

STATE OF THE UNION

TO judge by its output, the SA Union of Journalists ain't in the best of editorial shape. The October edition of *The Journalist* has a *Cape Times* hack bitching about how hard it is "to get our names and surnames pronounced properly and spelt correctly by any of the dozens of people we speak to on the telephone each day." The selfsame article then goes on to mispell the names of *Cape Times* journo, Yazeed Fakier and Aneez Sallie, compounding the errors by describing the latter as "our poor health writer". Forget about organising the profession, SAUJ - let's make it professional first.

SHOOTING FROM THE HIP

THE *Cape Times* obviously had a particular scenario in mind when it presented a silver hip-flask to associate editor Gerald Shaw upon his retirement earlier this year. Wide-eyed journalism students at Rhodes made the same assumption some months later when genial Gerald addressed them and hauled out the vessel for a mid-lecture swig. "It's just water," insisted the authoritative author of more than 1000 political columns. The sincere Shaw was trucking in truth.

Trouble is, even an authoritative writer like him ends up losing street cred after swapping the pen for a pension. Protestations about the contents of the flask notwithstanding, one could mindread the students' thoughts: "Water? Ah yes, the 'Holy water'?"

GRAVY PLANE

WHEN transport minister Mac Maharaj and family were bundled across the Atlantic and bivouacked at the Olympics, all courtesy the new Transnet, 'twas not the only thing prompting the phrase "plus ca change ...".

Also at work and reminiscent of the bad old days was the brave new minister's response to adverse publicity about the perk. The former underground chief of Operation Vula simply had a go at the media.

Yet while many journo wagged fingers about Maharaj's ethics and the effect of such enticements on his judgements about Transnet, no one seemed to recall some Transnet sponsorships closer to home. The parastatal last year paid for a major venue and several performers at the Grahamstown festival ... and subsidised a group of journo to come and cover the event. The ensuing objective reporting at the time bore no acknowledgement of said sponsorship.

Media hypocrisy? Well, plus ca change ...

SKIN STORIES

THE search for Hints's head made good copy in this country. So good that several journo reported as fact that Nicholas Gcaleka, alleged descendent of the allegedly beheaded Xhosa King, had found the gory item in bonny Scotland. Traditional culture made it into the media again more recently with reports of deaths of Xhosa teenagers circumcised with dirty instruments. Meanwhile, however, Nigerian magazine, *The News*, has some good news about this old-fashioned custom shared by Jews and Nguni-speakers alike. "What good can come out of a penile foreskin once it is discarded after circumcision?", asks a page one article in the West African magazine. The answer, as provided: the offcuts can be used to grow sheets of skin for transplants. "Cells from one foreskin can produce 25000 square meters of artificial skin," we're told. Don't hassle over how Hints's head has been reported: it's *The News's* journalism that really seems to be stretching things a little.

STORIES BEYOND THE SPIKE

PROVING that there's value in things of yore, comes the following gem from old Eastern Province paper, *The Great Eastern*, February 25, 1865. "A most unfortunate accident took place at the Tulbagh Kloof railway on Tuesday. Payling, the man in charge of the magazine, went with another man to get out a barrel of powder; on entering, they saw a snake and Payling got his gun and fired at it; the consequence was the blowing up of the place instantaneously, killing the two men and a woman who happened to be close at hand."

Now if only journalists today could find and tell stories like that.

NOTES FROM THE INTERNET

- >The Torch's District Visit - The REAL Story
- >With all the hype about the Olympic Torch coming through the D.C. area, certain gory details about the Torch's journey were omitted by the media
- >Accordingly, I thought you might like to see a minute-by-minute account of what REALLY happened as the Torch made its way through our fine city:
 - > 3:15 Torch arrives at U.S. Capitol
 - > 3:30 Torch leaves U.S. Capitol, carried by Bob Dole.
 - > 5:00 One block later, Bob Dole hands off torch.
 - > 5:15 Torch enters Northeast Washington
 - > 5:16 First recorded case of "Torch-jacking" occurs.

- >6:00 After massive search, Torch is found in a local pawn shop and repurchased for \$25
- >6:15 Torch arrives at city hall. Crowd is dismayed when Marion Barry uses it to light his crack pipe.
- >6:20 Barry is further embarrassed when he is stopped trying to take the torch to the country for "spiritual renewal".
- >6:30 Torch heads into Northwest Washington
- >6:35 Torch runner falls into D.C. pothole.
- >6:45 Torch is recovered (runner is never found).
- >6:55 Torch arrives at Dupont Circle. Residents are proud to have such a high profile "flame" in their area.
- >7:00 Torch runner attempts to hand off flame to NBA star Juwan Howard.
- >7:01 David Falk stops the transaction, demanding \$9 million over two years for Howard's effort.
- >7:21 Torch arrives White House.
- >7:22 FBI files on Torch arrive White House.
- >7:23 Hillary fires Torch, citing "gross mismanagement and bad recordkeeping".
- >7:24 "Torchgate" hearings begin on Capitol Hill.
- >7:30 Torch leaves White House, heads across the Mall.
- >7:32 Torch runner is knocked unconscious by long pop-fly hit by "With Ourselves" star, John Mechem
- >7:35 Torch is handed to Republican Presidential candidate, Pat Buchanan.
- >7:36 Series of mysterious fires at black churches begins along Torch route.
- >8:00 Torch heads for Virginia.
- >8:15 Crossing the 14th Street Bridge, Torch is accidentally dropped into Potomac — entire surface of river immediately ignites.
- >8:45 After being recovered by divers, Torch enters Virginia. Upon crossing state line, runner is immediately assessed personal property tax on torch.
- >8:47 Runner attempts to hand torch to Virginia Senator John Warner. Warner refuses, saying he cannot, in good conscience, support this torch.
- >9:00 Torch is retired for the evening. USOC vows never to set foot in the D.C. area again. — End —

Roll on Cape Town, 2004, and hope the Southeaster doesn't extinguish the famous flame.

Headlines & deadlines

GLOBAL GLITCHES:

- Clinton wins on health, but more lies ahead
- Juvenile court to try shooting defedent
- Miners refuse to work after death
- Two boats collide, one dies
- Prostitutes appeal to Pope
- 2 sisters re-united after 18 years at the checkout counter
- Never withhold herpes infection from loved one
- Safety experts say school bus passengers should be belted
- Lung cancer in women mushrooms

HOME GROANS...

- Vindicated Holomisa wants an ANC apology (*Cape Times*)
- Holomisa demands apology (*Daily Dispatch*)
- Holomisa calls on party to eat humble pie (*Mercury*)
- Apologise, says Holomisa (*Witness*)
- Say you're sorry, says Holomisa (*Eastern Province Herald*)

EMOTIONAL HYPE:

- Hoax taxi story angers Fivaz (*Daily Dispatch*)
- Fivaz outraged at bus driver's fake hijack tale (*Eastern Province Herald*)

COME AGAIN:

- Just what was the angle on these identical stories?
- Ramsamy's 'negative' bid attitude defended (*Eastern Province Herald*)
- Ramsamy under fire for 'tepid' bid support (*Daily Dispatch*)
- Phone records clear bomb suspect (*Eastern Province Herald*)
- Olympic bomb timing queried (*Daily Dispatch*)

Reporting Aids — 14 – 16 October 1996

This is a three-day practical workshop

After Saraphina II, are there any AIDS stories left? This workshop is designed for reporters on newspapers, magazines and community publications* who believe there are; who have responsibility for, or a special interest in, health reporting...

Perhaps the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism should try this Reporting Aid for starters: Sarafina, not Saraphina...