

THE IRE JOURNAL

A hand holding a folder against a blue sky background. The hand is positioned in the center, with fingers spread, holding a light-colored folder. The background is a clear blue sky with a few wispy white clouds. The overall image has a professional and clean aesthetic.

November/December 2006

Volume 29 Number 6

people & profiles

SECURITY I.D.

TSA employee
badges, uniforms
reported missing

PAIN PILLS

Methadone dangers
not outlined by
federal officials

FRAUD COMPLAINTS

Voters duped into
changing parties
on petition

It's not just
about the words

It's about the
quotes

Expand your pool of expert sources with
ProfNet ExpertsSM from PR Newswire.

ProfNet ExpertsSM from PR Newswire is the smart but simple way to find fresh new sources for interviews and quotes. Our network of 13,000 news and information officers — representing more than 4,000 organizations on five continents — is standing by to help you develop stories on any topic.

Just submit a query describing the nature of the expertise you need or search our database of 20,000 expert profiles. You'll quickly connect with expert sources that can provide just the insights and quotes you need for your story.

It's fast, easy and it's free.

Find out today how ProfNet Experts can assist in making your job easier and your story more credible. Go to www.prnewswire.com/media or contact PR Newswire's Media Help Desk at 800-387-8448.



THE IRE JOURNAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2006

- 4** IRE's transformation, commitment continue
By Brant Houston, IRE
- 6** IRE members featured in new PBS series
By Beth Kopine
For *The IRE Journal*
- 7** Katrina books provide context to disaster
By Steve Weinberg
The IRE Journal
- 8** Arizona Project highlighted by new generation of investigative journalists
By Debrin Foxcroft
For *The IRE Journal*
- 9** HOUSING SCAM
Developers pocket millions targeted to house county's poorest citizens
By Debbie Cenziper
The Miami Herald
- 12** LEGAL MISSTEPS
Flawed judicial system results in high conviction rate, errors
By Julie Patel
San Jose Mercury News
- 16** KILLER CURE
Unusual statistic leads to series on methadone overdose deaths
By Scott Finn and Tara Tuckwiller
The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette

18 LEAD THREAT
Water regulations not enforced; contaminated water found system-wide
By Pat Stith
The (Raleigh, N.C.) News & Observer

20 DEATH PENALTY
Small weekly newspaper's investigation unearths consumer complaints on funerals
By Rick Anderson
Seattle Weekly

22 - 33 PEOPLE AND PROFILES

FAKE I.D.
Nailing down details shows psychologist created false life, professional credentials
By Ruth Teichroeb
Seattle Post-Intelligencer

DEADLY DOC
Supervisor of state's lethal injections has questionable professional record
By Jeremy Kohler
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

DIRTY DEALINGS
Weekly records check snowballs into probe of million-dollar looting, murder
By Michael Levensohn
(Middletown, N.Y.) Times Herald-Record

UNHOLY RIPOFF
Money adviser who stole from top athletes paroled early, runs large church operation
By Brent Schrottenboer
The San Diego Union-Tribune

PEOPLE SKILLS
A treasure trove of investigative tools for profiling anyone from John Doe to the famous
By Duff Wilson
The New York Times

RESOURCES
Tools to help track, background and interview people
By Kate Rainey
The IRE Journal



ABOUT THE COVER
Putting together an investigative story on a person who doesn't want to talk to you can be a challenge – but it can be done.

Cover Story
Pages 22-33

Cover photo illustration by
Wendy Gray, *The IRE Journal*

34 SECURITY RISK
Persistent FOI battle nets numbers on missing TSA badges, uniforms
By Brian Collister
WOAI-San Antonio

37 Campaign coffers fill with money gained through gambling
By Brent D. Wistrom
The Wichita Eagle

39 DUPED VOTERS
Records show residents tricked into switching party affiliations
By Kimberly Kindy, Tony Saavedra and Brian Joseph
The Orange County (Calif.) Register

40 DATA DIVE
Basic community services measured in unique series on city performance
By Michael Mansur
The Kansas City Star

43 KILLER PRICE
Murder costing taxpayers millions; wide variety of services impacted
By Melvin Claxton
The (Nashville) Tennessean

THE IRE JOURNAL

VOLUME 29 | NUMBER 6

MANAGING EDITOR
Anita Bruzzese

PUBLICATIONS COORDINATOR
Megan Means

ART DIRECTOR
Wendy Gray

SENIOR CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
Steve Weinberg

CONTRIBUTING LEGAL EDITOR
David Smallman

EDITORIAL INTERN
Kate Rainey

IRE

IRE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Brant Houston

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

James V. Grimaldi, *The Washington Post*

VICE PRESIDENT

Cheryl Phillips, *The Seattle Times*

TREASURER

Dianna Hunt, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

SECRETARY

Stephen C. Miller, *The New York Times*

David Boardman, *The Seattle Times*
Wendell Cochran, American University
Renee Ferguson, WMAQ-Chicago
Manny Garcia, *The Miami Herald*
Mark Katches, *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*
Duane Pohlman, WEWS-Cleveland
Lea Thompson, NBC
Nancy Stancill, *The Charlotte Observer*
Duff Wilson, *The New York Times*

The IRE Journal (ISSN0164-7016) is published six times a year by Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. 138 Neff Annex, Missouri School of Journalism, Columbia, MO 65211, 573-882-2042. E-mail: journal@ire.org. U.S. subscriptions are \$70 for individuals, \$85 for libraries and \$125 for institutions/businesses. International subscriptions are \$90 for individuals and \$150 for all others. Periodical postage paid at Columbia, MO. Postmaster: Please send address changes to IRE. USPS #451-670

© 2006 Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc.

FROM THE IRE OFFICES



BRANT HOUSTON

IRE's transformation, commitment continue

As we finish 2006 – the year of so-called “transformation” (a term sweeping newsrooms across the country these days) – we thought it would be worth doing a quick inventory of what at IRE is “transforming” and not transforming.

We have kicked off a new initiative to provide Watchdog Workshops and other training and resources for ethnic media newsrooms that will not only bring investigative skills to those journalists but also create bridges between those newsrooms and mainstream newsrooms.

This initiative, we believe, has great potential both to encourage and improve investigative work. At the same time, it improves the overall coverage of communities that are increasingly multicultural.

This effort also will extend the work we began with IRE *en Español*, (www.ire.org/esp) our effort to build Web pages and training programs for Spanish-speaking journalists.

Our Web site and publications are becoming more accessible. Specifically, we are developing a redesigned Web site that will be easier to navigate and search, while making *The IRE Journal*, *Uplink* and other publications available online so they will become more timely, lively and valuable. We are focusing on our online tutorials, especially to prepare journalists for our workshops and to give them follow-up assistance.

We also are implementing a new business plan to ensure that we package our resources and training in forms that make them more useful. For example, conference tipsheets are compiled quickly for distribution on CD-ROM, and audio files of panel discussions can be downloaded from the Web or ordered on a CD. We also want to improve the marketing of our services and products and to reach out to editors and producers to encourage deeper involvement in our organizations' efforts.

Further, we are engaging in our biggest membership drive ever to increase the diversity and range of media in IRE. We want to make sure IRE itself is multicultural and international, that its membership reflects every media type and size, that it has young and experienced journalists, and that it is inclusive of all those who are interested in seeing more credible investigative work in the future.

As part of that effort, we are creating Web pages and resources for citizens who want to understand how investigative reporting is done, how to work with investigative reporters and how they can get skills that would allow them to be investigative journalists.

So, what are we not transforming?

IRE continues as an organization that works to maintain and improve the standards of investigative reporting. It continues to be the premier trainer in practical and measurable skills.

We still will do numerous Watchdog Workshops, computer-assisted reporting seminars and sessions on money and politics. Workshops both in the United States and abroad will continue, as will IRE's collaboration with other journalism organizations to help maximize our resources.

In addition, we will continue to provide tools and services journalists can use every day. We will maintain and improve the Resource Center and the Database Library. Tracking the legal challenges and freedom of information issues – and helping journalists deal with whatever the latest hurdles or attacks may bring – will continue to be a top commitment.

We will continue to raise money for our endowment, particularly in the final year in which we can receive \$1 from the Knight Foundation for every \$2 we collect. The endowment has crossed the \$3 million threshold and already is providing investment income for our operations – meaning that we are starting to counterbalance the cuts in newsrooms' training budgets.

And the board and the staff will continue to listen and be responsive to the needs of all our members and supporters so that we can offer the best training and resources during these years of “transformation.”

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.

CAR Boot Camp heads to South Florida

IRE and NICAR's Computer-Assisted Reporting Boot Camp will be in South Florida next month to deliver all the benefits of its weeklong CAR curriculum, minus the Midwestern winter weather.

This special CAR Boot Camp is organized by former IRE and NICAR training director Neil Reiser and hosted by Florida International University's School of Journalism and Mass Communication. The event will be held Dec. 11-15 on the university's Biscayne Bay Campus in North Miami.

Attendees will learn how to acquire electronic information and get hands-on training in using spreadsheets and databases to analyze data. Experts from IRE and NICAR will explain how to translate these skills into high-impact stories. Participants also can take advantage of follow-up assistance after they return to their news organizations.

For more information, visit www.ire.org/training/NorthMiami06.html.

Investigative journalist murdered in Moscow

The recent murder of investigative reporter Anna Politkovskaya is "a tragic example of how investigative reporting in Russia has become a deadly enterprise," says James Grimaldi, IRE board president.

"Anna Politkovskaya is the 13th journalist murdered since Vladimir Putin took power," Grimaldi says. "The violence against journalists must stop. And the government must move urgently to protect a free press."

Politkovskaya was shot to death in the elevator of her apartment building in Moscow in October. Her critical coverage of the Chechen conflict and other investigative work had brought her praise, but numerous death threats followed.

The Interfax news agency said police reported that Politkovskaya had been shot and that a pistol and four bullets were found in the elevator. The U.S. State Department issued a statement, saying the Russian government should "conduct an immediate and thorough investigation in order to find, prosecute and bring to justice all those responsible for this heinous murder," adding that the journalists murdered in

Russia over the last six years "is an affront to free and independent media and to democratic values."

Last spring, Politkovskaya spoke at an investigative journalism conference in Sweden and expressed concern about whether she would be able to re-enter her country. In discussions with IRE, she had spoken about appearing at IRE conferences and working on forging better ties between IRE and Russian journalists. She turned down requests to appear at the Global Investigative Journalism conferences in Denmark because of the demands of her work.

"We mourn the loss of a great investigative journalist and colleague," Grimaldi says.

Politkovskaya, special correspondent for the independent Moscow newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, reported extensively on human rights abuses by the Russian military in Chechnya. She was threatened, jailed, forced into exile, and poisoned during her career, the Committee to Protect Journalists said its research showed. The CPJ also condemned the fatal attack on Politkovskaya.

CPJ Executive Director Joel Simon says, "Anna Politkovskaya was uncompromising in her pursuit of the human story behind the ongoing war in Chechnya. In risking everything to tell this story, she became one of the leading press freedom figures of our generation."

He adds, "Her death is a great loss to journalism, to her country, and to the service of truth. Russia is one of the most murderous places in the world for journalists, and it has a long history of impunity in these killings. This is the time for Russian authorities to reverse this years-long assault on independent journalism by bringing Anna Politkovskaya's killers to justice."

Russia is the third-deadliest country in the world for journalists over the past 15 years, trailing only the conflict-ridden countries of Iraq and Algeria. A new CPJ report found that 42 journalists had been killed in Russia since 1992. Many were slain in contract-style executions, and the vast majority remain unsolved by Russian authorities. The report is available at www.cpj.org/Briefings/2006/deadly_news/deadly_news.html.

The contract-style killing of American journalist Paul Klebnikov is among the many cases that are unsolved. Two men were tried this year and acquitted. Klebnikov, editor of *Forbes Russia*, was gunned down on a Moscow street in July 2004.

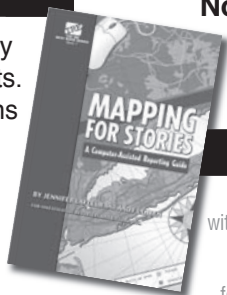
MEMBER NEWS

Trevor Aaronson has moved to *The Commercial Appeal* in Memphis as an investigative/special projects reporter. He worked for four years at the *Miami New Times* and at the *New Times Broward-Palm Beach* in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. ■ *The* (Hackensack, N.J.) *Record* team of **Jan Barry**, Thomas E. Franklin, **Mary Jo Layton**, **Tim Nostrand**, **Alex Nussbaum**, **Tom Troncione**, **Debra Lynn Vial**, Lindy Washburn and **Barbara Williams** won the first Grantham Prize for excellence in environmental reporting for its "Toxic Legacy" series about the pollution from a New Jersey automobile-assembly plant. ■ **Kurt Eichenwald** joined *Portfolio* as a senior writer and investigative reporter; he had worked at *The New York Times* since 1985. ■ **Keith Epstein** is now an investigative reporter in *Business Week's* Washington, D.C., bureau after serving as Washington correspondent for *The Tampa Tribune* and Media General, and a Washington-based reporter for *The* (Cleveland, Ohio) *Plain Dealer*. ■ **Susan Greene** of *The Denver Post* won a 2006 Ochberg Fellowship from The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. ■ **Holly A. Heyser**, the state editor at *The Orange County* (Calif.) *Register*, joined the faculty at California State University, Sacramento as the professional journalist in residence. ■ **Mark Katches** was named assistant managing editor for projects and investigations at the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. He was the senior team leader for watchdog journalism at *The Orange County* (Calif.) *Register* and serves on the IRE board of directors. ■ **Jeffrey Kummer**, formerly of the *St. Paul* (Minn.) *Pioneer Press*, is now the Texas news editor for the Associated Press in Dallas. ■ **Pam Maples** has been named managing editor at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. She has worked at *The Dallas Morning News* since 1990. ■ Environment reporter **Mark Schleifstein** of *The Times-Picayune* in New Orleans, is the co-author with John McQuaid of "Path of Destruction: The Devastation of New Orleans and the Coming Age of Superstorms,"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46 >

MAPPING FOR STORIES

Learn how to map data for daily news stories and larger projects. This book offers the foundations for using mapping software to dig deeper into stories. Downloadable maps and data allow reporters to work along with each chapter.



IRE members: \$15 each
Nonmembers: \$25 each

Plus media-rate postage: \$4
for the first book; \$2 for each
additional book.

E-mail questions to rescntr@ire.org

ORDER TODAY!

Call 573-882-3364

with your VISA, MasterCard or American Express

-OR-

Visit our Web site at www.ire.org/store
for online ordering or order form downloads

IRE members featured in new PBS series

BY BETH KOPINE
FOR THE IRE JOURNAL

Investigative reporters behind today's most important stories have their moment in the spotlight on the new PBS documentary series, "AIR: America's Investigative Reports," produced by WNET-New York in association with the Center for Investigative Reporting in Berkeley, Calif.

IRE Executive Director Brant Houston and the IRE Resource Center have partnered with the show's producers to identify potential stories to profile and provide research assistance for the background of these investigations.

The focus of the series mirrors the mission of IRE: excellence in investigative journalism, which is essential to a free society. The creators of the program set out to highlight the work being produced despite newsroom budget cuts for training and governmental roadblocks to records. Each "AIR" episode is 30 minutes and has a documentary feel as it follows the investigative reporting process from conception to broadcast or publication. Each episode concludes by showing the impact the investigations.

The series premiered on Sept. 1 with "Crisis Man-

agement," featuring *The South Florida Sun-Sentinel's* FEMA investigation, "FEMA: A Legacy of Waste," by Sally Kestin, Megan O'Matz, John Maines and Jon Burstein. The project started when Maines noticed that disaster money had been paid out to Florida residents who hadn't been affected by Hurricane Frances – false claims that totaled hundreds of millions of dollars. Thorough data analysis and the determination of the reporters revealed an agency fraught with problems.

Their stories led to indictments and a Senate hearing, and brought about changes to the agency's system for handling disaster claims. In the 2005 IRE Awards, the *Sun-Sentinel* team won the IRE Certificate for large newspapers (250,000-500,000).

That was the first of several episodes featuring investigative reports previously recognized in the IRE Awards. The second installment in the series, "A Bitter Pill," detailed the Bloomberg News investigation, "Big Pharma's Shameful Secret," winner of the 2005 IRE Certificate in the magazine/specialty category.

David Evans, Michael Smith and Liz Willen took a close look at the pharmaceutical companies and the dangers rampant in the world of clinical drug trails – dangers resulting in both injury and death.

"An Inside Job" profiled an NPR investigation by Daniel Zwerdling, Anne Hawke, Ellen Weiss and Bill Marimow that uncovered abuse in U.S. prisons – the type we'd grown accustomed to hearing about at Abu Ghraib, but not so close to home. The investigation found that immigrant detainees were facing physical abuse and threats by attack dogs in the Passaic County, N.J., jail.

The pieces shown on "AIR" exemplify the type of journalism that IRE continues to support and encourage: investigations that make a difference, sometimes for an individual or community, and often to the public at large.

On its Web site, the producers state the issues they plan to cover will span a wide range of topics: government and the judicial system; business and investment; public safety; law enforcement; immigration; national security; elections; education; health and medicine; and sports.

The episodes air weekly on PBS affiliates across the nation. You can find a listing of previously aired and upcoming episodes on the show's Web site: www.pbs.org/wnet/air/episodes.html. To find out if they are airing in your region, see www.pbs.org/search/search_programsaz.html.

For examples of other top-notch investigations, see our list of past award winners: www.ire.org/con-test/past.html. These, along with thousands of other standout examples, can be obtained through the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter/) or by calling 573-882-3364.

Beth Kopine is IRE's Resource Center Director.

Richard Rodriguez | Star Telegram



The *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* team of (from left) John Maines, Jon Burstein, Megan O'Matz and Sally Kestin accept their certificate for "FEMA: A Legacy of Waste" from IRE Board President James Grimaldi at the 2006 IRE Conference in Dallas/Fort Worth.

Kathryn Scott Osler | Denver Post



Steve Doig, (left) contest chair for the 2004 IRE Awards, presents award to Daniel Zwerdling and Anne Hawke of National Public Radio at the 2005 IRE Conference in Denver.

Richard Rodriguez | Star Telegram



IRE Board President James Grimaldi (left) presents Bloomberg's David Evans with a 2005 IRE Awards certificate for "Big Pharma's Shameful Secret" at the Dallas/Fort Worth conference.

DART AWARDS

For Excellence in **Newspaper & Radio**
Reporting on Victims of Violence

The 2007 Dart Awards honor reporting published or aired in 2006 portraying victims and their experiences with accuracy, insight and sensitivity.

Information and applications at: dartaward.org

call for entries

Information: 800-332-0565
info@dartcenter.org
Entries due: January 26, 2007

Presented by the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma

Katrina books provide context to disaster

BY STEVE WEINBERG
THE IRE JOURNAL

It is no surprise that in the year after Hurricane Katrina books are appearing about the numerous deaths, the ruined lives of survivors, the property destruction, the environmental implications and the costly failures of politicians and engineers.

While this review is not a comprehensive catalog of Katrina books, it draws professional lessons from two of the best books, both by New Orleans journalists.

"Breach of Faith" is by Jed Horne, an editor at *The (New Orleans) Times-Picayune*. "Path of Destruction" is the work of two reporters at the same newspaper, John McQuaid and Mark Schleifstein.

Both books are worth reading. They cover much of the same ground and are populated by many of the same real-life characters. Yet they contain enough unique material, are organized so differently and are so far apart in the tone of their prose that each book contains unique lessons for journalists.

Both go beyond the basics of recounting events before, during and after Hurricane Katrina. Some highlights:

- One of the *Times-Picayune* reporters who risked his life to stay in New Orleans and chronicle what he saw was sports writer Bob Marshall; neither he nor his editors considered him an investigative reporter. Still, he was deeply interested in environmental degradation, and when he received an unsolicited call a few weeks after Katrina's winds played out, he listened. As related in Horne's book, the call came from Mignon Marcello, who lived in a neighborhood near the 17th Street Canal, one of the waterways that flooded New Orleans during Katrina. Marcello told Marshall that about nine months before Katrina she had noticed unexplained water in her backyard, as had a neighbor. They contacted the Sewerage and Water Board; an inspector told them not to worry. It turns out Marcello had been right to worry because the water in question signaled an existing problem with the flood protection system. Horne's account of Marshall's investigation is masterful and educational.
- In the late 1990s, Schleifstein and McQuaid began investigating what would happen if New Orleans was hit by a major hurricane, culminating in a 2002 *Times-Picayune* series that pretty much foretold the Katrina disaster. Their book recounts the background of that series. The authors write: "The once-fanciful scenario had recently acquired a wealth of gory details thanks to those studying the computer models and estimates ... The images were so searing that no one quite believed them ... The *Times-Picayune* editors worried that if the series

focused too much on the worst-case scenario, it would be dismissed as alarmist."

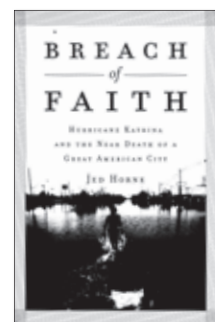
So, as the reporting duo thought through their rich material, they seized on the link between hurricanes and coastal erosion, the fact that storm surges were penetrating farther inland and hurricanes could now gain strength crossing watery marshes. Within that larger story, they explain in their book, "lurked the shadow of the Big One." The series appeared during June 2002 under the title "Washing Away," and drew prizes and praise. With those stories as their foundation three years later, the authors could turn out a strong book much more quickly than otherwise would have been possible.

- Both books provide temporary relief from tales of incompetence and corruption by including narratives of competence and selflessness. The exemplary performance of the U.S. Coast Guard, for example, demonstrated that advance planning combined with common sense is possible within a large bureaucracy.
- Both books compare disasters in other locales with what happened in New Orleans, which provides useful context. What happened during the destruction in 1900 of Galveston, Texas, and in 1995 in

Kobe, Japan, might seem irrelevant at first, but that assumption vanishes with in-depth reporting about those episodes.

It was easy for news reports to characterize the hard-hit Ninth Ward of New Orleans as limited to low-income African-Americans, easy to view post-Katrina survival tactics as looting, easy to characterize the city's mayor as a bumbler. Like almost all stereotypes, these turned out to be misleading. Sometimes the only way to document the fallacy of stereotypes is in-depth reporting through lots of on-the-ground interviews, studying government census data, reading through meeting minutes, speaking to the accused and their lawyers instead of relying solely on police reports, and obtaining intergovernmental memos.

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



BREACH OF FAITH: Hurricane Katrina and the Near Death of a Great American City
By Jed Horne
Random House, 412 pages, \$25.95



PATH OF DESTRUCTION: The Devastation of New Orleans and the Coming Age of Superstorms
By John McQuaid and Mark Schleifstein
Little, Brown, 368 pages, \$25.99

Announcing the 2007 PHILLIPS FOUNDATION JOURNALISM FELLOWSHIPS

WORKING JOURNALISTS ELIGIBLE FOR \$50,000

If you are a working print journalist with less than five years of professional experience, a unique opportunity awaits – the chance to apply for year-long \$50,000 full-time and \$25,000 part-time journalism fellowships.

Founded in 1990, the Phillips Foundation is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to advance the cause of objective journalism. The Foundation's fellowship program serves to provide support for journalists who share the Foundation's mission: to advance constitutional principles, a democratic society and a vibrant free enterprise system.

Winners undertake a one-year project of their choosing focusing on journalism supportive of American culture and a free society. In addition, there are separate fellowships on the environment, American history, and law enforcement. Applications are now being accepted for 2007. Applications must be postmarked by March 1, 2007. The winners will be announced at an awards dinner in Washington, in the spring. The fellowships will begin on September 1, 2007. Applicants must be U.S. citizens.

For applications and more information, visit our website or write: Mr. John Farley

• The Phillips Foundation • One Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 620, Washington, DC 20001
• Telephone 202-250-3887, ext. 609 • Email: jfarley@phillips.com • www.thephillipsfoundation.org

Deadline: March 1, 2007

Arizona Project highlighted by new generation of investigative journalists

BY DEBRIN FOXCROFT
FOR THE IRE JOURNAL

Three decades after his death, the life and untimely end of *The Arizona Republic* reporter Don Bolles again is serving as an important lesson for investigative journalists, this time for a new generation of reporters and editors at Arizona State University. (For more information, see www.ire.org/history/arizona.html.)

Over the last year, a group of Arizona State University journalism students revisited the circumstances surrounding the contract killing of Bolles on June 2, 1976. They delved into the Arizona Project, a collection of more than 40 investigative articles written by reporters and editors in the two years following Bolles' death. The students spoke to the key players and attempted to recapture the essence of the time. With thirty years between the students and the bombing of Bolles' white '76 Datsun, the new generation of investigative reporters tried to look back and see how that one morning altered the course of journalism forever.

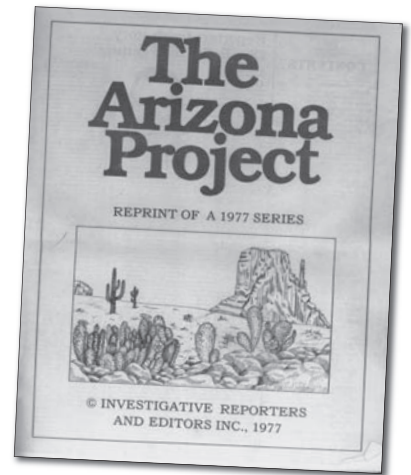
The stories published by *The Arizona Republic* commemorating the 30th anniversary of Bolles' death encompass several aspects of the case. The stories try to explain the events, the impact they had on the community and the legacy they created for future journalists. The profiles of both Bolles and Max

Dunlap, the man convicted of Bolles' murder, give an insight into the hearts and minds of the protagonists in this drama.

As part of this project, the students explored Bolles' work. They spoke to his fellow journalists, his editors and members of his family. Charles Kelly, a 30-year-old reporter for the *Republic* in 1976, gives his impression of the man who began it all. His testimony to the nature of Bolles, and the broader implication of what happened, sets the scene for the students' investigations.

Tatiana Hensley wrote a profile of Bolles, both as a man and a journalist. She reaches into his childhood to paint a picture of a man driven by the need for truth and a boy who is following in his father's footsteps. While by no means creating a perfect man, the profile shows why Bolles was so admired in life as a good reporter and in death as a symbol for the free press.

Megan Irwin, another one of the student reporters, explored the flip side of the case. Irwin looks at the events from the perspective of Max Dunlap, a land developer and father of seven. She explores the impact the events have had on him and his family and the efforts by an Arizona tax attorney to have Dunlap freed. She draws the reader in by telling a story of a frail man sitting in prison for a crime he claims he



never committed. While three men initially were charged with Bolles' death, Dunlap is now the only man serving time.

The impact of Bolles' death reaches further than the lives of those directly involved. It became a rallying point and created a common cause for colleagues in a frequently splintered and competitive profession.

In "A Full Press," Lauren Vasquez chronicles how a call sent out by the budding Investigative Reporters and Editors was answered by investigative reporters from around the country. Descending on Phoenix, the reporters picked up where Bolles left off, probing the glutinous underbelly of Arizona.

While the value of their final work is still debated, the Arizona Project came to represent an important stand for freedom of the press.

In an editorial run as part of the commemorative series, the author calls for journalists to again stand up for the right to information. At a time when the free press is under attack from many fronts, the author argues that we have the right to know what is happening in our communities and the responsibility to "scream bloody murder when crookedness or ineptitude sully the public's business."

Don Bolles was a dedicated investigative journalist, but his lasting legacy is not his work. His legacy for journalists is the principle he lived for and ultimately died for: the quest for the truth.

Debrin Foxcroft is a graduate student at the Missouri School of Journalism, where she has worked in the IRE Resource Center. She is now an information specialist for the University of Missouri's International Center.



The "Desert Rats" at work. In 1976, 38 journalists from 28 newspapers and television stations across the country combined efforts to complete the work of Don Bolles exposing Arizona's tangled underworld. The project was led by Robert W. Greene, an investigative editor at the time for *Newsday*.

Raul Rubiera | The Miami Herald



Corruption and mismanagement in the Miami-Dade Housing Agency squandered millions of dollars intended to provide safe, affordable housing for families living in the most distressed neighborhoods.

HOUSING SCAM

Developers pocket millions targeted to house county's poorest citizens

BY DEBBIE CENZIPER
THE MIAMI HERALD

In a city where dead voters swayed a mayor's race, a superintendent stole public money to spruce up his vacation home with gold plumbing, and dirty cops murdered drug dealers so they could hock the drugs themselves, it was easy to assume that no newspaper story about greed and corruption could rattle readers — much less outrage them.

But our "House of Lies" investigation jolted Miami like no story has in years.

The four-part series published in July exposed how the Miami-Dade Housing Agency paid millions of dollars to affordable-housing developers who pocketed the cash but never produced a single house, stranding the poor in one of the nation's most distressed communities.

The stories immediately prompted citywide protests and local, state and federal investigations, including a probe by the inspector general of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (HUD money was not used in these local programs.)

Halfway through publication, the county manager ousted seven people — practically every top manager of the Housing Agency.

The first of what is expected to be a series of arrests came in late August, when the state attorney charged developer Oscar Rivero with two first-degree felonies for allegedly using more than \$700,000 in affordable-housing money to pay for a new house — his own.

On the hook

The newspaper's investigation began in January with a traditional mandate — follow the money. Former *Miami Herald* publisher Jesus Diaz wanted a local investigation that tracked government spending, which at first didn't sound too appealing to project reporters hoping to break new ground on national issues.

But the newspaper, despite a rich history of local reporting, had not taken a hard look at Miami-Dade government in some time. Seizing on the issue of

Chuck Fadely | The Miami Herald



This housing project sits abandoned and covered in trash after it was closed with promises of new housing for its thousands of residents.

affordable housing made sense because the signs of the government's failures were everywhere: dead construction projects, barren lots and tens of thousands of families languishing in decrepit and unsafe homes.

The Housing Agency's records were incomplete and skewed by errors, which made getting started a challenge. The agency, one of the largest in the nation, receives tens of millions of dollars every year from local taxes but had never created a reliable database to track its money and projects.

The newspaper filed more than two dozen public record requests. It took three months to review hundreds of paper files and build a database of affordable housing projects between 2003 and 2005. The result was an accurate accounting of the Housing Agency's spending patterns.

It didn't look good.

The Housing Agency had pledged more than \$87 million to build 72 developments for the poor. The expected payoff: more than 8,300 new homes.

Web resources

Tipsheet No. 1444 by Brian J. Rogal, available from the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter), offers a number of valuable insights into investigating public housing, including this list of helpful Web sites:

- **www.hud.gov:** The Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) wide array of planning documents, government notices, rules, etc. Especially helpful are the annual and five-year plans each public housing authority is required to submit and detailed HUD assessments of each one's performance (Public Housing Assessment System).
- **www.huduser.org:** Provides direct access to HUD research throughout their Web site. Research runs the gamut from public housing demographics and housing discrimination to market conditions and policy developments. Especially important are the inspector general's audits of various housing authorities, programs and initiatives.
- **www.nationalhomeless.org:** The National Coalition for the Homeless, an advocacy group working with local affiliates, has fought to preserve public housing. Extensive information and links.
- **www.fairhousing.com:** The National Fair Housing Advocate Online is a clearinghouse for information focusing on fair housing and discrimination issues. Lots of HUD documents and policies.
- **www.nhi.org:** The National Housing Institute is an independent, nonprofit research organization dedicated to affordable housing. In addition to academic reports, the institute publishes Shelterforce magazine online.
- **www.nlihc.org:** The National Low-Income Housing Coalition has information on statewide coalitions and detailed housing statistics for all states, metro areas and counties in "Out of Reach," an annual NLIHC report.
- **www.urban.org:** The Urban Institute is a Washington, D.C., research group that covers a number of issues concerning low-income Americans. On housing, they're best on the displacement of public housing residents into private housing and how welfare reform affects federal housing assistance.

Raul Rubiera | The Miami Herald



Empty lots around Miami represent the empty promises of developers who received millions in public housing funds without proper documentation to secure the funds and without showing proof of building progress.

But approximately 40 percent of the projects funded between 2003 and 2005 had been canceled. Others were delayed for months, even years. Only 14 projects — less than one-fifth of what was promised — had actually been completed.

Overall, the Housing Agency paid more than \$12 million to developers who never built the houses they promised and did not return the money. In some cases, the agency allowed developers to take the cash without signing loan documents or pledging land as collateral, leaving taxpayers no easy way to recoup the money.

In one of the most outrageous examples of government waste, the agency diverted \$5 million — money earmarked by state law to build homes for the poor — to pay for a new office building with a \$287,000 bronze sculpture of stacked teacups called "Space Station," which was shipped from Italy.

One of the more difficult parts of the reporting process was peeling back the layers of a fledgling nonprofit agency that had received more than \$16 million in Housing Agency money. The nonprofit struck deals that benefited well-connected developers, former Housing Agency employees, a board member's business partner and a county commissioner's troubled social service agency.

But of its 17 affordable-housing projects, the nonprofit had produced just one, a 100-unit apartment complex for the elderly that was months delayed and riddled with building breakdowns.

Through a series of record requests, the newspaper explored the deals by studying minutes from board meetings, project files and accounting reports, which we took to two forensic accountants for review.

Besides a deep dive through paper files, the newspaper spent months running a series of lengthy database searches.

Using pay backgrounding service Accurint, LexisNexis and various property record databases, the newspaper turned up a startling discovery: Even when affordable homes were built, some developers bypassed the poor and sold to real estate investors who turned quick profits.

Developing a short list of problem developers required hundreds of queries in a Florida Department of State Division of Corporations database. Developers often create limited-liability companies for each project to shield other investments from financial losses. Determining who

Patrick Farrell | The Miami Herald



Officials shared results of an investigation sparked by "House of Lies." The probe found evidence that public housing developer Oscar Rivero diverted taxpayer funds to pay for his own luxury home.

was responsible for failed projects became a difficult but important step.

The newspaper also built its own database of business, professional and personal affiliations for more than 300 politicians, developers, consultants, lobbyists and local leaders to establish a nexus of connections and self-dealing. It became one of the most tedious parts of the reporting process – eye-glazing computer searches that often yielded nothing for days. Then suddenly, pay dirt.

Take the case of Rivero, the developer recently charged with two felonies. In 2004, one of Rivero’s proposed affordable housing projects received \$750,000 from a nonprofit group run by his longtime business partner. A year later, Rivero, as head of the Miami Parking Authority, awarded his business partner a lucrative development deal.

To date, Rivero has never built a single house for the poor.

The Miami Herald highlighted Rivero’s dealings in the lede to the main story, which reported that the Housing Agency had become an unchecked cash machine for developers and consultants.

Story hits home

The stories described the exploitation not only of taxpayers, but worse – the poor. They resonated across class lines and touched on nearly

every segment of the community. The response from readers was overwhelming and even a bit surprising.

Hundreds of callers flooded the state attorney, county offices and the newspaper, demanding justice. Readers marched on the steps of County Hall and in Miami’s poorest neighborhoods. Hundreds of people packed community meetings, renting vans and buses to ensure that families without transportation had rides.

The response reinforced once again why local watchdog reporting is such a fundamental responsibility for investigative reporters. “House of Lies” made clear that the ageless combination of government abuse, wasted tax dollars, corruption – and its impact on our most vulnerable families – continues to hit home with newspaper readers.

“I cried tears of frustration and powerlessness,” one reader wrote.

Another message said: “You have the rats running for their holes to hide in. Keep the pressure up.”

Chuck Fadely | The Miami Herald



Oscar Rivero turned himself in to the Miami-Dade Police Department’s Public Corruption Investigations Bureau after revelations of his insider deals and acceptance of nearly \$700,000 in public funds for affordable housing he never built.

Debbie Cenziper is an investigative reporter at The Miami Herald and the lead writer on the “House of Lies” series. Other reporters included Tim Henderson, Susannah Nesmith, Larry Lebowitz and Monika Leal. The series was edited by investigations editor Michael Sallah.

2006 AWARDS — for Excellence in — HEALTH CARE JOURNALISM

The Awards for Excellence in Health Care Journalism recognize the best health reporting in print, broadcast and online media. In its third year, the AHCJ contest boasts nine categories. Entries can include a wide range of coverage, including public health, consumer health, medical research, the business of health care and health ethics.

First-place winners earn \$500, complimentary lodging and registration for Health Journalism 2007 – AHCJ’s national conference – scheduled for March 15-18 in Los Angeles.

For more information on entry guidelines, please go to AHCJ’s Web site, www.healthjournalism.org. You also may contact contest co-chairs Charles Ornstein at charles.ornstein@latimes.com or 213-237-7969, or Julie Appleby at jappleby@usatoday.com or 703-854-5647.



Association of Health Care Journalists
and the Center for Excellence in Health Care Journalism
www.healthjournalism.org

CALL FOR ENTRIES!
Entry Forms available at www.healthjournalism.org

Take advantage of the early-bird deadline and save money!

Early-bird rate
(postmarked by Dec. 8, 2006)
• \$30 members
• \$50 nonmembers

Regular rate
(postmarked by Jan. 10, 2007)
• \$40 members
• \$60 nonmembers

Entry Categories

- Large Newspapers (over 250,000 circulation) and wire services
- Medium Newspapers (90,000 to 250,000 circulation)
- Small Newspapers (under 90,000 circulation)
- General Interest Magazines above 1 million circulation
- General Interest Magazines below 1 million circulation
- Trade Publications / Online Journals / Newsletters
- TV (Top 20 markets, network, syndicated)
- TV (Below Top 20 markets)
- Radio

The Awards for Excellence in Health Care Journalism were created by journalists for journalists and are not influenced or funded by commercial or special-interest groups.



Christian Sermeno (from left), age 13, his father, Miguel Sermeno and Miguel Sermeno Jr., age 11. The elder Sermeno resembled the driver of the car in a hit-and-run accident, who fled the scene on foot. Sermeno says he can never get back the 11 months he served in prison, away from his sons.

LEGAL MISSTEPS

Flawed judicial system results in high conviction rate, errors

BY JULIE PATEL
SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

It started out as a story about prosecutorial misconduct in Santa Clara County’s criminal justice system, and it evolved into an investigation finding a system flawed by prosecutorial bias and miscarriages of justice.

The five-day series was three years in the making and found that a third of the 727 cases analyzed were marred by some form of questionable conduct on the part of prosecutors, defense attorneys or judges. We found nearly 100 instances of questionable behavior within our study period, and dozens in additional cases, involving more than two-dozen prosecutors.

We also revealed that the California’s 6th District Court of Appeal routinely found prosecutorial and judicial error to be harmless to criminal defendants.

A systemic approach

In 2002, Noam Levey, a former courts reporter, began documenting problems with prosecutors. When Levey and Rick Tulsy, a veteran reporter with extensive criminal justice investigative experience, researched the issue, they repeatedly were told that the problem wasn’t just with the prosecutors. Defense attorneys, trial judges and the appellate court also often failed to serve as checks on the system, leading to high conviction rates and few cases overturned on appeal,

they were told by sources. In other words, there were problems system-wide.

“It was... the untold story of why Santa Clara County boasted of being a safe community,” Tulsy said.

But if they were to report stories anecdotally, problems could be dismissed as aberrations. Borrowing from his experience on past projects, Tulsy proposed a systemic approach: examining every Santa Clara County criminal jury trial decided on appeal over a five-year period.

In order to keep the project manageable, Tulsy and Levey limited their focus to jury trials since they are often hotly contested and often use the most resources.

With the help of the 6th District Appellate Project – a court-funded organization that served to oversee and coordinate the appeals for indigents – Tulsy and Levey set up shop in the project’s office. They began reading through briefs and opinions, searching for errors and summarizing each case in Microsoft Access database. The database included fields with basic information, such as the critical date of the crime, the charges, the name of the justices, and information about whether a case seemed significant and why.

As they reported initial findings to then-projects

editor George Judson, they began considering how the paper would deal with cases in which errors were explained away by the appellate court, or the courts said the errors didn’t influence the outcomes of cases. And what about the cases in which the appellate court did not find errors?

They decided to attack the problem in three ways: they would not attempt to find an error if the courts found no legal error and instead would call it “questionable conduct”; they’d be extremely careful when including cases in which the court did not find error; and they would have outside experts review such issues to confirm the paper’s sense that questionable conduct occurred.

In the end, the project examined 727 appeals of criminal jury trials in a five-year period and found that about one in three suggested major problems. Specifically, we found:

- In nearly 100 cases, the prosecution may have engaged in questionable conduct that bolstered its effort to win convictions. Some Santa Clara County prosecutors may have withheld evidence that could have helped defendants, while others defied the judge’s orders and some misled juries during closing arguments.
- In 100 cases, defense attorneys acted in ways that may have harmed their clients. In nearly 50 cases, the attorneys failed to take the most basic of measures, from properly investigating their case to presenting the evidence they gathered.
- In more than 150 cases, judges may have made missteps or made questionable rulings that favored the prosecution. Trial judges may have violated legal precedents by allowing evidence that unfairly tainted defendants and prohibited evidence that might have supported their defense.
- The 6th District Court of Appeal, the primary court of review for Santa Clara County cases, upheld verdicts in more than 100 cases even as it acknowledged errors had occurred. The appellate court concluded those errors made no difference in the outcome of the case. Sometimes those conclusions were appropriate, but a review of the appellate record and consultations with experts call into question the outcomes in more than 50 cases in which the court misstated facts, twisted logic and utilized dubious rationales to dismiss the error.

Correcting mistakes

Levey and Tulsy also reported on the people who had actually been affected. One such case was that of Miguel Sermeno, who in the summer of 1995 was standing in a crowd gathered at the scene of a hit-and-run accident. Three bystanders said Sermeno resembled the driver who had fled.

Sermeno was arrested; the police were so sure they had the right man that they did not fingerprint the car. Later, prosecutor Terence Tighe persisted in trying Sermeno, even though he was not the registered owner of the car and had no known connection to the other passengers. Tighe also withheld information that could have helped the defense find the car’s owner. The

trial judge found that Tighe had withheld information about the driver, like his nickname and the fact that he had a past arrest. The judge also found the defense had some responsibility to get that documentation independently. The trial judge refused to accept as evidence a photograph of the registered owner of the car, who strikingly resembled Sermeno.

But the only error the appellate court believed might have influenced Sermeno's case was the defense attorney's decision not to present testimony from the children who also were in the car and who said Sermeno was not the driver. The appellate opinion ordered a new hearing to determine whether the attorney's decision would have impacted the case's outcome. He was convicted and had already served his one-year jail term by the time the district attorney dropped the charges.

The system belatedly corrected some of its mistakes in the Sermeno case, as it did the case of Rick Walker. Walker's case was marred by questionable conduct by the prosecutor and defense attorney and – as we were researching the case – he was released from custody. The district attorney's office conceded Walker, who had already spent 11 years in prison, had been wrongly convicted of murder.

We also contacted prosecutors to discuss patterns of questionable conduct and were told all questions should go through Assistant District Attorney Karyn Sinunu. But as Tulsy and Levey prepared a list of

Anne-Marie McReynolds | Mercury News



Quedellis Ricardo Walker was freed from state prison after serving nearly 12 years for a murder he didn't commit. A review of the conviction shows that investigators did not check key evidence and the prosecutor who tried the case misled jurors and struck secret deals with key witnesses.



Apply for a Nieman Fellowship In Journalism at Harvard

Nieman Fellowships provide U.S. and international journalists with an opportunity to study for an academic year at Harvard. Nieman Fellows can reflect on their lives in journalism, renew their intellectual curiosity and enrich their understanding of the topics they cover.

Journalists with at least five years of full-time, professional experience in the news media are invited to apply for a 2007-2008 Nieman Fellowship. For more information and application forms, go to the Nieman Foundation Web site at <http://www.nieman.harvard.edu>

Applications for international fellowships must be postmarked by Dec. 15, 2006. Applications for U.S. and global health fellowships must be postmarked by Jan. 31, 2007.



A Nieman Fellowship means sublime moments of Mozart and discussions on religion and politics at the Kennedy School of Government. It means sharing opinions with journalists from around the world and learning more than you thought possible.

For a journalist, a Nieman year at Harvard is a chance to reflect and return to work with renewed energy and passion. It's more than I ever expected.

Mary C. Curtis, Class of 2006
The Charlotte Observer
Executive features editor and columnist

Anne-Marie McReynolds | Mercury News



Miguel Sermeno, shown here at his landscaping job, served 11 months for a hit-and-run accident he did not commit. An investigation found defense attorneys, trial judges and the appellate court failed to serve as checks on the justice system, leading to high conviction rates.

cases they wanted to discuss with Sinunu, Levey accepted a job at *The Los Angeles Times*.

Still, about once a week for months, Tulsy and prosecutors continued to discuss each case until they agreed on the facts, and the office explained the questionable conduct from its point of view.

The district attorney's office conceded that mistakes happen in the process of handling thousand of cases. But it stood by its position that it cared deeply about fairness and ethical conduct and that the project's findings amounted to nothing more than honest mistakes or, at worst, a few bad apples in a large office.

As Tulsy began writing, he responded to this feedback by outlining three wrongful conviction cases in which prosecutors engaged in questionable conduct. He further examined other cases handled by these prosecutors, established a pattern of problems with them, and showed that the office failed to address concerns raised in other cases, which could have prevented or minimized the injustices.

In the meantime, database expert Griff Palmer (now with *The New York Times*) combined data and cleaned it up as he found repeats or cases that didn't fall within the five-year period. Palmer and Tulsy also attempted to refine fields that needed more elaboration. For instance, when a prosecutor introduced improper evidence, what kind of evidence was it and had the

judge specifically prohibited it?

Palmer also used data from the 6th District to establish voting patterns of individual justices, including how often each appellate judge voted to reverse and how often each dissented.

Two years into the project, Tulsy finished writing a draft of one of the five main stories, but a departure slowed the process; projects editor George Judson left the paper to join the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Metro editor Bert Robinson took over, spending weeks poring over the data and summaries Tulsy had written. As Robinson began outlining his vision for the project, courts reporter Mike Zapler joined the effort. He took on the task of writing significant stories to supplement the main articles.

Meanwhile, Tulsy spent weeks with Zapler and me, scrutinizing each case to ensure the error was valid, and it was categorized appropriately. Graphic artist Doug Griswold created an illustration to show how the system is supposed to work and the individual cases. Anne-Marie Reynolds and Suzanna Frohman also helped illustrate the series with their photographs.

Problems exposed

The response to the series has been astonishing. Hundreds of readers have contacted the paper, via e-mail, postal mail and a special phone line the paper

created for the project. More than 150,000 people have viewed parts of the project online, including elaborate multi-media presentations that feature video interviews with four men who were wrongly convicted.

The district attorney's office has tightened internal policies to prevent prosecutors from wrongly withholding evidence, and some defense lawyers have said they can tell the difference. Both the prosecutors' office and public defenders have focused on internal training they can do to address problems exposed in the series.

A federal judge overturned one conviction based on new evidence raised by our investigation. An appellate panel overturned a second case featured in the paper, citing evidence that raised doubts about his guilt. The panel also issued a rare published opinion, reversing a conviction on the grounds of "deceptive and reprehensible conduct" by Deputy District Attorney Benjamin Field, the second such decision in 15 years. Field was a prosecutor upon whom the newspaper focused attention.

The series also has become a major issue in the election of the next district attorney, a race that just was starting as the series was published.

Julie Patel covers regional cities for the San Jose Mercury News.



AWARDS 2006

**CALL
FOR
ENTRIES**

The annual contest of Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc.

DEADLINE: Postmark by Jan. 8, 2007

Categories

Newspaper:

For outstanding investigative reporting at a daily or weekly newspaper.
Categories are: Circulation less than 100,000; Circulation between 100,000 and 250,000;
Circulation between 250,000 and 500,000; Circulation more than 500,000;
and Local-Circulation Weekly.
(Use highest one-day circulation of the week.)

Television:

For outstanding investigative reporting by a television outlet. Categories are: Network or syndicated program; Top 20 market; and Below Top 20 market.

Other Media:

For outstanding investigative reporting in other media such as Magazine, Newsletter, Specialty Publication, Book and Radio.

Online:

For outstanding investigative reporting.

Special Categories:

Tom Renner Award: Outstanding reporting in any medium covering and exposing organized crime. (Limited to 10 stories) You must submit TWO sets of copies if submitting an entry in the Tom Renner category and in another category.

IRE FOI Award: Honors individual or organization in any medium whose significant actions further open records or open government. You must submit TWO sets of copies if submitting an entry in the FOI category and in another category.

Student Award: Outstanding investigative reporting by a student in a college-affiliated newspaper, magazine or specialty publication (or while serving a print internship), or broadcast work that has been publicly reviewed, screened or aired.

International Entries: International entries will be placed into appropriate categories by IRE staff. Contest judges can then move entries into other categories. IRE can award a special citation for deserving international work. Entries published in a language other than English must include an English translation.

NOTE: Judges reserve the right to give more than one award in a category or to declare no winner in a category

The contest recognizes the best investigative reporting in print, broadcast and online media, and helps identify techniques and resources used by entrants.

For entry forms and additional information, visit our Web site at www.ire.org/contest



KILLER CURE

Unusual statistic leads to series on methadone overdose deaths

BY SCOTT FINN AND TARA TUCKWILLER
THE CHARLESTON (W.VA.) GAZETTE

Our investigation of methadone overdose deaths nationwide was prompted by an obscure entry in a West Virginia vital statistics report.

It ended six months later with several findings that surprised us:

- The number of Americans who died from methadone overdoses tripled over four years, to almost 3,000 in 2003, according to death certificates. The drug helped kill more people than any other narcotic except cocaine.
- The information on methadone’s label is dangerously misleading, according to several pain experts. Many patients would die if they took the “usual adult dosage” listed on the drug’s package insert. The drug manufacturer and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the package insert.
- The federal government hired a methadone-industry insider to write a 2003 report about how to respond to methadone overdose deaths, but Bush administration officials have failed to implement his modest recommendations.

Our investigation started about a year ago during a quiet Sunday evening shift at the newspa-

per. Finn was looking through West Virginia’s latest vital statistics report, paying special attention to the section that describes how people died. (*The IRE Journal* is one of the few places where he can say this without feeling like a ghoulish nerd.)

The number of “accidental poisoning” deaths seemed pretty high for such a small state. A report from five years ago showed that almost no deaths were blamed on poisoning.

The first thought was that toddlers might be ingesting cleaning supplies, or maybe people were overdosing on OxyContin, a painkiller that became known as “hillbilly heroin.” But the state medical examiner said the main culprit was a drug called methadone, which was blamed for more than 100 overdose deaths in West Virginia in 2005, more than any single prescription drug.

Officially, the cause of death in each of these cases is poisoning, not any specific drug. Medical examiners say methadone contributes to the poisoning death. Merely having the drug in one’s system is not enough – the medical examiner must determine that the drug was at least partially responsible for the death.

Problem prescriptions

First, we decided to examine whether the rise in methadone-related deaths was connected to the expansion of methadone drug-treatment clinics. But we discovered another cause – methadone being prescribed to treat pain – after interviewing medical examiners, epidemiologists and other experts across the nation.

A Utah study finally convinced us that the drug-treatment clinics were not the main culprit. The state medical examiner’s office cross-referenced the list of methadone overdose victims with its statewide prescription-drug database and with a list of patients in state methadone clinics.

Of the 114 Utah residents who died of methadone overdoses in 2004, at least 48 had a valid prescription to use the drug to treat pain. The rest either obtained the methadone from family or an acquaintance or no source could be determined. Similar studies in North Carolina and Clark County, Nevada, supported the Utah study findings.

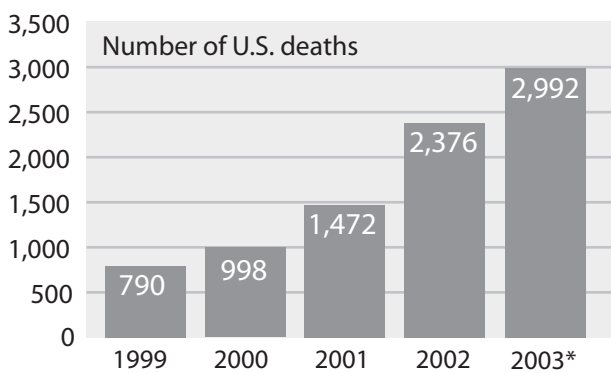
For a long time, we knew of no national data about methadone overdose deaths. Then a tip from a North Carolina epidemiologist led us to the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC). It collects and analyzes data from death certificates across the nation.

At our request, the center ran an analysis of methadone-related deaths, starting in 1999, when they first developed data that separated methadone from other drugs. They also looked at the number of deaths in each state per capita and shared the data with us.

We discovered that the number of deaths nationwide tripled in a few years. And our hunch was right – West Virginia had the worst death rate from methadone overdoses.

Methadone overdose deaths on the rise in U.S., West Virginia

Medical examiners are blaming more deaths than ever on the prescription drug methadone. These numbers reflect only deaths when methadone is listed on the death certificate after an autopsy.



*Most recent year available

SOURCE: National Vital Statistics System, National Center for Health Statistics



*Estimate, based on data for the first 10 months of 2005

SOURCE: West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

BRENDA PINNELL graphics / Sunday Gazette-Mail

Although experts told us that many of those killed were drug abusers who obtained methadone illegally, a significant minority of people took methadone legitimately for pain and died anyway. About 20 percent of methadone overdose victims in West Virginia had no other drug in their systems at the time of their deaths, according to our own analysis of toxicology data from the state medical examiner. Others had only methadone and usually harmless amounts of drugs such as acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol.

Pain experts told us there was a problem with how methadone was being prescribed. Doctors, insurance companies and government agencies were turning to methadone because it was cheap and effective. Too many were not aware of methadone's unique dangers.

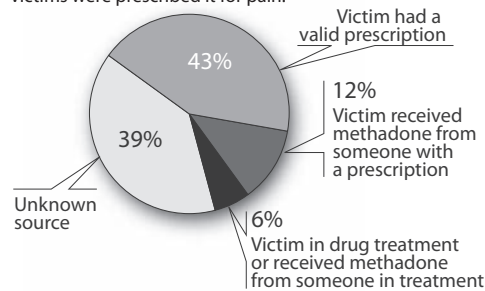
Methadone takes a long time to build up in the body, and a long time to be flushed from one's system. Because of that delay, it's easy for a patient to take a lethal dose before they realize they've taken too much. An overdose victim tends to fall into a deep sleep, and the drug suppresses the ability to breathe and causes suffocation and death.

We looked at methadone's package insert, which lists a "usual adult dose" of 2.5 mg to 10 mg every three to four hours for pain. That sounded high, based on what we knew about the drug, and several pain experts we contacted agreed.

This dosage might be fine for patients already used to strong painkillers. But it could be deadly to someone who is taking the drug for the first time. Nothing on the FDA-approved package insert warns doctors or patients about this.

Many victims had a valid prescription

A 2004 Utah study found that four in 10 methadone overdose victims were prescribed it for pain.



SOURCE: Utah Department of Health

Consumption increases

The most difficult part of this story was finding people who had lost a loved one through a methadone overdose. We found victims through the Internet, especially Web sites for grieving families and for people who think they might have a potential lawsuit. We contacted them through e-mail, developed relationships and followed up through frequent phone interviews. The families provided us with medical records and other documents to back up their claims that their loved ones had tried to take the drug correctly but died anyway.

After our series was published, the CDC came out with its own analysis that backed up our findings. It also relied upon medical examiners' data.

Two U.S. senators have called on the FDA to beef up the warnings on methadone's package insert, and FDA officials have said they are looking at the label. Officials at the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration have vowed to increase education for medical professionals on the safe use of methadone and develop nationwide standards on what qualifies as a methadone overdose death.

The series has generated a lot of controversy among both pain doctors and methadone clinics and their patients. Many "methadone advocates" worry that any bad publicity will make it harder for drug abusers to seek treatment. Pain doctors say they already are under siege by the federal Drug Enforcement Administration.

But the numbers indicate that this so-called bad publicity has not dampened the public's appetite for methadone. In fact, consumption has gone up tenfold in the last decade, according to the DEA statistics. To view

RESOURCES

If you're interested in looking at more investigations from journalists on this topic, consider these and other stories available from the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter):

• **Story No. 22482:** The story and five sidebars investigate the dangers of privately administered drug trials that are killing otherwise healthy people. Because companies stand to make billions on the next blockbuster drug, they are taking more risks with their trials and the people who sign up for them. The story offers an in-depth look at the possibly dangerous practices of the largest test center in the U.S. Bloomberg News, David Evans, Michael Smith, Liz Willen (2005)

• **Story No. 22264:** This investigation examines the deaths of several young women who were given mixtures of lidocaine and tetracaine by hair removal "spas." It found that the mixtures were made at "compounding pharmacies" that are not regulated by the federal government. The combination of prescriptions is a multibillion dollar industry, and there are no barriers to negligence. ABC News, Chris Cuomo, Geoff Martz, Alison Schwartz, Keturah Gray (2005)

• **Story No. 21638:** This extensive investigation shows that Congress and the Drug Enforcement Administration could have stopped methamphetamine growth across the West during the 1990s, and still can. The newspaper explained how the drug is able to be controlled because it relies on chemical ingredients produced by only a handful of factories worldwide. Two clampdowns on the legal trade of the chemicals caused meth shortages, prompting users to quit and meth-related property crime to fall. *The (Portland) Oregonian*, Steve Suo, Erin Barnett, Jim Barnett (2004)

• **Story No. 21602:** After decades of researching cold and diet remedies and discovering that these medicines could cause a stroke, major pharmaceutical companies continued to sell these drugs. This story describes the life of Tricia Newenham, who took this medication and is now mentally disabled after suffering from a stroke. *The Los Angeles Times*, Kevin Sack, Alicia Mundy, Deborah Nelson, Janet Lundblad (2004)

the entire series, "The Killer Cure," go to www.wvgazette.com/section/Series/The+Killer+Cure.

Scott Finn is a statehouse reporter for The Charleston Gazette. Tara Tuckwiller has been a reporter at the Gazette for nine years.

TIPS

Tipsheets offering advice for investigating medical subjects, including drugs, are available from the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resource-center). Fred Schulte provided these Web sites at the 2003 IRE Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.:

- National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators, www.naddi.org, www.drugbible.com
- American Society of Addiction Medicine, www.asam.org
- American Academy of Pain Management, www.aapainmanage.org
- National Institute on Drug Abuse, www.drugabuse.gov
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, www.samhsa.gov

The IRE and NICAR Database Library offers several datasets for investigating medical issues. To learn more about the data, visit www.ire.org/datalibrary/databases.php or call the Database Library at 573-884-7711.

- The Mortality database provides CDC death certificate data, stripped of names, that allows analysis by the deceased's age, cause of death, state of residence and more.
- The FDA Adverse Events Reporting System contains reports of deaths or complications related to drugs or biological products.



The head of North Carolina's water regulatory agency told a reporter that she might choose bottled water instead of tap water in rural areas of the state. Her department lacked the resources to investigate all of the water systems that tested positive for bacterial contamination.

LEAD THREAT

Water regulations not enforced; contaminated water found system-wide

BY PAT STITH
THE (RALEIGH, N.C.) NEWS & OBSERVER

In the spring of 2005, chloramine, the same disinfectant associated with lead-tainted drinking water in Washington, D.C., was in the news again, this time in Greenville, N.C. Could other North Carolina public water systems that use chloramine have lead problems? If so, what was being done?

We took our questions to the state's Public Water Supply Section. Officials there were unable to give us an accurate list of systems that use chloramine-treated water, but they said there were at least 20.

The agency's electronic records were all but indecipherable. Because there was almost no documentation to go with the 81 tables nor written descriptions for more than a thousand fields, David Raynor, our database editor, was forced to chase down the field descriptions one by one.

The federal safe drinking water rules, enforced by the state's Public Water Supply Section, were another problem. They are so complex that the state employs "rule managers" to master their nuances.

I had to learn as much as I could, at least for the most important contaminants.

In other words, a straightforward water story was turning into a swamp.

Questionable quality

Eventually Raynor was able to identify more than 100 chloramine systems in North Carolina. Eventually we would learn that none were reporting the kinds of problems that caused Greenville to warn residents to stop drinking the water.

Along the way, my colleagues and I realized that we were chasing the wrong story. That became clear when I had a "get acquainted" interview – one with easy, open-ended questions – with the chief of the Public Water Supply Section, an obscure 98-person agency headquartered in Raleigh. She expressed confidence in the large water systems, like Raleigh, but said she might not drink from a water fountain at a gas station in a rural area.

"I don't know if they're doing their testing or

not," she said. "I might get the bottled water."

Think about that: the official in charge regulating the water is afraid to drink it?

There are an inordinate number of public water systems in North Carolina (almost 7,000), and more than half of them are small systems like those in a service station or a convenience store, that serve people who are just passing through.

She told me she had asked for more help – several times – to regulate those small systems. I knew that budget requests had to be in writing, so I requested the records and found that she had told superiors that bacterial contamination was found in hundreds of systems in the past year and that most were not investigated. The state denied her request for a 25-percent increase in her staff.

Any final doubts about changing our project's direction disappeared when I saw the spare office where water records were stored. Stacks of correspondence were jammed on shelves, stuffed in torn cardboard boxes or piled in heaps on the floor. Could an agency keep records like that and still do a good job? We tried to answer that question.

Systems violate laws

The agency's reports to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the governor showed that thousands of systems weren't obeying laws that require them to test the water and clean up contamination. State regulators rarely levied fines and, when they did, they usually didn't collect. Our database editor Raynor found that hundreds of systems did not have a certified operator.

Science reporter Catherine Clabby put a human face on the problem when she visited a mobile home park that had water contaminated with arsenic. One woman told Clabby that she wouldn't even let her dog drink the water. State correspondence showed that regulators repeatedly had ordered the owner to develop a clean-up plan. The state threatened him with fines but never followed through.

We talked to more than 100 people, and some told us about problems with private wells that put more than two million North Carolinians at risk. Our report found that the state enacted construction standards for wells in the 1970s but did not enforce them and neither did two-thirds of the state's 100 counties.

Further, there was no state law in North Carolina requiring tests of private well water, and few counties required such tests.

State records showed that there are about 25,000 known sources of man-made pollutants that can contaminate ground water. State geologists told us where naturally occurring arsenic is most likely to poison wells, and we mapped those locations online. We told readers that our home county, Wake, is North Carolina's ground zero for radiological contaminants that pollute well water.

Since we knew that the state wasn't checking up on lead tests submitted by public water systems,

we did a little checking of our own. EPA rules say systems should test houses where they are most likely to find lead-tainted water: houses built after 1982 and before states banned the use of solder with high lead content to join copper water pipes. North Carolina's Public Water Supply Section said that meant houses built from 1983 to 1986.

Raynor used the state database to identify the addresses of houses used in lead tests. We picked 12 systems, and news researcher Brooke Cain went to each county's online property tax databases to look up the year the test houses were built.

Cain discovered that all 12 systems, including Raleigh's, had tested houses that were not built during that four-year period. North Carolina cities were not testing where they were most likely to find lead. In some cases, this appeared to be the state's fault due to confusing instructions to the systems.

Some systems also dropped houses from the test list after the house tested positive for lead — another violation.

Lead in drinking water is dangerous, and Clabby drove that point home with comments from a Greenville mother whose baby got lead poisoning from drinking city water. Clabby used interviews and government records to show that communication failures between water-quality regulators and health officials had delayed discovery of the lead's source by five months. The state now requires them to share information. One such exchange recently helped expose lead-contaminated drinking water in Durham, a city we cover closely.

System clean up

This project, which involved more than a dozen members of our staff, required an editor who could herd cats, like Deputy Managing Editor Steve Riley. He ran the weekly meetings, bought us more time when we needed it and then enforced deadlines. He required us to turn over most of the numbers to Judson Drennan, a graphic journalist. He asked Cain to pull together a daily directory telling readers what to do and whom to call if they were concerned about their own water. He had me make lists of things the government already had done to try to fix problems we had discovered, which we ran with each mainbar.

The government's reaction to our inquiry was novel. PIO officers taped my interviews, transcribed some themselves and then hired a transcription service when they got behind. Government e-mails about our inquiry, which we acquired, showed why. The governor's office and officials down the line used the interviews to identify problems so they could fix as much as they could before we published our three-part series, "N.C. Water: Safe to Drink?"

As a result of our stories, a number of changes have been made:

- The state sent letters to the approximately 2,650 systems that must periodically test for lead and

Robert Willett | The News & Observer



Water from the Little River flows over rock formations that may contaminate the water with radioactive elements in eastern Wake County.

inquired about their procedures. Systems that have not tested properly will be required to retest, officials say. That number is likely to run into the hundreds.

- Systems with no operators are being cited.
- The Public Water Supply Section is getting the 25 percent increase, a total of 24 new employees, it asked for years ago.
- The governor pushed for and won a law requiring statewide enforcement of construction standards for wells and testing of new wells. The General Assembly also agreed to require state notification of people whose wells at home or at work are within 1,500 feet of a known source of ground-

water contamination.

And, oh yes, the record room has been cleaned up.

Pat Stith has been an investigative reporter for more than 30 years. He was on the board of directors of IRE and has won a Pulitzer Prize. Catherine Clabby is a science reporter. She also has covered medicine, mental health care and higher education. David Raynor, database editor in the News Research Department, works with reporters across the newsroom on daily stories and investigative projects. See the project online at: www.newsobserver.com/news/health_water.

Robert Willett | The News & Observer



An investigation found that at least 12 of North Carolina's public water systems, including the one in Raleigh, didn't test for lead contamination in the houses identified as at-risk due to potentially high lead levels in their plumbing.

DEATH PENALTY

Small weekly newspaper's investigation unearths consumer complaints on funerals

BY RICK ANDERSON
SEATTLE WEEKLY

With looks of wonder, the Otis family and the McNeal family met for the first time across their sons' grave. That's correct: Two sons, one grave.

Both were teenagers, both were victims of crime, and both, the stunned families had just learned, were buried in the same grave. The McNeal's son, Terrell, 19, of Tacoma, Wash., had been shot while visiting Los Angeles on Dec. 31, 2003. The Otises' son, Johnathan, 17, of suburban Seattle, was slain Jan. 3, 2004, in a local parking lot. Like their families, they had never met in life. But they were unexpectedly united in death when the cemetery quietly buried one atop the other four days apart.

The families might never have known, save for a startling coincidence: A friend of the Otises who attended young Johnathan's burial ceremony was also a friend of the McNeals and attended the burial of young Terrell. No name markers or headstones identified the grave at that point, but the friend, certain it was the same plot, alerted the families. Ultimately, the cemetery moved one body to another grave, paid a \$6,500 legal claim, and therein settled a complaint the survivors had filed with the Washington state Funeral and Cemetery Office, alleging wrongful double burial.

I, too, along with my readers, might never have known of the double burial had it not been for that complaint, and stacks of others like it, that helped make death a lively topic for *Seattle Weekly* in

May. A cover piece on funeral and burial ripoffs, "Six Feet Underhanded," and two sidebars, grew out of a public records request. My motivation was pure (if not morbid) curiosity about what types of complaints were being filed with a little-known state agency, the Funeral and Cemetery Office, which is managed in part by retired morticians. They somberly unloaded several thousand pages of files even though I'd narrowed my request by seeking copies only of the complaint and the findings in each case, not full investigations.

Seattle Weekly has a small staff and undertakes almost no computer-assisted research. I spent only a few weeks reporting and writing the stories. Yet, with the state reports and other details gleaned through interviews, court records and queries to state and national funeral associations and services, it wasn't difficult to quickly produce three pieces.

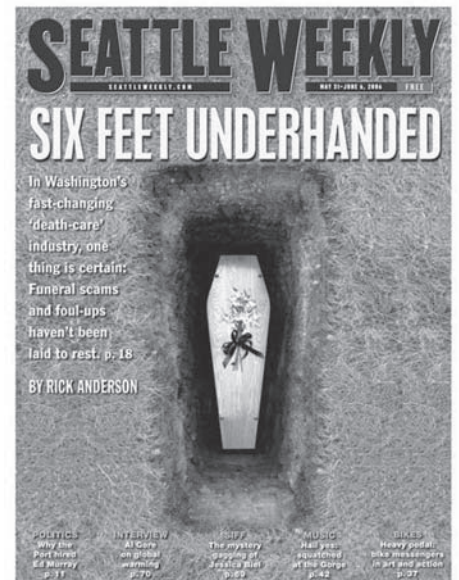
There were complaints about bodies buried in the wrong plots, cremated when they should have been buried, or occupying graves that had been resold to other bereaved families. Cheated or disappointed consumers had encountered misspelled headstones and the mishandling of their loved ones' remains, while others endured high-pressure sales pitches by the "death-care" industry's "grief counselors."

Horror stories

I had expected maybe a couple dozen complaints from my records request, but more than 60 arrived, covering a two-year period and ranging from small contract-language disputes to serious law-breaking. Washington state, which licenses 240 funeral homes, 149 cemeteries, 71 crematories, and 569 funeral directors, routinely pursues complaints as well as regulatory violations, some replete with horror stories.

An apprentice embalmer in Olympia was suspended for at least three years and fined \$500 for repeatedly taking pictures of the deceased in a funeral home, including photographs showing "significant trauma and other sensitive details" such as a disinterred baby and a large autopsied woman. The embalmer also once took home a child's casket to play with.

There was also the impatient funeral director who told a mother she'd just have to wait to view her accident-victim son because the director was



A request for records from the Washington state Funeral and Cemetery Office helped generate an investigation of the death industry.

still sewing his foot back on.

Some funeral-home operators don't like to see a family show up with its own discount-priced coffin – a relatively new trend. That happened to the survivors of Wayne "Ace" Colley, a World War II Navy tail gunner and long-time Boeing worker. When he died at 83 from bone cancer, his family turned to Costco in their time of need.

Costco, the warehouse club that specializes in appliances, electronics and bulk food also successfully markets a lower-end line of caskets such as the "In God's Care" model, an 18-gauge steel container from Universal Casket, for \$924.99, shipping and handling included. That's hundreds, even thousands of dollars less than some containers sold by funeral homes.

But once their discount coffin arrived at a Seattle mortuary, Colley family members discovered they were required to uncrate it themselves. They undertook the somber task in a room next to the crematory, where the roaring remains of others' dearly departed were being incinerated. After the uncrating, relatives had to haul away the packing materials. The family and an attorney for the casket-maker filed a state complaint, and the home has since discontinued its policy of requiring consumers to unwrap third-party caskets.

Fixing prices

The main story included a look at Service Corp. International, a multinational chain based in Texas. It is about to corner more than 15 percent of the U.S. market by buying the second-largest U.S. mortuary chain, the Alderwoods Group of Ohio. The \$856 million deal will allow SCI – headed by Robert Waltrip, longtime friend and contributor to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

TIPS

If you're interested in more tips on how smaller news organizations can do investigations, check out these tipsheets available from the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter):

- **Tipsheet No. 849:** A list of Web sites to make reporting easier and a list of small newspaper investigations. 1998 IRE New Orleans Conference, Hector San Miguel
- **Tipsheet No. 709:** Tips for reporters on how to convince editors to back investigative projects and tips for editors on how to deal with budget cuts. Also included are suggestions for cheap, computer-assisted-reporting stories. Tom Honig, Kathleen L'Ecluse, David Cuillier

“Twenty-plus years of high-intensity journalism had dulled my senses. At Stanford, my passion and creativity were reawakened, I began to ponder what’s really important and meaningful. I found answers. Along the way, I made friendships I’ll treasure and I learned from brilliant minds. My focus



in the classroom was on rights, cultural citizenship and the Chicano experience. But I learned so much more, about the world and about myself.”

—**JUAN CASTILLO**

Race and Immigration Reporter
Austin American-Statesman
Knight Fellow 2003



“The longer I am back at work, the more evident it is how valuable that year was to me. I really was able to develop a specialty on aging and retirement issues at Stanford, which I have been able to continue in my work here.”

—**MAUREEN WEST**

Phoenix Senior Editor,
Arizona Republic
Knight Fellow 1997

The application deadline for next year is **February 1, 2007**. For a brochure and application form, visit our website: <http://knight.stanford.edu>

John S. Knight Fellowships
Building 120, Room 424
Stanford, CA 94305-2050

Phone: (650) 723-4937
Fax: (650) 725-6154
e-mail: knight-info@lists.stanford.edu



The 2007 - 2008 John S. Knight Fellowships at Stanford are seeking...

- Reporters and editors and anchors
 - photographers and producers and news directors
 - editorial cartoonists and web-site gurus
- and more

We want people who have already accomplished a lot and are ambitious to do more. Candidates must have seven years’ professional experience. Fellows receive a stipend of \$55,000, plus tuition, and supplements for health insurance, books, housing and child care. All benefits and activities of the program are open to spouses and partners of Fellows.

Twelve U.S. journalists win Knight Fellowships at Stanford each year.

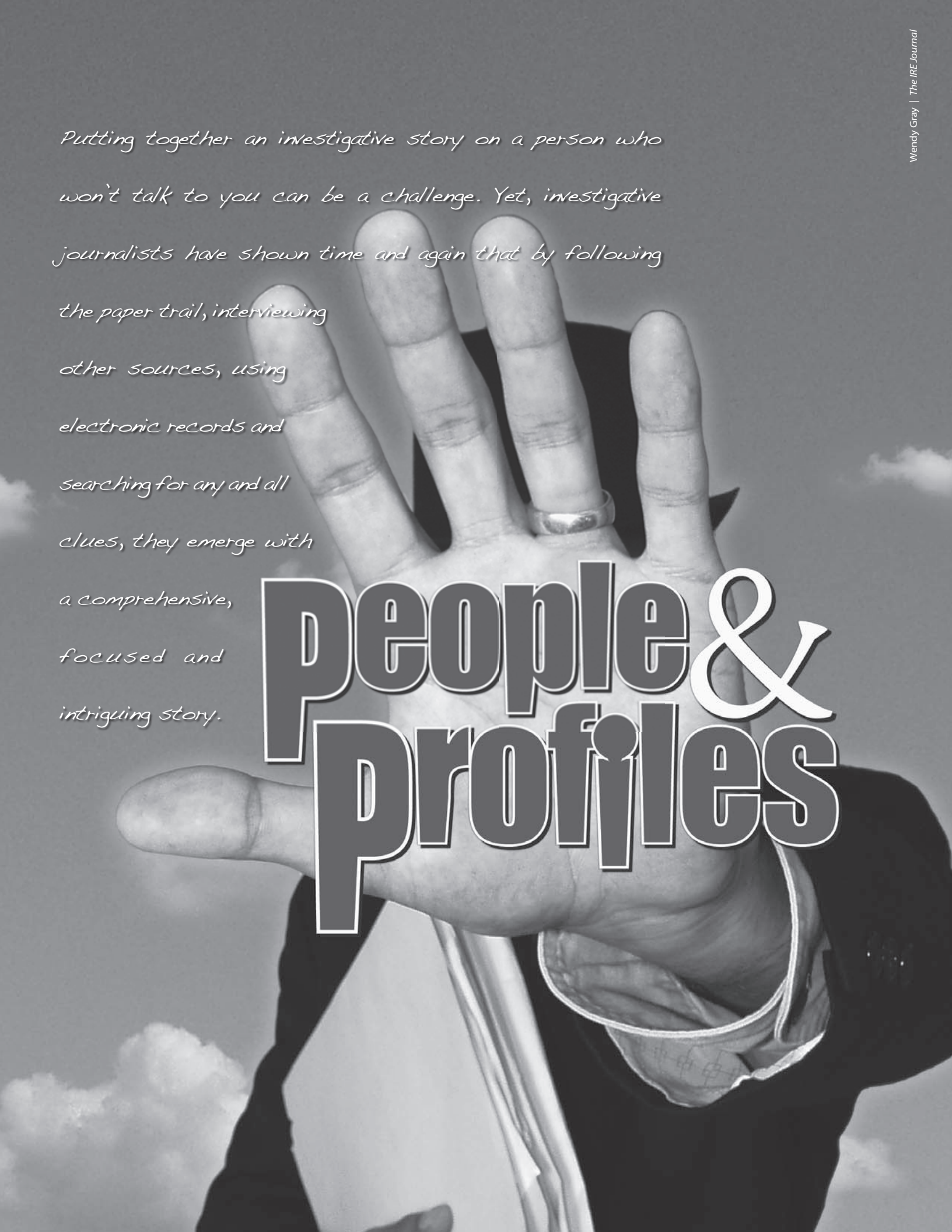
What do they get?

Nine months of study, intellectual growth, and personal change at one of the world’s great universities — in classes, in independent studies, and in special seminars with guest speakers. At the end of the year they return to their news organizations, better prepared for the rapidly changing world of journalism.



Putting together an investigative story on a person who won't talk to you can be a challenge. Yet, investigative journalists have shown time and again that by following the paper trail, interviewing other sources, using electronic records and searching for any and all clues, they emerge with a comprehensive, focused and intriguing story.

people & profiles



Fake I.D.

Nailing down details shows psychologist created false life, professional credentials

BY RUTH TEICHROEB
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

For 16 years, Terry Tafoya built his reputation as a preeminent American Indian psychologist from Seattle who captivated audiences with his storytelling.

Dressed in traditional garb and sporting waist-length black braids, Tafoya worked the lecture circuit at universities and government-sponsored conferences across the U.S. and Canada.

No one questioned his credentials – not Harvard University officials who invited him to speak last December; not the academics at the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University who appointed him to their board last year.

Then in March a man who had worked for Tafoya's consulting business sent an e-mail to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer's* I-team urging us to dig deeper.

The investigation would reveal a man who built a background of falsehoods that could lead to a criminal charge.

Academic fraud

Our tipster claimed that, during a court fight with Tafoya over unpaid wages, the counselor had admitted in a deposition that he did not have a Ph.D. from the University of Washington.

A quick Google search turned up thousands of hits for Tafoya, from media interviews to speaking engagements – all emphasizing his Ph.D. and blood ties to the Taos Pueblo tribe in New Mexico and Warm Spring tribe in Oregon.

Not only was Tafoya well-known, there was another news hook: A new state law making falsification of academic credentials a criminal misdemeanor

QUICK LOOK

Name of the series or story, and when it was published:
Masking the Truth, published June 21, 2006

How the story got started (tip, assignment, etc.):
The story began with an e-mail to our I-team tips address from someone who knew Terry Tafoya and wanted us to investigate.

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

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

Public disclosure requests were filed for the following documents used in the story: employment records at two universities, police reports, state Department of Health licenses/complaints

Other documents used: municipal court records, superior court records, federal bankruptcy records, property records, university student/faculty directories, university commencement records, high school yearbooks, published articles by Tafoya, newspaper articles about Tafoya, etc.

Major type of human sources used:

Here are some of those I interviewed: tipster who had worked for him, several old friends, relatives, former high school classmates, former bosses, academic officials at two universities, former professors, former coworkers, Taos Pueblo officials, Warm Springs tribal members, officials from groups that have booked Tafoya, state officials in Washington and New Mexico

Jake Schoellkopf



Terry Tafoya wore traditional American Indian clothing for his public appearances, but enrollment records did not support his claim of Taos Pueblo membership. A woman from the Warm Springs tribe said that her grandmother had adopted Tafoya "in the Indian way," leaving his tribal ties uncertain.

was about to take effect. Nine other states already had enacted similar laws following a spate of high-profile degree-fraud cases in recent years.

I-team editor Rita Hibbard gave the green light to pursue the story, and I began gathering documents and tracking down the sources who could help sort out truth from fabrications. It turned out to be a tangled web.

The Web site for Tafoya's consulting business, called Tamanawit, was a ready-made source of his biographical information, employment history and academic credentials. His resume cited a 1985 Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Washington.

I met with tipster Donnie Goodman, who gave me a copy of a key document – an October 2005 deposition in which Tafoya said he did not have a Ph.D. from the U.W.

Soon afterward I encountered an unexpected hurdle that made the deposition essential to the story.

When I called the university registrar's office to verify Tafoya's Ph.D. and M.Ed., officials told me he had blocked any release of information under a federal privacy law called the Family Educational and Rights and Privacy Act. Our attorney said there was no way to challenge it.

I decided to check other sources for references to Tafoya's academic career. I spent hours tracking down professors (many retired by now) who might remember him and combing through student directories and commencement records. The U.W.'s commencement book for 1974 listed his M.Ed. But there was no hint in subsequent years of any Ph.D.

Early in the investigation, I filed several public disclosure requests. I asked for Tafoya's employment records at the U.W. based on his claim of being "clinical faculty" at the university-affiliated Harborview Community Mental Health Center. I found no record of him holding that job.

But an Internet search eventually led me to a former director of the Harborview clinic who said Tafoya had been a part-time volunteer in the 1980s but not a faculty member.

A separate public disclosure request to the university for all contracts with Tafoya uncovered another item: the school of social work listed him as a consultant with a Ph.D. on a current federal grant.

I requested his employment records from The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Wash., where he taught psychology from 1985-88. The school refused to release Tafoya's application materials (which are exempt under state law) or say whether he had listed a Ph.D.

But the records revealed that Tafoya had left students in the lurch by going on a leave of absence without completing student evaluations. He never returned, and the school had to sort out the mess.

Another public disclosure filed with the state Department of Health asked for Tafoya's licensing records and any complaints. I discovered the self-described "family therapist" had never been licensed by the state. A complaint of unlicensed practice in 1995 went nowhere, and the file unfortunately had been destroyed.

Other items on his resume also did not check out.

A former boss said he had worked for the National Native American AIDS Prevention Center in 1988 but was not the "co-founder" as Tafoya said. An official with the American Psychological Association said Tafoya's claim of being on its national faculty couldn't be true because there was no such thing.

A check of municipal court records revealed that Tafoya had a recent drunk-driving charge,

interesting for a widely recognized expert on substance abuse. A public disclosure request for the police report provided the details.

Federal court records turned up a personal bankruptcy filing. Superior Court records contained Goodman's lawsuit against Tafoya and an anti-harassment petition filed by Tafoya against Goodman. The petition was denied when Tafoya failed to show up for court.

“After the story ran, the University of Washington launched an investigation under the new law, and the state Board of Psychology Examiners is investigating whether Tafoya broke the law by calling himself a psychologist.”

Blood ties

Sorting out Tafoya's family history was more complicated.

Goodman put me in touch with someone who had known Tafoya for three decades. Randy Lewis, a member of the Colville Confederated Tribes in Eastern Washington, told me he was sure that Tafoya's mother was not from Warm Springs.

Instead, Lewis said Tafoya had visited the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in the 1970s and "attached" himself to a family there. I later tracked down a member of that family who said the woman Tafoya called his mother had "adopted" him in "the Indian way." She said tribal elders had given him permission to use their stories.

One small but significant detail popped up during the interview with Lewis: he remembered seeing the name "Pompano Beach High School" on a photo of Tafoya.

I located the school's Web site, which to my delight had an alumni page where former students posted comments by year of graduation. I began e-mailing anyone who attended the school in 1969-70, the period during which I estimated that the now 54-year-old Tafoya had been enrolled.

Luck was with me, and a former classmate who remembered Tafoya responded. She dug up her high school yearbook and faxed me copies. The page with Tafoya's graduation photo also had a picture of another boy with the same last name.

After a Google search, I tracked down Perry Tafoya at his workplace in Florida. He turned out to be Terry's cousin. Reluctant to talk on the record, Perry put me in touch with his brother Jack, who willingly shared their family history.

Jack told me Terry was born in Colorado and

raised from infancy by his half-brother in Pompano Beach – not Taos as Terry claimed. He said Terry didn't find out until adolescence that the man raising him was not his real father.

Jack said the family had always believed Terry's father, Jose, did have blood ties to Taos Pueblo because he spoke Tiwa and visited regularly. Terry's mother was not American Indian and wasn't from Warm Springs, he said.

Hoping for the chance to hear him speak publicly before interviewing him, I deliberately had not contacted Terry Tafoya a month into the investigation. Because he was always on the road, I flew to Albuquerque, N.M., in late April to hear Tafoya give a keynote address at a state-sponsored conference. I planned to approach him after his speech.

It was a risky move. What if he didn't show up? Or refused to talk to me?

But Tafoya agreed to an interview with no hesitation. He spent an hour sharing his version of his life story, complete with a childhood spent in Taos Pueblo, N.M., his tribal enrollment there and Ph.D.

Confronted with questions about his credentials and roots, Tafoya spent the next hour denying the allegations and said Goodman was seeking revenge because of a personal relationship that went bad.

That turned out to be my only opportunity to interview Tafoya. He subsequently refused repeated requests for interviews. I e-mailed him long lists of follow-up questions. He responded by e-mail several times but answered few of the questions.

Taos Pueblo officials told me that neither Tafoya nor his father had been enrolled there. Whether Tafoya's father had undocumented blood ties remains an open question.

From the beginning, I envisioned the story as a timely profile of a fascinating character. To help shape the story into a narrative style, I met several times with *P-I* writing coach M.L. Lyke, whose feedback was invaluable.

Our online story included links to the deposition, police report and two brief video clips from Tafoya's Web site.

After the story ran, the University of Washington launched an investigation under the new law, and the state Board of Psychology Examiners is investigating whether Tafoya broke the law by calling himself a psychologist.

Tafoya still refers to himself as "Dr. Terry Tafoya, Ph.D." on his Web site. But word has spread. A high-profile keynote address by Tafoya to the 16th International Congress on Care of the Terminally Ill in Montreal in late September was canceled.

Ruth Teichroeb is an investigative reporter at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer where she has worked for nine years. Her stories have won numerous regional and national awards.

Deadly Doc

*Supervisor of state's lethal injections
has questionable professional record*

BY JEREMY KOHLER
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* newsroom was abuzz on June 26 when U.S. District Judge Fernando Gaitan Jr. ordered Missouri executions halted. Gaitan was concerned that Missouri's lethal injection could be unconstitutionally cruel punishment.

Ruling in the appeal of death row inmate Michael Taylor, Gaitan wrote that he was troubled that the state had entrusted the mixing of the lethal cocktail – a task which required absolute precision – to a dyslexic doctor who sometimes confused drug names and transposed figures. Gaitan said Missouri could not guarantee inmates were being properly anesthetized before painful injections.

The doctor's own testimony, from behind a screen, torpedoed Missouri's right to execute. He testified that he knew of no written protocols for the injection and said he changed the protocol on his independent authority.

Gaitan ordered the state to come up with a better system.

Who was this doctor? My editor, Patrick Gauen, assigned me to profile him. Our story would highlight the career troubled with professional allegations

and public reprimands of the man charged with the lethal injection of Missouri death row inmates.

Finding John Doe

Spotlighting this doctor's background seemed, to us, very much in the public interest.

But officials – including Missouri Attorney General Jay Nixon – kept a lid on the doctor's identity and even secured a court order sealing it. Nixon had long insisted that plaintiffs didn't need to know the doctor's identity, only that he was qualified and board-certified.

The doctor, therefore, was called "John Doe 1"

in court filings. When I asked to see Doe, a Missouri Department of Corrections spokesman refused, saying his superiors were concerned for Doe's safety. Although we would consider the state's arguments for masking Doe's identity, we believed we needed to first find out who he was.

I called Taylor's lawyers, but they said they were trying *not* to learn Doe's identity so they couldn't be accused of leaking it. They didn't want to bollix their victory by getting slapped with contempt-of-court charges.

A nurse, unconnected to the case, passed us a rumor that Doe's son was an anesthesiologist at St. Luke's Hospital in Chesterfield, Mo.

St. Luke's Web site listed 28 anesthesiologists. I ran each surname through the state's professional registration database to find general surgeons of the same name. I immediately found a St. Luke's anesthesiologist named Roy A. Doerhoff, 34. Two other Doerhoffs were listed as general surgeons in Jefferson City – the state capital – Alan, 62, and Carl, 56.

Using LexisNexis, I learned that Roy had lived at Alan's address years earlier. I figured Alan was probably his father, and it certainly made sense that Doe practiced in the capital city, home of the Department of Corrections.

My colleague Jaimi Dowdell found an article linking the Doerhoffs to Missouri prisons. Alan and Carl Doerhoff had treated state prisoners for more than a decade. I couldn't reach Alan Doerhoff, but Carl Doerhoff became upset when I questioned him, insisting he didn't know anything about executions and demanding that I not use his name.

Next, I found that the state Board of Healing Arts

St. Louis Post-Dispatch.



Alan R. Doerhoff in 1969, as he appeared in *MUTations*, the yearbook of the University of Missouri Medical School.

QUICK LOOK

Name of the series or story, and when it was published:

"Behind the mask of the execution doctor," July 30

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

After a federal judge halted Missouri executions in June, I was assigned to profile the doctor who oversaw them.

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

It took about 3 1/2 weeks to report and write the story, and about two days to edit.

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

Using the Sunshine Law, we obtained records of payments to the doctor and details about a reprimand from the Board of Healing Arts. I reviewed about 50 federal and state court cases.

Major type of human sources used:

I interviewed lawyers and doctors who had experience with Alan Doerhoff, as well as people who had sued him for malpractice. I also interviewed three officials who had roles at Missouri executions, who confirmed Doerhoff oversaw the process.

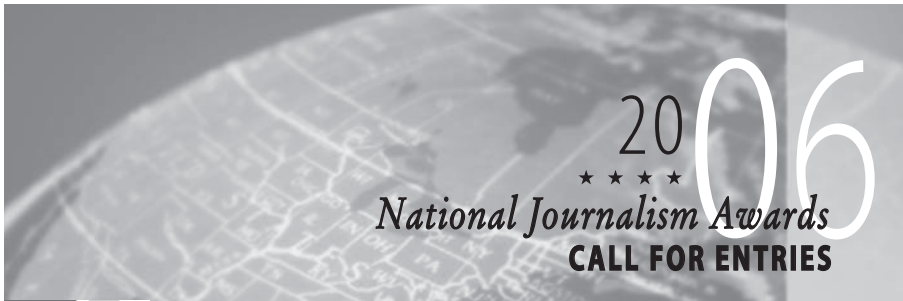
had publicly reprimanded Alan Doerhoff in 2003. Doerhoff had violated Missouri Revised Statute 334.100.2(4) by hiding his malpractice history from a hospital where he was trying to renew staff privileges, but I found few other details.

The attorney general's office had signed off on the reprimand, so, if Doerhoff was indeed Doe, Nixon's office would have had access to records showing the execution doctor had a blemished professional record. But the reprimand had not been disclosed to the prisoner who brought the lawsuit, or to Judge Gaitan.

Our news-research director, Mike Meiners, secured Doerhoff's pay records from the Office of Administration and found the Department of Corrections had paid him \$33,020 for "misc. professional services" since mid-2001, typically in checks of \$2,000 issued shortly after each of the past 17 executions.

I needed more. I found a clue while leafing through filings from several Missouri death-penalty appeals. A lawyer for Timothy Johnston, who was executed in August 2005, disclosed in filings that the Healing Arts board had disciplined Doe – as it had Alan Doerhoff – for a violation of 334.100.2(4), enacted in 2000.

Now we knew Doe was a male general surgeon, certified by the Board of Healing Arts as of June 5. He was practicing medicine as early as the January 1989, when Missouri first used lethal injection. He was publicly reprimanded by the state Healing Arts board, some time after 2000, for violating 334.100.2(4).



Since 1953 the Scripps Howard Foundation has recognized the best work in journalism through the National Journalism Awards. The awards recognize excellence in the following categories:

- **Investigative Reporting**
- **Excellence in Electronic Media**
- **Public Service Reporting**
- **Business/Economics Reporting**
- **Environmental Reporting**
- **Washington Reporting**
- **Web Reporting**
- **Editorial Writing**
- **Human Interest Writing**
- **Commentary**
- **Editorial Cartooning**
- **Photojournalism**
- **College Cartoonist**
- **Distinguished Service to the First Amendment**
- **Journalism Teacher of the Year**
- **Journalism Administrator of the Year**

Deadline is postmark January 31, 2007

Cash awards totaling \$195,000 will be presented to the winners at an awards dinner on April 20, 2007 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Official rules and entry forms available at www.scripps.com/foundation
For information, please call 1-800-888-3000 ext. 3030
or e-mail porters@scripps.com



**SCRIPPS HOWARD
FOUNDATION**

Then we began the process of elimination. Out of all the 412 physicians who accepted prejudicial board action during that time, 67 were publicly reprimanded but kept their licenses. Of those, 29 were found to have violated statute 334.100.2(4). Of those, 23 were men. Of those, only 17 were still licensed by the Missouri Board of Healing Arts.

Of those, one – Alan Doerhoff – was a general surgeon.

Read my lips

I went deep on Doerhoff. I criss-crossed the state, dug up malpractice suits, interviewed lawyers and doctors. I learned that two Missouri hospitals won't allow him to practice within their walls. By his own estimate, he has been sued for malpractice more than 20 times. He was alleged to have made false statements in two court cases, and a woman was paid \$100,000 to settle her allegation that Doerhoff gave her an abortion in a hotel room.

But I still didn't have enough for a story.

I contacted people who had roles in Missouri executions. I recalled something *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer's* Eric Nalder advised at the IRE Conference in Fort Worth: Ask your second question first. I wouldn't ask sources if Doerhoff was the execution doctor. I would ask them if he did a good job at it. Within a few days, I had three officials on the record confirming Alan Doerhoff was my man.

Two days before publication, I knocked on Alan Doerhoff's door.

"Read my lips," he said. "I don't do them [executions]."

"I've confirmed that you do," I said.

He shut the door.

We decided to publish Doerhoff's name. The public interest in publishing it seemed to outweigh risks to his safety. We rejected the notion that he would be in physical danger. Names of others who are involved in death-penalty cases – police officers, judges, prosecutors, attorneys general – are not secrets.

The story ran July 30. The next day, Doerhoff spoke to the Associated Press, saying he was proud of his service to Missouri. He denied being dyslexic.

Our investigation's effect on the death penalty in the U.S. remains to be seen, as state and federal courts grapple with the constitutionality of lethal injection.

Jeremy Kohler covers public safety for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. His coverage of under-reported crime in St. Louis made him a finalist for this year's IRE and Livingston Awards, an honorable mention for the Dart Award and placed first in the Missouri AP Managing Editors News Writing Contest. He also teaches principles of reporting and beat reporting at Washington University in St. Louis.



Donald Boehm reportedly lets his German shepherd out to bark at unwanted visitors, including process servers. Boehm faces police scrutiny for allegedly defrauding a cousin's estate and for possible involvement in the death of a former business partner.

Dirty Dealings

Weekly records check snowballs into probe of million-dollar looting, murder

By MICHAEL LEVENSOHN
(MIDDLETOWN, N.Y.) TIMES HERALD-RECORD

QUICK LOOK

Name of the series or story, and when it was published:

"Teflon Don," a 16-page special section on July 23

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

I tracked local bankruptcy filings through the Web site for New York's Southern District (<https://ecf.nysb.uscourts.gov>). My reporting began with the bankruptcy filings of three of Donald Boehm's companies.

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

The reporting was spread out over two years but intensified during the final six months. Writing took about a month, plus another month of editing.

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

Bankruptcy court documents, lawsuits, deposition transcripts, property sale records, contracts, deeds, bank records, legal and personal correspondence. I used state FOI requests for police reports.

Major type of human sources used:

Donald Boehm's relatives, business associates, friends and acquaintances; lawyers, bankers and police officials.

My two-year investigation of a local businessman started simply enough with my weekly check of bankruptcy filings. But it would explode and culminate in the publication of a 16-page special report showing how Donald Boehm – "Teflon Don" – had taken millions from business associates, banks and a cousin's estate, all in a desperate effort to keep his ventures afloat.

Police continue to investigate his possible role in the shooting death of Cosimo DiBrizzi, a prominent, beloved local businessman who had filed a lawsuit accusing Boehm of stealing from their partnership.

The reporting for "Teflon Don" began with the March 2004 bankruptcy filings of three companies. I checked for local bankruptcies using PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records, <http://pacer.uspc.uscourts.gov>), which provides fee-based access to federal court records.

The initial filings appeared to be a rush job. Each was just two pages long, where normal business bankruptcy filings are at least 30 or 40 pages. All three listed the same debtor address: the New Windsor residence of Donald Boehm.

The filings suggested these were small but not insignificant companies, each with between \$1 million and \$10 million in assets and debts.

With little to go on, I started a file and monitored the Web site for additional documents. Within a few weeks those documents appeared, and details about Boehm's companies emerged, including boat companies in the Cayman Islands and the British Virgin Islands.

I contacted the few people listed in the filings, but none were willing to talk.

When I checked the county clerk's office, a few property transfers for Boehm turned up, as did the DiBrizzi lawsuit. It dated back to the late 1990s and appeared unrelated to Boehm's current troubles. So, I focused instead on the property records and bankruptcies. Over the following months, I sat in on a few hearings when my schedule permitted but couldn't yet see the full picture.

High-profile killing

On May 10, 2004, about six weeks after the bankruptcy filings, a man walked into DiBrizzi's home and shot him and his son, Nicolas. Father and son were hospitalized, and Cosimo DiBrizzi died that August.

For a long time, our coverage didn't progress beyond what the police told our reporters, which wasn't much. A year later, in the summer of 2005, the pieces of the Boehm puzzle began to come together. I was working on a story about Nicolas DiBrizzi, who was assuming a more prominent role in the family's restaurant business, which at its height included some 60 restaurants along the East Coast.

At the same time, our court reporter, Oliver Mackson, was preparing a piece marking the anniversary of the shooting, which remains the most high-profile unsolved killing in the area.

Mackson stopped by my desk one day and told me that the police had identified a person of interest in the DiBrizzi shooting. His name was Donald Boehm.

I nearly fell out of my chair, then swore a bit and walked quickly to the filing cabinet where, I'm ashamed to admit, my sizeable Boehm folder had been sitting untouched for weeks.

Mackson and I met with Newburgh Detective Sgt. Margaret O'Neill, who was overseeing the shooting investigation. O'Neill had had little to say about the case, but she was now more forthcoming, though still guarded.

Boehm and DiBrizzi had been due in court two days after the shooting, at which time Boehm could have been jailed on a contempt charge for failing to repay DiBrizzi. Police were investigating the possibility that Boehm hired the intruder, perhaps to scare DiBrizzi into backing off in court.

O'Neill said she also was looking into allegations that Boehm had looted millions from the estate of his cousin, Fred Warmers. Warmers had accumulated a small fortune in cash and investments, as well as hundreds of acres of land in eastern Orange County. When Warmers died at the end of 1998, Boehm had been named executor of his estate.

Mackson wrote a story mentioning the investigation of Boehm, and my research continued. I figured we'd be ahead of the curve if and when Boehm got indicted.

I already had tracked some of Boehm's sales of Warmers' land through deed and mortgage records, but I hit the mother lode after spending half a day reading the estate case file. It included contracts, bank records and even Boehm's written ledger for

the estate accounts.

Using the bank records, I traced the path of more than \$1 million out of Fred Warmers' estate and into Boehm's boat companies. The file also included an inventory of Warmers' land, as well as documents detailing more than \$600,000 in loans made to Boehm by local real-estate broker Richard Shulkin and his various associates.

Boehm repaid those loans with land from the Warmers estate.

I used Excel to catalogue the dozen or so Warmers properties, then correlated sale records with tax maps, subdivision approvals, building permits and other documents from the towns where Warmers had owned land. This involved perhaps a dozen trips to planning board and assessor's offices in eastern Orange County. A typical trip might include an hour or two of collecting files, a visit to one or two properties and interviews with one or two minor characters.

I tried to do as many interviews as possible in person, especially with people I suspected were reluctant to talk. And nearly everyone was reluctant to talk. Oddly, though, they seemed to have no problem telling me who else I should talk to. On some days, I parlayed one drop-in visit into a string of conversations simply by driving down the main commercial roads in Newburgh and New Windsor and visiting people to whom I'd been referred.

The collection of bankruptcy files, meanwhile, had grown considerably, augmented by Boehm's personal bankruptcy case. He filed the day before his home was to be sold at a foreclosure auction.

It took months of searching and hundreds of photocopies to compile all the records I needed, but eventually several patterns emerged. Boehm had sold off millions of dollars worth of Fred Warmers' land, most of it at what appeared to be deeply discounted prices, and the vast majority of the proceeds never made it to Warmers' heirs. The land sales came in clusters at crucial moments in Boehm's business or personal dealings. Many of Boehm's boldest acts – the business and personal bankruptcies and the most audacious land deals – occurred as he faced imminent crises such as the loss of his boats or home.

It appears that he had help in carrying out these schemes from his accountant and at least two of his lawyers. One law firm was denied its fee in bankruptcy court for failing to disclose potential conflicts of interest arising from its many dealings with Boehm.

At the same time, the courts had been unwitting accomplices. Boehm had dodged a half-dozen contempt orders in three courts, and, to this day, has yet to be charged with any crime.

Boehm was a master, it seemed, at extricating himself from tight spots. The title of the special report, "Teflon Don," was meant to reflect his many escapes.

Filling in the blanks

Somewhere along the line, I switched gears from waiting for the prosecutors to make an indictment to wanting to scoop them.

My consistent presence in bankruptcy court began to pay dividends even after Boehm stopped showing up for his own hearings. The bankers and lawyers who once had been reluctant to talk eventually loosened up, although many declined to go on the record. Instead, they gave me useful background material or pointed me toward potential sources. One even shipped me a thick box of Boehm depositions, which provided a wealth of personal details about a man whose history is as fuzzy as his memory under oath.

Boehm, now 71, had been a shipbuilder all his life. He had built ships for the Navy and served on the board of a public company.

I found multiple affidavits by process servers who claimed they'd been chased from Boehm's house by his menacing German shepherd.

I met several more times with Detective Sgt. O'Neill. Each time, she opened up a little more. She was approaching retirement and was frustrated by the lack of progress in the estate case, which the district attorney's office seemed unwilling to pursue.

During one fortuitous visit to bankruptcy court, I met Fred Warmers' daughter and granddaughter. They previously had been unwilling to talk because they did not want to interfere with the estate case. But their frustration, like O'Neill's, overcame their reservations. We met for three hours-long interviews. They filled in some blanks on the estate and laid out their personal stories in heartbreaking detail.

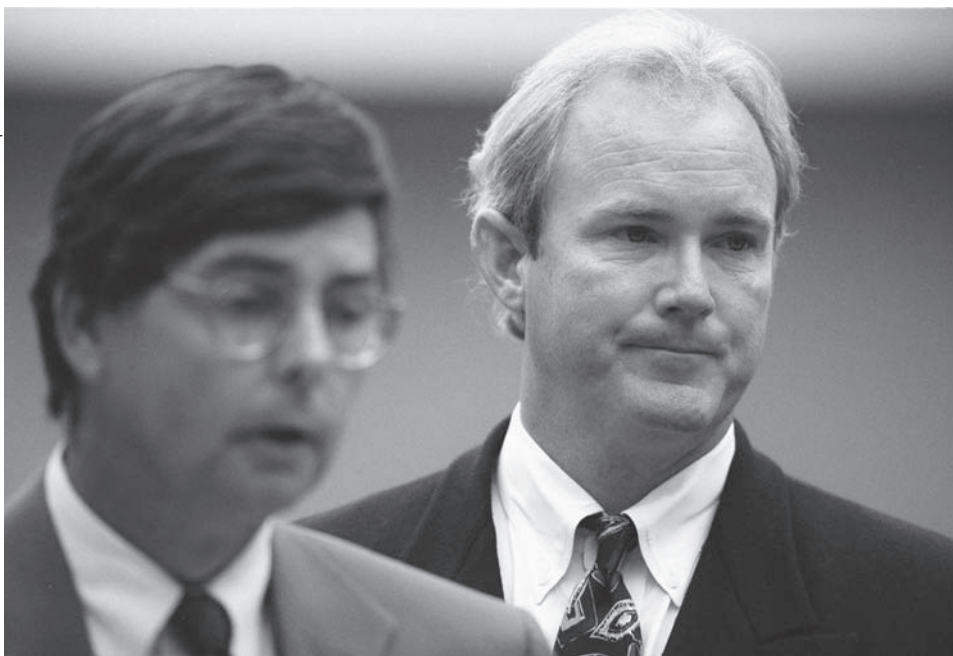
To illustrate the story, photographer Jeff Goulding and I spent three afternoons driving around Newburgh and New Windsor, taking pictures of wooded land and cleared building lots from Boehm's deals, as well as a handful of willing interview subjects.

In writing and editing the story, I worked mainly with business editor Douglas Cunningham and executive editor Mike Levine. Armed as I was with a half-dozen boxes of material, the writing presented several challenges. The story of Donald Boehm was incredibly complex, and it included three intersecting story lines: his dealings with DiBrizzi, his handling of the Warmers estate and the shenanigans involving his boat businesses.

The lawyering process to clear the stories for publication stretched across three meetings and perhaps a dozen phone calls. We were making assertions that usually follow an indictment rather than precede it. In the end, the lawyer may have actually improved the story by pushing me to focus on the best-supported claims and lose the rest.

The unfolding Boehm drama has gained an avid local following, and the *Herald-Record* continues to follow the developments. In early September, the bank made another attempt to auction Boehm's house, only to find that Boehm's wife filed for bankruptcy 45 minutes before the sale. By October, a grand jury began hearing parts of the estate case.

Michael Levensohn is a business reporter for the Times Herald-Record, a daily newspaper based in Middletown, N.Y.



John Gillette, Jr. (right), with his lawyer Jerry Coughlan, was convicted in 1998 and sentenced to 10 years for mishandling investment funds of high-profile athletes he represented. Released early in 2001, he now works for a church and avoids media coverage.

Unholy Ripoff

Money adviser who stole from top athletes paroled early, runs large church operation

BY BRENT SCHROTENBOER
THE SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

In 1998, John Gillette Jr. was sentenced to 10 years in prison for bilking several high-profile athletes out of more than \$11 million. He had made national news and was featured on HBO's "Real Sports" for using his Christian faith to lure such athletes into hiring him as a financial advisor. But he pleaded guilty to 38 counts of grand theft and forgery after ripping off those clients and using their money to support a lavish personal lifestyle.

So when I discovered his name on a witness list while covering an unrelated court case, I thought it might make an interesting follow-up story. It became an even better story when a source involved in his case told me Gillette was now a minister and chief operations officer at one of the largest churches in the nation.

Wait a minute, I thought. A guy who used his religious faith to entice and rip off his millionaire clients is out of prison two years early and has been entrusted to run the operations of a church with its own national

radio network and cable telecast each Sunday?

Do his victims know, and did he pay them back as his judgment required? Our stories informed readers in our community about Gillette and his actions. Depending on their points of view, our series either made them more watchful or more firm in their beliefs that everyone is capable of changing for the better. Or both.

Learning a lesson

Being new to San Diego, I first checked to see if there had been a follow-up story on Gillette. As it turned out, he had kept a low profile after his release from prison in early 2001. Although Gillette operates a high-profile church, he tends to stay out of the limelight and mostly ministers to small groups.

Next I went to the courthouse to find out why he received an early release from prison.

QUICK LOOK

Name of the series or story, and when it was published:

"He's gone from prison to ministry: After bilking athletes, Gillette now a pastor"

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

Gillette's name connected to an unrelated court case as a witness, in addition to a source's tip about his whereabouts.

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

While working on it off and on while covering other stories, a total of about four or five days was spent running around, calling, checking records and writing.

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

Criminal court file, judgment liens and property and car records

Major type of human sources used:

Interviews with financial victims

His file showed that the judge had a change of heart after a letter-writing campaign by Gillette's family. Gillette also had spent time in prison writing letters to his victims, asking for forgiveness and telling them he'd repay them as soon as he could.

The file documented victims' names and the amount each was owed, so I tried contacting some of them through their current professional sports teams. Some, such as retired football player Tony Boselli, had received a letter from Gillette saying he would pay him back. And, like others, Boselli received nothing. When I called Boselli, he asked for Gillette's whereabouts and phone number.

Other victims I contacted about Gillette's early release and new job had reactions ranging from disbelief to anger to guarded forgiveness. Many who were compensated received only pennies on the dollar, an amount that came from Gillette's bankruptcy proceeding. Most weren't aware he was out of prison.

After being told where the former financial adviser was working, some victims said they didn't want to be repaid if it meant taking money from a church.

I also interviewed church members who said Gillette had been forthright about his history and considered it a lesson learned.

Finally, I spoke with Gillette. I figured he would want to use this as a chance to talk publicly about his transformation, something he already had shared in his ministry. But when I told him about the story,

he politely declined to cooperate and said he didn't want to put his family through the publicity.

people & profiles

The Knight-Bagehot Fellowship

Columbia University is now accepting applications for the Knight-Bagehot Fellowship in Economics and Business Journalism.

Administered by the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, the Knight-Bagehot program offers experienced journalists a full academic year of study at Columbia University in New York City. It includes courses at Columbia Business School and other University departments, plus seminars and informal meetings with prominent guests.

The nine-month fellowship is open to journalists with at least four years of experience. Applicants need not be business specialists, but they should be able to demonstrate that greater knowledge of economics, business and finance could add depth and understanding to their reporting.

The ten fellows selected for the 2007–2008 academic year will receive free tuition and a living-expense stipend of \$50,000. Qualified Knight-Bagehot fellows may be eligible for a Master of Science in Journalism upon completion of this rigorous program.

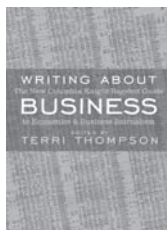
The deadline for the 2007–2008 academic year is March 1, 2007.

FOR APPLICATIONS, CONTACT:

Ms. Terri Thompson, Director, Knight-Bagehot Fellowship
Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism
2950 Broadway (Mail Code 3850), New York, NY 10027
Phone: 212-854-6840 Fax: 212-854-3900
E-mail: tat5@columbia.edu
www.jrn.columbia.edu/knight-bagehot

Too busy to take nine months off to study? Then buy the book!

Writing About Business: The New Columbia Knight-Bagehot Guide to Economics and Business Journalism, edited by Terri Thompson (480 pp.; \$27.50 in paper; ISBN 0-231-11835-X). Available from online and regular bookstores or from Columbia University Press: www.columbia.edu/cu/cup or 1-800-944-8648.



Columbia University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution.

I drove to his office 15 miles east of San Diego in El Cajon three times before I found him there. He was polite and easygoing, but he still refused to cooperate. He asked that I not pursue the story because it would hurt his family. I told him his story could be positive, that he held an important job in the community and our readers should know the ultimate outcome of his very public case. He didn't see it that way, asked me to reconsider writing the story, got in his car and left.

Lack of repayment

I continued to take interest in Gillette's life after prison.

His boss, Senior Pastor David Jeremiah, declined interview requests about Gillette. Church financial records are not public. But recent judgment liens at the county assessor's office provided Gillette's address.

Using Mapquest, I drove to his address and learned he was living in a house owned by his wife's parents in a gated community with mountain views. He also had a 2005 BMW sport utility vehicle.

Such facts were relevant considering that his victims were not fully repaid and he had used his clients' investments to fund his lavish lifestyle before going to prison.

Ultimately, though, the question remained: Had Gillette really changed?

There really was no way of really knowing. He and those close to him would say yes. Others would be more cynical and say his lack of repayment to his victims told them all they needed to know.

Brent Schrotenboer is an enterprise sports reporter for The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Public records

Getting no cooperation from the central personality in a story like this isn't surprising. In this case, people who know Gillette or who did business with him were more likely to tell me the unfiltered truth or their honest opinions about him than was Gillette himself.

Public records can be more brutally honest. They can reveal everything from a person's driving record and civil disputes to tax payment history, car ownership and place of residence.

If there's an abundance of public records and opinionated people who know the subject, often the best procedure is attempting to interview him or her last. That way, you're equipped with all kinds of information you can take to that person, giving that person more reason to talk to you, so that his or her version of events also will be part of the story. If the person still doesn't want to talk, chances are you've got enough information to write a good story anyway.

People Skills

*A treasure trove of investigative tools
for profiling anyone from John Doe to the famous*

BY DUFF WILSON
THE NEW YORK TIMES

There are a wealth of records, many at your fingertips, to profile people who don't want to be profiled, from the average John Doe who lives down the street to the more well-known or even famous individuals.

These investigative tools and records are as varied as people themselves. Some of them are broad as a species name like *Homo sapiens* and apply to anyone; other records are as esoteric as your individual DNA.

I would like to share with you some of the best tactics and practical tips I have learned over the years for investigating people. These are ways of learning as much as you can, as authoritatively as you can, and as fast as you can, about people of all varieties – with or without their cooperation. (Check out the Reporter's Desktop at www.reporter.org/desktop a noncommercial collaborative launch pad for daily and investigative reporting.)

First, the big picture, the bookends: the start and the end of your venture.

Early in the process of investigating a person – before your subject may go on guard – it is almost always best to talk to him or her. Don't settle for “no comment” at the end. Do some discreet background work first, then get an initial, open-minded and non-accusatory interview. It may be brief. It may be on the telephone. You want an element of surprise. You want to learn more than you say.

This first little chat will provide clues and shortcuts for your later work, place some topics on the record for truth squad work – especially if the subject is inclined to spin or shade the truth – and oblige the subject to answer follow-up questions later.

At the end of your work, you will want to share everything for comment. You will want such an accurate, fair and complete portrayal that you also can call the subject, whom by now you have re-interviewed several times, the day your work appears, and ask him or her if it was completely accurate, fair and complete. Knowing you'll do this at the end makes you especially careful during the process, engenders respect and opens follow-up

opportunities.

And now on to practical advice. Our goal is to get source materials. Some of these tools are covered in the collaborative Web page hosted by IRE, “Who is John Doe – and where to get the paper on him” at www.reporter.org/desktop/tips/johndoe.htm.

Obviously, you should be an expert in using Google (www.google.com) and its news, groups, book search and alerts. Your work may benefit from some common Google refinements: Put quote marks around “full names” or “complete phrases of words.” Use a minus mark to exclude a term. Put filetype:doc (or pdf or xls or ppt, etc.) to limit results to Word documents (or Adobe Acrobat PDF files or Excel spreadsheets or PowerPoint presentations, etc.). Add site:gov (or org or edu, and so on) to find results from certain domains.

Google has a good phonebook, but LexisNexis (www.nexis.com) is the best source for current addresses and phone numbers. Use the “public records search” on your LexisNexis home page; a subscription is required.

Accurint (www accurint.com) provides a fast background report on a subject's address history, real estate holdings, criminal or federal cases (if any), voting registrations, possible associates, possible relatives and other basic background. Don't print or air this information without double-checking it, though. Consider it a source of leads. Again, subscription is required; Accurint is owned by LexisNexis.

AutoTrackXP (www.autotrackxp.com) by ChoicePoint is another personal information aggregator and is occasionally more complete, but often more expensive.

Once you have some basic data, VitalChek (www.vitalchek.com) can lead you to birth, death, marriage and divorce records, though it's harder than it should be. Access and cost vary widely by state. Often you will do best by calling the state office for vital statistics. This information leads to parents, siblings, and the wonderful ex's. A marriage license also will lead to the witnesses – a source for

close friends of the bride and groom.

It's best to check all the courthouses wherever your subject has lived. PACER (<http://pacer.psc.uscourts.gov>), the federal courts database, has an authoritative Internet site with scanned court filings. A subscription is required and users pay a 8-cents-per-page viewing fee. Many state courts have good online indexes to cases in their systems. (The Center for Democracy and Technology reports on state-by-state availability of online court records at www.cdt.org/publications/020821courtrecords.shtml.) Unfortunately, such systems will not include the actual documents nor the misdemeanor and small civil cases where you can find unexpected gems and connections.

So go there in person. There are no shortcuts on court records.

It's as true today as it was 20 years ago in this business that county recorders' offices are investigative gold mines. Today, many counties make recorded documents – deeds, mortgages, lines of credit, partnership agreements – available online. Google the county name and “recorder.” If the records aren't online, go to the recorder's office – it's worth the trip. Or, as a fallback plan, you may find a title company willing to help on the phone. I've had surprising success this way: Call the biggest title company in the city of your subject and ask for customer service. Explain, cajole, plead. I've sometimes found people there willing to fax or e-mail the full grantor-grantee indexes on my subject.

The documents themselves warrant close read-

REQUIRED READING For Your Newsroom

Numbers In The Newsroom

Using Math and Statistics in News, by Sarah Cohen

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Sarah Cohen guides reporters through fractions, rates, percents and per capita. Making inflation adjustments. Understanding averages. Doing the budget story. Questioning surveys and polls.



ORDER TODAY!

Call 573-882-3364

with your VISA, MasterCard or American Express

-OR-

Visit our Web site at www.ire.org/store
for online ordering or order form downloads

ing. Combined with assessment records, you can do an informal financial backgrounder showing purchase prices and loan amounts, and hence cash down payments on real estate over time.

You'll also find interesting connections by tracking the other people involved in real estate transactions with your subject. I found a judge running a loan business out of his courtroom that way.

Always think of yourself when investigating other people. What paperwork exists on you?

After the basics, your investigation has to follow what the subject does. If she is a lawyer, check state bar records and Martindale-Hubbell (<http://lawyers.martindale.com/marhub>), a worldwide organization that claims a database of more than one million lawyers. If he is a doctor – like the advisor to Major League Baseball, whom I exposed for resume falsehoods – check out state medical records and the American Medical Association (<http://webapps.ama-assn.org/doctorfinder/home.html?3098012244>).

If he says he graduated from a certain university, check with the university. Federal law requires universities to state when and whether someone graduated. Students can, however, opt out of this disclosure and prevent schools from releasing attendance dates, graduation status or other “directory information” covered in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

Politicians have asset and contributor records (www.fecinfo.com) and pilots have FAA records (www.landings.com/_landings/pages/search/search_namd_full.html). Many business people and larger investors show up in Securities and Exchange Commission files (a good name search: http://searchwww.sec.gov/EDGARFSCClient/jsp/EDGAR_MainAccess.jsp). Others can be found in articles of incorporation and annual reports at the Secretary of State's office. And don't forget local business licenses.

A business your subject owns may show up on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration database of workplace inspections (www.osha.gov/oshstats). A nonprofit organization's tax return, with salaries of top employees, can be found through Guidestar (www.guidestar.org). Union tax filings and officer listings are accessible from the Department of Labor at www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/olms/rlo/lmrda.htm.

PubMed lists medical and scientific researchers' articles (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/entrez/query.fcgi?db=PubMed).

You can obtain the military records of uniformed or civilian employees through the National Archives at www.archives.gov/facilities/mo/st_louis/military_personnel_records/standard_form_180.html or the media contact at 314-538-2050. Federal

disciplinary appeals – a good place to look for insiders or whistleblowers if you are beginning to investigate a federal agency – are available at www.mspb.gov.

If your subject is a public employee, including teachers, every piece of paper and computer file is presumptively open to your inspection unless there is a specific exemption to the open records law. Ask for letters, memos, e-mails, calendars, phone bills, travel records and personnel actions.

I often use the fill-in Freedom of Information Act letter generator from the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press at www.rcfp.org/foi_letter/generate.php, or for state records, the forms from the Student Press Law Center, www.splc.org/foiletter.asp.

For ideas on what other records might exist to spark your thinking, check BRB Publication's Public Records Resource Center, <http://brbpub.com/pubrecsites.asp>, the lists and links at www.searchsystems.net and the massive, librarian-indexed collection at the University of Michigan Library documents center, www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs.

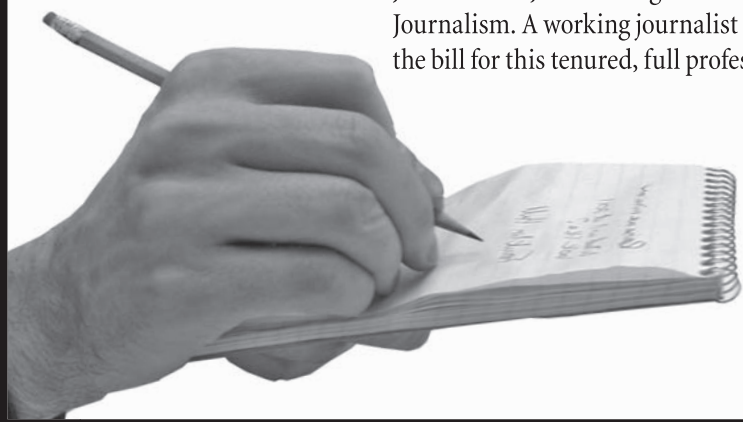
Duff Wilson is an investigative reporter with The New York Times and Web master of the Reporter's Desktop. He was elected to the IRE Board of Directors in June.

KNIGHT ENDOWED CHAIR IN SCHOLASTIC JOURNALISM

Can high school journalists save democracy? Maybe. With your help.

Do you believe in the importance of the First Amendment for those of all ages?
Do you believe in giving students a free voice to report what they find is essential
to a free society? Feel comfortable in a board room - and in front of a school board?
If you answered yes, you might be the news pro we want.

The Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the
James S. and John L. Knight Foundation have announced a Knight Chair in Scholastic
Journalism. A working journalist with a passion for high school journalism would fit
the bill for this tenured, full professor position. Find out more at: www.jmc.kent.edu



KENT STATE
UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

Contact: Barbara Hipsman, search director • bhipsman@kent.edu
130 Taylor Hall • PO Box 5190 • Kent, OH 44242-0001
(330) 672-1244 (phone) • (330) 672-4064 (fax) • www.jmc.kent.edu

Resources

Tools to help track,
background and interview people

If you're interested in more information on investigating people and putting together profiles, check out these tipsheets and stories, available from the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter):

Tipsheets

- **No. 494:** "Internet Tricks and Treats," Margot Williams, *The Washington Post*. This tipsheet lists Web sites for biographical information, professional and government locators and general directories. An audio tape also is available through the IRE Resource Center.
- **No. 1431:** "Loosening Lips: The Art of the Interview, Second Edition," Eric Nalder, *San Jose Mercury News*. This five-page tipsheet provides specific strategies for conducting successful interviews with reluctant sources, public officials and whistleblowers. It also includes information on anonymity, off-the-record interviews and background interviews.
- **No. 1801:** "Sources and Interviews Tipsheet," Dan Meyers, *The Denver Post*. This tipsheet provides concise tips on interviewing and backgrounding sources for a story.
- **No. 2387:** "Sources," Mark Skertic, *The Chicago Tribune*. This tipsheet describes how to develop and maintain sources, beginning with different ways to gain their confidence. It also gives advice regarding how to handle different types of sources, whether they're unhappy or uncooperative.
- **No. 2448:** "Using the Internet to Background People," Carolyn Edds, *St. Petersburg Times*. This tipsheet is a detailed guide to finding background information on the Internet, covering a variety of sources from property records to personal licenses.

Stories

- **Story No. 19935:** An investigation revealed emergency services in Chicago employed a number of criminals, many of whom were repeat offenders or had been convicted of a violent crime. During the year-long investigation, reporters conducted background checks on 18,000 police officers, firefighters and paramedics. Dave Savini, Michele Youngeman, Mark Ringo, Matthew Byrne, Bond Li, Michelle De Long, Sharon Pearson, Greg Schatz, WMAQ-Chicago. (2002)

- **Story No. 22377:** Paul Rubin investigated the background of Carl Gohson, who died on the streets during the July 2005 heat wave in Phoenix. Gohson was a popular street musician in his community and had battled mental illness throughout his life. (Phoenix) *New Times*. (2005)

IRE Journal Stories

- "Fugitive Capture: Electronic Documents Help Reporter Track Killer 15 Years after Prison Escape," Linda Johnson, *Lexington (Ky.) Herald-Leader*. Johnson explains how she used Internet sources and reporting techniques to locate an escaped murderer named Ralph Annis, whom police were unable to find. (July/August 2005)
- "Quick Hits: Investigations Don't Have to Take Months or Years; Tips on Getting the Story and Making the Deadline," Eric Nalder, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. This story offers eight tips for completing investigative stories quickly. Nalder uses examples from a story he wrote about a tax loophole and includes suggestions for all aspects of his investigation, including backgrounding and interviews. (March/April 2005)
- "Checking Criminal Backgrounds," Carolyn Edds, *The IRE Journal*. Edds details how to use federal court records and inmate locators when checking criminal backgrounds. She also suggests helpful services like PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records). (May/June 2004)
- "Paramedic Backgrounding: Small Station Uses CAR to Sift Entire State's Data," Mark Greenblatt, WBBH-Fort Meyers/Naples, Fla. Greenblatt describes his investigation of Florida's EMT certification system, for which he ran the EMT database against a criminal database. He discusses computer-assisted reporting, accuracy and cooperation with government agencies. (Sept/Oct 2003)
- "Defense Background Checks: Finding the Cracks – and Gaping Holes," Edward T. Pound, *USA Today*. Pound explains his investigation of the Defense Security Service, which does background checks on military and civilian personnel at the Pentagon before they receive access to classified information. Pound describes the state of disarray in the Defense Security Service. (May/June 2000)

CAR Boot Camp



Upcoming CAR Workshops

Computer-Assisted Reporting 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. In addition, IRE and NICAR provide follow-up help when participants return to their news organizations.

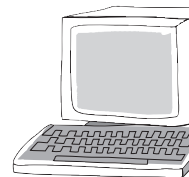
Mapping Data for News Stories: Columbia, Mo.

Learn how to uncover news stories by mapping data with geographic information system software.

- Jan. 12-14, 2007
- Aug. 17-19, 2007

2007 Boot Camps: Columbia, Mo.

- Jan. 7-12
- March 25-30
- May 13-18
- Aug. 5-10



www.ire.org/training/bootcamps.html

IRE What previous Boot Campers have said about the experience:

"They were able to talk in a real way about issues that reporters face when practicing computer-assisted reporting skills ..."

– Analisa Nazareno, *San Antonio Express-News*

"I realized I hadn't been fully tapping my beats, and you don't have to be a computer nerd to do computer-assisted reporting."

– Teresa Taylor Williams, *Muskegon Chronicle*

Fellowships

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

SECURITY RISK

Persistent FOI battle nets numbers on missing TSA badges, uniforms

BY BRIAN COLLISTER
WOAI-SAN ANTONIO

When a national television news magazine reported a large number of badges and uniforms missing from Canadian airport screeners, it put the country's airport security on high alert. It made me wonder how many of those badges and uniforms were missing from airports in the United States, so I began my own investigation.

I had no idea that it would take an 18-month battle with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to finally get records showing that more than 1,400 identification badges and uniform items had been reported lost or stolen from TSA employees since 2003.

Terrorism experts said what we uncovered showed an undeniable threat to security, and it drove one congressman to demand more answers from TSA. The agency responded that the missing badges were "just one of multiple items that are necessary to access our system."

Saul Wilen, a San Antonio-based terrorism prevention consultant, called the issue a very serious problem.

"If you have a badge and a uniform, you are invincible in terms of the system," Wilen said. "Not only can you get in and get around, you can get known and become a regular that becomes more and more recognized, so the next time you are less liable to have to go through the system's security, and the next time even less."

FOIA ammunition

After learning about the missing Canadian badges from the 2004 Canadian Broadcasting Corp. (CBC) story, I did a quick LexisNexis search and found a handful of articles from across the United States about incidents in which one or two badges or uniforms were stolen or missing from airports. I found nothing on a grand scale.

Because I didn't have any sources who could feed me the information, I filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for records detailing all badges and uniforms reported lost, stolen or missing since the TSA was created.

I knew my request would most likely be denied for security reasons in this time of unprecedented government secrecy, and that TSA would use such an excuse to avoid public embarrassment.

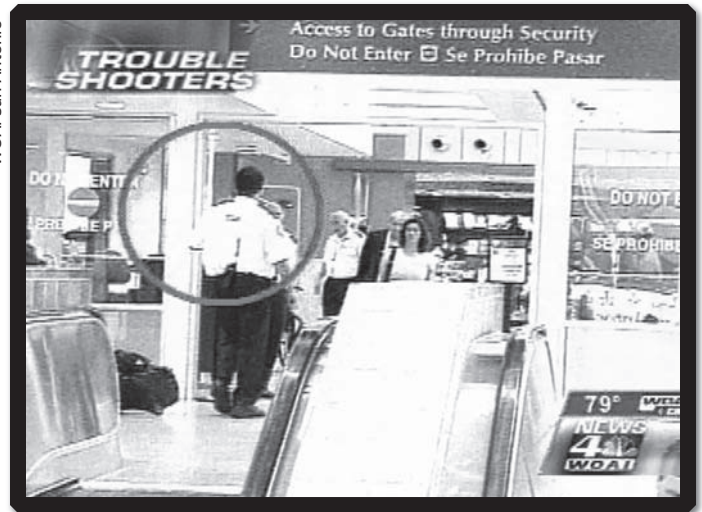
Several months after

filing my request, I got the expected response. But then I remembered earlier public comments from TSA claiming that missing badges did not pose a security risk. I wondered if I could use their own words to obtain the records.

During an online search for more information, I stumbled across a Department of Homeland Security report, about an unrelated topic, in which the department's inspector general noted an issue with some missing badges and uniforms. The report contained a small paragraph in which TSA responded by telling the inspector general that it did not consider its missing uniforms and badges to be a security risk. That report was issued prior to our denied FOI request.

I used the document as ammunition to file a second records request to force TSA to reverse its previous denial. I anticipated another denial citing a new reason and expected to have to take TSA to court to get the records.

WOAI-San Antonio



The WOAI-San Antonio investigation of missing TSA uniforms and badges used video from the local airport, plus footage from WTJV-Miami, to show a pattern of people in TSA garb routinely passing through security checkpoints.

WOAI-San Antonio



TSA officials e-mailed a statement saying that "Transportation security officers, regardless of credentials or uniforms, are screened each time they enter the checkpoint...." but undercover cameras told a different story.

Nuts and bolts information for computer-assisted reporters.



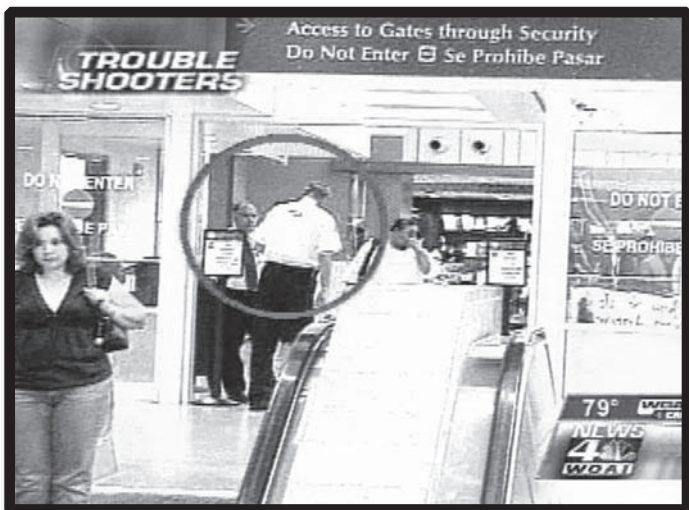
Uplink is a bimonthly newsletter covering every facet of computer-assisted reporting. It's written by the nation's top reporters for the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting.

Articles include valuable information for journalists, educators and students on uses of databases, spreadsheets, Internet resources, mapping and statistical software. Investigative reporters explain how they developed significant stories through these techniques. Technical tips and Q&As serve beginners and advanced journalists.

To subscribe, go to www.ire.org/store or call 573-882-2042.

NICAR is a program of Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. and the Missouri School of Journalism.

WOAI-San Antonio



Hidden cameras showed that flashing a TSA badge was enough to pass through airport security cameras, despite earlier TSA claims that a badge alone would not permit entry.

To my surprise, several months later, I received documents including a list showing the number of stolen and missing identification badges for airports, and a spreadsheet containing details of incidents from airports across the country where uniforms and uniform pieces were stolen or missing.

Without explanation, TSA only released limited information covering the past 15 months. My request specifically asked for records dating back to the creation of TSA in 2001. My deadline loomed as I fired off another appeal.

After several unanswered phone messages to TSA's FOIA office and calls to the public affairs officer for our region, I still could not get all of the records. The public affairs officer told me she could not help me obtain records covering the remaining time period because I already had started the FOI process. She hinted that if I had called and asked her for the records, she would have given them to me. I didn't believe her.

I figured it was time to throw a verbal hand grenade and call her boss in Washington, D.C. That tactic had worked in the past with stonewalling local officials, but, in this case, my request was denied after I was repeatedly referred back to the San Antonio office.

Still, my persistence paid off. After the local TSA public affairs official got wind of my call to her supervisor, she finally agreed (after a lengthy and heated conversation) to call the FOIA officer in Washington, D.C. Two hours later, she faxed the remaining documents to me.

Screening lapses

The full set of records showed that Chicago's O'Hare airport reported the most missing ID badges – 115. At Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport, 42 were missing.

TSA refused to do an on-camera interview. We

did, however, receive this e-mail from a TSA public affairs officer: "Transportation security officers, regardless of credentials or uniforms, are screened each time they enter the checkpoint. Badges and uniforms, used individually or collectively, would not allow access to a person with ill intent."

We decided to pay a visit to our local airport. Armed with hidden cameras, producers Steve Kline and Mandi Johnston spent the next few days standing by the security checkpoints. We soon had video of uniformed screeners routinely skirting security by flashing their ID badges

as they walked through the exits. TSA would not agree to watch our video, but the agency later contradicted its earlier statement, claiming that those employees must have been screened at the beginning of their shift or were supervisors who are not required to be screened.

To help show a pattern, I called my friend Scott Zamost at WTVJ-Miami. He sent me a 2003 video of TSA screeners being waived around a security checkpoint, shot when WTVJ did a story showing the security lapses. Our security expert also told us of observing screeners bypassing security checkpoints a few years earlier at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York.

We took our findings to a local congressman, Rep. Lamar Smith, who sits on the House Committee on Homeland Security. Smith said the missing badges and possible screening lapses are "a clear and present danger to homeland security. We are dealing with people – criminals – who are smart people and will go to great lengths to take advantage of any loopholes in our security."

Newspapers, news Web sites and broadcast news outlets nationwide picked up our investigation.

In response to the widespread attention, a TSA official finally gave NBC an on-camera interview.

"Just because you have one number to the combination doesn't mean you're going to get into the bank vault," he said. "It's just one of multiple items that are necessary to access our system."

Rep. Pete King, chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, told NBC, "This is very significant, and TSA's response is totally inadequate. They can't say it's not significant when you lose over 1,300 badges. In this day and age – in the world of international terrorism that we're confronted with – you cannot have badges being lost and not accounted for."

Sources within TSA contacted us after the story aired and told us the agency is still withholding a large amount of information about how much is really missing. Rep. Smith is trying to help us get that information by sending a letter to the head of TSA demanding more answers.

Brian Collister is an investigative reporter for WOAI-TV in San Antonio, Texas.

IRE's Resources

If you're looking at the TSA or other security issues at airports, check out these stories available through the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter):

- **Story No. 22661:** The story revealed that federal airport screeners have the highest injury rate in the nation. Injuries were causing screeners to miss about 250,000 work days a year, and those absences led to screeners miss training and violate a federal law requiring all checked luggage to go through bomb-detection machines. Thomas Frank, *USA Today* (2005)
- **Story No. 21862:** This investigation reveals the threat presented by unscreened cargo aboard passenger planes, three years after Congress passed a law requiring the screening of such cargo. The report noted that none of the Transportation Security Administration's \$85 million air cargo security budget is being used to screen cargo on passenger planes and that the government puts commerce ahead of safety. Rick Dawson, Loni Smith McKown, Jerry Peck, Doug Garrison, *WISH-Indianapolis* (2004)
- **Story No. 22340:** A three-part investigation into security at airport gates. The authors found that identification checks were less than adequate. They traveled domestically with fake I.D.'s, and sometimes none at all. The investigation found several shortcomings in the security process raising questions over the ability of the TSA to really know who was flying. John Mason, Julie Jacoby, Gary Hill, Jim O'Connell, *KSTP-Minneapolis* (2005)
- **Story No. 21613:** This series of stories examines the security deficiencies at Newark Liberty International Airport, one of the three airports breached by terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001. Thousands of bags each day are not being scanned for explosives and security checkpoints remain seriously understaffed, the newspaper found. Ron Marsico, *The (Newark, N.J.) Star-Ledger* (2004)

Some reporters cover

- City hall

Science journalists cover

- Bioterrorism
- Misuse of science in public policy
- Biotechnology and tissue engineering
- Brain and cognitive sciences
- Avian flu
- Privacy in the computer age
- Stem cells and cloning
- Weapons of mass destruction
- Nanotechnology
- Space exploration
- HIV and AIDS
- Dubious practices in drug marketing
- Global warming
- Toxic waste
- Pollution and poverty
- The truth about human nature
- Addiction
- Cancer
- Obesity
- Race and health care
- and just about everything else the human mind can explore

"I found being a Knight Fellow a marvelous experience. Perhaps the biggest unexpected bonus was the chance to swap career notes and ideas with a group of smart journalists who shared my interests and many of my goals."

— Justin Gillis
The Washington Post

To get a grasp on these and other crucial areas of science, technology, medicine or the environment, consider spending nine months at MIT as a **Knight Science Journalism Fellow**. You'll take classes from leading professors at MIT and Harvard. You'll be among other accomplished journalists who share your passion for understanding concepts at a deeper level and your desire to be an even better journalist.

Knight Fellows receive a stipend of **\$55,000** plus tuition and fees for one academic year.

Application Deadline: March 1



Knight
Science Journalism
Fellowships at MIT

For more information go to <http://web.mit.edu/knight-science/> or contact: Boyce Rensberger, director boyce@mit.edu 617.253.3442

Campaign coffers fill with money gained through gambling

BY BRENT D. WISTROM
THE WICHITA EAGLE

Before the 2006 Kansas legislative session began, many lawmakers were betting their political chips on gambling's ability to revive the state's public education system, which the state's Supreme Court ruled was funded at an unconstitutionally low level.

It would avoid a tax hike and let the thousands of Kansans who gamble in neighboring Oklahoma and Missouri spend their dollars in the Sunflower State. Gambling also was an idea that had come up annually for a decade, pushed quietly by an industry that contributed heavily to many candidates' campaigns.

But, in Kansas, if anything can be construed as a moral debate, it probably will be — especially in an election year.

Conservative Republicans rallied against the idea, saying the state should not promote an addictive behavior, especially to fund children's futures. Meanwhile, Democrats, including Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, worked quietly to garner the votes they would need and keyed on funding education, not casino profits or campaign cash.

The debate focused not so much on the potential crime around casinos, the profits that the state might reap and what that money would pay for, but on whether gambling is an activity the state should not only allow, but encourage.

The answer for many, mostly conservative Republicans, was a firm "no." But that didn't stop them from accepting some of the mounting cash flows gambling entities were showering on politicians.

Gaming money

Early into the three-month legislative session, as gambling became the year's biggest issue, investigative reporter Dion Lefler wrote a story about this apparent contradiction between moral high ground and campaign cash.

It generated an uproar in the statehouse.

Legislators stopped by our tiny office under one of the capitol's staircases almost daily to make sure we understood that they opposed gambling, that the contributions they were accepting came mostly from tribal gaming interests (who were seeking to protect their monopoly in the state), and that the contributions they received were probably only a fraction of what their liberal opponents were taking.

Lawmakers wanted to clarify that in no way were their votes for sale. And they suggested that gambling interests sprayed money at basically anyone running for office. Our veteran statehouse reporter, Steve Painter, had noticed many gambling-related donations, but the true extent of gaming money in

campaigns had not been quantified. And, after several years of failed gambling bills, it was unclear if casino owners were still betting on their cause.

We found they were, and the ante had risen three-fold, but it took us a few weeks to be able to write that with confidence. We had to identify not only all of the gambling groups, but as many of their husbands, wives and children as we could find because many of them were giving maximum donations to candidates as well.

Equipped with some basic skills learned at an IRE Better Watchdog Workshop and IRE's Computer-Assisted Reporting Boot Camp, I made contact with the state's office for governmental ethics and asked how we could obtain several years' worth of contribution data dumped onto a disk as a comma-delimited file.

I was surprised to find no resistance and a lot of explanation about the data. A state data analyst began e-mailing the text files the same week. No open records requests. No fees.

I spent several days in my apartment linking multiple tables together with some long-distance help from our CAR expert, Hurst Laviana, in Wichita. Once I became confident that the data was free of errors and did not contain non-gambling entities with similar names, I put my new structured query language skills to use. We needed to know the annual sum of contributions in which the contributors matched any one of about 15 organizations and all the variations of their names and families' names. So I carefully wrote queries and vetted my results to ensure the accuracy of our analysis. Several nationwide groups like the Institute on Money in State Politics (www.followthemoney.org) had already compiled campaign-funding totals by trade groups, but we needed to make sure we got not only the obvious donors, but people's spouses and children who were maxing out their annual contributions to several campaigns, including the governor's.

This is where a resident expert on state politics comes in handy. With a few phone calls, Painter fleshed out his already long list of gambling names. In addition to seven major entities in favor of expanded gambling, we found several contributors giving maximum contributions who were relatives of Phil Ruffin, a businessman who is developing a Las Vegas casino with Donald Trump and also bought several pari-mutuel tracks in Kansas in hopes of installing slot machines. All told, Ruffin and his ring of influence spent at least \$196,025 on Kansas campaigns over the last four years. We identified five groups that favored keeping gambling the way it is — a business operated

solely by American Indian tribes.

The previous years' returns were huge. Pro-gambling groups had spent \$501,473 from 2000 to 2004, and those opposing expanded gaming contributed \$381,050. We also knew there still could be advocates and multi-client contract lobbyists donating beyond the scope of our analysis. We told readers our analysis represented the low side of how much gambling-related money might have been contributed to Kansas campaigns.

Legislators, including many Republicans who opposed gambling on moral grounds, defended accepting the money and said they agree with Indian casino operators who could lose money if gambling expanded. One Republican representative who accepted money from both sides told us he doesn't think gambling is good for the public, but he said his constituents would burn him either way he votes.

Assured destruction

To show the whole picture, we needed to add contributions filed only a few weeks before we started the story. We had to wait for those records to come out in electronic form because we knew the state would finish their work long before we could transcribe all the figures into a database.

In the meantime, I spent a few hours with a notepad and a stack of contribution reports in the secretary of state's office logging gambling entities' contributions to state political parties. Although we could not portray the parties as advocates for or against gambling, we felt it was important to show how much gambling money they received.

With the new figures, we were ready to see the results.

Gambling-related contributions had spiked 300 percent in six years. We were ready to show lawmakers just how much they received from gambling groups advocating new casinos in Kansas, as well as those that were trying to fend off competition by opposing additional gaming.

Politicians weren't surprised, but our reporting led us to people who thought this might lead to corruption. And we found that some major players, like Ruffin, had channeled nearly \$200,000, some of which was given through family members, to campaigns over four years.

Republican Sen. Phil Journey, who has received \$3,650 in gaming campaign contributions, told us both pro- and anti-expansion contributions are skyrocketing because the two sides are trying to keep up with each other.

"It is akin to mutually assured destruction," he said, adding that it will keep growing until a bill passes or one of the sides gives up.

The bill failed, and so far, it looks like no one is giving up.

Brent D. Wistrom is The Eagle's city hall reporter. He also covers immigration, assists in The Eagle's coverage of Kansas state politics and works on computer-assisted reporting projects.



Government Exhibit 133:

Chapstick tubes with hidden microphones discovered in E. Howard Hunt's White House office safe in 1972. Hunt and G. Gordon Liddy, who led the Watergate break-in team, were stationed in a Watergate Hotel room while the burglary was underway. During the break-in, they would remain in contact with each other and with the burglars by radio.

“If it weren’t for those two reporters from *The Post*, I fear the Republic would have been lost.”

- SELDEN RING, Philanthropist

The deadline for nominations for the 2006 Selden Ring Award is February 1, 2007.

To learn more and download the nomination form, visit <http://annenbergl.usc.edu>.

Thirty-four years ago, **Bob Woodward** and **Carl Bernstein** chased what appeared to be a routine office break-in story all the way to the Oval Office. They didn't do it from behind their desks — they knocked on doors and relied on well-placed sources to cover the most important investigative journalism story of our time, resulting in the the resignation of a sitting president and prison terms for the co-conspirators of the crime.

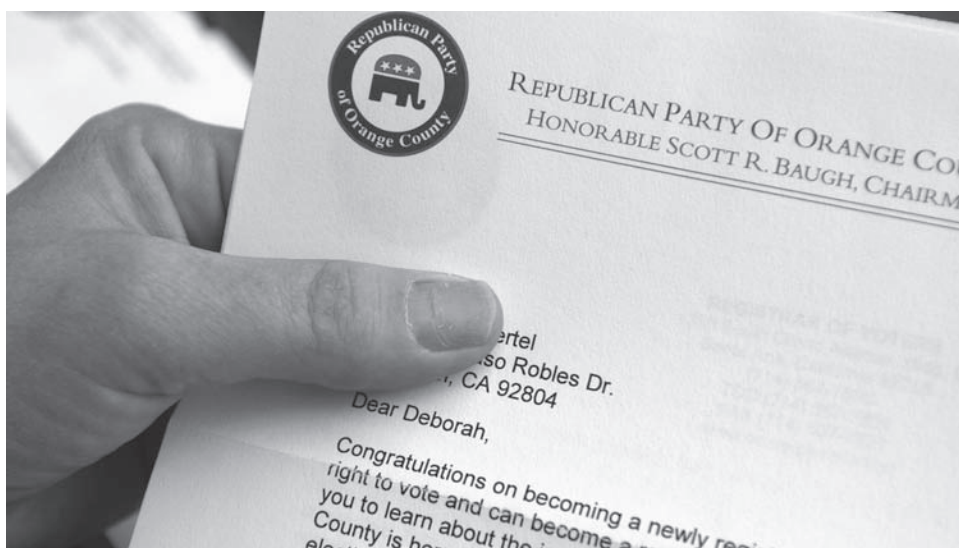
Selden Ring believed this demonstrated the power of investigative journalism — the ability to generate concrete results. Since 1989, USC Annenberg's **Selden Ring Award for Investigative Journalism** has celebrated the year's best in investigative journalism.

Applications are now being accepted for the 2006 Selden Ring Award. Full-time or freelance reporters working for a general circulation United States newspaper, wire service, magazine, or online publication are eligible. Through their investigative reporting, candidates must have informed the public about major problems or corruption in our society.



USC ANNENBERG

SCHOOL FOR COMMUNICATION
3502 WATT WAY
LOS ANGELES CA 90089-0281



Hundreds of Orange County, Calif., residents were incensed to learn that they had unknowingly registered to vote as Republicans after signing what they thought were political petitions.

DUPED VOTERS

Records show residents tricked into switching party affiliations

BY KIMBERLY KINDY, TONY SAAVEDRA AND BRIAN JOSEPH
THE ORANGE COUNTY (CALIF.) REGISTER

It was Christmas 2005, and the Republican Party was celebrating.

In just eight months, a massive voter registration drive in Orange County, Calif., had signed up more than 26,000 new GOP recruits. Sixty percent came from the most hotly contested district in the state. Party leaders predicted the surge would give them an edge in the November 2006 elections.

Then the complaints rolled in.

In February, the Orange County registrar of voters received fraud allegations from dozens of Democrats who claimed they were switched to the Republican Party without their consent.

That spurred us to investigate. We found that people initially were approached to sign petitions to cure cancer or stop criminals and then duped into registering as Republicans by those who were paid to gather names. Our stories have prompted a criminal investigation and made the California Legislature consider prohibiting voter registration workers from being paid per signature.

Bogus registrations

When we first began, we broke a quick story about the 37 complaints from Democrats. We verified that the California Republican Party paid for the drive by reviewing disclosure forms on the Federal Election Commission's Web site (www.fec.gov).

Next, we began looking for more victims. For

\$30, we obtained computerized voter rolls from the Secretary of State's office, which helped us identify the pool of potential victims.

Using that database and 2005 voter data we already had, we pinpointed voters whose party affiliations were changed to Republican during the registration drive. To limit our search, we focused on seven dates on which the most party affiliations were changed. We counted 200 potential victims.

During the next two weeks, a team of seven reporters worked late into the night using voter registration information, LexisNexis and Google to track down phone numbers. When we called the supposed GOP converts, many were surprised and angry.

Their stories struck a familiar note: Victims were approached in shopping center parking lots across Orange County and asked to sign petitions to cure breast cancer, punish child molesters or build schools. After signing a flurry of papers, the shoppers were asked to sign one last form featuring a box marked, "Republican."

If questioned, signature gatherers assured the people that marking the box would not change their party affiliation. It just meant that the petition drive was sponsored by the Republican Party, they said.

Just like that, the signature gatherers duped the harried shoppers into signing GOP voter registration cards.

Among the victims was a lifelong Democrat

Signature Gathering

Many signature gatherers are honest workers, but some resort to trickery to collect names that carry a bounty. Here are some tricks as related by those in the industry:

- Circulators use a "stopper petition" to get the attention of shoppers, choosing a hot topic that presses buttons. Sometimes circulators even fabricate petitions to get people to stop. Some examples of "hot button" topics include sex offenders, high gas prices and education funding. Once shoppers stop, they are presented with multiple petitions and the opportunity to register to vote.
- After shoppers sign the petition they care about, they are asked to sign several others. The petitions all are on a single clipboard in a pile so the signature gatherer can simply flip to the next one and ask for a quick signature. If the workers are getting a bounty, each flip can be worth an average of \$1 to \$3.
- At the end of the pile, the petition gatherer sometimes has a voter registration form. By the time shoppers get to this page, they often are thinking more about how to get away than about what they are signing. Many times they leave blanks, including items such as party affiliation.
- Circulators fill in any blanks on the forms, designating a party affiliation that will ensure they get paid. Sometimes they do this in groups; it's called a "signing ring." Some also use tracing paper to reproduce signatures left behind by voters who may have refused to sign a voter registration card but did sign a petition.

who was pressured to fill out forms even though she didn't have her glasses and couldn't see what she was signing.

We traced the bogus registrations to a number of signature gatherers, including Christopher Scott Dinoff, who checked out 13,000 blank registration cards from the registrar's office. He was arrested three years earlier on suspicion of voter registration fraud in Oregon.

We identified Dinoff and determined he was a major player by using a simple form the registrar's office keeps on file each time it releases a box of blank registration cards. The form requires the recipient to provide the following information: name, contact information; the number of cards checked out; and the tracking numbers assigned to each card. In most cases, the managers of registration drives check out the cards and also hire teams of signature gatherers.

Often, the managers later show up as signature gatherers on registration affidavits, which the signature gatherers fill out and attach to registration cards

CONTINUED ON PAGE 41

DATA DIVE

Basic community services measured in unique series on city performance

BY MICHAEL MANSUR
THE KANSAS CITY STAR

The assignment sounded rather simple: Can we find a way to rate local governments and their delivery of basic services? How are they maintaining streets? Or delivering water?

And, by the way, can we compare them to each other in some way? Who gives taxpayers the most bang for the buck?

Any local government reporter probably will attest that this request was far from simple. In fact, many local government officials would maintain that it's an impossible quest. Some in the Kansas City metropolitan area still take exception about whether we achieved an answer. But I believe, at the very least, we took a significant step in doing so.

In June, *The Kansas City Star* printed the results of our efforts – a three-part series that rated 18 local governments, each responsible for at least 20,000 residents, in eight basic service areas.

Early in my research, I became convinced that no news reporter in recent years had attempted such a project. The biggest problem is getting apples-to-apples comparisons. When you look at miles of roadway resurfaced, is that center-lane miles or total-lane miles? And what do you mean by resurfacing? Does that include overlay and chip sealing? What if they do concrete resurfacing?

The questions can seem endless. Then there's an even deeper problem: How accurate are those answers?

Methodology map

We sought information on eight services: police; fire and fire/ambulance; municipal court; water; sewer; parks and recreation; and street maintenance and solid-waste services.

Local officials at a regional planning agency warned that questions about the data might not become clear until we delved into the analysis. For example, when they attempted to measure street-sweeping efforts in the metro area, they chose the miles of streets swept as a performance factor. But they also found that three different cities measured their mileage in three different ways. One did an actual measurement, while another guessed based on driving speed and time, and the third estimated by looking at a map.

To guide our methodology, we referred to a November 2005 academic study, "Putting Out the Trash: Measuring Municipal Service Efficiency in U.S. Cities," published in *Urban Affairs Review*.

We also hired James Nolan, a University of Saskatchewan economics professor who conducted a similar study for the Reason Public Policy Institute in California. The Reason institute had rated the top cities in the country in even more categories. Nolan helped design inputs and outputs for our study as well as helping us run the numeric ratings.

“The most surprising finding was that Kansas City’s street department actually was pretty efficient. The city is notorious for potholes and rough streets, as many big cities are, but we found that city crews actually do quite a lot. The problem was the lack of spending by city leaders on street maintenance.”

Here’s what we looked at for each service:

Police: Budget, sworn officers and support staff versus the crime index (essentially a measure of crime per citizen)

Fire: Budget, full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) and the number of fires versus fire losses and response calls

Municipal court: Budget, number of judges, staffing levels versus fines collected and cases disposed

Parks and recreation: Budget and FTEs versus acres of parkland, number of facilities and total visits to parks, park events, leagues, other park facilities and community centers

Water: Budget and FTEs versus water mains (by mile), facilities, users served

Sewer: Budget and FTEs versus volume treated and sewer lines (by mile)

Streets: Budget and FTEs versus total lane-miles and miles of street resurfaced

Solid waste: Budget and FTEs versus tons of trash collected and tons recycled

Measuring effectiveness

I began data collection with police. It was easy to collect standard data for police because police departments are required to report budget, staffing and crime statistics. Most of the data was available on the Internet.

But to collect data for the other services, I established a contact person in each of the 18 cities and began to communicate our requests by e-mail and phone. This process took at least two months. We worked with local officials to define, for example, which “facilities” are counted for water or what types of fires are included in “fire losses.”

Cities are used to answering questions, just not such detailed ones. Some refused, for example, to provide the number of visitors to parks, recreation facilities and events because they said they had never tracked such figures. Others did track them or were willing to make reasonable estimates.

In the Reason study, the economists used a standard method to calculate the rankings. Known as DEA, it stands for “data envelopment analysis” and has long been used in academia and the business world to compare “decision-making units,” or essentially any group that spends money to produce some product or service.

We used EXCEL SOLVER and macros set up by our consultant to crunch the data. Other DEA software is available via the Internet.

As we collected data, I maintained master spreadsheets for each service. Once all cities had responded, I’d ship the data to the consultant who would run the macros. He also provided me with the macros, and I replicated his results on my own computer.

In addition, we ran a regression analysis, using data such as city growth in population, area and median household income. The regression analysis showed that the only notable factor – though it was minor – was the state in which the city was located. Missouri cities tended to be more efficient, which we speculated might be due to a statewide provision that restricts cities from imposing new taxes or fees without a public vote. In Kansas, local government officials have more leeway to raise taxes and fees.

We took the rankings by service for each city and averaged them to arrive at a final overall ranking. We penalized cities in a few instances if they couldn’t provide data that our consultant considered basic.

Cities often use “performance measurements,” in their budgets and other documents. They may, for example, track the repair cost per pothole – a simple ratio of total costs divided by number of potholes repaired. DEA is the only method we found that could take multiple inputs and outputs and produce relative rankings.

One drawback of the DEA method is measuring effectiveness of services provided. Given the data limitations, it’s much easier to measure the efficiency of a service. For example, it’s easy to

take inputs and outputs for parks and determine who is operating the most facilities, caring for the most parkland or getting the most visits, relative to the city's spending, but it's difficult to determine which city provided the most effective park maintenance in terms of quality. If cities surveyed park maintenance and assigned a numeric score for each park, it might be possible to also measure efficacy or quality. Unfortunately, cities don't do that. The number of visits might say something about park maintenance, but our study had to assume that parks and streets, etc., generally were well-maintained.

Future implications

The most controversial was our finding that combined fire/ambulance operations were more efficient than traditional fire-only departments.

Bigger cities fared better in parks and solid waste operations, although it was difficult to rate trash/recycling operations because few cities used comparable systems.

Suburban cities that have experienced rapid growth in population and land area had trouble in the police service ratings. Compact cities, which can achieve a police presence with fewer patrol cars, fared best.

The most surprising finding was that Kansas City's street department actually was pretty efficient. The city is notorious for potholes and rough streets, as many big cities are, but we found that city crews actually do quite a lot. The problem was the lack of spending by city leaders on street maintenance.

The reactions of city managers and other city officials ranged from, "Wow, can we do this every year?" to "What's the point? All that matters is our surveys of citizens and what they think."

The series has prompted some directors to begin discussing new data collection efforts with *The Star*, and some city managers are pushing for regional planners to facilitate new performance-measurement studies.

The future implications of these data-collection problems are important. As performance measurement increases and taxpayers demand more information about what they are getting for their money, cities will have to consider ways to collect the type of information we used in our study. Once a few cities begin this, more taxpayers will demand even more data that tell them not only how efficient their local government is, but also how effective.

Other countries – notably, Australia and New Zealand – lead the United States in requiring such measurements of local government. *The Star's* efforts and the public's demands for more quantifiable measurements should only intensify in coming years.

Michael Mansur, a projects reporter at The Kansas City Star, investigates local government. He won first place in the 2004 National Headliner Award for his coverage.

Voters

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39

for each registrant. The affidavit requires that signature gatherers provide their signature, full name, telephone number and home address. The registrar's office keeps a PDF copy of the affidavits, which we ordered for all the people who complained. Although not every signature gather properly filled out the affidavits, we were able to track down key players who were responsible for the fraudulent affiliation switches.

Criminal investigation

As we explored the world of signature gatherers, we learned they live as nomads, moving from state to state and following the cash in an industry where signatures are the lifeblood of politics. Petitioners often earn a bounty for each signature. In Orange County, bounties spiked as high as \$12 during the drive. Prosecutors say the practice fuels registration fraud.

In the end, we reached 134 voters. Of these, 112, or 84 percent, said they were flipped to the Republican Party against their will. Victims subsequently flooded the registrar of voters' office with demands to have their true party affiliations restored.

Five days after our April 1 story, the California Attorney General's office announced it was teaming with the Secretary of State in a historic, joint criminal investigation of the fraud.

By then, 167 complaints had surfaced, and we were hearing that some of the unregulated signature gatherers had unsavory histories. We discovered that

among the most active workers in Orange County were a convicted child molester, an immigrant smuggler and a prostitute.

Using names listed on registration affidavits, we checked their histories using LexisNexis and court records. Voter fraud investigators and prosecutors in California and other states helped us fill in the details of some signature gatherers' checkered pasts.

Even people who work in the industry acknowledged the criminal element in their ranks.

"Half the (petitioners) are crack- or meth-heads. It's to get cash for their next fix," said one petition and voter registration circulator from Las Vegas who has worked on and off in Orange County for two years.

The investigations have spurred the California Legislature to consider prohibiting voter registration workers from being paid per signature. The state's investigation is ongoing.


The number of complaints has reached more than 500.

Kimberly Kindy was an investigative reporter covering state politics for The Orange County (Calif.) Register. She was based in Sacramento and served as the office bureau chief. Investigative reporter Tony Saavedra specializes in city and county government coverage and is chairman of the investigations team. Brian Joseph joined the state politics team six months ago and covers the California Legislature for the Sacramento bureau. He most recently covered suburban politics for The Sacramento Bee.

A Grand Ol' Switcheroo

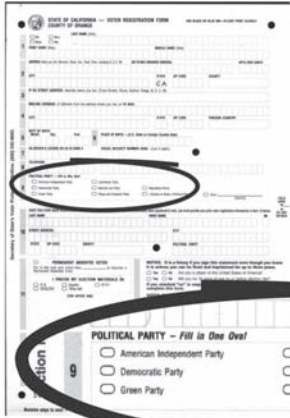
A Register investigation found more than 100 Orange County residents were duped into registering as Republicans by petition gatherers who were paid \$7 for each GOP registration.

1 Residents were approached to sign petitions to punish child molesters, build schools or cure breast cancer.




Luis Bravo, The Register

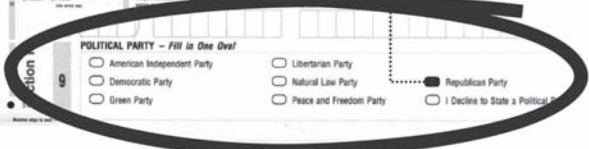
2 Without knowing, residents were also signing voter registration cards. Petitioners ask to leave political party field blank, or that by listing them as Republican they were not switching their party affiliation.



3 Residents began to receive Republican Party mailers welcoming them to their new party affiliation.



Petitioners fill out Republican Party





Presented by Investigative Reporters and Editors and
the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting

2007 CAR Conference

March 8-11, 2007

Cleveland, Ohio

Renaissance Cleveland Hotel

2007 IRE Conference

June 7-10, 2007

Phoenix, Arizona

Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa



Find out more at:

www.ire.org/training/conferences.php



The estimated cost of each murder topped \$626,648, not counting expenses such as burials, survivor benefits or hospital bills, which potentially add millions to the grand total.

KILLER PRICE

Murder costing taxpayers millions; wide variety of services impacted

BY MELVIN CLAXTON
THE (NASHVILLE) TENNESSEAN

For Nashville, 2005 was a very violent year.

The city saw a near-record 100 murders – a 72 percent increase from the previous year. It was the largest jump in homicides in any of the nation's 35 largest cities.

Hardest hit were the city's poor and minority neighborhoods. Law enforcement officials and community leaders blamed the increased violence on stepped-up gang activity, drugs and the ready availability of guns.

It was all too familiar.

The Tennessean and other local media reported on many of the murders. But with a significant number of the victims being young men linked by police to drugs and gangs, the public outcry over the spiraling murder rate was relatively muted.

It was understandable. Most Tennesseans felt removed from the violence or didn't see how the killings affected them.

But, even though they didn't realize it, Tennesseans were paying a heavy financial price for homicides. Our story went beyond the usual recitation of crime statistics to explain to readers how much murder was costing them.

Our investigation showed that the state's taxpayers spend at least \$110 million each year to investigate, try and incarcerate murderers. In Nashville alone, that bill was \$18 million.

Tabulating the cost

Getting to the cost of murder wasn't easy. From the start, we faced significant obstacles to putting a price tag on the crime.

No government agency or private organization in the state tracked this figure. Even agencies directly involved in investigating homicides or punishing killers didn't have specific cost data.

Our first task was to determine all the possible ways murder costs taxpayers, businesses and individuals. We began by identifying the local and state agencies involved at every stage of a murder case. We traced their involvement from the initial police investigation to the moment when the killers completed their sentences.

Once we identified the agencies and departments affected by homicides, we began the process of quantifying how much they spent each year on the crime. We started our hunt for numbers with a series of Freedom of Information requests for statistics and financial data from police, prosecutors, public defenders, courts, corrections, workers' compensation and the state's crime victim compensation fund.

We also interviewed police officials, prosecutors, defense lawyers, court officials, trauma experts, funeral home directors, EMS officials, crime scene cleanup specialists, social workers, hospital officials and relatives of victims and killers.

Our cost tabulation began with the police. The police department is typically the first government entity involved in a murder case. But getting precise figures on police murder-related costs proved dif-

John Partipilo | The Tennessean



The bill for cleaning up crime scenes, like this Nashville apartment, was added to the overall cost of murders.

John Partipilo | The Tennessean



Stories highlighted the cost to murder victims' families, and many readers responded with donations. This mother and her two daughters have struggled financially since the girls' father died.

ficult. The main obstacle was the fact that police detectives don't keep complete time logs on hours spent investigating murders, and most also work assault, rape and other major crimes.

There were other complications. Homicide detectives don't work murder cases alone but are assisted by patrol officers, forensic specialists and other police support staff. We had to factor these police employees into the equation.

We also had to deal with the fact that there is no average murder investigation.

Some cases are solved in a matter of hours, while others take months or remain open for years.

To come up with a realistic cost estimate, we created a database using 2005 statistics provided by the police. For each case, we showed the length of time it remained open, the number of officers and staff involved, hourly wages for each employee and the police department's rough estimate on the hours each employee spent on the case.

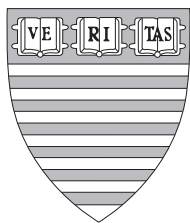
We used this data to determine how much police spent on salaries investigating murders in 2005.

We also looked at indirect costs: office equipment, supplies, utilities and miscellaneous expenses. We totaled direct and indirect costs to determine a final figure for police expenditures and shared that figure and our methodology with the police before publication for their feedback. Police officials endorsed the methodology and final numbers.

Our police cost estimates were not the only approximations. Because prosecutors and court employees don't keep specific records on the time they spend on murder cases, we used published

GOLDSMITH AWARDS

Joan Shorenstein Center
PRESS • POLITICS



▪ **PUBLIC POLICY** ▪

Harvard University
John F. Kennedy School of Government

\$ 25,000 Prize for Investigative Reporting

Materials must be postmarked by
January 4, 2007

For more information, please contact:

Goldsmith Awards Program
Joan Shorenstein Center
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-495-1329

www.shorensteincenter.org

surveys, salary information, budget figures and trial duration data to determine prosecution and court-related costs.

We gathered detailed or very specific cost data in several other areas.

The public defenders' office, which represents the majority of indigent suspects, provided detailed estimates on its murder-related expenditure. And because the post-conviction defenders office only handles appeals in capital murder cases, its entire \$1.2 million budget was murder-related.

In addition, we used billing records from court-appointed attorneys to determine how much taxpayers spend on private lawyers for indigent murder suspects. We made a public records request to obtain this information from the court administrator's office.

Public unaware

We also looked at other costs that are routinely overlooked.

The Public Works Department, which handles crime scene cleanup on public property, provided specific information on the murder scenes it cleaned and the cost associated with these cleanups.

The state medical examiner provided an itemized breakdown of autopsy costs.

Emergency medical services' officials provided data on the amounts billed for transporting murder victims to the hospital.

But the single largest cost associated with homicides is the incarceration of killers. That figure exceeds \$74 million a year in Tennessee.

To arrive at this figure, we obtained operating cost data from the corrections department for each of the state's prisons. Once we determined a cost per inmate for a facility, we multiplied that cost by the number of killers incarcerated in that prison.

While taxpayers bear the brunt of public services related to murders, businesses and hospitals share the burden as well. One story focused on the cost to private individuals, including victims' families who are financially crippled after their loss.

We obtained data on the costs associated with hospital trauma centers providing emergency medical care to murder victims. The information from the hospitals showed that most victims didn't have insurance. As a result, the majority of their bills went unpaid.

Companies that experience workplace homicides also pay a price. In addition to losing employees, these companies sometimes are forced to pay higher workers' compensation premiums.

We used workers' compensation fund records to determine the impact of job-related homicides on companies. These records were especially helpful in the case of a Nashville restaurant chain that declined to discuss the financial impact of a triple murder at one of its franchises. Using workers' compensation records, police reports and other documents, we were able to show that the murders cost the chain more than \$400,000.

John Partipilo | The Tennessean



A 2-year-old touches her father's grave in Nashville. An investigation showed taxpayers spend at least \$110 million annually to investigate, try and incarcerate murderers.

Readers seemed genuinely surprised by what we found, judging from letters and e-mails. We determined that the average bill for a murder – calculating expenses from the moment a police investigation begins to the time those convicted of the crime have served their sentences – is more than \$626,648.

In addition, we also found that individuals and taxpayers spent millions more for burials, crime scene cleanups, hospital bills, government aid to victims and other murder-related expenses.

The series has received strong praise from a

wide cross section of the public. We have also had numerous individuals volunteer financial assistance to many of the families of victims mentioned in the series. Many readers thanked us for bringing a little-known issue to their attention.

Melvin Claxton is a senior investigative reporter with The Tennessean in Nashville. He is a former investigative reporter with the Chicago Tribune, The Detroit News and The Virgin Islands Daily News and coauthor of "Uncommon Valor," a book about black soldiers in the Civil War.

Member news

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

published by Little, Brown & Co. in August.

■ **Mark Skertic** joined Kroll as a business intelligence and investigations director in the Chicago office; he worked at the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago-Sun Times*. ■ **Elise Warner** of MSNBC won a Front Page Award from the Newswomen's Club of New York for "Wasteland: The Innocent Victims of Meth."

Funerals

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

both President Bushes – to operate 2,202 funeral homes and cemeteries in North America.

The company has been hit by a number of regulatory actions and lawsuits, such as one in Florida where an SCI home was accused of selling an elderly, impaired woman funeral services totaling \$125,000, including a \$40,000 casket. SCI and Alderwoods, along with giant Batesville Casket of Indiana, also are being sued by consumer groups in federal court for allegedly conspiring to fix prices. SCI and Batesville say the allegation is bogus.

Besides the other sidebar on the double burial, I wrote a consumer piece on the latest trends in alternative sendoffs. They include a lower-cost, nontoxic "green" burial in the woods, a wake-style do-it-yourself funeral that includes temporarily storing your loved one in a dark and cool space at home, and an eco-pod casket that fits in the back of your hatchback.

And did I requisitely cite muckracker Jessica Mitford. The late author's updated version of her memorable expose of the funeral industry, "The American Way of Death Revisited," refers to funeral prearrangement insurance plans as the "pay now, die poorer" method. As if to confirm that, the state funeral-cemetery office says a Tacoma memorial society refused to release the ashes of a deceased woman until her family paid the prearrangement bill in full. Some seemingly basic costs – for a cremation container (\$75) and an urn (\$29) – weren't included in the limited contract the customer had signed. Other unusual costs, it turned out, were required by law, such as \$45 to remove the woman's pacemaker, which is potentially explosive when cremated.

Rick Anderson is a staff writer for Seattle Weekly and formerly a columnist for The Seattle Times, where he won the Heywood Brown Award. He's the author of Home Front: The Government's War On Soldiers.

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: Megan Means, meganm@ire.org, 573-884-2360

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 – Megan Means, meganm@ire.org, 573-884-2360

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



The Newspaper Guild-CWA announces its

2006 HEYWOOD BROUN AWARD

This annual competition is intended to encourage and recognize individual journalistic achievement by members of the working media, particularly if it helps right a wrong or correct an injustice. First consideration will be given to entries on behalf of individuals or teams of no more than two. This, too, is in the spirit of Broun.

- **DEADLINE:** Entries must be postmarked no later than Jan. 26, 2007, and must have a clearly legible return address on the package. Entries posted after Jan. 26 will be discarded. Faxed and e-mailed entries will not be accepted.

- **AWARD:** \$5,000, plus two awards of \$1,000 for entries of substantial distinction. One of the awards of substantial distinction will be for a broadcast (television or radio) entry. Entries published exclusively on the Internet will be judged as print submissions.

- **PUBLICATION DATES:** The award will be given for work published or broadcast between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2006.

- **ELIGIBILITY:** Journalists working on behalf of non-student mass media in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico are eligible, whether Guild members or not; student journalists should seek the Barr Award. Publishers and other employers, or entries on behalf of an entire staff of a publication or employer, are not eligible; neither are entries written or reported by managers. Entries may be submitted by applicants for themselves or by others; however, entrants should note that the judges frown on obviously mass-produced contest entries.

- All entries become property of the award committee.

Heywood Broun was a crusading columnist for The Tribune and The World in New York from 1912 until his death in 1939. He also wrote frequently for The Nation and The New Republic, as well as Harper's, Bookman, American Mercury and Collier's. **He founded the American Newspaper Guild in 1933 and served as its first president.**

Although his first love was sports, Broun is best remembered for his **reporting on social issues and his passionate championing of the underdog and the disadvantaged.** "When a man has a conviction, great or small, about eggs or eternity, he must wear it always in plain sight, pulled down tight upon his forehead," he once wrote. "I see no wisdom in saving up punches for a rainy day."

Broun maintained a steadfast belief that **journalists could help right wrongs, especially social ills.** "I am a little sick and tired of being classed as soft, bourgeois and sentimental if I say that human brotherhood could solve overnight the problems concerning which men shake their heads and say 'It's too bad but insurmountable,'" he wrote in 1933. And in 1939, just a month before his death, he



Matt Lait (left) and Scott Glover, reporters for the Los Angeles Times, receive the 2005 Broun Award from retired columnist William Raspberry.

wrote: "I would like to see some columnists do the side streets and the suburbs and **chronicle the joys and tragedies of the ordinary run of people.**"

- **REQUIREMENTS:** There is no official entry form, nor is there an entry fee. Each newspaper or magazine entry must be submitted in triplicate, one copy of which must be an original tearsheet. Internet entries should be submitted as print-outs, also in triplicate. Broadcast entries shall consist of one copy of a tape (VHS), CD or DVD and three copies of a final script and a summary.

All entries must include:

1. A one-page summary.
2. A separate description of the circumstances under which the work was done and its results.
3. Contact name, phone and e-mail address.

Entries that do not conform to these requirements will not be judged.

- **ADDRESS:** Broun Award Committee
The Newspaper Guild-CWA
501 Third Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20001-2797

- **PHONE:** 202-434-7177

- A list of past winners and judges may be seen online at the Guild's website, www.newsguild.org.

- Entries will be acknowledged via postcard. Winners will be notified personally and will be announced in the March, 2007 issue of *The Guild Reporter*, which also may be read online.

- Awards will be presented at a dinner banquet May 3, 2007 in Washington, D.C.



Counter clockwise from top left: A view from aboard the Excellence – the ship Rose Bard was working on when she had her accident; Rose, with the help of physical therapist Bernice Kegel, navigates over a speed bump; Rose gives a kiss to her son, Aries Hylan Laigo.

The triumph of the human spirit is never an everyday story.

Last fall, while working on a fish processing vessel in the Bering Sea, Rose Bard began the battle for her life. Just hours after finding out she was pregnant, Rose was cleaning a fish-mincing machine on the M/V Excellence when someone accidentally turned it on. The machine mangled her legs and trapped her for hours while she awaited a heroic Coast Guard rescue in one of the worst storms of the season.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer told Rose's dramatic story in a week-long serialized presentation. The P-I team of nationally recognized narrative writer Carol Smith and award-winning photographer Dan DeLong showed readers how one woman survived and thrived as a physically challenged mother in Seattle.



Carol Smith, Reporter
Dan DeLong, Photographer

Integrating the Web added an exciting dimension to the series, which ensured readers never missed a day of "A Life in the Balance." Online visitors viewed the photo gallery, listened to audio readings of the story and heard words from Rose. On the fourth day, the series drew the highest readership on seattlepi.com – an achievement far beyond most serials. See the entire series at seattlepi.com/specials/rose

The community responded to the series. Many readers wrote in to thank the P-I for sharing this inspiring story of one woman's perseverance over tragedy. Bringing readers the stories that they never forget is one more way Hearst Newspapers deliver excellence every day.

