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THE IRE JOURNAL

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FROM THE IRE OFFICES

IRE leads way for international efforts uniting journalists



BRANT HOUSTON

IRE now is truly an international organization – and just in time.

As threats against investigative journalists increase throughout the world and government interference escalates, journalists throughout the world must work together to combat those threats.

At IRE, we have begun setting up networks and systems to help journalists to do their jobs despite the variety of efforts to keep them from holding governments and businesses accountable.

As part of this initiative our board, staff, and volunteer members have crisscrossed the world over the past decade to train and spread the spirit of cooperative work with our colleagues.

Sometimes, we did this through large formal programs such as Periodistas de Investigación in which IRE staff, based in Mexico City, provided investigative and computer-assisted training throughout Latin America.

In other cases, individual IRE members joined seminars operated by fellow organizations in countries that included Nigeria, China, Great Britain, Sweden, Bosnia, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and South Korea.

During the same time, we co-founded – with our Danish colleagues – the Global Investigative Journalism Network, which attracts journalists from more than 40 countries to its conferences every other year. We help operate a Web site, www.globalinvestigativejournalism.org, that gives those journalists a place to network and share resources.

Meanwhile, IRE Español (www.ire.org/espanol), a Web site for Spanish-speaking journalists, is increasing its resources every day.

All of this work is showing significant results. Ten percent or more of participants at our annual conferences in the United States are from other countries. An IRE member can now contact a colleague in almost any country when working on a story. Tips, resources and databases are being distributed across borders through the Web.

We are collaborating with more international journalism organizations than ever on seminars and projects. In March, we met with representatives at a conference of the Inter American Press Association (IAPA) in Quito, Ecuador to plan cooperation on an investigative reporting institute that IAPA is starting.

Why is this just in time? Because the legal and lethal attacks on investigative journalists are increasing throughout the world. Investigative journalists are beaten and killed, governments seize newsroom computers, and subpoenas and threats of jail increase each month.

In addition, there is the increasing effort by governments to stymie the press through laws and regulations they say are needed to fight terrorism, but often fail to protect the public and instead allow governments to keep unnecessary secrets and threaten journalists with subpoenas and imprisonment.

The United States is no longer a safe haven for investigative journalists. Federal and local governments have stepped up their intimidation of the press and are emboldened to enter newsrooms and seize computers and documents.

At the same time, “pseudo-journalists” (as former *Los Angeles Times* editor John Carroll has characterized them) have infiltrated and infested our profession, sometimes under the pay of the U.S. government.

This turn of events is particularly worrisome as we approach the 30th anniversary of the kill-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38 >

Brant Houston is executive director of IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. He can be reached through e-mail at brant@ire.org or by calling 573-882-2042.

2006 IRE Conference

Don't miss out on early registration and hotel room discounts for the annual IRE Conference in Dallas/Fort Worth, June 15-18, 2006.

May 15 is the last day to secure a room at the special conference rate of \$146, plus tax, at the Renaissance Worthington Hotel in Fort Worth. Take advantage of early bird registration for \$165; after May 19 registration will be \$190.

Conference highlights include the 2005 IRE Awards luncheon, more than 100 panel discussions led by veteran journalists, special forums for broadcasters, international journalists and Spanish-language media, mentoring opportunities and the annual members meeting. Computer-assisted reporting classes and demonstrations will



be offered during the conference, and an optional all-CAR day is offered on Thursday, June 15.

Registration includes a Saturday night reception at the Fort Worth Museum of Modern Art. Tickets for the popular Blues Bash fundraiser on Thursday and a Friday night reception at the Sixth Floor Museum in Dallas are available for purchase on the conference registration form.

The IRE office will accept pre-registration forms until May 26, and on-site registration is available at the conference, but all registrations received after May

19 will be \$190. For details, including registration forms and hotel details, visit www.ire.org/training/dallasfortworth06. For registration questions, call 573-882-2772 or email jgreen@ire.org.

IRE members receive top industry awards

This year, several organizations saluted the work of IRE members with journalism awards. Winners are spotlighted here. Members' names are in bold:

Selden Ring Award for Investigative Reporting

• **James V. Grimaldi**, Susan Schmidt, and R. Jeffrey Smith of *The Washington Post* won the \$35,000 annual prize from the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication. Their winning series exposed illegal activities and political corruption surrounding Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff and his firm.

Heywood Broun Award

- **Matt Lait** and Scott Glover of the *Los Angeles Times* won the award from The Newspaper Guild-Communication Workers of America for "A Case of Doubt," an extensive report on a 20-year-old murder case that resulted in even the prosecutor testifying about his doubts about the defendant's guilt.
- **Chris Adams** and **Alison Young** at Knight Ridder's Washington, D.C., bureau were recognized for "Discharged and Dishonored," a package of stories examining how the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has assisted American soldiers returning home from the war in Iraq.
- **Sasha Aslanian** and Mike Edgerly of American Radio Works and Minnesota Public Radio won for reporting on an environmental hazard in Minnesota resulting from the widespread presence of 3M's former "Scotch-guard" chemicals.

George Polk Awards

- **Dana Priest** of *The Washington Post* won in national reporting for revealing the existence of secret CIA-run prisons and wrongdoings that included the death of an Afghan detainee and the attempted cover-up of the mistaken imprisonment of a German citizen.
- **David B. Ottaway** and **Joe Stephens** of *The Washington Post* won in foreign reporting for revealing problems in the U.S. reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.
- **Barry Meier** of *The New York Times* won in business reporting for exposing a commonly used heart implant device with a deadly defect that was not publicized by manufacturer Guidant Corporation or by the Food and Drug Administration.
- **Jerry Mitchell** of *The (Jackson, Miss.) Clarion-Ledger* won in justice reporting for unearthing information that led prosecutors to revive the case of three civil rights activists slain during the summer of 1964.
- **David Evans**, Michael Smith and Liz Willen of Bloomberg News won in health reporting for revealing clinical trials that recruited poor, mostly minority citizens to take part in medical studies without fully disclosing potential risks that might lead to serious illness or even death.

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Correction

The man seated in front of his computer is not Richard Edwards, but John Brown, one of the nation's only agricultural private investigators whose expertise is satellite imagery of crop fields. This photo appeared on page 33 of the March/April issue.



MEMBER NEWS

Neill Borowski, assistant managing editor for metro news at *The Indianapolis Star*, has been named managing editor at the Rochester (N.Y.) Democrat and Chronicle. ■ **Debbie Cenziper**, an investigative reporter at *The Miami Herald*, won first place for science writing in the National Headliner Awards for her four-part series, "Blind Eye," exposing breakdowns in the nation's hurricane-warning system. ■ **Joyce Dehli** has been appointed vice president for news for Lee Enterprises. She was the company's director of editorial development and managing editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal* in Madison.

■ **John Diedrich**, a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reporter, won the Al Nakkula Award for Police Reporting for coverage of the investigation into the beating of a man outside a party attended by off-duty Milwaukee police officers. ■ **M.L. Elrick** has left the *Detroit Free Press*, where he was city hall reporter, to become the chief investigative reporter at WDIV-Detroit. ■ **Renee Ferguson**, investigative reporter for WMAQ-Chicago, was one of three winners of the Studs Terkel Awards, which honors outstanding journalists who bring the voices of ordinary people to the public's attention as they cover Chicago's diverse communities. ■ **Veronica Flores**, assistant national editor of the *Houston Chronicle*, has been named metro editor of the *San Antonio Express-News*.


■ **J. Todd Foster**, managing editor of *The News Virginian* in Waynesboro, Va., recently won 16 writing and design awards in the Virginia Press Association 2005 awards contest. ■ **William Heisel** has moved to the *Los Angeles Times* as an investigative reporter in Orange County. He was a reporter at *The Orange County Register*.

■ **Judy Miller**, formerly managing editor of *The Miami Herald* where she supervised coverage that led to two Pulitzer Prizes, is a managing director of Kroll & Associates in Miami. Miller is a former president of IRE's board of directors.

■ **Nora Paul** of the University of Minnesota's Institute for Media Studies has won the Joseph F. Kwopil Award from the Special Libraries Association.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38 >

Send Member News items to Pia Christensen at pia@ire.org and include a phone number for verification.

A composite image featuring a person in the foreground looking through binoculars. The background is a close-up of a brown bear's face, looking directly at the camera. The person's hands are holding the binoculars up to their eyes.

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Muckraking journalist's work revived in biography

BY STEVE WEINBERG
THE IRE JOURNAL

When investigative journalism took ill around the time of World War I, the recovery proceeded poorly. Many journalists and scholars stood ready to pronounce the craft dead. Not until the late 1930s did promising signs of life appear. As much as any one person, Carey McWilliams deserves a commendation for his life-saving efforts – first as a writer, then as an editor.

McWilliams (1905-80) is nearly forgotten. A splendid biography by Peter Richardson will make forgetting him more difficult.

McWilliams' starting point was California. His magazine exposés, books and op-ed pieces shed light on race/ethnic relations, including the unconscionable Caucasian prejudices against Hispanic Americans and Japanese Americans; the exploitation undergirding labor-management workplace strife; the insanity of anti-Communist political purges; environmental degradation long before the invention of Earth Day; affordable housing shortages; and counterproductive immigration policies.

Occasionally, McWilliams' insights are mentioned today. The classic movie "Chinatown" derived its inspiration from McWilliams' 1946 book "Southern California: An Island on the Land."

Never heard of him

After being persuaded to leave California to become editor of *The Nation* magazine during 1952, McWilliams assigned memorable exposés about the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency and other violators of democratic principles. He encouraged, paid and helped train a new wave of investigative magazine writers, including Fred Cook, Matthew Josephson and Ralph Nader.

The lessons of McWilliams' career are straightforward and timeless:

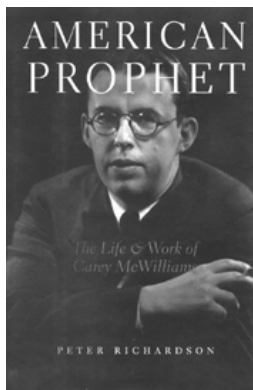
- Train to understand how the institutions of society work and fail to work. (McWilliams earned a law degree as part of his understanding process.)
- Listen carefully and observe sources from all walks of life.
- Consult documents to supplement the careful listening.
- Prepare well to scrutinize society's sacred institutions.

- Forge ahead despite intimidation.

Despite McWilliams' remarkable, fearless journalism, Richardson believes his subject's efforts might be forgotten.

"Any attempt to assess Carey McWilliams' legacy must confront at least one hard fact – almost no one born after 1960 has heard of him," says Richardson, who is communications director of the California Budget Project.

Richardson himself knew nothing about McWilliams until 1999, when he asked Sacramento journalist Peter Schrag what to read about the state's history and politics. Schrag said something like, "Everything by McWilliams."



AMERICAN PROPHET:
The Life and Work of
Carey McWilliams
By Peter Richardson
University of Michigan
Press, 334 pages, \$35

Muckraking revived

The biography concentrates on McWilliams' ideas and his reporting/writing methods more than on his personal life, a wise choice by Richardson. McWilliams, who had multiple marriages and children, acted impersonally in his private life for somebody so passionate about equality for all men and women. He liked ideas more than he liked people, a fine formula for investigative journalism, but not so much for a biography.

After a restless upbringing in Steamboat Springs, Colo., McWilliams was a teenager when his father, a state legislator, died. The youngster, obviously precocious intellectually, scraped together tuition for the University of Denver, but found concentrating on classroom studies difficult. At age 17, he dropped out, joining his widowed mother in Los Angeles. McWilliams found an entry-level job in the *Los Angeles Times* newsroom, studied at the University of Southern California, obtained a law degree, then settled into practice with a downtown firm.

But handling cases in constrained courtrooms could not satisfy McWilliams fully. He became fascinated by the life of American journalist/social reformer/satirist Ambrose Bierce. By age 24, McWilliams published his Bierce biography. Then he could not stop.

Unafraid of attracting hatred, McWilliams spoke out in his articles and books for equality of all individuals, no matter how unpopular his causes. The string of prescient exposés includes "Factories in the Field: The Story of Migratory Farm Labor

in California" (1939); "Brothers Under the Skin" (1943); "Prejudice: Japanese-Americans, Symbol of Racial Intolerance" (1944); "A Mask for Privilege: Anti-Semitism in America" (1948); "North From Mexico: The Spanish Speaking People of the United States" (1949); and "Witch Hunt: The Revival of Heresy" (1950).

Although vulnerable to anti-Communist witch-hunts by U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy and others, McWilliams did nothing to protect himself. Rather than swear to pseudo-patriotic loyalty oaths, McWilliams spoke out against their uselessness: "No rational person really believes that one loves one's country or one's wife the better for swearing to love."

He did not merely rant; he wrote "Witch Hunt," which Richardson terms "an exposé of fear-based political persecution and a meditation on the production and punishment of heresy," a term McWilliams meant literally. For him, the parallels to medieval witch-hunts were strict, and the book patiently maps the points of contact.

Writing in *The Nation* last year, Mike Davis, a University of California-Irvine historian with his own muckraking record, applauded the resurrection of McWilliams. While at *The Nation*, Davis says, the unlikely editor "almost single-handedly revived the muckraking tradition in American journalism."

That legacy offers both practical lessons and inspiration for investigative reporters and editors circa 2006.

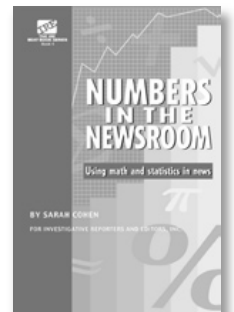
Steve Weinberg is senior contributing editor to The IRE Journal and a former executive director of IRE.

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IRE Award winners exposed corruption, toxic dumping

BY THE IRE JOURNAL

Investigative stories about deceit in Cleveland's public school district and an environmental disaster in New Jersey won the top prizes in the 2005 IRE Awards.

Those were among 15 prizes awarded by IRE this year from 563 entries. The contest, which began in 1979, recognizes outstanding investigative work each year.

IRE honored a 17-year body of crime reporting that unmasked the killer in the 1963 murder of civil rights worker Medgar Evers, investigations into fraud and abuse in two federal agencies and stories documenting troubles with the pharmaceutical industry.

In addition, IRE recognized one of the youngest journalists it has honored for work done primarily while in high school and, for the first time, gave a broadcasting award to a network not based in North America. The Korean Broadcasting System won a certificate for a report that prompted the South Korean government to ban ocean dumping.

IRE Medals, the top honor bestowed by the organization, were given to:

- Reporter Tom Merriman and journalists Mark DeMarino, Greg Easterly, Dave Hollis, Matt Rafferty and Chuck Rigdon at WJW-Cleveland for exposing millions of dollars in waste, gross mismanagement and cover-up in the Cleveland Municipal School District. WJW found hundreds of bus drivers were being paid millions of dollars to spend their days playing billiards. Reporters then revealed that the district inflated rider numbers to get more money from the state. The reports led to the resignation of the district's CEO and to major reforms.
- Reporters Jan Barry, Mary Jo Layton, Alex Nussbaum, Clint Riley, Tom Troncone, Barbara Williams, Lindy Washburn and senior photographer Thomas Franklin at *The Record* in Bergen County, N.J., for documenting the lethal legacy of the Ford Motor Co.'s dumping of toxic sludge into a vast area populated largely by low-income people. A community of hundreds of families is plagued by asthma, rashes and cancer at elevated rates. "This work stood out not only for its exhaustive reporting and clear writing," the judges said, "but for its riveting multimedia presentation."

IRE judges awarded the Tom Renner Medal for

Outstanding Crime Reporting to Jerry Mitchell, a crusading investigative reporter for *The Clarion-Ledger* in Jackson, Miss., who has doggedly pursued justice in Civil Rights era-killings for 17 years. Since 1989, Mitchell's beat has been "crimes of the past," in a state that was reluctant to prosecute or convict at the time.

Mitchell's first investigation resulted in the reopening of the killing of Medgar Evers. In 2005, his work resulted in a conviction of a Klan leader in the notorious "Mississippi Burning" case that involved the Freedom Summer slaying of three civil rights workers.

The prosecutions in the case are the result of Mitchell's brave and relentless reporting in the face of threats and personal attacks. The Renner award is given for a single story or a lifetime body of work.

The Freedom of Information award was given to Small Newspaper Group statehouse reporter Scott Reeder, who filed 1,500 Freedom of Information Act requests with almost 900 government agencies in Illinois to report his series, "The Hidden Costs of Tenure." He spent months compiling the documents that ultimately showed the failure of the state's 20-year-old law aimed at making it easier to fire bad teachers.

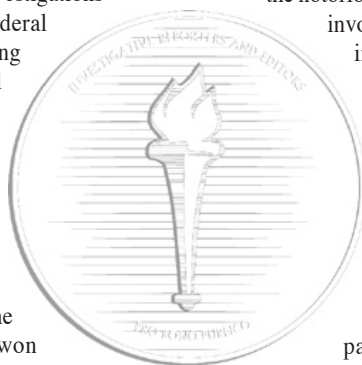
The IRE awards are divided into 15 categories based on market or circulation size, most for print, broadcast and online media. The IRE Certificate winners were:

- Scott Higham and Robert O'Harrow Jr. of *The Washington Post* for "High Price of Homeland Security." Despite the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to block the release of public documents, the reporters found evidence that the agency built on the ashes of 9/11 has mispent billions of dollars because of lax financial controls, outmoded technologies, inexperienced contractors and political influence.
- Sally Kestin, Megan O'Matz, John Maines and Jon Burstein of the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* for "FEMA: A Legacy of Waste." Analyzing applications for federal disaster aid filed by 4 million individuals in 20 national disasters, the *Sun-Sentinel* found that

the Federal Emergency Management Agency gave hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to people who were unscathed by storms, wildfires or earthquakes. The reporters found fraud and waste costing more than \$530 million.

- Scott Finn of *The Charleston Gazette* for "Brother's Keeper: West Virginia's Mental Health Crisis." This ambitious investigation documented the devastating effects of budget cuts, bureaucratic bungling and outright fraud on some of West Virginia's most vulnerable residents – the mentally ill. Compelling reading that also produced impressive results: The state passed reform laws and restored funding for mental-health services.
- Nigel Jaquiss of *Willamette Week* for "PGE Investigation." First-class dogged reporting put the brakes on secret plans by a Texas buyout firm to strip down Oregon's largest public utility and sell the leavings for a huge profit. Jaquiss revealed that the Texas Pacific Group tried to use local politicians and others to purchase Portland General Electric only to lay off workers, slash customer service and profit hugely by reselling the stripped-down power company.
- Kim Myung Seop, Han Seung Bok, Lee Seung Ik and Yoon Hee Jin of the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) for "Special Report: 17 years of Ocean Dumping." Going undercover and underwater, KBS revealed that ships routinely dump toxic sewage sludge and industrial waste into the sea. After this thorough investigation, the Korean government banned ocean dumping and plans to compensate fishermen whose livelihoods were harmed by the dumping.
- Craig Cheatham, Marty Van Housen and Jim Thomas of KMOV-St. Louis for "La Oroya." Investing significant time, resources and commitment, reporters raised serious ethical questions regarding Doe Run, the billionaire-owned company running a lead smelter in Peru that has poisoned a community. Judges said, "It is the type of story that is rarely, if ever, seen on local television."
- David Evans, Michael Smith and Liz Willen of *Bloomberg Markets* magazine for "Big Pharma's Shameful Secret." The Bloomberg News reporters found for-profit companies conducting clinical trials employing immigrants and the impoverished who are ill-informed before wagering their health on experimental drugs.
- David Kirby for Evidence of Harm: Mercury in Vaccines and the Autism Epidemic — A Medical Controversy. Autism, rare in the past, is exploding in the United States, and Kirby investigates

whether one of the causes is thimerisol, a vaccine preservative that contains mercury, a neurotoxin. Through careful and meticulous reporting, Kirby tells the story of stonewalling, denial and cover-up by federal regu-



Copies of Entries

Copies of all contest entries are available to IRE members from the IRE Resource Center, which has more than 22,000 investigative stories from the past 27 years. The center can be reached via e-mail at rescntr@ire.org or by calling 573-882-3364.

lators, medical groups and the pharmaceutical industry.

- Jack Hamann, author of *On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II*. The book reaches back more than six decades to expose a hidden travesty of justice by the U.S. military in World War II, in which the Army charged 43 soldiers, all of them African-American, with rioting that resulted in the death of an Italian prisoner of war. Hamann, with researcher Leslie Hamann, uncovers a web of lies in a book that holds lessons for today on the tensions between national security and individual rights.
- Sandra Bartlett, Bob Carty, Pauline Dakin, Mike Gordon, David McKie, Paddy Moore and Susanne Reber of Canadian Broadcasting Corp. radio for "Seniors and Drugs: Prescribed to Death." The CBC found that doctors had prescribed to more than a million seniors a variety of drugs that have been found to be potentially harmful to older people who have difficulty metabolizing drugs.
- J. David McSwane of Arvada, Colo. for "An Army of Anyone," which was a collection of three stories. Working for his high school newspaper, *Westwind*, when he began his investigation, McSwane went undercover to expose how recruiters desperate to meet their quotas ignored fictional flaws in his personal background. The stories forced the U.S. Army to convene a national stand-down to review recruiting tactics. The third story was published in *Westword*, a Denver, Colo. weekly.

Contest entries are screened and judged by IRE members who are working journalists. The IRE Awards program is unique in its efforts to avoid conflicts of interest. Work that includes any significant role by a member of the IRE Board of Directors or an IRE contest judge may not be entered in the contest.

This represents a significant sacrifice on the part of the individual — and often an entire newsroom — who may have done outstanding investigative work. For example, this year, board members who work for *The Washington Post*, *The Orange County Register*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Wisconsin State Journal*, KUSA-Denver and WEWS-Cleveland were unable to enter the contest.

IRE, founded in 1975, is a nonprofit professional organization dedicated to training and supporting journalists who pursue investigative stories and operates the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting, a joint program of IRE and the Missouri School of Journalism.

The IRE Awards will be presented during the Saturday, June 17, luncheon at the 2006 IRE Annual Conference in Fort Worth. The conference, scheduled for June 15-18 at the Renaissance Worthington Hotel, will feature many of the winners speaking about the techniques, methods and resources they used to develop their stories. To register, please go to www.ire.org/training/dallasfortworth06.

2005 IRE AWARDS IRE MEDAL WINNERS

The highest honor IRE can bestow for investigative reporting is the IRE Medal. This year's medal winners are:



Toxic Legacy – *The* (Hackensack, N.J.) *Record*; Jan Barry, Thomas Franklin, Mary Jo Layton, Alex Nussbaum, Clint Riley, Tom Troncone, Barbara Williams, Lindy Washburn

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

The Record revealed an environmental disaster of epic proportions: Twenty-five years after the Ford Motor Co. closed its massive assembly plant in Mahwah, N.J., toxic waste from the plant continues to pollute a vast area populated largely by low-income people. Thousands of families are plagued by asthma, rashes and cancer at extremely elevated rates. This work stood out not only for its exhaustive reporting and clear writing, but for its riveting multimedia presentation, which set a standard to which larger publications and broadcast outlets should aspire. The scope, depth and impact of this landmark work — by reporters Jan Barry, Mary Jo Layton, Alex Nussbaum, Clint Riley, Tom Troncone, Barbara Williams, Lindy Washburn and senior photographer Thomas Franklin — earns an IRE Medal, the organization's highest award.



School Bus Bloat 2005 – WJW-Cleveland; Tom Merriman, Mark DeMarino, Greg Easterly, Dave Hollis, Matt Rafferty, Chuck Rigdon

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Beginning with a tip that the Cleveland Municipal School District's Transportation Department was padding its payroll, WJW pursued six separate investigations that revealed a system rife with deception, fraud, mismanagement and cover-ups. Reporter Tom Merriman and his colleagues — producer Mark DeMarino, photojournalist Dave Hollis, editors Matt Rafferty and Chuck Rigdon, and news director Greg Easterly — were extraordinarily tenacious in their quest for truth, revealing that millions of dollars in the cash-strapped district were being wasted, laws were being violated and midlevel employees were being wrongly blamed for carrying out the orders of superiors. Among the specifics: Hundreds of bus drivers were being paid millions to spend their days playing billiards; the district was inflating rider numbers to get more money from the state; luxury coach buses were being hired to transport students short distances while hundreds of district-owned buses sat idle. The WJW reports led to the resignation of the district's CEO and to major, ongoing reforms. It earns an IRE Medal, the organization's highest award.



COMPLETE LIST OF WINNERS AND FINALISTS

NEWSPAPERS

LARGEST NEWSPAPERS
(MORE THAN 500,000) OR WIRE SERVICE

CERTIFICATE

High Price of Homeland Security – *The Washington Post*; Scott Higham and Robert O'Harrow Jr.

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

The Department of Homeland Security has been plagued by missteps from the beginning, but no one documented the full magnitude, cost and consequences of this failure until Scott Higham and Robert O'Harrow Jr. published "The High Price of Homeland Security." The reporters showed how billions have been wasted because of lax financial

controls, outmoded technologies, inexperienced contractors and political influence. Among the findings: Contractors enriched themselves (one paid herself \$5.4 million in salary for nine months' work); multimillion-dollar contracts inexplicably ballooned; a powerful lawmaker who controlled Homeland Security spending pocketed \$120,000 in political contributions from a startup that received a \$463 million DHS contract. Homeland Security officials tried to stymie the probe by withholding documents, forcing *The Post* to take legal action that is still pending. Despite the stonewalling, reporters were able to secure copies of damning internal documents. The series prompted DHS procurement reforms and sparked investigations by Congress and a federal fraud task force.

Do you want time to write?

www.KiplingerProgram.org

The Kiplinger Program in Public Affairs Journalism offers talented journalists six months to produce in-depth stories for print or online publication, as well as training opportunities in new media techniques such as podcasting, Web design and digital videography.

The fellowship offers a stipend of \$20,000, private office space and health and tuition benefits.

Last year, Kiplinger fellows had their stories published in a wide variety of outlets, including *The New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Cleveland's Plain Dealer*.

If you have a compelling story or in-depth reporting project, but don't have time in your current job to work on it, visit our Web site for application information:

www.KiplingerProgram.org

Deadline: July 20, 2006

Informational interviews will be conducted at the June IRE conference in Fort Worth. Please see our Web site for details.

THE JOHN GLENN INSTITUTE
FOR
PUBLIC SERVICE & PUBLIC POLICY



FINALISTS

- **Deadly Delays: The Decline of Fire Response** – *The Boston Globe*; Bill Dedman
- **Discharged and Dishonored** – Knight Ridder Washington Bureau; Chris Adams, Alison Young
- **Heart Devices** – *The New York Times*; Barry Meier
- **Vulnerable Forces** – *The New York Times*; Michael Moss

LARGE NEWSPAPERS

(250,000-500,000)

CERTIFICATE

FEMA: A Legacy of Waste – *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*; Sally Kestin, Megan O'Matz, John Maines, Jon Burstein

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

The size and scope of the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel's* investigation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency made this 15-month investigation a standout. *Sun-Sentinel* reporters Sally Kestin, Megan O'Matz, John Maines and Jon Burstein detailed fraud and abuse nationwide that cost taxpayers more than \$530 million. Residents outside storm areas got "free money" even if they had suffered little or no damage. The specifics are shocking: Wealthy people reimbursed far in excess of their actual damages; FEMA paying for funerals for those whose deaths had nothing to do with storms; criminals hired to process claims. The series led to 27 indictments and FEMA changed the way it processed disaster claims.



FINALISTS

- **Randy "Duke" Cunningham** – *Copley News Service*; Marcus Stern, Jerry Kammer, Dean Calbreath
- **Blind Eye** – *The Miami Herald*; Debbie Cenziper
- **Sex Offenders in Nursing Homes** – *Chicago Sun-Times*; Lori Rackl, Chris Fusco
- **What Crime/What Rape** – *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; Jeremy Kohler

MEDIUM NEWSPAPERS

(100,000-250,000)

IRE MEDAL

Toxic Legacy – *The (Hackensack, N.J.) Record*; Jan Barry, Thomas Franklin, Mary Jo Layton, Alex Nussbaum, Clint Riley, Tom Troncone, Barbara Williams, Lindy Washburn

FINALISTS

- **Uncovering "Coingate" and Ohio's pay-to-play** – *The (Toledo, Ohio) Blade*; James Drew, Mike Wilkinson, Christopher D. Kirkpatrick, Steve Eder, Jim Tankersley, Joshua Boak
- **New Jersey's Pension Peril** – *Asbury Park Press*; Michael L. Diamond, Nicholas Clunn, Eileen Smith, Peter N. Spencer, Ken Tarbous, Rob Jennings, Alan Guenther, Jonathan Tamari, Paul D'Ambrosio
- **Delaware's Deadly Prisons** – *The (Wilmington, Del.) News Journal*; Lee Williams, Esteban Parra
- **Hurricane Katrina: How New Orleans' Levees Failed** – *The Times-Picayune*; John McQuaid, Bob Marshall, Gordon Russell, Mark Schleifstein, Sheila Grissett

SMALL NEWSPAPERS

(UNDER 100,000)

CERTIFICATE

Brother's Keeper: West Virginia's Mental Health Crisis – *Charleston (W. Va.) Gazette*; Scott M. Finn

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

This ambitious investigation documented the devastating effects of budget cuts, bureaucratic bungling and outright fraud on some of West Virginia's most vulnerable residents – the mentally ill. Reporter Scott Finn found that suicides had increased and that mentally ill people were flooding emergency rooms, homeless shelters and jails. Finn's storytelling acumen made this compelling reading, and undoubtedly was a factor in the impressive results: The state passed reform laws and restored funding for mental-health services.



FINALISTS

- **An Anthrax Dilemma** – (Newport News, Va.) *Daily Press*; Bob Evans
- **The Deadliness Below** – (Newport News, Va.) *Daily Press*; John M.R. Bull
- **Damaged Shield?** – *Savannah (Ga.) Morning News*; Michael Fabey, Drew Martin

LOCAL CIRCULATION WEEKLIES

CERTIFICATE

PGE Investigation – *Willamette Week*; Nigel Jaquiss

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Dogged reporting by Nigel Jaquiss put the brakes on secret plans by a Texas buyout firm to strip down Oregon's largest public utility and sell the remnants for a huge profit. Jaquiss revealed that the Texas Pacific Group tried to use local politicians and others to purchase Portland General Electric only to lay off workers, slash customer service and profit hugely by reselling the company. Jaquiss' reporting is widely credited with scuttling the deal.

EDITOR'S CORNER

FINALISTS

- **Teetering C&A** – *Triangle Business Journal* (Raleigh/Durham, N.C.); Lee Weisbecker
- **The DWP Files** – *LA Weekly*; Jeffrey Anderson
- **Cancer Cell and Hospital of Horrors** – *Fort Worth Weekly*; Betty Brink
- **The Hit Parade Revisited** – *City Pages* (Minneapolis, Minn.); Paul Demko, G.R. Anderson, Jr.

TELEVISION

NETWORK/SYNDICATED

CERTIFICATE

Special Report: 17 years of Ocean Dumping – Korean Broadcasting System; Kim Myung Seop, Han Seung Bok, Lee Seung Ik, Yoon Hee Jin

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Some reporters go undercover for their stories. The Korean Broadcasting System went undercover and *underwater* to prove that ships were routinely dumping highly toxic sewage sludge and industrial waste into the sea around their peninsula nation. This remarkable story traced how South Korea is only one of two countries that still allow deep-sea dumping of hazardous chemicals, waste and heavy metals in vital fishing areas. The KBS video of tainted crabs covered in animal hair is stomach-turning. KBS reporters Kim Myung Seop, Han Seung Bok, Lee Seung Ik and Yoon Hee Jin retrieved soil samples from the ocean floor, tested the toxicity of the sludge and traced its source. As a result, the South Korean government banned ocean dumping and plans to compensate fishermen whose livelihoods were harmed by the dumping.

FINALISTS

- **The Case Against Saddam** – Towers Productions (Chicago, Ill.); Jonathan Towers, Tresha Mabile, Bill Smee, Stacy Atlas
- **Katrina Investigations** – NBC Nightly News; Lisa Myers, Jim Popkin, Rich Gardella, Douglas Pasternak, Aram Roston, Marisa Buchanan
- **Rendition** – CBS News; Scott Pelley, Graham Messick, Michael Karzis, Jeff Fager, Patti Hassler
- **Probing into the wealth of public servants** – Korean Broadcasting System; Kyung Young Choi, Moon Ho Choi, Young Sop Lee

TOP 20 MARKETS

IRE MEDAL

School Bus Bloat 2005 – WJW-Cleveland; Tom Merriman, Mark DeMarino, Greg Easterly, Dave Hollis, Matt Rafferty, Chuck Rigdon

FINALISTS

- **Talkin' Trash** – KTRK-Houston; Wayne Dolcefino, Steve Bivens, David Defranchi
- **Prison Tax Fraud** – WESH-Orlando; Travis J. Sherwin, Stephen Stock, Marc Rice, Jason Morrow, Pete Delis
- **Ghost Scouts: Atlanta Boy Scout Investigation** – WAGA-Atlanta; Michael

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35 >

Watchdog journalism worth time, money and manpower



TIM NOSTRAND

THE (HACKENSACK, N.J.) RECORD

As is the case with all good watchdog journalism, it wasn't easy to produce "Toxic Legacy," our five-part series on the continuing environmental havoc wrought by a long-closed Ford Motor Co. assembly plant that produced six million vehicles and an ocean of toxic industrial waste. (See page 21.)

Six reporters, a photographer and two editors worked on it full-time, most of them for the entire eight months it took to bring the project home. Still other staffers focused on our web presentation (www.northjersey.com/toxiclegacy). We spent more than \$10,000 doing our own environmental testing. The rest of the staff strained mightily to fill in for co-workers assigned to the project.

For a paper our size – 150,000 daily – it was an enormous investment of manpower.

But the stakes were equally big.

This story was worth it, one that cried out for an independent, unblinking look at an environmental disaster that had festered quietly for 50 years.

Had millions of gallons of lead paint sludge that were dumped in watersheds and other environmentally sensitive areas made people sick? Was industrial waste contaminating the water supply? And why hadn't government made sure it was all cleaned up the first time?

"Toxic Legacy" posed special challenges for its editors. As obvious as it was that we needed a big-time commitment of manpower, it was equally evident that the effort required a solid organizational structure to keep everyone from tripping over each other and to ensure that all the bases were covered.

This story was a monster, a saga spanning a half-century, with any number of equally important themes and focus points. We sensed it would best be told as a contextualized tale, one that readers could fully absorb only if told as a story and not in straight investigative form.

Our strategy was to borrow a page from the visual folks and "storyboard" the effort in advance. Each reporter was assigned not just to an area of reporting focus, but also to a segment of a larger story – each segment had a specific reporting mission and story-telling responsibility. We sensed that "Toxic Legacy" needed a chronological story line and set it up that way. In the final analysis, that's more or less the way we told it.

When we set this plan, we didn't know what the reporters would find out, nor did we prejudge the story. But we did know what ground they had to cover, and what answers they had to get and where those answers would fit into the overall tale,

whichever way the reporting went.

RESOURCES

See page 30 for resources for journalists interested in investigating the toxicity of our environment and its impacts on human health and safety.

Another key to success here was establishing a system whereby team members could communicate easily. We set up dedicated computer queues and everybody kept their materials there – notes,

drafts, research resources and important electronic documents. We also held frequent update meetings to assess our progress.

In hindsight, we think our strategy worked, even if it did entail some extra work at the back end knitting the elements together.

We also learned anew how important it was to be flexible, to allow the story to develop organically and to be willing to rip up elements of the game plan if that's where the reporting took us. At various points in the process, entire segments of what became the first-day "Toxic Legacy" story were deleted and others were devised on the fly. Other elements were broken off into their own stories, because they were deemed worthy of a full-day hit on their own.

Yes, "Toxic Legacy" took a lot of time, resources, and creativity. But that comes with the turf with good watchdog journalism. Telling it right is the right thing to do.

Tim Nostrand is assistant managing editor of projects for The (Hackensack, N.J.) Record, and will be a speaker at the 2006 IRE Conference in Dallas and Fort Worth. "Toxic Legacy" won an IRE Medal this year. A similar version of this piece originally ran in American Editor as part of the cooperative effort between IRE and the American Society of Newspaper Editors; it is used here with permission.



BUDGET PROPOSAL

Organization plans practical services, events
in light of cautionary times in newsrooms

Proposed IRE Budget for Fiscal Year 2007 (July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007) Combined All Programs

Year	Proposed 2006	Projected 2006	Proposed 2007
Membership			
Revenue			
New Membership	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$60,000
Membership-student	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Membership-international	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$5,000
Membership Renewals	\$130,000	\$130,000	\$130,000
Renewals-student	\$3,000	\$2,000	\$3,000
Renewals - international	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Subtotal membership	\$202,000	\$202,000	\$210,000
Journal subscriptions	\$10,000	\$9,000	\$15,000
Journal ads	\$45,000	\$60,000	\$70,000
Total membership revenue	\$257,000	\$271,000	\$295,000
Membership Service Expenses			
IRE Journal	\$88,000	\$90,000	\$90,000
Staff costs (membership)	\$85,000	\$75,000	\$80,000
Postage and shipping	\$7,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Total membership service expense	\$180,000	\$168,000	\$173,000
Net membership activity	\$77,000	\$103,000	\$122,000
Resource Center			
Books			
Book sales	\$60,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Royalty revenue	\$6,000	\$8,500	\$8,000
Book costs	\$35,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Net book activity	\$31,000	\$28,500	\$28,000
Stories and tipsheets			
Resource Center story and tipsheet sales	\$10,000	\$6,000	\$10,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$30,000
Resource center salaries and expenses	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$85,000
Net stories and tipsheets	\$(30,000)	\$(34,000)	\$(45,000)
Contest			
Award contest fees	\$30,000	\$29,000	\$35,000
Award contest expenses	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Net award contest activity	\$20,000	\$19,000	\$25,000
Net resource center activities	\$21,000	\$13,500	\$8,000
Web			
Web services revenue	\$10,000	\$12,000	\$12,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$40,000	\$30,000	\$20,000
Web services expenses	\$55,000	\$45,000	\$45,000
Net Web services activity	\$(5,000)	\$(3,000)	\$(13,000)
National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting			
Database library revenue	\$50,000	\$65,000	\$70,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$20,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Database library salaries and expenses	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$95,000
Net database library activity	\$(15,000)	\$(5,000)	\$(10,000)
Uplink subscription revenue	\$25,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Uplink ads	\$1,000	\$0	\$2,000
Uplink expenses	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Net Uplink activity	\$18,000	\$12,000	\$14,000
Net NICAR activities	\$3,000	\$7,000	\$4,000
Other sales and services revenue	\$2,000	\$2,500	\$1,000
Other sales and services expenses	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Net other sales and services activity	\$(8,000)	\$(5,500)	\$(7,000)
Net sales and services activity	\$11,000	\$12,000	\$(8,000)

BY BRANT HOUSTON
THE IRE JOURNAL

The proposed budget for the coming fiscal year, July 1, 2006, to June 30, 2007, is a cautious one, given the volatile and uncertain state of the journalism industry.

While many newsrooms continue to support training and the purchase of data, most of the managers with whom we speak foresee the months ahead as one of tight or diminishing budgets. In addition, some media companies are reluctant to donate significantly to conferences or seminars because of dire revenue projections for themselves.

Nevertheless, IRE's training and resources are seen as practical and as delivering results that can be measured in increased skills and better, more credible stories. In addition, news managers are seeing "watchdog journalism" as the "franchise" for the traditional and professional newspapers.

Because of that, we are not projecting cutbacks for IRE and its \$1.3 million budget. Indeed, we foresee an even more ambitious program of training that includes watchdog workshops, specialized seminars, and an increased focus on international journalists and on ethnic newsrooms in the United States.

We are developing new approaches, too, in our business plan so we can continue to provide services, particularly on the Web, for our members. The plan includes more advertising and promotion for our work. Not enough journalists and journalism managers know about IRE and what it has done for the industry in the past three decades.

Part of the plan includes a phase-in of a \$10-a-year increase in membership dues, which will bring the total dues to \$60 a year, less than many other similar organizations and still only a fifth of the total value of services provided for those dues. (Grants, training fees, and sale of resources provide the remainder of the revenue.)

At the same time, we plan more regional and local workshops and more online resources so the largest cost to members for training – travel and lodging – can be avoided.

The endowment drive also enters its last year as we strive to raise another \$1 million, which

**Proposed IRE Budget for Fiscal Year 2007 (July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007)
Combined All Programs**

Year	Proposed 2006	Projected 2006	Proposed 2007
Conferences and Seminars			
Annual Conferences			
Registrations and fees (IRE and NICAR)	\$150,000	\$130,000	\$150,000
Optional CAR day	\$15,000	\$12,000	\$15,000
Other revenues	\$25,000	\$15,000	\$20,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$150,000	\$130,000	\$150,000
Total annual conference revenues	\$340,000	\$287,000	\$335,000
Conference expenses	\$130,000	\$110,000	\$140,000
Net Annual conferences activity	\$210,000	\$177,000	\$195,000
On the road seminars			
Registrations and fees	\$50,000	\$95,000	\$95,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$20,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Seminar expenses	\$65,000	\$90,000	\$90,000
Net on the road seminar activity	\$5,000	\$7,000	\$7,000
Bootcamps			
Registrations and fees	\$55,000	\$75,000	\$75,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$20,000	\$7,000	\$5,000
Seminar expenses	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Net bootcamp activity	\$55,000	\$62,000	\$60,000
Regional Conference			
Registrations and fees	\$0	\$0	\$0
Prior/current year contributions released	\$0	\$0	\$0
Workshop Expenses	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net regional conference activity	\$0	\$0	\$0
Watchdog Workshops			
Registrations and fees	\$40,000	\$15,000	\$20,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$60,000	\$65,000	\$60,000
Workshop Expenses	\$60,000	\$50,000	\$55,000
Net Watchdog Workshop activity	\$40,000	\$30,000	\$25,000
Campaign Finance Workshops			
Registrations and fees	\$2,000	\$7,500	\$10,000
Prior/current year contributions released	\$10,000	\$7,500	\$25,000
Workshop Expenses	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$15,000
Net Campaign Finance activity	\$2,000	\$7,000	\$20,000
Conference Fellowships	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Fellowship expenses	\$15,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Net fellowships	\$0	\$0	\$0
Net conferences and seminar activity	\$312,000	\$283,000	\$307,000
Grants and contributions			
Temporarily restricted	\$170,000	\$89,500	\$100,000
Unrestricted	\$0	\$500	\$0
Permanently restricted	\$300,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000
Total grant and contributions	\$470,000	\$590,000	\$1,100,000
Investment return	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Endowment investment return & dividends	\$180,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
Net program activity	\$875,000	\$989,000	\$1,523,000

**Proposed IRE Budget for Fiscal Year 2007 (July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007)
Combined All Programs**

Year	Proposed 2006	Projected 2006	Proposed 2007
General and Administrative Expenses			
Salary and personnel costs	\$354,000	\$320,000	\$312,000
Professional services			
Consulting/Fundraising	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$7,000
Accounting	\$8,000	\$14,000	\$14,000
Legal	\$6,000	6000	\$6,000
Total professional services	\$19,000	\$25,000	\$27,000
General office expenses			
Telephone and fax	\$9,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Postage	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000
Office supplies	\$7,000	\$7,000	\$7,000
Photocopying	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Insurance	\$14,000	\$14,500	\$16,000
Computer supplies	\$1,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Equipment expense	\$4,000	\$2,500	\$3,000
Other office expense	\$5,000	\$6,000	\$6,000
Total general office expense	\$56,000	\$52,000	\$54,000
Other expenses			
Publications/Dues	\$3,000	\$3,500	\$3,500
Board of Directors	\$7,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Travel costs	\$2,000	\$3,500	\$2,000
FOI conferences	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
Computer purchases	\$15,000	\$1,000	\$15,000
Staff Training	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Total other expenses	\$33,000	\$21,000	\$34,500
Total in General and Administration Expenses	\$462,000	\$418,000	\$427,500
Fund-raising expenses			
Salary and expenses	\$52,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
Promotions	\$2,000	\$3,000	\$3,000
Total fund-raising expenses	\$54,000	\$43,000	\$43,000
Depreciation	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Reserves	\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
Total Administrative Expenses	\$561,000	\$486,000	\$495,500
Less Endowment Contributions	\$300,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000
Excess net program activity over expenses	\$14,000	\$3,000	\$27,500

Salaries and Benefits As of July 1, 2006

	Salary	Benefits	Total	Contributions or Allocations	
Executive Director	\$91,000	\$27,000	\$118,000	\$51,000	Journalism school/Seminars
Director of Publications	\$40,000	\$12,000	\$52,000	\$10,000	Journalism school
Training Director	\$56,000	\$17,000	\$73,000	\$73,000	Seminars
Database Administrator	\$57,000	\$17,000	\$74,000	\$74,000	Database Library
Membership Coordinator	\$41,000	\$12,000	\$53,000	\$43,000	Membership
Admin Asst. Membership	\$24,000	\$7,000	\$31,000	\$15,000	Membership
System Administrator	\$42,000	\$13,000	\$55,000		
Web Coordinator/Advertising	\$35,000	\$11,000	\$46,000	\$46,000	Journal/Web
Web Administrator					
Resource Center Director	\$38,000	\$11,000	\$49,000	\$49,000	Endowed Post
Conference Coordinator	\$43,000	\$13,000	\$56,000	\$14,000	Seminars
Campaign Finance Director					
Finance Officer	\$34,000	\$10,000	\$44,000		
Program Designer					
Computing Support Spec.	\$16,000		\$16,000		
Asst. Data Library Director	\$11,000		\$11,000	\$11,000	Database Library
FOI Center Director					
Development Officer	\$34,000	\$10,000	\$44,000	\$44,000	Endowment income
Subtotal	\$562,000	\$160,000	\$722,000	\$430,000	Subtotal
Graduate Assistants	\$35,000		\$35,000	\$35,000	Journalism School
Part-Time Help	\$50,000		\$50,000	\$35,000	Journal
Student Web	\$15,000		\$15,000	\$15,000	Web
Student Assistants	\$35,000		\$35,000	\$30,000	Data Lib/Res Ctr
Subtotal	\$135,000		\$135,000	\$115,000	Subtotal
Total General/Administrative				\$857,000	Total General/Admin.
Subtotal of allocations				\$545,000	Subtotal of allocations
Net salaries & benefits				\$312,000	Net salaries & benefits

will earn a half a million dollars in matching money from the Knight Foundation. If we succeed, the endowment fund will be close to \$5 million and is projected to produce \$200,000 or more a year in investment income, giving IRE a running start each year.

If you peruse the budget, you will see that we operate IRE with a small staff that is always cutting expenses wherever possible. We also benefit from the strong support of the Missouri School of Journalism, which provides free utilities and office space, some computers, Internet connections, free computer lab and lecture space for our Missouri workshops, graduate research assistantships and tuition support, and a portion of the executive director's salary.

We also depend deeply on the volunteer work of you – the members – and the support you give us in helping with seminars, publicity, advice, resources and endowment donations.

ENDOWMENT NEWS

RECENT ENDOWMENT DONATIONS AND PLEDGES BRING FUND TO CLOSE TO \$3 MILLION:

As we begin preparations for the 30th Anniversary of IRE's Arizona Project, we are pleased to give an overview of the recent substantial donations and pledges to the IRE endowment fund. We would like to thank the following for the generous support:

- **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation** for sending in \$275,000 in matching funds as part of IRE's \$1 million matching grant. So far, IRE has raised more than \$950,000 as part of the program.
- **IRE Board Member Nancy Stancill, her family and colleagues**, for raising more than \$20,000 toward the Godfrey Wells Stancill Small News Fellowship in memory of Nancy's father. With the Knight match, the fund now stands at more than \$30,000. We sincerely thank all who donated to the Stancill Fellowship Fund over the past year. The fund is already at work – we will award the first Stancill fellowship to our annual conference which will be June 15-18 in Fort Worth. The fellowship is open to journalists working for newspapers with Sunday circulation of 50,000 and below. For more information and an application form, please see: www.ire.org/training/fellowships.
- As we reported earlier, IRE received \$100,000 pledges from both the Gannett Foundation and the Nicholas B. Ottaway Foundation. Since then, the **Las Vegas Sun, Barbara J. Greenspun, publisher**, has pledged \$100,000 over four years to ensure that IRE training programs in investigative reporting are funded over the long term. Each \$100,000 pledge garnered a Knight-Foundation match of \$50,000 for a total of \$450,000.
- **IRE Board Members**, many of whom called 20 or more IRE members asking that they join them in pledging to the IRE endowment fund. Board members also approached potential major donors and helped the IRE development staff. Each and every one of the IRE board members also has made a significant pledge as part of the drive.
- **All IRE members and other individual donors** who pledged as part of our end-of-year drive, with nearly \$8,500 coming in. So far, more than 750 IRE members have pledged to the fund. Please consider joining them in support of IRE and investigative journalism.
- **All of the media companies that matched employees' donations to the endowment.** To find out if your company has such a program, please check with your human resources department. To see a list of media companies that match donations to IRE, please see: www.ire.org/endowment.



NOTE FROM DIANE SAWYER, ENDOWMENT CAMPAIGN CO-CHAIR:

"There is nothing more important for a journalist than to seek the truth, speak for those who have no voice, and try to hold power accountable. Investigative journalists have always felt this was more than a career – it's a trust, and a duty. In the age of blogs and the instant assertions of the Internet, it is even more critical to have journalists who check and double check and care. Investigative Reporters and Editors has always been a place where journalists have learned these skills. IRE has and will always honor the mission and lead the way. Please join me in supporting IRE during this important time in our history."

FOUR DAUGHTERS ESTABLISH FUND IN MEMORY OF THE LATE TOM RENNER

Dawn Pellechi had begun the strenuous and emotional process of organizing the papers of her late father Tom Renner, one of IRE's favorite sons, original member of the Arizona Project's Desert Rats and longtime organized crime reporter for Newsday. As she went through the papers, she remembered IRE from its earliest days and wondered if the organization would be interested in archiving his extensive files. (Renner died at age 61 in January 1990.)

Interested in finding out what happened to IRE, she contacted Myrta Pulliam, one of IRE's founders and a co-chair of the current endowment drive. What she found out stunned her – not only did the organization still exist, it had grown to a group of 4,500 members with a training calendar of more than 70 seminars and workshops per year, reaching thousands of working journalists and journalism students. Quite a change from the organization that she remembered from her youth!

After speaking with Executive Director Brant Houston and other members of IRE's staff, Dawn decided that she and her sisters would like to honor her father by establishing a fund to endow the Tom Renner Award, which honors outstanding crime reporting as part of the annual IRE awards. And establish she did, along with sisters Jackie Murray, Elaine Renner and Sandy Renner. Thanks to all, and we're very pleased that we honor the memory of her father, who, in Pellechi's words, "was so loved and is so missed," and who inspired and taught so many IRE members over the years.

To donate to the Tom Renner Award Fund, please fill out the donation form on the right and write "Renner Fund" in the "name area" blank. Or to donate online, please visit www.ire.org/endowment.



Tom Renner, surrounded by his daughters, (from left to right) Dawn, Elaine, Sandy and Jackie]

BREAKTHROUGHS

Please make your annual contribution to IRE!

"IRE's hands-on training, practical advice and network of support have made it the go-to organization for journalists in the U.S. and around the world. By revolutionizing the training of journalists everywhere, IRE has quite simply made the profession better. Contributing to its endowment will enable IRE to continue this great work."

James B. Steele
Editor-at-large for Time Inc.

FUNDING IRE's FUTURE

2006 ANNUAL IRE ENDOWMENT APPEAL

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IRE stands for – and promotes – the best in journalism. Help us make sure IRE will always be there to promote excellence in this essential field of journalism and inspire thousands of journalists to practice the best journalism they can. Year after year, IRE offers quality education and guidance for reporters, editors and producers through resources and services that uphold high professional standards and instill a passion for public service journalism.

Don't forget to inquire whether or not your employer will match your donation. For a list of media companies that match gifts to IRE, see: www.ire.org/endowment/matchingcompanies

\$500 pledge (over 5 years)
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To make a contribution, please use the form below, visit www.ire.org/endowment or phone

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AGING CITIZENS

Steep learning curve for series of stories on guardianship care for state's elderly

BY EVELYN LARRUBIA, ROBIN FIELDS AND JACK LEONARD
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Baby Boomers are reaching old age. Over the next three decades, the number of Americans over 65 is expected to double to 71 million. About 10 percent of them will suffer from Alzheimer's disease.

Who will take care of them?

Relatives or close friends will in many cases – but not all. A growing trade of for-profit guardians for the elderly has sprung up in California and other states.

The *Los Angeles Times* decided to take a hard look at this virtually unregulated, obscure business.

We found that hundreds of seniors lost their independence to professional conservators (California's term for guardians for adults) without their consent at court hearings that lasted minutes. Once under conservatorship, seniors and their relatives found it difficult – and expensive – to fight their way out.

Some professional guardians – who are subject to less oversight than hairdressers or guide-dog trainers – ignored the needs of the vulnerable adults in their care. Some isolated ailing seniors from their closest relatives. Some stole money or property. Many ran up fees, which were typically rubber-stamped by the overworked probate courts charged with overseeing the guardians' work.

Courts in Los Angeles had become so backlogged that they failed to check on the well-being of half of the seniors under conservatorship, a requirement under state law. Not surprisingly, courts missed a multitude of problems, including outright theft.

We wish we could tell you that our series came about after we discovered a wonderful government Web site from which we downloaded gigabytes of data which, after a few days of analysis, spelled out the problems in our state's guardianship system.

We weren't that lucky – no such database existed. In fact, no government agency tracks conservatorship cases in California.

Instead, it took three reporters, a researcher and a photographer years of gathering and analyzing data, seeking out sources, drilling deep into cases, polishing the writing and selecting the photographs.

We built a database – too early in the process, it turned out. Then we built another one. By the time we finished, we had reviewed more than 2,400 cases, including every one handled by professional conservators in five Southern California counties between 1997 and 2003.

We had a steep learning curve. None of us knew anything about the arcane world of for-profit guardians when we began the project. Along the way, we

took our share of wrong turns.

But the stories the *Times* ultimately printed shined a light on a dark corner few of our readers knew existed.

Illusory protections

It all began in 2002. Coming off a year of covering demographics, Robin Fields was convinced there was more to write about California's burgeoning elderly population. Browsing through legislation aimed at curbing financial abuse of seniors, she came across a bill analysis that mentioned professional conservators.

There had been a scandal involving a professional conservator in a nearby county. Was she simply a bad apple, or was her case symptomatic of larger, more systemic problems?

Fields read the clips and interviewed elder-rights advocates. They provided our first case leads, some of which survived to the final draft. The initial material was strong enough to persuade the *Times* to green light the project and commit two more reporters, Evelyn Larrubia and Jack Leonard, to it.

It wasn't until the three of us had spent months poring over files and observing probate hearings that we realized the extent of the problems.

We also realized the experts don't always know everything. In our case, the legal protections many had touted as conservatorship's strengths turned out to be mostly illusory.

On paper, California provided stringent safeguards to ensure that only elderly people who needed a professional conservator were appointed one. The state employed court investigators who were supposed to assess seniors before judges ruled on their cases. Conservators were supposed to alert seniors before filing a petition to become their conservator. We learned, however, that professional conservators were easily sidestepping these safeguards.

We also learned – the hard way – that you need to know your subject and the documents before you build a database. Think through what you want the final version of the story to be able to quantify.

Early on, we decided to limit our in-depth analysis to cases involving professional conservators with the biggest caseloads in Southern California. We felt that would be a manageable task. We created a checklist of questions to answer for each file we reviewed. Then we collected pages of information from each case, trying to make sure we covered every conceivable area of interest.

Our research helped us learn how to navigate conservatorship case files, which were far different from the criminal and civil cases we were used to reporting on. It also helped us compile a long list of examples showing conservators' wrongdoing and incompetence, as well as gaffes by courts.

We poured the information we collected into an Access database built by *Times* researcher Maloy Moore.

But six months into the project, we still had questions that our database couldn't answer. The numbers

Francine Orr | Los Angeles Times



Former conservator Anne Chavis listens as lawyers tell a judge she should be surcharged for more than \$1 million in missing money belonging to her clients.

we could produce came with all sorts of caveats. We couldn't say for certain whether our findings applied only to conservators with heavy caseloads or to all professional conservators. Moreover, we had not collected information about how quickly conservators took control of elders' affairs.

We decided to create a more focused database – based on a single page of questions – and collect that information from every case in the five-county region. We measured the time it took for courts to grant conservatorships and how often the courts disciplined wayward conservators. Our new review showed that in more than half of all cases, seniors were entrusted to for-profit conservators at hasty “emergency” hearings. In hundreds of instances, we knew, judges ruled the same day the cases were filed.

But, in our abbreviated second set of questions, we had neglected to ask whether proposed wards were notified about the hearings in advance, or had been checked on and informed of their rights by court investigators. We knew that many were not, but having the authority of an exact number was important.

So, we went back through every file. Again.

An unavoidable reality, it seems, is that these things always take longer than you first think.

Even after becoming well-versed in how conservatorships worked, we underestimated how long it would take to go through every Southern California file and take handwritten notes, then enter them into the database.

Also, as much time as we spent up to our necks in case files and data, it was just as important to convey the experience of wards and the people who cared about them. Their personal narratives were central to our investigation, showing the harm – not just in dollars but in human dignity – done by what is supposed to be a protective system.

There, too, we encountered hurdles. Most of the people whose conservatorships we examined were aged and infirm when they came into the system and often did not live long once their cases began. Because their guardians were not obliged to file reports for at least a year, hints of trouble often did not surface until long after the fact.

There were other obstacles. Elders who were still alive were sometimes too addled to realize they were victims of abuse. Conservators themselves often held the key to providing access to clients who lived in nursing homes.

Nevertheless, we began to reconstruct lives, interviewing neighbors, stepchildren – even, in one case, a dog handler who had trained a prize-winning Doberman pinscher owned by a couple that ended up under conservatorship. *Times* photographer Francine Orr accompanied us on interviews, capturing the frailty of elderly victims.

New characters emerged as we followed the story. We found Anne Chavis, a conservator for dozens of veterans and their widows, many of them mentally ill. We used property records to show how

Francine Orr | Los Angeles Times



Helen Jones, 87, says, “To me, conserve means to save and I thought this was a way of saving me money so I wouldn't have to pay utilities. I never did know how the conservatorship works. Nobody ever told me.” Her conservator has spent \$200,000 of Jones' money.

Chavis sold a client's house to herself at a cut-rate price without telling the court. In addition, she couldn't account for hundreds of thousands of dollars she was managing for her clients. The tale of her career became our third-day story.

“ The series unleashed an outpouring of outrage from readers. Hundreds left messages on the paper's blog. Hundreds more called or wrote to us, many of them describing their own stories of abuse at the hands of conservators.”

We also decided to add a fourth story, dealing with the Public Guardian's Office, Los Angeles County's conservator of last resort. The agency's dire state helped explain the growing reliance on professional conservators.

The story set up an important contrast: While people with assets were sometimes being thrust into conservatorships they did not need, indigent seniors – whose cases for-profit operators did not want – were getting dangerously poor service or no help at all.

Outpouring of outrage

Over the life of the project, three editors came and went. Eventually, Vernon Loeb, the *Times*' California investigations editor, took over and brought a fresh eye to the stories and a passion that propelled it

toward publication. In the last few months, assistant managing editor Marc Duvoisin oversaw the final editing, refining the themes and storytelling.

We spent weeks in Duvoisin's office, ordering pizza and staying well into the night, struggling over every word. We knew we had struck the right note when a weary-looking Duvoisin would smile, get off his chair and give his trademark celebratory leap.

By the time our four-part series was published in November, more than three years had passed – far longer than any of us had ever imagined it would take.

The results of our work had more impact than we had expected, as well.

The series unleashed an outpouring of outrage from readers. Hundreds left messages on the paper's blog. Hundreds more called or wrote to us, many of them describing their own stories of abuse at the hands of conservators.

In recent weeks, three state legislators introduced bills to strengthen regulation of professional conservators and curb abuses. The state chief justice has formed a task force to study laws and practices related to conservatorship.

Robin Fields has been a reporter at the Times since 1999, has covered consumer affairs, technology and demographics and is a member of the California investigations team. Evelyn Larrubia has worked for the Los Angeles Times since 1997, covering state courts and county government and the county's beleaguered child welfare agency. Jack Leonard has been a reporter at the Times since 1997, where he has covered criminal justice, local government and now covers Los Angeles County government.

SENIOR SCAM

Vulnerable retirees become target of persistent charity phone solicitors

BY JON BURSTEIN
SOUTH FLORIDA SUN-SENTINEL

Florida retiree Marie Woods gave \$1,181 to two nonprofit organizations in June 2005, but she doesn't remember the donations to the Global Mindlink Foundation and Select International Donors. The 74-year-old woman admits she has memory problems.

There's no question she made the donations — I have tape recordings of her conversations with the nonprofits. Phone solicitors reportedly pushed Woods and dozens of other senior citizens into giving money to the two groups, one of which claimed to help children's charities. We found that even when potential donors clearly had hearing problems or seemed senile, the phone solicitors called them again and again.

I got the recordings as I delved into how two Deerfield Beach, Fla., nonprofit groups allegedly took in millions from vulnerable retirees nationwide. State authorities believe those "donations" went to line the pockets of the nonprofits' officials. Records showed that money retirees had scrimped and saved to pay for basic necessities instead went to finance the nonprofit executives' Key West vacations and meals at five-star restaurants.



Lou Toman | Sun-Sentinel

Marie Woods of Coconut Creek received a call from a telemarketer soliciting money for a charitable cause.

Money flow

A lawsuit first brought the Global Mindlink Foundation and Select International Donors to my attention. The state attorney general's office had a civil consumer protection action against the two nonprofits, alleging they engaged in unfair and deceptive trade practices. In the past, the Global Mindlink Foundation had received favorable press from South Florida media outlets for helping disadvantaged children.

My first step was to pull the 990 forms the charity had filed with the Internal Revenue Service. Questions immediately emerged. For 2004, the organization raised \$560,000 with less than \$12,500 reportedly donated to charitable causes. But the nonprofit's president, Denise Battista, received a \$98,000 salary that year. Tax returns from prior years showed that, since at least 1998, the nonprofit used a minute portion of the donations for charitable purposes or would give the money to other nonprofit groups headed by Global Mindlink Foundation officials.

Next, I filed a public records request with the state attorney general's office for all materials related to the consumer protection inquiry. That's when I learned the two nonprofits had shut down abruptly in the summer, abandoning their shared office and mounds of paperwork inside. The attorney general's office seized all of those documents — reams of financial ledgers, employee records, bank records and canceled checks. Under Florida's excellent public records law, I had access to all those documents. I spent hours at the local branch of the attorney general's office going through the papers, tracing how the organizations spent money.

The documents showed that, while the Global Mindlink Foundation made a few high-profile donations to disadvantaged children, most of the money never left company officials' hands. Money flowed back and forth between the Global Mindlink Foundation and Select International Donors. Battista often wrote herself checks from the Global Mindlink Foundation accounts. The two nonprofits had taken in more than \$5.3 million since August 1999, but less than 2 percent went to charitable causes, according to tax returns and the groups' financial records.

In addition, the attorney general's office had subpoenaed the nonprofits' "verification calls." After donors agreed to give money over the phone, the nonprofits had an outside company tape the operator confirming the donation. The attorney general's office had six months of tape recordings and I was able

to get copies through my records request. I quickly realized that going through more than 800 phone calls — some running more than six minutes — would take too long. I focused my energy on the more than 170 recordings from June 2005, creating a database of those calls.

Almost all of those calls were made to senior citizens, some receiving as many as three calls within that month. Some seemed confused on the phone. One woman believed she was talking to someone from Wal-Mart. Others were told they already had "memberships" with the nonprofits reserved for them and they had to give money. The phone operators would continue to request money, even after they were told, "I might not have that much in my balance" or "skip the whole thing; I'm broke."

High-pressure sales

I had no problems tracking down the donors from the recordings, but interviewing them often proved difficult, if not impossible. Many didn't remember giving money, while others offered incoherent answers to my questions. That's when I turned my attention to tracking down their adult children. The children provided the best quotes, giving me detailed descriptions of their parents' poor health as well as how much money went to the nonprofits.

I reviewed several hundreds pages of sworn statements given to state investigators by the nonprofits' former employees. One of those statements revealed that a Global Mindlink Foundation official, Lynne Tallman, was paid \$7,500 a week for two years even though she acknowledges she never did any work. Tallman was Battista's former stepmother. Battista's father, Stephen Colangelo, founded the nonprofit, but turned it over to his daughter in 1998 when he had to serve prison time for shooting a man outside a south Florida bar.

After covering various boiler-room scams through the years, I knew the recordings provided a unique window into how high-pressure sales tactics work. I coordinated with the *Sun-Sentinel's* multimedia department to post 10 of the calls on our Web site. Readers were able to listen to the calls and judge for themselves how the nonprofits dealt with senior citizens.

In January, Battista reached a civil settlement with the state attorney general's office agreeing to pay \$350,000 in restitution, but not admitting to any wrongdoing. While the civil case may be over for her, the attorney general's office has referred the matter to the Office of Statewide Prosecution, which handles criminal prosecutions. At press time, no criminal charges had been filed.

Jon Burstein has been a reporter with the South Florida Sun-Sentinel since September 1999. He was part of the Sun-Sentinel investigative team that recently won an IRE Award and the Scripps Howard Foundation's National Journalism Award in Public Service Reporting for its reports on waste and fraud in the federal government's disaster aid program.

PILL POPPERS

Inmates given easy access to painkillers; sources say 'they hand it out like candy'

BY CHRIS HALSNE
KIRO-SEATTLE

Imagine morphine is a godsend to a soldier whose leg has been torn off by a land mine. Cancer victims also may find a modicum of comfort in the time-release painkiller. But I had questions when I found out morphine pills are routinely handed out to Washington state prison inmates who complain of everything from a sore back to a hurt toe.

Last July, nurses who worked inside various correctional institutions shared with us their concerns that the prisons were overprescribing highly addictive narcotics. One nurse told us, "They hand it out like candy." Another stated, "I pretty much saw inmates stoned all the time." They told us the real reason prison doctors overmedicated inmates was to placate inmates, to make them easier to manage. Their testimony was compelling and consistent.

It also was going to be difficult to prove. The privacy rules in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) were clearly standing in the way of full disclosure.

Colorado provides answers

Tracking the finances of taxpayer-funded painkillers was not as simple as we first imagined. The raw pills in question cost about \$500,000. Compared to the overall Department of Corrections health budget, it was a drop in the bucket. The costs of distributing the drugs, however, were untold millions more. Nurses described the three-times-a-day "pill line" for inmates as "total chaos." Extra security measures had to be taken near the drug cabinets. Doctors and nurses had to oversee the handout. Rapists, murderers, and thieves had to be moved in and out of a small room repeatedly.

One drawback for our investigative team was that we could not gain access to an unaltered pill line. I believe that because prison officials knew we were coming, they may have handpicked agreeable inmates to be on television. That's why the testimony of the nurses was so important. While we did agree to hide the identity of one nurse to protect her job, we balanced that secrecy with another on-camera nurse who backed up our hidden source's claims.

It took three months for the Department of Corrections to partially fulfill our Open Record Act request, which finally gave us the hard numbers to back up the nurses' claims. The state only provided data for the eight largest prisons, and included only certain drugs. Over a three-year period, pharmacy logbooks showed general population inmates took at least 329,000 oxycodone pills and 85,000 doses of

morphine. Overall, inmates consumed about a million doses of painkillers.

Our first task was to take those numbers, which sounded big, and give them some perspective. We couldn't find any scientific studies. State health officials were clueless, not even knowing where to start. Washington prison doctors basically challenged us to prove their painkiller distribution was not "normal."

Ultimately, the answer came from Colorado. We determined its prison system has the same basic population and racial breakdown as Washington's prison system. Investigative producer Bill Benson figured by reviewing Colorado's painkiller distribution, we'd see if there might be a problem here.

The numbers were polar opposites. Colorado wasn't prescribing any morphine or oxycodone to general population inmates. Other narcotics were used sparingly. Colorado, in fact, had determined that neither of those pills was safe to have inside a facility unless it was in the lockdown section of the prison hospital.

We also learned that because most morphine and oxycodone pills are time-release and cannot be crushed in water, as can other painkillers, prisoners routinely sell or hoard morphine and oxycodone by "cheeking," the nurses told us. Unless security staff is diligent about checking the mouth of every inmate in the pill line, it's easy for them to hide prescriptions, the nurses explained.

Wild variations

The most important statistic we found was not the sheer numbers of narcotics in prison, but the inconsistent distribution per institution.

Researchers told us fluctuations were really the key to spotting potential problems. It's reasonable to assume that on average, each prison would prescribe about the same amount of painkillers per inmate. By building an Access database from prison pharmacy distribution charts, we found wild variations. For example, at one correctional facility, inmates averaged less than one oxycodone pill per year. At another, they received 63 each.

When we shared this information with the Washington Department of Corrections, they became concerned and launched an internal investigation just before our first report aired. They found enough evidence of wrongdoing to expand their investiga-

tion, and the Washington State Health Department has put together a team of five professionals (a doctor, a pharmacist and three nurses) to get to the root of the troubles with painkillers. That outside investigative team already has expanded its examination to include psychotropic drugs.

Although it is not a problem we addressed in our investigative report, we did uncover some anomalies with Ritalin. Records showed inmates wolfed down 250,000 doses in three years. While adults do take Ritalin for attention deficit disorder, if someone does not have the disorder, the drug acts as a stimulant.

Our series "High on Prison Life" affected groups of viewers differently. Few thought indiscriminately handing out painkillers to inmates was a good idea. Some viewers thought inmates needed to suffer and that morphine distribution was "coddling." Others commented the state was actually addicting some inmates to drugs. We found some addicts, once released from prison, were committing more crime to feed that habit since the drugs were no longer free.

Our series is not complete and, in my opinion, still is missing a more serious look into that component. Many incarcerated felons already have a drug problem when they come into the system. A few years in a cell is an opportunity to get clean. A study by Colorado prison health experts found that inmates who came into the system with a drug background were far more likely to seek out prescription painkillers once incarcerated.




KIRO-Seattle

Prison staff must check every inmate's mouth to prevent them from hiding the prescription pills.

We continue to appeal some portions of our Open Records Act request. Our investigative staff still is looking for a more complete picture, especially when it comes to the question of why inmates get painkillers. Each prison facility has to keep dozens of logbooks with date, time, prisoner's name and reason for the pill distribution. We asked that the inmate name be removed and the remainder of the information be produced. Prison doctors say the public is not entitled to the medical reasons painkillers are handed out, because of the HIPAA privacy rule.

Chris Halsne is an investigative reporter with KIRO-Seattle. He won the 2004 Edward R. Murrow award for investigative reporting.



Investigations into toxic hazards show that humans remain under a constant, deadly threat whether it's on land, at sea, near train tracks or even in the neighborhood supermarket.

TOXIC LIVING

Vivian Milligan sits near an ominous old tunnel entrance to the Peters Mine, on property just behind her house. Her family and friends often sit near this tunnel entrance in the summer time as it has very cool air blowing out.



Dirt bikers ride past barrels that may contain lead paint, in an area formerly known as “the Meadows” next to the former Ford Auto Plant in Mahwah.

QUICK LOOK

Name of the series, and when it was published:

“Toxic Legacy,” Oct. 2-6, 2005

How the story got started (tip, assignment, etc.):

Developed from community coverage of ongoing issue

Length of time taken to report, write and edit the story:

Eight months

Major types of documents used and if FOI requests were needed:

FOI and state public records law to review case files held by federal, state and local government agencies

Major type of human sources used:

Interviews with residents, doctors, lawyers, government officials, environmental activists, plant workers and managers, truck drivers, hauling company owners, law enforcement investigators, various experts

DUMP DEBACLE

Superfund site still toxic after cleanup despite official claims to the contrary

BY JAN BARRY

THE (HACKENSACK, N.J.) RECORD

Finding industrial waste in a residential neighborhood is not unusual in New Jersey. After all, the state is known derisively as “Cancer Alley.” But it is novel to find tons of paint sludge in a neighborhood where a Superfund cleanup took place more than a decade ago.

That revelation was the starting point of “Toxic Legacy,” a five-part special report that set off shock waves in two states and at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The series laid out how, where and why paint waste laced with lead, arsenic and solvents linked to cancer showed up in lawns and parklands years after a Ford Motor Company dump site in Ringwood, N.J., was declared clean by the EPA and taken off the national Superfund list.

It detailed how federal officials had accepted

Ford’s assurances that it fully investigated the 500-acre site and removed the worst of the waste. Digging through mountains of dusty old documents and conducting innumerable extensive interviews, our team uncovered a far different tale.

We told a story of indiscriminate dumping in a poor community, near streams flowing to a major regional reservoir, and at more than a dozen other unauthorized sites in New Jersey and New York. We exposed the failure of government to adequately address the problem, even as officials said all was well.

After “Toxic Legacy” was published, the EPA vowed that the area would be fully cleaned up and, prodded by members of Congress, re-listed as a Superfund site. New Jersey’s governor vowed the state would take a firm hand. New York vowed to act on years of complaints about sludge dumps along a water supply river that flows into New Jersey.

I’ve heard such promises before.

A toxic tour

I first saw paint sludge in 1995 on an EPA tour to see a pile of grayish lumps that a Ringwood resident unearthed near his backyard garden. The EPA said it was an aberration – just a small clump overlooked in the 1987-90 cleanup, and Ford would remove it.

With the EPA on the case, we moved on to do a profile of the neighborhood. Paint sludge was just part of my piece on the Ramapoughs, a community of dark-skinned people with Dutch names who claim Native American ancestry. I described a tribe living in mountainside homes overlooking a scenic state park, whose members complained of years of being dumped on. Residents talked of deaths and danger living amid abandoned iron mines, industrial waste dumps, municipal landfills, high-voltage electrical lines, and midnight dumping of tires and other debris.

Nine years later, I again found myself on a toxic tour of Upper Ringwood. Residents showed EPA

COVER STORY

inspectors sludge in several places in the forest near their homes and in the front yard of the home where sludge was found in the backyard in 1995. That day in February 2004, EPA officials gave the same assurances as before – that some small amount of sludge got overlooked and Ford would take care of it. Ford representatives said they had done, and would continue doing, whatever the EPA wanted.

I was astounded. I reviewed my 1995 story and notes and realized I had not known enough then – and still didn't – to ask more focused questions.

Working with my colleague Barbara Williams, we set out to pin down the facts. Williams interviewed residents and found many in the community of about 400 people had cancer and other serious illnesses, or said family members had died of cancer. I dug into old files on the original cleanup and then took a hike with a camera and recorded rusted drums and paint sludge in and beyond where the clean-up work was said to have been done. Some of the most useful files were early investigators' reports, buried in state and EPA files, which we used to help locate paint waste that was not cleaned up.

Our reporting generated more questions – questions that persuaded senior editors to launch a project on the legacy of toxic waste generated at Ford's long-closed Mahwah, N.J., assembly plant.

Health reporters Mary Jo Layton and Lindy Washburn, environmental reporter Alex Nussbaum, crime reporter Tom Troncone and photographer Tom Franklin came aboard, under the direction of project editors Tim Nostrand (see page 11) and Debra Lynn Vial. Investigative specialist Clint Riley helped report how, a generation ago, New Jersey accepted a large tract of Ford's dumpsite as a gift without investigating what was on the land. Internal Ford documents revealed that company officials conveyed the parcel as a way to avoid responsibility for the contamination they knew was there.

We interviewed residents and their doctors, former Ford plant workers, haulers who dumped the sludge in various places in two states, neighbors who witnessed illegal dumping and law-enforcement investigators who chased dumpers with mob connections. Ford and EPA representatives declined to talk about what was done or not done in the past, maintaining that they were focused on the present cleanup work. Through residents and environmental activists we found frustrated officials or former officials who provided further insight into what happened in the past.

We reviewed stacks of documents at various agencies, tramped through overgrown dumps to document barely visible chunks of sludge, and

hired a state-approved lab to do field sampling and chemical analysis of paint sludge, soil and water in several locations.

Lessons learned

In the midst of our eight-month-long investigation, New Jersey's environmental commissioner looked at what was being turned up in Ringwood and called for a criminal investigation. The state's environmental justice task force ruled that the residents had been unjustly dumped on. The state health department announced that some cancer rates in the community were unusually high.

After publication, officials in New York state, citing *The Record's* series, began legal actions against Ford for dumping paint waste just over the state border from its former plant. Ford agreed to remove waste buried in the floodplain. Our testing had strongly suggested the contamination was spreading.

Recently, in an update on progress in the new Ford cleanup, the EPA announced that more than 14,000 tons of sludge and tainted soil – more than was removed in all previous years – was dug up and removed in 2005 by Ford and that several other Ringwood dump locations had been found and would be excavated.

I learned some lessons in pursuit of this story. The primary lesson was one of persistence: The persistent presence of reporters asking for files and interviews, attending every meeting and tour, wandering off on their own to look more widely, questioning every aspect of a dumpsite and where the waste came from and where else did it go, documenting known health effects of the toxic substances and the health problems of people in the area. This persistence, I learned, can pressure agencies to do their jobs.

I was reminded of something we can let slip in the press of deadlines – how important it is to check out every official claim. Our reporting compared these claims with information provided by residents, their lawyers and investigators, environmentalists who showed sludge in places that were brought to EPA or state attention years ago yet never got removed. We reported on a nonprofit watchdog group's independent testing that showed higher levels of toxic substances than EPA said Ford consultants found. That spurred *Record* editors to have our own testing done.

Government is promising to make sure that, this time, Ford's mess in Ringwood will be cleaned up. "Toxic Legacy" has made us better prepared to report the progress of that promise.

The full "Toxic Legacy" report, including test results, key documents, maps, photos and video, is available at www.toxiclegacy.com.

Jan Barry is a staff writer for The Record. "Toxic Legacy" won the New Jersey Press Association's 2005 public service award and an IRE Medal.



People walk past a pile of toxic lead paint sludge in the woods near Peters Mine Road in Ringwood. The lead paint was reportedly dumped by the Ford Motor Company years ago.



These samples of ordnance were found at a former military munitions site in northern Suffolk. During the World Wars, there was an ordnance dump and processing site there, now the location of a community college, some businesses and a wilderness area. It is now a Superfund area scheduled for clean up.

UNDER THE SEA

Army weapons-dumping practice extensive; hazardous chemical impact felt worldwide

BY JOHN M.R. BULL
(NEWPORT NEWS, VA.) DAILY PRESS

When a clamming operation off the coast of New Jersey dredged up a long buried mustard gas shell in 2004, Army officials probably realized an investigative reporter would come knocking on their door at some point.

It was the first chemical weapon dumped, long ago, into the ocean. Eventually, it would make its way back to the U.S. shore and be discovered in a clamshell driveway in Delaware. Though it was old, it still was dangerous – three bomb disposal technicians were burned when handling it.

Army officials knew this was serious business, and were prepared to cooperate fully if a reporter called with the right questions. That point came nearly a year later, and the reporter happened to be me.

I was deep into an unrelated military investiga-

tion and ran across a dated news story on the shell's discovery. Intrigued, I asked Army officials how a weapon of mass destruction ended up in the ocean, how many more were out there and if anyone just happened to know where they were.

Just like that, the Army turned over a treasure trove of old documents and even offered – without being asked – a dozen old photographs and access to an Army employee who arguably was the world's leading authority on U.S. chemical weapons.

I have to admit, I was surprised. The Army officials told me I just happened to be at the right place at the right time, with the right questions.

The first step was cross-indexing the records, and collating them to paint the most accurate and comprehensive picture of Army chemical weapon-dumping

QUICK LOOK

Name of the stories, and when they were published:

"The Deadliness Below: Decades of Dumping Chemical Arms Leave a Risky Legacy," Oct. 30-31, 2005

How the story got started (tip, assignment, etc.):

This project was sniffed out while researching an investigation into problems caused by local military ordnance disposal operations decades ago.

Length of time taken to report, write and edit the story:

Four months

Major types of documents used and if FOI requests were needed:

The Army agreed to provide three reports it created over the years, two of which contained critical information that was never before released. Scientific studies of overseas chemical weapons dumps also were obtained, as were reports from the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration.

Major type of human sources used:

Army chemical weapons experts, scientists from around the world, mariners who make their livings from the sea, former soldiers, environmental officials and national archivists.

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over decades, until the practice was halted in 1970.

From that, I discovered:

The Army secretly dumped at least 64 million pounds of chemical weapons into the ocean in dozens of locations off at least 11 states. Further, the Army doesn't know where they all are located and admitted that more dump sites likely exist.

The Army never informed Congress or state and local officials about the imminent dangers posed by the weapons, and quit inspecting the underwater dump sites for leaks 20 years ago.

Sixteen other countries were left to discover on their own that the U.S. secretly dumped chemical weapon stockpiles off their coasts, some within sight of shore. As a result, hundreds of fishermen have died over the decades because of their exposure to these chemicals.

The consensus of the few people in the world familiar with ocean-dumped chemical weapons was that they remain incredibly dangerous, and likely are either leaking or will leak over the next 100 years – with unforeseeable, yet potentially catastrophic, environmental ramifications.

I interviewed divers, former military officials, marine biologists and various state and local officials.

“Sixteen other countries were left to discover on their own that the U.S. secretly dumped chemical weapon stockpiles off their coasts, some within sight of shore. As a result, hundreds of fishermen have died over the decades because of their exposure to these chemicals.”

I researched scientific literature on chemical weapons and National Archive records.

After we published our investigation, news media inquiries poured in from around the world, including Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Great Britain and Canada. A flood of newspaper stories, as well as radio and television reports, resulted.

The Army determined that the newspaper's exposé was meticulously researched, entirely accurate, and

provided a clearer, more concise picture of past dumping practices than the Army itself possessed. In fact, the Army now uses the investigation as a reference tool.

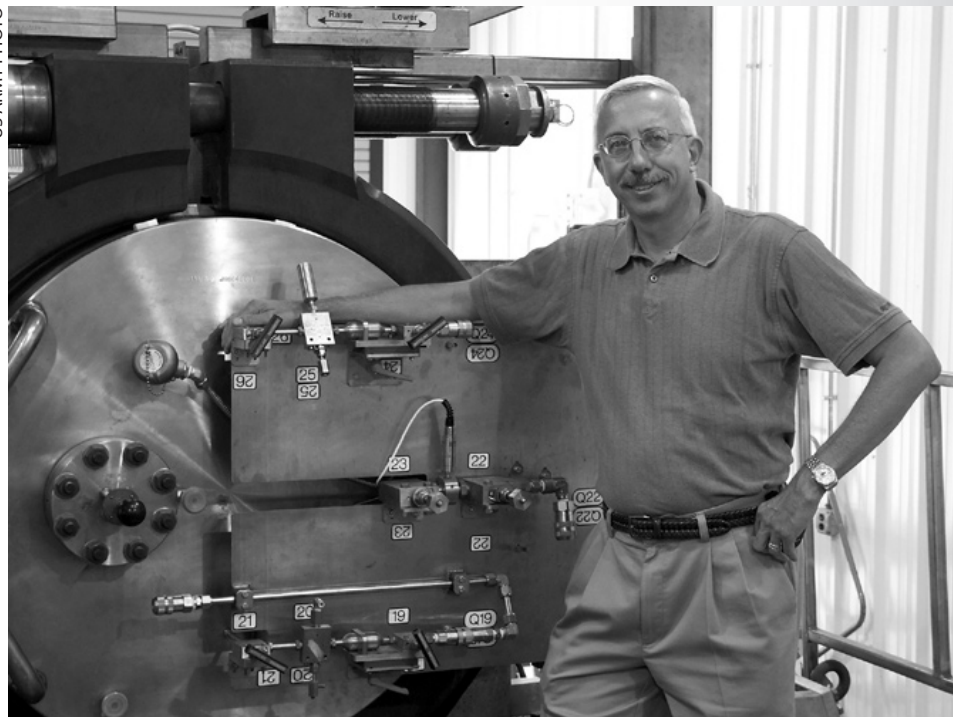
Further, the Department of Defense is in the middle of an exhaustive, military-wide record search to be completed this spring, in an effort to locate all surviving information on chemical weapons dumping to see

if more dump sites exist before deciding what to do about them.

The entire *Daily Press* investigation, “The Deadliness Below,” can be read at www.dailypress.com/chemweapons.

John M.R. Bull is an investigative reporter for the Newport News (Va.) Daily Press.

US ARMY PHOTO



William Brankowitz, deputy project manager for the U.S. Army Non-Stockpile Chemical Material Project, stands next to the containment vessel of the Explosive Destruction System (EDS). The EDS is a transportable treatment system designed to dispose of recovered chemical warfare material.



Elementary school children frolic in the playground as a freight train travels nearby. Trains hauling aging, substandard tank cars loaded with deadly chemicals pass through cities and towns across the United States every day.

OFF TRACK

Hazardous train cargo poses increasing threat to populated areas; system flawed

BY DAVID DANELSKI
THE (RIVERSIDE, CALIF.) PRESS-ENTERPRISE

Trains hauling aging, substandard tank cars loaded with deadly chemicals pass through cities and towns across the United States every day, carrying their dangerous cargo past homes, schools, hospitals and busy highways.

I didn't consider them a serious hazard until a Union Pacific freight train derailed last year in a densely populated neighborhood of San Bernardino, a working-class city in inland Southern California. The wreck left a jumble of tank cars piled along the tracks. Among the chemicals on board: pressurized chlorine gas, a substance used to kill soldiers in World War I trenches.

The railroad company and the local authorities gave the impression the accident was no big deal. No one died and no one was injured, although hundreds of residents had to leave their homes for more than two days.

But an investigation by four *Press-Enterprise* reporters found cause for concern.

Locally, we found an ineffective track inspection that overlooked obvious track defects that, only three days later, caused the derailment. Chemical cargo was misidentified, a federal violation and an obstacle for emergency responders who needed to know what was in the derailed tank cars. A 26-year-old tank car full of chlorine gas was cracked, although no chemical escaped. Miscommunication between the railroad and police allowed hundreds of residents to return to their homes before it was safe.

The San Bernardino wreck, we found, was a symptom of a national hazard that claimed more lives in 2005 than in the previous 20 years combined.

Limited track

San Bernardino had escaped a disaster. Other communities were not so fortunate. Minot, N.D., and Graniteville, S.C., are still recovering from deadly chemical clouds released in train wrecks.

QUICK LOOK

Name of stories, and when they were published:

"Toxic Cargo: Crowded Inland Rails at Risk for a Dangerous Chemical Spill," Nov. 20, 2005.

How the story got started (tip, assignment, etc.):

The story stemmed from a train derailment on April 4, 2005, in San Bernardino that sent tank cars loaded with pressurized poison gas tumbling just yards from a densely populated neighborhood, forcing the evacuation of hundreds of people.

Length of time taken to report, write and edit the story:

About four months. Most of the reporters also worked on other assignments during that time.

Major types of documents used and if FOI requests were needed:

The story relied heavily on accident investigation records obtained under the FOIA from the Federal Railroad Administration and under the California Public Records Act from the California Public Utilities Commission. A lawyer was retained to get state records. Also, downloaded hazardous-materials incident records from U.S. Department of Transportation Web site and used reports from the National Transportation Safety Board and National Academy of Sciences. For the online presentation, *The Press-Enterprise* used 911 recordings, and police and private videos.

Major type of human sources used:

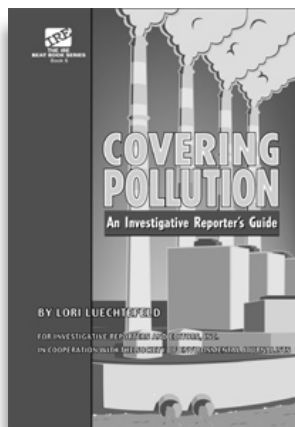
Interviewed academics and federal, state and local officials who oversee railroading, emergency response, accident investigations or had technical expertise. Also, dozens of railroad employees at motels and other hangouts near switching yards. Traveled to two of the most significant recent accident sites – Graniteville, S.C., and Minot, N.D. – and interviewed people who were injured or lost loved ones. Interviewed the son of a woman killed in blast from a train derailment and hazardous leak in Texarkana, Ark., and spoke to local residents.

Covering Pollution

An Investigative Reporter's Guide

by Investigative Reporters and Editors
in cooperation with the Society of
Environmental Journalists

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you can use for
local investigations into
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Nationwide, we found many tank cars that are more than 30 years old and more than half made with steel that doesn't meet the current standards, set in 1989.

We also discovered that the railroad industry and Federal Railroad Administration remain reluctant to make changes that safety officials have been seeking for years.

Our work faced the obstacle of post-9/11 official secrecy. We wanted to know what kinds and amounts of chemicals are hauled through our coverage area, principally Riverside and San Bernardino counties. Railroad companies and their state regulator, the California Public Utilities Commission, refused to release such data, arguing that a terrorist could use the information to plan an attack.

With repeated public records requests and the help of an attorney, we were able to get accident reports kept by the utilities commission.

We got an idea of the types of chemicals rolling through our region by analyzing 12 years of U.S. Department of Transportation data on hazardous materials spills. This data showed that San Bernardino County had more spills from trains than any other county in the nation.

Commodity data kept by U.S. Census Bureau provided national numbers showing that the volume of hazardous materials transported by rail had increased substantially since the 1990s. Local transportation agencies had rail traffic data showing that more and more trains are crowding onto a limited amount of track, increasing the likelihood of accidents in Southern California.

Our transportation reporter, Phil Pitchford, spent two days in the isolated desert town of Barstow, where train crews often spend the night between work shifts. He explored the train crews' view of hazardous cargo in several interviews with engineers and other railroad workers. Pitchford wrote the first draft of the main story and kept updating as the reporting evolved, a strategy that was tremendously helpful as deadline approached.

Mark Kawar, a business writer who covers railroads, worked industry, government and academic sources that provided expert commentary on increasing rail traffic and the industry's pace in making safety improvements.

General assignment reporter Ben Goad focused on the San Bernardino accident and the emergency response. He also pursued San Bernardino residents' complaints about liability waivers the railroads circulated after the derailment and evacuation. Many of the residents did not speak English and said they did not understand the documents they said they were pressured to sign.

I usually write about air pollution and other environmental issues. For this project, I focused on getting every public record I could find, including National Transportation Safety Board reports dating to the 1980s that detailed the board's repeated efforts to improve the safety of hazardous-materials shipments on trains.

We further collaborated with Ray Carnes, a computer modeling expert with ESRI, a mapping software company based in Redlands, Calif. Using updated census tract data, he gave us a sense of how severe of catastrophic release of chlorine could be in our area. His calculations became the starting point of a "what-if" graphic and Flash graphic.

But nothing beats the real thing. Goad went to Graniteville, S.C., where, in January 2005, chlorine gas from a ruptured tank car killed nine and injured hundreds in less than an hour. Some residents died in their sleep as the poisonous cloud invaded their homes. Some people working in a textile mill next to the derailment sought refuge in rooms that rescuers wouldn't reach for hours. Others tried to outrun the green fog; a few were overtaken and died in their tracks.

Meanwhile, I went to Minot, N.D., a community still shaken from a derailment and chemical release in 2002. A cloud of anhydrous ammonia smothered much of the prairie town, killing one and injuring more than a thousand. Residents still had respiratory ailments. They told stories about being stuck for hours in cold, dark basements, breathing through wet rags. Firefighters couldn't get through the thick white fog of ammonia to rescue them.

The chilling survival tales and residents' lingering anger at the railroads brought the project to life.

Begging for help

We had many discussions about how to present the project, what the statistics meant, what to include and whether we were fair to the railroad companies. The main story went through several rewrites based on feedback from various editors.

While we were doing the final rewrite, some of the most compelling information arrived in the mail – the Federal Railroad Administration investigative reports on the San Bernardino accident, which we had requested about two months earlier under the Freedom of Information Act. The records showed how Union Pacific had botched a track inspection just days before the accident, and how hazardous cargo was misidentified, among other compelling details.

While Pitchford reworked the main story, we pumped up our online presentation. Our graphics staff created the graphic in Macromedia Flash of how chlorine might spread through a community. Goad and I narrated slide shows of staff photographs from Graniteville and Minot.

I edited harrowing 911 audio recordings of Graniteville and Minot residents trapped in toxic gas clouds. Audio clips included a choking man asking a dispatcher to stay on the line so he wouldn't die alone and a woman begging for help finding her daughter, lost outside in the ammonia fog.

We had video from a Minot resident who had taped dead deer and wrecked tank cars a few days after the derailment there. And Texarkana, Ark., authorities gave us police videotape that captured the explosion of a loaded tank car following the collision of two Union Pacific trains. The explosion, which killed one

Kurt Miller | The Press-Enterprise



After this train derailed, nearby homes were evacuated because at least one of the cars carried chlorine. More than 1.5 million local residents in the Inland area of Southern California live close enough to railroad tracks to be at risk from a serious spill, according to a recent analysis.

resident, happened a month before our project was published.

During and after our reporting, National Transportation Safety Board officials reiterated calls for manufacturers to build more, crashworthy tank cars and to assess the risk posed by tank cars built before 1989, when tougher steel was required. Local authorities acknowledged a lack of emergency systems used to notify residents of a chemical disaster. Our two counties and the city of San Bernardino are preparing to install such systems.

Bolstered by our reporting, Sen. Nell Soto, a Southern California Democrat, has written a bill that would force the railroads to make sure residents get liability release forms printed in languages they understand.

California Assemblyman Rudy Bermúdez, D-Norwalk, introduced legislation that would require the state Public Utilities Commission to create a task force to examine train hazards and recommend solutions.

To see the online version of the project, go to www.pe.com/digitalextra/metro/trains.

David Danelski covers air and water pollution for The Press-Enterprise and has worked on several investigative projects. He joined the newspaper in 1990.

Amanda Lucidon | The Press-Enterprise



Rosa Torres, 10, of San Bernardino, sits with her niece, Elizabeth "Chapulina" Torres, 1, on a platform in their backyard that overlooks the train tracks. Hundreds of residents were evacuated after a train carrying hazardous chemicals derailed. The accident could have been deadly if the chemicals had spilled.

QUICK LOOK

Name of the series, and when it was published:
 "The Mercury Menace,"
 Dec. 11-13, 2005

How the story got started (tip, assignment, etc.):
 When *Tribune* reporter Sam Roe's wife became pregnant, he learned that mercury in seafood can harm fetuses. He wondered whether authorities were doing enough to protect consumers, and he teamed up with *Tribune* reporter Michael Hawthorne to find out.

Length of time taken to report, write and edit the story:
 Eight months

Major types of documents used and if FOI requests were needed:
 Scientific studies, court suits involving mercury, and documents from the Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, including transcripts of meetings, correspondence, and testing data. Some records were obtained through FOIA; others were available online. Industry documents included presentations made by lobbyists to federal scientists.

Major type of human sources used:
 FDA, EPA and industry officials; independent scientists; and mercury-poisoning victims

Chuck Berman | Chicago Tribune



Ping Lilisa shows off an 80-pound swordfish in cold storage at a wholesalers. An investigation showed how supermarkets routinely sell seafood highly contaminated with mercury.

SEAFOOD SAFETY

Independent testing finds alarming mercury levels in supermarket fish

BY SAM ROE
 CHICAGO TRIBUNE

When my wife became pregnant with twins, one of my duties was to go to the grocery store each week and buy what we considered to be a safe amount of fish. As nervous first-time parents, we kept up on the latest health news and had learned that mercury in seafood can harm developing fetuses. Pregnant women and other high-risk groups were advised to limit their fish consumption.

I would buy small pieces of salmon and carefully weigh the deli tuna. After a few weeks, I wondered, "How in the heck did it get to the point where we can eat only a limited amount of fish each week?"

I also wondered whether mercury might make a good investigative project. But where to start? The topic was immense, and much had already been written about the hazards of the toxic metal.

Yet, little had been written about the risks on your dinner plate. James O'Shea, the *Tribune's* managing editor, and George Papajohn, associate

managing editor for projects, proposed that the newspaper buy samples of popular fish in Chicago supermarkets and have them tested for mercury.

The idea proved to be a good one. Conducting our own tests not only gave us a sure-fire public service story, but it opened up several avenues of reporting. For instance, we learned that hardly anyone – including federal regulators responsible for seafood safety – had tested store-bought fish for mercury.

Random samples

I teamed up on the project with *Tribune* environmental reporter Michael Hawthorne, who had written extensively about mercury. After an eight-month investigation, a three-part series titled "The Mercury Menace" was published on Dec. 11-13.

The series showed how supermarkets are routinely selling seafood highly contaminated with mercury, which can cause learning disabilities in

children and neurological problems in adults. The series also documented the hidden risks of canned tuna and decades of regulatory failure.

The articles prompted action in Chicago, the state of Illinois, on Capitol Hill and even in Canada.

Our test of the fish was the guts of our story. Hawthorne and I wanted the study to be as scientific as possible. Instead of just buying a handful of fish at the nearest grocery, we studied the methodology of similar research and called experts for advice.

In the end, we decided to test 18 samples each of nine kinds of seafood. We picked extremely popular fish, such as tuna and salmon, but we also wanted to check fish rarely or never tested, such as walleye and gourmet canned tuna.

We also decided to randomly select the stores we would visit. A random sample would remove any biases we might have, and the results of our testing would be representative of the entire Chicago area.

But conducting the random sample was tricky. We needed a complete list of Chicago-area stores, which wasn't readily available from public records or telephone books.

So we paid W3 Data, a company that compiles information from phone directories, about \$300 to generate a list of all groceries, supermarkets and fish markets that fall within the six telephone area codes in and around Chicago.

We then used a random-number generator function in Microsoft Excel to select our 18 stores, which ranged from sprawling supermarkets in the affluent suburbs to mom-and-pop fish markets on the city's South Side.

Over the next two weeks, we battled Chicago traffic and collected the samples. We placed them in Ziploc bags, packed them in ice and shipped them overnight to Rutgers University in New Jersey. There, a lab experienced in mercury analysis conducted the actual tests.

In all, we tested 162 samples, making it one of the nation's most comprehensive studies of mercury in commercial fish. Each sample cost \$45 to test. Adding in shipping and the price of the fish, the study cost about \$9,000.

We believe the results were worth it. We found that much of the seafood was so tainted that regulators could have confiscated it – if only they were looking.

The Food and Drug Administration does not routinely inspect fish for mercury – not in ports, processing plants or supermarkets. In the rare instances when the FDA does check fish – usually in supermarkets – the agency does not seize high-mercury seafood that violates U.S. limits.

To document the FDA's lack of testing and its seeming unwillingness to enforce its own rules, Hawthorne and I drew upon court, industry and federal records. Some were obtained through Freedom of Information Act requests; others were available on an FDA Web site, www.cfsan.fda.gov/

Chuck Berman | Chicago Tribune



The government advises consumers to limit eating "white" canned tuna. Some scientists believe that there should be a similar advisory on "light" tuna.

[seafood1.html](#).

We also conducted dozens of interviews. One canned tuna executive revealed that the industry often uses a high-mercury tuna species, yellowfin, to make millions of cans of light tuna, a product the government specifically recommends as a low-mercury choice.

Discovering this helped convince us to expand our series from two parts to three. And even though our canned tuna story ran on the third day, it received more hits on our Web site than the other two days combined.

Bottom feeders

The Web package, www.chicagotribune.com/mercury, was overseen by *Tribune* online producer Danielle Gordon, who, from the outset, attended our mercury meetings. She helped devise an interactive "mercury calculator" to show readers how much fish they or their children can safely eat. The Web site also included other interactive graphics, a video interview with Hawthorne and photos by the *Tribune's* Chuck Berman.

Helping edit the series were Kaarin Tisue, an assistant metro editor, and Flynn McRoberts, the deputy projects editor who pulled double duty: He was technically on leave caring for his newborn son.

Reaction to "The Mercury Menace" was immense. Hawthorne and I received several hundred e-mails, calls or letters, and the series was featured on the Today Show.

The FDA announced it would investigate canned tuna; the U.S. Department of Agriculture vowed to correct its highly touted food pyramid to include mercury warnings; Senate Minority Whip Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk

(R-Ill.) called for regulatory reforms, and Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich proposed dramatic cuts in mercury emissions in the state.

Because the *Tribune* found high mercury levels in Canadian walleye, the Canadian fishing industry announced that, for the first time, it would conduct widespread testing of a variety of fish caught in the Great Lakes and sold in U.S. supermarkets.

Still, not everyone embraced the series.

The U.S. Tuna Foundation, a lobbying group for canned tuna producers, issued press releases saying that mercury in tuna was harmless.

The industry-financed Center for Consumer Freedom took out a full-page ad in the *Tribune* and gave us its mock "Bottom Feeders" award for "whipping up needless fears about mercury in fish."

All of the reaction taught us an important lesson: Just because other reporters have written about a topic doesn't mean you can't make a difference and discover new paths in familiar territory.

We also learned that conducting your own study isn't difficult. Numerous labs can test for pollutants, and for a couple hundred dollars, you can check several samples. If you find something, all kinds of questions are raised: How bad is the problem? Who's responsible? Who's affected?

Labs also can do DNA testing on food (about \$150 per sample) to determine whether there is more to your meal than meets the eye. For example, is that expensive fillet of walleye you bought for dinner tonight really walleye?

Answer: It may not be – and that's why it's important to keep after this story.

Sam Roe is a projects reporter at the Chicago Tribune.

Resources for investigating toxicity of our environment

BY RHITUPARNA CHATTERJEE
THE IRE JOURNAL

As growth and industrialization continue to poison the air, soil and water around us, reporters are faced with the challenge of warning the public of potential health hazards of toxic chemicals in our environment. To do so, journalists have to monitor environmental changes with the help of experts so that they can hold industrial facilities and environmental regulatory agencies accountable for their actions.

IRE has compiled the following resources for journalists interested in investigating the toxicity of our environment and how this impacts human health and safety from a local, national or global angle.

Databases

Databases are an environmental journalist's most important tool. The following is a list of relevant data-

bases, many of which can be ordered from the IRE and NICAR Database Library. (www.ire.org/datalibrary/databases/databases.php)

- The Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) maintained by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), is perhaps the most important site for accessing data on both on- and off-site chemical releases by private and federal facilities. (www.epa.gov/tri)
- Another excellent source for data on toxic releases is National Library of Medicine's (NLM) Toxicology Data Network (ToxNet). It provides multiple databases on toxicology, hazardous chemicals, environmental health, and toxic releases. (<http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov>)
- EPA's Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) is a database of hazardous effects on human health from exposure to various environmental substances.

(www.epa.gov/iris)

- Another EPA database, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Information System (CERCLIS) lists contaminated and potentially contaminated sites across the country, with information on pollutants, current status and remedial actions being taken. (www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/cursites)
- The Hazardous Materials Incident Report Subsystem is a database maintained by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Hazardous Material Safety. It contains information on transportation accidents involving hazardous materials. (<http://hazmat.dot.gov>)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provides databases on worker accidents, injuries from hazardous materials and workplace violations. (www.osha.gov/oshstats/work.html)
- The Nuclear Materials Events Database (NMED) provides records of all non-commercial nuclear power plant incidents. Also includes cases of radioactive byproduct-induced health problems. (<https://nmed.inl.gov>)

Book

"Covering Pollution: An Investigative Reporter's Guide" is a tool produced by IRE in cooperation with the Society of Environmental Journal-

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ists, to help journalists tap into resources they can use for local investigations into environmental pollution.

Find out where to start when reporting on pollution in a community, understand data used to monitor water and air quality and learn how to use the Toxics Release Inventory and track hazardous waste.

The book includes examples of how top journalists deal with environmental advocacy groups and take special care in their reporting and writing, and has appendices on navigating the EPA, following the money and tapping into state and federal environmental resources.

Order the book online at www.ire.org/store or call the Resource Center at 573-882-3364.

Tipsheets

IRE's Resource Center has many tipsheets that contain useful information on covering environmental pollution, from providing story ideas to helping interpret raw data for one's investigation. IRE members can download most tipsheets at www.ire.org/resourcecenter/initial-search-tipsheets.html by entering the tipsheet number or searching for more tipsheets. For additional help, call the Resource Center at 573-882-3364 or send and e-mail to resentr@ire.org.

- "Environmental Perils: Toxic Chemicals at Home and at Work," Elizabeth Alex, KSHB-Kansas City. This concise tipsheet provides fundamental guidelines to conducting a successful investigation into environmental pollution. (No. 987)
- "Some Tips for Environmental Reporters," Erin Hayes. This seven-page tipsheet contains guidelines for investigating water, air and land pollution, including issues such as water sampling, hazardous waste dumps and the Toxic Release Inventory. (No. 38)
- "Pollution Data You Can Use Everyday," Ken Ward Jr., *The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette*. This tipsheet lists some of the most important databases and Web sites for investigating pollution. (No. 2165)
- "Digging into Environmental Data," Robert McClure, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. This tipsheet lists Web sites and databases to help trace water pollution, track down polluters and monitor whether regulatory agencies are successfully regulating pollution levels. Also provides a list of environment groups to consult. (No. 1842)
- "Environmental Perils: Toxic Chemicals at Home and Work," Sam Roe, formerly at *The (Toledo, Ohio) Blade*. A tipsheet with guidelines and list of sources for tracking victims of environmental hazards. (No. 988)
- "Mercy, Mercy Me," Alan Levin, *The Hartford Courant*. An excellent tipsheet for someone seeking descriptions of successful use of the ToxNet TRI database for stories on toxic chemical emissions. (No. 432)

Web Resources

The following resources on the Internet provide excellent starting points for background research as well as data on the toxicity of our environment.

- NLM provides a plethora of resources for investigating environmental pollution. NLM's Specialized Information Systems (SIS) Web site has abundant resources and services in toxicology and environmental health. (<http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/>)
 - The Environmental Health and Toxicology Portal of SIS includes a list of topics such as toxicology, occupational health and safety, risk assessment and regulations and environmental health, toxicology tutorials, reference tools, database manual, Listservs and much more. (<http://sis.nlm.nih.gov/enviro.html>)
 - The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) provides abundant resources for covering environmental stories including databases, beat tools and a list of sources to contact. (www.sej.org/resource)
 - The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) provides real-time data on the chemical, physical, and biological properties of water from certain sites across the nation, using instruments that are kept at these locations. The site provides tutorials for data retrieval and analysis. (<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/qw>)
 - The U.S. Chemical Safety Hazard and Inspection Board (CSB), is an independent, non-regulatory body designed by Congress that conducts investigations into the causes of industrial chemical accidents. Based on its findings, CSB makes recommendations to the chemical plants themselves, as well as to the OSHA and EPA. CSB's Web site contains reports of current and past investigations, safety publications, recommendations, news releases and various other resources for the media. (www.chemsafety.gov)
 - While the words "pollution" or "environmental toxicity" usually bring to mind the polluted outdoors, a study by the World Health Organization (WHO), published in *The World Health Report 2002*, found indoor air pollution to be responsible for 2.7 percent of global diseases. WHO's indoor pollution Web site provides both background material as well as a global indoor pollution database. (www.who.int/indoorair/en and www.who.int/indoorair/health_impacts/databases_iap/en)
 - WHO also provides resources on other forms of pollution on its environmental pollution Web site. (www.who.int/topics/environmental_pollution/en)
- The Center for Science, Health and Environmental Journalism can assist journalists doing investigations on those topics. This program of IRE and the Missouri School of Journalism has compiled tipsheets, stories, databases, Web links and other resources (www.ire.org/sciencenter.html).

Rhituparna Chatterjee is a graduate research assistant for IRE and the Center for Science, Health and Environmental Journalism, a program of IRE and the Missouri School of Journalism.

CAR Boot Camps



These unique seminars, taught by IRE and NICAR's experts, train journalists to acquire electronic information, use spreadsheets and databases to analyze the information and to translate that information into high-impact stories.

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- Aug. 6-11, 2006
- Columbia, Mo.



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Uncover interesting news stories by mapping data with geographic information system (GIS) software.

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www.ire.org/training/bootcamps.html



What previous Boot Campers have said about the experience:

"It was intense, but totally inspiring. I feel like I came away with some solid skills."

- Abigail Sterling Vazquez, KRON-San Francisco

"Great program! You expanded my thinking on what is doable."

— Josh Wilson, WFTV-Orlando

Fellowships

A limited number of minority and small-news organization fellowships are available for IRE and NICAR workshops. Visit www.ire.org/fellowships.html for more information and an application.



Friends and family of the mine victims wait for some word outside the Sago Baptist Church earlier this year where family members were to get their news from officials. Under federal rules, every mine is supposed to have access to two mine rescue teams within a two-hour drive. But the MSHA data showed that there is only one team for every four underground mines in the country.

SAGO MINE

Sources, records, lead to insight about deficiencies in mine rescues

BY KEN WARD JR.
THE CHARLESTON (W.VA.) GAZETTE

I have been covering the mining industry for 15 years, and very early on in the Sago Mine disaster story, it became clear the rescue effort to save the 13 trapped miners was taking far too long. Rescue crews were not getting into the mine. Time was running out.

Longtime sources in the coal industry were telling me this did not surprise them at all. The mine rescue system in this country was broken, they said.

There weren't enough rescue teams. Those that did exist were not always near mines. Sometimes they did not have proper training and equipment. It was only a matter of time before miners died because of these problems, experts told me.

Even though I started working on this story the day of the disaster – Jan. 2 – I knew there was more if I could get my hands on some documents, maybe even some data. I needed proof. Luckily, I knew the right people to ask, beginning with

J. Davitt McAteer, who had run the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) under President Clinton.

McAteer told me he had known about the mine rescue team problem for years, and had tried during his time at MSHA to take steps to fix it. He gave me some quotes, but also gave me the things I really needed: tips on finding documents that would help me flesh out this story.

I already knew, from studying MSHA's annual regulatory agenda over the years (All agencies publish these, and they are online, www.gpoaccess.gov/ua) that the Bush administration had dropped McAteer's plan to reform the mine rescue system. But I needed to know more.

McAteer told me he had sponsored a conference in 1995 on the issue at the National Mine Health and Safety Academy in Beckley, W.Va. After the conference, MSHA published a report documenting mine rescue problems and possible solutions. I found a copy of that report at the library.

I also started doing some searches of MSHA's

Web site, and did standard Google searches on the mine rescue issue. Among other great tidbits, I found a Federal Register notice that announced another MSHA public meeting on mine rescue teams, held in March 2002, by the Bush administration.

From covering MSHA, I knew that the agency's computer nerds went to great lengths to post meeting transcripts and public comments online. I checked, and the transcript of the mine rescue team was right there – in .txt format or as a .pdf file.

All of this took place before we even knew the fate of the Sago miners. Regardless of whether the rescue was successful, this was a story that needed to be told.

More numbers

But I was filing daily stories on the early stages of the Sago investigation, and helping with what had quickly become the biggest newsroom-wide reporting effort in my time at the *Gazette*. So, the rescue team reporting was done between other tasks, and often late at night.

It was one of those late night, weary Web searches that led me to stumble across the other piece of information that I was missing: more recent data on mine rescue team numbers and locations.

MSHA doesn't really advertise it, or make it particularly easy to find. But the data is right there on the agency's Web site, at www.msha.gov/MineRescue/MAP/ASP/minerescuehome.asp. You can search by state or mine location, or you can download the federal government's entire mine rescue team database as an Excel file. I did both.

I was able to see how many teams there are in West Virginia and other states, and where they are located. I cross-referenced this data with figures from the U.S. Department of Energy and did some calculations to show how thinly spread these teams are.

Under federal rules, every mine is supposed to have access to two mine rescue teams within a two-hour drive. But the MSHA data showed that there is only one team for every four underground mines in the country. It wasn't an elaborate statistical analysis, but it was a pretty quick and dirty computer-assisted reporting trick that added some power to my story.

The story was published less than a week after the Sago Mine disaster.

The story generated a lot of response. Some readers complained my newspaper was somehow blaming the rescue crews for the Sago deaths. The story, though, never questioned the professionalism or heroism of mine rescue team members – it just said the coalfields need more of them.

The story also has forced federal and state regulators, along with national and state policymakers, to face this issue, and start to try to deal with it. (See this story and others online at <http://wvgazette.com/section/Series/The+Sago+Mine+Disaster>.)

We have published detailed accounts of the

Chip Ellis | The Charleston Gazette



Amber Helms is comforted by her boyfriend, Jason Chambers, as they wait for word of her father, Terry Helms, who was later found dead in the Sago Mine.

failings by our nation's mine safety regulators to do all that they could to give miners like those who died at Sago every possible opportunity to escape alive. We have reported on the failure of MSHA to implement a law that allowed it to require rescue chambers, the agency's refusal to mandate wireless communications systems in underground mines and MSHA's lack of a rule to require lifelines – fancy ropes with directional devices – to lead miners out of smoky underground tunnels.

A lot of these stories started by looking at the MSHA regulatory agenda, and then tracing existing regulations back through federal statutes and legislative history. I don't have LexisNexis or Westlaw. But a lot of this stuff is on the Internet.

In my case, for example, MSHA publishes the legislative history of mine safety laws on its Web site, at www.msha.gov/regsinfo.htm. The online Code of Federal Regulations, www.gpoaccess.gov/cfr, is annotated, so you can find Federal Register notices that explain the history of all existing federal mine safety rules.

Perhaps most valuable of all, MSHA posts on its Web site transcripts of all public hearings and comments it receives during rulemakings at www.msha.gov/currentcomments.asp. With this, I was able to find critics (and supporters) of MSHA proposals concerning a variety of mine safety topics.

During this story, I also relearned the importance of a basic resource: my local library. Through its interlibrary loan service, I was able to obtain lots of old government reports on mine safety and rescue, and a variety of textbooks on the subjects.

Ken Ward Jr. is a staff writer with the Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette and has covered the coal industry for 15 years.

Tips for using MSHA's Data Retrieval System

I was enjoying a quiet Jan. 2 holiday with my wife and 1-year-old son, waiting for the West Virginia Mountaineers to take on Georgia in the Sugar Bowl when I heard that an explosion had ripped through an underground coal mine in Upshur County, W.Va.

So, I did what I always do when I hear about a mining accident in West Virginia's coalfields: I got the name of the mine and went online to www.msha.gov to look it up on the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration's Data Retrieval System.

In the months since the Sago disaster, I've heard a lot of reporters around the country complain about this MSHA system. But I've been covering mine accidents for more than 15 years, and I remember the days when I had to beg someone from MSHA to fax me hundreds of pages of violation records on deadline after a fatal accident. It may not be perfect, but the MSHA's Data Retrieval System is heaven compared to those faxed records.

With a few hours work, I produced a front-page sidebar that was headlined, "Sago mine has history of roof falls." The story documented the hundreds of citations – including many very serious ones – that had been issued to the Sago Mine in the months and years before the explosion.

I try to do these stories on mine accident and investigation histories every time there is a miner killed in West Virginia. A few tips from my experience using the MSHA system:

- Always download the results of your query and dump them into Excel. It's a lot easier that way to look for trends that will become the meat of your story.
- Check back frequently. The MSHA system is usually updated every weekend. Knowing this allowed me to get stories on additional Sago Mine citations ahead of every journalism organization in the country.
- Get to know the Code of Federal Regulations. If you're going to cover mining accidents, read a little bit about the federal Mine Safety and Health Act, and study MSHA's CFR entries. If you know some of the major sections – like 75.200 for roof control and 75.300 for ventilation – it will help you narrow the list of violations that are important in the particular accident you are covering.

MINE MISHAPS

Data shows mining companies receiving leniency for safety violations; feds disagree

BY SETH BORENSTEIN
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

When a Knight Ridder analysis was published finding that since the Bush administration took office it has been more lenient toward mining companies facing serious safety violations, it was enough to get federal bureaucrats to work on a holiday.

Those bureaucrats, on Martin Luther King Day, attacked us online for a story that showed the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) was charging mine company scofflaws 43 percent less for major violations than it had under previous administrations.

But our follow-up story, which included a review by statisticians, IRE staff, and a database journalism expert, confirmed the original report. Further, both *USA Today* and *The New York Times* did their own stories, reaching the same conclusion regarding mine safety enforcement.

All this, of course, started with the tragic weekend mine disaster at the Sago mine in West Virginia.

Covering Sago was a challenge to the Knight Ridder Washington, D.C., bureau, which didn't have much expertise in mining issues. The disaster was broadcast live on television, and it happened hundreds of miles from the nearest Knight Ridder paper. We knew we couldn't cover the drama on the scene differently, or better, than other papers.

But, we believed, we could dig deep into records that might shed some light on how such a thing could happen.

Deep digging

Two-and-a-half years earlier, I'd conducted a database analysis of declining enforcement at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. After that story, I received some vague tips about similar issues at MSHA and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), but never got around to pursuing them.

Sago changed that.

I asked MSHA officials for industry-wide records on enforcement. The MSHA's Web site has good detailed information on violations, fines and follow-up on a mine-by-mine basis, but little on the universe of all mines. They pointed me to the agency's data retrieval system, and I found the site that had data on fines greater than \$10,000 (www.msha.gov/drs/ASP/HighDollar.asp).

I went back to 1996 and got 10 years worth of data, approximately the last five years of the Clinton administration and all five years of the Bush administration. That involved nearly 1,000 entries, and a

quick look at the data said we had a story. Even without adjusting for inflation, fines appeared to be dropping. When I adjusted for inflation, the drop became a nosedive.

We turned to Knight Ridder's *Lexington Herald-Leader* because the Kentucky paper has a history of writing about MSHA. Linda J. Johnson, the CAR coordinator there, and Lee Mueller, who covers eastern Kentucky, joined the project.

Johnson took over the database, crunching the numbers. Mueller knew mines and talked to locals, miners and experts. I dealt with national experts and the United Mine Workers of America union and continued to dabble in the database. I also got MSHA funding, enforcement funding, and enforcement workforce numbers – all of which showed declines. Johnson further found that many of the fines weren't being paid and that the ones that were being paid were being dramatically reduced. We found there were fewer, larger, fines under the Bush administration per month than under the Clinton administration per month.

By Thursday afternoon, we were certain we had a good story to write for the weekend. The only trouble was that Johnson was going to be in court Friday following a story. Things got worse when she sent me an e-mail saying that she had found scores of duplicates in the database. It was infected.

After calling MSHA's database people and getting them to cooperate, we all agreed that the duplicates could be discarded. The story was saved, although we now believed that MSHA's database was a tad suspect.

On another front, Mueller found a way to bring our story to life by interviewing the family of a Kentucky man who was killed in a freak accident in a mine owned by the same company that owned Sago, International Coal Group Inc. The MSHA fine for the Kentucky fatality was \$440, which the company had not paid.

Dirk Fillpot and Suzy Bohnert, spokespeople for MSHA, did not respond to our questions about the matter. (The story is at www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/13568525.htm.)

Sharing data

Our story received nationwide play, and 10 days later, MSHA stated on a Web site that our story was inaccurate, supplying its own data comparing 2005 to 2001. (See it at www.msha.gov/sagomine/mshapenalties.pdf.)

We found that MSHA's new database didn't match its public database. The agency claimed we had used averages when our story said median. Despite repeated e-mails to Fillpot, MSHA refused to correct that misstatement. Statisticians said that when data is widely scattered, medians are better indicators. But we also had looked at averages, and found those were down, too.

Fillpot said we were basing our data on violation dates, not the dates when the fines were issued, which could be as much as two years later. We believed that when writing about fines, it made more sense to use the date they were issued. While that made sense to us, MSHA's online database didn't include dates so it wasn't possible to do what Fillpot suggested.

When, after repeated requests, MSHA finally provided the database it had used for its new statistics, we found that median fines were still down 43 percent. Nothing had changed. We took two equal blocks – the last five years of the Clinton administration and the first five years of the Bush administration – and compared them. We found they had compared a "late" Bush time period to an "early" Bush time frame.

MSHA's new database contained 221 entries that weren't in the public database. Despite repeated requests, MSHA never explained where it got those entries. If those 221 entries were right, the number of big fines increased in the Bush administration, but the dollar amounts still dropped.

Next we shared our data, our analysis, MSHA's untouched database, MSHA's claims and our stories with experts in the field: two statisticians from the University of South Carolina, recommended by the American Statistical Association; Steve Doig, a journalism database expert at Arizona State University; Jeff Porter at IRE; and an expert who needed to remain anonymous because of job constraints. They all agreed that we were right in our analysis.

"It's really wrong for them [MSHA] to say you're incorrect," said John Grego, a professor of statistics at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. "There's no question that the average/median proposed penalty has gone down."

We wrote a second story, reiterating our facts (www.realcities.com/mld/krwashington/13568525.htm). At that site, you can link to the original story, MSHA's Web site, the data retrieval system, our original database analysis, our analysis of the latest MSHA data, the latest questions to MSHA that weren't answered, and the untouched MSHA new database.

And finally, we filed a Freedom of Information Act request to find out more about their Web site disputing our story, how much it cost and who ordered it. That request is pending.

Seth Borenstein covered environment, science, disasters and government contracting in the Knight Ridder Newspapers' Washington, D.C., Bureau. He is now a science writer, covering science on a national beat, for The Associated Press in Washington.

IRE Award winners

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

- Carlin, Dale Russell, Mindy Larcom, Travis Shields, Tony D'Astoli, Chris Dixon
- **Brains for Sale** – KIRO-Seattle; Chris Halsne, Bill Benson, David Weed

BELOW TOP 20 MARKETS

CERTIFICATE

La Oroya – KMOV-St. Louis; Craig Cheatham, Marty Van Housen, Jim Thomas

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

It's the type of story that rarely appears on local television: KMOV's Craig Cheatham spent years investigating the practices of a local company far from the station's broadcast area – in Peru. KMOV invested significant time, resources and commitment into challenging Doe Run, a St. Louis-based company running a lead smelter in Peru that has poisoned a community. Cheatham faced hostility from Peruvians who feared his reporting would damage the town's major employer. Yet he, news director Marty Van Housen and photographer Jim Thomas managed to expose and document the harm to local citizens and particularly to children.

FINALISTS

- **NewsChannel 5 Investigates: Capitol Hill Corruption** – WTVF-Nashville; Phil Williams, Bryan Staples
- **Highway Robbery** – WISH-Indianapolis; Doug Garrison, Loni Smith McKown, Karen Hensel, Pam Elliot, Rick Dawson, David Hodge, Kevin Stinson, Sergio Camacho
- **Dirty Secret: Chesapeake Bay Pollution Investigation 2005** – WBAL-Baltimore; John Sherman, Beau Kershaw, Michelle Butt
- **Cincinnati Archdiocese Investigation** – WCPO-Cincinnati; Laure Quinlivan and Phil Drechsler

OTHER MEDIA

MAGAZINE/SPECIALTY PUBLICATION

CERTIFICATE

Big Pharma's Shameful Secret – Bloomberg News; David Evans, Michael Smith and Liz Willen

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Reporters David Evans, Michael Smith and Liz Willen conducted an exhaustive analysis exposing how healthy people are injured and killed by participating in clinical trials of experimental drugs. Immigrants and the poor are poorly informed, then wager their health on experimental drugs used in trials overseen by for-profit companies standing in for federal overseers.



FINALISTS

- **A Broken Promise** – *Time Magazine*; Donald L. Barlett, James B. Steele
- **Hearts, Minds, and Dollars** – *U.S. News & World Report*; David E. Kaplan, Aamir Latif, Kevin Whitelaw, Julian E. Barnes

RADIO

CERTIFICATE

Seniors and Drugs: Prescribed to Death – CBC Radio; Sandra Bartlett, Bob Carty, Pauline Dakin, Mike Gordon, David McKie, Paddy Moore, Susanne Reber

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

The CBC investigation documents a major, hidden, public-health crisis: the overdosing of Canadian seniors. The CBC found that doctors had prescribed to more than a million seniors a variety of drugs that have been found to be potentially harmful to older people who cannot metabolize drugs as well as young people. Reporters Sandra Bartlett, Bob Carty, Pauline Dakin, Mike Gordon, David McKie, Paddy Moore and Susanne Reber tell heart-wrenching stories of the elderly being hurt, killed or sent into psychotic episodes by drugs meant to help them. Doctors were slow or unwilling to recognize the adverse drug reactions, leaving many seniors addicted or comatose.



FINALISTS

- **Merck Suppressed Vioxx Dangers** – National Public Radio; Snigdha Prakash, Joe Neel, Alison Richards, Rebecca Davis, Anne Gudenkauf, Bill Marimow
- **No Place to Hide** – American Radio Works/American Public Media/Center for Investigative Reporting; John Biewen, Robert O'Harrow, Jr., Deborah George
- **Power Trips series: The Lobbyist Loophole; Chilled Travel; In a Gray Area** – American Radio Works/Marketplace; Stephen Henn, William Kistner, Chris Farrell, Nate DiMeo, Margaret Koval
- **Toxic Traces** – Minnesota Public Radio/American Radio Works; Sasha Aslanian, Mike Edgerly, Stephen D. Smith, Catherine Winter

ONLINE

No finalists

BOOKS

CERTIFICATE

On American Soil: How Justice Became a Casualty of World War II – Jack Hamann, Leslie Hamann

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

This book reads like an outstanding piece of literary fiction, but it is investigative reporting of the highest order. In it, Jack Hamann reached back more than six decades to expose a hidden travesty of justice by the U.S. military in World War II, a miscarriage that occurred not overseas, but at an Army outpost on Puget Sound. The Army charged 43 soldiers, all of them African-American, with rioting that resulted in the death of an Italian prisoner of war. Twenty-eight of those soldiers went to prison. But Army prosecutors, led by Leon Jaworski of Watergate fame, knew that much of the evidence they presented at court martial was misleading. Hamann, with researcher Leslie Hamann, uncovered a web of lies in a book that holds lessons for today on the tensions between national security and individual rights.

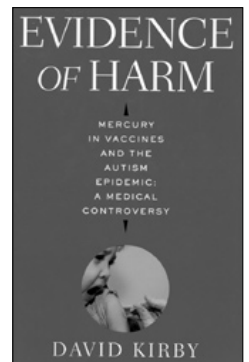


CERTIFICATE

Evidence of Harm: Mercury in Vaccines and the Autism Epidemic – A Medical Controversy – David Kirby

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Autism, rare in the past, is exploding in the United States, where it is now found in one in 166 children. Attention-deficit disorder also has skyrocketed. And 1 in 6 children today has a learning disability. David Kirby investigated whether one of the causes of these childhood afflictions is thimerisol, a vaccine preservative that contains mercury, a well-documented neurotoxin. In the 1990s, the mercury-containing additive was injected into children far in excess of federal safety levels. Kirby told the story of stonewalling, denial and cover-up by federal regulators, medical groups and the pharmaceutical industry. And he documents covert efforts by some of those same powerful forces – along with the U.S. Congress – to grant blanket immunity for drug companies that put mercury in vaccines. Like so many scientific controversies involving complex science and big business, the topic is controversial. Kirby's careful and meticulous reporting is exemplary in its balance, accuracy and documentation.



FINALISTS

- **No Place to Hide**; Robert O'Harrow Jr.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37 >



Riders slope downward on the Hulk roller coaster inside Universal's Islands of Adventure in Orlando. Florida's theme parks have a memorandum of understanding with the state that calls for them to inspect themselves, report accidents and make an annual presentation on safety issues.

PULLING G'S

Joint project uses scientific gear to investigate theme park ride safety

BY JOHN MCCARTHY
FLORIDA TODAY

In June 2005, 4-year-old Daudi Bamuwamye collapsed and died of a heart attack after riding Mission: Space, a ride at Walt Disney World's Epcot that simulates a rocket trip to Mars using a centrifuge and high-tech video imaging.

A month later, Leanne Deacon, 16, suffered a severe heart attack after riding The Twilight Zone Tower of Terror at Disney's MGM Studios, a ride that mimics a 13-story plunge in a dilapidated freight elevator at a haunted hotel.

Central Florida, of course, is the theme park capital of the world, drawing millions of visitors from around the globe each year to the giant Disney and Universal complexes in Orlando, as well as to the roller-coaster mecca, Busch Gardens Tampa. Even Sea World Orlando has jumped on the bandwagon, adding thrill rides to go along with killer whale and porpoise shows.

When someone dies during a ride at one of those theme parks, it is big news not just in Florida, but around the world.

After each injury or death, there is always speculation that the physical forces of the rides contributed to the situation. This has become even more prevalent in recent years as rides have gotten faster, taller and more intense. Typically, news reports will say something along the line of "G-forces on roller coasters sometimes top those felt by fighter pilots or space shuttle astronauts."

Central Florida's theme parks respond by saying the G-forces on their rides are well within the limits that healthy people can safely handle.

There was always one problem, though. They never released any data on exactly what G-force riders were subjected to.

Taking a test run

We were surprised to find they didn't have to. The federal government doesn't oversee theme park safety. State law does dictate the construction and safety standards for theme park rides. But Florida's theme parks have a "memorandum of understanding," with the state that calls for them to inspect themselves, report accidents and make an annual presentation on safety issues.

Florida law says all amusement rides in the state – including those at theme parks – must meet G-force standards set by ASTM International, an independent nonprofit group that sets safety and design standards for a wide variety of industries and services.

But while the theme parks have said they followed all the safety guidelines, they never said exactly what kind of G-forces patrons are subjected to on such rides as the Incredible Hulk, the Rock 'n' Roller Coaster or the state's newest ride, ShieKra at Busch Gardens, which features a 200-foot face-down plunge into a tunnel.

We decided to find out for ourselves. We called our television news partners at WKMG-Orlando to ask if they wanted to join our efforts. They assigned reporter Mike DeForest to the project.

Our goal was to plot out the G-forces on every major roller coaster and thrill ride in Central Florida.

We turned to Vernier Software and Technology, a Beaverton, Ore., company that manufactures and supplies scientific testing equipment to science teachers around the country. We purchased a LabPro data collector and a three-axis accelerometer. The sensor simultaneously measures G-forces in three different directions.

After the equipment arrived at our office, I spent several days going over the documentation that came with it, as well as reading everything I could about G-forces and their effects on the human body. I also researched roller coasters and how they worked.

I gave my new scientific gizmos several test runs, spinning in my office chair, zigging and zagging down the long hall that runs from one end of our newspaper plant to the other, and taking G-force readings as I toiled around our parking lot.

After getting comfortable with the equipment, I was ready to take it for a test run on an actual ride. I decided to test out the equipment at Sea World Orlando since it had only one roller coaster, Kraken. Having only one coaster left plenty of time to take several rides to see how our equipment was working. Luckily, this was all happening in October when lines at Florida parks are generally short.

There was one problem, though: getting the equipment on the rides.

The LabPro data collection device is about the size of four decks of cards laid side-by-side. The three-axis accelerometer is a cube only about an inch on each side, but it requires three wires be plugged into the LabPro, which has a series of lights that flash when collecting data. In other words, it was not the easiest rig to nonchalantly carry onto a roller coaster. Additionally, the actual sensor had to be firmly secured in place. And we wanted to make sure we followed all the posted safety rules for rides, which generally prohibit riders from holding anything in their hands. I also had to be able to push a button on the LabPro at the beginning of each ride to start the data collection.

There was one other problem. The LabPro was only able to hold data from one ride at a time. So, between each ride, I had to dump the data into a laptop computer and ready it for the next ride.

At Sea World, I tried out several different methods for collecting the data. I finally decided on an arrangement where I would carry the LabPro either in a fanny pack or in a side pocket in a pair of cargo pants, depending on the ride's restraints system. I ran the wires inside my clothing and pinned the sensor inside a T-shirt pocket.

Because of Sea World's relatively small size and the fact I was only interested in one ride, I was able to take several spins on Kraken. Between each ride, I went back to the parking lot where I

downloaded the data into my laptop in the back of my SUV.

However, that arrangement wouldn't work at other parks where I was interested in several rides and where just one trip to the parking lot and back could take an hour. I decided to stuff my laptop into a backpack and bring it into the parks with me.

My next stop was Walt Disney World, where I was joined by DeForest and cameraman Scott Noland. We met in the parking lot at Epcot where I wired myself and Noland hooked up his gear, including a "sunglass" cam that would allow him to capture video from a rider perspective.

For the rest of that day, we raced around Disney collecting data from the various rides. During the rides, I either stashed my laptop in a locker or left it in the care of either DeForest or Noland. No one ever stopped to ask why I was using a laptop in Disney.

Independent data

Within a few days, we were able to collect data on all the major rides in the area. Meanwhile, business reporters Donna Balancia and Scott Blake were working on sidebars looking at government oversight and industry pressures to build bigger, better, faster rides.

Back in the newsroom, I started analyzing the data. During the rides, I captured 20 samples per second on each of the three axes. But the very movement of roller coasters' twisting rides meant that the axes themselves were constantly changing. For example, what the machine thought was the vertical axis could be facing sideways at various times during the ride. I used a mathematical formula to combine the three separate readings into one net G-forces number.

LabPro uses proprietary software, which allowed me to easily graph the changing G-forces over the course of the rides. We featured those graphs in print and online.

The bottom line was that the forces were well within the level that healthy people can safely tolerate. To the best of my knowledge, we were the first folks outside the theme parks to be able to say that definitively, using independently gathered data. We also pointed out that the forces could cause problems with certain pre-existing health conditions and urged people with those conditions to take safety warnings about amusement rides seriously.

An autopsy report on Daudi Bamuwamye, the 4-year-old who died on Mission: Space, that was released around the time of our four-part series showed he had a previously undiagnosed heart condition.

John McCarthy is a special projects reporter at Florida Today in Melbourne, Florida. He joined the paper in 1994. The entire package of stories, graphics and photos is available online at www.floridatoday.com/apps/pbcs.dll?section?category=NEWS06

IRE Award Winners

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

SPECIAL CATEGORIES

TOM RENNER AWARD

IRE MEDAL

Unpunished Killings – *The* (Jackson, Miss.) *Clarion-Ledger*; Jerry Mitchell

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

This year's Tom Renner Award is a career-recognition award for a series of incredible stories published from 1989 through 2005 – one man and one newspaper's tireless struggle to see justice done. Over the past 17 years, Jerry Mitchell of Jackson's *Clarion-Ledger* located new witnesses and uncovered key evidence in unresolved or unprosecuted civil-rights era killings. Among the cases reopened as a result of Mitchell's reporting: the 1963 killing of Medgar Evers and the 1964 Freedom Summer killing of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, Miss. Mitchell's persistence in those and other cases led to the arrest and conviction of key civil-rights era killers, including Byron De La Bechwith, Klan chief Sam Bowers and, in 2005, a Klan operative who ordered the killings in the Mississippi Burning case. Mitchell's crusading work is even more heroic because the cases he's investigated were decades old but the threats against him were modern.

FINALISTS

- **A Hoax Most Cruel** – *The* (Louisville, Ky.) *Courier-Journal*; Andrew Wolfson
- **Dangerous Doses**; Katherine Eban



FOI AWARD

IRE MEDAL

The Hidden Costs of Tenure – Small Newspaper Group (Springfield, Ill., Bureau); Scott Reeder

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

Statehouse reporter Scott Reeder filed 1,500 Freedom of Information Act requests with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39 >

IRE news briefs

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

- **Marcus Stern** and Jerry Kammer of Copley News Service and Dean Calbreath of *The San Diego Union-Tribune* won in political reporting for exposing bribery and influence peddling by U.S. Rep. Randy “Duke” Cunningham, a Southern California congressman who awaits sentencing after admitting he accepted \$2.4 million in bribes from defense contractors.
- **Adam Clay Thompson** of *The San Francisco Bay Guardian* won in local reporting for a series on public housing detailing the atrocious living conditions in San Francisco Housing Authority-owned dwellings.

Scripps Howard Foundation

- **Robin Fields**, Evelyn Larrubia and Jack Leonard of the *Los Angeles Times* won in Investigative Reporting for a series of stories, “Guardians for Profit,” which examined 2,400 cases handled by professional guardians in Southern California over a seven-year period. It uncovered abuse of older citizens by those charged with protecting them. (See story on page 16.)
- **Brady Dennis** of the *St. Petersburg Times* won the Ernie Pyle award in human interest writing for “300 Words,” a series that took readers into the lives of ordinary people.
- **Ken Ward** of *The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette* won the Edward J. Meeman award in environmental reporting for exposing inaccurate permit maps and lax government regulation in the application of a huge coal company to build a potentially dangerous coal storage silo near an elementary school.
- **Chris Adams** and **Alison Young** of Knight Ridder’s Washington Bureau won the Raymond Clapper award in Washington reporting for “Discharged and Dishonored.”
- **David Schechter**, Tom Aviles, and Lino Rulli of WCCO-Minneapolis, won the Jack R. Howard award for “The Last Flagraiser,” a story about Marine Cpl. Chuck Lindberg.
- **Luke Timmerman** and **David Heath** of *The Seattle Times* won the William Brewster Styles award for exposing Wall Street firms that paid medical researchers to divulge details about their ongoing research into potential new drugs.

Society of American Business Editors and Writers: Best in Business

- **Ed Silverman**, *The (Newark, N.J.) Star-Ledger* for “The Vioxx Verdict”
- Therese Poletti, Dean Takahashi, **Nicole C. Wong**, Michelle Quinn, John Boodreau, Mike Langberg, Mike Cassidy, Sam Diaz, Donna Alvarado, Todd Woody, and Vindo Goel, *San Jose Mercury News* for “Why Fiorina was ousted”
- **Alicia Mundy**, *The Seattle Times* for “Boeing faces CEO dilemma”
- George Talbot, **Sean Reilly**, Andrea James, Bill Barrow and Sallie Owen, *Mobile Register* for “EADS lands”

- **Bart Jansen**, Matt Wickenheiser, Dennis Hoey, Jen Fish, and Paul Carrier, *Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram* for “A Bittersweet Outcome”
- **Margaret Allen**, *Dallas Business Journal* for “State will pay Vought \$65M”
- **John Biers** and Andrew Dowell, Dow Jones News Service for “Hurricane Katrina approaches”
- **Kurt Eichenwald**, *The New York Times* for “A Sordid Online World”
- **Mark Maremont**, *The Wall Street Journal* for “Jet Green”
- **David Washburn** and Bruce V. Bigelow, *San Diego Union-Tribune* for “In Harm’s Way: Titan in Iraq”
- **Joseph Barrios**, *Arizona Daily Star* for “High home prices mean jail, dump make OK neighbors”
- **Barry Meier**, *The New York Times* for “Flawed design: patients at risk”
- **Luke Timmerman** and **David Heath**, *The Seattle Times* for “Drug researchers leak secrets to Wall Street”
- Binyamin Applebaum, **Ted Mellnik**, and Rick Rothacker, *The Charlotte Observer* for “The hard truth in lending”
- Philip Brasher, Jennifer Dukes Lee, Anne Fitzgerald, and **Lee Rood**, *Des Moines Register* for “On new ground”
- **Janet Patton**, *Lexington Herald-Leader* for “Wrong side of the track”
- John Stamper, **Bill Estep**, and Linda Blackford, *Lexington Herald-Leader* for “Win, lose or draw: Gambling for jobs”
- **M.C. Moewe**, *Jacksonville Business Journal* for “Disappearances leave mystery”

From the IRE offices

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

ing of reporter Don Bolles in Phoenix in June 1976. Coming only a year after IRE was formed, Bolles’ murder led to IRE’s Arizona Project, in which dozens of journalists went to Phoenix to finish and expand on Bolles’ investigations into government and business corruption.

Since the Arizona Project, no U.S. reporter has been killed on U.S. soil while working on a story. Whether coincidence or a result of the Project, we know some journalists, particularly in the Southwest, worry that record will not last because they fear the drug war violence in Mexico will spill over the border into the United States.

Furthermore, the decades of assault on a free press have created an environment in which international organized crime and other corrupt individuals may be emboldened to again contemplate violence against journalists in the United States.

It is indeed time to show solidarity, to support one another’s work and to show the public how badly such journalism is needed – and how necessary and invaluable are the investigative journalists who produce that work.

- **David Evans**, Michael Smith and Liz Willen, Bloomberg News for “Big Pharma’s shameful secret”

RTNDA Regional Murrow Awards

- “Following the Money in Afghanistan,” a video report by **Joe Stephens**, **David B. Ottaway** and washingtonpost.com that aired on MHz Networks won a regional Edward R. Murrow Award for investigative reporting on television from the Radio-Television News Directors Association.

Oklahoma Professional Chapter of SPJ Newspaper Division A

- **Ziva Branstetter** of the *Tulsa World* won first place in investigative individual reporting. **John Perry**, **Steve Lackmeyer**, Judy Gibbs Robinson and **Ryan McNeill** of *The Oklahoman* won first place in in-depth enterprise/team reporting. **Steve Lackmeyer** and **John Perry** of *The Oklahoman* won first place in political/governmental reporting. **Steve Lackmeyer** of *The Oklahoman* won first place in general news reporting. **April Marciszewski** of the *Tulsa World* won first place in education reporting.

Newspaper Division B

- **Chris Terbruggen** of *The Daily Ardmoreite* won first place in investigative/individual reporting.

Television

- **Marc Dillard**, David Payne, Walt Cox, and Linda Cavanaugh of KFOR-Oklahoma City, won first place in spot news.

Member news

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

ciation News Division. The award, which is the highest recognition of the News Division, is named for the division founder and is given for major achievement in the field of news librarianship and for outstanding service to the division.

■ **Steve Rhodes** has left *Chicago* magazine, where he was the senior editor for politics and media to launch a Web site called The Beachwood Reporter (beachwoodreporter.com).

■ **Michael Sallah**, an investigations editor at *The Miami Herald* and **Mitch Weiss**, a deputy business editor at *The Charlotte Observer*, have a new book, “Tiger Force: A True Story of Men and War,” (Time Warner/Little Brown). ■ **John F. Wasik**, a columnist for Bloomberg News, has a new book, “The Merchant of Power: Samuel Insull, Thomas Edison and the Creation of the Modern Metropolis,” (Palgrave-Macmillan).

IRE Award Winners

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37

almost 900 government entities, then worked full-time for two months policing those requests to get a remarkable 100 percent response rate. With this information, he was able to show that the state's 20-year-old law aimed at making it easier to dismiss underperforming teachers had failed and been thwarted by the state's powerful teachers unions. The data he amassed showed that of the state's 876 school districts, only 38 were actually successful in firing a teacher. This work is a testament to the power of open records.

FINALISTS

- **Mayor Lives Large while Detroit Struggles** – *Detroit Free Press*; M.L. Elrick, Jim Schaefer, Victoria Turk
- **Missing: Children At Risk** – Scripps Howard News Service; Thomas Hargrove
- **Striking Differences** – *The Dallas Morning News*; Steve McGonigle, Holly Becka, Jennifer LeFleur, Tim Wyatt
- **Your Right to Know** – *The (White Plains, N.Y.) Journal News*; *The Journal News* Staff

STUDENT WORK

(ALL MEDIA)

CERTIFICATE

An Army of Anyone – *Westwind & Westword*; J. David McSwane

JUDGES' COMMENTS:

It's hard to believe that the most important details of J. David McSwane's investigation occurred while he was still in high school in Arvada, Colo. The 17-year-old was working for his school newspaper when he began reporting the story that led the U.S. Army to convene a national stand-down to review recruiting tactics. He went undercover to expose how recruiters desperate to meet their quotas ignored his purported drug problems and the fact that he hadn't graduated from high school, improperly offering to help him pass drug screenings and to create a fake diploma. His work was later expanded for publication in Denver's *Westword* weekly paper.



FINALISTS

- **The Children's Crusade** – *New Haven (Conn.) Advocate*; Zvika Krieger
- **Suspension & Expulsions: Minority students face harsher discipline** – *The (Arlington Heights, Ill.) Daily Herald* (Springfield Bureau); Melissa Jenco
- **City spending of federal funds prompts audit** – *The Daily O'Collegian* (Oklahoma State University); John M. Estus
- **The Dorm from Hell** – Southern Methodist University Investigative Reporting Class

IRE SERVICES

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTERS AND EDITORS, INC. is a grassroots nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of investigative reporting within the field of journalism. IRE was formed in 1975 with the intent of creating a networking tool and a forum in which journalists from across the country could raise questions and exchange ideas. IRE provides educational services to reporters, editors and others interested in investigative reporting and works to maintain high professional standards.

Programs and Services:

IRE RESOURCE CENTER – A rich reserve of print and broadcast stories, tipsheets and guides to help you start and complete the best work of your career. This unique library is the starting point of any piece you're working on. You can search through abstracts of more than 20,000 investigative reporting stories through our Web site.

Contact: Beth Kopine, beth@ire.org, 573-882-3364

DATABASE LIBRARY – Administered by IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. The library has copies of many government databases, and makes them available to news organizations at or below actual cost. Analysis services are available on these databases, as is help in deciphering records you obtain yourself.

Contact: Jeff Porter, jeff@ire.org, 573-882-1982

CAMPAIGN FINANCE INFORMATION CENTER – Administered by IRE and the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting. It's dedicated to helping journalists uncover the campaign money trail. State campaign finance data is collected from across the nation, cleaned and made available to journalists. A search engine allows reporters to track political cash flow across several states in federal and state races.

Contact: Brant Houston, brant@ire.org, 573-882-2042

ON-THE-ROAD TRAINING – As a top promoter of journalism education, IRE offers loads of training opportunities throughout the year. Possibilities range from national conferences and regional workshops to weeklong boot camps and on-site newsroom training. Costs are on a sliding scale and fellowships are available to many of the events.

Contact: David Donald, ddonald@ire.org, 573-882-2042

Publications

THE IRE JOURNAL – Published six times a year. Contains journalist profiles, how-to stories, reviews, investigative ideas and backgrounding tips. *The Journal* also provides members with the latest news on upcoming events and training opportunities from IRE and NICAR.

Contact: Pia Christensen, pia@ire.org, 405-707-7300

UPLINK – Newsletter by IRE and NICAR on computer-assisted reporting. Published six times a year. Often, *Uplink* stories are written after reporters have had particular success using data to investigate stories. The columns include valuable information on advanced database techniques as well as success stories written by newly trained CAR reporters.

Contact: David Herzog, dherzog@ire.org, 573-884-7711

REPORTER.ORG – A collection of Web-based resources for journalists, journalism educators and others. Discounted Web hosting and services such as mailing list management and site development are provided to other nonprofit journalism organizations.

Contact: Brant Houston, brant@ire.org, 573-882-2042

For information on:

ADVERTISING – Pia Christensen, pia@ire.org, 405-707-7300

MEMBERSHIP AND SUBSCRIPTIONS – John Green, jgreen@ire.org, 573-882-2772

CONFERENCES AND BOOT CAMPS – Ev Ruch-Graham, ev@ire.org, 573-882-8969

LISTSERVS – Amy Johnston, amy@ire.org, 573-884-1444

Mailing Address:

IRE, 138 Neff Annex, Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, MO 65211

2006 IRE CONFERENCE - JUNE 15-18

The best in the business will gather for panels, workshops and special presentations about covering public safety, courts, national security, the military, business, education, local government and much more. Visit www.ire.org/training/dallasfortworth06 for more information and updates.

Conference Hotel:

Renaissance Worthington Hotel, 200 Main St., Fort Worth, TX 76102

Hotel Reservations:

To get the discounted rate of \$146 plus tax, please make your hotel reservation by Monday, May 15. There are two ways to make a reservation:

Online: Visit <https://marriott.com/reservation/availability.mi?propertyCode=DFWDT&mktc> and be sure to enter this group code: INVINVA

Telephone: Call 800-468-3571 or 817-870-1000 and ask for the Investigative Reporters and Editors room block.

If you have hotel or general conference questions, please contact Ev Ruch-Graham, sr. conference coordinator, ev@ire.org or 573-882-8969. If you have registration questions, please contact John Green, membership coordinator, jgreen@ire.org or 573-882-2772.

Host: *The Dallas Morning News*

Primary Sponsor: *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

Sponsors: Sunbelt Communications Company and Jim and Beverly Rogers, Chicago Tribune Foundation, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies Inc., National Press Foundation, Haynes & Boone LLP



NOTICE: You will be listed on the IRE Web site as an attendee. If you don't want to be listed, please e-mail John Green at jgreen@ire.org.

REGISTRATION You can register for this conference online at www.ire.org/training/dallas/fortworth06 or by filling out this form and faxing it to **573-882-5431**. To register by credit card, you must have a VISA, MasterCard or American Express. If you are paying by check, please mail this form with your check to IRE, 138 Neff Annex, Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, MO 65211. *Please write carefully! This information will be used to make your nametag.*

Name: _____

Employer/Affiliation/School: _____

Address: _____

City, State: _____ Zip: _____ - _____

E-mail (*required*): _____

Home Phone: _____ Office Phone (*required*): _____

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Card Holder Name: _____

Card Holder Signature: _____

Cancellations need to be sent via e-mail to jgreen@ire.org. There is a \$50 processing fee for all cancellations until June 14, 2006. Refunds will not be given for cancellations after June 14.

To attend this conference, you must be an IRE member through July 1, 2006. Memberships are nonrefundable. Pre-registration will close on May 31. Early-bird registration closes May 24.

MEMBERSHIP:

____ I am a current member of IRE through July 1.
____ **\$50** I need to join/renew my U.S. or international
 Professional Academic Associate or
 Retiree membership
____ **\$25** I need to join/renew my student membership.

REGISTRATION (includes online audio access for all taped panels post-conference):

____ **\$165** I would like to register for the main conference days as a Professional Academic Associate or Retiree member
____ **\$100** I would like to register for the main conference days as a student.

CAR DAY – optional: Thursday, June 15 (requires additional fee)

____ **\$50** Professional/Academic/Associate members
____ **\$35** Student members

BLUES BASH TICKETS: Thursday, June 15 at 8 p.m. Advance tickets are \$20 (beer, wine and soft drinks included). Tickets on site, if available, will cost more. Enter total number of tickets needed ____ x \$20 = ____

RECEPTION: Sixth Floor Museum in Dallas, Friday, June 16 (Advance ticket required, 2 ticket max., only 350 tickets available) Enter total number of tickets ____ x \$20 = ____

SPECIAL NEEDS:

Do you require special assistance? Specify _____
 I would like a vegetarian meal at the IRE Awards luncheon. (Must request when registering.)

TOTAL \$ _____