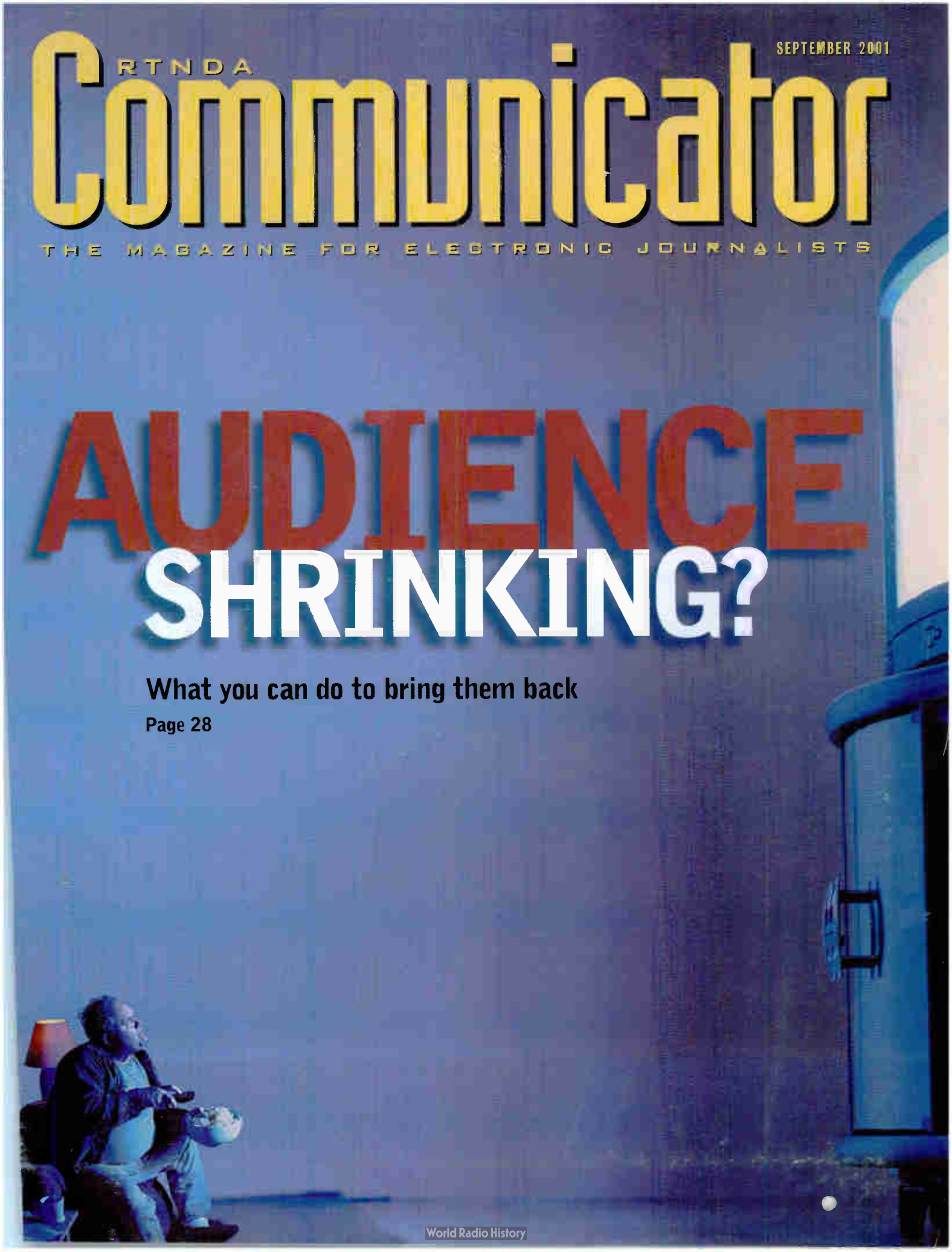
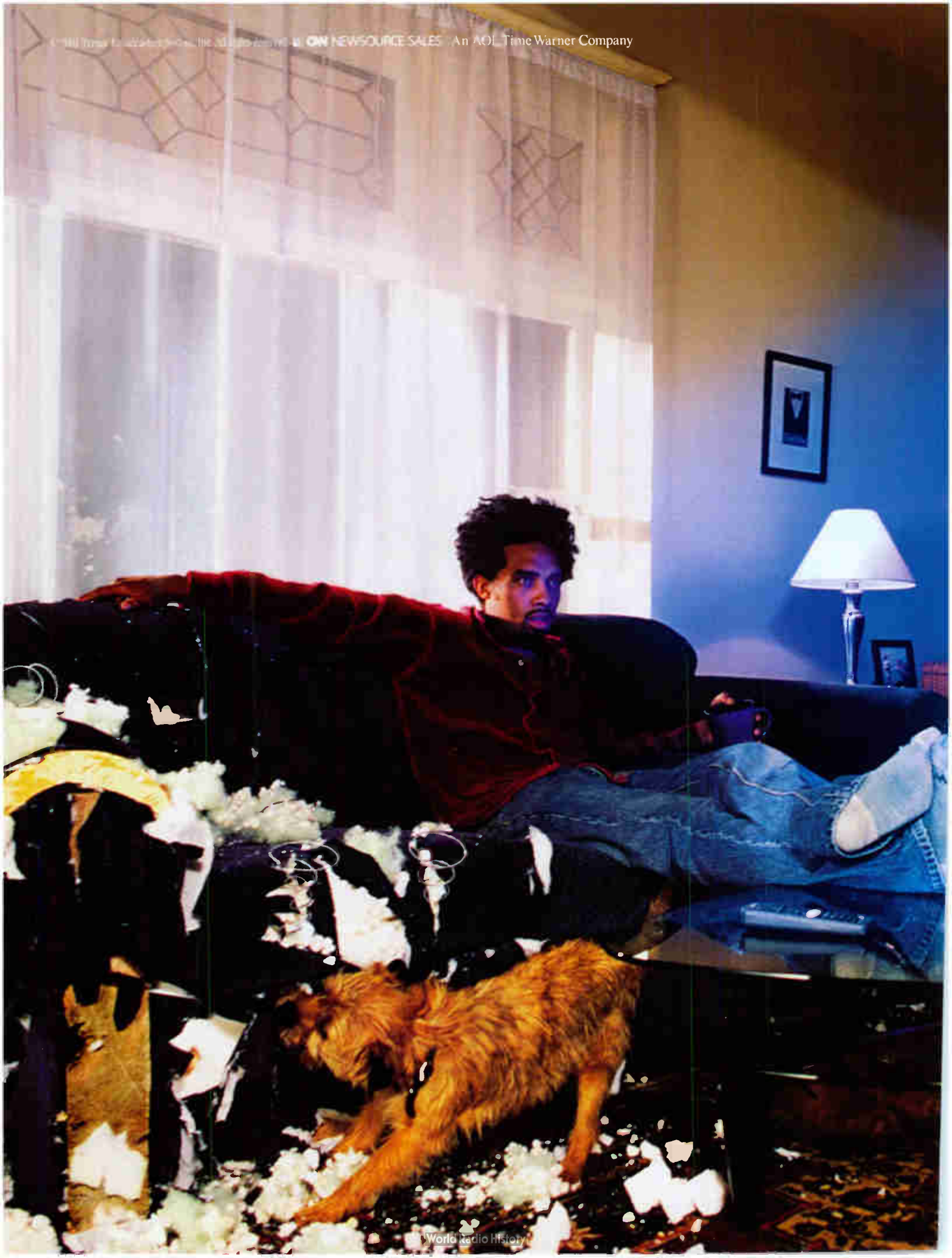
RTNDA Communicator
THE MAGAZINE FOR ELECTRONIC JOURNALISTS
SEPTEMBER 2001

AUDIENCE SHRINKING?

What you can do to bring them back

Page 28





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ON THE COVER

Audience tuning out? Tune in to page 28 to find out how to bring them back.

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

COLUMNS

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Contributors

IKE SEAMANS talks about his piece for WTVJ-TV on why viewers are leaving local TV news. He's senior correspondent at WTVJ. See page 31.

ALICE MAIN explores "Local News," an upcoming series on PBS that's sure to have everyone talking. The former executive producer and editor of the Producer's Newsletter now works as a web designer and freelance writer. See page 40.

JOAN M. BARRETT has advice for a situation you don't ever want to be in: having to deal with a death in the newsroom. Barrett is a vice president at The Broadcast Image Group in San Antonio. See page 85.

Seamans courtesy WTVJ-TV; Main by William Main; Barrett courtesy Joan M. Barrett

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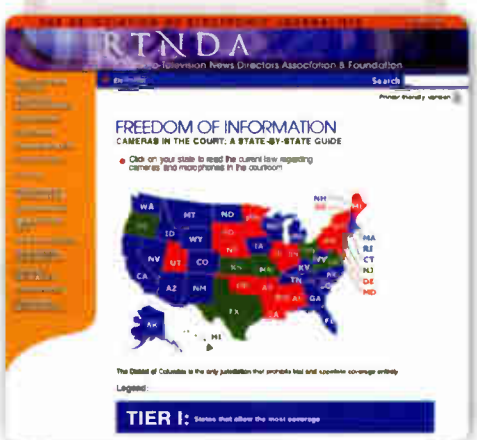

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Newsbreak

INDUSTRY NEWS

TV News Staffs Grow, Radio Newsrooms Shrink

The size of the typical TV newsroom rose to its largest level ever in the most recent RTNDA/Ball State University Survey. Radio, however, set a record in the opposite direction.

Almost every category in television news staffing rose. Part of the reason for the growth appears to be fewer new, small news operations, which bring the average down. It will be interesting to see whether these strong employment numbers hold next year, since much of the recent economic tightening has occurred since the survey took place.

Compared with 1994, overall full-time employment in television news is up 39.1 percent. In the last seven years, network affiliates, overall, have grown 28.9 percent, while other commercial stations have shot up 157.9 percent. In addition, the number of stations producing local news rose from 758 in 1996 to 851 in 2000. Between the growth in the number of stations doing news and the growth of station news departments, total TV news employment (full-time and part-time) has risen 45 percent in the past five years: from 24,180 in 1996 to 35,061 today.

In contrast, in the last seven years, the size of the typical radio newsroom has fallen 56.7 percent, from 4.5 newspeople in 1994 to 1.95 today.—Bob Papper and Michael Gerhard are professors of telecommunications at Ball State University.

TV Staff Size Changes (1999–2000)

	Increase	Decrease	Same
All TV news	**38%**	**25%**	**37%**
Big four affiliates	37%	26%	37%
Other commercial stations	60%	20%	0%

Independent news operations were far more likely to add staff. That may reflect a maturing of many of the newer, independent news operations. Stations with bigger staffs were generally more likely to increase staff than others, but there was no consistent pattern by market size or network affiliation.

TV Staff Size (2000)

	Average full-time	Maximum full-time	Average part-time	Maximum part-time	Average total staff	Maximum total staff
All TV	**37.0**	**141**	**4.2**	**39**	**41.2**	**160**
Big four affiliates	38.4	141	4.1	39	42.5	160
Other commercial stations	31.2	117	5.9	12	37.1	123
DMA 1–25	77.0	141	8.7	39	85.7	160
DMA 26–50	44.5	90	3.8	8	48.3	95
DMA 51–100	35.1	89	3.4	15	38.5	89
DMA 101–150	24.7	45	3.3	13	28.0	48
DMA 151+	17.8	46	2.8	10	20.6	52

TV news staff size rose to its biggest level ever, with substantial gains in almost every category. Part of the reason for the growth appears to be fewer new, small news operations, which bring the average down. Interestingly, while full-time employment is up substantially, part-time employment actually fell slightly.

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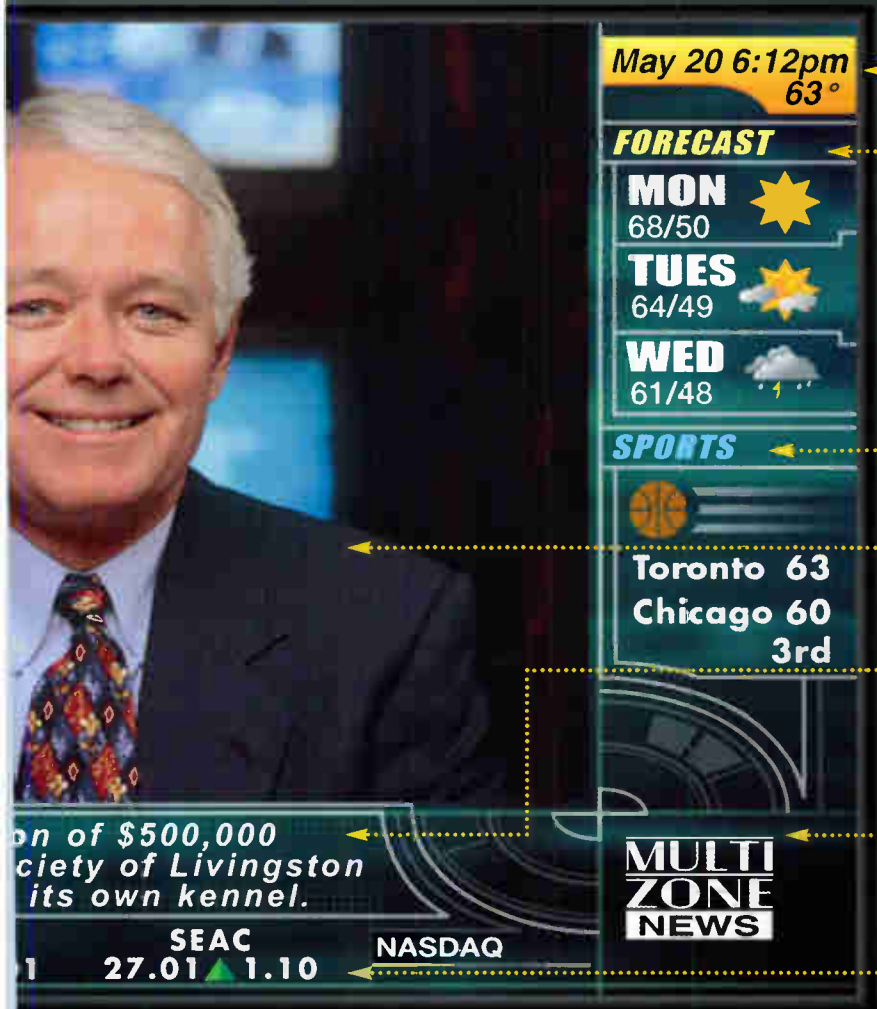

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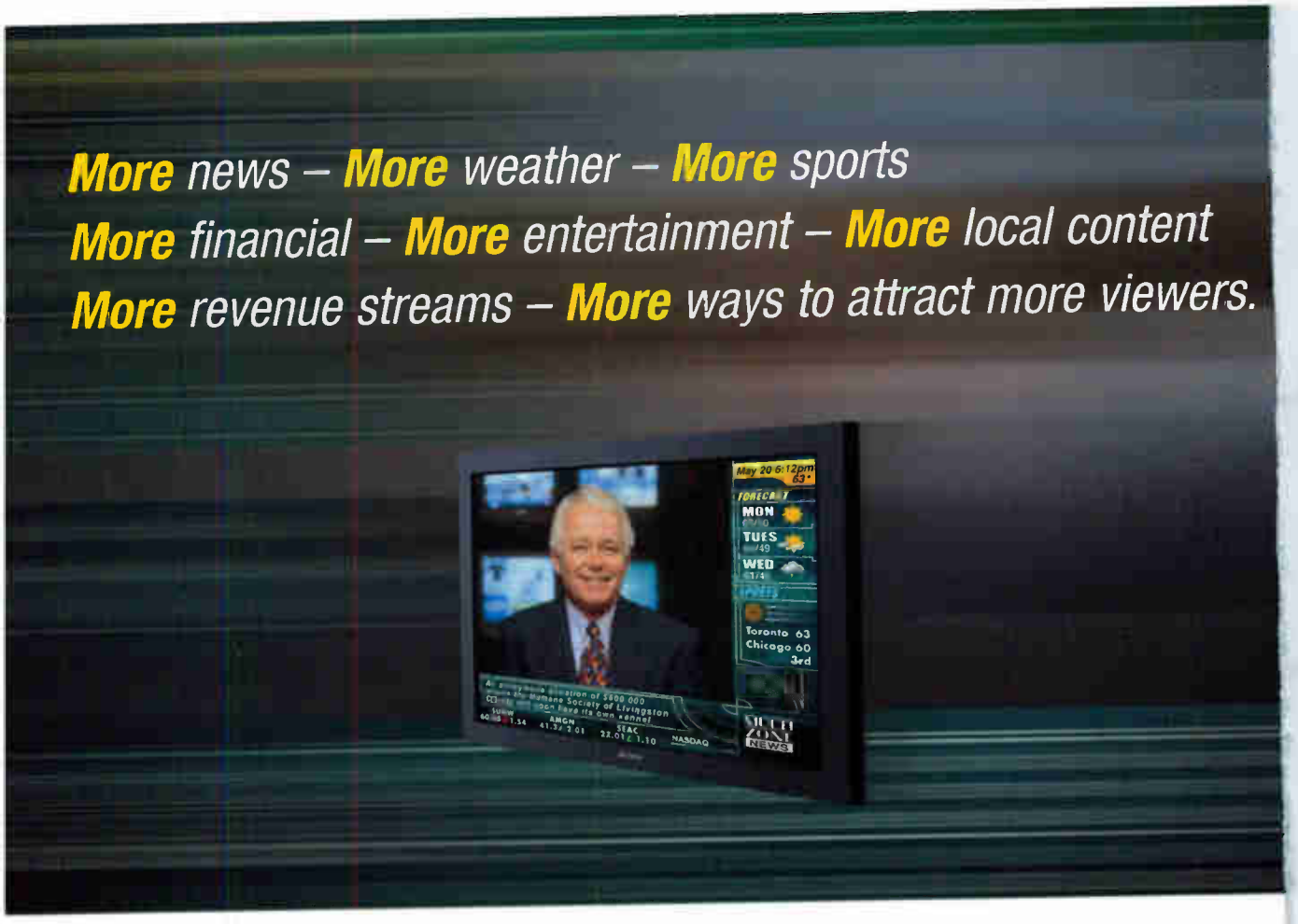

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Radio Staff Size (2000)

	Full-time	Part-time	Total staff
All radio news	**1.35**	**0.6**	**1.95**
Market			
Major	3.95	1.09	5.04
Large	0.64	0.36	1.00
Medium	0.79	0.57	1.36
Small	0.63	0.26	0.89

The latest figures represent a sizable drop in radio staffing from last year: down 25 percent, from 2.60 to 1.95. The drop is across all categories and in both full- and part-time positions. In 1994, the average radio news operation had 2.4 people full time and 2.1 part time. Since then, full-timers have declined 43.8 percent and part-timers have fallen 71.4 percent at the typical radio newsroom.

Radio Staff Size Changes (1999–2000)

	Increase	Same	Decrease	Not sure
Total staff	25%	66%	6%	3%

Almost all the stations reporting increases or planned increases were in major markets. Major markets are those with more than 1 million listeners. Large markets are from 250,000 to 1 million. Medium markets are 50,000 to 249,999. Small markets are fewer than 50,000.

Hired vs. Let Go

	Most often hired	Most often cut
1	Photographer	Reporter
2	Reporter	Producer
3	Producer	Photographer
4	Anchor	Anchor
5	Tape editor	Tape editor
6	Web specialist	Newsroom assistant (AP)
7	Assignment editor	Assignment editor
8	Other	Other

Almost twice as many stations reported hiring new staff as letting people go, and stations that hired newspeople hired three times as many people as stations that let people go. Interestingly, the lists of who was hired and who was let go are remarkably similar.

About the Survey

The RTNDA/Ball State University Annual Survey was conducted in the fourth quarter of 2000 among all 1,387 operating, non-satellite television stations and a random sample of 1,193 radio stations. Valid responses came from 731 television stations (52.7 percent) and 120 radio news directors and general managers representing 278 radio stations.

ENG SAFETY

Reporter Preaches Safety After ENG Accident

Kimberly Arms Shirk will never forget a day she can't even remember.

It was September 3, 1997. Shirk, who was in her second month as a reporter for WOI-TV in Des Moines, IA, volunteered to accompany fellow reporter David Bingham on a story about church vandalism. The photographer originally assigned to the piece had been called away.

Shirk and Bingham have no memory of the afternoon's events, but have pieced together details from witness, police and medical reports. It appears that when they arrived at the church, Bingham stood beside the truck and Shirk set up the camera on the sidewalk. He either lifted the mast or it malfunctioned—as it did occasionally, he says—and raised itself automatically. The mast went straight into a power line.

Bingham severely burned his right arm when the electricity traveled through the truck into him. Shirk likely touched Bingham and burned 12 to 15 percent of her body, including her left leg from the hip down. She fell into the van, burning her head to the skull, and suffered third- and fourth-degree burns on the right side of her face.

Bingham, who now is scarred all over his body, lost most of the tissue in his right arm. Doctors reconstructed the arm with tissue from a muscle in his back. He left the hospital in October 1997 and returned to WOI in November, where he worked as a weekend sports anchor until June 2001. He is now starting up his own production and reporting company and will continue to host his own radio show.

Shirk spent almost two and a half months in the hospital, and half that time in a medically induced coma to prevent her from moving and disturbing the intricate and extensive brain surgery doctors had performed, including repairing it with a muscle from her back.

In late July of this year, Shirk had what she thinks was her 28th surgery—she's lost count—and what she hopes was her last. Doctors repaired a severed tendon above her right eye that had interfered with her blinking. Now 29 and living in Lincoln, NE, with her husband of four years—they were married less than two months before the accident—Shirk does freelance writing for a communications company, serves on the board of a community theater, volunteers with the Special Olympics and Junior League, and plays tennis and golf. She has lost some feeling in her left hand, but not its functionality, and she can't bend her reconstructed left knee for too long or put much pressure on it. "I can't do squats," she says. Shirk is also looking for a publisher for a book she's writing about her experience. Even "if no one ever reads it, it will be such good therapy for me," she says.

Shirk has been speaking to church groups about her faith and her accident and is working to arrange meetings with utilities and news stations to urge them to provide thorough training for employees who work with equipment that could bring them in contact with power lines. "It's always closer to home if you see someone who's been through it," she says. "My idea is to get more education out there."

Shirk's faith, which was strong before the accident, grew even stronger after it. She was shocked by 13,200

Shirk by Keith Mandachit; van photo by Des Moines Police Department

It's always closer to home if you see someone who's been through it. My idea is to get more education out there.

volts of electricity. Children at the school who witnessed the accident and pulled Shirk and Bingham from under the truck where they had fallen weren't injured. "No one will tell me that we weren't saved that day by something greater than us," she says.

Religion may have helped Shirk cope with the pain and the scars, but proper training could have helped her avoid this kind of tragedy, she says. "These accidents don't have to happen," she says. "They are preventable."

Shirk says stations should equip ENG trucks with proximity warning devices, which would sound an alarm when the mast gets within a certain distance of a power line and prevent it from moving any higher. Management should also provide reporters, photographers and producers with ongoing and extensive training and require them to pass a test before they're allowed out in the truck, Shirk says. "You can put all the safety devices you want on the truck, but if people aren't trained, it doesn't matter."

Despite the trauma she's experienced, Shirk says she'd love to return to reporting. "I certainly haven't lost my love of journalism," she says. She's done some producing since the accident, but says she doesn't enjoy being on the other side of the camera.

She has learned what's really important, though.

"It's better to take the time to look and be safe than to get the story on first," she says. "There is no story, no headline, no sound bite that's worth what I've been through."—**Kristen McNamara is a New York–based reporter for Dow Jones Newswires.**

2001 RTNDA

Hear more from Kimberly Arms Shirk at RTNDA2001. She'll be speaking at 9 a.m. on Saturday, September 15. For more information on ENG safety, visit rtnda.org/technology/eng.shtml.

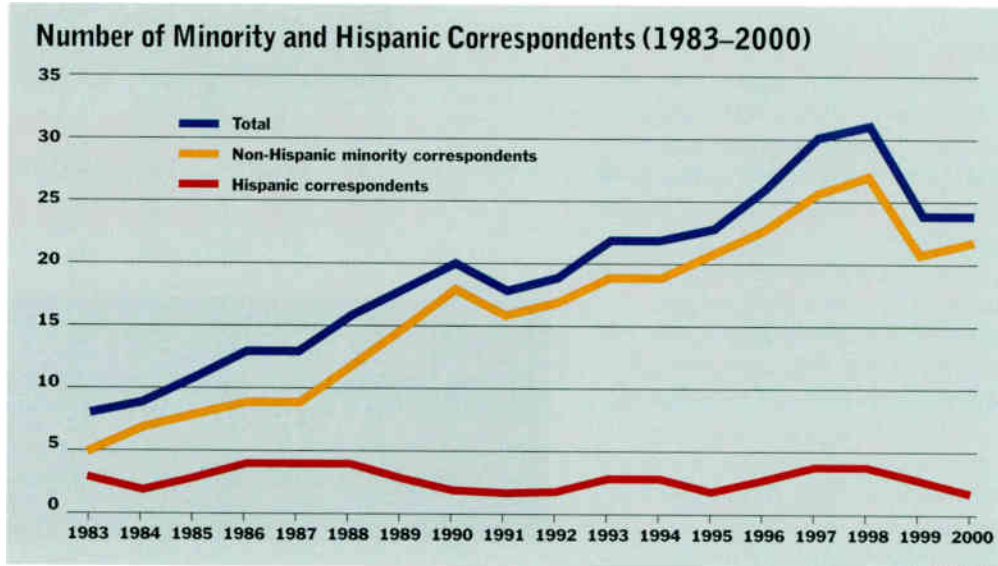
INDUSTRY NEWS

Few Hispanic Journalists on Network News

Hispanics may be the fastest-growing ethnic group in the United States, but you won't find many on the major network evening newscasts, according to a study by the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Telecommunication at Arizona State University. The study found that Hispanics have lower visibility and higher turnover than other groups it examined, including African Americans, Asians, white males and women.

The numbers show that

Continued on page 12



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Continued from page 10

even though the Hispanic population in the United States rose by 60 percent in the 1990s, the number of Hispanic correspondents remained static. Joe Foote, director of the Cronkite School and author of the study, says that when he began the study in 1983, there were three Hispanic correspondents on the evening news. In 2000, there were two. (The study does not include anchors.)

The 14 Hispanics who appeared on evening newscasts from 1983–2000 worked for an average of three and a half years. By comparison, white males averaged more than eight years, African Americans almost seven, and Asians and women five and one-half years.

Foote's study uses the Vanderbilt Archives as a database and includes correspondents who report at least five times per year for the evening news.

WEB WATCH

Night Moves

Working the overnight shift can put a strain on your health, your family and your social life (what social life, you say?). If your newsroom has people minding the store through the wee hours, take a look at workingnights.com and circadian.com for resources that may ease the stress on these employees.

Workingnights.com offers advice, feature articles, a message board, and even some games that will keep your overnight producer from nodding off as the scanners drone on in the background. The content doesn't appear to change that often, but what's there should be worth a visit. (And, hey, it's free.)

Circadian.com is geared more for managers who supervise night-shift workers. Circadian Technologies, which runs workingnights.com, is a research and consulting firm that specializes in the 24/7 workplace. Its client list boasts several Fortune 500 companies. Circadian's web site sells publications on alertness, safety, family life and even guides to getting a good day's sleep that could be much appreciated by third-shift newsies.

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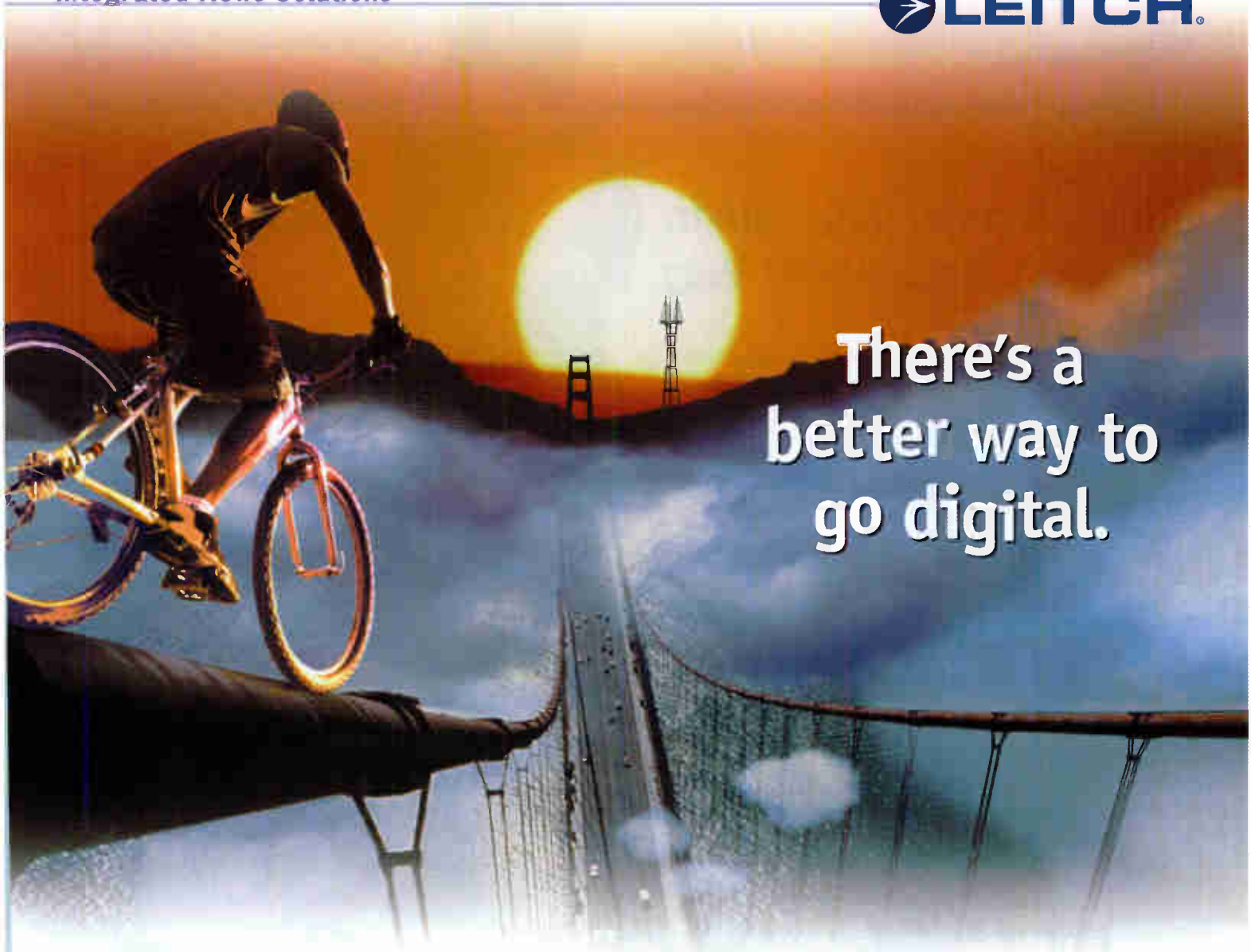

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RTNDF NEWS

High School Journalism Project Gets Under Way

The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation is launching a high school journalism project, and needs input.

The project's goals are to help identify, inspire, train and challenge the next generation of electronic journalists and First Amendment advocates. Please take a few minutes to visit rtnda.org/resources/highschool.shtml, where you can:

- Give feedback to help shape the program.
- Give advice about an Internet guide RTNDF will publish for high school journalists.
- Tell RTNDF about any partnerships you know of between a high school and a television or radio station.
- Let RTNDF know about any broadcast or online journalism programs at the high school level.
- Sign up to receive occasional e-mail updates about the project.

During the next year, the project will survey approximately 18,000 high schools to determine the status of electronic journalism, help set up partnerships between high schools and local television and radio stations, and field-test other approaches to help young people who are interested in broadcast journalism.

For more information, please contact Carolyn Terry at 202.467.5206 or carolynt@rtndf.org or Jamshid Mousavinezhad at 202.467.5250 or jamshidm@rtndf.org.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation funds this project.—Jamshid Mousavinezhad

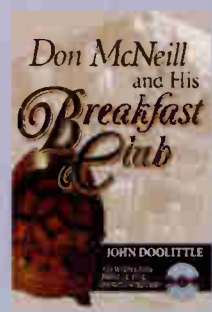
BOOKSHELF

Back to School Reading

Television News: A Handbook for Writing, Reporting, Shooting and Editing

By Teresa Keller and Stephen A. Hawkins
Holcomb Hathaway, 416 pages, $40, paperback, ISBN: 1-890871-35-4

Stephen A. Hawkins, longtime news director and anchor at WCYB-TV in Bristol, VA, and Teresa Keller, professor of mass communications at Emory and Henry College, have teamed up to write this handbook on the fundamental skills of TV journalism. The book covers topics like developing and interviewing sources, using public records, and perfecting voice and performance.



Don McNeill and His Breakfast Club

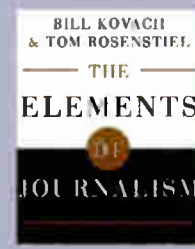
By John Doolittle
University of Notre Dame Press, 244 pages, $22.95, hardcover, ISBN: 0-268-00898-1

Don McNeill signed on with his Breakfast Club in June 1933, and for the next 35 years emceed what would become the longest-running program on network radio. The unscripted program, which survived wars, the Depression and three generations of listeners, relied heavily on audience participation, and had frequent visits from some of the biggest names in show business. This book includes a CD of Breakfast Club highlights.

The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect

By Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel
Crown Publishing Group, 205 pages, $20, hardcover, ISBN: 0609607839

As journalism experiences a crisis of conscience, confidence and purpose, this book identifies the enduring principles that define journalism as a profession and a calling. It grew out of a meeting the Committee of Concerned Journalists held to discuss where their profession had gone in the years between Watergate and Monicagate. The committee went on to hold 21 public forums and 100 in-depth interviews.



Regulating the Future: Broadcasting Technology and Governmental Control

By W.A. Kelly Huff
Greenwood Publishing, 233 pages, $64, hardcover, ISBN: 0-313-31468-3

This book examines the evolution of the FCC's role as a regulator. It also discusses emerging technologies, such as digital audio broadcasting, and their impact on broadcast regulation. In the 1980s the FCC deregulated TV and radio, electing to set only technical operating parameters and allowing legal operation of any system that meets those minimum standards. Huff argues that this approach and the FCC's changing role are likely to influence regulatory approaches to other new developments in broadcast technologies.—Brianna Williams

RTNDA/F NEWS

Bye-bye, Connecticut Avenue

Time to update your address books. RTNDA and RTNDF are moving. As of mid-November, we will be in our new offices at:
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Telephone (202.659.6510 and 800.80.RTNDA) and fax number (202.223.4007) remain the same.

Afisa Holmes

Futures File

SEPTEMBER

NAB RADIO SHOW
5–8 National Association of Broadcasters Radio Show, New Orleans; Kathleen Muller, 202.775.3527 or nab.org

WOMEN IN CABLE &TV
6–8 Women in Cable & Telecommunications executive development seminar, Loveland, CO; Jim Flanigan, 312.634.2330 or wict.org

NLGJA CONVENTION
6–9 National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association convention, Dallas; 202.588.9888 or info@nlgja.org

MINORITIES IN CABLE
10–12 15th Annual National Association of Minorities in Cable Conference: Digital Media and Diversity, New York; Robin Beaman, 312.751.9689 or namic.com

RTNDA2001
12–15 RTNDA International Conference & Exhibition, Nashville, TN; Danielle Browne, 202.467.5254, danb@rtnda.org or rtnda.org/convention/2001.shtml

EDITORIAL WRITERS
12–15 National Conference of Editorial Writers, Pittsburgh; Neil Heinen, 301.984.3015 or ncew.org

MAINE BROADCASTERS CONVENTION
29 Maine Association of Broadcasters annual convention, Bangor, ME; Suzanne Goucher, 207.623.3870, suzanne@mab.org or mab.org

OCTOBER

DTV SYMPOSIUM
2–4 Iowa Public Television DTV Symposium 2001, West Des Moines, IA; Carlyn Crowe, 515.242.3146 or iowadtv.iptv.org

STUDENT SHADOWING
4–5 RTNDF Student Shadowing Event for Journalism Students of Color, Denver; Karen Jackson-Bullitt, 202.467.5218 or karenb@rtndf.org

MINORITY JOB FAIR
4–6 California Chicano News Media Association Journalism Opportunities Conference and job fair, Los Angeles, ccnma.org

See the wares of more than 125 exhibitors at RTNDA2001.

SPJ CONVENTION
4–6 Society of Professional Journalists Sigma Delta Chi national convention, Seattle; Julie Grimes, 317.927.8000 or spj.org

NEWS MANAGEMENT SEMINAR
6–8 RTNDF News Management Training Seminar for Women and News Professionals of Color, Denver; Karen Jackson-Bullitt, 202.467.5218 or karenb@rtndf.org

POLITICS WORKSHOP
13–14 RTNDF's Covering Politics and Government: A Storytelling Workshop, San Francisco; Paul Irvin, 202.467.5219 or pauli@rtndf.org

RADIO SUMMIT
17–18 Radio Summit: The Future of Values & Finance, sponsored by Kagan Seminars, New York; 831.624.1536, seminars@kagan.com or kagan.com

STUDENT SHADOWING
17–18 RTNDF Student Shadowing Event for Journalism Students of Color, Nashville, TN; Karen Jackson-Bullitt, 202.467.5218 or karenb@rtndf.org

ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISTS
17–21 Society of Environmental Journalists annual conference, Portland, OR; sej.org

PRODUCER WORKSHOP
19–21 RTNDF TV Producers' Workshop for Women and News Professionals of Color, Nashville, TN; Karen Jackson-Bullitt, 202.467.5218 or karenb@rtndf.org

CANADIAN BROADCASTERS CONVENTION
28–30 Canadian Association of Broadcasters 75th Anniversary Convention, Ottawa; Marye Ménard-Bos, 613.233.4035 or cab-acr.ca

FUTURE RTNDA CONVENTION DATES
2002: September 18–21, Long Beach, CA
2003: September 17–20, Orlando, FL
2004: September 29–October 2 Denver
2005: September 14–17, Seattle

Send information for Futures File to Brianna Williams via e-mail (briannaw@rtnda.org) or fax (202.223.4007).

RTNDA2001

SEPTEMBER

12–15 Where can you find out about what audiences are looking for in local news and about changes affecting your job? At "The State of Local News," the opening session at RTNDA2001, NBC's John Seigenthaler (left) will moderate. Panelists include ABC News Radio's Chris Berry, Mark Effron from Post Newsweek, Andrew Fisher from Cox Television, and Fred Young from Hearst-Argyle Television. Register on site or learn more at rtnda.org/convention/2001.shtml.

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Names in the News

Job Changes

Peter Alexander to weekend anchor, KCPQ-TV, Seattle, from reporter/anchor, KHQ-TV, Spokane, WA.

Mark Berryhill leaves his post as vice president of news, KRON-TV, San Francisco.

Ramòn Chàvez to professor and chairman, Department of Contemporary Media and Journalism, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD, from The Freedom Forum.

Joe Coscia to news director, WPBF-TV, West Palm Beach, FL.

Margaret Cronan to news director, WBAL-TV, Baltimore, from the same post at WPBF-TV, West Palm Beach, FL.

John H. Davidson promoted to president and general manager, KABC-AM, KLOS-FM, KDIS-AM and KSPN-AM, Los Angeles, from director of sales, KGO-AM, KFSO-AM and KMKY-AM, San Francisco.

Joe Ducey promoted to co-anchor from reporter, KRON-TV, San Francisco.

Barbara-Lee Edwards to co-anchor, KFMB-TV, San Diego, from anchor, CKY-TV, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

▲ **Princell Hair** to corporate director of news, CBS television station group, from news director, WBAL-TV, Baltimore.

Marti Johnson to reporter, CONUS, from national correspondent, Hearst-Argyle Television, both in Washington.

Janelle Martinez to general assignment reporter, WCNC-TV, Charlotte, NC, from reporter/fill-in anchor, WXII-TV, Winston-Salem, NC.

▲ **Kay Norred** to anchor/producer, C-VIEW TV, Clearwater, FL, from producer, WTSP-TV, Tampa/St. Petersburg, FL.

▲ **Stacy Owen** promoted to news director from assistant news director, KRON-TV, San Francisco.

Monita Rajpal to anchor, CNN International, Atlanta, from reporter/fill-in anchor, CITY-TV, Toronto.

▲ **Mike Ratté** promoted to sports director/primary sports anchor from weekend sports anchor/reporter, WLVI-TV, Boston.

Gina Redmond to co-anchor, WPXI-TV, from anchor/reporter, WFAA-TV, Dallas.

Erika Ruiz to co-anchor, KRQE-TV, Albuquerque, NM, from anchor, KDFW-TV, Dallas.

George Smith to weekend anchor/reporter, KHOU-TV, Houston, from weekend sports reporter/anchor, WHDH-TV, Boston.

Mike Smith promoted to vice president, news and production, from director of news and production, WCTV, Tallahassee, FL/Thomasville, GA.

Chris Vlasto promoted to senior investigative producer from producer, ABC News.

Bill Yeager promoted to senior vice president, news division, from vice president of news operations, Metro Networks/Shadow Broadcast Services.

Recent changes at **KPLU/National Public Radio**, Seattle, include **Jennifer Niessen** to education beat specialist from general assignment reporter; **Bellamy Pailthorp** to business editor from general assignment reporter; and **Keith Seinfeld** to health and science editor from environment specialist.

Awards

Farai Chideya, editor, PopandPolitics.com, New York; **Beth Fouhy**, executive producer/political unit, CNN, Washington; and **Elizabeth Osder**, freelance editor and producer, New York, have been awarded John S. Knight Fellowships.

Marjorie Ford, producer, WFAA-TV, Dallas, received the National Foundation of Women Legislators 2001 Media Award of Excellence.

Jacqueline Ortiz, reporter/fill-in anchor, KMOL-TV, San Antonio, received a GRACIE award from American Women in Radio and Television.

WJMA-FM, Orange, VA, was named 2001 Outstanding Non-Metro News Operation by the Virginia Associated Press Broadcasters.

Deaths

William C. Matney Jr., 76, the first black correspondent for NBC News, died June 13. Matney, who joined NBC in 1963 in Chicago, also produced programs for NBC Radio and appeared on the Today show. He was also a founding editor of "Who's Who Among Black Americans."

▲ Princell Hair

▲ Kay Norred

▲ Stacy Owen

▲ Mike Ratté

Send information for Names in the News to Brianna Williams, briannaw@rtnda.org.

Hair courtesy WBAL-TV; Norred courtesy C-VIEW; Owen courtesy KRON-TV; Ratté courtesy WLVI-TV

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See us in Nashville
at the
2001 RTNDA
Booth 542

By Mark Millage

Parting Thoughts As I Pass the Torch

This has been a rewarding year as chairman of RTNDA. Thank you for making it possible.

"The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment to excellence, regardless of their field of endeavor."—Vince Lombardi

When I began my RTNDA odyssey, somebody cautioned me about the distractions that result from having two jobs: ratings declines, staff unrest, extensive travel, etc. The key to overcoming that, I replied, is leadership. Surround yourself with good people, empower them with direction and responsibility, and chances are they (and you) will succeed.

I am fortunate to work in a newsroom environment that continues to build upon its tradition of success. The ratings are great, the content is relevant, and the staff is dedicated. Their commitment to excellence helped make the past decade the most rewarding period of my professional life.

"You always miss 100 percent of the shots you do not take."—Wayne Gretzky

I became a news director at age 25, and was elected to the RTNDA board shortly before my 30th birthday. Each time, I was encouraged by somebody much wiser to seize the opportunity when it presented itself. As I reflect on my life and career, many of the good times have come from good timing.

The experience of working with the best in our business created for me some valuable news alliances and many lasting friendships. While few faces remain from my first RTNDA board meeting, the commitment and creativity are as strong as ever. RTNDA stands ready to keep taking the shots necessary in representing your interests.

"A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty."—Sir Winston Churchill

My year as RTNDA chairman was like a typical day in the newsroom. Always expect the unexpected. Nobody predicted the uncertainty of the presidential election and the backlash it created toward journalists. Nobody anticipated the softening of the economy and its impact throughout our industry. Yet, we moved forward.

With RTNDA's encouragement, the United States Supreme Court released audio transcripts immediately following the hearings on the contested Florida election results. That decision helped open courtroom doors for electronic newsgathering in all 50 states. RTNDA was busy on Capitol Hill, too. For the first time in nearly 20 years, the board met with key leaders to address issues affecting newsrooms. And, RTNDA is more active than ever at the local level, with a record number of regional conferences this year.

"A man who views the world the same at 50 as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life."—Muhammad Ali

It is a rewarding experience to be party to meaningful changes. I am encouraged by the strong turnout for the New Media Summit last March

The experience of working with the best in our business created for me some valuable news alliances and many lasting friendships.

and by the steady growth in New Media membership. RTNDA is taking the lead in helping you understand the evolution of technology and its impact on our craft.

Take advantage of what's offered at RTNDA2001 to broaden this understanding. The workshops and the exhibition are loaded with cutting-edge ideas. It's important that we have this annual opportunity to educate, network and recharge. Over the course of the next year, I will lead a committee focused on returning the convention to its rightful place as a must-attend event each year.

"By the time a man realizes that maybe his father was right, he usually has a son who thinks he's wrong."—Charles Wadsworth

When inducted into NAB's Hall of Fame last April, ABC's Ted Koppel explained the best part of his job: "I get to meet a lot of interesting people and travel to a lot of interesting places." I feel the same way, and cherish memories of seeing people like Walter Cronkite, Muhammad Ali, and Presidents Carter, Clinton and Bush, of having chance encounters with comedians Jerry Seinfeld and Al Franken, and of experiencing the hospitality shown by colleagues at conferences everywhere. Those are the perks of the job.

Now, it's time for family. More weekends at home with my wife, Joan, and our three children. Our son just started high school. It's time for me to set new priorities. And, it's time to focus attention back to my day job. Assignment editor Dexter Gronseth kept things running smoothly during my many absences. Every newsroom needs a Dexter.

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it!"—Yogi Berra

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as RTNDA chairman. It's been a great experience, with no regrets. I encourage you to get involved at the local or national level. We are always looking for new ideas and fresh perspectives. No market is too small, and no member is too young. I'm proof of that.

At the close of RTNDA2001 in Nashville, TN, I will pass the gavel to one of my best friends in the business, Dave Busiek of KCCI-TV in Des Moines, IA. I can't think of a more ready person to advance the cause of quality journalism. Dave is friendly and compassionate, honorable and hard-working. RTNDA is in good hands.

"Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened."—unknown ■

By Barbara Cochran

Remembering Katharine Graham

Her impressive life set a fine example for women, for business, and for journalism.

Sitting in Washington's National Cathedral, I listened intently to the tributes to Katharine Graham, who died July 17, 2001, at the age of 84. She was celebrated for building a successful communications company and insisting that the *Washington Post*, *Newsweek* and the broadcast stations she owned all strive for journalistic excellence. She was hailed as a pioneer for women in business and journalism, "a widowed mother of four," in the words of editor Ben Bradlee, who overcame her timidity to emerge as a corporate titan. She was remembered lovingly for her many philanthropic gifts and her long and lasting friendships.

Like many of the 3,700 who packed the cathedral for her funeral service, I thought of my own impressions of Katharine Graham. I had known her for most of the time I've lived in Washington and remembered many times when our paths crossed. Because we shared a birthday, we sometimes celebrated with cake and candles at the same event. On the night my son was born, I had attended a party she was throwing for a new *Post* executive and felt the first twinges of the impending event in her elegant dining room. Just the weekend before she died, I had been at a small dinner where she avidly participated in the conversation about the congressman and the missing intern.

Jonathan Becker

I feel fortunate to have these personal memories of Katharine Graham, but I also will remember her for two important contributions she made to journalism. One was the courage she showed as a corporate leader willing to stand up to the most severe government pressure and even to risk the financial future of the company in order to defend its editorial integrity and journalistic independence. The other was the trail she blazed to open up the world of journalism for other women and her willingness to share her story to encourage others.

That story is well-known by now, especially since she wrote her Pulitzer Prize–winning memoir, "Personal History." She wrote candidly about her self-doubt, but you could see the person she would become when she zestily recalled her days as a labor reporter in San Francisco. After her husband's suicide, she timidly but doggedly began mastering the details of the business. She recounts how she overcame her nervousness to make the decision to publish the Pentagon Papers, and later how she sought reassurances but still backed her team in the early reporting of the Watergate story.

When the book was published in 1997, Mrs. Graham seemed to blossom. Usually a little hesitant in public speaking, she became a very assured guest as every major anchor and talk show

Photo: Patrick Gerard Ryan

The most fitting tribute in these times may be to follow her example of putting editorial integrity ahead of bottom-line concerns.

President's Column

host interviewed her about her remarkable life. She became much more outspoken about how hard it was for women in the business.

We had seen glimpses of this before. In the early '70s, a group of us decided to picket the fancy dinner held every year by the Gridiron Club, a prestigious group of Washington bureau chiefs and newspaper columnists. Up until then, no women had ever been invited. Of course, there were very few women in high office, so the act of discrimination was not so obvious. But after a year or two of picketing, the club began to feel the pressure. In 1972, Mrs. Graham, by then a world-famous figure and the head of a powerful media company, was among the first women to receive an invitation. But after consulting with women reporters at the *Post*, she declined to go. She didn't join us on the picket line, but on the big night she and Meg Greenfield, the *Post*'s editorial page editor, circled the block in Meg's Mustang to get a glimpse of what was going on. Needless to say, the women at the *Post* and the rest of us on the picket line loved her for it.

In 1990, a group of us founded the International Women's Media Foundation, aimed at fostering a free press around the world and an equal role for women in that free press. Mrs. Graham was one of our earliest supporters and a recipient of IWMF's Lifetime Award for Courage in Journalism. In her acceptance speech, she told some of the stories about overcoming her fears that she would later repeat in her memoir. And then, with characteristic modesty, she said, "It's you younger women I really admire who achieve so much and have to balance that with your families and your other obligations." As powerful as she was and as much as she had achieved, she made every woman in the room feel that she understood and identified with their own struggles.

Thanks to her leadership in the Pentagon Papers and Watergate stories,

President's Column

Mrs. Graham established the Washington Post Company as a beacon of courageous, first-class journalism. In the early '70s, when she was making those decisions, nothing less than the financial future of the company was at risk. Acting on the advice of her executives, she was about to take the company public when the Pentagon Papers story erupted. First, the *New York Times* obtained the secret history, written at the Pentagon, of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam, but the government won a court injunction to force the *Times* to cease publishing. Then the *Post* obtained its own copy and had to make a decision. All of her financial and legal advisers told her not to publish, that such a move would seriously damage the plan to take the company public. Finally, in a phone call with executive editor Ben Bradlee, she decided. "Go ahead, go ahead, go ahead," she said. "Let's go. Let's publish."

That decision was crucial in giving her editorial team confidence in her support when the Watergate story broke. For many months, the *Post* was alone in reporting the outlines of a subversive scheme in which all roads led to the Nixon White House. Mrs. Graham sought to assure herself that the reporting was fair and accurate, but she never interfered. Here again, there was a significant financial risk to the company. One of the things the White House threatened to do was to challenge the licenses of the Post Company's television stations when they came up for renewal. Indeed, four Post stations were challenged. But in the end, the reporting proved accurate and the licenses were preserved.

Mrs. Graham's death triggered an outpouring of remembrances and tributes. But the most fitting tribute in these times may be to follow her example of putting editorial integrity ahead of bottom-line concerns, of putting courageous journalism ahead of the drive for profits. Mrs. Graham told us a great deal about her struggle to do the right thing. Let's hope we pay attention to her story. ■

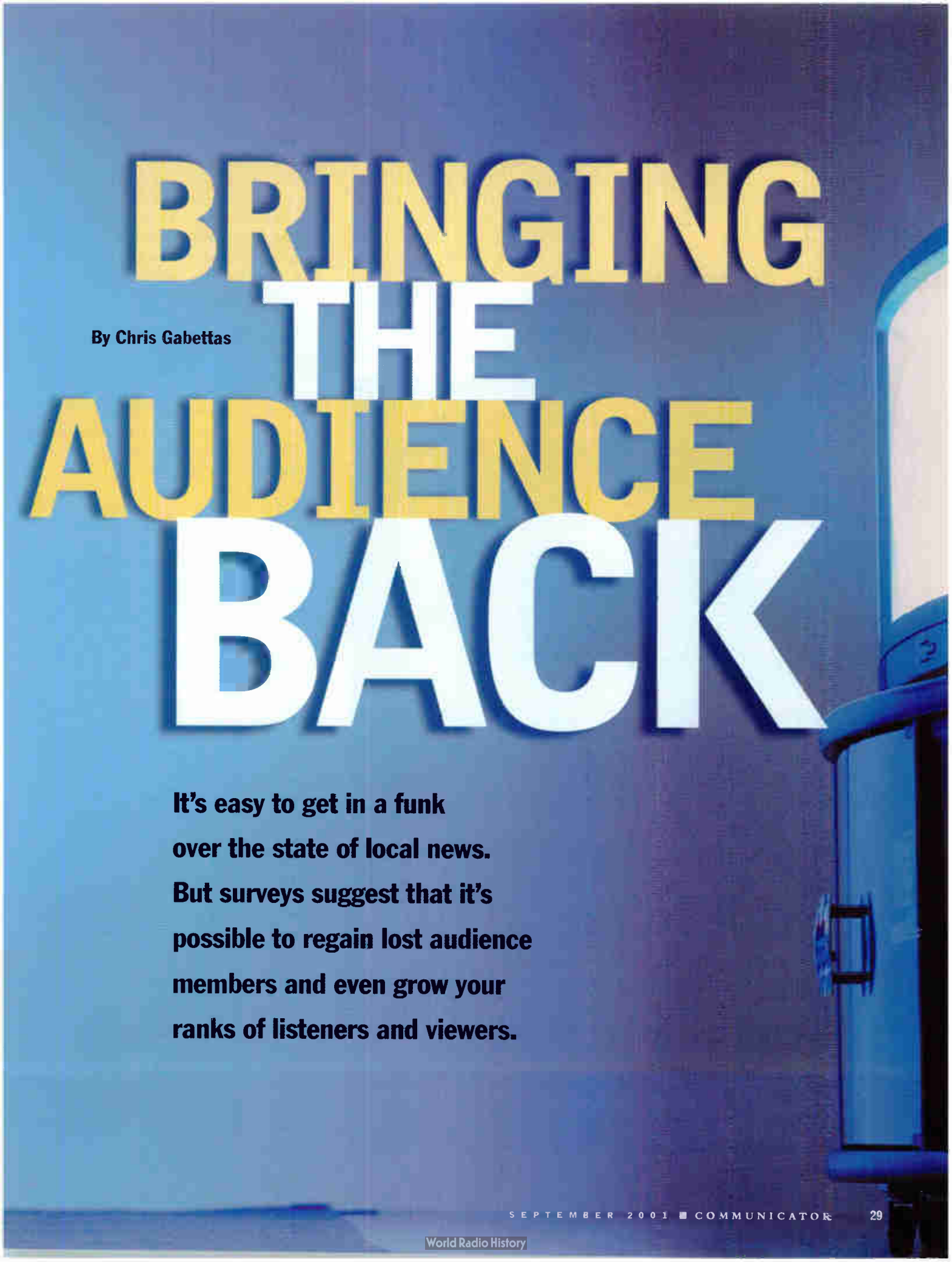
THE FUTURE OF NEWS CAN LOOK PRETTY BLEAK. Declining audiences, increasing competition, falling ad revenue, and changing lifestyles that leave people with less time have all put a strain on the business. In television, the numbers are unsettling. A June 2000 study by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press reports that only 56 percent of American adults watch local news these days, compared with 64 percent in 1998 and 77 percent in 1993. The picture for network news is much bleaker, with regular viewership dropping by half since 1993, from 60 to 30 percent. Radio news, which isn't as appointment-based as its TV counterpart, has seen more stable audiences in the last 10 years. But with the rise of the Internet, it too needs to stay on its toes.

Lifestyle changes, cable and the Internet explain some of the television audience defection, but researchers suggest the industry itself is to blame for driving many viewers away. Recent studies by NewsLab and Insite Media Research report that viewers are tired of repetitious, overhyped stories that have no relevance to their lives or communities.

BRINGING THE AUDIENCE BACK

By Chris Gabettas

It's easy to get in a funk over the state of local news. But surveys suggest that it's possible to regain lost audience members and even grow your ranks of listeners and viewers.



But therein, ironically, lies a silver lining. The Pew Center study says viewers continue to trust local television news more than their local newspaper. And Insite also notes that many viewers who've left local news say they'd come back if stations did a better job of covering their communities.

Of course, there's no sure-fire way to bring people back. But the future may not be that dark. We asked news directors around the country what they're doing to build their audiences, and found a span of ideas that range from lofty mission statements to new segments to simply ensuring they stay fresh and focused.

Giving the Audience Rights

When Forrest Carr became news director at KGUN-TV in Tucson, AZ, four years ago, his goal was to improve ratings, particularly the 5 p.m. news. He knew it'd be tough—more and more viewers were turning off local TV news, and he knew one reason why. "They found the media too arrogant, too insensitive to people's privacy rights and [felt] that they would trample over anyone to get a good story," says Carr, who recently became news director at WFLA-TV in Tampa, FL.

So Carr sat down and talked to viewers, who told him local news was too negative. They were tired of body bags and sensational crime reporting. They wanted crime covered, but they wanted it placed in context. They wanted reporters to ask tough questions, but to respect the privacy rights of citizens.

Those discussions became the framework of a two-page document called the Viewers' Bill of Rights, adopted by KGUN in April 1999. The document spells out the station's news philosophy and invites viewers to hold the station accountable, through an ombudsman, if it fails to live up to its news principles.

"I've been in many battles and have the scars to show it from some of my colleagues who think the notion (of a viewers' bill of rights) is absolutely insane," says Carr, noting that many news executives believe decisions about news coverage are best left to trained journalists. However, since adopting a viewers' bill of rights, KGUN's ratings have improved, gaining steadily on the market's dominant news leader, KVOA-TV, says Carr.

The most significant change is in the way the station defines and covers news. For example, last year when the Tucson City Council voted to turn off half the city's drinking water supply over fear of radon contamination, KGUN did more than just report the fight at city hall.

"We drew up a list of questions we wanted city officials to answer and read the list to our viewers. Then we decided to get those answers," recalls Carr. Reporters started digging and found radon posed no serious threat to the water supply and that city leaders may have overreacted. In the wake of the KGUN investigation, the city council reversed its decision.

However, Carr cautions, "it's not our role to change public policy. It's our role to invite the viewer's participation in setting that policy and making sure he or she is heard." Carr says

Would you be more likely or less likely to watch the local news if it offered more coverage of each topic?

Topic	A lot more	Somewhat more	Same	Somewhat less	A lot less
Education issues, like testing, teacher training	37.3%	31.1%	8.8%	16.3%	6.4%
Stories about what's happening in the local schools	37.1%	35.1%	7.8%	13.8%	6.2%
Health reports	33.7%	36.9%	8.4%	13.0%	8.0%
Community events and happenings in the area	33.0%	43.3%	5.2%	12.7%	5.8%
Local business activities and jobs	28.1%	38.0%	9.6%	17.9%	6.4%
Environmental issues, like air pollution and clean water	27.9%	38.0%	9.2%	15.3%	9.6%
Government waste or fraud	26.8%	31.4%	7.9%	20.7%	13.2%
Features about interesting people	24.5%	38.1%	9.3%	17.6%	10.5%
Consumer reports	24.0%	42.7%	9.1%	14.7%	9.5%
Personal finance issues	20.5%	34.5%	9.2%	23.1%	12.7%
State government actions	20.3%	34.9%	10.2%	22.9%	11.6%
City or local government actions	20.2%	39.8%	7.7%	20.6%	11.7%
Political campaigns and elections	12.3%	19.3%	12.5%	25.3%	30.4%
Fires	9.7%	22.9%	13.4%	34.1%	19.9%
Accidents	9.1%	21.4%	12.3%	28.7%	28.5%
Crimes	8.3%	21.3%	12.3%	26.9%	31.2%

Source: NewsLab

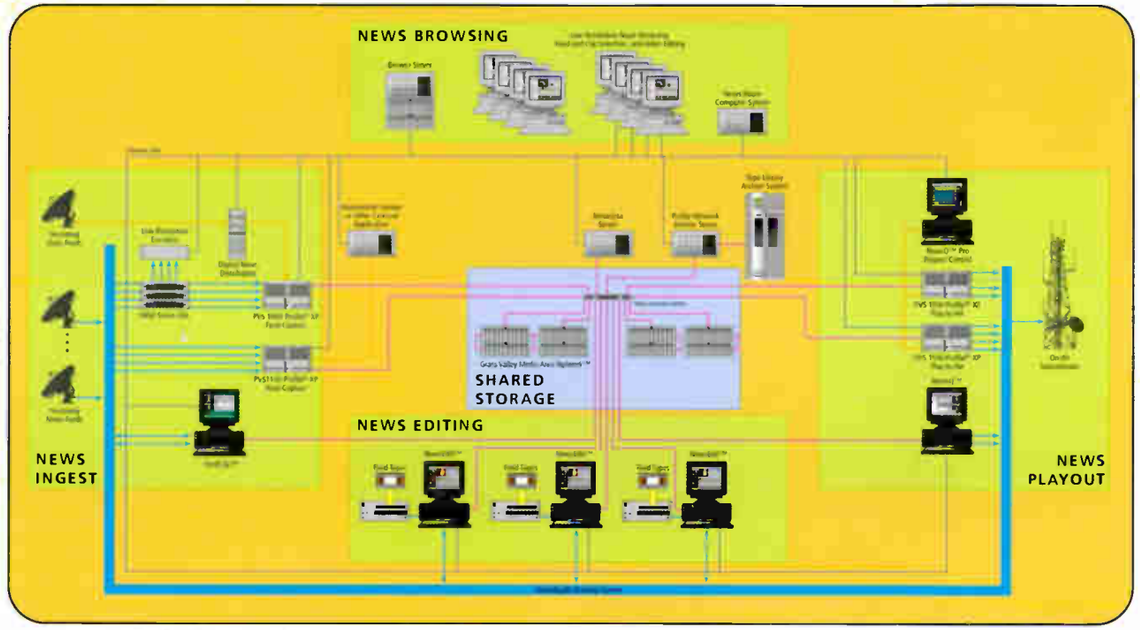
NewsLab asked a nationwide sample what they'd like more and less of on local TV news.

NEWS

From the capture, rapid assembly, and editing of material to on-air playback, our products get breaking news to air faster at less cost than traditional tape-based production gear. Comprised of the Grass Valley FeedClip™ interactive feed capture system, NewsEdit™ nonlinear editing system, and NewsQ™ manual playback application, which feature native MPEG and DV support at up to 50 mb/s, plus real-time effects.

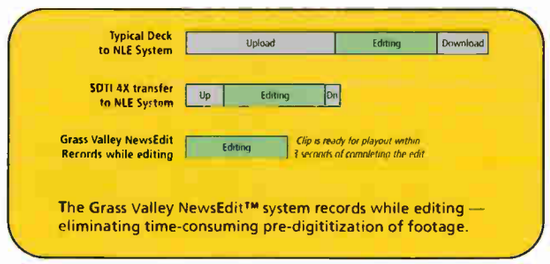
Accelerating the process is the unique "Edit to Timeline" feature of NewsEdit, which makes it the fastest non-linear news editor on the market when editing field footage.

Stretching newsroom dollars further, NewsEdit integrates with iNews, AP/ENPS, and Pathfire systems to greatly increase newsroom efficiency. Editors can assemble a low-resolution version of a story using the iNews MediaBrowse system, for example, then pass an edit decision list to NewsEdit to conform the story for high-resolution playout. NewsEdit is also integrated with the Profile XP Media Platform



Digital News Production Workflow

The Digital News Production Workgroup is built for speed and workflow efficiency. For example, while a Profile system captures a scheduled feed, a FeedClip system can capture breaking



The Grass Valley NewsEdit™ system records while editing — eliminating time-consuming pre-digititization of footage.

news, letting editors extract clips while the recording takes place. The NewsEdit system has access to these feeds and clips, making it easy to combine them with material brought in from field crews.

for resilient and automated playback of finished sequences as well as the NewsQ system for strictly manual applications. These digital playback systems eliminate the confusion and errors of tape-based playback—and make a control room just a wee bit calmer place to be.

The Grass Valley Media Area Network (MAN) real-time, shared-storage system provides simultaneous media access to the Digital News Production Workshop. Leveraging the strength of the Emmy® award-winning Profile XP Media Platform, the Grass Valley MAN system overcomes one of the biggest shortfalls of today's shared-topology storage systems: the inability for third-party applications to work together easily.

The Grass Valley MAN is an open, standards-based system that fits the way a newsroom works. It is compatible with all mission-critical broadcast applications; in fact, it supports Windows 32 file system access, so any Windows NT-based application can use its shared files. And by leveraging the multi-format capabilities of the Profile XP Media Platform, it supports the broadest array of materials possible, including MPEG 2 4:2:2, D10, DVCPRO50, HD, Windows Media, and Real Networks formats.

Specialized for news: new server for news, sports production

With more broadcast content stored on it than any other, the Grass Valley Group has expanded the Profile line to meet the rigorous demands of news and sports production. The new PVS1100 Profile XP Media Platform system supports DVCPRO, DVCPRO50, and I-Frame MPEG formats, including the D10 standard compatible with Sony IMX tape decks. It also features a bi-directional codec for on-the-fly channel configuration changes, unparalleled smooth slow-motion technology, and built-in SDTI support for accepting compressed VTR video at up to four times real-time speed.

To ensure high availability, the PVS1100 supports the Grass Valley Group's NetCentral™ software for Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP)-based remote monitoring as well as the Profile InSync™ automatic mirroring software.

Quickly sifting through mountains of digital assets

In deadline-driven newsrooms where inching your way through hundreds of archived tapes just isn't an option, the Digital News Production Workgroup provides highly optimized sifting and sorting of your digital assets. For fast retrieval of archival footage and other digital assets, the Grass Valley MAN—like all components of the Grass Valley Group news solution—is integrated with the Profile Network Archive (PNA). Using high-speed Fibre Channel technology, the PNA enables multiple Profile systems to access one or more libraries. The PNA also scales easily and affordably. And a recently announced partial-file restore option will enable the PNA to offer even faster asset retrieval.

Then there's the issue of applications compliance—or the lack thereof.

To prevent newsrooms from having to choose between tools that work in their environment and tools they *want*, the entire Grass Valley Group news offering– including the Digital News Production Workgroup—is compliant with the ContentShare software platform, an open, industry-standard framework for information access and exchange based on the eXtensible Markup Language (XML) that any application can use. Instead of costly custom interfaces, the ContentShare platform enables organizations to link third-party applications in a standard, cost-efficient manner—and to maintain those linkages even as the applications change.

For example, the Pathfire NewsTracker news-on-demand system saves newsrooms from rolling tape constantly to record news feeds. Its Java-based interface lets news producers review categorized regional, national, and breaking news stories, then select broadcast-quality video clips and associated scripts right from their desktops. Both the NBC News Channel and ABC News One have selected News Tracker for on-demand news delivery.

Quick Reference Guide to the Grass Valley Group News Solution

Digital News Production Workgroup, first cost-effective, truly open and standards-based solution for digital news production

PVS1100 Profile XP Media Platform, a bullet-proof server designed for the rigors of hard news and sports production

Grass Valley Media Area Network, a real-time, no-compromises shared-storage option

Profile Network Archive, the most advanced storage archive technology

WebAble, a tool suite for streamlined repurposing of Profile based content

Aqua Internet encoder, a turnkey system architected to provide the highest streaming throughput per rack-unit of space compared to any product in its class

ContentShare, an open, standards-based software platform for media asset management

Using ContentShare, Pathfire is enabling users to move materials from a NewsTracker server into a Profile XP Media Platform system as well as the Digital News Production Workgroup. This linkage will simplify newsroom operations, allow multiple users to use the same media and, most importantly, improve time to air.

Similarly, ContentShare is helping BitCentral in its support of CBS NEWSPATH NOW, a system for targeted delivery of news content to network affiliates. Using ContentShare, BitCentral can ingest audio, video, and meta data from third-party systems and distribute those materials using its MediaPipe product to 180 CBS affiliates.

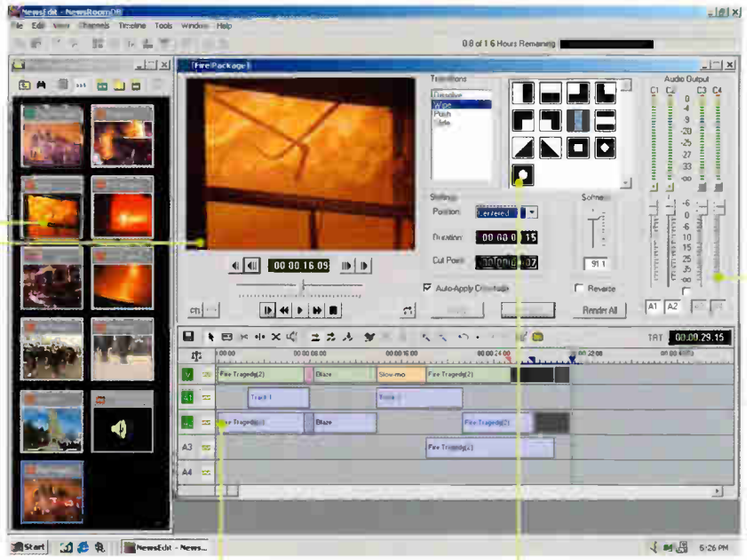
Putting news online quickly, cheaply

Here's the paradox of the Internet. In many broadcast operations—and pure-play Internet operations—people are trying to repurpose material very quickly for the Web. And in most cases that involves a lot of people running around looking for tape or looking for the person looking for the tape.

The Grass Valley Group's WebAble suite offers a drag-and-drop method for creating streaming media that fits neatly within newsroom workflows. Using WebAble, transferring a video clip to a Web server is as easy as copying a spreadsheet to a floppy disk; conversion to standard streaming formats such as Microsoft's Windows Media and Real Networks' Real Video is automatic.

To put content online, WebAble users need only identify the content or clip they need, drag it to a Microsoft Windows NT-based Web server, and initiate the streaming conversion process as part of that transfer. The resulting digital file is then ready for insertion into a standard Web publishing tool. They can also leverage the signal pre-processing capabilities of the Grass Valley Group's Aqua Internet encoder to turbo-charge the WebAble suite with the highest possible quality video.

THE NEWSEDIT USER INTERFACE



Media Bin
Used for organizing clips and storyboarding packages. Bins can be viewed in either thumbnail or text mode and clips can be quickly sorted and sifted by name, duration, description, and other familiar database categories.

Video Window
Allows viewing of media being recorded or played back. When performing trim edits, two or more video windows in the user interface display the respective in and out points of consecutive clips. Because the NewsEdit editor can record and play back simultaneously, it can imitate a record deck's PB/EE capability of an insert edit. The NewsEdit editor is the only nonlinear editing application to retain this familiar convention relied upon by tape editors.

Timeline
Allows an editor to view an entire story while editing. The timeline supports one track of video and up to eight tracks of audio. Clips and voice-overs can be recorded directly to the timeline or imported from the media bin. From within the timeline, clips can be trimmed with frame accuracy, split, moved, or reordered. Real-time effects preview, such as audio crossfades, dissolves, and wipes can be added quickly.

Real-Time Transition Preview
With Vibrint NewsEdit's transition tool, editors have the option of real-time transition preview with dissolves, wipes (with edge softness), pushes, and slides. The transition tool is one of six main tools in the user interface that make NewsEdit easy to use and speeds the process of delivering hard news.

Four I/O Audio Metering and Control.
With the ability to monitor and control up to four audio inputs and outputs as well up to eight tracks of audio on the timeline, NewsEdit provides users greater control of audio editing and playout. Each channel has an audio slider, pan adjustment, mute control, and soloing option. Audio adjustments can be made to an entire sequence, track, clip, or a single frame.

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Tortora says it's difficult to gauge the effect of the franchise on ratings, but notes the station's early evening newscasts have remained number one in the market and the late news number two.

Letting Them Choose

Attempting to follow the same path, KMOL-TV in San Antonio launched a franchise last February called "You Choose the News." The segment allows viewers to vote on one of three stories they'd like to see on Wednesday's 10 p.m. newscast. The first week, more than 800 people registered a vote, says news director Mark Pipitone. That number is now around 500 or 600.

Though viewership is up slightly for Wednesday's 10 p.m. news, Pipitone isn't certain if "You Choose the News" is the reason. "I don't think a station can do this and only this. It has to be right for the market, and we feel it is. Here we have a strong sense of community, a small-town feel even though San Antonio is the country's eighth-largest city," says Pipitone.

Though the hottest issues tend to be the cost and scheduling of road repair work or traffic problems, viewers are also interested in government waste of their tax dollars. They also want substance over sleaze. Last February, a third more viewers chose a story on cost overruns in a San Antonio convention center expansion project over a piece about proliferating sex clubs in the city, says Pipitone.

News director Jim Tortora started a segment called "Your Stories" at WIXT-TV in Syracuse, NY. The segments aim to either address a problem, solve a problem or answer a question.

Turning the Lens Inward

While many stations worry in private about shrinking audiences, WTVJ-TV in Miami aired a story on why viewers are leaving local television news (see sidebar). Ike Seamans, the station's sen-

Continued from page 32

that." An assignment editor: "You reported what many of us feel, but are afraid to mention." A producer: "It was the buzz for days even though we had to whisper. Management doesn't like criticism of the product."

I've heard managers privately admit the same things as well as agree with the critical studies based on interviews with a wide range of viewers from almost every socioeconomic group. Yet, local TV lumps them together with the mantra, "People say what they think others want to hear. Secretly, they love mayhem and fluff." Since audiences continue to dwindle, however, that's quickly followed by other finely tuned rationalizations: People get home after the early shows and aren't awake for the late ones; there are more demands on their time; cable fragments the audience. Viewers go to cable for entertainment or an alternative to network news, but not local, since none is offered. They're just leaving local news, period.

Ironically, the United States is not the only country where critics are clamoring about the increasingly violent and irrelevant content of local news. After my story ran, I was in England and appeared on the BBC with British media watchdogs and TV executives. Rob Brown, head of journalism at Manchester's Salford University, decried "body count" journalism on regional (local) newscasts that appeals to the "lowest common denominator," pointing out ratings are dropping all over England. BBC executive Olwyn Hocking denied it's because of too much crime and mayhem, which she claimed are not excessive. "People have more options, but many do watch," she said. Sound familiar?

Newsrooms not consumed by following the competition find they can get a bump in the numbers if coverage—including crime, soft stories, even breaking news—is relevant and reported intelligently.

How far do ratings have to fall and audiences have to shrink before the excuses stop and we admit that local news must change? Unless that happens, local news may never regain its once proudly held title: the most trusted source of information in America.—Ike Seamans is senior correspondent at WTVJ-TV in Miami.

Courtesy WIXT-TV

ior correspondent, did a special report in late May that struck a chord with viewers, according to Tim Geraghty, the station's vice president of news. He says some 300 phoned or e-mailed the station, many saying that local television news was not meeting their needs.

At NewsChannel 8, the 24-hour cable news outlet in the DC area, vice president of news & programming Wayne Lynch tries to focus on community issues, not the crime of the day.

Seamans says viewers told him they were tired of repetitious, sensational and superficial reporting. "I kept hearing people say, 'Cover all of the news. Don't dumb down the audience. Use crime in a show, but put it in context.'" For example, violent crime in Miami is actually down, but you'd never know that by watching crime coverage on some local stations, he points out.

"We are trying to do things differently," says Geraghty. "It's still a work in progress," he says, noting that local TV news should be given credit for doing some things very effectively. For example, WTVJ has made a yearlong commitment to covering South Florida's environment in weekly EcoWatch reports and news specials.

Finding Other Options

At NewsChannel 8, the 24-hour regional news cable station in the greater Washington area, the focus is seldom the crime of the day and is more likely to be an issue, such as education or transportation. "We felt our niche was to go in and try to do really local, community-based news and not follow the same recipe that typical local news does," says Wayne Lynch, who helped launch the operation in 1991.

By way of fiber-optic lines, the station and its reporters are able to deliver daily newscasts tailored to viewers in the metro DC area, Maryland and Virginia, all at the same time. In the past decade, the number of subscribers has gone from 750,000 households to more than a million.

"We saw ourselves as the way people were going to watch news in the future because appointment viewing for television news is a dinosaur," Lynch says, adding that few people have the time to sit down and watch a scheduled newscast these days.

Are These Just Gimmicks?

While some TV news critics and news executives dismiss a viewers' bill of rights and other viewer-involved seg-

On the Web

For more information, visit:

- **tvsurveys.com** for "Paradigm Shift," Insite Media's latest research report.
- **newslab.org** for its report "Bringing Viewers Back to Local TV News."
- **kgun9.com/mission.asp** for KGUN-TV's Viewers' Bill of Rights.

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ments as ratings ploys, participating news directors say they're committed. "It's not book-driven for us," says KMOL's Pipitone.

"It's not a gimmick," says Margaret Cronan of the "Talk to 25" franchise she started when she was news director at WPBF-TV in West Palm Beach, FL. (She's now at WBAL-TV in Baltimore.) It allows viewers to phone a special line and leave story ideas, suggestions or comments about news that's aired. "It's a platform to let our viewers know we're listening to them."

Tortora does admit that news franchises such as his can be a "dangerous toy" if stations attempt to cover every landlord-tenant dispute or child-custody battle that's phoned in. "The goal is to take a story and make it relevant to all viewers," he says.

But Ted Kavanau, a former major-market news director and founder of CNN Headline News, doesn't think much of so-called viewer-sensitive news. He says that news directors who rely on a viewers' bill of rights or who allow viewers to select news coverage are shirking their responsibility.

"Essentially you hire news directors to use their best judgment. I don't believe in talking to focus groups or viewers to decide what goes into a newscast," he says. He doesn't advocate ignoring the audience, just keep them out of the newsroom and deliver a good, solid newscast. They'll watch, he says.

Carr responds, "Why is journalism the only consumer enterprise where we feel we don't have to respond to consumer demands?" If you don't listen to viewers, he asks, how can you ever expect to connect with your audience?—Chris Gabettas, a TV reporter for 14 years, is a freelance journalist in Florida.

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A documentary crew shot 300 hours of tape at WCNC-TV with very few restrictions on access to produce a five-hour series for PBS. Here's a preview.

SURVIVING LOCAL NEWS

By Alice Main

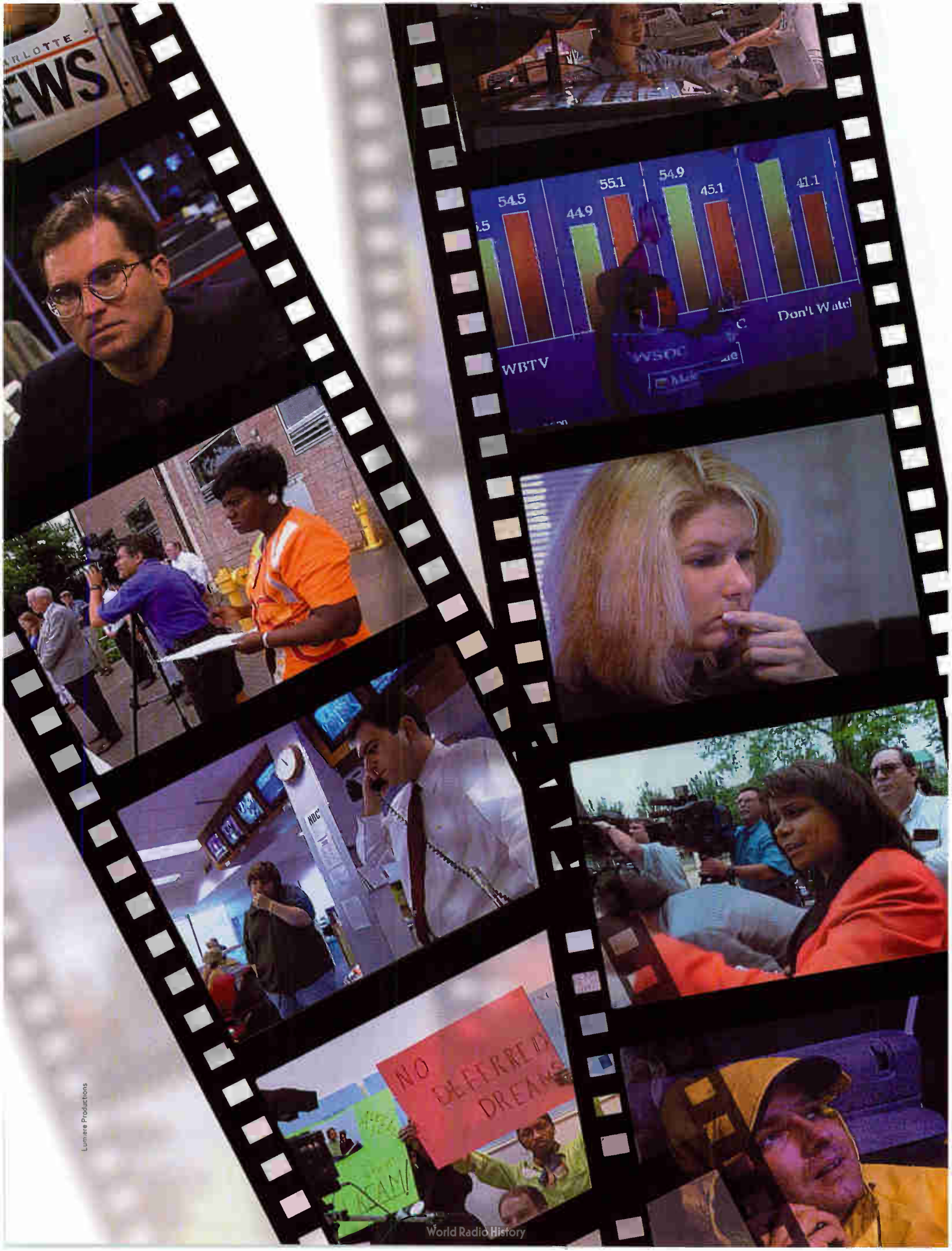
YES, KEITH CONNORS HAS SEEN IT. And no, he's not entirely happy with it. The WCNC-TV executive news director watched a documentary about his own news operation, and he's the star of the show. The documentary's producers logged 300 hours of videotape in and around the Charlotte, NC, newsroom over the course of a year, and then boiled it down to a five-hour series that will air nationwide next month on PBS.

Connors made the decision to allow the production company intimate access, bringing cameras into strategy meetings, critique sessions and along with reporters as they went about their daily newsgathering.

"We knew it wouldn't be all hearts and roses, but it's important that people see the process and see that it's not just thrown together," says Connors. "People are actually thinking about what they're doing."

In 1999, when the filming began, WCNC-TV was a number-three station trying to improve its position by doing quality journalism. The station had also recently changed ownership and management. "It's a snapshot in time," says Connors. "They caught us in the process of trying to turn a not-so-good television station into a good one."

Cal Skaggs of Lumiere Productions was part of the four-person team that created the show. He says it was easier than he expected to find a cooperative station. In fact, he says, two other stations were just as eager to open their doors. "I think all those places welcomed us because in



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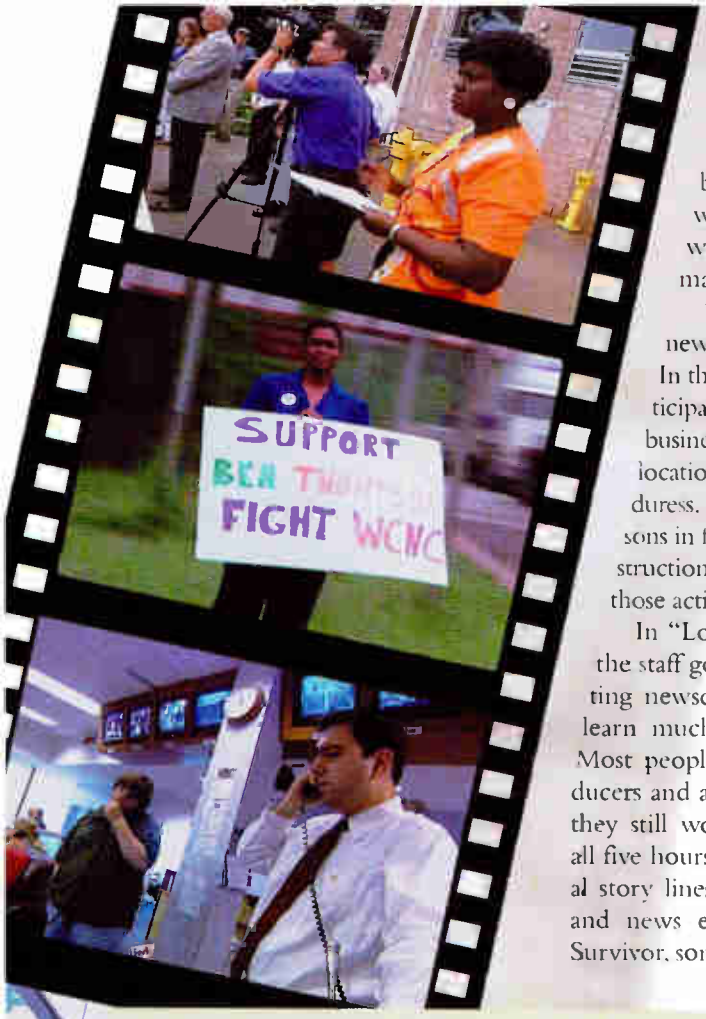

Lumiere Productions

their heart of hearts they want local news to be better," says Skaggs. "They wouldn't mind having a witness to their struggle to make it better."

"Local News" is to local news as Survivor is to survival. In the latter case, we see the participants going about the daily business of living in a remote location under varying degrees of duress. We don't get lengthy lessons in fire-building or shelter construction, although we see some of those activities in passing.

In "Local News," while we see the staff going about the job of putting newscasts on the air, we don't learn much about how it is done. Most people don't know what producers and assignment editors do, and they still won't know after watching all five hours. The show follows several story lines, hitched to personalities and news events. And, just like on Survivor, some people get the boot.

Weathering Rough Seas

When the station fires longtime reporter Beatrice Thompson, it touches a nerve in the community. Thompson is African American, and her supporters hold rallies and picket the station, accusing the management of racism and ageism.

"I think more than anything, I'm in the way," Thompson tells her supporters. "They don't know what to do with me."

We see a lot of Thompson on the job and hear a good deal from her, but we hear very little from management other than the expected, "We don't discuss personnel issues." The result is one-sided, which is a little troubling to the staff.

"We all loved Bea Thompson," says reporter Mike Redding now. "(But) when she left, a lot of white reporters left too, every bit as good as Bea."

The camera shows Thompson actively offering story ideas in the morning meetings. We see her offer more story ideas than anyone else, sometimes giving the impression that

"Local News" Is About Your Station, Too

By Al Tompkins

Wouldn't it be nice if we could see what is wrong with our own radio and television newsrooms as clearly as we can see the warts in Keith Connors' newsroom? I can't help but wonder how many of us would have had the courage to allow a camera crew to camp out in our newsroom as WCNC did.

This documentary can be a mirror that every news director should stare into. Do that, and you'll see some things that need fixing. But let's not just pick on one struggling TV station in Charlotte, NC. You'd find the same issues WCNC struggles with in newsrooms small and large across the country. This up-close look at WCNC raises questions we as an industry should ask ourselves.

Is our news local, and is it really news?

Driving on his way to an appointment, Connors tells the camera crew, "If you want to know what is happening in your neighborhood or in your state or in your country of your world, you are going to turn on the television." Keith inherited that line of thinking. In the fifth hour of the documentary, Keith's own father says, "If you don't look at the news on TV, how are you going to know what is happening?"

The problem is, when viewers watch most stations, they don't learn what is happening in their neighborhood, state, nation and world. National studies of local news content show a third of local news content is about crime and up to an additional 20 percent of it is "feed material" from syndicators and networks. A lot of what makes it on the air from those sources are "major medical breakthroughs" that are not major and not really breakthroughs, self-serving news tie-ins to network entertainment programming, and the most sensational video of the day.

In a moment of frustration over stagnant ratings, Connors gives us a clue about why so much local news is not local and sometimes not very important. He reminds his station management that his newsroom only has four general assignment reporters and three or four photojournalists to cover the news each day. (Two years later, he has six dayside, three nightside GA reporters and seven photojournalists covering the news of the day.)

Nationwide, reporters tell me that they routinely cover two or three stories daily when only a few years ago they covered one or two a day. Between live reports for midday and early evening news (which gets earlier all the time), the reporters try to gather enough information to constitute "news."

When reporters dash from one story to the next all day, we can't expect for them to be much of an expert on anything. Reporters end up picking the low-hanging fruit, leaning on the same tired sources, press releases and talking heads. They often interview whoever is available. The problem will only get worse as

she is the only one with any ideas at all. When Connors does not always pursue her suggestions, it may bolster the appearance that she is being treated unfairly.

In reality, though, everyone brought ideas to the morning meeting, every day. Bill Shory, who was the assistant news director at WCNC for the first several months of the shoot, says, "You'd rather put your head under a satellite truck than show up without an idea."

Redding looks as if he wished he could find a satellite truck one morning when he shows up empty-handed. Connors shames him for bringing nothing to the table, even though Redding has just returned from a trip to the coast, where he had covered a hurricane.

That hurricane coverage may be something of a revelation to the general public, as they'll discover that the harder the wind blows and the higher the surf gets, the happier the newsroom becomes. Charlotte is about 200 miles from the coast, and the staff is thrilled to see Redding standing at a 45-degree angle on Myrtle Beach, SC, delighted that he can lead several newscasts.

"I love hurricanes," says Connors. "It's the ultimate TV news story. You get the buildup, the climax and the aftermath."

Redding says he was a little mystified as to why the video crew followed him around, but felt a moral obligation to cooperate. "All we do all day is call people and ask them to do interviews. What right do I have turning down people who want to talk to me about my business?"

He says having the tables turned on him made him feel vulnerable, just as his own interviewees must feel. "I think every reporter should go through this."

When To Watch

"Local News" will air on PBS October 9, 16, 23, and 30 and November 6. Check local listings for times.

"We knew it wouldn't be all hearts and roses, but it's important that people see the process and see that it's not just thrown together."

—News director Keith Connors

stations ask reporters to not just file two or three stories for television, but also write stories for the web and write something else for newspapers that are the new "convergence" partners of so many stations. Reporters need time to report.

While watching this project, I had to keep reminding myself that the documentary series was shot in 1999, one of the two most profitable years in recent history for broadcast stations. Because of soft commercial sales in 2001, the pressures that stations feel to produce ratings and revenue are even more intense now than they were then. Connors says he was lucky that his station owner, Belo Corporation, was willing to invest in journalism and be patient for viewers to create new viewing habits, a process that he says takes years, not months.

Why use confidential sources?

As a WCNC reporter burns up the phones covering a local murder, the documentary crew listens in. The reporter is talking with a "source" who leaks some information about the investigation. The entire segment should be a time of reflection for all news managers to consider how and when their newsrooms use confidential sources. A 1998 RTNDF study shows viewers believe less than half of what they hear from confidential sources. The documentary never discusses the issue, as if it is understood that using confidential sources is just part of the normal reporting process. Connors says his newsroom has no formal rules about when to use confidential sources. "We use them rarely," he says.

The documentary might prompt newsrooms to think more closely about when it is justifiable to use confidential sources. Newsrooms should consider whether:

- the source really deserves protection.
- the source has first-hand knowledge that the information he is providing is true.
- the story is important enough to warrant the use of confidential sources, and whether the information can be proven to be true even if the source is not named.
- the station is willing to tell viewers/listeners why it is not naming the source.

How should we cover crime?

No news director can watch this documentary without being struck by the competing demands Connors and, I imagine, most other news directors feel. "You don't have to succumb to flash and trash," he says at one point.

With that, he beats back skepticism within his own newsroom about whether the station should produce a school board candidate's debate. "You are licensed to serve your com-

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"I think we show three or four people who are really heroic. Keith is one, Sterlin Benson Webber is another."

—Series producer Cal Skaggs

The cameras rolled constantly when the documentary crew was on site, so that the staff would get used to it, act and speak naturally, and reveal their true thoughts. Shory says the staff did begin to get used to the cameras after the first few days, but there were some moments when he wanted to hide.

"There were a couple of times when I was on a phone call that was fairly sensitive, maybe a chewing-out kind of thing. My office had a huge glass wall and I'd glance up and see the big fuzzy boom mic inching its way around the corner. A few times, I slammed the door on the boom mic," Shory says.

Charlotte at a Crossroads

Skaggs says Charlotte was an attractive setting for the documentary because of its explosive growth rate and because of the historic trial that was taking place in 1999. A group of white parents sued the school board, seeking an end to using race to assign children to schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system, and a return to neighborhood schools.

As the trial is about to get under way, Wanda Johnson Stokes is WCNC's senior producer and an African American. She grew up in the area, and attended segregated schools as a child. She is among those pushing for a one-hour special to air the night before the trial begins. Connors and Shory decide the topic probably won't sustain viewer interest for that long, and choose to produce a half-hour special instead. Stokes appears disappointed.

"I felt like I was unable to explain to him how critical that story was," Stokes says now. "I felt frustrated because I couldn't make him understand how significant that piece of history was. And that piece of history seemed to be returning."

The show gets a 1 share. "Brutal," says Connors the next morning. "It's almost like not even being on the air."

Education reporter Sterlin Benson Webber covered the trial for WCNC,

Skaggs courtesy Lumiere Productions

Continued from page 43

munity," he reminds himself and others. Even so, the debate is a ratings loser, just as the staff predicted it would be.

Later, in a closed-door meeting, a consultant and a corporate news executive turn the pressure up to get more aggressive in crime reporting. "I believe crime is something you should concentrate on. Find solutions to crime; it resonates with the group we are trying to recruit," Belo executive Marty Haag tells Connors.

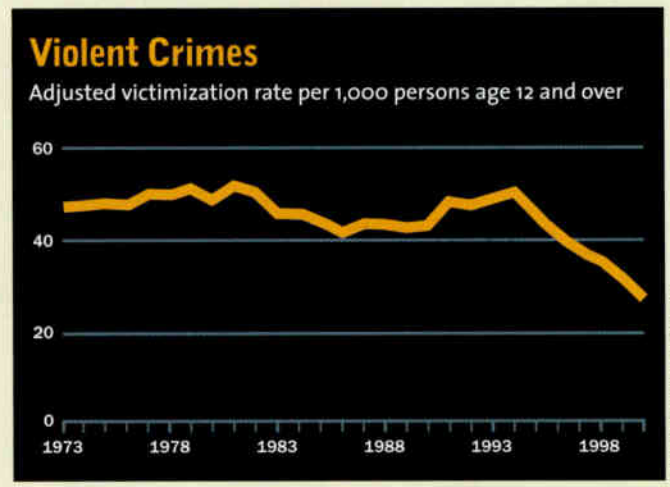
That recommendation comes even though violent crime has seen a 10-year decline, according to the FBI. At the same time crime is dropping, increased crime coverage by television is driving the public's concern over crime higher. The result is predictable. The public demands stiffer criminal penalties, more jail and prison space, and zero tolerance policies that take away judicial discretion. But the public demand is based on flawed perceptions about the real level of danger in their community.

Connors thinks he has found a way to satisfy his own concerns about sensational coverage while not ignoring crime coverage. Since the taping of this documentary, WCNC has adopted, like other stations, a "viewers' bill of rights," which promises viewers "responsible crime coverage."

Connors told *Communicator* that the station still covers crime on a daily basis, but it "limits the use of adjectives. We don't use words like 'horrific,' 'tragic,' 'grisly,' 'sensational' or 'a parent's worst nightmare,'" Connors says. The station also includes weekly crime prevention features, such as "Don't Be a Victim," which features a local personal safety expert.

What are the costs of going live?

Over and over in the series, the viewer can see the frustrations and limitations caused by the need to "go live." One reporter pleads to be freed from live shot demands during a lull in hurricane coverage so he can go get shots of homes being flooded. The demands to stay live and repeat information in one live report after another keep him from discovering new and possibly important details.



and she's shown agonizing over striking the right balance and tone in her reporting. Webber is African American, and worries that including too much inflammatory testimony from the trial will make her boss think she's only interested in reporting the "black side" of the issue.

"Had I really said some of the things that were said in court, I think he would sit back and get angry with me personally," Webber says as the trial winds down. "So I felt like I had a responsibility to the community and a fine line to toe at work."

Some 18 months later, Webber says she is not worried about what Connors or others may think of her comments. "I don't think I personally assaulted anyone's character or brought harm to the station. If you know what you're saying is true, you don't have to fear the repercussions."

The documentary's producers give a good bit of airtime to the trial, and even spends time with the school board chairman, without any reporters around. "We were not going to just stay in the newsroom all the time or even with the reporters all the time, because our whole purpose was to show not only how local news works, but also how it interacts with its community," says Skaggs.

Watching Bald Spots Grow

Connors and about a fifth of his staff saw the series over the summer. He says the producers took some license with the video in terms of how they edited their pieces together. In one case, the camera follows the fire department's public information officer to a fire scene. The competition is there, but WCNC is not. Then the show cuts back to the newsroom, where we see the staff working the phones to find a lead story, not knowing about the fire. Cut back to the fire. Cut back to the newsroom. But the producers had only one camera that

Another reporter is near panic-stricken because of the pressures to cut a story on tape and then race back out into the field to stand in front of a building to be live on the air.

At one point, a reporter stands in the rain to file a telephone report, as if the sound of the rain will make the phone report about a storm more authentic. It is worth asking whether the viewers and listeners value "live coverage" introductions and tags to stories as much as broadcasters. The "Local News" series should prompt us to ask ourselves what live coverage costs in terms of journalistic quality when that live coverage means less time for writing, shooting and editing.

Since the documentary was shot, and the station added reporters, Connors says the station has made an effort to send backup crews for the reporter who is tethered to the live position during big stories.

Can we find the time?

I imagine that everyday viewers will scratch their heads as they wonder how TV stations concluded that 90 seconds is the magical amount of time a story should run. In this series, we hear reporters get the "minute-thirty" order several times. In some newsrooms, that's considered generous.

The documentary includes one passage in which WCNC pulls together a commendable half-hour special on a judge's school bussing order. As part of its coverage, the station asks six people from the community to sit down and discuss their feelings about the complicated and emotionally charged subject. At the end of the interview, one person asks how long the story would be on the air. "A minute-thirty" the reporter answers. Connors says the reporter bargained with a producer and got 1:50.

I wonder if any of those people were left feeling they might not have truly been heard. I can't help thinking how I would have felt if I had driven all the way to the TV station, sat down for a half hour, poured my heart out on such a controversial subject, and then learned I might get 15 seconds—maximum—on TV tonight. Connors says he understands the concern. "If that would have happened today, we would have taken the interview and streamed it entirely to the web," he says.

Journalists should have the courage to let people talk on television. And newsroom managers should have the courage to dedicate significant airtime to important stories.

The single most memorable image of the documentary series is a metaphor for the life news directors sometimes lead.

On one of the most momentous nights of our lifetimes, New Year's Eve 1999, the night the world celebrated, Connors and his team sit in a dark control room pulling together special coverage. Exhausted and exhilarated, Connors types out a thank-you note to the staff. He walks out of the darkened station on New Year's morning 2000 with Astro, his 9-year-old sheltie, trotting beside him.

That is how journalists spend a lot of holidays: working. If we are lucky, we at least have a dog that still likes us when the day is finally over.—Former news director Al Tompkins heads the broadcast/online group at The Poynter Institute.

day, and couldn't have been in both places.

"It's the kind of thing you would probably suspend people for in your own news organization," says Connors. "But apparently documentarians are held to different standards than journalists."

"We're not doing the news," explains Skaggs. "We're doing a story about this news station. We did not violate truth or fact as we understood it, ever."

Still, it's Keith Connors who's the indisputable star of the show, a fact that seems to have caught him a bit by surprise. "I made a conscious decision a long time ago that I did not want or need to be on television. I'm much better behind the scenes," Connors says, laughing. "That's the scariest part of all, seeing your bald spot growing on the screen."

As of June, Connors had seen only a rough cut of the show. As for whether he's portrayed fairly, he says, "That's for others to judge, not me. It's difficult to watch yourself."

We watch Connors enter the building in the mornings, look at the ratings and sigh. We watch Connors give pep talks to the staff. We watch Connors suggest strongly to some members of his management team that they need to work together better. We watch Connors go to meetings with his bosses, in which the need for improved performance is spelled out clearly and adamantly before him. We watch as he asks for more equipment and is turned down because the money is not in the budget.

Although Connors points out that he's not in the business of telling others how to tell their stories, he says he does wish the documentary had included more positive stories about the turnaround in the newsroom. The station is still third (but "almost number two"), has won a pile of awards, and increased its percentage of minority staff, he says.

> "I think every reporter should go through this."
>
> —Reporter Mike Redding

Skaggs says he learned quite a bit about the news business from watching all 300 hours of videotape, and gained a healthy respect for the unique time pressures that broadcast journalists face. He also says he was surprised at how many stories came from the newspaper and Internet, and not from reporters doing investigations. "These people spend a lot of time sitting around talking about what they're going to cover instead of getting out there and finding what there is to cover."

But Skaggs says "Local News" is no hatchet job. In fact, he says, "I think we show three or four people who are really heroic. Keith is one, Sterlin Benson Webber is another."

For Connors, the buildup to the premiere has been something of a distraction, and he says he's looking forward to the time when it's all over so he can return his full concentration to the news. And the documentary is not at the top of his must-see list for fall.

"I'd rather see the next season of The Sopranos," he says.—Alice Main is a former local news executive producer who is now a web designer and freelance writer. Reach her at ajmain@mainhat.com.

2001 RTNDA

Catch a sneak preview of "Local News" at RTNDA2001 on Thursday, September 13. WCNC-TV executive news director Keith Connors and Lumiere Productions executive producer Cal Skaggs will be on hand to discuss the upcoming PBS series. For more information, visit rtnda.org/convention/2001.shtml.

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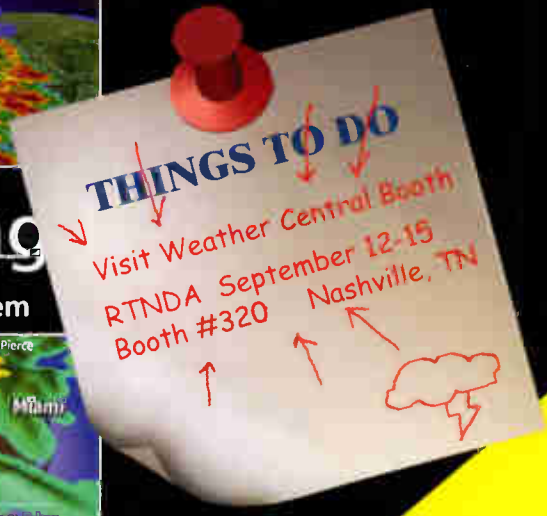

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New York's Finest

REPORTER JEANNE MOOS FINDS STORIES IN PLACES WHERE MOST PEOPLE WON'T LOOK.

You're about to enter a world where flying debris is lyrical, crash-test dummies are iconic, and pantyhose are downright funny. This is the world of Jeanne Moos, CNN's hip, offbeat reporter who has made a name for herself with whimsical pieces on an otherwise sober all-news network.

By Kristen McNamara

On the network that aired the Challenger explosion first, provided 24-hour coverage of the Gulf War, and broadcast live pictures of the detained U.S. Navy aircrew leaving Hainan Island, Moos has tried to murder a stuffed animal, was attacked by a naked man in a cage, and almost lost an arm while wiping saliva from an ungrateful hippo.

It's this unorthodox humor, sense of adventure and interest in unusual people that make Moos, 46, and the stories she tells, so popular. A New York–based national news correspondent for CNN, she explores the quirky aspects of life from one of the quirkiest cities in the world. Her feature, "Making the MOOSt of It," debuted in 1985 and runs on the network's domestic and international programs.

"Jeanne just has a way of looking at things," says cameraman Michael Gittelman, who's been working with Moos for 12 years. "She finds humor in anything."

Take crash-test dummies, for example. When Volvo pitched a promotional event featuring two live dummies and the band Crash Test Dummies, Moos knew there was a segment in there somewhere. "I have a sort of soft spot for crash-test dummies," she says. "You don't have to feel guilty because it's a crash-test dummy."

But when she showed up at the Good Morning America studio in Times Square with Gittelman and her sound man on a rainy April evening, she still wasn't sure what she was looking for.

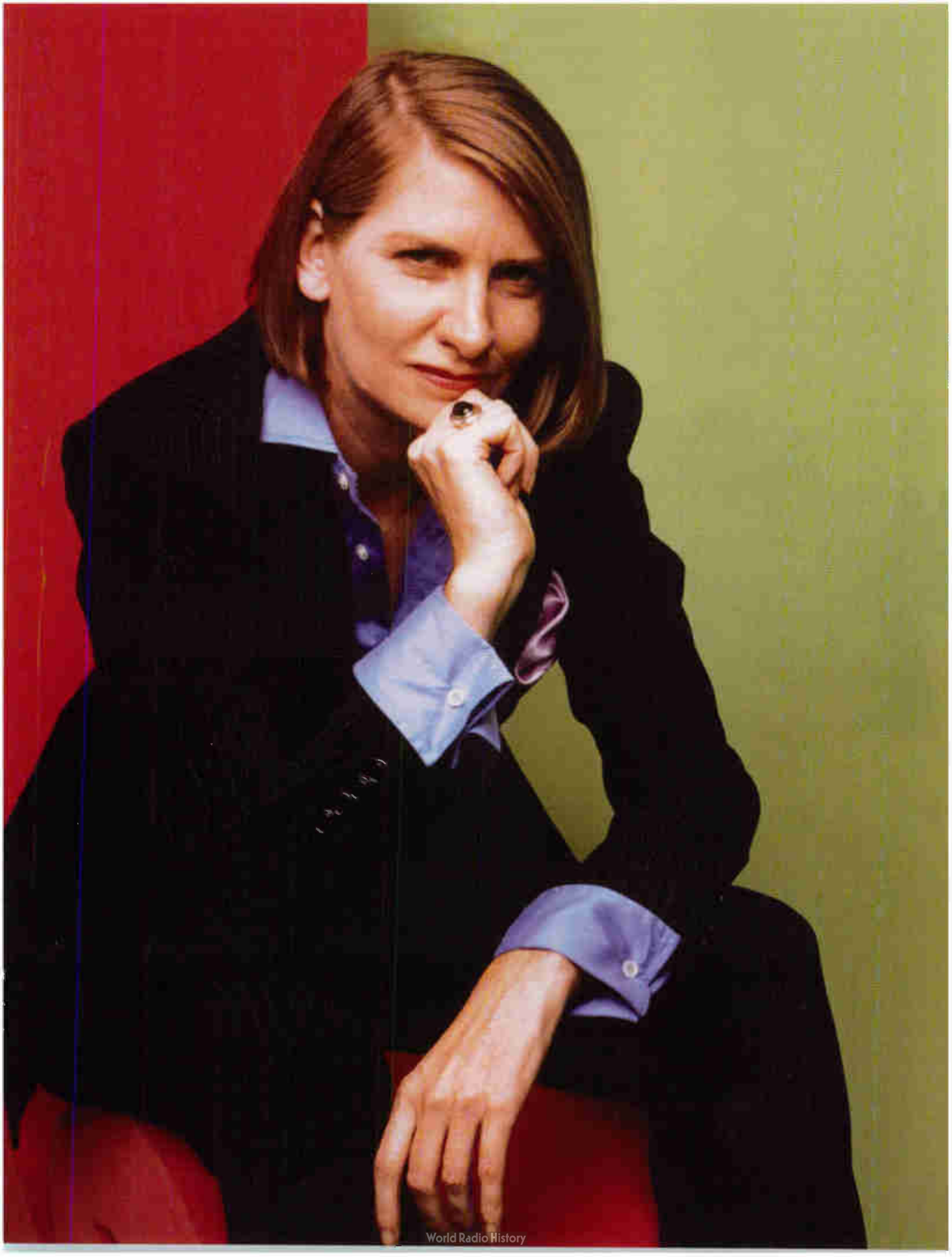
"I kind of wing it," Moos says.

As the camera crew shoots the fashionable crowd inside, the wet crowd outside and the band's equipment on stage, Moos speaks with Volvo's public relations liaison about arranging an interview with one of the company's safety engineers. Moos says she likes to entertain viewers, but also wants to provide them with nuggets of news and information.

IT'S HARD WORK TO MAKE IT LOOK SO EASY.

Her interview with a bespectacled Swedish researcher shows that even an engaging and experienced interviewer

Andrew Eccles

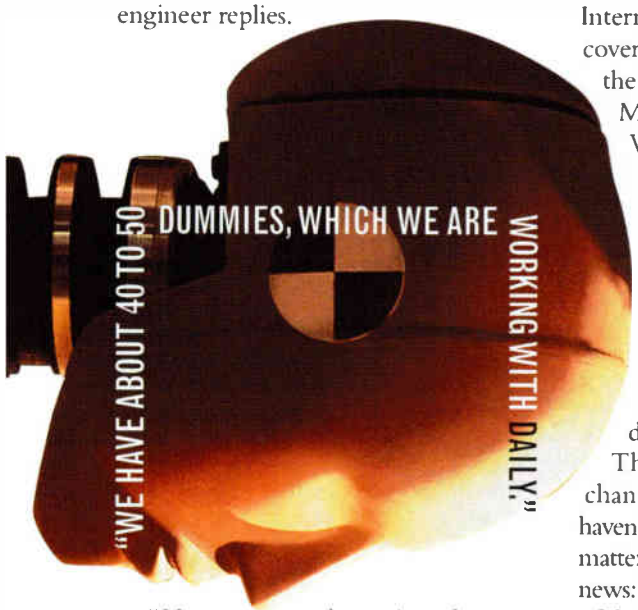


can get stuck with a less-than-compelling source. Standing in a staging area, the engineer earnestly explains the purpose of the yellow-and-black targets on the side of the dummies' heads (they help researchers measure the movements of the heads). He resists Moos' attempts to ferret out nicknames the dummies have been given. (She often asks sources about cute monikers when appropriate, she said later.)

Trying a different tack, she comments on the lack of arms on many of the dummies she saw in the file footage earlier that day.

"Are you saving on arms?" she asks.

"No. Not at all," the straight-faced engineer replies.



"How many dummies do you have?" she continues.

"We have about 40 to 50 dummies, which we are working with daily," the engineer says.

"That's fewer than I work with daily," the ever-clever Moos replies, turning the stagnant interview into a soundbite.

She says she often "fishes" during dull interviews to find the humor that's sometimes tucked away. If she doesn't get it from the source, she'll supply it herself.

Back among the well-groomed professionals sipping chardonnay and nibbling on skewered snacks at the party, she interviews several servers. Only one bartender has a quick enough wit to make it into the final piece.

"What do you think those targets on the sides of their heads are?" Moos asks.

"It's a birthmark," the 20-something blonde says.

More Than Just the Humor Beat

Even when she covered hard news, Moos tended toward her trademark features, which she was doing in China for CNN in 1989 when the student uprising in Beijing erupted. The network assigned her that story and she later won a news and documentary Emmy in 1989 for her work. She was also part of the CNN team that won a Golden ACE award and duPont Award in 1988–1989 for its coverage of China.

A 20-year veteran of the network, Moos won the 1991 Korn/Ferry International Journalism Award for her coverage of the United Nations during the Gulf War. Before joining CNN, Moos worked as a correspondent at WPTZ-TV, the NBC affiliate in Plattsburgh, NY. She joined the station in 1976 and was the first female correspondent the station hired. A native of Pittsburgh, she earned a bachelor's of science degree in public communication from Syracuse University.

After the Gulf War, Moos began doing features full-time for CNN. Though the subject matter has changed, her reporting techniques haven't. "I think she covers offbeat subject matter in the same way she covers hard news: with an honest and interested view of the world," says Keith McAllister, senior vice president and managing editor of national news at CNN, who has known Moos for 15 years.

Moos loves talking to people about their lives but isn't terribly chatty about hers. All she'll say about her personal life is, "I don't live alone." She does reveal that she lives in a two-story loft apartment with a terrace overlooking the city she covers.

Being Funny Is Hard Work

Finding feature ideas is a job that never ends. Moos says she can't enjoy the newspaper because she's always scanning for ideas. Flacks bombard her. Friends and family members float suggestions. But few ideas work, she says. The testimony to back her up lies in a corner of her pale-blue office, where a pile of rejected booty, including the next generation of McDonald's Happy Meal toys, sits beside shelves of discarded books and abandoned story tapes.

She can't explain what makes an idea a good segment. "You know when you see it," she says. She does agree with one of the lessons she learned in journalism school: Kids, animals and sex make great stories.

Moos develops three two-and-a-half-minute segments a week. She and Linda Djerejian, her producer of 16 years, meet once a day, or at least every other day, to brainstorm. Books they read or receive from publishers provide a fair number of ideas. Moos reads the *New York Times* every day, the *New York Observer* every week, skims the *New York Post*, and pores through magazines and listings of events in New York.

Her attention to detail and the piece of her personality she weaves into each feature place her in the difficult spot of doing almost everything herself, she says. In addition to generating ideas with Djerejian, she guides the shooting, screens and logs every inch of tape, writes the piece and sits beside the editor during editing.

Moos says she usually works 12-hour days, five days a week. For the crash-test dummy piece, Djerejian spent several hours pulling file footage of crash-test dummies the day of the event. She and Moos also found crash-test dummy poetry on the Internet.

MOOS MAIL

Jeanne Moos has somewhat of a cult following. Fans send her e-mails regularly, and Moos publishes some of them on the web. Read a sampling at cnn.com/cnn/programs/jeanne.moos/email.html.

Crash-test dummy: Wayne Eastep/Stone

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Moos spent three hours interviewing people and shooting B-roll at the party. She estimated she'd spend about five hours the following day in an edit booth screening and logging the three tapes they shot. Then, she figured it took three hours to write the piece and another three hours to edit it.

Working with her is physically taxing, her camera and soundmen say. "She's always looking for something funny to happen," Gittelman says, which makes working with her very demanding. Moos will work with only a few crews and is assigned the best ones. "It's a feather in your cap to be designated as one of the crews she works with," Gittelman adds. As the Volvo event wore on, he would bend at the waist several times to rid his back of the kinks that come from carrying a 35-pound camera for four hours. Another cameraman who works with Moos pops Nuprin on his way to shoots with her.

Moos Likes MOS

Some reporters disdain man-on-the-street interviews. Not so for Moos, who says MOS interviews are a key component of her stories. "It makes the piece," she says. "It's the equivalent of getting a prime minister." She often goes to 57th Street and Fifth Avenue because of the cross section of people she can find there. Typically, she stays out there for about an hour and a half. "There's a high ratio of bad to good," she says of the responses she gets. Still, she says she feels "sort of blessed on the street," adding, "I think I have a good eye for picking people, and I just keep at it until I find a gem, or gems."

Her look and her stories may have a New York edge, but her interviewing style doesn't. Flaunting conventional manners and the advice of mothers, she talks to, and touches, strangers. Half of a successful MOS interview is making people feel comfortable, she says. Moos stands just inches from her subjects, makes eye contact and touches them gently on the arm as she lobs questions at them. "I try to create an intimacy," she says. "It's all an attempt to make it more natural."

This technique coupled with her quick laugh and wit do the job. Sometimes too well. She's had people occasionally get annoyed when they learn the camera is on. Apparently they were too charmed by Moos to realize that her asking, "Do you mind if we ask you a few questions?" combined with the blinding light and camera in their face signaled an interview.

Moos shows up in her pieces interacting with people but rarely, if ever, alone. "I hate stand-ups," she says. "Stand-ups always look like Saturday Night Live."

Her natural curiosity and interest in people are key ingredients to her success, Djerejian and McAllister agree. Moos enjoys talking to sources and won't let them get away with the pat answer. She's the master of follow-up questions, such as, "Oh, come on, but really what do you think about this?" Djerejian says. Not everyone on the street is charmed by her, though. "I get blown off all the time," she says. "There's a lot of animosity toward the press." Undaunted, she just moves on to another target.

Some passersby recognize her and others don't. The people who do recognize her usually make intelligent and thoughtful comments, she says at the crash-test dummy event. As if on cue, a cute guy in a suit standing outside the GMA studios introduces himself as a production manager for the show and says he bought a satellite dish just so he could watch her segments.

For Moos, it's the perfect amount of celebrity. "It's not enough to be self-conscious all the time," she says, but it's "enough to give you an ego boost."—Kristen McNamara is a New York–based reporter for Dow Jones Newswires.

FINDING FODDER

Ideas don't always come easily. And even once they do, the stories they inspire are usually more memorable than the ideas themselves. Jeanne Moos can remember many of the features she's done at CNN over the past 16 years, but has trouble remembering how she came up with the ideas. She's constantly on the lookout for new material, and has developed a few guiding principles to help her search.

Be abusive. "Torturing things works," she says. When the makers of Furby introduced a new product called Interactive Shelby, Moos tried to destroy it by running it over with an SUV and freezing it. Interactive Shelby survived, producing a kind of commercial for itself and an amusing piece for Moos.

Use animals. When she's not putting out contracts on stuffed animals, Moos often trains her camera on live ones. Their unpredictability makes good television, her producer, Linda Djerejian, says. No matter how staged an event, the animal doesn't know it.

Visit trade shows. Trade shows are filled with story ideas, such as the man at the vision expo who made a pair of glasses for a racehorse.

Don't ignore the everyday. Moos also says she gravitates toward "mundane objects that have a humorous side to them." Featured in recent pieces: traffic cones that give their lives for us, three-legged pantyhose that provide a spare leg in the event of runs, and the uncanny characteristics of automobile air fresheners.

And when all else fails, sometimes it's a higher force that leads Moos to a story. "Sometimes we're desperate," she says.

Pantyhose: Brian Steele/Stone

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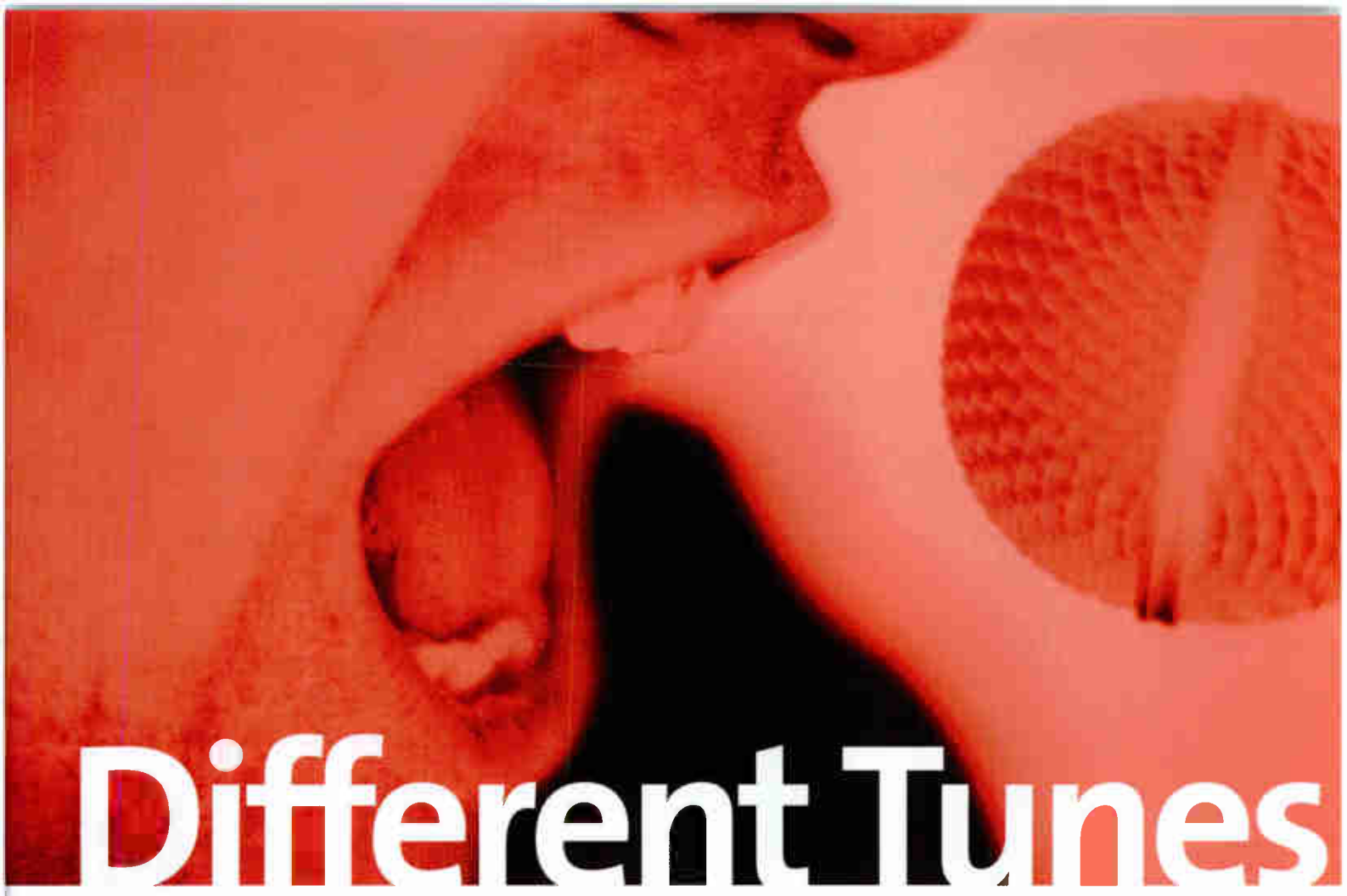
Same Station,

YOUR NEWS STAFF AND YOUR TALK SHOW HOSTS MAY SING FROM DIFFERENT HYMNALS, BUT THEY'RE STILL PART OF THE SAME CHOIR.

BY LAUREN ROONEY



Different Tunes

YOU'RE SITTING IN YOUR OFFICE with the station on in the background. Your talk guy is on, accusing a reporter of playing fast and loose with the facts. It sounds like just another day in talk radio, but suddenly you're jolted to attention. That's your station and your reporter he's smacking around.

Sound familiar? Jeff Henderson, news director at WLW-AM in Cincinnati, knows all to well how it feels to be bashed on the air by his own talk guy. For a time, he would do a casual "chatty" cast in the talk studio with the host introducing him. "He'd call me a bleeding heart liberal, a mouthpiece for the Clintons, that I called the White House every day to make sure I got my agenda," Henderson says.

While that may have been done in fun, it's not funny when those remarks taint the listeners' opinion of your product. Talkers like to bash the "liberal media"; it's part of the gig. But when your talk host is bashing your station, you don't have to

MAINTAINING A NEWS–TALK DÉTENTE

How do you keep the peace when the talk show host takes aim at the media? Just remember what Aretha Franklin said about respect.

Respond quickly to criticism. Don't let on-air criticism of your staff go unchecked. Standing by and saying nothing will make your talk guy think it's okay to bash your product.

Express your side. When you hear the talk show host bashing your reporters, go on his show to explain what you do and why you make the decisions you make. Be confident; they can smell fear.

Stand your ground. When defending your product, don't get defensive. Keep a cool head and go in armed with facts.

Personal attacks are not acceptable. When the criticism is focused on one particular individual, call the host and that reporter into your office for a face-to-face meeting. Tell the host that personal attacks are not allowed. You're a team, you're co-workers, and you should respect one another.

Earn respect. If the news and talk people understand what the other is trying to do, they will develop respect for one another. Criticism coming from a position of respect always seems a little less harsh.

Chart the course on hot-button stories. Decide how you're going to handle hot-button issues like abortion. Determine in advance what terms will be used in your copy and how you will balance stories.

Take the heat. Even though you've checked and double-checked your facts, you can still err on a story. Be ready to lose a fight, and admit when you're wrong. That will really throw the talk guy off balance.

grin and bear it. Here are ideas from some news directors who've tried to master the art of allowing talk hosts the freedom to criticize without destroying the station's news reputation.

Don't Back Down

Rod Fritz, news director at WRKO-AM in Boston, jumps right in when he hears unwarranted criticism of his department bellowing through the station monitors. "We become part of the show," says Fritz. "I go into the studio, sit down and take the side of the media."

Fritz explains what the news staff does, how they do it and why they make the decisions they make. "If your newspeople are getting beaten up, the important thing is to become involved in the show and don't let the host beat them up. Because, otherwise, they're going to keep doing it," says Fritz.

Sometimes it can be tough to get your point across. "Don't forget the talk host is in charge of the microphone," says Henderson. "They can cut to a break or control when you're going to speak, so it's hard to have a battle of the wits when they're in control." But Fritz says it's worth the effort to defend the news department. "It beats just getting beaten up and standing by and not saying anything."

Sometimes that on-air defense can spill into the hallways and turn into a knockdown drag-out between the host and a reporter. "There have been heated arguments off air and the two parties certainly get into it," says Jerry Bell, news director at KOA in Denver. When that happens, Bell sits both sides down in his office for a friendly face-to-face chat. "Even though we do different things, we're all part of the same team," Bell tells the two sides.

Bell knows he can't stop a talk host from having an opinion; that's what they do. But he insists their criticism be informed. "If they're going to bash anyone on the air, I don't take kindly to that and will ask them if they talked to the person or went off half-cocked," he says.

Explaining your news decisions may not change the talk host's opinion

"THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH SHARING RESOURCES (WITH THE TALK TALENT). THAT'S AN OPPORTUNITY, ESPECIALLY IN SMALL CITIES WHERE YOU DON'T HAVE THE RESOURCES TO GET SOME FRESH TAPE."

Condace Pressley, assistant program director, WSB-AM, Atlanta

of the media. But the next time he gets his shorts in a knot over a story, he'll at least have some knowledge of how you do news. He may at least curtail his criticism a bit. Maybe he'll even come to your defense when a listener calls in to complain. (Hey, you can always dream.)

Strong Relationships Will Cool Tempers

Beyond confrontation, fostering respect between the two camps can help a great deal. At WTMJ-AM in Milwaukee, Dan Shelley, news director and assistant program director, has created an atmosphere of mutual respect by getting the talk and news people to work together. "As assistant program director, I take an active role in helping our hosts as they develop ideas for their shows," he says.

Hosts will ask Shelley for information, or talk to a reporter to get some facts before tackling a topic. "That doesn't make us immune to their criticism, but it does help them under-

Pressley courtesy WSB-AM

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stand our role a little better," Shelley says. It also helps the newspeople understand where the talk show host is coming from.

A respectful, cooperative relationship will not only cool tempers when they flare, but as an added bonus helps both sides feel comfortable in the other's territory. That can lead to hot tips and a pipeline to local newsmakers.

"There's nothing wrong with sharing resources (with the talk talent)," says Condace Pressley, assistant program director at WSB-AM in Atlanta. There might be times a hard-to-reach source will call the talk show to vent. Ask the board-ops to give you a heads-up so you can tape that segment and pull some bites. "That's an opportunity, especially in small cities where you don't have the kind of resources we have at WSB in Atlanta, to get some fresh tape," she says.

Oftentimes talk shows will get tips on good stories, so use the host as a resource. And, Shelley adds, it's nice when your talk guy gives your reporters a little of his airtime to explain the big story of the day. "We all have to work together to further the audience's understanding of a story. That's what it's all about," he says.

Know the Facts

Another good way to quiet the riot when a verbal melee breaks out is to make sure your staff is well-armed to handle any debate. "Know your stuff, and be prepared with information to back you up," says John Matthews, news director at WMAL-AM in Washington.

Matthews sets newsroom policies on hot-button stories so staff members have answers when they get heat about how a subject was covered. "On a case-by-case basis, we'll determine what our stance will be in presenting the story to the public," he says. "Not an editorial stance, but in terms of how we phrase things or how we're going to do things."

For example, was it a spy plane that landed in China, or a surveillance aircraft? Are those protesters pro-life or anti-abortion? Just make sure you don't play favorites when you set policies, Matthews says. "Either please everybody or piss everybody off."

At KMOX-AM in St. Louis, news director John Butler says the best way to quiet detractors is to "clean up your act." Make sure your stories are balanced and fair. Check and recheck your facts. "Do the best job you can and present both sides of the story," he says.

Of course, you can choose to ignore the critics too. Chris Little, news director at KFWB-AM in Los Angeles, and his staff do just that. "We might discuss it occasionally amongst ourselves, but it's never really a topic that goes much further than 60 seconds," he says. Quite often his staff isn't even aware of the criticism. "We're usually listening to the competition, anyway, and not really paying attention to what our talk guy is saying."

Still, criticism can sting, and it's important that news directors build confidence in the newsroom. "Reassure them," says Shelley. "Tell them that this stuff is going to happen and they did a great job and don't worry about it."

For Bell, confidence comes from within. "If I'm going to do my best, I really don't care if someone out there hates me," he says. "I just know I have to be true to myself and what we know to be our standards of how we do our jobs."

Matthews sees the criticism as a good thing, keeping newspeople on their toes in terms of maintaining that fine line of non-partisanship. "The complaints are never going to go away," he says. "But as long as we do our job correctly, that's the most important thing."—Lauren Rooney is a freelance writer and a reporter-anchor for WWKL-FM in Harrisburg, PA.

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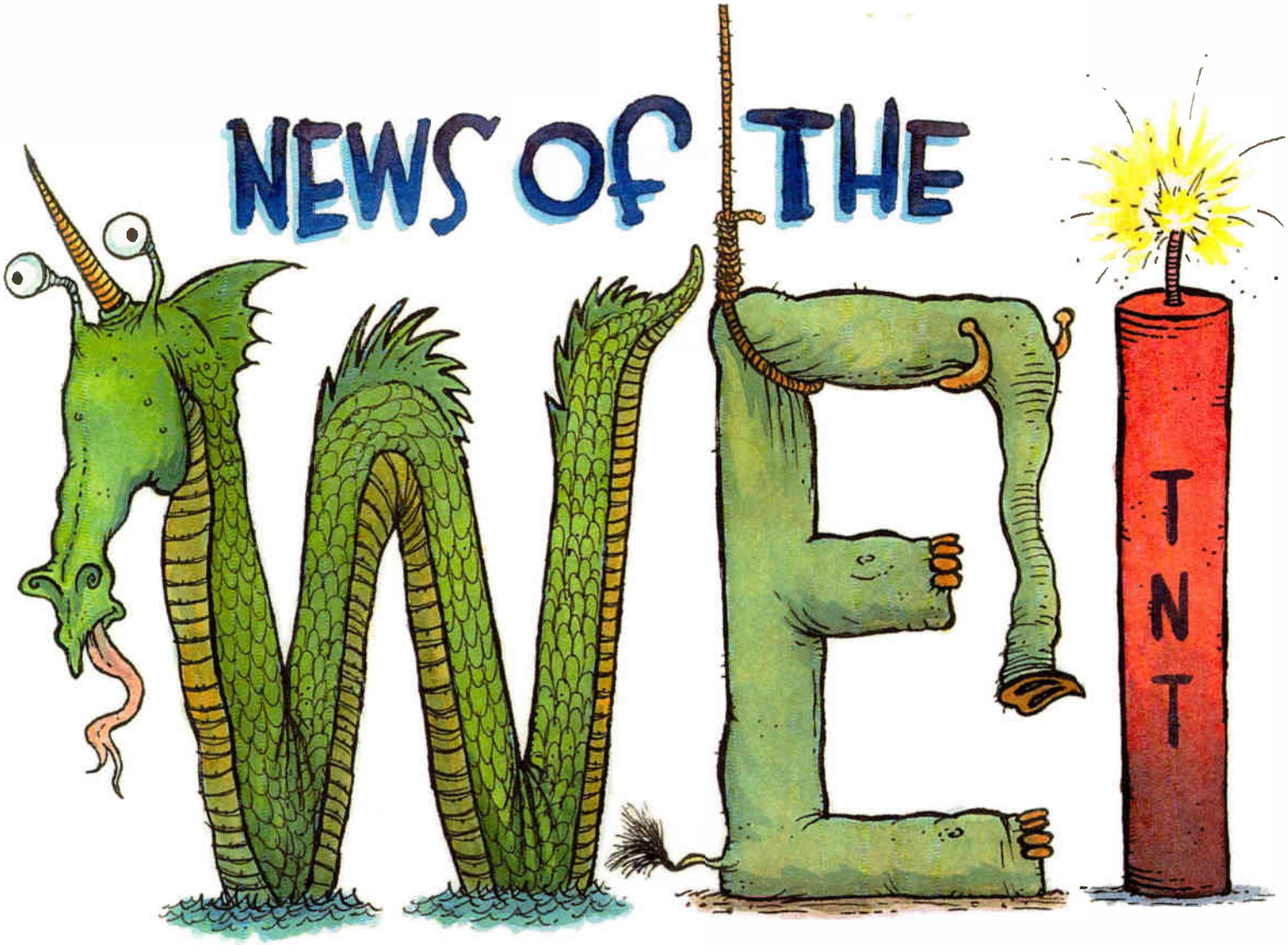

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At first, it appeared to be just another typical murder in Baltimore. Mark Miller didn't think much of it, figuring the apparent robbery gone wrong would provide some forgettable filler for WBAL-AM. Miller, now the station's news director, recalls that the story got stranger as the details surfaced.

"It turned out to be one of the most bizarre stories we've ever had to report on," recalls Miller, who was no stranger to news of the absurd. In the early 1980s, he was dogged by sightings of Chesapeake Chessie, the Chesapeake Bay version of the Loch Ness Monster.

But Chessie didn't hold a candle to Baltimore's newest morgue resident.

"It was a decapitation murder, which gave it a little more sensationalism," Miller says. "And when we started asking questions about who this woman was..." (Cue sounds of uncontrollable laughter breaking through the silence of the station.)"She was Madam Rose the fortuneteller, or something like that," Miller says. "When the cop said 'fortuneteller,' everybody broke up. I guess she wasn't that good in her profession."

If that seems odd, hold on to your steno pads and microphones, ladies and gentlemen. You're about to enter the broadcast theater of the bizarre, where things are even more head-scratchingly strange.

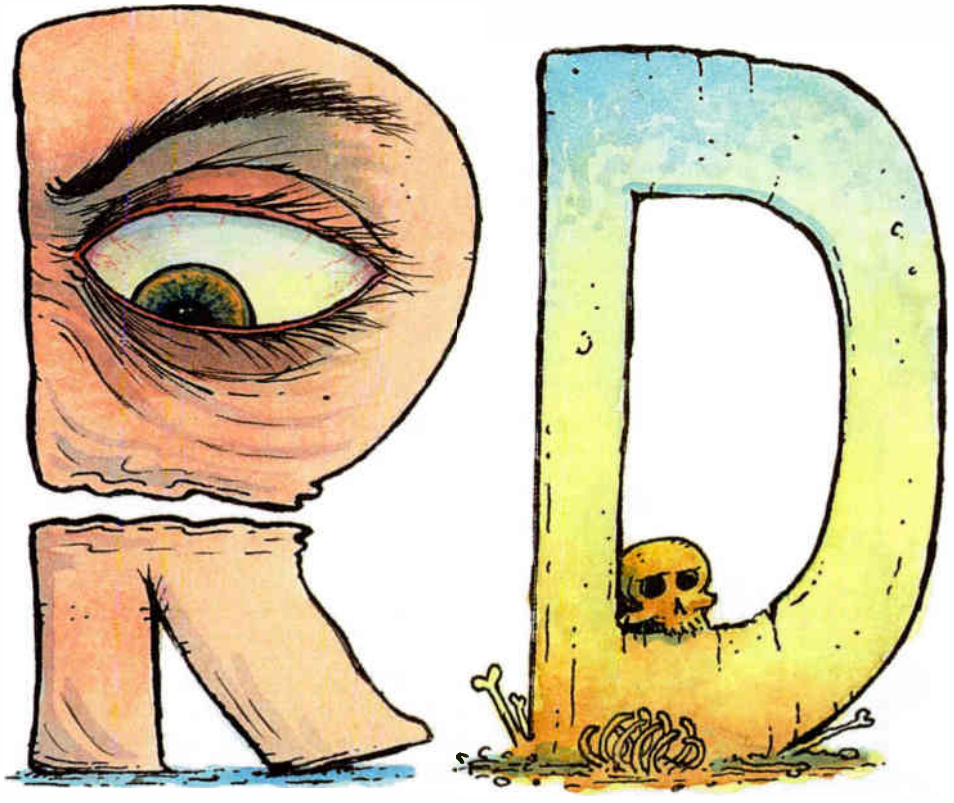
Elephants and Cadavers and Elephant Cadavers

Crown Demetria Kalodimos the queen of craziness. During her career, the anchor at WSMV-TV in Nashville, TN, has had two huge bouts with jaw-dropping journalism.

About 10 years ago, Kalodimos did a follow-up on an event she read about in "Ripley's Believe It or Not." In the early 1900s, an elephant named Mary was

By Cameron McGaughy

Illustrations by Dave Clark



in the traveling Sparks circus. When the circus went through the East Tennessee town of Erwin, there had been a parade to drum up interest.

"While the procession was moving through town, someone threw a watermelon rind," Kalodimos says. "Mary went for it, and in the process crushed her trainer in front of the parade crowd. She then went berserk, according to legend. Some say she attacked others; no one really knows for sure."

When it was all over, the locals decided Mary had to be punished. But no one had a gun big enough to shoot an elephant. They considered electrocution, but came up with a logical alternative: Because it was a railroad town, there was a derrick nearby. And a day or two later, they decided to hang Mary for her crime, with the other elephants forced to bear witness.

Townspeople still hang their heads in shame. "To this day it's the bizarre, dark story that has put the town on the map," Kalodimos says. "I was surprised that there was still that much sentiment about it when we got there. We never realized there were still so many strong feelings and, among some, a sense of shame. It's pretty bizarre."

But true. Kalodimos tracked down a man with the one existing picture of the incident.

"There is one picture of the dead elephant hanging from her makeshift gallows. We found the grandson of the man who took it," she says. "He remembered his grandfather telling him about taking the picture and how the first chain broke and they had to string her up a second time, and she kind of hung there for the whole town to see."

But that wasn't any more bizarre than "Last Rights," the story that won WSMV an IRE award in 1995.

Kalodimos discovered that for two decades, the University of Tennessee was using some questionable practices in its medical research facility. Researchers were taking dead bodies to an anthropology farm and allowing them to decay in various environmental conditions for the sake of forensic research.

"They would throw them out on fields to see how long it takes for them to decay. It was crazy," Kalodimos says. "We found out they were using homeless people, John Does and people who never gave consent for their bodies to be used for research."

Even more stunning, the report revealed, was that about 10 of the bodies were those of war veterans, prompting the Veterans Administration to reclaim the bodies for proper burial. The report also led to a change in state law: The city's medical examiner suspended the practice following the report, and laws were changed to increase the amount of time bodies could be claimed before being sent to the facility.

"The guy who directs the research hates our guts to this day," Kalodimos says. "I couldn't believe it, but apparently we were the first people to really ask tough questions about it."

Blue (Light) Wedding Bells

The weirdest story Dan Shelley ever had to cover, thankfully for him, had no bloodshed. His story took place under the watchful eye of God—and Kmart. At KTTS-FM in 1990, Shelley (now news director at WTMJ-AM in Milwaukee) got to witness the world's first Kmart wedding.

It all started when a woman who worked as a checker at the Springfield, MO, store met a customer who was going through her line to buy motor oil. The rest, of course, is history: He chatted her up, they started dating and they eventually decided to marry.

"But because they had met at cash register number four at this Kmart," Shelley says, "they decided they should get married at cash register number four."

So they brought in a preacher and a singer with a boombox that blared recorded piano music. The couple stood in front of the cash register, and under the store's signature flashing blue light.

"This was quite a little event," Shelley remembers. "Shoppers...were kind of gawking. Some even stopped and participated in the ceremony. The couple

found it very amusing; they were quite enthralled with all the attention they were getting. A lot of people laughed at them upon hearing the story, but they were good sports about it."

Shelley asked the bride about her original encounter with her future husband: "She said, 'He thought I was the Blue Light Special that day.'"

But apparently the bride forgot to put in her fresh blue light batteries: The couple divorced after six months.

Poor Lady...

Trying to kill your son with a crowbar is strange enough. But while reporting on the dad last December, Marci Natale—a reporter/anchor at WABI-TV in Bangor, ME—quickly discovered that strangeness ran in the family.

"The reason this man tried to kill his son was because the son was a zoophile," she recalls.

We'll spare dear readers from reaching for their Webster's (it ain't there, anyway): Zoophiles are people who like animals a bit too much.

"The son's dog was this older female German shepherd, and he called her Lady," Natale says. "And he would refer to her as his real wife, as though she was his equal. He actually introduced the dog to people as his wife."

During the father's trial, there was a holdup in court because the son wanted to bring his dog-slash-wife to the sentencing: "He felt he needed her support to get through the outcome."

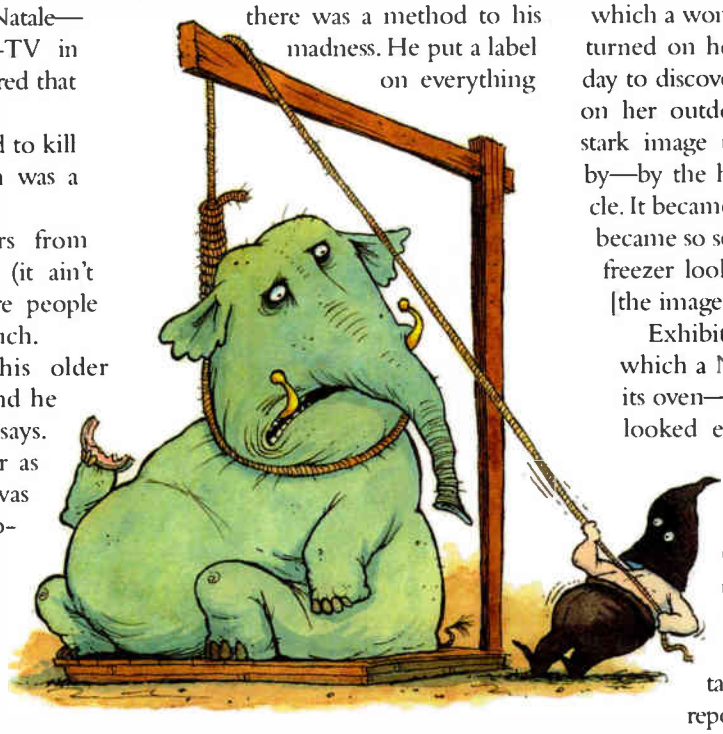
The judge wouldn't allow it, so the 38-year-old son never showed up. "But he wrote a letter to court saying there was nothing wrong with the way he feels, that he is in love with Lady just as anybody would be in love with a human," Natale says, adding the father is currently serving a nine-month jail sentence.

"The father was just devastated that his son was doing this. After the sentencing, he was asked if he came to peace with it and accepted his son, and he said, 'No. What he does is wrong and I don't regret trying to kill him at all.' It was weird working those soundbites in."

Talking Trash

Ed Kruger of Wycoff, MN, died in 1989 at age 91, but his legend lives on. That's what happens when you never throw anything away. After Kruger's death, townspeople turned his house and grocery store into Ed's Museum, a shrine to the man's painstakingly detailed life. KARE-TV reporter Boyd Huppert picked up the story nine years later.

"There was so much junk in his house," Huppert says, [that] "it took a few years to get through everything, and they're still going through some stuff, like his shoes. And as they started going through his things, they realized there was a method to his madness. He put a label on everything to explain what it was, which turned out to be really helpful when they turned it into a museum. He saved everything from when he was a kid."



And when Huppert says everything, he means it: all of Kruger's toys, his trash, his gold teeth, his gallstones, receipts, everything. The man had every *Life* magazine from 1938 to 1972, every *TV Guide* from 1969 to 1984, every *Reader's Digest* from 1952 to 1974, and every issue of *Cat Fancy*. Speaking of cats...

"We drove two hours to do this story based on one fact: We found out this man had put the body of his beloved pet into a cardboard box labeled 'Sammy the Cat, September 16, 1986.' One of the women who helps run the museum said no one was brave enough to open the box. We knew he had saved everything, but the fact that he saved his dead cat in a box was good enough for us to do the story."

Religious Refrigerators, Saintly Cinnamon Buns and One Scary Reunion

Say what? Yes, Al Tompkins has seen it all. The instructor at The Poynter Institute saw many oddities while directing the news at WSMV in Nashville.

Exhibit 1: "Frost-Free Jesus," in which a woman in nearby Murfreesboro turned on her outdoor porch light one day to discover the perfect image of Jesus on her outdoor freezer. "It was such a stark image that people started driving by—by the hundreds—to see this miracle. It became quite the spectacle, and she became so self-conscious about how her freezer looked that she cleaned it, and [the image] went away."

Exhibit 2: "The Nun Bun," in which a Nashville bakery opened up its oven—and out came a muffin that looked exactly like Mother Teresa.

"They ended up shellacking the muffin, and they called it the 'Nun Bun.' Once again, people flocked to the bakery to see it. It became quite famous."

But perhaps Exhibit 3 takes the prize. Tompkins sent a reporter to cover a flying school for missionaries run by the Mooney Aircraft Company, which trains missionaries who need to land on rough grass or airstrips in remote countries.

When the reporter started looking into it, he found an even better story: Some of the missionaries the company was training were headed to South America on the 25th anniversary of their mission's last visit to a particular Amazon jungle village.

"When [the earlier group] went down there 25 years prior, they were summarily murdered and eaten by a cannibalistic tribe," Tompkins says. "[The new group was] going to be the first to go back and meet up with the tribe. And we wanted to be there. It

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Again.

For the third consecutive year, NBC News has won the prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award for Overall Excellence.

Congratulations *Nightly News with Tom Brokaw*, awarded Best Newscast; and *DatelineNBC*, winner of four awards – more than any other newsmagazine. Special congratulations to *DatelineNBC* for winning the 2001 Unity Award, presented to news organizations that celebrate diversity.

No wonder more Americans watch NBC News than any other news organization in the world.

NBC NEWS

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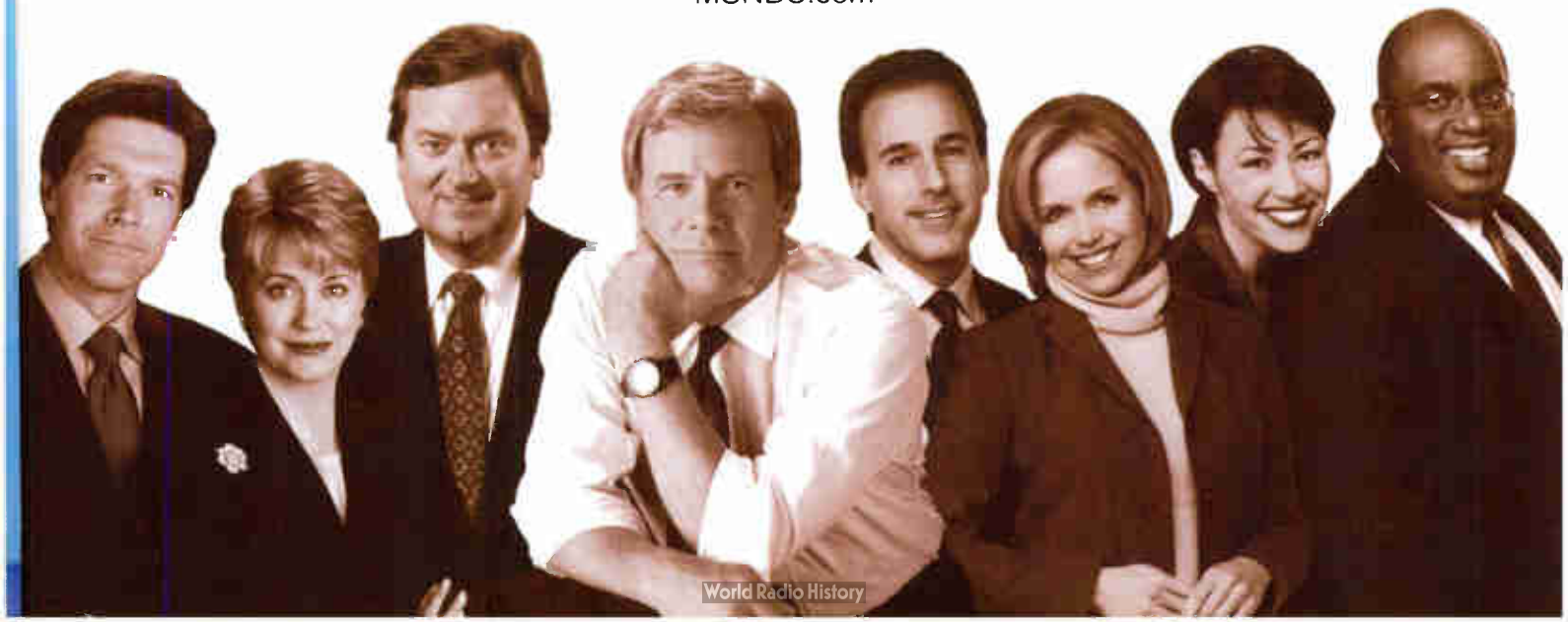


turned out to be a wonderful tale about this tribe of Indians and how their tribal culture had been shamed by the terrible confrontation. The current missionaries actually talked with people who remembered the attack. It was really a fascinating story."

Blubber Blast

Forget priestly pastries, bestiality boys and punished pachyderms. The granddaddy of all strange news, the story that has all others falling to their knees and bowing in inferiority, is without a doubt the infamous exploding whale tale, a story many mistake for urban legend.

It all started in November 1970 when a dead, 45-foot, 8-ton Pacific gray whale washed ashore on a beach near Florence, OR. It was up to the Oregon State Highway Division to solve this problem, one that was quickly developing a rancid odor. But no one was really sure what to do. Bury it? Nah, it'll just get uncovered. Cut it up? Burn it? Heck no (remember that stench?).

Nope, the logical answer, stupid, was dynamite. Twenty cases, or half a ton, to be precise.

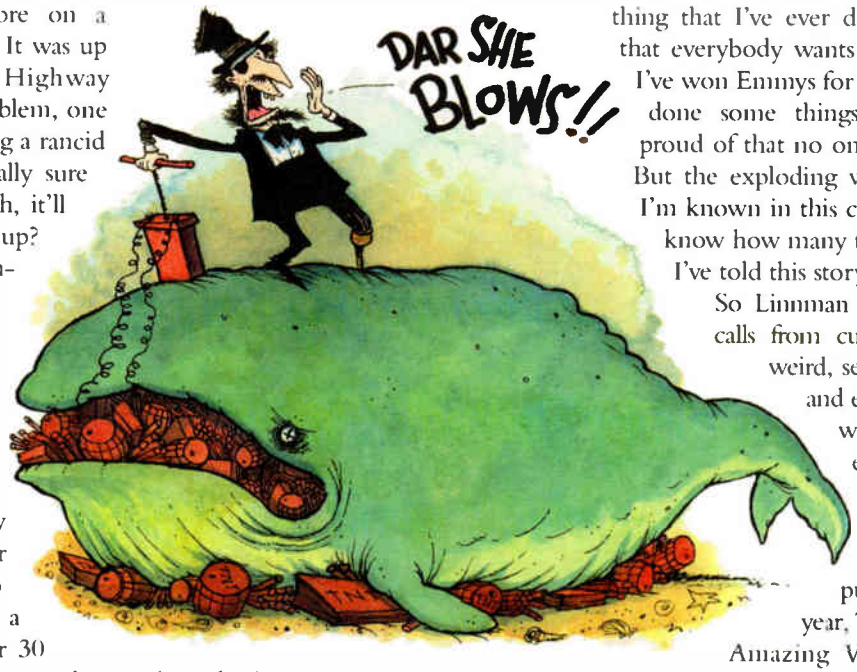
"When we put it on the air the first time we thought it was a pretty bizarre story, but I never dreamed it would be so bizarre it would take on a life of its own and last for 30 years," says Paul Linnman, who reported the story for KATU-TV in Portland and is currently an anchor for the station. "I don't pretend to understand what's kept the interest alive in it for 30 years, especially in these times. We save whales; we don't blow them up. But I remember that day being very interested in seeing what it was going to look like."

The hope, according to the highway engineer in charge of the blast, was that the resultant small pieces would either disappear into the ocean (the dynamite was placed on the leeward side of the whale) or be fodder for seagulls and other scavengers.

"Like anyone else watching the video, we couldn't wait to see what was going to happen," Linnman says. "They moved us back about a thousand yards from the detonation site and set up a signal system so we would know when to be rolling."

The signal came, and Linnman and filmer Doug Brazil both started rolling their cameras, as they and 75 bystanders watched in amazement. Linnman's report described it perfectly: "The blast blasted blubber beyond all believable bounds."

"If you've seen the video, you can hear Doug laughing," Linnman says. "But all of a sudden we realized this stuff was starting to hit the ground around us. It was making a very hollow thud sound, and the bigger the piece, the greater the sound. We suddenly realized we needed to get out of there."



So they started running down the sand dune separating the beach from the parking area, when suddenly...

"We ran right into a car getting flattened," Linnman recalls. "We saw this huge tabletop-piece of blubber, which would weigh thousands of pounds because it's so dense, flatten that car and blow glass every which way. Then we just stopped and froze. We had no way of knowing which way to run."

They were never struck by any big pieces, but everyone on the scene—after a chaotic scramble for their lives—was decorated in small mammal chunks.

"This was back in those days where we wore jackets and ties and trench coats to cover stories," Linnman says. "We looked down at our clothing and the beige was now pink. We were just permeated with flesh and blubber and blood from this whale. And the smell was beyond all description. It was overwhelming. We got back into the small aircraft to go home, and the pilot got ill smelling us."

And all of it, save for the frightening few moments after the initial blast, was caught on camera.

"The requests for copies of this story have never stopped in 30 years. It's phenomenal," Linnman says. "It's the only thing that I've ever done in my career that everybody wants to ask me about. I've won Emmys for my work, and I've done some things I'm particularly proud of that no one ever asks about. But the exploding whale? That's how I'm known in this community. I don't know how many thousands of times I've told this story."

So Linnman continues to field calls from curious fans of the weird, send tapes to safety and emergency seminar workers, and has even proposed a book on the incident that he hopes to see published. And last year, The World's Most Amazing Videos TV show bought the tape for $15,000.

"It's a book with alternating chapters," Linnman says. "One set tells the story of the whale that day and all of the years since, and the other set of chapters tells the stories of people who I thought were more impressive than the whale, people I have covered who have blown me away."—Cameron McGaughy is a freelance writer based in Arlington, VA.

News of the Weird, Part II

What was the strangest story you ever covered? E-mail your tales of absurdity to briannaw@rtnda.org and they might make our sequel.

Congratulations to

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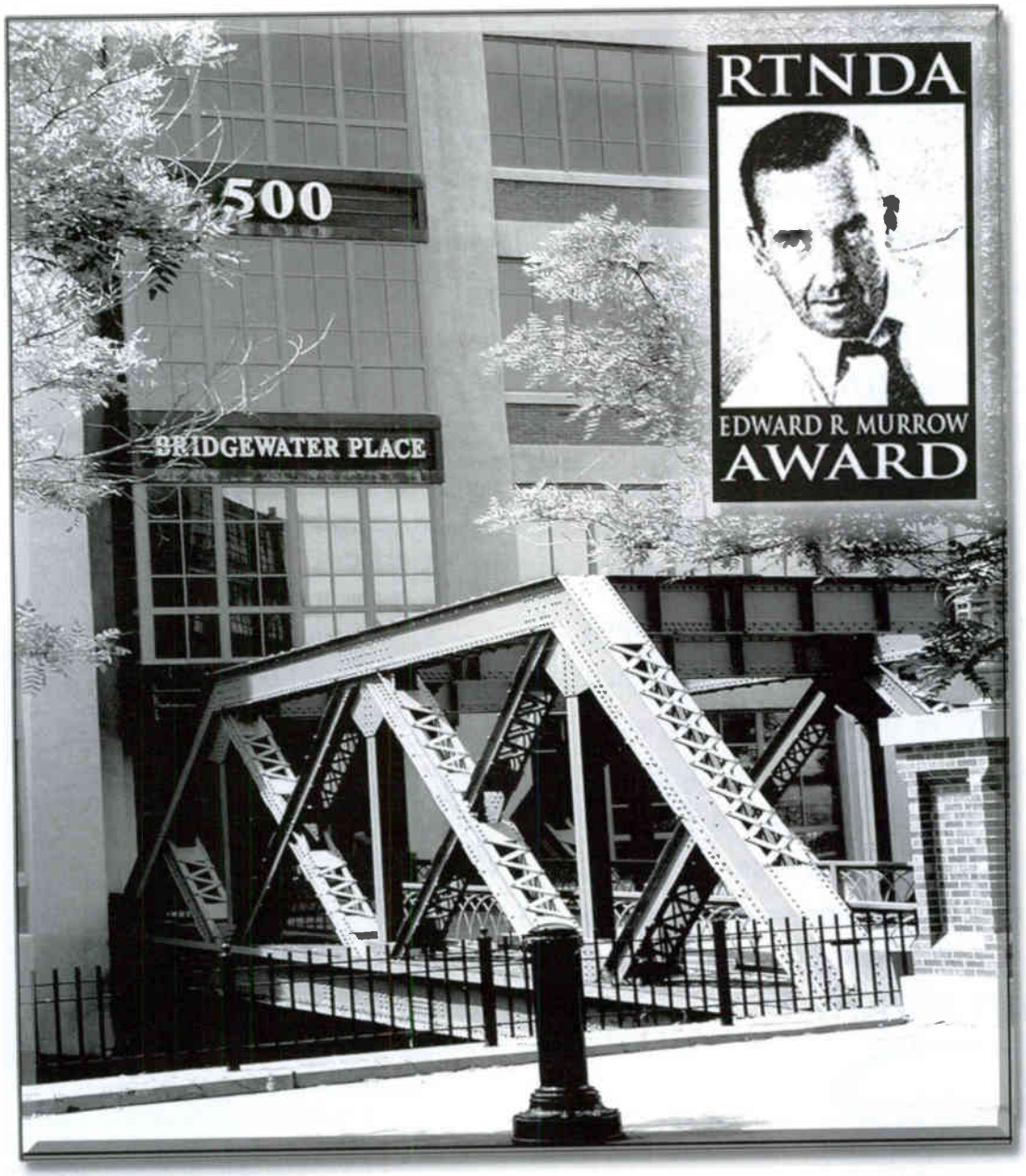
Edward R.Murrow Award
Overall Excellence 2001



CLEAR CHANNEL RADIO
Syracuse, New York

HERE'S THE BEST OF THE BEST

2001 Edward R. M

If your station is listed on the following pages, you're in elite company. This year, 54 news organizations won 69 national Edward R. Murrow Awards, which have been presented annually by the Radio-Television News Directors Association since 1971. RTNDA received 2,285 entries from 548 news organizations in the 2001 competition.

It's always enjoyable to review the winners each year. We found great investigative work, touching features, compelling video, awesome sound and sharp-looking web sites. We've highlighted a few winners in particular on the following pages, though any station that won a national Murrow deserves great praise.

You can see all the winners at an awards ceremony on September 12 during RTNDA2001. Don't miss it!

2001 RTNDA

Honor winners of the Edward R. Murrow Awards at the awards ceremony on September 12 during RTNDA2001. For more information, visit rtnda.org/convention/2001.shtml.

Network

Radio

Overall Excellence
CBS Radio News

Newscast
CBS Radio News
CBS World News Roundup

Spot News Coverage
ABC News Radio
Violence in Israel

Continuing Coverage
CBS Radio News
The Recount

Feature Reporting
ABC News Radio
Non-Emergencies in the ER

News Series
Youth Radio
Making the Grade

News Documentary
CBS Radio News
Eye on the Dream

Use of Sound
ESPN Radio
A Day in the Life of the Subway Series

Writing
CBS Radio News
Sidebar: Bill Whitney

From flying bullets and numerous explosions in Ramallah to the debacle of election night to the controversy over Elian Gonzalez, CBS Radio News distinguished itself as one of the premier organizations in network radio. Its reporters excelled in explaining complicated issues, humanizing stories and taking a fresh approach to the news. CBS' writers proved strong in everything from newscasts to the individual efforts of commentators like Bill Whitney.

urrow Awards

Television

Overall Excellence
NBC News

Newscast
NBC News
NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw

Spot News Coverage
CNN
Belgrade Uprising

Continuing Coverage
CNN
Elian Gonzalez Coverage

Investigative Reporting
Dateline NBC
The Paper Chase

Feature Reporting
Dateline NBC
War and Remembrance

Sports Reporting
Dateline NBC
The Gathering Storm

News Series
CNN
Sierra Leone Coverage

News Documentary
CBS News 48 Hours
The Enemy Within

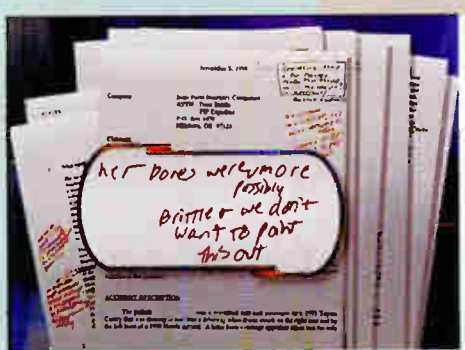
Use of Video
Dateline NBC
A Killer Among Us

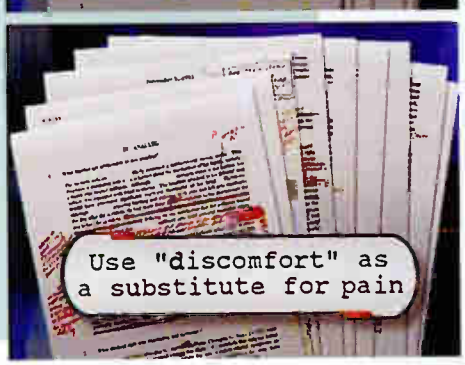
Writing
CBS News
Everybody Has a Story

Web Site
ABC News
abcnews.com

What really goes on behind the scenes when an insurance company challenges a medical claim after an automobile accident? Acting on a tip, Dateline began looking into paper review companies—operations that review medical claims for insurers to combat fraud—used by State Farm Insurance. After a 15-month investigation that involved interviewing more than 250 people, review of more than 70,000 pages of documents, and computer searches of court files in more than 100 courthouses, Dateline exposed a system rife with fraud and abuse. "The Paper Chase" found that reviews were consistently slanted toward the denial of claims, that people with no medical training were writing "doctors' opinions," and that only a few states either regulate or ban paper reviews.

Executives of two large paper review businesses employed by State Farm squirmed in their seats as Dateline correspondent John Larson presented them with documents from their companies containing forged doctors' signatures and citing bogus databases.





For the first time this year, there was a web site category in the Murrow Awards. Fifty-five sites entered and there were five winners, including this one from abcnews.com.

Elian Gonzalez: Associated Press; screen grabs courtesy Dateline NBC

Local Radio

Large Market

Overall Excellence
KIRO-AM, Seattle

Newscast
CFTR-AM, Toronto
History on Hold

Spot News Coverage
KMOX-AM, St. Louis
Governor's Plane Crash

Continuing Coverage
WTAM-AM, Cleveland
Murder of a Mom-To-Be

Investigative Reporting
WNYC-AM, New York
NYPD Strip Searches: The Illegal Practice Continues

Feature Reporting
KIRO-AM, Seattle
Experience Music Project

Sports Reporting
WBAL-AM, Baltimore
Jockeying for Status

News Series
KFBK-AM/FM, Sacramento, CA
Sacramento Valley of Meth

News Documentary
KCBS-AM, San Francisco
Hired Hands

Use of Sound
KYW-AM, Philadelphia
NSYNC NSANITY

Writing
KIRO-AM, Seattle
Letter to Bill Gates

Web Site
KTRH Newsradio, Houston
www.ktrh.com

Small Market

Overall Excellence
WSYR-AM, Syracuse, NY

Newscast
VOCM Radio, St. Johns, NF
VOCM News

Spot News Coverage
KFDI-AM/FM, Wichita, KS
Bombardier Crash

Continuing Coverage
WGY-AM, Latham, NY
The Amadou Diallo Trial

Investigative Reporting
WIVK-FM, Knoxville, TN
Oliver Springs Murders

Feature Reporting
WATD-FM, Marshfield, MA
The Possible Dreams Auction

Sports Reporting
KVOR-AM, Colorado Springs, CO
Darkness, Silence and Football

News Series
WOI-AM, Ames, IA
Vietnam: A 25th Anniversary Anthology

News Documentary
KCSD-FM, Sioux Falls, SD
German Prisoners of War in South Dakota

Use of Sound
WMSI-FM, Jackson, MS
Neshoba County Fair

Writing
WBHM-FM, Birmingham, AL
The Un-Rebels and Hands-On Experience

Web Site
WSJM-AM, St. Joseph, MI
www.wsjm.com

When he first reported on Vietnam, WOI-AM news director Rick Fredericksen was a young Marine working for American Forces Vietnam Network. More than two decades later, Fredericksen revisited the event, exploring the war's lingering impact on Iowa in this three-part series that judges called a "sometimes moving, sometimes witty, always powerful chronicle." Blended with historical audio, current interviews and Vietnam-era music, the documentary provides a new perspective to the stereotypes associated with Vietnam veterans.

To further address the needs of its community, WOI had a call-in show with Vietnam veterans discussing health and other issues, and broadcast a forum with a former ambassador who played a leading role in welcoming Vietnamese refugees to Iowa. The station later edited material from this series into a one-hour Memorial Day tribute.

Free food and a retired Bill Clinton was the recipe for a sixth national Murrow Award for Ed Perry, owner/reporter at WATD. While on Martha's Vineyard covering the ex-president for the Associated Press, Perry stumbled upon a sign that read, "Come and cover 'The Possible Dreams Auction'!" "There was nothing going on with Clinton and the food was free, so I signed up for a press pass," says Perry. Instead of selling a Clinton story to AP, Perry sent an award-winning story back to his own station.

The piece brings listeners to a celebrity-packed auction house where generally unobtainable things sell for large amounts of money. This event raised about $300,000 for Martha's Vineyard Community Services. The money goes to help the usually thriving community of Martha's Vineyard, which becomes poverty-stricken in the winter months.

As the auctioneer bellows in the background, Perry asks the winning bidders why they paid $65,000 for a personal concert by Carly Simon and $5,500 for a tie worn by President Clinton. He also interviews Simon herself and an elated Diane Sawyer.

Bidders paid $28,000 for lunch with Diane Sawyer and her husband, Mike Nichols, and $65,000 for a personal concert by Carly Simon.

Auction by Ralph Stewart, courtesy Martha's Vineyard Times. Sugerman courtesy KCBS-AM

For the sixth time, reporter Mike Sugerman won a national Murrow Award for KCBS-AM. In "Hired Hands," a documentary, he brings listeners into the world of Bay Area day laborers. Most of the workers are illegal immigrants who don't fill out any paperwork, don't pay income tax, aren't covered by workers' compensation, and don't contribute to Social Security. Through interviews and powerful storytelling, Sugerman creates a vivid picture of the workers and how they live. He talks with them through interpreter/writer Rose Arrieta, and asks economists, lawmakers and advocates for undocumented workers what impact these "hired hands" have on the community. In the last half of the documentary, Sugerman meets a 16-year-old Latino boy named Jose who has crossed the border 30 times for work since his mother died and his father abandoned him. Sugerman also spends some time with "Sister T" (Trinitas Hernandez), a nun who provides him with a tour of the laborers' cramped homes and busy hiring halls, where the workers wait to be called upon for a day's labor.

Local Television

Large Market

Overall Excellence
KARE-TV, Minneapolis

Newscast
WFTV, Orlando, FL
Eyewitness News at 11

Spot News Coverage
WBMA-TV, Birmingham, AL
Tornado 2000

Continuing Coverage
WBNS-TV, Columbus, OH
Black Mold

Investigative Reporting
KHOU-TV, Houston
Treading on Danger

Feature Reporting
KCNC-TV, Denver
Erin's Life—10 Years Later

Sports Reporting
WOOD-TV, Grand Rapids, MI
The Shot Heard Round West Michigan

News Series
KCBS-TV, Los Angeles
California's Billion Dollar Ripoff

News Documentary
WTHR-TV, Indianapolis
In the Child's Best Interest

Use of Video
KOMO-TV, Seattle
Class of 2000

Writing
KHOU-TV, Houston
Lauck 2000

Web Site
WFLA-TV, Tampa, FL
www.tbo.com

Small Market

Overall Excellence
WNDU-TV, South Bend, IN

Newscast
WOKR-TV, Rochester, NY
NewsSource 13 at 6 p.m.

Spot News Coverage
WTVC-TV, Chattanooga, TN
Tennga School Bus/Train Collision

Continuing Coverage
WSLS-TV, Roanoke, VA
The Disappearance of Tara Munsey

Investigative Reporting
WBBH-TV, Fort Myers, FL
Fire Code Investigation

Feature Reporting
WNDU-TV, South Bend, IN
Little River Steam Engine

Sports Reporting
WOWT-TV, Omaha, NE
Senior League

News Series
KEZI-TV, Eugene, OR
No Entry

News Documentary
KVBC-TV, Las Vegas
Honor Thy Father

Use of Video
KVUE-TV, Austin, TX
Rude Drivers

Writing
KOTV, Tulsa, OK
The Oklahoma Traveler

Web Site
KXLY-TV, Spokane, WA
www.kxly.com

Uptight. Discourteous. Terrible. Scary. That's how people described fellow drivers in this KVUE-TV report on rude drivers and road rage.

Photojournalist Josh Wade mounted a camera on his car's taillight and drove Austin's highways, which are strained beyond capacity. The camera showed cars drove as close as a mere few feet away—likely the reason why Austin leads Texas in rear-end collisions. Wade captured on tape drivers racing to the front of a backup, slamming on their brakes and then forcing their way in, cutting others off. The piece showed enough cars running red lights at busy intersections that it's surprising no accidents were caught on tape.

The story shows drivers doing everything from staring off into space to eating to tapping their fingers on the steering wheel to fiddling with the radio. Everything, that is, but paying attention to the road.

Reporter Joel Grover won his fourth consecutive Murrow Award this year at KCBS-TV for an exposé that prompted an unprecedented statewide crackdown on medical care. Nearly five million poor and low-income Californians depend on Medi-Cal, a $20 billion state program, for medical care. In a series of reports, KCBS revealed how many doctors were defrauding the Medi-Cal program, costing taxpayers an estimated $1 billion a year.

After spending five months on the streets of Los Angeles, Grover and his team found that many medical clinics and doctors recruited patients from poor areas and paid them illegal kickbacks so the doctors could bill the state for medical services that were never provided. KCBS also learned that the California State Department of Health was aware of the criminal activity, but had done little to stop it.

As a result of the series and the crackdown by the governor, authorities shut down 12 of the 13 clinics featured; the state cut off Medi-Cal payments to more than 200 doctors, saving taxpayers $75 million a year; and the state legislature passed a law aimed at curbing Medi-Cal fraud.

Anna Werner, David Raziq and Chris Henao ignited a firestorm last year over Firestone tires. What began as an investigative story on Houston's KHOU-TV in February 2000 has led to a massive recall, a government investigation and a severing of the decades-old relationship between Firestone and Ford.

Meanwhile, KHOU's investigative trio has made an impressive showing in journalism awards this year. In addition to winning the national Murrow Award for investigative reporting, the group also brought home an Emmy, a Peabody, a Scripps Howard Award, a National Headliner Award, a Sigma Delta Chi Excellence in Journalism Award, the duPont-Columbia University Award and a George Polk Award.

Medi-Cal photo courtesy KCBS-TV car crash photo courtesy KHOU-TV french fry photo courtesy KVUE-TV

HOW FOUR TOP NEWS ORGANIZATIONS CELEBRATE THE DIVERSITY OF THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE.

2001 RTNDA/Unity Awards

This year marks the second year of the RTNDA/Unity Awards, and already there's a repeat winner. KRON-TV in San Francisco distinguished itself last year with a two-part series that exposed some of the challenges of covering the diverse Bay area, and then turned the camera around to spotlight race relations in its own newsroom. This year, the station won for a collection of four features.

Three other news outlets—Dateline NBC, National Public Radio and KPCC-FM—took home honors this year as well. The awards will be presented on September 15 at RTNDA2001 in Nashville, TN.

KPCC-FM won an RTNOA/Unity Award for seven stories that show the diversity of Southern California. Shown here are (standing, L to R) reporter Adolfo Guzman Lopez, news director Paul Glickman, Larry Mantle's AirTalk associate producer, Julia Posey, Larry Mantle's AirTalk host Larry Mantle, (seated, L to R) reporter Rachael Myrow, and Larry Mantle's AirTalk producer, Jackie Oclaray.

Radio Station

KPCC-FM, Pasadena, CA

"L.A. Storefront Churches," "Korean Christians," "Day of the Dead," "Clinton to Vietnam," "Latino Actors," "Latino-Armenian Tension in Glendale," "Indian Health"

Staff: Paul Glickman, Lance Harper, Adolfo Guzman Lopez, Rachael Myrow, Jackie Oclaray, Julia Posey, John Rabe, Ilsa Setziol

These seven stories show the diversity of Southern California. Some of the issues covered include the lack of roles for Latino actors, the Americanization of the Latino holiday Day of the Dead, and health care challenges facing Native Americans. The many soundbites from the community, such as the voices of a Korean pastor, Latino actors and a Native American physician, add to the diverse flavor of KPCC's news/talk format.

Judges' Comments: "A clearly outstanding example of going into the community, and learning and sharing about the diverse people and issues in the Los Angeles area. Excellent use of sound with local folks. They [reporters] obviously spend time in their own community."

Network TV

Dateline NBC

"Breaking Away," "Pride and Prejudice," "A Matter of Respect," "Family Ties," "Miami Vise," "War and Remembrance"

Staff: Neal Shapiro, Jason Samuels, Bob Calo, Maria Shriver, Annie Ballard, Kort Waddell, Tom Tanquary, Dave Stewart, Rick Mills, Geraldine Moriba Meadows, Marc Rosenwasser, Sara James, Billy Ray, Debbie Goodison, Adrienne Urbina, Elizabeth Ruksznis, Lee Kamlet, John Hockenberry, Paul Greenberg, Fred Staab, Dorothy Anderson, Rich White, Jimmy Williams, Izhar Harpaz, Lisa Hsia, Caroline Ziv, Paul Thiriot, Vic Buccola, Meade Jorgensen, Kerry Sanders, Josh Kuvin, David Ketterling, George Suarez, Josh Weiner, Keith Morrison, Charmian Gilmartin, Robert Brandel, Kavita Maharaj, Mark Falstad, Kyle Eppler, Heidi Hesse, Katherine Gunn

Dateline won for six stories about race and ethnicity. "Breaking Away" focuses on a controversial federal experiment to see if moving poor families to the suburbs can move them out of poverty. "Pride and Prejudice" explains a private experiment that explores unconscious biases Caucasians and African Americans have toward one another. "Family Ties" is a story about 10 Native American siblings abandoned by their

Dateline NBC won the RTNOA/Unity Award for six stories about race and ethnicity, including one about 10 Native American siblings abandoned by their mother, and the couple who adopted them.

KPCC staff photo courtesy KPCC-FM; Dateline image courtesy Dateline NBC

mother, and the couple who adopted them. "Miami Vise" follows the effect Elian Gonzalez had on Miami's Cuban community. "A Matter of Respect" deals with an African American actor who is an innocent victim of racial profiling, and "War and Remembrance" follows a veteran who travels back to Vietnam to meet the daughter of the man he killed during the war.

Judges' Comments: "The judges applaud Dateline for the scope and depth of its stories, which reflect a broad range of issues, situations and emotion. The Dateline entry did the best job of reflecting a more complete human experience as it relates to diversity."

Television Station

KRON-TV, San Francisco

"Color Blind," "Beating the Odds," "Latin Eyes," "Civil Rights Anniversary"

Staff: Mark Berryhill, Craig Franklin, Pam Moore, Pete Wilson, Alex Zanini, Wendy Tokuda, Javier Valencia, Steve Relova, Jeff Piece, Stan Drury, Alex Jonsson, Paola Laverde, Andres Pruna, Belva Davis, and Karyne Holmes

KRON won its second RTNDA/Unity award for a collection of four features. "Beating the Odds," an ongoing, weekly segment, highlights the inspiring accomplishments of low-income, high-risk youths in the Bay Area. The students, most of whom are minorities, are often forced to overcome tremendous obstacles in their personal lives to achieve their educational goals. The segment is also tied to a scholarship fund that viewers can donate to, which helps send these students to college. KRON also explores race issues in "Color Blind," a two-part series on the neurological aspects of perceiving race; "Civil Rights Anniversary," which covers the 45th anniversary of the day Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat; and "Latin Eyes," a weekly program about the richness and diversity of Latin culture.

Judges' Comments: "KRON-TV continues to devote considerable airtime to the rich cultural diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area, precisely matching the criteria for this award. No one shows more of a commitment than KRON, which has expanded its diversity programming since winning in 2000."

The many faces of Bailey's Elementary School.

Network Radio

National Public Radio

"Changing Faces of America" series

Staff: William Craven, Neva Grant, Madeline Brand, Eric Westervelt, Jeffrey Katz, Amy Costello

As part of the "Changing Faces of America" series—dedicated to documenting our increasingly diverse nation—NPR reports on Bailey's Elementary School for the Arts & Sciences, a multicultural school in Falls Church, VA, where 92 percent of the students are not native English speakers. In these three reports on diversity in education, the listener goes into a multicultural classroom to hear from those who live the successes and difficulties of diversity day in and day out. The first two reports explain how the students and teachers work together to bridge the language divide, and the third tells how the students take their newfound knowledge home to their parents.

Judges' Comments: "A perfect score for an entry that really shows the challenges to teachers and students as classrooms become more multicultural and multilingual as a result of new immigration. The reporter showed great skill in developing a rapport with, and the trust of, the young students, which opened the door to insightful soundbites."

ABOVE: KRON anchor Wendy Tokuda (center) hosts "Beating the Odds." RIGHT: These are some of the students featured on KRON-TV's "Beating the Odds," an ongoing, weekly segment that highlights the inspiring accomplishments of low-income, high-risk youths in the Bay Area.

"Beating the Odds" photos courtesy KRON-TV; Bailey's Elementary photos: Paul Gillis

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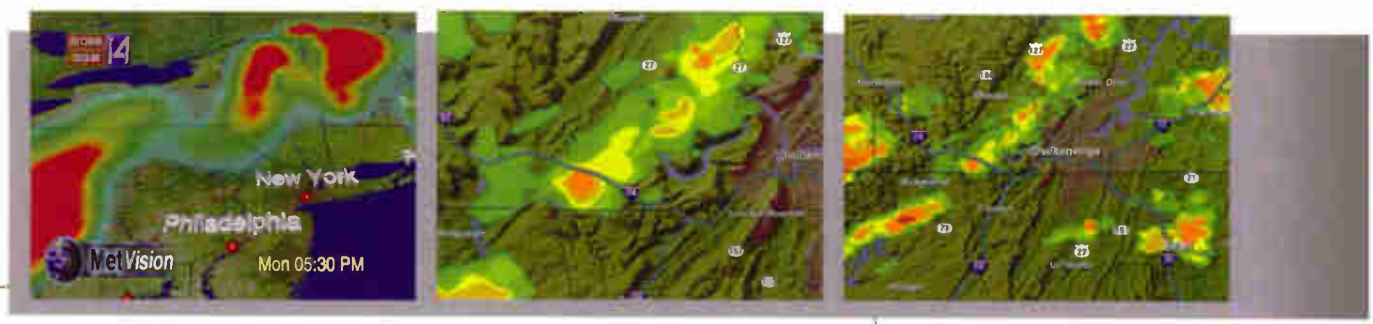

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By Kathleen Kirby

Know the Laws of Noncompetes

No matter which side of the table you're on, it's important to understand the basics of noncompetes.

Noncompete clauses in employment contracts are prevalent in broadcasting. When a radio or television station hires an anchor, for example, the station typically makes a huge investment in the employee's image. Accordingly, management makes every effort to protect its franchise by signing key talent to agreements that hinder them from moving freely to the competition. However, many of those affected by noncompetes—whether talent, employer or prospective employer—are unfamiliar with the relevant law.

A covenant not to compete is an agreement restricting a former employee's ability to engage in certain activities in a particular area for a particular time. The laws governing them vary dramatically from state to state. Some states prohibit such agreements as a matter of public policy, while others apply varying standards of enforceability.

Be Aware of the Basics

Noncompetes are legal in many states, but they have never been popular in the law. Principles of equity and public policy generally favor a person's ability to earn a living. Thus, noncompetes must be drawn narrowly, confined to only terms considered by courts to be the most reasonable and written in terms as favorable as possible to employees. The key to noncompete clauses is in the details. A noncompete should be in writing and part of an employment agreement. There are four areas on which to focus: geographic area, time frame, consideration and a valid business reason for restricting the future activities of the employee. The more defined these areas are, the more likely the noncompete will be enforceable.

Geographic area. Noncompetes must be limited in geographic scope. The smaller the territory, the greater the likelihood the court will uphold territorial limitations as reasonable. Generally, a covenant should not encompass anything greater than the employee's actual contact area. For broadcasters, a good guideline to follow is to limit the area to places where your signal is actually heard and you sell local advertising. This might equate to your Grade B television contour or your 60 dBu radio contour.

Time frame. A covenant not to compete must also be reasonable in temporal scope. While there is no specific time that will be consistently recognized by the courts, restraints on competitive activity for one or two years are typical and have generally been enforced. Restrict the length of time of a noncompete to as short a period as possible.

Consideration. As with any contract, a noncompete must be supported by consideration. Broadly, consideration is a benefit accrued by one party or a detriment suffered by another. To avoid consideration problems, an employer requiring noncompete agreements should notify applicants that signing such an agreement is a prerequisite to employment and should obtain a signed agreement when the applicant accepts an offer.

A frequently contested issue is whether continued employment con-

The right approach to negotiating a noncompete will depend upon the particular circumstances you face and the specifics of your state law.

stitutes adequate consideration. If an employer requires a new hire to sign a noncompete before employment actually begins, no adequacy problem exists—the employment itself constitutes the needed consideration. Sometimes, however, an employer does not require the employee to sign the noncompete before he begins work and later instructs the employee to sign the agreement. Courts have recognized that an employer attempting to impose a noncompete agreement after the employee has accepted a job takes undue advantage of the inequality of the parties. To protect the enforceability of the noncompete in such instances, the employer could offer a promotion or pay increase in exchange for signing. But be careful that this new consideration is more than what the employee is already entitled to receive, such as a normal salary increase.

Valid business reason. Not every interest of an employer is sufficient to warrant enforcement of a noncompete. Anti-competitive employment agreements are enforced only to the extent necessary to protect the employer's legitimate business interests. In the case of news reporters, stations typically cite the "uniqueness of services" (as opposed to disclosure of trade secrets, for instance) to justify enforcement of a restrictive clause. This raises the interesting question of whether a covenant not to compete is enforceable if an employee has a different scope of employment with a new station. Can an on-air personality, for example, go to work for another station in an off-air capacity without violating a noncompete? Unfortunately, the question is not an easy one to answer, and may depend on factors such as the language of the employment contract, the particulars of the market and the positions involved.

The circumstances of termination also may affect the enforceability of a noncompete. Some states specifically hold that noncompetes cannot be enforced if the employee is fired. Some states distinguish between situations in which the employer terminated the employee for cause or without cause. Courts that have enforced noncompetes even when the employee has been fired have reasoned that since the employer "paid" adequate consideration to the employee, and the noncompete otherwise meets the rules for enforceability, the employer is entitled to the benefit of its original bargain. Employees may consider asking that their noncompete be effective only if they voluntarily resign.

Will a Noncompete Be Enforced?

If a former employee has signed a noncompete agreement and then proceeds

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to work for a competitor, the employer has to decide whether to take legal action. That involves deciding whether the person leaving is worth pursuing. The employer's obvious recourse is to go to court to enforce the agreement. But often there are steps you can take short of litigation to solve your problem. Put the new employer on notice about the agreement. The possibility of litigation for tortuous interference with contract may encourage that employer to reassign the employee until the noncompete expires. Before you rattle your saber, however, make sure you have at least an arguably enforceable agreement.

And if you wish competitors to respect your contractual agreements, you probably should do the same for theirs.

From the employee's perspective, a future employer may ask if you have entered into a covenant not to compete, and they are right to do so. Again, a former employer with whom you have a noncompete can sue your current employer if the current employer knew about your noncompete and encouraged you to breach it. If a prospective employer thinks that your earlier noncompete agreement is unenforceable, they may agree to assume your legal expenses if you are sued for breach. Of course, if a prospective employer thinks an earlier noncompete is enforceable, you may not get the job.

More States Are Banning Them Altogether

The national environment is becoming increasingly hostile to noncompetes in the broadcast industry. The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists has given a high priority to contesting noncompete clauses. Earlier this year, AFTRA-backed legislation banning noncompete clauses for on-air talent passed the Illinois legislature, following the success of similar bills in Maine and Massachusetts. Another bill was defeated in North Carolina. California statutory law bans noncompete clauses in all industries, and laws in New York limit noncompete clauses or allow broadcasters to match offers from competitors under certain circumstances.

Remember, just because you have a noncompete it doesn't mean it's going to be enforceable. The question of whether a judge will enforce a noncompete is always iffy. No matter the side of the table on which you are sitting, a few minutes spent with your attorney is advisable.—Kathleen Kirby is an attorney at Wiley, Rein & Fielding in Washington. RTNDA members can find a collection of Kirby's columns on the RTNDA members-only web site at members.rtnda.org.

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By Cory Bergman

It's the Message, Not the Medium

Breaking down the barriers between broadcast and the web requires a change in mindset.

You've read the new mission statements: You're a content company, not a broadcasting company. From the web to wireless, you're a convergence engine.

That's very admirable, but most TV and radio stations must have missed the memo. After all, general managers quickly point out that the web is a financial black hole. News directors say they're simply too busy fulfilling the demands of doing more with less. "What's more important," the argument goes, "TV or the web?"

For newspapers, the answer is easy. With their very survival at stake, the success of both the paper and the web is critical. The threat of imminent demise has a way of clearing the mind.

Meanwhile, many broadcasters are still stonewalling, their skepticism fueled by a vicious economy. Look at all the failed dot-coms. The web is dying, right?

Wrong. It's skyrocketing. Compared with last year, 34 percent more New Yorkers have web access, according to Nielsen-Netratings. In Los Angeles, 25 percent more adults have signed up. Boston, 32 percent. Philadelphia, 40 percent. Despite the economy, news-hungry Americans are taking to the web in record numbers.

Until someone invents a time machine, the web will continue to erode TV and radio news. With decades of baggage, the biggest challenge facing newsrooms today isn't a shrinking budget but a series of gigantic cultural shifts:

We're journalists of all trades. A story is a story, regardless if it's written for TV, radio, print, a wireless device or the Internet. While many journalists will have their specialties, reporters will produce stories for a variety of media. The days of separate broadcast and online departments are over.

You can't cover the news without the web. When an earthquake struck Seattle at 10:54 a.m. in late February, most of the city was at work. "Everybody was hitting the web to see what happened," says Mel Martin, director of new media for KOMO-TV in Seattle. "I think if people see we had the best coverage on the web at work, it may influence whom they pick on TV when they get home."

The web is a cost of covering news. Think of the web like a satellite truck. It's expensive, it doesn't make a profit, but you need it to compete.

News Directors Set the Tone

Changing the way we've worked for decades is not an easy task. The commitment must begin in the news director's office. If the web isn't a visible priority, the newsroom can safely ignore it. Reporters know there's one sure way to get out of working for the web: Just say you're too busy with TV.

The broadcasting vs. web mentality sets a horrible precedent that will take many months if not years to undo. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. Today's ignorance will lead to tomorrow's failures. But by sending a few subtle signals, the best newsrooms put themselves in a position to succeed:

Keep the web in the loop. Don't put the new media staff in a closet. In Tampa, FL, WFLA-TV's web produc-

If the web isn't a visible priority, the newsroom can safely ignore it.

er sits right on the assignment desk, within earshot of any breaking news that might develop. WLWT-TV's web managing editor attends news management and department head meetings. "I don't think Channel Cincinnati.com would be nearly as successful if I didn't know the station's philosophy," says Craig Friedman.

Include the web in editorial meetings. At WRAL-TV in Raleigh, NC, the executive producer of the station's web site reviews the site's top stories during the morning editorial meetings. "I tell the producers what we have planned for the day ahead," explains WRAL.com's Julie Moos. "They especially like it when we enterprise stories they can use on the air."

Increase site awareness. The more the newsroom comes in contact with the station's web site, the more likely the staff will contribute. "Go in late one night and change everyone's start page," suggests Therese Duke, who oversees TV web sites for Internet Broadcasting Systems. MSNBC.com takes it a step further, dedicating a screen in the newsroom monitor wall to the home page of its chief rival, CNN.com.

Post the web site's traffic. "We've had good success with letting folks know about traffic on their stories," says Steve Burger, director of new media for WFIE-TV in Evansville, IN. "They don't get that kind of precise feedback from their TV-side roles. They always seem to respond in a positive way."

Provide positive feedback. News managers should always keep a close eye on the web site, making sure stories are timely, well-written and accurate. Keep in mind that web producers are habitually ignored. "Good job for getting that story on so fast," would make a web producer's day.

Reward reporters for online coverage. When a reporter adds a web component to a story, news managers should pile on the praise and send a positive message to the rest of the newsroom.

Offer training and tools. Journalists need to build up their skill sets fast. KNXV-TV in Phoenix designed an internal newsroom web site packed with resources and useful online tools.

By investing a little more time and energy into your station's new media efforts, you'll create a flexible, responsive news organization. When the economy rebounds, you'll have a jump on the competition. And did you notice? Each of those ideas didn't cost a penny.—Cory Bergman is the founder of LostRemote.com, a weekly newsletter for broadcasters coming to grips with convergence.

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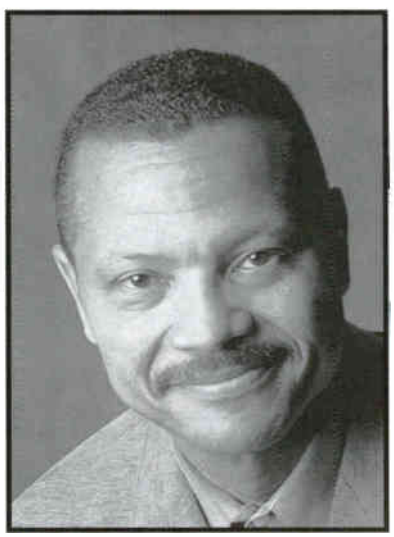

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Chicago Tribune

The McCormick Fellowship Initiative is an innovative executive development program for high-performing senior managers and executives of color in the media industry. Its goal is to increase both the number of minority executives at news companies and their impact on the industry.

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"Participation in the Advanced Executive Program as a McCormick Fellow has provided the most positive and extraordinary learning experience of my career. I hope to show my appreciation for having received the Fellowship in a very simple way—by using the many invaluable lessons and relationships to dramatically improve my contribution to the profession of journalism and the business of news. I entered AEP with little knowledge of what it meant to be a transformational leader. I leave it with a strong desire and the knowledge to become one."

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By Joan M. Barrett

When Tragedy Hits a Newsroom

Make a copy of this article, put it in a file, and hope that you never have to read it again.

It was Saturday morning. I was getting ready for a day with my boys. The usual: a baseball game, some errands and a little laundry. That's when I heard it. On the radio I heard that a local television reporter had been hit by a car and killed. She was covering a story when the accident happened.

That radio report brought back a lot of memories. During my first year as news director at KPNX-TV in Phoenix, we had more than our share of tragedies. It started when one of our photojournalists slipped under an antique tractor and severed his leg below the knee. Three months later, our longtime sports anchor was killed in a car accident. One of our newsroom couples lost a baby during pregnancy, a staff member died from AIDS the day before Christmas, and a senior reporter had a heart attack.

It was a rough year. More than once, I wished I had a manual that would tell me how to handle such situations. You don't learn how to deal with such a crisis as you work your way up the producing and management ranks. Yet as news director, you need to know not only how to deal with it, but how to guide others through the tragedy.

First, Communicate What You Know

After the family has been notified, one of the first things to do, and continue doing, is communicate with everyone at the station. Go to the newsroom and tell them what you know. Ask them to tell you if they hear anything. Tell them to direct all media calls to you. If viewers call, tell them you will have the latest information on your next newscast. Just knowing that you are there or where to send calls or what to say is a huge relief to those in the newsroom who are answering the phones. And remember, they still have the next newscast to pull together.

Next, bring in some extra help so your team doesn't have to field all the calls. Make sure you have contacted your general manager and your human resources person. Then, start calling all the department heads; instruct them to call all their staff members.

After that, call the entire news staff. Tell them what you know, and that the latest information will be on the next newscast. If you get a machine, say there has been an accident and to call the station as soon as possible. You want everyone to feel that you made an effort to tell them personally, before they hear it on the news.

Then, Get to Work

You will get calls from other media outlets, especially if the accident involves on-air talent. Discreetly round up some photos of the staff member. If the person is on-air, ask an editor in confidence to help you build a reel. Write a news release that includes things like when the person started and his or her hometown. Also, make sure opens and promotion spots with that staff member are pulled from rotation.

The way you handle such a crisis will have a big impact on your staff, family and community.

Discuss with your team how you will handle coverage. Think about who will be anchoring; try not to put anyone in a difficult position if he or she is too grief-stricken.

Reach Out to Staffers...

If another staff member was with the accident victim, reach out to that person. He or she may be in a state of shock or denial. Make sure that staff member knows you are there, and refer the person to a station/company counseling service if it's available. Investigate having a grief counselor come to the station to talk about the availability of counseling and the different stages of grief. Just giving people an outlet to discuss their feelings is an important step in handling the crisis.

Once the initial shock and grief have passed, there are still so many issues to deal with and think about. How will you cover the funeral? Will other stations cover major news events so more of your staff can attend the funeral? Can sister stations fly in help to cover shifts? Talk to the family about trying to schedule the funeral or memorial service in the morning so more people can attend.

...And to Family Members

Go to the hospital and let the family know you are there. If needed, see if a co-worker can arrange for a place for the family to stay. Also, ask staff members to organize food donations.

Encourage the family to think about a memorial fund. If there is a charity of choice or your company is going to establish some sort of scholarship, get started as soon as possible. People are more inclined to donate to a fund right away. You'll have a better chance of raising more money.

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Baylor College of Medicine	bcmhealthline.net	24	713.798.7969
BDL Autoscript, Inc.		36	516.799.3869
Bloomberg	bloomberg.com	38	212.318.2201
Broadcast Design International, Inc.	broadcastdesign.com	37	760.729.9229
Capital Networks	capitalnetworks.com	insert	905.946.1122, x231
CNN Newsource	cnn.com	90	
CNN	cnn.com	C2, 1	
Columbia University	jrn.columbia.edu/workshops	71	212.854.5377
Comprompter	enrnews.com	36	608.785.7766
Consumer Report News	consumer.org	9	914.378.2454
CONUS Communications	conus.com	35	651.642.4692
Devlin Design Group	ddgtv.com	5	858.535.9800
Edison Electric	eei.org	78	202.508.5074
The Express Group	theexpressgroup.com	21	619.298.2834
Flir	flir.com	2	800.322.3731
Focus on the Family	family.org	76	719.531.5181
Fox News	foxnews.com	87	
Fuji	fujifilm.com/provideo	19	
FX Group	fxbuilt.com	53	407.877.9600
Grass Valley	grassvalleygroup.com	insert	800.547.8949
International Center for Journalism	icfj.org	71	202.737.3700
International Longevity Center	ilcusa.org	17	212.517.1299
Kavouras	kavouras.com/sitemap.htm	74	
Leitch	leitch.com	13	800.387.0233
Mayo Clinic	mayo.edu/news	89	507.284.5005
MITEQ	mcl.com	10	630.759.9500
Mrs. Fixit	mrsfixit.com	39	315.423.0555
National Association of Minority Media Executives	namme.org	84	888.968.7658
National Mining Association	nma.org	15	202.463.2625
National Press Foundation	natpress.org	82	202.721.9100
NBC News	nbc.com	63	
Neuron Broadcasting	neuronbroadcasting.com	C3	866.NEURON.1
Opryland	oprylandhotels.com	80	615.871.5824
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Stephen Arnold	stephenarnoldmusic.com	57	214.726.1010
Surveyusa	surveyusa.com	26, 27	
Telecast Fiber Systems	telecast-fiber.com	12	508.754.4858
VDO	vdoimages.com	11	727.532.4001
Weather Central	weathercentral.com	47	608.278.6789
WNET Thirteen	pbs.org	77	
WSYR Radio	wsyr.com	65	

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Management

can be especially helpful for those families who haven't lived in the same city for a while. Somehow, it connects them to their loved one's recent life and memories. You can make tapes if the person was on-air. A photojournalist's work can be edited together as a tribute to his or her career. Families often play such tapes at the services.

The family will also need to know about benefits in a timely manner, especially if the staff member was the family's sole bread winner. Talk with accounting and human resources and compile as much information as possible so it's available promptly.

The station can also help by setting up a support system for surviving family members. For example, people can volunteer for different days and their responsibility on that day is to reach out to the family. This can be through a phone call, visit or gift of food. Frequently, there is a lot of initial support for families, but then the support fades away during some of the most difficult times.

Moving On

If the employee died on the job, you may be dealing with a lot of legal issues, as well. Was the assignment too dangerous? Was another employee to blame for the accident? It's important that you gather facts quickly and assess the situation. If there are any possible legal issues that may arise from the accident, involve the station's attorneys as quickly as possible.

Finally, how do you go about replacing that person? How long do you wait before advertising for the position? Will it be an internal promotion? Will that person have to sit at the same desk? Your staff and your viewers will be sensitive to how you answer these questions.—Joan M. Barrett is a vice president at The Broadcast Image Group in San Antonio. She was a news director, executive producer, producer, anchor and reporter during her 15-year broadcasting career.

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Mark Your Calendar

On your mark, get set…Schmooze! It's RTNDA time and once again CNN Newsource is happy to make possible the convention's Opening Reception. The event will be held on the exhibition floor, beginning at 4 pm on September 12th. So, stop by, grab a bite to eat, talk some shop and help us kick-off RTNDA 2001.

CNN NEWSOURCE
Serious about news?

By Michael Murrie

Field Audio Gets Easier

New equipment adds reliability and flexibility

Increasingly powerful microprocessors continue to improve versatility and reliability of new audio equipment for both radio and television. Makers of wireless microphone receivers, mixers and remote units have all made changes for the better in their latest offerings.

Left: Lectro's new wireless receiver, the UCR201, helps operators find clear frequencies and reduce the uncertainty of interference.

Below and bottom: Wendt's new five-channel portable mixer is loaded with different options.

Wireless Receivers Increase Capabilities, Decrease Size

Wireless microphones give reporters more flexibility in the field these days, but despite diversity reception and other improvements, they are still at the mercy of possible interference from radio signals (RF).

A new wireless receiver, the UCR201 from Lectro, has taken a big step to help operators find clear frequencies and reduce the uncertainty of interference. The receiver conducts an RF site survey by scanning its entire bandwidth for all RF signals present, and displays the activity it finds in an LCD window. You can also listen to what's on the frequencies.

Microprocessor control enables this feature and several others, which should make using a wireless a less hazardous enterprise. Other features include automatic squelch control and what Lectro calls SmartDiversity. The unit examines RF levels and audio content to anticipate the best time to switch from one diversity receiver to another. The receiver's price is $1,525. Lectrosonics: 800.821.1121 or lectrosonics.com

Another diversity receiver, the 500UDR from Azden, has decreased in size from previous models. It has 63 user-selectable frequencies and sells for $580. Azden: 516.328.7500 or azdencorp.com

Remote Units Expand Capabilities

If you do radio remotes from different parts of the world, you've no doubt found dealing with the various wireless/cellular systems a challenge. Or perhaps you're worried about the disappearance of analog cellular service for remotes.

Marti has new versions of its Cellcast that are supposed to help. The all-digital models of the classic Cellcast include a TDMA unit, a Tri-Mode system (TMDA, PCS, AMPS), and a GSM (Global System Mobile) model. As with the original Cellcast, the remote unit works with regular land-line phone service as well as cellular. List prices start at $3,350. Marti: 817.641.3869 or martielectronics.com

Tieline's new Commander coder/decoder handles audio transmissions over ISDN lines, as well as regular telephone service. The unit carries bi-directional 15 kHz mono audio over standard phone service. You can upgrade its software over the Internet. List price for the portable ISDN Commander is $4,450. Tieline: 888.211.6989 or tieline.com.au

Portable Mixer Adds Options

If you're handling more complicated field audio for ENG or radio, Wendt has a new five-channel portable mixer that's loaded with different options. The X5 features include a headphone switch (stereo, left, right), two VU meters, five three-position LC filters, and a three-way power switch (internal/off/external). In addition, there's a three-way switch for 48V phantom, 12V T power or dynamic mics, and a 12-pin HRS connector for a camera send/return snake. Wendt: 805.494.4432 or wendtinc.net—What are your experiences with new products? E-mail michael.murrie@pepperdine.edu.

Tough Calls

THE QUESTION:

Your reporter has uncovered a serious weakness in security at the county jail. The sheriff calls and asks you not to run the story until he can fix the problem, which will take several days. Do you comply with the request?

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JUNE RESULTS
Your reporter wants to test the integrity and credibility of a local charity organization and suggests placing a hidden recording device on or in your donation to track where it ends up. Do you allow this?

Yes: 49%
No: 50%
Total votes: 322

Send your Tough Calls ideas to Brianna Williams at briannaw@rtnda.org

JILL JENSEN
News Director
KQTV
St. Joseph, MO

There are several things to consider when answering this tough call. We don't want to panic the community, we just want to give the facts. Also, we don't want to burn the bridge with the sheriff. But protecting him is our last concern. Although we both serve the public, *our* first obligation as journalists is to protect the public's trust. In our small market news shop, we encounter this issue daily over much less dramatic stories. Viewers, civic leaders, law officers, teachers and others feel a type of "ownership" of KQ2. They often exercise it by suggesting, even demanding, we embargo a story. Advertisers threaten and, in rare cases, pull revenue as our newsteam presses forward. Pardon my patriotism, but in this newsroom we vigorously protect the precious First Amendment against outside influence. We do it politely, but firmly, explaining our position. It's not always easy. I remember a police chief begging us to not report sexual harassment charges against him because of his family. An advertiser made many threats as we broke a story detailing alleged fraud at his car dealership. We take no pleasure in making such tough calls. We do take pride in protecting a free press and holding the powerful accountable. And, yes, we would roll the live truck in this small market, where security problems at the local jail would be a top story!

TIFFANY MAGANA
News Director
KAVU-TV
Victoria, TX

I would not comply with the sheriff's request to hold off on the story. There are a number of issues that I'd weigh. Are we tipping off inmates? Potentially, if they have access to local television news. But maybe that should spur the jail to remedy the problem immediately or put a temporary fix in place. The public's right to know supersedes the risk that an inmate could use the information to his/her advantage. Are we putting the public at risk or denying them the right to know if we delay the story? Certainly. As a taxpayer, I would want to know if there were a potential problem. And as a voter, I would want to know what my elected official is doing or not doing. I think it is admirable when law enforcement and the media can work together, but that is not our primary function. It is our job as journalists to ask questions and pass along the answers. In my opinion, allowing an outside influence to interfere with that duty and dictate news content lets the viewer down. Burning that bridge is a risk I feel should be taken here. We may never get another story through the front door of the sheriff's department again, but there are always back doors, public records and FOI requests. As a footnote, I would insist upon doing a follow-up story if and when the problem was remedied. If the problem isn't fixed by the sheriff's own deadline, then there is another story as well.

ESTELLE PARSLEY
Director of News & Operations
WRDW-TV
Augusta, GA

No, I would run the story. A "serious weakness in security" most likely means our viewers have been at risk and, perhaps more importantly, could continue to be at risk for the several days it's expected to take to fix the problem. Our role is to inform, especially when the information could be lifesaving. In the case of a serious security weakness, we have to ask ourselves if this weakness will endanger the public. If the security problem means a suspected killer could easily escape and we do not run the story, we face (and deservedly so) harsh criticism from our viewers because we have failed to act in their best interest. I believe we not only run a story that tells viewers we uncovered the problem and what that problem is, but our news organization then needs to further explore what can and is being done to minimize the security risk to the public during the several days it takes the sheriff to fix the problem. Since we, like most every local news organization, rely on the cooperation and trust of the local sheriff's department, I would meet with the sheriff to assure him that our coverage on this story would be balanced and fair. In this investigative reporting, our organization would act as viewer advocate, not law enforcement adversary. Our coverage would offer the sheriff every opportunity to talk about not just the security problem, but the resolution.

Jensen courtesy KQTV; Magana courtesy KAVU-TV; Parsley courtesy WRDW-TV

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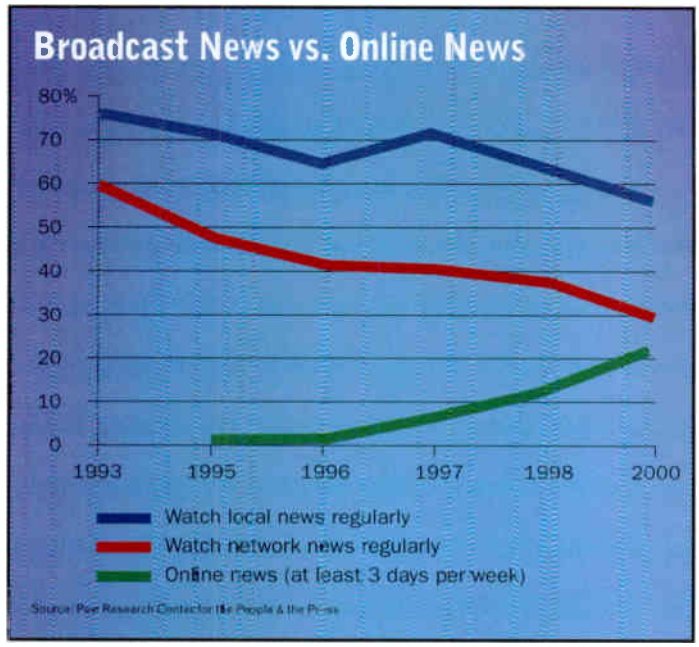
The number of stations with a viewers' bill of rights is slowly growing. KBCI-TV in Boise, ID, has developed one based on KGUN's, and Carr is currently at work creating one for WFLA.

Staying Fresh All the Time

Radio news executives also worry about a shrinking audience. KIRO-AM news director Steve Knight says his main competition isn't another radio station, but Seattle's morning television shows that provide much of the same information morning radio does—traffic reports, news headlines and weather. He stays ahead of the curve by providing fresh news in the morning—instead of rehashing news reports from the night before like much of local morning television.

"Content. It's all about content," says Knight, who gives listeners a steady diet of hard news and special reports 24 hours a day. Aware that repetition can drive listeners away, KIRO never repeats the same story in the morning and afternoon—unless there's a new development, says Knight.



The television news audience has been shrinking over the past 10 years.

At KTAR-AM in Phoenix, news director Brian Barks says listeners rely on vital traffic and weather information as they commute to work—making it tough for listeners to turn the dial. But he'd like to keep them around throughout the day.

"Everybody here understands that news is the driving force of our station," says Barks. To reinforce that point with listeners, Barks runs frequent on-air promos and teases to get viewers to tune into later newscasts.

While he worries about listeners defecting to other news sources, such as the Internet, he points out he has a captive audience during the morning commute. "One thing they're still unable to do is surf the web and drive at the same time."

Telling Their Stories

In February 2000, WIXT-TV in Syracuse, NY, launched "Your Stories," where viewers phone or e-mail story ideas to the station. Once a month, reporters take calls live during the early news shows, says news director Jim Tortora.

"We want to do stories that either address a problem, solve a problem or answer a question," explains Tortora, noting that calls range from simple traffic questions to tips on nursing home abuse or landlord fraud.

Viewers are given on-air credit for ideas, and the stories are showcased

Continued from page 31

people upset because we spend too much time on stories they don't want, and too little on stories they do want. A rabbi says there isn't enough Jewish news; an African American says TV only looks for bad news in his neighborhood; a housewife maintains that fluffy news "dumbs down" audiences; a teacher says local news is irrelevant, telling students to ignore it; a high school newspaper editor notes that trivial stories affecting few get more attention than big problems affecting many.

No one I've talked to wants "happy talk" or "family-friendly" news. Cover everything, they say, just keep it in perspective and, above all, stop blowing some news out of proportion.

After I wrote an article about criticism of local news for the *Miami Herald*, WTVJ executives decided I should do the story for TV, no holds barred. The response was overwhelming: Some newsroom colleagues thought it should have been more critical; universities, think tanks and consultants asked for dubs; trade publications and the BBC called for interviews; and a flood of e-mails and calls poured in, the most gratifying from Miami competitors. A correspondent: "The newsroom stopped when it was on and applauded when it was over. We don't have the guts to run a story like

Continued on page 34

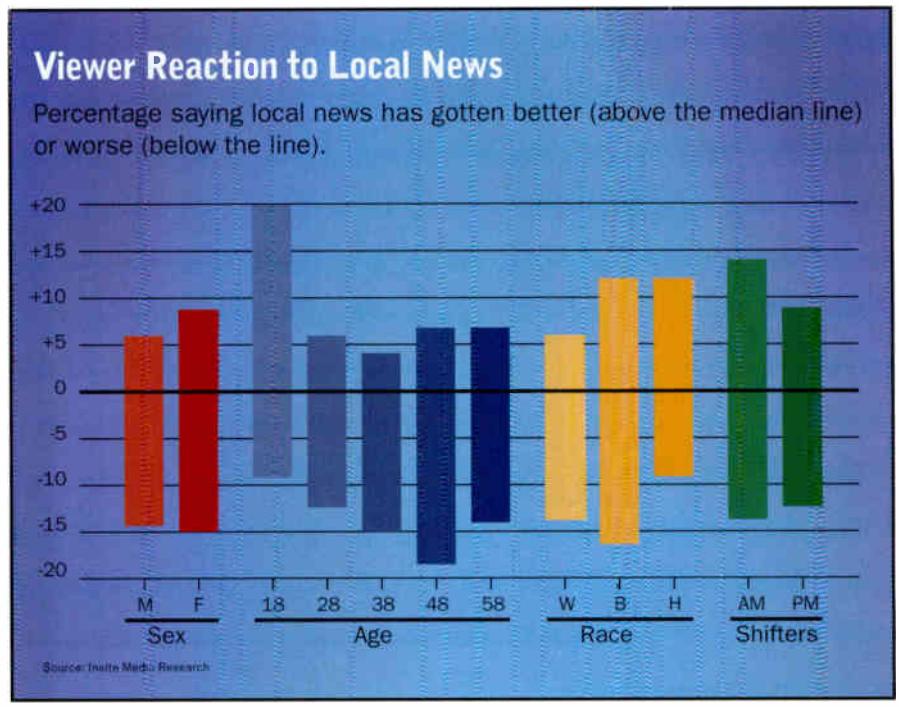
WTVJ senior correspondent Ike Seamans interviews his boss, vice president of news Tim Geraghty, for a story on shrinking local news audiences. Seamans also interviewed members of the public for their feelings about local news.

Courtesy WTVJ-TV

that too often reporters are stenographers, dutifully recording statements and regurgitating them to viewers. He says they should be viewer advocates, encouraging viewers to get involved in the political process.

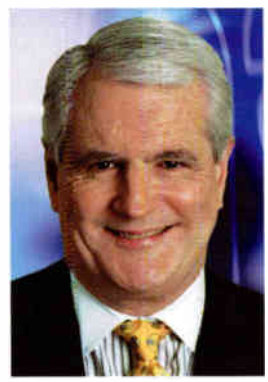
WCNC-TV in Charlotte, NC, also adopted a viewers' bill of rights. The guidelines, developed by Insite Media Research, include a viewer's right to more updates and less repetition, freedom from sensationalism, more meaningful crime coverage, and a better balance of positive and negative news. Executive news director Keith Connors credits the bill of rights with helping the station recruit more than 150,000 new viewers in the past year.

"It's far from an easy path," says Connors, "but it's the only path worth following. We're committed to finding stories that are relevant to our viewers." (See page 40 for more about life at WCNC.)



When asked whether local news in their area was getting better or worse, respondents to an Insite Media Research survey were about twice as likely to say it is getting worse.

What's Wrong With Local News?



By Ike Seamans

I couldn't believe my eyes. During a sweeps newscast, a Miami station rolled more than 10 minutes of nonstop crime, the anchors shriller and more dramatic by the second. It was "gore in review," since the majority of the incidents occurred the day before—or earlier—most affecting just the victims and their families. Worse, there were no new developments or arrests that would justify repeating the gruesome pictures. If you didn't know any better, you'd think this must be a dangerous place. Actually, the crime rate has been dropping for years.

Another Miami station breathlessly cuts into its newscast with "breaking news," live pictures of a spectacular fire, an abandoned warehouse in Massachusetts, not South Florida.

Welcome to "all mayhem all the time" news, now playing any day, anywhere on many TV stations. Increasingly, viewers say they're sick of it. People do tune in, but in smaller and smaller numbers, a sure sign local news is not meeting expectations and apparently hasn't for a long time.

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press finds that only 56 percent of Americans watch local news today, compared with 77 percent in 1993. The top-ranked news programs in Miami have the lowest ratings ever, and some of the other newscasts have ratings so minuscule, no one must be watching. The Project for Excellence in Journalism affiliated with Columbia University reports that besides an overemphasis on crime, viewers also turn off and tune out because of soft news featuring "eye candy, stunts and hype."

In a scathing study, Thomas Patterson of Harvard's Kennedy School writes that local news fails because it's "deliberately shortsighted, is rooted in novelty rather than precision, and focuses on fast-breaking events rather than enduring issues." Other critics charge the shortsightedness isn't necessarily deliberate; it's poor news judgment.

Many local news organizations provide excellent—but sporadic—coverage of "enduring issues" and win prestigious awards for in-depth investigations. However, even the best stations will bury these significant stories under an avalanche of eye-catching, insignificant events only because they're "great pictures" or "breaking news" that producers are convinced will grab viewers. People will watch overblown, sensationalized stories, but studies suggest they titillate only for a moment, then viewers surf on before the best efforts air.

Since I returned to local news in 1993 after years with NBC, I've been astounded by the strident viewer charge that "local news is no good." I'm constantly ambushed by

Continued on page 32

Courtesy WTVJ-TV