

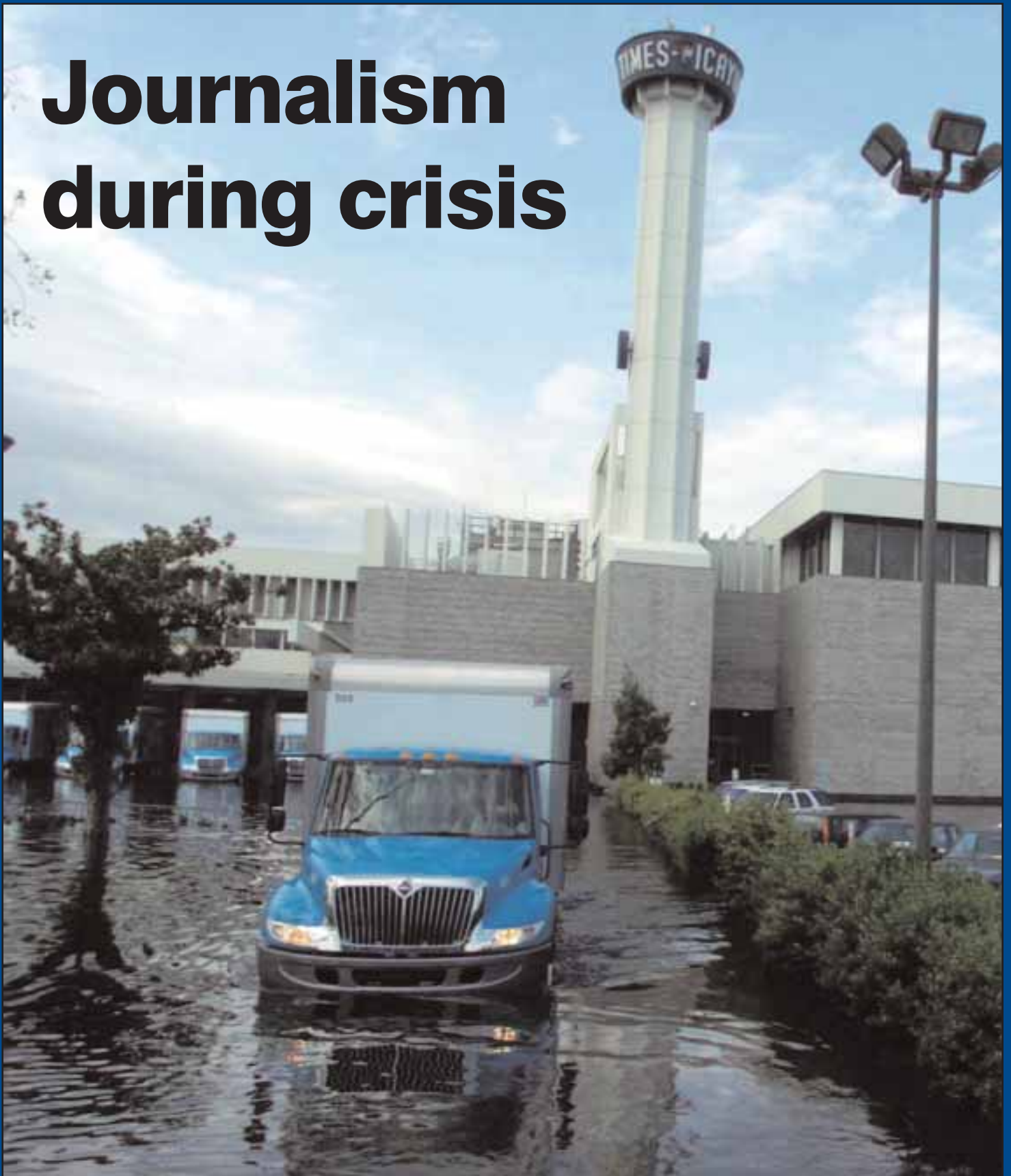


# The American Editor<sup>®</sup>

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2005

## Journalism during crisis



# As editors, it's time to move boldly ahead

BY RICK RODRIGUEZ

It's been the kind of year we'd like to forget. Cutbacks, layoffs, ethical transgressions, declining circulation, speculation about the industry's long-term future — you name it, the newspaper industry has lived it this year.

And while we'd all like to think it all will go away, we know it won't anytime soon. The industry is changing, our readers' habits are changing and we are in the throes of attempting to adapt to that change. No one really knows how things are going to shake out.

But we can and should remain confident that there will always be a market for news — and we're still in the best position to supply it.

What we do can't be replaced by news aggregators — without us, they'd have nothing to aggregate. We can't be replaced by bloggers — we provide much of the information on which they base their writings. For all of our mistakes, and we've made our share, newspapers and the business of news gathering remain vital to our way of life in this country.

So what to do in a time of uncertainty?

Now is the time to do what we've always done best, to differentiate ourselves by providing our readers with unique and useful information. That means not only unleashing the watchdogs to provide tough, critical looks at our governing institutions but using the information we've gathered through clicks on our Web sites to evaluate the kinds of information we deliver to our readers. Will they find it helpful, informative, entertaining, in other words, worth their time?

As editors, we still control how the newsroom resources are spent. We still

decide whether to launch investigations, travel with teams, whom to hire, what goes in the paper and what doesn't.

We may not have the resources we once did, but we still have more ability and resources to gather news and make a difference than any other local news outlet. Think about it. When you listen to the local drive-time radio, what do you hear: your paper being read, generally without any credit. TV? Same stories, repackaged with video, again mainly without credit. Web sites? We often find briefs of our stories or links to our Web sites.

So at a time when so many are predicting our demise or talking disparagingly about our future, we, as editors, really need to step back and look at the facts.

Our overall reach — through newspapers, online and other sources — and thus our influence, ultimately, is greater than it's ever been. Virtually every study on readership that I've seen shows that.

Do we know many businesses that have as healthy margins as our companies? Sure, our companies and Wall Street

analysts might have to scale back on their profit expectations, but even if they do, we'll still be a very profitable industry.

Do we know many businesses with our brand identifications in our communities? We've been part of our local communities for generations and we will be for generations to come. And in an era of massive media fragmentation, we still will stand as the last mass medium, the community unifier if you will, through the newspaper, online and whatever other delivery platforms we use.

Are we fulfilling our public service role? Despite our missteps, the cutbacks and the uncertainty, the journalism being done throughout the country at big papers and small is some of the best in our nation's history. I've gotten the opportunity to judge many contests over the past few years and I always leave inspired and encouraged because of all of the great work being done.

Don't get me wrong. We have many challenges and many changes ahead. The uncertainty in the industry, particularly for those editors whose companies are in play or face layoffs or cuts, is unsettling, daunting and, at times, downright discouraging.

But it's also an exciting time, a time to innovate, to re-evaluate and move in new directions. As editors, it's time for us to lead in ways that preserve the best of what we have done for generations while looking boldly ahead. Those will be the themes that we will focus on at our ASNE convention in Seattle in April. We hope you can join us. ♦

**"We may not have the resources we once did, but we still have more ability and resources to gather news and make a difference than any other local news outlet. Think about it. When you listen to the local drive-time radio, what do you hear: your paper being read, generally without any credit. TV? Same stories, repackaged with video, again mainly without credit."**



Rodriguez, ASNE president, is executive editor of *The Sacramento (Calif.) Bee*.

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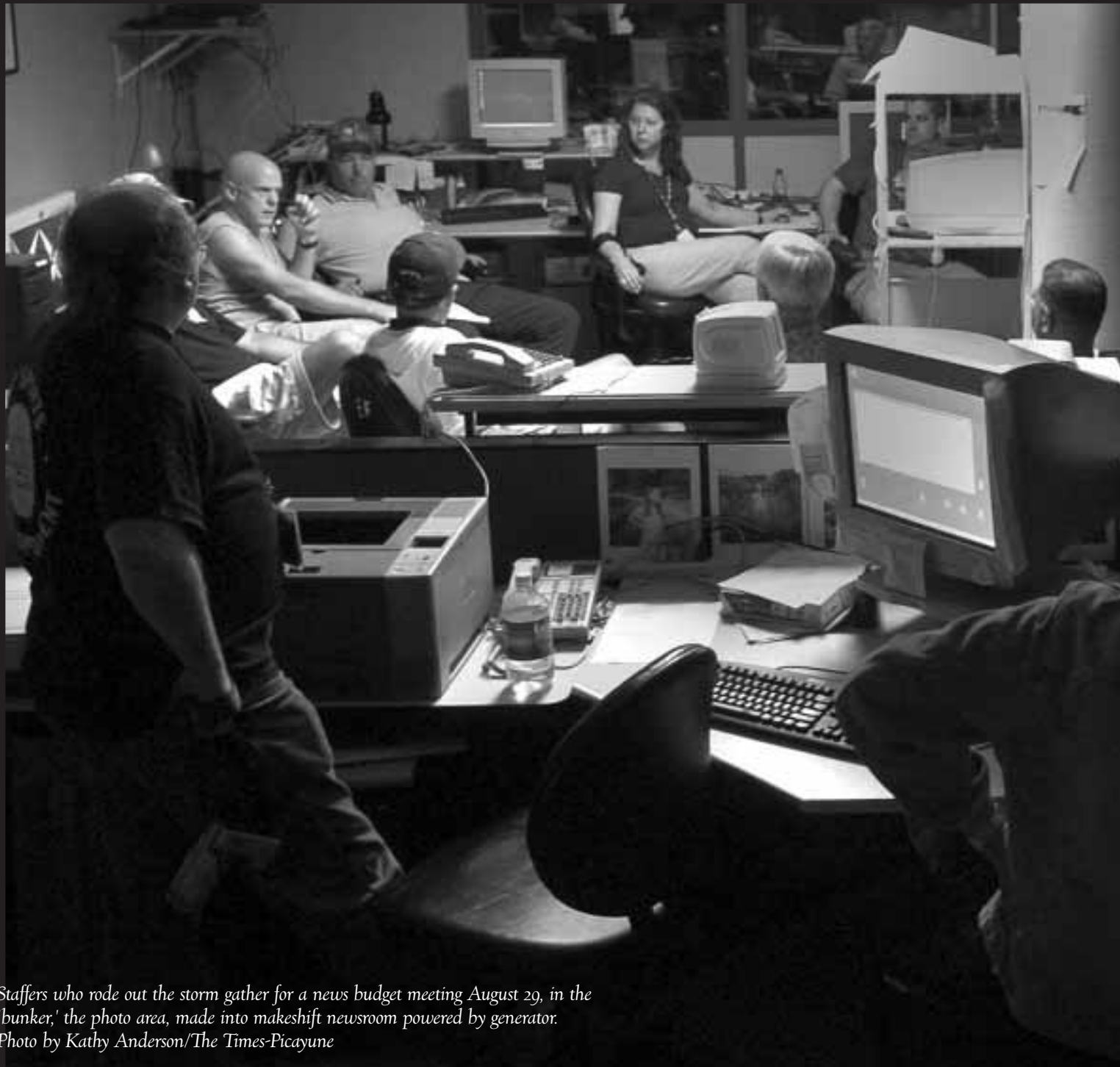
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Cover Photo by John McCusker/Times-Picayune



# Good journalism in dark days



*Staffers who rode out the storm gather for a news budget meeting August 29, in the 'bunker,' the photo area, made into makeshift newsroom powered by generator.  
Photo by Kathy Anderson/The Times-Picayune*



BY MIKE JACOBS

Natural disaster takes many forms. My own newspaper has dealt with flood and fire, ice, wind and snow storms, and — once — an intruder bent on vandalism.

None of these disasters approached the magnitude of what confronted editors in Biloxi, Miss., and New Orleans this year. Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast on Aug. 29. High winds and a flood surge devastated Biloxi, Miss. In New Orleans, flooding overwhelmed the city.

At the New Orleans Times-Picayune,

Editor Jim Amoss and his staff were driven out of their building and onto the World Wide Web. In Biloxi, Editor Stan Tiner and his staff found their building intact but their community destroyed.

Their responses provide both instruction and inspiration.

The instruction first. At least four lessons for newspapers are apparent in these and other natural disasters.

The first of these is both the most evident and the most difficult. It is, "Be prepared."

In New Orleans, Amoss said, the

staff knew the potential for a monster hurricane. The Times-Picayune had published extensively about the so-called "project hurricane," the one that blew through New Orleans, then doubled back and pushed Lake Pontchartrain into New Orleans.

"We knew about it," Amoss said. "Theoretically."

On Aug. 29, the project hurricane took on a name of its own. It was called "Katrina." Amoss' account of his newspaper's experience with this storm appears elsewhere in this issue.

The Times-Picayune had generators, food, water, even clothing stockpiled in its building. So did The Sun Herald in Biloxi. There, Tiner consulted the newspaper's "hurricane book," compiled in the wake of Camille in 1969. He checked the status of emergency supplies locked in a cabinet and periodically inventoried and updated. "We were practiced," he said. "We had a basic hurricane drill in place."

But preparations in both Biloxi and New Orleans were inadequate. Katrina overwhelmed them. As Amoss reflected, "At the Times-Picayune, we were both extremely well prepared and extremely ill prepared." In Biloxi, Tiner said, "We were absolutely not prepared. This was beyond anything we had ever seen before."

So the second lesson is, "Be flexible."

The Times-Picayune didn't have access to its presses, and it couldn't get to other printing sites in the immediate aftermath of the storm. So the newspaper turned to the Internet. The Times-Picayune published online and not in

print for three days, then turned to newspapers in Houma, La., and Mobile, Ala., for help. In Biloxi, newspaper managers turned to a sister paper in Columbus, Ga. The early issues of The Sun Herald were printed at the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer.



Jacobs is editor and publisher of the Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald.



Above: Times-Picayune employees ride in the back of a circulation delivery truck during the evacuation of their Howard Avenue plant on Tuesday, August 30, 2005. Photo by John McCusker/The Times-Picayune



Like the Times-Picayune, The Sun Herald was forced to make changes. Usually a morning paper, the Sun Herald appeared in the afternoon immediately after the storm. Soon, however, it had established a more normal schedule — except for deadlines. These were moved to 4 p.m.. The press started at 2 a.m., and the paper was delivered about 7 a.m.

The early deadline meant an important innovation for the Sun Herald. Its daily assignment meeting took place at 7 a.m.

A third lesson emerges from these circumstances. It is, "Count on your friends."

In Biloxi, this meant the resources of Knight Ridder, a disaster-seasoned com-

pany whose member newspapers have weathered hurricanes in Florida and the Carolinas and floods and winter storms in the Midwest. In all, Knight Ridder sent more than 100 people to Biloxi.

The Times-Picayune turned to its friends, too, in Baton Rouge and Houma, La., and in Mobile, Ala.

In Biloxi, Tiner recalled the emotion that erupted when Bryan Monroe, assistant vice president for news at Knight Ridder, appeared in the newsroom with a number of volunteer journalists from the company's other newspapers. "He got a big hug" — and Monroe is a big man. "We did a lot of crying. Then we pulled up our straps and got back to work."

This is the fourth lesson: "Put your





*Above: Times-Picayune editor Jim Amos (second from left, front row), managing editor Dan Shea and Sports Editor David Meeks stand in the back of newspaper delivery truck as they leave the flooded city on August 30, 2005. Photo by Kathy Anderson/The Times-Picayune*

*Left: Times-Picayune photo lab technician Joseph Graham gets some rest after being evacuated to Baton Rouge, Tuesday August 30, 2005. Photo by Donald Stout/The Times-Picayune*

people first.”

This means paying attention to their emotional as well as their physical needs. In New Orleans, it literally meant saving their lives.

More than 250 staff members and their families took shelter in the Times Picayune building. When the extent of flooding became obvious and the risk to life became apparent, the newspaper took action. It loaded everyone — from babies in arms to grandmothers in their 80s — into delivery trucks and got them out of town.

To Amoss, this provided one of the most harrowing moments of the Picayune’s ordeal. The Times-Picayune had alerted the world to the breaches in the levees, and its reporters had con-

firmed the extent of flooding by Monday night, a day after the hurricane itself passed through. This news was published on the Internet. “I went to bed in a sleeping bag,” Amoss recalled, “deeply troubled, not knowing what to expect but fully hoping for the best.”

Dawn brought the worst, however. Water was rising an inch in seven minutes. “It was inescapable,” Amoss said. “We had to get out of there.”

Otherwise, “We’d be trapped in the building. And our six days of supplies wouldn’t be enough.”

The Picayune turned to its delivery trucks. All 250 flood refugees “were herded like cattle into the trucks.” The evacuation wasn’t without risk. Amoss warily watched the dials on the dash of

the truck he was riding. But everyone reached safety outside the city.

In Biloxi, newspaper managers had urged people to evacuate and given them instructions about how to return to work. A few, led by the operations manager, stayed in the building.

In the days and weeks after the storm, both newspapers provided counselors for staff. In Biloxi, Tiner said, more than half of newsroom staffers took advantage of the service. “This was not something for sissies,” he said. “It was something for everyone.”

Four lessons then:

- Be prepared.
- Be flexible.
- Count on your friends.
- Take care of your people.

Now the inspiration.

The disaster was “a huge affirmation of what newspapers do,” Amoss said. According to Tiner, “Everything about newspapers was validated.”

In describing his experience delivering the Sun Herald, Tiner said, “It was like we had gold. Our stories were important. Our newspaper was vital, and people were grabbing for it, sharing it, reading it to one another.

“A lot of us felt that this experience affirmed why we got into the business, to be of service, to help the downtrodden.”

To Amoss, “Newspapers were able to play to our strengths and these are unique and not duplicated. We have an intimate knowledge of the community. We have a historic rapport with readers. We have a reservoir of reporters, photographers and editors and we were able to marshal these resources to make something that readers valued as much as food.”

Here, perhaps, lies the fifth and the greatest lesson of all for newspapers, their staffs and their editors.

Newspapers matter. In the worst of times, newspapers matter most.

“It’s an experience I wouldn’t wish on anybody,” Tiner said. “But I wouldn’t take anything for the journalist side of it. We’re all a lot better journalists and we have a lot better notion of why what we do is so important. We were a lifeline.” ♦

# When your life is the big story

*The reporters and editors of The Times-Picayune were chased from their building and their city, but not from their mission of chronicling Katrina and its aftermath*

BY JIM AMOSS

**F**riday, Aug. 26, was a typical late summer day in our city — hot, humid and relatively placid.

Though it was the height of hurricane season, my colleagues and I have been through so many false hurricane alarms that we barely took notice of Tropical Depression #12 in the Atlantic. Even after it blossomed into Hurricane Katrina and crossed Florida, it stayed tucked inside our newspaper's A section, a fair measure of our nonchalance. Katrina seemed on a firm course toward the Florida panhandle, well east of us.

Standing in The Times-Picayune newsroom that afternoon next to our hurricane reporter Mark Schleifstein, I mentioned the uneventful weekend ahead. "Jim, I need to show you something," he said, motioning me to his computer.

Mark is the co-author of a series we had published three years ago entitled "Washing Away." He was the one who described in graphic terms how a strong hurricane might someday approach New Orleans from the southeast, pushing Gulf of Mexico water into Lake Pontchartrain and driving it over the levees into the city. All power would be lost. The giant pumps that drain our low-lying city would sit idle while the lake, swollen with the surging Gulf, slurped into the bowl that is New Orleans.

Over the years, his colleagues had grown numb to his warnings of the

swamped-bowl scenario. But that afternoon his voice and his pallor made me listen. Katrina, Mark said, had become a category 3 hurricane and had veered to the east. The National Hurricane Center Web page on Mark's computer screen showed it headed directly toward New Orleans.

What's more, Mark said he had just received a call from his source Max Mayfield, the National Hurricane Center director. Mayfield had asked Mark about the structural integrity of The Times-Picayune building and had urged him to leave New Orleans. That a veteran storm observer like Mayfield would go so far as to worry aloud to a veteran storm reporter like Mark made an impression on me.

Like any newspaper potentially in the path of a hurricane, The Times-Picayune had rehearsed for "the big one" many times. Heeding the warnings of our own series, we had prepared ourselves by creating a special storm room in the fortified core of our building. There, rows of computers would be powered by generators with enough fuel to last us a week. We would write, edit and design the paper in our bunker, then transmit the electronic pages to another paper's press for printing and trucking back to our readers.

Like many New Orleans households, we spent all day

Saturday debating whether to evacuate. I planned to stay at The Times-Picayune, where I've weathered past hurricanes in a sleeping bag. I wanted my wife and son to get out of town, but they insisted that our 100-year-old house was as good a haven as any. We argued well into the night. At about 1 a.m. they agreed to leave. We packed two cars with photo albums, art, jewelry and clothing for what we thought would be their two-day trek to safety and back.

Sunday night, I placed my camping mattress in an inner corridor of the newsroom, alongside 240 other editors, reporters and photographers, safely away from the building's outer perimeter of floor-to-ceiling windows. The storm began howling at 2 a.m. The young reporter bunking next to me, new to the city and terrified, paced the corridor. At 4 a.m. we lost power. Now the howling outside, no longer masked by the white noise of air conditioning, scared even the veterans among us. There was a loud crash in the executive office area. Several of us shot up from our sleeping bags. One of the huge windows in the general manager's office had been blown across the room into the opposite wall.

We awakened Monday morning to the full force of Katrina: sheets of rain blown horizontally, interrupted every few minutes by an opaque curtain of water poured as though from a huge bucket in the sky. We could see the wind snapping trees, smashing billboards, peeling roofs from houses. Standing in our building's lobby, you could hear the oddly peaceful melody of the wind whistling past the entrance cavity — three sad, flute-like notes played over and over. At times, the wind would shriek to a high-pitched wail before returning to the three-note dirge.

That afternoon, as the winds died down, James O'Byrne, our features editor, and Doug MacCash, our art critic, went on a bike trip. At that moment in the French



Amoss is editor of The Times-Picayune in New Orleans.





Reporter Brian Thevenot, left, and other reporters and editors, work in the 'bunker,' the studio and photo area where the *Times-Picayune* set up generator power in order to produce the newspaper when power was lost the day Hurricane Katrina blew through New Orleans, Monday August 29, 2005. Photo by John McCusker/*The Times-Picayune*.

Quarter, national TV reporters were leaning playfully into the wind, proclaiming that New Orleans had once again dodged the bullet. But O'Byrne and MacCash headed toward Lake Pontchartrain. There they saw the first waves of the brackish lake rushing downtown from a breach in the levee of the 17th Street Canal. The canal, one of several channels to pump floods out of the city, had become instead a conduit for the swollen lake. Just as Schleifstein had predicted, the lake was inundating the city, submerging houses, Schleifstein's and O'Byrne's among them.

As the two approached the Filmore Avenue bridge at the eastern edge of the drowning neighborhood of Lakeview, they had an astonishing encounter. People who had fled their underwater houses were huddled on the bridge, the only high ground in the neighborhood. O'Byrne described the scene: "I was struck by how incredibly happy people were to see us, the newspaper arriving at the edge of their destroyed homes, wanting to tell their story. We were welcomed as their salvation, even

though we weren't taking them off the bridge or off their rooftops. It never felt more important to be journalists."

That same afternoon, photographer Ted Jackson had driven in the opposite direction, to the city's 9th Ward, where he was the first journalist on the scene to document people trapped on their roofs by the levee breach there. Eight other *Times-Picayune* photographers were fanning out across our coverage area at the same time, bringing back the first images of devastation.

After a 5-hour bike ride, O'Byrne and MacCash returned to the newsroom and burst into the evening news meeting with their report. Mark Schleifstein, meanwhile, had confirmed the canal breach with a Corps of Engineers source. That night, Page 1 of our paper, published online as pdf's, carried the headline: "CATASTROPHIC/Storm surge swamps 9th Ward, St. Bernard/Lakeview levee breach threatens to inundate city." The lead story described how the brackish waters "flooded huge swaths of the city in a process that appeared to be spreading even as night fell."

If we doubted that statement, we had only to step out of our own main entrance. By the time we were ready to turn in to our sleeping bags, water had reached the parking lot in front of our main entrance and had crept up the first step to our building.

We woke up just before dawn on Tuesday, hoping for good news. The sky outside my window was cloudless. The trees barely rustled. But the sight at our entrance was sickening. The water had reached the third step. And now it was rising more rapidly. By our estimate, it was gaining an inch every seven minutes.

At 10 a.m., Tuesday, I met with a group of editors in my office. The tide outside was still coming in. Even our high-riding delivery trucks were having trouble fording the moat surrounding our building. In my office, the six of us were reaching a conclusion: We must evacuate while our trucks were still able. Just then, the publisher stuck his head in my office. He had reached the same conclusion.

We ran through the building, shouting — "Leave! Leave now! Go to the loading dock!" — evicting journalists from the newsroom, late breakfast eaters from the cafeteria. We needed to herd 240 people to the loading dock, including a six-month-old baby, 3-year-old twins, some elderly relatives of staffers. All queued up to board the dozen newspaper delivery trucks that had pulled up.

We didn't know if the trucks would make it through a half-mile stretch of service road under four feet of water to the dry interstate in front of our building. We didn't know where we were headed. We had torn ourselves away from the storm room and its generator-powered computers, taking only what we could fit on our laps. We left with the queasy fear that, for the first time since the Civil War, we might not produce a newspaper for tomorrow.

A quarter mile down the watery road, a pickup truck had stalled, blocking much of our path. Driving around it meant entering still deeper water. An emergency light on my truck's dashboard was flashing the message, "Water

in fuel." Ahead of us, one of our trucks ploughed the wrong way down the I-10 exit ramp, reached dry pavement and made a U-turn on the deserted highway. The journalists crouching in the back cheered. One by one, the rest of our convoy gained the highway. We rumbled past people carrying suitcases and babies, headed to the downtown bridge across the Mississippi, through Algiers and Gretna to our West Bank bureau.

As we stretched our legs at the deserted and powerless bureau, we realized that in order to publish that night we needed to send a team back into the city. About a dozen people volunteered instantly — reporters, photographers and some improbable candidates — the sports editor, the editorial page editor, the art critic, the popular music critic. We gave them one of our trucks and back across the bridge they drove.

The rest of us piled back into our convoy, bound for Houma, La., home of the New York Times-owned *Courier*. The *Courier* people welcomed us with warm Cajun hospitality and assurances that we could run our paper on their presses. We left a production, design and circulation team there, the rest of us piled back into our trucks and headed north along Bayou Lafourche. The newsroom needed to be based temporarily in the closest sizable Louisiana city, Baton Rouge. But where in Baton Rouge should we direct the trucks and their human load?

I started working my cellphone. It took about 10 calls to make a successful connection. Just north of Thibodaux I reached my friend Jack Hamilton, dean of LSU'sanship School of Mass Communication. By now, it was late afternoon, and Jack was about to head home. "Jack!" I shouted above the din of the truck's cargo hold, "I'm headed to your town with about 180 Times-Picayune journalists. Can you help us?" Jack didn't hesitate. "Come to the journalism school. I'll meet you there. The students haven't arrived yet, so your folks can use our classrooms and our computers." It was the first time since Friday that we felt relief.

It was getting dark when our caravan pulled up on the LSU campus. Jack

Hamilton was waiting. He turned the school and several members of his staff over to us. We sat down at his computers and started making the next day's newspaper.

The volunteers who headed back to New Orleans from our West Bank had crossed the downtown bridge over the Mississippi with one goal: find a dry street Uptown, establish a base and start reporting. They headed toward the house of Editorial Page Editor Terri Troncale to see if it met their needs and perhaps even had a working land line.

Terri's house was dry, but the phone was dead. Cellphones weren't operating. But an elderly couple across the street had a working Bellsouth line. They took in the journalists, who offered bottled water in exchange. Sports editor David Meeks and several reporters then drove downtown, interviewing dazed survivors along the way. Reporter Mike Perlstein wanted to see his house Uptown near St. Charles Avenue. To his surprise, the street was inundated. They reached Mark Schleifstein in Baton Rouge, who gave this grim verdict: "The bowl's filling up." Armed with these observations, they went back to the elderly couple's house and dictated their stories. Our electronic Page 1 that night: "Underwater/Levee breach swamps city from lake to river."

We stayed at the LSU journalism school for two weeks, with Hamilton and his staff supporting us in every possible way. Eventually we all moved into leased office space in Baton Rouge.

The Times-Picayune, after three days of publishing the pdf version only, resumed a printed edition. On Friday, Sept. 2, thanks to the ingenuity of production and circulation staffs, a 16-page Times-Picayune rolled off the *Courier*'s presses and was trucked to shelters, hotels and the scattered readers in our area. When a group of reporters and editors showed up at the New Orleans Convention Center with a bundle of those first papers, people grabbed for them as if they were food.

Two weeks later, we moved to the larger capacity of our sister paper, the Mobile (Ala.) Register. Both papers had proved inexhaustibly generous.

Many of our readers, especially the suburban ones, have now returned to their homes. Still, a diaspora of New Orleanians remains scattered across the U.S. They have deluged NOLA.com, our affiliated Web site, a vital link to their hometown.

After a six-week absence, we returned to our New Orleans offices and presses on Oct. 10.

Our building had suffered remarkably little damage. The edition of Oct. 11 was once again produced on our own presses.

The city still felt like a frontier town, brimming with relief workers and insurance adjusters. In the few reopened restaurants, gumbo and jambalaya were served on paper plates, with plastic utensils. Power was only gradually returning to the neighborhoods.

Today, that description already sounds dated. The suburbs of New Orleans have been quick to recover.

New Orleans itself, for now, is two cities: The streets of the French Quarter and Uptown New Orleans, spared the flooding, are again buzzing with the traffic of returnees. More and more restaurants and coffeeshops have reopened. But there is a shadow city, stretching toward Lake Pontchartrain. The lake's swollen waters, breaching the floodwalls, inundated this area. Though now drained of the floodwater, these neighborhoods are still powerless and comatose.

Katrina and its aftermath consume most of our pages these days. For our readers, these stories have a lasting urgency. For us, whether our house was destroyed or we merely suffered a few downed tree limbs, Katrina is and will be a defining moment of our lives, a story we'll be telling till the day we die. And the newspaper will be an integral part of the plot.

Being a part of the plot is both riveting and deeply unsettling. We don't yet know the end of this story. And the story line is more than some engrossing journalistic narrative of the kind we're trained to tell. It's the story of our lives, and we must both live and chronicle it. ♦

# Looters and finders and the media

*The media jumped on the race angle in the aftermath of Katrina, but a closer look revealed that what most of those left behind had in common was poverty*

By KEITH WOODS

“Are you a looter or a finder?”

I read the subject line and knew what was in the e-mail. A wave of messages had rolled in on Katrina’s heels linking to the same two pictures: A black man pulling a garbage bag full of loot, a white woman towing bread and other food behind her. The black man, one photo caption says, is a looter. The white woman, the other says, found the food she’s pulling through the water. Television and print journalists had gotten swept up in the apocalyptic story of a city sinking into anarchy, and now they’d turned on themselves. Wasn’t this evidence, many journalists wanted to know, of the media’s bigotry?

The argument raged in my inbox. I deleted each one as it arrived.

It was Tuesday. People were dying in attics, on rooftops, on the roadsides and in the Superdome. What the hell did I care whether somebody messed up a caption?

That week, Slate’s Jack Shafer wrote with glib, liberal superiority that the fear of being called racists cowed white journalists so much that they ignored the most obvious element of the story: The people who stayed and were now, by the thousands, in harm’s way were overwhelmingly black. Thus, many journalists, their unexamined discomfort with the story’s images outed by the widely circulated column, leapt upon the opportunity to add the race of

This article is an excerpt. The complete text is available at <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=68&aid=90011>

To read Gregory Favre’s column on Katrina and home, go to <http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=68&aid=90071>

New Orleans’ victims to their stories.

I wondered if some even felt relieved to have permission finally to state the obvious.

I wish they’d waited for the water to go down low enough for the white people of St. Bernard Parish to start their sorrowful westward sojourn. I wish they’d waited until the Gulf of Mexico had retreated enough to reveal the devastation in Lower Plaquemines Parish and release the bodies of the white people drowned in Buras, Port Sulphur and Boothville and Venice — people who, just like the black people in

New Orleans, stayed because they had no options or because they believed this storm, too, would turn, or because they were unwise or because they believed in God but not in Armageddon.

I wish they’d waited until they heard the white president of Washington Parish crying on the radio as he pleaded for help that hadn’t come. I wish they’d seen the white president of Jefferson Parish crying on television because he thought help came too late. I wish they could have seen the white faces of poverty in the Superdome or along the Mississippi Gulf Coast as clearly as they could see the blackness of poor folks in the 9th Ward or the blackness of the mayor who leads New Orleans. Then, maybe, they’d understand how little of this was about race and how much was about a more insidious, long-standing, unconscionable malfeasance of government officials who must have felt secret glee as our eyes diverted from their criminal incompetence.

I know rage and racial suspicion. Every time I’ve cried since the end of August, those tears have been laced with the poisonous fear that we live in such a country where you can die of heat or hunger, drowning or dehydration — on national television — and no one will come to help if your skin is not white.

But I know more. I saw the white people waiting, hurting, dying. I knew they were there even when I didn’t see them. I knew that America had also failed them.

As Brother (Verdun Paul Woods Jr.) and I neared Baton Rouge, a white woman called in to a radio station from Bogalusa, a devastated victim of Katrina in Washington Parish, just north of the city. They’re crying racism in New Orleans, she told the host.

“Now the black people are going to get all the help and we won’t get nothing,” she said. “So I think we should set up a charity for white people. ♦



A New Orleans native, Woods is dean of the faculty at The Poynter Institute.



# The intent is noble, the approach foolhardy

*A national shield law would let Congress define a journalist for the first time in federal law and include large loopholes that would leave the door open to subpoenas*

In July, the ASNE Board of Directors voted for the first time to endorse the concept of a national shield law for journalists.

BY WILLIAM B. KETTER

Sierra Corriveau is an eighth-grade civics teacher at St. Pius X Elementary School in Aurora, Colo., and she's fearful the next generation of Americans has little appreciation for tough-minded journalism.

She has good reason. A recent survey of her 33 students on what they consider the five most important constitutional freedoms enjoyed by Americans did not turn up a single vote for the First Amendment's press clause.

Even worse, the students expressed resentment toward the news media despite Corriveau's pre-survey instruction about the importance of an independent press to guarantee the free flow of critical information to citizens.

"They really didn't feel it was all that important," Corriveau said. "They were huge on fairness and kind of embittered toward the press in general."

Scary stuff when you consider today's eighth graders will be running the country in a few decades, making and changing laws to suit their view of the world.

Yet much as they might dislike us when they grow up, there's little they can do about it. James Madison and other architects of the First Amendment made sure of that two centuries ago by declaring "Congress shall make no law" abridging freedom of the press. They didn't want an unpopular press subject to legislative whim.

Now we want to risk that funda-

mental constitutional understanding by conceding it isn't working — that journalists also need a federal shield law to report the news without fear of going to jail for using confidential sources.

The intent is noble, the approach is foolhardy. Congress is an unpredictable political body. What it gives in a spirit of cooperation it can also take away the next time it gets mad at the press.

Writing into law press rights that were assumed to exist under the First Amendment might hold off some misguided judges. But the tactic could also end up limiting those rights down the road.

Journalists pleading with Congress — an institution we're supposed to cover, not ask favors of — for quickie redress to the latest flurry of troublesome subpoenas frightens me.

Especially when the very press-protection law we're begging for includes exceptions for national security, guilt or innocence of an accused, and issues of overriding public interest if the details can't be obtained by any alternative means.

It would also define a journalist for the first time in federal law, and while it might broadly apply to anyone who disseminates news with the intent of informing the public, it cannot include everyone. Some bloggers and others

won't make the cut.

That's an unwise accommodation. The original journalists in this country were printers and pamphleteers who put their lives on the line so anyone could express ideas and opinions, no matter how irrational or distasteful. The ground rules shouldn't change due to the freewheeling nature of the Internet.

There's also the issue of opening the door to licensing journalists. If we let Congress define us in law, then it is conceivable we might some day need to meet government-defined standards to practice our craft. This is common in many other countries.

These are the main reasons I oppose a federal shield law. But I'm also skeptical that it would put a stop to litigants, prosecutors and judges seeking to get reporters to disclose their confidential sources or release their outtakes, and that it would serve to encourage those news sources who won't risk possible disclosure to spill the beans.

Case circumstances determine if a reporter is subpoenaed. Judges tend to balance the rights of journalists against other rights in society, including the rights of defendants, and a shield law won't change that reality.

Also, confidential sources are driven by motive, noble and ignoble. They leak damning information to reporters because they want to get the word out, usually to reporters

*Continued on Page 31.*



Ketter is editor of *The Eagle-Tribune* in Lawrence, Mass. He was ASNE president in 1995-96.

These articles present the pros and cons of a national shield law.

# Aggressive courts require a shield law

*With reporter's privilege increasingly under attack, a national shield law would codify principles without weakening the First Amendment argument*

BY SANDRA S. BARON AND MAHERIN GANGAT

**T**he first reporter's privilege statute was enacted in Maryland in 1896, and many other state shield laws have followed. More than a century later, however, the protection that reporters have under federal law from being compelled to testify about their sources or turn over information, notes and other newsgathering materials, is largely based upon the protections afforded by the First Amendment's guarantee of a free press.

Journalists and their counsel have been remarkably effective in articulating the scope and rationale of a privilege for reporters under from First Amendment principles.

But what some courts have held to be a secure, well-defined privilege, others have decried as simply nonexistent, a misapplication of the only Supreme Court decision on the subject, *Branzburg v. Hayes*, decided in 1972.

*Branzburg*, a decision often characterized as a 4-1-4 decision, undoubtedly holds that the First Amendment applies to newsgathering. But the Court was deeply split on the depth of that protection, including protection against subpoenas issued to journalists.

Five justices voted to join the majority opinion that denied protection from grand jury subpoenas issued to the journalists before them.

But with the somewhat elliptical opinion filed separately by Justice Powell, which gave the majority its fifth

vote, there is something for both sides of the constitutional debate in the opinions in *Branzburg*. The result has been somewhat inconsistent, and, in some federal courts, increasingly hostile approach to application of a privilege for journalists.

It is in this environment, and with the highly publicized decisions of federal courts in the District of Columbia holding journalists in contempt in both civil lawsuits and grand jury proceedings, that the Free Flow of Information Act was introduced in Congress.

The federal shield law proposed in that Act would establish strong, consistent and predictable standards for journalists seeking to protect their confidential sources and information in federal courts and other federal proceedings. It would offer protection against efforts by litigants to subpoena third parties, such as telephone companies and Internet service providers, seeking to ascertain the identities of those who journalists call and e-mail. It would apply broadly in civil, criminal, administrative, grand jury and other federal forums. It would bring national standards on the privilege to what is threatening to become a cacophony in the federal courts.

The proposed federal shield law would assure journalists of a strong privilege that they can rely upon in federal proceedings akin to what they work under in

many states. At present, 49 states and the District of Columbia recognize the existence of a privilege, albeit the specifics differ somewhat from state to state. But the public interests in free flow of information that those privileges were designed to promote are severely undercut if no privilege exists in the local federal court.

Some journalists are concerned about the press seeking what they see as "special laws" for reporters. Yet, the press does perform a very unique function, one which, like others that benefit from testimonial privileges, is protected because it strongly serves the public interest to do so.

As a result, reporters regularly, and legitimately, argue under the First Amendment for protection from subpoenas that is indeed distinct from that of the average citizen. No one should make the mistake of concluding that it is commonplace to ask a court to quash a subpoena based upon the strict standards that we regularly argue govern subpoenas to journalists.

Those who argue that we should continue to rely upon the First Amendment, to the exclusion of shield laws, are not arguing that we should backtrack from seeking highly protective standards from the courts for journalists, but that we should seek even stronger, more absolute protection under the First Amendment for journalists.

We concur that journalists

*Continued on Page 31.*

Baron is executive director of the Media Law Resource Center. Gangat is a staff attorney of the Media Law Resource Center.

# Getting the big story on immigration

*The changes coming to American communities because of immigration are sweeping and will impact everything from education, to health care to tax policy*

BY BOBBI BOWMAN

California and Texas editors stand on the verge of covering the best story of their lives — chronicling how these great states change from a white, white collar state to a brown blue collar state starting now.

California's emerging workforce is nearly 50 percent Latino at a time when 9.8 percent of Latinos graduate from college. Texas has an emerging workforce that is more than 60 percent black and Latino at time when 9.2 percent of adult Latinos are college graduates.

The great challenge for editors from Washington State to North Carolina in coming years is to explain to readers why the complexion of their labor force is changing and how it will affect their children, their pocket books, their Social Security, their taxes and the stores where they shop.

Newspapers are doing a good job of reporting how the country is becoming increasingly minority. California and Texas, the two largest states, already have majority minority populations. What they must now cover is — the future workforce that will have a majority of black and brown faces — many of whom are less educated than the white workers they will replace.

If you want to see the future of your country's economy visit an elementary school outside your neighborhood.

While one third of the U.S. population is now minority, 40 percent of the children 18 and under are minority.

Today in California, 66 percent of those under 20 are minority. In Texas, 60 percent of those under 20 are minority. That's the future labor force.

The story goes like this: How much education you have largely determines your job. Your job determines how much money you make.

The education level of workers determines the kind of jobs your county and state attracts. We know those white-collar businesses that we want look for a young, educated workforce.

Young Black Americans and Latinos are not getting the educations of whites. That means increasingly brown folks with high school educations and therefore working at Wal-Mart, Target, etc will replace white folks with college educations who work in offices with health benefits.

Let's look at the leader in this area California. The folks who are under 20 in California are one-third white not Hispanic. That means that two-thirds of California's future work place is minority. 10 percent are Asian, 7 percent are black, and 46 percent are Latino.

At the same time, 68 percent of the folks in California who are 65 and older are white — not Hispanic.

Let's look at education. For those 25 and older:

93.6 of whites, 85.3 of Asians and 84.9 percent of

blacks have a high school diploma. But among Latinos, barely half — 54.2 percent have finished high school.

As for college graduates who are 25 or older:

Among whites, 39.5 percent have a college degree, 49.9 percent of Asians, and 22.9 percent of Blacks. Among Latinos, 9.8 percent have finished college.

What are the implications of a growing undereducated workforce?

According to figures from the U.S. Census the average annual income for a person with a high school diploma is \$27,915. A college degree earns you an average income of \$51,206 and an advanced degree bumps you up to \$74,602.

If you have a county with high school graduates replacing college graduates you collect less money in taxes and therefore less money for government services. At the same time, you have a growing elderly white population that needs more services. Who makes up that gap?

A blue-collar job these days is a service industry job with no health benefits. That means people don't go to the doctor. When they do, they are very sick and end up in the emergency room. Who pays their hospital bill? The middle class and their insurance companies.

You want a Starbucks in your county. Better make sure you have a lot of college graduates with good jobs. You don't find a Starbucks in blue-collar neighborhoods. You also find few Starbucks in minority neighborhoods — unless Magic Johnson put them there.

Since newspapers are a large business in most communities these are also your future workers, advertisers and readers.

In the past thirty years, we've chronicled how large parts of our country have changed from white to brown. Now we must explain the long-term implications of that change and how they will affect all of us but particularly how they will affect our children.

This is the best story of our lives. ♦



Bowman is ASNE's diversity director.





*Times-Picayune staff photographer John McCusker paddles out of the paper's flooded parking lot to document the destruction in the city of New Orleans, Tuesday, August 30, 2005. Photo by Sean Gardner/The Times-Picayune.*



*Clinging to his puppy, the resident of a burning home on Columbia Street in New Orleans walks away while smoke and water fill the air in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Sept. 6, 2005. Photo by Ted Jackson/The Times-Picayune.*

# HURRICANE KATRINA | A sample of



As Hurricane Katrina's winds and rain attacked the Gulf Coast, the news media's coverage became constant, with newspapers being no exception. Virtually every newspaper across the globe splashed hurricane coverage onto its front page, however, the type of coverage varied by region. Many national newspapers focused on New Orleans, while papers' coverage in Mississippi obviously remained local. As the hurricane subsided, newspapers then revealed the damage done—and the new problems that had arisen.



## DAY TWO



## DAY THREE



## DAY ONE





# your pages

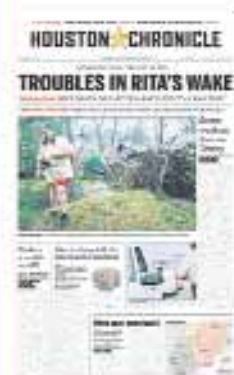


Graphic: Tim Parke, iMAGS, Ball State University, AOKH  
Source: Associated Press, Army Corps of Engineers



## RITA | More destruction

Just when Gulf Coast residents started the process of reclaiming their homes, another hurricane threatened destruction. New Orleans citizens fled again, and Texans also prepared for the storm. Fortunately for the Gulf Coast, Hurricane Rita's wrath paled in comparison to Katrina's.



## DAY FOUR



## DAY FIVE







*The Nikon D1 of The Times-Picayune photographer Bob Gunn after being retrieved from his home that was flooded near Slidell, La., from Hurricane Katrina. The frog jumped out of his camera bag as his gear was being inventoried Tuesday, Sept. 27, 2005. Photo by Chuck Cook/The Times-Picayune.*



*Standing in the moldy destroyed bedroom of their first home together, newlyweds Paola Corrada, left, and her husband Jose Corrada remark on how they had just finished remodeling their home on 35th St. in Lakeview. Residents get the green light to return to their Lakeview homes Wednesday, October 5, 2005 to survey the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina and collect what few belongings they can. Photo by Jennifer Zdon/The Times-Picayune.*

# Investigative journalists look at police pursuit

BY NEILL BOROWSKI

Marian W. Woempner, 78, and her 82-year-old husband, both still active in their church, were driving to a function there one Sunday a year ago to help dish out food.

But Marian Woempner's life and the couple's 58-year marriage was ended by a police officer in an Indianapolis intersection. The officer, who worked for the Indianapolis Housing Agency, had decided to join in a high-speed chase and ran a red light — slamming into the side of the Woempner's car.

Her death — and the deaths of 85 other bystanders, suspects and police in high-speed pursuits in Indiana between 1993 and 2003 — sparked an in-depth examination of police chases by Star reporters Eunice Trotter, Tom Spalding and Mark Nichols. Nationally, 3,877 people were killed in pursuits in the same period — 1,251 of whom weren't even involved in the chase.

To the Indianapolis Police Department, the death of Mrs. Woempner was an accident.

To her 48-year-old daughter, Dianne Carr, it was more than that. "The dangers of a pursuit to citizens as well as officers are not worth it unless a dangerous criminal is involved," she told The Star. "This was not the case."

She said the survivors were not approached by representatives of the city or Housing Agency. "No one said anything," she said of the chase, which began after a motorist left the scene of a minor property damage accident.

Editors and reporters at the Star discussed the Woempner death, wondering how often people — particularly bystanders — died from police chases and how such chases were monitored. We also wondered how Indiana com-

pared to other states in both deaths and police policies.

Over several months, the reporters reviewed paper reports and built an electronic database of 947 police pursuits by the Indianapolis Police Department, the Marion County Sheriff's Department and the Indiana State Police in 2003 and 2004. Summary statistics available from the agencies offered overall numbers but no tally of the circumstances or outcomes of the pursuits.

Building the database involved coding of different variables and inputting the results into Microsoft Access. Besides documenting the speeds of chases and the charges they resulted in, the database also offered rich demographic detail on variables such as age and race.

The Star's analysis found that 75 percent of all chases were prompted by traffic violations or suspicious vehicles or occupants. About one out of five ended in injury or death, and one out of three caused property damage. In several cases, the chases reached 120 m.p.h. on city streets and more than 170 m.p.h. on interstate highways.

And the most telling statistic: In only 3 percent of the chases was anyone charged with a violent felony such as robbery, carjacking, assault or homicide. The most common charge was resisting arrest (27 percent), which grew from the chase itself. The second most common was driving with expired or no plates or license.

The goal of the two-day series (May 22-23, 2005) was to document the cost of police chases with deep detail about the people involved. One page was devoted to vignettes

about the people who died in chases — from innocent grandmothers like Mrs. Woempner to others who were driving the fleeing vehicles.

Even when local police agencies have procedures for chasing, they generally were incompatible over municipal lines, the Star found. In Indianapolis, police are forbidden from conducting controversial chase-ending practices (such as the Precision Immobilization Technique, when an officer uses the police car to hit the suspect's to force the suspect off the road). However, the Marion County Sheriff's Department, in the same county as Indianapolis, permits the PIT maneuver.

Most departments in Marion County require the police chase to be turned over to a helicopter once it arrives. Yet, the series found, maintenance problems essentially grounded the helicopter fleet.

Relatives of victims, police who chase and even those who have fled police were interviewed. The deep look at people hurt and killed by police chases offered a different view.

Police maintained they needed to be able to chase suspects. Marion County Sheriff's Col. Kerry J. Forestal said if a suspect "is running, we can't assume the only violation is the broken taillight. There could be someone in the trunk."

However, Jim Phillips, a national advocate who lost his daughter in a police chase, reviewed the agencies' pursuit policies and said they "essentially give a blank check to the officer initiating the pursuit." He said that, in his view, "it is a disaster waiting to happen."

When a police pursuit occurs in our coverage area now, we pay more attention and write about the chase differently than before. After the series appeared, a sheriff's department deputy pulled a car over for a traffic complaint. The car fled the scene and the deputy chased — reaching a speed of 110 m.p.h. on city streets. The fleeing car hit a utility pole, was torn in half and the driver and a young woman — on a blind date with the driver — were killed. ♦



Borowski is assistant managing editor/local news of The Indianapolis Star.

# Journalists in charge of their own training

*NewsU uses the Web to deliver training that is targeted, focused and always accessible*

BY HOWARD I. FINBERG

Journalism training is now wired, and it's the future.

It's also fun. With more than 25 courses, 10 training partners and more than 8,000 registered users, News University is the future of online journalism training. NewsU, created by The Poynter Institute with a grant from the Knight Foundation, offers journalists the online training they want anytime — no matter where they live or work.

While this isn't the first attempt at electronic journalism training, NewsU reflects the Internet revolution that is reshaping our industry and our consumers. NewsU is a different kind of online training.

NewsU takes advantage of the Web to deliver training that is targeted, focused and always accessible. If you have access to the Internet, you have access to NewsU. The courses use standard Web-based design and interactivity tools, so there's no need for special equipment or software.

And, like parts of the Web, NewsU is fun. NewsU offers engaging, interactive courses that give journalists "just in time training" to meet a specific need.

The NewsU creators recognize that e-learning can't replace the interaction in a seminar. Rather than replicate the training a journalist might get at The Poynter Institute, the American Press Institute, NewsTrain or any number of local, regional and national conventions, NewsU creates a different experience.

Rather than a 16-week online course

**Who:** News University or NewsU, an online training portal for journalists, a project of The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, St. Petersburg, Fla.

**What:** Interactive learning for journalists, journalism students and others. More than 8,673 have registered on the site.

**When:** Launched April 11, 2005

**Where:** On the Web at <http://www.newsu.org>

**How:** Created with a five-year, \$2.8 million grant to The Poynter Institute from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

on writing and reporting, NewsU has a two- to three-hour e-learning module on revising stories or sharpening interviewing skills. Rather than merely reading screen after screen of text, NewsU's courses let you practice what you've learned by taking quizzes, playing games and communicating online with other participants.

NewsU's philosophy is that participants learn by doing. Therefore, interactivity is fundamental to NewsU training. For example, to assess your skills, you might play a game or solve a puzzle. And

NewsU, unlike some other online training, makes sure participants learn from both right and wrong answers.

Other activities give participants a chance to apply what they've learned in the course. And because much of the content is in small sections accompanied by interactive learning, participants can start and stop courses on their schedule. A course doesn't have to be completed in one sitting. Most courses are self-directed, which is a technical way of saying you can work at your own pace, on your own schedule. Some courses are faculty-led — an instructor posts readings, guides discussions with the class and offers detailed, individual feedback about your work.

NewsU also engages participants with strong visuals and animation. The site has bright, modern colors, and the Flash-based animations, simulations and movies have a fresh look that appeals to all age groups.

NewsU training, however, is more than a single-visit experience. Think of it as a training center with an always-open library. Covering Water Quality, a course created in partnership with the Society of Environmental Journalists, not only helps a reporter or editor understand the basics of drinking-water quality, but it also features a research library that can be accessed anytime.

Chip Scanlan's Get Me Rewrite course has several tools that help journalists revise their own work. One tool, The Sentence Tracker, gives reporters a visual view of the length of each sentence in a story. Once you're enrolled in the course, you can come back anytime you're working on a story to use the tools to strengthen your writing.

The depth of content in such a course depends on a key attribute of the NewsU project — its partnerships within the journalism community. While Poynter will offer extensive training on NewsU, success also depends upon developing training alliances with journalism



Finberg is director of Interactive Learning at The Poynter Institute.



## What NewsU offers

Here are just some of the courses available at <http://www.newsu.org>:

The Interview, helps with the skills needed for better interviewing. From Poynter's Chip Scanlan.

Lousy Listeners, a must for managers who want to improve their listening skills. From Poynter's Jill Geisler.

The Lead Lab, understanding and writing better leads. From Poynter's Chip Scanlan.

Cleaning Your Copy, helping you with style, grammar and spelling issues that can plague copy before it reaches the desk. From Poynter.

Journalism and Trauma explains traumatic stress in victims and helps you when covering tragedies. From the Dart Center.

Lessons from the 2005 ASNE Community Service Photojournalism Award winners and finalists. With Poynter's Kenny Irby.

Typography for News Design, the basics of type. With Poynter's Sara Quinn.

Covering Water Quality, an online training module from the Society of Environmental Journalists.

The complete collection of writing tools. From Poynter's Roy Peter Clark's The Writer's Workbench: 50

### Tools You Can Use.

Freedom of Information, helping you use FOI laws to write stronger stories. From the Society of Professional Journalists.

On the Beat: Crime and Police, from the Criminal Justice Journalists.

Math for Journalists, how to work with figures. From Debbie Wolfe, technology trainer at the St. Petersburg Times.

Got News? An introduction to journalism and news judgment.

Setting up a beat gets easier with Beat Basics and Beyond. With Steve Buttry.

Writing Better Print Headlines, with Kenn Finkel, a faculty-led module.

Reporting Across Cultures, a faculty-led module, with Victor Merina that teaches covering diverse communities.

Plus, there's Be a Reporter game, a fun way to test your journalistic skills.

Courses under development include:

Plagiarism: Combating Journalism's Original Sin

Legal Rights for Broadcasters

Grammar Rules: A Guide for Editors, with ACES

Writing Online Headlines — H.F.

associations, other training groups and individuals.

Current NewsU course partners include the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the Asian American Journalists Association, the Society of Professional Journalists, the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma, the Online News Association, the Association of Health Care Journalists, ReZnet, the Society of Environmental Journalists and the Criminal Justice Journalists.

Partners for future courses include Investigative Reporters and Editors, the American Copy Editors Society, the National Conference of Editorial Writers, the Education Writers

Association, the Media Bloggers Association and the Casey Center for Journalism. There are also conversations under way with several large newspaper companies to share their training materials via NewsU.

The skeptical journalist might ask, "Does this e-learning stuff work?" Like most training, the more effort you put in, the greater the reward.

Feedback from course participants tells the story. Their report cards put NewsU at the top of the class. Here are some of the responses from NewsU evaluations:

■ 73 percent said their course was useful to extremely useful.

■ 90 percent said they were likely to

participate in another course.

■ 86 percent said half to all of the course content was helpful in their job; 33 percent said all of the content was helpful.

■ 80 percent said they would recommend NewsU to a colleague.

One of the early adopters of NewsU training was Jane Clifford, who is the family editor at The San Diego Union-Tribune. "No matter how long you've been in business, it's never a bad idea to refresh what you think you know, to be reminded of the things that matter, the things we rarely have a chance to think about because we're too busy doing the work," she said. "It was almost like being back in a classroom, briefly, refining the skills to do the job well and continue to improve."

As NewsU heads into 2006, there are several tasks to tackle. First, create more e-learning modules.

The second task is to build awareness of NewsU. Using a combination of print and electronic marketing, NewsU has created an e-learning starter kit for editors. Among the items in the kit:

■ A movie about how e-learning at NewsU works.

■ Brochures and other materials that can be handed out.

■ A poster with NewsU Post-it notes to help journalists remember to visit the site.

Editors or newsroom trainers who want a kit should go to <http://www.newsu.org/getstarted>.

There's always one more question that gets asked of the NewsU crew: What does this cost? Right now, almost all of the courses are free. And that's the plan for many of the self-directed modules. Faculty-led courses have a modest fee because of the level of interaction and feedback from the instructor.

The goal for all courses is to make the training accessible to individuals as well as companies.

Ultimately, NewsU will succeed because journalists will take control of their own training needs and recognize that small investments in time — and money — can make them better at their jobs. ♦

# When NewsTrain comes to town

*Program for mid-level editors replaces the newsroom sink-or-swim promotion mentality with a comprehensive curriculum on management, credibility, and editing*

BY LILLIAN SWANSON

Old beer in cups and hot dogs in hand, the four journalists sitting at a picnic table inside a Cedar Rapids ballpark were engaged in a spirited debate.

They weren't talking about the fate of the Kernels, the minor-league team struggling on the field below, or the price of corn in Iowa. Instead, the three editors and a reporter from The Ottumwa (Iowa) Courier and the Omaha (Neb.) World-Herald were discussing what strategies their newspapers could adopt to boost credibility with readers.

Not a typical conversation for a ball yard. But not a surprise either when the Associated Press Managing Editors' NewsTrain comes to town.

Those of us involved in the workshop have learned that when you get front-line editors talking to each other about what they've just learned, it's hard for them to stop. That's why we encourage our local partners to include a wine-and-cheese reception after the first day of the training — or in the case of The Gazette in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, a trip to the ball game. We want the conversations, and the learning, to continue.

NewsTrain, a training program for midlevel editors sponsored by APME, is two-thirds of the way through its three-year grant cycle. By November, we had taught more than 2,100 editors at 23 regional workshops. By crisscrossing the nation, we're way down the track to teach more than 3,000 editors at 40 workshops by December 2006.

The price of admission is only \$35, thanks to a \$1 million grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. NewsTrain is one of a handful of Knight-funded journalism initiatives — including Tomorrow's Workforce, The Learning Newsroom and News University — designed to make professional development a core value in American newsrooms.

At NewsTrain, our twin goals are to provide editors with excellent training, and whet the appetite for more. Editors learn practical tips they can use on the job the next day. Over two days, they receive seven hours of training in editing and management skills, to help them become better leaders in their newsrooms.

The editing segments have included advice on coaching writers and focusing stories; brainstorming creative approaches to routine stories; common structures of story organization; diagnosing patterns in writing; and key questions to ask when time is short.

In the management courses, editors have practiced having difficult conversations; learned strategies for managing their time; and discussed how to give effective feedback.

Because local partners are asked to select the five courses that would be most valuable to their news organizations, the program varies from site to site.

Other standard training segments at NewsTrain are strategies to improve credibility in coverage; how to plumb the Freedom of Information Act for high-impact stories; principles of ethical decision-making; the benefits of diversity in coverage; ways that photo editors and assigning editors can help each other; and how online is changing the news industry.

We build the train and invite other organizations to add boxcars. Investigative Reporters & Editors; the Online News Association; the National Credibility Roundtables Project; and the Associated Press Photo Managers have routinely added their training segments to the NewsTrain workshop.

It's a lot to pack into two days, but we've found that busy front-line editors — those who supervise reporters or other editors — expect a lot in exchange for the precious time away from newsrooms.

The feedback from editors who have participated has been overwhelmingly positive, both immediately after a workshop and when we check back three months later. Ninety seven percent of respondents say they would recommend NewsTrain to other editors. Ninety five percent say they have used what they learned back in the newsroom.

There's also evidence that NewsTrain is encouraging newsrooms to provide staffers with more training. In Denver, for example, 12 editors, or 52 percent of those who responded to our survey, told us they believed the NewsTrain experience had caused their newspaper or management to provide additional training.

NewsTrain rides on these three rails:

We hire topflight trainers, journalists who have a deep knowledge of their subjects and know how to teach. They use real-life examples and plenty of humor to get their ideas across. The editing faculty has included Jacqui Banaszynski, Knight Chair in editing at the University of Missouri; Chip Scanlan of The Poynter Institute; from The



Swanson is director of APME's NewsTrain.

Arizona Republic, Phoenix, Michael Roberts; Jack Hart from The Oregonian in Portland, and Bob Baker, formerly of the Los Angeles Times. Consultant Edward Miller; Jill Geisler of Poynter, and Arizona State University's Kristin Gilger have starred in the management segments.

We rely on regional coalitions to provide local expertise and divide up the work. The local planners are involved in selecting the courses, choosing the trainers and customizing the workshops by adding topics of regional interest. The coalitions consist of editors from the host paper, several smaller newspapers, the AP bureau, a journalism professor and a state press association. The coalition ends up spending about \$700, although many have broken even and a few have made money. It costs NewsTrain about \$10,000 to produce each workshop.

We keep our pulse on what the front-line editors want and need. We use feedback right after each workshop to fine-tune the next one. We also rely on a survey run by John Greenman, Carter professor at the University of Georgia Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, to test the value of the training segments. Editors hear from Greenman's team before the workshop and 30 days and 90 days later to see what they are using in the newsrooms and whether they or their news organizations are seeking more training.

There is no question that editors are hungry for training. We've had editors drive 10 hours — one way — to attend a workshop. We've had them pay the registration fee and an overnight stay out of their own pockets. We've had them tell us they practiced what they learned on the car ride home.

We've learned that we don't need to divide the participants into classes based on the size of their papers. Editors from papers large and small face essentially the same problems. They just become more complex in larger organizations.

We've also learned that editors with little experience and those with many years in their roles benefit from the workshop, but in different ways. Vets often return to their newsrooms more

**There is no question that editors are hungry for training. We've had editors drive 10 hours — one way — to attend a workshop. We've had them pay the registration fee and an overnight stay out of their own pockets. We've had them tell us they practiced what they learned on the car ride home.**

confident that they know what they are doing. Rookies go back with new skills, tools that will help them for the rest of their careers.

Just as important, we've paid attention to our mistakes. Negative feedback surfaces when our teachers stray from practical advice and move into the theoretical or academic. We've also learned it's important to give editors time to talk with and learn from each other. In Seattle, the sound in the room was deafening when editors were given 45 minutes to discuss vexing management problems with other editors seated at their tables.

And, finally, we've confirmed from a show of hands at each workshop that about eight in 10 editors across the country had no training whatsoever in editing or management skills before taking on an editing role.

Or as Don Fry, a coach and former teacher at Poynter, said at the Wilmington National Writers' Workshop last spring: "On Friday, you're a reporter. On Monday, you're an editor. Your training was to survive the weekend."

This sink-or-swim mentality has long been part of the tradition of newsrooms, relegating new editors to learn by trial and error as they and the staff

suffer through what can be a steep learning curve.

To help change this, NewsTrain was designed to overcome two key obstacles to newsroom training: a tight budget and time away from work. That's why NewsTrain is so inexpensive and comes to the editors' backyards.

NewsTrain was envisioned by Carol Nunnelley, former managing editor at The Birmingham (Ala.) News and now director of APME projects. She focused the initiative on midlevel editors because they were seen as the most neglected, even though their roles are vital to newsroom performance.

Jody Calendar, a former senior editor at The Asbury Park Press in Neptune, N.J. and The Record in Bergen County, N.J., researched what training editors needed most and where NewsTrain was most likely to prosper in its early run. I've been on board since February 2004, adding my experience from four years as senior training editor at The Philadelphia Inquirer. Elaine Kramer, former managing editor of the Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel, came on board this spring to conduct four workshops.

Next year, NewsTrain expects to continue its journey to 15 sites, including Hawaii and Alaska, as we fulfill our promise to make the program accessible to midlevel editors in every state.

After that, there's a steep hill ahead for NewsTrain, finding permanent funding so that this traveling curriculum can continue its journey, making scheduled stops in each region every year. Top editors could count on it, and budget for it, knowing their front-line editors would get good training and the news industry as a whole would benefit.

For now, wherever we go, we aim to deliver a program that is informative, inspiring and fun. That's why on a chilly evening in May, in that field of dreams on the outskirts of Cedar Rapids, workshop trainers as well as front-line editors filled the picnic benches, munching on dogs and debating what's essential to making America's newspapers better. ♦

Contact Lillian Swanson at [ls완son@ap.org](mailto:ls완son@ap.org) or 267-577-2126. Or visit our Web site, <http://www.newstrain.org>



# 'The story for the remainder of my career and my life'

*Stan Tiner leads his staff through the worst days of their lives by bringing them together to share their losses and celebrate their victories*

BY JUDY PACE CHRISTIE

Sixty-five thousand homes in Editor Stan Tiner's Gulf Coast community were totally destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Among those: The homes of a dozen newsroom staff members at The Sun Herald in Biloxi, Miss., where Tiner is the executive editor and vice president. Virtually every staffer's home suffered what would be considered serious damage, joining 38,000 homes that were heavily damaged.

Now, nearly three months after the devastating hurricane, the rebuilding is under way, and Tiner, a veteran editor and member of the ASNE board of directors, is looking at the biggest story of his career, a story that has changed his life and his newspaper.

"When I drove down to U.S. 90 on the afternoon of Aug. 29 and saw that the coast had been destroyed, I knew that my life and the life of this community would never be the same again. This will be the story for the remainder of my career and my life."

**Q. How is your staff doing? What**

**message would you like to give your editor colleagues across the country?**

A. Our staff has performed magnificently throughout this period under the most trying conditions. ...In the early days, the staff would go out and discover their homes destroyed; they would come back; and we would cry together over their loss and hug each other and go back to the job at hand.

We have continued to be very attentive to their needs that have occurred following the storm, such as meetings with insurance adjusters, FEMA and the like. And we have continued to celebrate small victories, as someone gets a trailer or buys a new car to replace the one destroyed in the storm. We

have just had to work around these new realities. Knight Ridder has been an incredible partner. Dozens of volunteers have come in and supplemented our newsroom, allowing us to take care of the personal needs of staff and fill in open slots where we did not have a reporter to cover a particular area because of personal issues.

Additionally, the company brought in counselors very early on who became almost an extension of the staff. More than half of our editors and reporters availed themselves of the counseling. We also had group discussions over specific issues such as sleep deprivation that proved to be important to all of us as we have tried to understand what we are going through in dealing with such a traumatic event.

In terms of the message to give editor colleagues across



Christie is president of Judy Christie Consulting Services in Shreveport, La.

the country, I would begin by saying pray to God that it never happens to you. But I know, too, that all of us are trained as journalists to respond to the big story and that you and your staff will find within yourself a reservoir of strength and character that will carry you through day by day as you go about delivering this powerful story to your readers.

You will also know that you are providing the most essential information to your readers that they will ever receive and that the bond that you create between your newspaper, your newsroom and your readers is one that you will always hope for and may finally realize as the community and the newspaper become one, standing on the common ground of so much incredible pain.

**Q. Where were you when Hurricane Katrina hit?**

A. I was at my home in Gulfport, about 10 miles from the beach, with my wife, my son and his wife and daughter. We watched and listened as the great storm swirled around us. I like to say we used to live in a forest, but we now live on a plain, as we watched the great trees in all directions fall.

**Q. Please describe the way the storm unfolded from your perspective.**

A. We have been through this drill many times on the coast and are proficient at planning what we will do and how we will do it. In South Mississippi, we have always lived in the shadow of Hurricane Camille, believing that was the worst that could happen to us. We had watched intently for days as Katrina grew in size and intensity and seemed to be heading toward New Orleans. We were concerned for New Orleans, but also for ourselves, knowing that even if it hit New Orleans directly that we were going to be on the lethal northeast quadrant of the storm and that we would receive an incredible blow and tidal surge. At The Sun Herald, we closely followed the Weather Underground bloggers, who, beginning several days out, were virtually screaming about the dangers of this

storm.

On Saturday before Katrina arrived, we had a newsroom meeting where the publisher, Ricky Mathews, and myself spoke very soberly about our concerns for this storm and suggested to all of our staff that we get out our Sunday paper, have a skeleton crew publish a Sunday afternoon printing of the Monday edition and that everyone remove themselves and their families to safety as quickly as possible as we felt this was an extremely dangerous circumstance that was approaching. We dispatched a team of editors and designers to Columbus, Ga., our sister Knight Ridder paper, with the instruction that they were to be prepared to publish the Tuesday edition from that location if the storm continued on its course.

**Q. What was the atmosphere in the newsroom during the early hours after the storm hit?**

A. The atmosphere was very professional. The fact that the building withstood this tremendous storm was the first big news. Reporters quickly got out and were looking at what had occurred in the city and begin the process of writing the first draft of the history of this awful event.

**Q. How did the atmosphere change as the story unfolded?**

A. The atmosphere was impacted by the personal tragedies of the staff, even as we recognized how massive the storm was. It covered our entire readership area, and much of our infrastructure had been destroyed. Virtually none of our coast landmarks existed. There was no electricity, no cell phones, and no land-line communications.

**Q. Tell us about Katrina's damage to the communities in your newspaper's area and how that has affected your coverage and production.**

A. Sixty-five thousand homes were totally destroyed, 38,000 heavily damaged, and almost all of the homes suffered some damage, usually at the severe level. The tax base of our 11 coastal cities has been decimated and essentially all of the cities here are bankrupt and down

to only two to three months reserve in most cases, which clearly will be gone very soon. U.S. 90 was turned upside down across great lengths. The major bridges on the east and west were entirely destroyed and other roads and bridges severely damaged, which has limited traffic into the Biloxi peninsula and created a continuing gridlock situation in many areas. Those who are involved in the recovery effort and continued rebuilding of the area and all the many responders to our needs are crammed into these limited entry and exit points.

Our carrier force essentially did not exist for weeks following the storm. So of course, reporters and photographers became the delivery force. As they went here and there reporting on the story, they also dropped off bundles of papers at shelters and wherever they could find people standing.

The paper was produced in Columbus for the first week and trucked into Biloxi. We gradually shifted production of pages and finally the printing of the paper back over in a several day period. The Tuesday press run was 20,000 copies, and that was quickly ramped up to more than 80,000 per day for a protracted period of time, the largest circulation in the newspaper's history. For the first month, papers were delivered entirely free both to subscribers where possible and to free single copy delivery points around South Mississippi. I came to say, "You would be surprised how many papers you can sell when you're giving them away."

However, readers who had very little other means of communications hungrily consumed the papers and this was the touch point to news for tens of thousands of our readers. Meanwhile, our online site was probably the main conduit for important information to people around the world as our daily page views rose from 65,000 a day to more 1.5 million during the first week following the storm. Our blogs and our message boards were connecting families and providing information about survivors. The Web site was an essential communications link from our reporters and interested families and

friends everywhere.

**Q. When did you first realize the magnitude of the devastation?**

A. It was immediately clear that Katrina had impacted everyone. The streets were completely covered with trees. Mississippians tend to be armed with two implements: a gun and a chainsaw. So, quickly, folks from all of the neighborhoods came out of their homes and began to cut their way out. This allowed me to travel quickly to the newspaper, dodging massive debris piles in the streets. It was not until I got to the newspaper that I knew it was still standing. One reporter gave me a memorable quote: "It would be easier to list the structures that were still standing than to list those that had been destroyed."

**Q. Tell us about your first sight of the damage.**

A. When I went down to U.S. 90 and saw the other destruction there. There were people walking the street with a shocked or dazed appearance about them. They had what I call "the stare" that you would see in a combat situation where people have been in a large battle, what would have been called in World War I, shell shock. They saw that I had an official looking badge that was issued to the local press by the Civil Defense Center, and I suppose this gave me some air of authority. People would come up and very meekly ask if I could give them water or food as they told me their homes had been destroyed and that they were hungry and thirsty.

**Q. How are you publishing now?**

A. Within the first week, we had gone back to a normal publishing situation. We didn't miss a single day, and we have not missed a day in the 121-year history of The Sun Herald. We took a lot of personal pride — staff pride — in knowing that we had been able to accomplish that despite this great storm. We also saw that the community took similar pride in seeing it. It was one of the first visible signs, despite the great blow that we had suffered from Katrina, that one of the institutions in the com-

munity was continuing to operate.

By not missing a publication day and putting the eight-page paper in their hands, there was a sense of continuity and maybe renewed confidence that we were going to be able to operate as a community. This was one of the first signs of our ability to defy the storm and accomplish the mission that we had been given. The great opportunity and privilege to see readers reading the newspaper, and almost fighting to get to the newspaper, as they were delivered and the cries of joy, "The Sun Herald is here," will always resonate in my ear. It was an honor to be able to deliver those papers and to see the community embrace the newspapers, as I have not seen in my career.

**Q. How did you and your staff plan for covering this huge storm? How did that plan change along the way?**

A. I want to give great credit to not just The Sun Herald team in Columbus, but to the newsroom and production staff and all those in Columbus — from Publisher Pam Siddall to Editor Ben Holden and to all of those incredible journalists and also to Knight Ridder editors and designers who were stationed there — in helping produce the papers through those first few days, even to the detriment of the Columbus paper. On one memorable Friday night, it was necessary for them to miss their high school football game reports in order to accommodate the press run for The Sun Herald. And knowing something about the power of high school football in the South, I know that was a tremendous sacrifice. The Columbus Ledger-Enquirer will always have a special place in our hearts. Knight Ridder likewise was a great partner in the plan, pre-positioning reporters, editors and photographers in Montgomery, Ala., so that as soon as Katrina had passed Bryan Monroe was able to lead this group directly into Biloxi, appearing shortly after nightfall with satellite phones, chainsaws and journalistic comradeship of the first order. Their great efforts were extremely helpful in getting the first editions out and all of those that followed.

**Q. How do you cover the president, vice president, first lady and cabinet members when they suddenly become frequent visitors to your area?**

A. In my five-and-a-half years as the executive editor in Biloxi, I don't think any of these people have ever been to South Mississippi. But they were welcome guests and continued to be welcome guests in the days that followed. ... When you have a plan for the next day's coverage and then learn that the president is coming again for the eighth time and you have to prepare yourself for that coverage, to get the credentials done and be prepared to add that into the mix of the next day's news budget is a somewhat other-worldly situation, added on to so many other-worldly events that have become part of our routine in the post-Katrina days.

**Q. The town you call home was suddenly at the center of international news coverage. How well did outside media do covering this story? Where did they miss the mark?**

A. It was literally weeks before we had any sense at all of the news coverage. We weren't getting newspapers in here, and we weren't getting television or radio, of course. So our focus was really at ground level and covering the story as best we could. ... There is much that I don't know about the coverage, although many of our readers and those elsewhere tell me that we have not fared well in terms of the coverage that the Mississippi Coast has received compared to the story in New Orleans. Taken alone, the devastation in New Orleans would be the greater. Together they are of a magnitude that very few of us could even comprehend. I'll let others judge whether they think it has been fair or not, but I would say that the growing feeling, at least in these parts, is that it has not been equitable in the least.

**Q. Will the Mississippi coast bounce back? How will this change your area?**

A. Yes. The entire coast, more than 40 miles, has been utterly destroyed. We cannot go back and rebuild hundreds of



## Stan Tiner

**Birthday:** August 22, 1942.

**Misc.:** Was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University in 1985-86. Is a former U.S. Marine and a veteran of 13 months combat in the Vietnam War.

**Married:** Vicki Tiner, Dec. 31, 1966. We honeymooned in Biloxi. I am proud to say that the hotel that we honeymooned in more or less still stands. It will be 39 years this Dec. 31.

**Children:** Mark, Jon and Heather.

**Grandchildren:** Grayson, Rachel and Rebecca.

**What I'll tell my grandchildren when they are older:** Be true to who you are. Respect other people and the place you live, and give more than you take from life.

**First phone call I placed after Katrina hit:** I placed a lot of phone calls, but none of them went through, so it's almost a superfluous question. I guess, literally the first phone call I placed and got through was a satellite phone to Columbus to talk about trying to get the first edition out.

**Most stunning sight after the hurricane:** The debris line across the coast that contained three centuries of history and the lives of so many people.

**What editors should be thinking about when faced with a huge story:** Having the right people in place, in the right jobs, and empower them to do what they do and make sure that nobody impedes their ability to do so.

**Biggest change in my life since the storm:** Trying to do more than I thought I could ever do. When the storm hit, the publisher and I got together and said that we have three jobs that we have to do now. First is being the best publisher and the best editor that we can be. Second, we each have a civic role that we have to do. ... For the editor, the civic role would be making sure that our story is heard everywhere and that people don't forget about South Mississippi. Third, that we remember that we are husbands and fathers and that we have family responsibilities that we have to be sure are met. I would say that's the one that may have suffered some in all of this. The first two have been so overwhelming.

**When things slow down, I am going to:** Take my wife somewhere and make sure that she knows how important she is. We were due to go to the ASNE board of directors meeting in Sacramento, Calif. and take the Napa Valley tour, and we weren't able to do that.

**If I weren't a newspaper editor, I'd be:** I would like to write a book, teach and make beautiful gardens.

antebellum homes and all of the landmarks that were so well-known to people on the ancient coast. It is clearly going to be a different kind of place, but the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal has been an incredible experience. The new urbanist movement has brought in more than 100 of the top architects and designers from around the country and even the world to focus on each of our cities on the coast. And it is one of the

most incredible experiences in my life to see so much talent focused on this place and its rebuilding.

I believe that South Mississippi is going to be one of the remarkable stories of history, as I think the capital markets are going to respond to the opportunities here. If the rebuilders are respectful to our tradition and heritage, I believe that the explosion of rebuilding can be done in extremely smart and careful ways. If we keep in

place the rich ethnicity across our coast, I believe that it will actually occur much quicker than many could ever have imagined.

**Q. What has been the hardest part of this experience?**

A. The emotional feelings that derived from seeing your colleagues and your people across the region so incredibly hurt. To know of the lives that were lost and the homes that were destroyed and the precious possessions and artifacts of entire lives that were swept away in the few hours that Katrina visited us. The pain and trauma of that day will impact us for the rest of the days of our lives.

**Q. How were you and your family and friends personally most affected by the storm?**

A. My granddaughter, Grayson, who is five years old, drew pictures and read books throughout the storm as the winds howled and the trees fell. She will be the real pioneer of this period. She will have her roots in the beginning of the new time, which started with Katrina. When she is an old woman, that will be part of her legacy, that she lived through the storm and that she helped create the new place that will be Gulfport and South Mississippi. I think that is a legacy that all of us who lived through this will have. Some of us won't see what that future looks like, but can imagine it and feel confident because we are Mississippians and really strong people. We were able to come back from Camille and will be able to come back from Katrina and will not be defeated, not even by this great storm.

**Q. How did you help your staff cope with this story? How did life change in your newsroom?**

A. I would say that my staff helped me cope with the story by the strength of their own example. How could I not be moved to enable them in every way that I could (and that the company could and that this newspaper could) to help them live their lives and do the great job they had to do?

Life changed in the newsroom in so

many ways. We slept on the floor in the first days, on wet carpet and whatever we could find to put our heads on, and we learned to live on Spam and Vienna sausage and a lot of crackers and bottled water, which got us through those first days. Then the company came through with a weekly barbecue, with hamburgers and hotdogs, which were tremendous treats. We learned to live life walking out to the porta-potties. The camaraderie and closeness of this staff has never been greater than was forced here in the difficult days.

**Q. How would you describe your leadership style during these past few weeks? Have you changed as a leader?**

A. I am just humbled to be a part of a newsroom that has done the job that they have done. They have made me more aware than ever that a leader is only the sum of the parts of the people that he or she leads.

**Q. What lessons from Katrina did you learn that might be of help to other editors when disaster strikes?**

A. Pulling the staff together, talking constantly, having a morning meeting, midday meeting and an afternoon meeting to make sure that everybody is on the same page. Counseling support should be an integral part of anybody's plan. They should be prepared to come in from day one and become an adjunct to the staff, as well as medical doctors to give tetanus and hepatitis shots. Create cleanup zones so that — as reporters go out in the field and bring back potential biohazards and disease from the affected areas — you are able to maintain a safe zone within the newspaper, to protect everyone from what could be a catastrophic health risk.

**Q. Before Katrina, what was the biggest challenge you faced as editor of a community newspaper? What is your biggest challenge now?**

A. We have called ourselves "South Mississippi's Newspaper," and that is the community that we continue to serve. Since all of South Mississippi was incredibly affected, trying to keep the geographic focus on every story that we

do and on every place that we cover and that is a tremendous challenge to a staff of our size.

**Q. You heard from colleagues throughout the country during the aftermath of the storm. Tell us about those messages.**

A. They have been incredibly supportive. "What can we do to help you? We're thinking about you," and all of those things. I think so many of them wonder what it would be like to be in the position that we are in and are very interested in that. But there is almost a reverence toward the story and the newspaper and the staff that's having to cover this event. Someone said to me that it is almost a sense of guilt that they can't do more. And it is interesting because there is a similar thing that takes place internally. Everybody feels like someone else was hurt more than we were. We have an internal fund for grants for people with needs. Some have not applied for it because they feel that someone else has suffered more than they did.

**Q. How are you helping journalists in your newsroom with the tough act of balancing work and personal lives through this catastrophe?**

A. It is somewhat of a football game atmosphere. When somebody needs to come out of the game for whatever reason, they raise their hand and say, "Coach, can I come out?" And the answer has always been, "Yes." Some obviously have been impacted greater than others. One reporter lost her home, and her sister and brother-in-law were claimed in the storm. Their bodies were misplaced for two or three weeks and eventually were found. The first day that she got mail at one of the temporary post offices that they have set up around Bay St. Louis, the top letter was from the IRS telling her that she owed them an additional \$960. She indicated that the laughter that it elicited was well-noted by those around her.

**Q. You mentioned in an earlier conversation that you cannot see the end of this story. What are the next**

**steps you see unfolding?**

A. This is a marathon. We are going to be methodical about it. Every day is going to be better than the day before. The first day that the hamburger joint opened — that's progress. The first day that a new stop light is functioning — that's progress. The first day that you can cross the railroad tracks to go into your home and look for treasures — that's progress. As the pace accelerates, the stories get bigger. All of those things lead us from here to wherever the future takes us. But we try to do that incrementally. While we know there will be some backward steps, at the end of every week we think we are better off than we were the week before.

I think that in three to five years, this is going to be a much different place. I think that the casinos are going to come back in a competitive environment very quickly, and I think that the capital markets are going to respond well to the fact that Mississippi has been strong and dignified in the way that we are taking charge of our own fates. There is a lot of strength and resiliency seen in this place that is going to be rewarded by the capital markets, and development will be a lot more rapid than some think it will be. Part of it is because we are one of the most beautiful places in the world, and people want to be near the water. As the Europeans discovered over 300 years ago when they first started coming here, it's a place that you want to be. There is not much shoreline like this left in the country, and despite the horrible fact that it has been devastated, there is a fresh canvas for other to come and create their own new creations.

**Q. Predict what the Page One headline in your newspaper will say on the one-year anniversary of Katrina.**

A. I think it will say something out of what I just said to you: "What a difference a year makes." I think we will remember Aug. 29 for as long as we live, but I think we're also going to recognize the remarkable spirit of our people and that that has held us strong over the course of the next year and the years to come. ♦

# Lessons learned from old-school editors

By M. DAVID GOODWIN

When a young newspaper editor penned his salutatory editorial, he shared his hopes and visions for his country newspaper and for his hometown.

With eloquence, aplomb and homespun philosophy, he outlined the duties he expected to perform for generations to come. The young editor hoped "to live here until he is the old editor, until some of the visions, which rise before him as dreams, shall have come true."

William Allen White, the Pulitzer Prize-winning editor of *The Emporia (Kan.) Gazette* and a former ASNE president, did more than make his dreams come true. He established a standard of journalism excellence all of us measure ourselves against.

When I became a first-time editor of *The Middletown (Ohio) Journal* in August 2003, I turned to the wisdom I learned from Mr. White. When I was introduced to the staff (and later to important community leaders) I took to heart the advice — penned in that first editorial on June 3, 1895 — Mr. White sought from his staff and readers. I keep my handwritten notes in my desk drawer and occasionally review them as a reminder of that standard I ascribe to exceed. The notes read:

"This editor will perform all the kinds of offices this community expects of their editor. His relations with the people of this town and county are to be close and personal. He hopes that they may be kindly and just. ... (And) the good, honest, upright, God-fearing, law-abiding people of this newsroom and community will be called upon to guide me by making known your private opinion that it may become public opinion, to coun-

sel me and stand by me."

As editors, we find ourselves flushed with challenges to maintain readership, hire, nurture and retain talent, be financial stewards, read our publishers' minds, cut newsprint, drive Internet strategies, be hip to the young and relevant to the loyalists. We are equally innovators and hackneyed recyclers. There's truly nothing original, and, yet, all is original. In the end, we are left lifting this heavy epigram I fused from Gov. James Cox, when he recalled the early joys of a newsman. "We all worked like beavers and with fraternal cooperation. ... But we all loved the work, and I in particular found it fascinating."

Reflection is a healthy mental exercise to remind us why we chose this unpredictable, sometimes violent adventure as storytellers and purveyors of information and opinion. Instead of beating our heads against the wall to find answers to today's challenges, we should revisit the lessons learned by our predecessors. Really, nothing we experience as editors is unique.

When I feel I am losing my way, I will either call on the editor gods of old, or my father, James Goodwin (a fine editor and publisher toiling in Tulsa), or the countless friends who have mentored me along the way. Manna from these scribes replaces desire with sustenance, precariousness with balance, alarm with grit, deceit with integrity and idiocy with shrewdness.

As a 28-year-old publisher, Gov. Cox detested craven journalism: "Any newspaper

in the time of stress, which does not recognize its duty to a community is not deserving of the name. There is nothing worse than an invertebrate publisher. He neither does his public nor his profession any good."

Mr. White defined his standard for judging a newspaper: "If, in the long run and in the main, day after day and year after year, a paper stands for decency, for honest thinking and clean living, if it speaks fair for those who are trying to do good, and condemns sneaks and cheats and low persons, this is a good paper."

These are the standards I drive daily for *The Middletown Journal*. Our newsroom does not make peace with mediocrity. As the editor, I am never satisfied, because I know we can do better.

Many of my colleagues have given me ample advice. Still, I find myself gravitating back to Mr. White's words and expectations as a solid foundation to keep the faith. The very same challenges we endure today are no different than the issues he faced in his time. Time is no separator to excellence.

We strive not merely to be responsible to the public and to our profession; we strive to be true to ourselves. My grandfather, Edward L. Goodwin Sr., added this motto to the weekly newspaper he published (and which survives today) "We Make America Better When We Aid Our People."

In all that we do as members of the Fourth Estate, we cling to the ideology of writing to make a difference in the lives of individuals, communities, our country and our world. This is why I became a journalist. Jim Willse, editor of *The Star-Ledger* in Newark, N.J., puts it plainly, "to cast a light in dark alley ways." Damn those who stand in our way.

In all we do, we must never lose hope in the cause. We must work from sunup to sundown. For the yield is grand.

"The path of glory is barred hog tight for the man who does not labor while he waits."

Mr. White, I couldn't have said it any better. ♦



Goodwin is editor of *The Middletown (Ohio) Journal*.



# Calendar

Jan. 28 — Nominations Committee meeting, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Feb. 3 — Convention Program Committee meeting, Washington

Feb. 8-11 — ASNE Job Fair: Greensboro, N.C.

Feb. 16-18 — ASNE Awards Board meeting, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, St. Petersburg, Fla.

Feb. 26-March 1 — Diversity Leadership Institute, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

March 11-22 — ASNE trip to China

March 12-18 — Sunshine Week

March 14-15 — Readership Training Seminar, Ocala, Fla.

March 22-23 — Readership Training Seminar, Salt Lake City

April 10-11 — Readership Training Seminar, Memphis, Tenn.

April 25-28 — ASNE Convention, Westin Hotel, Seattle



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# Foolhardy

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they trust with a bond of confidentiality. It is a bond that has been served by the First Amendment since 1791.

A national shield law would not have protected Judith Miller from spending 85 days in jail before agreeing to testify before a grand jury in the CIA leak investigation. Nor would it have prevented six months' home confinement of TV reporter Jim Taricani for refusing to tell a prosecutor who gave him a secret FBI videotape from a corruption investigation.

In both instances, federal prosecutors were determined to find out if laws had been broken and, if so, who broke them. The reporters' confidential sources were considered crucial evidence.

Miller and Taricani relied on the First

**The five constitutional freedoms considered most important by Sierra Corriveau's students:**

- Right to keep and bear arms.
- Freedom of speech.
- Protection from cruel and unusual punishment.
- Freedom of religion.
- Right to privacy.

Amendment. It didn't save them from having to choose between incarceration and disclosure. That's because of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Branzburg* decision in 1972 that said journalists must testify before grand juries when they have clearly relevant information about a probable violation of law.

The *Branzburg* case has become the legal standard. It was a 5-to-4 ruling that established qualified protection from disclosure, the same kind of qualified protection the national shield law would provide.

Some day the Supreme Court may revisit *Branzburg* and strengthen our hand in confidential source cases. Judith Miller's appeal gave them an opportunity to do that, but the justices refused to take it up.

There will come another case, another court.

In the meantime, let's continue to rely on the Constitution, and fight for reporter's privilege — and the public's right to know — on a case by difficult case basis rather than risk the trapdoors of a federal shield law.

The best way to safeguard the First Amendment's press clause is to stand by it. If that means going to jail, then we need to be prepared to do so. ♦

# Aggressive

Continued from Page 13.

are entitled to a strong privilege under the First Amendment, and would suggest that much of what a shield law does is codify principles derived from judicial decisions in this area. The existence of a statute does not undercut the existence of constitutional protections, nor does it signal an abandonment of reliance on First Amendment protections with respect to privilege or any other aspect of media law.

Some in the press are concerned about government giving privileges that it can take away. True enough. But even a cursory reading of some of the decisions that have rejected the reporter's privilege in recent cases or failed to find reporters protected under privilege suggests that courts, too, have the ability to rethink, reapply, and even outright reject prior findings. For better or for worse, no privilege exists without some branch of government saying it is so.

While there has been much valuable soul searching in the journalistic community of late about the use of confidential sources, we do not think we have to make the case for the reporter's privilege to this audience. You understand that the privilege is afforded by the states and by the courts because of the recognition that the proper functioning of the press in a democratic society — and its essential role in keeping the citizenry informed — depends on the existence of a privilege. The First Amendment principles that establish a reporter's privilege are to protect critical societal needs for a robust,

independent press.

A federal shield law is intended to enable the press to hold government and other institutions accountable for their actions. Subpoenas to journalists risk reducing reporters to routine, involuntary participants in the judicial and investigatory process; risk disrupting press/source relationships; and risk potential sources simply refusing to come forward — in essence, risk government interference with the ability of reporters to do their jobs.

Few in the press, if any, would argue against a reporter's privilege that affords adequate protection for confidential sources and that adequately balances the public interest in the fair administration of justice against the need of the press to remain free of easy access to their nonconfidential newsgathering and testimony. A federal shield law that codifies those aspirations and protects the press and its sources from inconsistent and potentially very damaging rulings from the federal courts is urgently needed. ♦

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Cynthia Scott sits with her grandchildren Dwayne Alphonse and 3-month-old twins Eric & Erin Alphonse as she and thousands of evacuees were forced to sleep on an overpass next to the Superdome on Wednesday August, 31, 2005, days after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans.

## The value of compassion in a horrific situation

**Y**ou can't do this job without showing a little bit of compassion. While trying to get to the Superdome, a crowd pointed out the body of an 80-year-old man who had fallen to his death from one of the overpasses.

He may have accidentally fallen, thinking it was the place people were jumping the guard rail to cross over to a nearby sidewalk, so they could use the restroom on the ground level.

Cynthia Scott, had been looking out for the frail man. She felt despair that he had to die in such a way.

She, too, was trying to keep her family safe from shootings, heat and dehydration. I photographed her and listened to her story, letting her vent her frustration. "A whole city in ruins and no one doing nothing" she said.

I was getting emotional while taking the photos, and a nearby man said to me, "I can tell that you really care about people by the look on your face."

I can't imagine anyone not showing compassion and understanding in such a horrific situation.

The next day this picture ran, and I got a phone call from a woman in South Carolina, pleading with me to find this family, so she could adopt them. She was moved by the woman.

I knew I would never see the family again, but hope that they found some comfort through all the chaos. The mother's plight and desperation were consistent with the reactions of the people I met in New Orleans.

— Michael Ainsworth  
Photographer  
The Dallas Morning News

