

Silurian News

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Society of the Silurians
EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM AWARDS GALA
The National Arts Club
15 Gramercy Park South
Wednesday, May 16, 2018
Drinks: 6 P.M. • Dinner: 7:15 P.M.
Meet old friends and award winners
wendy475@verizon.net

MAY 2018

Silurians Celebrate The Best

BY MICHAEL S. SERRILL
Awards Co-Chair

In 2010 a new Nassau County Executive, Republican Edward Mangano, took office with a promise to overhaul the Long Island county's always-contentious property tax assessment system. Seven years later an enormously enterprising Newsday reporter, Matt Clark, undertook to learn how the "reform" had worked out. Using the huge sorting power of modern technology, he examined some 2.5 million tax bills and came to some startling conclusions. According to Clark—and his findings have not been seriously challenged—over seven years the new assessment system resulted in a shift of \$1.7 billion of the county tax burden from its richest homeowners to its poorest.

This happened because the county basically stopped fighting tax assessment appeals. Those who appealed their tax bills usually won, which meant their tax bills increased \$466, or just 5 percent, over the seven years. Those that did not appeal—usually the elderly and minorities—saw their property taxes increase an average of \$2,748, or 36 percent. Moreover, while the county saved tens of millions of dollars, the firms that homeowners hired to handle their appeals took in more than \$500 million.

Matt Clark's months-long effort, known as database investigative journalism, earned him two of the top awards in the Society of Silurians' 2018 Excellence in Journalism contest. Clark, 34, is the



PUBLIC SERVICE MEDALLION: THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Making of a Meltdown *How Politics and Bad Decisions Plunged New York's Subways Into Misery*

BY BRIAN M. ROSENTHAL,
EMMA G. FITZSIMMONS AND
MICHAEL LAFORGIA

After a drumbeat of transit disasters this year, it became impossible to ignore the failures of the New York City subway system.

A rush-hour Q train careened off the rails in southern Brooklyn. A track fire on the A line in Upper Manhattan sent

nine riders to the hospital. A crowded F train stalled in a downtown tunnel, leaving hundreds in the dark without air conditioning for nearly an hour. As the heat of packed-together bodies fogged the windows, passengers beat on the walls and clawed at the doors in a scene from a real-life horror story.

In June, after another derailment injured 34 people, Gov. Andrew M.

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winner of Silurian Medallions for Investigative Reporting and for Reporting on Minority Issues. The Newsday reporter says he spent 18 months digging into tax assessment data, looking for winners and losers. Mangano is now on trial for corruption in a separate matter. Clark notes that the new county executive, Laura Curran, has declared she will correct the tax inequities, while her deputy has copies of Clark's stories hanging on the wall of her office to remind her of the urgency to address the question.

Clark's reporting was overseen by Martin Gottlieb, a former editor of The New York Times, ex-editor-in-chief of The Record, and now "I-team" editor for Newsday. Gottlieb praised Clark's ability to "digest enormous streams of data" in his "relentless" pursuit of a story "that had many twists and turns. It was one of the most exceptional efforts I've ever been involved in."

Clark was one of more than 30 award recipients in the Silurians contest, which focuses on journalism from the tri-state area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. The biggest winners were Newsday, which garnered five Medallions and four Merit Certificates, and The Record of northern New Jersey, which earned three Medallions and five Merits.

Also prominent was the New York Times, which picked up three Medallions and two Merit awards. Other winners include Bloomberg News, The Daily News and Vanity Fair. The suburban Journal News also boosted a double winner. Re-

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Dennis Duggan Award: Samantha Maldonado – Winner

BY JERE HESTER

The Society of Silurians selected Samantha Maldonado as the winner of the Dennis Duggan Memorial Scholarship Award, given annually to a student at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism who excels at producing stories about everyday New Yorkers. The honor, to be presented at the Silurians' annual dinner on May 16, 2018, comes with a \$1,000 honorarium.

"Sam is a strong writer and a natural reporter," said Ellen Tumposky, a former Daily News reporter and editor who was one of Maldonado's first professors at the CUNY J-School. "She has shown a sharp eye for stories that others might overlook."

Tumposky said Maldonado is a smart young journalist whose promising early work evokes the spirit of Duggan, the late Newsday columnist who long chronicled New York City and its people. Duggan, a past Silurians president, also worked for The New York Times, the Daily News



SAMANTHA MALDONADO

and the New York Herald Tribune, whose old headquarters building now houses the CUNY J-School.

Maldonado, came to the J-School

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Peter Kihss Award: Winner — David W. Dunlap

BY CLYDE HABERMAN

David Dunlap values precision, and so one of the first things he did after entering the Times Gallery on a recent afternoon was to make sure that the grandfather clock in a corner was properly wound. The gallery is David's realm these days. It is a small New York Times museum and archive that he is creating in a 15th-floor corner of the newspaper's building on Eighth Avenue. Artifacts include typewriters (remember them?), a war correspondent's helmet and bullet-proof vest, a bust of Adolph Ochs and the writing desk of Henry J. Raymond, who co-founded the paper in 1851.

And there's the grandfather clock, given to Ochs by the citizens of Chattanooga, Tenn., in 1892. That was four years before he headed north, having borrowed money to buy what was then indeed a failing New York Times. You know the rest.

David has been a jewel in the Times



DAVID W. DUNLAP

crown for the last 43 years, with his elegant prose and with dogged reporting that reflects the same precision he devoted to that clock. Readers may know him best

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President's Report

Hail & Farewell!

BY BERNARD KIRSCH

Wait. Before I start, I need a minute to recuperate from listening to Andy Borowitz. Whew.

OK. Now I'm ready.

I am so happy about our season of speakers, and by our room-filling turnouts. Thank you, Silurians. Our last three luncheons — with David Cay Johnston; Dan Rather & Gary Paul Gates; and last month with Andy — were quite special. I watched every one of them a second time, on the video on our Silurians.org web page. And now, in May, we have our Excellence in Journalism Awards dinner. It will be a glorious evening, during which we will honor David Dunlap of The New York Times with our Peter Kihss Award, and Samantha Maldonado of the CUNY grad school of journalism with our Dennis Duggan Award.

My congratulations, and my thanks, to all the entrants. In the end, our big winners were Newsday, with five medallions and four merit certificates; The Record of Northern Jersey with three and five; and The New York Times, with three and two. And I'm proud to say that during my 40-year journalism career, I worked for two of those papers—Newsday and The Times.

I'm also proud of my two years as president of this august society. My term comes to an end with our June 20 lunch. Simply put, it was my goal as leader of this 94-year-old organization to bring you the most interesting speakers, and make our luncheons themselves into newsworthy events, and to enhance the reputation of our society. I hope I've succeeded. I know our next president will.

Waiting in the wings to take over is David A. Andelman. His credits would take up the rest of this column, and I'm sure he'll fill you in in the future. He'll be presiding here—with your approval—next year when we return to the National Arts Club, which has run a very good show for us. And again, we'll be here on the third Wednesday of the month—except for September, when we will gather on the fourth Wednesday (the third being Yom Kippur).

I hope that all our members, which now number more than 300, will feel free to recruit other journalists to join our society, no matter what our name winds up being. We'll let you know at our June lunch if a word or two might be added to Society of the Silurians. In the meantime, any suggestions should be sent to me at bernkir@gmail.com or to David Andelman at daandelman@gmail.com.

But no matter what we may call ourselves, we will remain one of the nation's oldest and certainly premier news clubs.

Thank you.

Peter Kihss Award: Winner – David W. Dunlap

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for his meticulous chronicling of the physical New York—Lower Manhattan's rebirth post-9/11, political machinations that make every square foot of development a battleground, architectural glories and mistakes.

You don't really need the byline to recognize vintage Dunlap. Like this lede from April 2017: "New York, the city of perpetual arrival, is getting three new gateways: diaphanous cable-stayed bridges that look almost too ethereal to bear the load of thousands of vehicles and people each day." Or this from May 2016 on a repository of World Trade Center ruins: "Hangar 17 at Kennedy International Airport is large enough to house a Boeing 747. For 14 years, however, it has held something much larger: the morning of Sept. 11, 2001."

For his talent and his nurturing of younger staff members, David is receiving the Silurians' Peter Kihss Award, named for a giant of New York journalism who died in 1984. David could be describing himself when he recalls Peter's "earnest desire to help" young reporters.

"If you got him at the right moment, he couldn't have been kinder," David said. "And, actually, if you weren't a copy editor, it was always the right moment."

Newsroom colleagues revere David. They talk of his kindness and courtly manner, down to his ubiquitous bowties (he has 40 of them). "He was incredibly generous with his wisdom," said Emily Rueb, a young reporter and editor who's completing a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard. Cara Buckley, who covers the film industry, says David helped her mightily when she was going through a rough patch. "He's an old-fashioned, morally upstanding, *good* man," she said, the italics her own.

Still—as David's interview subjects have learned, often to their pain—beneath the unshakable courtesy lies steely resolve and a refusal to abide hokum. Take it from Jim Dwyer, a Times Metro columnist who sat a cubicle away. "What I loved most was listening to David slowly, patiently, politely conduct an interview on the phone," Jim said. "People would have their say. David would

probe. Some would reiterate drivel. He would try once again."

"Finally, signing off with his exquisite manners and gentle tone, he would say, 'I thank you.' Then he would slam the phone down, rise to his feet and shout: 'Lying! Rat! Bastards!'"

David might have been destined to become a newspaperman almost from the beginning, which for him was in San Francisco in 1952. At age 12, his family having moved to Chicago, he wrote and edited a neighborhood paper that he called the Daily Dunlap, which may have been Dunlap but was hardly daily. "A hamster's death would be banner news," he said.

At Yale, Class of 1975, he majored in art history, but an interest in architecture and infrastructure was practically in his DNA. His father was an architect with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. He died at age 50, and the son honors him with his byline: David W. Dunlap. The W is for the father's first name, William.

David began life at The Times in 1975 as a clerk to the columnist James Reston. William Zinsser, who taught writing at Yale, had mentioned to the young Dunlap that he heard from John Hersey how Reston was looking for someone to work on The Vineyard Gazette, the Martha's Vineyard newspaper that he ran with his wife, Sally. Edgartown was not quite David's speed, though. Instead, he went to Washington as Reston's aide for more than a year.

By the second half of the 1970s, The Times was seeking to shed its "Gray Lady" image with art-and-chart displays. David, gifted in matters visual, became the graphics editor. But he really wanted to be a reporter, a role he'd never had (aside from his hamster blockbuster). In 1981, "convinced I had a place awaiting me on the masthead," he took what he saw as a step in that direction by joining the Metro staff.

"And I never looked back—never wanted to be anything else, basically," he said. "It was too damn much fun. There went my trip to the masthead."

His early assignments included night rewrite, general assignment and City Hall. But he found his niche covering

landmarks, city planning and land-use issues. That led to years in the Real Estate section, where his editors, Michael Sterne and Michael Leahy, set him loose to explore the city as an ever-evolving organism. He flourished in that role, as he would as well helping start the Times's "Lens" blog and making his "Building Blocks" column for Metro indispensable reading for anyone who cares about New York.

For two years in the mid-1990s, David also covered gay and AIDS issues. Back when he'd started at the paper, "gay people were beyond careful in hiding who they were, and could rely only on each other for support," recalled Richard Meislin, a former senior Times editor and reporter. "David, of course, was one on whom you could always rely."

The Dunlap coverage underlines a distinction between two cherished journalistic goals: objectivity and fairness. The first may not be fully realizable. But the second surely is, as David proved in reporting even on those less than sympathetic to the gay rights movement. "If you read my story and felt your point of view had been fairly represented, that was something to aspire to," he said. "Generally, I'd like to think I did that when I covered the gay and AIDS beat."

In 2012, 18 years after they became partners, David married Scott Bane, a former program director for foundations, who is finishing studies at the City University's law school.

As 2017 ended, David took a buyout, and is building the Times Gallery as a contractor. Looking back on his career, he cited a line from the late Ben Bradlee of the Washington Post. "It was a wonderful quote," David said, "about how he thought The Post could easily rival The Times when it came time to do a huge story but, damn it, the Times's cruising speed was just awesome. I was sort of in the engine room that helped produce that cruising speed."

Engine room? This was one time when his instinct for precision failed. David Dunlap is always topside, definitely topside.

Dennis Duggan Award: Samantha Maldonado – Winner

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last year after a stint working in communications for the Free Library of Philadelphia. She quickly got to work roaming Manhattan as she amassed one impressive clip after another.

She wrote a story for City Limits about people who pluck treasures from Dumpsters. Her piece on the woman behind the "New York Facts" that blare from the city's wi-fi kiosks made Next City. She turned out a feature for Religion News on

the man who gives tours of the catacombs under Old St. Patrick's in Little Italy. She also reported on street vendors' organization efforts for Voices of NY and wrote for Juvenile Justice Information Exchange about former Rikers Island guards who use art to steer kids away from jail.

Maldonado, a native of Springfield, Mass. graduated from Wesleyan University before enrolling in CUNY's graduate program. She is one of eight CUNY-J Schoolers chosen for the Media Leadership Project, a

new mentoring program that pairs students with a hand-picked group of executives from CNN and NBC News/MSNBC. She's set to graduate in December as a member of the Class of 2018's Urban Reporting cohort. Maldonado is the latest Duggan Award winner in a distinguished array of J-school students, including Barry Paddock and Megan Cerullo, both now with the Daily News and Rosa Goldensohn of the New York Times editorial department.

New Members

Stephen Vratos is the editor of Schneps Communications, a company that specializes in local news with a focus on readers in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island. Schneps started with The Queens Courier in 1985 and has since expanded to 18 newspapers, magazines and websites, including The Brooklyn Spectator and The Ridgewood Times. Earlier in his career, Vratos was a freelance reporter at The New York Post.

Seth Abraham is best-known as the man who upended the broadcast hierarchy of televised boxing matches when he joined HBO in 1978. Until then and into the mid-1980s, it was ABC, CBS and NBC that dominated boxing coverage. Under Abraham's leadership — he

eventually became president of HBO Sports — that all changed, and today HBO is the go-to channel for major bouts. While working toward his master's degree in journalism at Boston University in 1969, he was a stringer for the Boston bureau of The New York Times. Later, he covered education and the U.S. Supreme Court for Facts on File. And after leaving HBO in 2000, he was executive vice president and chief operating officer of Madison Square Garden. Since 2005, he has been running a one-man consultancy called Starship SA, which is involved with sports marketing and communications.

Jane Tillman Irving, now retired, was a prize-winning staffer at WCBS 880 from 1972 to 1986. That led to a three-year stint at WCBS-TV before she came back to radio at such outlets as WWRL, WLIB, WBLS and

WNYC, finally returning to WCBS 880 from 1999 to 2017. Her start there was truly ground-breaking, as the station's first female reporter just five years after it joined competitor WINS as the nation's second all-news/all-the-time radio station. She's been a street reporter, a news writer, an anchor and a talk-show host, and she's covered everything from crime scenes to national political conventions. For good measure, she's taught journalism at the Columbia J School and at CCNY, her alma mater.

George Flowers, who is married to Jane Tillman Irving and is also retired, was a newscaster at WCBS-FM, UPI International and WWRL in a career that began in the 1960s and stretched to 2013. He's also been a disc jockey, an announcer, an actor and a voice-over teacher.

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MEDALLION WINNERS

FEATURE NEWS / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

South Bronx 'Shooting Gallery'



BY RICH SCHAPIRO

Head north on Saint Ann's Ave. in the South Bronx and go past the AutoZone on E. 149th St. On most afternoons, students from two nearby high schools pack the sidewalks. Across the street, hidden from view, the depth of the city's heroin epidemic is on harrowing display.

Beyond a chain-link fence a slope leads to an abandoned railroad bed. At first glance, the hill sparkles with the shiny orange caps from single-use needles.

Move closer. Something more sinister blankets the patches of weeds and dirt: discarded syringes. Hundreds of them.

There are needles scattered on the ground like twigs and needles clumped under trees like piles of leaves. Needles are staked into a mud wall. Needles are floating in the pools of standing water below. Some of the syringes' tips are still stained with blood.

On a gray and damp Friday afternoon, Leidanett (Lady) Rivera sits in front of a crudely erected shelter overlooking the railroad bed, surrounded by used needles and other trash. She fumbles with an unused syringe as she describes surviving two overdoses in the past two months.

"I was lucky to come back twice," says the rail-thin Rivera, 38. "I might not be lucky the third time."

A few minutes pass. Rivera takes out a bottle cap-shaped cooker and mixes a solution of heroin and cocaine. She's wearing several layers of sweatshirts, blue jeans and construction boots. Pulling up her sleeves, she reveals arms covered in puncture marks and dark red scars.

"You see these track marks," Rivera says. "The vein is hard for me to hit." Her "addict partner" has just shown up. Rivera passes him the needle and tugs down her collar.

She looks straight ahead, her face blank, as the man sticks the syringe

into the left side of her neck and presses the plunger.

Opioid abuse has exploded in the city and across the country in the past five years. Overdoses involving prescription painkillers and heroin are soaring in the South Shore of Staten Island just as they are in countless middle-class American communities that have never before seen drug epidemics.

In many of these communities, users first got hooked on prescription opioids such as Percocet and oxycodone. They later turned to heroin, lured by its cheaper prices and staggering high.

The South Bronx in contrast has battled rampant heroin use since the 1960s. Experts say opiate consumption in the borough leveled off in the 1980s and '90s but has now returned with a vengeance.

Here, the users tend to be older and poorer than elsewhere. Most are black and Hispanic. Many have been hooked on heroin for years.

"It's great the profile of this issue has been raised but the Bronx has always been experiencing a heroin problem," said Julia DeWalt, advocacy manager for Boom!Health, a nonprofit that offers a range of services to opioid users in the South Bronx.

More than 1,370 New Yorkers died from overdoses in 2016 — twice the number of deaths from homicides and car wrecks combined. Roughly 80% of the overdoses involved opioids. Out of those, 90% were caused by heroin or fentanyl, a powerful synthetic drug.

The Mott Haven-Hunts Point area, where the shooting gallery spotlighted by The News is located, has the highest rate of heroin-involved overdose deaths in the city.

Its 2015 tally — 18.8 per 100,000 people — dwarfs the national rate of 4.1 per 100,000. If the neighborhoods were a state, it would trail only West Virginia in a ranking of those with the highest rates of all drug overdose deaths.

The South Bronx's opiate epidemic

PEOPLE PROFILE: MARIE BRENNER / VANITY FAIR

Deal With The Devil

In 1973, a brash young would-be developer from Queens met one of New York's premier power brokers: Roy Cohn, whose name is still synonymous with the rise of McCarthyism and its dark political arts. With the ruthless attorney as a guide, Trump propelled himself into the city's power circles and learned many of the tactics that would inexplicably lead him to the White House years later.

BY MARIE BRENNER

'Donald calls me 15 to 20 times a day,' Roy Cohn told me on the day we met. 'He is always asking, 'What is the status of this . . . and that?''

It was 1980. I had been assigned to write a story on Donald Trump, the brash young developer who was then trying to make a name for himself in New York City, and I had come to see the man who, at the time, was in many ways Trump's alter ego: the wily, menacing lawyer who had gained national renown, and enmity, for his ravenous anti-Communist grandstanding.

Trump was 34 and using the connections of his father, Brooklyn and Queens real-estate developer Fred Trump, as he navigated the rough-and-tumble world of political bosses. He had recently opened the Grand Hyatt Hotel, bringing life back to a dreary area near Grand Central Terminal during a period when the city had yet to fully recover from near bankruptcy. His wife, Ivana, led me through the construction site in a white wool Thierry Mugler jumpsuit. "When will it be finished? When?" she shouted at workers as she clicked through in stiletto heels.

The tabloids couldn't get enough of the Trumps' theatrics. And as Donald Trump's Hyatt rose, so too did the hidden hand of his attorney Roy Cohn, always there to help with the shady tax abatements, the zoning variances, the sweetheart deals, and the threats to those who might stand in the project's way.

Cohn was best known as a ruthless prosecutor. During the Red Scare of the 1950s, he and Wisconsin senator Joe McCarthy, the fabulist and virulent nationalist crusader, had hauled dozens of alleged "Communist sympathizers" before a Senate panel. Earlier, the House Un-American Activities Committee had skewered artists and entertainers on similar charges, resulting in a trail of fear, prison sentences, and ruined careers for hundreds, many of whom had found common cause in fighting Fascism. But in the decades since, Cohn had become the premier practitioner of hardball deal-making in New York, having mastered the arcane rules of the city's Favor Bank (the local cabal of interconnected influence peddlers) and its magical ability to provide inside fixes for its machers and rogues.

"You knew when you were in Cohn's

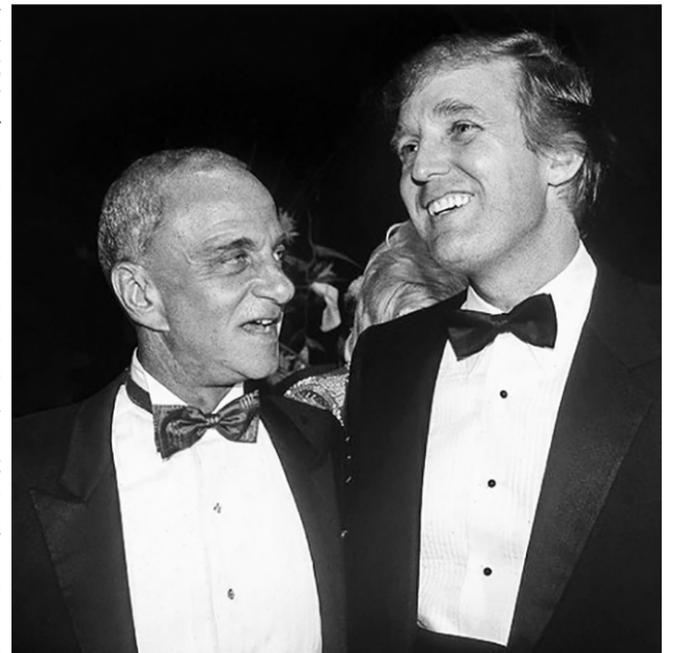
presence you were in the presence of pure evil," said lawyer Victor A. Kovner, who had known him for years. Cohn's power derived largely from his ability to scare potential adversaries with hollow threats and spurious lawsuits. And the fee he demanded for his services? Iron-clad loyalty.

Trump—who would remain loyal to Cohn for many years—would be one of the last and most enduring beneficiaries of Cohn's power. But as Trump would confide in 1980, he already seemed to be trying to distance himself from Cohn's inevitable taint: "All I can tell you is he's been vicious to others in his protection of me," Trump told me, as if to wave away a stench. "He's a genius. He's a lousy lawyer, but he's a genius."

BLEAK HOUSE

On the day I arrived at Cohn's office, in his imposing limestone town house on East 68th Street, his Rolls-Royce was parked outside. But all elegance stopped at the front door. It was a fetid place, a shambles of dusty bedrooms and office warrens where young male assistants made their way up and down the stairs. Cohn often greeted visitors in a robe. On occasion, I.R.S. agents were said to sit in the hallway and, knowing Cohn's reputation as a deadbeat, were there to intercept any envelopes with money.

Cohn's bedroom was crowded with a



Lawyer Roy Cohn and Donald Trump at the opening of Manhattan's Trump Tower, 1983. By Sonia Moskowitz

collection of stuffed frogs that sat on the floor, propped against a large TV. Everything about him suggested a curious combination of an arrested child and a sleaze. I sat on a small sofa covered with dozens of stuffed creatures that exploded with dust as I tried to move them aside. Cohn was compact, with a mirthless smile, the scars from his plastic surgeries visible around his ears. As he spoke, his tongue darted in and out; he twirled his Rolodex, as if to impress me with his network of contacts. The kind of law Cohn practiced, in fact, needed only a telephone. (The New Yorker would later report that his longtime switchboard operator taped his calls and kept notes of conversations.)

Who did not know Roy Cohn's backstory, even in 1980? Cohn—whose great-uncle had founded Lionel, the toy-train company—grew up as an only child, doted on by an overbearing mother who followed him to summer camp

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The Silurians Celebrate Journalism At Its Best

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porter Thomas Zambito wins a Medallion for his thoughtful series on what happens after the scheduled close of the Indian Point nuclear plant, and a Merit Award for his ground-breaking story on a Metro-North train crash.

A veteran member of the New York Times staff, David Dunlap, wins the Peter Kihss Award both for a lifetime of compelling journalism and for his sterling record of serving as a mentor to younger Times staff members. David covered infrastructure, architecture, engineering, landmarks, public spaces and transportation for the Times from 1981 until his retirement. See page one for a full profile by Silurian Clyde Habeman.

This year's second honoree is Samantha Maldonado, winner of the Society of Silurians' Dennis Duggan Memorial Scholarship Award, given annually to a student at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism who excels at producing stories about everyday New Yorkers. Maldonado has written about everything from dumpster-diving to juvenile justice. (See page one.)

Following are details on all the winners, with some examples of many of their entries:

BREAKING NEWS, newspaper, news service and online

Medallion: The Record, NYC Terror Attack, by The Record Staff

The newspaper and NorthJersey.com provided meticulous and comprehensive coverage of the terrorist attack Oct. 31 along a Manhattan bike path that killed eight people. The Record poured impressive resources into covering this attack, and the result was a compelling package of storytelling. In addition, the paper excelled precisely where a local news organization should, by diving deeply into the life of the suspect, a man from Paterson, N.J.

Merit Award: The Record, "Plane Crash in Teterboro" by The Record Staff.

The north Jersey paper wins again for its coverage of the fatal plane crash last May near Teterboro Airport. Two people were killed. Based not far from the site, The Record is all too familiar with cov-

ering plane crashes and other accidents. Its expertise was amply displayed as it chronicled the final moments of this ill-fated aircraft, the history of tragedy-plagued Teterboro and the emotions of residents who live nearby, never free from fear that horror may fall on them from the sky.

FEATURE NEWS, Newspaper, news service, magazine and online

Medallion: "South Bronx Heroin Den," Richard Schapiro of the New York Daily News.

Schapiro's gripping story, an up-close peek into the dark world of addiction, uses the alchemy of vividly dispassionate writing and rigorous reporting to achieve journalism that is simultaneously classic and timely.

Merit Award: "A Horrific Bus Crash, Three Years Later" by Benjamin Weiser and Alan Feuer of The New York Times.

Two veteran Times reporters revisit a devastating 2014 bus crash that killed three and seriously injured dozens. They focus on the surviving passengers, who continue to suffer through life-changing injuries and long rehabilitations, and a New York bus company that was woefully, if legally, underinsured, robbing survivors of adequate compensation for their injuries. Well written and superbly reported and researched.

Merit Award: "Bro, I'm Going Rogue" by Zeke Faux, Bloomberg News

This is a fascinating look into the backroom of a pump-and-dump stock-promotion operation and the snare set by FBI agents who ultimately got their flamboyant man.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING, newspaper, magazine, news service and online.

Medallion: "Separate and Unequal," by Matt Clark of Newsday.

This five-part series epitomized the art and science of a database investigation. Clark painstakingly scoured 2.5 million real-estate tax bills and revealed how Nassau County's effort to reform its tax assessment system ended up raising the taxes



of poor, elderly and minority homeowners by a total of \$1.7 billion over seven years and cut taxes for homeowners who could afford appeals. The reforms, he demonstrated, also enriched the county's tax appeal firms, who were large contributors to County Executive Edward Mangano. Matt also put flesh on the numbers by interviewing residents who were harmed. As a result, newly elected county officials cited Newsday's finding in their plans to overhaul again the tax assessment system

Merit Award: "Metro-North Loses Its Way" by Thomas Zambito of The Journal News.

Zambito's series showed how Metro-North, which prioritizes on-time performance, failed to anticipate a train crash in the Bronx in 2013 that killed four people, despite warnings from its own engineers

that earlier incidents indicated that a backup system was needed for the curve where the accident took place. The reporter showed groundbreaking enterprise on an important story that received more conventional coverage in other publications.

PUBLIC SERVICE REPORTING, newspaper, magazine, news service and online

Medallion: "System Failure," by Brian M. Rosenthal, Emma G. Fitzsimmons, Michael LaForgia and The New York Times Staff.

The Times series, especially impressive in its online version, includes stories throughout 2017 that detail how the Metropolitan Transportation Authority has systematically mismanaged New York

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The Silurians Celebrate Journalism At Its Best

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City's subway system for decades and up to the present day. State and city officials neglected maintenance even as ridership doubled, while, when construction and repairs are made, the flawed contract bidding process hikes up costs to five times the international average. Includes stories on the much more efficiently run London and Paris systems.

SPORTS REPORTING AND COMMENTARY, newspaper, news service, magazine and online

Medallion: Sports columns by Tara Sullivan of The Record.

Whether writing about the life of an invalid ex-Jets and Giants coach, or going into the stands to see what the family and friends of a New England Patriots' player are up to, Tara Sullivan brings a remarkable depth of insight, reportage, and, quite simply, humanity to her columns. And never lost in her features is a work ethic. When she puts together a story, she seems to have interviewed every person who has been touched by, or had an effect on, her subject.

Merit Award: "Sports Safety," by Jim Baumbach of Newsday.

Newsday has been a leader in looking at the effects of concussions and other injuries in scholastic football. Jim Baumbach spearheads the search, doggedly using the Freedom of Information Act to get high schools' statistics. We learn that an increasing number of Nassau County schools don't even field junior-varsity teams any longer because the kids aren't turning out.

BUSINESS/FINANCIAL REPORTING: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online.

Medallion: "Unmasking the Kushner Real Estate Empire," by Caleb Melby and David Kocieniewski for Bloomberg News.

The duo dug into the troubles of Kushner Cos., the real estate firm controlled by Presidential son-in-law Jared Kushner. Jared's troubles stem largely from his ill-fated 2007 purchase, for \$4 billion, of 666 Fifth Avenue, an aging and unstylish commercial and residential building that has lost much of its value since the financial crisis. That and other Manhattan purchases have pushed Kushner Cos into deep debt. Analysts don't see an easy exit. Could bankruptcy be in the Kushner future?

Medallion: "Whatever It Takes to Win," by Jen Wieczner for Fortune magazine.

This intriguing story looks inside Elliott Management, the secretive New York hedge fund founded by Republican donor Paul Singer. Elliott's aggressive style of so-called shareholder activism has brought a series of companies, and countries, to their knees. Its insistence on getting full price for Argentina's bonds kept that country out of the international debt market for years. Its battles with South Korea's Samsung arguably helped land both a top Samsung executive and the President of South Korea in prison for bribery.

Merit Award: "The Advice Trap," by Susan Antilla for The Intercept in partnership with The Investigative Fund.

Antilla wins for her story exposing the seven-year fight by the financial industry to prevent implementation of a tough new Department of Labor rule requiring financial advisors to put retirement investors



interests first when investing their money. The rule finally went into effect last June, but the Trump Administration is doing everything it can to quash it.

SCIENCE AND HEALTH REPORTING: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online

Medallion: "Death Disparities: Health Inequality in New York City" by Ruth Ford, Janaki Chadha and Jarrett Murphy for City Limits.

This crisply written four-part series by a trio of enterprising reporters brings to light the complex mesh of interlocking factors that underlie the growing disparity in health and life expectancy between poor and wealthier neighborhoods of New York City over the past decade. In doing so, the series--based on a meticulous examination of a thicket of public documents and interviews with community leaders and experts from a broad range of disciplines and supplemented by highly instructive sidebars and graphics--provides a roadmap for ways to reduce significantly these glaring inequities, if the public will exist to do so.

Medallion: "Miracle on Ice" and other stories by Lindy Washburn for The Record.

Washburn is a sure-handed health reporter who knows how to captivate. Whether covering cutting-edge clinical advances or reporting on medicine's enduring mysteries, she seasons her finely wrought stories with gripping human dramas that hold the reader rapt. That mastery is amply demonstrated in her account of how a teenage hockey player, incapacitated by pain, finds life-affirming relief thanks to a neurosurgeon cum amateur pilot who assembles an array of high-tech strategies that allow him to "fly" through the brain, locate and root out a precariously lodged tumor, the pain's source. The same goes for Washburn's reports on efforts to better understand as-yet-unexplainable sudden infant death and, on a related matter, the search for an explanation as to why babies born of African-American women die at a far greater rate than those of their white counterparts. Sown into each of these stories are poignantly drawn portraits of affected family members struggling to cope with unfathomable loss.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online.

Medallion: "After Indian Point: The Challenges Ahead" by Thomas C. Zambito for The Journal News.

After decades of generating electricity for Westchester County and New York City, the Indian Point nuclear plant is slated for shutdown in 2021. What then? Energy reporter Zambito sought answers. The result: a string of far-ranging stories that address the likely environmental, economic and political impact -- not just on communities around Indian Point but also towns and villages across the nation as a growing number of nuclear facilities cease operation, in part due to the rise of solar power.

Merit Award: "Contaminated Water" by Emily Dooley for Newsday.

In a series of stories based on critical documents obtained through New York's Freedom of Information act, Dooley, Newsday's environmental reporter, makes a strong case, in the face of vigorous company denials, that the defense contractor Grumman Aerospace Co. (now Grumman/Northrup) did in fact handle radioactive materials during its years manufacturing warplanes and space exploration equipment (the 1930's through the 1990's). The paper names Grumman as the likely source of contamination detected in groundwater wells around Bethpage, Long Island. The series has sparked official demands for additional answers from the company and further testing of the former production site.

ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTING: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online

Medallion: "James Levine Sexual Abuse Allegations" by Michael Cooper of The New York Times

Cooper's series on sexual misconduct charges against the esteemed Metropolitan Opera conductor, published over three consecutive days, reveals details of Levine's alleged abuse in interviews with his now-adult victims, who were his students. It also reports on the subsequent turmoil at the Met, as it scrambled to protect its reputation and placate its donors.

Merit Award: "Race, Money and Broadway: How the 'Great Comet' Burned Out" by Michael Paulson of The New York Times

Paulson tells the story, in vivid detail, of how messy and complicated Broadway has become by following a major musical production from beginning to end. Presenting a Broadway show has always been a mix of artistic vision and big money, but today the theater has two new explosive elements--race and the influence of social media.

COMMENTARY AND EDITORIALS: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online

Medallion: "I Was Misinformed" by Joyce Wadler of The New York Times.

Wadler's columns in the metro section of the Times take a whimsical, offbeat look at some of the central elements of life in New York City. Twice a month, Wadler delivers her own unique perspective, taking everyday events in our lives, stepping around to the side, cocking her head and delivering an elegantly written, often hilarious but trenchant vision of how our world functions.

Merit Award: Columns by Mike Kelly of The Record

Together with photographer/videographer Chris Pedota, Kelly hit the road for a broad and deep trip through a divided nation as Donald Trump was cementing his party's nomination for President--only one of several elegantly written and deeply reported columns that delighted and informed readers.

PEOPLE PROFILES: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online

Medallion: "Deal With the Devil" by Marie Brenner, Vanity Fair

An illuminating look into the fear-inducing tactics and dubious ethics of the late Roy Cohn, the lawyer, fixer and political thug whose counsel was a major influence on Donald Trump from the early 1970s until his death in 1986. Revealing how much the two men had in common, Brenner, a writer-at-large for Vanity Fair, touches on everything from Cohn and Trump's partnership in fighting against

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Silurians Celebrate The Best

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fair housing practices to Cohn's personal financial woes. She concludes that the two men are one and the same, writing, "Everything about [Cohn] suggested a curious combination of an arrested child and a sleaze."

Merit Award: "Garden State of Mind" by Christopher Maag, The Record

Here's proof that not everyone has to be a celebrity to become the subject of an engaging profile. For the past year or so, reporter Maag has been producing a column called "Garden State of Mind" for The Record. Its mission: to find and write about the people who make the suburbs just west of New York City "a singularly interesting place to live." They include a Paterson poet inspired by Jack Kerouac, a high school student whose family's financial crises motivated her to become class valedictorian, and an unemployed 25-year-old Teaneck man who hopes to one day be a professional wrestler—though for now he simply isn't very good at it.

Merit Award: "The Lady and the Scamp" by Evgenia Peretz, Vanity Fair.

Peretz gives us a rare glimpse into the life of Nan Talese, one of the most successful book publishers in America and one of the first women to break barriers in the literary world's old boys' club. She has her own imprint and an impressive list of distinguished authors. She is also the wife of New Journalism legend Gay Talese. Together, Nan and Gay—married since 1959—are one of New York's most glamorous and celebrated literary couples, yet the durability of their somewhat unconventional marriage remains a mystery to many of their friends and colleagues. Peretz, drawing on sources in and out of the Talese household, sheds lots of light on the subject.

REPORTING ON MINORITY ISSUES: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online.

Medallion: "Separate and Unequal," by Matt Clark of Newsday.

Clark's database investigative report on Nassau County's tax assessment system is especially relevant on the 50th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. This package of stories is both thoroughly researched and compellingly and clearly written.

Merit Award: "Unequal Justice," a Newsday/News 12 Special Report by Thomas Maier and Ann Choi.

This two-day multi-media series, which included a television news program produced jointly by Newsday and News 12, takes the first systemic look at race, ethnicity and Long Island's criminal justice system. In their analysis of police and court records from 2005 to 2016, Maier and Choi found that non-whites are nearly five times as likely as whites to be arrested on "stop and frisk"-like charges and spend time in jail. Their second report found racial disparity in Long Island's system of dealing with criminal drug possession. Whites, the reporting says, were far more likely than minorities to receive a lighter charge and penalty when arrested for possession. Moreover, minorities are often not told about the options for rehabilitation and treatment.

Merit Award: "Plight of the Immigrant," by Monsy Alvarado and Hannan Adely for The Record.

In one of a series of stories, immigration and diversity reporters Alvarado and Adely chronicle the death of Salvadoran detainee Carlos Mejia-Bonilla in the Hudson County jail after he was denied medication, while prison officials failed to relay crucial medical information to the hospital where he was taken before he died. The story resulted in a public outcry and dismissal of two members of the jail's medical staff. Alvarado also describes how Jose Estrada Lopez, a Guatemalan immigrant from Fairview, was ordered deported under the Trump administration's crackdown on illegal immigration after having lived in the United States for more than 15 years.

BREAKING NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY: Newspaper, news service and online

Medallion: "Mourning the Victims of MS-13" by Alejandra Villa, Newsday.

The deep anguish of the parents and friends of Michael Lopez Banegas, one of four young Latino men whose battered bodies were found in a heavily wooded area of Central Islip last year, is vividly captured by Villa in this heartbreaking photo taken at Michael's funeral. Ironically, Michael had come to the U.S. three years earlier to escape gang violence in Honduras.

FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHY: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online.

Medallion: "Fighting Parkinson's" by J. Conrad Williams, Newsday.

A portfolio of photos illustrates how a group of men and women on Long Island is dealing with Parkinson's Disease by taking part in a non-contact boxing program called "Rock Steady." The images are a striking depiction of the grit and determination displayed by patients fighting to counteract the effects of a degenerative disease.

Merit Award: "Imam" by Kevin Wexler of The Record

Imam Mohammed Ibn Ahmed is one of four chaplains at the Bergen County Jail. Photojournalist Kevin Wexler of The Record spent several days inside the jail, observing and recording Ahmed teaching the Quran and interacting with the inmates. The imam wears western clothes—sport shirts and dark trousers—and says about traditional dress: "It was the norm in Arabia. It's not the norm here. It's got nothing to do with Islam." An unusual look at an unusual man.

SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY: Newspaper, news service, magazine and online.

Medallion: "Altuve the MVP," by Thomas A. Ferrara, Newsday.

Pictures of baseball players sliding across home plate are common, but the overhead angle of Thomas Ferrara's shot of the Houston Astros' José Altuve arriving safely at home with the game-winning run is what makes it a prize-winner. And the look on the face of Altuve, the AL's 2017 Most Valuable Player, reflects the excitement and importance of that moment: a walkoff 2-1 victory over the New York Yankees during last year's AL Championship Series.

TELEVISION: Best Feature Reporting

Medallion: "On the Scene" by John Bathke of News12 New Jersey.

Bathke has produced a compelling portrait of the transformation of Robert Sundholm, a down-on-his-luck former janitor, who in his retirement has become a celebrated artist.

TELEVISION: Public Service & Investigative Reporting.

Medallion: "Kane in Your Corner.

The Animal Police" by Walt Kane, News 12 New Jersey. Producer: Karin Attonito; Photographer/Editor: Anthony Cocco

News12's year-long investigation of the New Jersey Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals exposed serious conflicts of interest, potential corruption and clear mismanagement at the agency the public depends on to police stray animals. The series was so powerful that it prompted the state legislature to abolish this agency.

BEST MULTI-MEDIA REPORTING AND PRESENTATION

Medallion: "Lyme Wars" by NBC-NewYork.com and WNBC.

This week-long collaboration gave viewers a comprehensive look at the many perils of ticks bearing Lyme disease and other infectious threats. The multi-media presentation, which included a 13-minute video and numerous graphics to help identify ticks and the ailments they may cause, gave the public real guidance about how to prepare for this public health threat.

Medallion: "The Morris Canal" by reporter James O'Neill and visual journalist Chris Pedota for NorthJersey.com.

The Record's website produced a nine-chapter feature that rolled back time to give readers and viewers a multi-media education demonstrating how a long forgotten canal stretching across 102 miles was the foundation for the early economy of New Jersey.

Merit Award: "A Day in The Life of Long Island" by Newsday.

Newsday's inventive effort enlisted 70 staffers and dozens of volunteer news collectors in a vast multi-media look at June 21, the longest day of the year. The presentation, with stories, photographs and videos from 100 locations, has something for everyone, from hard news to slice-of-life features.

AWARDS CO-CHAIRMEN: Michael Serrill, Jack Deacy

Judges: Linda Amster, David A. Andelman, Joseph Berger, Suzanne Charlé, Jack Deacy, Bill Diehl, Gerald Eskenazi, Allan Dodds Frank, Tony Guida, Clyde Haberman, Herbert Hadad, Myron Kandel, Valerie Komor, Carol Lawson, Tony Mancini, Ben Patrusky, Anne Roiphe, Wendy Sclight, Michael Serrill, Mort Sheinman.

Deal With The Devil

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and lived with him until she died. Every night he was seated at his family's Park Avenue dinner table, which was an unofficial command post of the Favor Bank bosses who'd helped make his father, Al Cohn, a Bronx county judge, and later a State Supreme Court judge. (During the Depression, Roy's uncle Bernard Marcus had been sent to prison in a bank-fraud case, and Roy's childhood was marked by visits to Sing Sing.) By high school, Cohn was fixing a parking ticket or two for one of his teachers.

After graduating from Columbia Law School at 20, he became an assistant U.S. attorney and an expert in "subversive activities," allowing him to segue into his role in the 1951 espionage trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. (Cohn persuaded the star witness, Ethel Rosenberg's brother, David Greenglass, to change his testimony; in Cohn's autobiography, written with Sidney Zion, Cohn claimed that he had

encouraged the judge, already intent on sending Julius to the electric chair, to also order Ethel's execution, despite the fact that she was a mother with two children.) Come 1953, this legal prodigy was named McCarthy's boy-wonder chief counsel, and the news photos told the tale: the sharp-faced, heavy-lidded 26-year-old with cherubic cheeks, whispering intimately into the ear of the bloated McCarthy. Cohn's special skill as the senator's henchman was character assassination. Indeed, after testifying in front of him, an engineer with the Voice of America radio news service committed suicide. Cohn never showed a shred of remorse.

Despite McCarthy's very public demise when the hearings proved to be trumped-up witch hunts, Cohn would emerge largely unscathed, going on to become one of the last great power brokers of New York. His friends and clients came to include New York's Francis Cardinal Spellman and Yankees owner

George Steinbrenner. Cohn would become an occasional guest at the Reagan White House and a constant presence at Studio 54.

By the time I met with Cohn, he had already been indicted four times on charges ranging from extortion and blackmail to bribery, conspiracy, securities fraud, and obstruction of justice. But he had been acquitted in each instance and in the process had begun to behave as if he were somehow a super-patriot who was above the law. At a gay bar in Provincetown, as reported by Cohn biographer Nicholas von Hoffman, a friend described Cohn's behavior at a local lounge: "Roy sang three choruses of 'God Bless America,' got a hard-on and went home to bed."

Cohn, with his bravado, reckless opportunism, legal pyrotechnics, and serial fabrication, became a fitting mentor for the young real-estate scion. And as Trump's first major project, the Grand Hyatt, was set to open, he was already involved in multiple controversies. He was warring with the city about tax abatements and other concessions. He

had hoodwinked his very own partner, Hyatt chief Jay Pritzker, by changing a term in a deal when Pritzker was unreachable—on a trip to Nepal. In 1980, while erecting what would become Trump Tower, he antagonized a range of arts patrons and city officials when his team demolished the Art Deco friezes decorating the 1929 building. Vilified in the headlines—and by the Establishment—Trump offered a response that was pure Roy Cohn: "Who cares?" he said. "Let's say that I had given that junk to the Met. They would have just put them in their basement."

For author Sam Roberts, the essence of Cohn's influence on Trump was the triad: "Roy was a master of situational immorality . . . He worked with a three-dimensional strategy, which was: 1. Never settle, never surrender. 2. Counter-attack, counter-sue immediately. 3. No matter what happens, no matter how deeply into the muck you get, claim victory and never admit defeat." As columnist Liz Smith once observed, "Donald lost his moral compass when he made an alliance with Roy Cohn."

FLYING JENNY

BY THEASA TUOHY

This alternative view of the days when the first Silurian first crawled out of the slime of New York's hangouts of hacks and organized themselves, is the debut chapter of a remarkable novel of those times by veteran (unless that's an oxymoron) Silurian Theasa Tuohy.... Flying Jenny (Kaylie Jones Books). In fact, this chapter draws on the exploit of a real-life Long Island flygirl, Elinor Smith who, on Sunday, October 21, 1928, became the first (and only) person to fly under all four East River bridges—in a Waco 9 biplane.

NEW YORK, 1929 – The Williamsburg Bridge was already jammed with photographers, spectators and newsreel cameras when Laura Bailey and Cheesy Clark arrived on the scene. They had a tough time shoving their way through to a good vantage spot at the railing, so they could see all the way upriver toward the Queensboro Bridge.

“So,” said Cheesy, removing the bulky flash attachment from his Speed Graphic as he set himself up for shooting, “here we is, me and you. A gal reporter and a cheese-cake artist. Whaddaya think da deal is?”

“This whole thing doesn’t make any sense.” Laura frowned as she wriggled into a space between a steel post and Cheesy, and stepped up on a rung of the railing for a better view. A puff of breeze warned that she needed to hold as tightly to her little hat with one hand as she was gripping the railing with the other. “I bet that span isn’t two hundred feet off the water,” she yelled to him over the noise of the crowd. “No one can fly under that. And look,” she said, pointing west toward the Manhattan side of the bridge, clogged with Sunday traffic moving to and from Queens over the East River. “There are cables and stuff hanging down that could catch and rip a wing in a second.”

Cheesy, the stub of a cigar clenched tight in his teeth, did no more than grunt. He was too busy jamming plates in and out of his Speed Graphic, turning one way for shots of the swelling crowd, whirling back,

shooting the bridge up ahead, the barges, Sunday sailors and other river traffic, then leaning back to get a dizzying shot of the soaring towers of the bridge they were on.

“Heck of a spread for the paper tomorrow,” he finally said. “Don’t wanna miss any angles. If the fool pilot gets himself killed or not, still heck of a spread.”

“Ouch, get your clodhopper off my foot,” Laura yelled, as a Pathé newsreel cameraman backed into her, angling for his own perspective.

Laura was at a distinct disadvantage jockeying among all these men, dressed as she was in a mid-calf length skirt that hobbled her movement, the tiny hat with a veil perched atop her dark marcelled wave.

“Sorry, lady,” the cameraman said. “But what are you doing here, anyway? You’re in the way.”

“So are you, buster,” Laura snapped, giving him a shove and turning her attention back to the bridge ahead, scanning the horizon on the outlandish possibility that there could really be a little bi-wing airplane approaching. It was a perfect summer day, blue, cloudless sky. The rumor was, hard to comprehend as it seemed, that some crazy barnstorming pilot from Roosevelt Field was planning to fly under all four bridges that crossed from Manhattan to Brooklyn and Queens.

People were doing all sorts of screwy things in 1929, as a glance at any newspaper would reveal. They called their era The Jazz Age, The Roaring Twenties. The Great War had been over for ten years, it was a time of boundless hope, optimism and prosperity. “Blue skies are smiling at me” was the song on everyone’s lips. The tabloids were full of flagpole sitters, flappers doing the Charleston, and marathon dancers leaning on their partners through endless nights. The more serious journals had many readers believing that Herbert Hoover would put a chicken in every pot, a car in every garage, and that the bull market would run forever. But everyone agreed that these stunt pilots took the cake. Ever since Charles Lindbergh had flown the Atlantic solo two years before, the entire world had gone nuts over flying.



Aviatrix Elinor Smith in plane.

Even women were doing it.

The vehicular traffic here on the Williamsburg Bridge was light but growing, it didn’t yet look as jammed as the Queensboro up ahead.

“Let’s hope he flies north to south,” Laura said to a reporter jammed next to her with an *Evening Graphic* press card stuck in his hat. “If he starts downriver from the Brooklyn Bridge, we won’t be able to see him coming, only going.”

The reporter laughed. “If he crashes into the Queensboro before he gets under it, we won’t be able to see that either. Some guy I just talked to has binoculars; he says he can see a lot of press stationed up there. They’ll get the good shots.”

“We shudda had another shooter here,” Cheesy grumbled. “I can catch action north, but with the bend in the river, I’m outta luck if he crashes into the Manhattan or the Brooklyn.”

“Crashes? You’ve got to crash doing this stunt,” said a photographer Laura recognized from the *Evening Standard*. “There’s hardly any clearance under most of these bridges.”

At that moment a collective “ooh ah” rose from the multiplying crowd. Laura could make out a dark speck moving through the sky toward the Queensboro. “Can you see any better through your camera lens?” she turned to ask Cheesy. But the photographer was slamming plates with the staccato of a machine gun.

The black spot was coming closer. It wobbled, caught a sunray that flashed on the water and headed straight for the dangling cables. Laura’s chest got tight; she realized she was holding her breath. The poor guy was going to be killed! She’d never seen anyone die before. She gritted her teeth. I suppose it’s part of the job. I can’t be weak kneed, I have to be strong. I have to prove myself. She watched the speck swerve, then merge with the shadowed waters beneath the bridge, her held breath turned to a gasp. The little spot popped up into the sun! A cheer went up from the bridge watchers. “He made it.” “That was close.” “Wow.” The crowd roared. The expanding dot was clearly identifiable as a plane now, fast approaching, threading its way among the ships and barges in the harbor. It neared the Williamsburg, and the open cockpit biplane rocked from side to side in greeting to the cheering, waving crowd. Laura could have sworn she caught a momentary glimpse of a grin under the cloth helmet and goggles of the figure in the cockpit. Bridge traffic was at a standstill.

The plane was heading straight for them, its nose pointing down. Laura elbowed and clawed her way back through the crowd and zigzagged through the stalled cars in what could only be described as a broken field run. The goal post was a view from the other side.

As she shoved one last person out of her way, she grabbed up a handful of hobbled skirt, yanked it above her knees,

kicked off her high heels – thank God they’re not the ones with the strap across the instep, she thought – and hoisted her lithe, five-foot-four-inch frame up several rungs on the bridge’s railing. Jeez, I hope Cheese has the good sense to be right behind me.

Sure enough, there he was hanging over the railing right beside her.

“You’re pretty fast on your feet for a broad,” he said with a grin.

“Darn right,” Laura yelled into the wind. Mild though the weather was, there was more than a little breeze when you stuck your head this far out. “I was saving you a spot.” She was already half over the rail leaning on her abdomen to help balance while she stretched over for a better view of the water.

“Holy cow, here he comes.” Laura could barely hear him over the sound of his camera’s slide click as she caught sight of the first dark shadow of wings spread on the water. At that same moment, she felt the wind tug at her hair. Uh oh. She didn’t dare grab at her hat. She needed both hands on the rail, or she’d be in the drink as well. With something akin to seasickness she watched the little veiled felt that represented a week’s salary sail off as it caught an air current. Borne by the fickle wind, it floated, then dipped, then glided as it leisurely made its way to the river far below.

She didn’t have time to mourn, here came the plane. It did the very same kind of pop up Laura had seen when it had come out from under the Queensboro moments before. I must ask someone how they do that, Laura thought. If the pilot is too dead to talk, someone at an airfield or someplace like that will know. Must be like gunning a car engine. Wow, she’d never had a story like this before. It was a real humdinger. She shifted her belly slightly on the railing and looked down, straight into the hole of metal that passed for a cockpit – a flutter of white.

A silk scarf flashed, blowing in the wind.

“Good grief,” Laura screamed at Cheesy, “that was a woman.” She knew it. She didn’t know why, but she just knew it! “A woman!” The tiny biplane and its shadow were already skimming through the sky and gliding along the choppy surface of the water. The crowd behind was laughing and cheering. Some people were actually dancing around the stalled cars or doing jigs on the roadway of the bridge.

“A woman!” Laura screamed again at Cheesy. “I’ve got to get to a phone.” As she dropped off the railing and scrambled into her shoes, she caught a view through the bridge’s lacy grillwork. The tiny dot of a plane was swinging slightly to its left trying to avoid the smokestack of a river barge on its way to the next bridge. I’ve got to file this story. I can’t stay to see what happens, Laura thought. Cheesy will get a picture.



Aviatrix Elinor Smith pilots plane under the Manhattan Bridge on her way to flying under all four East River Bridges.

The Making of a Meltdown

Continued from Page 1

Cuomo declared that the system was in a “state of emergency.” But the problems plaguing the subway did not suddenly sweep over the city like a tornado or a flood. They were years in the making, and they might have been avoided if decision makers had put the interests of train riders and daily operations ahead of flashy projects and financial gimmicks.

An examination by The New York Times reveals in stark terms how the needs of the aging, overburdened system have grown while city and state politicians have consistently steered money away from addressing them.

Century-old tunnels and track routes are crumbling, but The Times found that the Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s budget for subway maintenance has barely changed, when adjusted for inflation, from what it was 25 years ago.

Signal problems and car equipment failures occur twice as frequently as a decade ago, but hundreds of mechanic positions have been cut because there is not enough money to pay them — even though the average total compensation for subway managers has grown to nearly \$300,000 a year.

Daily ridership has nearly doubled in the past two decades to 5.7 million, but New York is the only major city in the world with fewer miles of track than it had during World War II. Efforts to add new lines have been hampered by generous agreements with labor unions and private contractors that have inflated construction costs to five times the international average.

New York’s subway now has the worst on-time performance of any major rapid transit system in the world, according to data collected from the 20 biggest. Just 65 percent of weekday trains reach their destinations on time, the lowest rate since the transit crisis of the 1970s, when graffiti-covered cars regularly broke down.

None of this happened on its own. It was the result of a series of decisions by both Republican and Democratic politicians — governors from George E. Pataki to Mr. Cuomo and mayors from Rudolph W. Giuliani to Bill de Blasio. Each of them cut the subway’s budget or co-opted it for their own priorities.

They stripped a combined \$1.5 billion from the M.T.A. by repeatedly diverting tax revenues earmarked for the subways and also by demanding large payments for financial advice,

I.T. help and other services that transit leaders say the authority could have done without.

They pressured the M.T.A. to spend billions of dollars on opulent station makeovers and other projects that did nothing to boost service or reliability, while leaving the actual movement of trains to rely on a 1930s-era signal system with fraying, cloth-covered cables.

They saddled the M.T.A. with debt and engineered a deal with creditors that brought in quick cash but locked the authority into paying \$5 billion in interest that it otherwise never would have had to pay.

In one particularly egregious example, Mr. Cuomo’s administration forced the M.T.A. to spend \$5 million to bail out three state-run ski resorts that were struggling after a warm winter.

At the same time, public officials who have taken hundreds of thousands of dollars in political contributions from M.T.A. unions and contractors have pressured the authority into signing agreements with labor groups and construction companies that obligated the authority to pay far more than it had planned.

Faced with funding shortfalls, the M.T.A. has resorted to borrowing. Nearly 17 percent of its budget now goes to pay down debt — roughly triple what it paid in 1997.

“It’s genuinely shocking how much of every dollar that goes to the M.T.A. is spent on expenses that have nothing to do with running the subway,” said Seth W. Pinsky, the former head of the city’s Economic Development Corporation.

“That’s the problem.” The Times reviewed thousands of pages of state and federal documents, including records that had not previously been made public; built databases to compare New York with other cities; and interviewed more than 300 people, including current and former subway leaders, contractors and transit experts.

The examination found that the agency tasked with running the subway has been roiled by turnover and changes to its management structure. Dozens of people have cycled through high-level jobs, including many who left to work for contractors who do business with the M.T.A. Byzantine layers of bureaucracy have allowed transit leaders and politicians to avoid responsibility for problems.



IN MEMORIAM

William Borders, who retired from The New York Times in 2006 after a 46-year career as a foreign correspondent and a senior editor, died on Feb. 28 at his home in Manhattan. He was 79. A graduate of Yale, Borders joined The Times in 1960 as a copy boy. His overseas stations included London, New Delhi, Montreal, and Lagos, Nigeria. He was also an editor on various desks, serving as deputy foreign editor, senior news editor, and editor of The Week in Review, a section since renamed Sunday Review. As Max Frankel, who promoted Borders to the job of overseeing the entire newsroom as the next day’s paper was assembled, told Sam Roberts, who wrote Borders’ obituary:



“Besides practicing distinguished journalism as a reporter and editor, Bill provided a rare serenity in the midst of all the excitement and so helped us always to keep our cool and achieve our best.” But he first distinguished himself as a foreign correspondent.

“Somehow I had been led to believe that the life of a foreign correspondent was a glamorous one,” he told Times Talk, the paper’s now defunct internal newsletter, “a lot of sitting around beach cabanas with Kings, Prime Ministers, Agas and other such folk and occasionally cabling New York for money. But that was before my trip to Biafra,” he added, “and the image now seems very distant.”

It was his very first assignment—reporting on the famine in Biafra during the Nigerian civil war in 1970, being captured by the Nigerian Army and held captive for two days without food or water. But that was only at the beginning of a career that included, among a host of other stops, a military coup in Afghanistan, India’s return to democracy and protests in London against nuclear weapons.

“He was one of the most considerate and thoughtful people I ever knew on the New York Times staff,” Craig R. Whitney told Sam Roberts. A former foreign correspondent and editor who recruited Borders as his deputy, Whitney concluded, “He had a great sense of humor, was appreciative of good writing and did his best to make sure it survived the editing process.”

Robert Grossman, a multi-talented artist whose illustrations and cartoons graced magazine covers, editorial pages, op-ed columns and long-form magazine and newspaper articles for half a century, died at home in Manhattan on March 15, apparently of heart failure. He was 78.

His work, often satirizing politicians and pop



culture icons, appeared more than 500 times on the covers of magazines ranging from Time and Newsweek to Rolling Stone and National Lampoon, on the editorial and commentary pages of The New York Times and other publications, and in children’s books and on record album covers.

Grossman especially enjoyed lampooning politicians, including his 1972 cover of National Lampoon magazine of a grinning Richard Nixon with an impossibly long, Pinocchio-styled nose with a Jiminy Cricket in the shape of Henry Kissinger perched on the end, or a 2006 Rolling Stone magazine cover showing George W. Bush perched on a stool in the corner, a dunce cap on his head. Perhaps his best-known illustration, however, was a poster for the 1980 movie comedy “Airplane!” It depicted a passenger liner tied in a knot.

But of all the jobs that could be classified as journalism, Grossman told The Tennessean newspaper in 2008 that his choice was illustrator. “Reporters labor under the terrible requirement that what they report must be true,” he said. “Opinion writers need to endure the less stringent demand that what they opine be at least plausible. Nobody ever expects what cartoonists do to be either true or even plausible. That’s why we’re all as happy as larks.”

Larry Friedman, who wore many hats in journalism, government and public affairs with integrity and grace, died on April 21 following a lengthy illness. He was 86. Friedman was a longtime Silurian and served for many years as chair of the Contingency Fund Board of Trustees. He started his professional news career as a copy boy at The Associated Press in New York, working nights while attending Brooklyn College and then Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism during the day. He later worked as a reporter and editor for The AP in Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Cleveland before returning to New York as daytime news editor.



Friedman then joined Advertising Age as an associate editor, before moving to Time Inc., where he served in top public affairs posts for Life magazine and Sports Illustrated.

After a stint as a senior press information officer at the United Nations, he became deputy press secretary for New York City Comptroller Harrison J. Goldin and then as a spokesman and speechwriter for Mario Cuomo when he was Lieutenant Governor of New York State. He subsequently joined Hill & Knowlton, where he was a vice president specializing in crisis communications and corporate public relations.

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