

The Newsletter of The National Association of

ScienceWriters

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THE TIMES-PICAYUNE PUBLISHES COME HELL AND HIGH WATER

by John Pope

For six terrifying hours last August 29, Hurricane Katrina pounded New Orleans. Ferocious gusts topping 100 miles per hour made needle-like rain blow sideways, uprooted massive live oaks that had been growing since the Louisiana Purchase, and pushed so hard against the plate-glass windows of *The Times-Picayune's* headquarters that they bent inward. One big window in the executive suite shattered. But by midafternoon, the gusts and down-pour had passed, and staff ventured into the front yard of the newspaper's building. There was standing water and a few limbs had been blown down, but we thought the worst had passed. As some colleagues splashed around in puddles like giddy children, we talked about going home, maybe by the next day, and resuming our lives.

Were we wrong. Instead of returning to normal, we were about to enter a period of utter uncertainty that would be horrifying and challenging, forcing many of us to rebuild our homes and our lives while working harder than ever to keep getting the news out to readers who had scattered across the United States.

Our first inkling of what was to come was that afternoon, when reporters came back from the eastern part of the city with tales of people standing on the roofs of their houses as water lapped at the eaves.

Later, two colleagues who had biked to Lake Pontchartrain to check on their homes, announced even more harrowing news: There was a breach in the 17th Street Canal separating suburban Jefferson Parish from New Orleans, and water was pouring into the city.

Waves of fear and anger swept through the newsroom that night as news of the breach spread. It was dark and dank—we hadn't had electricity since before dawn—and the tense atmosphere only heightened our anxiety and uncertainty about what to do next.

The August 29 edition, with a storm map and an enormous headline proclaiming "GROUND ZERO," was the last one printed before our power was knocked out. From then on, we were an online publication at www.nola.com, fed by a combination of stories and blogs typed on computers set up in the photo studio, far from any windows. Generators powered computers, lights, and big fans that blew heavy, muggy air into our faces.

We worked in shifts, each grinding out an assignment before yielding a chair to another reporter. By then, we were typing up anything we could get,

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All articles and columns in the newsletter express the opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of the institutions they represent nor of NASW. The Council for the Advancement of Science Writing provides generous financial support to NASW for the production of *ScienceWriters*.

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SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Summer Next Issue June 1, 2006

Fall September 1, 2006

Winter December 1, 2006

Spring March 1, 2007

from big stories on the levee breaches to blog items on shelter hours and highway safety. We had become, for people with Internet access, an electronic bulletin board.

For the second night in a row, I slept on the floor in our features section, next to a row of plate-glass windows. When I awoke at 6:15 the next morning, I looked out those windows and saw that the newspaper's front yard had become a lake, and the water was still rising. As others arose, we ventured down the inactive escalator to watch the water lap at the front steps. Our position was, to say the least, untenable and unprecedented. While plans had been made to secure windows and bring in generators and extra food, nobody had counted on having to leave because the 17th Street Canal levee had let us down.

In a few hours, executives ordered us onto bright-blue delivery trucks with only what we could carry. There were about 200 of us—reporters, photographers, editors and family members, including an elderly woman on a walker and a six-month-old baby.

For the first time in the newspaper's 168-year

the Louisiana Superdome, whose roof had been peeled off like an orange rind. On the other side of the river, at a suburban bureau, we stopped on dry land for supplies.

***Our position was, to say
the least, untenable
and unprecedented.***

At that point, a group of reporters and editors approached editor Jim Amoss with a request to go back into the city to record what was, obviously, the biggest story in its 287-year history. He consented, and about a dozen souls clambered onto a truck. Among them the art and music critics, the editorial-page editor, and several sports folks, including their leader, David Meeks.

They knew they would live like urban guerrillas, scrounging for food, lodging, and access to all-important generators in an anarchic environment that Brian Thevenot, a member of the group, described as looking like something out of "Hotel Rwanda." They would

record the squalor and death at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center and the Superdome, ride with troops in Humvees who patrolled the city, and capture powerful vignettes of a city on the ropes. Meeks would write movingly of swimming into his flooded Lakeview house to rescue his dog.

The rest of us reboarded the trucks to ride in the late-August

Left: *The Times-Picayune* used its delivery trucks to escape the quickly rising waters.

Below: The staff makes its escape.



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANDERSON © 2006 THE TIMES-PICAYUNE PUBLISHING CO.

history, we were abandoning our city. But there was no choice because, for all we knew, the building was about to take on water.

Off we went, with water lapping the headlights as CNN recorded our escape. We turned onto Interstate 10, which was eerily empty except for a family walking toward downtown through the blasted landscape. I couldn't help wondering where they had come from, how long they had been walking, where they were going, and what they hoped to find.

But there was no time to find out. The newspaper had been driven from its home. We had to find a place to publish until our return to New Orleans, whenever that might be.

Heading toward the Mississippi River we passed



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANDERSON © 2006 THE TIMES-PICAYUNE PUBLISHING CO.

TIMES-PICAYUNE KATRINA COVERAGE HONORED

The Times-Picayune, of New Orleans, has received the 2005 George Polk Award for Metropolitan Reporting for its coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, despite the loss of its presses, its offices, and most of its subscribers.

In its announcement, Long Island University, which has bestowed the Polk Awards annually since 1949, said:

With only a skeleton staff whose members themselves were displaced from their homes, the paper persevered, covering the disaster and serving as a critical and accurate source of information for the battered New Orleans community and the world.

heat to Houma, where the daily paper, *The Courier*, let our production team set up shop. Then it was on to Baton Rouge, where we were deposited shortly after sunset at the front door of Louisiana State University's Manship School of Mass Communication, which was to be our home for the next few weeks.

We were tired, hot and hungry, but there was no time for food or a nap. We had to work. I was sent down the hill behind the Manship School to two massive sports arenas that had been turned into field hospitals.

There, for the first time, I was able to grasp the magnitude of Katrina's destructive force. All around me on the polished hardwood floors of both buildings were dazed, desperately ill people on stretchers with intravenous lines dangling from their arms. Both arenas were jammed, and yet more stretchers arrived in a steady stream, bearing people who had been brought to LSU by ambulances and by a nonstop fleet of helicopters that landed on a nearby practice field. In the ten days of its operation, the 800-bed center would treat 6,000 people.

That night's frenetic pace set the tone for our time in Baton Rouge, first at LSU and then, about a week later, in a windowless suite in a former shopping mall, the Bon Carre Business Center, which we called The Bunker. We stayed there until returning to New Orleans on October 10.

Each day, we realized anew the scope of Katrina's

impact because we were writing not only about such predictable subjects as insurance, health worries, and repairs but also about such topics as flooded archives that had to be dried out, delayed funerals of people who had died far from home, damaged landmark restaurants such as Commander's Palace and Dooky Chase, and the diaspora of New Orleans musicians who wondered if they would ever have a hometown gig again.

The realization that Katrina had altered, perhaps forever, so many aspects of our lives added to the anxiety and melancholy we had brought with us from New Orleans. Besides the stress we felt about our city and our culture, we couldn't help worrying about our homes, and those of colleagues. Whenever anyone brought in home pictures that had been shot for an insurance adjuster, crowds gathered to glimpse and to commiserate. One of our designers' proudest possessions had been a burgundy leather sofa, but in the picture she showed us, it was white with mold.

Few were spared. Mark Schleifstein, a colleague who had predicted such a catastrophe in a 2002 series, was much in demand for interviews from other media around the world, and he acceded to nearly all the requests while turning out major daily stories for us.

Yet his own home in the Lakeview section of New Orleans had flooded. His wife told my wife, "We had two feet of water in our house—on the second floor."

In this high-stress environment, where we sat on flimsy folding chairs at long tables to work on laptops, it was common to see people burst into tears for no apparent reason, and to reach out for consoling hugs as they were writing about other people's ordeals and thinking, unavoidably, about their own.

Bonds were formed among reporters covering that storm that probably are like those among soldiers in combat. I don't know what we would have done without each other because the stress was too much for anyone to bear alone. I have likened what we've been doing to covering a war, but there is one big difference: Journalists who go off to cover wars generally have nice, safe homes to return to. This war came to us.

We found coping mechanisms. I ran before sunrise on a high-school track near the house I had bought for myself and my colleagues. Another common tactic was compartmentalizing, solving personal problems when we could find time while devoting time on the job to delivering consistently high-quality journalism.

Besides doing what we have been trained to do,
continued on page 7



WHAT I DID ON MY SUMMER EVACUATION

by Shauna S. Roberts

Many people celebrate Memorial Day by having a picnic. My tradition is different. I change my Web browser's home page to the National Hurricane Center's site.

Since my husband and I moved to New Orleans in 1991, we have evacuated—with cats—five times. Many New Orleanians pride themselves on riding out hurricanes. Me? I'd rather replace a house than a husband. So, we evacuate.

Friday morning, August 26, I checked the Hurricane Center and saw that Hurricane Katrina's projected path would take it so far from us that I no longer needed to monitor it. But that afternoon, my husband gave me the bad news: Katrina's path had shifted westward. New Orleans was smack in her sights.

We parked my husband's car in a parking garage, secured a hotel room in Port Arthur, Texas, and e-mailed clients and family. But we made no other preparations; surely Katrina would change course yet again.

By lunchtime Saturday, nothing had changed. It was time to get out. We spent a few hours sandbagging, moving valuables upstairs, covering furniture with plastic

Shauna S. Roberts is a freelance medical and science writer and editor in New Orleans.



PHOTO BY VICKI STANWICKS

Roberts before...

sheets, and gathering cat supplies. Then we tossed toiletries and clothes into suitcases, piled work-related materials into two boxes, and hit the road about 6:30 p.m.

Those two boxes, hastily stuffed with whatever caught our notice as we draped our offices in plastic, made it possible for my husband (a professor) and me (a freelance writer and copy editor) to work during the months we would be away.

In Port Arthur, we spent our time watching the Weather Channel. After the canal walls broke and it was clear we couldn't go home, we bought a road atlas and debated our next step.

Logic advocated heading north to Ohio, where my father, three siblings, and a cousin live. We had several offers of shelter. I know my way around. We could get a good vet quickly. (Both cats receive intravenous fluids twice a week.) There's a medical school library. One brother is self-employed, so I'd have access to a fax machine, high-speed Internet, and other office equipment and supplies.

Instead we drove south to the Mexican border, where my husband's parents live in a very small house in the very small town of Alamo, for no better reason than that one day in a car with yowling cats was less unpleasant than three.

This was our first encounter with what New Orleanians call "Katrina brain," an inability to remember or make good decisions.

We got lucky. The owner of a rental trailer next door to my in-laws offered to let us stay there until mid-December—the first of many great kindnesses we received after Katrina.



...and after Katrina.



PHOTO BY SHAUNA S. ROBERTS

The shell of a New Orleans mansion consumed in the post-Katrina fires. Ironically, street flooding prevented firefighters from reaching it.



PHOTO BY SHAUNA S. ROBERTS

A rooftop plea for help is still visible five months after the hurricane.



PHOTO BY SHALINA S. ROBERTS

Musical instruments, ruined in the flooding, served as Christmas lawn decorations come December.

Our first priorities were finding a vet and acquiring new wardrobes from the sale racks at Wal-Mart. Then we traveled to the nearest town to buy office supplies, a printer/copier/fax machine/scanner unit, and an answering machine. I cobbled together an office. A card table became a desk, a nightstand stored supplies, and a bed headboard served as a bookcase. I was back in business.

Starting over was made easier because I'd evacuated with:

- laptop computer
- Zip drive
- CD-ROM of my most important files
- background for the articles I was then writing
- background for my next batch of articles
- PDA
- PDA recharger
- notebook of Web site log-in names and passwords
- bag of bills to be paid and checks to be deposited (without which I wouldn't have had mail-in bank deposit envelopes)
- highlighters, pens, Post-It notes

There were items I didn't take, but sure wished I had:

- dictionary
- medical dictionary
- drug book
- thesaurus
- my copyediting client's style manual
- instructions for accessing my voice mail and answering machine
- my FedEx account number
- more office supplies
- two-gallon Zip-Lock Baggies and/or file folders (to organize papers and receipts)
- lots more chocolate

My new office cost less than \$400, not including the office supplies my family sent in a care package.

Clients were kind enough to offer me time off after

the hurricane. I declined. Having renovated a kitchen, I knew that working would be harder after we got home and were dealing with contractors. I took December off instead.

My South Texas Branch Office worked well, and I turned all my assignments in on time. But I did face four major problems.

First, being a refugee is nearly a full-time job. Among many other tasks, we contacted everyone from FEMA to the insurance company to companies we pay bills to, and we received dozens of e-mails from worried friends, neighbors, and relatives that had to be answered. We also made 1,500-mile roundtrips to our house to assess the damage, start demolition and cleaning, and hire contractors.

Second, Katrina knocked out our e-mail servers. I eventually set up an e-mail account at Yahoo, but (Katrina brain syndrome again) I did not think of doing so for several days.

Third, Alamo, had no medical school, and I had no medical reference books. So I had to do all my research online, which led to our fourth and greatest problem. We both needed to spend a lot of time online, but had limited Internet access. My in-laws had a slow Windows computer with dial-up service, and we didn't want to repay their hospitality by tying up their phone line for hours every day. The public library allowed us to use its high-speed Internet service, but limited access to two hours a day. My in-laws solved this problem by signing up for DSL service.

**...“Katrina brain,”
an inability to remember
or make good decisions.**

The transition back to New Orleans had its own difficulties. Alamo, small as it was, at least had a working infrastructure. Our section of New Orleans didn't. When we came home Thanksgiving weekend, our house had no gas, no phone service, no Internet service, no mail service, no newspaper delivery, and no regular trash pickup. We stayed with friends until we had heat, hot water, and Internet service. We then moved into my office, which served also as dining room and bedroom; every other room was either under construction or stuffed with boxes and furniture.

Today, New Orleans remains divided into three zones. On “The Island,” the arc of unflooded land along the Mississippi River, people go about their lives much as before Katrina.

The second zone consists of vast areas of total devastation, bleak and brown and devoid of life. Doors dangle from hinges as if these ghost towns were aban-

done long ago.

I live in the third zone. Here, many people are back, living in trailers, with friends, or in their second stories as they fix their houses. Some have basic services; some don't. Streets bustle with contractors' trucks and delivery vans, and I occasionally see squirrels.

The life of a freelance is often viewed as precarious. Hurricane Katrina proved the opposite. I worked and made money as usual. But two neighbors were fired when they could not return to work because they had no place to live. Other people lost jobs because their companies folded. Many employees earned no money while evacuated. As a freelancer, I was among the luckiest people. ■

KATRINA/TIMES-PICAYUNE *Continued from page 4*
work was therapeutic and, because of the extended reach of our Web site, a conduit for informing people and putting them in touch with each other.

Because we couldn't avoid seeing what Katrina had wrought, we were angry. We're still angry, and I think that has brought an edge to our coverage, a determination to find out what went wrong, why it happened, who is responsible, and what must be done to make things better.

Given that rage, has our coverage been fair? Absolutely. Despite all the righteous indignation we may bring to a story, all our pent-up and not-so-pent-up anger can't make up for inadequate sourcing.

People who saw our Bon Carre headquarters, where the lobby's dominant design features were big boxes of clothing and snacks that other newspapers had donated, were amazed that, working under those circumstances, we could put out a newspaper every day, not to mention one that was investigating such suddenly relevant topics as hydrology, engineering, and the infuriating intricacies of insurance.

Sometimes, we were amazed, too. But we did it, every day, and we're proud of what we could do.

A few days into our Baton Rouge stint, a psychiatrist was brought in to advise us on dealing with the emotional turmoil that continues to be part of our lives. The symptoms, including heightened anxiety and vigilance, are not unlike those of post-trau-

matic stress disorder, except that we're nowhere near the "post" part yet.

As we gathered around the New Orleans-born psychiatrist a few days after we had resumed printing, someone handed him a copy of the paper. He clutched it and broke down, saying, "You people are a lifeline."

Bonds were formed among reporters covering that storm that probably are like those among soldiers in combat.

When we returned to New Orleans, each of us received a T-shirt bearing the newspaper's name and the inscription: "We Publish Come Hell and High Water."

By that time, we were exhausted, mentally and physically. Feeling I was running on empty, I told my wife the night before our trip back to New Orleans that I didn't know how much longer I could keep writing about Katrina's effects. She replied, correctly, that I'm not allowed to say that, or even to think it. This is the hard part, she said, because the adrenaline rush of the storm is over, and we have to cover the complex issues of rebuilding a city.

We're still at it, and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. I won't pretend that being in "all Katrina, all the time" mode has been easy, not only because this is a somber topic that we can't escape but also because we have lost colleagues who moved away or retired. Besides, we are on an austerity budget because Katrina virtually wiped out two of the seven parishes in our metropolitan area, drove away thousands of subscribers, and dried up a great deal of advertising revenue. For the first time I can remember, we won't be able to have summer interns.

But our owners and editors are committed to doing

the best job we can, and we foot soldiers are, too. If I need inspiration, I turn to an e-mail from one of my best friends from college, who sent this message to me and my colleagues less than two weeks after the storm tore through: "You are performing the dedication that lured us all into the business in the first place. Few of us ever get tested in this way. So far you're passing with flying colors." ■



The *Times-Picayune* staff didn't have quite the space it was used to back home.

REMEMBERING PIONEERING WOMEN SCIENCE WRITERS

by Julie Ann Miller

"A man who can handle our medical and health articles," that's who Science Service Managing Editor Watson Davis was looking for in 1928. It's a sign of those times that he advertised for a "man" even though the previous medical writer, who'd successfully performed those duties for years, was a woman. Ironically, the person Davis subsequently hired for the position was also female.

Founded in 1921 as a not-for-profit organization, Science Service aimed to increase and improve the public dissemination of scientific and technical information. Initially, Science Service was a daily news service offering articles to client newspapers, but it soon began to combine many of the stories into a weekly publication for subscribers. It was called *Science News-Letter* (subsequently *Science News*). The organization's writing staff, pioneers in the emerging field of science journalism, included several women. A Smithsonian Institution Web exhibit, based on a collection of documents donated by Science Service in 1971 (see sidebar), was posted last December (<http://siarchives.si.edu/research/sciservwomen.html>). It highlights the careers of many of these women, some of whom were instrumental in the founding of the National Association of Science Writers (NASW) in 1934.

The correspondence of these women reveals a commitment to science and writing coupled with peripatetic careers. In some cases, their career paths were altered by their marriages in ways that those of their male colleagues were not, says Mary Tressider, a Mt. Holyoke undergraduate who, as a Smithsonian intern last summer, created the Web exhibit. Married women moved geographically, when their husbands changed employment, and often wrote as stringers for Science Service and other news organizations when they didn't hold staff jobs.

Marjorie MacDill Breit (the medical writer Watson Davis was looking to replace in 1928) left Science Service to follow her husband, Carnegie Institution physicist Gregory Breit, when his career took them away from Washington, D.C. According to the Web site, "She continued to publish, under her maiden name, on topics that ranged from zoology and entomology to toys and bottled milk."

A letter MacDill wrote to a scientist in 1927 represents views that seem current to science writers today: "Our news stories are devoid of sensationalism in so far as the facts on which they are based are unsensational. Our primary aim is to give accurate but interesting press



accounts of happenings in science."

Jane Stafford (the medical writer who replaced MacDill at Science Service) had majored in chemistry but also took English courses at Smith College, and then worked as a chemical technician in a hospital for three years. Next, she became assistant editor at a popular health publication of the American Medical Association. That work exposed her to new medical knowledge and the editorial aspects of magazine publishing; it also "indoctrinat[ed] [her] in the ethics and principles of popular writing on medicine," according to the Web site.



Over the next three decades, Stafford's stories for Science Service covered medical advances against ailments including polio, cancer, heart disease, influenza, and sexually transmitted diseases, as well as the early work on vitamins. She won the Westinghouse Science Writing Award in 1946 and was awarded the American Heart Association's Howard W. Blakeslee Award in 1955 for "articles that contributed most effectively to public understanding of progress in the prevention, care and treatment of heart and circulatory diseases."



Science writer Jane Stafford helped to found NASW and served as its president in 1945.

Stafford's career at Science Service overlapped that of another pioneer of science writing. **Marjorie Van de Water** covered psychology and a wide range of other issues, such as agriculture in Haiti. Van de Water began writing freelance for Science Service in 1926, was hired full time in 1929, and continued on the staff until shortly before her death in 1962. Before becoming a journalist, she worked in laboratories developing



psychological tests and carrying out research projects about personality or intelligence.

In 1959, the American Psychological Foundation honored Van de Water with their Science Writer's Prize "for her career of distinguished popular interpretation of science," noting in particular her interpretation of psychology as it related to wartime issues. At the ceremony, the presenter said, "Hundreds of thousands of Americans owe to you and to your skillful pen their conceptions of modern psychological science. ... Many an investigator owes to you the fact that a substantial proportion of persons in that public grasp with fair accuracy what his work means."

...Science Service was unusual in hiring so many women writers.

Van de Water wrote and spoke not only about scientific advances but also about science journalism. She lamented the obscurity of many scientific advancements and knowledge, which remained "locked away in...university laboratories." Van de Water argued for collaboration of scientists, and possibly their public relations officers, with newspaper writers. Whenever possible, she urged, scientists should provide journalists with advance copies of lectures and addresses to ensure timely coverage. She spoke of a trend in which psychologists had grown increasingly cooperative at meetings she attended, but she urged more regular exchange—and perhaps even press conferences.

Although these women operated as effective journalists, the Science Service records reveal gender-based barriers. According to the Web site, during Stafford's early years at Science Service, Washington social organizations such as the Cosmos Club and Harvard Club enforced a men-only policy.

The letters of **Emma Reh [Stevenson]**, who wrote about archeology, anthropology, and natural and physical sciences for Science Service in the mid-1920s and later as a correspondent in Mexico, contained several comments on being a female journalist. Reh remarked confidentially in a letter to a male science writer that she felt her status as a woman had both aided and hindered her. She wrote that, for example, others had made the same journey that she was planning as part of an archeological expedition to Mexico's Quintana Roo, "but no woman has, and I know I can add something new." Furthermore, she attributed her access to some scientific information to the chivalry of men,



From newsroom to museum

In 1971, the Smithsonian Institution received 268 cubic feet of papers from Science Service representing its first 44 years of activities. Among the papers is correspondence of senior editorial staff, drafts, and final versions of articles, staff notes, and the morgues that contained back-up material, information, and photographs for use in future stories. These documents give a vivid picture of science during the 1920s and 1930s and the origins of science writing.

No content list came with the gift, notes Tammy Peters, supervisory archivist at the Smithsonian Archives. The collection was so large that the Smithsonian didn't have the resources to index the records, so only a cursory inventory was originally available to historians. Between 1994 and 2004, a retired Science Service staff member, the late Jane Livermore, sorted and wrote descriptions of the collection contents. Then science historian Marcel C. LaFollette helped develop an annotated and illustrated contents list, called a "finding aid" (www.siarchives.si.edu/research/scienceservice.html).

Among the exciting material that's turned up in the collection are photos from the Scopes trial, original notes of an interview with Thomas Edison, and correspondence between H.G. Wells and Science Service director Watson Davis, men who greatly admired each other.

When asked whether other news organizations should consider donating their records to the Smithsonian, Peters responded without hesitation, "No." She points out that Science Service had a special relationship with the institution. For example, the Secretary of the Smithsonian had served on the board of directors of Science Service. Furthermore, the donation was championed and arranged by Audrey Davis, who was a Smithsonian curator and also the daughter-in-law of Watson Davis. Even then, some people within the Smithsonian argued against accepting the collection, LaFollette says.

However, even if the Smithsonian isn't interested, news organization should pay attention to saving their record "in its raw state," LaFollette says. The things that would be most valuable to historians are often those that get thrown out. LaFollette suggests that universities, especially those with strong journalism schools, and other archives can be approached about accepting science journalism material. "It's part of preserving American history," she notes.

remarking that “if you give them no cause to be anything else, they stay that way.”

On the other hand, she noted, she often had to convince people that “a girl could handle (woman, excuse me) certain situations.” Less than two years later, she wrote to Davis that even this problem could be overcome by invoking the name of science. She wrote, “Science is like religion in Latin America. It enables a lady to travel and do all sorts of unheard things and wear the halo at the same time.”

Both the men and women at Science Service were among the earliest members of NASW. Science writers who socialized while attending large meetings decided that they should form an association that would function both as a professional organization and a drinking society, says Bruce Lewenstein of Cornell University, a historian of science journalism. Five men, including Davis and another Science Service staffer, were at the 1934 meeting founding NASW. Stafford and Van de Water, along with another woman and two men from Science Service were among the 11 writers that the founders invited to join the fledgling organization. At various times, Stafford served as NASW secretary and president.

Marcel C. LaFollette, a historian of science and science writing, suggests that Science Service was unusual in hiring so many women writers. Lewenstein estimates that women made up about ten percent of the science writers identified in the early years of the profession. He observes that the women tended to come to science journalism after majoring in science in college, rather than by beginning as newspaper reporters. Perhaps Science Service, with its ties to the scientific community, valued the technical training more than a newspaper did.

However, Stafford told Lewenstein in a 1987 oral history that the women at Science Service were paid less than the men. She said that she’d once complained to Davis, and he told her that that’s just the way it was. The files at the Smithsonian don’t include Science Service financial records, so there’s currently no way to determine whether the organization was getting a bargain by hiring the women.

Despite some missing information, “what’s extraordinary about these records is their freshness, rawness,” says LaFollette. “Things were just as they had been stuffed in the files.”

She suggests that may account for the information on important women science journalists whose names and contributions had been largely forgotten. LaFollette says, “What we do know as historians is that sometimes when archivists sift through records what gets saved is the record of men. Here, everything was saved.”

“It’s a you-open-the-box-and-you-find-something-wonderful kind of record,” LaFollette says. ■

SCIENCE AT THE SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

by JoAnn Valenti

Mingling among the glitterati at this year’s Sundance Film Festival were a handful of top-notch scientists. When not rubbing shoulders with Jennifer Aniston, Sting, Robert Downey, Jr., and other celebrities only those under age 30 would recognize, they were hard at work as judges for the Alfred P. Sloan Prize—a \$20,000 award given annually, since 2003, for the film best communicating science or portraying scientists.

It took *Sex, Lies, and Videotape*, in 1989, to put the Sundance Festival on the map. Getting attention for Sloan’s science award may need a winner with one of those key words in the title. In media coverage of the festival, it’s hard to find a reference to this year’s Sloan winner, *House of Sand*. When mentioned at all in news stories, it’s the last paragraph. Clearly the Sloan award is the struggling underdog in a festival of underdogs.

House of Sand (Casa de Areia), by Brazilian director Andrucha Waddington, is a beautifully photographed story of a family trying to survive in the shifting dunes along South America’s isolated coastline. Embedded in the film is a tale of important scientific discovery. Midway through the movie, a team of international scientists arrive on the scene during a solar eclipse to measure the light from a group of stars. The team returns for the next total eclipse some years later for additional measurements leading to proof for Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. The encounter with the group of astronomers becomes an essential part of the story. Technology also stars in the film. The passage of time over the half century is depicted by the introduction of automobiles, the phonograph, radio, and the landing of man on the moon.

Although those attending the premiere applauded loudly and seemed to like the film, I failed to find anyone in the lobby afterwards, including a biochemist, who praised the science in the story.

“Doesn’t bother me,” said Doron Weber from the New York-based Sloan Foundation, who believes the science “lesson” should be subtle, not hit you over the head.

The Sloan prize aims to encourage the telling of stimulating stories about real scientists—portrayals of people involved in engineering, math, or technology.

JoAnn M. Valenti, PhD, is emeritus professor of communications, Brigham Young University. After years of introducing environmental communication students to the not-yet-rated world of indie films just over the mountain, retirement affords her the time to freelance and relax.

The foundation also funds programs at six university film schools and several other film festivals.

"Our capital is ideas," Weber said. "The public is not stupid; they want intelligent [films], not being talked down to, but entertaining."

The goal is not to teach per se but to build a bridge between science and art that will help people better understand the world. Through its support, Sloan hopes to empower those in the film industry, to harness their creative energy. Along with the annual film festival award, this year Sloan also announced an ongoing competition for scripts incorporating science. Winning submissions to the Sloan Commissioning Fund receive a significant monetary grant to begin production and are assigned a science adviser.

The Sloan Prize aims to encourage the telling of stimulating stories about real scientists...

This year at Sundance only four of the over 100 films selected for the ten-day event clearly met the Sloan science standard. Unlike other award categories at the film festival, contenders for the Sloan award were not identified in advance, nor were the award jurors named until the reception when the winning film was announced.

This year's Sloan judging panel included Antonio Damasio, MD, director of the University of Southern California's Brain and Creativity Institute; John Underkoffler, PhD, MIT media lab alumnus and science/technology adviser for such films as *Hulk* and *Minority Report*; and Martha Farah, PhD, cognitive neuroscientist from the University of Pennsylvania. Joining them in selecting the Sloan winner were filmmakers Lynn Hershman Leeson and Greg Harrison, whose feature film project *The Radioactive Boy Scout* was selected by the Sundance Institute for the screenwriters lab. Harrison's script tells the true story of a 16-year-old from Michigan who built a nuclear reactor in his backyard.

Other Sloan award contenders this year, in my book: *Special*, starring Michael Rapaport, and *Right at Your Door*, both picked up for U.S. distribution, and *The Science of Sleep*, a hilarious English/French/Spanish creation from Michel Gondry who also directed the commercial hit *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. If you're lucky enough to live in a market where these small films play, they are certainly worth a look. Science is embedded in each.

This year several documentaries offered strong content relevant to the political and policy side of environment or science issues: *Clear Cut: The Story of Philomath, Oregon*; *Who Killed the Electric Car?*; and *An Inconvenient Truth* featuring Al Gore's traveling

lecture on global warming. Also soon to arrive on your television screen or at your local theater from this year's Sundance festival: *An Unreasonable Man*, an attempt to redeem the life of Ralph Nader; *The Hawk is Dying*, starring Paul Giamatti as a Florida cracker obsessed with falconry; and *The Darwin Awards*, starring Winona Ryder and Joseph Fiennes in a hilarious escapade through risk-taking based on the annual awards named after the evolutionary theorist. The filmmaker's thesis in *The Darwin Awards*: some folks just need to be culled from the herd.

Sundance films have often focused on the stories found under the bylines of science writers. Documentaries are typically the more common film genre for science and environment policy subjects, and Sundance has long promoted documentaries as an unsung art form. However, the Sloan award is meant to encourage filmmakers who target the larger audience for features or narratives. Last year's winner, *Grizzly Man* by Werner Herzog, was an exception, possibly because of the reputation of the director, or the quality of the competition. The award may not be given every year; a recognition that film offerings may not always meet Sloan's requirements for accuracy or nonstereotypical portrayals.

The medium may differ but the challenge of delivering the message seems much the same, perhaps imbued with more overt passion. Actor/director Robert Redford's vision to promote the indie world and diversity in films has moved from humble beginnings—how to

Sloan science film winners

2006 *House of Sand (Casa de Areia)*, by Brazilian director Andrucha Waddington.

2005 *Grizzly Man* by famed director Werner Herzog. Chronicles the life and death of bear activist Timothy Treadwell, killed by an Alaskan grizzly in 2003. U.S. box office receipts of \$3.1 million.

2004 *Primer* is about a couple of garage inventors who build a time machine. With a shooting budget of \$7,000, the film by Shane Carruth, who also wrote and starred, went on to win The Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, beating out several multimillion dollar films with established stars. The film earned \$425,000 at the box office.

2003 *Dopamine* by Mark Decena, available on DVD and shown regularly on the Sundance Channel, explores love via biochemistry in a romantic tale involving an AI programmer.

For more information visit www.sloan.org/programs/edu_public.shtml.

get people, especially from Los Angeles, to trek to Park City, Utah, during winter's peak to watch grainy, non-studio pictures—to goliath proportions. This January, over 46,000 industry reps, talent agents, celebrities, fans, and some 1,500 members of the press converged on the tiny hamlet. Exhibited films came from 32 countries, from Argentina and Australia to Thailand and the UK, with countries from every continent in between.

Moviemakers may have the advantage of time and potential reward over those who toil in the fields of daily reporting, but for these mostly young, first-time writers/directors, the pay/debt seems far worse and an audience less certain. Telling important stories, regardless of medium, requires talent, persistence, and sometimes, just plain good luck.

"Film is the medium through which you experience ultimate reality," one young filmmaker told a panel of scientists. I can't imagine a journalist, young or seasoned, laying claim to that level of expectation. But you have to admire his passion.

At the opening press conference, Redford said his focus now is on short films highlighting voices from around the world that might not otherwise be heard. Let's hope more of those are the voices of science, maybe sexy, but not lying, and no longer the underdog. ■

WHEN IS IT SAFE TO DEEP-SIX TAX RECORDS?

by Julian Block

You need no reminder to hold on to your tax records in case your returns are questioned by the Internal Revenue Service. But just how long do you need to save those old records that clutter up your closets and desk drawers?

Unfortunately, there is no flat cutoff. The IRS says the answer depends on what information the records contain and the kind of transaction involved.

It supplements this vague guideline with a cryptic warning: Keep supporting records for "as long as they are important for the federal tax law." Translated from governmentese, this means you should save receipts, canceled checks, and whatever else might help support

Julian Block is an attorney in Larchmont, N.Y., who has been cited by the New York Times as "a leading tax professional" and by the Wall Street Journal as an "accomplished writer on taxes." This article is excerpted from his Tax Tips For Small Businesses: Savvy Ways For Writers, Photographers, Artists, And Other Freelancers to Trim Taxes To The Legal Minimum. Contact him at julianblock@yahoo.com. Copyright 2006 Julian Block. All rights reserved.

income, deductions, exemptions, credits, exclusions, deferrals, and other items on your return at least until the expiration of the statute of limitations for an audit or for you to file a refund claim, should you find an error after filing. The statute of limitations is the limited period of time after which the tax gatherers are no longer able to come knocking and you cannot recover an overpayment.

In most cases, the IRS has only three years from the filing deadline to take a crack at your return. For example, the deadline is April of 2009 for the government to start an examination of a return for tax year 2005, with a filing due date, for most persons, of April of 2006.

As soon as three years elapse, you could toss out supporting records for income and expenses. Candidates for the garbage pail include W-2 forms, as well as canceled checks covering expenses.

But wait! Predictably enough, nothing is straightforward when it comes to taxes. There are two exceptions to the three-year test, though they do not apply to most people. Those exceptions aside, there are other situations in which it is advisable to keep documentation for far longer than three years—proof of when you bought and sold investments, to cite a common example. More on that in a moment.

The first exception authorizes the IRS to double the audit deadline from three to six years if the amount of income you fail to report on your return is more than 25 percent of the amount you show on it. To illustrate, the six-year deadline expires in April 2007 for returns for tax year 2000 that were submitted in 2001.

The second exception provides that there is no time limit on when the IRS can come after you if you fail to file a return or file one that is deemed false or fraudulent. The audit, admonishes the IRS, can begin "at any time."

***Nothing is straightforward
when it comes to taxes.***

Copies of returns should be retained indefinitely. They take up little space and are always helpful as guides for future returns or amending previously filed returns. Also, copies of tax forms may prove helpful in case the IRS claims you failed to file them.

Besides copies of returns, there are other tax-related documents that must be kept until they can no longer affect future returns, which can prove to be much longer than three years. For example, you need to retain records of residential costs, as well as payments for stocks and other investments. Those records are vital, not only because you may need them for an IRS audit, but because you need them to figure your profits or losses on sales that may not take place until many years later. ■

DATELINE BUDAPEST: SCIENCE JOURNALISM IN DEVELOPMENT

by Linda Billings

Fall weather can be iffy in Hungary. In November 2005, I was lucky. Instead of freezing rain, snow, and sleet I experienced a sun-filled week there, starting each morning with breakfast overlooking the Danube before engaging in a round of talks about science and science writing with East European journalists.

I traveled to Hungary under the auspices of the State Department's U.S. Speaker and Specialist Program. I conducted a workshop for journalists on science writing and reporting, talked with high school students about space science and space exploration, attended a World Science Forum, and also spoke about the U.S. space program at a public event.

I was invited to make this "expert" visit at the recommendation of an American friend in Budapest who runs training programs for Eastern European journalism students. The State Department made my travel arrangements, planned my speaking engagements, and paid all of my expenses plus an honorarium. It was the least stressful trip abroad I've ever made!

The science reporting workshop for journalists was hosted by the Center for Independent Journalism, in Budapest. My goals were to inform participants of the state of the art in American journalistic practices, convey the idea of science as a process and practice and cultural institution, and provide practical guidance on finding science news, interviewing scientists, and framing science stories. About a dozen people attended, plus observers from the U.S. Embassy. The age range was 20 to 60, with women outnumbering men four to one. All were experienced journalists who work or had worked for English-language as well as Hungarian and other Eastern European media outlets (print, broadcast, and online).

Linda Billings, PhD (lbillings@seti.org) is a research associate with the SETI Institute of Mountain View, Calif. (www.seti.org), who works in Washington, D.C., and lives in Arlington, Vir. After 20 years of working first as a journalist and then as a consultant to NASA, she earned her doctorate in mass communication from the Indiana University School of Journalism. One of her primary professional interests is improving scientists' understanding of journalistic practices.

An important aim of the Center for Independent Journalism is to teach American journalistic standards and practices. Hungary is a country where it has long been acceptable for journalists to take payments from sources for reporting favorable stories about them. Freedom of information as we know it does not exist in Eastern Europe.

Reporters in attendance were, therefore, eager to learn about the state of American journalism and science journalism practices. Over the course of a day, various conceptions of science, the role of science in society, the identification and framing of science news (for editors and for audiences), new developments in electronic journalism, and interviewing techniques were discussed. Drawing on my experience as a journalist, science writer, and communications scholar, I briefed the group on topics ranging from news values to journalistic conventions and codes of ethics, the functions of journalism and journalists, journalistic and scientific objectivity, the current cultural environment for science journalism, best practices in science communication, what journalists believe about scientists and what scientists believe about journalists. There was plenty of time for dialogue, and everyone had stories and insights to share.

The good news is journalists covering science in Hungary find themselves working in the same sort of environment that American journalists do. The bad news is this environment presents the same sort of challenges: too much science to cover and not enough time (or people or space) to cover it, editors who are not as interested in science stories as their reporters (and probably their audiences) are, misunderstandings about public understanding of science, and suspicion on the part of scientists about science journalists' motives. Throughout the workshop, possible means of resolving these problems were discussed, and I offered tips for dealing with editors and scientists (some gleaned from NASW workshops).

I would cross paths again with a few of the workshop participants at the World Science Forum (www.sciforum.hu), hosted by the Hungarian Academy of Scientists. It was a huge, crowded gathering, packed with dignitaries. One well-received session was organized by the World Federation of Science Journalists and featured NASW past president Deborah Blum, on the topic of narrative journalism.

The picture of science presented at this meeting was truly global and featured large delegations from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. This forum offered a good vantage point from which to observe how nations, particularly China and countries in the developing



world, are positioning themselves in the global science community.

An encounter with students occurred during a presentation to the “Supernova” astronomy group at the Alternative School for Economic Sciences, in Budapest. I found these high school students exceptionally mature, polite, prepared, and not shy about asking probing questions. This particular astronomy club did not appear to fit any geeky stereotype, and girls made up about a third of the group. Some in the group were exceedingly well informed about the U.S. space program, and in fact one boy had recently visited U.S. space facilities under the sponsorship of The Planetary Society, a California-based space exploration advocacy group.

Toward the end of my stay, I visited the medieval town of Pecs, about three hours’ drive from Budapest, to give a talk about the U.S. space program, focusing on space science. This public event was organized by the American Corner program, a State-Department-sponsored cultural exchange initiative with centers in a number of countries. Questions from the audience (a couple of dozen young adults together with two school boys who accompanied their father) ranged from space science to human space flight to the politics of U.S. spending on space exploration while the nation is still engaged in a war with Iraq and while poverty persists at home and abroad. There’s nothing like being asked to defend your president when you didn’t vote for him.

Back home I’ve stayed in touch by e-mail with workshop participants, sending information on journalism fellowships and referring them to the NASW Web site for additional information about science writing. At least one has ordered a copy of the new *A Field Guide for Science Writers*. I’ve compiled a list of contacts and other sources of information for anyone who might be interested in reporting on space-science topics (available upon request), and have sent the list to participants in last fall’s lunchtime discussion about reporting on space science at the NASW workshops, in Pittsburgh.

***There’s nothing like being asked
to defend your president when
you didn’t vote for him.***

A valuable resource I came across in Budapest is a Hungarian online public science program called Mindentudas (www.mindentudas.hu/en/index.html), sponsored by Magyar Telekom (one of Hungary’s largest Internet service providers), T-Online, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and others. Mindentudas features public lectures by leading experts in a range of scientific disciplines, online classes available for credit, and other information sources. It’s so popular that activities

tend to be oversubscribed. The content of the Mindentudas Web site is available in five languages, including English. (The program is known in English as Encompass—ENcyclopediC knOwledge Made a Popular ASSet). Mindentudas offers a model worth emulating in other countries.

Cultural exchange between American science journalists and their counterparts in other countries is worth promoting as the role of science in everyday life grows not just in the United States but worldwide. The recent formation of the World Federation of Science Journalists is evidence of the increasing globalization of science journalism. Given the nascent state of journalism education in Hungary and throughout the rest of Eastern Europe, I hope NASW explores possibilities for presenting more U.S. science journalism talks and workshops in the region, working with journalism groups (such as the Center for Independent Journalism), universities, and national and regional academies of science. I appreciate being given this opportunity to participate in cross-cultural exchange, and I’d do it again in a heartbeat. ■

SCIENCE BLOGS AS VEHICLE FOR UPSCALE ADS

by Stuart Elliott

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

by Laura van Dam

"Hooray!" exclaimed NASW grievance committee members Dan Ferber and Robin Marantz Henig when they announced, in early February, the quick and positive resolution of complaints against two slow-paying publishers.

Ellen Ruppel Shell, another committee member, replied with equal enthusiasm. "A fabulous first step," she wrote.

Success already—for a committee that had been in existence just one month.

Of course, the real celebrating was done by the NASW members who collected thousands of dollars due them. One grateful writer is Bruce Goldman, who wrote to Ferber, "You just hit a home run."

The grievance committee won its first two cases using a polite but firm approach, in letters to the publishers in question. Apparently, it did not go unnoticed by them that, with nearly 2,400 members, NASW is an organization with clout.

Success already—for a committee that had been in existence just one month.

Critical to the grievance committee's ability to make a case for payment were paper trails that included agreements, subsequent communications, telephone phone logs, and copies of e-mail correspondence. This enabled Ferber to state the facts with authority in seeking redress. He allowed the publishers a chance to save face ("I want to give you the opportunity to correct what I'm sure is an oversight"), but didn't pull punches. He warned: "Please know that if you do not respond to this letter by January 21, we plan to include an item describing this case on an NASW listserv and in a newsletter that goes out to all NASW members."

While we'd rather that there were no call for a grievance committee, it's good to know NASW is here to help when members need it.

Ferber states the central philosophy of the grievance committee: "You are a professional, you did the work in a timely manner, and you deserve to be paid in a timely manner."

Part of being a professional is taking responsibility

Laura van Dam is a freelance writer and editor. She can be reached at lvandam@nasw.org.



PHOTO BY HOWARD SAXNER

for the following before bringing a case to the grievance committee.

- Find out the reputation of a potential client. Look for signs of previous payment problems by a company or individual.
- Make sure you have a contract (sometimes referred to as a "letter of agreement"). If the agreement is verbal, at the very least write down the relevant information and e-mail a copy to the client.
- Get everything in writing and keep supporting materials on file (contracts, letters, e-mails printouts, notes taken during telephone calls, and any related exchanges).
- Contact the client if there's a payment problem, stating your case by referring to the documents you have on file.

If these precautions and collection efforts fail, then it's time to contact the grievance committee, who will evaluate the merits of the situation.

While there's no guarantee of success in every case, the grievance committee has certainly made an auspicious debut. Hooray! ■

CYBERBEAT

by Russell Clemings

One of the most frequent questions directed to the cybrarian@NASW.org mailbox has to do with whether the NASW.org e-mail forwarding service is working properly.

"I think the NASW e-mail server has been down since last night," one member wrote recently. "I've sent myself several test messages, and my actual e-mail accounts are working. Do you know when it will be back online?"

It didn't take long to confirm that the server was working just fine: My inbox, as usual, was overflowing with messages sent to cybrarian@NASW.org and other NASW.org addresses.

So why wasn't this member getting his mail?

The answer: He was. But his Internet provider, in a perhaps misguided effort to protect him from unwanted (spam) e-mails, was dumping all of the mail forwarded from his NASW.org address into a junk mail folder.

Why it was doing this is hard to say. But it happens more than occasionally. Worse, some providers even take things a step further and simply start throwing away NASW.org mail without warning.

Russell Clemings is NASW's cybrarian and a reporter for the Fresno Bee. Drop him a note at cybrarian@nasw.org or rclmings@gmail.com.



On occasion recently, one or more AOL users used their "Mark as Spam" button on messages sent to NASW.org addresses and/or NASW listservs. As a result, AOL simply stopped accepting mail from the servers used by NASW.org. It took several days to straighten things out.

—

***...if you suspect your
NASW.org mail is not reaching
you, before doing anything else,
check your spam folder...***

—

Around the same time, the same thing happened at a small college in the Midwest. Again, the NASW member was not told. Her college's IT department just decided that anything coming from NASW.org must be junk mail and threw it away.

What can you do about this? The answer depends on your Internet provider.

But often you can add NASW.org to a "whitelist" of addresses from which you will always accept mail.

And in any event, if you suspect your NASW.org mail is not reaching you, before doing anything else, check your spam folder—both at your Internet provider and, if you use freestanding e-mail software such as Outlook or Eudora, in your personal folders.

If your provider doesn't let you create a whitelist or doesn't save suspected spam for your review, consider switching providers.

It's one thing for a provider to help you filter out spam. But you wouldn't want the post office to throw away your mail without permission. Don't let your Internet provider do the same with your NASW.org mail.

Their Money's as Good as Anybody's

One of the first things they told me when I took this job was that I would be driven crazy by social workers looking for the National Association of Social Workers, which shares our initials but not our domain name. But now I have firm evidence that their confusion can work to our benefit.

In the past year, the NASW Science Bookstore sold 318 items, including 111 copies of *A Field Guide for Science Writers*, but also:

- Three copies of *Social Work Speaks: National Association of Social Workers Policy Statements, 2003-2006*.
- One each of: *Clinical Social Work: Beyond Generalist Practice with Individuals, Groups and Families, Careers in Social Work* (2nd Edition), *Days in The Lives Of Social Workers: 50 Professionals Tell Real-Life Stories From Social Work Practice, Foundations of Social Work Practice: A Graduate Text, Strengths Perspective in Social Work Practice* (4th Edition), and

The Social Work Dictionary

And as long as we're talking about stupid human tricks, it's time for a confession. Last Christmas I ordered a \$200 camera for my daughter from Amazon.com. Not until later did it hit me—I could have paid the same price, ordered it through the NASW Science Bookstore (more than just books!), and earned about \$8 for NASW.

nasw-talk

Whoever said journalists don't do math hasn't spent much time with the nasw-talk crowd, which definitely knows from Euclid.

On Jan. 4, New York freelancer Blair Bolles posed this query: "A friend has sent me an AP story with the headline: 'Mo. Researchers Find Largest Prime Number: Team of Researchers at Central Missouri State University Discover World's Largest Prime Number.' My friend wonders if this really matters. Does it?"

He never heard much of a consensus, but what he did get was a detailed critique of the headline's assertion that the team had found the "largest" prime number.

"Even without reading it I'd be willing to bet it's the largest prime number found SO FAR, with every expectation that there will be an even larger one found sometime," *Time* writer Mike Lemonick replied.

Minnesota writer Mary Hoff was the first to invoke the immortal Euclid, with a link to a discussion of his proof that there is an infinite number of primes: <http://primes.utm.edu/notes/proofs/infinite/euclids.html>.

On the central question, Agency Zoe of Medical Information editor Fabio Turone threw in from Italy with the "who cares?" contingent: "Why should one put so many computers at work for so long when every achievement is one in an infinite list of numbers just waiting to be 'discovered'?"

Chicago freelancer Bill Thomasson spoke for the defense: "I don't know about this particular discovery, but generally the search for a new, larger prime is also a search for new computational techniques for handling very large numbers. Distributed computing is just one example."

Join NASW in Baltimore this October

Make plans now to attend the 2006 NASW annual workshops, held in conjunction with the CASW New Horizons in Science Briefing. Program information and online registration available in August. Join your colleagues in Baltimore, Oct. 27-31.

- NASW Science-in-Society Meeting (Oct. 27-28)
- CASW New Horizons (Oct. 28-31)
- NASW/CASW Awards Banquet (Oct. 29)

nasw-freelance

When it comes to the technical stuff, they're no slouches over on nasw-freelance either, as evidenced by the responses to Ontario freelancer Thomas May's Feb. 2 query.

"In an article I'm writing, I have to say that a particular gene is 'highly expressed' in a certain area of the brain, but my editor wants to change it to say that the gene is 'abundant' or 'prevalent' in that area. I have a feeling that this is not quite right."

List members agreed and suggested alternatives:

"The gene might be highly expressed, or the gene PRODUCT might be more abundant or prevalent, but it would be unusual in humans to have the gene itself be more abundant or prevalent," offered Virginia freelancer David M. Lawrence.

California freelancer Jennie Dusheck proposed a different wording: "How about: 'The gene makes a lot of its particular protein in that part of the body.?'"

Another suggestion came from Arizona writer Paul Muhlrud: "How about 'the gene is cranked way up' (like a rheostat)? I think I've used that one before. You don't have to know anything to understand that, just that it's doing its job in overdrive."

The discussion continued. By the next morning, with the list's help, May reached a decision: "I think I'll just say that the gene is 'highly active' (as opposed to 'highly expressed,' which my editor doesn't like) in that area of the brain. We'll see what happens..." ■

Tabitha Powledge takes her leave as The Free Lance

After nearly a decade as the sole contributor to The Free Lance column, Tabitha (Tammy) Powledge has elected to step down and open this newsletter forum to other voices. Thank you Tammy for your hard work, dedication to NASW, and leadership through the newsletter, the freelance committee, and the NASW board.

Launched in the spring of 1997, The Free Lance has examined the myriad topics, trends, and tools that have come to dominate the life of freelance writers. The Free Lance has become an NASW mainstay and will continue with a series of guest columnists.

If you have an insight, observation, or opinion you'd like expressed in The Free Lance, contact me with your ideas.—Ed.

THE FREE LANCE

by Jeff Hecht

Electronic piracy and the writer: what should we worry about?

Should writers worry about the electronic piracy that the music industry and Hollywood are loudly proclaiming threatens to put them out of business? Electronic books are available, but most book buyers prefer our product on old-fashioned paper. Yet it's too early to write off e-books as a failure. People may not buy very many of them, but most of us use electronic documents freely distributed in the Adobe PDF (Portable Document File) format every day, although we may not think of them as "books."

Free digital documents are readily available on the Internet in other formats as well. But some of them aren't supposed to be free. To check what is out there, I Googled on "Terry Pratchett ebook," and found the top entry was www.e-biblioteka.com/free.htm. It's one of innumerable Web sites scattered around the globe offering free pirated electronic books in a bewildering array of formats. Some are cracked copies of e-books published in copy-protected form for electronic readers, handhelds, or computers, but most were made by scanning paper copies. You can find another pirate stash in the alt.binaries.ebook section of Usenet—and if you aren't familiar with Usenet, you can find a more friendly interface at www.usenet-replayer.com/groups.

Pirates are bad enough, but both Amazon and Google also have scanned thousands of books into their computers. Amazon's goal is to increase book sales by allowing users to Search Inside books online. The company claims the program increases book sales, but many authors are skeptical they benefit, particularly since Amazon peddles used copies along with new ones. Google has a two-pronged project called Google Print. One part, the Print Publisher Program, is scanning books with the approval of publishers to build a searchable database similar to Amazon's Search Inside. The second, the Print Library Project, plans to build a searchable online library by scanning the contents of several major research libraries to build a searchable digital library. Books out of copyright will be displayed in entirety, but only small excerpts will be displayed for books in print.

Jeff Hecht has been free-lancing since 1981. He has written 11 books and contributes regularly to New Scientist and Laser Focus World magazines.



PHOTO BY LOS HECHT

Do these trends mean an apocalyptic end for those of us trying to earn a living from freelance writing? Will we end up starving on the streets along with all the recording artists who can no longer sell albums of their music because of illegal music file-sharing? But, come to think of it, weren't most of those musicians already starving? And how big a problem is e-book piracy if very few people are reading e-books anyway? The answers are not simple.

So far, the reading public has voted its dollars solidly in favor of old-fashioned paper books. We may read PDFs on our screens when we are working, but we still buy books on paper. Dedicated readers are getting better, but they still cost far more than a book, and offer no compelling advantages to readers who don't need large-type displays. Most books don't appear in electronic form. Only one of my 11 books has been published electronically, and my share of the electronic royalties came to under \$100 last year. Print earned me much more.

Music is a different matter. People like to listen to music on portable MP3 players like Apple's iPod. The music industry was very slow to spot the trend toward digital music, or to understand the implications of the file-sharing services that popped up like mushrooms during the Internet boom. Then, instead of marketing music in the electronic formats their customers wanted, the Recording Industry Association of America lobbied to make file-sharing a crime. Hollywood—worried that movie file-sharing would follow music file-sharing—joined in, and Congress obligingly passed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). Lobbying continues to further restrict copying that had been considered fair use, with a main target being the recording of television shows for later viewing.

***Pirates are bad enough,
but both Amazon and Google
also have scanned thousands
of books into their computers.***

Efforts to restrict digital distribution of music and videos raise a host of issues too complex to cover here. But it's important to understand that those restrictions have made many of the entertainment industry's best customers very unhappy. They don't like being told what they can do with their computers and other electronic gear—or how they can play the music and videos that they already own. They don't want to buy extra copies of songs they already own for their MP3 players. They view the DMCA as draconian. And after industry officials fulminated against criminal piracy, Sony was caught red-handed using a digital rights management

scheme that critics say itself was criminal because it literally hacked into Windows computers when users tried to play certain CDs. Sony pulled the copy-protection system, but still faces lawsuits and possible criminal action. These battles have seriously eroded goodwill toward intellectual property rights among the young and technology savvy.

By and large, writers are in better shape than the entertainment industry. Music is easy to copy because it's in digital form on a CD. With few electronic books available, book pirates must scan pages, producing bulky image files. A single page may be 100-200 kilobytes, and a professionally scanned version of one of my books ran 41 megabytes, too big to distribute in one piece. Pirates often run scanned images through optical-character recognition (OCR) software to produce more compact text files, but that takes time, and the results generally have to be spell checked to catch typos. All in all, book piracy is much harder than music piracy, and there's much less interest in sharing book files. That likely reflects the more limited market for books as well as the preference for paper. The most widely pirated books are best sellers widely read by the young and tech savvy, including books by Stephen King, J. K. Rowling, Terry Pratchett, and Tom Clancy. Pirates do not seem to have a huge effect on the U.S. book market today, although things may be different in places like Eastern Europe, where income is lower and books are relatively more expensive.

Scanning by the big Internet companies could pose broader problems than the underground pirates. Amazon's scanning for Search Inside initially stirred opposition among writers worried that it would be too easy for users to copy short stories or recipes from cookbooks. Amazon eased those concerns by limiting access to a few pages at a time and allowing publishers to "opt in" to the system, but some writers complained that publishers lacked the electronic rights they needed to license scanning. And some worry that computer-savvy readers could circumvent Amazon's limits on downloading.

Google also limits the number of pages that can be searched for books in the Print Publisher Program, and requires users to sign into their search site. Search restrictions differ between books, presumably reflecting limits set by publishers. However, Google has claimed it doesn't need permission to scan in copyright books for its Print Library Project because the "fair use" provision of copyright law give the company the legal right to scan and index all books and make excerpts available online. This claim alarmed both writers and publishers, and prompted suits by the Authors Guild and the American Association of Publishers. Yahoo, Microsoft, and the nonprofit Internet Archive also plan to create an online digital library, but they say they will scan only books that are out of copyright or for which they have permis-

sion from the copyright owner.

The big question for authors is whether online book searches will make casual copying easy enough to hurt sales. The answer depends on the individual book, the restrictions imposed on access, and the stakes for would-be pirates. A couple dozen college students might pitch in to copy a \$100, 200-page textbook, but they wouldn't bother with a \$6.99, 400-page mass-market novel. Writers could win if searching through a few pages online encourages many readers to buy new copies. But on Amazon that benefit is undermined by the company's heavy promotion of used books, which don't earn authors a penny in royalties.

What about other benefits? Could online searches open a new market for pieces of books? How many readers would pay \$5 for one chapter of a hardcover but not pay \$30 for the whole book? Would writers gain more from many small sales than they would lose from sales to people who would have bought the whole book otherwise? What kind of books would this work for? What are the risks and benefits? We don't know the answers yet; we barely are figuring out what questions to ask.

What should writers do? In informal discussions, writers who've thought seriously about it are all over the map. Some want to take a hard line and prosecute pirates like the music industry; others post free copies of their writings on their Web sites to promote sales. The questions remain. What limits should be imposed on copying? Is copy protection just an effort to protect the publishing industry's obsolete business models? Is there some way to have a global online library and be paid for it, too? The future is coming, and it won't bring any easy answers. ■

PIO Forum seeking other voices

The PIO Forum was launched in spring of 2001 in response to a strongly expressed need by many NASW members for regular and ongoing discussion of science communications topics in the pages of *ScienceWriters*. Over the years the tag team of Joann Rodgers, of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and Dennis Meredith, of Duke University, has done a splendid job in this regard.

Joann recently informed me that, pressed upon by other commitments, she's regretfully handing over the reins. Thank you Joann for your efforts and insights that have helped to make the PIO Forum such a valuable part of *ScienceWriters*. Dennis remains as a columnist to be joined by other PIO voices. If you have an insight, observation, or opinion you'd like expressed in the PIO Forum, contact me with your ideas.—Ed.

PIO FORUM

by Tim Hackler

The secret of the ivory-billed woodpecker expedition

The official name is the ivory-billed woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*), though it's also known as the "Lord God" bird, for the expression it invokes from people lucky enough to see it. Until recently, there had been only one confirmed sighting in the past half-century, and that was in Cuba. The ivory-billed woodpecker was thought to be extinct.

We now know that at least a few of the large birds—they have a three-foot wingspan—are still alive on the Cache River in the Big Woods area of northeast Arkansas. News that the ivory-bill had dodged extinction followed a year-long expedition involving 200 scientists—an expedition whose success depended upon an audacious PR campaign to keep the entire project secret.

The whole affair began in late 2003 when an amateur Arkansas bird-watcher reported he had sighted an ivory-bill while kayaking on the Cache River. Ornithologists were skeptical, but eventually the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in upstate New York sent staff members to Arkansas in February 2004, and sure enough, they also made a sighting of an ivory-bill. Sightings are not official, however, until made simultaneously by two experts (preferably on film).

The following month John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell lab, decided a major expedition was in order to determine once and for all whether the ivory-billed woodpecker was still alive. The name attached to the bird—the holy grail—gives some idea of how important it is among bird lovers and conservationists.

A natural coalition

The bird was seen on wetland that had been purchased and preserved by the Arkansas office of the Nature Conservancy. It was natural, then, for the Cornell lab and the Arkansas Nature Conservancy to form a coalition—the Big Woods Conservation Partnership—to conduct the search. Fitzgerald and Scott Simon, director of the Arkansas Nature Conservancy, knew the search had to be conducted in secrecy because, if word leaked, hordes of bird watchers would descend on the area and likely drive off remaining ivory-bills.

In addition, the Arkansas Nature Conservancy felt it needed to buy tens of thousands of additional acres

Tim Hackler was a journalist, a press secretary to Sen. Dale Bumpers of Arkansas and Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, and a media specialist at Powell Tate in Washington, D.C. He is now a Fellow of the International Center for Jefferson Studies.

from neighboring farmers in order to enlarge the bird's habitat. How could they keep their land purchases from attracting even more attention to the project?

The partnership had to devise a plan to keep the entire project an absolute secret—from birders, local residents, and most of all, the media. If they failed, what could be humankind's last chance to save the bird from extinction would be lost.

The plan

Central to developing the plan, in addition to Simon and Fitzgerald, were two individuals from the Nature Conservancy's Washington headquarters—Jim Peterson, director of communications, and Karen Foerstel, communications manager—and Simeon Moss, director of press relations at the Cornell lab.

The plan had these key elements:

- **Secrecy agreement.** The first step was to require each of the 200 individuals involved in the project to sign secrecy agreements. Simon was especially strong on this, and some of the scientists thought he was going a little too far. Eventually they understood the importance of it.
- **Safe house.** How could the Big Woods coalition minimize curiosity among the locals when ornithologists from all over the world descended on this rural area? Dozens of academics from around the globe all checking into motels at the same time would set tongues wagging for sure. So the coalition decided to put up the searchers in three out-of-the-way private accommodations: a duck club (it was out of season) and two houses, one of which they purchased. This may be the first use of what intelligence agencies call "safe houses" in the history of public relations.
- **Act local, or at least don't walk your iguana.** Ornithologists were asked to try not to stand out. According to the *Arkansas Times*, this was not so easy. One couple—he from the Netherlands, she from Borneo—rode their bikes to shop at the grocery store, not a local custom, and one scientist regularly took his iguana for a walk.
- **Cover story.** There were some things that couldn't help but stand out, such as the 80-foot high boom, or cherry-picker, that sat in a field at the edge of the forest to provide searchers a tree-top observation post. The coalition developed a story to explain the odd happenings—that biologists were making an inventory of flora and fauna of the Big Woods.
- **Contingency plans.** The coalition's PR team knew there was a good chance the secret would be leaked over what became a 14-month project. They built a Web site with fact sheets and backgrounders, which would be made available to journalists immediately if existence of the expedition did get out. To handle media developments on site, the partnership recruited Jay Harrod, who

left the PR firm he had founded in North Little Rock following a stint in Arkansas' Department of Parks and Tourism.



PHOTO BY COPYRIGHT CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY

Digital image of ivory-billed woodpecker at nest.

Against all probability, the secret of the ivory-bill expedition remained intact, with one exception. National Public Radio learned of the expedition and called for verification. The PR team said they would give NPR a tour of the site, let them interview anyone they wanted, and make it an exclusive if they would agree to embargo the story until the day of the public announcement. NPR agreed.

Once an official sighting of the ivory-bill was made and *Science* magazine accepted an article for publication, the PR team began planning a press conference. It was originally scheduled for mid-May 2005, to be held at the search site in Arkansas. But when word about the *Science* article began to leak, the conference was quickly moved up to April 28, with Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton presiding at the department's headquarters in Washington, D.C. The day before the conference, the PR team phoned journalists with whom they had a relationship to provide background details on an embargoed basis. Only one newspaper, in Ithaca, N.Y., (home of the Cornell lab) broke the embargo, Harrod says.

The discovery that the "holy grail" bird is still alive has gladdened bird enthusiasts, not least at the fund-raising office of the Nature Conservancy, which is using the discovery as the centerpiece of its current fund-raising efforts. "Nobody was supposed to find this holy grail," says a recent mailing. "But we did. Amazingly, America may have another chance to do right by the ivory-billed woodpecker."

Back in Arkansas, the focus is on conservation. According to the Arkansas Nature Conservancy's Lee Moore, who helped develop the media plan and oversaw purchase of the land, the ANC purchased or optioned 18,000 acres at a cost of about \$30 million. This adds to

the 300,000 acres already under protection.

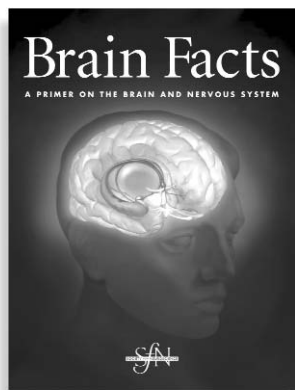
"It's important for people to realize that the discovery of the ivory-bill is only one sign that conservation efforts are beginning to pay off," Moore says. "A group of Arkansas conservationists and duck hunters got together in the early 1970s to stop a plan to channelize the Cache River, and 30 years later 300,000 acres have been preserved." Moore says the Big Woods Conservation Partnership had set a 10-year goal of preserving another 200,000 acres in the Big Woods' 100-mile corridor.

"The easy part is over," said Harrod. "Now our challenge is to keep interest in the ivory-bill alive for conservation purposes."

Tim Hackler was a journalist, a press secretary to Sen. Dale Bumpers of Arkansas and Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, and a media specialist at Powell Tate in Washington, D.C. He is now a Fellow of the International Center for Jefferson Studies. ■

"*The Secret of the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker Expedition*," PR Tactics, December 2005. Copyright 2005 PR Tactics. Reprinted with permission by the Public Relations Society of America (www.prsa.org).

BRAIN FACTS PUB AVAILABLE FREE TO NASW MEMBERS



The newly revised edition of *Brain Facts*, the Society for Neuroscience's 64-page primer on the brain and nervous system for general audiences, is available to NASW members free of charge. This fifth edition includes extensive updated discussions of the neuron and neurotransmitters, brain development, sensation and perception, learning,

memory and language, and movement. It discusses recent advances in the understanding and treatment of bipolar disorder, epilepsy, major depression, pain, and Parkinson's disease. The new edition also contains information on some of the biggest challenges in neuroscience—addiction, Alzheimer's disease, Lou Gehrig's disease, Huntington's disease, learning disorders, stroke and trauma, and schizophrenia. Other chapters discuss new diagnostic methods and potential therapies. A new chapter focuses on the emerging field of neuroethics. Copies can be obtained by visiting the SfN Web site, www.sfn.org, and clicking on *Brain Facts* under the public education section. ■

CLAUDIA DREIFUS AND RICHARD HILL HONORED BY SIGMA XI

NASW members Claudia Dreifus and Richard Hill have been named honorary members of Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society. They will be inducted during the society's annual meeting, in Detroit, on Nov. 2-5, 2006.



As a journalist, educator and lecturer, **Claudia Dreifus** is widely recognized for her abilities in interviewing scientists and communicating the complexities of their work to the public. Before coming to the Science Times section of the *New York Times*, she was known for her incisive interviews with international political figures and cultural icons. Her work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *Playboy*, *Ms.*, *The Progressive*, and *AARP—The Magazine*. In her book, *Scientific Conversations: Interviews on Science from The New York Times*, she delves into the thoughts and lives of some of the most intriguing minds in science. From Nobel laureates to virtually unknown innovators, across a multitude of scientific disciplines, she introduces and explains the personalities behind the great accomplishments. Dreifus is an adjunct assistant professor at the Columbia University School of International and Public Policy. She is also a senior fellow at the World Policy Institute of the New School for Social Research.

For the past 18 years, **Richard Hill** has been the science writer at *The Oregonian*, where he has been involved in producing the newspaper's weekly science section. He has written more than 2,500 science stories on a wide variety of subjects, from eruptions at Mount St. Helens to the hazards posed by the Cascadia Subduction Zone off the Northwest coast. In 2000, he was the first recipient of the American Geophysical Union's David Perlman Award for Excellence in Science Writing. He has also received the C. B. Bletten Memorial Award for Distinguished Reporting and has won several regional awards from the Society of Professional Journalists.



Hill has been a media fellow at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and has participated in two NOAA research cruises, including the first exploration of the Astoria Canyon off the Northwest coast. He recently published a book for the general public, *Volcanoes of the Cascades: Their Rise and Their Risks*.

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He has also been a reporter and editor at the *Dallas Times Herald* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Founded in 1886, Sigma Xi is the international honor society for research scientists and engineers, with more than 500 chapters in North America and around the world. ■

(Source: news release)

NASW ACTIVITIES AT ST. LOUIS AAAS MEETING

Mentoring Program

(report from education committee co-chairs
Jeff Grabmeier and John Travis)

The NASW mentoring program enjoyed another successful run at this year's AAAS meeting. We matched more than 25 science-writing students with accomplished professionals who agreed to share their knowledge and expertise.

On Friday, Feb. 17, the mentors and "mentees" met in the convention center over NASW-provided snacks and made plans for the remainder of the meeting. We were also able to make a few instant matches at the meeting between students and last-minute mentor recruits.

From reports heard during the meeting, both mentors and students were very satisfied with their matches and what they learned. And in at least one case, a student received a writing assignment from his mentor! We're seeking more feedback from both students and mentors to see how the program can be improved in the future. Thanks to all of the mentors for helping to make this year's program so successful.

Internship Fair

(report from Terry Devitt,
internship fair coordinator)

A dozen recruiters met 35 or so bright-eyed, prospective interns the afternoon of Saturday, Feb. 18. A few format changes this year seemed to make it simpler for recruiters and students alike. The informal feedback has been very positive and will be followed up with a survey.

The event's success was due in large measure to the heavy lifting done by Jenny Cutaro and education

committee co-chairs John Travis and Jeff Grabmeier, all of whom gave up big chunks of time to help student members. One exciting side note was that two of this year's recruiters attended the fair as students themselves last year.

I'm turning the keys over to Jenny as the new internship fair coordinator. I plan to be a helper next year, but Jenny will be in full control. Thanks to financial support from NASW Jenny, a freelancer, was able to attend the meeting. ■

PRESS PASS BASH IN ST. LOUIS

Under the leadership of freelance **Jeanne Erdmann** and **Tina Hesman**, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, party planning for the St. Louis Press Pass Bash began a year ago. Hesman even chose her wedding date so it wouldn't conflict with the party. Now *that's* dedication. It was a major group effort that involved science writers from St. Louis' two research universities, freelancers, radio, and print reporters.

Mary Burke, Academy of Science of St. Louis, handled all financial transactions, supplied stationery, manpower, and meeting and storage space and was intimately involved in the planning. **Tony Fitzpatrick**, Washington University, was on the planning committee from the start. He secured the band, assisted with fundraising, and brought out an army of university volunteers the night of the event.

Joni Westerhouse, Washington University School of Medicine, and her staff stuffed goody bags and coordinated door prizes. **Judy Jasper-Leicht**, also of Washington University, had sandwich board signs and programs printed and coordinated volunteers for coat check and the hospitality table, etc. **Joe Muehlenkamp**, Saint Louis University, printed sponsor tickets and press invitations, and also helped coordinate the door prize drawing. **Mike Martin**, *Weekly Scientist*, designed the party Web site.

Eric Hand and **Rachel Melcer** of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, **Nancy Solomon** of St. Louis University, and **Robert Frederick** of NPR affiliate KWMU were also active committee members. Selecting City Museum



When pterodactyls fly. St. Louis science writers hosted AAAS press registrants to a Press Pass Bash, on Sun., Feb. 19, 2006, at the City Museum, a fantastic world built from recycled, salvaged, and found materials.

PHOTO BY BARRY SHELL

(www.citymuseum.org) as a venue was pure genius. Housed in the 600,000 sq. ft. former International Shoe Company, the museum is an eclectic mixture of children's playground, funhouse, surrealistic pavilion, and architectural marvel made out of unique, found objects.

The brainchild of internationally acclaimed artist Bob Cassilly, a classically trained sculptor and serial entrepreneur, the museum opened for visitors in 1997. Cassilly and his longtime crew of 20 artisans have constructed the museum from the very stuff of the city; and, as a result, it has urban roots deeper than any other institutions. Reaching no farther than municipal borders for its reclaimed building materials, the City Museum boasts features such as old chimneys, salvaged bridges, construction cranes, miles of tile, and even two abandoned planes! The museum is also home to The World Aquarium, a separate nonprofit entity designed by the same artist.

Based on coat-check reports, it's estimated that some 400 attended. [AAAS had 633 pre-registered press and about 75 walk-in press registrants. Knowing that many people left the meeting on Sunday, 400 was an excellent turnout.]

Music was provided by That '80s Band and the Maple Street Music Group String Quartet. ■

(Source: Press Pass Bash organizing committee and eye witnesses)

NEWS FROM AFAR

by Jim Cornell

Struggling science scribes in the developing world will soon get direct and personal boosts to their professional careers thanks to an ambitious mentoring scheme devised by the World Federation of Science Journalists (WFSJ) and supported by a generous grant from the Canadian government.

Taking advantage of the unusually large foreign press presence at February's AAAS meeting, the WFSJ used that venue to announce the inauguration of its Peer-to-Peer Support of Science Journalism in the Developing World Project.

This program, more simply called P2P, will match five experienced journalists from the developed world with 20 fledgling writers in each of three regions

Jim Cornell is president of the International Science Writers Association. Send items of interest—international programs, conferences, events, etc.—to cornelljc@earthlink.net.

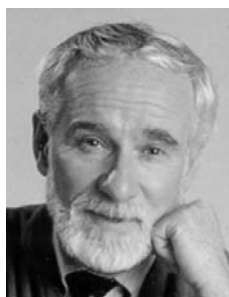


PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

—Francophone and Anglophone Africa and the Middle East—to create a network of personal contacts designed to strengthen and expand the reporting of science and technology.

The first three years of what is hoped to be an on-going program will be supported by a grant of CAD \$800,000 (approximately USD \$705,000) from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada. Additional funding from other international agencies is expected to follow.

"We hope to make a difference in the professional lives of science journalists in the developing world—initially in the Middle East and Africa, but later in Asia and Latin America," says Wilson da Silva, president of the WFSJ and the editor of the Australian science magazine *Cosmos*. "Our objective is to support journalists who want to report on science, but lack the peer support and training more common in wealthier nations."

Diran Onifade, a science journalist with the Nigerian Television Authority and one of three regional coordinators, feels that the P2P project "will certainly help bridge the capacity challenge we face as science journalists on the African continent."

In addition to Onifade, who will represent Anglophone Africa, television executive and teacher Gervais Mbarga of Cameroon will serve as the P2P coordinator for Francophone Africa, and Nadia el-Awady, of Cairo, science editor for Islamonline.net, will serve the Middle East area.

"We hope to give 60 journalists the opportunity to report on emerging science developments, advances, and issues in their regions. They will also be connected to the tremendous network of contacts, advice, and opportunities offered by the WFSJ and its 27 affiliated associations," da Silva says. (NASW is one of those associations.)

The three-year project will also provide services and support to nascent associations of science journalists at the national, regional, and international levels, extending the peer-to-peer concept to create pairings between the associations in the developing world with longer-established groups such as NASW.

While the peer-to-peer approach is a time-honored method of on-the-job training for journalists, the P2P project will be tested by the obstacles of distance, time, culture, and language. Indeed, while most of the mentoring is expected to be done remotely, via e-mail, telephone, and, hopefully, video links, there will be periodic face-to-face meetings between mentors and students, most likely tied to major scientific conferences in the respective training regions.

The challenges and promises of P2P will be explored in earnest at the first formal training session for mentors and coordinators to be held in Munich, Germany, July 10-14, just ahead of the 2nd Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF06) meeting there. Two German sci-

ence writers groups—the TELI and WPK—are providing both the venue and resources for the session; Kathryn O'Hara, chair of science journalism at Ottawa's Carleton College and P2P's lead consultant, is developing the training curriculum.

The global response by journalists interested in becoming mentors has been most heartening according to WFSJ Executive Director Jean-Marc Fleury, who reports the program's initial announcement "generated lots of e-mails from amazingly qualified people!"

Still, the P2P project is envisioned as a long-term activity and only one of several planned by WFSJ—all demanding continual recruitment and replacement of writers fluent in English, French, Arabic, and, eventually, other languages as well.

If you have the skills and the inclination to serve as a mentor—a service that will be compensated—or to contribute in other ways, visit www.wfsj.org, or contact Fleury at jmfleury@wfsj.org.

American writers attending the ESOF06 meeting this summer may see some very familiar faces in the press room. However, they won't necessarily be other Americans.

Many of the foreign reporters who have become regulars at the annual AAAS meeting in the USA will be gathering for its European equivalent in Munich, July 15-19.

A pan-national, multidisciplinary gathering of scientists, educators, policy-makers, and journalists drawn from the European Union and beyond, the second ESOF hopes to build on the strengths of its inaugural meeting in Stockholm two summers ago. The group represents an overview of current European science and technology not easily available elsewhere.

As at the AAAS, hard news may be in short supply, but the Munich meeting offers great opportunities to corner leading researchers for on-the-record statements about recent advances—and unguarded guesses about research ahead.

Because the semiunited Europe is still defining how its R&D effort can compete with the U.S. (not to mention India and China), the ESOF sessions tend to be heavy on policy issues. And, with more than a score of members and official languages comprising the EU, there is also an understandable emphasis on communication, with several sessions devoted to the state of science journalism. I will chair one called Quality Journalism (Don't ask! The organizers picked the title, but the theme deals with how to keep us off the endangered species list), which includes NASW members Rick Borchelt and Wilson da Silva among the panelists.

Ginger Pinholster of the AAAS will chair another

session—with a much better title—"Myths of Science: Glowing Monkeys, Wonder Dogs, and More." Rick Weiss of the *Washington Post* will join her to discuss how good science sometimes goes bad in the process of communication.

For more information on the program and the scientific side trips being arranged by our German colleagues visit esof06.org. By the time you read this, the cheap hotel rooms may be scarce, but registration for working press is still free.

Another face that will certainly become more familiar to American writers is Niall Byrne, chief representative of the local organizing committee for the 5th World Conference of Science Journalists, in Melbourne, Australia, April 17-20, 2007.

Byrne was in St. Louis—with committee member Sarah Brooker—touting the joys of going Down Under and handing out miniature koalas to entice visitors. He will be attending most of major international science-

Upcoming international meetings

June 24-26, 2006. Annual Meeting of the Canadian Science Writers Association, St. John's, Newfoundland. Details available at www.sciencewriters.ca.

July 24-27, 2006. Western Pacific Geophysics Meeting (WPGM), Beijing, China. Sponsored by the American Geophysical Union (AGU), a host of Chinese scientific societies, and others from the Asia-Pacific region this meeting focuses on geophysical research in the western Pacific region. More information at www.agu.org/meetings/wp06/.

July 15-19, 2006. EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF), Munich, Germany. The second edition of this pan-European scientific meeting. Program information at www.esof2006.org.

Sept. 2-9, 2006. The BA Festival of Science, Norwich, England. The British Association for the Advancement of Science's annual meeting—looser and more public-oriented than the AAAS, but still a big attraction for European press. Information at www.the-ba.net.

April 16-20, 2007. The 5th World Conference of Science Journalists (WCSJ2007), Melbourne, Australia. Information at www.scienceinmelbourne2007.org.

writing venues in the next year—PCST, BAAS, ESOF, AAAS, etc.—promoting what promises to be an unusual event and unique experience.

Topped and tailed—as the Aussies say—by optional satellite conferences, science briefings, and research tours, the three-day conference will include plenary sessions on whatever big issues are then facing journalists.

In addition, there will be daily streams for print, broadcast, and online use; professional development workshops; and real story ops, with access to a wide range of Australian scientists and their work—from platypus breeding and wine making to the biotech potential of natural materials harvested from the Great Barrier Reef.

And, in keeping with a model set by the 2004 WCSJ in Montreal, where a score of African writers attended free, the WCSJ2007 organizers hope to provide fellowships for young aspiring science journalists from East Asia and the South Pacific.

For more information—and to make your own suggestions for program sessions—go to www.scienceinmelbourne2007.org and then start saving up your frequent flyer miles. ■

OUR GANG

by Jeff Grabmeier

OK, so the Winter Olympics are long gone. But I needed a theme and was inspired by the Olympian accomplishments of our colleagues. I just hope my ratings are a little better than those of NBC's coverage of the winter games.

Going for the Gold (Mine).

Members of the Western New England chapter of The National Writers Union were treated Jan. 17 to a talk from NASW freelancer **Daniel Drollette**. Daniel discussed reporting from overseas and his recent (mis)adventures in South Africa, where he found himself doing things such as descending to the bottom of the world's deepest gold mine to pursue a story. Ask Dan for the details at DanDrollette@nasw.org.

Cross-Country Event. **Jackleen de La Harpe**, the first executive director for the Rhode Island-based Metcalf Institute for Marine and Environmental Reporting, resigned her position after eight years to move to Portland, Oregon. She will continue working for the Metcalf Institute on a part-time basis, adminis-



PHOTO BY JO MCNULTY, OHIO STATE

Jeff Grabmeier is assistant director of research communications at Ohio State University in Columbus, OH. Send news about your life to Jeff at Grabmeier@nasw.org.

tering a fellowship program for minority journalists. Jackleen's e-mail remains the same jack@gso.uri.edu.

Skating Away with a Promotion. **Earle Holland** is movin' on up in the world. Earle has been named assistant vice president for research communications at Ohio State University, where he has worked for the past 28 years. I'd say it was a well-deserved promotion, but I don't want to seem like I'm trying to win favor with the boss! Congratulate Earle at holland.8@osu.edu.

De"Luge" of Health News. So who will be the last NASW member to finally get a blog? It won't be **Star Lawrence**, a freelancer from Chandler, Arizona, who recently opened shop at www.healthsass.blogspot.com. (I'm choosing to believe the name of the blog is "Health Sass," but I could be wrong!) Why a blog? Star says "I run across so much health news, I decided to start a wonkette.com-like, snarky health site." She posts each weekday. Star is at JKelLaw@aol.com.

Coaching a Winner. After several years of working with Chris Edwards, who was her coach and personal editor during a transition from scientist to science writer/editor, **Beth Schachter** joined Chris' business. So, Beth says, she is now the New York division of "Still Point Coaching & Consulting," and Chris is the Massachusetts division. The firm offers help with professional development for scientists. You can learn more at www.stillpointcoaching.com or write to Beth at bschachter@nasw.org.

Lighting a New Torch. **Victoria Gilman** has left her job at *Chemical & Engineering News* and landed a job just across the street in Washington, D.C. She is now a writer/editor at the Web site National Geographic News, where she assigns stories to freelancers, edits stories, writes headlines and photo captions, and helps to write and edit newsletters. You can find her work at <http://news.nationalgeographic.com>. Say hello to Victoria at vm.gilman@gmail.com.

"Curling" Up with a Good Book. **Barbara Ravage** reports that during March she will get to discuss her book *Burn Unit: Saving Lives After the Flames*, with members of a New York City book club that is reading the book. She also gave a reading from *Burn Unit* at the Norman Williams Library in Woodstock, VT. Barbara is at barbararavage@barbararavage.com.

Doing it Free(lance)style. **David Bradley**, a British freelancer, will be celebrating ten years with a science-related Web site this May. In 1996, he uploaded a very basic page based on a column he used to write for the Royal Society of Chemistry's young chemist's magazine *New Elements*. The column mutated into a Webzine of its own, called *Elemental Discoveries*, which then formed the basis of his science portal, Sciencebase.com, in 1999. The site now includes external news sources, educational channels, as well David's personal science blog. David can be found at david.bradley@sciencebase.com. ■

IN MEMORIAM

John M. Langone

John M. Langone, a Navy veteran, journalist, former editor at the *Boston Herald Traveler* and author of 25 books on health, medicine, science, and human behavior, died in January. The cause was chronic lymphocytic leukemia due to Richter's Syndrome, a rare form of lymphoma. He was 76 and had been an NASW member since 1964.

Born in Cambridge, Mass., he lived and wrote in Old Lyme, Conn. He graduated from Cambridge Latin School and earned a degree in journalism from Boston University in 1953. Langone often credited two uncles, both researchers in physiology at Harvard University during World War II, as influencing his choice of career in medical and science journalism.

Langone served in the Navy and Air Force. He was discharged from the Air Force as a first lieutenant.

Langone began his lengthy writing career at UPI's Boston bureau. He served as chief of the Rhode Island bureau and later at the international news desk in Chicago. As medical-science editor of the *Boston Herald Traveler*, he wrote about many of the medical firsts and breakthroughs in the city's scientific, medical and educational institutions. In 1980, he joined Time Inc. in New York City as senior editor at *Discover* magazine. He later worked as associate editor at *Time* magazine.

He was widely recognized for his ability to explain complicated scientific subjects in lucid prose for lay readership. He was awarded a Kennedy Fellowship in Medical Ethics at Harvard, where he held an honorary faculty appointment in the Medical School's Department of social medicine. He was also given a fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University, and a Fulbright Fellowship at the University of Tokyo's department of psychiatry.

Langone enjoyed teaching various aspects of medical and science journalism at Harvard and New York University. Until recently he wrote the Books on Health column for the weekly Science Times section of the *New York Times*. His latest book, *The New How Things Work: Every-day Technology Explained*, was published by the National Geographic Society. At the time of his death, he was working on a book about the human body for the society.

He was a member of the Harvard Club of New York City, Time Life Alumni Society, Overseas Press Club of America and the Society of the Silurians.

(Source: *Bostonherald.com*)

John Langone: A Remembrance

For more than half my life, John Langone had been my mentor and friend. At a time when female scientists and science writers were somewhat uncommon he

was an equal-opportunity mentor to me, as well as to the young men and women who were just starting out as researchers and writers at *Discover* and *Time* magazines. Throughout the years, he guided many of us to respectable—and in some cases, stellar—careers as health, medical, science, and technology writers and editors.

Standing barely 5 feet 6 inches in stocking feet, John was a giant in our field. His contributions to science and medical journalism went significantly beyond seeding NASW with a new generation of members. During a trail-blazing career that spanned teletype to word processing, and grease pencils to delete keys, he was among a group of forward-thinking wire-service and newspaper journalists in the early '70s who initiated many of the conventions and techniques we rely on today. For instance: Getting hold of embargoed copies of *The New England Journal of Medicine* and other peer-reviewed journals, and writing articles explaining the methodology, findings and significance of medical and public health research to provide lay people and patients with important information only doctors were privy to before.

John's family, friends and colleagues are diminished by his death, as is our profession. Yet as much as he contributed to this genre of journalism, John's life may well have taken another direction entirely if his two favorite uncles, both researchers at Harvard University, had not taken him under wing and instilled in him a love of science and the process of scientific inquiry.

You see, John had a weakness for ladies' hats—more specifically, ladies in hats. He once confided that had he not become a science and medical journalist, he would have been a milliner. I can only imagine the delightful creations he might have whipped up to put onto my head. But I will always be indebted to him for the priceless knowledge he put into it.

(Submitted by Ruth Papazian)

Robert B. Hotz



COURTESY OF THE HOTZ FAMILY PHOTO ARCHIVE

Robert Bergmann Hotz, 91, an award-winning aerospace journalist, author and arms control expert who served on the presidential commission that investigated the space shuttle Challenger accident, died February 9, in Frederick, Md., of complications from Parkinson's disease.

His career as a journalist spanned more than 50 years in which he pioneered news coverage of international military and aerospace affairs. He was editor and then publisher of *Aviation Week & Space Technology* magazine from 1955 through

1980, where his work was honored by the Aviation Space Writers Association and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

Hotz was born in Milwaukee, Wis., in 1914. He graduated with a BS in economics from Northwestern University in 1936 and, upon graduation, went to work as a reporter on the staff of the *Paris Herald Tribune*. In 1938, he became New York bureau chief for the *Milwaukee Journal*, a job he held until the beginning of World War Two.

Hotz was commissioned as a captain in the U.S. Air Force in 1942. He served two tours with the 14th Air Force in China, in B-25 bomber combat operations and on the staff of Gen. Claire Lee Chennault. During one bombing mission, Hotz was shot down, parachuted safely behind Japanese lines and, with the help of Chinese and Miao partisans, successfully eluded capture. He was awarded the Air Medal with Oak leaf cluster. He ended the war with the rank of major.

After the war, he worked for *Aviation News* and then as head of public relations for Pratt & Whitney. In 1955, he became editor of *Aviation Week & Space Technology* magazine. In the ensuing decades he built a publication that became known to Pentagon cognoscenti as "Aviation Leak," for its consistently well-informed coverage throughout the Cold War of Soviet, European, and American military aerospace developments, ranging from secret Soviet fighter designs and the development of international ballistic missiles to the "Star Wars" programs of directed energy weapons research and the military exploitation of space.

As an editorial writer, Hotz was both a booster and an outspoken critic of the American space program, from the creation of NASA and the Apollo era race to the moon, to the design and launch of the space shuttle fleet. He was known for the strength and prescience of his policy views and the forceful, literate language he employed to express them.

In 1982, President Ronald Reagan appointed Hotz to the General Advisory Committee of the U.S. Arms Control & Disarmament Agency, where he served throughout the Reagan Administration and during the administration of President George H.W. Bush.

In the aftermath of the 1986 space shuttle

Challenger accident, President Reagan appointed Hotz to the presidential commission that investigated NASA's space shuttle program. Other commission members included former U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, Noble laureate Richard Feynman, aviation pioneer Chuck Yeager, and former astronauts Neil Armstrong and Sally Ride.

Hotz was the author of four books, most notably *With General Chennault: The Story of The Flying Tigers* in 1943. He also edited Gen. Chennault's memoirs: *Way of a Fighter*, published in 1946.

In 1980, he retired to Rams Horn Farm in Myersville, Md., where he raised Angus cattle and peacocks. He was an avid amateur scholar of the American Civil War, assembling a significant collection of memorabilia of the conflict, and a collector of early American antiques.

He is survived by his wife, Joan Willison Hotz; a sister, Peggy Diehl of Philadelphia; four sons, George, Michael, Robert Lee and Harry; four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

(Source: Los Angeles Times)

REGIONAL GROUPS

by Suzanne Clancy

Chicago

Waiters bearing armloads of flaming cheese shouted "Oopa!" as Chicago science writers began their February 1 meeting in a restaurant in the city's Greektown. The 40+ members and guests lunched their way through a five-course Greek meal, concluding with coffee and baklava as science writer Dava Sobel rose to share some of her experiences writing about science.

Sobel, a former *New York Times* science writer, was spending the winter in the Windy City as a writer-in-residence at the University of Chicago. She also taught a class on science writing to undergraduates.

In the audience were members of the science-writing program at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, and Sobel directed some of her remarks to this group, sharing that some of the courses she had taken in college had surprising consequences for



Correction

The NASW Fall Membership Meeting Minutes (SW, Winter 2005-06) incorrectly stated the date of the meeting. The correct meeting date was Sun., Oct. 23, 2005.

Suzanne Clancy is a science journalist and communications consultant in San Diego, Calif. Send information about regional meetings and events to sclancyphd@yahoo.com.

writing about science. Taking Italian, for instance, because it was a class she enjoyed with a roommate, paid off handsomely when she worked on her best-selling book *Galileo's Daughter*. What you learn when you're young stays with you, she assured the students.

Sobel also discussed some other unusual pathways for topics that became books. By attending a conference on longitude and persisting in her interest, she was able to produce the critically claimed book, *Longitude*. She had never actually considered it a book project until an editor saw the story she had written about it in *Harvard* magazine, she said. The recently published *The Planets*, is an outgrowth of an earlier project that got scrapped at the last minute. Sobel said that beginning again years later, she was able to revise her original text and bring understanding to the topic she would not have been able to do with the first version.

New York

On Feb. 8 SWINY (Science Writers of New York) kicked off a new annual tradition with a gala celebration of Darwin's 197th birthday. Around 80 New York science writers turned up to the Chemist's Club in Midtown Manhattan to mingle and munch, listen to the live bluegrass band Uncle Wade (with *New York Times* reporter Andy Revkin on vocals, fiddle, and guitar), and grapple for raffle prizes that included tickets to the Darwin exhibit at the Museum of Natural History, dolls of the revered master of evolution himself, and a full transcript (all 139 pages) of the Dover, Pennsylvania, intelligent-design trial. For future SWINY events visit www.swiny.org.

Philadelphia

This January, PASWA started the year with its first career workshop, where members gathered at The Wistar Institute to learn the ins and outs of Web page building from a local Web design expert and programmer. Topics covered included the basic mechanics behind building Web sites, such as finding a hosting service and making use of the free software that comes with most hosting plans. Many members were able to get some good use out of the notion that you can build a professional-looking site on the cheap with free software and a little creativity.

San Diego

On Valentine's Day, San Diego science writers gathered at UCSD's Rebecca and John Moores Cancer Center to hear of National Cancer Institute efforts to accelerate drug development and basic science advances from researchers in this west-coast biotech hub. Jerry Collins, NCI's associate director for developmental therapeutics, discussed the institute's recent support of research in the later stages of drug development, including assay development and high-throughput screening

techniques that bring drugs into the clinic more quickly. "We have to ask, where will cancer research be in ten years?" he asked. "Maybe in ten years the pipeline will be out there, and we'll be describing a therapy we don't even know of, as 'of course that's a treatment.'"

Three scientists from the Salk Institute, the Burnham Institute and UCSD presented some of the basic science advances that might be translated into treatments:

- The Salk's Reuben Shaw, PhD, highlighted the small number of cellular signals linked to cancer, and suggested possible drug targets for cancer as well as for diabetes.
- Cell adhesion and recognition molecules bind with programmed cell death molecules (known as caspases) in normal cell processes that are disrupted in cancer, says Dwayne Stupack, PhD, of UCSD. This disrupted process could allow newly designed drugs to halt cancer metastasis.
- Kristiina Vuori, MD, PhD, acting director of Burnham's NCI Center, shared with writers her institute's plan for a center for chemical genomics, which will use high throughput screening, nuclear magnetic resonance imaging, and other advanced techniques to find molecules that could be candidates to fight cancer.

New England

Members of the New England Science Writers Association were invited by their medical-writing counterparts, the New England Chapter of the American Medical Writers Association, to participate in AMWA's yearly professional roundtables brunch. Several NESW members led roundtable discussions on topics such as determining the soundness of a scientific study, tips for medical writers who want to write about other areas of science, writing for fundraising purposes, and the craft of science writing for popular magazines. ■

THE RELATIONSHIP OF REGIONAL GROUPS TO NASW

by Diane McGurgan

Lately there's been confusion, angst, and downright bellyaching over the purpose, procedures, and relationship of regional science-writing groups to NASW. It's time to clear the air.

First and foremost, there are no NASW local chapters. Surprised?

Instead, independent, regional science-writing groups have come into existence to bring like-minded individuals together for the purpose of networking and

Diane McGurgan is executive director of NASW.

to run events designed to help improve the shared craft of science writing. Different regional groups have different membership requirements (or none at all). Some charge dues, which are separate from those of NASW.

Although NASW has no local chapters, it does support regional groups in a number of tangible ways.

What does NASW do? Glad you asked!

1. Foster New Groups

For 20 years, NASW has earmarked funds (currently \$1,000/annually) in the operating budget intended as seed money to help start regional groups. To petition NASW for a portion of these funds, send an e-mail to the executive director stating the amount requested and how the funds will be used. A follow-up report (with receipts) is required after funds are expended.

2. Promote Regional Activities

NASW's quarterly newsletter, *ScienceWriters*, regularly publishes a Regional Groups column as a means to showcase regional group activities and innovative events, and to share program ideas that can serve as models for emulation by other groups.

3. Facilitate Networking

The NASW Web lists the contact information for all known regional groups, and also provides the URLs of groups that have Web sites (www.nasw.org/affil.htm).

Because the regional groups are not chapters of NASW, the following distinctions are important to keep in mind.

1. Separate Funding

NASW does not fund the ongoing activities of regional groups. In planning for a holiday party, monthly meetings, or an event with another association, regional groups must secure their own funds through local member dues, admission charge, or other local fundraising efforts.

2. Independent Operations

NASW does not monitor the regional groups, nor does it impose any standards upon them. Regional groups decide on their own membership requirements and program activities. NASW membership does not automatically grant entry into regional groups and vice versa.

3. Separate Identity

VERY IMPORTANT: Because regional groups do not represent NASW, they may not use NASW stationery or the NASW logo for their correspondence or event publicity materials. To do so may have significant implications for NASW's nonprofit IRS status.

Regional groups offer an excellent way for NASW member and non-members to get involved on the local level and to see science-writing colleagues more than once a year at the national meeting. In some cases, regional participation has led some writers to national involvement with NASW. When that happens we all benefit as new leadership develops and further strengthens the field of science writing. ■

LETTERS

Congratulations to the *Washington Post's* Rick Weiss being awarded the 2005 Victor Cohn Prize for Excellence in Medical Science Reporting (*SW*, Winter 2005-06).

Vic Cohn and I were fast friends for more than three decades. He was my mentor and sponsored my application for NASW membership in 1963 when I was the medical science writer for the Rochester, Minn. *Post-Bulletin*, whose circulation barely registered on the radar screen. But we were in Mayo Clinic's home turf and my beat was extensive and written for a tough audience of some of the world's foremost doctors, scientists, investigators, and researchers.

The beat carried me to medical conventions and seminars country-wide and in Canada. Vic was invariably covering the same meetings and prodding and helping me learn about the most challenging beat in journalism. He was a mentor and friend without peer. In the early years, I couldn't have covered the quantity and quality of subjects and complex medical topics on which there could frankly have been twin bylines, if that had been possible.

He had the patience of an oyster with me and encouraged me at every turn. He'd just finished his term as NASW president in 1963 when he invited me to apply for membership. My sponsors included Vic, a couple of Mayo Clinic Nobelists in medicine who discovered cor-

ScienceWriters welcomes letters to the editor

A letter must include a daytime telephone number and e-mail address. Letters may be edited. Letters submitted may be used in print or digital form by NASW.

Send to Editor, *ScienceWriters*, P.O. Box 1725 Solana Beach, CA 92075, fax 858-793-1144, or e-mail lfriedmann@nasw.org.

tisone, and leaders from Mayo in almost every corner of medicine, surgery and aerospace medicine. The membership committee frankly admitted it had never reviewed an application with so many backers who were leaders in virtually every field recommending a reporter they'd never heard of from a small newspaper they also had never heard of.

I could never have had the career I enjoyed if Vic Cohn hadn't taken time out to befriend and teach me. I was honored many times to introduce him at seminars and meetings nationwide when he gave one of his droll and always brilliant speeches.

Ken McCracken
Medical/Science Writer
Chatham, Ontario

Excellent recent issue (Winter 2005-06) of *ScienceWriters!* A real keeper was Dennis Meredith's "PIO Forum" piece on embargoes, which I plan to share with my editors at *PNAS*.

Regina Nuzzo
Science Writer
Chevy Chase, MD

NOTICES FROM DIANE

by Diane McGurgan

Dues, roster, database

The bell has tolled. If you wish to be listed in the 2006 Member Roster your checks and credit card numbers must get here ASAP. June 1, 2006 is the cut-off date. Miss that date and you will be dropped from the database and stop receiving member benefits. A reminder: If renewing dues online (nasw.org/NASW/renewals.htm) by Visa or Mastercard the three-digit security number (back of the card) is needed to process your payment. Also needed is your billing address for the card.



PHOTO BY ANDREW SKOLNICK

Victor Cohn Award deadline

Deadline for the CASW-Victor Cohn Award in Medical Science Writing deadline is July 31. Entry form brochures will be mailed out soon. The award will be presented Sunday, Oct. 29, during the CASW New Horizons in Science Briefing, in Baltimore.

BOOKS BY AND FOR MEMBERS

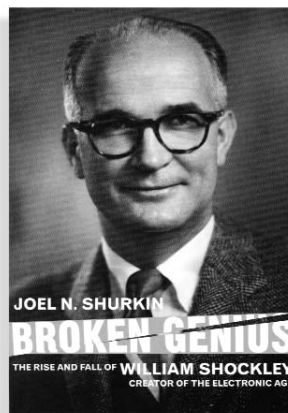
by Ruth Winter

***The Star Wars Enigma: Behind the Scenes of the Cold War Race for Missile Defense* by Nigel Hey (NASW), published by Potomac Books.**



Nigel Hey, an Albuquerque, N.M., freelance, has written a book that explores President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), including the possibility that it was the greatest bluff in history. "In the beginning I was simply interested in the idea of putting exotic systems in space and how they might be made to defend the United States against Soviet attack. As I got into the story I learned that U.S. 'Star Wars' science and technology had morphed rather amazingly into a successful psychological tool in the Cold War confrontation; and the Soviets had done more R&D in beam weaponry and space-based defense than the U.S. ever did—in absolute secrecy—years before (President) Reagan gave his speech. The story was so intriguing that I went to Moscow to talk to the people who were involved in 'SDIsky.'" Hey started researching the book in 1999 with encouragement from Adm. James Watkins, who was an important voice in encouraging Reagan to endorse strategic defense, and Gerold Yonas, a Sandia labs colleague (and neighbor) who was SDI's first chief scientist. Both, for quite different reasons, said they thought the SDI story should be told for what it was, in understandable prose. Hey says he took this as a challenge. Hey can be reached at Nigel@nasw.org and 505-898-6679.

***Broken Genius: The Rise and Fall of William Shockley, Creator of the Electronic Age* by Joel N. Shurkin (NASW), published by Macmillan Science, London.**



Joel Shurkin, a Baltimore, Md. freelance, has written the first biography of William Shockley, founding father of Silicon Valley, whom he labels "one of the most significant and reviled scientists of the 20th century." Shockley won a Nobel Prize for inventing the transistor, upon which almost everything that makes the modern world is based. Shurkin

maintains little has affected history as much as this device, developed along with John Bardeen and Walter

Brattain at AT&T's Bell Telephone Laboratories in the mid-1940s. He writes Shockley then recruited the best eight young semiconductor scientists in the world to found the first company in Silicon Valley. A year later, because of his impossibly controlling management, those men resigned en masse to found Intel together and thereby became billionaires. "Shockley," Shurkin says, "is remembered more for one of the most vicious controversies in modern science. His campaigning about race, intelligence and genetics saw him donating to the Nobel Prize sperm bank, being vilified on national TV, and ultimately destroyed his reputation." Drawing upon unique access to the colossal private Shockley archives, Shurkin gives an unflinching account of how such promise ended in such ignominy. Shurkin can be reached at joel@nasw.org. The press representative is Sara Abdulla at s.abdulla@macmillan.com.

***Nature's Restoration* by Peter Friederici (NASW), published by Island Press.**

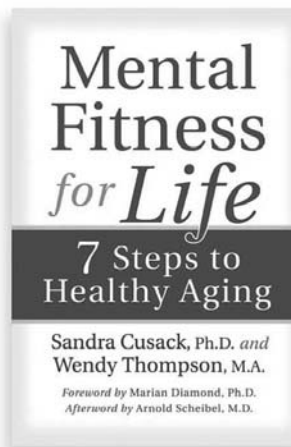
Peter Friederici, a Flagstaff, Ariz. freelance, wrote this book about people who really care and put their efforts into restoration of ailing Mother Nature. He writes that from the Hawaiian Islands to Appalachia's forests ordinary citizens are changing the way we think about nature. In Chicago and its suburbs, for example, legions of volunteers replant prairies in the shadow of freeways. On a deserted Bermudan island, a man has spent 40 years single-handedly restoring the nesting habitat of a rare seabird. In America's Southwest, entrepreneurs work to make pine forest restoration pay for itself, while in Virginia, a farmer tries to bring back the mighty American chestnut. On a planet "suffering from serious ecological problems," Friederici reports the refreshing restoration movement is an attempt to set things right. Through detailed reporting and numerous interviews, he describes how the growing movement is shaping places and inspiring people. Stephanie Mills, author of *In Service of the Wild: Restoring and Reinhabiting Damaged Land and Epicurean Simplicity*, commented on Friederici's book that "The diverse half-dozen stories in this fine book are quite as gripping as any 19th century accounts of wilderness explorations." Friederici can be reached at pfried@nasw.org and 928-774-3056. The press representation is Evan Johnson at ejoynson@islandpress.org or 202-232-7933 ext. 24.

***The First Human: The Race to Discover Our Earliest Ancestors* by Ann Gibbons (NASW), published by Doubleday.**

Ann Gibbons, a contributing correspondent for *Science*, has written a chronicle of the race to find the missing links between humans and apes involving the highly competitive world of fossil hunting and the lives of the ambitious scientists intent on pinpointing the

dawn of humankind. Her book tells the story of four international teams obsessed with solving the mystery of human evolution and of the intense rivalries that propel them. There is Tim White, the irreverent and brilliant Californian whose team discovered the partial skeleton of a primate that lived more than 4.4 million years ago in Ethiopia. If White can prove that it was hominid—an ancestor of humans and not of chimpanzees or other great apes—Gibbons says he can lay claim to discovering the oldest known member of the human family. She writes that just as White painstakingly prepared the bones, the French paleontologist Michel Brunet comes forth with another, even more startling find. Well known for his work in the most remote and hostile locations, Brunet and his team uncovered a skull in Chad that could set the date of the beginnings of humankind to almost seven million years ago. Two other groups—one led by the zoologist Meave Leakey, the other by the British geologist Martin Pickford and his partner, Brigitte Senut, a French paleontologist—enter the race with landmark discoveries of other fossils vying for the status of the first human ancestor. Gibbons can be reached at ann.gibbons@andrew.cmu.edu and 412-422-3940. The press representative is Rachel Pace at RPace@randomhouse.com.

***Mental Fitness for Life: 7 Steps to Healthy Aging* by Sandra Cusack and Wendy Thompson, published by Bull Publishing Company.**



Sandra Cusack is Guttman-Gee Research Fellow and adjunct professor in Educational Gerontology at Simon Fraser University, in Vancouver, Canada. She is a member of the American Society on Aging and the National Council on Aging. Thompson is an educational gerontologist and the author of five books. A former Olympic speed skater, she has encouraged thousands as a speaker and trainer.

The authors insist that by establishing and continually pursuing mental clarity throughout life you can actually help prevent degenerative brain diseases further down the road. "Evidence is accumulating that the brain works a lot like a muscle—the harder you use it, the more it grows." One of their suggestions: Speak your mind. "Speaking effectively is an art," say Cusack and Thompson. "It is an excellent way to train your mind and to cultivate a vocabulary and expressive style that is truly yours. Seize every opportunity for speaking your mind. It gives your brain cells a good workout. Think

before you speak—what is it that you really want to say? Join in discussions—everyone has something important to contribute. Don't talk to people or at people or over their heads. Talk with people and then, above all, listen." The press representative is Dottie DeHart, Rocks-DeHart Public Relations, at 828-459-9637.

***Adventure on Dolphin Island* by Ellen Prager, PhD (NASW), published by iUniverse.**

Ellen Prager, president of Earth2 Ocean, Inc., in Tierra Verde, Fla. wrote this book that is both fiction and fact about dolphins "as a new way to engage young readers (and their parents) in learning about the ocean and to engage them to want to learn more." In addition to the unusual aspect of combining fiction and nonfiction in the story itself, she has a short section in the back of the book that describes some of the science integrated into the story, followed by a list of Web sites where kids and adults can go to learn more about the ocean. She says many of the adventures, environments, and organisms in the book are based on her own experiences as a marine scientist. She is also doing a series of interactive educational presentations with the book and those also have been extremely well received. She says she hopes to get one or more sponsors to expand the series to various regions across the nation. Prager can be reached at pragere@earthlink.net and 305-720-7070.

***The New Medicines: How Drugs Are Created, Approved, Marketed And Sold* by Bernice Schacter, PhD (NASW), published by Praeger.**

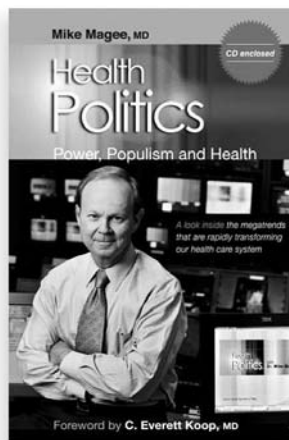
Bernice Schacter, a Wilmington, Del. freelance, says her book is intended to demystify for a general audience the process of getting prescription drugs from the lab to the drug store. "I worked for over 20 years in biomedical research both in academia and in the biopharmaceutical industry. I realized that the process of moving laboratory discoveries to a pill in the bottle is unknown to most people, though almost all of us use prescription drugs. In the book I track two drugs, Copaxone, a drug used in MS, and the arthritis drug Celebrex, a drug of some reknown, from their discovery, through their development, animal testing, and clinical trials, FDA review and approval, the market launch and sales. I explain the history and role of the FDA and the procedures used by the companies to choose which drugs to develop and how to market and sell them. The book is neither a polemic nor a paean to the industry or the FDA. I ask whether we have the system to get us the drugs we need and want and provide the evidence that, though far from perfect, the system of industry, regulators, academics works pretty well." Schacter has over 20 years of biomedical research experience in both academia and industry. She served on the faculty of the School of Medicine of Case Western Reserve University and con-

ducted immunology research at Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. She also served as vice president of research at BioTransplant, Inc., a biotechnology startup company in Boston, Mass. The press representative is Kathleen Barrett at kathy.barrett@greenwood.com and 203-226-3571.

***Delivery System Handbook for Personal Care and Cosmetics: Technology, Applications and Formulations* by Meyer Rosen (NASW) editor, published by William Andrew Publishing.**

Meyer Rosen, president of Interactive Consulting, says this 1,000-page book "creates a foundation text for technology to improve skin and teaches readers about techniques called delivery systems for providing consumer products with anti-wrinkle and other skin needs. There are over 80 authors, from over 40 companies and universities and about ten countries, who have contributed to this book during the almost four years it took to complete. More information at www.williamandrew.com. The sales representative is Brent Beckley at bbeckley@williamandrew.com.

***Health Politics: Power Populism and Health* by Mike Magee, MD published, by Spencer Books.**



You may find this a good reference book. Designed as a classroom resource, it contains 76 essays grouped in nine categories with references at the end of each essay. The subjects are "the megatrends that are rapidly transforming our health care system." A CD is included containing all of the materials located in the "Online Resources" section of each chapter. All of the Web links listed in each

chapter are included as live links. You may have already discovered Mike Magee's Web site (HealthPolitics.com) as a research tool on current health care topics. Contact Spencer Books at 90 Spencer Dr. Wells, ME 04090; 207-646-9926; fax 207-646-5021 or www.spencerpress.com.

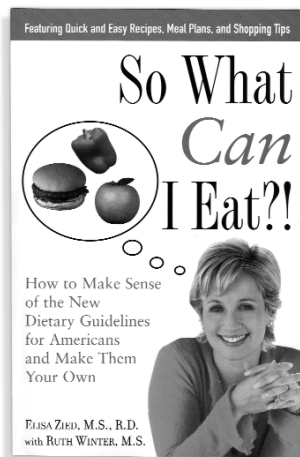
***Perfect Passwords: Selection, Protection, Authentication* by Mark Burnett, published by Syngress Publishing, Inc.**

Traditional security policies for passwords may work against you, resulting in greater insecurity, warns security researcher and author Mark Burnett. According to Burnett, users find password policies too restrictive and respond with patterns of weak and predictable passwords. "Administrators come up with policies to enforce strong passwords, but in the end the users defeat these policies with even weaker passwords or other poor

security practices," says Burnett. And he should know—he spent three years researching and studying millions of real-world passwords for his book. The solution, according to Burnett, is to educate users how to come up with strong passwords by themselves, enforce a minimum password length, and ease off the more restrictive password policies. "There are techniques that users can learn to build long passwords they can easily remember. If they can come up with strong 20-character passwords, they shouldn't have to change it every 60 days," explains Burnett, "Be smart about it and let them keep the password for six months." The press representative is Amy Pedersen at amy@syngress.com and 781-681-5151 ext. 12.

The following book was reviewed by Lynne Friedmann

***So What Can I Eat?! How to Make Sense of the New Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Make Them Your Own (Paperback)* by Elisa Zied and Ruth Winter (NASW), published by Wiley.**



NASW member (and *ScienceWriters* columnist) Ruth Winter has published her 35th book. Co-authored with Elisa Zied, a registered dietitian and highly visible spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association, the book is a blueprint for developing a nutritious, balanced eating plan for life. Every day, readers are presented with conflicting information about food, nutrition, and how to eat

properly. The book clarifies the new U.S. Dietary Guidelines and provides a plan for developing a nutritious, balanced, and sustainable eating plan for life whether the goal is to lose weight, have more energy, or manage or prevent diet-related conditions. Helpful menu plans and recipes allow readers to enjoy eating without feeling deprived. A review in *Publishers Weekly* stated: "For befuddled readers wanting to 'clarify the often conflicting information you hear every day about food and nutrition,' this book will serve as a usable resource in the pursuit of better health." Contact Winter at ruthwrite@aol.com. The press representative is Kate Bando at kate@ksbpromotions.com. ■

Send material about new books to Ruth Winter, 44 Holly Drive, Short Hills, NJ 07078, or e-mail ruthwrite@aol.com. Include the name of the publicist and appropriate contact information, as well as how you prefer members get in touch with you.

NEW MEMBERS

ARIZONA: Michael Price*, Ariz. State Univ.
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continued on page 35

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SOCIETY OF NEUROSCIENCE ANNUAL MEETING

Science journalists are invited to cover the annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience in Atlanta, Oct. 14-18, 2006. This is the largest and most important meeting of the year on the brain and nervous system. Major topics include the latest research on brain development, nerve growth factors, stem cells, the senses, behavior, attention, learning and memory, language, brain disorders, gene therapy, brain imaging, neurotransmitters, and receptors. Public information officers at universities and nonprofit institutions are encouraged to prepare news releases about their neuroscientists' work for placement in the press room. For more information, please visit www.sfn.org or call Joe Carey at 202-962-4000.

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NEW MEMBERS

Continued from page 34

Marilee D. Karr*, Portland State U; Sara Manson*, Portland State U; Christina Thuerwachter*, U of Oregon. **PENNSYLVANIA:** Carolyn Banta*, Lehigh U; Sarah Bruncker* Penn State; Margaret Gallagher* Johns Hopkins; James Endres Howell, State College; Jessica McGillen*, Carnegie Mellon. **RHODE ISLAND:** Cynthia W. DeMaio*, URI; A. Peter Morello*, Brown U. **TENNESSEE:** Rebecca Hall*, Jay Mayfield, U of Tenn; Jan Rosemergy, Vanderbilt Kennedy

NEW COLUMBIA JOURNALISM MASTER'S PROGRAM

The Graduate School of Journalism seeks applicants for its recently established one-year master of arts program. The program offers four broad subject-matter majors: arts and culture, business and economics, politics, and science and medicine. Students take a full-year course co-taught by faculty from the J school, who are distinguished journalists working in the subject area, and faculty members from other programs at Columbia—a cast of dozens that includes physicist Brian Greene, economist Jagdish Baghwati, and Sudhir Venkatesh, the sociologist who does a star turn in *Freakonomics*.

The science and medicine concentration offers students the chance to develop knowledge about a series of fields—from physics to ecology and medicine—as well as familiarity with the history, sociology and structure of science. By studying with scientists, historians and physicians, students become familiar with different approaches to research questions and with important emerging issues. They work on stories that range from straight news pieces to op-eds and long features.

The M.A. program is designed for working journalists who desire a new challenge, who wish to secure an impressive additional credential, or who seek to understand and write about complicated subjects. The application deadline for the 2007-08 class is February 2007. Detailed information about the program and application process is available at: www.jrn.columbia.edu/admissions/apply/ma-program/ma_overview.asp.

Center. **VIRGINIA:** Bob Beard, U of Va. Health System; Kristen A. Dincher*, James Madison U; Lori D. Cole, freelance, Vienna; Sarah Cooley*, U of Ga.; Lisa Guernsey, freelance, Alexandria; Katie Lorentz, NASA Langley/SAIC; Bud Ward, Morris A. Ward, Inc. **WASHINGTON:** Lisa Natalie Anjozian, To Each His Own Media; Hannah Hickey, freelance, Seattle; Amy Pletcher*, U of Wash; Dana Rozier*, Vermont College. **WISCONSIN:** Margaret A. Broeren*, U of Wisconsin; Jacqueline Jaeger Houtman, freelance, Madison; Nicole Eileen Miller*, U of Wisconsin.

[columbia.edu/admissions/apply/ma-program/ma_overview.asp](http://www.columbia.edu/admissions/apply/ma-program/ma_overview.asp).

Admission to the M.A. program is need blind, and we are currently able to offer most students tuition exemption, a small stipend, and housing for those who need it.

For specific science and health program questions, please contact Professor Marguerite Holloway at myh7@columbia.edu or 212-854-9149.

AMERICAN THORACIC SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

NASW members are invited to cover ATS 2006—San Diego, the annual international conference of the American Thoracic Society, which will take place May 19-24 at the San Diego Convention Center. Information to be presented at this meeting represents the latest clinical and basic research findings in pulmonary and critical care medicine. A full-service press room will be available to journalists covering the meeting. In addition, ATS staff is prepared to provide assistance to journalists who want to cover the meeting off site. To request an advance program or additional information about covering the meeting, contact Jim Augustine at 703-723-1612 or medsci@earthlink.net. ■

Submissions to *ScienceWriters*

To place an ad or classified listing in *ScienceWriters* contact Lynne Friedmann at lfriedmann@nasw.org. ■

WYOMING: Kelly Reeves*, U of Wyoming. **CANADA:** Megan Ogilvie, freelance/*Toronto Star*, Ontario. **GERMANY:** Michael Brendler, *Badische Zeitung*, Freiburg; Anke Brodmer Kiel, *Berliner Zeitung*, Berlin; Martin Schmitt, *Die Rheinpfalz*, Ludwigshafen; Daniela Tominski, *Hamburger Abendblatt*. **SOUTH AFRICA:** Rene Louise Lotter, AFREA, Capetown. **UNITED KINGDOM:** Laura Gallagher, Imperial College of London; Anne D. Holden*, U of Cambridge; Jonathan Leake, *The Sunday Times*, London. ■

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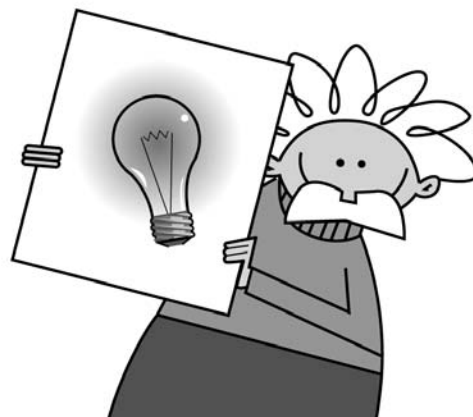
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