

# Silurian News

Published by The Society of The Silurians, Inc., an organization of veteran New York City journalists founded in 1924

**Society of the Silurians**  
**EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM AWARDS GALA**  
*The National Arts Club*  
*15 Gramercy Park South*  
**Wednesday, May 15, 2019**  
**Drinks: 6 P.M. • Dinner: 7:15 P.M.**  
*Meet old friends and award winners*  
Aileen.jacobson@gmail.com

MAY 2019

## Celebrating The Best

BY JACK DEACY

Investigative stories were the highlight of this year's Silurian Excellence in Journalism contest.

The New York Times, Newsday and The Record/NorthJersey.com were the big winners in the awards sponsored annually by the Society of Silurians.

Newsday also won the President's Choice Medallion for its extraordinary investigation that exposed a complex web of corrupt ties between politicians and the business, law enforcement and legal communities of Long Island. Over four years a battalion of Newsday reporters and researchers conducted hundreds of interviews, pored over thousands of government documents and developed inside sources. The result was "Pathway To Power," a 48-page, 30,000-word special Sunday supplement published last March.

The vehicle for the probe was Gary

Melius, a onetime street hoodlum who came to own Long Island's unofficial political clubhouse, a grand, Gatsby-era estate called Oheka Castle. Along with hosting celebrity weddings and music videos by Taylor Swift and others, Oheka became the place where high-ranking public officials, political leaders and law enforcement brass wine and dined, played poker, anointed and cross-endorsed candidates and otherwise sliced up the public pie.

Other winning entries also featured outstanding investigative work and several of them targeted the Trump business empire:

- The New York Times investigative team of David Barstow, Susanne Craig and Russ Buettner won the Medallion for **Investigative Reporting** by telling the complex story of the legally dubious financial history of the Trump family business. It demonstrated that Trump

received today's equivalent of at least \$413 million from his father's real estate empire and that much of it came from questionable tax schemes during the 1990s, including outright fraud.

- On their way to winning the Medallion for **Radio News Reporting**, WNYC Radio and ProPublica combined their staffs to produce "Trump Inc.," a year-long series of podcasts that uncovered wrongdoing and conflicts of interest in the Trump business empire.

- The Associated Press Trump Business Team dug deep into the business activities of Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner. Their investigations exposed glaring conflicts of interest as the pair continue to serve as White House advisers without divesting their extensive financial holdings. For their reporting, the AP team won a Merit Award for **Business and Financial Reporting**.

- The exhaustive research work of James O'Neill, Scott Fallon and photojournalist Chris Padota of The Record/NorthJersey.com resulted in "Toxic Secrets: Pollution, Evasion and Fear in New Jersey," which won the Medallion for **Environmental Reporting**. The four-part series uncovered how DuPont downplayed the dire health risks posed by cancer-causing groundwater contamination at their now closed munitions manufacturing plant

in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey.

- Newsday reporter Will Van Sant's "Hands to the Neck" exposé won for **Public Service Reporting**. It took Van Sant a year to conduct deep research, collecting documents, developing sources and using old fashioned shoe leather to get the story. It revealed scores of non-fatal strangulation attacks in state-run or state-supervised hospital and other medical facilities. Van Sant's reporting detailed how Patricia Gunning, the former special prosecutor and inspector general at the New York State Justice Center for the Protection of People with Special Needs, was stymied in her attempt to study and combat the phenomenon, which often involved employees acting against vulnerable individuals under state care. Van Sant's piece spurred calls for Congressional action.

- Kevin Armstrong won for Sports Reporting for taking a close look at an FBI probe into the way businessmen and coaches schemed to funnel six-figure payments from sneaker companies to the families of star high school basketball players. When he wrote it he was working in the sports department of the New York Daily News. When the Daily News let half of their editorial staff go during 2018, Armstrong was among the casualties. But he bounced back and now covers

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### New Jersey Bus Crash Tragedy



A bus carrying fifth grade students from Paramus, New Jersey, hit a dump truck while allegedly making an illegal U-turn on Route 80. The crash killed 10-year-old Miranda Vargas and teacher Jennifer Williamson-Kennedy while injuring 43 others. This photo by Bob Karp for TheRecord.com was one of a series that won in Breaking News Photography.

### Dennis Duggan Award Winner: Rachel Rippetoe is Dedicated to Local Reporting

BY ALLAN DODDS FRANK

The first story by Rachel Rippetoe, this year's Dennis Duggan Award winner, appeared in the "Knightly News," her high school newspaper at Hume-Fogg Academic Magnet High School in Nashville, Tenn., home of the Blue Knights.

In those days, Rippetoe was working part time at a farmer's market so her journalism focused on agriculture and the food chain. She wanted to get out of the South and had relatives in Oregon so she enrolled at the University of Portland, where she became the editor-in-chief of The Beacon, the student newspaper.

While still at school, Rippetoe got an internship at the Eugene, Oregon Register-Guard. It was "the most fun ever, reporting in a small town," she says. "I got into journalism there and knew I

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RACHEL RIPPETOE

## President's Report

### Greetings, Silurians!

Spring is prize time for Silurians. We had the good fortune to kick it off with a bang, celebrating our Peter Kihss Award winner, WCBS News Radio's ace street reporter Rich Lamb, just entering his 41st year on the streets of New York. He was joined at our April awards lunch by the Dennis Duggan winner, the amazing young journalist, Rachel Rippetoe, a 23-year-old student at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at the City University of New York. The names of both awards, of course, enshrine two of the giants of our profession—Peter Kihss of The New York Times and Dennis Duggan of Newsday, each of them contributing magisterially to the craft we all love.

In May, as you are reading this, we will be presenting our annual Excellence in Journalism Awards at a gala at the National Arts Club. And we have an amazing collection of Medallion and Merit winners, including for the first time in many years the President's Medallion, which I will be bestowing on an extraordinary work by Newsday called "Pathway to Power," which you will find featured elsewhere in today's Silurian News.

\* \* \*

Since I will shortly be nearing the end of my first (of two) years as your president, I thought it might be worthwhile to engage in a little accounting. I am of the strong belief that elected officials, at every level of politics, society and media, owe that to their constituents. It is a belief nourished by my first-hand experience chronicling the abuses perpetrated by dictators operating in their own rather than their peoples' interests. In a real democracy, none of us operates in a vacuum. We are all, or should be, accountable to all of those who put us in office. (Sound familiar? Or perhaps unfamiliar these days.)

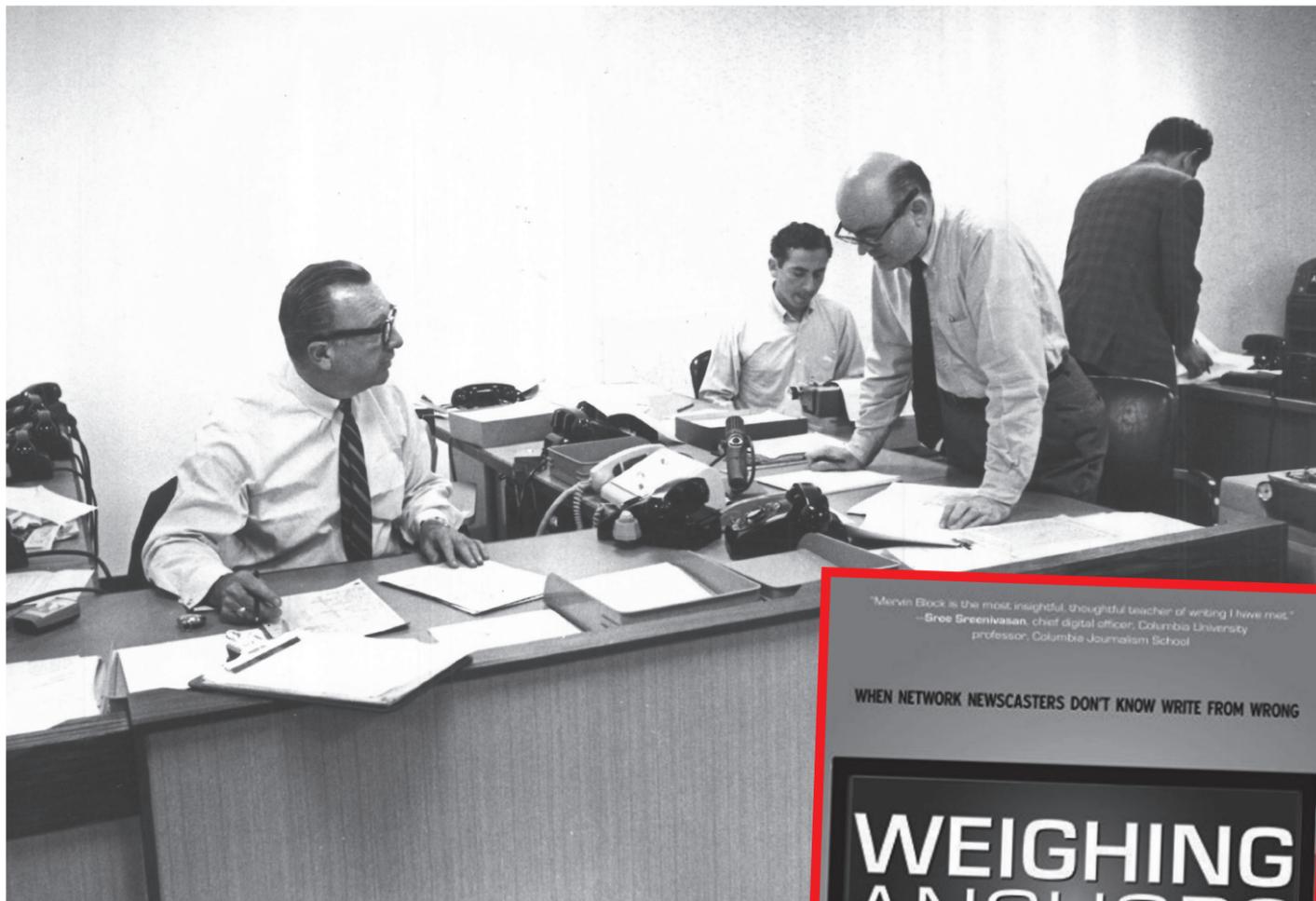
One of my principal goals in assuming leadership of what was then the Society of the Silurians, was to broaden our reach and influence, which by strength of the present or former employment of all of us, should be not inconsiderable. I was especially moved (not positively) by the comment from a top aide to Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC), in declining our invitation to speak at one of our gatherings, referring to The Silurians as "your luncheon club."

Well, we are not a tea party nor (merely) a luncheon club. We are, or should be, an active, exciting, impactful collection of the best and brightest from our profession. We express this mission in many ways—through our awards (from Lifetime Achievement in October to Excellence in Journalism in May), our press freedom committee, our scholarships for journalism education and of course our regular noontime gatherings nine times a year.

My first goal, then, was to help convey more directly just what we are—hence the change of our name, retaining our beloved "Silurians" but adding Press Club for those addled few who had no idea what was a Silurian. Next, we have moved on to designating a Keynote Speaker for our Awards Gala—the extraordinary Debby Krenok of Newsday. Finally, an invitation is out to an amazing Lifetime Achievement winner for October. Stay tuned! Allan Dodds Frank is also honchoing both our journalism scholarships and press freedom committees, which I am confident will begin to have the broad impact Silurians should have. And that's all just in my first year.

So stand by! Any and all comments always appreciated by the way. As one who has prospered from the efforts of any number of brilliant editors, I try at least to take all such contributions constructively and graciously!

All the very best,  
David A. Andelman



Block goes over a script with CBS anchor Walter Cronkite in an undated photo.

## PROFILE: MERVIN BLOCK

BY BILL DIEHL

Mervin Block is watching the TV news and grumbling. "Too many crawls," he says. "It gives me the creeps. *Breaking news. Happening now.* Those headlines are usually phony. Where are the editors? Supervisors? Management?"

Longtime Silurian Block, at 93, is still speaking his mind even though he retired from the day-to-day news business decades ago.

Merv had a distinguished career as a news writer at all three of the traditional U.S. networks—ABC, NBC and CBS. He wrote for some broadcast greats, including: Walter Cronkite, Harry Reasoner, Frank Reynolds, Marlene Sanders, Edwin Newman, Dan Rather, Diane Sawyer, Roger Mudd, Charles Osgood, Doug Edwards and Charles Kuralt. Block has written five books on broadcast news writing, and they're still used in journalism schools today. His first book, *Writing Broadcast News Shorter, Sharper, Stronger*, was published in 1987. His most recent book, released in 2012, is *Weighing Anchors: When Network Newscasters Don't Know Write from Wrong*.

In a review of the latter book for Time-Out Chicago, Robert Feder wrote, "When network anchors murder the language—which they do night after night—thank goodness there's Merv Block to perform the autopsy. No one has a better ear or sharper pencil than Merv Block. He's a one-man quality control department for the broadcast news business."

Last year Block was honored by his alma mater, Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, with its highest award, admission to the Hall of Achievement.

Block has seen a decline in broadcast news writing. Is it because they never

learned good English in school?

"No," he told me. "That's not the problem. Writers need to remember the art of writing lies in rewriting." Block's early career was in print news. Does he feel TV news today is generally superficial? "Yes, it is what it is. It's not The New York Times, but it's free." What about the look of TV news anchors, especially at the local level? Are they just hiring pretty faces, good at reading from the teleprompter? "I wouldn't say that, or think that, although a pretty face is no handicap."

In his books, Block doesn't come down hard on news anchors, realizing they haven't written everything they read, but "I do quote some of their scripts verbatim, which is bad enough."

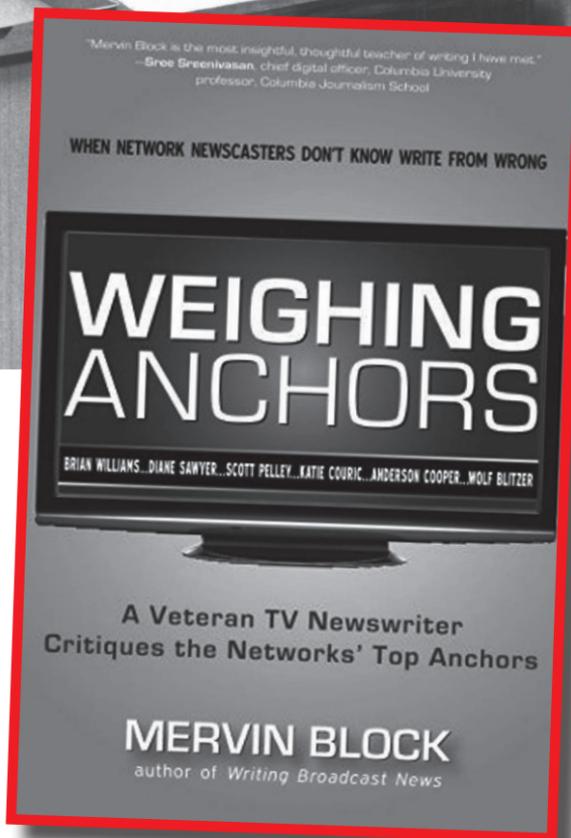
Does he watch the Sunday shows—"Face the Nation," "This Week," Meet the Press?" No, but he does like CNN's Fared Zakaria ("He knows his stuff.") and Jake Tapper.

Any thoughts about President Trump? "Can't we say something new and not [just] call Trump a liar? Or why even mention him, unless we can say something no one has ever said? How about, President Trump caught telling the truth? But no one would believe it."

As for Fox News, Block thinks Chris Wallace (son of Mike Wallace) seems to be a straight shooter. Mostly he thinks Fox News is partisan to a fault. "I watch Fox briefly now and then but what I see and hear leaves me shaking my head in disbelief. Likewise, Fox's Sean Hannity, who is laughable in the way he's in the Trump camp."

Any advice if Block were running a network newsroom now? "Hire some folks who covered city hall for a small town daily and police and fire. And hire more folks with backgrounds in print reporting." Before he was a news writer at CBS, Block was a newspaper copy boy, reporter and editor at the Chicago American, covering courts, crime and city hall (and crime in city hall). In New York City, he wrote and broadcast editorials for WNBC-TV.

During my career at ABC News Radio I have interviewed some big names, but it's hard to top Merv. He once had a private lunch with Alexandra Tolstoy, daughter of



Russian writer Leo Tolstoy. He had dinner with Jimmy Stewart.

His list of interviews is long: Elizabeth Taylor, Elvis Presley, Judy Garland. (Garland was 45 minutes late for her interview. "Why were you late, I asked. She said she was taking a shower. She wasn't pleased when I said, 'How long does it take you to take a shower?'"

He once had breakfast with Senator Joe McCarthy, not in Washington but at the home of ABC Radio's Paul Harvey. It happened accidentally, he said. "I was following the senator's motorcade and it wound up at Harvey's house in River Forest, a suburb of Chicago. After the senator went in, I went up to the house, knocked on the door, and identified myself as a reporter. To my surprise, Harvey welcomed me in to join them for breakfast. So I did."

Other political interviews included Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and Eleanor Roosevelt. And he had tea with the poet T.S. Eliot and interviews with Carl Sandburg and W. H. Auden.

No doubt about it, a great and fascinating career that would be the envy of most anyone.

How would Mervin Block like to be remembered? "That's easy," he said. "Just say, 'Someone who tried.'"

Bill Diehl is a correspondent at ABC News Radio and a member of the Silurian Board of Governors.

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# PETER KIHSS: JUST DAD TO ME

On April 17 the Silurians Press Club awarded its annual Peter Kihss Award to Rich Lamb of WCBS Radio for his role in mentoring young journalists over a long career. The award is named for a legendary New York Times reporter who did the same, and died too young, in 1984. In his Times obit, Peter Kihss was lauded as, "by nearly every standard of American journalism, an ideal reporter: thorough, fast, tenacious and objective, with an encyclopedic memory, voluminous contacts and the ability to write with speed, grace and a towering calm against a deadline." We asked his son Erik, a music teacher in New York, to recall what it was like growing up with a man regarded as a titan of his profession.

BY ERIK KIHSS

Like many children of people who are noted in their professional careers, I was unaware of how highly regarded my father was until several major events in my life. I was, of course, very proud of him, but he was always just Dad to me.

The first of these events was when I was in college at NYU in the early 1970's and got a call that my father suffered a major heart attack while walking our dog on a cold, snowy winter's night. He dragged the dog home and had to be coaxed into the ambulance by my mother and the family doctor. This was dad, through and through. People had no idea how self-deprecating he could be, telling us that we should let him die, and that the world and my mother would be better off without him.

I rushed to the hospital to find him in intensive care with the next 24 hours being critical. It was at this time that I met [New York Times metro editor] Arthur Gelb, who visited him almost every day throughout his recovery. Arthur sang his praises to me in ways I had never heard my father described before. At that time my father was doing a lot of city news stories, about topics such as welfare and the city budget, that, as a young music major, I wasn't particularly interested in. Mayor John Lindsay, knowing my father's attention to detail, jokingly sent him a copy of the city budget for his reading pleasure while he recuperated. Of course, my father dove right into it and alerted the mayor's office that there was a page missing, which sent everyone scrambling to look at their copies. Apparently the missing page was only in the copy sent to my dad, but this was typical of him.

The next major event that really showed me how well respected he was was his mandatory retirement at age 70 in 1982. He was called for interviews on radio shows such as Howard Cosell's "Speaking of Everything" on WABC, where Cosell in that unique voice of his described him as a "reporter's reporter." This was followed by tributes even by reporters from competing newspapers speaking of my father's generosity, helpful advice, and how he would freely share information and sources. My father had an address book full of phone numbers of city officials. If you wanted the home number of the water commissioner, Dad would give it to you.

His career started in what today's journalists consider the ancient past. According to my mother, one of the stories that had a profound affect on my dad was when a plane crashed into the Empire State Building in 1945. He was apparently coming out of the subway and witnessed the crash and was the first reporter on the scene. My mother said that he didn't like to talk about it after seeing such carnage as a woman's head on a window sill. I am glad he was not around for 9/11.

Although he, like the rest of the country, was shaken by the assassination of President Kennedy, the murder of Robert Kennedy seemed to affect him more deeply. He covered RFK on numerous occasions while he was campaigning for senator of New York and I know he thought him an honest and good person. I remember waking him up with the news early that morning as I was getting ready for school and saw how deeply it affected him.

After John Kennedy's assassination, he led a team of reporters covering the Warren Commission and had access to all the background information the commission gathered. He believed that Oswald acted alone. I don't know what he would make of all these conspiracy theories today.

My father would never tell me whom he voted for in an election, keeping that reporter's objectivity, even with his own family. I suspect, however, that he voted mostly Democratic. Still, even Richard Nixon praised him for his fairness. He wrote a profile of the Nixon family in 1963 that pleased the future President. I have a framed letter on my wall from Nixon saying "the best newspaper reporters are objective, fair and considerate, particularly when they are writing about a man's family and personal life." After Watergate my father said he had never seen such a change for the worse in a person as he did in Nixon.

Peter Kihss did have enemies, though: his editors. I heard him many times arguing with copy editors over the phone about changes in his stories. One time I heard him angrily say something on the order of, "You can print that story, but without my byline or else I quit." He did quit the Herald Tribune over arguments with editors before joining the Times in 1952, the year of my birth. He quit the Times over editing issues three times and had to be coaxed back. One quote attributed to him: "An editor is someone who separates the wheat from the chaff and sees to it that the chaff gets into the paper." Ironically, my father's first job after graduating from the Columbia School of Journalism in 1932 was as an editor for the AP. He must have been miserable there.

I never heard my father utter a curse word stronger than "hell" or "damn" in my life. He was a man of a different generation. He had rather old-world views on women's roles, and actually made my mother quit her secretarial job before they got married. But I know he had utmost respect for female colleagues at the Times like Edith Asbury, Nan Robertson and Anna Quindlen.

When he retired, my father felt he didn't deserve all the accolades and, according to AP writer Jerry Schwartz, said, "Somehow, I must have lived a life of deceit to create such illusions." Typical dad. He also didn't appeal his mandatory retirement and, according to Schwartz, said "the Times is better off with young reporters." And when he was working, he tried to reject the salary increases grateful editors pushed upon him. He had to be persuaded to take them by my mother, Alice, whom Arthur Gelb in his book City Room described as "the voice of reason" when it came to her husband's career. According to Arthur, Dad once accused executive editor Abe Rosenthal of "binding me with chains of gold."

Retirement gave my father a bit of time to indulge his dual interests in history, which he read voraciously despite terrible eyesight, and baseball. He was a die-hard Brooklyn Dodger fan. He was appalled when they left New York, but thrilled when the Mets came into being and brought back some of his National League heroes such as Duke Snider, Richie Ashburn, Gil Hodges and Wille Mays at the end of their careers. He would say, "The Mets got a break today; the game is rained out." But he loved them, Marvelous Marv Thorneberry and all.

When he died in December 1984, what really brought home to me how appreciated my father was by his peers was the outpouring of tributes from journalists everywhere, including Robert McFadden, Pete Hamill, Sydney Schanberg, Nat Hentoff and many others. A few months before he died, the Times sent him a special award signed by 200 Times reporters and editors, lauding him for "setting and maintaining standards of journalism at their highest. In grateful acknowledgement of all he has taught us." I am glad he lived to see this and it hangs proudly on my wall.

One final measurement of the regard in which my father was held came in 2001, almost two decades after his death. There was a devastating fire in my parents' house in Jamaica Estates, Queens. I didn't know



Kihss and the young Erik

at the time that my mother was in the early stages of dementia; she had let the insurance lapse two months earlier. I called Dad's old friend and editor Gelb to see if he could help. What happened next overwhelmed my mother, sister Wendy and I. Arthur, who died in 2014, held a fund raiser at the Times and we started getting personal checks in various amounts from Dad's former colleagues, from the publisher down to young reporters who only knew of my father by reputation. With this money and what I could borrow from my pension plan, we were able to save the house and get re-insured. My mother lived another three years in that house and died peacefully in her own bed. I am forever grateful to all the great people at the Times for their generosity in a way that can never be repaid.

I am so glad that the Peter Kihss Award is given out each year by the Society of the Silurians so that my father's legacy endures.

*Erik Kihss, who has a masters degree in music from Columbia University, is a retired music teacher and a jazz pianist. He was the house pianist at Gage & Tollner restaurant for six years, and entertained many celebrities, including Walter Cronkite and the old Brooklyn Dodgers.*

## ADVENTURES IN RADIOLAND

*Rich Lamb of WCBS Radio is this year's choice to receive the Peter Kihss Award, given each year to a journalist who has served as a mentor to his fellow scribes and broadcasters. The award was presented at an April 17 luncheon at the National Arts Club attended by a squad of Rich's friends and family. Lamb has covered every major event in New York since 1978, including two subway strikes, the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 and its destruction in 2001. He "has been there for every mayoral, gubernatorial and presidential election since 1978," said Silurian President David Andelman in his introduction, "not to mention the utterly innumerable murders, fires, blackouts and parades—all the stuff of a hack on the streets of New York." The plaque presented by Andelman commends Lamb, in part, for "nurturing young journalists to follow in your footsteps, all in the legendary tradition of Peter Kihss." Some recollections from Lamb's long career:*

One night a former California governor was speaking at the Waldorf. The station didn't really care. At that point in the race for the GOP nomination Ronald Reagan was way behind, but I was assigned to hear what he had to say anyway. There was so little media interest in Reagan that his PR guy immediately offered me a one-on-one. So I did him a favor and said yes. The interview was in one of those grand ballroom anterooms. Reagan spoke so softly that from two feet away I could barely hear him. When I got back to the studio and played the tape

and listened to the richness of his tones it came to me that he knew how to use a microphone way better than I did. By the way, I erased the tape, knowing that politically Reagan was going nowhere.....

Here is my favorite Pope story... It's 1979 and I've been at WCBS for about a year and a half and a 59-year-old Pope John Paul, in very good shape, he visits New York. It's hard to imagine now but I was assigned to stand behind a blue NYPD sawhorse at the top of the front steps of St. Patrick's cathedral and that was it [for security]. The Holy Father is walking and waving on the 51<sup>st</sup> Street side of the cathedral. He stops, looks up at the buildings and does his patented two-handed gesture of appreciation. The people are roaring. I am on the air live and I say, Here is the Pope about 30 yards away, now 20, and I expected he would turn to his left and enter the cathedral. But no, he kept walking toward me. As he drew even he turned his head—and winked at me. And I thought, do I say this on the air, the Pope winked at me? Would it be disrespectful? But I went ahead and said: The Pope winked at me. Ben Farnsworth and Pat Parsons both cracked up on the anchor mics back at the studio, laughing and asking, "Rich, did the mayor wink at you, the police commissioner?"...

It was Dec. 8, 1980 and on Monday Night Football Howard Cosell announces that John Lennon has been shot. I was dispatched to Roosevelt Hospital, jumped out of the WCBS mobile unit and arrived just in time to hear a doctor announce that John Lennon has been shot in the chest four times and he has expired. I dashed back to the car, unlocked the door and landed on broken glass. In the five minutes I had been out of that car thieves had broken in and ripped out all the two-way radio gear. No choice, you had to keep going. About three in the morning at the 20<sup>th</sup> precinct, Inspector Pete Prezioso told me to go into a nearby room and look at a piece of paper. On it was written the words Mark David Chapman. I wrote the name down and went back to him and said who is that? He said who expletive-deleted do you think it is? I said where is he from? He said Hawaii. I said, can I use this? He said go ahead, it's yours. So now I had to go down to the corner and call the radio station because all the gear was out of the car. It was quite a long night. Driving home that cold December morning, I really lost it when [the Lennon song] "This is Christmas" came on the radio.



RICH LAMB

# The Silurians Celebrate Journalism At Its Best

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the Mets for The New York Times.

Strong investigative and research skills were also at work at the Norwood News, a community weekly paper that covers the Northwest Bronx. The paper's Housing Matters series, written by editor David Cruz, won a Merit Award when it found that the city's plans for creating affordable housing may be beyond the means of many Bronx residents.

In the **Reporting on Minority Issues** category, Christine Veiga and Samuel Park of Chalkbeat, a non-profit editorial website covering education, won the Medallion for a series of articles on community pushback against the proposed integration of middle schools on New York's Upper West Side.

Extraordinary reporting and writing were on display in pieces by several Medallion winners.

In "The Case of Jane Doe Ponytail," Dan Barry and Jeffrey Singer of The New York Times won in **Feature Reporting** by telling the tragic life-and-death story of an Asian girl caught up in the illegal massage/prostitution trade that was a big business along one street in Flushing, Queens.

Jim Dwyer of The New York Times won the Medallion for **Commentary** by bringing the lives of everyday working New Yorkers to life and by digging deep to uncover wrongdoing that sent innocent men and women to prison.

The New York Times garnered five Medallions and three Merit Awards; Newsday won two Medallions and five Merit Awards and The Record/NorthJersey.com won four Medallions.

Here is the full list of this year's winners:

## THE PRESIDENT'S CHOICE MEDALLION

Extraordinary Excellence  
In Journalism

**Gus Garcia-Roberts and Sandra Peddie and the Newsday Staff**

In March of 2018 Newsday published a special 48-page, 30,000-word insert for its readers that shined a light on Long Island's corrosive politics. Its investigation exposed corrupt ties between politicians, businesses and the law enforcement and legal communities of Long Island, many dating back generations. These complex webs stretch into some of the darkest corners of the region's social fabric, especially in the real estate and industrial development industries.

## BREAKING NEWS REPORTING:

Newspapers, news service, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Class Trip Turns Deadly" by Jim O'Neill and Steve Janoski for The Record/NorthJersey.com. with photographs by Bob Karp, Amy Newman, Marko Georgiev, Tariq Zehau and Kevin Wexler.**

When The Record/NorthJersey.com staff photographer Bob Karp sent his first photograph from the terrible scene of a Route 80 crash involving a school bus loaded with Paramus middle school students, it made the newsroom go quiet. Reporters raced to the scene and found that a child and teacher were dead and 43 other students and teachers injured. All day long reporters and photographers gathered the story. Reporter Steve Janoski used a network of law enforcement sources to get the details of the crash, learning that the bus driver

was attempting an illegal U-turn on the highway, while reporter Jim O'Neill expertly stitched together feeds from reporters positioned on opposite ends of a three-county coverage area to create a compelling narrative of the day.

## FEATURE NEWS REPORTING:

Newspapers, news service, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "The Case Of Jane Doe Ponytail" by Dan Barry and Jeffrey Singer for The New York Times with photographs by Todd Heisler.**

This is a brilliant investigative news feature, tracing in depth the operation of a Asian sex trafficking ring in Queen. It was done with crisp writing and deep background reporting, all conveyed in colorful, novelistic style.

**Merit Award: "A Bright Light, Dimmed in the Shadows of Homelessness" by Ben Weiser for The New York Times with photographs by George Etheredge.**

A fine example of how to bring to vivid life the story of a person who too often fades into the background of the urban scene, reduced to an abstraction rather than flesh and blood. Weiser wears out shoe leather and all the other tools of a

seasoned reporter to produce a story that is understated, thorough and ultimately heartbreaking.

**Merit Award: "Housing Crisis In New York City" by David Cruz for the Norwood News.**

With City Hall committed to expanding the stock of affordable housing, Norwood News, covering the north-west Bronx, asked a basic question: affordable for whom? The newspaper's well-researched Housing Matters series, written by editor David Cruz, found that planned housing may be beyond the means of many Bronx residents struggling for the very soul of their neighborhoods.

## INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING:

Newspapers, news service, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Taxes and Trump" by David Barstow, Susanne Craig and Ross Buettner for The New York Times.**

For decades, Fred and Donald Trump escaped detection while building the Trump empire, using questionable financial practices, deception and unlawful manipulation of the tax laws. Combining deep documentation, exhaustive report-

ing and sophisticated accounting analysis, this New York Times report exposed how the President's fortune was built on a foundation of misrepresentations, lies and alleged fraud, behavior that continues to this day. This investigation is a landmark in the history of the Trump presidency.

**Merit Award: "Sign Here To Lose Everything" by Zachary Mider, Zeke Faux, David Ingold and Demetrios Pogkas for Bloomberg News.**

This well-documented and meticulously reported story uncovered a dangerous new form of predatory lending that relies on the legal system to drain bank accounts of citizens accused, often falsely, of failing to pay their debts.

**Merit Award: "Blue Lies" by Joseph Goldstein for The New York Times.**

This series uncovered the disturbingly widespread practice of "testilying" by New York City police, even under oath in judicial proceedings, to cover up shoddy or illegal police practices and questionable or mistaken arrests.

## BUSINESS & FINANCIAL REPORTING:

Newspapers, news service, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Keep Quiet," by Ann Marsh for Financial Planning.**

In this outstanding demonstration of determined reporting, senior editor Ann Marsh dug deeply into how Wells Fargo rebuffed, tried to quiet and eventually fired an executive who tried to expose systemic fraud and disregard of federal regulations in its wealth management division. She outlined how the bank's actions contradicted its professions of protecting whistleblowers in the midst of its efforts to clean up a reputation already damaged by the creation of thousands of fake accounts for unwitting customers.

**Merit Award: "Ivanka, Kushner Could Profit From Tax Break They Pushed" by AP's Trump Business Team for the Associated Press.**

The AP's Trump Business Conflict Team dug deep into Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump's activities in 2018, with hard-hitting investigations that broke news and got action. The reporting shined a light on glaring conflicts of interest and disturbing business practices that continue to this day as Ivanka Trump and Kushner act as White House advisers without divesting their extensive financial holdings.

**Merit Award: "Paper Jam" by Shawn Tully for Fortune.**

Troubled Xerox planned to merge with one of its biggest stakeholders, Fujifilm of Japan. Shareholder and corporate raider Carl Icahn teamed up with Texas billionaire Darwin Deason to block the deal in one of the nastiest takeover battles of the year.

## ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Toxic Secrets: Pollution, Evasion and Fear in New Jersey," By Jim O'Neill, Scott Fallon and photojournalist Chris Padota for The Record / NorthJersey.com.**

This exhaustively researched four-part report brought to light for the first time the lengths to which DuPont, over a period of a decade and more, downplayed to regulators and inhabitants of the nearby

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Excerpt from "Sir Shadow, Maestro of the Last of the Bowery Flophouses" by Alex Vadukul for The New York Times, the Medallion winner in the People Profiles category. Sir Shadow is the man in the fedora, above.

There's a ghostly old flophouse on the Bowery. Rowdy brunch crowds stumble past its stained-glass windows and locked double doors. It's lonesome but not empty.

Radiators hiss in its cracked tile floor lobby. Dusty, unused keys hang behind a reception desk. Dark halls are lined with hundreds of boarding rooms empty except for worn mattresses. A few of these cubicles are occupied, stuffed with clothes and belongings. Steam rises from a shower stall. Light flickers behind doors. And a lullaby can be heard through the building when a 70-year-old poet and artist who calls himself Sir Shadow draws at night.

Sir Shadow is one of six men who are the final residents of the Whitehouse Hotel. The crumbling four-story building is one of the last of the cheap single-room-occupancy hotels that lined the Bowery a century ago alongside brothels and saloons and defined the area as a symbol of urban despair. While rooms across the street

at the Bowery Hotel cost around \$400 a night, the men pay no more than \$8.50 for their cramped cubicles, though they pretty much have the run of the place.

As Sir Shadow hums for inspiration, his slender hand strikes a sketchpad with a silver marker and swirls deliriously, never leaving the page, as though he were signing a signature. The elegant silhouette, formed with one continuous line, depicts a saxophone player. He blurs through more: a jazz ensemble featuring trumpet and upright bass; a drummer in the flurry of a solo. His musicians are faceless abstractions.

"I'm a doctor and this is the medication for my patients," he said one afternoon. "My medicine is positivity. Every line is based on what's in my heart."

Sir Shadow arrived at the Whitehouse Hotel around 1995, and he has become a kind of Bowery folk hero since then. At 6-foot-4, he sleeps diagonally to fit into his windowless cubicle. Rarely without his fedora, he gets around on a red electric scooter and draws his blues and jazz musicians across the neighborhood. He calls his one-line style Flowetry, which can be found in the calendars he sells. Quincy Jones, Lauryn Hill, and Diana Ross are said to be fans.

# The Silurians Celebrate Journalism At Its Best

Continued from Page 4

residential community the dire health risks posed by cancer-causing groundwater contamination at its now-shuttered Pompton Lakes munitions-manufacturing site. At the time the series ran, the problem remained largely unaddressed, despite reports of elevated levels of illness. Following its publication, Gov. Phil Murphy ordered his attorney general to probe DuPont's management of the matter and his environmental commissioner to monitor cleanup operations.

## SCIENCE &

### HEALTH REPORTING:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Simple Surgeries, Tragically Results"** by Lindy Washburn for *The Record / North Jersey.com*.

Invited by the USA Today Network to participate in an investigation of the safety record of the nation's fast-proliferating same-day surgery centers, the Record had its health reporter look into the state of affairs in New Jersey, home to more than 300 such units. What Washburn discovered, based on her resourceful mining of hard-to-locate public data, dogged pursuit of attorneys, heart-rending interviews with patients and family members, and personal visits, were facilities that were often woefully understaffed, improperly equipped, and free to hire personnel who could not make the grade at regular hospitals. In a number of instances, these lapses led to infections; in others, to death. Washburn's reporting prompted lawmakers to begin tightening state regulations governing these facilities.

**Merit Award: "It keeps us safe": A New York City Bathroom Set Up To Stem Overdoses"** by Jennifer Peltz of *the Associated Press*.

When New York became the biggest U.S. city to embrace safe haven sites for injecting drugs, the Associated Press set out to find a story beyond the debate over whether such facilities should be established. Through patient and sensitive reporting, Jennifer Peltz tells the story of an under-the-radar facility that already exists in the overdose crisis: monitored bathrooms where staffers are prepared to come in with overdose reversing drugs if necessary.

**Merit Award: "Cold Spring Harbor Scientists Discover a New Form of Lung Cancer"** by Delthia Hicks for *Newsday*.

Newsday Health and Science reporter Delthia Hicks takes us inside the story of the discovery, by sheer serendipity, of a new form of lung cancer. The finding of a once-obscure population of cells by a Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory scientist and his team helps clear up why a subset of patients never fared well with conventional treatment. Now, doctors have a new target for strategic therapies.

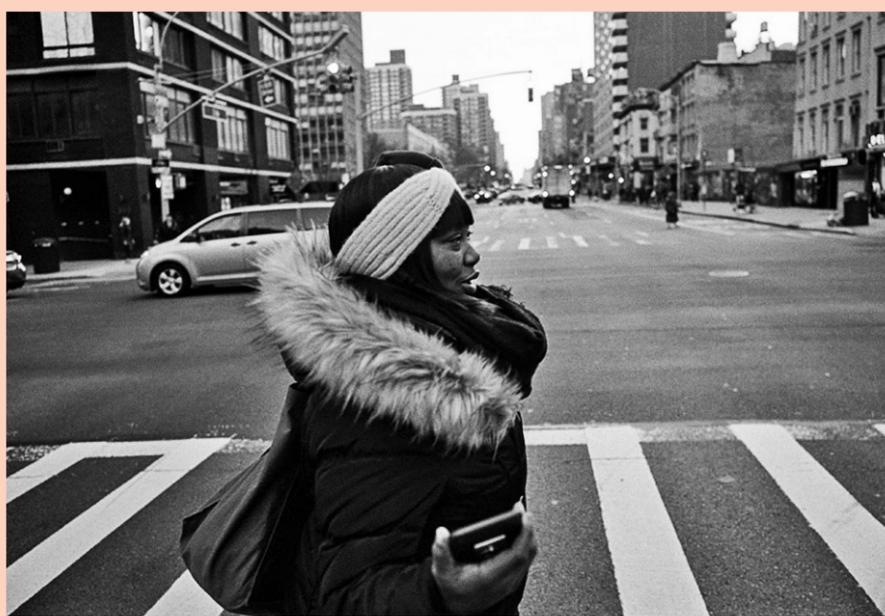
## PEOPLE PROFILES:

Newspapers, news service, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Sir Shadow, Maestro of the Last of the Bowery Flophouses"** by Alex Vadukul for *The New York Times*.

He is known to all as Sir Shadow, this strange creative man who is one of the last remaining residents of one of the last remaining flophouses that once lined New York's Bowery. He is a 70-year-old poet and artist of singular talent, an elegant fellow in a fedora who has been living in the Whitehouse Hotel at 340 Bowery since the mid-1990s and

## New York's Shrinking Middle Class



Kamik Chin, 37, a single mother, works two jobs, as a medical biller and Uber driver, to support herself and her two children. She takes in \$42,000 from the two jobs, which leaves her exhausted and without enough time with the children. "If [my apartment rent] wasn't income-based, I wouldn't survive," she says. "I absolutely couldn't afford to live in the city without it." Fortune's Andre Wagner won the Feature Photography Medallion for his photos of Chin's and two other struggling New York families.

who says, "A man with a million dollars doesn't have what I have." Regarded as a folk hero by the locals, his own story — who he is and how he got to where he is — has remained a mystery. Until now. In this compelling, compassionate profile, Alex Vadukul brings Sir Shadow into the light.

**Merit Award: "The Change Agent"** by Amanda Fortini for *Vanity Fair*.

This is an illuminating portrait of the actress Michelle Williams, known for guarding her off-screen privacy just as fiercely as she bares the feelings of her on-screen characters. Williams opens up to writer Amanda Fortini with an exclusive account of how she felt when she learned she was being paid less than \$1,000 for some reshoots while her male co-star was getting \$1.5 million for the same job. Williams also reveals the grief she felt following the death of her partner Heath Ledger in 2008 and the new love she found with her marriage to Phil Elverum last year.

**Merit Award: "A Broadway Mogul Redefines Clout in His Own Fashion"** by Michael Paulson for *The New York Times*.

Jordan Roth — pony-tailed, red-carpet ready, flamboyant and gay — is the highly successful, 42-year-old head of Jujamcyn, a group of five Broadway theaters, who managed to lure Bruce Springsteen to perform in one of them and who has had major hits in the others. He is, by any measure, a big-time showman. He is also an outspoken Democrat, activist and fund-raiser who is behind a series of satirical videos that poke fun at Donald Trump and the coarsening of the culture. Roth's father, meanwhile, is a billionaire real estate investor who is a close friend and supporter of Trump, which makes for an interesting family dynamic.

## ARTS AND CULTURE

### REPORTING:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Welcome to Brighton Beach, Brooklyn"** by Yelena Akh-

torskaya with photographs by Alexey Yurenev for *The New York Times*.

Brighton Beach, a seaside enclave of Soviet emigrés not far from Coney Island, is one of New York's liveliest and most culturally insular neighborhoods. Here, novelist Yelena Akhtiorskaya and photographer Alexey Yurenev have teamed up to capture with exuberance, energy, warmth and wit a portrait of a bit of New York where "the sea turns to vodka and the newspapers turn Cyrillic."

## COMMENTARY:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "About New York"** columns by Jim Dwyer for *The New York Times*.

For millions of his devoted readers, Jim Dwyer brings the texture and the atmosphere, but above all, the real people of this great city to life. New York is a richer place for his unique gift of storytelling.

**Merit Award: "Up and Down Wall Street" Columns** by Randall Forsyth for *Barron's*.

Forsyth explains in exquisite detail and deep understanding the arcana of how Wall Street functions and the critical role it plays in the American and global economy.

## PUBLIC SERVICE:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Hands To The Neck"** by Will Van Sant for *Newsday*.

For a year Van Sant cultivated sources, collected documents and used shoe leather to come up with this extraordinary exposé. It chronicles the horror of the distressing and widening pattern of non-lethal strangulation as a tool for controlling youths with special needs in New York State institutions. The stories detail how state officials charged with protecting the vulnerable derailed an attempt to mitigate potentially lethal abuse because of concern that a focus on strangulation assault could bring unwanted attention.

## MINORITY AFFAIRS

### REPORTING:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Middle School Integration In New York City"** by Christina Veiga and Samuel Park for *Chalkbeat*.

There may be no more liberal, tolerant neighborhood in the United States than Manhattan's Upper West Side. But when it comes to the education of their children, attitudes among the parents in the wealthy enclave can take a hard right turn. Veiga and Park, writing for a new education-oriented website, chronicled in a series of articles the fierce resistance from parents when education officials proposed to integrate West Side middle schools with schools just to the north in Harlem. The stories serve as a backdrop for a discussion of the broad segregation that characterizes New York's 1,000 schools, which educate 1 million children. Recent political attention has been focused on the city's half dozen specialized high schools, Veiga writes, where admission is by test and African-Americans and Hispanic students are a tiny minority. Those elite high schools get most of their students from just 10 middle schools, several of them on the Upper West Side.

**Merit Award: "MS-13"** by Victor Manuel Ramos for *Newsday*.

Newsday reporter Ramos tapped into contacts he developed during years of covering Long Island's immigrant communities to earn the trust of Edwin, formerly a homeboy in one of the most violent cliques of MS-13, the Salvadoran gang whose members have terrorized high schools and neighborhoods in eastern Long Island and cities from Washington D.C. to Los Angeles. Ramos uses Edwin's tribulations as he separated himself from the gang to tell the larger story of where MS-13 came from and how police and communities are battling to contain its depredations.

## SPORTS REPORTING

### AND COMMENTARY:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Through the Looking Glass"** by Kevin Armstrong for *the New York Daily News*.

A sweeping look at an FBI probe into the way businessmen and coaches schemed to create a climate of corruption in which six-figure payments from sneaker companies were funneled to the families of elite high school basketball players via college coaches who themselves pocketed piles of kickback money. Reporter Kevin Armstrong spent six months pursuing the story, moving from high school gyms to college arenas, from Vegas hotel rooms to federal courthouses. He talked to teenage "next big things," former NBA stars, scouts and coaches; listened to government wiretaps; and scoured documents obtained through FOIA requests. The result: A panoramic look at a probe that produced multiple convictions, guilty pleas and the resignation of at least one key coach.

**Merit Award: "Hard Knocks: Lacrosse and Brain Trauma"** by Jim Baumbach for *Newsday*.

Researchers at the New York Institute of Technology in Old Westbury, Long Island, tracked 10 players through the school's 18-game lacrosse season last spring to monitor how their brain functions may have changed because of repeated hits to the head, raising questions about the impact of such blows even if a

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# The Silurians Celebrate Journalism At Its Best

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player isn't diagnosed with a concussion. The school agreed to share the results of the study with Newsday, and the paper's investigative and enterprise reporter for sports, Jim Baumbach, deftly wrote about the subtle declines in memory and slower cognitive reactions of the players.

## BREAKING NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "Class Trip Turns Deadly" by staff photographer Bob Karp, for The Record /North Jersey.com.**

Bob Karp was the first photographer on the scene on May 17, 2018, when a much-anticipated class adventure to a historic park became a nightmarish, deadly ride for Paramus, New Jersey fifth graders. Their school bus, one of three heading to Waterloo Village, and a dump truck collided on Route 80 in western Morris County. The crash killed 10-year-old Miranda Vargas and beloved teacher Jennifer Williamson-Kennedy and injured 43 others. Karp's photos and videos from the scene – taken while balancing on the railing of an overpass while a reporter held him steady – were as incredible as they were heartbreaking.

**Merit Award: "Blizzard Blaze" by Thomas A. Ferrara for Newsday.**

On a snow-filled night in March 2018, veteran Newsday photographer Thomas A. Ferrara responded to a report of a car on fire on the Long Island Expressway. His dramatic photo caught members of the Ronkonkoma, N.Y. Fire Department as they braved a driving snowstorm to battle a car fire.

## FEATURE PHOTOGRAPHY:

Newspapers, news services, magazines and online.

**Medallion: "The Shrinking Middle Class of New York City" by Andre Wagner for Fortune**

Fortune magazine may be a surprising

choice to be the winner in the feature photography category, but Andre Wagner's poignant black-and-white portraits of New Yorkers who earn inadequate incomes despite working multiple jobs movingly illustrated the series of photo essays titled "The Shrinking Middle Class: Tales from New York City." The magazine is commended for reaching outside its usual realm of coverage to focus on the plight of an often-overlooked segment of the American workforce.

**Merit Award: "Mermaids of Long Island" by Thomas A. Ferrara for Newsday.**

Newsday's Thomas A. Ferrara provides us with imaginative glimpses behind the scenes and under the waters of the Long Island Mermaid Pod, a group of Land-Lubbers that transforms itself – through costumes, practice and performance – from mere mortals into mythical, magical denizens of the deep.

## TELEVISION BREAKING NEWS:

**Medallion: "November Snow Storm" by the Eyewitness News team for WABC News.**

The 11 pm coverage by WABC News of last year's November snowstorm showed the power of authoritative local news at its best. The news team's whip-around reporting from New Jersey, New York and Connecticut combined with solid weather and government stories gave viewers a complete picture of what was happening and what was coming next.

## TELEVISION FEATURE NEWS:

**Medallion: "Concussion Coverup" by Walt Kane for News 12 New Jersey.**

Until Walt Kane's reports appeared, few people knew that roller coaster rides can cause concussions and even fewer people would have guessed that once the coverage began the state would try to help amusement park operators disguise the risk of riding.

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*Excerpt from "Through the Looking Glass," Kevin Armstrong's six-month tour of basketball's underbelly for the Daily News, a deep dive into an FBI investigation of chicanery involving elite high school prospects, sneaker companies and college coaches, the Medallion winner in the Sports Reporting and Commentary category.*

One night in October, Lamar Odom stands up, straightens his 6-foot-10 frame and strides to a podium inside Bryant Park Grill on W. 40th St. Dressed in a black suit and tie with white polka dots, Odom is sober, two years removed from a cocaine binge at a Nevada brothel that left him in a coma and breathing through a ventilator. Odom, 38, looks around the room. The occasion is the New York City Basketball Hall of Fame Dinner, and he is about to be inducted. To his right is Tom "Satch" Sanders, a retired Celtic in a bow tie. To his left is "Jumpin'" Jackie Jackson, an old Boys High Kangaroo who used to hand out

business cards with four words on them: "Have Converse, Will Jump." Sneaker laces remain the ties that bind many in the city game. In the back sits Gary Charles, a 5-foot-5 businessman who wears a black three-piece suit and matching fedora. Charles coached Odom with the Long Island Panthers, an AAU program sponsored by Adidas, when Odom was the nation's top prospect with Christ the King High in 1996. Odom leans in to the microphone.

"I never thought I would be re-

ceived as a great New York City basketball player after I left Christ the King," Odom says before turning his attention to Charles. "My AAU coach is here. You can ask him questions about that."

Charles, 58, is known as "Short Riley." He no longer works in systems programming for Bank of New York, but still wields influence as a power broker on the grassroots basketball scene. He guffaws at the finger pointing. On the dais, Odom outlines his path: a father addicted to heroin, a mother



lost to colon cancer when he was 12 and his attendance at three schools in two states as a high school senior in search of academic eligibility. His recruitment is in the record books for having triggered three college investigations that landed two NCAA programs on probation in his wake. Famous since 16, Odom, a southpaw from South Jamaica, recalls coaches, sneaker company operatives and runners for agents circling the scene.

"I learned the game," he says. "I learned life."

## Dennis Duggan Award Winner: Rachel Rippetoe

Continued from Page 1

wanted to do it fulltime, but I wanted to go to a bigger city." She returned to Tennessee for an internship sponsored by the Dow Jones News Fund at the Nashville Business Journal, before enrolling in the masters program at the Craig Newmark School of Journalism at CUNY.

Now in her second semester at CUNY, Rippetoe, 23, writes for the Mott Haven Herald and the Hunts Point Express, two community newspapers in the South Bronx underwritten by Newmark. Guided by Joe Hirsch, who edits the newspapers, Rippetoe covers housing, gentrification, sanitation and crime. She has written about Bronx tenants battling with their landlord, private sanitation workers fighting for back pay after their employer shut down and the troubles facing sanitation workers forced to work long hours.

"Rachel is an extremely dedicated reporter who very quickly understood why the neighborhoods that we serve needed dedicated reporting," says Hirsch. "From the time that she started, she covered all the bases. She never settled for the easiest approach to a story, and was always intrigued to go deeper. She understood what our readers wanted."

Hirsch, who nominated her for the

Duggan award, says Rippetoe exemplifies the spirit of Dennis Duggan, the late Newsday columnist who put his heart into shoe-leather local reporting for five New York newspapers.

Rippetoe tells The Silurian News that she has learned a lot being on the street. "I recently did a story that was pretty controversial about a guy who put on a music festival in the Bronx that got cancelled," she says.

The man was Marco Shalma, a South-African born concert promoter who had convinced 30 musicians and 40 local artists to participate for free in a festival called "It's The Bronx." His plan was to stage the festival on three floors inside Union Crossing, an eight-story building that originally had been a bakery for A&P supermarkets.

Shalma, creator of a recurring summer food & music event called "Bronx Night Market," had convinced Madison Realty Capital, developers of Union Crossing, to donate the space for the festival, scheduled for March. But after selling nearly 500 tickets it became apparent that the Union Crossing Building would not be finished in time. So Shalma convinced another Bronx institution, a Grand Concourse art hall called the Andrew

Freedman House, to host the festival. But almost immediately, social media blew up, denouncing Shalma as a tool of developers and an exploiter of artists and triggering a protest of more than 70 people in front of Union Crossing. The Freedman House also backed out.

"He was under a tremendous amount of pressure. People were protesting him. We called him up and asked him one question about the protestors and he began screaming at us," recalls Rippetoe. Shalma asked if Rippetoe and her reporting partner were recording the conversation and they said yes. Then he said: "You guys are not even doing your job. You are not even trying to meet me in person."

Of course, Rippetoe responded that they would love to meet with him. "So he kind of backed himself into a corner." She remembers he replied: "Well, I guess I can make time tomorrow."

"We ended up meeting with him and talking to him for an hour and a half. It built into a good story, so it worked out." The in-person interview gave Rippetoe a much better perspective about the man and his project, a more-in-depth story and a good lesson in the importance of meeting people face-to-face. The concert

never happened.

"Especially reporting in the Bronx, people are scared of displacement. They are fighting to keep the neighborhood how it is. There is a dynamic between the artists, the preservationists and the people who want to make the Bronx hipper, richer, more upscale," says Rippetoe. Her insight: "One thing I have realized: Always go to the person who is being attacked first."

Rippetoe prefers print and is enrolled in the urban reporting concentration where one of her teachers is Errol Lewis, the New York 1 political reporter/anchor who spoke to the Silurians last year. The urban concentration, she says, "covers government, community and crime, everything I am interested in."

So what does Rippetoe like best about journalism? "Talking to people and learning things I did not know before. The writing is fun too, but what I like the most is talking to people who maybe didn't want to talk to me at first." Yes, an ideal answer from a young reporter honored by the Silurians to carry on Dennis Duggan's legacy.

*Frank is a past Silurian president and a member of the Board of Governors.*

# Welcome to Брайтон Бич, Brooklyn

The winner in the Arts and Culture category of the Silurians Excellence in Journalism awards is a photo essay done for The New York Times in December by photographer Alexey Yurenev and writer Yelena Akhtiorskaya. Here is an excerpt from Akhtiorskaya's charming essay—she is a native of Odessa—and a couple of Yurenev's delightful photos.

“The current state of Brighton Beach,” writes Akhtiorskaya, “can be traced directly to the year 1979, when the first spate of Russian Jews came sputtering out of a hole in the Iron Curtain. The leak was patched up for a little while but opened more deliberately by Mikhail Gorbachev in the late '80s and early '90s. This was when my family came. We were part of the Odessa diaspora, unable to resist the allure of the water, so reminiscent of our beloved Black Sea home...

“New Yorkers tend to discover Brighton Beach by accident. They set off for Coney Island, but through train mishaps or sheer excitement at the first sight of the sea, they get off at the wrong stop and are confronted with its grumpy next-door neighbor instead. If they do make it to Coney Island, they might stroll down the shore, until the sea turns to vodka and the newspapers turn Cyrillic. Regardless of how they get there, they seem to peregrinate in a fog, for which they can hardly be blamed: In Brighton Beach, questions are deeply frowned upon, then ignored.

“But no one's coming to Brighton Beach for clarity. A dose of local exoticism is the best they can hope for. And after wandering up and down the boardwalk, marveling at the decked-out seniors — the ladies in fur coats with radioactively purple hair and men in track suits playing backgammon as if their lives depended on it, which they quite possibly did in the Siberian prisons — after devouring the warm *piroshki* (flying saucers of fried dough), tanning alongside the master tanners who've got



The American Association of Invalids and Veterans of World War II from the Former U.S.S.R. honors Anastasia Guildina, third from right, a veteran and Holocaust survivor, on her 93rd birthday.

it down to a science, and braving the dour ladies in paper hats who dole out the delicacies the land has on offer, the visitors will sigh contentedly, as after a battle won, and say that they're going back to Brooklyn.

“A slip of the tongue, perhaps, but it means something. And what it means is that Brighton Beach is a universe unto itself, with its own time, its own language, its own customs, for which it makes no apologies. If you don't get it, it's your loss.”



Semyon Krasilschikov, who served in the Great Patriotic War, celebrating his 100th birthday in Brighton Beach.

## INSIDE MS-13

Victor Manuel Ramos's gripping story for *Newsday* about a Salvadoran immigrant boy on Long Island who joined the Mara Salvatrucha gang, better known as MS-13, won a Merit Award for Reporting on Minority Issues. The young man, Edwin, admitted to committing crimes against the gang's enemies. The story had a rare happy ending when Edwin found religion and was permitted to leave MS-13. Following are the lede paragraphs of Ramos's story:

Edwin recalled the afternoon in 2005 when he decided to join the MS-13 gang as a personal low point. He was 14, recently arrived on Long Island, and hating his life. A group of boys who belonged to the SWP gang had been harassing

him in the hallways, cafeteria and locker rooms at Turtle Hook Middle School in Uniondale.

They called him names, pushed him and pinned him against walls and, when no adults were around, punched him. Even though they were immigrants too, they used expletives to berate him as an immigrant, mocked his inability to speak English, commented on his unfashionable clothes and dubbed him “*primo*”—literally “cousin,” which he said was a demeaning term for a “hick.”

Edwin, who asked to not be identified by his full or street names, had been leaving school in a rush to avoid his assailants, but that day about 10 of them waited on his path. One called him out to fight. He

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## Celebrating the Best

Continued from Page 6

**RADIO FEATURE NEWS:**

**Medallion: “Trump Inc.” by the WNYC/ProPublica Investigative team for WNYC/ProPublica.**

In the age of Trump, WNYC and ProPublica combined their investigative staffs to produce “Trump Inc.,” an ongoing series of podcasts that has uncovered wrongdoing and conflicts of interests in the Trump business empire. They detailed how Trump and his children misled investors and profited as real estate projects failed, learned that some of the money raised for Trump's inauguration went to the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C., and reported that an inauguration official expressed concern about being overcharged and worried about what would happen “when this is audited.” They also uncovered how

Trump was advancing the interests of casino magnate Sheldon Adelson in Japan. With these podcasts, WNYC and ProPublica have created a new template for collaborative journalism in an age when authorities are broadly arrayed against fact-finding and truth-telling.

**JUDGES:** Linda Amster, David A. Andelman, Joseph Berger, Bill Diehl, Allan Dodds Frank, Tony Guida, Clyde Haberman, Herbert Hadad, Fred Herzog, Aileen Jacobson, Myron Kandel, Bernard Kirsch, Valerie S. Komor, Carol Lawson, Anthony Mancini, David Margolick, Kevin Noblet, Ben Patrusky, Michael Serrill, Mort Sheinman.

**Editorial Research and Tech Support:** Ben Long

**Awards Chairman:** Jack Deacy

# My Snafu with Andre

BY ROBERTA HERSHENSON

In 1992 I was a freelance reporter covering the arts for The New York Times. My territory was Westchester County, where I lived, and where a good number of well-known performing artists lived their private lives amid the tall hedges and spacious gardens of the suburbs.

I was knowledgeable about classical music and was carving out a space for myself interviewing conductors like Andre Previn and Kurt Masur, composers like David Diamond and David Amram, and opera singers like Roberta Peters and Renata Scotto. As long as they lived in Westchester they were fair game.

There was plenty to cover north of the city, and I pursued this beat for several decades, writing also for other sections of the Times as well as for magazines like Opera News and Classical Singer. As an English major who did not study journalism, I learned on the job, and I'm still wondering if a journalism degree would have averted the snafu caused by my second Previn feature in the Times. Previn's recent death has brought the incident to mind in all its red-faced clarity.

Back then we filed our stories orally with the Recording Room, noting every comma and "new graph" and enunciating as though our lives depended on it. Errors were corrected in later editions—and in the case of the Sunday Westchester section, where the Previn feature ran, corrections ran the following week. Though I focused on his musical career in the interview, his life in Westchester—specifically in Bedford Hills, where he had settled—was also relevant. Readers would feel they were getting an inside look at the famous, multi-faceted musician who lived among them.

So I asked questions about how Previn and his fourth wife, Heather Sneddon (who somewhat resembled his third wife, Mia Farrow), liked living in the community. Previn, who had begun a six-year stint as Artistic Advisor at Caramoor, in nearby Katonah, where he also coached young chamber musicians, said he often lent his name to local events. My lede referred to such gestures as neighborly, though "relatively effortless."

When the article appeared, the word "effortless" appeared as "fruitless." The Recording Room had heard me wrong.

It was a Friday, when advance copies of the Sunday regionals landed on doorsteps along with the daily paper. I quickly called Previn, explaining that what he was going to read about him was not what



ANDRE PREVIN

I had written. "They called your activities 'fruitless' rather than 'effortless,'" I said, placing my head in the lion's mouth. "I'm sorry."

"WELL, FIX IT!" he bellowed into the phone.

A quick call to the editor, Silurian Wendy Slight, and a correction was arranged for the following Sunday. (Unfortunately, the archived edition of the 3/22/92 article, "Previn Coaches Players in His First Love, Chamber Music," still contains the word "fruitless.")

It wasn't like mistaking Mozart for Hadyn, or stating that Previn specialized in Early Music, one of the few musical genres not his bailiwick. And he didn't hold a grudge; I spoke to him often after that for the weekly arts news column, Footlights, I wrote for the Westchester section.

The "fruitless" fiasco was not really my fault. But I began to hold my breath whenever a new article appeared in print, lest someone discover a mistake. One time I confused Moss Hart with Lorenz Hart, and Kitty Carlisle Hart herself called to sweetly set me straight. By then we had entered the digital age, and the error was corrected right away. The incident stung, but not as much as when the esteemed Andre Previn yelled at me to "fix it!"

*Roberta Hershenson wrote for The New York Times from 1983 to 2009. She currently tutors adults in ESL and writing, guides a memoir workshop, and writes for NYCWoman.com.*

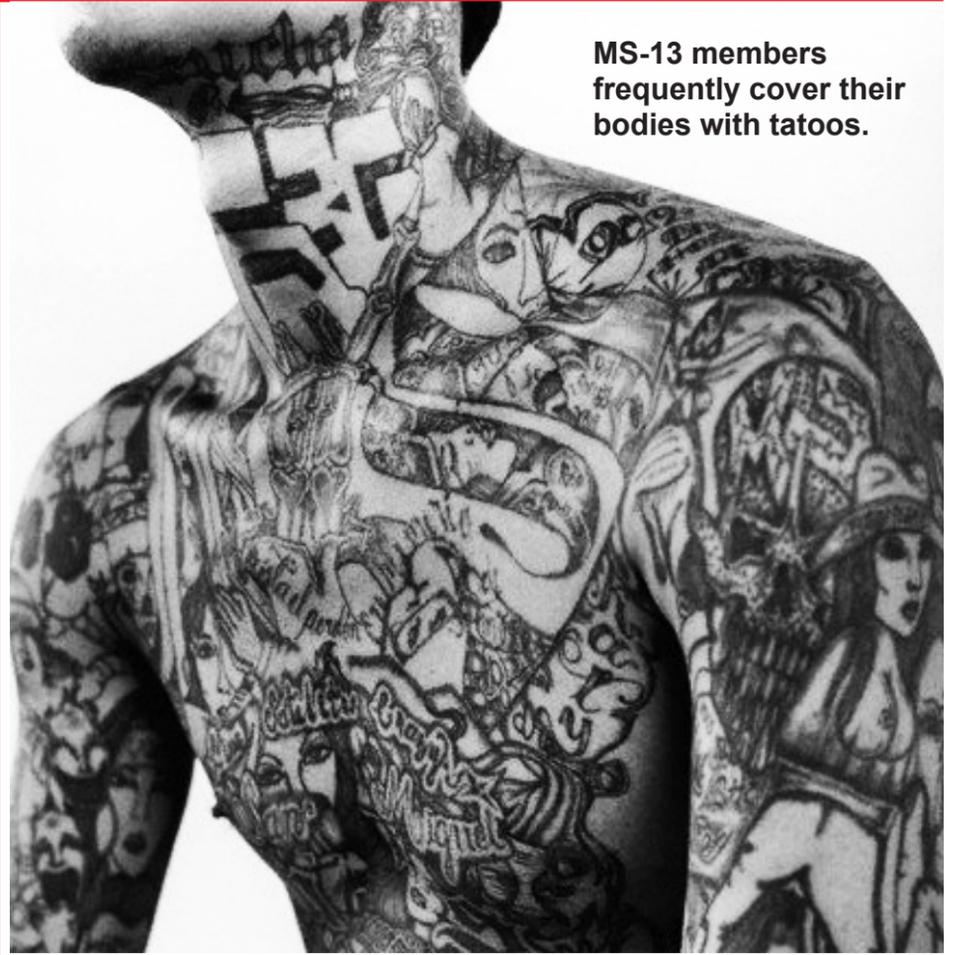
## Welcome New Members

**Karen Feld** has been a freelance writer, editor and broadcaster since 1969. She was Washington editor of the Shuttle Sheet, a Delta Airlines in-flight magazine; a syndicated gossip columnist with stints at the Washington Times and the Washington Examiner; and she has written on a variety of subjects for such publications as Parade, People, Time, Newsday, Money and Vogue.

**Mike Kelly** is an award-winning columnist at the Bergen Record, where he has been employed for more than 40 years. He has written about events foreign and domestic, was named "Journalist of the Year" in 2001 by the New Jersey Press Association and "best general interest columnist in America" in 2004 by the National Association of

Newspaper Columnists. He's reported from Africa, Northern Ireland, the Middle East, Israel, Iraq, Malaysia, and the George Washington Bridge. He is also the author of three non-fiction books, the most recent of which is *The Bus on Jaffa Road*, a chronicle of a single act of terrorism and its effect on the victims as they tried to seek justice.

**Patricia Jo Matson** is a former senior vice president at ABC Television and a current communications consultant at The Walt Disney Co. She was at ABC from 1979 to 2001 and has been working with Disney since that time. During the Gerald Ford administration, she worked in the White House as assistant press secretary to First Lady Betty Ford and was one of her speechwriters.



MS-13 members frequently cover their bodies with tatoos.

## INSIDE MS-13

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said he couldn't turn around without looking like a coward. They got down to it, and when Edwin landed punches, the other boys jumped him. They were punching and kicking him senseless and he thought he was going to die.

Then, something of a miracle happened. He remembers seeing a souped-up Toyota 4Runner SUV pull up out of nowhere and stop. His attackers ran. A tough-looking guy in his 30s told him in Spanish "Súbete" — to hop in the car. "To this day I don't know who he was," Edwin said. The man revealed that he was an MS-13 member in Hempstead. He delivered him to safety.

Thus began Edwin's devotion to an organization that largely bypasses the sustaining criminal rackets of other gangs for a loyalty built on crude violence, with a lure so potent it has enabled it to regroup despite decades of crackdowns. Only a turn toward religion

while he was in the depths of sadness and depression enabled him to escape this life and replace it with something better. ...

Simple protection ...is what Edwin says drew him to the gang toward the end of his first school year. He said he wanted to emulate the mysterious figure who rescued him. He hadn't been exposed to gangs in El Salvador because he grew up more than two hours from the gritty neighborhoods in the capital of San Salvador that serve as their well-springs. But after his encounters with the Uniondale boys he decided he couldn't go it alone. "I thought this is the solution so I can be protected in school," he said.

Edwin went home, logged onto MySpace, and started searching. He found a profile for an MS-13 clique in nearby Westbury and chatted with the person running it. He soon knew all he needed to know. If he joined, the gang would have his back.

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