

THE IRE JOURNAL



January/February 2007

Volume 30 Number 1

ENERGY & UTILITIES

POPULAR HIT

Mechanic fraud story proves effectiveness of Web investigations

FALSE PLEDGE

Over half of donations made to troopers' fund kept by telemarketers

HIPAA CHALLENGE

Two-year legal fight for lead records results in groundbreaking ruling



PRELIMINARY SPEAKERS LIST



Helena Bengtsson,
The Center for Public Integrity
Robert Benincasa, Gannett News Service
Megan Clarke,
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Sarah Cohen, *The Washington Post*
Chase Davis, *Houston Chronicle*
Dave Davis, *The (Cleveland) Plain Dealer*
Steve Doig, Arizona State University
David Donald, IRE and NICAR
Jaimi Dowdell, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*
Carolyn Edds, *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times*
Alletta Emeno, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*
Matthew Ericson, *The New York Times*
Robert Gebeloff,
The (Newark, N.J.) Star-Ledger
Jason Grotto, *The Miami Herald*
Doug Haddix, *The Columbus Dispatch*
Brian Hamman, *Columbia Missourian*
David Herzog,
Missouri School of Journalism
Adrian Holovaty, *The Washington Post*
Brant Houston, IRE and NICAR
David Knox, *Akron Beacon Journal*

Jennifer LaFleur,
The Dallas Morning News
Daniel Lathrop, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*
Andrew Lehren, *The New York Times*
David Milliron,
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
Ron Nixon, *The New York Times*
Paul Overberg, *USA Today*
Aron Pilhofer, *The New York Times*
Jeff Porter, IRE and NICAR
Adam Clayton Powell III,
USC Annenberg School for Communication
Janet Roberts, *The New York Times*
Adam Symson,
E.W. Scripps Broadcast Group
Maurice Tamman,
Sarasota (Fla.) Herald-Tribune
Tom Torok, *The New York Times*
Jodi Upton, *USA Today*
Matthew Waite, *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times*
MaryJo Webster,
Saint Paul (Minn.) Pioneer Press
James Wilkerson, *The New York Times*
Derek Willis, *The Washington Post*

PRELIMINARY PANEL LIST

Watch www.ire.org for updates.

(Please note that titles and panel topics may be changed in the final program schedule.)

- Applying social network analysis to community investigations
- Applying social science methods to CAR
- Avoiding errors in CAR
- Building the newsroom intranet
- CAR and basic math
- CAR and natural disasters
- CAR and subsidies
- CAR and the American Community Survey
- CAR goes international
- City Hall and CAR
- Covering elderly issues with data
- Covering transportation safety with CAR
- Doing CAR in a small newsroom
- Editing in CAR

- Editing the CAR story: Making it sing and avoiding wrong notes
- Exposing ethnic injustices
- Finding data on the Net
- FOI and CAR: Successful strategies
- Getting touchdowns with CAR in sports
- Homeland security and CAR
- Housing scams and CAR
- Introduction to statistics
- Latest tools to collect information: RSS and more
- Making CAR work for broadcast
- Medicine and CAR
- Military data for investigations
- Narrative writing in CAR investigations
- No fear: An overview of CAR and how to get started

- Online maps for enterprise stories
- Real estate investigations in CAR
- Scraping data from government Web sites
- The latest in CAR and politics
- The latest in visualizing data: Maps, webcams, and social network analysis
- The latest investigations in CAR and the environment
- Thinking in CAR: Approaches, methodologies and blending it with traditional reporting
- Transportation stories with CAR
- Understanding crime statistics and CAR
- Using CAR to grade your school system
- Using federal contract data for investigations
- Using wikis and blogs in investigations
- Worker safety and CAR

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The Sacramento Bee
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The (Salt Lake City) Deseret Morning News

ENERGY & UTILITIES



ABOUT THE COVER

NRG Energy Inc. of Princeton, N.J. received a \$22 million property tax break in 2003 as a participant in New York's Empire Zone program, which is designed to help businesses create new jobs.

Cover Story

Pages 20-33

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Gary Walts, *The Post-Standard*

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FROM THE IRE OFFICES



BRANT HOUSTON

IRE promotes training for ethnic media

It's estimated that they serve 50 million readers and viewers. Their journalists are passionate, optimistic and deeply connected to the community. The issues they cover include injustice, housing and fraud, and they are not afraid to advocate for change. Their circulation and markets are increasing – sometimes exponentially.

While we once might have assumed this to be only the description of the mainstream media in the United States, it actually is the story of ethnic media newsrooms, both large and small, in this country.

Some 700 of these organizations belong to New America Media, (www.newamericamedia.org) a coalition envisioned and started by Sandy Close, the founder of Pacific Radio and winner of a MacArthur Fellowship (also known as the “genius grant”) in the mid-1990s.

New America Media, or NAM, is the country's first and largest national collaboration of ethnic news organizations. Close founded NAM under her nonprofit news service – Pacific News – in 1996 in California.

As NAM states on its Web site, its “goal is to promote the editorial visibility and economic viability of this critical sector of American journalism as a way to build inclusive public discourse in our increasingly diverse, global society.” It also serves as a bridge to foundations and corporations that are trying to figure out how to connect to communities of new citizens and immigrants who speak languages other than English.

In its 10th year, NAM recently held a conference and its first national awards ceremony in Washington, D.C. Investigative reporting award winners included journalists from *Tu Ciudad* (Los Angeles, Calif.), *India-West* (San Leandro, Calif.), *The Indian Express* (New York, N.Y.), *El Diario/La Prensa* (New York, N.Y.) and *Chinese Media Net Inc./Duowei Times* (Bayside, N.Y.).

As part of the awards recognition, the organizers called all the finalists in all categories to the stage, and it was an epiphany: There stood the diversity and connection to communities that the mainstream media has been seeking for decades.

At the conference, IRE conducted a watchdog journalism panel. More than 40 journalists attended, representing bilingual newsrooms serving communities speaking Korean, Mandarin, Spanish and other languages. We talked about standards, methodology, resources and, of course, investigative stories. We answered questions. We offered ideas, and we got ideas. It was the first time we had collaborated with NAM, and it was an indisputable success.

As IRE moves forward into 2007, we are about to launch a series of Watchdog Workshops in collaboration with NAM. The first will be Feb. 17-18 at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Chicago. These Watchdog Workshops will follow the long-time model of IRE with sessions ranging from cultivating sources to using the Freedom of Information Act to following document and database trails. We will make sure to cover relevant topics such as immigration, injustice and housing.

Helping us launch this program is the McCormick Tribune Foundation, which a decade ago supported our initiative in Mexico and the rest of Latin America.

While some of NAM's advocacy programs may diverge from the priorities and practices of mainstream media, the potential of this collaboration is limitless for both IRE and NAM.

We have much to learn from each other. IRE can share skills and knowledge built up over the past three decades. NAM can provide gateways to communities and stories often missed by mainstream media, and new colleagues who bring fresh ideas and a reminder of the crucial public service role that newsrooms should play in society.

This collaboration will bring diversity and enthusiasm to IRE membership ranks that we know we need to continue to be a vibrant, valuable and forward-looking organization.

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.

IRE Board vacancy filled by Thompson

The IRE Board of Directors voted unanimously to appoint Lea Thompson, NBC's chief consumer correspondent, to serve out the remaining 2006-07 term of departing board member Deborah Sherman.

Sherman, an investigative reporter at KUSA-Denver, resigned in October for medical and family reasons. She was first elected to the Board of Directors in 2004 and has been an active fundraiser and advocate for IRE's broadcast members.

"While the board is saddened to see Deb step down from the board, we certainly understand that family comes first, and we wish her well," said James Grimaldi, IRE board president.

Thompson, a long-time IRE member, has worked in the NBC system throughout her professional career, starting at WRC-Washington, D.C., and moving to Dateline and NBC News in 1992. She primarily covers consumer, environmental, health and safety issues. Her investigative work was the driving force behind three acts of Congress and has initiated more than two dozen congressional and governmental agency hearings.

Thompson has won two IRE Awards, along with numerous honors as a finalist in the IRE awards. She also has received several Peabody, Polk, Edward R. Murrow and Emmy awards, the Gerald Loeb Award from the UCLA Anderson School of Management and an Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Award.

"The board is delighted to have someone of the caliber of Lea Thompson on the board," Grimaldi said. "Always a popular speaker at our conferences, Lea has deep roots as a long-time IRE member and winner of IRE awards."

IRE provides CAR training for Chinese students, journalists

IRE and NICAR training director David Donald recently completed eight days of hands-on computer-assisted reporting training for Chinese journalists at Shantou University in Guangdong Province.

Donald gave a presentation on the uses of CAR to about 70 undergraduate students at Shantou. He held training classes for five journalists and five graduate students who received fellowships from the university and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund to pursue stories on environmental problems in China.

He also attended an environmental reporting conference in Guangzhou, where he discussed how U.S. reporters have used CAR for in-depth reporting on pollution.

Donald says Chinese reporters and students are eager to develop more analytical skills. Although data acquisition can be more challenging than what Western journalists face, the reporters and students found a surprising amount of data already posted on the Web, he said.

Ethnic media workshop kicks off in Chicago

IRE will hold its pilot Ethnic Media Workshop Feb. 17-18 at the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Chicago. This will be the first event in a new IRE training series for ethnic newsroom media.

According to New America Media (NAM), ethnic media are the fastest growing part of American journalism. IRE will collaborate with NAM, an organization of more than 700 ethnic news groups, to produce the workshops and will work with other minority organizations, including the National Association of Hispanic Journalists and the National Association of Black Journalists.

The Ethnic Media series will cover how to do investigative and enterprise reporting quickly and effectively. It will take successful sessions from IRE's Watchdog training program and focus on specific issues relevant to ethnic newsrooms, such as immigration, homeland security, social injustice and workplace safety.

The first workshop will include sessions on using open-records laws and computer-assisted reporting. Professional journalists will demonstrate how to find relevant documents, databases and sources.

The workshop is funded by the McCormick Tribune Foundation. For more information, visit www.ire.org/training/ethnicmediaws.



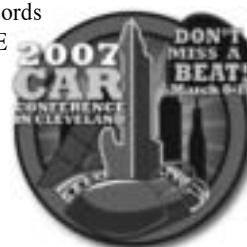
Cleveland conference offers CAR training

The leaders in the field of computer-assisted reporting will gather for IRE's 2007 CAR Conference on March 8-11 in downtown Cleveland's Renaissance Cleveland Hotel.

Attendees should reserve a hotel room early to be guaranteed a spot in the conference room block. The reservation deadline is February 9 to receive the discounted rate of \$119 per night, plus tax. Hotel information, registration and preliminary program details can be found at www.ire.org/training/cleveland07.

Panels and classes will emphasize the daily use of CAR for beginner, intermediate and advanced users in every medium of journalism.

The program will include hands-on classes, special sessions for editors and educators, in addition to panels on the uses of wikis and blogs in investigations, how to present stories on the Web, interactive maps, newsroom intranets, social network analysis and using open records laws to get data. IRE will invite experts in social research methods, surveys, statistics, Census data and other topics, too.



MEMBER NEWS

Bert Dalmer has joined the state of Iowa's Office of Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman, where he will investigate citizen complaints regarding state and local government and adverse actions taken against whistleblowers. He worked at *The Des Moines Register*. ■ **Clif Dunn** is now a segment producer at "Dailies" on the ReelzChannel network. He worked for ESPN Hollywood and Bauer Publications. ■ The *Bangor (Maine) Daily News* team, including **Misty Edgecomb** and **Greg McManus**, won first place in the small market reporting division from the Society of Environmental Journalists for "Our Changing World." ■ **Aaron Kessler** has joined *The (Charlottesville, Va.) Daily Progress*. He was deputy director at the Virginia Public Access Project, a campaign finance watchdog group in Richmond, Va. ■ **Bill Marimow** is the new editor at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. He was a reporter at the *Inquirer* from 1972 until 1993, winning two Pulitzer Prizes, and most recently worked at National Public Radio. ■ **Jim Parsons**, Kendall Cross and Shawn Quinlan of WTAE-Pittsburgh won a television reporting award from the Society of Environmental Journalists for "Toxic Treatment." ■ **John Sherman** and Beau Kershaw of WBAL-Baltimore won a television reporting award from the Society of Environmental Journalists for "Dirty Secret," about a composting facility polluting Chesapeake Bay. ■ **Jeff South**, an associate professor of journalism at Virginia Commonwealth University, was awarded a Knight International Press Fellowship for 2007. He will spend six months in Ukraine teaching media skills, including computer-assisted reporting, to journalists and educators. ■ **Matt Waite** and Craig Pittman of the *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times* won the Kevin Carmody Award for investigative reporting from the Society of Environmental Journalists for "Vanishing Wetlands," an investigation into Florida's disappearing wetlands. ■ **Henry Weinstein** won the 2006 John Chancellor Award for Excellence in Journalism, which recognizes long-term quality reporting. He has worked at the *Los Angeles Times* since 1978.

Send Member News items to Megan Means at meganm@ire.org and include a phone number for verification.

BOOKS OF 2006

Investigative authors probe variety of issues ranging from military operations to tainted food

BY STEVE WEINBERG
THE IRE JOURNAL

Despite marketplace demands and pressures for higher profits by some publishers, there was an outpouring of books by investigative journalists appearing in stores. Unlike years past, however, these books tended to cluster into a relatively small number of categories, ranging from U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to China as a political and commercial power to tainted and unhealthy foods. Other subjects showing popularity as investigative topics include:

- World and domestic religious fundamentalism
- Conflict in the Middle East
- The failures of intelligence gathering at the CIA, NSA and FBI

- Environmental degradation and energy depletion
- U.S. political campaigning and corruption
- The failures of U.S. health care
- Corporate practices, especially those used by Wal-Mart
- Flaws in the criminal justice system leading to wrongful convictions
- Continuing traumas from Hurricane Katrina
- Media criticism

While many of the books published during 2006 are important – and all those on the annual *IRE Journal* list are worthy – one needs emphasis because of its implications for reporters and edi-

tors across the United States. That book, “Game of Shadows: Barry Bonds, BALCO, and the Steroids Scandal That Rocked Professional Sports” (*The IRE Journal* July/Aug. 2006), is based on superb reporting from public and private sources.

The authors, Mark Fainaru-Wada and Lance Williams of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, are facing incarceration ordered by a judge unless they reveal the source of grand jury information. IRE and other journalism organizations have protested the judge’s ruling.

The content of the book is important beyond its implications for Major League Baseball star Barry Bonds. Performance-enhancing substances are filtering down to high school athletics and perhaps even pre-high school competitions. Their abuse raises moral, health and legal issues for youngsters as well as professional athletes. Beyond serving as a real-world textbook for investigative reporting, “Game of Shadows” serves as a reminder that journalists must be allowed to perform their jobs without interference from prosecutors and judges.

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

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2006

Every year, Steve Weinberg does his best to compile this exclusive list for *The IRE Journal*. It consists of books of investigative or explanatory journalism, broadly defined, published for the first time during 2006 in the United States in English. The list is limited to authors who work as journalists for American media outlets, and who are trying to reach general audiences through retail bookstore sales. If you know of a book unintentionally omitted from this list, please send an e-mail to weinbergs@missouri.edu.

A
• Anderson, Chris
The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business Is Selling Less of More
(Hyperion)

• Ashworth, William
Ogallala Blue: Water and Life on the High Plains
(Norton)

B
• Ballard, Chris
The Butterfly Hunter: Adventures of People Who Found Their True Calling Way Off the Beaten Path
(Broadway)

• Bamberger, Michael
The Man Who Heard Voices: Or, How M. Night Shyamalan Risked His Career on a Fairy Tale
(Gotham)

• Barnes, Fred
Rebel in Chief: Inside the Bold and Controversial Presidency of George W. Bush
(Crown)

• Bawer, Bruce
While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying the West From Within
(Doubleday)

• Beaujon, Andrew
Body Piercing Changed My Life: Inside the Phenomenon of Christian Rock
(Da Capo/Perseus)

• Beinart, Peter
The Good Fight: Why Liberals – and Only Liberals – Can Win the War on Terror and Make America Great Again
(HarperCollins)

• Benson, Michael
Betrayal in Blood: The Murder of Tabitha Bryant
(Pinnacle)

• Bergen, Peter L.
The Osama bin Laden I Know: An Oral History of al Qaeda’s Leader
(Free Press)

• Berlinski, Claire
Menace in Europe: Why the Continent’s Crisis is America’s, Too
(Crown)



• Bianco, Anthony
The Bully of Bentonville: How the High Cost of Wal-Mart’s Everyday Low Prices Is Hurting America
(Doubleday)

• Biank, Tanya
Under the Sabers: The Unwritten Code of Army Wives
(St. Martin’s)

• Black, Edwin
Internal Combustion: How Corporations and Governments Addicted the World to Oil and Derailed the Alternatives
(St. Martin’s)

• Blehm, Eric
The Last Season
(HarperCollins)

• Bleifuss, Joel, and Steve Freeman
Was the 2004 Presidential Election Stolen?: Exit Polls, Election Fraud and the Official Count
(Seven Stories Press)

• Blumenthal, Sidney
How Bush Rules: Chronicles of a Radical Regime
(Princeton University Press)

• Boehlert, Eric
Lapdogs: How the Press Rolled Over for Bush
(Free Press)

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2006

• Boss, Shira
Green With Envy
(Warner Business)

• Bowden, Mark
**Guests of the Ayatollah:
The First Battle in America's War
With Militant Islam**
(Atlantic Monthly Press)

• Briggs, Kenneth
**Double Crossed: Uncovering
the Catholic Church's Betrayal
of American Nuns**
(Doubleday)

• Burnett, John F.
**Uncivilized Beasts and
Shameless Hellions: Travels
with an NPR Correspondent**
(Rodale)

C
• Carlin, Peter Ames
**Catch a Wave: The Rise, Fall
and Redemption of the Beach
Boys' Brian Wilson**
(Rodale)

• Carlo, Philip
**The Iceman: Confessions
of a Mafia Contract Killer**
(St. Martin's)

• Carpenter, Amanda B.
**The Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy's
Dossier on Hillary Clinton**
(Regnery)

• Carr, Howie
**The Brothers Bulger: How They
Terrorized and Corrupted Boston
for a Quarter Century**
(Warner)

• Carter, Bill
**Desperate Networks: Starring
Katie Couric, Les Moonves,
Simon Cowell, Dan Rather, Jeff
Zucker, Teri Hatcher, Conan
O'Brien, Donald Trump and a
Host of Other Movers and Shakers
Who Changed the Face of
Primetime TV**
(Doubleday)

• Cassidy, Tina
**Birth: The Surprising History
of How We Are Born**
(Atlantic Monthly Press)

• Chandrasekaran, Rajiv
**Imperial Life in the Emerald City:
Inside Iraq's Green Zone**
(Knopf)

• Cheney, Annie
**Body Brokers: Inside America's
Underground Trade in Human
Remains**
(Broadway)

• Connelly, Michael
**Crime Beat: A Decade of
Covering Cops and Killers**
(Little, Brown)

• Continetti, Matthew
**The K Street Gang:
The Rise and Fall of the
Republican Machine**
(Doubleday)

• Cooper, Anderson
**Dispatches From the Edge:
A Memoir of War, Disasters,
and Survival**
(HarperCollins)

• Cooper, Christopher, and Robert
Block
**Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and
the Failure of Homeland Security**
(Times Books)

• Cuadros, Paul
**A Home on the Field: How One
Championship Team Inspires
Hope for the Revival of Small
Town America**
(Rayo)

• Cullen, Lisa Takeuchi
**Remember Me: A Lively Tour of
the New American Way of Death**
(Collins)

D
• Dadge, David
**The War in Iraq and Why the
Media Failed Us**
(Praeger)

• Delsohn, Steve, and Mark Heisler
**Bob Knight: The Unauthorized
Biography**
(Pocket)

• DeStefano, Anthony M.
The Last Godfather
(Citadel)

• DeYoung, Karen
Soldier: The Life of Colin Powell
(Knopf)

• Dornstein, Ken
**The Boy Who Fell Out of the Sky:
A True Story**
(Random House)

• D'Orso, Michael
**Eagle Blue: A Team, a Tribe, and a
High School Basketball Season in
Arctic Alaska**
(Bloomsbury)

• Dubose, Lou, and Jake Bernstein
**Vice: Dick Cheney and the Hijacking
of the American Presidency**
(Random House)

E

• Earley, Pete
**Crazy: A Father's Search Through
America's Mental Health Madness**
(Putnam)



• Edsall, Thomas B.
**Building Red America: The New
Conservative Coalition and the
Drive for Permanent Power**
(Basic Books)

• Eilperen, Juliet
**Fight Club Politics:
How Partisanship Is Poisoning
the House of Representatives**
(Rowman & Littlefield)

• El-Faizy, Monique
**God and Country:
How Evangelicals Have Become
America's New Mainstream**
(Bloomsbury)

• Englert, Jonathan
**The Collar: A Year of Striving and
Faith Inside a Catholic Seminary**
(Houghton Mifflin)

F

• Fagone, Jason
**Horsemen of the Esophagus:
Competitive Eating and the
Big Fat American Dream**
(Crown)

• Fainaru-Wada, Mark, and Lance Wil-
liams
**Game of Shadows: Barry Bonds,
BALCO, and the Steroids Scandal
That Rocked Professional Sports**
(Gotham)

• Fallows, James
**Blind Into Baghdad:
America's War in Iraq**
(Vintage)

• Fanning, Diane
**Gone Forever: A True Story of
Marriage, Betrayal, and Murder**
(St. Martin's)

• Farrell, Greg
**Corporate Crooks: How Rogue
Executives Ripped Off Americans ...
and Congress Helped Them Do It**
(Prometheus)

• Finkbeiner, Ann
**The Jasons: The Secret Society of
Science's Postwar Elite**
(Viking)

• Fischer, Mary A.
**Stealing Love: Confessions of a
Dognapper – A Memoir**
(Crown)

• Fishman, Charles
**The Wal-Mart Effect: How the
World's Most Powerful Company
Really Works – and How It's Trans-
forming the American Economy**
(Penguin Press)

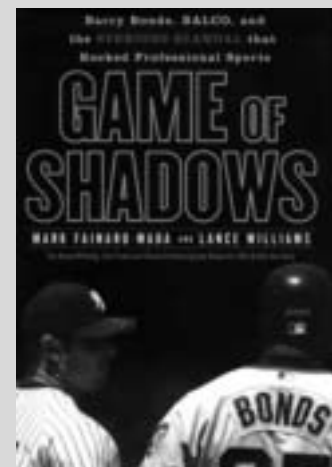
• Fitch, Robert
**Solidarity for Sale: How Corruption
Destroyed the Labor Movement
and Undermined America's Promise**
(Public Affairs)

• Fitzgerald, Randall
**The Hundred-Year Lie:
How Food and Medicine Are
Destroying Your Health**
(Dutton)

• Fleeman, Michael
The Officer's Wife
(St. Martin's)

• Fletcher, Connie
**Every Contact Leaves a Trace:
Crime Scene Investigators Talk
About Their Work, from Discovery
through Verdict**
(St. Martin's)

• Fox, Cynthia
**Cell of Cells: The Global Race to
Capture and Control the Stem Cell**
(Norton)



INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2006

• Frankel, Alison
Double Eagle: The Epic Story of the World's Most Valuable Coin
(Norton)

• Freedman, Samuel G.
Letters to a Young Journalist
(Basic Books)

• Frenay, Robert
Pulse: The Coming Age of Systems and Machines Inspired by Living Things
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

• Fromartz, Samuel
Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew
(Harcourt)

• Frump, Robert R.
The Man-Eaters of Eden: Life and Death in Kruger National Park
(Lyons)

G

• Gertz, Bill
Enemies: How America's Foes Steal Our Vital Secrets – And How We Let It Happen
(Crown)

• Gibbons, Ann
The First Human: The Race to Discover Our Earliest Ancestors
(Doubleday)

• Gibson, David
The Rule of Benedict: Pope Benedict XVI and His Battle With the Modern World
(Harper San Francisco)

• Gilgoff, Dan
The Jesus Machine: How James Dobson, Focus on the Family, and Evangelical America Are Winning the Culture War
(St. Martin's)

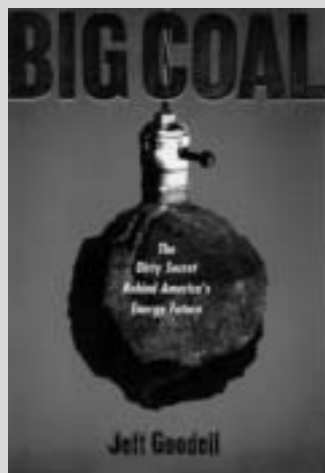
• Glatt, John
Never Leave Me
(St. Martin's)

• Goldberg, Jeffrey
Prisoners: A Muslim and a Jew Across the Middle East Divide
(Knopf)

• Goldberg, Michelle
Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism
(Norton)

• Golden, Daniel
The Price of Admission: How America's Ruling Class Buys Its Way Into Elite Colleges – and Who Gets Left Outside the Gates
(Crown)

• Goodell, Jeff
Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America's Energy Future
(Houghton Mifflin)



• Goodman, Amy, and David Goodman
Static: Government Liars, Media Cheerleaders, and the People Who Fight Back
(Hyperion)

• Greene, Melissa Fay
There Is No Me Without You: One Woman's Odyssey to Rescue Africa's Children
(Bloomsbury)

• Greenfeld, Karl Taro
China Syndrome: The True Story of the 21st Century's First Great Epidemic
(HarperCollins)

• Greenhill, Jim
Someone Has to Die Tonight
(Pinnacle)

• Grey, Stephen
Ghost Plane: The True Story of the CIA Torture Program
(St. Martin's)



• Grunwald, Michael
The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise
(Simon & Schuster)

H

• Hall, Stephen S.
Size Matters: How Height Affects the Health, Happiness, and Success of Boys – and the Men They Become
(Houghton Mifflin)

• Hallman, J.C.
The Devil Is a Gentleman: Exploring America's Religious Fringe
(Random House)

• Halperin, Mark, and John F. Harris
The Way to Win: Taking the White House in 2008
(Random House)

• Hamburger, Tom, and Peter Wallsten
One Party Country: The Republican Plan for Dominance in the 21st Century
(Wiley)

• Hamm, Steve
Bangalore Tiger: How Indian Tech Upstart WIPRO is Rewriting the Rules of Global Competition
(McGraw-Hill)

• Haner, Jim
Soccerhead: The Adventures of a Reluctant Coach and His Seven Warriors in the Land of the Two-Tone Ball
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

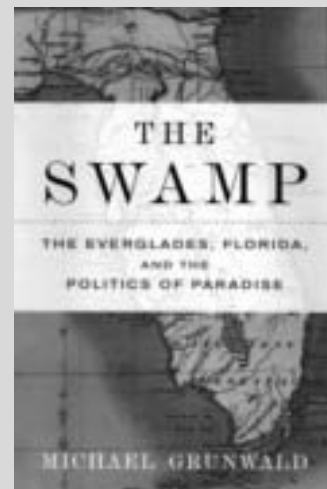
• Hendricks, Steve
The Unquiet Grave: The FBI and the Struggle for the Soul of Indian Country
(Thunder's Mouth Press)

• Hessler, Peter
Oracle Bones: A Journey Between China's Past and Present
(HarperCollins)

• Hirsch, James S.
Cheating Destiny: Life With Diabetes, America's Biggest Epidemic
(Houghton Mifflin)

• Horne, Jed
Breach of Faith: Hurricane Katrina and the Near Death of a Great American City
(Random House)

• Horowitz, David
The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America
(Regnery)



• Horowitz, David, and Richard Poe
The Shadow Party: How George Soros, Hillary Clinton and Sixties Radicals Seized Control of the Democratic Party
(Thomas Nelson)

• Hunter-Gault, Charlayne
New News Out of Africa: Uncovering Africa's Renaissance
(Oxford University Press)

• Hurley, Dan
Natural Causes: Death, Lies and Politics in America's Vitamin and Herbal Supplement Industry
(Broadway)

• Isikoff, Michael, and David Corn
Hubris: The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War
(Crown)

• Jefferson, Margo
On Michael Jackson
(Pantheon)

• Johannsen, Kristin
Ginseng Dreams: The Secret World of America's Most Valuable Plant
(University Press of Kentucky)

• Jones, Ann
Kabul in Winter: Life Without Peace in Afghanistan
(Holt)

• Joshi, S.T.
The Angry Right: Why Conservatives Keep Getting It Wrong
(Prometheus)

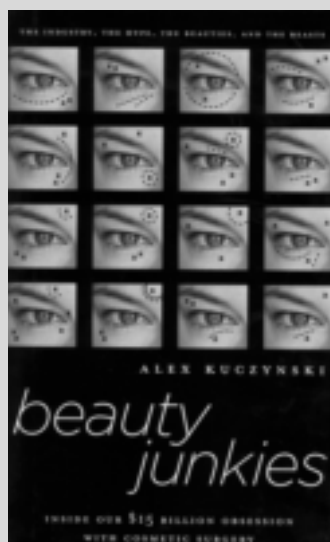
• Junger, Sebastian
A Death in Belmont
(Norton)

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2006

K

- Kahaner, Larry
AK-47: The Weapon That Changed the Face of War (Wiley)
- Kaiser, Robert Blair
A Church in Search of Itself: Benedict XVI and the Battle for the Future (Knopf)
- Kamenetz, Anya
Generation Debt: Why Now Is a Terrible Time to Be Young (Riverhead)
- Kamp, David
The United States of Arugula: How We Became a Gourmet Nation (Broadway)
- Kanipe, Jeff
Chasing Hubble's Shadows: The Search for Galaxies at the Edge of Time (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- Kessler, Ronald
Laura Bush: An Intimate Portrait of the First Lady (Doubleday)
- Kiernan, Stephen
Last Rights: Rescuing the End of Life From the Medical System (St. Martin's)
- Kinzer, Stephen
Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change From Hawaii to Iraq (Times Books)
- Kipnis, Laura
The Female Thing: Dirt, Sex, Envy, Vulnerability (Knopf)
- Klein, Joe
Politics Lost: How American Democracy Was Trivialized by People Who Think You're Stupid (Doubleday)
- Knecht, G. Bruce
Hooked: Pirates, Poaching and the Perfect Fish (Rodale)
- Kolbert, Elizabeth
Field Notes From a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change (Bloomsbury)
- Konik, Michael
The Smart Money: How the World's Best Sports Bettors Beat the Bookies Out of Millions (Simon & Schuster)

- Kosner, Edward
It's News to Me: The Making and Unmaking of an Editor (Thunder's Mouth Press)
- Kuczynski, Alex
Beauty Junkies: Inside Our \$15 Billion Obsession With Cosmetic Surgery (Doubleday)



- Kuipers, Dean
Burning Rainbow Farm: How a Stoner Utopia Went up in Smoke (Bloomsbury)
- ### L
- Lapham, Lewis
Pretensions to Empire: Notes on the Criminal Folly of the Bush Administration (New Press)
 - Lerner, Jesse
Forgive Us Our Spins: Michael Moore and the Future of the Left (Wiley)
 - LaRosa, Paul
Tacoma Confidential: A True Story of Murder, Suicide, and a Police Chief's Secret Life (Signet)
 - LeDuff, Charlie
Us Guys: The True and Twisted Mind of the American Man (Penguin Press)
 - Leopold, Jason
News Junkie (Process)
 - Levy, Steven
The Perfect Thing: How the iPod Shuffles Commerce, Culture, and Coolness (Simon & Schuster)

- Lewis, Michael
The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game (Norton)
- Lind, Michael
The American Way of Strategy: U.S. Foreign Policy and the American Way of Life (Oxford University Press)
- Linden, Eugene
The Winds of Change: Climate, Weather, and the Destruction of Civilizations (Simon & Schuster)
- Long, Steven
Every Woman's Nightmare (St. Martin's)
- Love, Dennis
My City Was Gone: One American Town's Toxic Secret, Its Angry Band of Locals, and a \$700 Million Day in Court (Harper Collins)
- Lowry, Richard S.
Marines in the Garden of Eden: The Battle for An Nasiriyah (NAL/Caliber)

- Lueders, Bill
Cry Rape: The True Story of One Woman's Harrowing Quest for Justice (University of Wisconsin Press)

M

- Madsen, Wayne
Jaded Tasks: Brass Plates, Black Ops and Big Oil – The Blood Politics of George Bush & Co. (Trine Day)
- Maguire, James
American Bee: The National Spelling Bee and the Culture of Word Nerds (Rodale)
- Mahar, Maggie
Money-Driven Medicine: The Real Reason Health Care Costs So Much (Collins)
- Mann, Brian
Welcome to the Homeland: A Journey to the Rural Heart of America's Conservative Revolution (Steerforth)
- Masters, Brooke A.
Spoiling for a Fight: The Rise of Eliot Spitzer (Times Books)
- Mathews, Joe
The People's Machine: Arnold Schwarzenegger and the Rise of Blockbuster Democracy (Public Affairs)

- Max, D.T.
The Family That Couldn't Sleep: A Medical Mystery (Random House)
- McDonald, Brian
Safe Harbor: A Murder in Nantucket (St. Martin's)
- McKiernan, Kevin
The Kurds: A People in Search of Their Homeland (St. Martin's)
- McMullan, Paul
Amazing Pace: The Story of Olympic Champion Michael Phelps From Sydney to Athens to Beijing (Rodale)
- McMurray, Kevin F.
If You Really Loved Me (St. Martin's)
- McPhee, John
Uncommon Carriers (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- Meisler, Stanley
Kofi Annan: A Man of Peace in a World of War (Wiley)
- Mencimer, Stephanie
Blocking the Courthouse Door: How the Republican Party and Its Corporate Allies Are Taking Away Your Right to Sue (Free Press)
- Miller, Joe
Cross-X: A Turbulent, Triumphant Season With an Inner-City Debate Squad (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- Miller, T. Christian
Blood Money: Wasted Billions, Lost Lives, and Corporate Greed in Iraq (Little, Brown)



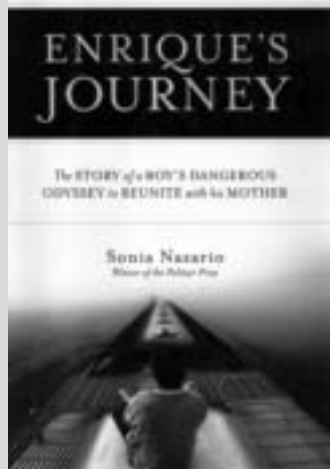
INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2006

• Minutaglio, Bill
The President's Counselor: The Rise to Power of Alberto Gonzales (Rayo)

• Mnookin, Seth
Feeding the Monster: How Money, Smarts, and Nerve Took a Team to the Top (Simon & Schuster)

• Moir, John
Return of the Condor: The Race to Save Our Largest Bird From Extinction (Lyons)

• Moore, James, and Wayne Slater
The Architect: Karl Rove and the Master Plan for Absolute Power (Crown)



N
• Nazario, Sonia
Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother (Random House)

• Newsham, Gavin
Once in a Lifetime: The Incredible Story of the New York Cosmos (Atlantic Monthly Press)

O
• Oppenheimer, Jerry
House of Hilton: From Conrad to Paris, A Drama of Wealth, Power and Privilege (Crown)

• Owen, Frank
No Speed Limit: Meth Across America (St. Martin's)

P
• Palmer, Chris
The Sixth Man: A Season Inside the NBA Playground (ESPN Books)

• Pearce, Fred
When the Rivers Run Dry: Water – the Defining Crisis of the Twenty-First Century (Beacon)

• Pearlman, Jeff
Love Me, Hate Me: Barry Bonds and the Making of an Antihero (HarperCollins)

• Pelton, Robert Young
Licensed to Kill: Hired Guns in the War on Terror (Crown)

• Perle, Liz
Money, a Memoir: Women, Emotions, and Cash (Holt)

• Phelps, M. William
Murder in the Heartland (Kensington)

• Phillips, Ty
Blacktop Cowboys: Riders on the Run for Rodeo Gold (St. Martin's)

• Pierce, Charles P.
Moving the Chains: Tom Brady and the Pursuit of Everything (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

• Pitluk, Adam
Standing Eight: The Inspiring Story of Jesus "El Matador" Chavez, Who Became Lightweight Champion of the World (Da Capo)

• Pollan, Michael
The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals (Penguin Press)

• Pollitt, Katha
Virginity or Death!: And Other Social and Political Issues of Our Time (Random House)

• Pomfret, John
Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China (Holt)

• Ponnuru, Ramesh
The Party of Death: The Democrats, the Media, the Courts, and the Disregard for Human Life (Regnery)

• Press, Eyal
Absolute Convictions: My Father, a City, and the Conflict That Divided America (Holt)

Q
• Quart, Alissa
Hothouse Kids: The Dilemma of the Gifted Child (Penguin Press)

R
• Remnick, David
Reporting: Writings From The New Yorker (Knopf)

• Rhoden, William C.
Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete (Crown)

• Rich, Frank
The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth from 9/11 to Katrina (Penguin Press)

• Ricks, Thomas E.
Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq (Penguin Press)

• Risen, James
State of War: The Secret History of the CIA and the Bush Administration (Free Press)

• Robbins, Alexandra
The Overachievers: The Secret Lives of Driven Kids (Hyperion)

• Roberts, Gene, and Hank Klibanoff
The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation (Knopf)

• Rosen, Nir
In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq (Free Press)

• Rosenberg, Scott
Dreaming in Code: Two Dozen Programmers, Three Years, 4,732 Bugs, and One Quest for Transcendent Software (Crown)

• Rosencrance, Linda
An Act of Murder (Pinnacle)

• Ruhlman, Michael
The Reach of a Chef: Beyond the Kitchen (Viking)

• Russo, Gus
Supermob: How Sidney Korshak and His Criminal Associates Became America's Hidden Power Brokers (Bloomsbury)

S
• Sallah, Michael, and Mitch Weiss
Tiger Force: A True Story of Men and War (Little, Brown)

• Sandler, Lauren
Righteous: Dispatches From the Evangelical Youth Movement (Viking)

• Sawyer, Kathy
The Rock From Mars: A True Detective Story on Two Planets (Random House)

• Schou, Nick
Kill the Messenger: How the CIA's Crack-Cocaine Controversy Destroyed Journalist Gary Webb (Nation Books)

• Schrag, Peter
California: America's High-Stakes Experiment (University of California Press)

• Seife, Charles
Decoding the Universe: How the New Science of Information Is Explaining Everything in the Cosmos, From Our Brains to Black Holes (Viking)

• Shachtman, Tom
Rumspringa: To Be or Not to Be Amish (North Point Press)

• Shah, Sonia
The Body Hunters: How the Drug Industry Tests Its Products on the World's Poorest Patients (New Press)

• Shawn, Eric
The U.N. Exposed: How the United Nations Sabotaged America's Security and Fails the World (Sentinel)

• Sheler, Jeffery L.
Believers: A Journey Into Evangelical America (Viking)

• Shepard, Alicia C.
Woodward and Bernstein: Life in the Shadow of Watergate (Wiley)

• Sherr, Lynn
Outside the Box: A Memoir (Rodale)

• Singular, Stephen
Unholy Messenger: The Life and Crimes of the BTK Serial Killer (Scribner)

INVESTIGATIVE BOOKS OF 2006

• Spinner, Jackie
Tell Them I Didn't Cry: A Young Journalist's Story of Joy, Loss, and Survival in Iraq
(Scribner)

• Spitz, Marc
Nobody Likes You: Inside the Turbulent Life, Times, and Music of Green Day
(Hyperion)

• Stille, Alexander
The Sack of Rome: How a Beautiful European Country with a Fabled History and a Storied Culture Was Taken Over by a Man Named Silvio Berlusconi
(Penguin Press)

• Stone, Peter H.
Heist: Superlobbyist Jack Abramoff, His Republican Allies, and the Buying of Washington
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

• Stossel, John
Myths, Lies, and Downright Stupidity: Get Out the Shovel – Why Everything You Know Is Wrong
(Hyperion)

• Suarez, Ray
The Holy Vote: The Politics of Faith in America
(Rayo)

• Sullivan, James
Jeans: A Cultural History of an American Icon
(Gotham)

• Sutherland, Amy
Kicked, Bitten, and Scratched: Life and Lessons at the World's Premier School for Exotic Animal Trainers
(Viking)

• Svrluga, Barry
National Pastime: Sports, Politics, and the Return of Baseball to Washington, D.C.
(Doubleday)

• Sweet, William
Kicking the Carbon Habit: Global Warming and the Case for Renewable and Nuclear Energy
(Columbia University Press)

• Szalavitz, Maia
Help at Any Cost: How the Troubled-Teen Industry Cons Parents and Hurts Kids
(Riverhead)

• Suskind, Ron
The One Percent Doctrine: Deep Inside America's Pursuit of Its Enemies Since 9/11
(Simon & Schuster)

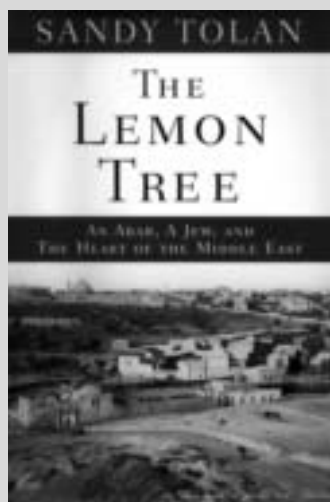
T

• Talese, Gay
A Writer's Life
(Knopf)

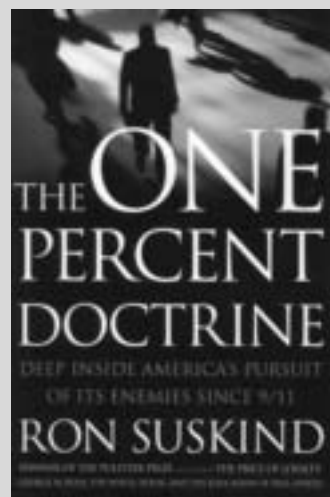
• Tayler, Jeffrey
River of No Reprieve: Descending Siberia's Waterway of Exile, Death, and Destiny
(Houghton Mifflin)

• Thomas, Helen
Watchdogs of Democracy?: The Waning Washington Press Corps and How It Has Failed the Public
(Scribner)

• Thompson, Tracy
The Ghost in the House: Motherhood, Raising Children, and Struggling With Depression
(HarperCollins)



• Tolan, Sandy
The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew and the Heart of the Middle East
(Bloomsbury)



• Traub, James
The Best Intentions: Kofi Annan and the United Nations in the Era of American World Power
(Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

• Trento, Susan B., and Joseph J. Trento
Unsafe at Any Altitude: Failed Terrorism Investigations, Scapegoating 9/11, and the Shocking Truth About Aviation Security Today
(Steerforth)

U

• Uchitelle, Louis
The Disposable American: Layoffs and Their Consequences
(Knopf)

V

• Vincent, Lynn, and Robert Stacy McCain
Donkey Cons: Sex, Crime, and Corruption in the Democratic Party
(Nelson Current)

• Vincent, Norah
Self-Made Man: One Woman's Journey Into Manhood and Back Again
(Viking)

• Vitzthum, Virginia
I Love You, Let's Meet: Adventures in Online Dating
(Little, Brown)

• Vollers, Maryanne
Lone Wolf: Eric Rudolph – Murder, Myth and the Pursuit of an American Outlaw
(HarperCollins)

W

• Wade, Nicholas
Before the Dawn: Recovering the Lost History of Our Ancestors
(Penguin Press)

• Weinberger, Sharon
Imaginary Weapons: A Journey Through the Pentagon's Scientific Underworld
(Nation Books/Avalon Publishing)

• Weisman, Alan
Lone Star: The Extraordinary Life and Times of Dan Rather
(Wiley)

• Weiss, Gary
Wall Street Versus America: The Rampant Greed and Dishonesty That Imperil Your Investments
(Portfolio)

• Weisskopf, Michael
Blood Brothers: Among the Soldiers of Ward 57
(Holt)

• Werth, Barry
31 Days: The Crisis That Gave Us the Government We Have Today
(Doubleday)

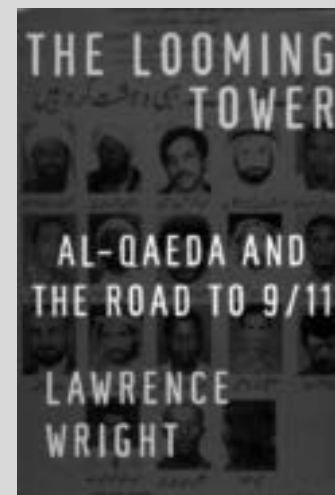
• Wilentz, Amy
I Feel Earthquakes More Often Than They Happen: Coming to California in the Age of Schwarzenegger
(Simon & Schuster)

• Williams, Juan
Enough: The Phony Leaders, Dead-End Movements, and Culture of Failure That Are Undermining Black America – and What We Can Do About It
(Crown)

• Williams, Pete
The Draft: A Year Inside the NFL's Search for Talent
(St. Martin's)

• Wilson, Drew
The Hole: Another Look at the Sinking of the Estonia Ferry
(Exposure Publishing)

• Woodward, Bob
State of Denial: Bush at War, Part III
(Simon & Schuster)



• Wright, Lawrence
The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11
(Knopf)

Z

• Zielenziger, Michael
Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation
(Doubleday)

• Zoellner, Tom
The Heartless Stone: A Journey Through the World of Diamonds, Deceit, and Desire
(St. Martin's)

IRE ANNOUNCES NEW JENNIFER LEONARD SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

At this year's IRE Conference in Phoenix the first Jennifer Leonard Scholars will learn the skills that Leonard said "will always be needed to dig into every important aspect of society to improve our democracy."

The scholarships will go to women of modest means who are journalism students or have less than three years of work experience. The funds will enable them to attend IRE conferences or NICAR training seminars. IRE staff will select the recipients.

IRE member David Cay Johnston of *The New York Times* created the scholarships to honor his wife, the president of the Rochester Area Community Foundation and a national leader in promoting ethical standards for endowments.

In the early 1980s, Leonard exposed how corporations blackballed various charities in 16 cities. She tried to get the newspapers in these towns to pay attention, but only two followed up on her article for a little magazine called *The Grantsmanship Center News*.

If you would like to create a similar scholarship fund in honor of someone close to you, please contact IRE development officer Jennifer Erickson at 573-884-2222 or jennifer@ire.org.

Leonard also wrote what may be the first published list of how grantors should apply the Golden Rule to grant seekers. Later, hoping to stir better coverage of nonprofits and their role in the quality of communities, she and her husband co-wrote a piece for the *Columbia Journalism Review* on how to cover nonprofits as hard news. The couple also wrote exposés of charities and Hollywood films that sold lies as truth.

The Jennifer Leonard Scholarships are funded with a pledge being paid over 20 years, plus matching funds from friends and The New York Times Company Foundation – all of which were matched by the Knight Foundation through a challenge grant awarded to IRE. The number of scholars is expected to double once the pledge is fulfilled.

"Giving to the IRE Endowment can have a big impact with a modest level of giving over time," Johnston said. His gifts of \$1,400 per year, before the income tax deduction, and the matching funds will eventually provide the IRE Endowment with more than \$100,000.



Jennifer Leonard

To apply for the Jennifer Leonard Scholarships, please visit IRE's Fellowship Web page, www.ire.org/training/fellowships, or contact John Green, IRE membership coordinator, at 573-882-2772 or jgreen@ire.org.

COUNTDOWN TO DEADLINES!

IRE is currently in the middle of two separate challenge grants, and deadlines are quickly approaching. How can you help make sure IRE receives the full grant amounts? By acting now to support IRE's mission of fostering excellence in investigative journalism.

These grants will give IRE \$1 for every \$2 IRE raises. Currently, IRE has the opportunity to receive \$1.2 million in matching funds.

JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION CHALLENGE GRANT

IRE must raise \$2 million in endowment funds to release \$1 million from the Knight Foundation. IRE is half way there because of the generous support of IRE members, media corporations and foundations and other individual donors. Knight sends IRE \$1 for every \$2 pledged or donated to IRE's endowment fund.

If you've been putting off your support of IRE until it is needed most, now is the time to act. **This challenge will end in December 2007**, so we need your help today. And keep in mind that the Knight Foundation will match multi-year pledges in full. For instance, if you were to pledge \$500 over five years before December, the Knight Foundation would send IRE a match of \$250. Make your philanthropic dollars grow immediately.

So far, nearly 1,000 IRE members have risen to the challenge. Please join them and, in the process, help IRE ensure its uninterrupted support of investigative journalists and editors and allow IRE to focus additional resources on emerging programs.

For more information on donating to IRE's endowment fund, please see the form on the right or contact IRE development officer Jennifer Erickson at 573-884-2222 or jennifer@ire.org.

IRE MEMBERS CAN ASSIST IN MANY WAYS, INCLUDING:

- donating or pledging to IRE's endowment fund
- donating or pledging toward IRE programming and general operations
- sharing ideas with IRE staff for potential prospects in your region
- recruiting new IRE members within your own newsrooms
- asking co-workers to renew their lapsed IRE memberships
- establishing funds within IRE's endowment

CHALLENGE FUND FOR JOURNALISM III

IRE is pleased to have been selected to take part in the Challenge Fund for Journalism III (CFJ), a program funded by the Ford Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Ethics & Excellence in Journalism Foundation.

The CFJ program's goal is to help journalism organizations strengthen their leadership, organizational infrastructure and financial resources so they can continue their programs well into the future.

All new IRE memberships will help us meet our \$200,000 challenge goal, which will release \$100,000 in matching funds. How can you help? Simply by recruiting new members from your own newsroom. The effort will cost you zero out-of-pocket expenses, help IRE meet its match AND introduce your colleagues to the many benefits of IRE membership.

Again, time is of the essence. **The deadline for raising the \$200,000 is May 31, 2007.** Please act today.

Please direct your work colleagues to www.ire.org/membership or call IRE membership coordinator John Green at 573-882-2772 for more information.

BREAK THROUGHGS

Please make your annual contribution to IRE!

“There is nothing more important for a journalist than to seek the truth, speak for those who have no voice, and try to hold power accountable.

Investigative journalists have always felt this was more than a career – it’s a trust, and a duty. In the age of blogs and the instant assertions of the internet, it is even more critical to have journalists who check and doublecheck and care.

Investigative Reporters and Editors has always been a place where journalists have learned these skills. IRE has and will always honor the mission and lead the way.

Please join me in supporting IRE during this important time in our history.”

– Diane Sawyer
ABC News

FUNDING IRE’S FUTURE

2007 ANNUAL IRE ENDOWMENT APPEAL

Help us ensure that IRE’s independent voice, state-of-the art training, up-to-date resource library, and vast array of networking possibilities for journalists continue into the future. Join the hundreds of IRE members who have donated and pledged to IRE’s endowment fund.

And, for a short time longer, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation will give \$1 for every \$2 you donate or pledge under a \$1 million partial matching program. See your philanthropic dollars immediately grow!

IRE seeks donations from all audiences that value quality investigative journalism and recognize its importance in keeping governments, businesses and individuals accountable.

IRE depends on contributions to maintain and improve its services and to create long-term financial stability. At present, more than one-third of IRE’s \$1.4 million annual budget is funded through donations.

By achieving a \$5-million endowment, IRE will ensure its uninterrupted support of investigative journalists and editors and will be able to focus its efforts on emerging programs. In short, a strong endowment will allow IRE to continue to foster excellence in investigative journalism, a mission essential to a free and democratic society.

All endowment gifts make a difference because, taken together, they form a strong foundation that continues to grow for years to come.

Make your dollars grow: Don’t forget to inquire...

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

\$500 pledge (over 5 years)
+ \$500 match from employer = \$1,000
+ \$500 Knight Foundation match
= \$1,500 endowment increase

To make a contribution, please use the form below, visit www.ire.org/endowment or phone IRE Development Officer Jennifer Erickson at 573-884-2222. All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

YES! I would like to support IRE’s Endowment Fund

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Company _____

Company Address _____

Wk Phone _____ Hm Phone _____

I will pledge \$ _____ over _____ years.

My check is enclosed and **made payable to IRE.**

Please write “Endowment” in the memo line of your check.

Please charge my credit card with the amount indicated

VISA MasterCard American Express

Account Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

I would like my gift to benefit IRE in this way:

Endowment - general operations

Endowment - specific program, services or resource area

Name area _____

Amount of gift \$ _____

My company will match my contribution

CHECK BOX IF YOU DON'T WANT YOUR NAME DISCLOSED AS A DONOR.



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FAX 573-882-5431

ABUSIVE COPS

Investigation uncovers nationwide problem of police officers sexually assaulting women

BY CRAIG R. MCCOY AND NANCY PHILLIPS
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

You never know what someone will say until you make that call.

So we were reminded when we phoned a disgraced former Philadelphia police officer on probation for joining his partner in sexually assaulting a stripper in the back of their squad car.

“Being honest with you, women do like cops,” former cop Jimmy Fallon said. “Women love guys in uniform.”

The interview with Fallon became one of the most startling aspects of a two-part series in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that explored fresh territory in the otherwise well-trodden turf of police misconduct: sexual abuse.

It turned out that Fallon was quite an interview – an unrepentant font of sexual braggadocio. Fallon insisted that the dancer had consented to the sex. He clung to this view even though he and his partner had pleaded guilty to indecent assault and official oppression.

“Why would I have to threaten anybody?” Fallon asked. “I have the looks. I always did. I don’t need to

force myself on anybody.”

Focusing on both local and national cases, we explored the locker-room mentality that sometimes afflicts police departments, how some officers use their badges to extort sex and how their departments too often ignore warning signs about their escalating misbehavior and fail to discipline abusive cops. That national review led to one of our most unsettling findings: In cities and towns large and small, the cases follow the same pattern.

Abuse studies

Most assaults take place during the night shift, when the hours are long and the supervision is thin. Once abusers cross the line, they attack again and again before they are caught. Unchecked, their misbehavior escalates. A cop might begin by picking up women while on the job, then move on to physical assaults.

Helping to blind their chiefs to the phenomenon, rogue police shrewdly select their victims by targeting runaways, strippers, prostitutes, drug users and others

who would be less likely to complain and less likely to be believed if they did.

Once the abusers are caught, investigators who dig into their police work, such as reviewing reports of car stops, typically turn up a trail of earlier victims and discounted warnings.

We pored over records from civil and criminal trials from across the nation, tracked down victims and contacted the accused cops and their bosses. We were surprised to find that police commanders often fail to recognize the problem. We discovered that few departments address the issue in training and most don’t keep track of such incidents.

In short, we tackled a problem that is underestimated and largely unstudied.

We did locate a few academics who had focused on the issue, including two experts from the University of Nebraska who completed a study called “Driving While Female.” While groundbreaking, their report was wholly anecdotal.

Another study by researchers at St. Louis University was more limited in scope but somewhat more scientific. These researchers dug into police disciplinary records in Florida to determine that when police abused citizens, sexual abuse was the most common violation, exceeding such offenses as beatings or theft.

As we explained in our reporting, the academics had to tease their finding out of the records. The sexual nature of the abuse was often mislabeled; a demand for sex often got reported as seeking a bribe.

To tell the story, investigations editor Joe Tanfani helped us organize the material into a two-part series with multiple sidebars highlighting a mix of national and local misconduct. Photographers Barbara Johnston and Clem Murray took effectively ominous pictures for the project. The Web site at <http://go.philly.com/predators> was built by Jennifer Musser-Metz. Editor Amanda Bennett backed the project with generous space, including 2 1/2 inside pages for the first day. On the news desk, editors Steve Glynn, Steve Kelly and Jim Seltzer designed the display.

The resulting package explored wrongdoing in departments across the country.

For example, in Eugene, Ore., we told how two uniformed predators, operating independently, sexually assaulted a total of 20 women before they were each arrested in 2003.

In an interview, Eugene Police Chief Robert Lehner, who took office after the scandal, told us the two ex-cops were cunning in choosing victims who had been drunk or high and almost “impossible to believe.”

Closer to home, we examined a sex scandal that enveloped the Pennsylvania State Police. A state trooper committed a string of sexual assaults despite warnings from fellow troopers that he was a “hormonal sex freak” who was going to cause the force “great embarrassment in the future,” court records show. The ex-trooper, Michael K. Evans, is



The Philadelphia Inquirer

Images from a camera in New Britain Borough police officer Darryl Allen’s patrol car show him after he pulled over a driver on New Year’s Day 2005 because he saw her vehicle weaving. He pleaded guilty to assaulting this woman, whose breath test indicated she was legally drunk.

now serving five to 10 years in state prison. In an interview from prison, he detailed for us precisely how he plotted his crimes.

“I would see women that were vulnerable where I could appear as a knight in shining armor,” he said. “I’m going to help this woman who is being abused by her boyfriend, and then I’ll ask for sexual favors.”

In another local case, we reported that an officer on a tiny force in a small town outside Philadelphia had harassed or attacked women after he pulled them over when they were driving alone late at night.

There were warnings for years from victims and even a police chief before he was finally arrested and convicted of indecent assault, indecent exposure and official oppression. In the case that finally led to his conviction, prosecutors obtained a video the officer shot from his police cruiser as he pulled his victim over in the pre-dawn darkness on New Year’s Day.

We obtained a copy of the tape. Electronic lab technician Michael Levin painstakingly captured chilling stills from that tape that provided vivid real-time images for the project.

Pressuring agencies

To pry loose records, Michael Baughman, a lawyer for *The Inquirer*, asked a federal judge to rule that Internal Affairs’ reports into sex-abuse allegations – released by the city to plaintiffs’ lawyers – were public documents. The judge agreed.

In one sidebar, the paper highlighted how the city had sought to bar the public disclosure of the information in apparent violation of a mayoral edict ordering their release. This was in keeping with *The Inquirer’s* and Bennett’s focus on pressuring public agencies to release records in Pennsylvania, a state notorious for its restrictions on public information.

In Philadelphia, we painstakingly unraveled the allegations against James Fallon and his former partner, Timothy Carre. Although the officers were arrested and convicted of the December 2002 attack on the dancer, we learned that eight other women had leveled accusations against one or both officers, and Carre asserted that he had warned his bosses about his partner’s behavior.

The department wouldn’t release anything about those allegations, but using clues contained in a lawsuit against the officers and with help from public records and interviews, we were able to track down several of these women. A few were reluctant to talk, but others opened up to us, including a woman who quietly told us how Fallon had raped her. In each case, we approached the women in person, explained the larger context of our story and found that many were willing to share their experiences. In part, this was because they found our interest a welcome change from the chilly reaction they had often faced when they first came forward.

Like Fallon, Carre adamantly rejected all allegations of sexual misconduct. But that was about all the former partners seemed to agree on. Fallon disparaged Carre while Carre said he had repeatedly

warned his superiors that Fallon used the job to prowl for sex.

Our articles also disclosed that commanders in their local precinct had fielded a complaint about Fallon, but he had stayed on the street.

Unresolved contradictions

Ruling in a lawsuit, a federal judge ultimately found that the Philadelphia Police Department was “not very well run” and said that many cops “visited their wives and girlfriends” while on duty. But he said the lawsuit had not shown that “responsible officials” knew that Fallon and Carre could be sexual predators.

In the second day of our project, we told the story of two women who were swept up in a drug raid in a drug-ridden part of Philadelphia, locked in a cell and then ordered to put on a sex show as a price of release.

Once again, a woman stepped up to tell her story, agreeing to be identified and photographed. We learned of Erica Hejnar’s ordeal though her civil suit, one that settled with a modest payment by the city. Before the case was closed, she obtained the complete documentary record of the Internal Affairs investigation of her complaint.

From those records, which included verbatim questions and answers from cops under investigation, we were also able to underscore unresolved contradictions in the officers’ accounts.

To let readers see the evidence themselves, we posted the reports on our Web site.

While a number of officers claimed they remembered nothing about the incident, our detailed narrative revealed a heroine, a cop who complained bitterly once she heard about the sex show, shouting, “Why

would you allow something like that to happen?”

As we talked with police and city prosecutors about the episode, our questioning broke a logjam that had stalled the Internal Affairs investigation. In an interview shortly before we published, authorities revealed that they had a suspect in the case.

As for Fallon and Carre, a federal jury recently ordered them to pay \$8.3 million to their victim, though the woman’s lawyers conceded that the two ex-cops, now on probation and working in construction, hardly have the money to pay up.

Craig R. McCoy and Nancy Phillips are members of The Philadelphia Inquirer’s investigations team. McCoy was part of a team whose work on the Philadelphia police was a finalist for a public-service Pulitzer Prize. The coverage won a Selden Ring Award and a Roy Howard Award. Phillips won a special citation from IRE for her investigation into the murder of a New Jersey woman that ended when the killer confessed to her.

The Philadelphia Inquirer



Former Philadelphia police officers Timothy Carre and James Fallon were accused of raping an exotic dancer in their patrol car in 2002. They pleaded guilty in 2003 to misdemeanor charges of indecent assault, simple assault and official oppression and were sentenced to four years probation. As part of the plea deal, charges of rape were dismissed.

John Costello | The Philadelphia Inquirer



Reporters used clues from lawsuits to track down sexual abuse victims. Here, Erica Hejnar stands outside the Philadelphia Police 26th District Station, where she says police ordered her to perform a sex show in a jail cell.

FALSE PLEDGE

Telemarketing firm soliciting donations for troopers keeps more than half the money

BY AMY DAVIS
KPRC-HOUSTON

Shannon Taylor is a woman of her word, and when a Texas lobbying group posing as a police charity tried to put words in her mouth, she became suspicious. Taylor contacted the KPRC-Houston tip line after receiving a letter from the Texas State Troopers Association stating: “You generously agreed to a pledge of \$50.”

“The whole problem is, I never talked to anybody, and I never agreed to anything,” Taylor told us.

After we aired Taylor’s story and our investigation of the association, the state attorney general’s office began investigating Taylor’s complaint that she never pledged any money to the organization. We also found that although the association collected \$3.5 million dollars in 2005 from donors, it gave telemarketers more than half that amount.

When we received Taylor’s initial phone call, my assignment was fairly simple: Find out exactly what the Texas State Troopers Association is and how it got Taylor’s name, phone number and address.

A quick search on Guidestar, a free online database of non-profit organizations, revealed that TSTA is a non-profit group, but it is not a 501(c)3, the Internal Revenue Service’s category for a charitable, religious or educational organization. TSTA is categorized as a 501(c)5, the designation assigned to labor, agricultural and horticultural organizations.

This told me two things. First, as a non-profit, TSTA is required to file a Form-990 with the IRS. The form is filed annually by all public charities and private foundations and lists assets, receipts, expenditures and compensation of officers.

Second, contributions made to 501(c)5’s are not tax deductible. The letter Taylor received made no mention of this. It did say that her support would be used to provide programs such as “provisions for families in the event of a death, insurance coverage for accidental death or dismemberment, officer training, legal defense, various youth activities throughout the



Rick Hartley, president of the Houston 100 Club.

state and legislative representation.”

The 990 also specifically asks: “What is the organization’s primary exempt purpose?” TSTA’s answer: “Lobbying for improvement of troopers’ employment.”

Telephone solicitations

My initial calls to TSTA were not returned, so I looked to the Texas attorney general for information about the association. Under the Texas Law Enforcement Solicitation Act, all groups that solicit donations by phone for law enforcement must register with the attorney general. The act requires full disclosure of all telemarketing companies the group contracts with and what percentage of the donations the solicitors receive.

We found that TSTA contracts with two professional solicitation companies and turns over 60 percent of all donations to those telemarketers. In 2005, when donors gave TSTA \$3.5 million, the association gave telemarketers \$2.7 million, leaving the group with less than \$1 million. The association’s tax records show \$853,000 went for “services to members that will better their employment as troopers” – primarily “lobbying” in Austin.

I decided to compare the TSTA with the most widely recognized agency in our viewing area that assists officers, called the Houston 100 Club. This non-profit charity was formed in 1953 to assist the survivors of any federal, state or local officer who dies in the line of duty within an 18-county area in Texas. To date, more than \$23.9 million has been collected and dispersed to surviving dependents, to provide special equipment, to educate officers and to reward outstanding officers and firefighters.

The 100 Club gives benefits to the survivors of any certified law enforcement officers, regardless of the agency employing them. TSTA’s benefits only go to its members, a number TSTA won’t release.

“It may sound on the phone like they are protecting and covering and helping everybody in a particular agency,” said Rick Hartley, president of the 100 Club. “But, people need to realize that when you get one of these calls from an employee group, it’s only for those officers that are members of that particular group and not the entire agency.”

Further, the 100 Club does not endorse political candidates, lobby the legislature or side with any partisan groups. TSTA hires two lobbyists to work at the state capital to persuade politicians to vote in favor of what TSTA calls the “improvement of troop-



Shannon Taylor reads over the letter from the Texas State Troopers Association.

ers’ employment.”

Hartley says he believes the most important difference between the groups is that the 100 Club never solicits donations by phone. The telephone is TSTA’s only means of raising money.

Taylor says she never remembers a phone call from TSTA and maintains she never pledged money to them. The whole experience, she says, has turned her off to giving in general.

Agency complaints

We encouraged Taylor and other viewers who received similar letters from TSTA to file a complaint with the attorney general’s office. Through a faxed statement, the association’s executive director told us his records show Taylor made the \$50 pledge by phone.

“Most all of the calls are taped,” he wrote to us. “We did go back to look for the tape of that particular call, however, since it was made almost four months ago, that tape has been reused for newer calls.”

TSTA declined both on-camera and telephone interviews. The executive director answered three of our eight questions, writing: “The remainder of your questions will be taken before TSTA’s Board of Directors at their next Board meeting.” Since that time, he has not returned my phone calls to determine what, if anything, the board did.

The 100 Club’s Hartley spoke with us for our story because he says when letters and solicitations from agencies such as TSTA circulate, the 100 Club feels the effects. He says people get confused and may even donate to TSTA because they believe their money is actually going to the 100 Club.

Our investigation originated from Taylor’s e-mail, but you’ll likely find people in your area who have been solicited by checking complaints with all of the usual agencies, the Better Business Bureau, the attorney general and the secretary of state. Start by getting a list of all groups claiming to raise money for police from your secretary of state, then check complaints against those agencies.

Amy Davis is an investigative reporter at KPRC in Houston. Her investigations have prompted the Justice Department to close a Texas swim club discriminating against black children and sanctions against a North Carolina assisted-living facility for neglecting its disabled patients.

RECORDS BATTLE

Challenge to HIPAA over lead records results in court's groundbreaking ruling

BY SHARON COOLIDGE
THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

It started as a simple weekend story two and a half years ago, but it stirred up a court battle that went all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court and resulted in a groundbreaking ruling that helped define how governments should interpret a new and controversial law.

We challenged that law, the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, or HIPAA, after Cincinnati Health Department officials refused to release records for all property owners with lead paint citations.

"Many people think the 'P' in HIPAA has something to do with privacy. That's just not the case, and we need to help educate public officials and the public that HIPAA does not create a shroud of secrecy over all things 'medical,'" said Tom Callinan, the *Enquirer's* editor.

The law is intended to protect personal medical records and allows fines as high as \$50,000 against any person or agency that violates the rules. HIPAA, which took effect in 2003, has been a source of controversy as government agencies and media organizations battle over how to interpret its requirements.

Although we had been denied information from

police and fire departments under HIPAA, we had never encountered one from a city health department. Health officials said the lead records we requested could not be released to the public because they contained the addresses of homes and businesses ordered to remove lead paint.

HIPAA applied in this case, city officials said, because lead citations are based in part on blood tests of children. The disclosure of addresses could reveal the children who tested positive for high lead levels, they said.

The *Enquirer* sued the Cincinnati Health Department in Ohio's 1st District Court of Appeals and argued the records are public under Ohio law. In January 2005, we won a portion of the records – those from apartment buildings where the children could not be identified. But, we wanted them all. The Ohio Supreme Court agreed to hear the case and ruled in March 2006 that the health department should hand over the records. Specifically, the court concluded that Ohio's open records law trumps HIPAA.

"Ohio has a longstanding public policy committed to open records," wrote Ohio Supreme Court

Justice Terrence O'Donnell in the court's unanimous decision. "The Cincinnati Health Department and its commissioners have a clear legal duty to make the lead citations available."

That ruling resulted in the articles published in *The Enquirer*, but it also clarified some of the new rules created by HIPAA.

Our legal counsel, Jack Greiner, said the Supreme Court's decision is important because it gives agencies, like the health department, guidance. He said HIPAA was intended to protect personal records – not to prevent media coverage of serious public health issues such as lead paint contamination.

"The way the city was applying HIPAA I don't think was ever really intended by Congress," Greiner said.

Behind the denial

The story began a couple of years ago when Hamilton County decided to start a housing court. Research showed other housing courts around the country handled nuisance complaints, building code violations and lead paint citations. But, in Hamilton County, there were no lead cases on the docket.

I asked why, but court officials offered only vague answers. So, I went straight to the source: the Cincinnati Health Department.

I asked for records for all property owners with lead paint citations. At the time, I wasn't sure what types of records the department kept. Because there was a lead prevention division, I knew there must be some records, and I was sure citations were public under Ohio law.

When I received the denial citing HIPAA, I argued that officials could simply black out the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 >

From the IRE Resource Center

Additional stories on lead pollution can be found in the IRE Resource Center. IRE members can order copies by calling 573-882-3364 or e-mailing rescntr@ire.org.

- **Story No. 22615:** Poor environmental protection in Chesapeake, Va., allowed developers to build homes on severely polluted land. In one subdivision, lead contamination is so high that homeowners are forbidden to grow vegetables or water their lawns with groundwater. Robert McCabe, *The (Norfolk) Virginian-Pilot*. (2005)
- **Story No. 21762:** After a 1-year-old suffered brain damage from lead poisoning, investigators tested the costume jewelry popular among kids. All the jewelry tested contained lead, which prompted a voluntary recall of more than 150 million pieces of jewelry sold out of gumball machines. Tisha Thompson, Bill Fink, WMAR-Baltimore. (2004)
- **Story No. 21406:** Herculaneum, Mo., was built around the Doe Run plant now the nation's largest lead smelter. Despite official claims of attempts to limit pollution, the soil and air are both affected, and children who live near the plant test positive for too-high levels of lead. Chris Birk, Katie Tiernan, *Columbia (Mo.) Daily Tribune*. (2002)
- **Story No. 20369:** Lead cleanups in the United States are failing due to poor strategy. About 2.5 million Americans suffered lead poisoning in the last decade, and an estimated 300,000 children, 22,000 of whom live in Michigan, face long-term difficulties. Emilia Askari, Tina Lam, Megan

Christensen, Marsha Low, Hugh McDiarmid, Jr., Dan Shine, Shawn Windsor, Wendy Wendland-Bowyer, *Detroit Free Press*. (2003)

- **Story No. 18919:** Numerous cases of attention deficit disorder-like behavior in kids were caused by lead poisoning. Some children's jewelry contains lead levels higher than what is admissible in household paint. These levels can cause neurological damage. Ross McLaughlin, Shawn Hoder, KIRO-Seattle. (2001)
- **Story No. 17937:** Nearly 3,000 children are poisoned by lead each year in Rhode Island, often from paint wearing off older homes. This six-part series details the effects of lead poisoning on children, especially impaired mental development, and examines the lives of some children who suffer from lead paint poisoning. Peter B. Lord, *The Providence (R.I.) Journal*. (2001)
- **Story No. 17683:** Ruth Ann Norton, executive director of The Coalition, has worked tirelessly to prevent lead poisoning in kids. Children absorb lead more easily than adults, and once it has affected the brain, the damage is irreversible. Norton now has a budget of \$2.6 million to examine older homes and repair lead hazards. Kim Hitselberger Fernandez, *Baltimore Magazine*. (2001)
- **Story No. 17191:** Database analysis and newly available records detail an epidemic of lead poisoning among Baltimore's children. Thousands of toddlers suffer brain damage in the city's slums because of inadequate public health safeguards and a lack of housing-code enforcement. Jim Haner, *The (Baltimore) Sun*. (2000)

BIG HIT

Popularity of online mechanic fraud story proves effectiveness of Web investigations

BY JOEL GROVER
KNBC-LA

In my 17 years of doing investigations on local television, I never imagined that millions of people nationwide would be watching my stories. But, that's exactly what's happening now, thanks to the Internet.

Last May, we aired an investigation by producer Matt Goldberg and me called "Is Your Mechanic Cheating?" When the investigation first aired, it was viewed by 578,000 people in the Los Angeles area. Since then, about five million people across the country have viewed our investigation on the Internet. Clearly, the Internet is delivering a huge untapped audience for TV investigations.

"Viewers have always been hungry for investigative reporting," said Bob Long, KNBC news director. "Now, with the Web, they don't have to sit through an entire newscast to get it."

In some ways, our mechanic investigation was a classic local consumer expose. It uncovered wrongdoing at Jiffy Lube, the nation's largest lube and tune chain, which serves 30 million customers per year. Acting on a tip from an insider, we caught some L.A. Jiffy Lube locations charging customers

for repairs that were never done. The story had good undercover tape, a revealing interview from an insider and a compelling confrontation with a top manager who lied on camera.

“Viewers have always been hungry for investigative reporting,” said Bob Long, KNBC news director. “Now with the Web, they don’t have to sit through an entire newscast to get it.”

A few days after it aired, I realized something big was happening: The story was being spread “virally” across the Internet, meaning the story’s link was being spread to e-mail distribution lists and posted on other Web sites, drawing in more



When KNBC-Los Angeles first asked whether local Jiffy Lube mechanics were cheating customers, the company's corporate leaders refused interview requests. After the Web exposure generated more news coverage, the president of Jiffy Lube International went on the record with Joel Grover and apologized for the wrongdoing discovered in the investigation, although he declined an on-camera interview.



The Jiffy Lube investigation turned into a national phenomenon as the story gained viewers on the Internet and boosted the station's Web site to first place in the Los Angeles market.

viewers. For example, the link was sent out on an e-mail list of 200 working moms and California state employees, and it ended up on popular Web sites, such as Consumerworld.org. This drove millions of people to KNBC's Web site, www.nbc4.tv.

Currently, the story has had 2.3 million page views on our Web site, making it the most watched story ever on KNBC's site. When we include unauthorized circulation on numerous other sites, such as YouTube.com, the number of viewers swells to an estimated five million.

Explaining its popularity, Bonnie Buck, managing editor of KNBC's Web site, said: "The Jiffy Lube investigation potentially affects everyone who has a car because it's in almost every neighborhood in America."

Treasure trove

Before the story, the KNBC site had fallen to third among TV station Web sites in the L.A. market. Today it's ranked number one.

"Undoubtedly, the reason we got back on top is a direct result of the mechanic story," Buck said.

The Internet is a great venue for investigative reporters to showcase their work. It allows them to present their investigations in far greater detail than on the airwaves.

"A Web site is the place for an investigative story to really shine," Buck said. "A Web site isn't going to tell a reporter to keep their story to three minutes. We'll give you as much time and space to tell your story as you need."

Further, most stations' sites will allow a longer Web version of the story with elements and information that couldn't be included on air.

When we realized there was such high interest in the mechanic investigation, we decided to offer viewers an entire page dedicated to the Jiffy Lube story (www.nbc4.tv/mechanicinvestigation/index). It contained the original investigation, plus material that normally would have ended up on the cutting room floor, such as a longer version of our insider interview and the complete statements we received from the Jiffy Lube corporation. We also shot and added new elements, such as a back story of Goldberg explaining how we wired our

test cars with hidden cameras and a discussion board where Jiffy Lube customers could share their experiences.

We kept updating the investigation page with follow-up reports and new information, so it was constantly changing. This kept viewers coming back to the Web site again and again.

All of this exposure on the Web offers reporters more than just turbocharged viewership. In this case, it generated hundreds of e-mails to me from Jiffy Lube customers and employees in 17 states. Those e-mails were a treasure trove of tips and new information that allowed me to do important follow-up stories. Many of these viewers told me that the same type of wrongdoing I'd uncovered at the L.A. Jiffy Lube was occurring in other parts of the country. So, I asked NBC stations around the country to interview some of the people who e-mailed me. Months after my first Jiffy Lube report, I aired a follow-up showing that there might be wrongdoing at Jiffy Lube stores across the country.

Clearly the wide exposure our investigation was getting on the Web got the attention of Jiffy Lube executives. When our first report aired, Jiffy Lube refused to do an interview responding to our findings and stood firm in their refusal to talk for months. They simply issued written statements to respond to each report and follow-up.

But, several months later, as we were about to air a follow-up that was national in scope, Jiffy Lube did an about-face. A spokesperson admitted to me that Jiffy Lube had no idea this story would spread like wildfire across the Internet. The day before my September follow-up aired, the president of Jiffy Lube International, Luis Scoffone, got on a plane and flew from Houston to L.A. to do an interview with me. He began the interview by "personally apologizing" for the wrongdoing KNBC had uncovered at his stores, and he laid out steps the company was taking to prevent future problems.

Bright future

Even though television's share of news consumers may continue to decline, executives at KNBC don't foresee the demise of enterprise reporting. "The future for investigative reporting is bright," said Long.

Still, he adds that more and more viewers will be getting their investigations in the digital domain.

"The future of investigative reporting is on the Web and other digital services, such as iPod downloads," he said.

Long says he even foresees a day when viewers, hungry for more investigative and enterprise reporting, will "pay per view" to see investigative reports.

Joel Grover is an investigative reporter at KNBC-Los Angeles.

Lead

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

child's name, but the health department countered by saying an address could lead us to a child. What was behind the denial?

Throughout the battle over the records, my editor, Joe Fenton, and I never knew what the records would reveal. Lead projects in other newspapers led us to think we would find a group of errant landlords or at least discover where the lead-tainted properties were located.

It took another month to actually get the records. What we got in return wasn't so much a database as it was the kind of spreadsheet you'd expect to find when it's used by someone who keeps the system in one's head. The disposition of many closed cases wasn't fully explained, the property's ownership wasn't kept up-to-date, and some of the addresses didn't exist. There were few uniform codes.

After some cleaning by reporter Greg Korte, we were able to map 98 percent of the addresses using Arcview 9.1. The reports were aggregated by census tract (to find demographic data), and then by neighborhood (because no one knows what census tract they live in).

A day's worth of analysis boiled down to just one sentence in the final story: "Sixty-nine percent of properties suspected as sources of lead poisoning were in areas with a median household income of less than \$27,000."

The project, a five-page special section, focused

on the Cincinnati Health Department's failure to force 300 property owners to clean up lead hazards. There was the main story, a story about a family, two issue stories and a story about how we got the records.

Reaction was swift. The mayor asked the City Council's Education, Health and Recreation Committee to look at the issue. Two days after our story ran, the health committee called on the health department to answer why the problem had been allowed to languish. The health department promised to clean up all 300 properties by the end of the year.

While the council was in recess over the summer, the health committee held three public hearings to invite doctors, property owners and experts to give their views on what should be done.


The committee drew up a plan to eradicate lead poisoning. Three months after the story was published, the City Council enacted a nine-point plan that includes requiring the city's legal department to develop an avenue to prosecute building owners who do not abate lead or disclose known lead hazards to renters or buyers.

It also lowers the level of lead poisoning at which the health department takes corrective action. Currently, the health department takes action when a child's blood-test results indicate 14 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood or higher. The national recommendation is to act at 10. The proposal before the council lowers it to between five and 10, making it among the lowest levels of action in the country.

The health department continues to take action.

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THE Rosalynn Carter Fellowships FOR MENTAL HEALTH JOURNALISM




"This program is an exciting component of our efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination against those with mental illnesses. I look forward to working with each of our fellows to promote awareness of these important issues."

—Rosalynn Carter

The Carter Center in Atlanta, Ga., announces six one-year journalism fellowships of \$10,000 each. Designed to enhance public understanding of mental health issues and combat stigma and discrimination against people with mental illnesses, the fellowships begin in September 2007. Fellows will not be required to leave their current employment.

THE CARTER CENTER

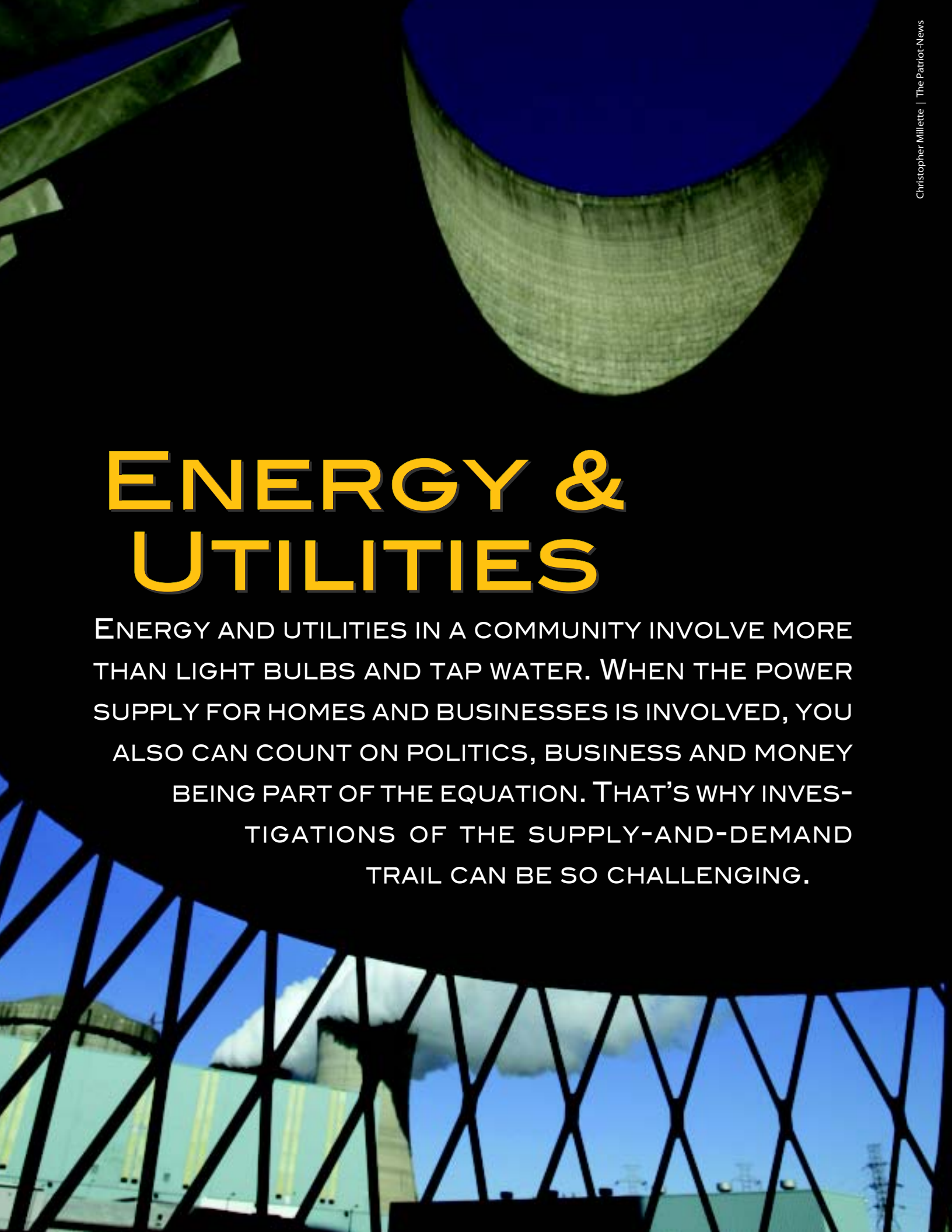


The application deadline is April 23, 2007. To apply, e-mail: Rebecca G. Palpant, M.S. The Carter Center Mental Health Program ccmhp@emory.edu www.cartercenter.org/health/mental_health/fellowships/index.html

For more information, see www.cartercenter.org

ENERGY & UTILITIES

ENERGY AND UTILITIES IN A COMMUNITY INVOLVE MORE THAN LIGHT BULBS AND TAP WATER. WHEN THE POWER SUPPLY FOR HOMES AND BUSINESSES IS INVOLVED, YOU ALSO CAN COUNT ON POLITICS, BUSINESS AND MONEY BEING PART OF THE EQUATION. THAT'S WHY INVESTIGATIONS OF THE SUPPLY-AND-DEMAND TRAIL CAN BE SO CHALLENGING.



INCREASING DEMAND FOR POWER REQUIRES CLOSER LOOK AT NUCLEAR ENERGY INDUSTRY

BY GARRY LENTON
THE (HARRISBURG, PA.) PATRIOT-NEWS

Nuclear Waste: It's hard to believe that an industry that has been around for more than 40 years still doesn't have a permanent place to store its waste, but it's true. The U.S. Department of Energy is developing a site at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, but it is a long way from completion. Until it opens, the highly radioactive spent fuel is stored in deep pools of water or in casks at the plants.

◀ Reactor Two at the Three Mile Island nuclear power facility was shut down 30 years ago following a partial meltdown in the reactor core. That event, along with the Chernobyl disaster in the former Soviet Union, fueled public resistance to expanding nuclear power resources, but today's fossil fuel concerns have prompted a new look at this alternative.

In the classic Saturday Night Live sketch "The Pepsi Syndrome," comedian Richard Benjamin explains to the world how the complicated process of nuclear fission is used to boil water to make electricity "so you can make toast."

The skit aired nine days after the March 28, 1979, accident that destroyed the Unit-2 reactor at Three Mile Island and gave a nervous nation a chance to laugh after a harrowing week. At the time, the world's attention was focused on the nuclear plant and whether a hydrogen bubble inside the containment building would result in a release of deadly radiation.

Up until then, few reporters were paying attention to nuclear energy. It was a trusted technology, an atoms-for-peace initiative that migrated out of the U.S. Navy's nuclear program. Many of the nuclear engineers who helped get the nation's commercial nuclear power plants up and running came from the Navy's program. We were naive.

The accident changed that. In the decades that followed, the nuclear industry came under scrutiny from government regulators, watchdog groups, the media and the public. Then, the Russian reactor at Chernobyl caught fire seven years later. The two events left the industry with two black eyes that lasted into the 21st century. No one was ordering new plants. The legal battles over new sites and finding investors to finance a project would be tough, if not impossible.

Not anymore. Demand for electricity is rising; concerns about pollution from coal-fired power plants are escalating, and the public, which is fed up with rising oil prices and a sense that the U.S. is too dependent on the goodwill of Middle Eastern despots for sweet crude, is beginning to soften its view. Operating licenses are being renewed, new plants are being ordered and the time for journalists to start paying closer attention to this billion-dollar industry is now.

Nuclear issues cut across several beats – environment, public safety, business and labor, to name a few. If you're not covering nuclear, now is a good time to start. Here's a look ahead at some issues worth exploring:

Re-licensing: The Nuclear Regulatory Commission oversees all aspects of the industry and licenses commercial nuclear plants. Licenses are good for 40 years, but 20-year extensions are available.

There are 103 operating reactors in the U.S. at 64 sites in 31 states. More than half were built before 1979, and their licenses will expire in the next decade. It is expected that most owners will ask for an extension. Nuclear sources provide about 20 percent of the nation's electricity and 16 percent worldwide. Without it, the nation would have to find a way to replace the supply. Reliance on nuclear power is heaviest in the East, where most of the plants are located. In Vermont, 72 percent of the electricity supply comes from nuclear power. In New Jersey and South Carolina, it's 52 percent.

Companies start preparing to re-license about 10 years before their current license expires. If the owners aren't ready to go public with their plans, there is one strong indicator of their intentions – investment. Replacing a vessel head, or steam generators, are \$100 million projects, not something a company would want to do in a plant it expects to retire in the next decade.

The re-licensing process is described in detail on the NRC's Web site, www.nrc.gov.

Information about each plant and how nuclear energy compares to other forms of power genera-

tion can be found at the Nuclear Energy Institute's Web site, www.nei.org. The NEI is a Washington, D.C.-based industry group.

Aging: Nobody really knows how long a plant can run before it is considered "old," though there are debates and concerns. Congress settled on the 40-year license based on economic and anti-trust considerations, not technical specifications. Still, it's largely uncharted territory and worth monitoring.

"We know that unless it's managed properly, aging can be a problem," said Richard Barrett, director of the NRC's division of engineering in the Office of Nuclear Reactor Management, in a 2004 interview. The key, Barrett said, is strong oversight and maintenance.

The media should play a role in monitoring the oversight by the NRC and the maintenance by the plant operators. To start, regularly review the NRC's Event Notification Reports, a daily listing of any reportable event at a plant. If a problem has been reported at a plant, it will show up here first. Keep an eye out for mechanical failures. The worst would be those that force the plant to shut down.

Sign up for e-mail notification of NRC press releases through the link on the agency's home page.

Get familiar with the NRC's agency-wide Documents Access and Management System, or ADAMS. This online database allows you to quickly search and download documents. ADAMS also allows you to see comments being filed on proposed rule changes. Visit www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html, or follow the "Electronic Reading Room" link from the NRC home page.

Brain Drain: The loss of experienced operators is a rising concern among regulators, watchdog groups and the industry. Those nuclear Navy guys are getting older and increasingly ready to leave for a life of travel and golf. Many likely will be able to continue working part time as consultants unless nuclear engineering becomes more popular among incoming college freshman. Talk to local plant executives and ask how many seasoned control room operators they expect to retire in the next 10 years.

Security: Since the Sept. 11 terror attacks, companies such as Exelon, a U.S. electricity provider with one of the largest commercial nuclear operations, have invested hundreds of millions of dollars in security upgrades. The plants look more like prisons than utilities with miles of concrete barriers, double layers of high-tech fencing, extensive vehicle checks and guard towers. They have also, by most estimates, doubled the number of security officers whose job it is to repel terror attacks or sabotage. Are the upgrades enough to protect an industry that the Bush administration says has been targeted by terrorists? That's an ongoing debate because the NRC will no longer make public information about security requirements.

Information has dribbled out. Recently, the

Government Accountability Office, the investigative arm of Congress, issued a report criticizing the NRC for not setting the security bar high enough. The GAO reported that the NRC appeared to have reduced its requirements after industry officials complained they would be too expensive.

Lawsuits also can shed light on security strengths. Earlier this year, security officers at Three Mile Island filed a civil suit against their employer, Wackenhut. The class action listed the names of 78 plaintiffs, a number more than twice the last known size of the security force.

Public safety: There are many things that can go wrong at a nuclear plant, but it's the problems that can result in a radiation release that concern the public most. All plants are required to have emergency plans for dealing with a radiation release. Those plans extend for a radius of 10 miles around each facility; the NRC calls this the Emergency Preparedness Zone, or EPZ. The licensing process requires it.

These plans are public documents worth exploring. Crucial to each is how the surrounding communities would handle an evacuation. Check on how local and state agencies plan to evacuate so-called "special populations." This category includes prisons, hospitals, nursing homes and schools. In Pennsylvania, questions have been raised about how children in day care centers and nursery schools would be evacuated. The president of the state's day care association says she prays there is no need for an evacuation because her industry isn't ready.

Sources to check with include: emergency management officials at the federal, state, county and local levels; the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and local emergency officials, police agencies and elected leaders. Harrisburg's long-time mayor, Stephen R. Reed, has been openly skeptical of emergency planning.

Nuclear Waste: It's hard to believe that an industry that has been around for more than 40 years still doesn't have a permanent place to store its waste, but it's true. The U.S. Department of Energy is developing a site at Yucca Mountain in Nevada, but it is a long way from completion. Until it opens, the highly radioactive spent fuel is stored in deep pools of water or in casks at the plants.

How much storage space does your plant have left? What do they plan to do to create more, and how much will it cost? Who will pay for the expansion – ratepayers?

These are just a few of the topics open for examination by any reporter whose community or state plays host to a nuclear power plant.

Garry Lenton is the computer-assisted reporting coordinator for The (Harrisburg, Pa.) Patriot-News. He has covered Three Mile Island and related issues since 1992. To read coverage of the 25th Anniversary of the accident at TMI go to www.pennlive.com/news/tmi.shtml

WEB SITES

• U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission:

www.nrc.gov

- Daily event reports
- Public reading room
- Submit FOIA requests
- Subscribe to e-mail news releases

INDUSTRY GROUPS

• Nuclear Energy Institute:

www.nei.org

- Statistics
- Access to experts inside the industry
- National perspective

WATCHDOG GROUPS

• Nuclear Control Institute:

www.nci.org

• Union of Concerned Scientists:

www.ucsusa.org

• Three Mile Island Alert:

www.tmia.com

• Project on Government Oversight:

www.pogo.org

• Nuclear Information and Resource Service:

www.nirs.org

• Eye on Wackenhut:

www.eyeonwackenhut.com

- **Site maintained by the Service Employees International Union** focuses on the international security firm, Wackenhut, which holds contracts to guard several nuclear plants.

FERTILE GROUND FOR UTILITY INVESTIGATIONS USING SOURCES, DATABASES AND FOI LAWS

BY TOM MCGINTY
NEWSDAY

In July 2001, just a month after I was hired by *Newsday* and assigned to the utilities beat, the Long Island Power Authority, or LIPA, announced that it had to build new power plants across the island because increasing demand by residents and businesses would soon surpass the available supply.

Talking to experts about the issue, I learned that utilities in the Northeast typically have plenty of kilowatts to go around on all but the hottest days of the year when air conditioners cause huge spikes in demand. I was curious about changes in demand on LIPA's system over time, so I asked the utility for three years' worth of hourly readings in electronic format.

The chief spokesman looked at me like I was from Mars (the authority had never been asked for electronic data before), but he ultimately gave me a disk with 26,000 records in fixed-width ASCII format along with an utterly pointless 500-page printout of the same data.

My resulting story documented that demand on LIPA's system, which then had a maximum capacity of 4,600 megawatts, had exceeded 4,000 megawatts during just 16 hours in the previous year. The data allowed me to explain to readers that new power plants, always unpopular with residents, wouldn't be needed if the utility and its customers could find ways to cut electric usage during those few peak hours.

Looking at trends

Over the ensuing years on the beat, I would turn to databases and public documents from countless sources to fact-check industry officials and investigate a wide range of issues, from fuel costs and pollution to utility salaries and the impact of deregulation on the energy industry.

In fact, few beats have more data and public documents readily available to the reporter who knows where to find them and – this is the hard part – how to decipher the incredibly arcane terminology of the industry.

Untangling the inner workings of electric utilities got that much harder after the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) prodded many states to deregulate their utilities. Deregulation involved breaking up the electric monopolies that historically owned every piece of the systems – the power plants, the high-voltage transmission lines that moved the juice over long distances and the low-voltage distribution circuits that feed kilowatts to users.

In states where deregulation was enacted, including New York, utilities were typically forced to sell their power plants to independent firms and open their wires to competitors who would purchase bulk power on newly established exchanges and try to sell it to utilities' customers. Proponents of deregulation said the newly competitive landscape would lead to efficiencies and lower rates that the stodgy monopolies of yesterday could never match. But as *New York Times* reporter David Cay Johnston noted in a recent series of articles, that promise has not been realized.

“A decade after competition was introduced in their industries, long-distance phone rates had fallen by half, air fares by more than a fourth and trucking rates by a fourth,” Johnston wrote in October. “But, a decade after the federal government opened the business of generating electricity to competition, the market has produced no such decline.”

This is fertile ground for utility beat writers, and all the information they need to piece together what has happened in their states is readily available.

The first stop should be the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration, which maintains dozens of databases with thousands of measurements of every facet of the electric industry. For example, the annual database created from form EIA-826 contains monthly sales figures for most utilities in the nation. As of this writing, it is available from 1990 through July 2006 in dBASE format, which is easily imported into Access or Excel.

Using that data, a reporter could quickly piece together the cost-per-kilowatt trend for his local utility over a decade and also compare it to other trends for other utilities.

Other EIA databases include one that tracks utilities' conservation efforts (known as “demand-side management” in industry parlance) and another that documents the cost and quality of fuel burned in certain power plants.

I used the latter database in March to examine whether LIPA's soaring rates really could be blamed on the cost of power plant fuel, as the utility claimed. My analysis found that, “In 1999, the main KeySpan Corp. power plants under contract to LIPA generated 11.6 million megawatt hours of electricity, about 56 percent of LIPA's total energy sales, and racked up a fuel bill of \$327 million, according to FERC data. Last year, the total from

those same plants dropped to 10.7 million megawatt hours, or 49 percent of LIPA's total, but their fuel bill was \$847 million—more than two and a half times as high as in 1999.”

Asking questions

Of course, databases alone won't be enough to fully investigate your local utility or the impact of deregulation, but there is also a wealth of documents available at the state and federal levels.

LIPA, the main utility I covered, is an entity of the state and therefore not subject to oversight by federal or state regulators. That means the authority doesn't file many of the reports required of investor-owned utilities, but it also means that LIPA is subject to the state's Freedom of Information Law.

I made liberal use of FOI requests, and I obtained payroll data, contracts and other documents. In 2003, after learning that LIPA regularly conducted surveys of its customers, I filed a FOI request for copies of the results. I can still see the funny look LIPA's chief spokesman had on his face as he reluctantly slid four thick binders to me across a conference room table. Their remarkable contents led to a cover story headlined, "Power and Politics: LIPA's polls focused on its performance – and politicians'."

The story noted that, "The Long Island Power Authority, a state-run utility whose board is controlled by appointees of Gov. George Pataki, commissioned opinion polls that included questions about the popularity of the governor, Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and more than a dozen other elected officials and politicians." In all, a third of the questions were political in nature, which critics said constituted a

gross misuse of ratepayers' money.

Although FOI laws can help reporters gather information about government-run utilities, they're of no use to those who are writing about investor-owned utilities. Instead, they must turn to the numerous regulatory filings that utilities must submit even in the wake of deregulation.

For example, if a utility wants to raise its rates, it typically must file what is known as a "rate case" with the state commission that regulates utilities. The utility seeking the increase must file a host of supporting documents and submit to questions and document requests from interested parties.

When it comes to rate cases in New York, my first stop for insights and tips is Gerald Norlander, executive director of the Public Utility Law Project, or PULP, an organization whose sole purpose is protecting the rights of low-income and rural utility customers.

Norlander said a rate case is "like a little window into large corporations that we don't normally see. They have to leave tracks, and they have to come in and justify what they're doing. We get to ask questions.

Reporters looking for similar experts in their states can consult the Web site of the National Association of State Utility Advocates.

Another rich source of documents is the FERC's docket-search Web site. If, for example, a reporter wanted to research the deregulation of his local utility, a process that must be approved by FERC, he or she could probably find a docket with dozens or hundreds of documents submitted by all of the interested parties on this Web site.

LINKS

- **Energy Information Administration databases:**
www.eia.doe.gov/cneaf/electricity/page/data.html
- **FERC Dockets:**
<http://elibrary.ferc.gov/idmws/search/fercadvsearch.asp>
- **National Association of State Utility Advocates:**
www.nasuca.org
- **EPA National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment:**
www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/natamain
- **New York Independent System Operator:**
www.nyiso.org/public/index.jsp

Mining data

Another source of information on utilities are the so-called "system operators" that operate the energy markets created by deregulation and oversee the reliable flow of electricity on their territories' high-voltage power lines. The New York Independent System Operator maintains scores of public databases and documents everything from utility-level power demand to bids and sales on the electric market.

The system operator's Web site also allows access to meeting materials of the various committees that oversee the system. Earlier this year, I used several presentations from one of those committees to document a flaw in New York City's energy market that allowed three large generating firms to keep prices artificially high.

Pollution, obviously, is another important issue to examine on the utility beat, and there is no shortage of data to mine for stories on this topic. In 2002, I analyzed state and federal emissions databases, including the Environmental Protection Agency's "National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment," for a story about local power plants' impact on the air Long Islanders breathe. The data showed that the much-maligned power plants lagged far behind cars and other sources when it came to creating smog. They also contributed less than 1 percent of the deadly substances tracked by the EPA's Toxics Assessment.

As one official from the New York Department of Environmental Conservation said, "I would say [power plants are] part of the problem, but they're not as large a part of the problem as people perceive them to be, based on the numbers."

On Long Island, where power plants burn oil or natural gas, the story was that power plants aren't as bad as everyone thinks. However, in the parts of the country where coal is used to produce most of the electricity, the findings could be quite a bit different.

Tom McGinty is a staff writer on Newsday's investigative team. As Newsday's energy reporter, he was a leader on the team that covered the 2003 blackout that darkened large swaths of the United States and Canada. The coverage was a finalist for the 2004 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news. He previously served as the training director for IRE and NICAR and as a reporter for the Times of Trenton in New Jersey.

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Deadline: March 1, 2007

ENERGY AND UTILITY RESOURCES

If you're interested in doing an investigation on utilities or energy, check out these stories, tipsheets and resources available from the IRE Resource Center (www.ire.org/resourcecenter):

- **Story No. 22241:** An investigation into the proposed sale of Portland General Electric revealed inside information that sank the deal. Internal documents showed the Texas Pacific Group, which planned to buy PGE, intended to resell the utility. Nigel Jaquiss, *Willamette Week* (Portland, Ore.). (2005)
- **Story No. 22240:** The Department of Water and Power in Los Angeles is beset by price gouging, dysfunctional management, extortion and poor workmanship. This series follows a previous report about racial discrimination at the utility company. Jeffrey Anderson, *LA Weekly*. (2005)
- **Story No. 22051:** In the 1970s, a Texas company installed 750 miles of faulty gas pipes. Thirty years later, the pipes exploded, killing five people. Questions were asked about why the faulty pipes were initially installed and why no one repaired them earlier. R. A. Dyer, *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. (2004)
- **Story No. 18257:** After examining energy deficiencies in Illinois, Ohio and New York, the reporter concludes that the energy crisis in California isn't unique. Electricity doesn't obey supply and demand laws, so deregulation leads to unnecessarily complex and inefficient energy markets. Merrill Goozner, *American Prospect*. (2001)
- **Story No. 18185:** A 10-month examination of California's energy crisis reveals political manipulations during talks between energy companies and state and federal regulators. The reporters also study deregulation in other states

and its results, and how companies bid on lucrative energy deals behind closed doors. David Lazarus, Bernadette Tansey, Susan Sward, Christian Berthelsen, Scott Winokur, Carla Marinucci, Patrick Hoge, Stacey Finz, Carolyn Said, Kevin Fagan, *San Francisco Chronicle*. (2000)

- **Story No. 17584:** Utility cutbacks of overnight personnel increase emergency response times. Emergency services are frequently delayed while waiting for utility crews to shut off power or gas, and in several cases, fire chiefs attributed losses to the utilities' actions. Jean Kessner, Marty Sicilia, *WIXT-Syracuse*. (2000)

Tipsheets

- **No. 2706:** "Sexier Than You Think: Investigating Electric Utilities," Nigel Jaquiss, *Willamette Week*. This tipsheet offers tips for reporters covering utilities on how to find sources and relevant documents. It also includes information on possible conflicts between consumers and shareholders.
- **No. 1631:** "Energy and Environment," Mike Taugher, *Contra Costa Times* (Walnut Creek, Calif.). This tipsheet lists 13 Web sites with information on energy, environmental issues and energy companies.
- **No. 1630:** "Energy and the Environment – Mining for Coal Stories," Ken Ward, Jr., *The Charleston (W. Va.) Gazette*. This tipsheet offers advice on investigating coal, emphasizing environmental impact. It also includes a list of useful Web sites with energy-related information.
- **No. 1620:** "Useful Web Sites for Energy Information and Electric and Gas Business News," Arthur O'Donnell, California Energy Markets. This tipsheet lists Web sites related to numerous aspects of energy investigations, such as regulatory data, legal information and restructuring status around the U.S.
- **No. 1369:** "Environmental CAR: 10 Great Sources of Data," Ken Ward, Jr., *The Charleston (W. Va.) Gazette*. This tipsheet provides 10 sources of data useful for reporters investigating water and air quality, pollution and energy usage.

Past issues of *The IRE Journal* have stories by journalists exploring their investigations into energy and utility issues. Those include:

- "Blackout: Power Shortages, Interruptions Could Become More Common Story," *The IRE Journal* staff. This article summarizes resources for journalists covering blackouts, the energy industry and related regulation. (July/Aug. 2004)
- "More daunting tests ahead pitting 'right to know' against 'need to know,'" Charles Davis, The Freedom of Information Center. Davis, associate professor at the Missouri School of Journalism, discusses the balance between secrecy and open information regarding energy in post-9/11 America. (Jan/Feb 2004)
- "Federal commission changing access rules to avoid FOIA guidelines," Charles Davis, The Freedom of Information Center and Missouri School of Journalism. Davis examines a new Federal Energy Regulatory Commission rule that could restrict access to information about the infrastructure of the energy industry and predicts that other agencies will adopt similar rules. (Jan/Feb 2003)
- "Radioactive Waste," Lisa Davis, San Francisco's *SF Weekly*. Davis and John Mecklin discuss mishandling of radioactive material at the Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory. They discovered that radioactive material had been dumped in San Francisco Bay, radioactive fuel had been burned and radioactive scrap metal was sold to private companies. (July/Aug 2002)

Finally, these databases are available through the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (www.ire.org/datalibrary/):

- **Nuclear Materials Events Database:** NMED provides records of all non-commercial power reactor incidents involving radioactive byproducts. This database has 15 tables with entries from 1990 to 2005, including the basic record of events, abnormal occurrences and what radioactive materials were involved.
- **OSHA Workplace Safety Data:** This Occupational Safety and Health Administration database contains inspection records for all U.S. states and territories from 1972 until February 2006. It also offers information on workers injured in on-the-job accidents.
- **Toxics Release Inventory:** The TRI is a good database for investigating polluters in the community. It provides information on a variety of topics, including toxic chemical identity, waste treatment and recycling activities, among other things.

WATER WORRIES

AGING WATER SYSTEM FLOWS

WITH CONTAMINATION;

LITTLE OFFICIAL OVERSIGHT

OF COSTS, MAINTENANCE

BY RON SEELY

WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL



The *State Journal* findings led some Madison residents, including Wendy Ward, left, her husband Anders Svanoe, and their son, Jan-Erik, to switch to filtered drinking water.

Madison, Wis., has long been known for its progressive politics and its environmental awareness. The city regularly makes top 10 lists of the best places in the country to live and is noted for everything from schools to bike trails to the lakes that shine from just about any vantage point.

That reputation is largely deserved. I've lived in the city for 30 years and know that Madison is a beautiful place to live, work and raise a family. And water defines the landscape from the chain of lakes on which the city is built to the trout streams that beckon anglers just a 10-minute drive from downtown.

So, it was a shock when, after just a couple weeks of nosing around for a story on the Madison Water Utility and the management of the city's drinking water supply, I started turning up information that seemed very much at odds with the community's squeaky clean resume.

A story that started with residents complaining about discolored water flowing from their faucets would eventually turn into a four-part series called "Water Worries" that found numerous contaminants, including viruses, in the deep aquifer from which the city draws its drinking water. My investigation revealed an aging and decrepit water system that increased the perils of contamination, a renegade public utility that received little or no oversight from the city and managers who were less than forthright about everything from carcinogens and bacteria in the water to the security of wells and water towers.

I had plenty to report. But, in addition to revealing the results of my digging, I also wanted to explain to Madison residents

where their drinking water comes from, how it gets to their homes and how the utility that manages the water operates. Such a foundation seemed necessary if readers were to fully understand our findings. So, the series turned into a unique blend of investigative and explanatory reporting complete with graphics, interactive maps and charts that brought to life the workings of a public utility that operates, like most utilities, with little or no attention from the public. Although they are rich repositories of stories, such utilities are about as visible as the buried water pipes they oversee.

Until the spring of 2005, in fact, the Madison Water Utility operated in near obscurity. Then, residents from one of the city's neighborhoods started complaining about dirty water coming from their taps. The discolored water, it turned out, was from the mineral manganese, a naturally occurring metal that can cause health problems if ingested in large enough amounts over a long period of time. Especially at risk are babies and people with liver problems.

After the first story on manganese, I started hearing from residents - dozens and dozens of them. Young parents called to tell me they worried about their children drinking the water and had stopped using tap water completely. Others called with stories about how poorly they had been treated by those working for the water utility. Calls came from workers within the water utility who wanted to provide me information about long-standing problems within the agency.

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Madison Water Utility employees spent long hours flushing the city's water mains after residents reported manganese in the water supply. A four-part investigative series found additional contaminants, including viruses, in the deep aquifer from which the city draws its drinking water.

Resident frustrations

As the newspaper's science and environment reporter, I was assigned to do a story about manganese and what the city's water utility was doing to combat the problem. What I discovered in that first story set off alarm bells. Although it was turning up water nearly blackened by manganese, and although dozens of residents were finding black chunks of the mineral in their water, the Madison Water Utility was doing little at that early stage to alert its customers to the potential dangers of manganese. Instead, the utility told callers that there was no danger and that, even if tap water was cloudy, it was all right to use.

I spent some time talking to engineers and looking at maps at the water utility's offices. When I asked one engineer to explain the city's system of pumps and wells and how water reached homes, he insisted that the system with its pressure zones and 24 wells was too complicated to easily explain. I insisted that he try to help me understand. Over two or three sessions, I developed a thorough understanding of which neighborhoods were served by which wells, how water pumped from the deep aquifer flowed through the city and how the water was stored, treated and tested for contaminants.

But, those early interviews only piqued my interest. After doing a December 2005 story about the utility's response to manganese, I proposed a project in which we would take a hard look at the city's drinking water and how it was being managed. I started filing open record requests, seeking water-testing data for the previous five years for all 24 of the city's wells and all the records regarding public water quality complaints for the previous three years. To make the work manageable, we chose four specific contaminants we knew had been a problem and then compared the levels detected over the years to the health standards set by the EPA.

During my conversations with the utility's chief engineer, I heard him refer several times to an infrastructure study that had been completed the year before for the utility by a national consultant. The study had never been released publicly, so I asked for a copy of the report and spent several days reading the fat report.

After the first story on manganese, I started hearing from residents – dozens and dozens of them. Young parents

Quick Look

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

"Water Worries," April 30-May 3, 2006

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

We received calls from Madison residents saying their water was running black because of the mineral manganese.

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

About five months, though I reported on other stories during that time.

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

Documents included unreleased consultant studies from the utility, five years' worth of test data on spreadsheets, dozens of internal reports and memorandums, spreadsheets with three years of public water-quality complaint records and various national reports on urban water systems. Most material from the utility was obtained through several open record requests.

Major types of human sources used:

Utility and city officials, utility employees, residents with water problems and national experts on drinking water quality.



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Complaints about tap water darkened by manganese, a potential health hazard, prompted a look at problems in the Madison Water Utility. Madison is known as a progressive, environmentally friendly city built around a network of lakes and streams.

called to tell me they worried about their children drinking the water and had stopped using tap water completely. Others called with stories about how poorly they had been treated by those working for the water utility. Calls came from workers within the water utility who wanted to provide me information about long-standing problems within the agency. One especially important source was a resident who first brought the manganese problem to the city's attention and ended up taking on the utility practically single-handed.

All told, I spent nearly five months sorting through all of this material, interviewing sources and traipsing around the city with flushing crews and engineers to learn about water and pipes and wells. I sat at many kitchen tables listening to residents talk about their frustrations with their water and the utility. One elderly woman showed me her laundry, turned brown by the water and said, "If I wanted tan underclothes, I'd buy them that way!"

Performance problems

I spent hours interviewing the water-quality specialist with the state Department of Natural Resources who was responsible for regulation of the Madison Water Utility and who also had a computer full of tests and other data that proved invaluable because it allowed me to check utility data against data gathered by the regulatory agency.

This is what I found:

- Although contaminants rarely reach levels beyond health standards, the aquifer is contaminated by numerous pollutants, many of them carcinogens.
- In four wells, manganese was above the health standards recommended by the EPA. In one well, which serves a major city high school, the levels of carbon tetrachloride detected during one quarterly test in the year 2000 exceeded the EPA health standard.
- I found a study that had identified viruses in the city's wells, which was something few people knew about. The viruses detected can cause everything from stomach problems to the common cold.
- Using spreadsheets, I analyzed five-years worth of test data for five contaminants, including three industrial carcinogens, manganese and iron, for all 24 of the city's wells. Using this data, along with information from the utility engineers about which wells serve which neighborhoods, our graphic artist created

an interactive map and a chart that allowed readers to click on the well closest to their home and find out what levels of the selected contaminants were found in it. It was the first time many readers were able to identify the well that serves their home, let alone find out what was in the water.

- The unreleased infrastructure report proved a goldmine of information. We found that the utility's own consultant had warned the utility was neglecting to spend enough on replacing aging pipes and wells and other infrastructure – problems plaguing utilities across the country. In Madison, those aging pipes, some dating to the late 1800s, were, in fact, partly responsible for the manganese, which was building up inside of them.
- The utility, according to its own consultants, was spending only about \$200,000 per year to reinvest in facilities such as wells, when it should have been spending closer to \$2.5 million. It was spending \$2.8 million on pipe replacement when it should have been



In addition to investigating contaminants in drinking water, stories explained how the local water system works. Here, hydrologist David Hart demonstrates how a piece of the Mount Simon sandstone aquifer soaks up and stores water.

shelling out closer to \$6.5 million.

- Based on documents obtained through open record requests, as well as interviews with sources inside the utility and state regulators, we were able to confirm that utility officials had failed to track water quality complaints for two years (a violation of state law), had quarreled with the Department of Natural Resources about issuing a boil order because of bacteria showing up in tests, had not reported a break-in at a water tower, and failed to report levels of carbon tetrachloride that exceeded federal health standards in one city well. Utility officials blamed a typo in the water quality report in which the test result was supposed to appear.

Within three weeks after the series ran, Madison Mayor David Cieslewicz announced a 10-point plan to reorganize the city's water utility and protect the city's drinking water. The plan set performance standards for the utility's general manager and directed more spending on replacing pipes and wells. Still, the story continues to unfold. The water utility, for example, has announced plans to shut down two of the problem wells identified in the series. And the city council has approved spending nearly \$3 million more in the coming year on replacement of aging pipes. The city's public health director has sought help from the federal government in studying potential connections between pollutants such as manganese and illnesses in the city.

Most important, residents in Madison have become very aware of not only where their drinking water comes from but how it is managed. Hundreds have turned up for neighborhood meetings on the city's water problems and city officials, in the midst of an election season, were peppered with questions about water.

Ron Seely has been a reporter at the Wisconsin State Journal, the state's second largest daily, for 28 years and has covered science and environment for the newspaper for nearly 15 years. Seely has won numerous state and national awards for his reporting on water issues.

POWER PLAY

UNDESERVING POWER

COMPANIES NAB TAX

BREAKS INTENDED TO

REWARD BUSINESSES

CREATING JOBS

BY MIKE MCANDREW
THE (SYRACUSE, N.Y.) POST-STANDARD

I admit I might have a hard time explaining how electricity is made and how it gets to my computer.

When I look at my monthly electric bill, I do not have a clue what the assorted fees are for.

But I could not let those shortcomings stop me from writing a story about how New York is giving one power generator a \$22 million-per-year tax break because it created one job.

We were launching a series of investigative stories on New York's Empire Zone program, which rewards businesses creating new jobs with incentives, such as full reimbursement of 10 years of the property taxes they pay to local governments. Although other states offer similar tax incentives for corporations, the cost of New York's program had skyrocketed to a projected \$546 million in 2006 from \$30 million in 2001.

Even so, New York officials refused to disclose the value of the tax breaks being awarded to each of the more than 8,000 businesses certified to participate in the Empire Zone program.

Doing the homework

Post-Standard reporter Michelle Breidenbach and I used the Freedom of Information Law to obtain state records that detailed the jobs created and tax credits claimed by each Empire Zone business.

Using those electronic records, as well as other records, such as property tax payments and filings with the SEC, we determined that two power companies – NRG Energy Inc. of Princeton, N.J., and Reliant Energy Inc. of Houston – had claimed the largest Empire Zone tax credits in 2003.

Specifically, New York had refunded \$22 million in local property taxes that NRG had paid that year for three power plants. To qualify for that windfall, NRG had added one-half of one new full-time equivalent employee. (There was no explanation of how this would be done, whether it was a part-time employee or full-time worker employed part of the year.)

Reliant Energy was not far behind NRG in terms of a refund.

While these two electric generators were feasting on Empire Zone goodies, New York

QUICK LOOK

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

"The Great Empire Zone Giveaway" series began Sept. 17 with "Money for Nothing," the story about tax breaks awarded to two power companies. Other stories in the series were published Sept. 24, Oct. 1, Oct. 8, Oct. 22 and Nov. 19.

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

Projects Editor John Lammers suggested a series on the state's Empire Zone program. Reporter Michelle Breidenbach and I analyzed records and discovered the power companies were getting the biggest Empire Zone tax breaks.

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

The first FOI request for the series was filed in late August 2005. It took seven or eight months to get the records. I spent two to three months reporting for this story and others in the series. Writing and editing the "Money for Nothing" story on the power companies took about two weeks.

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

Excel spreadsheets were obtained through FOI from the New York State Department of Economic Development. The spreadsheets contained 2003 and 2004 data about jobs created, capital investments made, and tax credits claimed by each of the more than 8,000 businesses in the state's Empire Zones.

Major type of human sources used:

Empire Zone officials, state tax department officials, experts involved in the power industry and environmental health, state legislature energy committee chairmen, accountants.

Gary Walts | The Post-Standard



NRG Energy Inc. of Princeton, N.J. received a \$22 million property tax break in 2003 as a participant in New York's Empire Zone program, designed to promote new jobs.

families were paying the third-highest electric rates in the country.

These facts alone promised to give our series a sizzling start, but editor John Lammers pushed me to find out more about these out-of-state power companies and their facilities.

“We wanted to do more than an audit,” Lammers said. “We wanted to show vividly what New Yorkers were getting for their millions in tax money, to turn facts into a story with color.”

As a general assignment reporter, my experience covering power companies consisted of the occasional story on a storm-related power outage. Clearly, I needed to educate myself about the issue.

One of our business desk reporters was kind enough to steer me to an official at the state’s power grid so I could learn how the grid works and how the market price is set for kilowatts. I tapped our paper’s environment reporter for the names of officials who could give me a quick primer on pollution caused by the companies’ power plants.

Using LexisNexis, I researched what other papers had published about NRG and Reliant Energy. I discovered that Reliant Energy was awaiting trial on federal criminal charges that alleged it conspired to manipulate the price of electricity in California by creating a phony power shortage. I also found out that Reliant had paid \$300 million for the naming rights of the Houston Astrodome complex, including Reliant Stadium, where the NFL’s Houston Texans play. So, while Reliant was telling New York officials that it could not make capital improvements to its facilities unless it got the tax breaks, it was spending a fortune on stadium-naming rights.

In addition to LexisNexis, I visited the NRG and Reliant Energy corporate Web sites and numerous other Web sites for reliable information about these power companies and the electric market, including:

- The Energy Information Administration (www.eia.gov/fuelelectric.html), where I found government statistics, including state-by-state comparisons of the cost of electricity for residential and commercial customers.
- The New York Independent System Operator (www.nyiso.com), which operates New York’s power grid. I found the dates when each electric-generating unit in the state was put into service,

“We wanted to do more than an audit,” said editor John Lammers. “We wanted to show vividly what New Yorkers were getting for their millions in tax money, to turn facts into a story with color.”

Gary Watts | The Post-Standard



Power-generating companies reaped millions in tax benefits under the state’s Empire Zone program while New York’s citizens paid the third-highest utility rates in the country.

the type of fuel each burned and the kilowatts each unit produced. This helped confirm that Reliant Energy was getting Empire Zone tax credits for some hydropower stations that were 100 years old.

- The Environmental Integrity Project (www.environmentalintegrity.org), which included the organization’s annual report that identifies the nation’s dirtiest power plants and those with the worst emissions. Two of the NRG plants receiving Empire Zone tax breaks were the dirtiest in New York.

I checked sources that had nothing to do with power, such as New York’s Temporary Lobbying Commission (www.nylobby.state.ny.us) and state Board of Elections (www.elections.state.ny.us). I found records documenting the companies spending several hundred thousand dollars lobbying state officials on Empire Zone issues.

I also discovered that the companies were contributing thousands of dollars to state legislators. Some of those same legislators were instrumental in blocking proposals to limit the value of Empire Zone tax breaks that NRG and Reliant Energy could claim.

Also, NRG Energy and Reliant Energy are both publicly traded companies that file quarterly and annual financial reports with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. In the SEC filings, I found information about the companies’ 2005 profits and executive compensation.

Program shortcomings

Trying to get NRG and Reliant to answer my questions proved frustrating. Weeks before the story was published, I

e-mailed questions to the communications staffs at both companies. Both companies declined to answer any of those questions. My requests to tour the generating facilities with a photographer also were rejected.

Despite that, I learned a lot about power in about one month. By the time I started interviewing state officials, I could confidently challenge one senator’s assertion that giving NRG these tax credits benefited all New Yorkers because it helped NRG generate cheaper kilowatts. (Other sources already had explained to me how the market price for electricity was set.)

After my story was published in September, I received phone calls from readers statewide who expressed outrage about the tax breaks being given to the power companies.

The story also caught the attention of candidates campaigning for state offices. Gubernatorial candidates discussed their plans for reforming the Empire Zone program and the department that oversees it. A candidate for lieutenant governor recited some of my story’s findings during a radio interview. After the elections, it seems likely New York’s next governor and the legislature will address the Empire Zone program’s shortcomings.

A final piece of advice to reporters writing about power companies, kilowatts and tax breaks: Keep the writing simple. Your readers will include folks like me who didn’t pay attention in science class.

Mike McAndrew is a general assignment reporter at The (Syracuse, N.Y.) Post-Standard. The series on the Empire Zone program can be read at www.syracuse.com/specialreports. In the July-August issue, Michelle Breidenbach wrote “Lights Out,” detailing The Post-Standard’s investigation of the New York Power Authority.

HOOP PERKS

UTILITY SPONSORSHIP

OF NBA TEAM

NETS FEW REWARDS

FOR RATEPAYERS

BY ANDREW MCINTOSH
THE SACRAMENTO BEE

When Southwest Airlines dropped its sponsorship deal with the NBA's Sacramento Kings, *Sacramento Bee* editors wondered what such deals included, how much they cost and whether they possibly were getting too pricey even for major corporations.

The Kings billionaire owners, infamously tight-lipped about much of their off-court business dealings, sidestepped most questions about their sponsorship deals, saying they were confidential. Besides, they were still negotiating renewals with several other firms.

The story might have ended there.

But imagine my surprise when I learned from a brief mention in a colleague's story that other major businesses in talks with the Kings for sponsorship renewals included the Sacramento Municipal Utility District, or SMUD.

The ratepayer-owned utility generates and distributes power to people and businesses in a 900-square-mile territory in Sacramento County and a small portion of Placer County in Northern California. It operates a monopoly in the region.

With its \$83 million profit on \$1.23 billion in operating revenue during 2005, SMUD might be a logical target for a professional sports team's sponsorship marketing pitch. But why was the public utility actually spending ratepayer money on deals with an NBA team? How much had it already spent and since when? What did it get for the money?

Internal SMUD documents, obtained through the California Public Records Act, soon offered our readers a look at the Sacramento Kings sponsorship agreements. I requested copies of all sponsorship deals the utility had signed with Maloof Sports and Entertainment Inc., the owner of the Kings, as well as related staff memos.

Within 10 days, the SMUD documents helped us discover that since 2002 the utility had spent more than \$1 million in ratepayers' money on sponsorship deals with the Kings and its sister team, the WNBA's Sacramento Monarchs.

SMUD paid Maloof Sports and Entertainment \$428,532 during the 2002-03 season and an additional \$497,816 during the 2003-04 season. The sum dropped to \$119,605 during the 2004-05 season, according to contracts the utility signed.

Such numbers were surprising enough, but details of the contracts also offered a rare glimpse into the NBA team's advertising and sponsorship dealings and the hospitality perks that go with such agreements, which usually are not disclosed publicly.

The first two years of the deals gave SMUD the exclusive rights to Kings receptions, suite nights for several regular-season games and four tickets for all Monarchs regular-season home games. Furthermore, there was radio, print and Internet advertising that promoted SMUD's energy conservation and renewable energy programs.

We learned that Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance (DHA) employees enjoyed one of the suite nights and several receptions. The utility company gave game tickets, food and free parking at Arco Arena as an incentive for DHA workers to recruit low-income people for SMUD's discount power programs, which allow eligible customers a discount of more than 30 percent on their monthly bill.

Our investigation also found that no other public utility in the United States has had a similar deal with an NBA basketball team, a fact

Quick Look

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

"SMUD teamed up on ads; perks defended for county workers," May 15, 2006

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

Part of my job is to identify how public records research efforts can further enhance our breaking-news coverage. When sports writer Clint Swett reported that the Sacramento Kings, the city's professional basketball team, had lost Southwest Airlines as a major sponsor, Tom Negrete, assistant managing editor for sports, and Cathie Anderson, executive business editor, wondered about the deals involved and why they were not being renewed. Were they getting too expensive? Swett mentioned talks were continuing with the Sacramento Municipal Utility District to renew its sponsorship. Negrete and Anderson approved my proposal to go after previous SMUD agreements with the Kings to see how much public money was spent on such deals and what ratepayers were getting for it.

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

About 12 days spread over four months

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

Copies of three separate sponsorship contracts signed between SMUD and Maloof Sports and Entertainment Inc. between 2002 and 2005 were obtained under the California Public Records Act. SMUD also provided staff reports and other PowerPoint presentations and memos about what the utility called its "partnership deals."

Major types of human sources used:

Senior officials in the Sacramento County Department of Human Assistance confirmed that their employees received Kings game tickets and hospitality perks from SMUD as an "incentive" to sign up low-income people for SMUD's discount programs. Sports marketing experts, an industry group, a university ethicist and ordinary SMUD ratepayers discussed whether these deals were appropriate.

confirmed by James Santomier, a sports management professor at Sacred Heart University. He closely follows marketing deals and trends in the pro-sports world.

The utility's documents also revealed some fascinating financial inequities in men's and women's pro basketball. SMUD's association with the Kings cost \$340,000 in 2003-04, while it cost the utility just \$64,800 for the same association with the Monarchs.

The contracts had some odd terms. They called for SMUD to make extra per-game payments, ranging from \$1,700 to \$3,611, if either team made its league's playoffs, though total amounts included a playoff cap for both teams between \$65,000 and \$70,200. What benefit any of that offered SMUD ratepayers was questionable.

Series of perks

SMUD customers, who read copies of the deals we posted on our Web site, also said the utility was wrong for spending public money on deals with wealthy owners of professional sports teams, especially when the power company is a monopoly provider in the area.

SMUD representative Monica Siewert defended the utility's deals with Maloof Sports and its decision to offer Kings tickets and hospitality perks to county workers as incentives. She said the utility received good advertising value for its money.

Siewert said the deals were approved by SMUD's board in 2002 and were signed as part of

efforts and strategic policies intended to "promote local economic development."

She initially said no SMUD executives or employees attended Kings games on the utility's tab and that SMUD traded back its suite privileges for more advertising. She also said SMUD traded back the four Monarchs tickets it received for each home game in exchange for more advertising.

In a second interview, Siewert acknowledged that SMUD did keep at least one suite night, and the utility gave the suite to 20 workers from a county DHA office in nearby Galt, Calif. The Kings game was their prize for enrolling the most participants in the energy assistance program.

Asked why the utility company gave county workers incentives to sign up recruits for the energy assistance program when their job is to help low-income earners, Siewert replied that it seemed odd to SMUD as well.

"DHA workers already have a large workload," Siewert said. "We found if we weren't offering incentives, they just weren't going to do it."

For energy program participants, the average savings can top \$280 a year. SMUD had been criticized for signing up far fewer low-income customers than other utilities its size, Siewert said. By tapping the DHA offices with incentives, SMUD had the potential to reach 114,000 low-income customers, she said. DHA normally enrolls between 100 and 200 low-income people a month, but the two-month-long contests in 2004 resulted in 2,178 new program participants.

The initial sponsorship contracts revealed that SMUD obtained a series of perks from Maloof Sports for each season, including two receptions at Arco Arena for Kings games, a "chalk talk" before each game with a member of the Kings coaching staff, game tickets, parking for 30 people and complimentary arena food and beverages. SMUD also got a private suite night for 20 guests at a regular-season Kings game, including tickets and parking for 20 people and complimentary food and beverages.

During the 2003-04 NBA season, workers from two other county DHA offices also shared three pre-game receptions with food and drink

for 30 guests. The outings included a pre-game talk with an assistant Kings coach and Kings tickets.

The utility's 2004-05 agreement included none of those perks and no extra playoff charges, and the sticker price declined from almost \$500,000 to \$119,605.

Serious scrutiny

Future incentives are unlikely to involve Kings game tickets. When we started asking questions about SMUD's plans for future sponsorship deals with the Sacramento Kings, the utility quietly zapped those plans and said it planned to spend only \$20,000 on advertising with the Sacramento Monarchs in 2006.

Any examination of spending by a public utility, big or small, should include some serious scrutiny of how it spends its money on sponsorships and advertising by identifying recipients and dollar amounts. A few tips:

- Learn their lingo. Utility executives and managers, like professional athletes and coaches, often speak a different language. Learn their insider jargon. Find out what they call something; don't ask for documents based on what you think it's called. In this case, SMUD called its deals "partnerships," insisting they were not sponsorships, though one letter from Maloof Sports welcomed the utility "to our family of sponsors."
- Think documents, documents, documents. Meetings equal minutes. Sponsorships equal contracts. Keep copies of all your record requests. Ask for a written acknowledgment of your Freedom of Information or public records requests. Watch legal deadlines and hound officials to respect them. Don't accept less than what you've asked to see.
- Ask officials to scan and e-mail documents to you when possible to save time. When you get the records, read them at least twice.
- Banging out a quick chronology can help organize complex material and generate good questions when you see the facts on top of each other.
- Look for resignation letters. When utility executives leave or quit and won't talk, their letters (sometimes lengthy, sometimes angry) often speak for them. Request copies from sources or file a public record request. Request and examine their office e-mail traffic for three weeks before their departure.
- Internal audits can be roadmaps. Utilities often bend their governing rules. Internal auditors often discover who's doing the bending, how it's being done and then call them on it. Ask for a year's worth of internal audits to see what has caught their attention.

Andrew McIntosh is assistant city editor, investigations, at The Sacramento Bee.



PUMP CHECK

MOTORISTS HAVE 1-IN-25 CHANCE OF BUYING GAS FROM A PUMP THAT FAILS TO GIVE AMOUNTS WITHIN LEGAL LIMIT

BY LEE DAVIDSON
THE (SALT LAKE CITY) DESERET MORNING NEWS



An inspector from the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food checks the pumps for accuracy at a service station, but state records do not specify how much each pump is over or under the stated gasoline output.

If you're looking for a quick, fairly easy investigation that will grab the interest of readers, then checking out the accuracy of gasoline pumps is the one for you.

The project, which took me only about a week to do (and I spent most of that negotiating and waiting for a copy of a state database) came about after a string of stories about how gasoline prices had dropped significantly nearly everywhere except Utah. While the governor launched another investigation of the high prices, we decided to look at whether customers really receive what they pay for at the pump.

Some of our findings:

- Customers in Utah have a 1-in-25 chance of buying gasoline at a pump that fails to give amounts within legal ranges.
- About half of the pumps give too little gasoline, and half give too much. So, motorists have about a 1-in-50 chance of getting more than they paid for, and 1-in-50 odds of getting less.
- About 8 percent of gas stations in Utah had at least one pump that failed from January 2005 through August 2006. They were scattered among 92 stations in 43 communities.
- Some stations had all of their pumps fail repeatedly in multiple inspections. However, the state issued no fines and closed no pumps or stations at that time.
- The state inspected all of the state's gasoline stations in 2005 but now has decided to inspect only about one-third of them each year. It has only eight inspectors, and they do a variety of other work, including checking scales and price scanners at stores statewide. The state said that other work had been suffering.

We began our investigation with a quick search on the state's Web site (www.utah.gov), which showed us that the Division of Weights and Measures in the Department of Agriculture and Food had the data we needed. The Web site mentioned that the division tests "all gasoline pumps for accurate measurement." (I also could have found that by simply looking more closely at the inspection stickers that the division places on each gasoline pump in the state.)

The state provided me a full copy of its Access database on a CD, and it already had some state-designed queries saved on it, such as "total pumps failed with location and count," which made my life far too easy. I had most of the numbers and information that I needed from the database in about an hour.

Some simple division of the number of pumps that failed (1,898) by the total pumps inspected (44,796) gave the overall failure rate (4.2 percent). Division of the number of stations with at least one failed pump (92) by the number of total stations (1,140) gave the failure rate for stations (8 percent).

I did some sorting by station and inspection date to discover that many stations had all their pumps fail repeatedly in up to five inspections over two years. Sorting by city, I also found that some of the state's biggest cities did not have any failing pumps, while some smaller cities had numerous failures.

Finally, sorting and counting by date showed that virtually all known stations had been inspected in 2005, but inspections appeared to be way down in 2006.

Once I had my information from the database, I interviewed state officials and industry representatives. A photographer and I went with a state inspector to a local gas station to see and describe how inspections occur.

We also found some interesting tidbits along the way. The inspector told us that pumps always give a little bit more gasoline when it is pumped quickly instead of slowly, so now I am sure that all of our readers pump gas as quickly as possible.

State officials also say pumps are designed so that as they wear out they should err in favor of consumers. I also suspect that readers started looking for older pumps.

A major drawback with the Utah database is that it did not include whether a "volume failure" occurred because a pump gave too much gasoline or too little. However, the inspection supervisor and other inspectors agreed that nearly half of the time the failed pumps gave too much, and half the time they gave too little.

We put a list online of all stations that had at least one pump fail. It showed the dates of inspections and how many pumps failed each time. We arranged that by city to make it easier for readers to identify nearby stations.

Lee Davidson is a special projects reporter for The (Salt Lake City) Deseret Morning News. The story can be found online at www.deseretnews.com.

Lead

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

As of this writing, 53 cases have been cleaned up. Twenty-one cases have been brought to court, and 121 property owners have received updated orders. Non-compliance can result in legal action.

One of the greatest challenges of the project was keeping the scope narrow. Lead is a huge topic. It can be looked at from dozens of perspectives. My editor, Fenton, and I decided we had to stay focused on the records we had won. It was a difficult decision. There are six other major counties in our coverage area. Cincinnati is just one health department in its own county.

The most time-consuming aspect was tracking the properties. We wanted to know how many children lived in the lead-tainted properties. The health department didn't know. With the help of two clerks, I went to all 300 properties. It was a huge undertaking and took two and a half months, but it was worth it.

Fifty children lived in those homes. There was no better reason to write the story.

Sharon Coolidge joined The Cincinnati Enquirer in 2002 to cover state courts. In 2006, the Associated Press Society of Ohio named Coolidge best news writer in the state, and that year she was also chosen by the Ohio Society of Professional Journalists as best Ohio reporter.



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

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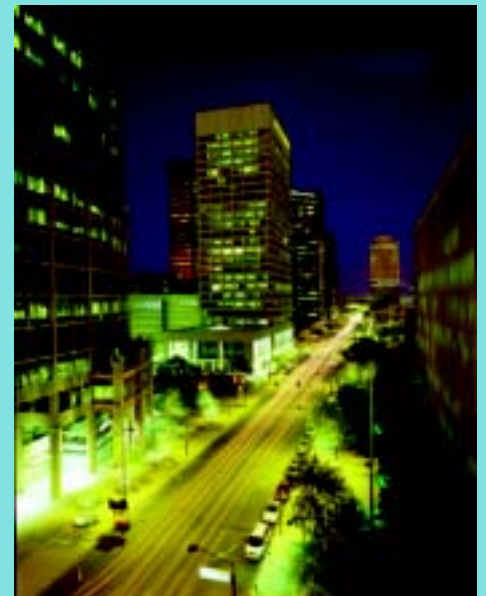


HOST: The Arizona Republic

Join the best in the business as IRE honors Don Bolles and the 30th anniversary of the Arizona Project at its annual conference.

The Arizona Project was the historic effort by journalists to continue the investigation that led to the killing of Arizona Republic reporter Don Bolles, a 47-year-old husband and father. Bolles and many of those 38 journalists, known as the Desert Rats, were founding members of IRE and were instrumental in shaping its future.

For IRE, the resulting Arizona Project brought national attention and stature. A tiny organization with little money flourished to become what it is today. Thanks to those who have gone before, IRE now has an organization strong enough to take on today's threats to investigative reporting.



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To be awarded annually, beginning Fall 2007:

First place \$5,000

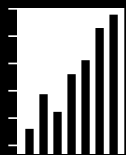
Runner-up \$2,000

Named for the widely acclaimed investigative business journalist team of Don Barlett and Jim Steele, these awards funded by the Reynolds Center celebrate the best in print and online investigative business journalism. Barlett and Steele, winners of two Pulitzers at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and two National Magazine Awards at *Time*, have worked together for more than three decades. They are contributing editors to *Vanity Fair*.

Submission deadline August 1, 2007.

Entries must have appeared between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2007.

More details about the awards and Barlett and Steele at www.BusinessJournalism.org.



Donald W. Reynolds
**National Center
for Business Journalism**

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