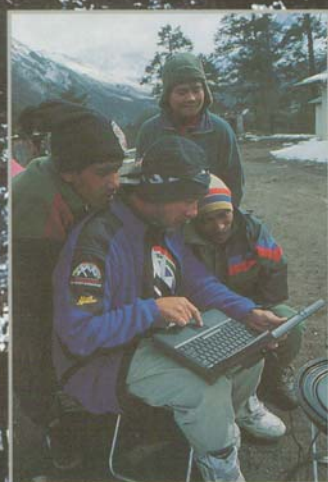


Rhodes Journalism Review

12
OCTOBER '96

THE MEDIA,
THE MOUNTAIN
and the valleys in between



PRESSFREEDOM

- *Ivan Fallon*
- *Bojosi Otlhogile*

MEMORYLANE

- *Arthur Maimane*

SUNDAYPAPERS

- *Brian Pottinger*

SABCTELEVISION

- *Jill Chisholm*

INSERT
RAGGEDRIGHT

Do we need a truth commission to report on the South African press? **ANTHONY SAMPSON** thinks so.

Rhodes Journalism Review

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INSERT: RAGGED RIGHT

This issue

HOW to keep our eyes on the ball and which ball. That's the issue at the heart of this edition of *Review*. How does a journalist make sense of the media's movements when so much is happening? There have been editorial charter debates,

changing print ownerships, Comtask deliberations, satellite TV launched, digital technologies ... and so on. Where, then, should we focus?

Actually, it's quite straightforward. You can see it in the common concern of *Review's* contributors: namely, journalism. Focussed. Professional. Credible. Independent. And a journalism which serves this society successfully.

To begin with, digital technology is indeed taking the media by storm - but it's secondary to our journalistic mission. That's the watchword in articles by Monty Cooper on the Everest expedition, Mike Zajakowsky on digital photojournalism, Pieter Malan on picture manipulation, Kerry Swift on the World Wide Web and Guy Berger on mining online information sources.

Then, there may be a lot on the go in the media milieu, but the professional ethics of journalistic storytelling don't go away. Fairness comes under focus from Cathy O'Dowd, while Mike Morris pleads for the unfashionable notion of objectivity.

Substantiation and avoiding stereotypes as ingredients for credible story-telling comes up in Margaret Legum's criticism of the English-language press. Credibility is what motivates Anthony Sampson's controversial call for the custodians of truth to come clean about complicity in apartheid.

These themes reflect an underlying concern for press freedom, and interest in what South Africa's media is making of its new political latitude. Arthur Maimane's article makes us measure journalism against the bad old days, while Bojosi Othogile points to the problems still plaguing independent journalists just across our borders. An optimistic pitch for press freedom comes from *Independent's* Ivan Fallon. But he also sounds a sobering note by pointing out freedom has not been a boon to newspaper circulations.

Concentrating on what it takes to raise South Africa's miserable circulations are the *Sunday Times'* Brian Pottinger and independent consultant Chleo Ehlers.

Broadcasting is also wrestling with how to serve and secure audiences simultaneously. Community radio has many models, says Bill Siemering. SATV's own public service model suggests a different view of audiences and quality journalism, as explored in Larry Strelitz's interview with Jill Chisholm.

Credible and professional journalism is key ingredient in the appeal of any medium. And yet the first of these qualities attracts too little attention.

You can see this, for example, in the way discussion of editorial charters has been defensive, reactive and racially polarised. Certainly, journalists do need editorial autonomy from untoward commercial influences and from day-to-day political interference. Credibility is the first casualty of journalism that mouths commercial or political agendas. And media without credibility are not going to make it in the marketplace - nor contribute to democracy. All this is true.

But neither will media succeed if they don't provide pointed relevance and pleasure to potential audiences. Credibility needs to be compelling.

The challenge ahead is to combine professionalism and credibility with a catchiness that will attract the mass of South Africans whose attention is otherwise occupied at present.

Keeping our eyes on this ball is basic. If we don't, the public will be focussed elsewhere.

● *Review* pays tribute to outgoing editor, Charles Riddle, who consolidated its role as South Africa's premier forum for journalists.

communicate, transmit, pass on information;
despatch news 588vb. correspond report, cover,
keep posted, get across, get in touch; send a
message, disseminate, broadcast, telecast
announce, be informed, have the facts
understand; ☀ NATIONALE PERS; come to know
get the facts. 589vb. learn; awaken to, become
alive to. Adj. informative, newsy, instructive
590adj. educational, to entertain 600ad
publishing; informed, in the picture

Guest Editorial

Anthony Sampson on the need for a press truth commission.

Is there a case for a truth commission to report on the South African press? It would not be set up by government or chaired by an archbishop, I hasten to add. It would be initiated by the media themselves, in their own self-interest, to establish their own credibility, as the recorders of their country's transformation.

The thought kept recurring to me when I was recently revisiting South Africa from London, talking to old black friends now in government, visiting Robben Island and watching President Mandela opening parliament.

Like many other visitors, I was struck by the discrepancy between the rapid shift of power in South Africa over the last two years, and the appearance of normality and "business as usual", as Mandela called it.

And that appearance seemed to be magnified by many South African newspapers, which preferred to pretend that nothing much has changed—including themselves.

That sense of normality can be wonderfully reassuring to conservative whites, to old-fashioned tourists or anxious investors. To them, it is part of the "miracle" that the change of power has scarcely affected their everyday lives.

The trouble is, the pretence evades the central fact of recent South African history, that the system of apartheid was until a very few years ago supported or condoned by the majority of whites, including much of the media.

It evades the fact that the end of apartheid requires a drastic re-thinking and restructuring, everywhere. And if whites ignore that necessity, they are storing up huge trouble for the future, from the black majority who voted to bring down the system.

The problem of the media struck me most forcibly when I read the *Sunday Times*' celebrations of their 90th anniversary in February, congratulating themselves on their courageous past record.

They included, it is true, some criticisms of the paper's endorsement of the government's referendum in 1983, and a reference to the lamentable press coverage of the transition after 1990.

And Ken Owen, in a remarkable interview by Ivor Powell in last December's issue of this *Review*, admitted that he made an historic failure in disbelieving the existence of a "third force".

But the *Sunday Times*' celebrations never really faced up to the fact that their paper had for long periods been manipulated by successive apartheid governments, and used as a

receptacle for leaks to smear the black opposition—which is now in power.

And most of the "mainstream" press has never really acknowledged the fact that in the dark years of the eighties it was the alternative press that set the pace for the exposures and revelations which discredited the government. Much of the mainstream press, as Ivor Powell wrote in the same piece, "failed in the dying years of the apartheid regime to see the obvious".

It is hardly surprising that they now face a credibility gap among many of their readers, particularly black readers, and that the *Sunday Times* for instance is increasingly challenged by *City Press*.

Of course this habit of evasion is far from uniquely South African. Many overseas newspapers, who had far less excuse for conniving with South African governments, became the willing allies or dupes of apartheid politicians or businessmen, because they found it more comfortable or profitable to enjoy their hospitality and friendship.

The London *Sunday Times*, in the run-up to the 1994 elections, became notorious for propagating any story which would discredit the ANC, absurdly influenced by John Aspinall, the editor's friend who was fanatically pro-Inkatha. They published hysterical reports, about an impending race-war, about secret communist influences, or about Mandela's senility.

Other foreign correspondents who loved the South African climate, the easy living and friendly Afrikaner sources were only too glad to provide stories which their proprietors, and many of their readers, wanted to believe.

The mere thought of being recalled to a London winter could deter them from offending the apartheid government: while a journey to darkest Soweto, and the patient pursuit of a shadowy black politician, was far riskier and much harder work than picking up leaks at a convivial party in the white suburbs.

Now many of the same papers, inside or outside South Africa, which thrived on attacking the communist terrorists of the ANC, are glad to join in the praise of President Mandela as if nothing had happened.

But readers are not so forgetful, particularly black readers who endured the full horrors of apartheid who cannot forget how little they were reported at the time. They may continue to read the same papers. But they have their own sanction: they can simply stop believing them.

The only effective remedy is to come clean: to go over the past, to try to record what went wrong.

It has been done before. Before the second world war, the London *Times* had an appalling record of appeasing Hitler—a record which cast doubt over all its subsequent reporting and ponderous editorials thereafter.

But it was *The Times* itself which revealed the full truth when it published its official history of that period in 1952, describing how its editor Geoffrey Dawson censored his correspondents to avoid offending the Nazis. He boasted how he "did my utmost, night after night, to keep out of the paper anything that might hurt their susceptibilities".

And this belated candour did much to re-establish *The Times*' reputation for objective reporting—at least before Rupert Murdoch came in with his own agenda.

Few newspaper histories have dared to be so candid. *The Economist*, which is privately ashamed of its past record of condoning apartheid governments, glossed over the subject in its recent history of its 150 years.

It is certainly a painful task, to analyse past mistakes; like a corporate psycho-analysis, digging down into past secrets and trauma, which can upset many individuals concerned.

But the truth will come out in the end anyway. And the sooner the media can confront it, the sooner they can perform their crucial role of recording and explaining the transformation of their country.

The truth will set them free.

♦ Anthony Sampson was editor of *Drum* magazine in Johannesburg from 1950-1955, and has frequently returned to South Africa since. He is a member of the Scott Trust in London which owns *The Guardian* and *The Observer*; and is also on the international advisory board of *Independent Newspapers* in South Africa.

HIGHTECH communication on Mount Everest

EVEREST — “Hello, Mum!” came the breathless exclamation from Cathy O’Dowd, on the summit of Mount Everest on 26 May.

Cathy was talking to her mother, after being patched through the South African Everest Base Camp, via the Indian Ocean satellite and London to South Africa.

Her link across continents and altitudes symbolised the incredible modern communications capabilities used by the climbers.

Some of the world’s most advanced technology was used to transmit the Everest Expedition team’s thoughts and feelings from the Everest Base Camp via satellite to South Africa.

Cathy recalls her arrival on the summit and the phone being thrust into her hands. “Then I got to them, (Ian Woodall and Pemba Sherpa); four steps, rest; four steps, rest; slipped to my knees and hugged both of them. Then Ian gave me a phone and I spoke to South Africa and to Mum. After that, it’s a complete blur!”

Ian Woodall, the Everest expedition leader, also talked to his mother in Johannesburg from the top. “Suddenly my mother turned up on the radio — you can’t even get to 8848m without your mother chasing off behind you,” he jokes.

Communications between the climbers and Base Camp were implemented with VHF radios, and the climbers carried portable receivers with the base station located at Base Camp.

One of the most poignant moments for the climbers was the death of highly experienced mountaineer, Bruce Herrod, who, using a walkie-talkie earlier, had spoken to his partner, Sue Thompson, in London, after being patched through his Base Camp site and satellite link.

Similarly, famous mountaineer, Rob Hall, who used a walkie-talkie to talk to his wife in New Zealand, reported that he was severely frost-bitten, lacked the strength to make the descent, and died shortly afterwards.

But it wasn’t all fantastic high-tech technology on the trip or on the climb. On the long trek up to the Base Camp, the team, journalists and I had to resort to the ancient art of journalism via “cleft stick”. The high-end technology wasn’t connected until the team reached the Base Camp.

We had to resort to this technique to get copy and pictures off the mountain for the initial three weeks.

We knew civilisation had ended when we e-mailed our last pix out of Kathmandu from one of the many fax bureau which proliferate throughout this sprawling city of dust, temples and rickshaws.

The minute we hit the trekking trail, which stretches 170 kms north and UP,



Satellite dishes provide education and entertainment to the different generations at Jiri in Nepal. The older men in the shop gaze at an international soccer match, while the young teenagers steal a peek from outside. All pictures by Montgomery Cooper.

there was no electronic communication. We did try and e-mail via a phone line further up the mountain trail, but the connections proved too intermittent and we gave up.

So we resorted to runners making the four-day trip down to Namche Bazar, the main trading village, where the crumpled envelope was passed up onto a helicopter, flown out to Kathmandu and expressed back to South Africa. Even with this streamlined “cleft stick”, the news took nearly a week and a half to reach Johannesburg.

Once at Base Camp, the expedition technician, Phillip Woodall, coped with the logistical nightmare and manned the communications network at the Everest Base Camp. He used 800 hours of bought satellite time on the Inmarsat (Indian Ocean satellite) system to broadcast the progress of the expedition.

The Inmarsat ground station was at Base Camp, with a line of sight directional receiver at Kala Pattar, above the Base Camp.

Woodall’s powerbook computer was attached to a portable and collapsible satellite dish at the Base Camp and the messages beamed to the Internet Solution server in Johannesburg.

The satellite transmitter was a miracle of miniaturisation — 30kg of high-tech equipment packed in a suitcase. It is able to handle electronic mail, modem data and a fax machine — and transmit pix — all at the same time.

The Everest team was not able, as was planned, to respond to the hundreds of e-mail messages sent to them via the World Wide Web page manned initially by the *Sunday Times* group.

The reason wasn’t high-tech failure, but the fact that the team didn’t have enough power to transmit — they were using two car batteries eventually.

In addition, the team used up their 800 hours of satellite time and were relying on Radio 702 and me to transmit information a lot of the time.

The original World Wide Web site was manned by the newspaper group initially and later by the Internet Solution company. The URL for their pages is: <http://www.web.co.za/everest/>.

In the first few weeks of the site being opened and the climbers walking up the foothills, with me following, there were nearly 10 000 “hits” — people accessing the page and reading it, or downloading the information.

I have accessed the page many times, downloading the frequently scurrilous discussion groups about the teams and their personal clashes; the information from other sources on the climbing in general and finally, downloading the pictures — some of which are mine.

There is now also another Web site on the expedition, done by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies’ experts, Brett Lock and Vincent Maher. It is my own account (with audio as well as photos) of the Everest expedition, the

blizzards and the triumphs. The URL is <http://www.ru.ac.za/photojourn/everest/>.

Throughout the main climb over the Khumbu Ice-fall and onto Camp One through Camp Five, the team used Apple and Kodak digital DC40 and DC50 cameras, and the images downloaded regularly onto the Web site.

The climbers are believed to be amongst the first climbers to have carried digital cameras above the notorious Ice Fall.

A Kodak digital camera, the DC55, was used by the *Sunday Times* photographer, Richard Shorey and by expedition photographer, Herrod during the long walk-in and climb.

The camera has no film and the images are stored on a PCMCIA card. The card is then plugged into a laptop where the images are viewed and readied for transmission.

In our case, the images were transmitted from the Base Camp via satellite via London to South Africa.

A moving indication of the dedication of photojournalists is that Herrod is believed to have been slowed down considerably by working with the digital cameras. He “summitted” late and died on his way down.

The climbers also carried point-and-shoot cameras up the long and exhausting trek in and climb to the top. As Cathy says: “Ian took summit pictures — lots of them, both of me and Pemba Sherpa.”

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CATHY O'Dowd has recovered from the strain of climbing Mount Everest, but she's still sore about media coverage of the expedition. The 27-year-old has done reporting – and studied the subject at Masters level. Now she's "cheesed off with journalism".

This is what happened when she climbed Mount Everest. She discovered that her life had changed: from having covered the mountain and become the news. "It's a thoroughly educational experience I would recommend to any journalist," says O'Dowd. "It really makes you realise the absolute importance of accuracy and objective reporting."

In short, O'Dowd got a bad press from the print media during the Everest expedition. Her ensuing sense of grievance extends beyond the *Sunday Times*, the paper that shifted from sponsoring the climbers to shafting them. Several other publications that covered the story are equally culpable in her view.

Part of the problem in the press coverage was logistical: the mountaineers spent much of their time up a crevice without a media paddle, so to speak. Not contactable, they could not communicate their side of the story to a world getting another side.

Yet, says O'Dowd, their inaccessibility was far from absolute. The group was always contactable by phone while at base camp and at Katmandu. The problem, she says, is that scant few journalists made an effort to get hold of the climbers there.

That is sloppy, lazy journalism, she charges. It reflected a lack of interest in getting to the first-hand sources. "Newspapers were happy to publish allegations of misconduct, and to report what each other had said – and if the first report was inaccurate, the rest then repeated the mistake."

To compound things, she argues, many publications picked up negative reporting by the *Sunday Times*, without questioning that paper's own agenda. "The *Sunday Times* was a player, it was not simply reporting from the outside."

One magazine which "didn't bother" to speak to the sources, ended up with a one-sided version and factual inaccuracies, says O'Dowd angrily.

Isn't the one-sidedness also a result of her group deciding not to talk to the *Sunday Times* after the paper pulled out of the expedition?

"Once the *Sunday Times* withdrew its sponsorship, we had no reason to trust what they would say. In the short term we could not win with the paper out to get us. It would have been us slinging allegations in return, and the public then gets no reason to believe any of you."

O'Dowd denies that she is confusing the messenger with the message. According to her: "There is nothing wrong with being a messenger carrying negative messages, or even being critical yourself. But you need to be accurate."

The case of Ken Vernon, *Sunday Times* reporter, especially riles her. He wrote that she had banished him from the camp and even refused



him a cup of tea at a time when he had been lost and freezing on the mountain.

Simply not true, says O'Dowd.

In giving her account, O'Dowd says that it is hard to convey things through soundbites or 200 word articles without some distortion. "I guess that applies to all sorts of stories," she reflects. And, in this instance, she feels like a victim of an unfair selection of facts.

"First, Ken said that the incident was observed by Deyshun Deysel (her fellow climber), implying that there was a witness to the exchange. She wasn't there.

"Then, he never mentioned in his story that I did offer him shelter in the mess tent. We could not set up a new tent for him at that time of day, and without any notice that he was arriving.

"Some journalists wrote that the tent we offered him was not insulated – the point is that tents are not insulated: you have to carry an insulation mat.

"It was a heated exchange, the result of growing tensions and Ken's attacking me for sticking with (expedition leader) Ian Woodall. In the course of it, he asked: 'So don't I even get a cup of tea, then?'. I said: 'No!'. Then he went off and got one from the kitchen tent anyway."

What was thus published bore little resemblance to what actually happened, she insists. Certain facts were picked out, other facts were not mentioned. "It puts a spin on events that makes it sound terrible on my part. That is where you see the power of the media being abused."

O'Dowd says it does not take great specialisation to do mountaineering journalism. However, at least some research is needed, and where this was lacking, numerous inaccuracies resulted.

➤ continued on page 47

THE
HIGHER
YOU CLIMB
THE FURTHER YOU

fall

Everest doesn't
loom as large as
the mass media.
That's what
emerged when
GUY BERGER
interviewed the
first South African
woman to reach
the peak.

BY BRIAN POTTINGER




days, you may have noticed, are not what they used to be in the days of puritanical observance laws.

Then it was  church, the  braai, Sunday paper and  **bad tv.** These days it is

international  **sport** (live or on the box), all-day shopping at the malls ,

 **drinks** in the pub and an **explosion**  of out-door  activities encouraged by the more  **relaxed** political climate.

And in the  **evenings** there is, at least for some, the **Internet.**

Battling to get a  look-in on our profoundly changed Sabbaths, meanwhile, are the papers that publish on this day...

➤ *continued on page 9*

Sunday newspapers

“Many, even most, Sunday readers are in a relaxed mode by the time they read the paper. A surfeit of serious analysis can easily tire and indeed bore them. A Sunday newspaper has certainly to be informative and reliable. It must also have the capacity to surprise, intrigue and amaze.”

S

UNDAY PAPERS world-wide have taken a bit of a knock in recent years. Sales are down for most of the quality and tabloid weeklies across the US, UK and Europe. In some places publishers are reduced to producing an “executive summary” paper to spare their less committed readers from having to plough through kilograms of newsprint. The South African Sunday market, alas, has not been able to escape its share of the trauma.

There are two distinguishing features about Sunday newspapering in this country. Over the last 20 years the number of papers sold on Sunday has increased by only 100 000 which on present population growth means a diminishing readership in real terms. The last audited six-monthly figure now stands at a hardly impressive 1.2 million newspapers sold on a Sunday. Out of an estimated population of over 40 million, it is small beer.

The second feature has been the rigidity in the share of the market. Out of every ten papers sold on Sunday, four are copies of the *Sunday Times*, three *Rapport* and two *City Press*. The remaining copy is a *Sunday Tribune* and now there are a few competitors nudging in on the fringes of the market—the *Independent on Sunday* and the Sunday edition of *The Argus* in Cape Town which together control about five per cent of the market.

Sunday publishing has thus been constrained by a market that is declining in real terms and by market leaders who have not been able to improve their share.

I believe there are three issues which the Sunday newspapers have to confront head-on: the role of the Sundays in the broad sweep of other media, their format and content and their markets. All three are closely interwoven.

The Jeremiahs over print media have long since been dismissed. First it was television that would finish us off. Then the Internet. Now satellite television.

This has not happened and the printed word has kept its place in the educational and entertainment life of the nation. What has happened, instead, is a growing awareness of the complementary, rather than adversarial, nature of media.

If radio provides the quick audio hit on the story, television follows with the visual, the dailies with the written news, the Sundays the backgrounders and analysis, the magazines deep background and the Internet a vast and largely uncharted archival cavern. All exist on the continuum of media.

At the *Sunday Times* we recently pioneered an interesting exercise in the way media can complement each other through our ill-fated *Sunday Times* Everest Expedition. The expedition as we envisaged it fell apart because of an explosive and unpredictable cocktail of human emotions and frailties, but the media principles on which it was built are worth a thought.

It was our intention to make the bid to put the country's flag on top of the world a multi-

EACH SUNDAY PAPER FACES ITS OWN LIMITATIONS:

- **The very breadth of the *Sunday Times* readership is a challenge: how do you hold together a constituency that stretches from white farmers in the Limpopo Valley to black industrial workers in Langa — particularly in times of rapid political and social transformation?**
- ***Rapport* has benefited from coloured readers re-appropriating Afrikaans after the demise of apartheid, but its growth is limited by the number of people who speak the language.**
- ***City Press* has taken enormous strides in recent years — pushing its share from under six per cent to 19 per cent in less than seven years — but it still battles to provide a wide range of coverage for its increasingly far-flung readership.**
- **The coastal papers like *Sunday Tribune* and the *Weekend Argus* have loyal local readers but would have to look at massive investments in print capacity and staffing to become successful national papers.**

media event. As principal sponsor we would carry the print news and pictures from the expedition. Our own magazine and *Out There* magazine, a sister publication, would have the magazine rights. We agreed to *Radio 702* running a daily bulletin from the mountain and welcomed attempts by the expedition leader to draw in television to provide both news and documentary coverage.

Finally we helped set-up and maintain an Internet site where we downloaded copy and pictures. Because of some truly imaginative innovations provided by some sponsors, 360 degrees quicktime for example, the site became the most popular in South African history. It was intended to evolve into an on-line link with a site at the Everest base camp but this did not materialise because of disputes with the expedition leader.

As a pilot it was an interesting experiment in how various media can be drawn together to drive a central story.

Our initial impressions are that the complementary nature of the media coverage gave a greater impetus to reader interest in the *Sunday Times*—and that was even before the row between ourselves and the expedition leader propelled us into an unexpected and not wholly welcome type of public prominence.

I use the expedition merely as an example of the way a weekly paper can be networked into a range of other media in a mutually reinforcing way to drive interest in its contents and sharpen reader interest in the paper. It is these linkages that will have to be explored in the future.

What then should be the Sunday's role in this continuum of news?

I believe in a traditional role: break the big news exclusive, give context to the news of the week and entertain imaginatively. The key to the success of such a paper is the mix between information and entertainment. Many, even most, Sunday readers are in a relaxed mode by the time they read the paper. A surfeit of serious analysis can easily tire and indeed bore them. A Sunday newspaper has certainly to be informative and reliable. It must also have the capacity to surprise, intrigue and amaze.

This leads onto the question of format. If it is true that Sunday people have less time than ever to read newspapers, if it is true that we are now competing for people's time rather than simply their money, it raises a compelling question. What should newspapers do to present themselves more effectively? It all depends on your market.

The *Independent on Sunday* represents one side of the coin. It presents itself as an unashamedly up-market paper. It focuses more on features than news and it is nothing if not indulgent in its use of space. It has a range of foreign lifting rights and uses them expansively. This is a newspaper for the languid Sunday hours and as there are not many people with either that time or inclination it is likely to be limited to its existing platform of 30 000 to 40 000 readers. Nothing wrong with that, but its very format and content militates against its reaching a broader market.

City Press, the hugely successful black targeted paper, has a different hit. It presents hard news in a punchy and truncated form. ➤ *continued on next page*



“ Since the elections white readers have to a large extent lost interest in public policy issues and are now fiercely focused on life-style issues — particularly those relating to personal finance, education of their children, sport and holidaying. The obverse appears true of black South African readers. Here there is an intense interest in public policy...”

BRIAN POTTINGER

Its design is brash and it knows its readers want to get the news quickly and without complications.

I suspect that the future challenge for circulation Sunday newspapers will be to publish a range of editorial products, each one of which will have to value a niche reader and the sum of which will appeal to the more committed reader prepared to peruse all parts of the package. A newspaper like the *Sunday Times* with its stable of business, magazine and regional editions is well positioned to develop these niche markets within its broader constituency.

But that has implications for how one presents the paper. Increasingly, I believe, the papers will become segmented into closely cropped news sections and more expansive feature ones. The business sections will become more popular to attract pull-through readers and the magazines more life-style focused. There will have to be a carefully constructed dispersal of news and features throughout the component parts of the package. Design will have to follow these imperatives.

The third aspect to successful Sunday newspapering is of course markets. I detect an intriguing ground swell since the general elections. General interest English-language newspapers have by-and-large shown a decline in circulation. The more niched publications: financial, Afrikaans-language and black targeted have either grown or maintained their readership.

The reasons for this decline in readership are various but a central theme seems to be emerging.

Since the elections white readers have to a large extent lost interest in public policy issues and are now fiercely focused on life-style issues—particularly those relating to personal finance, education of their children, sport and holidaying. The obverse appears true of black South African readers. Here there is an intense interest in public policy as the enfranchised groups appropriate ownership of the country's domestic and foreign policies—the clearest indication of this was in the fierce debate waged over South Africa's policy towards Nigeria. There is another interesting strand to

this movement: as South Africans begin to become more comfortable in their multi-cultural democracy there is a move back towards cultural, religious, ethnic and language roots and this reflects in readership interests. The deadening hand of enforced segregation has lifted: deciding voluntarily to be different and diverse is now OK.

This is a sign of a maturing democracy but it does pose serious questions to general interest English-language papers which have traditionally straddled vast racial and class divides.

The answer to keeping a broad based readership is again going to have to be a greater diversity of supplementary publications under the aegis of a main title. To a considerable extent this has happened on the *Sunday Times* where the main body newspaper carries national news and specialist features and the five metropolitan papers—including the highly successful *City Metro* which circulates in the historically black residential area—report on local community news and features.

It is this link between local readers and their publications that is crucial to the survival of the broach churches represented by the English-language Sundays. In this regard the battles between the *Sunday Times* and coastal competitors like the *Sunday Tribune* and the Sunday edition of *The Argus* is fiercest.

The long-term future of Sunday newspapers is linked to a host of external factors—political, cultural and infrastructural. It is linked to the ability to build press capacity in this country and the ability to maintain the sophisticated support that is needed to run advanced fourth-wave technology and operate simultaneous printing operations at remote sites.

Ultimately, of course, it depends on how successfully Sunday journalists can persuade a very active public to invest precious time in a newspaper of which they might only read part—and then probably between watching a soccer international and going to the shopping mall. It demands new creativity, new ways of engaging readers.

At the time of writing Brian Pottinger was editor-designate of the Sunday Times and has since assumed full editorship.

Your global guide to reporting **porn** and the **Internet**

BY W.W. WEB

ALL SUCCESSFUL STORIES on the Internet are based on the following fact: The Internet is a piece of high-technology whose single goal is to get porn and bomb recipes into the hands of children.

Ignore the fact that there are over 11,000 other interest areas available on the Usenet. All people ever talk about there is books, films, art, hobbies, cars, health, politics, financial issues, current events, religion, literature, and so on. Who on earth would read a story about that?

Give your Internet report a special polish by specifically targeting a particular group. For example:

If you're writing for a right-wing audience:

Tell them about the horrible perversions they can run into on the Net. There are actually areas of the Net where gay people can meet, and talk. Your message is therefore: The Internet is a piece of high-technology whose single goal is to allow perverted gays and lesbians to get to your children.

If you're writing for a left-wing audience:

Your left-wing readers/viewers will be suspicious of the Net because the government is involved with it.

The Internet is simply a bridgehead for a nationwide police database, identity cards, and the spectre of Big Brother. Your general message is therefore: The Internet is a piece of high-technology whose single goal is to allow the government to set up a Big Brother-like nationwide computerised monitoring system

If you're writing for the "moral majority":

Tell them anything. If a 15-year-old runs away from home, they've been kidnapped by an Internet paedophile ring. There are more paedophiles on the Net in the US than the population of some countries. The Middle East has an appalling paedophiles-on-the-Net problem, even though there is no Internet in the Middle East.

You get the best results if you make your message more or less:

The Internet is a piece of high-technology whose single goal is to allow every imaginable form of depravity and filth into every home in the country.

Horror stories about the Internet have already helped hundreds of your colleagues through dry spells in the flow of news. Preserve this valuable resource for future generations of journalists.

You can report virtually anything without needing to do any research or acquire any background information. Therefore the real purpose of the Internet can finally be revealed:

The Internet is a piece of high-technology whose single goal is to allow reporters to grab the headlines for a day or two with an absolutely minimal investment in time and effort.

Many models of community radio

BY BILL SIEMERING

WHILE community radio has been on-air in South Africa less than a year, it is part of a larger global movement that goes back to the late 1940's. For-profit stations may often serve community service, but their purpose is to make money. In its broadest role, community radio provides a service that is not commercially viable, meeting needs most commercial broadcasters ignore.

Community radio is a patchwork of different goals. It may:

- affirm a language / cultural or ethnic group
- give voice to people not heard on mainstream media
- present a political point of view
- respond to specific local needs
- provide a mix of local and national programming where there is no other media
- provide educational/ development needs.

While the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) issued 79 licences last year to community stations that include Fine Music Radio in Cape Town and Muslim and Christian stations, I'm referring to stations that are serving disadvantaged geographic communities.

Since by definition a station should reflect its locale and circumstance, there are many community radio species. In South Africa, community radio began with the primary intention of providing access, giving a voice to the voiceless. The Jubaleni-Freedom of the air-waves conference in the Netherlands in August 1991 sparked interest in community radio for many South Africans and the enthusiasm was carried over into a series of conferences with democratic NGO's. The Cassette Education Trust which merged into *Bush Radio* became the locus for the movement and training centre.

The emphasis was upon empowerment of the people and free speech, based upon the assumption that everyone had the right to be on the radio. A man observed at a meeting north of Durban: "With community radio, even a stutterer can be on the air." They taught volunteers how to use a boom box to produce programmes.

I've argued that expecting people to strain

At one community radio station a woman called the station to say she was abused and gave the name of the man who did it; co-workers in a factory heard it and had him arrested. A support group helps another with child and domestic abuse. A call to the station about a murder resulted in an arrest. The station helped avert violence between two rival taxi associations by getting them to discuss their differences on air.

Over 14 000 kilometres away, two murders motivated a community station to bring together police, spiritual leaders, a psychologist, the parents of the victims and perpetrators to help heal the community.

While their goals are similar—both use radio to build their communities—they are on separate continents. The first is *Radio Atlantis* serving the industrial town of Atlantis, 45 minutes north of Cape Town. The second is *WOJB*, located on a reservation in northern Wisconsin in the U.S. mid-west.

Both meet the definition of community radio: community representation in decision making and commitment to meeting local needs. They believe radio must act as a catalyst to improve the community, not simply a passive transmitter to sell advertising.

Each station should sound quite different, reflecting the uniqueness of the people and place it serves.

to hear a programme full of clicks, hum and buzz is a disservice; that listeners have a right to hear programming that is worth their time; programming should be accessible as well as provide access. Programming should reflect the same care and attention to quality that goes into creating the baskets, pottery and music that comes from the community, not sound makeshift. Shabby air sound can keep community radio marginalised in the competitive radio market place. Too narrowly focused special interest programming can sound like a club meeting with more people in the studio than in the audience.

I believe the movement has been hampered by over-emphasis upon this one aspect of access. You have authentic voices and engaging programming. Most of the stations I know in South Africa have quickly developed into vibrant stations with varied programmes providing a genuine community service. They have clear, well-defined missions that recognise

to serve the community, they must reach the community. They are both mission and listener driven. Boom boxes are out; they are now requesting second digital production studios. (Many say that digital produces the best sound and is easiest to operate.) While some believe adverts, if any, should be limited to staple items like mielie-meal, others sell advertising that helps local economic development and keeps them on the air.

Soweto Community Radio, for example, has many ways of keeping in touch with the community: a board of directors meets weekly to evaluate the programming; a management committee meets daily; the staff go to high schools and shopping centres weekly to get feedback on programming; listeners are invited six times a day on-air to comment and periodic call-in programmes continue the dialogue with the listeners. The station is actively engaged in building a bridge between the police and the people and in making Soweto a

better community. The station sponsored a Charity Begins at Home concert with local performers donating their services; admission was food and clothing to be given to a home for the elderly and children with AIDS. They brought in candidates for local elections and talk about tough issues like child abandonment. They record many local musicians and 60% of the music played is African. Advertising has proven effective: a pizza parlour reported a three-fold increase in business after running spots on the station. And after only a couple of months on air, they had an estimated audience of 71 000.

The concern about becoming too commercial-like is real and some community stations are charged with being commercial ones in disguise. Presenters may look to *Metro Radio* for role models rather than developing their own voice. Often with an absence of outside or government support, and with a mission to serve the disadvantaged, it is tempting just to play the most popular music to reach the largest possible audience to get advertising.

In the United States we found success by distinguishing ourselves from commercial media. May 1996 marked the 25th anniversary of the first programming on National Public Radio, the local station controlled national production organisation. As NPR's first programme director, my colleagues and I wanted the voices to reflect the pluralism of America rather than the single white male voice of authority from New York. We wanted the local stations to be the source of programme material, not just passive transmitters. We wanted to capitalise on the imaginative quality of radio, get out of the studio, hear many dialects and accents from people where they live and work and play. In other words, we wanted to give listeners a sense of authenticity, to reflect their lives and give equal weight to artists and writers as to government officials.

I faced an anxious, sceptical and sometimes angry group of managers two weeks after we started to get their feedback. They were uncomfortable because we didn't sound like CBS or NBC, the main commercial networks. They thought women's voices did not transmit well and lacked authority, and we shouldn't use music on an information programme. We believed in the conversational style and while we improved the presentation, we stayed with our vision. Now NPR news is widely regarded as the best on radio and is used by eight out of 10 newspaper editors as an important source; it has replaced CBS and NBC radio in news and information programming.

However, NPR itself has changed. There are fewer sound documentaries, fewer pieces from stations and fewer accents. Some local public stations rely too much on focus groups and eliminate too many records from their playlists resulting in few surprises and a blandness. On these stations, each quarter hour marches by in the same polyester uniform. This is a cautionary tale.

At the same time, some of the most innovative national programmes in the U.S. originate at local stations. The stations closest to their communities still have the most vitality. Here are a few snapshots of stations outside of South Africa:

● **There is a Native American station owned by the Ojibwa tribe to deal with significant issues, affirm the culture and serve as a**

bridge between the Indian and white communities. They broadcast Indian pow wows, involve the community in a dialogue to seek solutions to problems. Music is eclectic: country, rock and roll, world, folk, blues. Since they are in a rural area, the news and information programming from NPR fills a third of their schedule. From a weekly listenership of 10 000, they raise R360 000 for a cash budget of R1 188 000; they have a staff of eight paid employees.

● **The mission of another station far south is to celebrate the cultural heritage of New Orleans with music and information. The station is home to many local musicians who drop by regularly and have benefited from the exposure; an Italian promoter heard one and booked him on a tour of Italy. The station has produced jazz festival items and distributed them to over 100 other stations. All the music—jazz, blues, African, Cajun, swing, gospel—is related to groups within the community. The full time staff of four is supported by 235 volunteers; 98% of the presenters are volunteers. One third of the R1 440 000 annual budget is from listeners; the Jazz and Heritage Foundation is the licensee. The 50 000 weekly listeners are evenly divided between black and white.**

● **Latin America has the largest number of community radio stations—estimated at over 40 000. Some are operated by unions, churches; other production groups buy time on neighbourhood stations. Many present educational content in an appealing Radio Novela format, radio dramas, free from a didactic narrator. There are rebel stations in El Salvador and in some other countries the state provides some support. A women's network is growing strong as gender becomes a more important social issue.**

Community radio as we've been discussing it is unknown in new democracies of the former Communist bloc. There is no culture of it for the most part and broadcasters are more attracted to capitalism than service. Some sound like American rock stations, even using playlists developed in Paris. There are exceptional stations that reflect the daily life and concerns of the community, but they are relatively few. Radio stations are dependent upon the government for their licence and many leaders still can show displeasure at even balanced reporting.

Back in South Africa, the community radio workers are creating radio unique to their communities and country. Language is in the vernacular, and more fluid, than ever heard on SABC. The style is informal and at the same time done with a professional attentiveness; smooth but not commercially slick and hyped. They speak with authority about the community as no one else can. They are trustworthy centres where people call to tell of abused children or tips on finding murderers. They have quickly become places where people turn for solutions, for making better neighbourhoods.

Looking ahead, this bold beginning will be difficult to maintain. The full potential of both service and creativity is still in the future.

Outside funding may be essential, particularly in rural areas with vast poverty. The Danes have committed R3 million for two years to establish a fund to provide support for equipment, training, operations, programme production and audience surveys which will be administered by the Independent Media Diversity Trust. Matching funds may be provided by the government. Public broadcasting in the relatively affluent U.S. would not have been possible without some federal support, which is 16% for the average station, much higher for community stations serving rural and ethnic minorities. The key is building in safeguards from government interference and a fair and equitable way to distribute the support.

The Open Society Foundation for South Africa, with whom I've worked as a consultant, has provided the largest and most comprehensive support of community radio to date for planning, development, training, equipment and programme production.

A national community radio network would give more visibility to community radio, provide stations with high quality material to extend their broadcast hours, help establish a unique, recognisable community radio style, give outstanding local talent a national audience. Live interconnection will capitalise upon the immediacy of radio and make possible news / information programmes and live event concert broadcasts. This raises the question of whether a community network would compete or complement the evolving public service programming on SABC.

Given the Independent Broadcasting Authority's (IBA) requirement for local content and shortage of material, community stations can play a key role in identifying, recording and distributing South African music.

Tony O'Reilly, owner of Independent Newspapers and Chair of H.J. Heinz, has said that this century was dominated by ideological competition and that the 21st will belong to commercial competition with global marketing to the global consumer.

He said: "Television will further homogenise the cultures of the developed world. It will in turn generate the cosmopolitan aspiration best satisfied by global brands....The final step in the process will be mass communication. And the technology of satellite and cable television will make that possible."

Amidst this global homogenisation, community radio can stand for the strong, rich diversity of life and celebrate the importance of place and the individual voice. A woman who told of being forcibly removed from District Six in Cape Town in an oral history programme summed it up well when she said: "We have a voice and we want to be heard. We don't want to do anything violent. We just want someone to listen to us and to make up for the injustices."

Radio is the most democratic, pervasive and imaginative of media. In a short time community radio in South Africa has demonstrated how much can be done with few resources when backed by dedicated volunteers and a commitment to make a long held vision a reality.

Bill Siemering has been a consultant for the Open Society Foundation for South Africa and is now president of the International Center for Journalists in Washington, D.C.

PEN SKETCHES

P

eter Mascher grew up



between donkeys and cows and dirt roads and thorns, north of Johannesburg in the Rustenburg area.



One of four sons, he would line up his brothers to draw their portraits.



He hated school. "I drew the teachers... maybe that's where it all started!"



BY KIM GURNEY & JOANNE LILLIE

Mascher's Mirror

PEN SKETCHES



This is one of Peter's favourites. "The people love Madiba muti: if he's there, they win."



Peter Mascher's magic mirror



AS the son of Lutheran missionaries, Peter Mascher spent a significant amount of time in church and it wasn't long before the elders too became the subject of his sketches.

After school Peter studied Fine Art at Wits Technikon. For three years he didn't have anything to do with cartoons. The first thing he bought to put up in his residence room was an A1-sized red tin board with two cartoons by Derek Bauer: "That was the first thing I stuck up and that was where I ended up". Along with Ralph Steadman, Derek Bauer has remained an influence on his work.

In his second or third year, he bought a tandem and together with his girlfriend, Lucy, cycled from Johannesburg to Cape Town. "What we enjoyed mostly was the concept: to have no car with luggage, but to have everything on

the bicycle from the food to the tent". The trip took five weeks.

A year or two after the tandem tour, they built a busking contraption in a metre long box. A coin is picked up by a hand on the one side, and moves along the conveyor belt where it falls into a hat. The belt moves the wheels of a tandem, which in turn moves the legs of the cyclists. Music plays and signs with information about the two are displayed. The lid of the box is a moving landscape. Pressure on a pump emits bubbles from underneath.

This box became their life-line when they busked the streets of Germany, Amsterdam and London for six months. "It's a nice concept. We couldn't sing or play instruments well enough. But we could live off our takings for one hour a day of operating it. It was more economical to do three hours of entertainment for three

"I like simplicity... when someone glances at the picture, they've got to get the point immediately."





days and then take a break. We made that tandem because it was something we had experienced. We had lived on that bicycle."

He travelled for two years, accumulating artistic experience. On a kibbutz in Israel, he ended up drawing cartoon birthday cards. Waiting for a train in Germany, caricatured postcards of politicians caught his eye. "They really impressed me and I bought them immediately."

He never completed his year at AAA studying graphic art. An accident on his motorbike landed him unconscious in hospital for a week. "I smashed up my leg and with a lung embolism was given a 40 percent chance of survival". He hasn't ridden a bike since.

During this crucial week of unconsciousness, *Die Beeld* was looking for a cartoonist. Lucy put together a portfolio of his work and approached the paper on his

behalf. Mynderd Vosloo, already published, was given the job but he left after six months. After the elections Peter received a phone call out of the blue. He gave up his course in Industrial Design and snapped up the job offer. He has been with *Die Beeld* for the last two years.

Living from his talents, Peter Mascher is a modest artist, just following a passion: "I love to draw. I've always been creative, making things, drawing. Basically I enjoy design above everything, whether it's 2-or 3-D, but with cartooning there is a humour aspect that comes into it."

And any responses to his work? "I haven't had a politician phone me up yet!"

Kim Gurney and Joanne Lillie are postgraduate students in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University.

"I look for characteristic facial features and play on that, either by enlarging or reducing them".



Peter Mascher's waggie mirror

PEN SKETCHES



Mascher's diversity lies in his ability to poke fun in every direction, without prejudice.



Political cynicism,

Wither the

Returning to the UK,

the usual questions about how it is going in South Africa. I reflect that a major plus for me in South Africa is the relative absence of cynicism compared with England. South Africans argue, disagree, struggle: they face hard issues and go for conflict resolution and act as though they believed their opponents are human beings with a viewpoint and a soul. Even when talk collapses and people fight, there is a genuine passion for some sort of justice, rather than the coldness, the easy brutality of cynicism. Romantic view maybe; bear with it anyway for the moment.

Sadly, the exception to that (romantic) notion seems to be found within the English-language press. Lest I am misunderstood: that is a conscious generalisation to which I know there are many exceptions; it is not a stereotype, which is a product of assumptions, not thought. The English-language press is often brave and original, creative, passionate and non-pretentious. Those qualities are the opposite of cynical.

The cynicism is symbolised by random over-use of the term PC (political correctness) as an insult. It means we worldly, successful people are tough enough not to care whether our words or action hurt vulnerable people—in fact we like to amuse each other by sneering at those who do care. It includes an “as we all know” quality, which suggests there is no more to be said once the PC label has been applied: its object has no option but to apologise for a breach at the very least if good humour and/or good taste.

The term PC was first coined, apparently, in the United States where small groups of equality zealots, semi-Marxists, applied the phrase to the unreconstructed old order who refused to adapt to new ideas about equality of esteem. “Correct” is of course a horrible authoritarian concept when applied to ideas; so the phrase was a gift to reaction—the perfect weapon for the backlash against the trend towards egalitarianism.

Of course, doing or saying anything for the sake of image or effect is hypocritical. Making changes because they would please the big battalions of the left or the right is unattractive and untrustworthy, and may be said to be inspired by political correctness in the real sense. But not all changes in outlook, not all widening of perspective, is about currying favour. In fact, the righteous indignation over PC is very often itself hypocritical because it is a cover for the wish to preserve the status quo and existing privilege.

logic, anger...



English-language press

Cynicism is about the assumption that all criticism of privilege—on account of whiteness or maleness or class or any other—is motivated by sycophancy if it comes from a privileged person. It is not about justice or personal values; it is about sucking up to the avenging hordes or previously excluded people lining up to claim their just desserts. Cynicism implies that no one who has privilege can possibly see any personal advantage to giving it up in favour of an egalitarian order, presumably because the cynic cannot imagine so doing.

But I think there is more to it than that. There are plenty of people who participated “selflessly” in the struggle—in the sense that they put themselves at risk in many ways—and who are now adopting a cynical posture via the English-language press which is not congruent with the values they demonstrated before the battle for political democracy was won. I think the cynicism, which assumes the proportions of a new form of political correctness, covers hurt or fear, and therefore anger.

In my work I travel widely, to many different kinds of society. From the sweet clean suburbs of Sweden to the desperate masses of Bangladesh, from the scrawny poverty of the high Himalayas to the roaring obese sophistication of New York City. In all of these places I am welcomed as a representative of a superior breed, bringing the beauty of my language, spoken “properly”, my classy ancient cultural roots, my amusing sophistication, my unpretentious dress, my effortless worldly wisdom, my low-key Protestant Christianity—above all my internationalism, my liberal open-mindedness, my democratic kindness, my magnanimity.

Of course, I and many of my colleagues in those societies know that is all utter tripe. But it is there. It exists. And whatever our conscious minds think about it, we are aware that unlike lesser mortals, I am not required to speak the language of my hosts; on the contrary, they

apologise for not speaking mine well. The assumption of superiority on the part of we international English liberal/progressive development-minded people is accepted at a deep level all over the world. We belong to the world. We are at home everywhere. Though we are also much resented for all that, we can fall back on a smug sense that basically they are all just jealous.

These days, however, that sense is beginning to fail. Britain and especially England, is on the skids, her culture needing a lot of cheap scent to cover the sad decline. Down the ladder of comparative achievement and health she slides year by year. Other, formerly despised, nations overtake England; and our shops are forced to put up signs in Arabic, Japanese, German and Portuguese. What will be next. Thai? Swahili? This perceived decline affects the morale of all of us—even those who have lived for generations in South Africa, Australia, Zimbabwe and the rest.

Particularly if we live in South Africa, and have played an honourable part in the process of giving up white political privilege, we may feel threatened. Unlike Australians we are surrounded by people who have suffered extremely at the hands of people who look like us; unlike Zimbabweans,

our Black competitors have a strong worldly sense of their own capability, culture, place in the world and general strength and importance. We feel for the first time perhaps, genuinely in a minority, with perhaps some advantages which may not last.

So we are inclined to pull rank. We feel hurt about the lack of whole-hearted acknowledgment of our role in the struggle and hence enthusiastic use of our talents in the present. We are afraid of what will happen when the lustre of our culture fades altogether and we are left competing like everyone else on the basis of our simple humanity alone. This fear is unfamiliar. And fear creates anger. We become angrily defensive whenever we are criticised. We see ourselves as having a special role; if others do not, we see the avenging hordes and become emotional. But since this is not part of our self-image, we convert it to cynicism.

There is being created a new form of political correctness, taking the

cynical line that no one is to be trusted, that all action to correct the

past is a cover for self-interest, and “hate speech” is what Black people

use in disagreeing with White people, not the other way round. This new

form of PC is, as much as the old, a substitute for thinking.

► continued on page 18

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The clue is in the uncharacteristic lack of logical argument; and instead the substitution of amusing insult or mockery and a world-weary tone. A brilliant and surprising example is an article by, of all people, Van Zyl Slabbert, hardly a cynic by record, nor English by heritage, in the *Mail & Guardian* of April 4–11. The important issue of “liberal” racism is headlined “There’s Much Ado About Nonsense”. The “light-hearted” tone barely conceals fury—which is picked up by the cartoonist who has him throwing rotten tomatoes. Those he disagrees with are “boring”, “unoriginal”, speak “nonsense” and treat us to “farce”. These judgements are not backed up, only stated and followed by (English) schoolmasterly commentaries along the lines of “Oh dear, Oh dear”.

Thus an opinion which has cost time and energy and maybe painful personal experience is airily dismissed as, for instance, “nursing grievance, hate or guilt”. Nuf said. You must try harder next time not to feel a sense of grievance, hate or guilt; and if you do, please deny these feelings!

In this way Slabbert sets himself above those he disagrees with. There is no respect in it, only a jaunty, barbed wrist-slapping which is clearly insulting. Here are some of the proposi-

tions which he implied are so obvious that he needn’t bother to argue them.

- The idea that a university can and should reflect the “essence” of the situation where it is located is an “intellectual disease”, “nonsense”, “old hat” and to be equated with the establishment of the apartheid-created Bush colleges.

- The accusation that a person has cooked his CV and/or acted unethically is so unimportant that it merely demonstrates how little there is at stake at universities. A person to whom it has happened is entitled to be “pissed off” but not to have his/her name cleared by an independent board of inquiry.

- The suggestion that white liberals can be racists is so ludicrous that it’s OK to dismiss it as “Barney’s thing” as “the sport of generic racial labelling” and as equivalent to the apartheid labelling of all opposition as communist. (Why? Aren’t white liberals human?)

- The discussion about Africanists’ views of white liberals’ current contribution is not only an intellectual farce but a threat to “democracy, reconciliation, human rights, tolerance and so on”.

- In case the rest of us didn’t know, there are many examples in history of universities prohibiting, banning, expelling and threatening people they didn’t agree with. This is

demonstrated by a lofty dip into European history between the fourteenth and the seventeenth centuries. It follows that these unpleasant activities will be applied within South African universities should they try to become more congruent with their place and time.

- Propagating the idea that Black people discovered maths or the wheel is so absurd that it can be described as “rewriting history”, “kinky” behaviour, “dressing up funny”, and in some ways akin to Mad Cow disease (Someone who needs to bone up on his history, it seems).

- white people who argue the case that white liberals—as well as other people—can demonstrate racist thought and behaviour are “palefaced ululators, prostrated with self-flagellating confessions of primordial guilt”; that being so, their arguments can be ignored.

The lack of logical argument contained in all this is even more vivid in the writings of Ken Owen. For example, under the title *Wits and the Challenge of Excellence* (editorial *Sunday Times*, 17 March) Owen describes Charles van Onselen’s new book in utterly glowing terms, which is all fine, if slightly sycophantic; but then suggests that Van Onselen should therefore be exempt from criticism. In particular he should be immune from “shabby

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imputations of racism” because no one who wrote that book could be racist. Moreover, the “environment of excellence and intellectual honesty which allowed Van Onselen to flourish” is dependent on “white academics and administrators” to “enforce the stern disciplines that made Wits a great institution” and as the survival of Professor Makgoba makes clear this is now under threat. I take it that Van Onselen would distance himself from such overt racism. What is clear is that rage has unhinged Owen’s powers of logic.

As for Makgoba himself, Owen has not apparently read his books so has no opinion about what kind of intellectual climate might be conducive to the excellence for which Makgoba might be responsible. What is clear to Owen is that Makgoba was “economical with the truth” in suggesting his CV was “open to misunderstanding”. How does Owen know that? If he is so clear why not tell the rest of us. I have never understood why the *Sunday Times*—or indeed any other newspaper—did not get a copy of that CV and send an investigative team to establish the extent of its accuracy: perhaps its Editor realised that innuendo is a more powerful weapon than the truth?

Intellectual muddle leading to double standards is common, though less blimpish, in the more liberal of the English language press. The *Mail & Guardian* (March 22–28) editorialises that Dennis Davis’ attack on the Human Rights Commission (claiming that the members had been chosen as a reward for political services) was “strikingly mild”; while Chairman Barney Pitso’s response (that Davis’ critique had racist overtones) was “really vicious”; it’s a moot point which of these insults most of us would rather avoid.

However, two things are taken for granted in that editorial which help to explain both the irritation of Africanist critics and the pain of the white liberal intellectual. One is that the political left has a special prerogative to “probe, criticise, argue and debate”. The other is that racism is to be recognised by the intended effects of the individual.

The first of these contains an assumption of superiority which irritates. Certainly the activities of probing, criticising, arguing and debating are valuable activities; but why are they assumed to exist in only that slice of the body politic? Is there an implication that debate and criticism cease when a person joins a governing party or decides to cooperate with one? Do we become sycophants when we use our judgement to decide when to support and when to criticise. Moreover, does arguing, probing etc. not count when it comes from positions other than the left-leaning intellectual?

Finally, does that activity exempt us from criticism? If we of the left criticise a government activity, why should they not defend themselves by criticising our viewpoint? Disagreeing with a view expressed by a newspaper is too often represented as an attempt to silence the press. Why? Perhaps it comes down to cynicism again.

The second assumption in the *M&G* editorial illustrated by the statement that although there may be racism in some criticism of government activity, “in Davis’ case it is patently not so”. No reasons given, no argument, just a statement of the obvious. Why? I suggest it is because the issue of racism is not being understood.

Racism is not only about the personal intentions of the perpetrator. Racism is a cultural mind-set, centred in the idea of white superiority which becomes embedded in the psyche of all of us. It is the result of centuries during which we have all been conditioned to norms of behaviour, thought patterns, assumptions, values, images, language issues and relationships which have dug themselves in way below where we have immediate conscious access to them. They show themselves in thoughts and activities that are a million miles from an individual’s intention to hurt.

For example, it turns out that in criticising the HRC, Davis meant only the right-wing white people appointed to it. He did not say so; and this is supposed to make it OK. The rest of us were supposed to know what he meant. He was engaged in a coded set of messages that would be clear to the in-people. In his mind that may have nothing to do with race. But it is a vivid reminder of how sophisticated racism (like sexism and classism) can operate; it often excludes simply by obfuscating. Intended or not, it is infuriating, because it confuses and humiliates. Its victims feel foolish. Nor is it any answer to suggest it is a class rather than a race issue: the point is that it excludes, and a defensive intellectual reaction solves nothing.

Another example of the chirpy semi-humorous unintended racism which so irritates some of us comes from the pen of Brian Kantor, UCT’s professor of economics, writing in the *Financial Mail* of March 22. Announcing his intellectual credentials right away by mentioning the “athletically challenged”, Kantor suggests that much as golfers level the playing field, so to speak, by the handicap system, all Black participants in the economy might be given a points system to compensate for their various degrees of past disadvantage. Kantor thinks this would be a fair and logical approach to affirmative action, but—here comes the cynicism—he thinks it wouldn’t work because in fact affirmative action is not about compensating for unequal access in the past, but “a case of special interest politics”.

Affirmative action, he claims “is to serve the interests of Blacks with professional skills, educational attainments and often also wealth”. Affirming them—here comes the racism—will disadvantage the poorer Black people because employing them will raise prices, create inefficiency and thus represent a tax on the poor. But just a sec. I thought these people had professional skills, educational attainments, etc. So what is it precisely that they lack which will create an inefficient market? Skin colour, maybe? Does Kantor claim there is no such thing as race prejudice or discrimination in South Africa? Or does he think that bringing black people into organisations at all levels adds nothing that would not have been there without them? That is surely not what he meant, but it is the effect of what he wrote.

There is being created a new form of political correctness, taking the cynical line that no one is to be trusted, that all action to correct the past is a cover for self-interest, and “hate speech” is what black people use in disagreeing with white people, not the other way round. This new form of PC is, as much as the old, a substitute for thinking. It creates knee-jerk reactions. Unlike the old form, it is cynical and in that it assumes self-serving motivation is universal.

It is noticeable indeed that this genre of writing actually avoids reasoned argument. It relies on the PC gibe itself, with tired jockey references to “physically different” (disabled) outsiders who are thus mocked once again. It invents and gives credence to silly excesses like objections to “manholes”, “black coffee” and “nippy” weather. It pretends to fear “threats to the English language”. Thus: “why have homosexuals taken over a perfectly good English word, gay, and made it into something different and nasty?” Ignoring the perversion by homophobics of perfectly good English words like pansy and queer. Language changes and develops. Thank God.

And thank God that in South Africa we rejoice in the kind of political and intellectual atmosphere in which I can write all this and get it printed and have arguments about it and suffer little more than ruffled feathers and the odd cold shoulder. The fact that this is true is due to the courage and intelligence and imagination of the English-language press in South Africa. So here’s to them.

Margaret Legum is a consultant on race and gender issues.

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conscious access to them.

Freedom of the press and access to information are no longer subsumed under freedom of speech. There is indeed a recognition that this aspect of human rights should enjoy autonomous status. Yet the governments' approaches have not changed.

press

freedom

in southern Africa by Bojosi Otlhogile

IN 1634 an English writer named William Prynne made the unfortunate mistake of writing a pamphlet that criticised the King and Queen. Brought before the Privy Council of the Star Chamber, Prynne was found guilty of libel and ordered to spend the rest of his life in prison. As an added punishment, he had his ears lopped off and was branded on the cheeks with the letters SL (Seditious Libeller). Had Prynne been living in the present day southern Africa, would he have fared any better?

His case would have depended on one thing: in which country in the sub-continent he lived. What is clear though, is that at least he was pilloried after standing trial. It is very unlikely that there would have been such a nicety in southern Africa on the eve of the 21st century. The scenario in Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, Malawi and Botswana is like this:

Had Prynne lived in Zambia's second republic, he undoubtedly would have been sentenced to prison for an indeterminate period by the Speaker of the National Assembly without any trial. In Zimbabwe apart from a rap on the knuckles, the writer's sexual orientation would be important for the authorities' next step. South Africa would blow hot and cold. While the ANC-led government would have made repeated protestations of its support for freedom of expression and access to information, many MPs would oppose Prynne's freedom to express himself.

Namibia's president would certainly have scurried to the state media to fire the first salvo, not of gunshot, but by both banning and burning the pamphlet. In Malawi, perhaps, he would have fared better: either Prynne would end up in the Sanjika Palace or have been pressed to disclose his source of information. Botswana, one of the older liberal democracies, has perfected the art of dealing with such persons. As an Englishman, Prynne would certainly have earned himself the wrath of the government and a sure one-way ticket back to England. He, in short, would have been declared a *persona non-grata*. Were he a citizen, the

Minister of Presidential Affairs would either have transferred him to some obscure post or taken over and re-edited the pamphlet!

This in itself shows how our journalists are treated by the authorities in the region. The bottom line is that our leaders are very uncomfortable with the concept of press freedom. Relations between the government and media remain strained. This is surprising, more so now that southern Africa has gone through a democratic sea change and the majority of state constitutions in the region contain express provisions on freedom of the press. Freedom of the press and access to information are no longer subsumed under freedom of speech. There is indeed a recognition that this aspect of human rights should enjoy autonomous status. Yet the governments' approaches have not changed.

In short there is a crisis of confidence. The problem is that all parties to the crisis cannot trust one another. The governments view the press as a menace bent on distracting them from the business of governing. The press believes it has a democratic right and duty to inform the public. It is the watchdog of the new and emergent democracy.

All parties to the dispute are partly right and there is nothing contradictory about these claims. The problem needs to be placed in context. With a few exceptions, for a long time Southern Africa choked under repressive governments of one form or another. Those countries which came to independence in the 1960s saw universal suffrage replaced by the one-party state. Even the benevolent liberal democracy governments like Botswana were no better. They became strictly *de facto* one-party systems. The opposition parties were weak if not non-existent. The other countries were chaffing under unrepresentative minority governments.

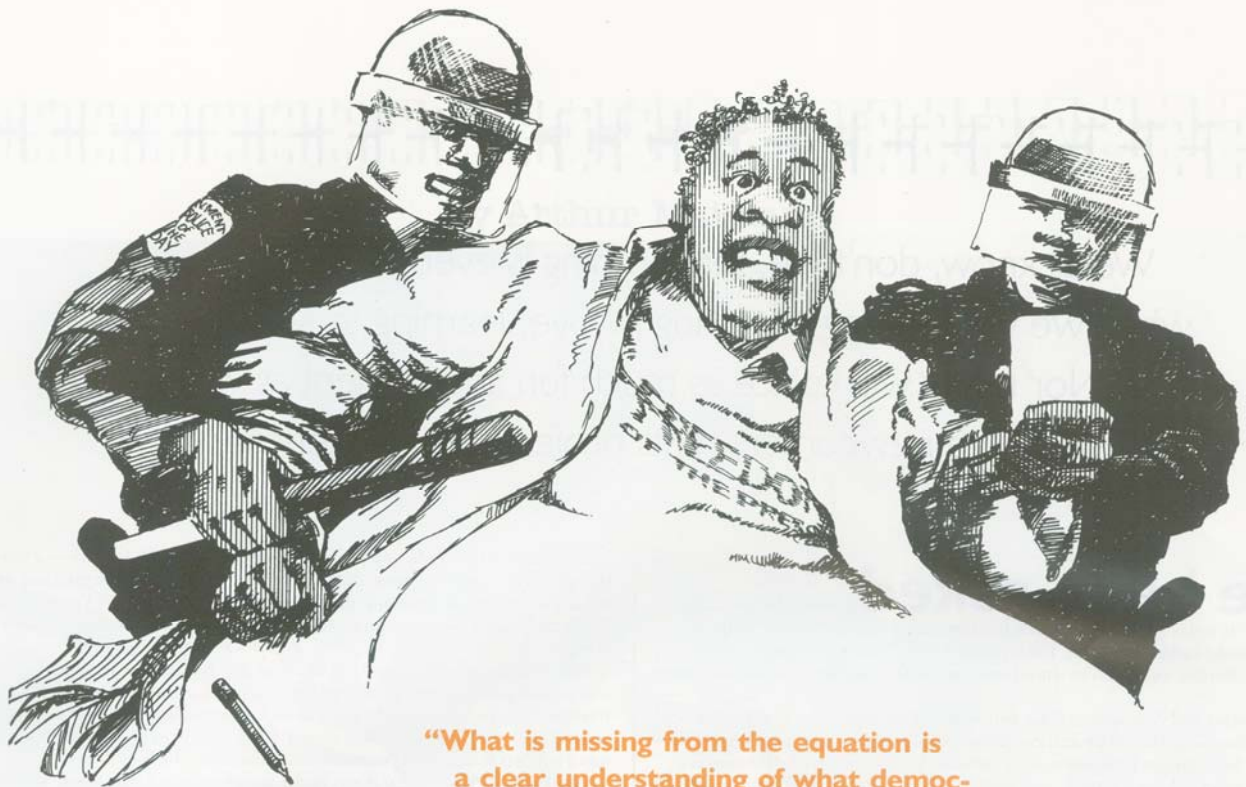
In the absence of organised and effective opposition parties the media effectively became the only voice of organised resistance. Those in power saw the media as a threat. The opposition entered into a marriage of convenience with the media. The media strenuously campaigned against the authorities. By the time the old

regimes collapsed and the new leaders ascended to power there had developed this false assumption that the media were allies who would not challenge them in the same way they did with previous regimes. When the media maintained their strict adherence to independent and fearless reporting, that effectively signalled the end of the cohabitation between the two parties.

The second point is that most governments inherited many forms of legislation enacted by the previous governments and their colonial predecessors and continued to use them to stifle freedom of expression. This was done in spite of express provisions in the new constitutions guaranteeing press freedom.

One country which has disappointed most of us is Namibia. The Namibian Constitution was the first in the region to contain express reference to and recognition of press freedom. It was in Namibia in 1991 that the SADC countries signed the Windhoek Declaration on the recognition of rights, plurality and diversity of the media. It is one country which gave us so much hope yet it has now moved to the opposite end of the spectrum. The notion of a public service media has been sacrificed by the appointment of party loyalists to leading positions in these sectors. More than anything else it was Namibia which removed books and magazines from bookshops in the name of public morality. Namibia has "progressed" from subtle suppression (of press freedom and accesses to information) to removing "offending" publications —not far off burning books at the pyre. In short, Namibia has receded to the 13th century vanities of bonfires!

Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe are running a close second. The irony is that the authorities in these countries could not have come to power without the collaboration of the press. It is now conveniently forgotten that during the dark days when the traditional sources of opposition were suppressed, the press emerged as a sort of permanent opposition. The press is now used to playing this role. It is now too late for them to do otherwise. The new governments expect the press to do less of what it is used to. If anything, during this period



“What is missing from the equation is a clear understanding of what democracy means. The concept implies competition between political participants with the possibility for the ruling party to lose elections. What they fail to understand while in power is that should it ever happen that they were turned out of office, they would need a free press—not controlled by the government—to convey their message to the voters as they seek to crawl their way back in.”

of democratisation, the press should do even more of what it is already doing. Certainly not less of something it now does.

What is being required is that the media must only report the success of the government and not the failures, the bankruptcies of companies but not the explanations behind such collapse. The media are free to cover a minister's foreign trips but not their purpose. The media must concentrate on what is perceived to be good news and leave out the “bad news”. What is lost sight of is that the media do not manufacture government failures or companies bankruptcies. The bad news will still remain even if it is not reported. If there is to be any chance of correction, improvement and appreciation of what the government is doing, then all the news must be made known.

It is this fearless coverage of the news that has earned Zambia's Fred M'membe and *The Post* the wrath of the authorities. The honeymoon between former bed-fellows is now over. The champions of constitutional reforms have now started gnawing at those reforms from within. The moment they get into power, it seems, our leaders develop some dementia. They forget what is contained in the very constitutions which placed them in power, especially the provisions relating to press freedom and access to information. The first casualty is the press and the journalists whilst the government delegate to themselves sole authority to gauge and interpret public opinion. What is forgotten is that the media, when they are doing their job properly, base their fundamental professional judgments more accurately on the vagaries of public opinion than can policy makers.

The irony of this relationship should not be lost on all of us. No government in a democracy can afford to suppress the media without using the media itself. The power and role of the media are well known to the authorities. It is for this reason that all governments in this region wish to maintain a tight control over the “airwaves”, to keep control and ensure that the state media follow, what the SABC's Johan Pretorius once

called “a fairly strict government of the day line”. What however, is missing from the equation is a clear understanding of what democracy means. The concept implies competition between political participants with the possibility for the ruling party to lose elections. What they fail to understand while in power is that should it ever happened that they were turned out of office, they would need a free press—not controlled by the government—to convey their message to the voters as they seek to crawl their way back in. Seldom has self-interest produced such blinding effect.

Once freedom of the press is attacked, invariably other freedoms also suffer. The right of the public to participate in the democratic process does in great measure depend on the availability of information and its dissemination. Not only should the information be publicised but must also be explained. It is the duty of the Press to analyse and explain such information to the public. The public also has a corresponding right to demand it of the press. What use is the information that the country is experiencing a recession if no one

explains its cause? What is the point of reporting the war in Liberia or Lebanon if no one goes beyond the headlines and the carnage?

The politicians and other stake holders would not give all the explanations without trying to serve self-interest. The media, on the other hand, hardly ever give their own jaundiced views of the issues. They report what the general public, experts and interest groups tell them. This task is too important to be left to the politicians, and without a vibrant media it is sacrificed if not lost outright.

The media, like a butterfly caught up in web-like silken strands from which it is struggling to escape, fights to survive in a hostile environment in spite of the entrenchment of their rights in state constitutions. This apparently is the state of the media in southern Africa as we enter the 21st century.

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We all know, don't we, that nothing is ever as good as it was when we were doing it—falling in love, learning to smoke and all that. Nor is any workplace as much fun and efficient as when we were newcomers to its professional mysteries.

I've been asked to consider the moot question, "Is today's journalism much fun compared to those golden oldie days?" I would rather, of course, the last words were "when you were a cub reporter". But for some who've since come into the trade, those are indeed "the old days".

To consider this very serious issue and reaffirm my own belief that journalism is indeed fun — or should be and can always be for those who do not regard the trade as a high-falutin profession — let me start with anecdote. Not concerning those good old days, but my own modern experiences in a reborn country which acknowledges the possibility of black people being competent journalists. And having fun as hacks - which was my mistaken assumption.

The first outside assignment I selected after my return from foreign fields at the invitation of the *Weekly Mail*—now the *Mail & Guardian* under the umbrella of the London Grauniad—was the "summit meeting" at the Union Buildings, South Africa's ultimate centre of power on a hill that overlooks Pretoria. On that very important, and serious, day in 1990 Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk finally agreed, after a very long vigil for all concerned—and dry for me—on what they portentously termed The Pretoria Minute in which the ANC agreed to suspend The Struggle.

On entering the press room within the hallowed grounds—only seen from Church Street in the apartheid past whose iniquities drove me out of the country—my eyes searched for what was, I learned, termed a hospitality area. But, alas, all it offered were tea, coffee and—I seem to remember—soft drinks. Nothing at all that would add some verve to the long wait. No booze, firewater and any variation of the age-old sustenance of the trade. And, yes, a hazard for the unwary which has led to journalists having a reputation as soaks.

It was bound to be a long day, whatever "media liaison officers" said, and old—no, "veteran" sounds better—hacks like myself would need the odd shot of the traditional sustenance that has floated us merrily through dull hours at other vigils: part of the fun, you see. And I realised that any bar off the official premises would be too far away to keep an eye, however blurry, on official proceedings, however slow. Worse still, I had no idea how far that haven offering quickies could be found even though Pretoria was my home town.

Such facilities didn't exist for nie-blankes in my growing-up days and, anyway, I'd been too young then, as were white kids my age.

Thus the gossip in the press room—not its intended use in Sir Herbert Baker's design—was slow and learned desultory: not enlivened by scandalous gossip or witty observation as it would've been at political stake-outs of an earlier era. Even the marathon vigils for the tardy passing away of Generalissimo Franco in Spain (and a Pope whose name is forever lost in a haze) were sort of fun, being far from abstemious. The belief, then, was that any form of liquid with an alcohol content was the only way to keep hacks happy and on their toes. That way, the leaden hours had passed lightly on tippy-toes.

But, of course there have always been those journo's who do not indulge in such irresponsibility. Even in that era, they lurked around newsrooms and conferences chewing pens—didn't smoke either—and frowning in deep thought.

They regarded the trade as a profession and behaved like lawyers—or so they thought. They would've been shocked and disillusioned by the guzzling and behaviour of that profession if they'd ever deigned to enter El Vino's, a drinking hole where the trade and profession mingled opposite the Law Courts on Fleet Street.

But, fortunately, there were not many of that type with a serious mien when I was a cub reporter in the Boer republic. Shebeen queens knew us well as free-drinking heavy spenders and I'm told that the Federal Hotel's collapse started after the *Rand Daily Mail* closed down and, to nobody's surprise, there was a sudden shortage of customers in its notorious bar.

Neither is El Vino's what it was in the vinuous days of yore when, despite its old-fashioned rules (ties for all men and women could not drink at the bar but only when sedately seated) it was always crowded with journo's exchanging gossip over wet lunches and suppers. As some old soaks insisted: good sustenance did gurgle out of bottles as well as slop out of pots and pans.

Nor are any of the Fleet Street pubs the same since newspaper proprietors moved their assets, lock stock and barrel, to Canary Wharf and other outlandish outposts. The old camaraderie is no more, and the community splintered.

If I sound maudlin, the cause is to be found in the first paragraph: nostalgia for the good old days by all of us. But of course those weren't all days of wine, women and hangovers. The basic fun that seduced reporters (who looked askance at titles like "journalist") into working long and sometimes dangerous hours for miserly wages was the job itself. True reporters were excited by the hunt: the search for inside stories—days of wine and scoops they were indeed—which would upset, and occasionally governments to titter even in the Boer republic. And, at a lesser but very satisfying level, scoops that annoyed rivals.

While I was a foreign correspondent for Reuters in East Africa, I was cabled the odd

herogram for having beaten the opposition by a few minutes—which was of great moment for news agencies trying to impress current and potential clients. And, like other reporters on any beat, I glowed with pride for hours on end and passed it among colleagues—inevitably, in some bar. Particularly great fun when their own newspapers ran my copy rather than "from our own correspondent" because the Reuters story landed earlier on news desks. A feat regarded as a betrayal by the colleague from the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, who wouldn't forgive me for weeks after he got a rocket from his Canadian employers.

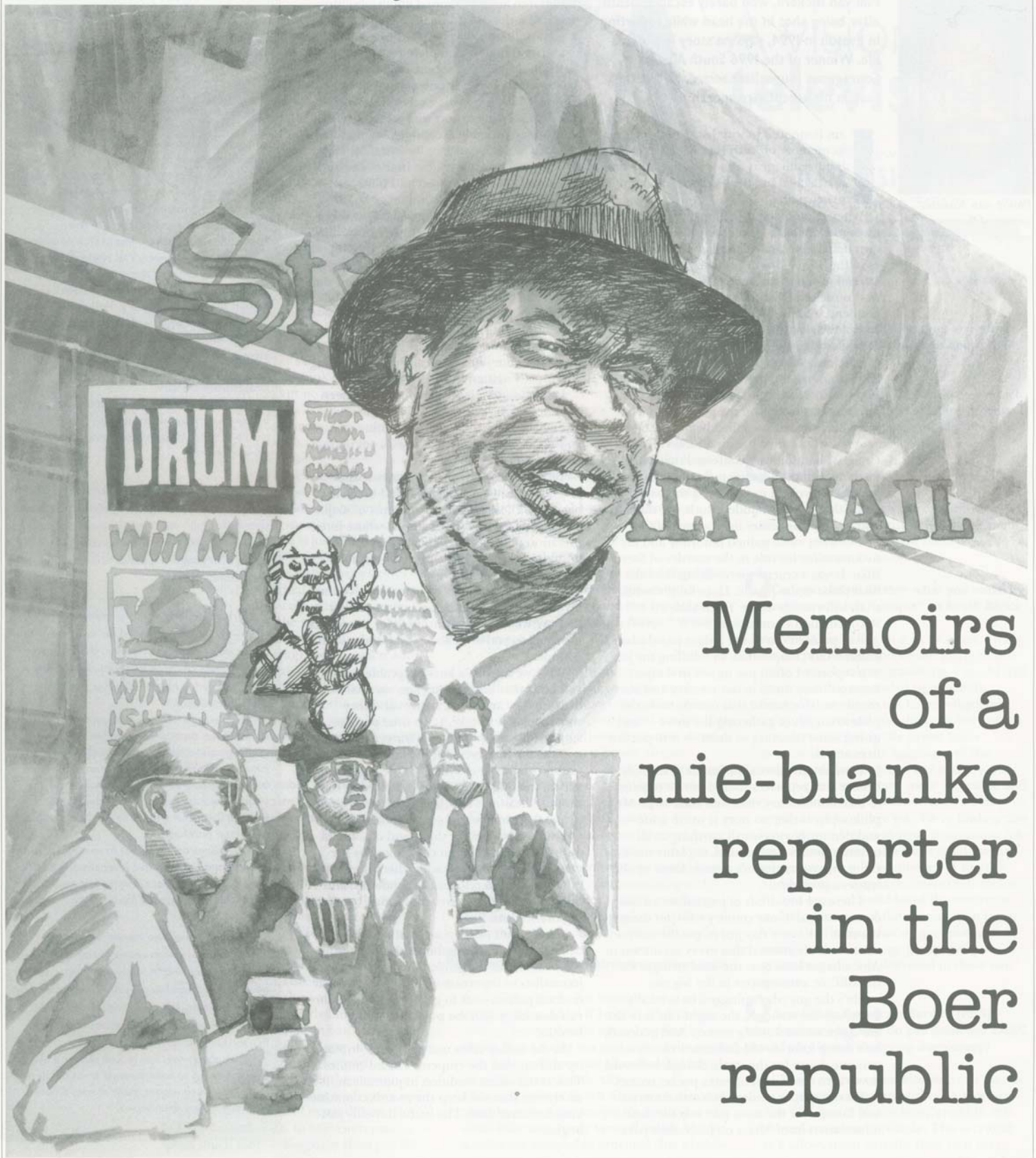
That was years ago and in another age; but I've brought back home, and have hanging in my office at *The Star*, a choice few of the herograms sent to me from 85 Fleet Street. And, of course, I've also brought back a scrapbook I toted throughout the years of exile containing cuttings of my by-lined reports for *Drum* and *Golden City Post*—those long gone days when journalism was, for us who were without official recognition and thus no police protection, very dangerous fun indeed.

We couldn't go to press conferences and other official occasions because we didn't have the all-important Press Cards. We didn't have them because the Commissioner of Police didn't recognise that any African could possibly be a journalist. So in a riotous situation when we protested to police turfing us out that we were journalists, the bottom line was the reply: "You can't be a blerry journalist if you don't have a Press Card, boy!"

The belief, then, was that any form of liquid with an alcohol content was the only way to keep hacks happy and on their toes. That way, the leaden hours had passed lightly on tippy-toes.

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by Arthur Maimane



Memoirs
of a
nie-blanke
reporter
in the
Boer
republic

The Ruth First Award for courageous journalism



Phillip van Niekerk, winner of the award for courageous journalism.

Phil van Niekerk, who barely escaped death after being shot in the head while reporting in Evaton in 1994, says no story is worth a life. Winner of the 1996 South African Courageous Journalism award, he put the case in his acceptance speech:

I am honoured to win this prize which is in memory of Ruth First. I never met her but her integrity as a journalist and an intellectual has been an inspiration in my own life.

When I interviewed Joe Slovo in Pretoria three weeks before he died, he justified his own decision to turn a blind eye to the excesses of the Soviet Union because he had not wanted to suffer the same fate as Ruth — she was ostracised, he said, because of her independence of mind and outspoken criticisms of events such as the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

Not only did she have the courage of her convictions, she was physically brave. She chose to move to Maputo, an hour's plane flight from Pretoria, to pursue her research into migrant labour on the goldmines. That was where the regime killed her.

A few weeks after Joe died I interviewed Craig Williamson who confessed that while working with the security police in Pretoria, he had been involved in doctoring the parcel-bomb that fatally wounded Ruth. He claimed that it was done under instructions of Colonel Piet Goosen - who gained notoriety and his nickname for his role in the murder of Steve Biko. It was a crucial piece, though not the final piece in the puzzle. Hopefully, the full truth will emerge at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

As I pointed out to the judges panel when I entered this competition, in fulfilling my job as a reporter I often put myself in danger. Extraordinary times in our country and our continent have meant that merely to do the pedestrian job of gathering the news — and giving some meaning to them — is to put our lives at risk.

I am not an adrenaline junkie. I strongly believe that reporters should not be required to take unnecessary risks with their lives. My philosophy is that no story is worth a life — and that no story is worth anything at all unless it breaks new ground, explains something the reader doesn't already know or challenges a prejudice.

There are hundreds of journalists on our continent and in our country who put themselves at risk every day just to get the story. I am constantly amazed that every smalltown in Africa has at least one: the local stringer for the BBC or a newspaper in the big city.

He's the guy who's plugged in to what's going on, the scandals, the night-life, how the aid agencies are wasting money. And generally he's doing it for an old-fashioned virtue: a genuine desire for the truth, though he would never turn down a bit of extra pocket money.

Yet newspaper readers in North America and Europe for the most part rely for their information from Africa on journalists para-

chuted into air-conditioned hotels who interview half-a-dozen diplomats, NGOs and human rights activists before they emerge with what they think is a complete picture of the enormously complex society they have just passed through. Their only insight into the feelings of the people is a conversation en route back to the airport with a taxi-driver.

There are notable exceptions, such as Chris McGreal of the Guardian, for instance, whose work appears regularly here in the Mail and Guardian. He is the bravest and pluckiest reporter on the African continent.

But the point I want to make is that these "barefoot" journalists of Africa are brave not only because of the physical hazards of reporting in Africa: they are prepared to take on the authorities. In fact, they regard it as their duty to give the government a hard time. Anyone who still thinks that African journalists are cowed by authority should spend a few days in Lagos. The newspapers there are technologically crude but journalistically tough, exciting and usually written in superb English.

Unfortunately, our newsrooms have been denuded of the skilled reporters. Talented journalists are promoted onto editing jobs, on and on what is regarded as the ascent up the corporate ladder.

Yet it is reporters who make newspapers: professionals who can pursue and break the big story, whose first-hand accounts of major events are history's raw material, whose interpretation of complex events as they are unfolding is the public's primary credible source of understanding.

It is time newspaper owners in this country invested in reporters by paying them what they are worth — and ensuring for them a status equal to and even above that of the senior editors.

What we need is a knowledgeable, outspoken press that keeps politicians on their toes - because they are public figures and they should be able to take it. It's time people stopped blaming the media for everything.

Take the management of South African rugby: totally out of sync with the new South Africa, treating men like boys, behaving like tin-pot dictators. Yet they turn around and blame their image problems on the media.

Frankly, I don't like the sound of some of our new ministers when challenged by the press. They see conspiracies where there are none, label mild criticism as vendettas, and often respond defensively to routine questioning of their conduct.

I don't want to advocate that newspapers become a permanent, almost misdirected opposition, but the tendency of some political journalists to fraternize with the hoi polloi at cocktail parties - not to get stories, but just to rub shoulders with the powerful - is not healthy.

In the end, it takes moral courage to stand up and say that the emperor has no clothes. That is the oldest tradition in journalism. It is surely one that will keep the awards committee busy for some time. The battle has only just begun.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS in the competition also went to Evening Post journalist Beverley Garson, African Eye newsagency editor Justin Arenstein and Star regional editor Anna Cox. Each will receive R500 as a tribute to the quality of their work.

Judges Prof Guy Berger, veteran journalist Juby Mayet, and Freedom of Expression Institute executive director Jeannette Minnie said the four journalists had all shown sustained courage in the face of danger and intimidation.

"Despite a close call with death after being shot in the head while reporting in Evaton in 1994, Van Niekerk kept his journalistic nerve and had since reported in extremely dangerous conditions," said the judges.

He was one of the few journalists to enter diamond territory in conflict-wracked Angola this year, and discover how conflict over the gems had been a major factor in the continuation of the civil war in that country.

In Liberia's civil war, Van Niekerk reported how fighting came to the country's capital Moldavia as a result of armed factions having milked the countryside dry. He was trapped in a hotel for four days, with street battles raging outside. Until President Nelson Mandela intervened, Van Niekerk was unable to get a position on the US military aircraft evacuating people from the city.

Van Niekerk, who wins R7000, works as a freelance correspondent for the Observer and the New York Times, and for several South African papers.

● Beverley Garson received an honourable mention, because despite receiving two death threats for her reporting, she had continued to cover gangs in Port Elizabeth, staying in in close touch with gangsters, police and members of the community.

● African Eye newsagency editor Justin Arenstein was commended for uncovering four major scandals in his province, the most well known being the Eugene Nyati and ex-ANC Senator Patrick Mogale exposes published in the *Sunday Times*.

Arenstein persevered despite intimidation, racial abuse, burglary, suspected computer sabotage and a battery of legal threats. He faces a potential R8-million defamation case brought by former Kwangwe homeland political heavyweights Enos Mabuza and Mangisi Zitha for articles he published about their land purchases.

The judges commended Arenstein for determined investigative journalism in one of the remoter provinces despite a severe lack of legal and other support for his work.

● Anna Cox was also named a runner-up for having put journalism ahead of fear by reporting from within, and on a regular basis, news from Johannesburg's Alexandra township. In one incident, she was caught in crossfire between residents and squatters and had to flee for her life.

The judges were impressed with the way Cox appeared to have built up trust on all sides and was able to report many stories direct from the actors themselves.

Q You worked for ITN news for 20 years. Did the move to the SABC require you to shift any of the journalistic assumptions you took for granted while working in Britain?

A: Only in the technological sense. I think journalism remains journalism wherever you are. I don't think in any sense I have either changed or compromised my views in this regard. However, technologically many of the facilities available to journalists at the SABC lag behind what is available abroad. For instance, in South Africa, because we have so few satellite inject points, raw material has to be sent physically to Auckland Park. In Britain, a significant proportion, if not the major portion of editing is done in the field because this allows the editor to extend the deadline tremendously by injecting right from the spot. We are hoping to budget for more inject points in the future.

Q You are on record stating that certain improvements had to be made in local journalism. Could you elaborate?

A: I don't think I ever said I was critical of local journalism, but I think there is always room for improvement no matter how good your news organisation is. We did not have, and we are beginning to build up, areas of specialisation and areas of expertise. For example, we did not have specialist beat reporters. Now we have a labour correspondent, we have a good political base, we have strengthened our economic base and we're looking to put other specialists in place. I don't think journalism is just working off a news diary. I think news is going out and finding what the news is, breaking stories and bringing in original material...not just bringing the same perspective that everybody is bringing to the story. If you build up specialisation in your organisation and you allow people to develop their contacts and their contact knowledge, then you're going to get a much better news service. I was not being critical of the people who were there, it's just we did not have the specialists in place. We didn't have systems in place which allowed people to really develop their skills.

Q You brought a number of print journalists into television news. Are there not fundamentally different skill requirements for the two media?

A: I will answer that in two ways - yes and no. No, there is not a difference in the sense that I believe all journalists have the same role. But how you express that in the two media is different. Television journalism allows you to do things that print journalism does not and vice versa. If you take a news broadcast, it usually lasts between 26 and 28 minutes. Because of this you can only cover any given subject in a fairly limited and concise way. This doesn't mean you can't cover it but it involves a different way of writing, a different way of expressing yourself. Print journalism allows one to set the story in a lot more context if you want to. It gives you more space to write and expand than television journalism does. In television you speak much more colloquially than you do



A vision for television

An interview with
JILL CHISHOLM
Head of Television, SABC

in writing, but a good journalist will make that adaption very easily and a good journalist will be able to function very readily in television within a short time of transferring. It requires learning how to use the medium, but it isn't changing the fundamentals of what you're doing which is trying to communicate information very clearly, very fairly, in a very balanced way. It's the same function. In fact, we haven't brought in many print journalists. The ones people point to most readily are people like Reg Runney who came in as an economics editor. But that is a high specialist area where it seems to me that the specialisation was more important than the medium in which he'd worked.

Q In another interview you stated that "the SABC lacks a distinctiveness apparent at other broadcasters. We need the type of television that is unique to South Africa." What did you mean by this?

A: If one looks at SABC television news, apart from the fact that you have black reporters and black specialist correspondents and presenters, you would not say that there is something utterly distinctive about this which tells you it is South African. However, if you look at the BBC, there is no doubt at all that it is entirely distinctive. There's no difference, for example, in covering news in Britain and covering it in South Africa, but it's the style, the way you do it, the way you communicate with your particular audience. We need to find the most effective way of communicating with our particular audience without assuming that if we adopt the same style as CNN or the BBC we are communicating effectively.

Q Is this in terms of both form and content?

A: Yes I think it is. For example, at a staff meeting I was asked if I would allow South African accents on the news. I replied by saying that I could not understand the question. How could we not allow South African accents? We are South African. There are a lot of South African accents and some have become acceptable and some of them have not. In my view all South African accents are acceptable provided that whatever

language is being spoken, is spoken correctly.

Q Do you think that before you arrived certain journalists felt self-conscious about their accents?

A: Yes, some certainly felt that way — which is strange seeing we have so many accents. I don't know if I have changed that, I would love to have.

Q Are the forms of the story changing?

A: If you are dealing with complex issues it often helps to concretise issues, make them real for people...show how these issues relate to their own lives.

Q Can you define further what you mean by a television which is "unique" to South Africa.

A: I think we've begun it in two ways. Firstly, we are producing, and we are going to produce, more local programming. I would still like to see this expanded significantly. Secondly, we aim to use more indigenous languages, not only on the periphery of our broadcasting, but in the prime times because these are the languages of the majority of the people of our country. So if we are going to become more accessible and more distinctively South African, we have to expand our language use. We're finding that if an African language news programme follows a programme accessible to all the language groups, a large number of English and Afrikaans language viewers will stick it. By and large an awful lot of the content is multilingual even if the presentation is not. We're also finding that we get enormous ratings within language groups for programming which is delivered in those languages.

Q As a Public Broadcast Service (PBS) broadcaster, what role do you think the SABC should play in our emerging democracy?

A: There are two roles television can play in an emerging or an established democracy. The PBS function is to bring credible, reliable information to people. This is critical as it allows them to make their own deci-

➤ next page

sions and choices about democratic issues. However, public broadcasting cannot simply survive by being informative, but must also be entertaining as well. Even if we were entirely funded by licence fee or by fiscal vote we would still need to be entertaining – otherwise people simply wouldn't watch no matter how worthy we are. We need to offer people interest in a very wide spectrum. I think that what is most distinctive about the SABC at the moment is that we have three channels, which is a wonderfully huge resource allowing us to provide full spectrum broadcasting.

Q Yet you are in the difficult position of being a public service broadcaster, but reliant on advertising. Underlying this tension are two different models of broadcasting, one which addresses viewers as citizens with rights to particular types of information, the other as consumers with the broadcaster dependent on giving the viewers "what they want". How is this tension playing itself out at the SABC?

A: It's not a tension within the content but there is a tension in our ability to fully fund the public service programmes. The notion that if you receive your funding entirely from the fiscal vote frees you from other pressures is totally false. Governments would always love to influence broadcasters because broadcasting is powerful and important in our lives. The need to generate our own funding forces us to look far more closely at our programming and be less complacent if our viewers don't like our programming. We stand to lose, we can't simply go on dishing up anything. This will be even more true when we have terrestrial competition. I think that's healthy.

Q In the face of the globalisation of culture and the increasing domination of the television landscape by a few major corporations, do you think it is possible to 're-territorialise' the media, to establish a media which contributes to sustaining both the distinctiveness and integrity of local cultures?

A: Yes, I do think so because the local is very popular. The BBC and other broadcasters in Britain may have had their audiences reduced by Mr Murdock's operation, but they seem to be holding their own...the BBC has not wilted into a negligible broadcaster. It is a broadcaster of a significant amount of high quality programming. Of course you can't retain the total monopoly of audience you've had in the past, but you can compete. Public broadcasters are competing in a lot of areas.

Q So do you think then that there is still a desire on the part of audiences for typical PBS material?

A: Yes, because typical PBS material combines a lot of things that you're not going to get on other stations because why bother. If your sole purpose is the consumer side of it you're not going to put on any programming which has marginal interest, or which is serving interests which are not clearly commercial.

Q According to the *Sunday Times* there is "panic in the corridors of the SABC", a result of the corporation not being able to attract advertisers. Is this true?

A: There isn't any panic. If there were, I'd be the first one jumping out of the window.

Q In your view why do you think advertisers are staying away?

A: I think they are taking their time, not unreasonably or unexpectedly, to look at things. We have made some fairly radical changes and it is new for them as well...the changes are only three months old. It's not a huge drop off, it's not disaster. In fact, the huge proportion of our advertising revenue is still there. I wouldn't pretend to you that we are making all the figures we would like to be making or that we projected we might have. We might have underestimated the significance in the scope of what we were changing. Advertisers will find their way around it pretty much as the viewers are doing and will advertise in a different way.

Q How?

A: In the past advertising was pretty easy in that you had a predominantly black audience sitting on CCV and a predominantly white audience sitting on TV1 and NNTV wasn't taking advertising. It was pretty easy to target a specific audience and it was done very broadly. Now I think they are going to have to target more specifically as our audience is moving across the three channels during any one night's viewing. They will have to do what advertisers are doing around the world, targeting by programme rather than by simply dropping adverts on racially divided channels. They will be much more discriminating in how they place their advertising.

Q You refer to "radical" changes. Besides language changes what radical changes have been made in terms of programming?

A: I think the most radical change is the language one and that was our first target operation. It was to introduce all our indigenous languages in prime time as part of mainstream programming. Other changes will take longer and include more local content, more indigenous languages...that's what we find our audiences want. Generally we need to strive for quality programming. Broadcasting is the same as print journalism...it should be about excellence. We need to make our broadcasting more accessible and relevant and this doesn't mean simply trying to shove factual programming down people's throats. It means looking at all the programming we're putting on air and asking if it is good programming, high quality programming.

Q This begs the question as to what you mean by "quality" programming.

A: I don't simply mean high brow. Quiz programmes can be high quality. It has to do with production values and content values. By production values I mean not having rocks that shake because they are made of paper mache. If you watch a good film the

camerawork is good, the acting is good, the direction is good, the script is wonderfully written. The 'Jewel in the Crown' is a good example. It is not crude and it is not obvious. That's what I mean. On the other hand I often see soaps on our screens and I think, dear God this is such stereotypical ordinary stuff. It isn't challenging, it does not offer any new perspectives. I've seen the same everywhere so it's not peculiar to us. You can be provocative, entertaining, funny, but let's see it in ways that are not always stereotypical and relying on the givens. It's about how much care you take with what you are doing. I think there are high production values in Felicia Mabuza Suttle's shows and in our news shows and sometimes in our GMSA. It's about how much care you take with what you're doing and that you don't simply put on stuff and say "it's crude but it's television". I don't believe in that.

Q What about other local television productions? Are we on our way to producing high quality television?

A: Yes we are producing high quality television, but I think there is always scope for enlarging it.

Q You stated recently that we have to address the gender issues in our programming. What did you mean by this?

A: This relates to the issue of stereotyping. I think we are still depicting women in stereotypical roles and styles and I don't think we depict accurately the full range of women's experience. Or men for that matter. Because if you stereotype women you are going to stereotype men because they are held in juxtaposition. I'm not trying to impose political correctness, but I do look at some of our own programming and feel that that does not relate to my own experience or my own life at all. I think this is true for many women today. We need to see different images of women on television besides showing them exclusively in the role of someone who works in the house and who has two and a half children.

Q How do you conceive of the audiences across the three channels?

A: At the moment the audience is not settled across the three channels and truthfully we are not totally defined in how we want to build those audiences. We need to look at it in a much longer scale than we've done at the moment. In our IBA submission we did say that SABC1 would be for the younger audiences, SABC2 for the broader family, and SABC3 for the specialist viewer. I now think these concepts are too broad and that we have to refine our views on this quite significantly. We need to define the characters of the three channels, how they are complementary and how they are different. We have to look at the very new audiences and get their response. We need to find out how we are being perceived, what they feel is right and what is utterly wrong in what we are doing. We still have a lot of work to do in this regard so I cannot be too definitive. At this point in time it would be arrogant for us to say that we know who our audiences are and what they want.

Q You are on record as stating that there would be ongoing monitoring of public reaction by the corporation. Has this in fact started?

A: On the advice of our research department we decided to give it eight weeks before we started this process. However, we've already received hundreds of calls from people trying to find particular programmes. They didn't say that they hated what we were doing, but they were finding it difficult to find their way around the new channels. We are now starting to do some initial research into viewer preferences.

Q Has anything interesting emerged from this initial research?

A: Not yet, except the flexibility of the viewers. They've got themselves around the new scheduling much more quickly than have the advertisers. Our viewing figures, while they do fluctuate by two or three points occasionally, remain fairly constant.

Q Are you on your way to achieving the IBA's requirement of 50% local content?

A: We are, without any doubt. We monitor it consistently and we're well on track. However, the local content debate needs to be continued — it's not cut and dried. For instance, the IBA stated that our local content requirement would have to take into account the overnight international feeds of BBC and CNN. In my view it is an over-demanding requirement to include those as we are putting them on as a service. If at the end of the day we have to take them off because we can't meet our local content targets we might need to do this. By including these news services, the IBA is skewing the balance of local content. There's still a debate around that.

Q Have you had to rethink your relationship with outside producers in order to meet this target?

A: Yes. We put together a draft paper on commissioning procedures. There had been a working group between the independent sector and the SABC last year. After much debate it had reached some agreement. We have had another workgroup internally which has been looking at how to implement the proposals. We do have a paper which we've discussed internally with our unions as well as with the external players. It's had a good response so far. We needed to do this as we were not responding timeously to people and I think this is important if you are trying to encourage new people and new talent. There was also a perception that our decisions were not transparent and that there were a favoured few who were getting work. It was not clear where and how we placed our commissioning. We have fundamentally changed our approach to this. SABC has always commissioned work but we are now restructuring to make it much more consistent, to give the commissioning editors much clearer lines of responsibility and authority. The unhappiness I was hearing from people in the industry had to do with the expectation that we

would say that all the people involved in commissioning in the past would no longer be involved and that we would fill these posts from the outside.

Q On this issue, one hardly ever sees posts within the SABC advertised. Why is this?

A: We have a policy at the SABC that we always first advertise internally. If you have

staff with career path ambitions who want to develop and grow then you must give them an opportunity. If you can't meet the needs within the organisation then you look outside.

Interviewer Larry Strelitz lectures in Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes.

Who's winning the battle to get more and more South Africans to buy newspapers?

(There's nothing Irish about the answer...)

Over the five year period, 1990 to 1995, there is only one company whose sold newspapers have grown by more than the rate of the population increase. That company is Caxton Newspapers. Our 11 paid papers have put on 24% ABC circulation growth. This is in stark contrast to the biggest publisher of dailies, who've seen circulation slide by 10% in the same period.

In addition, Caxton is a group who has a vigorous empowerment programme. We're bringing newspapers to communities who have never been served by newspapers before. And we're doing it in partnership with people from the communities we aim to serve. In



Alexandra, in Soweto and on the East Rand. And there are more to come...

With a full time training department, and a unique system of awards and incentives, Caxton encourages its journalists to aim high. The payoff comes in the dedicated readership for our free and paid papers.

With an aggregate circulation (including associates) of 1,3 million in 62 communities, Caxton is playing a major role in the creation of a free and informative press in the New South Africa.

Caxton - born, bred and rooted in the RSA.

CAXTON/CTP & ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS: ■ BEDFORDVIEW EDENVALE NEWS ■ KEMPTON EXPRESS ■ TEMBISAN ■ SANDTON CHRONICLE ■ RANDBURG SUN ■ NORTH EASTERN TRIBUNE ■ NORTHCLIFF MELVILLE TIMES ■ ROSEBANK KILLARNEY GAZETTE ■ BENONI CITY TIMES ■ BOKSBURG ADVERTISER ■ BRANKAN HERALD ■ GERMISTON CITY NEWS ■ SUNBEAM ■ KRUGERSDORP NEWS ■ RANDFONTEIN HERALD ■ ROODEPOORT RECORD ■ DOBSONVILLE KAGISO EXPRESS ■ WEST RAND TIMES ■ SECUNDA BETHAL HIGHVELD RIDGE ■ ALBERTON RECORD ■ SOUTHERN COURIER ■ PRETORIA RECORD ATTRIDGEVILLE ■ PRETORIA RECORD CENTRAL ■ PRETORIA RECORD CENTURION ■ PRETORIA RECORD EAST ■ PRETORIA RECORD MAMELODI ■ PRETORIA RECORD MOOT ■ PRETORIA RECORD NORTH ■ ALEX TIMES ■ VAAL STER ■ VAAL VISION ■ VAALWEEKBLAD ■ BONUS ■ BRITS POS ■ GEMSBOK ADVERTISER ■ NOORDWESTER ■ RUSTENBURG HERALD ■ STELLALANDER ■ THE MAIL ■ DIE LAEVELDER ■ LOWVELD NEWS ■ ZULULAND OBSERVER ■ UMLOZI WEZINDABA ■ LADYSMITH GAZETTE ■ DRAKENBERGER/TIMES OF LADYSMITH ■ OGWINI ■ SOUTH COAST HERALD ■ SOUTH COAST MAIL ■ SOUTH COAST SUN ■ SOUTHLANDS SUN ■ BEREA MAIL ■ HIGHWAY MAIL ■ NORTHGLEN NEWS ■ QUEENSBURGH NEWS ■ TEMPO ■ TAXI ■ NEWCASTLE ADVERTISER ■ INKANYEZI ■ ESTCOURT MIDLANDS NEWS ■ GEORGE HERALD ■ OUDTSHOORN KOERANT ■ MOSSEL BAY ADVERTISER ■ KNYSNA & PLETT HERALD

global journalism

FORGET about Internet's publishing possibilities - cyberspace is probably more valuable for the input, rather than output, side of journalism.

After all, you can only make the jewellery once you've got the gold. And the shiny stuff is just waiting to be mined out there in the online world.

A good place to start is at the two dozen or more glittering gateways specially dedicated to helping journalists exploit the Internet. These are designed to make it easy for journalists to enter cyberspace.

Known as one-stop stations, jumpsites or launchpads, these are more than maps pointing to the whereabouts of treasure troves. They're really mine-shafts direct to valuable information.

Says Tim Maloy of the Internet Newsroom site, more than 126 news organisations used this particular launchpad last year. Why? "To harness the power of cyberspace in their newsgathering operations".

Studies show that in North America at least, online research is growing rapidly. Journalists there are finding real wealth in online connectivity.

Predictably, reporters are using the Internet to write about the Internet. But they are also reporting about other subjects by means of the Internet.

To use cyberspace as a research and reporting aid, you need to know something about its geology. What kind of gold is buried there, and how do you find it?

1. ONGOING CHAT GROUPS (CALLED NEWSGROUPS OR USENET).

Starting with this stratum of the Internet, an online miner will discover more than 20 000 vibrant newsgroups. These give a reporter access to what the Poynter Institute's Nora Paul calls a "computer assisted rendezvous". Examples? Alt-skinheads, alt-child-abuse-recovery, alt-crime, alt-censorship... and so on.

A journalist online, like any other online user, goes out on the Internet and visits these groups on whatever computer is host to them - unlike the more formal discussion groups (sometimes called listservs) where postings are sent direct to members' own computers. You go to newsgroups; listservs or discussion groups come to you.

How are journalists using the newsgroups?

- To discover information you didn't even know existed ...

There are a million story ideas in newsgroups waiting to be unearthed. Journalist Alexander Wolfe found one and broke a major story, now known as The Pentium Papers, in November 1994. He simply picked up on a mathematician's remark in a newsgroup that there was a bug in Intel's Pentium computer chip.

It's all change for newspapers. Or part change. No one yet knows.

Global newspaper association, Fiej, enters its 50th year with dynamic debate about how to position newspapers to survive into the 21st century.

As of May, the global organisation has a new name and a new president. Still to be called "Fiej" (the French acronym for the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers), the body has nevertheless been rebaptised as the World Association of Newspapers.

It now represents 15 000 newspapers in more than 40 countries, and is headed by Brazilian publisher and TV magnate Jaime Sirotsky. The question is where it's all headed.

Three years ago, the organisation gave birth to the World Editors Forum as a parallel association aimed at servicing journalists as distinct from publishers. Editors, like owners and managers, are also trying to make sense of a fast-arriving future.

There were record attendances when the two bodies held their annual conferences in Washington DC in May.

But the contrasting themes for the two meetings symbolised the existential quandary faced by the press. While publishers discussed "Visions of the Future", the editors' theme was "Back to Basics".

What endures in newspapers, and what expires, is the issue at the heart of the speeches given at Washington. The excerpts on these pages are made possible with the support of Naspers.

Global trends in newspapering

BASED on 1995 statistics, Norway is once more the world leader with 600 newspapers sold per thousand population; second is Japan with 576; Finland and Sweden tie in third place, with 464 copies per thousand populations. The USA finds itself down in fifteenth place with 226 people per thousand buying their daily newspaper. There is some positive movement towards increased penetration, between 1994 and 1995, in Japan, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic, Canada, Malaysia, Spain, Turkey, Cyprus, Brazil, Peru, Sri Lanka and India. In nine of these 13 cases, it is true to say that penetration still remains at a very low level - below 150 newspaper buyers per one thousand - and the potential for growth therefore remains high.

IN BRIEF:

- Circulation continues its decline in most of the industrialised world; in the developing countries and those others where readership has been historically low, it is booming.
- Advertising growth for newspapers continues almost everywhere, though it slowed in 1995 in most of the industrialised world, as it increased significantly in developing nations.
- The advertising market share gained by news-papers continues to shrink in the majority of countries.

TIMOTHY BALDING, DIRECTOR-GENERAL WORLD ASSOCIATION OF NEWSPAPERS.

THE INTERNET
goldmine
for journalists
BY GUY BERGER

- To find required information:

Scott Henry of the *Marin Independent Journal* (California) has been successfully prospecting in newsgroups. His analogy is having to monitor the police radio scanner: the useful bits are often few and far between, but they're there.

Stumbling upon tip-off nuggets and story-ideas in the newsgroups is one thing. Henry has discovered that you can search for specific information as well - by monitoring newsgroups round the clock merely by using a free computer service from Stanford University.

Thanks to the service, titled SIFT, Henry's paper now receives copies from thousands of newsgroups of any message that makes mention of Marin County. "By doing this," he says, "we break a story (major or minor) every other day because of our systematic 'mining' of Usenet".

The *Marin Independent* not only watches what's coming up on the newsgroups through SIFT: it occasionally searches newsgroup archives as well. A number of tools can do perform this task: most notably Infoseek, Deja News (used by the *Marin Independent*) and Alta Vista and Excite.

Journalists are also using newsgroups to:

- Generate new information.

Arthur Goldstuck - a journalist with a pleasantly appropriate surname in the context of mining the Internet - has made a name by collecting and publishing urban legends. He researched his latest book by putting up questions on newsgroups to track new myths ahead of the South African 1994 elections.

"Within two months, I had collected as much material online as I had in two years using conventional methods," he says.

Other journalists have also been out prospecting the newsgroups. US reporter Michael O'Reilly describes: "When I was doing a story on CD-ROMS, the first place I turned to was the Usenet group alt.cd-rom and its FAQ file. I was able to quickly educate myself on CD-ROM technology, history and future trends."

He continues: "I then posted a few questions to the newsgroup. Responses began rolling in within the hour, and continued for the next few days answering all the rest of my questions (the story was on the business applications of CD-ROM technology) and connected me to a few ideal sources to interview."

A final use of newsgroups by journalists entails their ability to:

- Canvass newspaper readers.

Newsgroups can help define the newsagenda. Jim Hopkins of *The Idaho Statesman* tapped an on-line chat group after the Oklahoma bombing, asked people what sort of stories they wanted to read, and then used their responses to shape the paper's coverage.

Thus the riches of this part of the Net. There's another geological stratum worth uncovering.

2. LISTSERVS/DISCUSSION GROUPS:

The advantage of this online service is that a journalist does not have to go out looking for the information, as in newsgroups. It is delivered right to your electronic doorstep.

People subscribe (usually free) to these 40 000-plus discussion groups. The computer hosting a listserv discussion group distributes to each subscriber the messages posted to it. In this way, reporters worldwide are tapping jour-

Create a 3-d community

YOU can't look forward to a future of merely simulating paper in cyberspace. The Web as we know it - two-dimensional simulation of printed pages - is disappearing rapidly. Already you can say farewell to dead info. With Hot Java (and other similar programmes) you can animate information. You can launch agents over the network to do your bidding. Say farewell to flat pages. Together, Java and VRML will open new horizons for design creativity. Imagine instead of a newspaper, a three dimensional news space. Say farewell to solo user experiences. Shortly, you will be able to interact with other page visitors. This is a big deal for newspapers because you are really in the community creation business.

... The next chapter in the Internet revolution is NOT about connecting people to information. Rather it's about connecting people with other people in information-rich environments. The Internet is not merely a conduit but a destination in its own right. It is a space in cyberspace in which people will spend an increasing proportion of their time. The next wave of the Internet will be the construction of these spaces and avatars - our electronic alter-egos - that will inhabit them. What does this mean? — Cyberspace is a full employment act for editors and publishers.

PAUL SAFFO, INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE

nalists and non-journalists alike online. With exciting results:

- Getting references to information:
Earlier this year, KHOU-TV messaged the Computer-Assisted Reporting and Research Discussion Group (CARR-L), asking for experts on what beef cattle were being fed in the US. In return, list member Ron Tyler posted five rich references to Internet sites, including a University of Maryland round-up of latest studies.

From far-off Croatia, journalist Mario Profaca responded as follows: "there are A HUNDRED LINKS at MAD COW Page" and presented the Internet address and a joke.

- Learning from existing experiences:
Discussion groups are great places to find out what others have done. A recent query was posted on the Investigative Reporters and Editors discussion list (IRE-L) under the title, "Lust in the dust". The question under it read: "I'm putting together a series on Leaking Underground Storage Tanks (gasoline) and was wondering if anyone knew of a source which disputes the EPA claims regarding the impact on polluted soil".

Came a reply: "We've done three stories on this in the *Albion Monitor*. Look at the December 21, January 12 and March 10 issues in our morgue...". The Internet addresses to these articles were provided.

Not much deep level digging required here: the glittering goodies are literally strewn on the surface.

- Using discussion groups for tip-offs:
Discussion groups are high-yield ores for tip-offs about story possibilities. Looking for an angle on alleged Unabomber Ted Kaczynski? The CARR-L discussion group alerted its members that his mathematical writings could be found at an Internet address. There's a very different angle for the story.

- Getting experts via Profnet:
Profnet is a listserv set up to serve its members - whose job, in turn, is give service to the media. This listserv's subscribers are 2400 public information officers at educational and research institutions in 17 countries. The reporter pops the question, and they all try to find experts to answer it.

There are many successful experiences with Profnet: To cite just one, the *Boston Globe* needed someone to comment on the impact of traffic flow of a new highway being built. The academic whom Profnet put them onto had just returned from an independent inspection of the very project.

Comments Swedish journalism researcher Joakim Sandberg of Profnet: "It's the difference between fishing with a hook and fishing with a net."

There's more online than newsgroups and listservs. There's electronic mail as a communication device.

3. E-MAIL FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Journalists are using e-mail facilities successfully to receive information like press releases, interview hard-to-reach sources and to communicate with readers. Many report great results, especially used in conjunction with information gleaned from other facilities in cyberspace.

Negating assembly-line news

B RING skills together in groups or clusters. Writing, editing and graphics. Avoid terms such as 'team' because it is full of biases that would deflect people's imaginations. The leader is simply titled cluster-leader. This person is the organiser, the motor and the negotiator. There isn't a managing editor, nor a city editor, nor assignment editor, nor photo editor. At our paper these functions are still being done, in different ways, under different job descriptions. The editor-in-chief has associate editors in this cluster and that cluster is called 'the editorship'. Clusters on our paper are:

- community cluster: includes police, courts, levels of government;
- work and wealth (includes the technology reporter);

- family: schools, health, social services;
- applause: the sports columnist lives here along with other specialists such as the drama critic and the movie critic;
- opinion: daily editorials, columnists, letters to the editor, forum and speakers corner.

Cluster leaders can be seen as the wholesalers offering their wares to the section editors who are like retailers with empty shelves that need filling every day. Section editors don't have staff, only space or empty shelves.

The art department works for everybody. Photographers are assigned to clusters, but must be available for other clusters too. Writing, editing and some design takes place in each cluster.

WILLIAM MCGRATH, ART DIRECTOR, LONDON FREE PRESS (CANADA)

Lighting a path for future journalism

A BRIGHT future for print journalism should be built on newspapers that do not feel compelled to mime TV's frequently superficial theatrics. Sensationalism becomes boring. Can-you-top-this journalism ends up not being journalism. While some in the media wallow in the muck, we must take the higher road.

... Those in charge must insist on staffs and managements that reflect the community. We can never cover our communities well enough until we fully reflect the places we serve. Our progress on the path to pluralism remains mostly glacial. Frequently disgracefully so. We also need to broaden our definition of 'pluralism' to include age, sexual orientation, thought, lifestyle and other factors of inclusion.

... There are no silver bullets - no one thing, or even a few things, that we can do that will meet every challenge. Instead we must move on many fronts. At the place where I work, that covers a satellite edition, joint ventures with Spanish and English language stations, online content in two languages, and much more. All are moons around the daily planet called the newspaper.

... Do not tell me that you need to run your grandmother over in order to make it in journalism. Quite to the contrary. The cynic has no real staying power. As Thomas Friedman wrote in the *New York Times* recently: "Scepticism is about asking questions, being dubious, being wrong, not being gullible. Cynicism is about already having the answers - or thinking you do - about a person or an event".

... I see a future where people continue to enter the business for the same reasons you and I did - for ideals of public service and the quite honorable desire to make this world better. While other media focus on instant gratification, we will provide the coverage and commentary that prod people to think for themselves. Democracy thrives on reflection. Democracy needs journalism.

... Our future is in focusing on stories of real importance and telling them thoughtfully. Doing journalism that tells the reader what is really going on. Journalism that is unafraid to celebrate good people and good things. Journalism that is unhesitating in its pursuit of wrongdoers.

DAVID LAWRENCE, PUBLISHER AND CHAIRMAN, MIAMI HERALD

4. COMMERCIAL AND OTHER DATABASES

There are numerous types of databases in the online world, dealing in even more numerous data. Amongst them are:

- Electronic archives.
Who needs the clippings morgue down the passage, when the world's press is increasingly available to journalists at their desks? Take for instance the commercial online collection held by Dialog, with approximately 70 newspaper databases - including publications from the USA, Hong Kong, Thailand, the UK and elsewhere.

Australia's *Courier Mail* reporter Paula Doneman searched the Dialog archives and discovered that her local story about biker gangs involved in organised crime had parallels in Russia, Canada, the USA and Europe. It meant she could write additional copy with a global angle.

A number of commercial services exist to filter information in databases. Newshound, or Fishwrap, for instance, will copy articles on topics you have chosen in advance and post them to your personal e-mail.

Besides for paper archives, journalists are striking it rich in another type of database:

- Records databases:
Says David Milliron of Gannett (USA), about a dozen of his company's newspapers use the DBT Online database for investigative journalism.

"For instance, just inputting what limited information we knew on Theodore Kaczynski (accused Unabomber) we were able within minutes to locate his family, relatives and neighbors. We also used it, for instance, during the Oklahoma bombing to locate all the suspects and their family, relatives and neighbors."

If these are examples of the riches in the database geological layer, there is yet more wealth to found in the hot lava, (or is it java?), layer of the online world, a stratum that is giving rise to major volcanic eruption. It's the Web.

5. WWW AND GOPHER. (THE INTERNET NARROWLY CONCEIVED)

Gopher databases constituted the original stuff of the Internet, but they are increasingly being eclipsed by - or merged into - the singing and dancing World Wide Web. These Web publishing sites are springing up as fast as events arise.

Existing publications are going online by the week, and every day thousands of institutions and individuals previously outside the publishing business are getting in on the act.

So how are journalists using gopher databases and especially the fast-growing Web?

- Retrieving information:
Financial Mail journalist Robert Laing comments: "The Internet's biggest boon for me is that government's green and white papers, commission reports and other public documents are online. This has made it a lot easier to report and analyse the progress of SA's new telecommunications legislation. Other countries' policy documents are also available online, helping journalists place local trends in an international context."

Beth Marchak of the *Plain Dealer's* Washington Bureau has found that FedWorld, the US government's site covering 130 bulletin

► continued on page 30

boards and databases is "a great start to a story". Elsewhere on the Internet, and aided by the Foxpro programme to analyse much of the data she collects, Marchak has accessed vital information from the web pages of the Federal Aviation Authority and the Valujet Airline.

The result: she was able to expose safety problems at Valujet and the efforts to keep these secret. Says Marchak: "Using computers I'm six months ahead of the crowd on some aviation stories, but right now too few people understand that."

● Monitoring changes:

According to Scott Henry, there are now about 50 newspapers and magazines worldwide that offer free archive searches via the WWW. The URL-Minder programme can monitor updates of past searches on about one quarter of these, and Henry has used this to full advantage.

Using this system he found a Marin County couple sailing around the world, and interviewed in the Newport News, Virginia; a prominent police official from Lancashire planning to retire to the county; a local musician who had started his own recording studio in Los Angeles; etc.

● Reference information:

Many journalists are becoming savvy to the WWW's abundance of reference information, whether this be a telephone directory where you can also find someone's e-mail address, the CIA's global statistics, quotations, dictionaries, translation programmes, or similar. Information for checking facts is there and it's being used.

6. WHERE TO DIG ...

Amongst all these layers of the online geological world are some very special gems: "spiders" or "intelligent agents" that scour cyberspace and compile catalogs and indexes that in turn can be probed with one of some 20 search engines, most of them for free.

These tools make life much easier because they automatically locate the exact stuff a journalist wants. They mean the difference between surfing and searching. But be advised: for maximum benefit, you need to know how to use them, and what their limitations are.

In particular, if information is not on the World Wide Web, or not to be found easily with a given Internet search engine, this does not mean that the information does not exist elsewhere online. Nora Paul warns that the Internet is not a replacement for commercial databases like Nexis-Lexis or Dialog - not yet anyway.

New York freelance journalist Oliver Brotski adds: "Searching the Internet is time-intensive. That's why when I freelance at ABC News World Research Center, we use online databases, not the Internet, when we have less than 5-10 minutes to locate a fact."

In short, the price of gold rises as deadline frenzy grows, and here dedicated commercial databases, despite their charges, may often give up the gilt more effectively.

According to Michael Jesse of Dayton Newspapers: "We still use commercial online services and anticipate continuing to do so. Information has value and I expect to pay for depth, breadth and quality. Which isn't to say you never find those qualities on the Web, but very frequently you do not. There is a lot of fool's gold mixed in with the real stuff."

People and our primary purpose

IT IS possible for newspapers to come closer to the whole truth about a terribly complicated story. It is possible, and hard, and rare. It takes time. It may take money, but above all, it takes unusual, gifted people - journalists with an ear and a heart and a brain - to understand a bit more about the story and put it into words.

... These people cannot be summoned into being by fibre-optic cables and high speed modems. And when we fail to tell a story, it makes a difference. ... Whatever form that news organisations and news media take in the future, they still will be trying to explain an impossibly complicated world to readers and viewers. That job is hard, regardless of technology. But it remains our most important responsibility.

DONALD GRAHAM, CEO WASHINGTON POST

Japan pioneers the portable paper

THE IDEA of the Mainichi Zaurus electronic newspaper has emerged out of experiments. Zaurus is one of Japan's hottest-selling personal digital assistants (PDAs). More than 800 000 Zaurus machines have been delivered in the market so far, accounting for 80 percent of the domestic market for portable information terminals.

... Even though its screen display capacity is smaller than that of the office or household personal computer, and its communication speed is 2 400 bits per second at present, it has the merit of weighing only about 200 grams, making it light enough to carry in the coat inside pocket or in a handbag.

... Our news and information, excluding columns, is condensed into 150 characters and stored in the Nifty Serve computer. There are expected to be two million members of Nifty Serve by August. Amongst these members will be those Zaurus owners who will be able to use a telephone to download the news to read it whenever and wherever desired.

... There are 18 genres, updated twice a day, with sports results being distributed more frequently. The 18 genres are: hot news; sports flash; general domestic and foreign news; politics; economy; international; city; sports; leading people; editorials; multimedia information; personal computer magazine information; corporate information about new products; weather; toku-toku information (an entertainment listings system); fortune telling and lottery tickets; rankings of popular hit songs; and leisure.

... Some 100 hot news items are provided on a busy day, but 10 items in the morning and 10 in the evening are the basic amount for politics, economy, international and city.

... The user can download all genres at once, or select a genre of choice. The monthly charge is 500 yen, plus a telephone charge and connecting charge for using Nifty Serve for each access. This 500 yen is good for slightly more than one cup of coffee at a coffee-shop in Japan. We thought this price would be acceptable to consumers.

... The monthly charge for the Zaurus electronic newspaper is about one-eighth that of the printed Mainichi Shimbun. Readers of the Zaurus numbered 4000 in April this year. The target is 20 000 subscribers by the end of August, six months after the start of the electronic paper, and 50 000 after one year.

KOJI TAKEUCHI, MAINICHI SHIMBUN, JAPAN.

7. MINING KNOW-HOW

Chris Terry of the Owatonna People's Press reminds would-be online miners that: "Internet resources are only as good as your reporters."

Like any mining activity, training is needed not only to raise productivity: it is essential in order to avoid the pitfalls - especially the costs of untutored online searching of commercial databases. There are also potential disasters in misinterpreting information or falling for misleading information.

Skills are thus relevant to more than efficient search procedures. Locating the facts is only half the business of journalistic research. Interpreting them is the other.

From the LA Times editorial library, Debbie Coyle declares: "The important part of information gathering on the web (and elsewhere) is NOT finding it - any 'kid who surfs the web all day' can do that ... The important part is evaluating the information - for applicability, correctness, timeliness, and a host of other criteria."

Online miners not only need to locate the gold: it needs to be brought up to the surface, weighed, measured, tested and packaged for further transit.

8. THE DOWNSIDE:

Mining is never without dangers, and digging in online services is no exception. Here are some of the negatives:

● Time-wasting:

Brian O'Keeffe, producer of CBS programme "48 hours", was asked if he ever found it difficult to confirm a fact online. His response: "Last week I was trying to find when 243 servicemen were killed in Beirut.... I spent about an hour going nuts, weeding through all these citations." Eventually a "real human being librarian opened up a book and found the date himself".

● Over-reliance on online sources:

Online sources are typically insufficient for a story. This is a supplementary tool, not a replacement, for direct contacts with sources and direct visits to places. As Gannett's David Milliron stresses: "Computer-assisted reporting is nothing more than a tool. Access to online records gives reporters and editors a starting point to their reporting."

This is echoed by Nora Paul: "Computer assisted reporting is just that: an assistance. It is not called computer completed reporting." According to Beth Marchak: "Don't be lulled into one-source reporting. Don't think the computer is doing your work."

And magazine journalist Lamar Graham says of her use of Profnet: "This is not some kind of journalistic cyber-panacea. It doesn't replace the telephone or shoe leather. It augments them." Online over-reliance is also raised by St Petersburg Times (USA) journalist Elijah Gosier, in a column headlined "E-mail talks a lot but it doesn't say much".

Over-dependency on cybersources raises the question: Is online mining just a recycling of pre-existing information, and a disincentive to original thinking and research?

It could be. But it would be a pity if journalists were only to repackage information already published elsewhere. Online access should not displace the need to find gold in places far removed from the electronic nirvanas, nor the need to add journalistic value to that which is already available to go online.

● Another downside is:

● Distortion related to online availability.

Proof that old-fashioned journalism works

THIS is a story about the comeback of the quality newspaper. Three years back, our paper was the fifth largest paper in Denmark, and based in one of our provinces.

It is now the leading national paper, with an especially successful Sunday edition. Advertising revenues have risen markedly.

The secret has been in old-fashioned journalism. If you repeat what is on television or in magazines, you devalue what a newspaper can do. Let them do what they do best. The solid foundation of a newspaper is information; entertainment is only a small part of it.

While other papers have cut back on staff, we have invested heavily in journalistic talent. In four years, Morgenavisen has added 60 new reporters - many in foreign bureaux - and expanded its newshole by a fifth. Combined with an assertive marketing campaign, the investment has paid off neatly in terms of circulation.

Morgenavisen is a paper run by journalists. Our decisions - even marketing ones - are made by editorial. They are not made by consultants, nor by readers. We don't do reader surveys or run focus groups. Morgenavisen rejects calling a newspaper "the product" and the readers "the customer".

You can get new technology, do redesigns and even start to publish online and not raise your circulation at all. Journalism is what counts.

It is basically nonsense that newspapers are being superceded by other media. The future belongs to papers with editorial quality and a sharp profile. Hence, at Morgenavisen we stress quality journalism and the role of the press in a democracy. In this way, the paper has demonstrated a winning strategy.

JØRGEN EJBØL, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EDITOR, MORGENAVISEN JYLLANDS-POSTEN, DENMARK
(Note: Items supplemented from an article on the Morgenavisen in American Journalism Review, distributed at the conference).

As a result of online info's accessibility to reporters, the very journalistic enterprise can start to lean too heavily on these sources.

As Robert Laing notes, with so much state information now available online, this may prompt the media into giving "government documents more coverage than they deserve". To reflect only - or even primarily - that part of the world's information and limited social spectrum which is online is a disservice to journalism.

A final negative to note is the danger for the two cornerstones of journalism

● Accuracy and reliability:

As with any mining, there is always a need not only to evaluate what's dug up, but also to refine and purify the product. While gold traditionally used to be treated with cyanide, online services need a strong measure of traditional journalistic cynicism.

Cautions the *Atlanta Constitution and Journal's* Kathleen Flynn: "Just because it is electronic does not mean it is true." In the opinion of Dayton's Michael Jesse, the WWW, "is the biggest vanity press in the history of mankind." Reporters have to take extra steps in to judge the accuracy and level of expertise of the online publishers.

In short, there are important professional and ethical implications in mining the online world.

9. THE 1001 OTHER JOURNALISTIC USES FOR AN INTERNET

Many reporters may be tempted by the line on one jumpsite for journals: "When your editor's not looking!" — and its links to entertainment sites.

Then there's *Journalism Bookmarks* by veteran online journalists Randy Reddick and Dan Gillmor. After its worthy list of sites, it displays the entry: *Useless Web Pages. After you've done all that Important Journalism, stop here for a few giggles.*

Something else for miners to consider is a remark by former TV journalist Jim Upshaw from an article titled *The Virtual Watercooler*: "The online world is full of reporters doing what reporters do: assembling research, finding things to read, wasting time, cultivating sources, floating trial balloons, complaining about editors, following paper trails, moonlighting, sniping at the competition, and hanging out."

Do journalists "hang out" online, and is that such a bad thing? My answers - yes, and no.

IN CONCLUSION

There is much attention today to journalists as producers of information on the Internet. We forget that journalists are also consumers of information, and that indeed, to be a good producer of information, whether for paper or broadcast or cyberspace, a journalist needs to be a good consumer. And to be a consumer, today, ought to include consumption of online info.

My case is for journalists to consume more information via online services. Against this, people may argue that in world of information-overload, where journalists struggle to select, compress and cut even their off-line information, the need is for less, not more, information.

I disagree. Information is what makes the difference between dependent reportage and independent journalism. As Canadian journalist Tom Koch argues, all too often journalists are forced

A Spanish Clark Kent

IN MY country, a new government and a new prime minister has replaced the charismatic socialist leader, Felipe Gonzalez, after 13 years in power. Most political analysts and Gonzalez himself recognise that this defeat in the election of March 3 and the fall from grace of the Socialist Party, are the direct result of serious corruption scandals uncovered by the press.

... The existence of a vicious circle of corruption and state-sponsored terrorism was proved when *El Mundo* discovered in mid-1994 that high officials of the ministry of the Interior had been appropriating money from the secret funds meant to pay for the dirty war against ETA.

... When later developments and court rulings bore out the truth of our revelations, the Gonzalez government accused us of spearheading a conspiracy against democracy. Sometimes they said we served sinister financial interests, others that we worked for Mr Azner (opposition leader) and his party, or even that we, the journalists, were trying to seize power for ourselves without winning the support of the people through elections.

... For those journalists who have participated in the investigation to uncover hidden truths, these are days of wine and roses similar to the post-Watergate euphoria experience in the US. Etched in my memory, a relic of those days, is a celebrated cover of *New Yorker* magazine. Divided into two sections, the first showed a weak and depressed Superman entering a telephone booth and the second a powerful and euphoric Clark Kent brandishing his pad and pen. The caption read: 'And now to fight corruption in the highest places.'

PEDRO RAMIREZ, EDITOR IN CHIEF, EL MUNDO, SPAIN

Content could go commercial

A newspaper is a representation, or manifestation, of its community. No one knows the community like its local newspaper. So, the local newspaper can help advertisers get personal, can engage with advertisers and sell the local experiences and knowledge that is a newspaper.

... The newspaper can physically put the local community on the digital map. It could establish an Internet site which would literally be a representation of the town, neighbourhood, or community that the newspaper lives in. All the community members would have a place on that site. Instead of being 'newspaper centric' on the Internet, the newspaper should be 'community centric'. This could be truly valuable to an advertiser.

...What I'd really like is a

customised newspaper. Created by real newspapers. A science paper for my technology clients. A business paper for our business clients, a sports paper for my entertainment clients. The big opportunity is for newspapers to become third party content providers to the advertising community. This is in contrast to the newspaper being the advertising vehicle. It turns the table on the traditional role of paper and advertisers. It creates new revenue streams for a paper, new readers and opportunities to use content which might otherwise have gone unused.

... The consumer of the paper edition will be significantly different than the consumer of the digital edition. If I'm right, there is an opportunity to focus more sharply your analog product — your paper

into sheer reportage of what politicians and experts say, simply because they do not have the knowledge or background to question it.

The answer, Koch says, is to use computer-assisted journalism and online information options, to empower the reporters. These facilities can shift the balance in their favour - rendering them less dependent on what one newsmaker is telling them.

Koch continues: "There will be editors who say this is all very nice, but 'I want my reporters out interviewing, talking to people. Not playing with computers.' ... The question for these editors, of course, is: what questions do you want your reporters to ask the experts and officials? [And what experts, officials and other people? - GB]?"

He concludes: "Interviewers need ammunition, need more than a source, a leak, a single contrary report. ... And where else but online are they going to get it?"

Koch overstates his case. Yet the more the world continues its headlong pace to become wired, the more important online mining will become to journalists.

You ought not to get carried away with gold-fever, but you'd be a fool not to recognise the developing reality. There's really gold in them thar online services ...

Guy Berger is professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University. An expanded version of this article is available online at <http://www.ru.ac.za/departments/journal/gold.html>

Web Press

ONLINE news publishing is something very different than simply an extension of news publishing paper. It uses a new technology as different as the gasoline engine is from the horse. And just as automobiles produced highways, shopping centres and bedroom suburbs, so will online news publishing produce its own completely unanticipated consequence - including new forms of what we today call 'the newsroom'.

... Online news skills not ordinarily required in the traditional newspaper newsroom encompass:

- Theory and practice of online and Web page design - an evolving skill as browsers and technology evolves;
- Intimate familiarity with what else is on the Web;
- Thinking in terms of multi-media: dynamic graphics, animated infographics, graphics with sound over, etc.;
- Multimedia technical skills - how to use new tools like JAVA, ShockWave and VRML;
- How to build threaded Webs related to an evolving

story and how to access in-depth hyperlinked materials that are background to every key story;

- How to create friendly, usable news-archives;
- How to build and keep maintained databases: movie and restaurant reviews, emergency and medical resources, shopping available, etc.;
- Willingness to respond to a lot of e-mail;
- How to cross-index news items with hyperlinks to other Websites;
- GCI and PERL scripting, and advanced Web design technical procedures.

... Creating a dynamic and effective electronic publication is not just a production job. It requires mobilising a new set of skills in new ways in a new organisational context. Much new must be learned to create a newsroom to meet these challenges. Even harder, much of what traditional newspaper managers and editors know must be forgotten.

VINCENT GIULIANO, THE ELECTRONIC PUBLISHING GROUP, USA.

Cost: R10 per paper (incl. VAT and postage)

● Roy Greenslade: *The 100 years war: big Saturdays, small prices and the fight for readers.*

● Yoshinori Okuda: *The public function and economic survival.*

● Pedro Ramirez: *Spain - the triumph of reporting.*

● William Ardell: *Technology - the enabler, not the solution.*

● A Kamel and M Pereira: *An O Globo experiment: listening to readers.*

● Stuart Garner: *The market is king.*

● David Lawrence: *The future of newspapers.*

● Paul Saffo: *The web is dead.*

● Timothy Balding: *World trends in the newspaper industry - an update.*

● Koji Takeuchi: *The Mainichi Zaurus portable electronic newspaper.*

● Vincent Guillano: *Newsrooms for electronic editions.*

● Deborah Withey: *How to approach design and why.*

● Alejandro Junco de la Vega: *Gaining market acceptance under adverse conditions.*

● Don Graham: *A look at the future through the rearview mirror.*

● Alex Machaskee: *Acting to shape the future.*

● McKinsey & Associates: *Internal upgrading and external re-orientation and growth - newspapers Janus challenge for the next century.* (Note: price is R100, this document is 100 pages long)

● William McGrath: *New newsrooms - setting out the next good old times*

● Eivind Thomsen (Norway): *Brand building strategies: the VG case story*

● Bengt Braun (Sweden): *Develop or die*

● Michael Sanet: *Building newspaper brands and business in the digital age*

● *The Daily Newspaper Train in Education:* Federazione Italiana Editori Giornali

"circulation winners" - 9 case studies from the Fiej readership conference, 1995

(Note: R75, 60 pages)

● *Challenge of the future" - report on the second conference of the World Editors Forum, 1995.* (Note: R40, 34 pages).

BY MICHAEL MORRIS

That hoary

Objectivity in journalism is probably one of the most maligned and certainly most unfashionable ideals in current debates on the role of the media, yet it is possibly the most important source of credibility available to lately freed South African newspapers and broadcasters as they seek to reposition themselves the better to exercise, and protect, their freedom.

word...

... is a bit like a grace: it's never attainable — and criticising it on that basis is spurious — but aspiring to it is immeasurably valuable.

Objectivity is especially pertinent in view of the efforts of politicians, particularly, to prescribe a role for the media in sustaining South Africa's nascent democracy.

At the heart of these efforts, invariably, is the notion that a vigorously independent, harpingly critical or disinterested media is unhelpful, even disloyal.

The nurturing duty that's offered as an alternative is a cosier, collaborative thing: it calls for political realignment (ill-defined "transformation" may, euphemistically, be germane), it implies sympathy with the political majority (the *vox populi*, it is hinted, is not to be trifled with), and it appears to abhor the idea that news is the really quite unintellectual business of satisfying people's curiosity about the world they move in.

What it usually overlooks is that the media's importance to

democracy lies quite simply in its exercising minute by minute the democratic rights of citizens.

Even so, the implied role — essentially that journalists place themselves on the "right" side — is seductive, perhaps mainly because it appeals to their sense of what they are against (and what many of them spent most or all of their careers opposing): the whole nasty regiment of what used to be called the "anti-democratic forces". The grand project of opposition has probably been the most defining feature of the South African debate since World War 2, giving influential media institutions a strong sense of purpose even if they didn't always live up to it, and the justification for several decades of elegantly imperious stand-offishness.

Things have changed, and to be truly non-aligned now has about it a whiff of betrayal, as if it's inimical to democracy, or might threaten it.

In the brisk Cyberian climate of the late 20th century, there's possibly little patience for the elaborate cadences of John Milton, but what he has to say in his *Areopagitica* (a seminal defence of free speech) of 1644 about virtue and truth having to earn their value is salutary.

"I cannot," Milton wrote, "praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat."

It is salutary because that is really what the media should be for. In this sense, journalism's crucial role in democracy is not that it serves the "agents" of the democratic process, but actually resists doing so.

It's difficult, not least because it makes the media seem churlishly indifferent to the celebrated rapprochement achieved in these past few years, callously unappreciative of the toll of repression and revolt in the decades that preceded it, and recklessly unmindful of the risks that would attend its failure in the years ahead.

Quite rightly, it's a difficulty that belongs in the media's province, not the government's.

But it's an important challenge, because if it is to succeed in its vital, independent role, and resist overtures to be cosier, the press must have credibility, and to be credible, it cannot simply be aloof without having a sense of why it should be: it must be confident in knowing not what it is against, but what it is for.

Is that possible without a reinvigoration of the concept of—the aspiration to — objectivity?

Ultimately, it is not what the government thinks that counts, but what listeners, viewers and readers think. It is their trust essentially in the sincerity of the news process that will determine the success of the media as a forum to test, expand, monitor and promote democracy — or even simply survive in the market.

Contextualising events, presenting the broader picture rather than bitty snap-shots, is essential too — but it's not a substitute for a commitment to the balance, fairness and independence of view that the aspiration to objectivity offers.

That's surely what underpins the media's confidence in what it is for, and its capacity to exercise the rights of those on whom it depends for its commercial viability.

It's this relationship that really matters.

Cushrow Irani, eminent Indian newspaper proprietor and one-time chairman of the International Press Institute, said of his own media's circumstances in a speech in 1979: "We have not yet learnt that temporary advantage is no substitute for principles. We no longer have even the excuse of the midnight knock on the door or the fear of detention for our conduct. So we must improve both our conduct and our performance and thus earn the confidence of our readers and the general public in greater measure than we do today. This is the best guarantee of our existing freedoms and it is only on this foundation that we can push back the frontiers of liberty for all our citizens. I suggest that there are no freedoms so dangerous as those which are not exercised."

The same might be said of South Africa today.

Michael Morris is Olympic Bid reporter for The Cape Argus.

A SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDY IN DIGITAL MANIPULATION

REVIEW touched on the problems of digital manipulation in a recent article by Montgomery Cooper quoting well-known overseas examples of pictures digitally doctored for greater effect or to fit the editor's most favoured format.

But even before Cooper's article, Cape Town newspaper photographers already had first hand experience of what it meant to drastically alter a news picture in a case that has since become known as "the lowering of the dove".

During Nelson Mandela's first public appearance on the balcony of the Cape Town City Hall after he was elected president on May 9, 1994, he released a white dove in front of a crowd of thousands assembled on the grand parade.

The significant moment was missed by most press photographers present as all of them were distracted by angry members of the crowd wanting to break down the VIP enclosure for a better view of the newly elected president.

The only South African photographer, as far as my knowledge goes, to get the shot was *Die Burger's* Henk Blom.

Blom, working with a 400mm lens, got two frames. One showed the dove just leaving Mandela's hands with a smiling Tutu (and security guards) looking on, while the second shows the bird about two metres above his head.

Blom remembers: "At the time there was a huge commotion going on at the back with the crowd wanting to break down the enclosure where we were sitting."

Most photographers had vantage points from scaffolding erected for the press and were able to shoot pictures of the angry crowd from above. Blom, sitting in front of the scaffolding, could not get to the crowd without abandoning his equipment, an extremely lucky coincidence, as it was during this commotion that Mandela released the dove.

As the batteries of his FM2 motor drive were almost flat, he got only two frames.

Nevertheless, he was quite happy with the results and offered the chief sub-editor both frames and suggested a horizontal cropping of the first as the main picture.

The next day a drastically altered picture was used on the paper's front page over three columns and about 30cm deep.

The picture showed the second frame with Mandela's hands in the air and the dove lowered by about a metre to appear just above the president's outstretched arms.

Ironically the headline read "Die nuwe era begin" (The dawn of a new era)—ironic as the use of this digitally manipulated picture was also the dawn of the comput-

er age and all its associated problems for South African press photographers.

Blom believes now, almost two years later, that the altered picture negatively influenced the impact of his own shot.

"Digital manipulation takes the control out of photographer's hands. The shot I gave them was good and usable, but by manipulating the second frame, they destroyed the first shot's impact.

"If a newspaper wants dramatic pictures, its photographers must go out and take them. The point is that when I released that shutter, the dove was not there."

Ebbe Domisse, the editor of *Die Burger*, also acknowledged the decision to lower the dove was not a good one.

"I immediately put out a staff bulletin at the time, saying that we should be very cautious about this kind of thing. I also gave instructions that whenever we change pictures, we should tell our readers that we have done it in the caption."

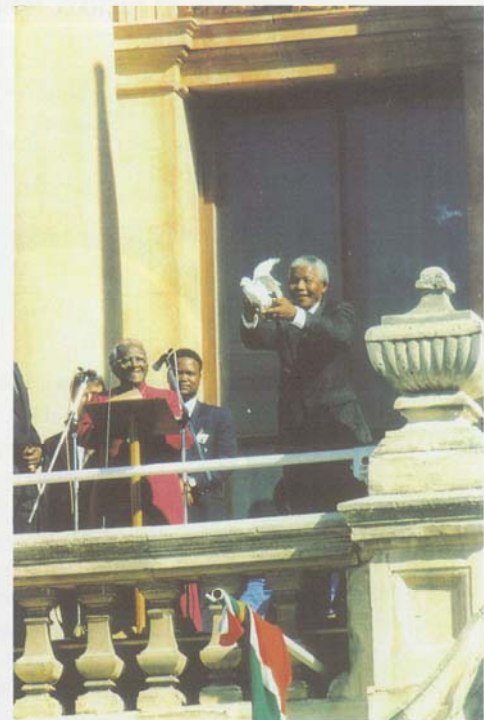
He says: "With the Mandela picture the argument was that at some or other stage the dove had been near Mandela's face. If the photographer had pushed the shutter half a second earlier he would have got the shot. "But the most important thing is credibility. We should tell readers if we tamper with images."

It is true, as both Blom and Domisse agree, that the unfamiliarity of the new technology and the fact that very few realise exactly what a powerful tool it is, are mitigating factors when criticising the dove incident.

The question, however, is where newspapers go from here.

Pieter Malan is a reporter with The Argus. He lectures photography at the journalism department of the University of Stellenbosch.

"Digital manipulation takes the control out of photographer's hands... If a newspaper wants dramatic pictures, its photographers must go out and take them. The point is that when I released that shutter, the dove was not there."



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Die keuse is deur die parlementêre keusekommissie gemaak. Die DA het 'n meerderheid van 175 van die 260 setels in die parlementêre keusekommissie behaal.

Die keuse van Mandela as president is 'n simboliese oomblik in die nuwe era van Suid-Afrika. Dit dui op 'n eenparige keuse deur die volk se verteenwoordigers.

Nelson slaap oor by Kobus Meiring

Therapie van die Westelike
 Nelson Mandela het 'n sifiliese kanker aan sy heup gehad. Die kanker is deur Kobus Meiring, 'n bekende chirurg, genees.

Volledige lys van LP's verkyn op bladsy 5

Die ligte sigaret wat bevredig

Ek is bly jou droom het waar geword, sê bewaarder

The lowering of the

BY PIETER MALAN

dove

The fourth-wave revolution which has now engulfed just about every major daily newspaper in the country has brought with it one of the biggest ethical dilemmas that editors, and especially picture editors, have had to grapple with in recent years.



Several years ago, in a dark room where we gathered, a beam of light shone on the man at the podium who predicted a terrible future for us all. The photojournalist of the future will be dispatched to a news event, his high-resolution video camera electronically tethered to an evil picture editor who would be barking instructions for every shot through an earpiece. ► *pg 39*

from
darkness
BY
MIKE
ZAJAKOWSKI
into **light**

Go for the core

by Cleo Ehlers

LOOKING BACK over this column since 1993 it seems as though I have been bogged down on one theme. Even now I can't resist one last word on the same subject—that of understanding newspaper readers and consequently non-newspaper readers.

Really understanding them, who they are, what motivates them to read or not read and then tailoring our effort from all points of the newspaper business, in order to best reach those whom we can and satisfy them. Without this crucial aspect, we are fooling ourselves if we believe that we can maintain a presence in their lives. I have harped on the need to get to grips with this vital and primary market of ours. The issue goes way past the numbers. Successful marketing demands a deep knowledge of people and then acting on that knowledge with sincerity and commitment.

I would like to concentrate on that elusive element of non-readers which beckons and confounds circulation managers and editors. All too often the pressure is on to attract the attention of those not reading our publications, sometimes to the detriment of our existing and loyal reader base. On the surface it seems simple enough: hundreds of thousands of literate people are not reading newspapers. We look at these people from many angles: How old are they? How much money do they have? What are their education levels? Where do they live? If we find that they are young we may bring a youth-focused supplement or section into the newspaper in order to attract their attention. If they're female, we focus on what females read and so on. But is this enough and what does this do to our core?

I would like to argue that we need to look beyond the numbers and rather make use of qualitative information on non-readers in order to understand what motivates their behaviour. What are their values, their attitudes, their beliefs? What are the triggers that kick-start their responses? How do we communicate with them? Can we?

I approached Market Research Africa (MRA) who conduct the most widely used psychographic survey on urban South Africa, Sociomotor, in order to get at some of this qualitative data. The value of this study cannot be understated in that it allows us invaluable insight into what motivates consumer behaviour. It goes a long way towards answering some of the more intangible questions we have on those amorphous markets out there. The possibilities are vast—there are implications for editorial, advertising, marketing, circulation, to name just a few.

Looking at the psychographic profile of non-newspaper readers, we begin to understand why they are so different to our readers and perhaps why they are so difficult to attract. In many respects they do not want

to know what goes on around them. They do not seem to have a thirst for information or the necessary empathy to understand the rest of society. We should also not forget that they are often at loggerheads with our regular readers, so that we would be creating or allowing a severe polarisation which would be extremely difficult to manage in terms of content, design and even pricing and distribution. Judge for yourselves:

NON NEWSPAPER READERS: URBAN BLACK ADULTS

- These are people who are aimless and given to feelings of hopelessness and boredom. They have neither the financial nor the educational resources to change their circumstances and tend to view any efforts to improve themselves as pointless. As such, they are not concerned with the future in any way.
- They tend to adhere to cultural customs, at the same time shying away from modernity, technology and liberal attitudes. Theirs is a backwards looking view of the world.
- With little to look forward to, these people live by an ingrained caution and with a great sense of economy-mindedness.
- They do not accept modern ideas such as the blurring of gender roles. Such stereotypes are to be upheld and not questioned. In the same vein, racial integration is not something with which these people are happy, nor is anything that challenges their old world view and which demands revitalised thinking.
- They tend to have rather rigid views on life and would not be open to change or to novelty. They prefer being indoors and are not at all interested in taking steps towards being healthy, either physically or in terms of diet. Essentially these are people who feel defeated and cheated by life and will not do anything for themselves, in order to change their sense of hopelessness.

NON NEWSPAPER READERS: URBAN WHITE ADULTS

- These are people who need constant reassurance as regards products or brands, as they tend to be suspicious of the motives of manufacturers and advertisers. As such, they tend to prefer mass-consumed items or even items they've made themselves.
- As with their black counterparts, these non-readers are very economy-minded, choosing items based on price rather than on quality. Whatever is cheapest is usually best, intrinsic value of products or services are irrelevant.
- Family obligations tend to be uppermost for these

people who would be inclined to spend their time with their families rather than with friends. Their life view then is also centred around family life and they are relatively insular.

- They are also orientated towards the past believing the "good old days" to be better than anything the present has to offer. This view goes with an inflexibility and with discomfort if things change. Rules and order are paramount. Modern society is a mess.
- They have a strong need for approval from others, manifested in a tendency to behave in a perceived socially desirable manner. They would never dream of questioning norms.
- As with their black counterparts, modern and liberal thinking is not part of their credo, neither is any thinking which would involve being flexible, open to risk or to questioning. Ideas which challenge social norms or structures have no place with these conservative people.

My view of the above profiles is that "news" has no real value for these people. They are not interested in information which can enhance their lives or shape their judgement. Theirs is a view which is rooted in the past and in a refusal to find anything good about today. Newspapers are often the vanguard for change and for stimulating new ideas. These non-readers are afraid of change and insecure about operating in a world which is individual and tenuous. We are poles apart from each other.

So then where do we turn our attention, if these people do not constitute our potential markets? I would argue that we study our existing readership bases from "qualitative" angles, explore what makes them tick and investigate the degree of our penetration into these groups.

In most cases we have a long way to go before we saturate the various markets in which our readers can be found. It makes marketing sense to focus our efforts on relatively homogenous groups, where it is not difficult to produce newspapers which fit within their lifestyles. Where we find groups, which may well form potential markets and which are not currently part of the loyal core, we would do better to investigate line extensions or even new products which will appeal to these groups, without confusing or alienating our loyal readership bases.

It is only when we begin to understand markets in qualitative terms, begin to feel their texture and gain some insight into their thinking and motivational triggers that we are in a position to address our own responses to these markets.

Chloe Ehlers is a marketing analyst and consultant.

At that photojournalism conference, we sank low in our seats in fear. Not possible, we thought. We'll fight. But even then we knew it would come true.

Today the debate about the future of photojournalism is less theoretical and is taking place daily in newsrooms all over the world. The question on publishers' lips is not if, but when.

With the recent purchase of digital cameras at my newspaper, *The Times*, that time is now, and photographers are challenging themselves to think differently about the way pictures are made. It has not been easy. Photography, however, has always been a medium in constant change, and photojournalism has changed with it. We look back on the evolution of film formats, from 4x5" to 120 to 35mm, as trivial adjustments today, but decades ago there was vigorous debate.

Photojournalists have not only always adapted, but have embraced advances in technology and used them to their best advantage. The Leica was at first considered a toy, until it helped define documentary photojournalism as we know it today. By the nature of the business, news photographers are obliged to use the fastest and cheapest technology available for making pictures because the success of any media — newspaper, television or computer web site — depends on its ability to transmit images to its audience efficiently.

Photographers, therefore, are often the technology leaders in their newsrooms because the gathering and reproduction of photographs is one of the most time-consuming and complicated parts of the publishing process. The metamorphosis of film-based photography to digital is a boon to the publishing industry. Despite the new challenges of moving massive amounts of digital information quickly, the basic advantage of digital photography is its speed. Buying a digital camera and laptop computer for *The Times* allowed us to improve our deadline coverage tremendously by transmitting digital photographs from sports events, night meetings and even spot news events. Photographers can edit photos, write captions, transmit and go home, literally leaving our competition behind.

The most recent challenge, and most threatening to some, is the marriage of still and video technology. In 1989, I was given a Canon still video camera to try for daily assignments. The image wasn't sharp, but acceptable if it was reproduced small. It had its place even then as a tool for assignments where a large number of photos were required and high resolution wasn't needed.

National Press Photographers Association President Steve Sweitzer, the news operations director for an Indianapolis, Indiana, television station, takes the change in his stride. "Digital just isn't that big a deal. It's just a new tool. On the TV side, we went through this over 15 years ago as we moved from film to video. Still photographers can learn from our experience."

But Sweitzer does see a change in the culture. "There is a new generation of photojournalists without a particular allegiance to still or TV. These folks won't have much trouble picking up a video camera when it seems to be the best tool for telling the story and they'll be just as comfortable picking up a still camera when it's needed."

Text, sound, video and still pictures will all be a part of news reporting through online services via home computers, as they are in television now. Dismissing any of these forms of communication is self-destructive. Each has its innate power and worth in the storytelling process. To argue one format over the other in the abstract is pointless.

However, photojournalists justifiably fear the loss of creative control when the possibility of the picture editor looking through their lens comes closer to reality. This situation reduces the role of the photojournalist to robot and completely undermines the creative process. Who benefits in that situation? As an editor, I could never presume to know better than a photographer I trust at a news event.

Effective photo editing happens during the everyday normal conversation between picture editor and photographer, no matter what the technology. As a director of photography, I'm always asking questions and challenging photographers to seek a new point of view, to try something they may not have thought of, especially while working on a documentary project. It isn't a confrontational experience. It is necessary to the creation of a good story.

While others may predict the demise of photojournalism, I see the daily multiplication of online newspapers, magazines and television cable outlets, as a growing market for the photojournalists who can think beyond traditional outlets and do what they have been doing for a hundred years: adapt.

Michael Zajakowski is director of photography for *The Times of Munster, Indiana*.

"The contemplation of things as they are, without substitution or imposture, without error or confusion, is in itself a nobler thing than a whole harvest of invention."

(Dorothea Lange posted these words, attributed to Francis Bacon, on her darkroom door.)

Documentary Photography Today

BY JURGEN SCHADEBERG

Documentary photography records the life, condition and behaviour of human beings, the social scenes of today to mirror the present and record relationships between people and relationships between social groups, lifestyles, working conditions and social behaviour. It also records the achievements in industries, science and arts... In other words, it is the Pulse of the Day, the "Zeitgeist"!

Documentary photography includes all subjects, from wedding pictures in photo albums to landscapes or wildlife photography, especially if the photographs have magic.

The world around us is continuously vanishing and as it vanishes, there is no way we can bring it back. Photography must hold on to the changing elements around us — a memory cannot be developed and printed whereas the painter, the writer, the film maker has time to reflect on the subject. The film maker, for example, can recreate the past with historical photographs.

The photojournalist, the documentary photographer, has a responsibility to record people, places and events in the most truthful manner possible and as humanly as possible, without distorting or romanticising, without adding or subtracting.

He must look at his assignment and examine it, and search for the often intangible truth. He must go beyond the editor's brief which is often short-sighted or distorted. The editor, sitting behind his desk, comes up with briefs and ideas which often do not relate to the realities out there when the photographer is in the field.

These thoughts are the ideals of Documentary Photography.

There are problems, however, that have appeared in the past three decades.

A historian once complained to me in the early seventies that it had become more

and more difficult to find images after the mid seventies of, for example, street life, village and farm life, community and family life, and people at work.

Somehow, with the closing of many of the major magazines in the United States such as *Life* and *Look*, as well as *Picture Post* in England, photographers stopped photographing life and rather worked for new magazines and agencies which covered news, wars, violence, the unusual and the exceptional.

The photographer who captures the most gruesome pictures of death and destruction achieves instant success. The images included in specialist magazines which cover such topics such as boating, cars, cooking, women's issues, sex and handicrafts, may well be of interest to future generations. However, they do not show the life or the "Zeitgeist" of our society.

Photographers used to walk the street looking at city life, attend festivals and traditional festivities and might go from an event such as a German Beer fest to a Spanish religious Easter Parade. We used to go to weddings and discotheques; we photographed the poor and the rich; we went to mental hospitals and prisons, garden parties and bingo halls, farmyards and factories, old age homes and nurseries.

Today I wonder whether we are still looking at ourselves or whether we are seduced by the superficial instant "fix" attitude that needs to look for the fancy, the unusual, the shocking, the lollipop, the violent. Are we ignoring reality as it doesn't sell?

Where are the images of life in our cities today — the squatter camps, the townships, the holiday camps, the religious festivals and community life?

South Africa is going through a process of rapid change and we need to record these changes.

Jurgen Schadeberg is a veteran documentary photojournalist and film director.



THE 1996
FREEDOM
OF THE PRESS
LECTURE
RHODES UNIVERSITY

Ivan Fallon

FREEDOM of expression and freedom of information have come a long way in South Africa in just a few years. They are enshrined as fundamental human rights in sections 15 and 23 of the Constitution and although there are certain limitations and restrictions, they are the result of societal factors such as the administration of justice, privacy, national security and so forth, where basic protections have to be guaranteed even if they do conflict with full and unfettered freedom of expression.

In South Africa, these are mostly the kinds of exceptions and pressures any civilised country would impose upon itself. I detect no indication anywhere in government of an intention to retreat from the principles of freedom of speech so central to a democratic and open society. True, ministers from time to time complain of a hostile press and a media which they find disappointing in its ability or preparedness to disseminate information and government policy to the great mass of the South African public. The press stands accused of not treating serious issues seriously enough, of being too parochial and trivial, of failing to provide the quality of comment and analysis many had become used to in exile in Britain or the United States.

There are several myths or misunderstandings here which are important to correct. The most important one is that newspapers in South Africa are mass media. They are not—their penetration outside the main metropolitan areas is tiny, and even in the big cities, readership is essentially confined to the educated, learning classes, the so-called LSMs 6,7 and 8. Of the 25.2 million adults in South Africa, less than 10 per cent read newspapers in the Independent Group, daily or weekly, and 14 per cent if you include the *Sowetan*. These readers may include most of the opinion formers, but even so, newspapers are not, and never will be, the most effective method of communicating government information and policy to the South African citizenry. Television, which affects the lives of most South Africans, and radio, will always be more effective media in this regard.

The second myth is the belief that newspapers have a responsibility to disseminate everything that ministers say, and cover every debate in every committee in parliament. Newspapers in fact are commercial, profit-making concerns, just like any other businesses. They have their own constituencies and their responsibility is to them rather than to an abstract group of potential readers with whom the government needs to communicate. Independent titles are regionally based, and owe their first loyalties to those readers and

advertisers who are prepared to pay for their services. Ministers sometimes complain that, for instance, *The Star* in Johannesburg does not give proper coverage to the opening of a new dam in Mpumalanga, but the hard fact is the editor has to take a view on just how interested his readers are in that dam.

The streets of Johannesburg are paved with the bones of newspapers which have tried to report matters which are worthy but of little interest to the residents of that area. Complaints made by ministers are on the whole, in my experience at least, constructive and healthy. They have never touched on freedom of the press, or involved any threats, even veiled ones.



The debate that rages tends to centre on this subject of dissemination of information but goes on to include ownership, diversity, transformation and foreign involvement, all of which I shall come to later. It also often—too often—centres on the question of competence and quality, the ability of newspapers simply to report events and debates accurately, which I'm afraid is a failing on our part (although one that is receiving a great deal of attention in our part of the industry at least). But it always stops well short, at least in the political circles that matter, of any serious retreat from the freedom given to the press in these past few years.

That, of course, may alter as the honeymoon period ends, the miracle of Mandela recedes and particularly as serious electioneering begins in the run-up to the 1999 election. But I for one sincerely doubt it. I have never before come across a society which so appreciates and cherishes the benefits of its press freedom at all levels. It has been long in coming, it was hard won, and I don't for a second believe there is any threat to it.

But press freedom means different things to different people. A single newspaper free of government involvement would represent a significant step forward along the road to press freedom in a number of countries on this and other continents. In South Africa a new newspaper represents greater diversity and competition, which certainly help the cause of press freedom, but not much else. In Britain, where press freedom is believed by many to have gone too far and to be out of control, it means something else again.

I often feel humble in the company of seasoned South African journalists, particularly my black colleagues, who have learnt and practised their journalism in very different circum-

*I have never before
come across a society
which so appreciates
and cherishes the
benefits of its press
freedom at all levels.*

The exact site

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stances to those in which I learned and practised mine. All were censored, most suppressed, and many of them arrested, beaten and jailed. All have extraordinary stories of the lengths they had to go to get even half the truth out, and the even greater lengths the authorities went to stop them.

Previous lecturers in this series, who have lived through it, have touched on this, and I only do so to highlight the sharp contrast between the inheritance of the press in South Africa and Britain where I worked until 18 months ago. Although South Africa now has, in theory and law at least, as much freedom as the press in any country in the world, the words "press freedom" evoke an immediate and emotive reaction in the breast of every right-thinking South African which is unknown to me and the depths of which I can only guess at.



In Britain for years we used to debate, probably equally heatedly although a good deal more comfortably, the subjects of press ethics and voluntary codes of conduct; we would discuss invasion of privacy and ombudsmen and rights of reply and reform of the libel laws and the laws of contempt; just as in South Africa journalists and editors endlessly debate the relationship between the Afrikaans press and the National Party and the media in general and the ANC, we endlessly talked about the press and the Tory party and the press and the Labour party; we became obsessed in recent years by the question of just how far the press could obtrude into the lives of the young royals before it became utterly intolerable, and whether it was possible for the Royal family to survive another generation living as it now did in the full exposure to a press which had taken the concept of press freedom to its logical extreme and which was now running into the threat of curbs simply to stop it ruining the lives of entire innocents whose only crime was to be the wife or child of someone in the news. We seldom if ever debated the basic principles of press freedom in the sense they are understood in South Africa, and which I believe were the principles on which this Press Freedom lecture was inaugurated to the memory of the *Sowetan* journalist Sam Mabe, murdered by unknown assassins.

In contrast to the elaborate framework of laws limiting press freedom which still existed in South Africa in 1991 when the first lecture was given here at Rhodes's Department of Journalism and Media Studies, the only laws that we worried about were the laws of libel and the laws governing contempt of court, and those, although many of us may have thought them unnecessarily restrictive, only rarely intruded seriously into our daily lives as editors and journalists.

The point is the British press, instead of regarding its freedom as something sacred and to be cherished as it is still in South Africa, takes its freedom for granted. Newspapers have existed and published for years in circumstances South Africans could until recently only dream of: a competitive and prosperous press, with a centuries-year old tradition of printing more or less what it wanted to print, a large, educated and affluent reading public with a long tradition of consuming printed matter at a very healthy rate, a wonderful diversity of newspapers—there are nine daily and as many Sunday papers selling nationally across the country, not to mention countless regional, metropolitan and local papers—and proprietors wealthy enough to support large staffs of journalists in the handsome style to which they have become accustomed.

These are the circumstances in which diversity and competition can reign. They are also the circumstances in which, alas, press freedom can also be abused and the excesses of the tabloid papers in pursuing their often meaningless stories into the very bedrooms of their targets have damaged the image of the newspapers in the eyes of the reading public in a way which may have long-term implications for the very freedom they pay so little attention to. Let us hope that situation never arises in South Africa.



There are lessons in plenty to be learned from the developed world, lessons of what not to do in order to make best use of your precious and hard-won press freedom, as well as lessons to be followed. That, however, is the subject of a different lecture. There is an entirely different and subtle series of factors at play in South Africa which directly touch on freedom of expression, not so much in the constitutional or

legal sense, but in the reality of how the newspapers, which are still very much more the opinion formers and moulders than any of the electronic media, report, comment and analyse South African affairs.

Forty years of apartheid did not leave behind it a press in South Africa well suited to taking advantage of its new-found freedom. For years, many of the more talented journalists had chosen to leave for Britain, Australia or Canada rather than continue to operate under the stultifying atmosphere which prevailed through the 1970s and 1980s. For years, there had been little or new investment, no innovation, very few new titles launched, and many which closed. Reading the first lecture in this series, given by Max du Preez of *Vrye Weekblad*, there are a number of stark ironies which jumped out at me.

Du Preez gave his lecture in 1991, a time of great hope and naive promise for all sorts of media in South Africa which is hard to imagine even today. He talks of the changes which had occurred in South Africa since February 2 1990 and their effect on press freedom: "We could afford to spend our energy and talents on those facets of journalism that are so terribly important: good writing, good culture, good sport, good fun and humour. We could start concentrating on good journalism rather than being just good watchdogs," he said. "It is significant that instead of withering away or being on their death-beds, every one of the member newspapers in the Confederation of Independent Newspaper Editors, that is *New Nation*, *Vrye Weekblad*, *South and New African*, have seen a substantial increase in circulation as well as advertising revenue since February 1990. One of those newspapers whose imminent death we hear so much about, *New Nation*, has just rocketed to 410 000 readers. That must say something."

Well, it must have said something indeed, although not quite what Du Preez might have had in mind. Good journalism clearly has not been enough even in this new era, nor was good sport, good fun or good humour. *South* has gone, a paper without a role in the new South Africa, with no backers willing to support it in its last trembling days. *Vrye Weekblad* itself, which had for years provided the Afrikaans educated elite with a broader political perspective than that of *Beeld*, a paper which I don't have to tell you had traditionally espoused the Botha position, also found itself without a role when De Klerk moved and *Beeld* moved with it. It too has folded. *New African* too is no more. As for *New Nation*, this is a paper which the *Sowetan*, in which we are partners with Dr Ntatho Motlana, rescued last year when its advertising had all but disappeared and its circulation had sunk to less than 20 000. It is now doing much better, but its role today is a very different one to that expounded by Du Preez, and it is still a long way from the dizzy heights of 1991.



It is an extraordinary and depressing fact that those publications which did most to sustain the flame of freedom in South Africa, and which came roaring into the new age full of hope, have, with the notable exception of *Sowetan*, either disappeared or are struggling. This is a factor which affects our newspapers too, although much less dramatically. Although advertising has never been more buoyant, circulations everywhere in South Africa have fallen sharply since the election, with the sole exception of the Afrikaans press which has held up remarkably well.

Why? We can provide some part answers including higher cover prices and more targeted titles which have deliberately shed circulation in costly outlying areas. But these are far from complete explanations. I cannot accept the view that the quality of our newspapers has declined so dramatically—in fact I am prepared to argue the opposite, particularly in the case of titles such as the *Cape Times* and the *Mercury* in Durban which are greatly improved titles, yet have suffered sharp circulation declines. *The Cape Times* that was delivered to my hotel room this morning is a paper which I believe is one which any reader, whether Capetonian or visitor, would be more than pleased to receive, and it is a paper I am very proud of, edited by a man, Moegsien Williams, one of the very best editors in South Africa and a man who is rapidly developing into a journalistic legend.

The answer may be more abstract and have to do with the fact that whereas once South Africa's newspapers were seen as the voices of opposition against apartheid, now in a country where every sensible person—and certainly Independent Newspapers—agrees with the broad thrust of government policy involving reconciliation, political stability, tolerance and economic prosperity, the newspapers have lost their old role

Forty years of apartheid did not leave behind it a press in South Africa well suited to taking advantage of its new-found freedom.

and have not yet found a new one. That does not mean our papers, or indeed any papers, are slavish supporters of everything the government does—far from it—but there is no real disagreement, even with the effective end of the Government of National Unity, about the type of society we all want to see achieved.

The country, once so closed to the press, now almost overflows with transparency and freedom. Journalists are allowed into committee meetings in parliament which are too numerous for the number of political reporters available, and too wordy for the space available to report them as they deserve.

Only a fraction of the debates are reported, but even then the reader is drowning in the flow of words. A number of discussions which affect the lives of every South African are either going unreported or are unread. The challenge to us is to find ways of reporting political debates in ways that do interest the reader, and I think we can do that.



But the fact is that press freedom has not necessarily been good for the press. The debate in this past year has moved on to a different, not necessarily higher, plane altogether, one which we at Independent Newspapers find ourselves at the centre of and which to an extent features in the Task Group on Government Communications set up by Deputy President Thabo Mbeki.

The principal brief of that Task Group is to propose to the various levels of government the most effective methods of disseminating government and other information; as a side-issue, almost as a postscript, it has also been asked to assess the ownership and control of South African media and how this affects government communications. The background to that extra part of the brief came after various journalists had raised, at a conference at Arniston last year, the so-called dominance of the press by White-owned monopolies and the powerful position occupied by foreigners.

Because Independent Newspapers is not only the biggest newspaper group in South Africa but also the only group with a significant overseas shareholding, we find ourselves at the centre of that debate. I have to say we are willing participants in it on the grounds that we are prepared to argue, and prove by the actions we have already taken, that we are not only an effective and unbiased disseminator of government information but we have also added considerably to the diversity of ownership in this country. One man's foreigner is another's international investor, bringing not just capital but international skills, standards and a burst of innovation onto a staid old scene; he is also a scarce animal which needs to be cherished, as he is in all areas of investment other than the media.

Nor are we a malevolent white-owned monopoly. Independent Newspapers is a highly successful and fast growing international company which is one of the few media companies which has concentrated on what it knows best, which is newspapers, rather than the more glamorous electronic media. It is currently the biggest newspaper publisher in Ireland, New Zealand as well as South Africa, and is the joint biggest shareholder in the award-winning *Independent* of London, but it is not a white-owned monopoly anywhere. It is involved in media for the long-term, and jealous of its reputation for integrity, training, the independence of its editors and the contribution it makes to the societies in which it operates. It has no intention of jeopardising that reputation in any country in which it operates. We will argue to the Task Group that Independent has been a major beneficial force in the South African media, bringing a powerful element of competition—and press freedom is nothing without competition, as journalists in Zimbabwe or Kenya will tell you—which has encouraged the whole of the print media to raise its standards by raising its own, launched new and innovative titles such as the *Sunday Independent*, *Business Report* and *Sunday Life* magazine, invested in state-of-the-art electronic technology, promoted bright young editors, several of them from disadvantaged backgrounds—the first time that has ever happened—and is now busy training the next generation of editors.

It is true that we have also raised the profitability of our titles, but that too is very important for press freedom, as so many of the titles Max du Preez mentioned discovered too late, and we are not about to apologise for making ourselves more efficient. A poor man, even if he lives in the most democratic of societies, is not a free man, and a struggling newspaper is anything but free, open to the influence of anyone, including advertisers or vested interested, prepared to throw it a lifeline. We are big and healthy enough not to need

But the fact is that press freedom has not necessarily been good for the press.

anyone's lifeline, but even after two years of sharply increased profits, our returns are still well short of international standards, and still not up to the levels at which new entrants into the market are easily encouraged.

Inextricably linked with the debate over ownership and diversity is that of transformation. Mr Mbeki has said several times that South Africa's mainstream newspapers are dominated by white males and that this could not but influence the way developments were presented and interpreted.

That is true—up to a point. The fact is Independent Newspapers is a group in the process of what must be the most far-reaching transformation programmes of any private media company in South Africa. It is radically reshaping itself to respond to, and anticipate, the needs of the new South Africa at all levels including management and editorial, not just in token terms but in much more significant and meaningful ones. Every company and every government department has to make this shift, and make it urgently. Unless we all do, and this particularly applies to the media, South Africa will have a very different future to the one we all hope for. And I doubt there will be much room for press freedom in it.

It is not my intention to deliver a propaganda message for Independent Newspapers. But the issues we are facing up to and the problems we are tackling, notably transformation, have a great deal to do with the way in which freedom of the press develops in this country.



It is by no means enough to have the constitutional right to print fearlessly, and within the confines of the libel and civil laws, what editors want to. That is merely the beginning. You still have to have the skills, the resources, the imagination and the titles to exploit fully that freedom. You also need a press which, regardless of ownership—which is largely irrelevant—reflects the aspirations, hopes and interests of its readers. And that means the appointment of the right editors to take on the achievements of the old editors of *South*, *Vrye Weekblad* and the others.

More immediately it means the appointment of editors to papers such as the *Cape Times* and *The Argus* capable of taking those papers into the new South Africa, and reporting, commenting and analysing that new society in a very different way to that which had been the order of the day in the past. Senior editorial appointments in Independent are already reflecting the spir-

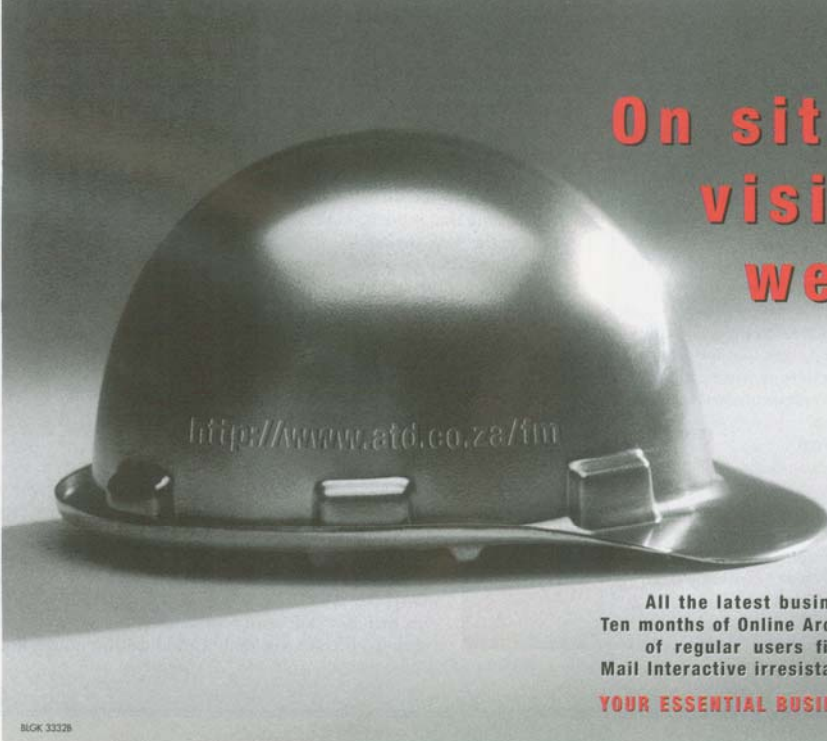
New editors are now being appointed who can better reflect the values and views of the new South Africa.

it of a fast-changing country and a fast-changing company. In 1995 Moegsien Williams became the first black journalist to be appointed editor of a mainstream daily in the group, first at the *Pretoria News* and subsequently at the *Cape Times*. It was not a token appointment: Williams is in full charge of the future and destiny of the paper he edits, and to which he has already made a series of substantial improvements. Shaun Johnson, one of the brightest journalists of his generation, has been promoted dramatically and after launching the *Sunday Independent* has now been appointed as editor of one of the group's flagship papers, *The Argus*.

In Natal, Dennis Pather recently took charge of another flagship paper, the *Daily News*. Eighteen months ago only one of the group's eleven major titles was edited by a black person. Today four of the six are. Both the *Cape Times* and *Pretoria News* have black deputy editors. *The Star* has promoted black personnel to a number of senior positions just a rung below that of editor. All the papers have also promoted women into senior positions for the first time, and there are now more than a dozen women occupying senior editorial roles in the group's newspapers. We have selected 12 of our brightest journalists for special fast track training to equip them as the next generation of editors or senior journalists, including a course at the Nieman Foundation at Harvard.

What you may ask has this got to do with press freedom? It has a great deal to do with it. South Africa has an old tradition of editorial independence and that has not altered under Independent Newspapers which also has a long tradition of it, as evidenced by any of its editors in countries overseas. New editors are now being appointed who can better reflect the values and views of the new South Africa, and are being given the resources, the support and the ability to take newspapers in this country into the future in their own way. As Thami Mazwai, a black journalist for whom I personally have a lot of time, recently said: "Other media must underpin our democracy and play a crucial role in protecting, consolidating and entrenching freedoms we fought for and now enjoy." Only a professional, international class, properly equipped and well-trained press can do that effectively, and then only properly if it is truly transformed. That is the press the new South Africa deserves. And I believe it is the press South African is beginning to get.

Ivan Fallon is deputy CEO and chief editorial executive of Independent Newspapers.



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Convers(at)ion

BY KERRY SWIFT **in** Munich

MUNICH in Spring is a most unlikely place to discover the 21st century, but the quiet-spoken and somewhat diffident guy sitting opposite me is already living in the next millennium.

John Richmond is one of those itinerant Anglo-Saxons one tends to find exploring new frontiers, be they mountain peaks or, as in this case, intellectual property. Richmond, you see, develops and sells ideas for the Internet, some of which promise to change the entire way in which the world does business. He is a leading missionary for the new technology and I sought him out because there's nothing quite like a Damascus Road revelation to get the old enthusiasm going again.

Munich is renowned for its beer and, in the spring, its fresh white asparagus basted in butter sauce are unparalleled. Thus fortified we set out for BMW AG's head office where, as electronic ideas merchant and consultant, John Richmond is preparing a vision of a Brave New World for BMW.

To get a sneak preview of that world, he takes me into the bowels of the building where he has been fine-tuning an Internet presentation for the BMW AG board of directors for months. This is a fantastic compilation of electronic wizardry which he hopes will convince the great men (there are no women at that level in Germany) that they are taking a privileged peep into the future.

The next step, of course, will be to get the great men to put up the money to turn vision into reality. The sum being mentioned is a R5.8 billion, serious money in any language.

The great men, you see, are sceptical about the Internet—most people who don't use it are—but there are some who have grasped the marketing potential of the Internet and, in this case, one of them happens to be the boss. When the geschäftsführer shows interest in something, everyone gets interested. The world may well be changing, but not in its essentials.

Bernd Pischetsrieder believes in the potential of the Internet because, among other things I am told, his son believes in it. This fact alone, makes him a wise man for, as the old Indian proverb has it: "Listen to your children if you wish to hear the future."

This is why John Richmond has been preparing this presentation over the past few months because, like the chairman of BMW, he sees what the future holds.

I was privileged to glimpse that future in previewing John Richmond's presentation to the BMW board. Every vehicle manufacturer's Internet pages get projected up onto screens

strategically placed around the room with the centrepiece, of course, being the experimental BMW web site—an example of comparative advertising at its best.

And the object of all this electronic activity? To get the board to develop intranet and Internet links for BMW worldwide—the intranet for instant internal communications and the Internet to do what the company does best—selling cars. The former will link up the world of BMW, while the latter will link the world to the company and its products.

Both are projected as being vital to the future strategic advantage of the company, but it is the Internet vision that is the most spectacular because it could change the way the company, and indeed the whole motoring industry worldwide, does business forever.

The vision is that using this technology, anyone, anywhere in the world will be able to order their vehicle via the Internet. The days of the brick-and-mortar showroom in every city high street would come to an end. All the customer need do is make a local phone call to an Internet service provider, access the manufacturer's local web site and order a car.

The customer sees the vehicle on screen and orders whatever custom bells and whistles required. As each new feature is added—blue leather seats, cherry-wood dash, CD player, climate control, real blow-up rubber doll—the on-screen vehicle changes accordingly. So does the total price of the vehicle. Better still your monthly repayments are tracked according to the ruling interest rates as each custom accessory is added.

For the manufacturer this means potentially billions of dollars in savings worldwide. For the customer, it means experiencing the joys of building a vehicle of choice in the comfort of one's own home with all the finance/insurance details being calculated as you construct your order.

Now the customer can literally cut his coat according to the available cloth. And, once the order is processed and cleared, the customer can use the Internet to follow the building of the vehicle as it moves through the various stages of production in the factory. As Keith Floyd would have it: "Brilliant!"

It will be even more brilliant when Internet technology becomes available on the home television screen which, of course, is the next mass consumer step forward. There's no doubt about it, the world is getting wired at a speed that takes your breath away.

This is the world that missionaries such as John Richmond are promoting and the fact is we are not that far from ordering whatever we want off our television screens which, in time, will be the conduit to the world-wide shopping

and informational mall. It is not something governments favour, of course, because they will not be able to control the flow of money.

In South Africa things are not standing still in this direction either. There is a great deal of creative activity concentrated on the Internet.

Despite its geographic location and its long years of political isolation, South Africa has stayed abreast of Internet technology.

Indeed, says Peter Blum, board member of the International Association of Business Communicators Southern Africa (IABC): "South Africans are technology mad. Look at the proliferation of cell phones and the explosion of DTP technology. But the bottom line is that we had no choice. The result is that we have some extremely innovative players on the Internet."

A good example of that local entrepreneurship comes from a link-up between the photographic agency, Southlight in Johannesburg and PictureNet, which makes photographs available on the Net. Southlight, representing a number of local photographic sources, provides the photographs. PictureNet then processes them to provide ready-to-print, scanned, full-colour news and advertising images on the Net for local and international subscribers. Subscribers simply search the PictureNet archive and download the images of their choice.

Naudé van der Merwe is a guiding light behind PictureNet and a director of Aztec, one of the leading and most user-friendly service providers on the Net. He believes that while local propellerheads are doing interesting things, big business needs to get wired up fast, warning that unless South African businesses gets fully on board the Internet, they will fall behind and wither on the vine of international commerce.

"Businesses around the world are investing billions on Internet solutions for marketing and communications. Unless local businesses get wired, they will simply become Third World spectators."

It is the view being advanced by all the Internet missionaries because they know that those companies which deliver the most accurate and up-to-date information to the market and which can respond fastest to market needs, will be the big winners. And the Internet makes this instant informational flow possible.

It is impossible, having spent time with the missionaries and seen what the Internet is capable of doing, to disagree with them. I have seen the future and I like what I see. Indeed, Munich in the spring is a splendid place. The beer and asparagus aren't bad either!

Kerry Swift is MD of Fox Publishing

But now press releases—reams of them from every conceivable source arrive daily—are the order of the day and what should be reporters digging into the fabric of society have become bored rewrite personnel.

Nor did we, like the current generation, ever get the press releases which have turned so many of them into re-write artists. We had to dig out the stories on our own—and surprised official spokesmen (no “persons” then) when we asked for their side of any story to balance it and so avoid a banning order. I did that almost every week when I was news editor on *Golden City Post* and the man in Pretoria came to recognise my voice. Prinsloo was Hendrik Verwoerd’s spokesman and his onerous job was justifying the workings of apartheid when the great architect was minister for Native Affairs, before the department attempted to improve its image with names like Bantu Affairs and other nefarious attempts at public relations.

I still believe that Prinsloo facilitated my passport application to avoid listening to this familiar voice asking embarrassing questions about the brutal application of apartheid—not so much the policy itself—towards the end of every week. That, too, was fun in its own, morbid way.

But now press releases—reams of them every day from every conceivable source arrive daily at *The Star*—are the order of the day and what should be reporters digging into the fabric of society, have become bored rewrite personnel. And they complain about being “de-motivated” in what was previously an exciting trade. Using civil service jargon unknown to old-fashioned hacks, they are accountable to accountants rather than their own, instinctive news judgement.

The camaraderie has gone, the accountants have taken over—the villains who have for decades been blamed for the demise of original creativity in Hollywood. In the lean days there wasn’t enough of a budget for them to interfere; but in these affluent days (the glossy new *Drum* bears no resemblance to the cheap-paper rag we created) cold-eyed logic demands balancing cost against news value. Correct guess on which wins and you too can join their chartered ranks.

And, I’m told, the new generation of editors seldom, if ever, drink with reporters. Not because the hacks would, when in their cups, tell them exactly what is wrong with their newspapers. They don’t booze, so editors are safe; but it appears they’d rather stand on their dignity than drink with their staff—again, so I’m told—except on special occasions like Christmas. But when I’ve tried to do the old-fashioned thing and “drink with the boys” it was they who didn’t think it was such a good idea.

Thus editors make many of their policy decisions in the dark since only reporters can keep them in touch with their readers. But there’s a fallacy now in even that traditional point of view since, these days, black journalists tend to live, like their white colleagues, in suburbia and are somewhat out of touch with the constituency we once served.

Not that I blame them for their choice of residence: I would certainly not have returned to the country if I was still forced to live in “locations” that have since been upgraded by apartheid’s official euphemism into “townships”.

In those good-old-bad days, it was our white counterparts (they didn’t consider us colleagues) who were in the dark. I remember young men from the *Rand Daily Mail* strolling into the *Drum* offices, looking around at us in amused surprise and then asking: “By the way, who’s this boy—I mean guy—Robert Sobukwe (or Nelson Mandela)? We hear he’s quite bright for a -you know... What d’you think, hey?”

We didn’t actually laugh in their faces, being a forgiving lot—viz, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission advocated by that other bright boy, Nelson. But we had fun putting them straight, even if we failed to reconstruct their stereotypes of

us as fellow scribes and people—and not only the surprising intelligence of Mandela and Sobukwe.

A generation later and with access to the Union Buildings—and black journalists “accepted” in the mainstream—I find what were once hacks transformed into earnest “professional” men and women who spurn the traditional hazard of my trade that created some of the fun. I have first-hand knowledge that booze has killed more journos than their covering any war zone, including Bosnia and Vietnam. My liver has survived the days of excess, but not so most of those I was wont to sip-and-fly with, in and then away from, shebeens in our youthful wild days.

But I was rather impatient with other survivors on my first return in 1990 when they only boasted about the hard-drinking days at what was supposed to be a seminar on *Drum*’s initial impact and what made it such a resounding success. Instead most of the reminiscences about “those golden days of black journalism” were about binges and blackouts.

We did gulp by the gallon to oil the ferris wheel of a merry-go-round that veered between angry resentment and hysterical laughter—and the latter wasn’t only to keep from crying into glasses of illegal, rot-gut brandewyn. But the binges weren’t all that made journalism fun.

With shebeen prices twice those at bottle stores, and paid woefully low wages, our guzzling could never have been the mainspring of the ferris wheel we rode.

We were callow youths, then, and whatever the circumstances it was that adventure into the dark which made the trade attractive: we would turn the dead-end that was black journalism into a highway that might not be paved with gold, but we’d make it as good as the whites-only variety that dismissed us as a bad joke.

We made it better, in fact: digging up stories they didn’t know existed in a world whose names were known but most couldn’t spell. We were not only cocking a snook at apartheid’s officialdom and its armed enforcers in the monthly *Drum*, and then every weekend in *Golden City Post*. Striking at

the underbelly of the monster by exposing evils that were officially not supposed to exist within the dragon. Written with gnashing teeth, most of the time—but we sort of enjoyed the muck-raking because it had value beyond selling newspapers and provided us dronkies with a professional respect. Even though, as some of our readers sneered, we were not committed political activists.

Just hacks digging up good stories, embarrassing the government and doing better than our rivals. It was an attitude accepted by Oliver Tambo, my former housemaster at boarding school where he was known as “Brother T”. On my return a generation later in 1994 Walter Sisulu remarked: “We admired you boys in those days,” but then asked, “Can we still trust you now?” And at a private audience Nelson Mandela, much older than the firebrand of yore and now head of state, made similar remarks—but didn’t ask the question.

The motto then was, quite simply, “beat the opposition”—and have fun doing it most of all. There were kudoos from “ordinary” readers which are still repeated; but that wasn’t what made the trade fun. Journalism was an adventure, not a job to make money from—nor a profession that was taken too seriously by its practitioners.

Arthur Maimane is managing editor of *The Star*. © Reserved

We did gulp by the gallon to oil the ferris wheel of a merry-go-round that veered between angry resentment and hysterical laughter—and the latter wasn’t only to keep from crying into glasses of illegal, rot-gut brandewyn.

HIGHTECH communication on Mount Everest

The team had planned to transmit live video and two way radio from the summit to South Africa. Only the link to Radio 702 was transmitted, not the video.

I spoke twice daily to Phillip, Deshun Deysel and Cathy at the Everest Base Camp and at Camp Two. At a heart-stopping 42 rand a minute for the satellite calls and faxes, it was even more frightening as the pause between call and response was, at times, nearly half a minute.

At the beginning of the expedition, Philip was a solitary figure struggling in the Kathmandu hotel courtyard with the computer setups from Apple Computers and the digital video links.

He was working on the satellite transmission system, which failed to connect with Inmarsat and the Eastern Satellite system.

As he said in his first fax to me from the courtyard, "I'm sending this via the Inmarsat, hopefully." He used

the satellite link-up from the middle of the courtyard, independently of the hotel fax/phone setup and it succeeded. He continued this amazing technological feat far up the trail, at the Everest Base Camp, all of five kilometres up.

Nearly 200 kilograms of computer software, hardware, cameras and satellite add-ons were hauled up the long trek path to the Base Camp by over a hundred yaks.

The power of e-mail journalism was really brought home to me recently in Grahamstown when I interviewed the team via international telephone link-up in Kathmandu on their return.

I then wrote the copy for two newspapers, in Johannesburg and in Cape Town, and sent it via email, page by page to the Cape Town office. The first copy was on the stone within thirty minutes. The copy was then transmitted almost instantaneously via e-mail

attachment to Johannesburg. At the end of it all, though, this dazzling technology provides a faster vehicle for journalists, but can never really be a substitute for great copy and great pictures.

Montgomery Cooper, Rhodes Photojournalism lecturer, accompanied the South African Everest Expedition from Kathmandu to Pheriche. On his return, he covered the team's progress for the Independent newspaper group and followed them through daily phone satellite calls up the Ice Fall, through blizzards and tragic deaths of other international team members to the team's triumphant, if bitter-sweet, conquest of Everest, more than five kilometres high.



The higher you climb the further you fall *continued from page 5*

"The media missed the boat. The splits were part of the story, but they missed the story of the climb. They misjudged it completely."

CATHY O'DOWD

"It was reported that Bruce Herrod had been asking for directions on his radio, shortly before he died. In fact he was on a knife-edge ridge with an 8000 foot drop on either side. He did not have a lot of options. Anyone who had studied the maps would have known this. We have the log of the radio calls, and Bruce never asked anyone for directions."

Another example of poor media research that O'Dowd cites is the confusion by journalists over mountaineers climbing with and without oxygen.

"With oxygen, it is like being at sea-level - you are perfectly capable. By confusing the issue, it was easy for journalists to say our decisions were bad because we had no oxygen. We did have oxygen."

O'Dowd's assessment is that the news media often did not know enough about what they were talking.

Is there some kind of mountaineering code journalists needed to know in order to evaluate how the climbers related to each other? "There is no code, only your basic standard ethics," says O'Dowd. "If someone is in danger, you do something to help. We didn't think Bruce Herrod was in danger in our judgement. (Herrod who was still ascending met O'Dowd, Woodall and sherpas who were descending).

"When you say a member of the team is dead because of the leaders, that has massive implications. The basic underlying assumption by some journalists was that Bruce was in danger and we abandoned him. He was not in especial danger - except inasmuch as being on Everest is dangerous."

The Everest story as carried in the media typically seemed to be one of human conflict, rather than one of humans clambering across crevices and conquering the world's best-known mountain.

O'Dowd agrees: "The media missed the boat. The splits were part of the story, but they missed the story of the climb. They misjudged it completely. Radio 702 simply reported on our progress, and this had people in Gauteng glued to their radios."

She is bitter that the media "missed the story" about the *Sunday Times'* involvement in the expedition. "To some extent they protected their own; they were not prepared to take on the *Sunday Times*." No one asked, she argues, why the paper gave Woodall \$70 000 in the beginning, or why it was nearly a year later that they got around to investigating his CV.

Similarly, she says, no journalist asked why *Sunday Times* reporter Ken Vernon had not been at base camp much of the time, and why he apparently preferred to report at a distance from Kathmandu.

Aside from the controversies in the coverage, what does O'Dowd make of the way journalists conveyed the experience of Everest? After all, *Carte Blanche's* Derek Watts, interviewing O'Dowd on the mountain, confessed to the camera that he could not find the right words to describe what it was like.

Her answer suggests a sense of media having met its match in the Mountain. "It is difficult to report on Everest, especially for an audience not schooled in mountains. It is not easy to convey how big it all is, or the conditions and difficulties you face. To get it 100 percent right is probably impossible."

She considers, though, that 702's Patrick Conroy did convey a lot of dramatic sense by painting pictures with words. "But I am not sure that journalism can ever do the experience justice," she concludes.

Burnt by her brush with the press, O'Dowd does not see herself working on a newspaper in the future. But the journalist within her is still there. She's commencing work on a book.

That much press coverage went wrong is a huge loss, muses O'Dowd. She does not hold out much hope of a belated correction. "There are other ways for us to tell what happened, and in the long-term, the public will hear and decide."

Her book is one of these ways. It is a means for her to reconcile the experiences of reporting and being reported on. The journalistic issues entailed in such a work are somewhat different to those she experienced on Everest. They are no less complex and challenging. No doubt, the journalists she now criticises will be among those who read the work - and respond in their pages with an assessment of O'Dowd's own journalism.



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...