eliminated those she deemed too bloody. There was also the matter of identifying the students. At this point, there was still confusion about who had escaped from the school; Reeves says she "didn't want to risk upsetting parents by using a photo of a kid who didn't make it."

The photo that was chosen for the Extra cover would eventually be seen nationwide. *News* photographer George Kochaniec Jr. captured one student gripping another in a hug, the boy's face the embodiment of anguish. The headline: "HORROR" in two-and-a-half-inch capital letters, beneath a bright red "EXTRA!" at the top of the page.

The headline, too, would get national exposure, as the host of *CBS This Morning* held the paper up to the camera the next day. "I think this headline says it all in a single word," CBS's Cynthia Bowers observed.

Underneath, the subhead reported, "At least 21 wounded as two gunmen open fire at Columbine High School." Less than an hour later, when the Jefferson County sheriff estimated a death toll as high as 25, a second Extra edition was produced. (That estimate turned out to be wrong.)

The Extra was finished, but the pace didn't let up for the staff, which immediately began work on producing the next day's paper. As each piece of information arrived in the

office, as each photograph emerged from the developer, editors confronted difficult choices. Not only did they have to determine what to cover (and what to leave out), they had to settle on how to present the information, in terms of tone and sequence. "There's a lot of conversation about decisions [here]," says Deans, the assistant managing editor/Sunday. "I think that's something the public often doesn't realize."

One photo in particular was a major source of controversy at that day's four o'clock front-page meeting. The photograph, taken from a helicopter rented by the *News*, showed a group of students hiding behind a parked car in fear, while on the other side of the vehicle, a boy's body lay motionless on a sidewalk. No one could identify the boy, so the staff couldn't confirm whether he was dead or injured (or whether the parents knew). But Reeves, the director of photography, and Temple agreed that it was a powerful photograph. "I mean, we don't run body pictures here—but sometimes you have to tell a story that bad things happen and this is a result of it," says Reeves.

Jack McElroy, the managing editor, also played a big role in the decision to run the photo. Unlike Temple, known by many for his energetic manner and his frenetic "drive-by" trips past newsroom desks, McElroy is said by colleagues to have a "calming effect." Five feet four inches tall, with a slight frame, he always keeps the sleeves of his well-worn shirt rolled up and doesn't wear a watch.

Even after the 4 P.M. meeting, the picture's use continued to be debated intermittently for over four hours. "The question that kept coming up [was], 'What are the parents going to think?' 'How are they going to feel?'" McElroy relates. "This was a horrible thing, and we had to, in some way, let the horror speak."

**"This was a horrible thing, and we had to, in some way, let the horror speak," says managing editor Jack McElroy.**

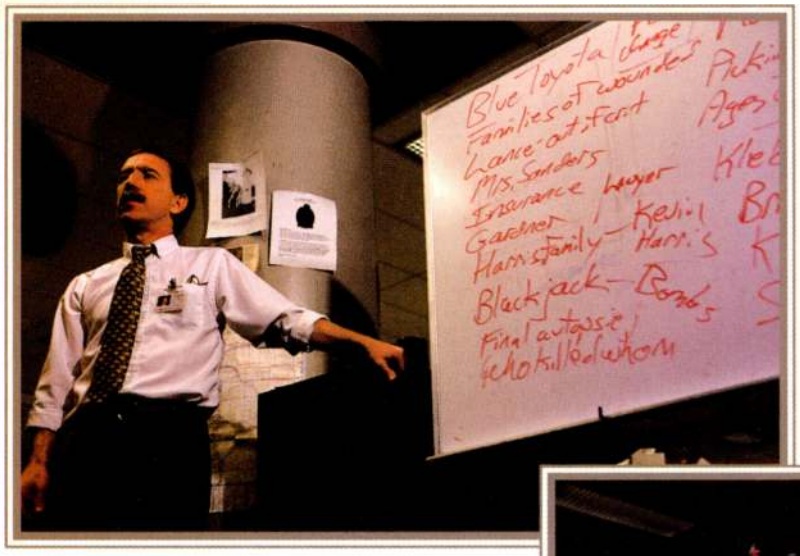
Although she was concerned about the impact on the parents, Deb Goeken, the assistant managing editor for news, thought that running the picture was the right decision. "You can't lose sight of the victims, and that doesn't just include the dead kids and the teacher. It includes the community, it includes the school, and it includes the five-year-old kids, thirty miles away, who are now afraid to go to kindergarten," Goeken explains later. Ultimately, the photo ran in Wednesday's paper; it turned out that the family, not yet officially notified of their son's death, did recognize him in the photo. "There are no words to describe it," said Sue Petrone, the mother of Dan Rohrbough, the boy in the photo. "I understand them using the picture, because it's the only one that really shows the horror of the whole thing, but they should have waited a few days until they contacted us." Petrone's husband found the photo first thing Wednesday morning as he thumbed through the pages in hopes of spotting Dan with the survivors.

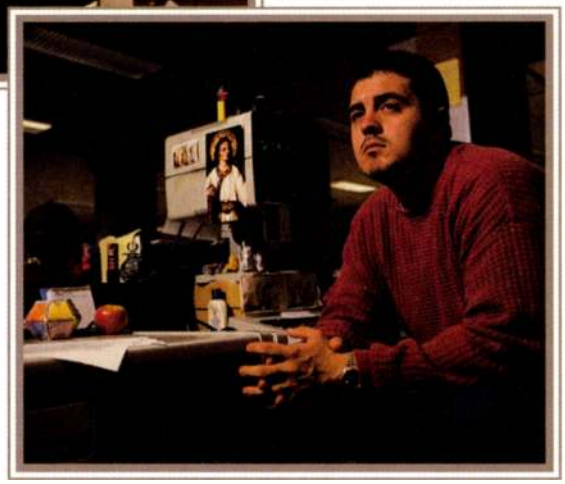
Another telling choice was about to be made: what headline treatment to use for the next day's paper, which would hit doorsteps and newspaper boxes even before all of the students' bodies had been removed from the school. After much discussion and debate, the *News* finally decided on a single word: "Heartbreak." (*The Denver Post* went with "High School Massacre.")

Keeping a close eye on the rival *Post* is a constant in the *News*'s newsroom. The E.W. Scripps Company-owned *News* and the MediaNews Group-owned *Post* have competitive circulations—about 347,000 for the *Post* and 329,000 for the *News*—and each aspires to be the newspaper of record in a metropolitan area with a population of 2.2 million. *News* staffers refer to this as a "war," and it remained in the minds of some even when the Columbine story broke. "Being in a competitive situation makes it even harder," says city editor Myers. "I can't imagine what the Oklahoma City folks went though when they had their bombing. But they didn't have one thing that we have, which is an enemy newspaper just down the street. Now we have the entire world of media here, so we're competing on a different level than we've ever competed on."

As the night wore on and the day turned into days, the staff continued at the same exhausting pace. The long hours began taking their toll.

Photographer George Kochaniec Jr. captures the grief in Clement Park, site of the makeshift memorial (left). Director of photography Janet Reeves presents a controversial photo to the editors (below).



Managing editor Jack McElroy strategizes during a morning staff meeting (above). Reporter Manny Gonzales listens while McElroy lists the leads that need to be investigated (right).

"A lot of people here have kids, and a lot of people [are] in their thirties and forties," explains reporter Mike Anton, 38, whose wife is a reporter at another paper. "Those first three or four nights were just terrible because we have a three-year-old in day care, and it was like, *Okay, now what are we going to do?*"

Meanwhile, Temple pushed to create a special 24-page section for Thursday's paper, as well as a 32-page Sunday section dedicated to the survivors; both ran ad free. On the front page of the Thursday section, a letter from publisher Larry Strutton declared the *News*'s willingness to "lead the charge" in supporting the community in however it decided to respond to the shooting, a gesture backed up with the creation of a memorial fund and a $25,000 contribution to that fund.

The Sunday section, titled "Day Of Remembrance," featured individual tributes to each of the victims. In addition to personal stories, the staff collected photos and memories from survivors and relatives. The section also recounted details of the investigations and presented a "moment by moment" time line of Tuesday's events. There was also a photo essay titled "Scenes of Sorrow."

"I wanted a paper that these families would save in their Bibles for the rest of their lives," explains Goekin, the assistant managing editor for news.

The leads and stories kept coming: the emergence of a videotape that the killers had made; the National Rifle Association's upcoming convention in Denver; accusations that the police were slow in responding; inquiries into the possibility of accomplices; and information revealing that police were warned about the killers more than a year in advance.

The crazy pace didn't prevent the journalists from reflecting on the tragedy. Judy Wiley, an assistant city editor, was periodically moved to tears. "This is the worst thing...I've seen in twenty years. Ever." Another assistant city editor, Luke Clarke, was worried about his two teenaged children and his wife, a teacher. "Watching these kids—they looked like mine. The killers looked like kids I would be happy to have in my home."

In the flood of information zipping through the newsroom that first day, a mistake made it past the editors that quickly became magnified due to the omnipresence of the national media. "In a story, we mistakenly identified [on page six] an individual as a member of the Trenchcoat Mafia," says Temple. "It was just one of those things that had gotten through the cracks, and, of course, the people were tremendously upset, because the next day, the whole world media was on their doorstep because they wanted to interview members of the Trenchcoat Mafia. We published a prominent correction the next day—on page two—but...I'm sure they were still hurt by what we did."

Another mistake had even more hurtful ramifications: The newspaper included the name of a boy who did not die, Richard Castaldo, on a schedule of funeral services. "That family was very upset and rightfully so, and they were very hurt," acknowledges Myers, the city editor, who takes responsibility for the mistake. (The next week, when NBC's *Today* show had Castaldo's father on as a guest, Katie Couric chided the *News* for running Castaldo's "obituary.")

The journalists also found themselves running afoul of the religious sensibilities of the families involved in the tragedy. On Friday, April 23, the *News* ran a story about Columbine student Craig Scott, who had escaped from the school's library and then led classmates in prayers for their siblings. In the saddest of ironies, many of the others' siblings escaped alive, while Scott's sister, Rachel, was killed even before Craig left the building. The headline, "Prayer Couldn't Save Sister," may have seemed clever, but a woman identifying herself as Rachel's aunt called the paper to explain that it had deeply wounded the family. In a voice-mail message that McElroy saved, the woman explained that the Scott family was deeply religious, and that "prayer is the only thing that's going to get us through this." The woman stated that Rachel's father, grandfather, and uncle were all ministers, and the headline "insults the very core of...where we gather our strength from."

The emotional strain inside the newsroom became noticeable, too. Reporter Bill Scanlon, one of the first on the scene, says he was shell-shocked from talking to survivors. The photographers who directly witnessed grief and mourning all week were especially affected. "We cry every day here," photo editor Dean Krakel says. "[People are] very strung out, real strung out, pretty raw."

Temple responded to the emotion sweeping over his staff by bringing in professional counselors to provide "trauma debriefings"—an approach seldom seen in newsrooms. A number of staffers said later the counseling helped them deal with their feelings and enabled them to recognize that their reactions were normal.

One of journalism's abiding ironies is that the worst tragedy is also a huge opportunity, and a couple of *News*

staffers say they'd be lying if they denied that, after the initial flurry, thoughts of a Pulitzer Prize didn't cross their minds. Reporter Manny Gonzales expresses mixed emotions about the story. "I'm lucky to be a part of this," he quietly explains. "This is the kind of story you get involved in journalism to cover, but you always wish you didn't have to be involved in something like this. I wish it never had happened."

Gonzales, who says he was haunted by bloody images for days after the massacre, feels the editors cut more of the gore than they should have. "They collected a lot of good stuff that didn't all get in. If they would have let somebody who was standing there write it, we would have included that people thought there was a third gunman, and the firsthand accounts of what went on in the library....You wouldn't even believe the carnage. There were a lot of deaths. And you wouldn't believe what the gunmen said.

"One kid said he was listening and there were just these guys laughing and one of the gunmen said, 'I've never killed anybody with a knife before' and the other kid said, 'Well, do it, dude, do it!' It was almost like a game to them. It made me sick." That quote never made it into Wednesday's lead story, which was written by a reporter stationed in the newsroom. "If I had written it," Gonzales adds, "I would've put it in there because it shows how sick these two kids really are, how much of a game it was to them. A lot of people ask, 'What was the motive behind what they did?' And I think it was just because they were insane."

**Care can be just as much a part of journalism as aggressive reporting, a rule that holds even truer when you're a local paper accountable to hometown readers.**

The difference between what Gonzales would have put in the newspaper and what actually made it in illustrates the role of editors in determining what gets seen and read. "The staff doesn't necessarily see the big picture," says Temple. "The big picture to me is...How much space am I going to dedicate to [a story]? What is going to be the rhythm of the content? I have to stand back and go, what does the reader need to know? And what is the most important information? What are they going to be asking in the morning?" Such questions were the impetus for the special sections in the first week and for later decisions about how to frame the events.

Nine days after the shooting, on the day of the final Columbine funeral, for student Isaiah Shoels, the challenge of being sensitive to reader sensibilities remained in the forefront. During the four o'clock front-page meeting, Reeves set out more than 15 photos on the conference table before the editors. After some discussion, everyone agreed on the most powerful image for the cover: a grieving woman passing in front of the open coffin (and blocking most of Shoels's face). Goekin questioned, however, whether using it on the front page was appropriate, because Shoels was the only black victim and the photo focused on a white woman.

"Now what about the racism element?" asked Goekin. "You can't see the dead black boy, all you see is the white girl....All we'll be showing on the front page is a white person rather than a whole church filled with [black people] and the family."

Temple, who is white, sought input from April Washington, the black reporter who wrote the story (who, incidentally, started work at the *News* the day before the shooting). "[Some people] already feel like the media hasn't addressed the racism behind this enough," she reasoned. "[Although] I did point out in my story that blacks, whites, Asians—people from all walks of life—gathered to memorialize this kid, my opinion is that you'll probably come under further fire if you use that. It's a heck of a photo...[but] I think it's going to bring more headaches than necessary."

Temple took her word for it. The next day's paper featured a photo of Shoels's father flanked by family members, his hands resting on the closed casket.

That decision, along with the *News*'s many others, demonstrated how care can be just as much a part of journalism as aggressive reporting, a rule that holds even truer when you're a local paper accountable to hometown readers.

During a period of both personal and professional strain, the *News*'s staff produced a body of work that was informative, extensive, and compassionate, and which included a couple of scoops. And judging from the unprecedented number of letters the newspaper received from readers, including expressions of appreciation and commendations for its extensive coverage, the *News* served its community.

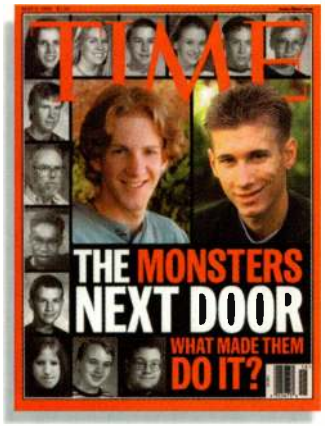
Temple says he is acutely aware that, in order for his newspaper to survive, he has to produce hard-edged reporting that breaks new ground. He is decidedly confident that even with the popularity of other technologies (the *News* launched a website in 1995), Denver is still a "newspaper town." The *News*'s 10.4 percent circulation increase over the last year—which coincides with Temple's tenure as editor—seems to support this claim.

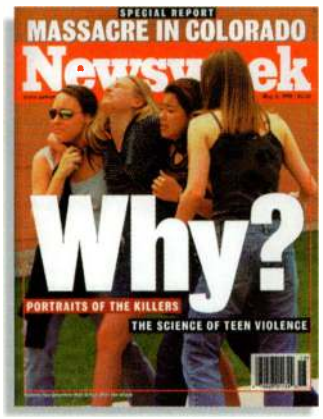
"You have TV covering it around the clock, you've got radio, you've got Internet," says assistant managing editor Goekin. "But newspapers are still the—literally—the piece of paper that you can save forever."

Throughout the days that followed the shootings, the *News* was besieged with interview requests from all sorts of out-of-town media outlets, including CNN, the *Today* show, and ABC's *World News Tonight*; most were turned down by city editor Myers and others (one reporter received over 20 requests in three days).

After CNN bookers called for the third time in one day, Myers said, "[CNN anchor Judy Woodruff] wants to talk to me, and I don't have time. I'm not going to play [her] game." As he rushed past Myers's desk, Temple quickly answered, "If she wants information, tell her to read Sunday's paper." ■

# Adding Up The Facts




**_Time_ and _Newsweek_ had just a few days to put together their cover stories on the Columbine High School shootings. How did their reporting compare? By Matthew Heimer**

How did the two leading newsweeklies compare in covering the Columbine High School shootings on Tuesday, April 20? *Time* and *Newsweek* had until Saturday and Sunday, respectively, to complete their work, and given the time constraints, both did an admirable job. *Time*'s lead story made for a more gripping read. *Newsweek* delivered a more complete picture.

Each weekly anchored its coverage with a reconstruction of the rampage and the events surrounding it. *Time*'s centerpiece story placed a heavy emphasis on eyewitness accounts, creating an article that was moving, but often muddy in its efforts to retrace the gunmen's steps. And *Time*'s cover may have undermined its lead story's sensitivity to the anguish of the Columbine survivors. Families of two victims objected that the cover photos of Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris had the effect of glorifying the killers, even though the coverline called them "Monsters."

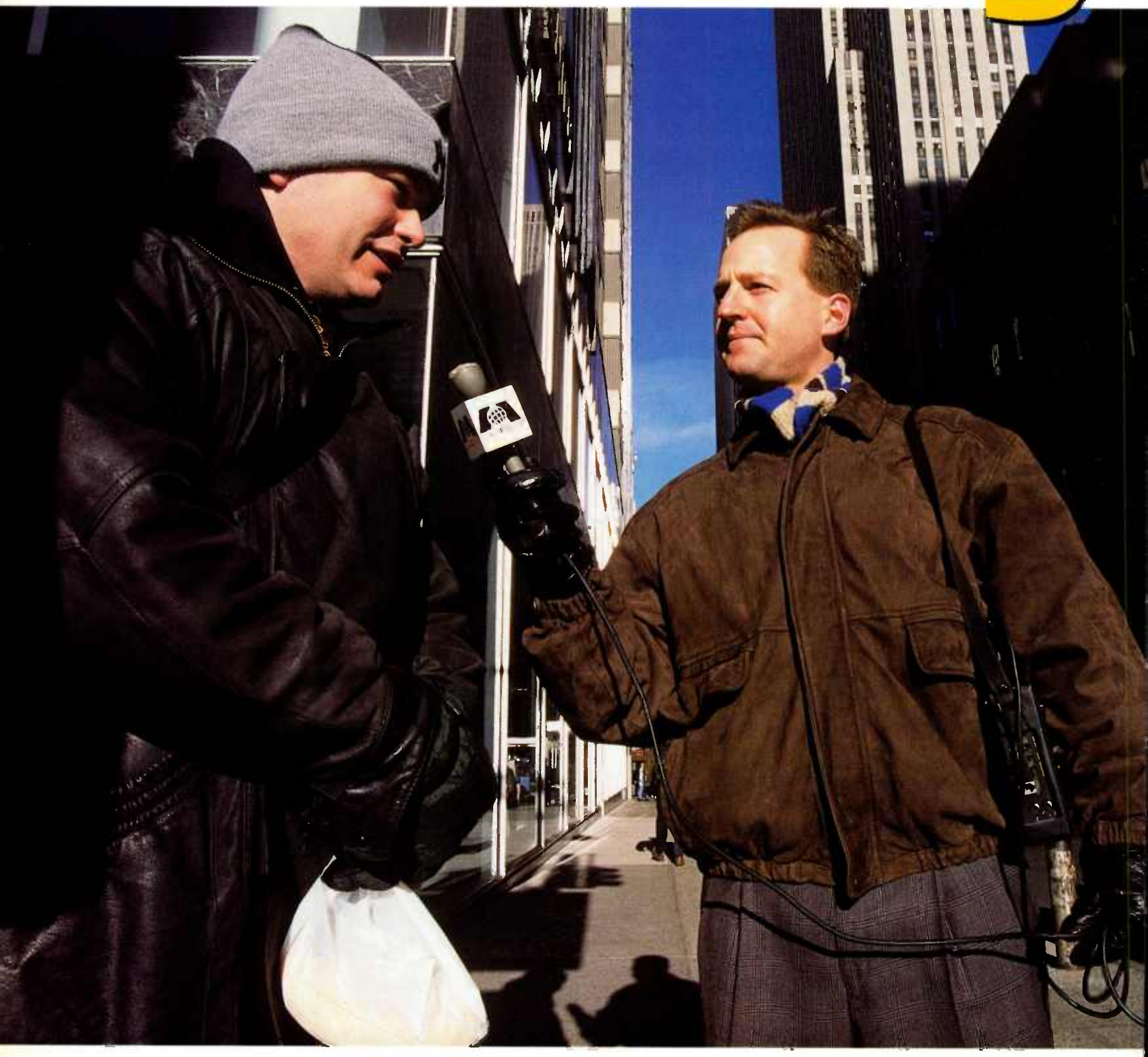
*Newsweek*'s "Anatomy of a Massacre," meanwhile, took a more dispassionate approach, reporting more details about the events immediately preceding and following the massacre, and relying more heavily on law-enforcement sources. The result was a clearer reconstruction of the tragic day, presented with more context than *Time*'s piece.

*Brill's Content* identified 82 distinct statements of fact that *Time* and/or *Newsweek* used in their lead stories to elaborate on the basic facts of the tragedy. Among them were 38 that *Time* included but *Newsweek* did not, and 26 that *Newsweek* used but *Time* did not. The two magazines also often differed—and occasionally contradicted one another—in the details that their stories shared. In the chart below, we highlight and gauge the accuracy of eight details found only in *Time* and eight found only in *Newsweek*, and compare the weeklies' coverage on eight facts that they both featured.

| Littleton Fact | Time | Newsweek | Accurate? | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ironic Ancestry:** Klebold, who took part in a massacre on Hitler's birthday, had a Jewish philanthropist as an ancestor. | ● | | YES | Reported by The Associated Press the Friday before *Time* appeared. |
| **Graduation Speaker:** Sara Martin was working on her commencement speech when the shooting took place; in the aftermath of the rampage, she no longer wanted to give the speech. | ● | | *unknown* | *Time* made Martin's change of heart a framing device for its story. But Martin eventually decided to deliver a commencement address after all. |
| **Foreshadowing:** Isaiah Shoels had had run-ins before with members of the Trenchcoat Mafia, and his father had complained to authorities about the harassment. | | ● | *in part* | The day after the shooting, Shoels's father told *Dateline NBC* about the harassment of his son. The next day on *Today* he added that he himself didn't report the bullying. |
| **Alarming Writing:** An English teacher had brought one gunman's violent writings to the attention of a guidance counselor. | | ● | YES | *Newsweek* scooped the detail but didn't capture it in its entirety; violent stories by both gunmen led the teacher to inform their parents. |
| **"Phrase of the Day":** In-class TV monitors flashed a message to the effect of "You don't want to be here." | ● | | YES | *USA Today* ran a similar detail in its Friday coverage, citing a Columbine sophomore. |

| Littleton Fact | Time | Newsweek | Accurate? | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Bowling Buddies:** Harris and Klebold liked to bowl and would give Nazi salutes to celebrate strikes and spares. | ● | ● | YES | *Newsweek* noted—and *Time* did not—that the gunmen attended a bowling class on the morning of the massacre. |
| **The Diversion Program:** Harris and Klebold cleared their criminal records by completing a program that included community service and an anger-management seminar. | ● | ● | *in part* | Only Harris attended the anger-management seminar, a fact neither magazine made clear. |
| **Making Shrapnel?:** Neighbors reported hearing Harris and Klebold breaking glass in Harris's garage before the shooting. | ● | ● | YES | *Newsweek* said the shrapnel party took place the previous weekend; *Time*, the previous day. They were both right. |
| **Early Warning:** Just before the shooting started, Harris warned a friend he encountered to go home. | | ● | YES | Friend Brooks Brown told his story to *The Denver Post* and KUSA-TV on the day of the shooting. |
| **The Beginning:** Harris and Klebold began their rampage outside the cafeteria, killing Rachel Scott and Danny Rohrbough. | | ● | *unknown* | *Newsweek*'s source was a student who witnessed the first shootings. *Time*'s main text did not depict this scene and did not identify who the first victims were. |
| **Frantic Call:** As shooting began, Denver police officer John Lietz received a phone call from a fellow cop's son, who was trapped in a storage room. | | ● | YES | *Newsweek* opened its story with this snapshot, the first of several in its story that came from police who were on the scene. |
| **Biology Exam:** The kids who tried to save mortally wounded teacher Dave Sanders were taking a test when the killings began. | ● | | YES | Among other U.S. news sources archived on Lexis-Nexis, only *The Baltimore Sun* (4/25) reported this detail. |
| **Fatal Wounds:** The gunmen shot Sanders on the school's second floor. In *Time*'s account, they shot him in the back; in *Newsweek*'s, in the chest. | ● | ● | *in part* | According to a coroner's findings, Sanders was shot from behind, as an eyewitness told *Time*; *Newsweek*'s description of a "face to face" shooting was inaccurate. |
| **First Aid:** Junior Aaron Hancey led the effort to try to save Sanders. | ● | | YES | The first-aid effort was a focal point of *Time*'s coverage; Hancey had previously described his role to other media. |
| **The Choir Room:** Packed into a closet, students lifted classmates with breathing problems toward the ceiling closer to air ducts. | ● | | YES | Previously reported by *The New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the AP, among others. |
| **Pyrotechnics:** The killers set off a huge explosion in a science lab by turning on natural gas spigots and then tossing in a bomb. | | ● | *unknown* | At press time investigators had not determined that this took place. The detail was not widely reported elsewhere. |
| **Test of Faith:** A gunman asked a girl if she believed in God. After she said she did, he shot her dead. | ● | ● | YES | *Time* added that the shooter replied, "There is no God." Victim Cassie Bernall, whom later reports linked to this exchange, has been embraced by some Christian groups as a martyr. |
| **Why They Waited:** Police proceeded cautiously through the school rather than dashing ahead to find and stop the gunmen. | ● | ● | YES | *Time* took up the theme that the police were overcautious, asking rhetorically, "What if their kids had been inside?" *Newsweek* portrayed the police as quicker and more decisive—and featured the account of a SWAT team leader whose son was inside. |
| **Identification:** SWAT teams entering the building carried photos of Harris and Klebold to distinguish the suspects from other students. | | ● | YES | *Newsweek* appeared to be the first to report this detail. |
| **Offer of Help:** During the melee, Dylan Klebold's father contacted authorities to offer assistance and was turned down. | ● | ● | *in part* | Thomas Klebold didn't call directly, as *Time* reported, but through his lawyer, as *Newsweek* stated. Neither magazine reported that Thomas made contact only after a friend of Dylan's told him that his son was a suspect. |
| **Finding the Bodies:** Klebold and Harris were found in the library, each shot once in the head. | ● | ● | YES | Two officers on the scene disagree over a minor point in *Newsweek*'s description of the bodies. *Time*, meanwhile, did not provide details of this scene. |
| **Keys to Plot:** Reports emerged that Harris, as a member of the audio-visual program, may have had a key to the school. | ● | | *in part* | This report had appeared earlier on *ABC World News Tonight*; at press time investigators said they had no evidence to suggest that the gunmen had school keys. |
| **Other Suspects:** As the event unfolded, police detained four other youths. Some witnesses told of a third gunman. | | ● | YES | *Time* made only a general reference to other suspects, stating that "suspicions immediately arose about whether [the killers] could possibly have acted alone." |
| **Memorials:** Crosses were erected to honor the dead: nine blue (for the boys), four pink (for the girls), two black (for the gunmen). | ● | | YES | The crosses were put up two days after the shooting, and the Cox News Service reported on them that night. |

# Trafficking



Going station to station: Metro Networks radio reporter Gordon Deal (or is it David Ryan?) conducts a man-on-the-street interview in Manhattan.

# In News

**The company that brought you the ubiquitous radio traffic report is now bringing you the news. But you may never know it, because Metro Networks—and its reporters—keep the Metro name off the air.**

## By Rifka Rosenwein

**Photographs by Lori Grinker/Contact Press Images**

GORDON DEAL IS COVERING A NOONTIME RALLY IN LOWER MANHATTAN CALLED TO PROTEST THE DEATH OF A WEST AFRICAN IMMIGRANT AT THE HANDS OF POLICE. AFTER GETTING THE SOUND BITES HE NEEDS, THE RADIO NEWS REPORTER RUSHES BACK TO HIS MIDTOWN STUDIO. THERE, Deal tapes two 30-second reports, each one focusing on different aspects of the rally. He then calls the two stations for whom he covered the event and feeds them the reports.

The two talk-radio stations, WOR-AM and WABC-AM, have somewhat different formats and may use Deal's reports in different ways throughout the day. WOR, for example, generally allows more airtime for Deal's reports than WABC does. Because the two stations are also direct competitors, Deal makes an additional change between the two broadcasts: He uses his own name for WABC, but goes by David Ryan on WOR.

Listeners never learn that these names belong to the same person. They also never learn that Deal doesn't work for either station.

Deal is employed by Metro Networks Inc., a Houston-based company that is the country's largest provider of on-air traffic reports. Metro is now branching out into radio news and, in just three years, has become a major presence in the field. In fact, on some days, when Deal feels he has a story that might be of interest to some of the other 39 radio stations in the New York area served by Metro, he broadcasts on those stations, as well. On soul-music station WWRL-AM, for example, he goes by Cordell Jones, the name of a friend.

Does anybody care that the same person delivers news to competing stations, does so under different names, and never tells his audience who pays his salary? Deal doesn't think so. "A person listening to a newscast on WABC doesn't care at all who I am or where I am," he says. "We give listeners too much credit."

Marc Fisher, special reports editor at *The Washington Post,* who until recently wrote a radio column called "The Listener" for the paper, sees it differently. "There's an essential deceit in what they do," Fisher says, referring to Metro and its main competitor, Shadow Broadcast Services. "They never tell you [the report] is from Metro or Shadow."

But Fisher, who bemoans the increasing trend among stations to "outsource," or contract out, their news, concedes that the economic realities of a deregulated and consolidated radio industry mean that this is the future.

From its roots in traffic reporting, Metro has taken the winning combination of ubiquity and anonymity into the news business, where the strategy arguably raises thornier questions. Knowing the source of your news may be more significant than knowing who is telling you about the traffic jam up ahead.

"It's not important to us" to get our name mentioned, says company founder, chairman, and CEO David Saperstein. Instead, Metro makes it a point to customize its reports for each station, to have reporters use each station's call letters, and even to participate in station promotions. As to whether this approach misleads listeners, Saperstein replies that stations "never credit the [Associated Press] either," referring to the wire service that has long been the backbone of radio news.

THE IDEA FOR METRO NETWORKS WAS born in a Baltimore blizzard in 1978. That was back in radio's Stone Age, when you could be stuck in a traffic jam for hours and never once hear the now-familiar whir of a helicopter propeller or the latest sightings from the nearest "jam cam" on any of your favorite stations.

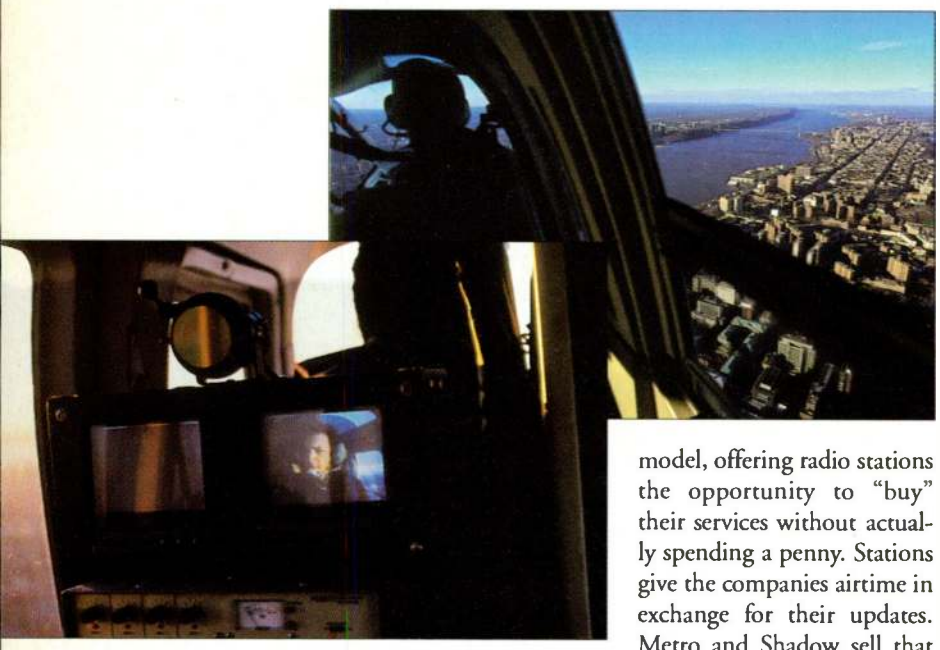
Saperstein, then a car dealer, was stuck in just such a jam and happened to catch a rudimentary radio report describing traffic

conditions down the road from where he was idling. The report was so helpful that Saperstein called the station's news director, who happened to be a friend of his, and asked why the station didn't provide such reports all the time. Saperstein was told it was too expensive to buy cars and send them out in search of traffic problems.

"Well, I have plenty of cars," Saperstein, 58, recalls saying. "We'll use my cars, and you give me commercial time for my dealerships." The station owner agreed, but Saperstein, a consummate salesman, never ended up using the ads for his own dealerships. He sold the time to other advertisers; within months, he had hired two reporters to produce traffic reports for several local stations.

Today, Metro provides traffic, weather, news, and sports reports to about 1,700 radio stations and 150 TV stations in 80 U.S. markets. (There are a total of 12,227 radio stations nationwide.) In 1997, Metro reported advertising revenue of $139.1 million, almost double its 1995 figure. Shadow, meanwhile, provides reports to about 400 stations, including a handful of TV outlets, in 16 U.S. markets. Shadow was acquired last year by giant radio content provider Westwood One, which, in turn, is 25 percent owned by CBS.

Metro and Shadow follow the same basic business model, offering radio stations the opportunity to "buy" their services without actually spending a penny. Stations give the companies airtime in exchange for their updates. Metro and Shadow sell that airtime to advertisers, who thus gain access in one fell swoop to multiple stations in a single market. Kelly Barton, a Metro spokeswoman, says the company would work for a single station in a market, but only with the intent of eventually growing into other stations in the same area.



Up in the air: From his helicopter perch high above New York, Metro's John DelGiorno checks out the traffic (right). An on-board monitor shows DelGiorno as local TV viewers see him (left).

Metro's Saperstein takes credit for creating the ten-second radio commercial, which is read live by the reporter providing the traffic, weather, or news update. "This report, sponsored by..." is by now an almost ubiquitous refrain on radio stations around the country.

The savings to stations are clear. "Nobody could afford the helicopters, the cameras, and the staffing" required to patrol traffic thoroughly, says Warren Maurer, senior vice-president of Shadow Broadcast. "Only by serving a network does it become economically viable."

The radio business as a whole has become more cost-conscious since deregulation and the subsequent consolidation of the industry. Until the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, broadcasters were limited in the number of stations they could own in one market and the number of markets in which they could have a presence. Companies were allowed to own up to 20 AM stations and 20 FM stations nationwide. Fast forward to today: Industry powerhouses Chancellor Media Corporation and Capstar Broadcasting Corporation, which are scheduled to merge this year, will own a combined 488 stations when the deal is completed.

Today, outsourcing news has much of the same appeal outsourcing traffic has had. "In this consolidation, the thinking is, 'If we have six stations in one market, then why should we have six different news departments, six different engineering departments?'" explains B. Eric Rhoads, chairman and publisher of *Radio Ink*, a trade magazine.

This economy of scale has dovetailed with an increasing "lack of interest in news" on most stations not specifically devoted to news, says Rhoads. Most of the stations served by Metro and Shadow feature music or talk formats and broadcast news only at the top or bottom of the hour for two to five minutes. It is often not worth it for such stations to employ reporters or even news anchors.

David Juris, vice-president and general manager of three Denver music stations owned by the Tribune Company of Chicago, illustrates the point. Juris had been airing Metro traffic reports for about ten years when he was offered Metro's new news service, Metro Source, last year. His news needs are simple—and fairly typical of stations like his. "We're music-based stations," Juris says. "We simply provide limited news to listeners so they know what's going on before they get to work and don't feel like idiots at the water cooler."

Juris gave up membership in The Associated Press when he switched to Metro Source. "AP was a cash contract. Metro is a barter agreement," he says. "It reduces cash outlay."

But Metro also offered more services than AP, and saved costs in other areas. "Metro offered to supply us with news personnel," says Juris. "It sounds as if they're employees of the radio station," but in fact they're Metro employees. In some cases, in fact, they are former employees of a station whom that station asks Metro to hire when it can no longer afford to retain them. Sometimes, a station and Metro will share the cost of a reporter.

Juris has come to rely on Metro's eight reporters in the Denver area and on the relationship he has with the local Metro bureau. "We didn't have a local relationship with anyone from AP," he says. He says he speaks to Metro's local news director several times a week, constantly letting his needs be known.

Why contract out to Metro instead of building his own news infrastructure, which would also have an economy of scale? "Two reasons," Juris says: "cash flow and employee

count. If we were a news-intensive operation, then we might consider having an internal news department. However, since we're music-driven stations, [Metro] reporting is appropriate for our format. And the savings, in terms of cash outlay and personnel, benefits us in the long run."

Juris used to have the female member of the morning team on one of his stations, KOSI-FM, prepare and deliver the news, relying mostly on AP. Getting the news from Metro "frees up our person to be more personality-driven," says Juris. "It's not as credible when the female personality on your morning show also delivers the news. It's all about the image of a newsperson."

While preserving the credibility of their on-air news broadcasts, the Denver stations never let listeners know that the news anchor works for an outside company. Information taken from Metro's news-information service is never attributed to Metro or to its sources (In addition to its own reporters, Metro has formed partnerships with Bloomberg News, Weather Services Corp., and a variety of regional and local news providers in order to cover all aspects of news, sports, and weather).

In some ways, of course, as Saperstein points out, Metro's approach differs very little from the traditional wire services. The term for what disc jockeys or news anchors have long done to deliver the news is "rip and read," a reference to ripping information off the wire and then reading it over the air, usually without attribution. "It's always been so," says industry consultant Walter Sabo. Most stations around the country read the news at the top or bottom of the hour throughout the day. Some of these stations employ one or two street reporters and writers, but "the rest is just reading the wires," says Sabo.

Tori Smith, an AP spokeswoman, believes there are distinctions between her organization and Metro that arise in part from the different type of relationship each has with stations. "The people we serve are members of the AP," who in turn help run the cooperative organization. "We are responsible to the members. They own us and guide us," she says. "The relationship is not just client and provider."

Also, unlike AP, United Press International, and other radio-news wires such as CNN and CBS, Metro is not a company with a strong news tradition. Its news division was established in June 1996 as a means of "leveraging the infrastructure," says John Tomlinson, Metro's senior vice-president for news. Traffic reporters, already up in the air or monitoring police scanners, were well positioned to arrive first at many news events. Saperstein says one of his helicopters was the first at the scene of the crash of TWA Flight 800 off of Long Island in 1996 and another was the first over the Miami Beach street where designer Gianni Versace was murdered in July 1997.

That year, the company introduced Metro Source, a complete news package that includes a console with proprietary software so that an anchor can edit stories, plug in audio cuts, and gain access to extensive databases. The company now has 700 news reporters in 90 bureaus filing stories to a main clearinghouse in Phoenix, where about 40 producers edit the material, group related stories, and send those stories out via satellite to Metro Source subscribers.

About 600 stations use Metro-produced news reports—that is, they have Metro employees deliver entire reports. Some 500 use Metro Source, which allows station employees to use information provided by Metro in reports they produce themselves. (Some stations subscribe to both services.) Often, disc jockeys at music stations weave bits of information they receive from Metro, particularly items about the entertainment industry, into their on-air chatter.

**Some critics maintain that what Metro offers is really "McNews"—bite-sized nuggets of spot news. But Saperstein argues that "if it wasn't for [Metro], stations would've dropped news altogether."**

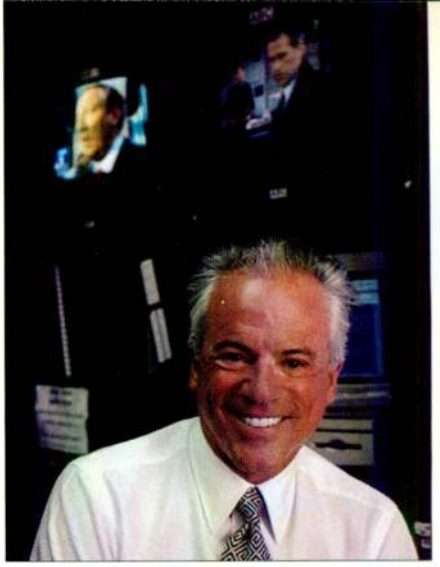
There are only about a dozen all-news stations in the country, says Sabo. And even most of these stations rely on Metro or Shadow to provide traffic, weather, or sports reports. "The idea of farming out news is anathema to me," says Jim Farley, vice-president of news and programming at WTOP-AM and FM in Washington, D.C.

Metro is driven by the market and its clients' needs. "We're not *Field of Dreams*, where we build something and hope they will come," says Tomlinson. "A station does research that tells them what they need, and we come in and provide them with what they need."

Some critics maintain that what Metro offers is really "McNews," as *Radio Ink*'s Rhoads puts it—bite-sized nuggets of spot news, with a large dollop of entertainment. But, Rhoads is quick to point out, "most of the stations [serviced by Metro] are not stations you think of for news." And Saperstein makes no apologies for what he offers radio stations. "All we are is a well. It's up to the individual stations to pick and choose," he says. "If they want to give McNews, they can."

Saperstein argues, in fact, that if it weren't for services like his, "stations would've dropped news altogether." Music stations would have to allocate a disproportionate amount of their resources to staffing and technology to prepare maybe four 60-second news spots each morning, he adds.

"We do a better job than [any single station] could have done with one person reading the news," says Saperstein. "There isn't a news station in a city that has more resources than us." ■



Metro Networks founder David Saperstein takes credit for creating the ten-second radio commercial.

1998

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NEW YORK POST

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MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 1998 / Sunny, 40 / Weather: Page 26 • http://www.nypostonline.com/ • • • • 50¢

# CAUGHT IN THE ACT

FULL COVERAGE STARTS ON PAGES 2 & 3

CLOSE ENCOUNTER: Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky were caught in a compromising position last spring in the White House, sly sources

- Secret Service found them together: source
- Clinton will fall if sex charge is true: Moynihan

1999

Burba pitches complete game, Tribe sweeps Oakland

IN SPORTS, SECTION D

THE PLAIN DEALER

OHIO'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER 35¢ SPORTS FINAL CLEVELAND, FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 1999

Friday!

Sweet Jane

A rock 'n' roll birthday tribute to the great Scott

# Bombings help Milosevic, U.S., NATO officials admit

## New look for Old Stone Church

At left, Jimmy Holt, standing, and Marty Dickerson accomplish the tough job of threading an 8-foot-8-inch-tall, stainless-steel Celtic cross into a mast atop the new Old Stone Church steeple on Public Square. As aluminum replicas of the original spire, right, is moved into place atop a steel base anchored to the church. The men made two ascents to 200 feet before managing to maneuver the 300-pound cross into place amid 22 mph winds. For a detailed look, see tomorrow's religion section.

## Despite West's intent, army's morale rising

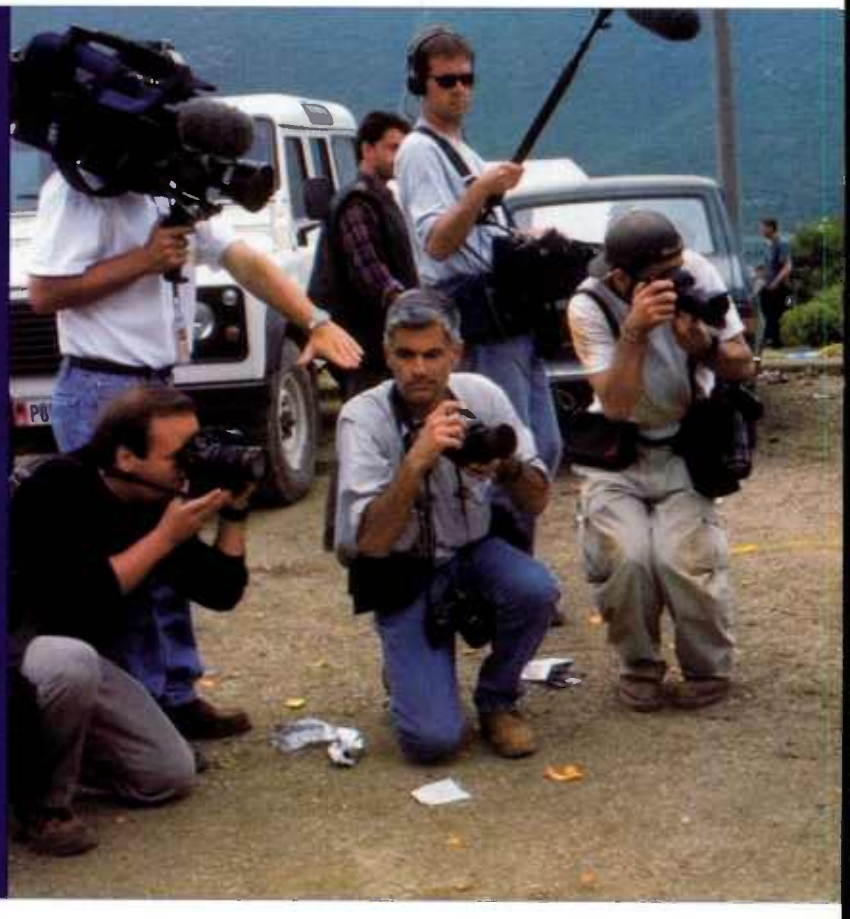
## Allies step up air campaign

## OU, OSU settle battle for 'Ohio'

Presidents reach trademark deal

## Littleton closes final casket

Inside



# WAR GETS THE MONICA TREATMENT

ROBERT VISSER/REUTERS (CURRIE); LES STONE/SYGMA (ALBANIA)

**You know the press went overboard in the Monica scandal. But nobody died in Monicagate. What would happen if the same media machine throttled into overdrive on a complicated, multifront, life-and-death story? Like a story about a war?** **By Steven Brill**

**This spring, we began to see how the changing dynamics** of our new media culture have affected even the way we deal with war and peace. The Monica Lewinsky scandal put all the dynamics of that new media culture on display:

•The speed of today's never-pausing news cycle that demands instant reactions from the players.

•The way 24-hour cable news channels love to fill the air with two screaming sides for every argument, as if the two sides are always equal and as if there is always credible disagreement about whatever the issue at hand happens to be.

•The brutal competition across a vast array of profit-hungry news providers that are typically subsidiaries of giant corporations.

•The carnivorous appetite for any shred of news that has even the slimmest claim to being "new."

•Sinking standards for sourcing.

•Shrinking attention spans, and the ability of the story du jour to drown out most other news.

THE LEWINSKY STORY WAS SPECIAL; IT WAS important but, as with the death of Princess Diana, by its nature it didn't really test how news organizations in our new media culture would deal with a truly "serious" story du jour that doesn't have the lure of sex, scandal, sensationalism, or celebrity. The war in Yugoslavia has become that test.

There's a lot so far that's encouraging in how the new media machine has dealt with war; it's hard, for example, to imagine our troubles in fighting the war in Vietnam going unheralded for so long today. But there's also a lot that is anything but reassuring, mostly because the central dynamic of the new media machine is for all the players to stretch to get the most controversial—which usually means the most negative—story, and then for everyone else to grab it and send it spinning out into the print, online, and cable TV echo chamber, where it assumes a magnified reality.

## CREATIVE WRITING AT *THE WASHINGTON POST*

Here's an example. It's a complicated, not-made-for-sound-bites episode, requiring an attention span that, as we'll see, ABC's Sam Donaldson was unable to muster. But stay with it. After all, the facts in a story about war and peace do matter.

"It seemed like a pretty big story," says an editor at *The Washington Post* who was in the newsroom on the late afternoon of Friday, April 23, as the first edition of the Saturday paper was about to go to press. "Big headline across the top of the front....Maybe a turning point in the war."

There was some satisfaction in the newsroom over how the *Post* had apparently read the day's diplomatic tea leaves so expertly that it was about to break a big NATO story on the same weekend that NATO leaders were convening for their historic summit just up the block. But one *Post* staffer who had worked on the story was uneasy. "I thought we might be making something out of nothing," this journalist recalls. "We were straining too hard."

*Straining* is not really the right verb. *Creating* is more like it.

"NATO Softens Conditions," the *Post*'s four-column headline proclaimed. "Leaders Compromise in Hopes of Getting Russia to Broker Peace," the subhead explained.

Just after 11 P.M., Terence Hunt, the chief White House correspondent for The Associated Press, got a call at home from his office, where an editor read him the headline, along with the first few paragraphs of the story.

The lead sentence did seem like big news:

*"NATO leaders reaffirmed their determination yesterday to escalate the bombing campaign against Yugoslavia until the terms for peace are met, but softened those conditions in the hope of encouraging Russian attempts to mediate an early resolution to the conflict over Kosovo."*

"The new position, outlined in a 17-point communiqué, represented a series of compromises," the article continued.

"Can't we match the story?" Hunt recalls his editor asking. Hunt told him that he had read the communiqué and didn't recall any "new position." Figuring he needed to check further, Hunt dialed David Leavy, the deputy White House press secretary who acts as the spokesman for the National Security Council.

Hunt says that when he told Leavy about the *Post* piece, "he was very vehement about the story not being correct."

"I had a strong reaction to the piece as it was recounted to me," says Leavy. "It was totally inaccurate. In fact, it had the message of the summit completely backwards....My concern," Leavy continues, "was that this was going to be misconstrued by Milosevic." Plus, with NATO meeting in Washington, all 18 foreign leaders—and the press corps that travels with them—were bound to read the hometown paper, which would only magnify the impact of the story.

The *Post* story, by Thomas Lippman and William Drozdiak, said that the NATO leaders' new, "softened" condition was that:

*"[T]he alliance [was] 'prepared to suspend its air strikes' once the government of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic has begun —rather than completed—a withdrawal of troops and security forces from Kosovo."*

In other words, the "old" condition that had supposedly been softened was that all troops had to be completely withdrawn before the bombing stopped.

But the *Post* hadn't specified from which document or statement this old condition had been taken.

Which was no surprise. For, as Leavy now explained to Hunt of the AP, according to both men, the only official set of conditions that had been issued by NATO prior to this new communiqué—an April 12 communiqué issued by the 19 NATO foreign ministers—had said that Milosevic "must...ensure the withdrawal from Kosovo of the military, police and paramilitary forces." It did not say that the withdrawal had to be completed.

In fact, one could easily read the new document as hardening the condition, for it went on to specify that NATO would only suspend the air strikes once Milosevic had "demonstrably begun to withdraw [his] forces from Kosovo according to a precise and rapid timetable," whereas the earlier statement had only talked vaguely that he must "ensure" the withdrawal. (In that circumstance, as a practical matter, it is difficult to imagine NATO bombing those troops as they are withdrawing under such a specific timetable.)

Asked what the difference really was in the two documents, *Post* reporter Drozdiak, who is based in Berlin, says that he did not read the earlier communiqué in preparing the article. He says his work on the story involved synthesizing what *Post* reporters covering various NATO delegations in Washington during the summit were telling him they were hearing in background briefings from those nations' officials about how the new communiqué could be construed as a softening.

In other words, in writing a story comparing the conditions, Drozdiak and the *Post* were clearly basing the story on the new official document from the 19-member NATO group issued that day and spelling out those conditions, yet ignoring the old one in favor of looking for the spin from a bunch of politicians' off-the-cuff statements.

Aside from that lack of symmetry, one of the difficulties in doing this kind of reporting is that diplomats almost always talk only "on background" (that is, anonymously), and do so either to send signals to the other side that are real, or to send signals to the other side that they wished were real but that aren't because a policy decision has been made in a way that they don't agree with. It's always difficult to tell the real from the wishful thinking, yet in this case a simple, cold reading of the documents seems to make it clear that the *Post* reporters, reaching for a scoop, chose to fall completely on one, incorrect side.

CNN's highly regarded world affairs correspondent Ralph Beglieter defends the *Post*'s attention to the diplomatic backgrounders. "In this kind of reporting, the documents don't count nearly as much as what people are telling you....And in the weeks leading up to this, we were all hearing a lot about how the bombing would never stop until all the troops were out." Nonetheless, Beglieter says that in his reporting that weekend he didn't use *softening* to describe the new communiqué or otherwise think it was big news. "I really only implied it," he explains. And, again, the *Post* reporters didn't ignore both documents. They just ignored the earlier one; the new communiqué was referred to repeatedly in the article and reprinted in full inside the paper.

Moreover, unlike a bilateral dispute or war, in a multilateral operation in which 19 countries have to agree to take action, any document that nails down in specifics their agreed position would seem to take precedence over what one or more diplomats from a few of those countries might be whispering at any given time.

Another aspect that the *Post*'s Lippman and Drozdiak detected in their article as a *softening* was that, in this new communiqué, NATO said that an international army, rather than just a NATO army, would be acceptable as the force that would occupy Kosovo and safeguard the ethnic Albanians once the Serbian troops withdrew. The article called this "a modification of its previous insistence that the force be fundamentally composed of troops from NATO countries."

But, as Leavy says he pointed out to the AP's Hunt, the first communiqué had said exactly the same thing, word for word, as the second one had: Milosevic must "agree to the stationing in Kosovo of an international military presence."

Lippman of the *Post* explains his interpretation this way: "I did not have the [earlier] language [meaning the first communiqué] in front of me." Rather, what he had been thinking of in writing the stories was the "rhetoric in background briefings of some NATO officials."

But, Lippman adds, Drozdiak, his partner on the story, knew about the earlier communiqué, because Drozdiak wrote a story about it when it was issued. Told that Drozdiak says he, too, did not read the earlier communiqué in preparing this story, Lippman says, "I really can't speak to that."

But Lippman does point to one difference in the earlier statement versus the new one that *was* specific and important (although this supposed difference was never mentioned in the article) and was, he says, based "only on the documents," not on any of those background briefings. The use of *softens* in the headline was well justified, he says, by the fact that the new statement did not say that "all" troops had to be removed; it only said Milosevic must "withdraw his military, police, and para-military forces." The first statement, Lippman says firmly, used the word *all*. The difference, he says, was crucial; he notes it was akin to a subtlety in the wording of conditions that the press had spotted during the negotiations over the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories captured during the 1967 war.


The Washington Post
Saturday, April 24, 1999
NATO Softens Conditions
Leaders Compromise in Hopes of Getting Russia to Broker Peace
Littleton Probers Casting Wide Net
Possible Accomplices Sought in Massacre
The Washington Post
FINAL
Saturday, April 24, 1999
NATO Amends Conditions
Leaders Seek Role for Russia; More Troops, Tanks Headed to Balkans
Littleton Probers Casting Wide Net
Possible Accomplices Sought in Massacre

The *Post* modified its headline between the first edition (left) and a later version (right) to make it more accurate. The trouble was, the story the two headlines touted simply wasn't true.

But this is why it would have been helpful if someone at the *Post* had read the first statement in the course of writing a story comparing it to the second. For the first statement said, "ensure the withdrawal from Kosovo of the military, police and paramilitary forces," while the second one said, "withdraw from Kosovo his military, police and para-military forces." The word *all* wasn't in either statement in connection with the withdrawal of forces.

Leavy ultimately convinced Hunt that the story was a nonstarter; Hunt called back his editor and, as Hunt recalls it, explained that "I was persuaded...that we hadn't missed a story."

Indeed, this is one of those rare press controversies that

should have been relatively easy to resolve. If an article is going to be written that purports to use one document and compare it to its prior counterpart, then the documents are the documents. Either the conditions changed or they didn't. If you want to see for yourself, go to our website, *www.brillscontent.com*, and take a look. There's a lot of diplomatic verbiage, but the point is uncontestable. The second document was in no way "softer" than the first.

But Leavy's work that evening was not finished. Only the *Post*'s earliest edition was out; it was the late edition that would be distributed the next morning all over town, including to the doors of the 18 visiting NATO heads of state. So Leavy got Deputy National Security Adviser James Steinberg to call Lippman at the *Post*.

Sam Donaldson displays one of the *Post* headlines. He told ABC's *This Week* audience that the paper's switch from *softens* to *amends* after the White House complained proved that "things haven't worked out" for NATO—a breathtaking leap of illogic.

Steinberg rarely talks on the record to reporters, but he offered to do so with Lippman to contest the idea that the conditions had been softened.

"Steinberg and I had an unbelievably unpleasant conversation," says Lippman. "I said I didn't buy his argument and I wouldn't change the story." This meant not only that the headline and gist of the story would not be changed, but that Steinberg's on-the-record quote denying any softening would not be added.

Leavy and Steinberg, both incensed that Lippman would not add the quote, let alone not correct an obviously incorrect story, then called John Harris, the *Post*'s lead White House reporter. Harris was persuaded, he says, that the *Post* should make some changes and said so to his editors.

The result: In the next edition of the *Post* the word *softens* in the headline was changed to *amends*, so that the headline now read, "NATO Amends Conditions." The lead sentence then changed *softened* to *modified*, although nothing in the communiqué really had been modified. Far down in the middle of the article, a paragraph was added saying that "White House officials strenuously denied that the troop pullout language was a softening of NATO's position," despite the fact that *softening* was not now to be found anywhere in the article. Steinberg was then quoted as saying that the new language actually "toughened" the conditions.

Of course, in a perfect world the *Post* would have scrapped the thesis of the article rather than bastardizing it, and it would have issued a correction for what had been published in the earlier edition. But in the real world, this toned-down version of a false story was considered a victory of sorts for Leavy and the White House.

But not a perfect victory.

In the new age of the media machine, where the story of the day gets the full Monica treatment, once a negative scoop gets out there, there's no stopping it.

*The Washington Post* has a wire service that is used by 465 of the nation's newspapers, most of which have abandoned foreign policy coverage of their own, and many of which ran the story. The wire service typically uses the early edition of the paper. So that Saturday morning, readers from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas to Memphis read about NATO's "softening" of conditions on the front page of their local paper.

More important, anyone watching television around the country or logging on to the Internet saw repeated references to the "softening" on network and cable television shows over the next few days. And, although the impact of the "softening" story was limited by the way the media machine turned its near-singled-minded attention that week to Littleton, viewers were nonetheless treated to debates about its implications on the cable news talk shows, radio talk shows, and various online chat areas.

But one veteran television newsman did sniff out the story about how the *Post* had backtracked from its original take on the NATO communiqué. By the time ABC News came on air with its evening broadcast, Sam Donaldson was on the case.

Sort of.

When the history of our media age is written, Donaldson's near-breathless report that night on ABC should stand as a quintessential moment—a classic example of the press's insularity, arrogance, and eagerness to put the most controversial, negative spin on anything.

What did Donaldson report? Not that the *Post* had screwed up a story, but rather that the changing of the *Post*'s headline proved that NATO wasn't succeeding in Yugoslavia.

After describing some wrangling among the NATO leaders at the day's summit meeting over a possible Yugoslav oil embargo, Donaldson reported:

"The president denied the alliance had drifted into an open-ended Vietnam-style war....Administration sensitivity to the fact that things haven't worked out yet and the policy is being adjusted was nowhere more evident than in this morning's *Washington Post*, whose initial headline read 'NATO Softens Conditions.' But by the final edition of the *Post*, the same headline read 'NATO Amends Conditions.' What was the difference...? A White House official called up to complain."

The next morning, on his *This Week* Sunday talk show, Donaldson, warming to his own scoop, gave it some more

flourish. "Well, the problem is that the strategy so far hasn't worked," he told cohost Cokie Roberts, who had teased a question to Donaldson by noting that "Sam has a very interesting visual aid here."

Donaldson then gave his shtick about the two headlines, while triumphantly holding them up to the camera. "The difference" between the two headlines, he concluded gravely, "was simply that the White House and a top official there called up, raised unchartered H-E-L-L with the *Post*, [and the headline] changed, but the story remains the same."

When I asked Donaldson by fax a few weeks later if he had personally read the two documents that would supposedly contain the old and the newly "softened" conditions, ABC spokeswoman Eileen Murphy replied, "I think whether he read the two documents or not has nothing to do with what he reported on air."

Meantime, over on NBC's *Meet the Press*, host Tim Russert's third question to British Prime Minister Tony Blair that Sunday began with, "The headlines in the American papers were 'NATO Softens Conditions.'" Asked if he had read the two supposedly contrasting NATO documents containing the conditions, Russert declined to comment.

What was also revealing about Russert's reference to newspaper *headlines* was that none of the other leading American or European newspapers who had their own reporters covering the story, all of whom had presumably read the new communiqué, wrote anything about "softened" conditions.

Doyle McManus, the Washington bureau chief for the *Los Angeles Times*, who wrote his paper's Saturday story on the communiqué, says he wrote the story, headlined "19 Countries Speak With A Single Voice," the way he did because that's what he thought the story was, and that he thought the *Post* piece was "just funny....I was surprised by their headline and their take....I know these are two fine, intelligent reporters, and I know that it's entirely possible to read a document and draw the wrong inference, and I think they did...But, in their defense, there were differences in some nuance in the two documents that I guess could lead to inferences."

Hunt of AP may have declined his editor's urging to "match" the *Post*'s story, and McManus and the other reporters at the handful of newspapers that still cover foreign affairs on their own may also have resisted the temptation. But Russert's and Donaldson's homing in on the *Post* story fits a pattern in war coverage, just as it did in Monica coverage. In the months since the bombing began, the negative stories are the ones that invariably get picked up and given life by the media machine's two newest engines: all-day cable news talkfests and Internet news and chat boards. Whether the story is Monica, JonBenét, Littleton, or a war, that's the way the media machine works. Many news organizations—including now even apparently the best print news organizations, like *The Washington Post*—are consumed by a frantic desire to find some new twist, even if it's not there. And then the juiciest ones get grabbed and chewed up by everyone else, whose definition of news is anything that's "out there," rather than anything that's out there that they've taken the trouble to verify.

White House National Security Adviser Samuel Berger was asked about the *Post*'s "softening" article on CNN's Sunday *Late Edition* show. Because he was mindful of the media machine's thirst for controversy, he later explains, he disputed the article, but only matter-of-factly. "I was stunned by the headline of the story, because we had assiduously followed the language of the prior foreign ministers' statement" in drafting the second one, he says, but he did not "want to keep it going for another day by continuing the argument rather than just letting it slide by and taking a one-day hit." (Disclosure: Berger is a longtime friend of the author. He agreed to be interviewed for approximately 20 minutes for this article, only after he knew it was being written. Neither he nor anyone on his staff suggested the article. All of his quotes are on the record, by name; he is not quoted anonymously anywhere in this article.)

**Many news organizations—even, apparently, *The Washington Post*—are consumed by a frantic desire to find some new twist, even if it's not there.**

## QUOTE SPLICING AT THE *TIMES*

Six days after the *Post*'s "softened conditions" scoop, a story appeared headlined in bold across the two top right-hand columns of *The New York Times*. For almost anybody I know, it was this April 30 story that most credibly and sweepingly raised the most dire questions about our prospects in Yugoslavia.

But the story seems to have been the product of a leak from a group in the CIA that had no firsthand knowledge, buttressed by only two quotes from named sources, both of which were taken out of context in a way that would embarrass the *National Enquirer*.

THE *TIMES* HEADLINE READ: "BOMBING Unites Serb Army As It Debilitates Economy—Yugoslav Rift Heals, NATO Admits."

In other words, not only was the bombing not weakening Milosevic, it was strengthening him. And NATO had now admitted it.

That afternoon, I was giving a lunch speech in Cleveland, and a man in the audience asked me about the article and expressed concern about all of its anonymous sources. I answered something to the effect that I'd read the story on the plane and agreed that its

use of anonymous military or intelligence officials made me uneasy. But in thinking later about my answer I also recalled that there was one quote that was not anonymous and seemed to justify the point about army leaders in Belgrade now being more united behind Milosevic. It's a quote that appeared just before the article jumps from the front page, and it came from, of all people, Supreme NATO Commander General Wesley Clark. Following a sentence in which *Times* reporters Blaine Harden and Steven Myers wrote that Clark had previously "insisted...that the bombing had hobbled Yugoslav air defenses and was wearing away the resources of Mr. Milosevic's armed forces," it said. "But General Clark also acknowledged that despite the bombing, 'you might actually find out that he's strengthened his forces in there.'"

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition

VOL. CXLVIII . . . . No. 51,309 NEW YORK, FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 1999 60 CENTS

NEW JERSEY PLANS TO FORESTALL SUIT ON RACE PROFILING

AGREES TO NEGOTIATIONS

Justice Department Has Found Enough Evidence to Pursue Charges Against Police

Bombing Unites Serb Army As It Debilitates Economy

Yugoslav Rift Heals, NATO Admits

A Long Week of Funerals Ends

Students' World After Massacre

Violence, Real and Imagined, Sweeps Through the Schools

The *Times*'s claim in its lead story—that the NATO bombing had "invigorated the Yugoslav army"—was apparently based on an anonymous CIA leak and quotes taken out of context.

It was that quote that seemed to justify the headline "Yugoslav Rift Heals, NATO admits." Clark, after all, does seem able to speak for NATO, and he did seem to be admitting that Milosevic had strengthened his army following the bombing.

However, it turns out that this pivotal quote didn't come from an interview Clark gave to the *Times* reporters who were asking him about whether the bombing had actually strengthened the Yugoslav army. Rather, it came from the transcript of a routine press conference Clark had conducted in Brussels three days before, when he had answered a wholly different question asked by a *Los Angeles Times* reporter.

The question Clark had answered that day was about changes in the state of the army's strength *in Kosovo*—not whether, as *The New York Times* article's lead sentence asserted, "[t]he NATO bombing that was intended to cripple and demoralize Slobodan Milosevic's military machine had instead invigorated the Yugoslav Army and helped him heal his long-poisoned relationship with the officers corps..."

If, as is obvious, in that press conference Clark had clearly meant Milosevic's strengthening of his forces "in there" to refer to troops going into Kosovo, how could the *Times* have used it as the one pivotal nonanonymous quote in a story about Milosevic's relationship with his officers in Belgrade and the general state of his army?

"I don't think that's a distinction that's meaningful here," says *Times* reporter Harden. "If there are more troops in Kosovo and they are in a position to fight, then the army is stronger....I don't want to go into text analysis of this story....We worked on it very hard and satisfied ourselves at many levels that this is what's going on."

But what about the headline that had said that "Yugoslav Rift Heals, NATO Admits"? Clark was the only NATO official quoted in the article, and he hadn't admitted that at all. Harden's coauthor, Myers, says, "I can't speak for the headline writers....We didn't say that NATO admits anything in our article."

"We were all surprised by the quote," says Captain Steve Warren, a spokesman for Clark. "And I can tell you that the general was very unhappy." (If you want to see for yourself how the quote was used out of context, the transcript of the Clark press conference containing the question he was asked and the answer that included that quote can be found at www.brillscontent.com.)

Other than the quote from Clark, all but one of the many quotes and paraphrased assessments in the *Times* article were attributed to anonymous government, military, and intelligence officials. Their quotes on their own should have meant nothing, and certainly shouldn't have meant that NATO was admitting across the top of the front page of *The New York Times* that the bombing had boomeranged. We can't know how many of these "officials" there were (2 or 200?), what axes they have to grind, or what real knowledge they have (though none were described as having been in Yugoslavia anytime recently). Indeed, a reporter can always get an anonymous source in the Washington national security community to grouse about any policy, and when it's a war policy such as this one, there are always factions in the CIA or Pentagon who think the U.S. should be doing more, or less, or something else completely.

The second—and only other person—quoted by name in this 1,600-word, multiquote front-pager was James Gow, a professor at Kings College in London. Gow was described as an expert on the Yugoslav Army, and his appearance as such in the article lent it great credibility. He was quoted near the end of the piece with what was clearly meant to be a kind of penultimate confirmation of its bombing-has-boomeranged theme: "The NATO campaign has put the army in first place in the institutional command for the first time this decade," he says.

But that's not all Gow said when the *Times* reporters came to see him.

"They came to me," Gow recalls, "and said that they had had a briefing from some people in the CIA, who were telling them that morale in the army was up since the bombing. And my eyebrows raised at that....Morale is down. There is trouble there."

Gow says that he is in contact with people in Yugoslavia and monitors Yugoslav military publications. "The army people just wrote some article about 'triumph over stress,' and I told the *Times* that that meant there was trouble. I told them that they wouldn't mention stress that way unless there was big, big trouble....My sense is, there are real problems....I know there are thousands of desertions....I told them that....I told them I am in contact with people in Yugoslavia who tell me that."

Gow also says that he expressed "wonderment" to the *Times* reporters that the people from the CIA with whom

they had spoken could have real, firsthand information—if that's what they were saying about the state of the Yugoslav army and its leadership. However, he says, the *Times* reporters answered that "that's why they wanted to talk to me."

Asked if he had any sources with firsthand knowledge, Harden of the *Times* refuses to characterize his sources in any way. But he did not deny telling Gow that the *Times*'s sources were not firsthand.

"The quote they used," Gow adds, alluding to the reference to his saying the army was now "in first place," was accurate, "but I was simply making the point that because the country is under attack, the army, which had been second fiddle to the police, is now in a better position....It had nothing to do with the thrust of their article."

The *Times*'s Harden confirms that Gow did, indeed, say he disagreed completely with the premise of their story and that he spent most of their interview saying so. "Yes, that's an accurate portrayal of what he said and what he thinks," Harden concedes. Then why not quote him saying so? "We talked to people in a better position to know," Harden says, referring to his unnamed sources. "You try to figure out...where the truth lies from the people who are best informed, and then you go with that."

Asked if he was troubled that one or more people in the CIA seem, by Gow's account (which is consistent with the article's description of its sources as "intelligence officials"), to have been able to plant a story like this one, National Security Adviser Berger says only, "The CIA's job is to provide analysis to the executive and legislative branches of government, period."

Of course, we can't know if the CIA people who apparently spoke to the *Times* were a rogue group trying to sabotage their president's policy, or a band of dedicated, whistle-blowing patriots. We always have to depend on reporters who use anonymous sources to make those judgments. But when the same reporters have clearly taken their most credible, named official sources' comments utterly out of context, and ignored and distorted the input of their only other named source, we have to be worried that they've overreached and that their anonymous sources may have known that they would.

"The simple fact is," asserts one intelligence official who asked not to be named, "that there are some CIA people who think we should be invading Yugoslavia, and there are some people, lots of them, at the *Times* and *Washington Post* who think we should. They have a right to believe that. But it is not their job to use their positions to advance that, and I think that is what they are doing." (It's an assessment that not only helps make my point, but also makes the point that one can always find an anonymous "intelligence official" to support one's view.)

As with the *Post* story, the *Times* wire service spread the "Yugoslav Rift Heals" story all over the country, from Des Moines to Cleveland to Orange County, California. (It was even picked up in London's *The Daily Telegraph*.) Similarly, the story made its way over the next few days onto the various cable news talkathons, where, in many instances, it was batted around approvingly by that new staple of the media machine who had replaced the blond former prosecutors of Monicagate—the former generals.

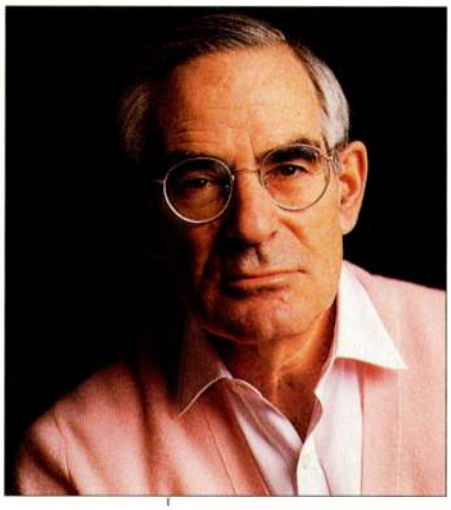
On Sunday, Tim Russert used the *Times* headline to grill Secretary of Defense William Cohen and Joint Chiefs of Staff Vice-Chairman Joseph Ralston. It apparently didn't matter to Russert that the night before the *Times* story ran, NBC's own evening news with Tom Brokaw had reported that Milosevic's top army command might be in disarray and that nine of his top generals were reported to be under house arrest. (These reports by NBC and by other news outlets of disarray and even desertions within the Yugoslav Army would, in fact, accelerate about three weeks after the *Times* story.)

A week later, on May 9, Russert teased his show with this introduction, based apparently on nothing: "Is the Clinton administration on the verge of retreat in Kosovo?" True, *Meet The Press* is not the sober session it was years ago under Lawrence Spivack. It's true, too, that Spivack didn't have to worry as much about ratings the way everyone at NBC does now that news is a profit center under a parent company, General Electric, that rightly worries about profit. But Russert, who does not play favorites, is also performing a vital, classic journalistic function by picking the toughest questions to ask and by stirring the liveliest possible debate. Suppose this were the Vietnam War era. Wouldn't we want him to ask the questions that some of his colleagues might be ignoring?

**When *Times* reporters have clearly taken their most credible, named sources' comments out of context, we have to be worried that they've overreached.**

Milosevic made sure that we saw this picture of the bombed Chinese embassy but not any images of bombs hitting military targets.

AP-WIDE WORLD



When David Halberstam and other reporters found that their frontline reporting in Vietnam was taking second place to official sources, many of those reporters quit. Today, they might be on TV, arguing with the officials who once could have silenced them.

Wouldn't we want those "process" stories about supposed internal disagreement?

Sure, it might seem absurd that Russert, as if to personify the modern media's impatience with any story that doesn't have a quick resolution, questioned the viability of the war effort even on the first weekend of the bombing campaign. But aren't we better off that the questions, however unfair or overeager or based on a desire just to stir things up, are asked?

We are, but there is also a question of balance and perspective. If journalists are cynical and negative about everything—because the new dynamics of their business dictate that they be—then they may be listened to less closely when their questions are the most justified.

THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER EXAMPLES OF slipshod reporting about this war, one of which was emblematic of a reality of the new media age: Exclusives often count more than a true story. On April 7, CNN's Brent Sadler phoned in an exclusive report from inside Kosovo that became the subject of an appropriately biting critique by Charles Lane in *The New Republic.* Sadler allowed himself to be under such tight strictures at the hands of his Milosevic minders during his tour of the Kosovar city of Pristina that rather than talk about burned-out homes and get firsthand accounts of atrocities and ethnic cleansing, he simply noted that there "is no clear indication, of course, as to what happened, where all those people have gone and under what conditions they left." He then offered multiple descriptions of wreckage caused by NATO bombs that had gone astray.

Similarly, when Sadler landed an interview with the notorious alleged Serbian war criminal Arkan, Sadler described him only as a "well-known businessman" and a "fighting man," and then allowed him an unchallenged opportunity to attack CNN's Christiane Amanpour for having reported on charges that he was a war criminal, an event that occasioned Amanpour, whom the Milosevic regime had driven from Yugoslavia, to say, when asked about the Sadler interview on CNN's *Reliable Sources*, "If you're going to put an indicted war criminal on the air, then you really need to challenge him on the facts and on what he says." (Sadler could not be reached for comment.)

The coverage of the war has hardly been all bad. Far from it. There has also been a lot of great journalism that itself is emblematic of what the new media machine can do well. For example:

•Reports from Amanpour and others at CNN and at ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox News from the refugee camps.

•Two incredibly detailed, powerfully persuasive reports, one from Peter Finn and R. Jeffrey Smith of *The Washington Post* (which even had a house-by-house neighborhood map) and the other from Barry Bearak of *The New York Times*, that meticulously used accounts from the refugees to document specific war crimes and other atrocities by the Serbs.

•A series of dispatches and longer documentaries by the BBC (also aired on its fledgling BBC America cable channel) from inside Yugoslavia, reporting in great detail on the ethnic slaughter, on the role of Milosevic's wife in the government and in the ethnic cleansing policy, and on Milosevic's own history and current policy apparatus.

•Dispatches from freelancer Masha Gessen for the online magazine *Slate* describing what's going on inside Yugoslavia. Gessen, a correspondent for the Russian magazine *Itogi*, has provided a compelling diary of the war from the perspectives of both sides.

•Reports from the one North American reporter, Paul Watson, of the *Los Angeles Times*, who managed to get back into Kosovo and report firsthand about what the Serbs (as well as the NATO bombs) have been doing there [see "Alone In The War Zone," page 127].

•Long-form pieces from CNN&*Time*'s *NewsStand* and CBS's *60 Minutes* that aired about seven weeks after the war started, using home-video footage smuggled out of Kosovo that showed the ethnic slaughter.

## THE NEW REALITIES

The tableau offered by all of these journalistic efforts, the bad ones and the good ones, present, I think, a consistent picture and some consistent truths about the fate of a big story—any big story, including one about war and genocide—in the new media age. Indeed, the realities of the new media machine's dynamics dictate what will be the highs and lows of any story that becomes the machine's subject du jour. Here's how:

**1.** *Because the media machine is now so massive, so competitive, and so driven by financial goals, it is absolutely carnivorous. It always needs new material, the more controversial or exclusive the better.*

Thus, the *Post* created the "softening" story and the *Times* leaped at the Yugoslav army-unity story once some CIA people apparently floated it, whereupon Russert and Donaldson and the cable talk shows eagerly seized on the stories. This is akin to the media pack seizing on every leak from independent counsel Kenneth Starr or President Clinton's White House, or to everyone covering Littleton chewing the fat night after night about any leak coming out of that investigation.

This becomes what media critic Tom Rosenstiel and veteran editor Bill Kovach (who is also this magazine's ombudsman) call in a new book (*Warp Speed*, published by The Century Foundation Press) "the journalism of assertion," rather than "the journalism of verification."

Veteran journalist David Halberstam explains the difference this way: While he was covering the war in Vietnam for *The New York Times*, he got a report from a reliable source that U.S. troop morale was so bad that there had been a near mutiny at some outpost outside Saigon. It was a story that was perfectly consistent with everything Halberstam thought about the war.

For a few days, he tried to check it out, he recalls, and

TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS/CORBIS-OUTLINE

when he couldn't make any progress, he hired a car and went to the scene himself, and discovered that the story wasn't true. Today, "a reporter might simply just report that assertion, rather than wait to verify it," Halberstam says, "and everyone would just debate it, until someone tried to verify it, and then they'd debate the story that knocked it down."

Similarly, because *controversial* usually means *negative* or *counterintuitive*, the press is predisposed, even in war, toward countering any consensus that might be building that a policy may be working. Imagine that kind of dynamic during World War II, when there was lots of negative material to report, let alone overstate and exploit. Could the country have summoned the will to fight the war if constantly reminded, and even deceived about, how bad things were?

Another kind of material that satisfies the new media machine's appetite for something new and different is the interview with someone who has not been interviewed by anyone else. It matters less what information comes out of it than it does that it's an exclusive.

the circumstance, he might allow such reports about a planned terrorist act, for example, on the principle that it would save people on the other side. But his overriding principle, he explained, is that he would make any such decision without regard to which particular side was helped or hurt by what CNN did.

Again, there is an undeniably positive side to the new media machine's appetite, however profit-motivated it may be, for evenhanded coverage and debate. First, that kind of fairness is the essence of what journalism is supposed to be about. Second, it lets people—rather than elite editors—make decisions about the issues. When Halberstam and other reporters found that their frontline reporting about problems with the war in Vietnam was being overruled by their bosses at home who preferred to believe official sources in Washington, many of those reporters ultimately became demoralized and quit. Today, they'd make it on to CNN or MSNBC or Fox News, arguing with the officials who once could have silenced them.

## The media machine—buttressed by our quick win in the Persian Gulf—demands fast results. Would we have the patience for another World War II?

**2.** *Because TV talk is cheaper and usually offers more fireworks than real journalism, any story on cable television soon becomes one with two equivalent sides, so that two talking heads can fight about it on air.*

First it was a debate over ground troops, featuring those retired generals whose credentials and axes to grind are never revealed. Then there was the argument over whether we were justified in being in Yugoslavia in the first place, including whether wholesale murders and ethnic cleansing were really going on.

The full-scale debates over that, plus the new dynamic of lusting after—and having plenty of airtime for—any exclusive interview regardless of its content, are enough to make one wonder if, had we had today's media machine then, we'd have seen Hitler on some show in the early 1940s explaining how charges of anti-Semitism were a bum rap.

An added complication is that many of the news organizations (particularly the television entities) are, or hope to become, global empires. This contributes to the admirable journalistic instinct to be fair to all sides, but arguably collides with traditional patriotic duties. Does CNN consider itself as having any patriotic duty to support America in a war? "Not at all," says CNN chairman Tom Johnson. "We have to take off our hats as Americans when we are journalists....I cannot be an extension of any government." But would he withhold reports of secret American troop movements? "Yes, I would," says Johnson. "But I would also withhold reports of secret troop movements by any government if it would jeopardize any combatants."

Johnson, however, went on to say that, depending on

**3.** *The media machine demands instantaneous, clear reactions on the part of the players.*

Because the news cycle now never ends, especially in a war involving countries in so many time zones, and because clear, uncomplicated quotes carry the day, those fighting a war with a 19-country war council who can't make sure the home team's media prints exactly what they want printed are at a real disadvantage—which can mean that confusion or disarray is conveyed when it's not really there.

By the same token, the media machine also demands fast results; it has little tolerance for stories that take a long time to play out, a dynamic that, when it comes to war coverage, has been buttressed by the quick win we enjoyed in the Persian Gulf. What does that say about how a war that takes a long time to slog through would be covered? Would we have the patience for another World War II, or even a half-year or yearlong war someplace in the world?

**4.** *It's nondiscriminating—or democratic, depending on your view—in terms of sources and outlets.*

When news outlets are in a hotly competitive race looking for something new, any anonymous source can become a player. And any outlet can let a story loose that gets picked up by the others eager not to be scooped for too long. We saw this happen much more in the Monica scandal—as with Matt Drudge, or *The Dallas Morning News*'s false story about a supposed Secret Service witness to President Clinton's indiscretions. But even in a complicated international story like this one, badly sourced stories put "out there" by one outlet quickly get picked up.

*continued on page 136*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# Fearless Predictions:

## The Content World, 2005

*Editor's note: Predictions, like New Year's resolutions, are often made but rarely come true. The future often unfolds differently than our best guesses. But prognostications do serve a useful purpose: They force us to take a hard look at what's happening now and to try to figure out what it all means. Consumers of content may not be aware of the technological innovations and business trends reshaping the media, but these shifts will play a significant role in determining what kind of news and information we'll get, how we'll receive it, and whether its quality is any good.*

*Therefore, we asked Michael Wolf, author of* The Entertainment Economy: How Mega-Media Forces Are Transforming Our Lives *and the senior partner of the media and entertainment group at the Booz-Allen & Hamilton Inc. consulting firm, to gaze into his crystal ball at the future of news and information. Wolf, his partner Geoffrey Sands, and their colleagues, who have worked with the world's top media companies, examined the media landscape of today using statistical research, as well as by quizzing professionals, college students, and high school students in three separate focus groups. After crunching the data, they've come up with what we think is a fascinating glimpse of the coming world of nonfiction.*

MIDWAY THROUGH THE NEXT DECADE, MANY OF TODAY'S MOST RECOGNIZABLE MEDIA companies will still be around, because we increasingly will rely on strong brands to help us choose our news and information providers. But don't be surprised if they enter your home or office in unfamiliar ways, as you tune into *Dateline NBC* on your computer, or *The New York Times* on cable. When one of the high school students in our focus groups says that in the coming years "the main source of information for us—especially in college—would definitely be AOL [America Online]," it is both a prediction and a warning of how news as we know it will cease to exist. We'll still spend most of our media-consuming time in front of the television, but the Internet is likely to become our main source of basic 'who, what, where, and when' news and information. Radio will sound radically different than it does today. And electronic books will be a key part of the nation's reading habits. To help make sense of how your media diet is going to change, we present eight predictions for the media world circa 2005.

**By Michael J. Wolf and Geoffrey Sands**

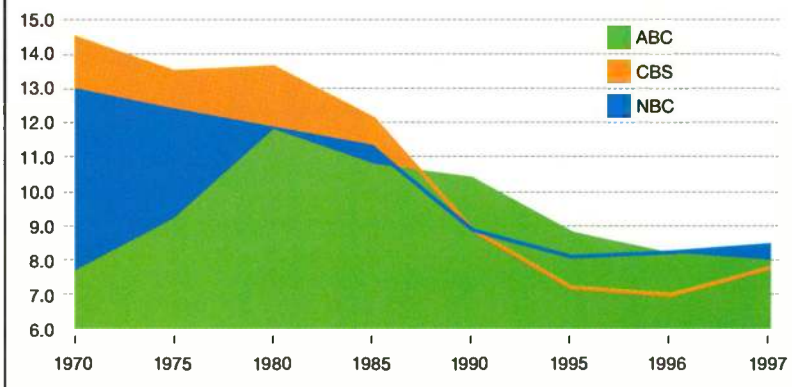
*Michael J. Wolf is the founder and senior partner of Booz-Allen & Hamilton's media and entertainment practice. Geoffrey Sands is a partner at Booz-Allen, also in the media and entertainment practice.*

# 1 A FEW MAJOR CONGLOMERATES WILL DOMINATE THE MASS NEWS BUSINESS, EACH WITH TV, PRINT, AND WEB OUTPOSTS

Viewers of the network evening news continue to flee, a trend that began in the 1970s, as the accompanying chart shows. CNN has investigated merging with the news operation of a broadcast network. And CBS chief executive Mel Karmazin says he wants to buy another network.

Traditional news formats are becoming increasingly irrelevant, and their economics unsustainable. We want our news and information when *we* want it, not at a preordained 6:30 time slot. Nearly every day, new competitors set up shop on the Web and on cable. The costs of newsgathering are skyrocketing, and consumers are loath to pay for it. "Why should I pay for anything online?" said one professional during a focus group held last spring. "There are sources that give you articles on specific topics for free."

**Broadcast Network Evening Newscast Household Ratings (1970-1997)**




**Broadcast network news ratings have significantly declined over the past 30 years.**
Source: Nielsen Media

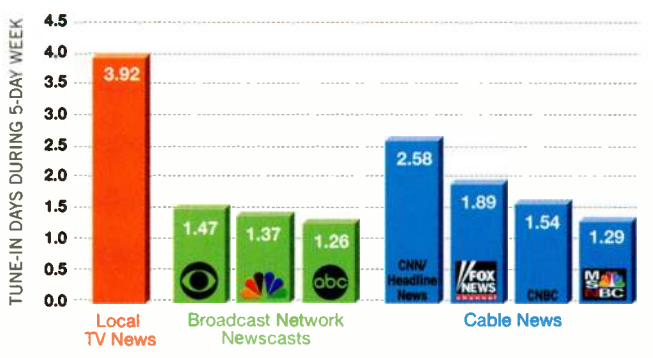
The survivors will not just be broadcast networks, or cable news networks, or newspapers, or websites. They will be entities that encompass all of them, and there will be only a few of them. They will deliver news anywhere, at any time you want it, through your TV, your laptop, even your Palm Pilot, as portable devices allowing online access revolutionize the way people get their news and information. When you watch your favorite cable channel, the announcers will urge you not just to keep watching but to pick up its magazine, tune in to its radio station, and log on to its website. We're already seeing it with ESPN's various entities. TV, print, and online news operations will be integrated even more closely, mimicking the model *The Wall Street Journal* has begun following with its business partner, CNBC. Each day, boxes printed in the paper tell us to watch the business-news channel for more information about its stories; when we tune in, we see *Wall Street Journal* reporters. *Time* journalists will actually report their own stories for sister Time Warner company CNN, as Washington correspondent James Carney has begun to do, and not just pop up as talking heads. The cross-promotion will be relentless, as media giants try to keep you within their families. The winners of the coming consolidation in news and information will be the companies that carefully coordinate their disparate offerings. The ones who don't will not survive.

# 2 LOCAL NEWS STATIONS WILL THRIVE, BUT ONLY IF THEY BEEF UP COVERAGE AND HAVE STRONG ONLINE OFFSHOOTS

"If you're living in New Jersey or New York, it's boring to hear about what's going on in California." These words from a high school student during one of the focus groups presage a key aspect in the media world of 2005: Local news—be it about area sports teams, mayoral politics, traffic, or the weather—will continue to be of immense importance to nearly all consumers (see chart). But local broadcasters, traditionally the mainstay of local news and information with their station brands like "Eyewitness News," will squander their advantage if they don't change what they offer us.

The local news field is getting more crowded, and most local broadcasters are doing little to blunt the round-the-clock convenience and greater depth of Internet city guides and local and regional cable news and sports networks. Your local affiliate now devotes precious minutes on its 11 P.M. newscast to hyping an entertainment show on its parent network, rather than on reporting items of real interest and importance. If those stations don't change their ways, consumers in many markets—particularly the young and affluent—will turn to Internet sites and local cable channels.

**TV News Viewing: Average Weekly Tune-Ins (1998)**



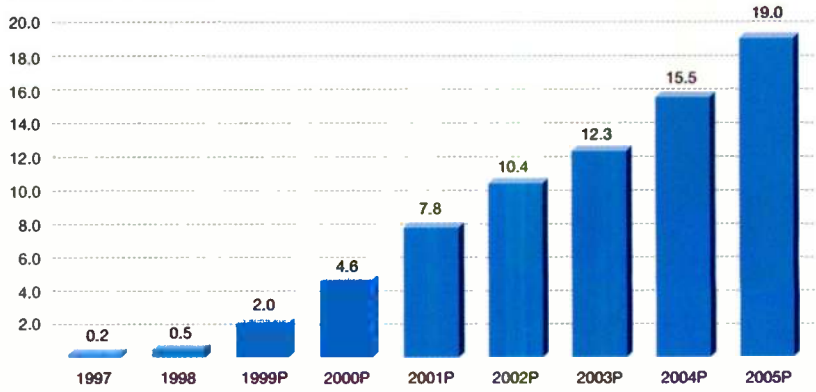

**Local news is the most regularly watched news on television.**
Source: Frank N. Magid Associates

## 3 TV AND THE WEB WILL FINALLY CONVERGE BUT IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

Surfing the Web can still be a poky experience for most of us. But the long-heralded day of "convergence" is almost here. Thanks to advances in cable and telephone technology, the digital world is rapidly coming to your home (see chart). The Internet will always be "on," through your computer or TV, and audio and video offerings will get richer and more interactive.

But convergence won't occur the way conventional wisdom has foretold. There won't be one appliance in your home doing everything. The TV won't become your computer. While it will carry programming with instant online tie-ins, which will let you access Web-like pages and even make transactions, TV will still be used mainly for passive entertainment. For research-intensive activities, you'll rely on your computer, which will boast video and audio as crisp and clear as you can get on your TV.

**Digital Cable Subscriber Projections**
**(households in millions)**




**By 2005, more than a quarter of cable households will have digital systems, providing instant online access, interactive TV, and e-commerce capabilities.**
Source: Booz·Allen & Hamilton

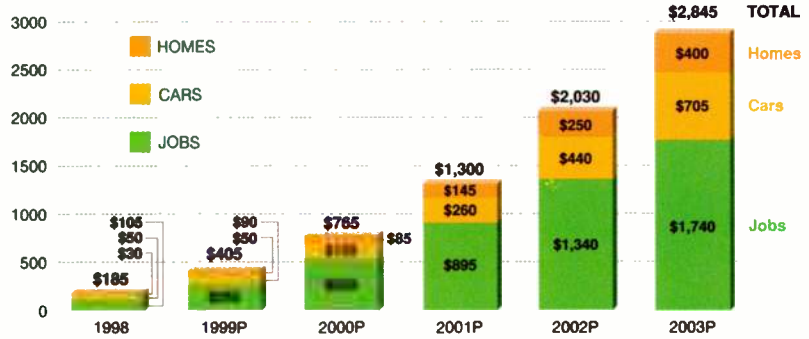
## 4 NEWSPAPERS WILL BE AN ENDANGERED SPECIES UNLESS THEY EMBRACE THE WEB AND EVER-MORE TARGETED COMMUNITIES

While the predictions of doom and gloom for newspapers have been around for years, the Internet poses a significant threat to the industry's health because it may take away critical classified-advertising revenue (see charts). Today those ads represent close to 40 percent of a typical daily's revenue and 50 percent of its profits. But if newspapers lose half of their classified revenue, as the Newspaper Association of America has warned will happen if its members ignore the online threat, their profit margins will evaporate and scores of papers will close.

Newspapers therefore must find a way to grab an online audience and the attendant advertising dollars if they expect to thrive in 2005. As Andrew Grove, the chairman of Intel Corp., told members of the Association of Newspaper Editors in May, "Nothing sharpens the awareness of a situation like the sight of a gallows."

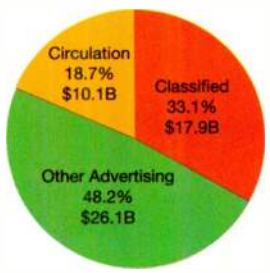
One step newspapers can take is to provide distinctive online local content, and not to let the Microsofts of the world dominate the market with Sidewalk.com-style city guides. Papers will have to make their offerings more valuable to specific groups of readers through targeted editions. And as papers begin to lose paying readers to their own free online editions, they will institute new subscription plans, ones that provide access to all the content they produce, in whatever form it's delivered.

**Projected Online Classified Advertising**
**(dollars in millions)**




**The online classified market is expected to grow rapidly.**
Source: Forrester Research

**Spending On Daily Newspapers (1998)**



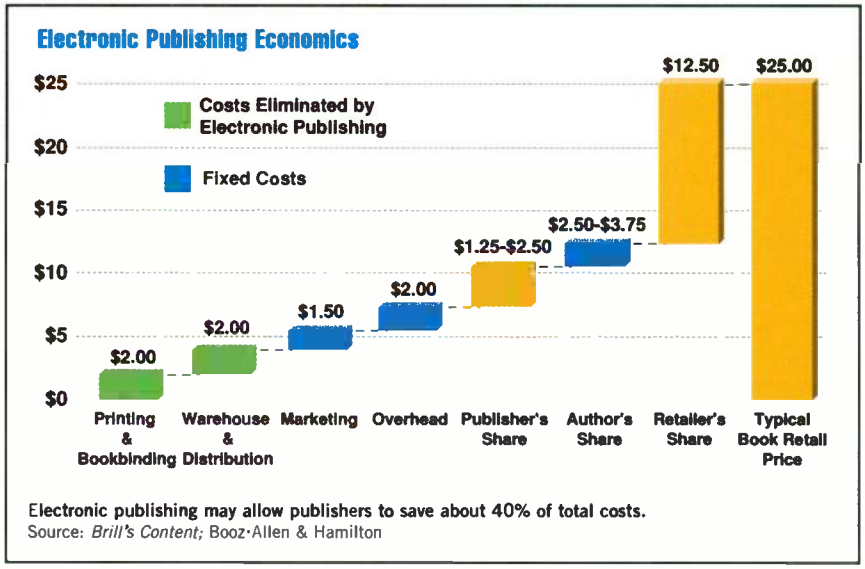

**TOTAL: $54.1 BILLION**

**Classifieds represent a large portion of expenditures on newspapers.**
Note: Includes Sunday
Source: Newspaper Association of America; Booz·Allen & Hamilton

# 5 HALF OF THE COUNTRY'S BOOK PURCHASES WILL BE MADE ONLINE

Six years from now, we will buy nearly half of our books from online retailers, such as Amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com. The simplicity, convenience, and low prices offered by these outlets will trump the bricks-and-mortar retailers. Only those stores that provide an entertaining buying experience will survive. So we'll be treated to more author appearances, writing seminars, and coffee bars. Megastores are here to stay; independents will continue to struggle.

Electronic books—paperback-sized digital recording devices you can download titles into—will have begun transforming the publishing business by 2005, lowering costs (see chart) and preventing books from ever going out of print. Writers who would have gone unpublished as recently as six years earlier will be unleashing their works on the world. Textbooks will be electronic. And you'll be able to download your favorite newspaper into your eBook, too. All these uses for eBooks will find a receptive audience in a younger generation that has grown up with computers and is not as wedded to print.




Electronic publishing may allow publishers to save about 40% of total costs.
Source: *Brill's Content;* Booz·Allen & Hamilton

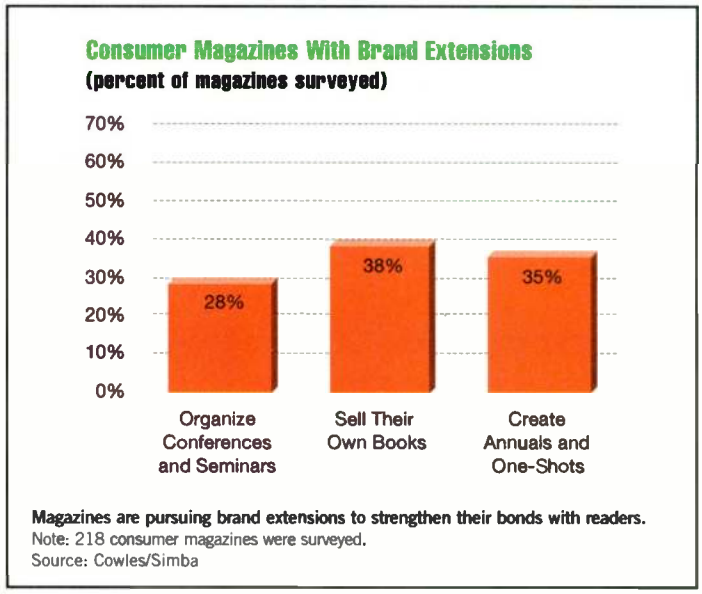
# 6 THE NUMBER OF MAGAZINES WILL GROW DESPITE THE GLUT OF MEDIA AND THE RISE OF THE WEB

Cable networks have proliferated. Surfing the Web has eaten into magazine-reading time. And newsstand sales continue to drop. All these factoids seem to bode ill for the future of magazines. Yet the number of magazines continues to soar. There were 4,500 titles by the end of last year, 50 percent more than in 1990. With the cost of launching a magazine relatively low, there are more launches than ever. In 1998, for example, 1,067 new magazines fought for your hearts and pocketbooks; in 1990, there were just 557.

The trend is not about to tail off. These new magazines will be tailored to ever more specific audiences, and many will be spinoffs of existing, well-known publications. Already we're seeing magazines such as *People* aggressively use its strong and positive name recognition to launch *In Style*, *Teen People*, and *People En Espanol*, while this fall *Architectural Digest* will spin off a lifestyle magazine about cars called *Architectural Digest Motoring*.

Magazines will continue to move into such other areas as conferences and seminars, as *Forbes* and *Fortune* have done, and book imprints, like *Rolling Stone*'s (see chart). This brand-extension frenzy will only intensify. With all of the media options out there, hitching a ride into the marketplace with an existing brand that consumers already know and trust will improve a new product's odds of succeeding.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the Internet is not about to doom magazines to obsolescence. Nothing available now can beat magazines for portability and high-quality photo reproduction. But to avoid advertising dollars and readers being siphoned off by websites providing similar content, expect magazines to beef up their online content to complement their print offerings and strengthen the bond with their audience. More magazines will provide original content on the web, and daily updates, personalized features, and e-commerce applications will be among the innovations you increasingly will see.



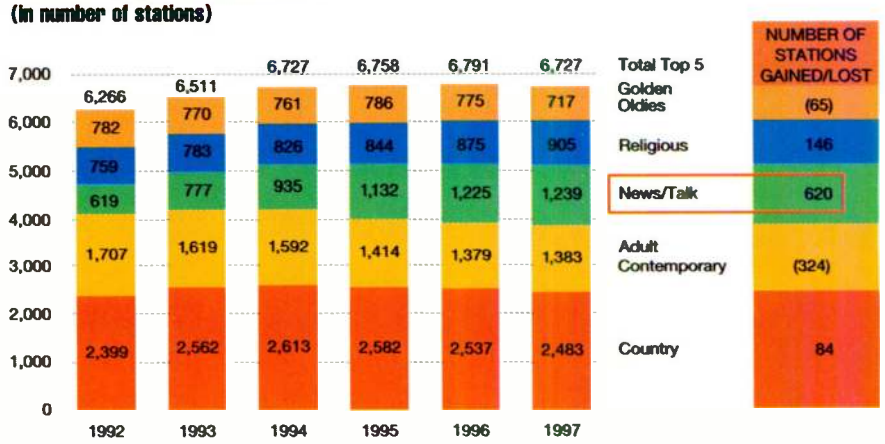

Magazines are pursuing brand extensions to strengthen their bonds with readers.
Note: 218 consumer magazines were surveyed.
Source: Cowles/Simba

## 7 THE CURRENT MUSIC RADIO FORMAT WILL BE NEARLY OBSOLETE WHILE NEWS/TALK CHANNELS GROW STRONGER

The Internet will transform how we listen to the radio. We'll get our music over the Web or through our televisions, as services such as Broadcast.com or MTV Network's Imagine Radio transmit radio programming over the Internet, and cable companies and satellite companies offer digital audio channels. We'll have more control over the songs we listen to and we'll be able to tune into stations from across the country.

But as the power of today's music radio fades, the news/talk format will build on the gains it has made in the 1990s (see chart). In 1998, news/talk was the most listened-to radio format, surpassing country and adult contemporary. By 2005, more news and talk shows will invade our drive-time hours, their content more local and targeted. News/talk stations are already aiming shows at teenagers, while sports, entertainment, and Christian talk shows are proliferating.

**Growth of Top 5 Radio Formats**
**(in number of stations)**



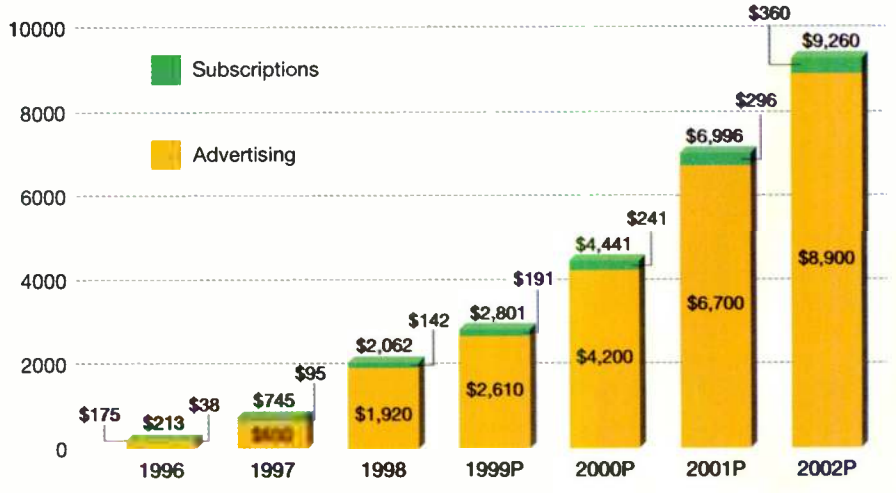

**News/Talk is the fastest-growing format in radio.**
Source: Veronis, Suhler & Associates

## 8 THE LINES BETWEEN EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING WILL BLUR MORE THAN EVER

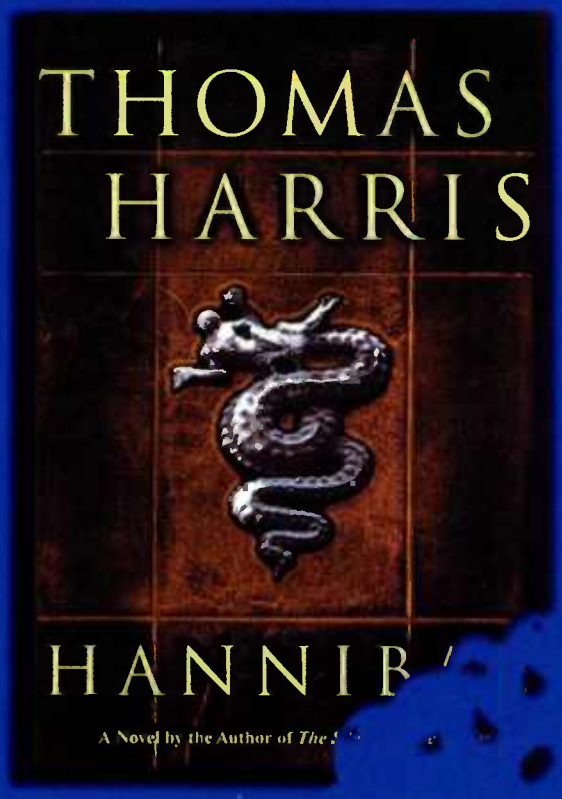
The Chinese wall that is supposed to stand between journalism and advertising is full of gaping holes in the online world. The infractions can be as obvious as an Intel ad featuring Homer Simpson gallivanting across *USA Today*'s logo. But the more insidious kind are the ones in which you can't tell that the lines are being blurred. Some search engines sell their top search-result spots to the highest bidder, rather than just giving you the most accurate entry. And Amazon.com plugged books in return for up to $10,000 from publishers, a practice it did not disclose to its customers until a *New York Times* article sparked an outcry.

This trend is only going to worsen. Consumers won't pay for online content, with a few exceptions for specialized content, such as financial-information sites (see chart). That will force websites to rely almost exclusively on advertising and, increasingly, e-commerce, whereby a site gets a cut of any purchases made by the people it steers to a retailer. The temptation to increase that revenue may drive media companies to include links to advertisers' sites within articles, or even embed ads in the content through advances in online-technology. The line between church and state of many media companies will become even blurrier by 2005. ■

**Online Revenues**
**(dollars in millions)**




**With advertising the primary revenue source for websites, the pressure on editorial integrity will only increase.**
Source: Jupiter; eStats; Internet Advertising Bureau

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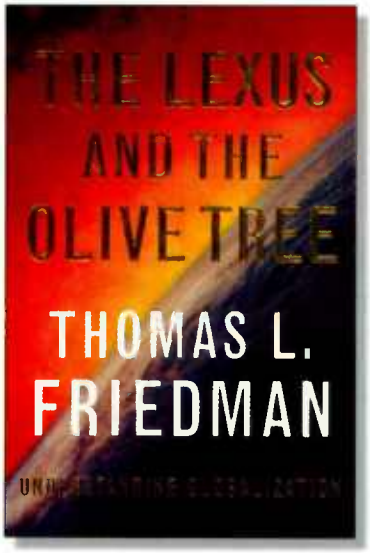
# Summer Reading

## THE BEST OF NONFICTION

Summer is the perfect time to enjoy reading a few great books. But selecting those books from the seemingly endless shelves in your local bookstore can be a daunting task. So, we've pored over hundreds of nonfiction books published since January—some that have shined under the media spotlight, and some that have had quieter debuts—to compile a list of books that we think are the season's best.

ILLUSTRATION BY JEAN TUTTLE




### THE LEXUS AND THE OLIVE TREE: UNDERSTANDING GLOBALIZATION

By Thomas L. Friedman • Farrar, Straus and Giroux • April 1999 • Print run: 65,000

**AN AMERICAN READING THOMAS** L. Friedman's *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* would be hard pressed to feel anything less than exuberant about this nation's prospects. After all, as this *New York Times* foreign affairs columnist and two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter explains, the politics and economic ideologies of the Cold War have been supplanted by a new paradigm—globalization. And the U.S. is leading the way.

Gone are the days of two superpowers butting heads in the geopolitical arena. When the Berlin Wall fell, Friedman observes, so too did the barriers that stymied the free flow of information, goods, and services between nations. These are the days of interconnectedness, the days of an "inexorable integration of markets, nation-states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before."

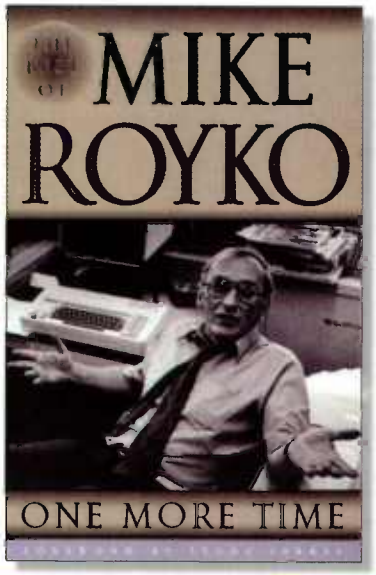
With liberal use of anecdotes gleaned from two decades of foreign reporting, Friedman demonstrates how those living in nations that fail to interconnect are sure to languish. While not all Americans will understand how to reap the benefits of globalization, the United States is better poised than other nations—geographically, financially, politically, and technologically—to thrive under this new global system. "America is a country where the minute one person stands up and says, 'That's impossible,'" Friedman writes, "someone else walks in the door and says, 'We just did it.'" Because of globalization, this "it" can be instantly traded in the marketplace of the world. —*Michael Freedman*

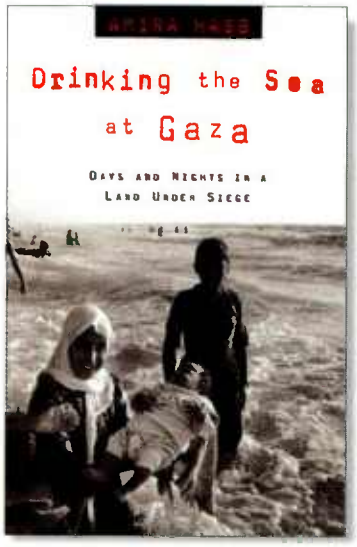
### ONE MORE TIME: THE BEST OF MIKE ROYKO

By Mike Royko • The University of Chicago Press • April 1999 • Print run: 50,000

**IN APRIL 1997, CHICAGOANS AND** fans of hard-nosed journalism mourned when legendary syndicated columnist Mike Royko passed away. Two years later, the same people can now celebrate the publication of *One More Time*. Readers of this collection who discover or revisit 110 of Royko's columns from his 34-year career, will find that despite the columns' impressive range of subject matter, Royko's voice remains singular: irascible, funny, compassionate—sometimes all in the same sentence. He is famous for lambasting the corruption of Chicago's political machine and the systematic racism of public housing, and his 1967 Christmas column—in which he imagines the absurd struggle that the pregnant Virgin Mary would have faced to find shelter in an inhospitable, modern-day Chicago—remains a classic.

Though Royko was best known for white-hot moral outrage swirled with black humor, he could also write tender reminiscences of his Windy City childhood, as well as poetically painful eulogies, whether for his late wife or for a close friend's famous nephew, John Belushi. The cumulative effect of having these varied columns in one volume is staggering, and makes *One More Time* a great legacy from a great American writer. —*Matthew Reed Baker*




### DRINKING THE SEA AT GAZA

By Amira Hass • Metropolitan Books June 1999 • Print run: Not available

**THE GAZA STRIP IS THE OVER-**crowded seaside enclave where hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees have lived since the creation of Israel in 1948. Most outsiders see Gaza as a squalid ghetto and a hotbed of terrorism; among Israelis, the expression "Go to Gaza" means "Go to hell."

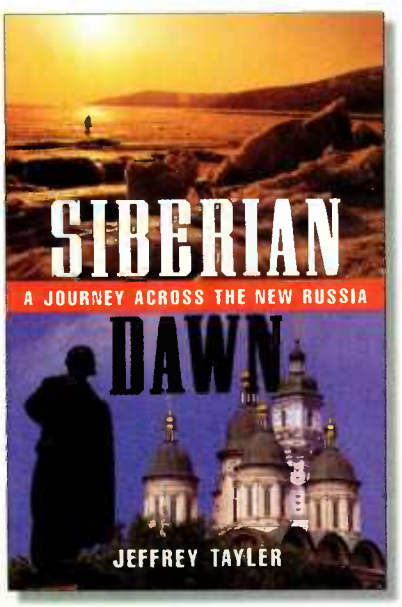
After the Arab-Israeli peace process gained momentum in 1993, Amira Hass, a reporter for the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, made hell her home, becoming the first Israeli journalist to settle in Gaza. Her stereotype-busting book depicts the Middle East maelstrom through the experiences of her Palestinian friends and neighbors. Hass finds that while Gaza refugees yearn for the homes they lost, few translate their feelings into fanatical hatred of Jews. She also shows that Gazans suffer their worst hardships not from political suppression but from economic suffocation, as fears of terrorism prompt Israel to repeatedly close Gaza's borders and cut Gazans off from jobs and goods. —*Matthew Heimer*

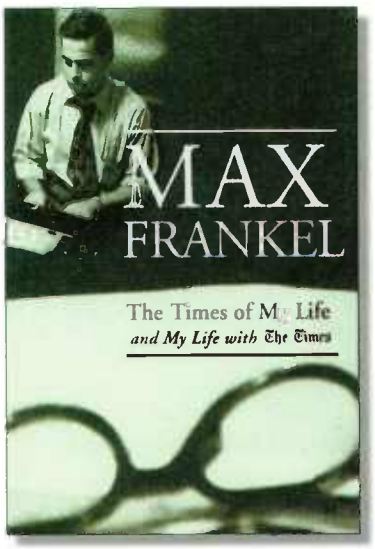
## SIBERIAN DAWN: A JOURNEY ACROSS THE NEW RUSSIA

By Jeffrey Tayler • Hungry Mind Press
February 1999 • Print run: 5,000

**IT WAS AN ABSURDLY DANGER-**ous project: an 8,325-mile odyssey by truck and train across the entire Russian landmass, with just a U.S. passport and a Moscow-only visa. Despite warnings from his Russian friends, Jeffrey Tayler made this journey in 1993, and now, in *Siberian Dawn*, he recounts his adventures: trucking over frozen marshland in roadless gulag country; nearly getting into a bar fight with a Russian mobster; falling in love in Tomsk, recently irradiated by an explosion at a nearby "secret" nuclear city. But Tayler, a Moscow-based contributor for *The Atlantic Monthly* and *Salon*, eschews gonzo bravado in his storytelling. He seems genuinely humbled by the empty vastness and brutal weather of the steppes and taigas. Both his fear of deranged drunks and his compassion for the honest poor are palpable. And through the reaction of a Yakut medical student, he admits the naïveté of his "interesting" Russian romp: "She glared at me, as if to say, 'What is *interesting* to you as an outsider is sheer hell for us. We have to live here.'" Most important, Tayler neither romanticizes nor patronizes the Russians as he weaves their tales and his own into a haunting saga.

*—Matthew Reed Baker*




## THE TIMES OF MY LIFE AND MY LIFE WITH THE TIMES

By Max Frankel • Random House
March 1999 • Print run: Not available

**IN 1957, AT AGE 27, MAX FRANKEL** arrived in Moscow armed with an "awesome press credential" bearing the words *The New York Times*. His account of the three years he spent there—before covering Cuba and the White House and eventually becoming the top editor of the *Times*—provides a fascinating portrait of an ambitious young reporter as he learned to decipher the smoke signals of Russian politics (the arrangements of official portraits of Soviet leaders was particularly telling) and devise tricks to slip a true picture of the Soviet Union past the faceless censors at the Central Telegraph office. Frankel's memoir offers telling glimpses into the personalities of presidents and policy makers. Nikita Khrushchev, whom Frankel describes as one of his "only real Soviet acquaintances" (because Frankel got to see the Soviet leader frequently at receptions but was denied contact with Russian citizens) is brash and incautious but genuinely concerned about improving his country. "He really believed that he could reform and rescue the Communist system by exorcising the ghosts of Stalin," Frankel writes. "And behind his mask of bluster, I thought I saw a face of decency."

Frankel also sheds light on the inner workings of the *Times*, especially in his description of how much influence owner-publisher Arthur "Punch" Sulzberger exerted on the editorial page when Frankel was its editor (some, Frankel says, but not as much as people might suspect). He shares his remembrance of how the *Times* confronted President Kennedy's direct, personal request that the paper not break the story of the Cuban missile crisis, and provides a vivid account of what it was like when he finally moved from the editorial page to the pinnacle of a great newspaper career—the job as top editor of the *Times*. By then we've lived through Frankel's highs and lows as a reporter on various beats, and can easily appreciate both his joy in moving into the top spot and the insights that are packed into his account of how he handled that role. Though filled with candid takes on the various people and issues he encountered along the way, this is not a kiss-and-tell memoir. Frankel's most revealing portrait is of himself, a discerning reporter and editor who devoted his life to penetrating the minds of men like Khrushchev and Henry Kissinger. *—Jennifer Greenstein*

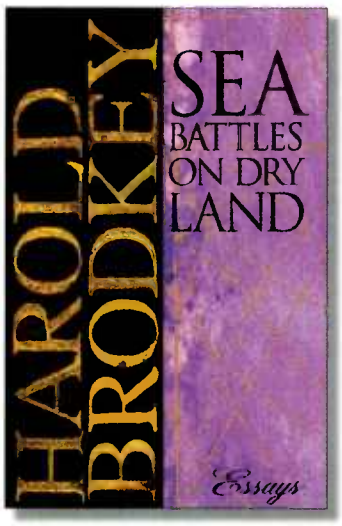

## BLACK HAWK DOWN: A STORY OF MODERN WAR

By Mark Bowden • Atlantic Monthly Press
March 1999 • Print run: 155,000

**THIS STORY OF A U.S. MILITARY MIS-**sion gone awry belongs in an elite category: nonfiction that you can't put down. On October 3, 1993, an Army strike force launched a daylight raid into

Mogadishu, Somalia's capital, only to be stranded after clansmen shot down two of the team's Black Hawk helicopters. Mark Bowden, a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, interviewed scores of Americans and Somalis to reconstruct a minute-by-minute account of the shootout and race-the-clock rescue mission that ensued.

American veterans of the fight describe the shock of realizing that superior training and equipment did not guarantee their survival. Others recall the psychological battles they waged to overcome fear and the rush of adrenaline, and the horror of seeing comrades die. Bowden strips the combat of any trace of Hollywood glamour—though that hasn't stopped testosterone-fueled producer Jerry Bruckheimer (*Top Gun*, *Con Air*) from buying the movie rights to this page-turner. —*Matthew Heimer*



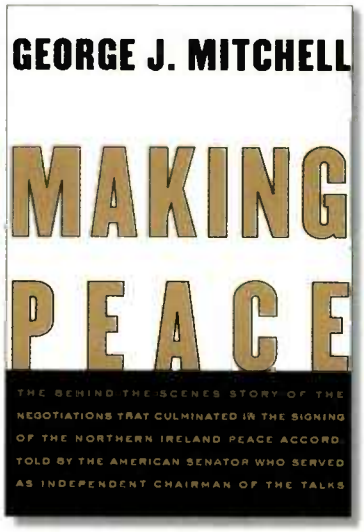

**SEA BATTLES ON DRY LAND**
By Harold Brodkey • Metropolitan Books
April 1999 • Print run: Not available

**THE LATE HAROLD BRODKEY** is best known for short stories, a moving AIDS memoir, and—some have said—squandered literary promise. *Sea Battles on Dry Land*, a collection of his essays that originally appeared in *The New Yorker* and elsewhere, mirrors Brodkey's uneven career: near-brilliant in places, reckless in others, and well written throughout. Here's his unorthodox description of Oscar-night fashion: "Jane Fonda in some formfitting swollen raincoat with half a million buttons suggested an unpleasant dominatrix." The essays cover a lot of territory, from Hollywood and politics to literary reputation and the uses of language. The best pieces take on pop-culture icons, or else rely on Brodkey's generous descriptive skill—"The Subway at Christmas" is a hauntingly beautiful first-person account that, on its own, justifies the book's purchase price. —*Jeff Pooley*

**FULL MOON**
By Michael Light • Alfred A. Knopf
June 1999 • Print run: 100,000

**THIRTY YEARS AGO, ASTRONAUT** Neil Armstrong made his giant leap for mankind. Today, a large-sized photograph of crewmate Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin's lunar bootprint appears with unprecedented clarity in this lavish book. For the first time, NASA allowed an outsider, landscape photographer Michael Light, to make digital scans from NASA's first-generation duplicates (the original rolls are in cold storage for protection). The final result is 129 historic pictures that are more crisply detailed than the fourth- and fifth-generation photos published elsewhere. Along with the photos, a vivid essay by Andrew Chaikin, author of the Apollo history *A Man on the Moon*, chronicles the astronauts' experiences—the joys of weightlessness, the sense of isolation that comes from losing radio contact on the far side of the moon, and the wondrous confusion of being in a genuinely alien world. "[E]arthshine is so much brighter than moonshine," says *Apollo 16*'s Kenneth Mattingly. "You get this magic terrain—you can see relief."

Still, the bulk of this book is wordless, with these eerie, magnificent views arranged in the order of one composite lunar visit: takeoff, lunar orbit, moonwalk, splashdown. Combining the best of words and images, *Full Moon* comes as close as the printed page can to capturing such an incredible journey.
—*Matthew Reed Baker*




**MAKING PEACE**
By George J. Mitchell • Alfred A. Knopf
April 1999 • Print run: 30,000

**IT IS NO SMALL FEAT TO KEEP** a story suspenseful when the reader already knows the outcome, but former U.S. Senate majority leader George Mitchell manages to do so as he recounts the more than two years of intense, difficult negotiations that led to last year's historic peace agreement in Northern Ireland. After serving as independent chairman of the talks, Mitchell is able to give an insider's view of an often tedious and detailed process without losing sight of the passion and significance attached to the talks.

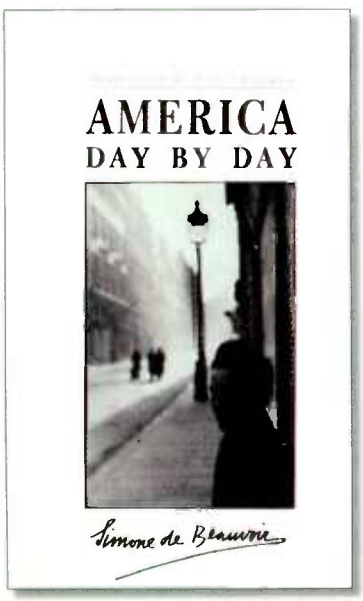
Some of Mitchell's best passages describe long days and nights taking tiny steps toward peace among parties and individuals who had never sat in the same room before, only to have the process shattered by news the next day that another bomb had gone off somewhere in Northern Ireland. These examples highlight for the reader just what was at stake for Mitchell and the country he came to love. —*Rifka Rosenwein*

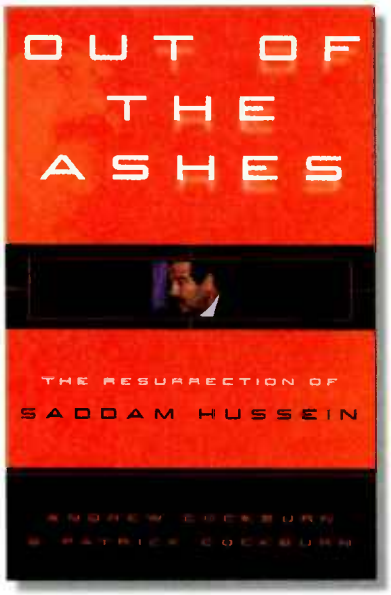
## AMERICA DAY BY DAY

By Simone de Beauvoir • University of California Press • January 1999 • Print run: 10,000

**IN 1947, THE FRENCH EXISTEN-**tialist writer Simone de Beauvoir careened from New York to Los Angeles and back by bus, car, and train on a four-month lecture tour, with an apparently bottomless entertainment budget that let her scour each city for nightlife and lowlifes. Her reactions as a first-time visitor to America encompass everything from childlike wonder at the splendor of New York by night to cold condemnation of the racism of the Jim Crow South. She's disturbed by her hosts' detachment from Cold War political and moral issues, which leads her to wonder pointedly whether Americans will ever do anything worthwhile with their tremendous personal freedom. But de Beauvoir is more often a lover than a scold, and her affection for American generosity and optimism is contagious.

Not long after her U.S. trip, de Beauvoir published her 1949 opus, *The Second Sex*, which helped lay the intellectual foundations for the women's liberation movement. Fifty years later, the ongoing debate about the impact of feminism has sparked a renewed interest in de Beauvoir's nuanced, witty work, paving the way for the first U.S. publication of this opinionated, entertaining, but long-forgotten journal. *—Matthew Heimer*




## OUT OF THE ASHES: THE RESURRECTION OF SADDAM HUSSEIN

By Andrew Cockburn and Patrick Cockburn • HarperCollins Publishers March 1999 • Print run: 25,000

**AS THE WORLD CONTINUES** struggling to understand Saddam Hussein and his unrelenting power, Andrew and Patrick Cockburn provide their version of how the Iraqi ruler survived the Gulf War apparently unscathed. The personal observations of Patrick Cockburn, one of the few journalists to remain in Baghdad during the war, and both brothers' knowledge of the Middle East enhance this engaging account of the inability of the United States to destroy Hussein's regime.

*Out of the Ashes* examines various stages of the war from within Iraq, and tracks how U.S.-imposed sanctions failed to create the coup the CIA had predicted would overthrow Hussein. The Cockburns reveal how these unsuccessful efforts led instead to Iraqi civilians suffering while their country became a third-world wasteland. Now, years later, the resurrection of Hussein remains a mystery to many. The Cockburn brothers' shocking tale untangles the web of lies Hussein had weaved and exposes how scared and feeble he was during the war, even though he appeared resilient and invincible to the rest of the world.

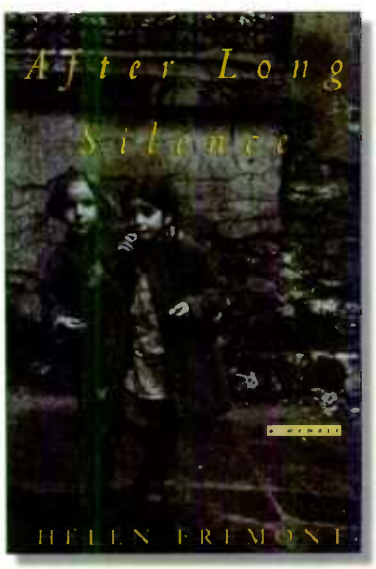
*Out of the Ashes* is enhanced by interviews with Hussein's advisers and Iraqi dissenters and is an essential read for those interested in a unique perspective on the inscrutable dictator. *—Bridget Samburg*

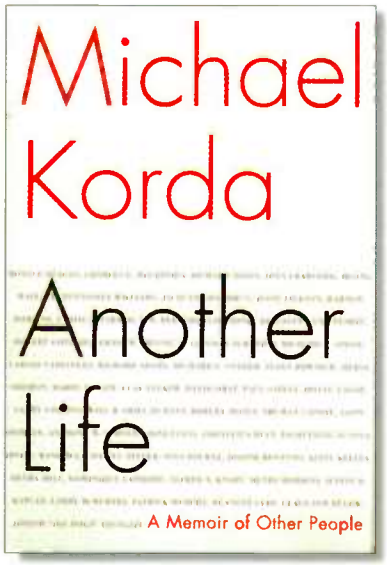
## AFTER LONG SILENCE

By Helen Fremont • Delacorte Press February 1999 • Print run: Not available

**HOW MUCH DOES FAMILY HIS-**tory graft itself onto our own identity, defining the shape and texture of who we are? In *After Long Silence*, Helen Fremont journeys into her parents' past for answers, and unveils secrets long repressed and even forgotten. Fremont was raised Roman Catholic in a mid-western town, and was always told that her grandparents were killed by a bomb during World War II. Some elements of that past never harmonized with her present. It wasn't until Fremont was in her thirties, however, that she and her sister discovered why: their parents were Jewish, and their grandparents had perished in concentration camps in Poland. In this elegantly written memoir, Fremont recounts her parents' experiences during the war—from her mother's posing as an Italian soldier to her father's six years in the Siberian gulag—as well as their resistance to confronting their past. Ultimately, Fremont learns that the secrets they guarded to protect their children may have also guarded their souls.

*—Kimberly Conniff*






**ANOTHER LIFE: A MEMOIR OF OTHER PEOPLE**
By Michael Korda • Random House
May 1999 • Print run: Not available

**MICHAEL KORDA HAS CREATED** the near-impossible with his new book: a saga about book publishing that is compulsively readable. An author of popular novels and nonfiction books, Korda also has been Simon & Schuster's editor in chief for thirty years. He explains how he started at S&S in 1958, when book publishing and editing was still a rather hermetic trade, and his tale of the industry continues to the profit-focused present day, where "'units' and 'titles' [are] interchangeable." Korda worked with such colorful celebrities as actress Joan Crawford, as well as the imperious Charles Bluhdorn (owner of the Gulf + Western Corporation, which owned S&S) whose phalanx of cowed assistants "clung close to him like remora around a shark." Such pinpoint humor can be found throughout *Another Life*'s many vignettes, such as Truman Capote and deal maker Irving "Swifty" Lazar planning a dinner date with each other by ostentatiously searching for free time in appointment books stuffed with high-society engagements. But Korda also writes compassionately about the fragile sides of these famous people: Publicly brassy author Jacqueline Susann privately struggles to keep her breast cancer a secret, and a sincere President Ronald Reagan confuses his own life with his movies as his "autobiography" is ghostwritten. Through these profiles and anecdotes, Korda combines irreverent memoir and an industry history into one rollicking tale.

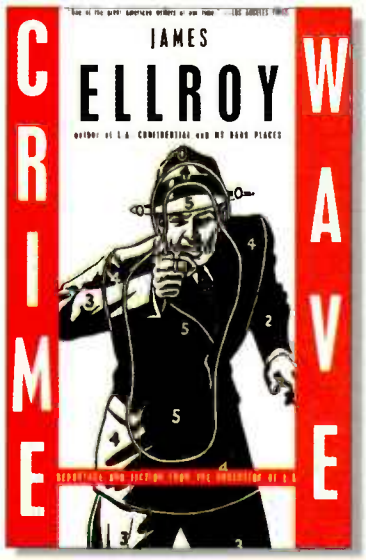
*—Matthew Reed Baker*

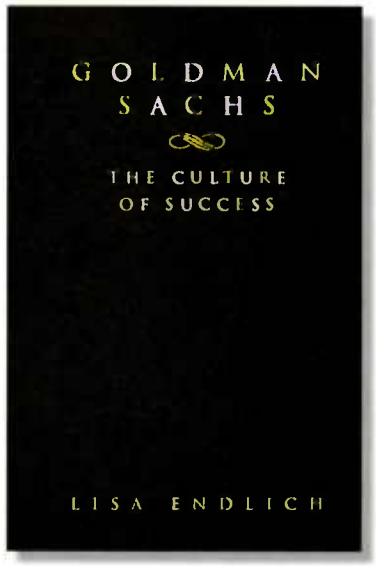
**CRIME WAVE**
By James Ellroy • Vintage Books
March 1999 • Print run: 36,000

**IN 1958, JAMES ELLROY'S MOTHER** was murdered in a "downscale" suburb of Los Angeles when Ellroy was only ten years old. The killer ran free, and the crime remains unsolved—but for Ellroy, it is far from over. For the past two decades, he has injected his fiction with sordid crime scenes that echo his mother's murder, twisting and reworking them into such novels as *Clandestine*, *The Black Dahlia*, and *L.A. Confidential*.

In the 1990s, this obsession spilled over into Ellroy's nonfiction writing. *Crime Wave*, a collection of Ellroy's predominantly real-life stories originally published in *GQ*, takes us back to the scene of the crime: 1950s Los Angeles. Here, Ellroy reconstructs grisly unsolved murders, including his mother's. One of the stories, "My Mother's Killer" later became the autobiographical best-seller, *My Dark Places*. Ellroy also takes on the O.J. Simpson case ("a gigantic Russian novel set in L.A.") before the verdict is announced, and declares that "O.J. went out behind a chickenshit end run. He didn't have the soul or the balls" to decide between "changing your life or ending it."

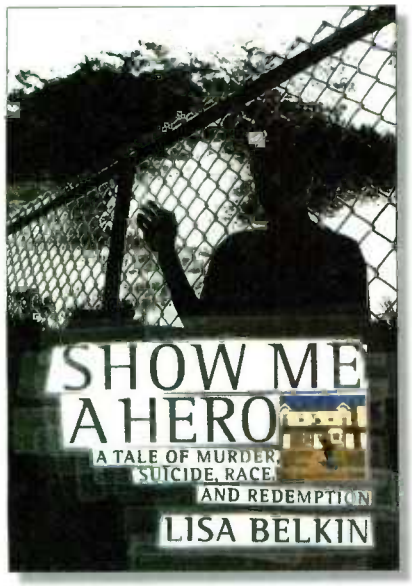
Ellroy's style is brash, staccato, and not for the weak hearted or moral minded. But his tightly wound prose makes for a captivating read. *—Kimberly Conniff*




**GOLDMAN SACHS: THE CULTURE OF SUCCESS**
By Lisa Endlich • Alfred A. Knopf
February 1999 • Print run: 50,000

**THE FINANCIAL MARKETS MOVE** like roller coasters. Their highs are intense, their lows are dramatic, and the suspense is constant. In *Goldman Sachs: The Culture of Success*, former Goldman Sachs vice-president and foreign exchange trader Lisa Endlich provides her view of the market's volatile motion over the past 130 years through the history of the last major privately held investment bank, which finally went public in May 1999. Personifying Goldman Sachs through the accomplishments and personalities of its various senior partners, this institutional history profiles the company from its inception as a family business, started in a cramped basement office by German immigrant Marcus Goldman, through its near collapse in 1929 after senior partner Waddill Catching's risky underwriting decisions caused investors to lose 92 percent of their investments in the stock market crash. The book culminates with a gripping account of the bank's failed 1998 attempt at going public. *—Kendra Ammann*




### SHOW ME A HERO

By Lisa Belkin • Little, Brown and Company
March 1999 • Print run: Not available

**IT BEGINS WITH A PIPE BOMB** meant to topple the nearly finished homes of low-income, black residents—and goes back in time through years of protests and defeats, a murder, and a suicide. Lisa Belkin's *Show Me a Hero* is the story of a town's angry resistance to housing desegration, and the city government's insistence that its residents comply. In the mid-eighties, a judge ordered Yonkers, New York, to build townhouse-like public housing projects on its east side, right in the middle of a predominantly white middle-class community. Citizens were outraged, arguing that they had worked too hard for their homes to have them blemished by the problems they thought "people with no morals" would bring with them.

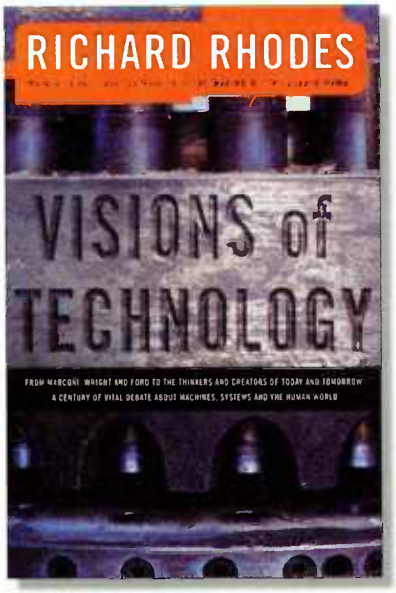
Belkin, a contributing writer for *The New York Times Magazine*, chronicles this clash of wills, identities, and prejudices, telling the story through the intersecting lives of politicians and average citizens. All the while, she challenges us to ask ourselves what we would do if these homes appeared in *our* neighborhoods, or more important, if these were *our* new homes. She follows people like Nick Wasicsko, the 28-year-old mayor who unwittingly sabotaged his political career by supporting the housing, and Alma Febles, a Dominican immigrant who clung to the small hope of having a place to call home. Eventually she finds it, but in this complex tale, Belkin asks whether you can ever really go home to a place forced to invite you in. *—Kimberly Conniff*

### VISIONS OF TECHNOLOGY

Edited by Richard Rhodes • Simon & Schuster • March 1999 • Print run: Not available

**"TECHNOLOGY COMPETES WITH** the gods at miracle-working and the gods take revenge: no wonder we're nervous about it," observes Richard Rhodes, the Pulitzer Prize-winning editor of *Visions of Technology*. Rhodes has compiled more than 200 short excerpts—from articles, books, speeches, novels, and letters—that chronicle this century's debate between miracle makers and malcontents. Starting in 1900, the selections advance chronologically past the boosters and critics of each new technological advance: Orville Wright's prediction that the airplane would stop war; widespread fears about "technological unemployment" in the 1930s; the atom bomb, *Dr. Strangelove*, and the paradox of post-World War II peace; and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and the environmental movement. The book reads like a condensed history of technology, told through the strained voices of those who marvel—or cower—at its impact.

*—Jeff Pooley*




## ALSO KEEP IN MIND

Here are a few highly recommended books we've noted in our "Unhyped Books" department in past issues.

### THE KISSINGER TRANSCRIPTS

Edited by William Burr • The New Press
February 1999

This collection of Kissinger's personal papers—once-classified accounts of the former national security adviser's meetings with communist leaders—strips away the mystique of diplomacy to reveal an eerie camaraderie between Kissinger and such icons as Leonid Brezhnev and Mao Zedong.

### THE ORCHID THIEF

By Susan Orlean • Random House
January 1999

Florida nursery owner John Laroche is an appealing antihero—he's a motor-mouthed, chain-smoking schemer with a passion to capture and breed rare orchids. Susan Orlean, a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, spent two years researching and visiting Laroche's quixotic world, which she brings to life in *The Orchid Thief*.

### THE BEST OF OUTSIDE

Vintage Departures • September 1998

For 22 years, *Outside* magazine has showcased great writing about travel, adventure, sports, and exploring the great outdoors. This collection of articles offers extreme tales of trekking through Africa, vacationing in Belize, scaling Mount Everest, battling runaway forest fires, scouting Komodo dragons, and much more. A perfect elixir for the armchair adventurer.

### LIFE THE MOVIE

By Neil Gabler • Alfred A. Knopf
November 1998

There was a time when Americans dreamed of becoming movie stars. Today, they dream of becoming celebrities—the stars of what cultural critic Neal Gabler calls "life the movie." Gabler offers a compelling portrait of a world in which our singular obsession with fame has transformed our lives and permeated our culture.

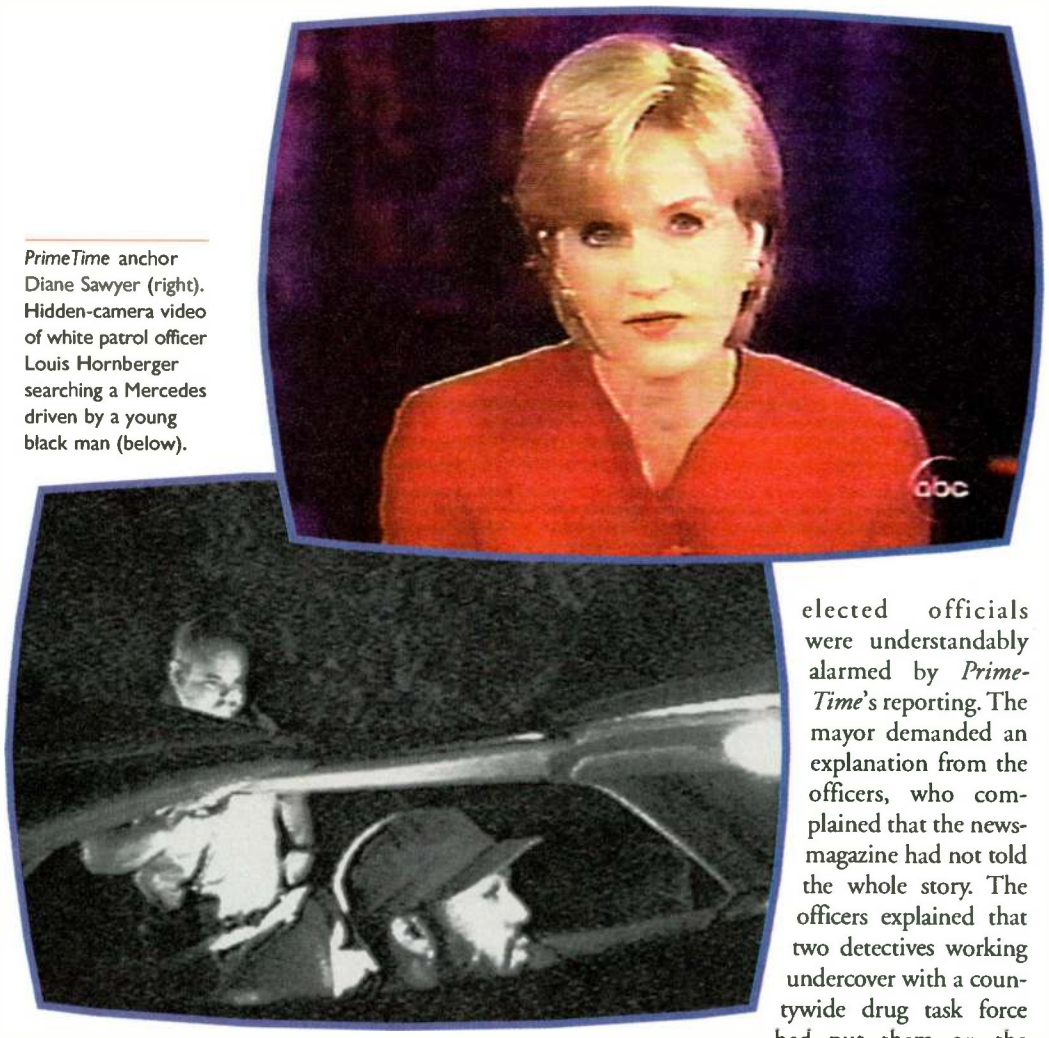
# STINGING THE COPS

**A *PrimeTime Live* hidden-camera story ended up raising as many questions about its own reporting as it did about the police.** • BY D.M. OSBORNE

PATROL OFFICERS LOUIS Hornberger and Robert Tonkery were suspicious when they spotted the sleek new Mercedes cruising through Jamesburg, New Jersey, on the night of June 28, 1996. The car, occupied by three African-American men, had been seen the previous night around the town, whose 5,500 mostly working-class residents don't spend much time circling its one-square-mile area. At one of Jamesburg's two traffic lights, the Mercedes abruptly made an illegal lane change, prompting officers Hornberger and Tonkery to pull the car over.

The traffic stop seemed routine. And it might have been quickly completed, except that the backseat passenger made the white officers nervous. When asked for identification, the young man scowled, poked at the pockets of a heavy leather jacket, and said, "I left mine at home." Hornberger, a burly cop with a shaved head, grew more suspicious when the men in the front identified their companion by two different names. Hornberger and Tonkery ordered the men to exit the car one by one, frisked them, and searched the vehicle. The officers found nothing and waved the trio on without so much as a warning. "I thought I was doing them a favor," Tonkery would later say.

But when ABC's *PrimeTime Live* came to Jamestown and started asking questions three months later, the officers learned that their erstwhile suspects had in fact been hiding something. The African-American men had been working undercover for the newsmagazine in a report about the law enforcement practice known as racial profiling. And *PrimeTime*'s November 27, 1996, report, called "D.W.B." (Driving While Black), featured carefully edited hidden-camera footage of the Jamesburg patrol officers in action.




*PrimeTime* anchor Diane Sawyer (right). Hidden-camera video of white patrol officer Louis Hornberger searching a Mercedes driven by a young black man (below).

In a town where racial tensions erupted in violence six times in the late sixties and seventies, Jamesburg's elected officials were understandably alarmed by *PrimeTime*'s reporting. The mayor demanded an explanation from the officers, who complained that the newsmagazine had not told the whole story. The officers explained that two detectives working undercover with a countywide drug task force had put them on the lookout for a Mercedes similar to ABC's undercover car. The officers also claimed that *PrimeTime*'s broadcast had omitted "several negative and provoking statements" by the backseat passenger, whose conduct had caused them to fear for their safety.

When the network refused a request to provide unedited tapes of the incident, Jamesburg mayor Joseph

Dipierro concluded that the network had "something to hide." Far from criticizing the officers, Dipierro issued a letter in December 1996 commending them for their conduct. "There is a law that says police officers can't entrap a suspected criminal," says the mayor in a recent telephone interview. "What *PrimeTime* did was to make every effort to entrap a police officer."

Through a corporate spokeswoman and a lawyer, ABC, the segment's producer, and the young men all declined to be interviewed. The lawyer defending the network provided brief responses to written questions about the segment, which ABC maintains was "a truthful, responsible, and fair report." ABC asserts "it did not 'entrap' any officers into doing anything they were not inclined to do."

That's not how the officers—who were not named in the broadcast—saw it. Convinced they were unfairly branded as racists, the patrolmen (including a third who had been serving as backup during the traffic stop), have sued ABC and its operatives for defamation. But *PrimeTime*'s unedited tapes, which the network was recently ordered to produce in the litigation, do not clearly vindicate the police officers; in some respects the tapes even contradict their accounts. As a result, the hidden-camera footage, which in theory could have resolved the debate, has raised as many questions as it has answered.

AT THE OUTSET OF *PRIMETime*'s "D.W.B.," correspondent John Quinones set a provocative tone: "Young black men in an expensive car. Be honest. What do you think?" Quinones went on to probe the practice of police profiling, a controversial procedure in which officers stop or detain members of certain racial minorities on the theory that members of those groups are more likely to commit a crime than those from other ethnic backgrounds. In the segment, three black professionals offered firsthand accounts of perceived racial bias in traffic stops. So, too, did Charles Ogletree Jr., a Harvard University law professor. "It's happened to me, it's happened to my family, it's happened to my colleagues," Ogletree said on *PrimeTime*. The newsmagazine bolstered its report with videotape of Florida highway patrol officers, showing that blacks were far more likely than other races to be stopped, questioned, and searched on suspicion of transporting drugs.

ABC's undercover team: Two college students and a recent graduate. The three groused when police didn't pull them over on one night of their sting.

Despite its strong evidence, *PrimeTime* wasn't satisfied. "ABC believed that it was important not only to report the comments of citizens who said they had been the victims of profiling," the network's letter asserts, "but also to document the practice, if possible." So producer Joan Martelli contrived a sting, arranging for at least five nights of undercover drives. *PrimeTime* (which has since been merged into *20/20*) recruited three young black men—two students at prestigious universities and a recent college graduate. New Jersey was "a good choice," Martelli explained in a memo to anchor Diane Sawyer, "because of a very recent court ruling concluding that racial bias was used to make traffic stops in that state." (Since ABC's broadcast, the issue of profiling has intensified in New Jersey. The state attorney general has acknowledged that state troopers—who are not affiliated with the Jamesburg police—have routinely engaged in the practice.)

But the men working with *PrimeTime* spent at least two nights driving around without incident, a fact that ABC never revealed. ("This was not a statistical study," the network responds. "What difference does it make whether these or other young black men were out driving and were not stopped on some other night in some other place?") A month before the taping in Jamesburg, for example, an unaired ABC tape recorded the men's disappointment when a police car that had tailed them for several blocks suddenly turned away. "Oh! He turned, son of a bitch!" exclaimed the driver. "We lost them....Damn, we had them pussies." They debated what they should have done differently. "Goddamn," the driver said. "I ain't never had this problem before getting pulled over. Never."

ABC's decoys had no better luck during their first night in Jamesburg (something the show acknowledged, albeit indirectly, on the air). That night, ABC has told the officers' lawyers, the youths did not "engage in any activity that could reasonably—or remotely—be construed as suspicious." But in sworn testimony, the Jamesburg patrol officers asserted that the Mercedes, or one very similar, had been flagged as suspicious by two narcotics detectives. "They saw it circle this drug area they were investigating two or three times," says the officers' lawyer, Brian Rishwain. (The drug investigators declined to be interviewed for this article.)

"This is not the kind of town you come into and cruise. It's not like *American Graffiti*," says then-police chief Victor Knowles, confirming that agents had designated part of Jamesburg a "drug supermarket." "When you've got a Mercedes cruising up and down here two nights in a row, that's going to pique the officers' curiosity."

On the second night in Jamesburg, the driver would later recall, the patrol car did not begin to follow the trio until they drove by for a third time. (Despite the driver's taped statement, ABC

maintains the car drove through Jamesburg only once before being stopped.) Then, with the police in tow, the Mercedes pulled out of a left-turn lane and veered across a painted medi-

Sandbagged? Victor Knowles, Jamesburg's then–police chief, was unprepared for ABC's questions, but defended his officers on camera.

an, without signaling a lane change. As the car pulled over, ABC's cameras, hidden in the rearview mirror, the sunroof, and at the rear of the car, started to roll.

Unedited video of the 20-minute stop shows indisputably that the officers were polite. It also shows that their decision to order the men out of the car was precipitated by the backseat passenger saying he had left his ID at home. Of course, no law requires passengers to produce identification. But the three men had been advised by a lawyer for ABC that police are trained to interpret the slightest suspicious gesture as cause to escalate an interrogation.

A criminal defense lawyer had warned the network's recruits that failure to use turn signals is one of the most common reasons drivers, regardless of race, get pulled over. If the three men were stopped, the lawyer advised, they could avoid being ordered out of the car by having all of their credentials in order, by not carrying any open containers, and by complying with officers' basic requests. "If you follow all my instructions," the lawyer told them in a videotaped briefing, "they shouldn't have a reason to search you."

*PrimeTime*'s report made no mention of the lawyer's advice, and the young men either forgot or ignored much of it. Not only was their auto insurance expired—an infraction for which drivers can be arrested in New Jersey, the lawyer had cautioned—the backseat was stocked with what the police would later describe as props: two large bottles wrapped in brown paper bags (water) and a locked cosmetics case. Moreover, in a hushed conversation during the traffic stop (an exchange omitted from *PrimeTime*'s broadcast) the backseat passenger suggested that he knew his decision not to produce ID could have caused the police to ask the front seat passenger, Bill, to get out of the car.

Passenger: "Do you think that was the right answer?"

Driver: "Do you have [the ID] with you?"

Passenger: "Yeah, I got it."

Driver: "Well then you should've shown it to them."

Passenger: "Yeah, but then they wouldn't have pulled Bill...

Driver: (Interrupting) "Shh, shh, shh."

TO THE OFFICERS, THE passengers' comportment and evasive responses were cause for concern. "Therefore, for our own safety," officer Tonkery later explained to town officials, "the passenger compartment was checked." ABC's unaired tapes confirm that the officers expressed safety concerns.

In other respects, though, the videotape doesn't support the officers' account. Their suit against ABC asserts that the officers asked the youth three times to get out of the car. But only one such command is audible on the tape. And though the young man sulked and shook his head, the tape indicates he swiftly complied.

Nor does the footage support officer Tonkery's claim that he requested and obtained consent to search the Mercedes. Granted, ABC's equipment was wired to pick up sound from inside the car. As a result, traffic noise on the busy street outside drowns out much of what was said. But the lack of evidence on this score is significant, given that the officers' defamation suit charges *PrimeTime* with falsely reporting that the officers searched the car without asking permission. Asked for comment, the officers' lawyers offer a new reason, arguing that consent was not required. (*PrimeTime* also included some persuasive evidence against the cops. For example, ABC had monitored the intersection in question: On one day, *PrimeTime* reported, some 220 cars had committed the same violation as ABC's driver—failing to use a turn signal—without being pulled over.)

Whether justified or not, the officers' search turned up nothing, and the ABC operatives were sent on their way. As the young men pulled out of Jamesburg, the disappointment they had shared a month earlier was replaced with nervous excitement. The backseat passenger asked whether ABC would treat them to dinner at Sizzler or Red Lobster. The driver mused, "That was perfect. Like a dream." A few minutes later, an ABC staffer's voice told them over a walkie-talkie: "Remember, the tape is on....Don't talk about anything, anything that happened. Anything in any way, shape, or form." So the three stopped talking and instead hummed and sang along with Bob Marley tunes for the remainder of the ride.

BY THE TIME ABC CONTACTED THE Jamesburg police department three months later, *PrimeTime* had already obtained an expert opinion that the officers were out of line. Presented with an 86-second edited excerpt of the 20-minute stop, Harvard's Ogletree told correspondent Quinones the interrogation was unwarranted and the search was unconstitutional: "A traffic violation is not a basis to do anything that he's doing."

After reviewing ABC's unedited tapes of the traffic stop for this article, Ogletree stands by his opinion that the officers' conduct was improper. But, he adds, "the police officers may have a legitimate basis to complain about the set-up, or entrapment, in this case....The network made a serious error in editing the tape in such a way as to exaggerate the facts. They

didn't need to contrive a situation."

ABC's unedited interview with Ogletree shows that Quinones wasted no time in asking about the racial-profiling issue. But when *PrimeTime* requested interviews with the Jamesburg police department, "they were very vague, very non-specific," says David Lester, now the chief. "I remember them saying, 'We want to talk to you about police work.'" In a subsequent conversation, former chief Knowles says, the producer offered a few more particulars. "What she had told me was that they had come into town with some black individuals and that their vehicle was stopped by several of my officers," Knowles says.

Even during an in-person interview, correspondent Quinones at first dodged the real reason *PrimeTime* had come to Jamesburg. ABC's camera crew taped the correspondent and the police chief as they toured the town. Their conversation meandered between pleasantries and the occasional hard question. "It all came out of left field," recalls Knowles.

Later that day, *PrimeTime* set up its cameras in Jamesburg's municipal court, and Quinones segued to the central topic of his story. "In Jamesburg, three young black men in a new Mercedes. Suspicious?" Quinones asked.

"No. Why?" Knowles shrugged. "Why would it be suspicious?"

"Just wondering," Quinones replied.

In editing, *PrimeTime* skipped over that response from Quinones and jumped ahead four minutes into the interview. At that point in the broadcast, Quinones handed Knowles a small video playback machine, revealing that his question about the Mercedes was not idle curiosity. ("There are lots of ways to do an interview," ABC's lawyer writes when asked why Quinones didn't ask Knowles directly about what was at the heart of the report. "We fail to understand the significance of the question...")

Knowles reviewed the 86-second excerpt without flinching, then firmly stood behind his officers' conduct. Although Knowles admitted the stop might be characterized as "profiling"—a practice he said he does not condone—he told Quinones that the officers clearly had adequate legal grounds to search the car and that the search was "incidental to the individual officers' protection."

In a telephone interview for this article, Knowles says *PrimeTime* fairly and accurately presented his comments, which he maintains neutralized what was intended to be a "negative story." But Knowles was clearly restricted by not knowing in advance the precise incident on which *PrimeTime* was reporting. "You really don't know the state of mind of the individual officer," Knowles emphasized to Quinones in a portion of the interview that was not aired. "You don't know if someone made a furtive gesture. Without sitting down and speaking to the individual officers, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on their course of conduct."

**ABC's undercover operatives joked and laughed after their police sting. But now the three men describe the experience in very different terms.**

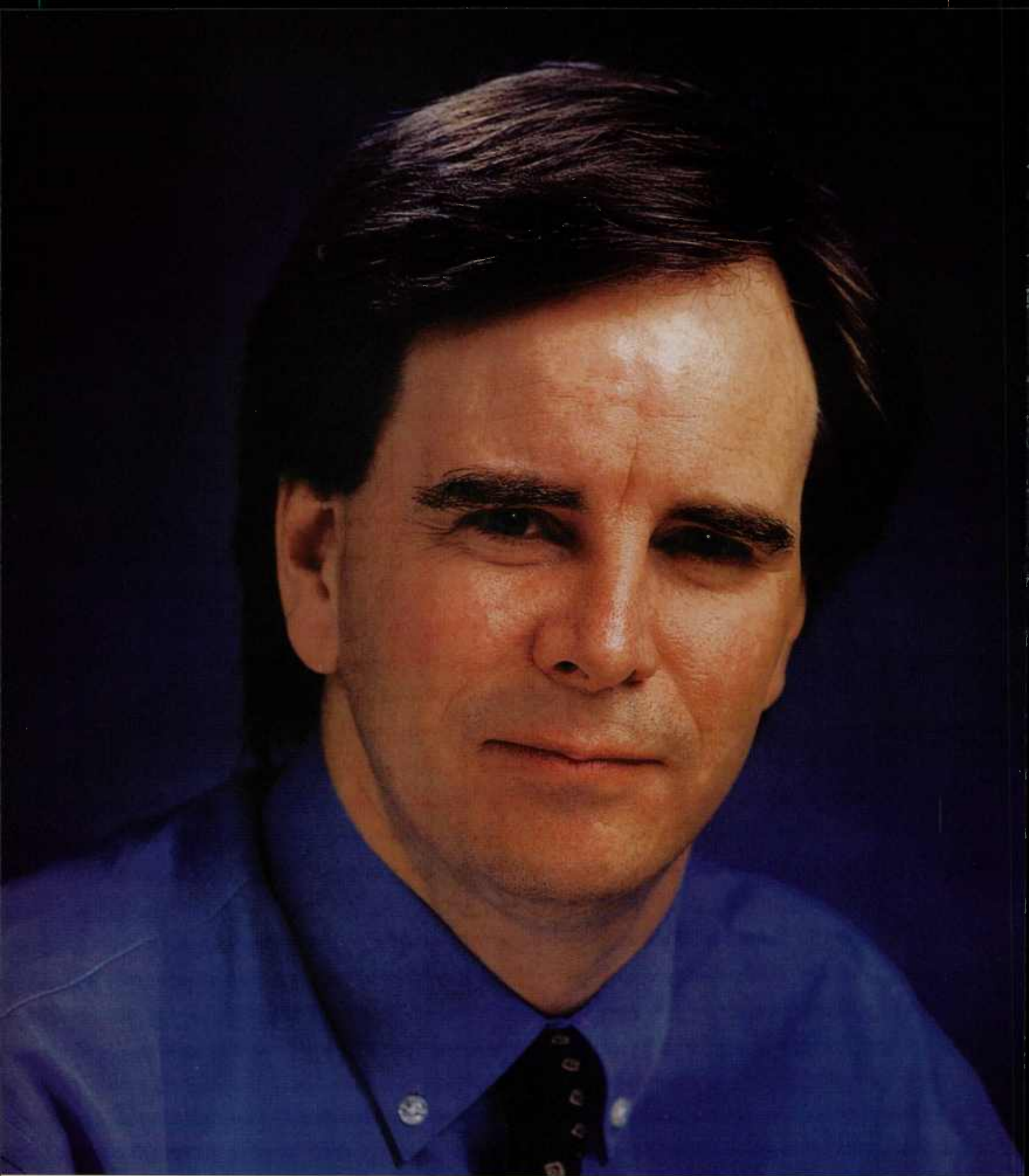
That same day, segment producer Martelli tried three times to obtain on-camera interviews with Hornberger and Tonkery. On orders from the chief, they declined. "I wanted to insulate them," Knowles explains. The officers did have two conversations with the producer, however. Her notes of those conversations—nine sentence fragments—show that the officers told *PrimeTime* the car "looked suspicious and [had been] seen...in town the night before." *PrimeTime* did not include those comments or any reference to them in its broadcast.

Nothing in the record, however, suggests that the officers told *PrimeTime* about getting a tip from narcotics officers that the car was suspected of drug activity. Asked why, the officers, through their lawyers, maintain that they did not feel at liberty to volunteer information about an ongoing investigation. They also fault ABC for not being clear about the point of its broadcast. "ABC descends on this town with this 'gotcha' story, and my clients are expected to come up with answers like it's *Jeopardy*," says attorney Neville Johnson, who is devoting his practice to opposing hidden-camera reporting, and who has five such cases pending against ABC, including one written about in *Brill's Content* ["Lab Scam," The Investigators, February 1999].

AS THIS ARTICLE WENT TO press, ABC asked the judge hearing the officers' case to impose a gag order that would keep upcoming depositions of the network's representatives out of the public record.

For their part, the officers say their run-in with *PrimeTime Live* has sapped their enthusiasm for the job. "I'm just worried about making stops, you know," officer Hornberger testified at his deposition. "I see a violation at night, I roll up on the car, stop the vehicle, walk up, and when I—when I find out that the occupant or the operator is black, it's like the blood runs out of me. I want nothing to do with it. I want to get out of there. I [wonder] did they see me on TV? Are they going to start calling me a racist?"

The three men in ABC's sting, meanwhile, have undergone a transformation of their own. They filed a counterclaim in March seeking unspecified damages from the officers for allegedly violating their constitutional rights against unlawful search and seizure. The men are being represented by the same lawyers defending ABC in the underlying defamation action. Their claim also includes a variety of other charges. The same three men who decided to test the police for the benefit of a nationwide TV audience—and then laughed and bantered on tape after the incident—now claim they "suffered an invasion of their privacy, humiliation, embarrassment, and emotional distress." ■



Paul Watson says that as a war correspondent, "you come down to the basic issues of life and death, right and wrong, lies and truth."

# ALONE IN THE WAR ZONE

## When journalists were forced out of Kosovo, only one North American reporter was able to make his way back in—Paul Watson.

BY LESLIE HEILBRUNN

PAUL WATSON HAS A KNACK FOR BEING LAST. When bombs started falling on Baghdad in 1991, he was the last newspaper reporter to leave the city. After the press fled Somalia in 1994, Watson again stayed behind—and wound up winning a Pulitzer Prize for his photograph of an angry Somali mob dragging a U.S. airman's corpse through the streets of Mogadishu. And now, he is the last North American still reporting on NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia directly from the province of Kosovo.

Watson, who joined the *Los Angeles Times* last September as its Vienna bureau chief, was kicked out of Kosovo along with all other NATO-country journalists on March 25, the day after NATO dropped its first bombs. He went to Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, where he could only find hotel accommodations for one night. When he awoke the next morning to a CNN bulletin saying the Yugoslav government had rescinded its expulsion of journalists, Watson realized he had two options: He could look for another hotel room in Skopje or he could make his way back to Kosovo. He chose the latter, and among his colleagues, he was very much alone in that decision.

*New York Times* correspondent Carlotta Gall explains why she chose not to try to return to Kosovo. "Basically, we left because these paramilitaries were in town and were actually in the hotel, and they're very dangerous men," she says. "I don't believe you mess with them." Peter Finn, a *Washington Post* correspondent who reported from Kosovo, says that due to the manner in which the Serbs kicked journalists out, "people may have felt that it wasn't worth going back." Gall says Watson "got in on an exceptional window" by returning the very next day, because journalists who tried to enter Kosovo only a couple of days later were turned away by the Yugoslav authorities.

Despite the dangers he faces, Watson has not backed away from reporting stories critical of his Serbian hosts. "I see deployed Serbian forces, I see people setting fire to houses, I see refugee movement, I see a lot of things that the government would not want me to see under normal circumstances," Watson says, and his dispatches are full of such sightings. On March 28, just two days after he arrived in Pristina, Watson wrote a detailed account about how five Serbian police officers abducted and executed the ethnic Albanian human rights lawyer Bajram Kelmendi and his two sons: "The officers didn't bother to pull down their black woolen hats to mask their faces when they abducted Kelmendi and his sons, and they left two widows who saw straight into their eyes."

He also brings unique slices of Kosovo life to *Los Angeles Times* readers. In his dispatches, we learn about more than the falling bombs and scorched villages—we see the civilian casualties of war. Watson's April 11 report eerily depicted the Kosovars' numbness to NATO's air raids. "A daylight air raid Saturday over Kosovo's capital didn't disturb the clientele relaxing in plastic patio furniture outside Brooklyn Bar," his dispatch began. "The young women and plainclothes police just kept chatting over their cups of espresso and cappuccino. A soldier in camouflage body armor nursed a beer while his AK-47 assault rifle leaned in the chair next to him."

*Los Angeles Times* foreign editor Simon Li says that, with Watson's Kosovo reports, the paper has "been able to make what's happening in Kosovo more real to our readers, more immediate to our readers. I think we've also been able to introduce at least the sort of healthy skepticism that's part of good journalism, so that we have been able to at least raise questions about NATO statements more so than other people," he says.

Watson's lone voice in Kosovo has led such outlets as CNN, the Canadian Broadcasting Company, and MSNBC to interview the reporter for their news programs. "Without having the ability to have our own people in there, it was the closest we could come to someone who we knew came from a credible news agency where the reporting was credible in our opinion," explains CNN executive producer Brad Rhoads. However, after a few days, Watson says he ceased doing interviews for television because he feared that the Serbian government would begin to censor him.

The reporter's journey back to Kosovo wasn't an easy one. On his harrowing drive to Pristina, he passed through several military and police roadblocks, which, he says, were made easier by the fact that he is a Canadian citizen (one of the less aggressive NATO members) and that he had enough stuff in his car, including sunglasses, a mobile phone, and two Leatherman knife-tool kits, for checkpoint officers to loot.

When Watson first returned to Pristina, he checked into the Grand Hotel, and its staff warned him that for safety reasons he shouldn't speak English in public. So, his first few days, he pretended he was mute, silently walking through Pristina to see which stores were still open, which buildings were on fire, and

COURTESY OF *LOS ANGELES TIMES*

which neighborhoods had been taken over by Serbian thugs. For the first few days, he relied on the help of his ethnic Albanian translator to get information and set up interviews, but Watson says she was forced out of Kosovo on March 31. He now only works with a Serbian translator. As a result, he can only interview those ethnic Albanians who speak Serbo-Croatian or English.

As Watson travels around the country, often with Greek and Serbian journalists, he says he does not feel constrained by Serbian authorities. He is free to travel where his leads take him, so long as he can get a ride (his two rental cars were both stolen since the NATO bombings began).

Watson has always wanted to be a war correspondent. While working as a city reporter for *The Toronto Star*, he spent his vacation time reporting on civil wars in Eritrea, Angola, and Sudan, experiences that he says gave him a feel for war coverage and taught him important lessons of the trade. *Star* publisher John Honderich says that Watson was on the fastest track for becoming a foreign correspondent at the *Star*. "He has always developed a particular knack for being in extraordinarily difficult situations and surviving," Honderich says. His accomplishments are all the more impressive when you consider that Watson was born without a left hand.

The journalist has been married for just over a year. His wife, Zelda Shum Sai Hung, says that knowing her husband is in a war zone is not easy. "I miss him and I worry about him, but that's his job," she says. Watson says they talk on the phone every day. "I am forever grateful that I'm married to somebody who understands why I think it's important to do this," he says. "It is risky, and I think several times a day that this may be selfish on my part....If I'm killed or, worse, I'm disabled in a way that she has to take care of me for the rest of her life, it's a selfish act."

Watson says what drives him is a "frustration with the lies that are told by military forces on all sides in any conflict." Thus, in the case of Kosovo, Watson felt he had no choice but to return. "I'd prefer [being there] because at least I know what I'm looking at is real....But if I'm stuck out in a refugee camp listening to stories which I can't prove or disprove either way, it's just not the reporting I want to do." ■

# MEEKS COVERS TRIAL WITH A CRITICAL EYE

BY BRIDGET SAMBURG

FEW REPORTERS WRITE breaking news stories half drunk. But for MSNBC.com's chief Washington correspondent, Brock Meeks, it couldn't be helped. On March 24, while covering the Microsoft antitrust trial, Meeks posted himself at the bar in the Washington Court Hotel, where the annual spring meeting of the National Association of Attorneys General had convened. He wanted to stop as many of the 19 attorneys general whose states had sued Microsoft as possible. Meeks knew that Microsoft was close to offering a settlement agreement; he was determined to find out the details of the proposal. "I bought drinks for the majority of the attorneys general that night," says Meeks.

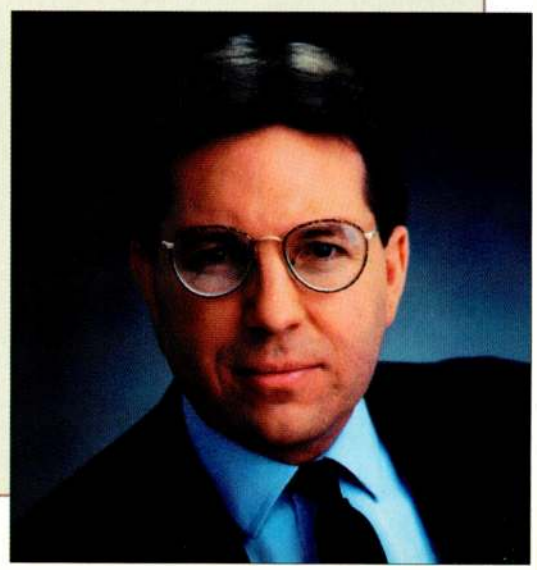
The bar tab paid off. Meeks scooped his competitors by piecing together information he gleaned from various attorneys general. "I wrote the story around 1:30 in the morning, half drunk," recalls Meeks. His story blazed across the Internet: "Microsoft Corp. has offered to suspend the use of exclusionary contracts and relax its strict licensing requirements for Windows." (Microsoft declined to comment for this story about Meeks and his reporting.)

Meeks, 43, began covering technology in 1994 for *Inter@ctive Week*. From there he went to *Wired* magazine and then to *HotWired*, the publication's online site, covering the 1996 presidential campaign. Meeks returned to what he knows best in March 1997, when he was hired by MSNBC to cover technology and the government's policies for the industry. Like many media watchers, he was initially skeptical of how MSNBC would treat stories about the network's co-parent, Microsoft. Now, however, after more than two years, Meeks is confident in MSNBC's ability to allow reporters to write objectively about Microsoft. "The spotlight is on us in this regard," says Merrill Brown, editor in chief of MSNBC On the Internet. "It's very intense."

Meeks has proven that he can be tough on both Microsoft and the Justice Department. For example, in a February 2 article about that day's courtroom proceedings, Meeks was critical of Microsoft officials who had apparently tampered with a videotape submitted as evidence in the company's defense. The article focused on the bumbling Microsoft officials confronted in court with this evidence. "The antitrust case against Microsoft exploded into an almost surreal 'Perry Mason moment,'" the story began. After excerpting some of the most embarrassing pieces of testimony, the article concluded: "[M]ajor damage has been done to the credibility of the taped exhibit."

Meeks has been equally critical of the prosecution. In a December 17 article, he criticized the states' diminishing role in the case: "[T]he states have been largely mute, leading trial observers to wonder, 'What are the states doing here?...Their involvement in the day-to-day grind of the courtroom drama has evaporated."

"Brock has given [the trial] totally fair coverage," says Tom Watson, cofounder of @NewYork, a weekly newsletter that covers the Internet industry. "He's the kind of guy who, even if his direct boss was Bill Gates, would do the right thing journalistically." ■



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Meeks believes MSNBC has covered Microsoft fairly.

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# A VOICE FOR FREEDOM

## Veran Matic's Radio B92 has been silenced by Serbian rulers. But he says his fight for an independent press is far from over.

BY DIMITRA KESSENIDES

FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS, VERAN MATIC has championed free speech and free expression in his native Yugoslavia. Radio B92, a maverick independent station he cofounded in May 1989, grew out of the premise that for democracy to take root and develop, there must be a free press. In early April, less than two weeks after NATO began its air campaign against Yugoslavia, Matic's work was brought to a halt. The 37-year-old editor in chief, together with his staff of about 90, encountered a ban, a shutdown, and, ultimately, the loss of their jobs and offices.

B92 is not alone. Since March 1998, almost all of Serbia's approximately 70 independent media outlets have been shut down, and those that remain are subject to strict government censorship. Matic has seen friends and colleagues killed and beaten. He has been harassed and threatened by allies of President Slobodan Milosevic. A pro-government management team has taken over B92's frequency, broadcasting what press freedom groups describe as government-sanctioned reports. Matic even faces the threat of being forced to serve in the Yugoslav army.

Despite the dangers he faces by remaining in Belgrade, Matic says he is determined to stay. His goal: to resurrect B92 and build a resurgence of independent media in his homeland. "The very essence of what I'm doing and of what B92 has been struggling for [is] freely expressed opinion at any cost," he explains.

So, for now, Matic disseminates news from the sidelines. His team provides updates about the restrictions imposed by the ruling government on independent Serbian media. Reports and statements are distributed over the Internet, with the help of an Amsterdam-based service provider.

Matic's decision to stay in Belgrade came as a surprise to B92's friends and supporters both outside and within Yugoslavia. "The outside expected us to leave, and the ones here don't believe that we're still together," he says. Many people are leaving Belgrade, he says, but "someone must remain to pick up the pieces of...democratic processes when the war is over." For the time being, the B92 staff works out of any available space—an apartment, a cafe, an office in the Belgrade Media Center. They meet to discuss the latest developments in the conflict, to draft responses to actions against the media, or simply to toss around ideas about how to rebuild once the bombing stops. As for their livelihood, the Prague- and New York-based Media Development Loan Fund has set up a program for financial contributions that will go to support independent journalists in Yugoslavia who are out of work.

From its inception, B92 was a commercial station that preached and practiced tolerance of all political views. "Our [independence] was based on professionalism," Matic explains, not based on being separate or opposite from the ruling party. "A part of the media who defined their independence as independence *from the government* always became part of the opposition, and when you become a part of any political project, you lose your...credibility."

The station's tolerance of all views—plus its mix of news, cultural programming, and music—drew young listeners from Belgrade and throughout Yugoslavia. International recognition of the station from groups such as the Committee to Protect Journalists and the Vienna-based International Press Institute soon followed. Still, with the economic hardships confronting Yugoslavia following the Bosnian War and the sanctions imposed by the U.S. and other governments against Belgrade, B92's resources were limited. So, Matic secured funding for his efforts from organizations around the world, such as the Soros Foundation and the National Endowment for Democracy, among others.

"He has an enormous following in the West," says Kati Marton, who met Matic in 1993 when she served as the chair of the Committee to Protect Journalists. By last fall, the bearded non-English speaker had traveled throughout Europe and to the United States, meeting with such top-level officials as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook. In his travels, Matic has emphasized the importance of Western support for democratic movements in Yugoslavia and elsewhere.

Matic is credited with making significant strides for independent journalism in Yugoslavia over the last decade. "He's definitely the core figure," says Marton. "He's the most tenacious fighter for independent media...the symbol for [it]." As such, Marton and other former colleagues say, the future of Yugoslavia's independent media is in Veran Matic's hands.

B92's future is uncertain. For now, Matic and his colleagues are planning how to return to the airwaves once the conflict ends. "We can only hope that the true B92 will [reemerge]," Matic muses, "and its listeners will recognize it." ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY ILKKA UIMONEN/SYGMA


Veran Matic says the B92 team of journalists will remain in Belgrade as "an encouraging example" to other independent news outlets that have been shut down.

# BILL'S STORY

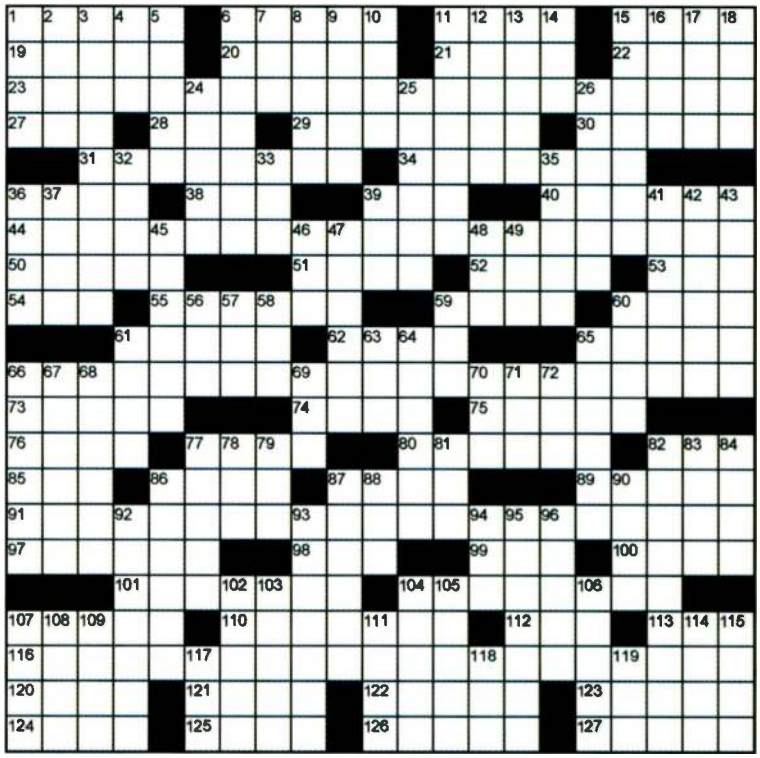
## The president uses the media to tell his tale of woe.

### ACROSS

1 Sportswriter Reilly and namesakes
6 Proofreader's marks
11 Cold War mouthpiece
15 Clock sound
19 One of the Barrymores
20 Attacked
21 First word of fairy tales
22 Vigor
23 "It all started when ___, a few smooth words to entice her."
27 Actor DeLuise
28 One of seven
29 Give no choice regarding
30 Digital Kinsley
31 They open doors
34 Bit of Scarlatti
36 *The Crucifixion* artist
38 ___ up (indignant)
39 "___ *favor*"
40 Light rock fare
44 "Then ___, a special number to call after hours."
50 Nightclub
51 Springsteen handle
52 Cream ingredient, often
53 Putting around org.
54 Thesaurus wd.
55 He batted .367 lifetime
59 Latin love
60 Newspaper's soapbox
61 Singer Bryson
62 Justice Warren
65 Hollow facade
66 "When the dress news came out, I said to Hillary, ___."
73 *Das Bild* turndowns
74 Wire story
75 Long-gone despots
76 *Black and Blue* novelist Quindlen
77 First lady's man
80 The *Citizen* is published there
82 Hero
85 McGwire's weapon
86 B followers
87 U2 lead singer
89 Actress Hedren
91 "My feelings of shame were so great that ___."
97 Magazine for those who like to serve
98 Woody Allen, in a recent film
99 Mil. address
100 Quality ___
101 Court TV evidence
104 Like some paparazzi
107 Law firm employee: abbr.
110 Minnesota neighbor
112 Questioning Russert
113 Break at the *Daily Telegraph*
116 "And I wanted to hide away forever, ___."
120 1976 Pulitzer-winning critic Kriegsman
121 Daybreak
122 ___ of mistaken identity
123 Trunks
124 Space drink
125 "___ sow, so shall..."
126 Bowling alley button
127 Green lights

### DOWN

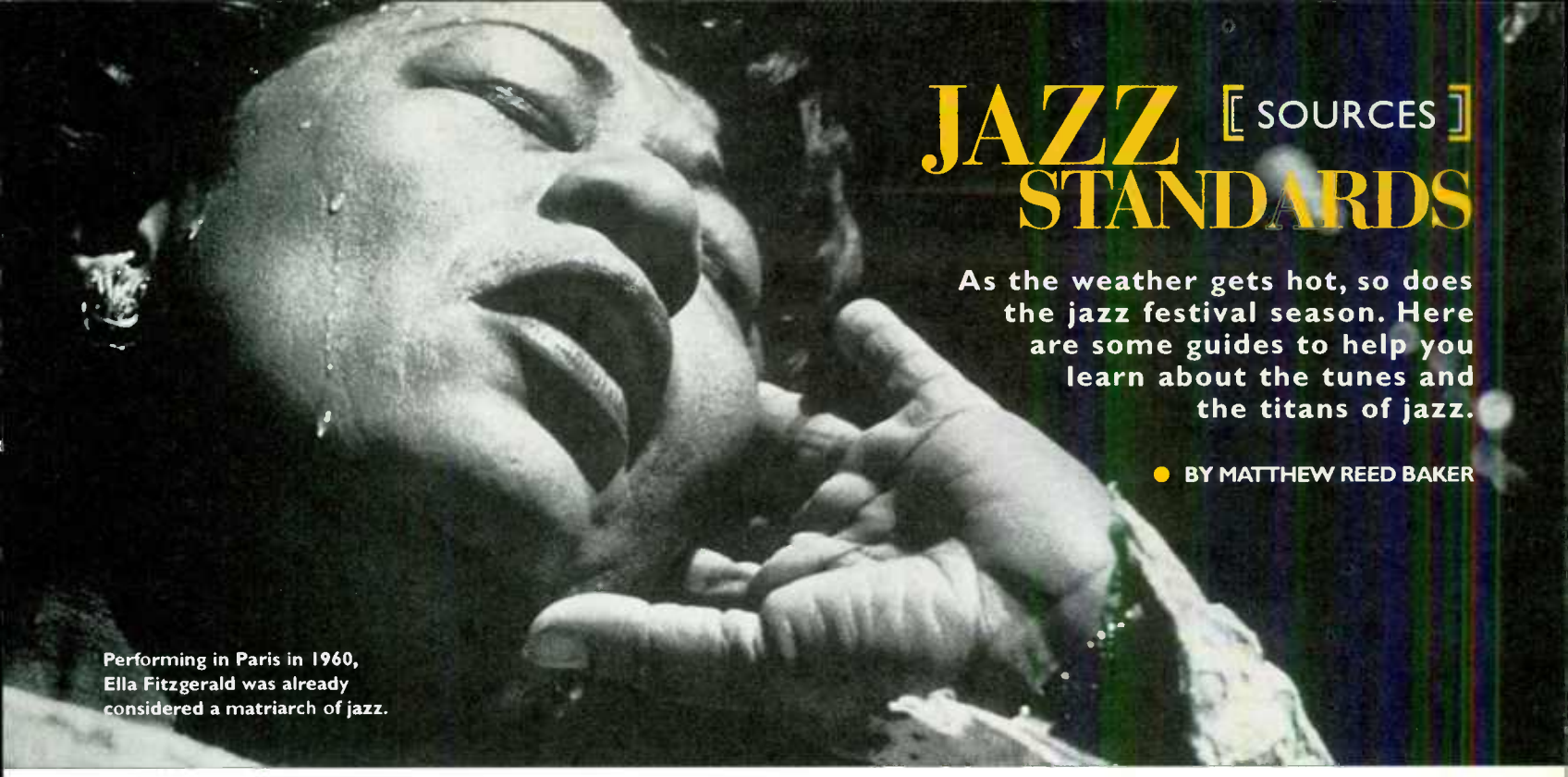
1 *Washington Post* reporter T.R.
2 "Let ___!"
3 New York-Vermont-Quebec lake
4 Actor Spacey, to friends
5 Rosebud and others
6 Entertained à la the *New York Post*
7 *The Joy Luck Club* author
8 Uplift morally
9 Items hawked by a chihuahua
10 Kansas City paper
11 "Makes my heart start ___..." ("Travelin' Man" lyric)
12 "___ that note..."
13 Lacking, as evidence
14 Ready follower
15 Stephanopoulos's *All Too Human*, for instance
16 1998 Olympic figure skating champ Kulik
17 Secret language
18 Patella locale
24 Dayan of Israel
25 Feud side
26 Fourth ___ (media)
32 "Is not" incorrectly
33 Biblical verb ending
35 More than dislike
36 Rights word
37 Sea call
39 Blair and Churchill, for short
41 Loose-___ (like some sources)



42 Radical Davis
43 Not just injurious
45 Puts off
46 A tide
47 NBC correspondent Bazell
48 Part of a Descartes quote
49 Day-___ (paint brand)
56 "Whoo-hoo!"
57 They lured Dave
58 Tic-tac-toe win
59 Whither many recent refugees: abbr.
60 Cries of discovery
61 Former Clinton cabinet member
63 House vote
64 Punk band member
65 These may be social
66 Soon
67 Dennis, notably
68 "Roses are Red" singer Bobby
69 Mug top
70 Mel who hit 511 homers
71 2002 Olympic host
72 Verb for Tweety Bird
77 ___ footnote (expands upon)
78 Study
79 Ship direction
81 Little one
82 Old maids
83 Second word of fairy tales
84 Recycling containers
86 Mathematically secure
87 Big name in publishing
88 Calendar abbr.
90 The Beatles' "Yes ___"
92 Downfall
93 A con man pulls it
94 Rabbit source
95 "Slick Willie" or "Tricky Dick"
96 "I'm serious!"
102 Fracases
103 Contest hopeful
104 Article
105 Smidgens
106 Like some promises
107 Blind as ___
108 Toni Morrison novel
109 Marvel Comics founder Lee
111 Hitchcock title word
114 *In* ___ (existing)
115 Sale condition
117 Simon & Garfunkel's "I ___ Rock"
118 Part of a name in Chinese history
119 Wade opponent

***For solution, see page 138***

*Matt Gaffney constructs crossword puzzles for* The Washington Post, The New York Times, *and* GAMES *magazine. You can reach him at mgaf@erols.com.*



Performing in Paris in 1960, Ella Fitzgerald was already considered a matriarch of jazz.

# JAZZ STANDARDS

[ SOURCES ]

**As the weather gets hot, so does the jazz festival season. Here are some guides to help you learn about the tunes and the titans of jazz.**

● BY MATTHEW REED BAKER

The great Duke Ellington was born 100 years ago on April 29, 1899, and since then, jazz has been transformed. First, it was the folk music of the urban African-American. Then, it was the soundtrack of beatnik cool. Now, it is regularly heralded as America's classical music. Beyond the iconic Ellington, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane, there is plenty of great music that awaits the budding jazz fan. Many solid jazz reference materials exist, and the experts we spoke to said these are the best.

## in the magazines:

**DOWN BEAT** (Maher Publications, $3.50) At 65 years old, *Down Beat* is the granddaddy of jazz publications. This densely packed magazine is filled with profiles of top musicians and refreshingly blunt record reviews. The back page's "Blindfold Test"—the reported results of a listening test in which musicians try to identify and evaluate their peers' tunes—has been a beloved fixture for decades.

**JAZZTIMES** (JazzTimes, Inc., $4.95) *JazzTimes*'s uncluttered design and lovely illustrations make it a pleasure to look at, while a stable of gold-plated contributing writers—Nat Hentoff among them—make it a pleasure to read. It also includes a vast record-review section.

**JAZZIZ** (Jazziz Magazine, Inc., $3.98) *Jazziz* is a good place for fans of mainstream smooth jazz to begin branching out. With each issue, subscribers receive a companion compact disc, which newsstand buyers can order for $5 by contacting the magazine.

**CADENCE** (Cadnor Ltd., $3) For the jazz fan whose taste leans toward the avant garde, our experts recommend *Cadence*. It covers a broad range of improvised music—from jazz to blues to more experimental fare—and offers lengthy interviews and oral histories. Dan Morgenstern, director of Rutgers University's Institute of Jazz Studies and a noted jazz historian, praises the huge number of detailed record reviews (more than 100 in each issue).


HERMAN LEONARD/ARCHIVE (FITZGERALD)


## on video:

### RHAPSODY FILMS INC.

This film company offers a catalog of some 50 jazz videos of biographies and concerts, and the range is remarkable: from Count Basie to pioneering free jazz saxophonist Ornette Coleman. "Almost anything they put out is something that can be recommended," says jazz historian Morgenstern. *JazzTimes* managing editor Mike Joyce recommends the new "Jim Hall: A Life in Progress," about the influential guitarist. Most films cost $19.95, and can be found online at www.cinemaweb.com/rhapsody.

### A GREAT DAY IN HARLEM

(Bonneville Worldwide Entertainment, $19.95) In August 1958, photographer Art Kane assembled almost 60 of New York's greatest living jazz musicians on a Harlem stoop for a photo that would later become famous in the pages of *Esquire*. This 1994 film tells the story of that photo and the musicians who sat for it, through old performances and interviews with Dizzy Gillespie, drummer Art Blakey, saxophonist Sonny Rollins, and others. "Just remarkable," says Susan Markle, editor of the Jazz Institute of Chicago's newsletter, *Jazzgram*, "You really get a feel for some of the famous people in jazz."

### RALPH J. GLEASON'S JAZZ CASUAL

(Rhino, $14.98 each) The late Ralph J. Gleason, acclaimed jazz columnist and cofounder of *Rolling Stone*, hosted this show, which aired on the National Education Television Network from 1960 to 1968. The episodes showcased intimate interviews and performances by jazz legends. Rhino Records has released them on videocassette, starting with those featuring saxophonist John Coltrane, big band legend Count Basie, and singer Carmen McRae.

## in the bookstores:

### THE HISTORY OF JAZZ

by Ted Gioia (Oxford University Press, $15.95) Slave dances in nineteenth-century New Orleans and Wynton Marsalis's 1997 Pulitzer Prize for music are the chronological bookends for this overview of the history of jazz. Released in 1997, this book provides copious and up-to-date information, but remains a smooth read. *JazzTimes*'s Joyce cites it as one of the most comprehensive jazz profiles to come out in the last decade.

### VISIONS OF JAZZ: THE FIRST CENTURY

by Gary Giddins (Oxford University Press, $35) Renowned *Village Voice* jazz critic Giddins won the 1999 National Book Critics Circle Award for criticism for this collection of 79 beautifully written profiles of musicians, from Louis Armstrong to modern chanteuse Cassandra Wilson. "Although it's not a formal history, it reflects the whole scope of the music," says jazz historian Morgenstern.

### READING JAZZ: A GATHERING OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY, REPORTAGE, AND CRITICISM FROM 1919 TO NOW

edited by Robert Gottlieb (Pantheon Books, $37.50) In this comprehensive anthology, former *New Yorker* editor Gottlieb compiles more than 100 pieces by musicians and the finest writers, including Giddins, Nat Hentoff, and Ralph Ellison. *JazzTimes*'s Joyce praises the breadth of contributors in this book, which, he says, "will give you a head start on who's out there and writing well about jazz."

### JAZZ: THE ROUGH GUIDE

by Ian Carr, Digby Fairweather, and Brian Priestley (The Rough Guides, $24.95) Rather like a jazz dictionary, this book features more than 1,600 short biographies of musicians, accompanied by photos and recommended samples from each artist's oeuvre. Recommended for the jazz neophyte.

### BASS LINE: THE STORIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS OF MILT HINTON

by Milt Hinton and David G. Berger (Temple University Press, $27.95) Hinton has many stories to tell as a premier bassist for more than half a century. He has played with the best—Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie—and the tale of his engaging life is accompanied by his accomplished portraits of fellow jazz greats. "A must for anyone who loves jazz music," raves singer Vanessa Rubin, who praises Hinton as "a walking national treasure and a guru of jazz history."

### THE JAZZ AND BLUES LOVER'S GUIDE TO THE U.S.

by Christiane Bird (Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, $15) This guide to "more than 900 hot clubs, cool joints, landmarks and legends" points the way to the best places to catch live music across the country, as well as where to find good record stores, music festivals, and historic spots, such as musicians' homes and gravesites.


"NAIMA" BY JOHN COLTRANE.1972© JOWCOL MUSIC

## on the web:

### ALL ABOUT JAZZ
(www.allaboutjazz.com)
A well-organized and all-purpose website, All About Jazz features a cornucopia of information: interviews, biographies, a year-by-year historical time line of jazz, festival listings, and many reviews. Fans can also interact easily with the site, whether through message boards, submitting their own reviews, or taking quizzes that test their knowledge.

### JAZZ ONLINE
(www.jazzonline.com)
Jazz Online started in 1991 and is the oldest commercial website dedicated to jazz. This site is particularly useful for the beginner because it features a recommended "starter kit" for a basic jazz collection, as well as "Jazz 101," which defines and explains the different styles of jazz, such as "cool" and "third stream."

### JAZZHOUSE
(www.jazzhouse.org)
This website, run by the Jazz Journalists Association, is manna for experienced jazz fans. The articles from its extensive archive are more technical than most, but its gallery of historical photos, transcripts of radio interviews with musicians, and overview of "lost jazz shrines" around the country will appeal to anyone interested in the music.


### JAZZ INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO
(www.jazzinstituteofchicago.org)
The Jazz Institute of Chicago website's main feature is the *Jazzgram*, a monthly online magazine that features current and archival material, as well as reviews of books and albums. While the focus is largely on musicians from this great jazz town, fans interested in jazz history will find much more here, including a generous collection of links to organizations, publications, and even artists' websites.

*continued from page 107*

**5.** *The media machine is largely a one-ring circus and has a fickle, short attention span.*
Most newspapers manage to balance their coverage of more than one big story. But television, especially cable television, and, in large part, even the Internet news channels tend to beat one story to death. This means that most of the popular press underplayed or ignored the lead-up to the war while the Lewinsky scandal raged, then dropped it, then picked it up with the Chinese embassy bombing, then dropped it for a while, then picked it up again when there were hints of progress on the diplomatic front.

This emphasis on one story at the expense of all others is relatively new. It leaves all kinds of gaps in what the public understands about the war, and makes everyone more susceptible to being swayed unduly by bogus stories like the *Times*'s Yugoslav-army-unity story, or by the simple video images and accompanying sound bites that come during stretches when the story gets the full Monica treatment.

**6.** *On television, the only thing better than negative or counter-consensus material is a vivid picture.*
Thus, Watson's reporting in the *Los Angeles Times* from inside Kosovo about atrocities at the hands of the Serbs has not dominated the public consciousness of what's been happening inside Yugoslavia the way the images of those wayward NATO bombs have. That's because Milosevic has been smart enough to make sure that all television footage coming out of Yugoslavia is footage he controls.

Except for some work by the BBC and one report by Fox News, no video journalists—despite the competitive frenzy—succeeded (and it's unclear how many really risked trying) in breaking that image monopoly in the early weeks, a blockage later eased in part by the successful efforts in mid-May by CNN and CBS's *60 Minutes*, among others, to get hold of home-video footage smuggled out by some victims' families, and then by the State Department's own release of similar videos.

Similarly, Milosevic was shrewdly playing the picture game when he released the three captured American soldiers and allowed that photo opportunity of him praying with the Reverend Jesse Jackson.

This, of course, can work both ways. From outside Yugoslavia, we have gotten a vivid picture of the refugee crisis, because our cameras and live satellite feeds have been able to get to the refugee camps. Similarly, the Pentagon was pretty much given a free ride during the war in Iraq, because the only pictures available were those impressive shots, provided and controlled by the Pentagon, of our bombs wreaking pinpoint havoc; there was no competition then with the likes of the live-color shots supplied by Milosevic of bombs going bad. And if, by the next war, the Pentagon can develop better close-ups in color of the bombs hitting, these images could trump a strategy by someone like Milosevic to allow ground cameras only to show the bombs going astray.

Then again, this could also allow the Pentagon to have a propaganda advantage rather than a truth advantage.

## THE THREE STAGES OF WAR REPORTING

That game of war policy-by-image, however, is high risk. As Halberstam points out, the most dangerous thing about the way war is being covered and being spun is that "when you do foreign policy by public image, you can quickly get into deep s--t. The best example is Somalia, where we got in because we saw the images of people starving and got right out after that soldier was killed and we saw him dragged through the streets....Foreign policy then becomes as volatile as public opinion, which is controlled by those images....[President] Clinton's support may go up when we see the refugees and it'll drop when we see bodies coming home."

Against that backdrop, it becomes the responsibility of the press to convey more than these images, to cut through to the substance and complexity of an issue. And it becomes the responsibility of the audience to pay attention to substance and complexity. War, after all, is serious enough to make words like *responsibility* not seem naive.

In fact, if we look at three wars in our recent history—World War II, Vietnam, and this war in the Balkans—we can see three radically different stages of so-called media responsibility.

In World War II, the press, with lots of exceptions, was by and large a lapdog for the U.S. war effort, so much so that in *The First Casualty*, a fascinating book by Phillip Knightley published in 1975, a Reuters correspondent is quoted after the war as writing: "It's humiliating to look back at what we wrote during the war. It was crap....We were a propaganda arm of our governments. At the start the censors enforced that, but by the end we were our own censors. We were cheerleaders. I suppose there wasn't an alternative at the time. It was total war. But for God's sake, let's not glorify our role. It wasn't good journalism. It wasn't journalism at all."

Knightley also quotes General Dwight Eisenhower as saying, "I have always considered as quasi-staff officers, correspondents accredited to my headquarters." In fact, Eisenhower and the army, as Knightley points out, awarded war medals to their favorite reporters.

Then there was Vietnam. There, many of the reporters on the scene wanted to report that the war was not going the way the generals and politicians said it was. But at least in the early years, they were usually spiked by bosses at home, who preferred to believe the generals and the higher-ups in the Johnson administration.

And now there is the Balkans, where nothing is believed automatically. The most negative reporting, however, doesn't come from the battlefield, where there are no reporters. The only field reporting is from the refugee camps, where the dispatches largely tend to support the official NATO position, though often with the seemingly justified negative twist that NATO should have prepared better for the refugee onslaught. Instead, the most negative reporting—indeed, consistently negative reporting—emanates either from the other side's control of visual images or from anonymous sources and former generals in Washington, where those process stories about policy miscalculations, administration

and NATO dissension, and softenings of conditions abound. In short, the new model, based on the dynamics of the modern media machine, is the flip side of World War II. It's knee-jerkingly negative.

None of the three is an attractive model. And what's especially troubling about the modern version is that the best reporting, which has come mostly from the refugee camps, was trumped in large part in the early weeks of the war by the controlled reporting from inside Yugoslavia and, more important, by the knee-jerk negative reporting from Washington.

there. Our only hope would be that we'd continue to be smart enough to sift through it, whereas in earlier times the media, practicing the journalism of verification more than the journalism of assertion, pre-sifted much of it for us.

In short, we'd be substituting pure democracy for representative democracy both in our decision making and in our access to the information with which we make decisions.

It's unlikely that either we or our politicians, however craven they become, will ever go that far. But it's hardly clear, even with the relatively limited polling (as compared to daily Internet voting) that we have today, that the modern

**The new media model, based on the dynamics of the modern media machine, is the flip side of World War II. It's knee-jerkingly negative.**

## DANGEROUS STUFF

As of this writing, perhaps because those negative images out of Yugoslavia aren't able to outweigh the images of all those refugees, and perhaps because the public is just turned off by those anonymously sourced process stories out of Washington, the public has ignored it all enough to keep voting for the war in the daily polls. In that sense, this is like the Lewinsky affair, in that the public just never signed on to the press's take on the scandal's import.

But, as Halberstam says, this notion of foreign policy by public image is dangerous stuff. For what it really means is foreign policy that turns on a dime as the public mood shifts.

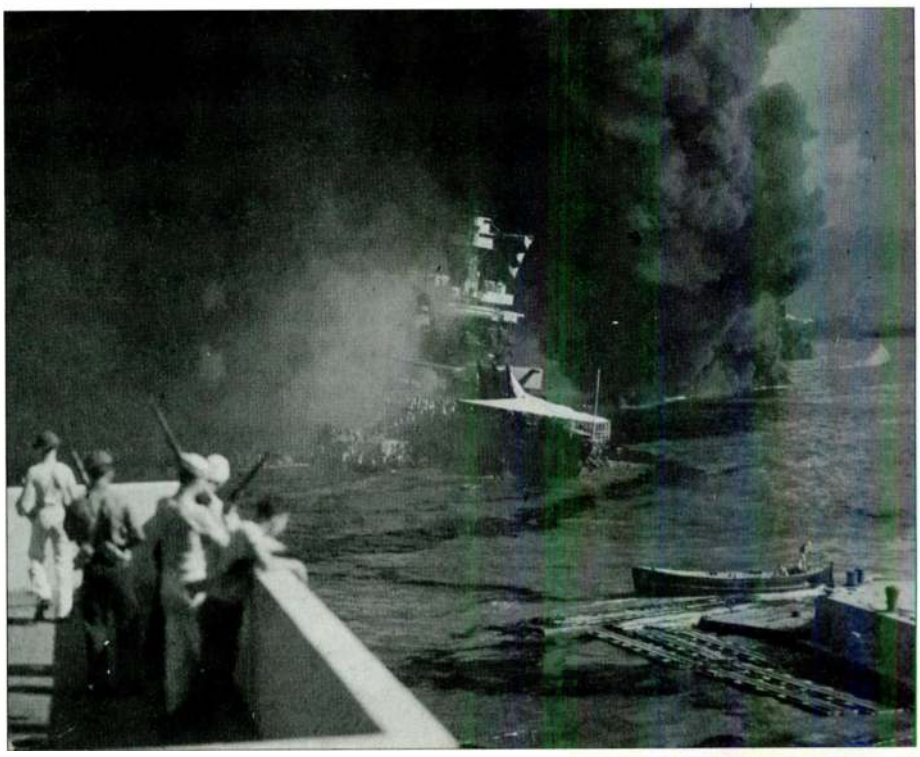
To be sure, we have a president who seems more obsessed than most with polls. But if anything, the new media age is likely to intensify the way Americans can vote every morning for this or that policy, including this or that world-changing foreign policy—if their politicians are willing to listen. Today, we have only those annoying daily polls, whose credibility is limited because they sample just a few thousand Americans. But what about tomorrow? How far are we away from the day when America Online or some other Internet outfit that can reach tens of millions of Americans instantly takes a daily poll that checks America's mood on a given issue?

It would be like a daily national town meeting.

Which sounds great, except that we would be changing the fundamental nature of our republic from a representative democracy to pure democracy—from one in which we elect public officials to represent our interests for four years or two years, to one in which we all vote on every policy every day. Our only guidance would be what the media machine throws out

media machine's take on the story of the day won't sway public opinion in ways that we'll all come to regret. And judging from the way that this machine, including such respected components of it as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, has sliced and diced the Balkans war so far, we need to face the fact that even when the subject is something as earth-shatteringly serious as war, we're depending on a process that is anything but dependable— and hoping that Americans can have the good sense to survive their media rather than rely on it. ■

*Staff writer Jennifer Greenstein contributed to the reporting for this article, and assistant editor Matthew Reed Baker and staff writer Jeff Pooley contributed to the research.*



OFFICIAL U.S. NAVY PHOTOGRAPH

Battered by bombs and torpedoes, the U.S.S. *Califarnia* sinks into Pearl Harbor as crewmen from the U.S.S. *Oklahoma* look on. Would today's media machine have undermined our patience for fighting a long, tough war?

*continued from page 25*

directors of the San Diego Padres. Isn't that an important bit of info to include when identifying these birds?

RALPH DEARDEN
Santa Maria, CA

## JUSTIFY IT

*Your words ["Who Gets Paid What"]: "Is this stuff any of our (or your) business? We answer yes, of course, and here's why." Perhaps there is some justification for why you didn't include the salaries of your own editor in chief, staff writers, etc., but don't you think you owed it to readers to explain this omission?

AUDREY VAN BUSKIRK
Editor
*The Santa Fe Reporter*
Santa Fe, NM

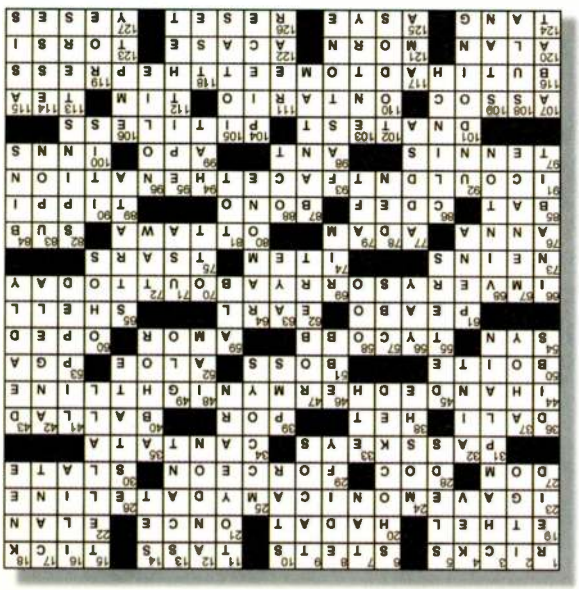
## JUST DESSERT

*I had just finished eating lunch when I read the article on media salaries. Big mistake! We'll never be able to walk into the next century holding our heads high when entertainers and professional athletes make this kind of money—while a schoolteacher in New Hampshire can barely afford to feed and educate a family of four.

PAUL FOSTER
Boston, MA

## Crossword Puzzle solution

*See puzzle, page 132*



## BIG-TIME LETDOWN

*I agree with your statement of knowing who the source of a story really is, what their motivation is, etc. But in all fairness it is easier for you to put the spotlight on others than on yourself.

When I saw this month's cover including media salaries, I said to my wife: "I wonder if Mr. Brill and company will include their salaries?" I must say that omitting yourself was a real disappointment. If it is so important that the public know the salaries of those delivering the news, then why not include yourself and your staff?

ANDREW MENSCH
Melville, NY

## WONDERING

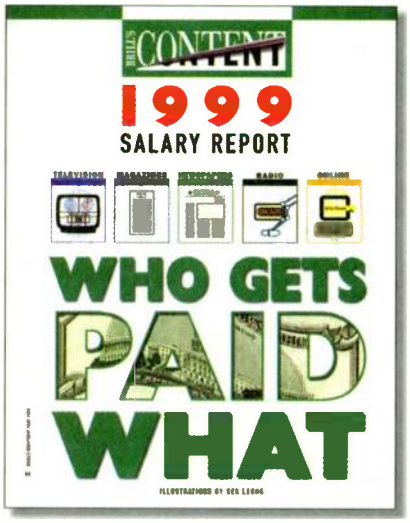
*I couldn't help but notice that the article on salaries in the media industry was missing what should have been the easiest numbers to procure: the wages paid to [Steven Brill] and [his] employees. Was this an oversight or, more sinister, something your reporters were barred from revealing?

BARRY NORDIN
Warwick, RI

## EXPLAIN YOURSELF

*I was a bit disappointed to see how quickly you dismissed privacy concerns in your rush to print the salaries of journalists ["Who Gets Paid What"]. I think we deserved a better explanation for your actions. Editor Eric Effron at least allowed as how "[p]eople are entitled to try to keep their salaries secret." Thank you for that. Presumably that privilege is contained in the Bill of Attempted Rights, right next to the right to "try" to get a fair trial, the right to "try" to remain silent, the right to "try" to practice freedom of religion, etc.

Mr. Effron asserts that media salaries are the public's business and, in defense of that notion, makes a good case that the public stands to benefit from this information. Sure, but isn't this the same leap of logic—that the media's desire to know automatically gives the media a right to know—that has estranged our industry from the public? Note that your magazine's willingness to violate the




privacy of 89 named media figures comes just seven pages after an article questioning CBS News's handling of privacy concerns ["Whose Story Is It, Anyway?"]. Further note that your article on media salaries lists 20 contributors, none of whom saw fit to flash *their* pay stubs.

FORREST CARR
News director
KGUN-TV
Tucson, AZ

**Editor in chief Steven Brill and editor Eric Effron respond:** Mr. Carr raises good points about privacy concerns, and in fact, journalists should think long and hard before revealing information some might consider embarrassing or personal. We did debate this issue before deciding to "name names" with some of the salaries. It may not have been a perfect methodology, but we used names (as opposed to just positions or titles) in instances where people either already had a high profile in their markets or when we deemed that they exert enough influence that it's relevant for consumers to know how the market has valued their work. We do not believe that our "desire" to know this information gives us a "right" to know it, but we think it's a legitimate area of inquiry and that revealing this sort of information serves our larger mission of shedding new light on the information marketplace.

As for the questions raised here about our choice not to include our own salaries: This, too, was a matter of considerable internal debate prior to publication. We

have two high-minded reasons for not having done so, although they are both self-serving. First, we generally are uncomfortable reporting on ourselves, because it can appear self-indulgent. Second, obviously we know the salaries of everyone who works here, but we know them only under confidential terms; we did not want to pressure our own people to waive their confidentiality. As for our own salaries, they involve information we have pledged to the other partners in the magazine's parent company to keep confidential. So does this make us hypocritical for seeking this sort of confidential information from others? No, because the principle here is that we will honor confidences we have made. If some other journalistic outfit wants to go after our salaries, we may not be too thrilled—who would be?—but we would not challenge their right to try to get us or others to reveal that confidential information.

JEREMY WOLFF

Richard Johnson, editor of the *Post's* Page Six

## DISH IT UP

*Your May issue nicely reported what those of us who happily call ourselves gossip columnists have known for some time: These jobs are hard work and serious reporting ["Inside The Dish Factory"]. When I was a "serious" reporter, I could recite chapter and verse of the 1996 Telecommunications Act. No one cared. But these days, when I get e-mail from Oracle Corp. CEO Larry Ellison, find out about the half-naked lady at Netscape [Communication Corp.] cofounder Jim Clark's yacht-launch party in Holland, or examine the extraterrestrial musings of former USWeb honcho Joe Firmage, my editors—and writers at a half-dozen other publications—go wild.

But how could you write about gossip columnists and leave out *The Washington Post*'s Al Kamen? He's great.

CHRIS NOLAN
High-tech gossip columnist
*San Jose Mercury News*
San Jose, CA

## BAD ACID

*I am sorely disappointed in your May issue. To dedicate the lead article to a gossip column in New York City, of all places, sorely demeans the purpose of the magazine. The fawning tone of the article was particularly nauseating. It sounded as if you were dearly interested in seeing your own name placed in the gossip column. This article was exactly the type that I was hoping to read you acidly critique.

ROBERT ADAMS
Burney, CA

## THE BOMB

*After reading "The Future Of TV Sports Is Glowing" in your May issue, I was reminded of some ideas I had along the same lines:

•The Whistling Football: That fat, cumbersome ball presently used by the NFL should be replaced by a smaller, sleeker model. (The new design would be much like the whistling, aerodynamically tailed, small footballs sold in toy stores.) The average NFL quarterback should be able to throw from his own end zone into the opponent's end zone, thus introducing a whole new strategy to the game. Can you imagine the thrill of hearing a football "bomb" whistling the entire length of the field? [Buffalo Bills quarterback] Doug Flutie could throw "Hail Marys" every play.

•Weather-active stadiums: All stadiums would be domed and equipped with interior-controlled weather (ICW). Each team would be required to play one snow game, one mud-rain game, and one fog game. A frigid game would be added during the playoffs.

JOHN WHEELER
Waterford, NY

## ABELSON ABJURES

I was, of course, quite honored to be the subject of a feature in your illustrious magazine ["A Source Of Conflict," The Money Press, April], especially since you spelled my name right. Frankly, I thought the piece was pure camp: the righteous nag of the media runs an article with seven anonymous hostile quotes. This is the higher journalism?

Although admittedly difficult to choose among so many worthy candidates, my favorite anonymous quotee is the brave fellow who averred that, had he been the subject of my indiscretions, he might "punch [me]" or "go straight to the CEO" to get me fired—in either case, please don't use his name. Apparently, he can't decide between role models—Ernest Hemingway or Linda Tripp—but, alas, the poor chap is too deficient in testosterone to be either.

There were a few of the usual errors. I've been drawing a paycheck at *Barron's* for 43—not 33—years, and Kate Welling stepped down as managing editor not, as reported, coincident to my editor's epaulets being torn off, but some years earlier in order to be a better mom. I don't want to be picky—the author and fact checkers had a lot of anonymous quotes to verify, so you can't expect perfection.

If you've escaped knowledge of the incident that occasioned the airing of my transgressions over two pages, complete with photo, in *Brill's*, I'm reluctant to deprive you of such blissful ignorance. The nut of it is: a *Barron's* story (I suppose it's obligatory to say, "in my view") unfairly impugned the ethical behavior of Barton Biggs, a Wall Street type who nonetheless is a good fellow, an old friend both of mine and the magazine, and as near an ethical paragon as I've come across in decades of stalking the securities business. I took ungentle exception before a group made up of *Barron's* editors and panelists, including Biggs, at our annual "Roundtable." All hands are pledged to silence as to what goes on at the meeting on penalty of death, or, even worse for the panelists, not being invited back. No honor among money managers and journalists, I guess, and one of them blabbed.

[Staff writer] Matthew Heimer,

who wrote the *Brill's* piece, shrugged off the critical *Barron's* article as accusing Biggs of "nothing worse" than "hypocrisy." Actually, the article rather favored the notion that Biggs was guilty of insider trading, although hypocrisy would have been bad enough. But it's certainly true that it did not call Biggs a serial killer, rapist, or child molester.

The inspiration for the *Brill's* coverage, according to the author, was an account of the enormously newsworthy episode that appeared in the *New York Post* (proving again that one never knows where inspiration will come from). All the more surprising that your article failed to correct a rather crucial misstatement in the *Post* story: that the *Barron's* column to which I took objection was one I had seen before publication. As I told your man—and as even the other side in this intramural fracas readily concedes—that simply is not true. Perhaps if I had spoken anonymously, my amendment might have merited inclusion.

But then Mr. Heimer, for all his evident earnestness and industry, is not one of those knee-jerk journalists who are immediately turned on by the prospect of a scoop. Kate Welling, the other scandalous wretch so lacking in couth as to criticize out loud something that appeared in our magazine, and I both suggested to him an interesting lead: Someone with easy access had stolen into her office, removed the tape carrying my immortal words, transcribed them, and sent my "screed," as Mr. Heimer aptly calls it, to the *Post*. Illegal entry and theft of corporate property struck Kate and me as possibly worth pursuing. Seemingly not. Far be it from me to suggest that Mr. Heimer lacks a nose for journalism. It simply may be that he had a cold that week.

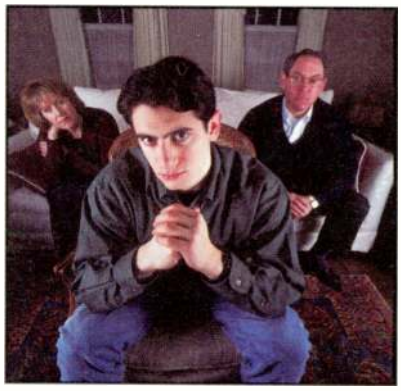
ALAN ABELSON
*Barron's*
New York, NY

**Matthew Heimer responds:** In my article, I did misstate the length of Alan Abelson's tenure at *Barron's*; he has been a columnist for the publication for 33 years, but his overall tenure at the magazine is longer. I was also mistaken when I wrote that Abelson's demotion "resulted in a lesser title for [Kate] Welling." Welling and other sources told me that her responsibilities had decreased as a result of Abelson's demotion, but in fact she had already stepped down from the managing editor's position, as Mr. Abelson describes. Both of these mistakes arose from my misinterpretation of information in printed sources, and I apologize for the errors.

But the story contained four, not seven, anonymous quotes. And, contrary to the impression given by Mr. Abelson's letter, my article gave a full airing to his side of the story and his objections to Susan Ward's column.

With regard to what Mr. Abelson considers our omissions: My article makes it quite clear that he did not see the *Barron's* column that offended him until it had been published. The *New York Post's* initial story was incorrect on this point. I decided, however, that that error fell outside the focus of my story: I was writing about what happened at *Barron's*, not about how the *Post* covered it.

As for the "stolen tape" theory, I did not find anything other than Abelson and Welling's speculation to substantiate it.



Dan Granger (shown with his parents): charged in a statutory rape case covered by *48 Hours*.

## WHAT A TRIPP

*That was an excellent article on the duplicity of Abra Potkin from *48 Hours* ["Whose Story Is It, Anyway?" May].

What a Linda Tripp she is! First she gains the confidence of these families by implying that she really wants to help them get their story out. When they finally agree to cooperate with her, thinking that it would help others avoid similar situations, she then sticks a knife in them.

What makes it really sad is that it is all about ratings. Neither [*48 Hours* producer] Abra Potkin nor *48 Hours* could care less about these girls and their story. They were looking for a ratings grabber and got one. Isn't it nice to know that Linda Tripp is now the new role model for *48 Hours* producers?

GENE MORRISSEY
Chicago, IL

## NO SYMPATHY

*Try as I might, I couldn't summon up any sympathy for anyone in Leslie Heilbrunn's story about CBS's coverage of a statutory rape case ["Whose Story Is It, Anyway?"].

All of the adult participants were hoping to manipulate the situation to their own advantage. The girls—despite their sexual precocity—were easily seduced by the glamour of national exposure. The parents were nearly as easy to convince. Now the parents cry foul and the network stands by its story, a mirror image of the girls' relationship with the defendant. Deciding who is hiding behind the largest, steamiest pile of hypocrisy is difficult.

ARTHUR RANNEY
Platteville, WI

## USE THE WEB

*I agree on the inequity you reported: *The New York Times's* selling of space for op-ed ads but not allowing (or charging for) responses ["Free Speech, If You Can Afford It," The Big Blur, May].

A simple solution seems to me to suggest that *The New York Times* set up a website specifically dedicated to comments on advertisements on its op-ed page. On the op-ed page itself, the paper should clearly refer to the URL of this site page, which would take minimal space. This would not affect their income or policy, but instead it would constitute good public responsibility.

BEN OOSTDAM
Millersville, PA

## NO FAULT FOUND

*Eric Effron's recent contribution to "The Big Blur" column is blurry indeed, but I'm having trouble finding ethical fault with *The New York Times* for requiring ad money to rebut ad

DONNA TEREK

money. The ad on the op-ed page is clearly defined by its border, layout, and type style, and as admitted by all parties, the ad cannot be construed as *Times* editorial material.

Granted, the quote from the *Times*'s own advertising guidelines does seem to lend the cachet of editorial responsibility to advocacy ads. But Mr. Effron and Joanne Doroshow, of the Citizens for Corporate Accountability & Individual Rights, seem to think that they should have free rein to respond to paid advocacy ads without paying the same fee, and at the same time, receive the *full* impact, credibility, and respectability of the *Times*'s editorially-approved pages. What a deal.

MARK ROSE
Seattle, WA


MATTHEW MARTIN (ILLUSTRATION); KURT GERBER (KOTLOWITZ)

## THAT'S NOT ALL

*Your May installment of "The Big Blur" actually only tells half the story. Even when groups can pay to place advocacy ads on the *Times*'s op-ed page, they are selectively scrutinized, depending upon whether or not the message is in line with the *Times*'s outlook.

As reported in the December 1997 issue of *Extra!Update*, it is common for advocacy ads that are progressive in nature, or that challenge reporting by the *Times*, to have to live up to a set of standards of accuracy, and, contrary to [*Times* manager of advertising acceptability Robert Smith's] claim, *are* suppressed or modified because of challenges to their accuracy.

Herbert Chao Gunther, of the Public Media Center, regularly places progressive ads in the *Times*. [*Extra!* quoted him as saying that] "every assertion of fact and every quote contained in our ads...requires full documentation....Not only does the *Times* require documentation...they also assert the right to review...and threaten to withhold our ads from publication unless their demands are satisfied." It seems that even if you can afford free speech, at *The New York Times*, it isn't really free.

JARETT WEINTRAUB
Riverside, CA

**Editor's note:** We asked the *Times* to respond to Mr. Weintraub's letter. What follows is a statement from *Times* spokeswoman Nancy Nielsen:

"In an effort to keep our advertising columns open to all points of view, we accept ads from groups or individuals who want to comment on public or controversial issues.

"We make no judgments on an advertiser's arguments, factual assertions, or conclusions. We accept opinion ads regardless of our own editorial position on any given subject. We don't verify or vouch for statements of purported fact in opinion ads. We reserve the right, however, to require documentation of factual claims when it is deemed necessary.

"In the past, we've refused to run opinion ads that are clearly and outrageously false. During the last decade, we've refused opinion ads that have denied the following historical events ever took place: the Holocaust, the Rape of Nanking, and the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

"Also, the advertiser's name and mailing address *must* appear in the ad or we won't take it. Box office numbers are not permitted."

## REAFFIRMED

*The "Honor Roll" feature is so good. Alex Kotlowitz's journey toward justice ["Juvenile Injustice,"

Alex Kotlowitz

May], dealing with the two very young boys and the tragic murder of the young girl, was a leap back to how media is supposed to work. My memory would have always been of the two young boys being murderers, as the first stories implied. Now, [my memory] is of a courageous reporter and two innocents receiving justice. Kind of reaffirms a system that often proves the opposite.

SANFORD GOODKIN
Del Mar, CA

## NOT QUITE RIGHT

*In "The Truth Really Is Out There" [The Browser, May], Jon Katz writes about *The X-Files*: "Mulder and Scully had struggled to unravel some murky but evil conspiracy by a group of White Men In Suits (in *The X-Files*, any white man in a suit smoking cigarettes signals danger)." And later, "Isn't that a central notion of the young, that the world is run by a bunch of suits inhabited mostly by middle-aged white men in remote places making corrupt, greedy, even evil decisions?" Mr. Katz is obviously oblivious to the humorous irony in his describing *The X-Files*'s "prime audience" as being "profoundly tolerant on racial and sexual issues." Apparently in our racially Orwellian society, it is considered the height of racial "tolerance" to be racially intolerant toward Americans of European origin.

TOM ANDRES
Santa Barbara, CA


## CREDIT WHERE DUE

The article about *Pop-Up Video* ["Pop Goes The Revolution," May] shows the intricate balance of satirizing the entertainment industry while still being a part of the same business.

I am not surprised that in a text-driven magazine about a star-driven entertainment business that the 14 illustrated icons used for the article lacked a credit to the artist. The visual importance of the show may be negligible, even if *Pop-Up Video* has used the same artist and visual concept since the show was launched three years ago. The graphic style has also been [used] by other television shows and by advertising agencies in a media world fast to recycle.

I am not surprised—although *Brill's Content* normally gives credit where it is due—but I am a touch disappointed, because I am the artist.

TRACEY BERGLUND
New York, NY

**Editor's note:** Ms. Berglund is in fact the artist who created the icons used to illustrate the article. We did not credit her because her name was not provided to us by the *Pop-Up Video* creators who were the subjects of the article and who provided us with the illustrations. Ms. Berglund produced those illustrations as "work for hire" and does not hold the rights to them. The worldwide rights to the illustrations are owned, in perpetuity, for use both on and off VH1, by the music channel's parent, Viacom Inc.

## NO SELL-OUTS

*On page 48 of the May issue, Mr. Brill gives high praise to *The Industry Standard* ["Stuff We Like"], yet there is an advertisement for that very same publication on page 61. (Coincidence? Yeah, right!) Perhaps you should change your description of the "Stuff We Like" column from "A few of the things that bring us pleasure" to "A few of the things that bring us advertising revenue."

Mr. Brill owes his readers—and the editorial staff he is supposedly leading—an apology for this severe lack in editorial judgment.

MANDY DIXON
Greensboro, NC

**Steven Brill responds:** It is a coincidence. I had no idea that the ad was running.

## STAT MAN

*Upon reading Paul Brodeur's piece on trichloroethylene (TCE) and human carcinogenicity ["Cop-Out At *The New Yorker*," Talk Back, May], I was struck by how easily a seasoned reporter could allow his objectivity to fail. Based on the facts given in the piece, it's obvious that, epidemiologically speaking, the case against TCE won't stand up to scientific scrutiny.

Based on the current evidence, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has labeled TCE as a probable human carcinogen for a reason: Statistically and epidemiologically, the evidence does not show the causal link Mr. Brodeur believes to exist. That does not mean that TCE doesn't cause human cancers, only that no studies have proven, beyond a scientifically reasonable doubt, that it does.

SCOTT BOITO
Gray, GA

## JUST CHECKING

*My first book has just been published [*The Concrete Wave: A History of Skateboarding*, Warwick Publishing] and I could relate to my fellow authors' obsession, for I too have caught the Amazon.com sales-rank bug ["Amazon Obsession: How'm I Doing?" The Notebook, May]. And why not? I know where I stand, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This can be both an uplifting and painful experience as I try to crack the top 100.

My prediction is that this ranking system will spread into other commercial sites and in the very near future become an integral part of the marketing of all products on the Internet. This will then spin off another industry: therapists who help those who have failed to crack the top 100 or who have taken a big tumble with the numbers.

MICHAEL BROOKE
Thornhill, ONT

## BALANCING ACT

*I believe you placed too much emphasis on the production of some bit of still-undisclosed news in your evaluation of the capability of White House reporters ["The Best And Worst White House Reporters," April]. Instead of the feeding frenzy that goes on, perhaps [a more] balanced perspective in news production and the occasional hesitation to scoop that may create such balance would be [a more] useful evaluation criteria.

BILL NEWNAM
Venice, FL

## EVERYDAY PEOPLE

*What sets *Brill's Content* apart from other pseudo-watchdog media establishments seems to be its penchant to ask questions about the press that the everyday person would ask. For instance, the 1999 Salary Report of the press was truly eye-opening. I also liked the April issue, which boldly graded the various [members of the] White House press corps based upon the amount of work they seem to do. On a side note, it appears that your letters to the editor reflect that the "who's who" out there seem to be concerned about what is getting written about.

TORBEN BRUCK
La Mesa, CA

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# [ TICKER ]

**810** Number of jokes about President Clinton told by Jay Leno, David Letterman, Conan O'Brien, and Bill Maher in 1997

**1,712** Number of jokes about President Clinton told by Jay Leno, David Letterman, Conan O'Brien, and Bill Maher in 1998[1]

**542** Number of crime stories broadcast on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news in 1990

**1,392** Number of crime stories broadcast on the ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news in 1998[2]

**40.2** Percentage of U.S. television households that tuned in to the 1999 Super Bowl

**33.4** Percentage of U.S. television households that tuned in to Barbara Walters's interview with Monica Lewinsky

**28.6** Percentage of U.S. television households that tuned in to the 1999 Academy Awards[3]

**472** Number of journalists killed worldwide while on the job, 1989–98

**49** Number of journalists killed in Yugoslavia and its former republics while on the job, 1989–98

**7** Number of journalists killed in the United States while on the job, 1989–98[4]

**53** Percentage of journalists working for national news organizations in 1995 who agree with the criticism that the distinction between reporting and commentary had seriously eroded

**69** Percentage of journalists working for national news organizations in 1999 who agree with the criticism that the distinction between reporting and commentary has seriously eroded[5]

**23** Percentage of Americans who said in April 1993 that they regularly listened to radio call-in shows

**13** Percentage of Americans who said in April 1998 that they regularly listened to radio call-in shows[6]

**325,000** Average number of copies of *Vegetarian Times* sold each month

**929,000** Average number of copies of *The American Hunter* sold each month[7]

**$4.95** Average cover price of consumer magazines launched in 1998

**$23.52** Average subscription price of those magazines

**94.8** Average number of pages per issue in those magazines

**19.2** Average number of ad pages per issue in those magazines[8]

**8** Percentage of world population whose native language is English

**56.5** Percentage of Internet users whose native language is English[9]

**18** Percentage of CEOs who have used the Internet

**83** Percentage of teenagers who have used the Internet[10]

**$128.4 billion** Market capitalization (total stock market value) of America Online, Inc., as of May 11, 1999

**$123.4 billion** Combined market capitalization of The News Corporation Limited (Fox), CBS Corporation, and The Walt Disney Company, as of May 11, 1999[11]

1) and 2) The Center for Media and Public Affairs 3) Nielsen Media Research 4) Committee to Protect Journalists 5) and 6) The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press 7) *Vegetarian Times*; National Rifle Association 8) *Samir Husni's Guide to New Consumer Magazines 1999* 9) Global Reach: International Online Marketing; *The New York Times 1999 Almanac* 10) Gateway, Inc: IntelliQuest, Inc. 11) Morningstar, Inc.

**Subject: Our Finest Hour(s)**
**Date:** Mon, 09 Aug 1999 10:24:21
**From:** boss@mfcnbs.com
**To:** MFCNBS employees <everyone@mfcnbs.com>

Neil Mitchell was soaking up the local culture in a Bourbon Street bar when he got the page. In Manhattan, Solinka O'Shaughnessy had just tucked in her eight-year-old daughter and was settling into bed with Stephanopolous and his memoir. I was at my horse ranch in Montana, grooming the new mare, Maribel. Instantly, we all sprang into action to produce some extraordinary television. Also, some journalism.

A hearty congratulations on the two weeks just past. As the newest 24-hour news network, it was crucial that we owned this story and lived up to our slogan: "When Something Bad Happens, We're There." We did, and I think our ratings (up 1/4 point in overall households, up 1/16 point among bourgeoisie 18-49) reflect that.

When the bomb exploded two weeks ago at a nursing home in Fayville, Louisiana, our correspondent Neil Mitchell happened to be vacationing in New Orleans, just 80 miles east. Neil was on site within an hour and was the first to identify the suspect as a 75-year-old invalid. His ambulance interview with a victim was first-rate: "Miss? Miss, can you hear me?...Is this Hollywood's fault?" A seasoned pro who's covered more massacres and natural disasters in the last year than most of us will get the chance to experience in our lifetimes, Neil stayed with the woman until she cracked. I don't use the word "courage" very often, but in this case it almost applies.

Our technical staff in New York deserves kudos. Within half an hour, we had a killer graphic: "Nightmare, Cajun-Style." Much catchier than CNN's "Louisiana Terror," MSNBC's "Target: Grandma" or Fox News' "Crisis in Kosovo." (I hear Murdoch personally fired the director who flubbed that one.) And by the morning, when the other networks were still running stock music, we had an original composition—a percussive theme, dark and somber, with a touch of zydeco.

We did our best to combat misinformation. It was unfortunate we reported that a nursing home employee helped construct the bomb, but I don't think her suit will hold up. At least we were the first to confirm the death count as four—though, like everyone else, we originally reported 35. Whoops! Such is our world.

For my money (and, well, it *is* my money), no one conducted more heart-wrenching interviews than our senior correspondent, Solinka O'Shaughnessy, MFCNBS's own grief counselor. Whether grilling the sheriff or consoling relatives, Solinka managed to put a human face on this tragedy: *her* face. "Have you met many interesting folks since your father was killed?" she asked a victim's daughter. "I can't believe I'm talking to you, Solinka!" the woman answered. Then they cried. And watching at home on HDTV, I cried. And the nation, especially those with incomes greater than $50,000, cried.

In a tragic story like this, our viewers naturally look for answers, and MFCNBS clearly identified these answers with a colorful pie-chart graphic. Our expert psychologists described the dangerous "retired rebel" figure promoted by the Internet and the AARP. Pat Buchanan shared with us his own anxieties when he discovered his mother listened to such "outcast music" as Marilyn Manson and Steve Allen. And Don Rickles, direct via satellite, told our viewers of his turbulent experiences in the ultra-violent "Catskills culture."

I could go on—to our makeup artists, CGI programmers, stuntmen, and craft services—for all of you have contributed to our top-notch drama. Now it's important we maintain momentum. Most of the other TV crews have left Fayville, even though it's only Day 15 of "Nightmare, Cajun-Style." This is easily a full month story. We'll move on when a hurricane levels Kentucky, or some nut in Ohio takes out a fast-food restaurant, and not a moment sooner. We're not leaving until we interview the last 75-year-old in Fayville.

Best,
The Boss

# No one's walked out halfway through one of our films.

With a personal video system in First and Club World business class and a choice of 45 films in First, it's hardly surprising we've been voted the best airline in the world for inflight entertainment.

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britishairways.com

Winner "Best Overall" inflight entertainment, 1998 World Airline Entertainment Awards.

BRITISH AIRWAYS
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