

ANNUAL ETHICS ISSUE

Quill

MARCH/APRIL 2016

A MAGAZINE BY THE SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS

gambling *with* credibility

*The tangled web newsrooms weave
when they're not transparent and aim to deceive.*



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Every year the Society of Professional Journalists recognizes students, advisers and professional members who play a vital role in the Society's fight to improve and protect journalism. Nominate an SPJ member today for one of the following honors:



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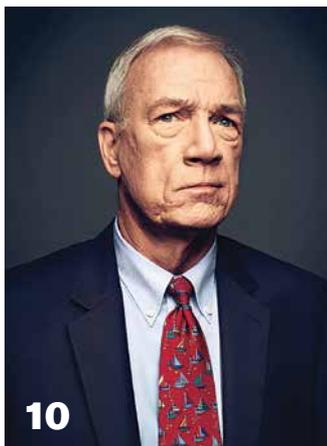
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Quill

MARCH/APRIL 2016
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Volume 104, No. 2

Quill (ISSN 0033-6475) is published bi-monthly for \$75 per year by the Society of Professional Journalists, Eugene S. Pulliam National Journalism Center, 3909 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46208.

Periodicals postage paid at Indianapolis, Ind., and additional mailing offices.

Printed in U.S.A.

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Quill will review and consider unsolicited manuscripts submitted by email only. Topic pitches and queries to the editor are preferred. Deadline is 45 days prior to publication date (e.g. August 15 for October issue). The decision to publish or edit submissions rests solely with the magazine. Opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the editors or of the Society of Professional Journalists.
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Send via email: quill@spj.org. Only signed letters (include telephone number) will be considered for publication.

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At the leading edge of journalism ethics

HERE ARE THREE journalism news items from the past few months:

1. Actor Sean Penn, in a piece for *Rolling Stone*, interviews Joaquín Archivaldo Guzmán Loera, a Mexican drug lord known as “El Chapo.” He and the magazine give El Chapo prior approval to the article before publication.

2. Reporters rush into the home of Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik in San Bernardino, Calif., with cameras and microphones, seeking any detail in the lives of the mass murderers who killed 14 people in a shooting.

3. The Adelson family buys the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Nevada’s largest newspaper. The purchasers remain a secret until the paper’s own staff uncovers the deal.

How does one make sense of these stories and how they affect journalism?

Easy: Consult the SPJ Code of Ethics.

Two years ago, the Code was revised for the first time in 18 years. I was a member of the committee that put together the revision, which was adopted by the Nashville convention.

It replaced a document that creaked. The 1996 Code contained references that became dated fairly quickly. (For example, “Label montages and photo illustrations” was one recommendation.) And with a quick check of the year — 1996 — note that the Internet was just taking off as a source of news and information.

The 2014 Code was written to be flexible and adaptable going forward. It contains few if any references to format. There was a lively debate about whether even to include any mention of “social media,” with the ultimate decision not to include that phrase, in case it is replaced by something newer later.

To keep the Code as current as possible, the Ethics Committee is posting additional, supplemental material to explain and amplify provisions in the Code on the SPJ website. Take a look: spj.org/ethicscode.asp.

Back to the news items, viewed through the prism of the Code.

One of the front-and-center questions about the *Rolling Stone* story is whether Sean Penn is a journalist.

The answer: He could be. The Code is aspirational, designed to provide best practices and to establish standards for all journalists and would-be practitioners.

Since 1996, citizen bloggers and online columnists have joined traditional reporters and broadcasters in the marketplace of ideas.

The Code is welcoming. Anyone can practice journalism, so long as he or she adheres to ethical principles.

Rolling Stone, already battered by a discredited campus rape story, did not do its reputation any good

with the El Chapo piece. The article came with a disclaimer: “An understanding was brokered with the subject that this piece would be submitted for the subject’s approval before publication. The subject did not ask for any changes.”

The third tenet of the Code, “Act Independently,” was not changed during the 2014 revision. Prior approval gives the subject control of the information, which makes it suspect. Even if El Chapo did not ask for changes, this was a mistake.

The rush into the shooters’ apartment in San Bernardino was appalling to many journalists. During the first wave, at least one anchor at a major network asked that the video cut away from what was happening. People with cameras started pawing through personal effects, holding them to the camera. This included pictures of children.

“Minimize Harm” has been a credo in the Code for many years. And journalists always have been urged to balance the public’s right to know with the ability to do harm by publishing information.

The horde that stormed the apartment overlooked, or maybe never knew, that one.

The secrecy over the sale of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* prompts a look at one of the new provisions of the 2014 Code.

The fourth tenet, “Be Accountable,” was updated. It now states, “Be Accountable and Transparent.” The identity of the new owners remained murky for several days. One of the new sections urges journalists to “respond quickly to questions about accuracy, clarity and fairness.”

In December, SPJ Ethics Chairman Andrew Seaman called for the new owners to reveal themselves. “Accountability begins with knowing a messenger, which allows an audience to understand that messenger’s motives and better understand the messages,” he said.

Indeed, when rumors started circulating that Sheldon Adelson, a wealthy casino mogul and major Republican donor, was behind the purchase, some wondered what it might mean.

With shakeups and resignations in the *Journal-Review* newsroom since the purchase, what it all means remains an ongoing question.

These are just three recent headlines. No doubt new issues will crop up in the months to come. Many ethics questions can be resolved by consulting the Code or the supplemental materials available at the SPJ website.

The Code is, above all, a valuable tool that helps journalists breach the best decisions possible. ❖



PAUL FLETCHER

2015-16 SPJ President Paul Fletcher has been publisher and editor-in-chief of *Virginia Lawyers Weekly* in Richmond, Va., since 1989. He joined the newspaper the previous year as news editor, after practicing law in Southwest Virginia for three years. Fletcher has been a member of SPJ since 1992 and was previously president of the Virginia Pro chapter.

Eugene C. Pulliam

FELLOWSHIP FOR EDITORIAL WRITING

The Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship was established to enable a mid-career editorial writer or columnist to have time away from daily responsibilities for study and research. The cash award allows Pulliam Editorial Fellows to:

**TAKE COURSES • PURSUE INDEPENDENT STUDY • TRAVEL
PURSUE OTHER ENDEAVORS THAT ENRICH THEIR KNOWLEDGE
OF A PUBLIC INTEREST ISSUE**

HISTORY

The Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship is a Sigma Delta Chi Foundation educational program of the Society of Professional Journalists. The Society first offered the fellowship in 1977. It is funded by a grant from Mrs. Eugene C. Pulliam honoring the memory of her husband, one of the original members of the Society, which was founded in 1909 as Sigma Delta Chi. Eugene C. Pulliam was the publisher of The Indianapolis Star, The Indianapolis News, The Arizona Republic and The Phoenix Gazette.

WHAT THE FELLOWSHIP PROVIDES

The Pulliam Fellowship awards \$75,000 to an outstanding editorial writer or columnist to help broaden his or her journalistic horizons and knowledge of the world. The annual award can be used to cover the cost of study, research and/or travel in any field. The fellowship results in editorials and other writings, including books.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for a Pulliam fellowship, a candidate must:

- Hold a position as a part-time or full-time editorial writer or columnist at a news publication located in the United States.

- Have at least three years experience as an editorial writer or columnist.
- Demonstrate outstanding writing and analytical abilities.
- Secure assurances by the editor or publisher that the applicant will be allowed sufficient time to pursue the fellowship without jeopardizing employment. (Fellows do not have to leave their jobs.)
- Demonstrate ability and intent to publish work within 18 months of selection. (If selected, work must be published within 18 months of receiving the fellowship.)

The selected applicant must provide a post-fellowship written report on how funds were used. Each Fellowship recipient will become a mentor to the following year's recipient.

SELECTION AND PRESENTATION

A panel of judges will review materials submitted by all the applicants and select the Fellow. The Fellowship presentation will take place during the 2016 Association of Opinion Writers Convention.

QUESTIONS?

For more information contact SPJ Headquarters at 317/920-4791 or by email: awards@spj.org.

Visit spj.org/a-pulliamfellow.asp for application information.
APPLICATION DEADLINE: JUNE 22, 2016

An inspiration in the newsroom and classroom

BY MAGGIE LAMAR

Faith Sidlow is a wife, mother and outdoor enthusiast. She's also preparing the next generation of journalists for a successful career in journalism.

As a child raised in a "news-obsessed" family, Sidlow watched the evening news every night. She said Dorothy Fuldheim inspired her to become a journalist. One night, activist Jerry Rubin said something during an interview that angered Fuldheim, who slammed down his book and threw him off the set. After witnessing that moment, Sidlow followed her family around with a tape recorder to interview them, saying she was going to be a journalist just like Fuldheim.

Sidlow made her dreams a reality after graduating from San Diego State University. In 1985, she began her career as a TV reporter and producer and moved on to become an anchor and reporter. One of Sidlow's most memorable moments of her broadcasting career was the "Extreme Faith" series of reports she did from 1997 to 2001.

In the series, she tried a new out-of-the-ordinary activity. One episode involved a hike to the top of Half Dome in Yosemite National Park with a string quartet in tow. The hard work that went into that story paid off: Sidlow was awarded an Emmy for it.

Her broadcasting career blossomed in a time where women were still paid unequally and there was a lack of women in upper management. Sidlow said this disparity had an effect on women's longevity in the news business and their potential for advancement.

Coping with those obstacles, Sidlow was still able to find success and recognition. She was inducted into the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Silver Circle for making a significant contribution to Northern California television for more than 25 years. She has also been recognized with several other awards and honors, including an Edward R. Murrow Award for News Series, three Emmy nominations and two Mark Twain awards.

In 2005, news stations were cutting staff, and Sidlow could see the broadcast newsroom shrinking. She made the switch to higher education because she wanted to help change the direction that journalism was heading. She knew she could make a bigger impact on journalism as an instructor than an anchor.

She is now an assistant professor of broadcast journalism at Fresno State University, where she teaches news reporting and production, broadcast and online news writing, radio/TV performance, media law, basic editing, and current events.

Sidlow's influence on young journalists has expanded beyond her own classroom. Each year, she has assisted students as co-adviser for the EIJ News student project at the Excellence in Journalism conference.

The EIJ News is a beneficial experience to students, according to Sidlow, because it's an opportunity for them to develop multiplatform skills while also networking with industry leaders. According to Sidlow, EIJ News alumni "used connections from the conference to find jobs after they graduated, and they continue to receive feedback from news directors and recruiters."

Angela Landeros, a past student of Sidlow's and EIJ News alumna, said that being mentored by Sidlow has helped fuel her passion for journalism.

"She helped advise me from what classes to take, to places where I applied to for my first job after graduation," Landeros said. "She was and has always been there for me and all her students; anytime we had questions or needed help with something, she's there. There are not enough words to describe how wonderful of a mentor she is and deserves recognition for it."

As an instructor, Sidlow is able to inspire students to achieve an equally successful career in journalism, just as Dorothy Fuldheim did for her.

"Everyone remembers that one teacher who sparked their passion or who made a difference in their lives, and for me that is Faith Sidlow," Landeros said. "She truly cares about our journalism program at Fresno State and her students. I couldn't have accomplished what I have without her." ❖



Courtesy Faith Sidlow

“Everyone remembers that one teacher who sparked their passion or who made a difference in their lives, and for me that is Faith Sidlow.”

— ANGELA LANDEROS, *former student*

FAITH SIDLOW

MEMBER PROFILE



KEEP UP WITH SPJ BLOGS: BLOGS.SPJNETWORK.ORG

A refreshing break from boozin'

I found Andy Boyle's article in the January/February issue of Quill, "A Break from Booze," refreshing.

First of all, it is not Boyle's problem if others make him feel less accepted in professional circles if he does not engage in social drinking. It is their problem. I have an occasional drink. However, I don't feel pressured to have a drink in social settings after attending journalism conferences or in other circumstances. I'll order a diet soft drink instead of an alcoholic beverage.

In the late 1980s, I was in a nightclub in the Sierra Nevada foothills in Northern California with a friend who never drank. A young woman looked at us and asked, "Don't you guys drink?" I quipped, "It's against my religion." She did not believe me.

I formerly lived in a community in Arizona where the most touristy street is dubbed Whiskey Row. I'd go out on the town on Friday and Saturday nights and sometimes catch up with co-workers. I faced the excesses of social drinking. The future husband of a co-worker misinterpreted a remark as an insult, called me a five-letter word that questioned my manhood, grabbed me by the shirt and pushed me against the wall. "Calm down," I said.

His future wife told me he had drunk a six-pack; she said she would take him home and have him apologize to me. He apologized to me the following week, but I felt uncomfortable afterward being around him when he had been drinking.

By the same token, I met a number of people who liked to go out on the town, listen to music and dance who proclaimed, "I do not drink." Excesses of drinking are well known. A former neighbor of mine who was a heavy drinker and smoker died at the age of 61. His stepson, who lived next door, did not find out he had died until two days later — after his employer called authorities because he was not answering his calls and did not show up to work.

Make an appointment with a new doctor, and one of the questions new patients routinely fill out is if they drink and how often. A former employer required employees to undergo drug tests if they were involved in a car accident (even non-injury) on company time. Undergoing the testing was a humiliating experience.

In closing, I'd be happy to talk shop with Andy Boyle and others after hours while imbibing Diet Cokes.

Sincerely,
Ken Hedler



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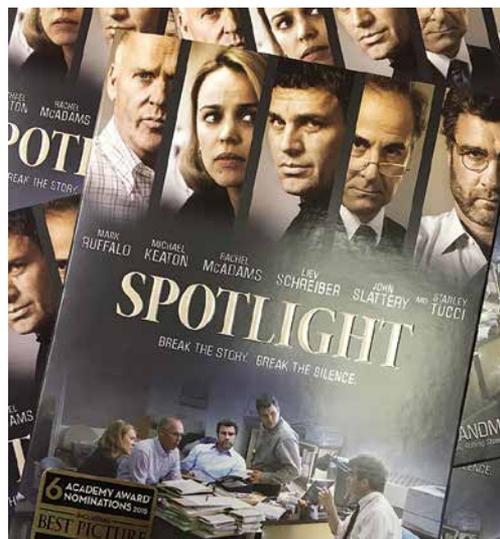
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Chapters put spotlight on 'Spotlight'

Sixteen SPJ chapters and newsrooms are making plans to host movie watching and discussion events for "Spotlight," which received Oscars this year for Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay. The movie, which chronicles work of the Boston Globe's investigative team to expose decades of child sex abuse cover-ups in Boston's Catholic Archdiocese, was provided through a grant from the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation. Chapters that requested one of the limited screening licenses available received a DVD copy and SPJ membership materials. Licenses to screen the film for educational purposes, required by copyright law, were paid for by the Foundation.

See the 10 interview in this issue (page 10) for a Q&A with Walter "Robby" Robinson, who led the investigation and is portrayed by Michael Keaton.



Want to submit a letter? Know of a fellow SPJ'er who would make a great member profile? Maybe your local chapter is putting on a cool program. If so, contact Quill editor Scott Leadingham at (317) 640-9304 or email him at sleadingham@spj.org.

Black Hole 'Award' given to Virgin Islands government

SPJ awarded its fifth annual Black Hole Award to the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands for its bald and breathtaking contempt of the public's right to know.

Announced annually in March during Sunshine Week, the Black Hole Award highlights the most heinous violations of the public's right to know. By exposing such abuses, SPJ's Freedom of Information Committee seeks to educate members of the public about their rights and call attention to those who would interfere with openness and transparency.

The Virgin Islands Daily News nominated the Virgin Island government, including Gov. Kenneth Mapp and the Senate, citing an array of access problems.

"The government's lack of transparency has caused an uproar in the territory," Jonathan Austin of the Virgin Islands Daily News wrote in his nomination letter.

Mapp has refused to comply with the territory's open-records law and claimed he has a right to alter records before they can be released, according to the newspaper.

Mapp also retaliated against a subordinate after that person released documents showing Mapp spent excessively on travel, groceries and alcohol using a government-issued credit card. The subordinate, whom Mapp fired, subsequently filed a lawsuit and claimed Mapp wanted her to remove embarrassing information in the credit card statements, the newspaper's nomination said.

The U.S. Virgin Islands Senate also is refusing to dis-

close how much money some legislators have spent at a legislative conference in Seattle, the newspaper said.

"What's happening in the U.S. Virgin Islands is unacceptable," said Jonathan Anderson, chair of SPJ's Freedom of Information Committee. "Citizens deserve a government that is more open and responsive, and they should remember that in the next election."

Runners-up for the 2015 Black Hole Award were the Wisconsin Legislature's Joint Finance Committee and Marshall County (Tenn.) Sheriff's Office.

Other finalists included:

- Community Services District of Cambria, Calif.
- Colorado Judicial Branch
- Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback
- Los Angeles City Hall
- New York State Police
- Wyoming Legislature
- New York State Thruway Authority

Nominations for the Black Hole Award come from journalists, open-government advocates and the general public. Previous recipients include the U.S. Forest Service, Oklahoma State University, the Georgia, Utah and Wisconsin legislatures and the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

For more on the award, past recipients and the nomination process, see spj.org/blackhole.asp.

Calling chapter leaders for Scripps Leadership Institute

SPJ's Ted Scripps Leadership Institute helps participants become better leaders by offering a mix of sessions focused on interpersonal and organizational leadership skills, as well as sound chapter management practices. Leaders can immerse themselves in everything SPJ, take an intuitive look at their own leadership style and make time for serious personal reflection, all while building new relationships with other SPJ leaders.

Previously based in Indianapolis, the Scripps program is now a traveling show meant to arrive in each of SPJ's 12 regions over the course of three years (four regions per year).

Upcoming stops:

Region 2: Baltimore, May 13-15

Region 9: Location TBA, July 2016

Region 11: Location TBA, Nov. or Dec. 2016

SPJ encourages chapters to send two to three members of their board, from incoming president to membership chair and any position in between. Members not affiliated with chapters but who are inter-

ested in SPJ leadership at the regional, community, committee or national board level are also encouraged to apply.

Participants in the interactive program learn:

- About their individual leadership style, its strengths, and how to better interact with others.
- The importance of building a sense of community among chapter members and how that can be accomplished.
- The role of the leader in recruiting, developing and rewarding talent.
- How to effectively manage responsibilities while remaining focused on important goals.

Participants are responsible for their travel costs to and from each location, but lodging and meal costs are provided.

To apply, complete the online application (at spj.org/scrippsilt.asp) before the application deadline for each location. Applications will be reviewed and invitations will be extended to participants. A submitted application does not guarantee an invitation to the program. ❖



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THE SIGMA DELTA CHI FOUNDATION PRESENTS THE EUGENE S. PULLIAM FIRST AMENDMENT AWARD

The Sigma Delta Chi Foundation announces the Eugene S. Pulliam First Amendment Award to honor a person or persons who have fought to protect and preserve one or more of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. Mr. Pulliam, who passed away in January 1999, was well-known for consistently using his own considerable influence and that of his newspaper to support activities that educated the public about First Amendment rights and values. The Sigma Delta Chi Foundation has established this annual award to honor those committed to the same goals as a tribute to the professional contributions that Eugene S. Pulliam made to journalism and to the freedoms outlined in the First Amendment.

ABOUT THE AWARD

At the Excellence in Journalism 2016 Conference, the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation will honor an individual, group of individuals or organization with a \$10,000 cash award and an engraved statue. The honoree(s) also will receive transportation to the conference in New Orleans, La.

ELIGIBILITY

Nominations are open to any person, persons or organization in the U.S. or its territories who have worked to protect the basic rights provided by the First Amendment. Honorees do not have to be journalists. In fact, the Foundation encourages recognition of those outside the journalism profession for their First Amendment efforts and initiatives, such as, but not limited to, public officials, members of the legal profession, scholars, educators, librarians, students and ordinary citizens.

NOMINATIONS

Visit spj.org/a-pulliam.asp for nomination information.

QUESTIONS

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The Eugene S. Pulliam First Amendment Award is a project of the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation. For more information on the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation go to spj.org/sdx.asp.

THE NOMINATION DEADLINE IS
JUNE 22, 2016



Don't be tricked by tricky word pairs

HERE, AS PROMISED in my last column, is a collection of frequently confused word pairs. Good writers are careful to avoid such common confusions — not only for the sake of clarity and credibility but also for the sake of the poor readers. As Mark Twain observed: “The difference between the right word and the nearly right word is the same as the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

As suggested often in this column, media writers do best by sticking to the accepted choices and practices of Standard English.

affect, effect

affect: influence, impress, touch, sway (the weather *affected* our decision; the film was deeply *affecting*); artificial, pretentious (he is *affected*; he *affects* a British accent; his British accent is an *affectation*).

effect: Noun: consequence, result, outcome (the film had quite an *effect* on me). Verb: result in or bring about (the report has *effected* a change in policy).

a lot, alot

a lot is the accepted form; *alot* is incorrect.

awhile, a while

awhile: (adverb) a brief time (stay *awhile*); does not use the preposition *for*.

a while: (noun) an indefinite time (we haven't been there *for a while*). Uses the preposition *for*.

bate, bait

bate: reduce in force or intensity, restrain (*bated* breath).

bait: (noun) a lure; (verb) to lure.

callus, callous

callus: thickened layer of skin.

callous: cold, cruel, insensitive.

compliment, complement

compliment: flattering remark.

complement: to complete; counterpart.

comprise, consist

comprise: include or contain (the whole *comprises* the parts; the nation *comprises* 50 states; my OED *comprises* 20 volumes). Avoid “*comprised of*.”

consist: made up (*of*); composed (*of*).

disburse, disperse

disburse: to pay out.

disperse: to scatter.

discreet, discrete

discreet: prudent or reserved in conduct or speech.

discrete: separate, individually distinct.

disinterested, uninterested

disinterested: unbiased (does not mean indifferent or lacking interest).

uninterested: lacking interest, indifferent.

farther, further

farther: literal or actual distance (go *farther* down the street).

further: figurative or abstract distance (give it *further* thought).

forego, forgo

forego: to happen or go before.

forgo: to abstain from or give up.

forte (French), forte (Italian)

forte, French: (noun) strong point or suit, specialty. Pronounced FORT.

forte, Italian: (adjective) loudly, strongly, as in music. Pronounced FORTay.

forthcoming, forthright

forthcoming: about to appear, available or ready when needed.

forthright: frank, candid, direct, straightforward.

fortuitous, fortunate

fortuitous: purely by chance or accident.

fortunate: lucky, favorable.

gantlet, gauntlet

gantlet: punishing or arduous path to a goal (originally a military punishment forcing the victim to run between two rows of people armed with sticks).

gauntlet: a glove (we run the *gantlet*, but throw down the *gauntlet* — as in issuing a challenge to a duel).

gibe, jibe

gibe: jeer or taunt.

jibe: to be in harmony, agreement, accord; or to shift from one side of a ship to the other.

home, hone

home: to focus on or pinpoint (the missile *homed* in on the target).

hone: to sharpen.

infer, imply

infer: deduce, conclude.

imply: suggest (you *imply*, I *infer* — that is, I make an *inference* from your *implication*).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19



**PAULA
LAROCQUE**

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WALTER "ROBBY" ROBINSON

**Quill poses
10 questions
to people with
some of the
coolest jobs
in journalism**

BY **PATRICIA GALLAGHER
NEWBERRY**

On Jan. 6, 2002, the Boston Globe led its Sunday paper with a story that began: "Since the mid-1990s, more than 130 people have come forward with horrific childhood tales about how former priest John J. Geoghan allegedly fondled or raped them during a three-decade spree through a half-dozen Greater Boston parishes."

The Globe would go on to report close to 600 more stories about abusive priests and their victims — and about the archdiocese's monumental failure to address the crisis. For its efforts, the paper won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service Journalism in 2003. And from its efforts came the film "Spotlight," which nabbed Best Picture and Best Original Screenplay Academy Awards on Feb. 29.

Walter "Robby" Robinson, 70, has worked for the Boston Globe for 34 years. Now editor-at-large, he covered four presidential elections and two White Houses, he served as Middle East bureau chief, city editor, assistant managing editor and roving correspondent. He ran the Globe's Spotlight investigative unit for seven years, heading the team that revealed one of the darkest times in the Catholic church in America and how it played out in Boston.

Nine days after a whirlwind trip to Hollywood, Robinson spent a day at Miami University in Ohio, to talk about the film and the journalism that made it possible. These 10 questions were among the many Miami University students asked Robinson in class visits, over meals and at his main talk.

Why did it take so long for the Globe's 2002 Spotlight project to be made into a movie?

In 2003, I wrote a piece for Nieman Reports about our coverage. A few years later, Columbia did a case study, which attracted a screenwriter. They signed us up for about the price of a latte. And then they went away for a couple of years. They were trying to sell the concept of the story and get the funding. (Then), they spent weeks and weeks in Boston interviewing us. We were kind of skeptical. Then we realized they actually wanted to tell the story pretty accurately.

What finally moved the project forward?

(Actors Michael) Keaton and (Mark) Ruffalo had become friends but had never worked on a film together. Ruffalo read the script, and he called Michael and said 'You've got to read this.' He read it, and the two of them called (director Tom) McCarthy and said, 'We want to do this film.' And then Rachel McAdams, a couple of days later, signed on.

Do you have any problems with the movie?

I don't have issues with how I came out. Michael Keaton has less hair than me. Am I going to complain about that? No. (But) it takes

five months of our work and compresses it into two hours and eight minutes. The director did an amazingly good job of making the really tedious work we do look exciting. The part about us using the church directories for clues about bad priests? This is done very dramatically on film in about three minutes, with the scenes going from one of us to another, going through the directories. In real life, it took us three-and-a-half weeks to do that.

In the film, the characters talk about how the Globe knew about the scandal in the church years before it pursued the story. Can you talk about that?

The scene in real life didn't happen. We had run a piece inside the paper about a lawyer claiming he had 20 victims. But that clipping never showed up in 2001. None of us remembered it. When Josh Singer, the screenwriter, was doing his research in 2012, everything had been digitized and he actually found the story. He and Tom McCarthy had a view that the Globe had been too deferential to the church for too long and that this story had been buried because of that deference. Singer emailed me the clip. I said, 'Geez, I had just become metro editor about two weeks before that story ran.' So all of a sudden they created a scene in the film. It was part of the narrative about the Globe.

How did readers react to your 2002 stories?

We were a story or two into this when it went viral. Within a couple of days, we were getting emails from people in Europe, in Australia, in Latin America, who wanted to tell us their stories about what had happened to them. This was the first investigative story of the Internet Age. If we had published this two years earlier, it wouldn't have gotten near the attention it did.

And did you really get a flood of calls from victims, as shown in the film?

The film ends with the phones ringing off the hook. In the next several weeks, just in the Boston Archdiocese, we received calls from more than 300 victims. We interviewed all of them. If you want to have a bad day at the office, try listening to victims tell you what a priest did to them when they were 11 or 12 or 13 years old. Most had never told anyone because they felt such shame and such guilt. I got a call from an 87-year-old man in Millinocket, Maine, who called to tell me what had happened at the hands of a priest in 1926, 75 years earlier when he was 12 years old. He had been depressed his entire life and he had never told anyone until he picked up the phone and called us. The damage that was done over generations was just extraordinary.

Did the church ever explain itself?

Yeah, they did. Two days (after the first story), the cardinal had a news conference. He said, 'We're sorry this happened. But before we put Fr. Geoghan back into another parish we had two competent physicians that said he was no threat to children.' Two days later we had a story that said the two competent physicians were, one, his family practitioner, and two, a psychiatrist at a Catholic medical center who had been accused of sexually molesting two of his women patients. When we reported that story, the cardinal's support among the most influential, wealthiest Catholics in Boston kind of evaporated.

What do you make of the fact that Cardinal Law resigned at the end of 2002?

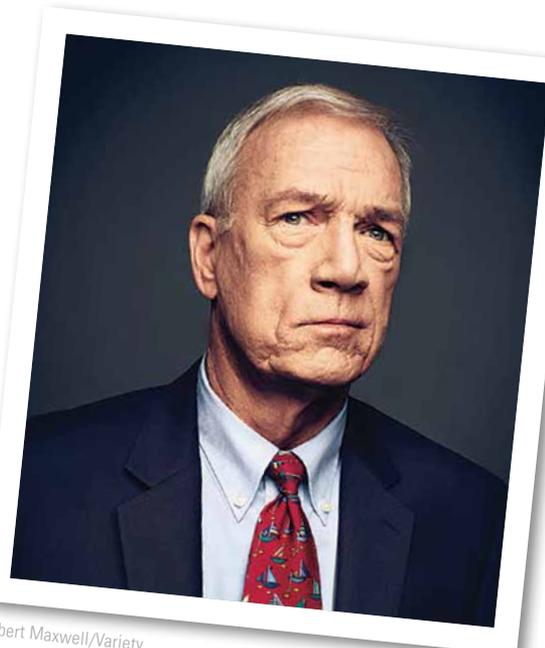
At that point, he had no support in Boston. So it wasn't a huge surprise. The fact that the most senior and prominent American cardinal would be forced out because of what a newspaper did — given that the church doesn't in any way consider itself beholden to or answerable to civil authorities and certainly not the press — was kind of a remarkable moment.

How have survivors of priest abuse reacted to the film?

They knew the film was coming. There were advance screenings for some of the leaders. They loved the film. One thing the film does is allow us all to see through the reporters' eyes what happened to people at the hands of priests and to look at it in a way in which we don't have to avert our eyes. If you tried to make a film about what happened to the survivors, no one would finance it.

What's your secret to getting reluctant sources to talk?

I try to persuade people that the public has a right to know. I try to appeal to their loftier instincts. I tell them, 'This story is going to come out. You're going to be affected by this story. You need to talk to me. You have to talk to me. You don't want other people who are critical of you to be quoted and for you to say 'No comment.' 'No comment' is never a good answer. ❖



Robert Maxwell/Variety

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—SEYMOUR L. LINFIELD

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40 Years Ago

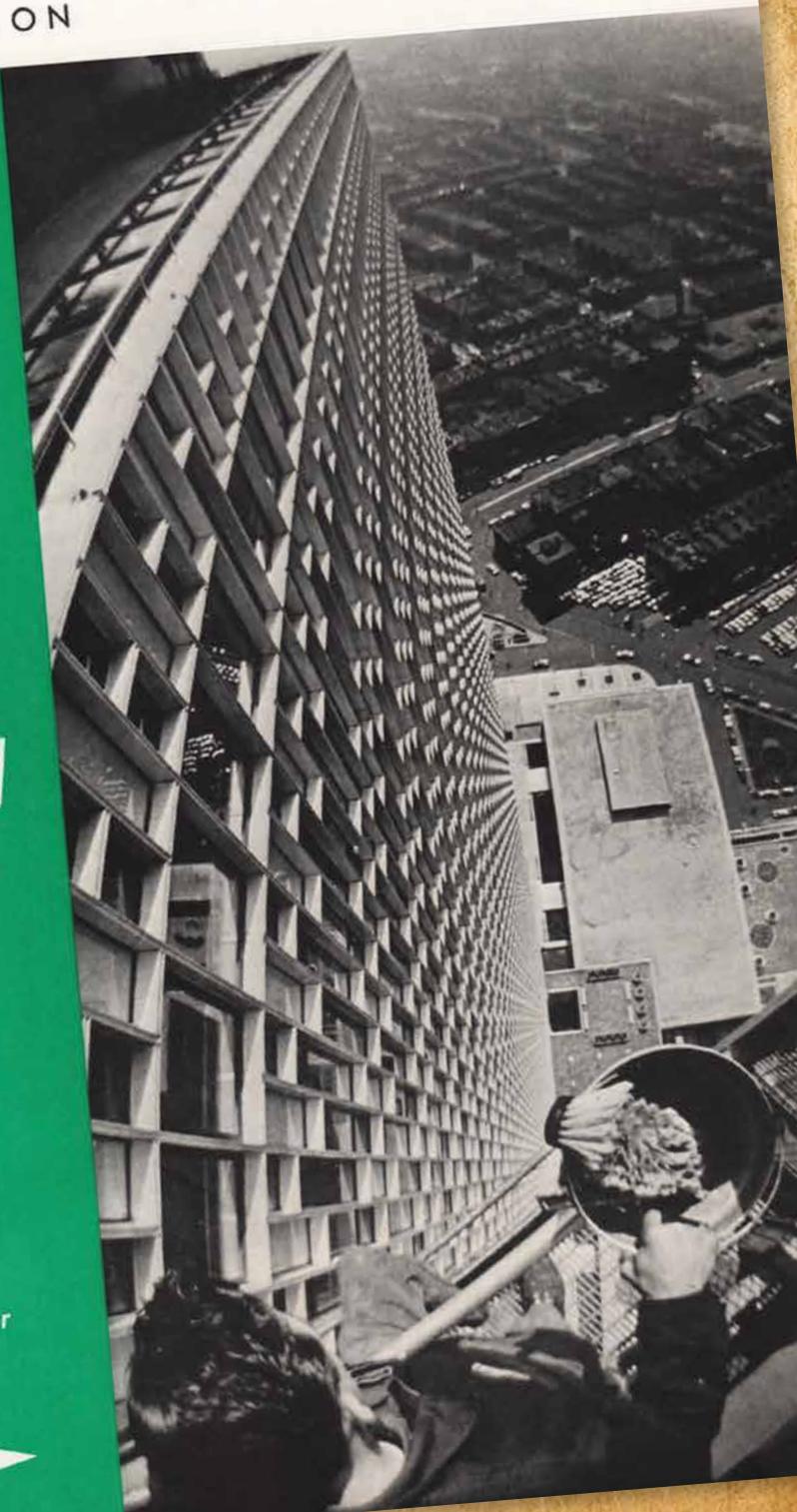
—KARL F. ZEISLER

13 Ways to Improve Newspaper Photography

—ROBERT S. McCORD

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13 WAYS TO IMPROVE NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHY

In the 1960s, broadcast journalism had emerged as a prominent news source, and newspapers were competing with images accompanying stories on television.

Robert McCord explained in this article the shortage of photo editors in newspapers. McCord's article should still resonate with journalists today because of the importance of making news stories approachable to readers.

"It's the job of a dedicated newspaperman not only to present the facts but also to get them read. What good is the greatest piece of journalism that was ever written if no one ever reads it?" McCord wrote.

McCord believed there were two reasons photos became neglected in newspapers. The first was that few journalism schools taught picture editing. Second, McCord said he didn't think higher-up management could see that pictures had a purpose in newspapers except for fillers.

McCord said there was still hope for photos in newspapers. He provided a list of 13 ways, with detailed tips and reasoning, to improve newspaper photography.

Online journalism and social media play a big role in the significance of pictures in news stories today. Take a look at the list McCord created below and decide what advice is dated and what still rings true:

- 1) Run the photos big.
- 2) Don't be afraid of an unusual size.
- 3) Put related things together in layouts.
- 4) Write short captions and, when at all possible, put them under the picture instead of off to the side or on the top or in a copy-block.
- 5) Don't get too close.
- 6) Put them on the front page and don't be embarrassed about it.
- 7) Don't be afraid to use a picture just because it's a great picture and for no other reason
- 8) Be just as aggressive chasing down a good picture as you are in chasing down a good news story.
- 9) Just because you've always done it is no reason to keep on doing it.
- 10) Don't run ridiculous pictures.
- 11) Accept once and for all that yes, boys do like dogs, and stop trying to convince people! (Don't stage photos.)
- 12) Don't run away from white space.
- 13) Don't be afraid to be original.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- An advertisement displaying the luxury of a full meal on Delta Airlines.
- Two young journalists share their exciting summers interning at a newspaper.
- A visual representing how "good" news regarding Tucson teenagers occurred more than "bad."
- The announcement of the 16 winners of the 1965 Sigma Delta Chi Awards.
- The University of Missouri chapter donated items to soldiers in Vietnam. ❖



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Looking in the mirror

The mark of a truly ethical news outlet is how it covers itself

by anna pratt

At the time the sale was announced, no one knew who the mystery buyer was who shelled out \$140 million for the Las Vegas Review-Journal. Besides the exorbitant price tag revealed on Dec. 10, 2015, the secrecy surrounding the owner's identity alarmed many of the newspaper's staffers who'd heard about the deal during a monthly town hall session that evening.

James DeHaven, a reporter who'd already lined up a new job with the Helena Independent Record, said, "Everyone could see what a problem that would be for us, in the integrity of news coverage."

However, when Review-Journal editorial staff brought up the conflict, higher-ups tried to shoo them away. They were told they didn't need to know who the buyer was, and they should just keep doing their work.

The staffers felt it was very much their work to discover and disclose who the owner was.

DeHaven, along with a team of investigative reporters, and with the backing of then editor-in-chief Mike Hengel and deputy editor Jim Wright, immediately began digging into their own newspaper's story as aggressively as they would any other assignment.

As veteran reporters, they were used to playing detective, but this was a whole different story. For starters, when their initial article was going to press, "Someone at the corporate level had the presses stopped and had quotes removed from the first story. That was not an auspicious start to the whole investigative process," DeHaven said.

But the journalists pressed on, piecing things together bit by bit. In less than a week, their persistence paid off, as they broke the news: The family of billionaire Las Vegas casino owner Sheldon Adelson had, unsurprisingly, bought the state's largest news outlet.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal, Dec. 17, 2015, the day the family of billionaire casino mogul and major Republican donor Sheldon Adelson confirmed in a statement that they are the new owners of Nevada's largest news outlet. The announcement ended a week of speculation and demands by staff and politicians to know the identity of the new owner. AP Photo/John Locher

The reporters continued to sniff out details of the sale; the reporting process continued to be fraught. "Things were removed from stories. Stories were spiked. Things were being reviewed. It was never clear who was pulling the strings," DeHaven said. "Every single story I was involved in was a battle to get it out."

It was difficult to work under those conditions. "People were worried about retribution and the paper's reputation, understandably so," said DeHaven, whose last day at the paper was Dec. 24.

covering yourself

David Folkenflik, NPR's media correspondent, praised the Review-Journal staff's willingness to stick it out. "I think they deserve tremendous credit for what they were doing. They didn't know how it would go. They still may not be 100 percent clear. They followed the story where it took them," he said.

The newspaper's seller, Gatehouse/New Media Investment Group, had intended to keep the ownership under wraps indefinitely. Still, the journalists tried to keep their readers informed

about the newspaper's takeover by one of the world's wealthiest people, he said.

While some news organizations shy away from covering themselves altogether, citing potential conflicts of in-

"If we say we're serious journalists and try to hold institutions accountable, acknowledge difficult truths about all kinds of figures and players and public life, then in certain cases, we need to do that to ourselves, as well." — DAVID FOLKENFLIK, media correspondent, NPR

terest, others, like the Review-Journal's newsroom, encourage greater transparency with their community.

Tackling one's own story is a complicated task, but an important one. "It has always seemed to me, through the reporting, and the careful scrutiny that one can provide, you demonstrate the values of the news organization," Folkenflik said.

"If we say we're serious journalists and try to hold institutions accountable, acknowledge difficult truths about all kinds of figures and players and public life, then in certain cases, we need to do that to ourselves, as well," he said.

At NPR, Folkenflik followed up in 2013 on an in-depth analysis of a story about tribal adoptions in the Dakotas by Edward Schumacher-Matos. As NPR's ombudsman at the time, Schumacher-Matos

was assigned to analyze and scrutinize NPR's coverage.

Folkenflik delved into Schumacher-Matos' 80-page ombudsman report, looking at "the mixed critical response it engendered, but also questions about the overreach in criticism."

Likewise, a few years ago he reported on NPR's firing of senior national correspondent Juan Williams, and the outcry after that, "which led to a 'sting' video seemingly having (NPR) fundraising officials saying damaging things," which was taken out of context, the reporting showed. "There was a lot of executive



turnover and changes in the ranks, which led to some instability," he said.

Although criticism within one's own shop can be uncomfortable, Folkenflik said, he's able to be an independent voice. Nobody who's under scrutiny in the story, including senior executives, deals with it before it goes on air, he said.

More broadly, Folkenflik pointed to several examples of solid "self-coverage" outside his beat reporting at NPR. He said the late David Shaw, used to do "sprawling investigations" of the Los Angeles Times. In the 1990s, Shaw evaluated the newspaper's relationship to the L.A. Police Department in light of longstanding racial tensions. Shaw homed in on how a racist culture took root within the department. Set against the backdrop of the Rodney King riots, "It was germane to how the city felt about itself and how it operated," Folkenflik said.

The late New York Times media critic David Carr penned a powerful piece in 2010 about the Tribune Company's corporate culture and how its fraternity-like ethos affected newspapers all over the country, he said.

not to cover

At Bloomberg News, coverage of owner Michael Bloomberg often comes in the form of aggregated reporting. Bloomberg News has a policy not to cover itself or Michael Bloomberg's wealth or personal life.

Bloomberg News declined to comment for this story, but its co-founder Matthew Winkler told The New York Times in 2014 that it represents "an inherent conflict of interest and no outlet does it well."

But what happens when Michael Bloomberg is considering running for president of the United States? That's the question that spurred Kathy Kiely to quit her job as the Washington news director for Bloomberg News in January.

"I left because I perceived it as a conflict," Kiely said. "Even without Michael Bloomberg entering the race, (he was) publicly mulling it."

When Joe Biden was considering running, Bloomberg News covered it extensively. For a political website not to give

Michael Bloomberg the same treatment is a cop-out, she said.

Furthermore, there's no such thing as a conflict-free zone. "The question is, are you willing to follow the news all the way, even if it leads to your front door?" she said.

Bloomberg News responded to Kiely's resignation in a February New York Times story.

In the story, Bloomberg editor-in-chief John Micklethwait is quoted saying her departure was "a little odd," bearing in mind the company's policy. Michael Bloomberg said in March that he wouldn't run, but even if he had, "then we would probably come up with a more formal set of things," Micklethwait said.

NPR's Folkenflik said it's rare to have a policy that explicit, plus a figure like Michael Bloomberg, whose influence extends well beyond Bloomberg News.

By the same token, "I think there are plenty of smaller organizations that tread lightly on ownership. It's not unheard of," he said.

Still, he argues for more transparency. "I think it's misguided, a mistake, minimizing Michael Bloomberg when he's the subject of intense media scrutiny and puts out statements about whether he'll run for president," he said.

It's something to pay attention to, "and it serves readers best when you do that," Folkenflik said.

maintaining standards

Some outlets try to cover themselves by hiring public editors/ombudsmen to reflect on reportage.

ESPN's public editor Jim Brady interacts with people on Twitter, and he's accessible via email. He recently re-examined ESPN's Deflategate coverage, an NFL scandal about footballs that were said to be underinflated during a Patriots-Colts playoff game last year.

Craig Bengtson, vice president and managing editor for newsgathering and reporting at ESPN, which claims to be the only sports media with a public editor, said it makes sense to do such analysis of their own coverage since, "We do

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Having a public editor "keeps us honest. It helps us to ask questions of ourselves that we need to ask and make sure the fans and audience understand how we do what we do and why we do what we do," he said.

Similarly, Philip Corbett is an integral part of the New York Times news-

Both the public editor and standards editor positions were created in the aftermath of the 2003 scandal involving Jayson Blair, a 27-year-old reporter who had frequently made up and plagiarized material.

The results of that soul-searching were on display in 2014 when the paper fired executive editor Jill Abramson. "It was difficult for the Times to cover because it affected all of us." A front-page

but it was also a good sign that the Times let him do it, Corbett said.

It's impossible to have the same detachment one would have when reporting on outside institutions. "We should be honest and humble and admit, it's not a perfect situation when you report on yourself," while striving to be as professional as possible, Corbett said.

transparency and credibility

Butch Ward at the Poynter Institute stressed the importance of telling one's own story.

While news organizations are more open to admitting mistakes nowadays than, say, 25 years ago, he said, "We have to acknowledge readers and viewers that we serve have a tremendous amount of skepticism about media and journalism in 2016."

Anyone can now take to the Internet to offer up interpretations of events, true or false. As such, transparency is a key ingredient in credibility, Ward said.

But it's not just about explaining wrongdoing. Rather, it relates to "how we interact as a newsroom every day. It's hard to practice with the public if we don't

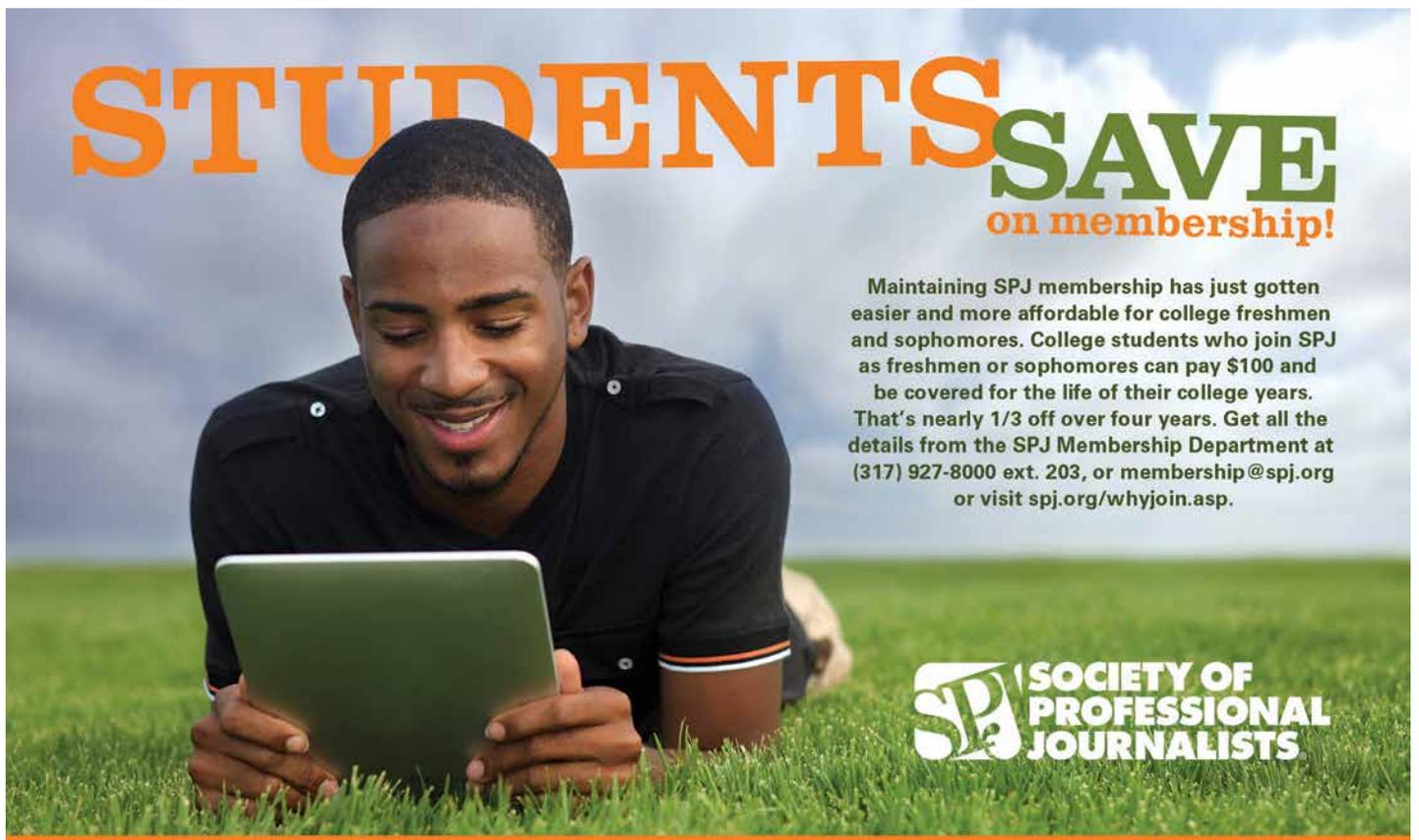
Whether it's putting an outside overseer on the payroll, counting on reporters to risk their own livelihoods or opting out of reflexive reportage, there's no one set way the journalism industry has settled on when it comes to covering itself.

room as associate managing editor for standards. He is also in charge of its style manual.

His role is similar to that of the Times' public editor, Margaret Sullivan, although he's in a position to "push back against a situation that might arise and compromise journalism, like a commercial consideration," Corbett said. And, he's a resource to his colleagues, as well.

story ran in its print edition, and the online version was also visually prominent. "We did a good job covering bases, as if the upheaval was somewhere else," Corbett said.

Media critic David Carr followed it up with "a long, thoughtful, tough-minded column in the aftermath that was pretty penetrating. It was partly a credit to David and the stature and insight he had,"



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practice with the newsroom," he said.

"One way to look at this issue is, 'What do you do in crisis mode?' I would argue, the answer to that question is, 'What do you do when you're not in crisis mode?'"

All kinds of questions come up on a regular basis. In addition to corrections and clarifications, news organizations grapple with questions about how transparent to be.

There aren't hard and fast rules for answering those questions, but it "needs guidelines, precedence and traditions. You have to get comfortable having these conversations," Ward said.

"In a lot of newsrooms, you hear people say, 'We don't know what's going on.' When the time comes to tell the public about something, it'll be more difficult. It's not in your DNA to be open about the way you do your work and its impact," he said.

Ward considers what Roanoke TV station WDBJ did last year a great example of transparency. After journalists Adam Ward and Alison Parker were killed on camera, the station was candid about what was happening as the tragic events unfolded.

two-way conversation

Ward said a number of organizations are trying to have more robust conversations with the public on an ongoing basis. Some editors write columns, while social media has given journalists the opportunity to talk directly to the public about what they're up to. Others are livestreaming news meetings or hosting so-called pop-up newsrooms at coffee shops.

Technology has enabled a two-way relationship with the public. "You have a richer pipeline of feedback about the work, a more plentiful supply of ideas," Ward said. "If you have a good relationship with the audience, they tell you things."

Recently, The New York Times created an online feature highlighting the week's most popular comments. Times Insider delves into the story behind the story. Additionally, the Times posts many original documents, some with annotations, Corbett said.

In the coverage of presidential de-

bates, several political reporters participated in a live chat. Their running commentary was "almost like having your smart political friends over watching the debate with you at your house," he said.

It may not be controversial, but such outreach underscores the effort to be transparent, something that varies from one media outlet to the next.

Whether it's putting an outside overseer on the payroll, counting on reporters to risk their own livelihoods or opting out of reflexive reportage, there's no one set way the journalism industry has settled on when it comes to covering itself.

That may reflect the idea of journalism ethics being a decision-making guide, not a hard-and-fast rulebook. The SPJ Code of Ethics, for example, implores journalists and news outlets to "be accountable and transparent" and to "expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their own organizations."

But there's no prescription outlining exactly how to do so. ❖

Anna Pratt is a freelance journalist based in the Minneapolis area and chairwoman of SPJ's Freelance Community. Email: annaprattjournalist@gmail.com

WORDS & LANGUAGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

loath, loathe

loath: (adjective) reluctant (TH pronounced as in "moth").

loathe: (verb) despise (TH pronounced as in "other").

oral, aural

oral: pertaining to the mouth or speech.

aural: pertaining to the ears or sound.

pedal, peddle

pedal: a lever or bar pressed by the foot.

peddle: to sell.

perspective, prospective

perspective: viewpoint; in art, perception of distance or dimension.

prospective: future, expected (*prospective* buyer).

phase, faze

phase: a stage in development.

faze: disturb or trouble.

prescribe, proscribe

prescribe: to order, direct, mandate.

proscribe: to prohibit.

refute, rebut

Refute: disprove with conclusive evidence.

Rebut: dispute, deny, reject, challenge, contradict (*rebutting* a statement or argument doesn't necessarily mean *refuting* it).

retch, wretch

retch: to gag or vomit.

wretch: a miserable or despised creature.

reticent, reluctant

reticent: quiet, silent (*reticence* signals only an unwillingness to speak; it does not mean unwillingness in general).

reluctant: unwilling.

stationary, stationery

stationary: still, immobile.

stationery: writing materials.

tic, tick

tic: spasm.

tick: the sound of a clock; a check mark; blood-sucking bug.

trooper, trouper

trooper: policeman, infantryman.

trouper: actor, performer, team player.

wangle, wrangle

wangle: finagle or gain through trickery.

wrangle: quarrel, bicker; to herd livestock.

want, wont

want: desire.

wont: (adjective) accustomed (as he is *wont* to do); (noun) custom (that is his *wont*).

wrack, rack

wrack: twist, warp, contort, wrench.

rack: (noun) shelf or framework, a device for torture; (verb) to cause pain, strain (*racked* his brain), collect or store (*rack* up points).

wreak, reek

wreak: to cause, bring about, perpetrate (*wreak* havoc).

reek: smell bad. (Both words are pronounced "reek.")

yoke, yokl

yoke (noun): wooden frame for carrying something on the shoulders or that joins draft animals; servitude, burden, bondage; (verb) fasten, couple, join.

yolk: yellow center of an egg. ❖

CODE of ETHICS

PREAMBLE

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. Ethical journalism strives to ensure the free exchange of information that is accurate, fair and thorough. An ethical journalist acts with integrity.

The Society declares these four principles as the foundation of ethical journalism and encourages their use in its practice by all people in all media.

SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT

Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- ▶ Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible.
- ▶ Remember that neither speed nor format excuses inaccuracy.
- ▶ Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.
- ▶ Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story.
- ▶ Be cautious when making promises, but keep the promises they make.
- ▶ Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources.
- ▶ Consider sources' motives before promising anonymity. Reserve anonymity for sources who may face danger, retribution or other harm, and have information that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Explain why anonymity was granted.
- ▶ Diligently seek subjects of news coverage to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing.
- ▶ Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information unless traditional, open methods will not yield information vital to the public.
- ▶ Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Give voice to the voiceless.
- ▶ Support the open and civil exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- ▶ Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.
- ▶ Provide access to source material when it is relevant and appropriate.
- ▶ Boldly tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience. Seek sources whose voices we seldom hear.
- ▶ Avoid stereotyping. Journalists should examine the ways their values and experiences may shape their reporting.
- ▶ Label advocacy and commentary.
- ▶ Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information. Clearly label illustrations and re-enactments.
- ▶ Never plagiarize. Always attribute.

MINIMIZE HARM

Ethical journalism treats sources, subjects, colleagues and members of the public as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- ▶ Balance the public's need for information against potential harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance or undue intrusiveness.

- ▶ Show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage. Use heightened sensitivity when dealing with juveniles, victims of sex crimes, and sources or subjects who are inexperienced or unable to give consent. Consider cultural differences in approach and treatment.
- ▶ Recognize that legal access to information differs from an ethical justification to publish or broadcast.
- ▶ Realize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than public figures and others who seek power, influence or attention. Weigh the consequences of publishing or broadcasting personal information.
- ▶ Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity, even if others do.
- ▶ Balance a suspect's right to a fair trial with the public's right to know. Consider the implications of identifying criminal suspects before they face legal charges.
- ▶ Consider the long-term implications of the extended reach and permanence of publication. Provide updated and more complete information as appropriate.

ACT INDEPENDENTLY

The highest and primary obligation of ethical journalism is to serve the public.

Journalists should:

- ▶ Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived. Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- ▶ Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and avoid political and other outside activities that may compromise integrity or impartiality, or may damage credibility.
- ▶ Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; do not pay for access to news. Identify content provided by outside sources, whether paid or not.
- ▶ Deny favored treatment to advertisers, donors or any other special interests, and resist internal and external pressure to influence coverage.
- ▶ Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two. Prominently label sponsored content.

BE ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT

Ethical journalism means taking responsibility for one's work and explaining one's decisions to the public.

Journalists should:

- ▶ Explain ethical choices and processes to audiences. Encourage a civil dialogue with the public about journalistic practices, coverage and news content.
- ▶ Respond quickly to questions about accuracy, clarity and fairness.
- ▶ Acknowledge mistakes and correct them promptly and prominently. Explain corrections and clarifications carefully and clearly.
- ▶ Expose unethical conduct in journalism, including within their organizations.
- ▶ Abide by the same high standards they expect of others.

The SPJ Code of Ethics is a statement of abiding principles supported by additional explanations and position papers (at spj.org) that address changing journalistic practices. It is not a set of rules, rather a guide that encourages all who engage in journalism to take responsibility for the information they provide, regardless of medium. The code should be read as a whole; individual principles should not be taken out of context. It is not, nor can it be under the First Amendment, legally enforceable.

Eliminate ‘flack speak’ for clear writing

THIS SENTENCE APPEARED on the whiteboard during my beginning reporting class.

“Police arrested the man.”

Other versions preceded it while the class worked on an editing exercise to reduce sentence word count and use strong verbs.

“Well, what do you think?” I said to the class. A hand shot up in the back row.

“Shouldn’t it say ‘apprehended’ instead of ‘arrested’?” the student said. I sidestepped the issue that the words do not mean the same thing and focused on “apprehended.”

Earlier in the week, I posed these questions to my editing class:

“What is the difference between an ‘active shooter’ and a ‘shooter’?” I said. “Is there such a thing as a ‘passive shooter’?”

An important piece of advice I got early in my reporting career came from an editor who told me “We do not assume the language of our sources.”

“Apprehended” and “active shooter” serve as examples of police speak, and the “active shooter” routinely appears in news stories produced in all formats. Such usages litter news story archives — from “in harm’s way” to “boots on the ground” to “9/11,” that one TV speak to get around the cumbersome Sept. 11, 2001.

The problem with source speak, and other language issues, might get worse.

Over the past few years, SPJ has been outspoken about public information officers and their private-sector counterparts running interference for sources. That interference often involves “flack speak,” language reporters should eliminate — from “monetize” to “funding” to “infrastructure” and the like. Some common usages from government agencies, as Time magazine reports, are “weatherization,” “gasification,” “grantsmanship” and “interdependencies.”

Gasification indeed.

Perhaps more troublesome news for journalism teachers comes from high schools, where a call for more grandiose language in writing surfaced in an article in the Wall Street Journal: “Use More Expressive Words! Teachers Bark, Beseech, Implore.”

The book “Banning Boring Words” in 2009 launched this idea. Some comments posted on the Writer’s Digest site about the Wall Street Journal story made me smile:

“I may plan on retiring from all writing forums when these students start joining them.”

“Anyone who tells kids, or adults, or writers, not to use ‘said’ is an idiot, and has no clue whatsoever about the language, or about writing. The entire point of ‘said’ is that it is a dead word, which means readers ignore it, but

pay attention to what’s around it.”

The last comment refers to one of the main targets of the expressionists, the word “said,” which they would ban.

I talk to my students about attribution, particularly about the word “said.” I categorize it as “neutral,” not “dead,” and a word readers have become comfortable with that allows them to focus on what’s around it, as per the comment above.

I recall covering a town hall meeting on animal control in the 1980s in Bay County, Fla. I directly quoted one of the speakers and wrote “he shouted” for attribution.

The day the story appeared in the paper, I got a call from the man I quoted, who took issue with my use of “shouted.” He said it made him seem angry and mean-spirited. He wanted people to hear his comments, but readers might think otherwise, he said.

I took his criticism to heart.

So as teachers, particularly in beginning classes focusing on fundamentals, exercises in eliminating “flack speak” and “grandiose” words is a necessity.

Gather some press releases and have students rewrite them in “normal speak.”

Have students edit news stories in which reporters have assumed the language of their sources. And ask your students questions that get them thinking about the language they read in news stories and the language they use.

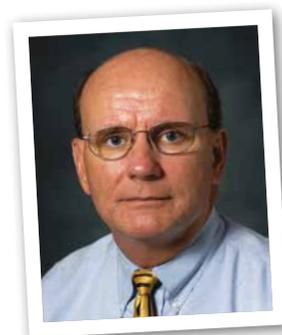
I asked the student in my basic reporting class what he would tell his mother when he returned with the family dog that escaped from the fenced yard.

“Mom, I apprehended the dog.”

I asked my editing class if they ever asked mom or dad this question:

“Can I have some funding to go to the movies?”

Both classes laughed. ❖



MAC MCKERRAL

Mac McKerral, a past national SPJ president, teaches in the School of Journalism & Broadcasting at Western Kentucky University. Contact him at mac.mckerral@wku.edu

CLEAR WRITING RESOURCES:

- Time and government mumbo-jumbo
tinyurl.com/TIMEgovtmumbojumbo
- Mantex: How to avoid jargon
tinyurl.com/MantexAvoidJargon
- Avoiding redundancies
tinyurl.com/AvoidCommonRedundancies
- Writer’s Digest forum
tinyurl.com/WritersDigestWordForum
- National Archives: Plain writing checklist:
tinyurl.com/ArchivesPlainWritingChecklist
- News Manual: Language and style basics
tinyurl.com/NewsManualBasics

SAVING THE DAY, SINCE 1909!



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Paralyzed at the mixer? You're not alone

AS A FREELANCER, I'm pretty much the epitome of the reclusive gnome: I occasionally emerge from my home office, blinking in the light, to sample the fresh air outside and exchange actual spoken words with people instead of emailing them. Recently, this has even included going to several networking mixers for associations I've joined, which involved putting on reasonably nice clothes and a healthy cloak of courage.

It's not that I don't like people; I love having a great conversation. I mean, I'm a journalist, and I'm always down for a juicy story. But put me in a room full of people with nametags and an expectation to schmooze, and I seize up.

What I imagine will happen: link up with an editor I really admire and learn what they're looking for in a pitch. What actually happens: Room-cruising sharks end up glomming onto me, a very hit-or-miss approach for having a good time.

So how do you make the best of one of these networking events, let alone put your best foot forward, when you don't get out much to begin with?

For starters, definitely don't avoid the mixers. I doubt any freelancer would debate the importance of a healthy network, especially given the outsized role that online social networks now play in modern life. Those in-person connections are more valuable now than ever.

Fortunately, there are people happy to advise hapless hacks like me, and I tracked one down at Poynter, a place where folks are in the habit of helping journalists do their jobs better.

Described by his colleagues as one of the most socially capable people around the office, Ren LaForme not only helps organize events, but he formed a group that meets monthly in Tampa Bay with the express purpose of connecting journalists with digital designers and developers. During work hours, he builds Poynter's online education courses.

"Meeting a person face to face is still the best way to accomplish anything," LaForme told me. "And I say that as a person who does e-learning for a living."

Here are a few other tips LaForme offered that might help you have a great conversation at your next mixer, even as you ponder rapidly draining your wine glass in panic.

Set small goals. Before you even show up, decide what you want to get out of the event. Make a goal to talk to a set number of people — say, three or four — and then you can leave, or just hang out by the bar and see what happens. "But try not to attach yourself to the hors d'oeuvres for too long," LaForme says.

Icebreakers work. When LaForme walked into his 10-year high school reunion, he found everyone converged at the bar near the door, glued to a spouse or friend. Fin-

ishing his drink, he approached a classmate and dropped a line he ended up repeating all night: "This whole thing is awkward and super weird, right?" Tapping into an unspoken observation can help diffuse the tension of the setting, and allow for more natural conversation to flow. "Don't be afraid to milk it for what it's worth," LaForme says.

Practice some boilerplate. I try to head off talking about myself by asking tons of questions, but also because I am genuinely interested in other people's success. But the inevitable question comes: So what do you do? "Be ready to answer with a story about an article you enjoyed writing, an interview you really enjoyed or a particularly great time you had working with an editor," LaForme advises. "It's less about trying to fit what you do into what they do but showing what you're into."

The audience is rooting for you. We can't all be Robert Downey Jr. smooth, but sometimes there's no way to slide into a conversation than to gently butt in, possibly by asking a question or contributing a point under discussion. "The secret is that those people who are all talking together are really happy to have someone to talk to and

I doubt any freelancer would debate the importance of a healthy network, especially given the outsized role that online social networks now play in modern life. Those in-person connections are more valuable now than ever.

don't have to butt in," LaForme says. "But they want you to succeed. Come in with confidence and contribute as fast as possible."

Don't curb your enthusiasm. If you really want to wow that editor, show them you care about what you do and be ready to draw upon subjects that excite you. "Editors are looking less for topics and more for passion," LaForme says. Asking lots of questions never hurts, either — it demonstrates that you're an expert listener.

Everyone is on edge. That's the big secret: Most people at networking events are probably queasy, too. It just goes against instinct to shoehorn a connection, and Wi-Fi just isn't reliable enough to Google-stalk everyone you're about to talk to. "I'm uncomfortable every time I go," LaForme says. "But it's provided me with so many great career tips and moves that I just try to push that aside and have a good time." ❖



MICHELLE Z. DONAHUE

Michelle Z. Donahue is a Maryland-based science and technology freelancer who thinks that writing third-person bios is almost as tough as jumping into a conversation already in progress. She has written about robotic scooters for babies, dogs that hunt for whale poop and coffee brewing in space for outlets including Smithsonian and Popular Science. On Twitter: @MZDonahue

HO,
HO,

NO!

RESIGNATI

IT'S CHRISTMAS EVE ON THE EAST COAST, AND I QUIT MY LONGTIME NEWSPAPER JOB AFTER SHELDON ADELSON BOUGHT THE LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL.

BY **STEVE MAJERUS-COLLINS**

On Dec. 24, 2015, I resigned from a job I loved — as a reporter at a Connecticut daily — to protest the ethical lapses of my newspaper's editor and publisher. Even though I knew my decision would create financial hardship for my family, I couldn't work for a boss who mocked the principles that make journalism a worthy endeavor. Some things are worth a whole lot more than money.

It started two weeks earlier, when my boss, Michael Schroeder, showed up in a newsroom on the opposite side of the country to tell its editorial staff their paper had been sold. In one of the more perplexing moments of my 28 years in journalism, I saw a Twitter picture of Schroeder talking to employees at the Las Vegas Review-Journal as the buyer's representative. It seemed bizarre that Schroeder, my boss at The Bristol Press, had anything to do with the secret takeover of Nevada's largest newspaper. As publisher and editor of my small paper, Schroeder had no obvious ties to anything so far away.

That night in Nevada, Schroeder told reporters the new owners "want you to focus on your jobs ... don't worry about who they are." Fortunately for the profession, some of the journalists in Las Vegas realized their jobs required them to worry about who owned their paper. They quickly suspected that casino magnate and Republican powerbroker Sheldon Adelson stood behind the deal. And within days, they uncovered the connection, bravely pursuing and publishing it in the pages of their paper despite the warning. Once unmasked by dogged reporting, Adelson's family soon admitted its new role.

What came next, though, proved more troubling for me.

DROP EVERYTHING

On Dec. 18, the Review-Journal reported that in early November, three of its reporters "received an unusual assignment passed down from the newspaper's corporate management: Drop everything

and spend two weeks monitoring all activity of three Clark County judges."

The story said they were never given a reason. And their work, which included scrutiny of a judge Adelson had clashed with, never reached print. In one of the more disturbing sentences I've ever read, the story went on to say that "a long article blasting" the judge's rulings in a case involving Adelson "appeared in a small Connecticut newspaper with a connection to Adelson that became known only last week." It referred, of course, to my paper.

When I dug out the story from Dec. 1, I discovered a poorly written article that focused mostly on business courts, which don't exist in Connecticut, and included some harsh criticism of the judge who irked Adelson. The obvious hit piece carried a byline by Edward Clarkin, a name I didn't recognize. It appeared deep inside the paper where readers ignored it.



Courtesy Steve Majerus-Collins

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I couldn't make sense of it. Where it came from, I had no idea. Why it appeared mystified me, except that it clearly had something to do with Schroeder's odd foray to Las Vegas. I felt unsettled and wary.

Matthew Kauffman, a seasoned reporter at The Hartford Courant, drew back the curtain further Dec. 23 with a story that showed plainly that Edward Clarkin didn't even exist and that the story itself was chock full of plagiarized material and made-up quotes. Within hours, we learned from Christine Stuart, who keeps the online news site CT New Junkie hopping, that Schroeder's middle name was Edward and his mother's maiden name was Clarkin.

Schroeder himself had no comment. I saw him that afternoon, looking almost giddy, and wondered how he could be happy.

CONVICTION

The next morning, I woke up with the clear conviction that after 22 years serving the readers of my newspaper, I could not continue at The Bristol Press. I couldn't stomach working for a man who deliberately ran a fake story in what I believed was a pathetic attempt to ingratiate himself with Adelson or his minions.

What really got me, as I sat staring at our Christmas tree, was thinking about the hundreds of students I help to mentor through Youth Journalism International, the charity my wife and I created in 1994. We tell our students frequently about the skills that reporters need — including how to take accurate notes, source facts and write active sentences — but we also tell them journalism is not just a career, it is a calling. It requires those who join its ranks to stand up for what's right even when it is difficult. How could I urge them to care deeply about ethics while simultaneously working for a man who obviously had none?

So I talked to my wife, Jackie, and we jointly decided I had no choice except to resign. Since quitting in protest carries a lot more weight if it's explained, I sat down at my computer and pounded out a 900-word open letter outlining my thinking. If nothing else, I wanted the many people in Bristol to know why I would

suddenly vanish from the pages of their local paper.

At noon, I told my boss that "after the bizarre events of recent days, which have fundamentally changed working conditions for all of us at The Bristol Press and [our sister paper] New Britain Herald, I have no choice except to resign from a job I've loved these past 22 years."

Shortly after, I posted my open letter on Facebook, accusing Schroeder of "journalistic misconduct of epic proportions."

"There is no excusing this behavior," I wrote. "A newspaper editor cannot be allowed to stamp on the most basic rules of journalism and pay no price. He should be shunned by my colleagues, cut off by professional organizations and told to pound sand by anyone working for him who has integrity. ...

"I can't teach young people how to be ethical, upstanding reporters while working for a man like Michael Schroeder. I can't take his money. I can't do his bidding. I have to stand up for what is right even if the cost is so daunting that at this moment it scares the hell out of me." ...

"I have no idea how my wife and I will get by. We have two kids in college, two collies, a mortgage and dreams of travel and adventure that now look more distant than ever."

I tried to put on a brave face, but I felt like I had thrown myself into an abyss.

Then something amazing happened: My Facebook note went viral. The phone started ringing, with journalists near and far offering encouraging words. Notes poured in. The Washington Post, The New York Times and Talking Points Memo wrote stories. Emails flood my inbox. Prominent journalists such as Glenn Greenwald praised me on Twitter. Chris Hayes and Amy Goodman put me on television. The New Yorker gave me a passing nod.

Clearly, I had touched a nerve, partly because almost everyone has had a moment when they wanted to tell their boss to shove it the way I had. Mostly, though, they just wanted to tell me they were rooting for me. That happens at Christmas, even among people as hard-bitten as reporters, editors and, yes, publishers. Some of them even sent money to help tide me over.

WHAT COMES NEXT

I'm still trying to piece together what comes next. For the time being, I'm freelancing for CT New Junkie and trying to scrape by. In that respect, I'm in the same position as all too many journalists handed pink slips in recent years as our troubled business continues to evolve.

I keep hoping the perfect job will pop up, but they are few and far between. I wonder about the possibility of shifting from the newsroom to the classroom. I am pondering options about how to join with others to fight more broadly for the standards journalists need to preserve.

I am also paying close attention to the still unraveling story of Schroeder, Adelson and the Review-Journal. By early January, under withering criticism from many, Schroeder issued what looked like an apology for the Clarkin piece, which he admitted contained errors. But he did nothing to explain its existence or to correct the record as news outlets must when they err.

We also learned from a story Peter Stone wrote for The Huffington Post that Schroeder offered one of my former colleagues \$5,000 to write the business court story in September. Scott Whipple, a retiree who could certainly use the money, turned it down because it

didn't feel right. Schroeder told some local college students he hired someone else instead.

Out in Las Vegas, Adelson's grip on the Review-Journal has grown ever stronger. But the paper still has some great journalists trying to advance the story. What's most interesting now, as New York University's Jay Rosen and Po-

but there's so much that reeks as well. As a profession, we have to figure out how we're going to preserve journalistic independence and values during this tumultuous, moneygrubbing era.

One thing I am sure about is that the time for hunkering down is long past. Those of us who care about journalism are going to need to display the same

CLEARLY, I HAD TOUCHED A NERVE, PARTLY BECAUSE ALMOST EVERYONE HAS HAD A MOMENT WHEN THEY WANTED TO TELL THEIR BOSS TO SHOVE IT THE WAY I HAD. MOSTLY, THOUGH, THEY JUST WANTED TO TELL ME THEY WERE ROOTING FOR ME.

litico Media's Alex Weprin have shown, is that the Review-Journal's former owner earned tens of millions of dollars in profit in selling the paper to Adelson.

GateHouse Media, which owns papers across the country, agreed as part of the deal to keep Adelson's identity secret indefinitely, a provision that appears to strike at the very heart of what news is all about. How can a news company agree to keep critical news secret? I guess the answer is: "When the profits are large enough."

Anyone interested in ethics will be eyeing this whole sorry saga for a long time to come. There's honor in the story, especially in that newsroom in Nevada,

courage inside our newsrooms as we do in the world at large.

As I put it at the end of my resignation note:

"Whatever happens, I am going to hold my head high and face the future with resolve. Journalism is nothing if we reporters falter and fade. We are doing something important, and men such as Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Adelson — no matter how much money they can toss around — cannot have their way with us." ❖

Steve Majerus-Collins is co-founder of *Youth Journalism International* and a (now) freelance journalist in Connecticut. Email: majeruscollins@gmail.com



Michael Uchalid

GET SET FOR



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Avoid the false balance trap

FALSE BALANCE OCCURS when journalists elevate one position or argument to that of another, even without supporting evidence, to give readers, listeners and viewers a sense of fairness. While a noble pursuit, elevating unsupported positions or arguments can cause more harm than good.

As a journalist who exclusively reports on medicine and science, I'm frequently reminded in my own reporting of how often false balance presents itself.

For example, in general stories about childhood immunizations, journalists often reach out to parents who believes those shots are harmful or unnecessary. However, the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence shows that the benefits of immunizations endorsed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention outweigh the risks.

In those cases, journalists are presented with three choices: 1) include the parents' comments without statements describing them as wrong in the eyes of science. 2) Include the comments and provide adequate context about their validity. 3) Ignore those voices altogether.

The goal should be to provide the public with the most accurate depiction of an issue.

There is no universal "cheat sheet" for reporting on contentious issues. But I do believe there are a few steps that can help reporters know if they're reaching too far to provide balance.

Take a step back and look at the entire issue. Is there a group of people influencing the issue at the level you're reporting on? For example, a small activist group in a rural community may make a difference at the local level. Those activists may be relevant to stories in the community. However, on a national level, the same small activist group may not be relevant to the issue. Take a good look at each position and argument. If you decide to include it in your story, make sure it's accompanied by context and information about the veracity of those claims.

Ask yourself if the position or argument in question is relevant. For example, journalists often call or email their local Catholic bishop to comment for stories about abortion. While there is a legitimate debate around the morality of abortion, a bishop or other religious figure may not be the best source for stories evaluating the medical safety of the procedure. If you and your editor or news director are at a loss for a person or organization to provide an opposing viewpoint, don't overreach and purposely create one.

Fairly evaluate the evidence for each side of the issue. If there is a vocal group of people with a position

contrary to the overwhelming weight of evidence, be cautious about putting their position and arguments on equal footing. For example, so-called "Flat Earthers" — people who deny the Earth is round — pop up from time to time on social media. While that group's pictures and rationales are amusing, there is no justification to include those in stories about space exploration or other relative topics. Why? Because the overwhelming weight of evidence shows the Earth is round, and — as discussed in tip one — "Flat Earthers" won't have an influence on the shape of the planet or shape-related matters (or at least let's hope not).

Check your biases. If you're writing traditional news stories, your personal stance on subjects should not influence the ultimate pieces. For example, you should not leave out rational arguments supporting natural gas fracking even though you personally believe it to be wrong and harmful. Allow hunches and thoughts to aid your investigation, but don't let those get in the way of reporting a fair and accurate evaluation of the issue. If you can't, pass the story to another journalist.

As for the previously mentioned general immunization story, I believe including the comments of parents ques-

Take a good look at each position and argument. If you decide to include it in your story, make sure it's accompanied by context and information about the veracity of those claims.

tioning their safety and efficacy is the right approach as long as they're accompanied by additional context. For example, journalists can say that while there are anecdotal reports on social media of children being harmed by vaccinations, they are not supported by rigorous medical studies, which prove the safety of immunizations.

Presenting the parents' comments without qualifying statements would make the story — for the most part — inaccurate. Also, the number of parents deciding not to vaccinate their children is too large to ignore. In some cases, their collective decision to forgo immunization led to infectious disease outbreaks.

Overall, when it comes to balance and viewpoints, keep an open mind. But in the words of former New York Times Publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger, don't let your brain fall out. ♦



ANDREW SEAMAN

Andrew Seaman is chairman of the SPJ Ethics Committee and a health/medical reporter for Reuters. Contact him at andrew.m.seaman@gmail.com. On Twitter: [@andrewmseaman](https://twitter.com/andrewmseaman)

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Struggling with a dilemma on deadline, or just want to talk about a tough call you've had to make? Call SPJ's Ethics Hotline at (317) 927-8000, ext. 208. Leave a message, and a member of SPJ's Ethics Committee will soon be in touch.

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Observation can elevate event stories

MY MORNING BEGAN that Monday with a note from an editor telling me I'd been tapped to cover the Friday memorial ceremony for a police officer who'd been shot and killed while making an arrest in a small coastal community about 90 minutes from Portland.

I want to lead you through the choices I made on this story. I received many emails and calls from readers, all of whom said something like this: "You captured the community's sorrow, grief and loving spirit in a way that no other coverage has. Well done."

I want you to see how, in the real world, you can use narrative techniques in a breaking or seemingly regular "news" story, and in doing so elevate a standard story into something better than a template most reporters use.

ARRIVE EARLY

The event was scheduled for 1 p.m., but I got to Seaside at 8 a.m. I wanted to get a sense of the people and the community before other reporters arrived. The governor would be attending, as well as a host of dignitaries. I wanted to wander the town, letting what I saw and heard guide me.

I was feeding the Oregonian via tweets and photos, as well as a story for the Web noting the ceremony would be taking place. But my real mission was to let the story come to me instead of believing the story was the ceremony itself.

This seems obvious, but if you arrive late to a story, it's easy to get caught up in the logistics of the story: Can I get a comment from the governor? Where are reporters supposed to sit? Who can give me a quick quote?

That kind of approach leads to a story that's quickly forgotten and doesn't resonate with readers.

THINK EARLY ABOUT YOUR STRUCTURE

How do you want to tell this story? What structure works best? Why? When you're in the field, you have to provide yourself both the questions and the answers. How? Getting out, talking with people. What do you see? What do you feel? The answer isn't going to come from a press release.

I arrived in Seaside and walked the streets, looking around, talking with people with the goal of finding the story I wanted to tell. I went to the spot where the officer was killed. It was in front of a restaurant. I saw a makeshift memorial. I talked with people looking at it. What were they thinking about? What had the week been like? I went into the restaurant, sat at the counter, ordered breakfast and talked with the waitresses, staff and customers — not idle chatter, but questions that helped me find the story.

And in doing so, I found both my story and the structure on how best to tell it:

SEASIDE — Residents of this coastal town had been preparing for Friday's ceremony for several days. And as morning broke, with rain giving way to blue skies, they believed they were ready.

It was just a week ago that one of their police officers, Sgt. Jason Goodding, a man paid to protect them, was gunned down on the city's main street while trying to arrest a man with a long criminal record.

Goodding's afternoon memorial service in the city's convention center would take place about four blocks from where he died.

And so the town got busy.

The act of doing something, anything, this past week seemed to provide a certain comfort to those who live here.

Signs honoring Goodding's family were placed along U.S. 101. Flags were raised. Public offices were closed and city streets were barricaded. Maps were printed and distributed so people could watch the procession.

So they were ready.

And then, slowly, as the day unfolded and the clock clicked closer to the 1 p.m. gathering, they realized that perhaps they weren't.

USE WRITER'S VOICE

Notice what's not in that opening? Aimless quotes. A writer's mission is to guide the reader, tell a story and make them feel something. Quotes and voice are tools. Choose wisely. More importantly, know why you're choosing a specific tool.

This structure sets up movement: What happens next? I'm leading readers toward the ceremony. But now the ceremony isn't the story, the story is the path to the ceremony. This allows me to write scenically, to let readers be part of a journey.

Writing scenically also allows me to make each scene almost a stand-alone that reveals something larger about the entire story. How do I do that? By adding the element of time.

Here are the first few lines from each of the scenic blocks, all of them separated when the story ran by these symbols: ***

Each block builds on what I stated in the opening: *And then, slowly, as the day unfolded and the clock clicked closer to the 1 p.m. gathering, they realized that perhaps they weren't.*

Take a look:

It was about 8 a.m.

That's when police officers from around the region made their way to the spot where Goodding died. It's on



**TOM
HALLMAN JR.**

Tom Hallman Jr. can be reached at tbhbook@aol.com. His website is at tomhallman.com. His latest book, "Dispatches From 1320," an anthology of his work from the past 35 years, is available on Amazon.com.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

MIND TREE



Not everyone — or every outlet — covers the armed services regularly. But aspects of the military pop up in many regular coverage areas. How can a reporter not versed in military terms, bureaucracy and sources best get the info?

MILITARY

BY KAY NOLAN

When a standoff by armed activists at eastern Oregon's Malheur Wildlife Refuge made international headlines in January, an aspect of the story referenced the U.S. military.

Some occupiers wore military uniforms, and one prominent figure in the group — who told reporters he was a former Marine who'd served in Iraq and Afghanistan — spoke to the press using what sounded like military language.

The self-claimed military status of some of the activists was hardly the main point of the story, a drama that unfolded over 41 days as supporters of the Cliven Bundy family and their circle of anti-government activists clashed with local and federal law enforcement over ranchers' rights versus government land management.

But it became a big deal to military service members and veterans when it turned out the self-proclaimed war veteran was actually a tattoo artist who'd fabricated the whole military service line. An activist who wore a Marine combat uniform had never served, either.

Military service can add emotion and relevance to a story — heartwarming when a soldier returns

home to ecstatic family; relevant when veterans programs affect a community; eyebrow-raising when touted by a political candidate; cloying when used in court or by criminal suspects as a prop for sympathy; or as "proof" of weapons knowledge.

Relatively few news outlets today have the luxury of a full-time military reporter. Most have no need for one given their coverage priorities. But military components can overlap ordinary daily news coverage at anytime, anywhere — on the street, in the courtroom, at a political rally or at a crime scene.

And all journalists should want to get details right.

Their reputation and that of their outlet is at stake. Errors or lack of follow-through, even in a minor story, can hurt the ability to gain cooperation with military spokesmen when the next story happens.

"It doesn't look very good to make mistakes," said Jenn Rowell, military reporter at the Great Falls (Mont.) Tribune, which covers nearby Malmstrom Air Force Base. "The military knows, and they pick up pretty quickly on whether or not you have any idea what you're talking about. If you consistently make mistakes when you cover them, they won't deal with you if they don't have to."

Even a seasoned reporter like Rowell — who formerly worked in communications for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and as an editor at KMI Media Group, whose publications target military audiences — acknowledges the beat can be intimidating and unforgiving.

"I once messed up," Rowell said. "I confused 'drill sergeant' with 'drill instructor.' I got email for weeks about it. I did not enjoy getting yelled at by a bunch of Marines for weeks. One paper I worked at, I wrote a story about airmen, and the headline ended up saying soldiers. Those kinds of things can hurt credibility."

FAMILIARITY

Lack of familiarity with military terms and procedures, as well as a lack of ready sources, can drive many journalists, especially those on deadline, to skip verification or leave out military details.

For example, when a crash involving a semi-trailer and a military vehicle tied up freeway traffic for hours in southern Wisconsin, it was definitely local news. Soon, a dramatic photo of the massive green vehicle hanging cab-first over the smashed railing of a freeway overpass — requiring

Relatively few news outlets today have the luxury of a full-time military reporter. Most have no need for one given their coverage priorities. But military components can overlap ordinary daily news coverage at anytime, anywhere — on the street, in the courtroom, at a political rally or at a crime scene.

a harrowing rescue of its driver and passenger — "went viral" on the Internet, according to Gina Duwe, a former Janesville Gazette reporter who posted the story.

"People were curious about it," Duwe said. "If we could have had somebody right away to tell us who the (military) group was, where it was traveling to and from and what they were transporting, we would have reported it."

Police and fire department officials relayed that a male driver and female passenger had non-life-threatening injuries. Public works officials discussed the bridge damage. The vehicle was ultimately described as a "military wrecker." But audiences in Wisconsin, a state with limited military presence, never learned more.

After all, the press needed to move on.

But how can the average journalist verify military information in short order?

Paul Rickert, director of public affairs for the Wisconsin National Guard, said it helps to know the specific military branch and unit in question. Rickert fields questions about the state's Army and Air National Guard and helps reporters connect with public affairs officers at individual units.

But if a reporter has questions involving the Army or Army Reserve, Rickert acknowledged he couldn't help much.

"I'd call Army Public Affairs," he advised.

That's where it can get confusing.

Google "Army public affairs," and a website comes up, but one that's not very helpful. Click on "contact information for media queries," and phone numbers come up for "Operations, Intelligence and Logistics," "Weapons, Environment and Technology" and "Personnel and Human Resources Team." It's unclear which number to call to confirm whether an individual is a soldier or veteran or to identify an Army truck tying up traffic.

A phone call for this story to the Department of Defense public affairs office, to ask for general guidelines and sources for journalists regarding the military, added to the confusion.

The public affairs officer asked that questions be submitted via email, which she promised to share with the public affairs team. When she called back, she was polite but sounded frustrated.

"You need to find information online," the PAO said. "It's incumbent upon the reporter. You're welcome to ask (questions), but it's not something we would teach them. Part of being a journalist is doing your homework.

"I'm in the Pentagon," she said, adding that the journalists who work on the

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TIPS FOR VERIFYING MILITARY INFORMATION IF IT'S NOT YOUR REGULAR BEAT

BY KAY NOLAN

- Contact public affairs officers at an individual's unit to verify his or her service record. If you don't know the unit, you can contact the main public affairs office for each military branch. PAOs have access to records for current service members, including reservists and National Guard members, as well as veterans who served within the past 10 to 20 years, depending on the branch.

- To verify service records dating from World War I to the 1990s or so, consult the National Archives and Records Administration office in St. Louis. Requests must be made in writing using Standard Form 180. Because the billions of records stored there are not computerized, a response normally takes two or three weeks. Members of the press and Congress, however, can file a more urgent request by sending the form via email to congressional.status@nara.gov or by fax to 314-801-0763. Key words to use are "time sensitive" and "expedited media request." For questions, a special phone number for media is 314-801-0816. Randi Dolphin, National Archives and Records Administration customer service representative, said that service records from the 1950s to 1970s typically are filed by "service number" instead of an individual's Social Security number. Also, she notes that the U.S. Air Force did not exist until 1949, although the Army had an Air Corps during World War II.

- Active-duty service members are required to carry an Armed Forces common access card, or CAC, photo ID. "They should not object if you ask to see it, as a quick way to verify that they are really in the military and to verify rank," says Joseph Coslett, public affairs officer at the Defense Information School. "There's an expiration date on there as well." Military retirees are also issued IDs. "If they say they're retired military, they'll have a retirement card," Coslett said.

- Army vehicles have a code stamped on the front and back bumper that identifies the unit to which it belongs, according to Capt. Eric Connor, deputy chief of media relations for U.S. Army Reserve Command at Fort Bragg, N.C. "If you see that, all you have to do is Google it," Connor said.

- To identify a Navy vessel or aircraft, you can call Navy public affairs and send a photo.

- Silver and Bronze Stars, Purple Hearts and other medals can be verified by contacting the branch or unit a recipient served in.

- The website cmohs.org lists all Medal of Honor recipients by state.

OTHER TIPS FOR COVERING MILITARY COMPONENTS IN A STORY

- Always verify a service member's rank. "We once took a reporter on an air refueling flight, and when we finally saw the story, she identified the pilot as a 'lieutenant sergeant.' That's not even a rank," said Nathan Wallin, an Air National Guard public affairs officer.

- Use AP style, not military style, for rank, advises Jenn Rowell, a longtime military reporter. "Don't just copy what the military sends us, which is all caps (e.g., SGT)."

- Avoid the common mistake of describing all former service members as retired. "The term 'retired' technically means the individual is getting a pension, either by having served 20 years or longer, or by being medically retired," said Drew Brooks, military editor at the Fayetteville Observer. "Few people actually retire from the military." For most others, you can say "veteran" or "served from X date to X date."

- It's OK to approach a service member for comment involving non-military or non-political topics; for example, a "person-on-the-street" interview about a snowstorm or back-to-school shopping. You don't have to run the quotes past a PAO. Be aware that members of special forces, such as Navy SEALs or Army Rangers, may decline even benign interviews or photos, since anonymity might be crucial to their safety and that of their families.

- Be aware that members of the military are not supposed to wear their uniforms at political rallies, protests or other non-military events. Veterans are not supposed to wear their uniforms, except for very few exceptions, such as funerals, weddings and ceremonies/parades on Veterans Day, Memorial Day or Fourth of July. Do not ask service members, reservists or veterans to dress in uniform for photo shoots or just for effect. "It's not a costume and shouldn't be treated as one," Brooks said.

- For journalists who expect to cover military issues often, Rowell recommends the book "Pen & Sword: A Journalist's Guide to Covering the Military" by Ed Offley (2001, Marion Street Press).

premises are knowledgeable in military matters.

Asked where journalists who don't cover the military can turn when they have questions, she suggested contacting the individual branches.

THE BRANCHES

Joseph Coslett, an instructor at the Defense Information School at Fort Meade, Md., which offers formal training in public affairs for all branches of the Armed Forces, urges reporters to call the De-

partment of Defense press desk or central public affairs offices of any branch, usually starting with the human resources/personnel team.

other — literally, they're sitting in a huge area where they all see each other. Let them divert you to the right person."

Coslett, a retired Air Force major, said he knows the military has a lot of acronyms and jargon.

"Don't be afraid to ask the basics," he said. "We teach (PAOs) here to truly empower the journalist because they are doing the same mission we are trying to fight for, which is getting out the information timely and accurately. Journalists think we're a gated community, so we try

to break down those walls."

Calls to public affairs offices for the U.S. Navy, Air Force and Marines produced friendlier results. Like the Army, the Air Force and Marine Corps prefer that the press seek out PAOs at individual units first.

But those interviewed welcomed gen-

eral press inquiries. "If people don't know where to go, they look us up and give us a call and we're able to point them in the right direction," said Capt. Sarah Burns, Marines spokeswoman.

In the Navy, many media queries appear to start at the top level. "If we can't answer it here, we'll refer them to the right place; we're like the hub," said Navy spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins. "We have commands all around the world. You may get referred back to us if it's not the right place to handle that question."

Asked if a small-town journalist should feel intimidated to call Navy public affairs at the Pentagon, Hawkins said, "No. We get a lot of media inquiries, and they usually come here, from small-town newspapers to major outlets, all of it." Still, a call to Army Public Affairs Human Resources proved touch-and-go. Once again, the PAO who answered insisted questions be sent via email. She wrote back that a PAO named Wayne Hall would be in touch. She copied Hall but didn't provide his number.

"If we can't answer it here, we'll refer them to the right place; we're like the hub. We have commands all around the world. You may get referred back to us if it's not the right place to handle that question." — LT. CMDR. TIMOTHY HAWKINS, Navy spokesman

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Three days passed with no response. When I emailed again, Hall finally called. At first, he said he hadn't seen the original email; then he admitted he'd seen it, but hesitated to respond out of concern that he was not "best-suited" to answer questions about helping news media.

After a few minutes, however, Hall warmed up and offered some guidelines.

"If you're talking issues of policy, say, changes in uniform regulations or say, the Army implementing a breastfeeding policy or extending maternity leave, at this level, this number, we talk to the media," Hall said. "If you're looking for the total number of soldiers who deserted during 2013, those are the things we answer."

Hall said his team has helped local media verify an individual's service record. Mostly, though, Hall recommended working through PAOs at individual Army units or bases.

In parts of the country with little military presence, however, those sources might be unfamiliar and hard to track down quickly.

In Elkhart, Ind., 60-year-old Norman Reynolds was arrested last fall for shooting at alleged shoplifters as they drove from a store parking lot. Reynolds

Mark Maley, editor of the Elkhart Truth — a daily with just six reporters to cover a city of 50,000 and the surrounding area — said the paper took the man at his word, even after readers questioned the man's story and photo.

"We elected not to pursue it," Maley said, noting that "even if the uniform had come from Goodwill," the military element wasn't essential to the news at hand in his view. "But had this been a veteran issue or a military issue, we would have pursued it regardless of staffing level."

Drew Brooks, military editor at the Fayetteville Observer in North Carolina — home to Fort Bragg, one of the largest Army installations in the world — said he finds most military PAOs quite helpful.

"I've been covering the military since 2011," said Brooks, who has embedded with troops in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait. "The attitude toward the press is varied among individuals, just as it is among civilians. Some (members of the military) don't look too kindly on the media, but I've found the same thing in fire departments or police stations or at political events."

Brooks urges journalists to speak up and ask questions. He said those who do improve accuracy and perform a public service.

"There's a pretty wide military/civilian divide; the days when most people had a family member who'd been drafted or served are long gone," Brooks said. "Most civilians don't know much about the military. By writing about it, you're helping to explain and help close that gap."

HALL OF SHAME

Journalists certainly don't want their stories to end up enshrined on a "stolen valor" or "hall of shame" website for failing to catch an imposter who falsely claims military honors.

Brooks said more and more groups seek to highlight such mistakes.

Even the military-savvy Fayetteville Observer got stung after it ran an Associated Press story about a businessman who insisted he'd been part of the Special Forces team portrayed in the movie

"Black Hawk Down."

"The claim was, 'I didn't get along with the producers, so they killed off my character,'" Brooks said. "That story ran in our paper unbeknownst to me. I came to work the next day and there's a deluge of emails and phone calls saying this guy's full of crap."

"Ask, ask, ask," Brooks advises. "Most mistakes I see could have been easily avoided." ♦

Kay Nolan is a freelance journalist based in Wisconsin. Email: kay.nolan.write@gmail.com.

NARRATIVE WRITING TOOLBOX

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

Broadway, right in front of the Pig 'N Pancake, a place known to all who come to the beach.

It was about 10 a.m.

That's when members of the Portland Police Highland Guard, a bagpipe unit, stood in the middle of an intersection on Broadway and began practicing the mournful dirge they would play in a few hours when they walked up the center aisle in the convention center after the audience of 1,600 settled into their seats.

BE ALERT

The story has to be about something, not just a countdown. Each section revealed something about the town, law enforcement and onlookers. Here's my final section, the one right before the ceremony itself. Look at how I come back to the theme and use writer's voice.

And what triggered that voice? Look at the section and put yourself there. What did I see? What allowed that writer's voice to emerge in a way that was real, true and powerful?

It was about 11 a.m.

That's when members of the Portland Police Bureau's Mounted Patrol Horse Patrol Unit took their positions, knowing the procession, made up of hundreds of police cars and fire trucks, had left from Camp Rilea, near Warrenton.

And then it was here. They were ready.

But then came an SUV carrying Goodding's wife and their children.

Those watching could see the widow openly crying, wiping her eyes as she sobbed.

Ready?

Never, not for this.

Men saluted. Women placed their hands over their hearts. Hats were removed. Tears flowed.

Now go find your story. ♦

"I've been covering the military since 2011. The attitude toward the press is varied among individuals, just as it is among civilians. Some (members of the military) don't look too kindly on the media, but I've found the same thing in fire departments or police stations or at political events."

— DREW BROOKS, *military editor, Fayetteville Observer*

showed up for his court hearing and television interviews wearing a complete, albeit outdated, half-Army, half-Air Force uniform. He called himself a "24-year military veteran" and touted his weapons training and marksmanship.

Listening for diversity

I F YOU'RE READING THIS, you care about diversity. You aim for inclusion. After all, you're part of an industry that has been working on more demographic fairness and accuracy for at least a half century.

What's the one thing that we all could easily do better? Listen.

Over the past three months the Trust Project, an effort I lead at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, has been on a listening tour. Our interviewers have traveled the San Francisco Bay Area, Phoenix, Detroit, New York and three European countries.

Our goal is to understand what the public values in the news, what inspires trust and what makes people lose it. One thing we've learned: News users want to see themselves represented in the news they consume. They want to know about others, as well, and to learn their perspectives. Whether you hear this message, though, depends on the interviewer. And that means you and me.

When I reviewed our interview notes, themes of inclusion came out strong. But not all of the interviewers heard them. Why? Sometimes our interviewees were cautious. Sometimes their actions, in terms of the news they valued and followed, spoke louder than words. Often, their language was nuanced. Listen to what they had to say:

Wendy, 35, a self-described American Mexican in Phoenix, suggested that Univision has become too focused

Are our interviewees asking their white interviewer specifically for diversity? Maybe not. But it is embedded in their comments and habits.

on advocating for Latino interests. Before, she said, it would follow all kinds of topics aggressively. She has come to prefer NALIP, the National Association of Latino Independent Producers, because "they post all those views." Wendy values diversity, both within her own community and externally, in terms of the wide perspectives she wants to hear.

Rodale, 29, a Native American also in Phoenix, said he appreciates NPR because they cover more than just the catchy news items. They go deeper than the headlines. They cover the arts — and Native Americans. He emphasizes that news shapes the views of the populace. Without exactly saying it, Rodale is looking for a reflection of his own community in the news and wants journalists to understand how important this is.

Kalah, 24, a white Mormon who lives in Phoenix, looks

for her news in a lot of places. She forwards news about education and about Native Americans. She relates to people her age in the news, as well as people from the locations she has lived and the population she serves as a youth program leader.

Alex, 29, in Detroit, says, "I surround myself with color." She's acutely aware that, as a black woman, she needs to be aware of events and issues. Stories she says broke her trust include coverage of Assata Shakur, a former Black Panther activist who has been living in Cuba since 1984, and Angela Davis, an internationally known civil rights activist and scholar with an emeritus appointment at UC-Santa Cruz.

Alma, 64, an African American who lives in Detroit, reads the Detroit Free Press, MSNBC, NPR, PBS, the Griot and the Root. She wants to know when news is local and how it relates to her. Based on her reading habits, we can hear her wanting news that relates to her own life, and to her community.

Are our interviewees asking their white interviewer specifically for diversity? Maybe not. But it is embedded in their comments and habits. And, when we asked about indicators that might help news organizations earn trust, at that point interviewees often mentioned diversity. They selected "diversity of sources" (both voices and news sources), and liked the idea of a tool that would allow them to suggest diverse sources to a journalist.

How can we listen better? Some ideas:

- Quiet your mind. Don't assume your definitions are the same as your source's.
- Ask why? Look for the story behind the story. Listen for the reason behind the statement.
- Meet your source where she is, both literally and figuratively. You'll be able to hear better if you are in your source's comfort zone, not your own. And she will be more forthcoming.
- Ask what your source actually does, not just what he thinks or knows.

These techniques can help deepen your reporting and make any story more accurate.

As an industry, we can also think about more inventive ways to respond to our audience's needs for inclusion and diversity. Some questions to ponder:

How might we use the news to connect our audiences to people they trust to tell them the whole story? How might we help our users visualize the landscape of perspectives on a topic?

Journalists are great listeners. Let's take our abilities to hear, to interpret accurately and to serve our audiences one step further. ❖



SALLY LEHRMAN

Sally Lehrman is a senior fellow in digital journalism ethics at the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University. The center is working with news organizations to develop the Trust Project, which is promoting best practices and developing new tools to enhance transparency and integrity in the newsgathering process.

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Social media reporting needs restraint

VERIFYING A STORY before publishing it has always been a journalism must. Now, in the instant social media era, it is even more important. A false fact, even via retweet, can have vast repercussions, especially if the scoop involves possible fatalities.

In the process of verifying information, we should cover the following aspects: Is the information accurate? Is the source reliable? And finally a twofold question: Do we have permission to reproduce it, and is it ethical to do so?

We have recent examples from the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks, where both professionals and regular people parroted unfounded alarms and spread fake images; even some people who were alive were presumed dead. How do we resolve the conflict between the urgency to inform and the responsibility of accuracy? The best, as always, is to be prepared.

Have a list of reliable resources in each social media platform

Freelancers, journalists, official sources, agencies or citizen journalists should have handy lists of credible accounts to follow in case of breaking news. It is easier to verify information when it appears in several trustworthy accounts.

Twitter lists of journalists organized by specialty, media by location or simply people with a verified background on a specific topic can save us precious time in our search and verification. So does building lists of interests or groups in Facebook, circles in Google + and playlists in YouTube. Doing this will take work in advance — verifying profiles, investigating and classifying them — but it will all pay off.

In most networks, using hashtags on specific issues can guide us in our mission of grouping resources.

Be skeptical, no matter who the source claims to be

We all have witnessed how Twitter boils when an event of serious magnitude happens. It is then important to keep calm and remain skeptical to start filtering the nonstop waterfall of details given over the Internet. Following several official accounts, while verifying and contrasting data by crowdsourcing, is a good practice at the onset of the breaking news, being aware that even official sources can have limitations. The main recommendation here would be comparing the information, always trying to get first-hand material.

Know the tools for verifying an online story

To verify whether something online is real or true, we

can begin by looking for it through other places on the Internet. Some sites like Checkdesk and Snopes are useful when it comes to verifying or locating fake news. Confirming the location, using tools such as Google Earth, Google Street View or Wikimapia, can be the next step in our check list. When we have visual material to confirm (probably the first picture hasn't been taken by a journalist), there are methods to verify date and time, too.

We can use weather applications such as Wolfram Alpha to search for concrete weather conditions in a certain area and date and compare it with the image. Google images or TinEye will reveal through reverse search whether a photograph is old or has been reused. EXIF data stored under picture properties will tell us about its authenticity, and tools like Izitru will reveal whether a picture has been edited.

Checking attached links is always a good practice. In the case of sensitive breaking news, it could be the difference between informing and contributing to unintended misinformation. Validating that they lead to the right place is a must.

To verify the identity of someone's profile, various tools are available such as Facebook Graph Search, LinkedIn, Pipl.com (which crosses individual data through different networks) or Spokeo (which collects personal data about someone). It is also possible to know who the owner of a website is thanks to Whois.net. For a Twitter profile we can further investigate who the user is following, if he/she is in someone else's list, if there is any Web/network linked to the profile, etc.

When it comes to casualties, better to wait than fail

In covering a tragedy, the number of initial fatalities can substantially differ from one source to another. And with each new victim counted, alarm grows. So it is better to have accurate data about the injured, missing or dead than to make a big mess with a misreport.

Review as much as necessary before posting

Since we are all humans, we can err just mistyping data; so the best advice here is to thoroughly review the information before posting. "Garbage in" equals "garbage out." It is well worth the extra seconds.

Record the first information you start working with

In the verification process, it is important to keep a record of the first content you are dealing with. It could be evidence that will support you in case you have to respond for publishing it. The tool TwXplorer, among others, saves snapshots of your search through Twitter. ❖



DESIRÉ VIDAL

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(newberpg@miamioh.edu)

REGION 6

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

April 8-9

Details coming soon

Contact: Joseph Radske (jradske@spj.org)

REGION 7

OVERLAND PARK, KAN.

April 16

Johnson County Community College

Contact: Mark Reddig
(markreddig@gmail.com)

REGION 9

NEW MEXICO

April 15-16

*University of New Mexico,
Student Union Building*

Contact: Laura Paskus
(laura.paskus@gmail.com)

REGION 11

PHOENIX, ARIZ.

April 29-30

The Heard Museum

Contact: Amanda Ventura
(mandaven5@gmail.com)

REGION 12

NEW ORLEANS, LA.

April 16

Sheraton New Orleans

Contact: Amanda Womac
(appalachiandaughter@gmail.com)

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