NINE ON TEN 3

A PUBLICATION ABOUT NEWSPAPERS AND JOURNALISM

Contact us at:
tonysut@idirect.com

RUI RAMALHEIRO

NEWSPAPER STORIES (1)

The photographer and the porker

By JACK KURTZ

When people ask me why I became a photojournalist, I tell them this story. I had just arrived home after another grueling day at the *El Paso Times*, when the photo editor called me about a breaking news story: a pig had fallen into a ditch and the fire department was trying to save it.

I hopped into the car and headed out to see what was happening. About halfway there my boss called on my cellphone with an update: the pig was in a swimming pool, not a ditch, and it (the pig) was someone's 600-pound pet. (No, I'm not making this up.)

When I arrived, you could cut the tension with a knife. Neighbors were huddled along the fence in front of the house, praying for the pig's safe recovery. Other peered from behind curtains as firefighters rushed to the pool, their arms laden with heavy equipment. Thoughts of a Pulitzer danced in my mind. Then, reality check: It's just a pig.

I hurried into the backyard where a small cadre of firefighters were comforting a giant pig that didn't seem too upset. The pig's owner, a woman in her late 30's, stood watching the scene unfold. I asked the despondent owner how her pig came to be in her (mostly) empty swimming pool. She told me the pig, Hamilton, "Hammy" for short, had walked into the pool on Friday night (three days before) to wallow in the brackish water in the deep end.

Apparently, Hammy liked wallowing so much, he wouldn't return to terra firma. So, the owner got into the pool and slept with the porker for two nights because she didn't want him to be lonely. But on Monday morning, she decided it was time to get him out of the pool, so she tried to entice him with bacon sandwiches. (No, I'm not making this up, either.) Hammy stayed put, so she tried to bribe him out with pizza. But he stayed put. What do you do when you have a 600-pound pig in a pool and he won't come out? You call 911! That's how the firefighters got involved.

While we watched the firefighters wrestle with the monster Vietnamese pot-bellied pig, who was quite happy where he was, I asked the owner if Hammy could swim. She said he was a natural in the water. That begged the question, "Why not flood the pool and let Hammy float (or swim) out?" The silence was deafening. The firefighters stopped what they were doing and looked at the owner, who looked at me. Wheels turned in everyone's mind. The fire chief finally broke the silence, "That's our next step."

But, before moving onto the "next step," the firefighters tied a harness around Hammy's midsection and eight of El Paso's toughest heaved. Whoosh! The pig came flying out of the pool like a cork from a bottle of champagne. Hammy's owner grabbed him around the neck and, with tears streaming down her face, gave the giant porker a hug. For his part, Hammy oinked and headed back to the pool, only to be turned back by a phalanx of firefighters who herded the pig into the woman's kitchen. That ended my day.

Oh, in case you were wondering, the two-column photo of the firefighters wrestling with the pig made page one.

Jack Kurtz is a photographer for the El Paso Times *in El Paso, Texas. The story appeared in* The Digital Journalist *(www.digitaljournalist.org.com).*

EDITOR'S NOTE

NEW STORIES, NEW READERS

We've got an interesting mix of stories in the third edition of *Nine On Ten*, beginning with an editorial by media critic Norman Solomon who is following in the footsteps of a renowned predecessor George Seldes in his denunciation of the US press. His target, on this page, is the U.S. media's servile endorsement of its government's doublespeak on international terrorism.

One journalist who could never be described as servile is Robert Fisk, the award-winning Middle Eastern correspondent of London's *Independent,* and we're grateful to the *Progressive* magazine and its editor Matthew Rothschild for allowing us to reprint an enlightening interview with one of the best journalists of this generation.

I'm also pleased to present Ingrid Hein's essay on the birth of a new digital proletariat and Jack Lessenberry's eye-opening report that shows the ever-widening gaps between workers and managers at Detroit's troubled newspapers.

Finally, I'd like to welcome our new readers — journalists and students in South Africa and New Zealand — who are now receiving locally-published editions of *Nine On Ten*. And, of course, special thanks to Ed Cassavoy and Steve Rhodes, editor and publisher of the *Guelph Mercury,* for again printing this North American edition. **— *Tony Sutton***

Published by

NEWS DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Editorial & Publication Design Consultants
10469 Sixth Line, RR#3,
Georgetown, Ontario L7G 4S6, Canada
Tel: (905) 702-8600
Fax: (905) 702-8527
E-mail: tonysut@idirect.com

Editor / Designer
Tony Sutton

Associate Editor (South Africa)
Kerry Swift

Associate Editor (New Zealand)
Charles Riddle

Type Designer
Nick Shinn

Contributing Editors
Denis Beckett, Tim Knight, Jack Lessenberry, Jeff Gustafson, Ingrid Hein, Ted Pease, Matthew Rothschild, Norman Solomon, Randy Tibbott

Illustrators:
David Anderson, Michael Custode, Brian Gable, Alex Groen, Joe Morse, Rui Ramalheiro, Nick Shinn.

To receive future issues of *Nine on Ten*, please contact Julia Sutton at the above address.

MEDIA BEAT

DAVID ANDERSON

Orwellian Logic 101 – a few simple lessons

By NORMAN SOLOMON

During the week after U.S. missiles hit sites in Sudan and Afghanistan, some Americans seemed uncomfortable. A vocal minority even voiced opposition. But approval was routine among those who had learned a few easy Orwellian lessons.

When terrorists attack, they're terrorizing. When we attack, we're retaliating. When they respond to our retaliation with further attacks, they're terrorizing again. When we respond with further attacks, we're retaliating again.

When people decry civilian deaths caused by the U.S. government, they're aiding propaganda efforts. In sharp contrast, when civilian deaths are caused by bombers who hate America, the perpetrators are evil and those deaths are tragedies.

When they put bombs in cars and kill people, they're uncivilized killers. When we put bombs on missiles and kill people, we're upholding civilized values.

When they kill, they're terrorists. When we kill, we're striking against terror.

At all times, Americans must be kept fully informed about who to hate and fear. When the United States found Osama bin Laden useful during the 1980s because of his tenacious violence against the Soviet occupiers in Afghanistan, he was good, or at least not bad — but now he's really bad.

No matter how many times they've lied in the past, U.S. officials are credible in the present. When they vaguely cite evidence that the bombed pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum was making ingredients for nerve gas, that should be good enough for us.

Might doesn't make right — except in the real world, when it's American might. Only someone of dubious political orientation would split hairs about international law.

When the mass media in some foreign countries serve as megaphones for the rhetoric of their government, the result is ludicrous propaganda. When the mass media in our country serve as megaphones for the rhetoric of the U.S. government, the result is responsible journalism. Unlike the TV anchors spouting the government line in places like Sudan and Afghanistan, ours don't have to be told what to say. They have the freedom to report as they choose.

"Circus dogs jump when the trainer cracks his whip," George Orwell observed, "but the really well-trained dog is the one that turns his somersault when there is no whip."

Orwell noted that language "becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts." And his novel *1984* explained that "the special function of certain Newspeak words ... was not so much to express meanings as to destroy them."

National security. Western values. The world community. War against terrorism. Collateral damage. American interests.

What's so wondrous about Orwellian processes is that they tend to be very well camouflaged — part of the normal scenery. Day in and day out, we take them for granted. And we're apt to stay away from uncharted mental paths.

In *1984,* Orwell wrote about the conditioned reflex of "stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought ... and of being bored or repelled by any train of thought which is capable of leading in a heretical direction."

Orwell described "doublethink" as the willingness "to forget any fact that has become inconvenient, and then, when it becomes necessary again, to draw it back from oblivion for just so long as it is needed."

> "In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible"

In his afterword to *1984*, Erich Fromm emphasized "the point which is essential for the understanding of Orwell's book, namely that 'doublethink' is already with us, and not merely something which will happen in the future, and in dictatorships."

Fifty-two years ago, Orwell wrote an essay titled *Politics and the English Language.* Today, his words remain as relevant as ever: "In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible."

Repression and atrocities "can indeed be defended," Orwell added, "but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness."

National security. Western values. The world community. War against terrorism. Collateral damage. American interests.

Norman Solomon is co-author of Wizards of Media Oz: Behind the Curtain of Mainstream News *(1997, Common Courage Press). His latest book,* The Habits of Highly Deceptive Media: Decoding Spin and Lies in Mainstream News, *will be published by Common Courage Press in March 1999. To receive his weekly column of media criticism without charge, e-mail the word "Subscribe" in the subject line to mediabeat@igc.org.*

CAMPUS LIFE

A MEDIA FISH OUT OF WATER

"You guys are as clueless as clams about the mass media environment in which you eat and live and swim"

By TED PEASE

"I don't know who discovered water," I tell my class, misquoting Marshall McLuhan, "but I'm pretty sure it wasn't a fish." This apparently is a pretty exotic image for my students — they seem to remember it, anyway, which for a professor is reassuring. Maybe it's because Utah is landlocked, which makes the aquatic compelling. (After all, no one blinked when the University of Utah declared itself a "flagship university," not noticing that Utah is a desert.) Or maybe the class snaps to when I invoke fish because so many of them are fly-fishermen.

In any case, the fish image seems to have caught hold with these 18- to 22-year-olds in COM 2000-Media Smarts, as I compare their lack of awareness about the influence of the mass media on their lives to how much guppies think about the water in which they live.

"Most of you," I tell them, laying it on a bit thick, "are just as clueless as a trout, as unaware as a flounder. Most Americans spend their lives in mass-mediated soup, but they don't notice it. We swim in a daily dose of sitcoms and advertising, muzak and infomercials, MTV, news flashes, Internet and saccharin Top 40 hip-hop.

"How many of you find yourselves singing advertising jingles or Barry Manilow tunes?" Ooops. Wrong generation. I back off: "Well, OK. Not Barry Manilow. But you get the idea." At 8:30 in the morning you need something to catch their attention, but Barry Manilow is not it.

"Fish don't know that their ponds are toxic until they turn belly-up and their eyes bug out," I tell them. "And you guys are as clueless as clams about the mass media environment in which you eat and live and swim." Well, OK. Clams don't swim. And that's not really a direct quote. A little after-the-fact embellishment. But I've been saying stuff like that to them for the past six weeks, and it appears that some of it — the fish things at least, maybe more — is starting to stick.

It's pretty heady stuff for a sophomore-level GenEd class at 8:30 in the morning. But it appears to be as good an eye-opener for my students as a big cup of Ibis Aggie Blend is for me.

From the first day that I used the McLuhan parable, I've been getting fish stories from one anonymous wiseguy via e-mail. Everyone in the class keeps a daily media journal, reflecting on how the mass media influence and infiltrate their lives, or try to, and about how they see media effects seeping into their daily environments. Many e-mail me their diaries, but Fish Boy doesn't identify himself.

> "I saw a TV show that had kids watching TV on it. They said, 'Oh man! There is never anything good on TV.' The sad thing is that me and my roomies were watching TV, and we found that line quite amusing."

This student (Hey bub, I think I know who you are!) keeps sending me stuff like this: "After a long weekend of football games, I wonder what kind of a fish am I? Am I as smart as a Dolphin? I know I'm smarter than a Bear or a pitiful NY Jet, but . . . ." And, "I had some Charlie Tuna for lunch, so I guess I win that one!" And, "There was this commercial on the Comedy Channel about these Nikes. Advertising is powerful, but do you think a fish would buy shoes?"

OK, I'm thinking, this fish metaphor maybe wasn't such a good thing. But at least Fish Boy and his classmates are getting hold of the concept that they are immersed in a mass media environment that, as we all have seen, can be toxic to the less aware guppies among us.

"Let me tell you how the media cause me physical pain," one woman wrote in her media journal this week. "I have these adorable shoes [that] are considered what's 'in' right now by various magazines. I already have two blisters, the leather is so stiff that my foot barely slides into them, so I've ended up just holding them and walking barefoot the entire day."

"I do not know how I would get along without the Internet," another student observes. "Most days I get a daily dose of news, sports, and part of my family/friends communications all from the Web. On the other hand, sometimes I never leave the house, and that can be scary. I work the graveyard shift, go to school all morning, and sleep the afternoon away into the night…

"Sometimes I go for several days before I realize that besides work and classes, I have not left home. I wonder how social establishments are faring these days?"

Another student offers this: "Yesterday I saw a TV show that had kids watching TV on it. . . . [They] said, 'Oh man! There is never anything good on TV.' That is so true. The sad thing is that me and my roomies were watching TV, and we found that line quite amusing."

This, from a male student: "I saw a Gap commercial during Sunday football. A bunch of kids were swinging to some modern swing music. The commercial made me want to learn how to swing. The advertisement was for khaki pants. It didn't make me want pants."

But another student had the opposite response: "This past week as I have particularly focused on keeping a daily journal of how I use the mass media, I realize it plays an enormous role in my life. After a long day at school and work, I arrive home exhausted." He turns on the tube: "Soaring through the channels, a commercial caught my attention. It was an advertisement for the Gap's khaki pants. It had a bunch of young, energetic teens roller-blading around in these 'ideal for fun' pants. This commercial honestly generated energy in my body. I wanted to get up off the couch, go buy a pair of khaki pants, put my roller blades on and hit the streets."

(Now admit it: You recognize these ads, right? And I don't know about you, but I want some "ideal for fun" pants.)

"TV commercials have an incredible impact on our lives," says another entry. "I caught myself humming jingles for different products while picking up groceries. Just a glance at a box or a sign in the aisle triggered my mind to recall lyrics and catchy lines used in advertisements. Now I am wondering how often I purchase items I really do not need."

There's much more in their journals, of course, lately rife with Monica and Bill, baseball sluggers, stock market scares and comic strips. One young woman came to my office last week wearing a baseball cap with a Nike swoosh on it, and an inexplicable B*U*M label on her sweatshirt. She complained that the mass media have no effect on her whatsoever, and so keeping this journal is a waste of time. I urged her to keep trying.

When final course lists came out, 88 students remained in my Media Smarts class, all struggling in their weekly media journals with my demand that they learn to take note of the water in which they and their friends, families and culture sink or swim.

They are not very patient with the assignment to survey the vast wasteland that has, as Newton Minow predicted 37 years ago, become the defining feature of American life, or very happy about the task. But as my wiseguy might observe, "That's how the fish-stick crumbles in the Information Age."

On second thoughts, I'm sure he (or she) will send me an even better line in time for the next class. And perhaps it would be smart not to say that media markets are bullish …

Ted Pease is Professor of Journalism at Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

ALEX GROEN

EYE ON THE BOX

QUOTE UNQUOTE

■ "I must say I find television very educational. The minute somebody turns it on, I go to the library and read a book." — *Groucho Marx.*

■ "Dealing with network executives is like being nibbled to death by ducks." — *Eric Sevareid, TV newsman.*

■ "There's a powerful lot of junk on the airwaves; they'd rewrite *Exodus* to include a car chase." — *Walter Cronkite, A Reporter's Life, 1996.*

■ "Bad [TV] ratings do not necessarily decrease viewership. Kids automatically know that the bad stuff they're going to watch is [signalled] through those parental guidance warnings. The word spreads like crabgrass or smoke signals. ... The homes that do not have the V-chip, or don't use it, will be flooded by the refugees, like boat people, from V-chip homes." — *Marvin Kitman, columnist, Newsday, 1997.*

■ "Kids are seen by media as little consumers. It's as if they are saying to kids, 'Our nation depends on YOU! You must consume!' Very few things in media do anything other than entertain or terrorize children. Television should be a very positive tool, but it seems like everybody got together and decided to bring it down to the lowest common denominator." — *Patricia Schroeder, former congresswoman from Colorado, 1994.*

■ "Newspapers are where television people get their information." — *Garrison Keillor, 1995.*

■ "My father hated radio, and could not wait for television to be invented so he could hate that too." — *Peter De Vries, novelist, 1964.*

■ "Television is democracy at its ugliest." — *Paddy Chayefsky, playwright, 1923-1981.*

■ "Seeing a murder on television ... can help work off one's antagonisms. And if you haven't any antagonisms, the commercials will give you some." — *Alfred Hitchcock, film director.*

■ "Television is a device that permits people who haven't anything to do to watch people who can't do anything." — *Fred Allen, comedian, 1894-1956.*

THE ROAD TO HELL

Ridding newspapers of story jumps is not as easy as it ought to be. The following appeared in the *Pasadena Star-News,* in California, on the day of its relaunch in 1992: "We have made the commitment to our readers to minimize 'jumps,' those stories that continue from one page to another. Readers have told newspapers loud and often that they do not like such 'jumps,' and we've resolved to arrange our pages so that most stories will finish on the page they began.' No problem there? Except that to get the complete story on the design changes, the reader had to 'jump' to another page.

NEWSPAPER STORIES (2)

Big moment missed – big time

13 photographers — and they all missed the big shot. Here's why

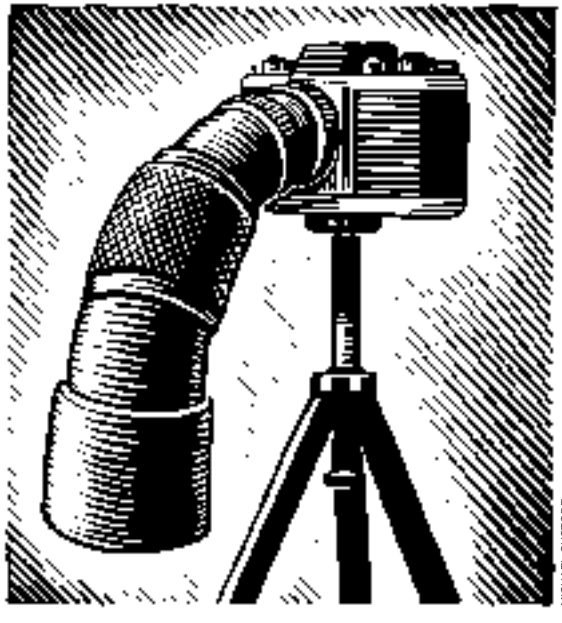
By BOB GALLAGHER

At all the newspapers I've edited or consulted with in the past decade, the lament about mediocre photography has always focused on staff shortages.

But having a surplus of photographic resources, as I learned to my dismay, is no guarantee of quality, either. The year was 1984, and my paper, the *Detroit News* was locked in a titanic struggle for market supremacy with Knight-Ridder's *Detroit Free Press*.

Uncharacteristically, money was no object as the two metros battled for readers and advertisers in one of the last urban print wars. And this intense competition produced two good newspapers that were getting better and better, before it all ended abruptly the next year with the invasion of the Gannettoids and their disastrous, greed-induced JOA exercise.

This professional contest was never more evident than the aggressive, complete coverage that enveloped the sports scene when the Tigers met the San Diego Padres in the World Series.



MICHAEL CUSTODE

As an assistant managing editor, one of my tasks was overseeing the operation of the *News's* 35-strong photo staff. The planning for photo coverage of the baseball championship was impressive: a 13-person team was organized and trained; lensmen were stationed at every strategic point in Briggs Stadium; and relays of couriers were programmed to collect film canisters at regular intervals.

We even detailed one photog to roam the stadium shooting celebrities, although she ignored the planning instructions, used different film speeds (so the lab could not gang develop her rolls), and forgot to provide the runners with captions.

We outshot the *Free Press* during the opening games but we blew the series finale, when Kirk Gibson won it with a dramatic home run, then bounced up and down on home plate with his arms triumphantly raised.

The *Freep* devoted its entire front page the next day to Gibson's victory dance but our office resembled Mudville, with a growing chorus of recriminations and irate demands for explanations why we had missed The Shot.

The photo editor and I launched a negative search of the 185 rolls of staff film, although it seemed improbable that such an image could have been overlooked in the editing process.

Finally, we located a similar image, only it was taken from the first base side and showed the back of Gibson.

The mystery was solved when this negative came into focus on the enlarger board: there, in the background, facing Gibson, was our most experienced sports photographer — an old pro in his early 70s — and he was clapping wildly. Next to him was the *Free Press* photographer, adjusting her lens as her motor drive whirred.

What to do now? The photo editor and I were, understandably, drawing a lot of critical fire, and the temptation to spread the responsibility around was strong. But what changed my mind was the memory of a story my high school football coach told me, years after the fact, of how he had deleted a sequence from the game film in which our star quarterback had deliberately turned from a potentially injurious tackling situation. Why? I had asked him. "Well, the play didn't change the outcome of the game," the coach explained, "and I wasn't going to let one mistake tarnish his whole school career."

I turned to my photo editor. "I'll leave it up to you, Joe," I said, "but I think we should destroy this roll of film." He thought about it for a moment, then nodded in agreement.

R.I..P., Doc!

A former editor and publisher, Bob Gallagher is a newspaper consultant based in Chicago.

WRITING

GET OUT OF YOUR OFFICE!

That's the best way of producing more compelling stories that people will want to read

By DON GIBB

Editors should declare one day a year as National Get Out of the Office Day. Reporters would be required to get off their duffs, leave the office and talk to people *in person*.

Why? Because the stories will be guaranteed to be more compelling and engaging for readers.

■ Reporters will see the joy on the face of the Vietnamese refugee who fled her homeland and is about to receive her citizenship certificate.

■ They will touch the hard, icy hailstones that devastated a farmer's field of ripe corn.

■ They will hear the bluebird as they walk through the woods with the activist determined to save the trees — and the birds — from a profit-minded developer.

■ They will smell the salty ocean air as they listen to a fisherman agonize over the loss of his livelihood because of a moratorium on salmon fishing in the waters beside his home.

■ They will taste the first offering of a young wine from the local winery that has rebuilt after a destructive fire.

And they will appreciate that the phone is only a small tool in the craft of reporting.

Excellent reporters can make the best of things over a telephone — using their sources as their eyes, ears and sense organs — but nothing can replace being there.

Too often, excuses win out: too many stories to do before deadline; too much time to walk, drive or otherwise visit the interview subject; no need to leave the newsroom, anyway: what could it possibly add to the story? A little color, maybe, but it's not worth the hassle.

Actually, it *is* worth the trouble. While there may be valid reasons for not leaving the office, laziness isn't one of them. By staying put, reporters lose the potential for the rich color, vivid detail and even an unusual story angle because they sacrifice one of their best reporting tools — observation.

It means they won't get what U.S. writer Rick Bragg brings to his story about a black washerwoman in a small Mississippi town who gave her life savings to finance scholarships for black students in her hometown university:

> *She is five feet tall and would weigh 100 pounds with rocks in her pockets. Her voice is so soft that it disappears in the squeak of the screen door and the hum of the air conditioner.*

Nor would they bring readers the graphic

JOE MORSE

detail in this Canadian Press reporter's account of the aftermath of the crash of Swissair Flight 111 off the coast of Nova Scotia:

> *On the windswept sea … the acrid smell of jet fuel is overpowering; the blunt, visceral reality of death is all about. And always there are the reminders. Purses. Suitcases. A shaving kit. Documents with names and Swiss addresses. Fuselage. Insulation. Foam. Upholstery.*

For this reporter who rose early in the morning to catch a rare glimpse of a dying mating ritual among sage grouse, the wait was worth it:

> *The master cock — he who will breed with most of the females — stands belligerent in the middle of the dancing ground, making wary quarter-turns in the dawn light to stake out his turf and keep all pretenders away.*
>
> *Greenish sacs swell high in his chest, bursting forth like inflatable breasts as he pumps them full of air. As he lets the air go, the sacs deflate, sending out the grouse's eerie love call. It reverberates across the land:* Palummp bump, palummp bump.

These reporters bring all of their senses to their writing and that can only be achieved to the fullest when reporters get out of the newsroom. It can be as simple as asking someone why he has a picture of the late Mother Teresa on his desk or seeing a tear running down a mother's cheek as she describes how her daughter was killed by a drunk driver. Staying in the office and using the telephone means we get little more than the obvious. The phone is a one-dimensional tool that allows us a quick hit and serves a functional purpose when we are strapped for time.

But too often, the phone is a crutch — an excuse not to dive into a story. To be at a place and to witness the story by using all of our senses makes writing more compelling, engaging and emotional for readers. It will also show reporters that they have the wonderful power to observe first-hand and, because of that, to bring riveting detail to their stories.

By getting out of the office, reporters can ask more intelligent questions, can see the location of their story, can take a person to a pertinent place in their story, can see their reaction, and, above all, can soak up the story. The writing is easier because there is more to write about.

Don Gibb is a lecturer in Journalism at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto and the author of How To Write The Perfect Lead *and* How To Get The Most From Your Interviews.

LITERARY CRITICISM (1)

VIENNA, CAFE SOCIETY, TROTSKY AND USA TODAY

In his book, Neither Here Nor There, *author Bill Bryson found the cafe society of Vienna, the Austrian capital, less exciting than he expected — and the selection of newspapers was not quite what he had in mind, either …*

"On the whole, the cafes were the biggest disappointment of Vienna to me. I've reached the time of life where my idea of a fabulous time is to sit around for half a day with a cup of coffee and a newspaper, so a city teeming with coffee houses seemed made for me. I had expected them to be more special, full of smoky charm and eccentric characters, but they were just restaurants really. The coffee was OK, but not sensational, and the service was generally slow and always unfriendly. They provide you with newspapers, but so what? I can provide newspapers.

Even the Cafe Central, where Trotsky used to hang out, sitting for long hours every day doing bugger-all, was a disappointment. It had some atmosphere — vaulted ceilings, marble tables, a pianist — but coffee was thirty-four schillings a throw and the service was indifferent. Still, I do like the story about the two Viennese who were sitting in the Central with coffees, discussing politics. One of them, just

Bill Bryson, Neither Here Nor There, Avon Books (U.S.$12.50)

back from Moscow, predicted a revolution in Russia before long. 'Oh, yeah?' said the other doubtfully, and flicked his head in the direction of the ever-idle Trotsky. 'And who's going to lead it — him?'

The one friendly cafe I found was the Hawalka, around the corner from my hotel. It was an extraordinary place, musty, dishevelled and so dark that I had to feel my way to a table. Lying everywhere were newspapers on racks like carpet beaters. An old boy who was dressed more like a house painter than a waiter brought me a cup of coffee without asking if I wanted one and, upon realizing that I was an American, began gathering up copies of *USA Today.*

'Oh no, please,' I said as he presented me with half a dozen, 'put these on the fire and bring me some newspapers.' But I don't think his hearing was good, and he scuttled around the room collecting even more and piling them on the table. 'No, no,' I protested, 'these are for lining drawers.' But he kept bringing them until I had a stack two feet high. He even opened one up and fixed it in front of me, so I drank my coffee and spent half an hour reading features about Vanna White, Sylvester Stallone and other great thinkers of our age."

By MATTHEW ROTHSCHILD

INTERVIEW

ROBERT FISK

"You do see people die, and you realize how easy it is to be killed. At the end of the day, either you get back to Beirut and file your story and go out to a French restaurant, or you end up in a fridge."

Robert Fisk is Britain's most highly decorated foreign correspondent. He has received the British International Journalist of the Year award seven times, most recently in 1995 and 1996. His specialty is the Middle East, where he has spent the last 23 years. Currently the Beirut correspondent for the London *Independent*, Fisk has covered the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war, the Persian Gulf war, and the conflict in Algeria. He is the author of *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War* (Atheneum, 1990), and his reporting from Lebanon has brought him international attention. He was the one who broke the story about the Israeli shelling of the U.N. compound in Qana, Lebanon, in 1996.

Fisk visited Madison, Wisconsin, to give two lectures on the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. He brought with him film footage of the Qana shelling, as well as footage of an Israeli bombing of a Lebanese ambulance carrying 14 people. He showed a film he made about Palestinians who had lost their homes when Israel became a state. He also showed interviews with Jews who lost family members in Nazi concentration camps, and he went to Auschwitz to show where the Holocaust took place. In one of his lectures, he made a special point of taking on those who deny the truth of the Holocaust.

I spoke with Fisk on my radio show, Second Opinion, and later when I drove him to the airport and as we waited for his plane. He was off to meet his wife, Lara Marlowe, in Paris, before heading back to Beirut.

Q: How dangerous is it being a foreign correspondent in the Middle East?

FISK: You do see people die, and you realize how easy it is to be killed. You go through the risk and the danger. At the end of the day, either you get back to Beirut and file your story and go out to a French restaurant, or you end up in a fridge. I had two colleagues from CBS. They were Lebanese — Bahije Metni and Tafik Ghazawi. They were heading south to cover an Israeli raid in Lebanon in 1985. I was headed out to cover the same story. We saw each other, said "hi." I was in a village that overlooked where the Israelis had a tank positioned. They were being attacked by Hezbollah guys who were trying to do suicide attacks on them. And the Israelis were firing tank shells into the villages. I was in a village overlooking it, and a shell fell in a field opposite me and I got blown physically off my feet by the shell blast through a door of a house next to a mosque.

Q: Were you injured?

FISK: No, not at all. I was bruised but nothing terrible. The tank kept on firing through the fields into the next village and the next village. Tafik and Bahije had got out of their car and were talking to villagers in the back of a yard. A car had been hit in the front, and they went out to film it. And as they were filming it, an Israeli tank round landed, and they were literally blasted into bits of flesh around the houses. I went back down the next day and people were scraping them off the houses with pen knives. When I got to the Hamoud hospital, they were unrecognizable, pieces of meat, nothing, horrible.

Q: And those incidents don't give you pause as to whether you should continue?

FISK: It's an odd situation. When you go off to a dangerous place, you're full of foreboding. But if you decide you're going to cover it and it's worth doing, you must commit yourself to it and stop saying, "Should I do it?" You've got to turn the potential for panic into the concentration of the mind. But you never should be greedy. If you're after something, you talk to witnesses at the scene, you report it, and get out. Don't hang around. When I'm out of a dangerous situation and I'm back in Beirut, I go out with my beautiful wife to dinner and I sit down and I think, "Whew!" There's always a feeling afterwards — you've got the story — it was worth it. Because you got back. But if you don't get back, you won't be in a position to say that.

Q: The first time I heard your name was in connection with your report in 1996 at the Qana refugee camp in Lebanon, which was bombed by the Israelis. Tell me what you saw there and how you pieced together the story.

FISK: Well, I was actually by chance coming on a U.N. convoy. You recall, of course, that at this stage Israel was carrying out what it called "Operation Grapes of Wrath," which was a bombardment of Lebanon with 22,000 shells and heaven knows how many thousand air raids.

Q: John Steinbeck must be rolling in his grave.

FISK: John Steinbeck in one book of his which I have describes Arabs as "the dirtiest people in the world," I noticed.

Q: So maybe it was appropriate for that.

FISK: Well, who knows. It might have come from the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" or the book of Deuteronomy. In any event, this operation was set off after Hezbollah men had fired rockets over the border into Israel. The Hezbollah were responding to the unexplained killing of a young teenager in a south Lebanese village by a booby-trap bomb, which the Hezbollah believed the Israelis set. The Hezbollah took revenge, as they said they would if there were any deaths of civilians. The Israelis said this was an unprovoked attack and launched its bombardment.

I was traveling in the U.N. convoy near Qana and we heard an Israeli gun battery inside southern Lebanon. It was part of the Israeli occupation force. Suddenly, fire rang over the top of our convoy into the village of Qana and we could hear this "boom, boom, whoosh," the whiffling of a shell — "wham!" — as it hit into Qana. And within a few seconds we could hear the headquarters of the Fijian battalion of the United Nations saying, "Shells are falling on our compound. Help us, help us." Shortly afterwards, we heard a Fijian very, very frightened come up on the radio again, "Help us, help us. The shells are falling." And a Lebanese army liaison officer was saying, "I hear the voice of death."

We had been by Qana that morning and had seen it crowded with 800 refugees. The people with their villages under fire had been taken by the U.N. armored vehicles into the U.N.'s own compound. This wasn't a refugee camp. This was a battalion headquarters of the U.N. in Qana, where they would be safe. And we could even see that they actually brought their cattle with them and tethered their cows and goats to the barbed wire around the camp. They were going to be safe there.

When we got to Qana, much of it was on fire. As these proximity shells burst, they killed in all 106 people, including 55 children. Proximity shells burst seven to nine meters above the ground. They're anti-personnel weapons; they're intended to give amputation wounds. When we got there, these poor people without arms and legs had crawled and smashed down the back gate of the compound, and we drove into it. It was literally a river of blood, and it was overflowing our shoes. And we got inside, and it was just butchery. Babies were without arms and heads. Women torn apart. People eviscerated. There was half a body at the top of a burning tree. There was a young girl to my right when I came in holding in her arms this middle-aged man with his eyes open, but he had an arm missing and he was dead. And she was rocking this body back and forth, backwards and forwards, crying over and over, "My father, my father, my father." So that's what we found.

Q: How do you keep your composure? How can you report under such circumstances?

FISK: It's a journalist's job to be a witness to history. We're not there to worry about ourselves. We're there to try and get as near as we can, in an imperfect world, to the truth and get the truth out. I always feel in those circumstances great compassion for innocent people who died. I also think that, though dead, they would probably want us as independent reporters to be there. Because they'd want the truth to be told about what happened to them. I know that sounds prissy and simple, but I do believe in it. I think journalism should be a vocation. So in answer to your question, I get on with my work. I have work to do; that's the way I look at it. You can feel very angry about things like that. It was a great wickedness what happened at Qana. But it's not our job to become overwhelmed by it.

Robert Fisk: " I can remember many many times when an American journalist arrives in town and goes to to the U.S. embassy, the French embassy, the British embassy. They get their accreditation from the ministry of information and maybe ask for a couple of interviews.

Q: How hard was it to get back from Qana to Beirut?
FISK: We're coming out of Qana, and there's this this gunboat firing, and we slow to a stop. It's my wife, the driver Habibi, and me.

Q: Your wife was with you in Qana?
FISK: Yes, she's a correspondent, too. She's American by the way, from L.A., Lara Marlowe. She was then reporting for *Time* magazine. We take the car and head up to Sidon, which was under fire. The Lebanese had blocked the road further north of us. The Israeli gunboat was rocketing this road with shells, shooting at every car it saw.

We stopped. There were people backing out, frightened, turning back, women were crying. This horrible whiffle sound. And my friend Habibi said, "What should we do?" I watched the gunboat. I've seen them a lot of times, and I reckon if we've seen four rounds fired, four explosions, there's usually a gap of 32 seconds. So I said, "Go, we've got to get this film to Beirut." And we went down that road and were just across the bridge and — "whoosh" — one passed us and exploded on the bridge in a bubble of flame.

We got to Beirut, and I said to Lara, "Tonight, we're not going to eat or drink. I'm just going to sit on the phone and you'll sit on the other phone and we'll just do live broadcasting all evening. We were there, we saw it." And we did until 3:00 a.m. Then Lara made dinner and I opened a bottle of wine. We sat on the balcony and looked out and the moon came out, and there — way across the balcony — was an Israeli gunboat watching Beirut. And we're like, "Should we move off the balcony? Forget it! Let's have a glass of wine."

Q: Your reporting at Qana got you in a controversy because the pundits in the U.S. like Abe Rosenthal of *The New York Times* said why in the world would the Israelis bomb a refugee camp.
FISK: I didn't get myself in a controversy, I cleared the controversy up. What happened was, even with the bodies still lying rank in Qana, some of the survivors and some of the U.N. soldiers were saying there was an Israeli pilotless aircraft drone that had been flying over the camp before and during the massacre.

Q: And what's the importance of that?
FISK: The purpose of the drone is to give artillery men a siting of an artillery target in what is called dead ground. Dead ground is what you can't see. In other words, you're firing over a hill so you don't know what you're hitting. But the drone is flying over and you can see on the television screen where your shells are flying. A lot of people had said they'd seen this drone. Then, later on, I'd heard that a U.N. soldier quite by chance a mile away in a neighboring position, a Norwegian soldier, was taking an amateur video of the shelling of Qana and actually filmed the drone. Then I was told the film had been taken by the U.N.'s investigator general to New York, but no one else was going to be allowed to see it, that there probably would be no written report by the U.N. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, I was told, was informed by the Clinton Administration that if he wanted to have any chance of another run as Secretary General there wouldn't be a written report. So, of course, the film was very important. If the film existed and if it showed the drone, it placed a very heavy burden of responsibility upon Israel.

> "American journalists go for safe stories. They don't like controversy. They don't like to say, 'I was a witness. I saw this. This is true. this is what happened.' You have this constant business where journalists can never be the source. There has to be this anonymous diplomat"

Q: It would prove that the Israeli military knew what they were bombing?
FISK: It would be very difficult to deny that they were doing it by chance. It would have to be a military error of such monumental proportions we would have to think of Israel as an incompetent army. And I don't think that's how Israel regards itself. When I got back to Beirut, I was pretty depressed. I wanted the story. I was chasing that tape. I was at home the next day in Beirut and my mobile phone rang and a voice just gave me a map reference in southern Lebanon, and he said, "1300 hours." I've never driven to southern Lebanon so fast in my life. When I got there, a U.N. jeep pulled up behind me and a U.N. soldier got out. And he walked up to me and he said, "The drone is on the film. I've seen it, and I've copied it before the U.N. took it." He said, "I have two children at home the same age as the children I carried dead in my arms at Qana, and this is for them." And he pulled a cassette out of his battle dress and threw it on the passenger seat of my car.

I took it back to Beirut, and sure enough, right in the middle of the shelling, the camera zips up and there is a drone flying over. In the background you can hear the Irish U.N. radio operators saying, "Qana is under fire! The shelling is going on!" You can hear the shelling. You can see the drone. So, I got it back to Beirut, and we broke the story. My paper ran three pages on it and carried an editorial saying that the people responsible for this should be brought to justice, which of course they were not. We had lots of copies of the tape, and we gave them to all the TV stations, including the Americans, who hardly used it. CNN used a bit of it. And we gave it to Israeli TV, which showed more of it than the American television did. The U.N. was forced to publish a report and acknowledge the film. Boutros Boutros-Ghali did indeed lose his job. Not just because of that, but partly.

Q: You also have done a lot of reporting on an Israeli attack on a Lebanese ambulance full of people. What was that story?
FISK: It was April 13, 1996. Abbas Jiha was a farmer and a volunteer ambulance driver for the village of Mansouri in southern Lebanon. On this day, he'd taken two trips to Sidon — first with a wounded man, then with a wounded baby. When Abbas returned to Mansouri, there was panic, shells were falling all around. People were saying, "Take us to Sidon, take us to Sidon." He put four of his children in the vehicle, he put another family in, and another guy, a window cleaner — in all there were 14 people in the ambulance. He'd got up to the U.N. Post 123 on the main coast road. He was one-third of the way to safety in Sidon. So he goes through the checkpoint, and Reuters photographer Najla Abujahjah is standing there and sees the car go through and sees two helicopters. One of them comes down and starts chasing the car up the road. When helicopters start flying at vehicles, you know you're in trouble. They're coming up behind to fire a missile into the back of the vehicle. That's the way they do it.

Q: There'd be no denying that the helicopter wanted to hit this ambulance?
FISK: Oh, absolutely not. They intended to hit it, they absolutely did. They fired two missiles. One didn't explode, the other did. It exploded through the back door, engulfing the vehicle in fire and smoke and hurling it 20 meters through the air. Abbas Jiha stood in the road beside one of his dead daughters, weeping and shrieking, "God is Great."

He held up his fists to the sky and cried out, "My God, my God, my family has gone." He saw his two-month-old baby, Mariam, lying outside the ambulance, her body riddled with holes and her head full of metal. His five-year-old, Hanin, "was cut through with holes like a mosquito net," he told me. The Reuters photographer saw her collapse on the broken window frame, her blood running in streams down the outside of the

SEE NEXT PAGE

ROBERT FISK

CONTINUED

vehicle. Abbas Jiha also lost his nine-year-old daughter, Zeinab, and his wife, Mona. "She was so terribly wounded, I couldn't recognize her face," he told me. Two other passengers died, a 60-year-old woman and her 11-year-old niece.

The Israeli government admitted it had targeted the ambulance but made two claims: that the ambulance was owned by the Hezbollah, and that it was carrying a Hezbollah guerrilla. Both of which were totally untrue. Jiha has no connection with the Hezbollah at all. Just before 1996 he returned from Germany where he and his wife and children sought political asylum because it was so dangerous in Lebanon. Even if the vehicle had been owned by the Hezbollah, the idea that it's all right to kill women and children because you don't like the owner of the vehicle is an entirely new view of the rules of war.

Q: Why didn't we hear more about this in the United States?
FISK: *The New York Times's* reporter, Serge Schmemann, ran a report the next day. It was six paragraphs before he came to the ambulance incident. He began by explaining how Israel's forces were tightening their hold on Lebanon. And then, paragraph six, he managed to have the courage to mention, "In the bloodiest incident of the day, an Israeli helicopter fired a missile into the back of an ambulance." I mean, absolutely incredible.

Q: It wasn't the lead in any other stories?
FISK: It certainly was the lead in my story, on the front page, and it was the lead in every other European paper. It wasn't the lead in *The New York Times*, and let's just look at two things. When you go to journalism school, which we don't in Britain, but I know you do here, you put the main part of the story in the first paragraph. It wasn't there. Now let's ask another question: If a Syrian helicopter fired a missile into the back of an Israeli ambulance and killed four kids and two women — heaven spare us, let it never happen, but if it did happen — I believe it would have been in the first paragraph. And that is one of the problems with Middle East reporting. It is not fair. It is biased.

Q: Why is it biased?
Fisk: One is because U.S. journalists I don't think are very courageous. They tend to go along with the government's policy domestically and internationally. To question is seen as being unpatriotic, or potentially subversive. America's great ally is Israel. When you're given 10 seconds to try and explain why you might be critical of an American ally, whoever it might be, it becomes a very odd and weird experience.

American journalists go for safe stories. They don't like controversy. They don't like to say, "I was a witness. I saw this. This is true. This is what happened." You have this constant business where journalists can never be the source; there has to be this anonymous diplomat.

The conformity of American journalism is going to be one of the nails in its coffin. All American journalists write in the same style, and there is a kind of sickness among a lot of Western correspondents in that they have this dreadful reliance on their own governments, their own embassies. I can remember many, many times when an American journalist arrives in town and goes to the U.S. embassy, the French embassy, the British embassy. They get their accreditation from the ministry of information and maybe ask for a couple of interviews. And then you get the report like the one reprinted in the *International Herald Tribune* Paris edition I was reading the other day. It was, in all, 12 paragraphs, and unnamed diplomatic sources were quoted 10 times.

I don't go near embassies. I won't do it. I can go where I want and don't have to worry about what other people think. Why would I want to go to an embassy? I don't think I have much to learn from embassies. If I want to go to an embassy, I could live in Washington or London — I don't need to live in Beirut.

Q: What other constraints are there when it comes to coverage of Israel?
FISK: There is a very powerful Israeli lobby in this country. It's a fact. People who dare to criticize Israel are often made to regret it. I can give you an example of a journalist from a northwestern daily American newspaper.

I said, "How are things?"

He said, "We have problems reporting the Middle East stories, as usual."

"What?"

"Well, for example, I had been referring to Netanyahu's new government as 'the right wing Israeli government.' But now I just call it 'the government.'"

"Why did that happen?"

"Oh, some of the readers of the newspaper who are members of the Jewish community object to the phrase 'right wing.' So I don't use it anymore."

That's how the distortion starts. In these circumstances, you have a press that is very loath to rock the boat.

American journalists, whether they be on television or in the press, are very frightened of writing a report which is going to make Israel — or, more important, Israel's supporters in the United States — unhappy. If you dare to criticize Israel's policies or their actions — and, of course, you should also criticize the Arabs, let's not get romantic about this — but if you dare to criticize Israel, you will inevitably get the claim that you must be racist, anti-Semitic, and that is intended to shut you up. And in many cases in this country, I'm afraid it's successful.

Q: Do you get called anti-Semitic a lot?
FISK: In the past in Britain, letters have been published that suggest this, but if it happens again, I'll take legal action. Because in Britain to be called a racist is grounds for slander. And I won't accept that by anyone because it is a lie. However, there are ways of implying it without saying it. You'll get a comment that goes, "Mr. Fisk, you are writing from the dark side of journalism." So that must mean subversive, bad, terrorist, racist, etc. Listen, if criticizing Israel is anti-Semitic, which is bullshit, what is criticizing Mr. Blair? Is it anti-Anglo Saxon? I mean, that is a ridiculous situation, immature, and I don't think that kind of argument is going to work. Well, it might be sustained here in the States for all kinds of reasons. But it's not going to work elsewhere for much longer, I think. It's not acceptable.

Q: Tell me how you got so interested in the Middle East, and why you've spent 23 years there.
FISK: I was the Portugal correspondent covering the aftermath of the Portuguese revolution, 1975-1976, and was sitting on a beach. My foreign editor — Louis Herren at the London *Times,* for which I then worked — called me up and said, "The civil war seems to have taken hold in Lebanon, the newspaper's correspondent has just got married, his wife wants to leave, would you like to be the Middle East correspondent?" I was 29, and that seemed to me like a very dramatic story to cover and a dramatic job to have, so I flew to Beirut, and originally it was a three-year posting. But unlike in America, where your correspondents only do three years and move on, we don't have that tradition in Britain. We believe that if a correspondent is doing his job and gets to know the story, he's more qualified the longer he's there.

Q: Is there a problem with U.S. journalism posting people for two or three years, and then shipping them out?
FISK: Oh, yes, absolutely.

Q: There's a saying among U.S. editors that they don't want people to "go native."
FISK: Yeah, well, I've heard this comment. This is usually used about journalists when they start to understand the story and tell the truth. The real problem is that it takes at least three years to even start to understand a complex story like Russia, the Pacific Rim, or the Middle East. And the moment when the reporter is beginning to get a grasp, "bingo," he's off to Moscow or Latin America.

Q: How long do you see yourself doing this? What keeps you going?
FISK: Well, I'm 51, and I don't intend to spend the rest of my life in Lebanon. But I'm more than happy to stay on. I can break good stories. The paper wants me to stay there. Why should I go? I mean, I don't want to become an executive and have a car and a swimming pool. I'm happy in Beirut.

Matthew Rothschild is editor and publisher of The Progressive *, in which this interview was first published.*

RUI RAMALHEIRO

ALTERNATIVE VOICES

Minor dictator on Lafayette

By JACK LESSENBERRY

Henry Louis Mencken remains the best media critic the Colonies have ever produced. "The average American newspaper, especially of the so-called better sort, has the courage of a rat, the information of a high-school janitor and the honor of a police station lawyer," he wrote in 1920.

Yes, yes; high school janitors are better than that, and newspapers have gotten worse. But I wished desperately Mencken could have been with me at a mediocre restaurant in Dearborn, Michigan, where I had an experience more awesome than seeing the two-headed calf at the state fair in 1960, or getting my first copy of *National Geographic* with a photo spread on naked tribal women not long after.

What I thought I was seeing — at first — was a reincarnation of Fatty Arbuckle showing up to audition for the part of Gen. Alfredo Stroessner, strongman of Paraguay, in a Fordson Players Guild remake of *The Great Dictator*. But alas, it was only the amazing Mark Silverman, new editor and ersatz publisher of the truncated *Detroit News*, who had come with two real publishers to speak to the local Society of Professional Journalists.

To the astonishment — and barely muffled titters — of the reporters, editors and second-rank publicists present, he arrived with a security squad with wires running into their underwear who stood around menacingly, puzzling customers at the bar. "I knew Orville wasn't really dead," one grizzled local said, pointing at Ronald Clark, a black student I brought from Wayne State. "He'll straighten this out."

Silverman desperately needed his stormtroopers; there were three young women newspaper strikers demurely sitting at a far table, led by Kate DeSmet, who must weigh nearly 100 pounds. Earlier that week, he bravely threatened to back out or walk out if he had to endure confrontation with what remains of the union's tattered troops. The strategist in me found this dismaying. I had expected to be favorably impressed by the Louisville Flash; my network of spies inside the faded gray lady were cautiously optimistic; he had, one said, even been seen talking to humans. Silverman, of course, has had the great good luck to follow Bob Giles, a man whose natural radiance made Andrei Gromyko seem like a bon vivant. The new broom was a boomer, I knew; I had heard him say "really cool" on a radio commercial.

Were we entering an era of Gannettoidism with a human face? After having mostly destroyed his newspaper and having helped the unions destroy themselves, Giles had been extracted by Gannett and Silverman introduced last May.

> He arrived with a security squad with wires running into their underwear who stood around menacingly, puzzling customers at the bar.

The Detroit Metro SPJ chapter, now ably led by Marsha Stopa of *Crain's*, had invited all three new publishers in town — Silverman, Frank Shepherd, new owner of the *Oakland Press* and *Macomb Daily* among other papers, and Donald Thurlow of the excellent and usually overlooked Heritage newspapers — to speak.

Had El Caudillo come with Los Cojones, he could easily have taken a union taunt and said, "Hey, I wasn't here and I don't know everything that went on. I think the strike was unfortunate, I understand the unions have offered to come back to work and we are trying to get people back on the job as soon as possible. But this is not the place to further discuss internal employment matters."

That would have satisfied much of the crowd, and had the union members then gotten obnoxious, they would have looked bad; it was, after all, a three-man panel, and the others had nothing to do with the labor troubles.

But their opposite was a nervous Nellie. Watching Silverman scrutinize the mostly middle-aged crowd of largely sun-needing VDT strokers, I felt the onset of an attack of *clung*, a marvelous term invented by Dr. Ralph Johnson, dean of editorial writers in Toledo, Ohio. "Means a sudden rush of fecal matter to the heart," he said once, explaining to me the national reaction to Jimmy Carter's revelation that he discussed nuclear policy with his daughter Amy. This was a clung moment indeed.

Eventually, Silverman delivered an articulate speech which seemed, however, to have been prepared for a suburban Rotary; there was a fair amount of Babbitt-like boosting of Detroit, a place virtually everyone in the room knew more about than he.

There were a few muffled giggles when he mentioned that the *News* is committed to "fair and balanced" coverage (presumably, as in how it covered the strike.) But his most telling remark was in response to a question about the future.

He predicted a *Detroit News* circulation of "just under 300,000" by the year 2002. Whether or not it can crawl back is doubtful, but the real story is that this paper, 10 years ago, had 670,000 paid subscribers. No paper in Paraguay ever accomplished that sort of freefall.

Afterward, as he waddled out, goons following, talking into their sleeves, several suburban editors watched. Then one took off his shoe — a la Maxwell Smart — and talked into it. "Target approaching Langley, over."

"Did they help him wash his hands in the bathroom?" someone asked. Alas, a reporting lapse; no one knew.

Whatever one says about Bob Giles, he was never laughed at. This town desperately needs more humor; maybe having this fellow around won't be so bad after all.

This article was originally published in Metro Times*, Detroit's alternative newsweekly.*

EYE ON THE NEWS

QUOTE UNQUOTE

■ "You have to trust the readers. You don't have to hit them over the head and say, 'This is tragic, this is shocking' — they can make the moral sense themselves … You don't have to treat people as if there is only one way to look at a story. You don't have to treat them like morons. It's about respect and real journalism." — *Pete Hamill, former editor New York* Daily News.

■ "Monopoly is a terrible thing, till you have it." — *Rupert Murdoch.*

■ "The American press, with a very few exceptions, is a kept press. Kept by the big corporations the way a whore is kept by a rich man." — *Theodore Dreiser,* Don't Blame The People.

■ "After I finished high school, I went to Kansas City and worked on a paper. It was regular newspaper work: Who shot whom? Who broke into what? Where? When? How? But never Why, not really Why?" — *Ernest Hemingway.*

■ "Rulers do not require the total suppression of news; it's sufficient to delay the news until it no longer matters." — *Mark Cook & Jeff Cohen, writing about the Panama invasion,* Extra*, Jan/Feb 1990.*

■ "The newspaper industry spends less on research and development than the dairy industry does. Think about that. I'm pretty sure we know all there is to know about milk. . . ." — *Bob Cauthorn, director of new technology,* The Arizona Daily Star.

■ "The freedom of the press works in such a way that there is not much freedom from it." —*Princess Grace of Monaco, 1918-1982.*

■ "The truth never lies, but when it does lie, it lies somewhere in between." — *Christopher Hitchens, writer, 1997.*

■ "Government is order. Journalism is disorder. Life imitates journalism." — *James Deakin, St Louis Post-Dispatch.*

■ "Alternatives have a willingness to take chances. They're fresh and they possess a hell of a lot more energy than dailies."
— *Art Howe, president of Montgomery Newspapers, after trying to buy a chain of alternative newspapers, 1998.*

E-MAIL FROM AFRICA

THIS STORY HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH NEWSPAPERS

Extract from an e-mail to the editor from Denis Beckett, South African editor, author and TV personality (sort of):

Damn funny night on Friday, after another tough week in Africa: a fair-to-middling speech somewhat overlain by holy terror that I might not get back to Johannesburg in time for the most unmissable commission of the year, to do farewell to son Matt's class leaving primary school, to which he has to reply.

Huge comedy of errors getting to the school. Gael has left word that if I'm not there by 7p.m., death us will part prior to forthcoming 25-year anniv.

About three secs to 7, I slope in huffing and puffing, sweaty as hell, still wet from the shower and dressed in brown shirt and suit. Uh oh; it's black tie. Feeling charleyish, I zoop home, breaking speed limits, not to say records.

Get home. Some guy is stuck in my drive. Been trying to turn, car broke down. He's pushing, wife driving, getting no place. Civility says help, but mental pic of son's face, to say nothing of wife's face, says get your ass back to school. So take detour to back pedestrian entrance. Skid in wet grass and great chaos extricating car. Realize one of my dearly beloved offspring has annexed my keys, which include one for this gate. All I have is decoder for main gate. It's main gate or nuttin'.

Run back. It's raining. Help guy push. Car gets going. Chest heaving, into property. Uh, oh, door is locked — by Murphy's Law, purloined keys also include house key. Clamber round back to place where I can climb pergola into upstairs room. Need another shower. Now have post-shower sweat and pre-shower sweat competing. Fastest shower in hist.

Rewetted, into dress suit. Except no dress shirt. In fact, no white shirt. Finally find collarless white shirt, Mao-style. Figure if I carry it off brazenly enough will p'raps get away with establishing black tie without the tie as new black tie fashion. Back to school. Parking lot full. Park in dismal alley hellangorn away and sprint through rain. Slip in as ceremonial is beginning, ducking through bagpipers, spraying rain and sweat in equal proportions. What the hell. Made it.

Deliver speech, a little breathless and a lot tieless but without disgrace. After 1/2 hr and wraplike bit re good wishes for high school, I say: "And for the second half of my speech. I want to tell you boys how to secure peace in the home." Pause while kids think "Oh, @#$%, enough." Then say: "Never flush the loo while your father's in the shower."

Now it's Matt's turn. I suffer parental paranoia. Will he clam up, mumble, get mocked by his pals, summoned by headmaster? No. He goes at it, clarion as a trumpet, sharp amalgam of little-boy cheek and incipient-adult solemnity.

Finally says: "Now I want to tell you dads how to secure peace in the home." Copycat pause. "Take short showers."

MEMO TO REPORTERS

You're great to drink with, yet so bloody dull and pompous in print?

A few questions for newspaper people from a television journalist

By TIM KNIGHT

There's a sordid conspiracy among newspapers. But not the usual bleeding-heart, tax-the-rich, retrain-the-loggers, disloyal, left-wing conspiracy so beloved of politicians. Instead, it's a neo-middle-class conspiracy which servilely slobbers over the doings and sayings of the powerful — the privileged class — and arrogantly ignores the lives and needs of the rest of us.

However, I do not believe that the cryptic, vague, obscure and ambiguous writing in so many newspapers is part of the conspiracy. I put that down to sheer bloody laziness. In the light of all this, I have some questions for newspaper people:

■ **Are you losing your journalistic souls?** Has journalism become business? Once upon a time it was very simple. We had this dream: Our first loyalty was not to any employer, union, nation-state or cause. instead, we saw ourselves as servants of the people and guardians of that magnificent democratic ideal — the free marketplace of ideas. Journalism was a public trust. Free journalism was the one essential ingredient of a free and democratic society. Free journalism was the jewel in the crown of democracy. Nothing was more important than the people's right to know.

Do corporate needs and priorities rather than journalistic needs and priorities define the profession today. Are church (journalism) and state (management) forming a sordid and illicit union? Do you care?

■ **When did you become so damned respectable?** There was a time when the powerful loathed journalists as irreverent, disrespectful, disreputable trash. Now, you're part of the powerful. There was a time when your job was to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." Now, you are the comfortable.

■ **Where did you get this crazed obsession with power?** Why are you so fascinated by who's got power? Who's lost power? Who wants power? How many of your readers share your delusion that the blood sport of power politics is the most important story, page after page, day after day?

■ **How has it happened that news has become what the rich and powerful do and say,** interrupted occasionally by some of the nasty things that happen to the rest of us?

■ **Why do you always see the world through the eyes of a small minority of us — middle-aged, middle-class, white, Western men?**

— Most of the world isn't middle-aged — median age of people alive today is around 24.

— Most of the world isn't middle-class — three out of five of us earn less than $2 a day.

— Most of the world isn't white — three out of four of us are people of colour.

— Most of the world isn't Western — four out of five of us live outside the West.

— Most of the world isn't male — more than half of us are female.

So why is there almost no view from the world's majority — the young, the working class, non-whites, non-Westerners and women?

■ **While on the subject of women, how have you been so successful in persuading women journalists to act, think, behave and write like men?** Is there some top-secret school hidden away in the mountains where you train women to deny their anima (female) side and see the animus (male) view of the world as the only norm?

■ **Why do you cover so much blue-collar crime (murder, assault, rape, drugs, etc.)** and so little of the white-collar crime that affects many more of us (embezzlement, bribery, fraud, price fixing, industrial pollution, political corruption, etc.)?

■ **When did you discover that reporting endless accidents and acts of God is easier and cheaper than real journalism?** Why are far distant train wrecks, plane crashes, floods, fires, storms and earthquakes so incredibly important to you? What makes you think they're of any importance to your readers?

■ **Why the love affair with authorities, experts and spokespeople for institutions and organizations?** They're not participants. They're not players in the game. They weren't even there. They don't represent themselves. They represent other people. All they can say is what other people who aren't there pay them to say. Why do authorities, experts and spokespeople for institutions and organizations dominate and manipulate so much of the news?

■ **How come you go to so many news conferences?** Only spokespeople and journalists go to news conferences. Real people are thrown out. When was the last time real news came out of a news conference?

■ **Why does so much news reporting mask meaning, foster ambiguity**, obscure the truth and spread a sad, sodden feeling of helplessness over the land?

■ **Where is it written that news has to be dull, lifeless, boring and institutional?** Where is it written that news can't be reported with insight, wit, humor, even wisdom? You're not stenographers. You're journalists. You write the living theater of our times.

■ **Why are you newspaper chaps so great to drink with, yet** so bloody dull and pompous in print?

This article is extracted from Outside The Box, What Newspaper People Can Learn From TV People, *by Tim Knight, a Toronto writer and documentary producer who trains broadcast journalists around the world. He is also the author of E*verything You Always Wanted To Know About How To Be A TV Journalist In the 21st Century But Didn't Know Who To Ask or Storytelling And The Anima Factor.

ESSAY

HERDING CATS WITH A PITBULL!

How editors can control the creative process

Stormy — that's probably not the best word to describe the day-to-day working atmosphere inside any organization that has artsy-fartsy designer types on one side of the office facing off against a surly bunch of literary editorial hoodlums on the other. But it's the politest. One of these factions could at a stretch be described as creative (zany, kooky, whacked-out, intractable, i.e. nuts), the other as pragmatic (solid, sensible, pedantic, literal, i.e. dull). And, as any industrial psychologist will probably confirm, there's precious little common ground between them.

This enmity (rivalry is too wimpy a word) is not unique to editor/art director relationships. It's the same with architects and their clients (*"Yes, Mies, your building is very wonderful, but our old offices had flying buttresses, so could you incorporate some onto … ouch, why did you hit me with that two-by-four?"*); ditto with artists and their patrons *("Yeah, Leonardo, the painting's fine up to a point, but could you make Mz. Mona's smile just a little bit more seductive; I see a big future in toothpaste marketing…")*.

And, if you're a woman, you probably have a similar relationship with your hairdresser *("Uh, yes, madam, I know you said you liked your hair long, but your head was just m-a-a-a-d-e to be bald.")*. In fact, we're not just on opposite sides, most of the time we're not even on the same planet.

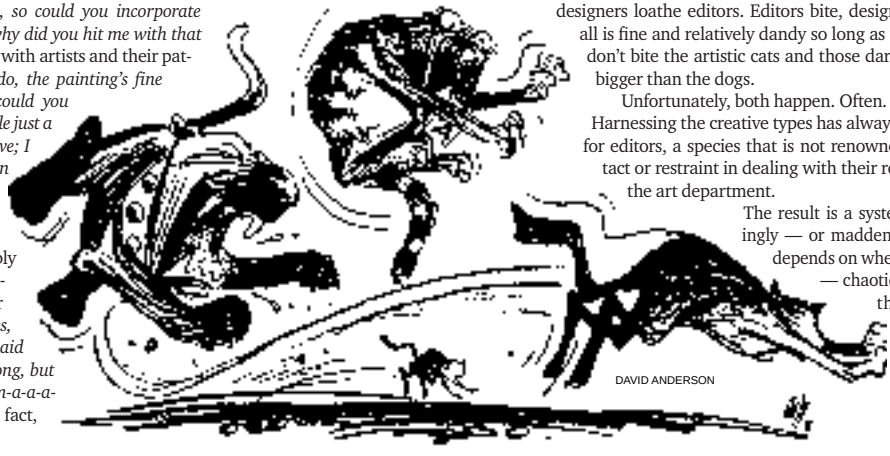
It's the same in nature, if that's any consolation (it isn't). Take my dog, Harley (please). He hates cats. Nothing strange or original there, all self-respecting dogs hate cats; that's why they chase 'em. Cats loathe dogs; thankfully, they can run faster and are better at climbing trees. It's the natural order of things, the balance of nature, a permanent state of war. The relationship works at the most basic level — both parties benefit from the exercise, the brisk, though brief, action keeps them alert and makes their lives richer, healthier and livelier — so long as the cats outrun the dogs. If not, life goes to shit, for the cats anyway.

Why should the newsroom be any different? Editors hate designers, designers loathe editors. Editors bite, designers scratch. And all is fine and relatively dandy so long as the editorial dogs don't bite the artistic cats and those darn cats don't grow bigger than the dogs.

Unfortunately, both happen. Often.

Harnessing the creative types has always been a dilemma for editors, a species that is not renowned for diplomacy, tact or restraint in dealing with their reluctant chums in the art department.

The result is a system that is charmingly — or maddenly (the viewpoint depends on where you are sitting) — chaotic, the effect being the equivalent, it has been said, of using pitbulls to herd cats.



DAVID ANDERSON

SEE NEXT PAGE

BY TONY SUTTON

"WHY SHOULD PHOTOGRAPHS, WHITE SPACE AND BIG TYPE GET IN THE WAY OF MY NEAR-PERFECT WORDS"

CONTINUED

Paul Hollister, the man responsible for the original design format for *Life* magazine in the '30s found an interesting way of controlling those hyper-creative art director types who never met a format they couldn't improve and, in the process, render unreadable and unintelligible:

"Put him at the drawing board," he told publisher Henry Luce. "Then put tape over his mouth because whatever he wishes to say should drain through his fingers onto paper. Never let a designer talk. On the table to his left put your basic format for reference. Onto a table at his right feed him batches of photographs with a note saying what you want. Let him make layouts from those pictures.

"If they are right," Hollister continued, "you pat him on the head. If they have strayed from the basic format, you take a small hammer which you have chained to the wall for the purpose, rap him smartly over the skull, point severely to basic dummy format — cry 'No, No, No! Naughty!' He then repents and gets the layout right, or you get yourself a new designer."

Sounds like a good solution, eh? It worked for *Life*, which notched up sales of 8 million copies a week in its heyday. Maybe we should stop here and retire for a few beers.

But, hang on, didn't *Life* curl up its toes, cough gently and expire a few years ago, before being exhumed and turned into a generally turgid lifestyle or, judging by a seeming preoccupation with the thereafter (quite understandable following its own demise and resurrection), deathstyle magazine?

Perhaps Hollister was only half right. Or maybe he was just a troublemaking shithead.

Denis Beckett, a former sparring partner during my days in South Africa had a slightly different perception of the editor-designer relationship. As editor and publisher of *Frontline*, a noted (and now extinct but — like *Life* — about-to-be-revived) socio-political magazine, he seemed to spend almost as much time battling his part-time and underpaid production editor (me!) as he did fighting the evils of apartheid: "The Chief Minister of Kwazulu, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi," he wrote a few years ago in the introduction to a book I wroote, "once sent me a letter. He denounced my lack of backbone, commitment, clarity, understanding and much else besides. The only good thing about my magazine was 'its very excellent page make-up and the layout design generally.'

"Well, I thought, maybe I should fade out of the picture entirely. I'd give Tony Sutton a few sheaves of Latin doggerel and go off to play poker. Tony could wow the masses with very excellent page make-up and layout design generally, unhampered by an editor suffering from confusion and vacillation.

"Since then, I've heard more of the same. People rattle off a long list of *Frontline's* faults, in terms of range, direction, breadth, the lot. Then they pause for a moment and say, 'I'll grant you this, though. It does look nice.'

"They might say so, It's good that they do. I don't always agree. My relationship with Tony is, much of the time, a shouting match. The language would make a sailor blush. In fact, why sailors are supposed to be the ultimate foulmouths I have never been able to figure out. Hadn't those guys ever heard of journalists, especially creative designers.

"*Frontline* shares a corridor with a Young Women's Christian Association and once when Tony and I experienced a divergence of view — over headline size or picture size I should think, those are the usual — a serene lady called in to request that we retire to a nearby parking lot.

"That is part of what makes it worthwhile. Dynamic tension between designer and editor. You're meant to yell at each other. Creation is pain. The trick is to yell without getting your innards gnarled up, which is not hard if you're yelling honestly."

There you have it. One problem. Two solutions. I'd like to venture, with my usual modesty, that both miss the real point. Most of the tension between editors and designers — Word People and Picture People as they are so charmlessly described in North America — is caused by fear and ignorance. That's not creative; it's destructive. And most of the time it's unnecessary.

Who's to blame? We all are.

As an editor and design director (I've never never been comfortable being described as an art director; it seems fraudulent — my artistic talents are so limited that if someone held a gun to my head and said, "Draw a picture or I'll shoot," I'd say, "Pull the trigger and put us both out of our misery."), I find it irritating beyond words exceeding four letters when I meet designers who delight in saying they never read the stories they're entrusted with laying out.

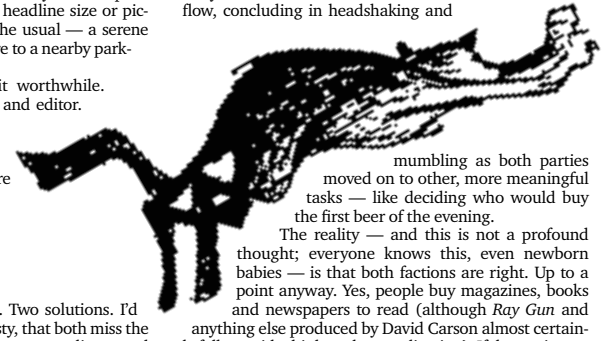
That's when I get a twitchingly-serious urge to grab hold of Paul Hollister's little hammer and thud out a tattoo on the skull of the offending party, simultaneously chanting this charming little mantra which, I'm told, has Buddhist origins:

"If you don't read it, you can't understand it.
If you don't understand it, how can you design it,
You stupid little git?"

Or words to that effect.

Then there's the opposing viewpoint that words are all that matters and design is unnecessary froth and embellishment, an argument that was ably propagated by the previously mentioned and otherwise excellent, engaging and, I should add, award-winning Mr. Beckett who, I trust, has finally recovered from the demented notion that readers actually buy any of his magazines to read the damn things. That being the case, he would reason in a manner that exposed his irritating legal background, why can't we begin the book on page three with a 24pt headline and just flow the text beneath it and through the next 40-odd pages in 10-point type, using 18pt headlines to signify where one story ends and the next begins? "Why," I can hear him saying, with effortless immodesty, "should photographs, white space and big type get in the way of my near-perfect words?"

The only response to that kind of editorial logic was (and remains) a carefully chosen string of words that ought not to be uttered in front of Christian young women, but which translates into something along the lines of, "Well, yes, of course people want to read your magazine, but they're only going to do that if it looks appealing and they can find the main stories quickly when they pick it up at the newsstand. They don't want to have to wade through every page to find your cover story. Idiot!!!!" And so the debate would ebb and flow, concluding in headshaking and



mumbling as both parties moved on to other, more meaningful tasks — like deciding who would buy the first beer of the evening.

The reality — and this is not a profound thought; everyone knows this, even newborn babies — is that both factions are right. Up to a point anyway. Yes, people buy magazines, books and newspapers to read (although *Ray Gun* and anything else produced by David Carson almost certainly falls outside this broad generalization). If the stories are crap, readers will stop buying it and the publication will fold (which is the main reason why newspapers in North America are in deep doodoo and newspapers in Europe aren't). Unfortunately for editors, those damned readers won't just pick up, buy and read anything they happen to knock off the shelf as they dash through their local minimarket; it has to look good as well. Which leads to another interesting thought to ponder:

Design attracts 'em; content keeps 'em.

Like all of life's laws, that one's short, simple, easy to understand and can be hummed to the tune of almost any advertising jingle you care to think of. But before you say, "Hey, this is really easy, can we go for a beer, now" there are a few other considerations to bear in mind, including that great abstraction — the personality of the publication:

- ☛ What is it trying to achieve?
- ☛ Who are its readers?
- ☛ What is its message?
- ☛ What is the best way of transmitting those messages?
- ☛ What is the best format to convey those messages?

Put on your flak jacket and steel hat; we're entering dangerous territory. How do you explain to those zanies in the art department that the magazine they are designing should have an image that is "staid and respectable because it is targeted at middle-class and middle-aged men-in-gray-suits-who-are-quite-happy-to-have-nothing-

in-common-with-their-long-haired-MTV-watching-offspring" and we'd "rather not have that distressed-and-unreadable-typeface-that-you-love-so-much-in-the-pages-of-*RayGun* in my magazine, if you don't mind, you dumb shit."

It's a tricky problem that can only be adequately resolved in a dark alley with a baseball bat, the element of surprise and a good alibi.

But that, I'm informed by no less an authority by my old pal Jan V. White, author of a zillion design manuals and seminar leader-extrordinaire, would take all the pleasure out of the sport. The less-direct route, he informs me, probably offers less spiritual fulfillment, but is more humane and — very important — will keep you out of the way of real crazies who'd like nothing better than to be your best friend for the next 25 years.

Editors are afraid, says White, because they they feel inadequate talking about design. So they ignore it or talk in such vague abstractions that you'd need a degree in gobbledygook or bafflegab (neither of which is taught at art school, although I gather both are necessary for an MBA) to understand precisely what they're jabbering about.

"They're afraid," says White, "because composing a magazine looks so complex. What makes it worse is that there are so many don'ts, so many conventional wisdoms, so many supposed-to's to bear in mind. And there are so many traditional prejudices and standard ways of doing things. How on earth can you absorb them all?

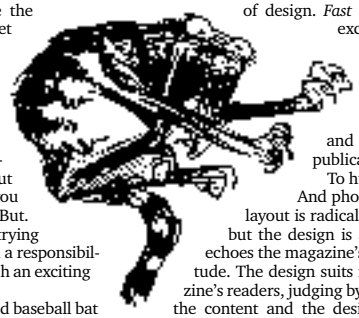
"Learn the techniques? Of course! Learn the rules? Certainly! But, remember, there's only one that really matters — that of common sense. Forget the 'right' solution to your design problem: there's no such thing. There is only effective and ineffective. If it is effective (if it works), it is indeed 'right.' If it doesn't work, no matter how pleasing to the eye it may be, it is now and forever will remain lousy."

Warming to his theme, White points out that what is right for one publication is almost certainly not okay for another.

"Each is different, so the solution to each must also be different. That's why all those maxims and precepts can be so misleading. If you look hard enough, you will discover that each problem carries within itself the seeds of its own solution. Find those seeds and the the pages will 'design' themselves. You only get into difficulties when you try to impose a set of pat solutions where they don't fit. Don't force your material into ready-made straightjackets; custom-tailor the jacket to fit the material.

"The only authority in your situation is YOU. Your intelligence, intuition, knowledge, professional wisdom — and plain gut feeling — are the only arbiters. Only you know the criteria and the parameters. But. most of all, only you know what you are trying to achieve. Isn't it marvellous to have such a responsibility? Isn't it marvellous to be working in such an exciting context?"

Er, well, maybe … but the dark alley and baseball bat sound easier and a damn sight more fun.



Okay, if we're going to try to communicate with those maniacs in the art department, we'd better get our act together so we can pretend to know what we're talking about. Let's start by trying to answer the most difficult question of all:

What is good design?

I'm pleased you asked that. Umm, let's turn it around by saying that the pages of a magazine or newspaper are not, and should not be allowed to degenerate into, an adventure playground in which self-indulgent designers can parade their talents for the appreciative glances of their pals in the creative community (even if the publication wins lots of awards and the editor gets to share the praise and drink lots of free booze).

No, sirree, the production of beautifully laid out pages that rely on graphic fast-footwork for impact, deliberately ignoring the twin considerations of legibility and readability, is not good design. It is bad design. It is bad because it has failed to perform the most basic design function — to communicate the editorial message from writer to reader in a clear and logical manner. In simpler words, the reader buys the magazine to read, not to admire the extravagant pyrotechnics of the art director.

So, what, then is good design? Put simply, it is that which establishes an atmosphere that allows the publication to 'talk' to its readers. The process is very much the same as when a good lecturer addresses his or her audience, pacing delivery and raising or lowering the voice to generate interest and maximize emphasis.

Just as the listener soon becomes restless (zzzzzz) when subjected to a long, droning monologue, so the reader quickly tires of a publication that makes no attempt to change the pace of editorial presentation. The designer must, therefore, ensure that the content of each issue can be heard, with a 'voice' ranging in volume from a whisper to a full-throated roar.

That's a fairly sound, if slightly abstract, definition of the purpose and function of publication design, but there's more.

The design of a publication should also echo the tone of its content. That's another reason why copying the design of a successful publication won't work if the content is totally different.

Let me illustrate that point: I was talking to an editor the other week who was worried because his art director wanted to copy the typographic style of *Fast Company*, the hip business magazine. Generally, business magazines are the model of restraint and not on the cutting edge of design. *Fast Company*, however, is the exception to that rule and it was distressing him.

"The trouble with FC," he bleated, "is that you can't read the headlines and the design is anarchic and unsuitable for a business publication."

To humor him, I bought a copy. And phoned him. Yes, I agreed, the layout is radical for a business publication, but the design is absolutely right because it echoes the magazine's deliberate in-yer-face attitude. The design suits its persona, and the magazine's readers, judging by the letters pages, like both the content and the design. But, transferring that design to the pages of, say, *Business Week* wouldn't work because it is a different sort of publication; its voice is more moderate and less strident. It would be unseemly and out of character, like a businessman dressed in a suit jacket, tie and … jeans. My final piece of advice was that if his art director persisted with this nonsense, he should be taken into a dark alley and, well, you know the rest …

But there's more to it than a few cheap slogans. If we are to bridge the gap between the Word and Picture people we must find common ground. That's hard, but perhaps a discussion of these five key elements that contribute to the creation of good design will help find a starting point in that discussion.

1. GOOD DESIGN IS CLEAR, CONSIDERATE AND READABLE

Content is the most important ingredient of any publication (with the exception of just about every teen publication ever produced), so don't use graphic effects that may impede the editorial message. The way you present text on your pages can make it attractive, clear and legible or jumbled, messy and almost impossible to read. Think twice before leaping from the cliff-edge of graphic excess. Suicide is messy and usually unnecessary.

2. GOOD DESIGN HAS DISCIPLINE

If your magazine has been designed for the past 20 years as a restrained, even dull, Voice of the Business Establishment, with two columns to the page, every headline in 24pt Times Medium and no pictures, you should produce pages that follow that style. Don't take one look at the format and rush out and set everything in narrow columns with screaming headlines and go-faster stripes sprayed in multi-colored slashes all over the place. If you do you'll soon find yourself rubbing a sore posterior, wondering if there's a future for an unemployed, although very creative, art director.

3. GOOD DESIGN IS FLEXIBLE

The content of any publication is subject to change right up to the final deadline, so accept as an inevitable fact of life that your most inspired designs may have to be ripped apart and re-made at the last minute at the whim of an unsympathetic philistine editor. Don't be a creative prima donna if you don't want to be the cause of unnecessary and painful bloodletting (your pain, your blood) on the art department floor.

4. GOOD DESIGN CONTAINS ELEMENTS OF SURPRISE

The overall format of your publication should be recognizable and consistent, but that's no reason why it should look boring. No matter how limited or restrained by format, budget or pedantic editors, you should strive to produce layouts that are vibrant, alive, exciting and stimulating — within the framework laid down by the design stylebook. One or two surprises an issue are quite sufficient, however; don't overdo things or you'll give your readers a dose of graphic indigestion.

5. GOOD DESIGN SELLS THE STORY

The main function of editorial design is to stimulate and maintain interest throughout the issue and from page to page by making it look important, attractive, exciting and easy to follow. The underpinning philosophy should be:

☛ To develop an easy familiarity with the regular reader so your magazine becomes an essential part of his or her life;

☛ To persuade the casual browser flicking through the host of journals on the newsstand, to grab yours and dash to the salesdesk with a fistful of cash.

In conclusion, I can only state the obvious truth: We're all in this together, so it's in the best interests of us and our readers if we work together and produce the best publication possible. Creative tension — if it is controlled — can add spice to that mix, but a stand-off between two armed camps will produce a stalemate. Or all-out war.

Seems a good time for that beer.

Tony Sutton is editor and publisher of Nine On Ten. *He is also the president of News Design Associates, editorial and publication design consultants, Georgetown, Ontario, Canada.*

PRESSWATCH

ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO SLANT

By JEFF GUSTAFSON

On November 3, after reading yet another call to bomb Iraq from *The New York Times* editorial staff, I quickly penned a letter to the editor. A day later I arrived at work to find, in my in-box, a message from Mary Drohan at the *Times* urgently requesting a call.

Aside from getting some personal information, the purpose of the call was to help verify the statistics I used. I pointed her to a 1996 article in her own paper, as well as a 1997 UNICEF report at www2.unicef.org/pub/iraqsa. She then told me she'd send her edit to me for my approval and I thanked her and went on my merry way.

That is, until Thursday when I opened the *Times* to page A24. Here is my letter as I originally wrote it in all its naked glory, followed by the dressed up, sanitized version the *Times* ran.

Here's the original:

To the editor,

In response to your editorial of November 3, 1998, entitled "Iraq's Audacious Defiance":

Iraq's defiance is not nearly as "audacious" as the most comprehensive humanitarian blockade in history which continues to deny the entire population of Iraq adequate food and medicine. According to UNICEF, even with the oil for food program, over 90,000 die every year as a direct result of economic sanctions, over half of which are children under the age of five. How the misuse of the US military to add to this number is supposed to rein in a dictator who cares nothing for his people, escapes all rational thought.

Its no wonder that this economic war the US is waging against the civilian population of Iraq has proven completely ineffective. It's time economic sanctions, the only 'confirmed' weapon of mass destruction left in Iraq, be dismantled.

Sincerely, Jeff Gustafson

Here's the one they printed:

To the Editor:

Re "Iraq's Audacious Defiance" (editorial, Nov. 3):

Iraq's defiance of the United Nations weapons inspectors is not nearly as audacious as the humanitarian blockade that — despite the oil-for-food program — continues to deny adequate food and medicine to the entire population of that country.

According to Iraqi officials, half a million children have died since the Persian Gulf war in 1991 for reasons that are related to the economic sanctions.

It's time the sanctions were dismantled.

Jeff Gustafson, Seattle, Nov. 3, 1998

After pointing Ms. Drohan to page 42 of the 1997 Unicef report which clearly reports that sanctions kill over 90,000/year (50,000 of whom are children under 5), she completely changed the source of these statistics to "Iraqi officials!" Of all the changes that could be made to my letter, I can think of nothing more effective than this — if the goal is to allow the average American reader to more easily dismiss my words. Add to this the exclusion of my critical thoughts on Saddam and yet another peg is knocked out from under my argument. Furthermore, no one from *The New York Times* called or attempted to contact me regarding these changes.

I would like to ask Mary Drohan and T*he New York Times*: "Why even bother to radically alter any letters from the public to advance your agenda or to completely undermine an opposing viewpoint? Why not simply manufacture them?"

But what ever you do, don't put my name on it!

This item was taken from the Web magazine Eat The State *(www.eatthestate.org)*

Nine On Ten needs YOU!

Do you have any **funny tales** or interesting **newspaper stories** you'd like to share with our readers? Do you have any intriguing **anecdotes** about life as a designer or editor? Do you know of any **columnists** that we ought to feature in future editions? Do you have anything constructive — or destructive — to say about the **state of the newspaper industry**? If so, write an article for **Nine On Ten**. We don't pay for contributions, but we do promise an **appreciative audience** of journalists around the world. Contact **Tony Sutton,** the editor, at:

NEWS DESIGNASSOCIATES INC
10469 SIXTH LINE, RR#3, GEORGETOWN, ONTARIO L7G 4S6, CANADA.
TEL: (905) 702-8600 / FAX: (905) 702-8527
E-MAIL: TONYSUT@IDIRECT.COM

DIRECTORY OF ILLUSTRATORS

The following illustrators contributed their work without charge for this issue of Nine On Ten. Thanks, guys, we really appreciate your assistance

FUTURE SHOCK

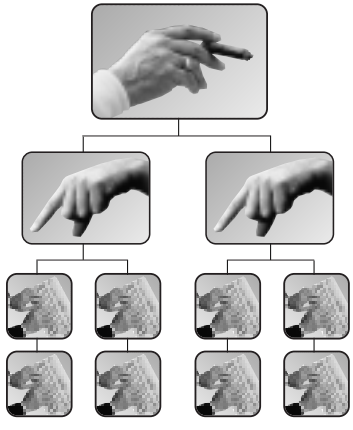
The digital proletariat

By INGRID HEIN

I remember my first technical blue-collar summer job. It consisted of scanning and labeling images for a 500-page motorcycle and snowmobile parts catalogue. The procedure was this: pick up photograph of part, place it in the scanner. Press 'scan.' Bring the photograph into an imaging program. Select the edges of the photograph and remove the shadows. Check the part's product number and label the image. Among the 6,000 images, I think I scanned about 500 nuts and bolts that looked almost identical, and perhaps about 300 snowshoes that I couldn't tell apart aside from the part number.

It was extremely boring, the summer of hell. I was in a room with two other scanners. We were called the 'graphic design department.' Funny, design was the last thing on our minds. We complained a lot and thought of ourselves as robots. We all sported Walkmans and punched cards at 8a.m. and 5p.m. There was nothing high-tech about the job, but we were considered the most technical department in the place.

The next year I worked with an animation studio, doing flying logos and short animations for television commercials. The job was good, it required thought and creativity. However, it had its pitfalls, too. I used to sleep beside the computer while it was rendering an animation in case it crashed. It used to take about 14 hours to render three seconds of animation on the old clunker of a computer I was using, and if it stopped halfway through, I wanted to be there to restart it.



NICK SHINN

Today, computers are much faster. and the same animation might take half an hour to render. But today, the same job would be completely digital, and one would be expected to churn out a full minute of animation instead of just three seconds — a task that in the long run takes more time.

As CPU speeds get faster, so does the pace of technical work environments. People are expected to work as quickly as the machine does, and while a computer can keep going 24 hours, seven days a week, people can't. I've refused to do what I call 'digital blue collar work' in the past few years, and began to convince myself that it didn't exist any more. But recently I found myself back on the assembly line, rather unexpectedly. I was producing a Windows Help system for a high-end software company. The software was interesting enough, capable of digital video editing. I basically had to take the desktop publishing files of an 800-page manual and turn them into online help files. Once the planning was done — deciding what parts of the manual would stay and what parts would go, what would link to what — each paragraph had to be formatted and linked to other parts of the manual. And while there's software that supposedly 'automates' this procedure, it was far from automatic.

I quickly became a drone. I tried to attend social events after weeks of spending 10 hours a day in front of the computer, but found that I couldn't talk. My social skills were numbed. My brain was numbed. The only time I felt normal was when I was in front of the computer, unaware that five hours had spun on the clock before I looked up from the screen.

I think many people working in supposed high-tech jobs experience the same thing. It's not that they're taming the machine; the machine is taming them.

"We bought the software, why is that task taking so long?" companies wonder. They hire computer science dropouts and university graduates with masters degrees to use software to do grunt work, assuming that somehow buying the software means the job is half done. Not so. In most of these tasks — especially when it comes to digitizing information — the software doesn't do much. A good majority of high-tech jobs are still data-entry. They might require a weekend course learning the right software, but in the end, the software doesn't do the job — a person does.

Nicholas Negroponte's book *Being Digital* comes to mind. All the world is becoming digitized, he wrote. We can cook our food, heat our homes, do our banking and order lunch using our computers. He's right, but he left out the piece about digitizing it. Every bit of information has to be input into a computer, and the task of doing this is extremely unpleasant and extremely un-high-tech.

We've convinced ourselves that we're wiping out blue-collar work by using computers, but the truth is, it's just a different kind of blue-collar work — it's digital blue-collar work. Jobs aren't disappearing, they're just changing. The digital proletariat is working hard — at typing.

Ingrid Hein writes the eyeNet *column in* eye*, an alternative newspaper in Toronto, in which this article first appeared. She may be contacted at: Ingid@digitaldiva.net.*

BOOKMARK

EDITORS' LIST OF SHAME

"I was astonished to hear a group of Canadian editors, who were participating in a rare brainstorming session on readership a few years ago, list "boring content" as their number one concern about newspapers. I mean, these were the people in charge of what went into their papers, and *they* were bored? Why shouldn't the rest of us be, too? Asked what they thought people wanted to read, the editors compiled this list:

1. Scandal
2. Drama
3. Quality sleaze
4. Shocking
5. Human interest

This is bankrupt thinking. It's the ultimate sin of modern journalism — the failure to treat readers as intelligent human beings, capable of having informed discussions about public affairs. There's just no charitable way to look at it, even if the list was only half serious, or the product of editors who were self-conscious and unfamiliar with brainstorming together or, even worse, cynical about what motivates their readers.

What is indisputable is that this flies in the face of history. In city after city, time after time, it's always the paper of substance and quality, the paper of subtlety and metaphor, the paper whose rich view of life sinks deeper into the souls of its readers that survives and prospers in the long run.

Only a very few Canadian editors appear to acknowledge this or have the resources to do anything about it, judging by the papers they publish every day."

From Yesterday's News, Why Canada's Daily Newspapers Are Failing Us*, by John Miller (Fernwood Can. $24.95)*

A LIFE IN DESIGN

REVENGE IS MESSY – LAST GASP OF A DYING TECHNOLOGY

By RANDY TIBBOTT

At my second job in New York City, I worked for a designer who rented space at a design "commune" — the kind of place where several designers rented space in a loft and shared the copier, messengers, and a library.

They also shared a communal paste-up area which was situated next to the main hallway of pedestrian traffic. One of the aforementioned designer/renters was a "pioneer" of actually using Macintosh technology for graphic design. He was so proud of his Mac 512k and Laserwriter that he often placed it on the paste-up area counter and would proselytize about how this machine was going to make mechanicals obsolete. While prophetic, this banter did not make the mechanical at hand go any faster.

At this time in the mid-eighties, SprayMount was the choice for mechanical speed demons. I hated the stuff and still used rubber cement. One day, a production person had left his materials out on the counter closest to the edge of pedestrian traffic — forced there by the placement of the towering Macintosh. These materials included a brand new can of SprayMount and a T-square.

The gentleman I was working for had hired the production person and was supervising the mechanicals. He was also getting an ear-full from the Mac owner. Someone called his name from the front and, being so anxious to end the "Mac is god" talk, he spun on his heels, catching the corner of the T-square in his pants pocket, thus causing the T-square to pivot. It rammed the opposite end directly into the base of the SprayMount can.

This was a one-in-a-million shot. The T-square punctured the spray can. The spray can leapt to life, spewing its contents as if there was no tomorrow. It seemed to happen in slow motion — three of us standing, watching, unable to react. In no time, the can had covered the Mac, keyboard, mouse, counter, floor and wall with a thick beard of spray adhesive.

The Mac was forever "sticky" and the "e" key on the keyboard was notorious for staying depressed if you hit it too hard.

Randy Tibbott is a designer at Our Designs, Inc./Nashville

LITERARY CRITICISM (2)

WHY MR. SMEETH DOESN'T ENJOY HIS NEWSPAPER ANYMORE

Aiming content specifically at women is a product of the nineties, right? Wrong! In this brief excerpt from English author J.B. Priestley's 1930 classic Angel Pavement *(Heinemann), Mr Smeeth returns home after hearing bad news at the office. His newspaper, it seems, offered little in the way of distraction …"*

"Mr. Smeeth made his way to Moorgate, where, as usual, he bought an evening paper and then climbed to the upper deck of a tram. There, when he was not being bumped by the conductor, jostled by outgoing and incoming passengers, thrown back or hurled forward by the tram itself, an irritable and only half tamed brute, he stared at the jogging print and tried to acquaint himself with the latest and most important news of the day.

An excitable column and a half told him that a young musical comedy actress, whom he had never seen and had no particular desire to see, had got engaged, that it had been quite a romance, that she was very very happy and not sure yet whether she would leave the stage or not.

Mr. Smeeth, not caring whether she left the stage or dropped dead on it, turned to another column. This discussed the problem of careers for married women, a problem that had been left absolutely untouched since the morning papers came out, ten hours before.

RUI RAMALHEIRO

It did not interest Mr. Smeeth, so he tried another column. This reported an action for divorce, in which it appeared that the petitioning wife had only been allowed a hundred and fifty pounds a year on which to dress herself. The Judge had said that this seemed to him — a mere bachelor (laughter) — an adequate allowance, but the paper had collected the opinions of well-known society hostesses, who all said it was not adequate.

Mr. Smeeth, who found he could not share the editor's passionate interest in this topic, now tried another page, which promptly informed him that evening gowns would certainly be longer this winter, and then went on to tell him, to the tune of three solid columns, that the modern business girl (with her latch-key) had quite a different attitude towards marriage and therefore must not be confused with her grandmother Victorian, with no latch-key).

Mr. Smeeth, feeling sure that he had read all this before, passed on, and arrived at the sports page, where the prospects of certain women golfers were discussed at considerable length. Never having set eyes on any of these Amazons and not being interested in golf, Mr. Smeeth next tried the gossip columns. The tram was swaying now and the print fairly dancing, so that it was at the cost of some eye-strain and a slight headache that he learned from these paragraphs that Lord Winthrop's brother, who was over six feet, intended to spend the winter in the West Indies, that the youngest son of Lady Nether Stowey could not only be seen very frequently at the Blue Pigeon Restaurant but was also renowned for the way in which he painted fans, that the member for the Tewborough Division, who must not be mistaken for Sir Adrian Putter, now in Egypt, had perhaps the best collection of teapots of any man in the House, and that he must not imagine, as so many people did, that Chingley Manor, where the fire had just occurred, was the Chingley Manor mentioned by Disraeli, for it was not, and the paragraphist, who seemed to go about a great deal, knew them both well.

Indeed, he and his editor seemed to know all about everybody and everything, except Mr. Smeeth and all the other staring men on the tram, and the people they knew, and all their concerns and all the things in which they were interested.

Nevertheless, Mr. Smeeth reflected, as he carefully folded the paper, there were a lot of things in it that his wife would like to read. They seemed to have stopped writing penny papers for men."