

Silurian News

Published by The Silurians Press Club, an organization of veteran New York City journalists founded in 1924

Honoring Excellence!

THE SILURIANS
PRESS CLUB
AWARDS DINNER

National Arts Club

June 21, 2023

Cocktails 6 PM

Dinner 7 PM

JUNE 2023

Celebrating Excellence in Journalism



Alejandra Villa Lorca of Newsday won the Breaking News Photography Medallion for her wrenching portrait of the family of New York City firefighter Jesse Gerhard at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church in Bay Shore on Long Island. Gerhard died of a heart attack a day after battling a fire in Far Rockaway, Queens.

BY JACK DEACY
AWARDS CHAIR

A moving investigative piece by Dan Barry and Karen Zraick of The New York Times that examined the lives and deaths of three non-union construction workers killed at a troubled project in the Bronx has won the President's Choice Medallion, the top prize in the Silurians Press Club's 78th annual Excellence in Journalism Awards.

The Times also led this year's winners, capturing six additional Medallions in Breaking News Reporting, Feature News Reporting, Health and Science Reporting, Environmental Reporting, Arts and Culture Reporting and in the Editorials, Commentary and Public Service category.

Newsday was close behind, winning five Medallions, in Minority Affairs Reporting, Breaking News Photography, Sports Photography, Sports Reporting and Commentary, and in the Editorials, Commentary and Public Service category.

But far smaller and younger news outlets performed successfully in the Silurians competition as well. Insider, an online business news site, took home two Medallions, one for Environmental Reporting and the other for Feature News Photography. THE CITY, another online non-profit news site, won the Medallion for Business and Financial Reporting and Streetsblog NYC captured the Medallion for Investigative Reporting.

In the remaining categories, New York Magazine and ProPublica teamed up to win the Medallion for People Profiles, The

Record/northjersey.com won one of the two Medallions awarded in Health and Science Reporting, WABC Eyewitness News won for Television Breaking News Reporting and News 12 New Jersey won for Television Feature News Reporting.

Runners up in each of the prize categories were honored with Merit Awards. The Times won six Merits, Newsday won three, and both the non-profit City Limits and Streetsblog NYC took home two. And each of the following media outlets captured a Merit: The Gothamist, The Record/north Jersey.com, Fortune, NBC New York and the New York City News Service at the Craig B. Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. The Medallion and Merit awards will be presented at a Silurians Press Club dinner on Wednesday evening, June 21, at the National Arts Club in Manhattan.

PRESIDENT'S CHOICE MEDALLION

When Dan Barry of The New York Times read a piece in the Daily News about an elevator accident on a Bronx construction site that killed one worker and seriously injured another, he thought that there must be more to the story. There was.

So Barry and reporter Karen Zraick started to research the construction site where an old ice factory was being rehabbed into a new charter school.

What they discovered was that three non-union construction workers – two undocumented immigrants from Latin America and a homeless man who was living in a city shelter – had been killed at the construction

site within a three year period. It represented the most workers to die at a New York City construction since 2003 when the city began using computerized records. Barry and Zraick

scoured hundreds of documents, conducted interviews with the families and friends of the three men and interviewed the worker who survived the elevator accident. The Times also sent photographer Danielle Volpe to a small village in Ecuador to stay with the family of one of the dead men, Marco Martinez. His family had taken out sizeable loans to smuggle Marco into the United States for a better way of life. He was 18 when he was killed at the construction site and had only been in the United States less than four months.

The reporters also found that the consequences for all three deaths were negligible: the contractor and subcontractors faced relatively small fines and no criminal charges were filed.

Barry wrote: "Our hope in reporting this story was to bring to light dangerous conditions in the construction industry but also to bring to life, in a way, the men who were lost to 20 Bruckner Boulevard."

BREAKING NEWS REPORTING

Nicholas Fandos of The New York Times won for his series of illuminating articles on New York State's redistricting crisis. He explored how Albany Democrats redrew Congressional district lines that so egregiously favored their interests that a court threw them out and appointed an impartial referee. As a result of their miscalculation, the Democrats lost four Congressional seats in the state during the midterm elections, ensuring that the Republicans took control of the House of Representatives. As the judging panel wrote: "Fandos's exploration of Albany Democrats' flawed and ultimately court-rejected attempt at redistricting gave readers clear insight into political overreach and miscalculation."

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Streetsblog NYC's Jesse Coburn won for his six-month data-driven investigative

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Passing the Torch: The pandemic forced many families in Chinatown to shutter their stores. For some, the new generation of owners had to completely rethink its approach to running the family business, bringing a renewed sense of optimism to the community. "The Next Generation of Chinatown," published in Insider, explores how the next generation is preserving their families' legacies. Photographer Jingyu Lin, winner of the Feature News Photography Medallion, visited six businesses to show how one generation is passing the torch to the next. This photo shows Eleanor Ting and her daughter Jona outside Ting's Gift Shop.

President's Report Bots vs. Reporters

Dear Silurians,

We are at the dawn of the Age of Artificial Intelligence and more than a few of us are wondering what it will mean for our jobs as journalists. If the "chatbot" can be taught to grind out a news story in inverted pyramid style, or with an anecdotal lede by being fed a few facts, why bother hiring writers who require salaries, pensions and health insurance? When I think of straightforward stories about zoning meetings and mayoral announcements that I used to knock off on various stints of rewrite, I despair. Those large-language models can write such stories without breaking a sweat (though, as you'll see, they are subject to "hallucinations" that fabricate information). But when I look at the winners of the Silurians Press Club awards listed in this edition of the Silurians newsletter, I am extraordinarily hopeful that the end of journalism as we know it will not arrive soon.

Take the winner of the President's Choice award — "The Men Lost to 20 Bruckner Boulevard," an epic examination of the careless construction of a Bronx building that led to the deaths in three years of three workers, two of whom were undocumented and one homeless.

First of all, it took a perceptive human brain to conceive of the reporting project and a seasoned reporter's intuition that an investigation would not be a waste of time. It took diligent, patient shoe-leather reporting to dig up what went wrong and why. It took a human talent for gaining the trust of knowledgeable sources in a delicate situation where exposure could cost them their jobs. It took human sensitivity to know that filling in the lives of the three victims by talking to relatives and friends as far away as Ecuador would burnish the portraits that make the reader feel viscerally what losing the three lives meant.

Finally, it took a lifetime of reading and inventing and tinkering with language and some mysterious gift to write a monumental piece as feeling yet restrained as the article. Its authors: Dan Barry and Karen Zraick.

A runner up, Newsday's astonishing series on how the police departments of Long Island protected corrupt cops from serious punishment, showed the kind of keen reasoning, clever enterprise and dogged pursuit that chatbots cannot match anytime soon. And other winners also stood out in similar ways.

The Times, the Washington Post and other media, some of which have departments and editors dedicated to corrections, have pointed out the dangers inherent in machine-made news articles. Because the chatbot logarithms consolidate information from many sources on the Internet, some articles and other productions are packed with the kind of lies and misleading factoids spouted on Fox News, Newsmax and conspiracy websites. And if a question put to it is not worded just so, the chatbot can produce outright fabrications requiring an astute user to check the original references, not exactly demonstrating the time-saving rationale for chatbots. For fun, I asked a chatbot to compose a sonnet about Mickey Mantle. I was quite impressed that it wrote a sonnet at all, but it was rather insipid and the Mickey it extolled was Mickey Mouse.

Certainly A.I. tools will make reportorial research more comprehensive and may take over the production of routine newspaper articles and features. But there's a long way to go before it renders newspapers and television news shows obsolete. Of course, you may wonder whether this letter was written by a chatbot disguised as a Silurians president. Well, please keep wondering.

All best and keep well,

Your president,
Joe Berger



Celebrating Excellence in Journalism

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reporting on the safety of streets around New York City schools produced an alarming finding: a hidden epidemic of traffic violence with car crashes near schools averaging 50 a day and injuring a dozen people daily. In building a data base with information about nearly a million car crashes over more than a decade, Coburn discovered that streets around schools are far more dangerous than streets citywide and also documented the underwhelming response by government officials to school safety solutions.

BROADCAST JOURNALISM

Television Feature News

"Justice Delayed," a harrowing documentary, distilled a four year investigation by News 12 New Jersey reporter Walt Kane and producer Karin Attonito into years of child sexual abuse by a former sheriff of Warren County, New Jersey. Using hundreds of pages of sealed documents, their investigation unraveled the secret that the former sheriff had systematically raped pre-adolescent boys in the county's care while officials — warned the abuse might be happening — took no action. The county's defense included the controversial argument that, because the boy had a troubled childhood, a rape would not have caused further damage. Warren County ended the case with a \$5 million settlement.

BROADCAST JOURNALISM

Television Breaking News

The WABC TV Eyewitness News Team won for their comprehensive coverage of a shooting in one car of a crowded N train in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Their 11-minute report included dramatic cell phone video of the chaos as passengers, some wounded, fled the subway car still filled with gun smoke as well as interviews with survivors lucky to be alive after the shooter fired his handgun 33 times.

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

In 2022, New York's economic future hinged on a post-pandemic question that lingers still: Whether and how often will workers return to the office? In insightful features and regular analyses, THE CITY'S Greg David followed the trajectory of the issue, illustrating employers' efforts to lure people back and synthesizing the impact commuter trends and other factors had on officials' responses to the lagging numbers of full time in-office employees.

ARTS AND CULTURE REPORTING

The Medallion goes to Alex Traub of The New York Times for his pieces that he paired as "The Cultural Vibrancy of Working Class New Yorkers." The first is about Barbara Maier Gustern, an elderly vocal coach who never made it into the news until her tragic death on a street in Chelsea, but who had found personal fulfillment helping other talented singers sound their best. The other centers on another non-famous high-impact creative guide, Will Malitek, proprietor of Film Noir Cinema, who is apparently the last movie rental clerk in New York and the owner of a 54-seat theater where he screens films that are often obscure and sometimes life-changing for his devoted customers.

PEOPLE PROFILES

"The Police Lawyer's Trial" by Jake Pearson is a carefully researched and written exploration of a complicated subject — the zealous defense by city lawyers of police officers accused of crimes against civilians, often Black men — and Karl Ashanti, a Black city lawyer who defended the police for more than a decade. And then he was unjustly arrested by a white officer and found himself on the other side of the aisle. The riveting story appeared in New York Magazine in collaboration with Pro Publica.

MINORITY AFFAIRS REPORTING

The Newsday investigative team of Paul LaRocca, David Schwartz, Sandra Peddie and Jeffrey Basinger followed up on last

The Other Side of the Law

The People Profiles Medallion went to Jake Pearson for "The Police Lawyer's Trial," published by New York Magazine in collaboration with ProPublica. Here is an excerpt of the article, the story of Karl Ashanti, a rare Black man who defended police in court for more than a decade. And then he was unjustly arrested.

By the time Karl Ashanti neared his office in the New York City Law Department's headquarters in March 2018, the police were shutting down Park Place. Ice had fallen from the buildings above, so an officer had cordoned off the area. Ashanti flashed his work ID and the cop let him through. Then, about two-thirds of the way down the block, he ran into a second officer. "Turn around now," John Shapiro barked. "I said now."

... By the time he detained Ashanti, the officer had already been named in three false-arrest lawsuits. (Two were settled, and one was dismissed.) Ashanti's own unit had handled those cases.

Within days of the incident, the Law Department gave Ashanti an ultimatum: resign or be fired. After more than a decade defending the police, Ashanti was finding out what it was like on the other side of the law.



year's award winning series on discrimination by the Nassau and Suffolk County police departments with "Inside Internal Affairs," a big package of stories bringing to light the failure of those departments to take seriously allegations of abuse of minority citizens by their officers. The series offers chapter, verse and video showing that incidents in which four people died and four more were seriously injured resulted in little or no discipline for the officers involved — despite clear evidence on their part.

SPORTS REPORTING AND COMMENTARY

Newsday's Gregg Sarra won for his series of articles and videos that detail the amazing journey of Dunia Sibomana, who grew up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, at the age of six, suffered horrific facial disfigurement and life-altering injuries after an attack by a group of chimpanzees. Newsday followed the story of Dunia's adoption by a Long Island family, his exploits as a member of the Long Beach High School wrestling team, and his astonishing rise to the New York State wrestling championship. He then placed third in the National championships.

SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Newsday photographers Thomas A. Ferrara, J. Conrad Williams, Jr., Johnny Milano, John Keating and William Perlman won the Medallion for their portfolio of 11 images of Long Island high school wrestler Dunia Sibomana, whose amazing story is told in Sports Reporting and Commentary.

HEALTH AND SCIENCE REPORTING

The judging panel awarded two medallions

in this category.

Christopher Maag of The Record/northjersey.com and the USA Today Network won a Medallion for "Pandemic Failures." Troubled by the long delays in obtaining Covid-19 test results in New York and New Jersey, Maag set out on an intensive yearlong investigation to find an answer. The result was a powerful, groundbreaking six-part series that found that the problem rested with a national health system that largely relied for its testing on two profit-making laboratories, both of which were overwhelmed by the epic demands of the pandemic.

The other Medallion went to Sharon Otterman and Joseph Goldstein of The New York Times for "Understanding the Omicron Surge." In a rich packet of compelling stories, Otterman and Goldstein covered a broad range of critical issues related to the dramatic surge. Among them: how well the city's health care system responded to it, public health lessons learned over the course of the pandemic and a moving explanation of long-Covid centering on the unrelenting post-infection torments suffered by a celebrated Broadway conductor.

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

The judging panel awarded two Medallions in this category.

Anne Barnard of The New York Times won a Medallion for "Ten Years After Sandy's Wake Up Call, New York Has Changed. Not Nearly Enough." To mark the tenth anniversary of superstorm Sandy, Barnard provided fine grained coverage of the challenges facing five diverse city neighborhoods. She found that no single solution

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A Short Woman With a Mighty Impact

Here is an excerpt from "She Taught New York to Sing," by Alex Traub of The New York Times, part of his Art and Culture Medallion winning entry, which he titled "The Cultural Vibrancy of Working-Class New Yorkers."

Barbara Maier Gustern, a 4-foot-11 woman from the tiny town of Boonville, Ind., exerted an improbable and little-known influence over New York's overlapping music scenes, guiding cabaret performers, stage actors and rock stars to get the most out of their voices. Ms. Gustern, who

died last month, had a gift for unusual metaphors that made her teachings stick. In the bedroom of her 17th-floor apartment in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan, where she gave lessons almost every day deep into her 80s, she would ask her students to build theaters inside their heads.

Your tongue, Ms. Gustern said, is the stage. Your soft palate is the fly space. You must sing from the very back of stage, projecting your voice into the fly space, through a blowhole at the top of your head.



Joyce Purnick Tops Her Lifetime of Firsts with the 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award

By DAVID A. ANDELMAN

When it comes to Joyce Purnick, there are a multitude of firsts. As Silurians president Joe Berger pointed out, she was the first female City Hall bureau chief for The New York Times and the first female Metro editor of The Times.

But there is so much more to Purnick. And Berger pointed all of this out in his introduction before presenting her with the Silurians' Lifetime Achievement Award, which has also been bestowed on Walter Cronkite, Gay Talese, Pete Hamill, Murray Kempton, and Purnick's husband Max Frankel before her.

The profession still attracts promising young talent. I read and see and watch them and hear them every day.

— JOYCE PURNICK

"Fearlessly honest," "tough, shrewd, and knowledgeable," were the adjectives that first leaped to Berger's lips. The theme continued through the encomiums of one of her biggest admirers and oldest friends, another former Times City Hall bureau chief and columnist, Clyde Haberman.

He thanked her "on behalf of all the city hall reporters who are in this room. I think every one of us learned basically almost everything we know from you personally. You showed us how to understand the city, how to understand power in this town in a way that most of us only understood a fraction of."

In high school, all she ever really wanted to be was a reporter. "I was bad at math... and

allergic to science," she said. "So my wise mother, worried about my future, encouraged me to study music and art and to write. Writing stuck, and journalism was the right fit."

Watching President Kennedy's televised news conferences, "I saw a few women sprinkled in among the men reporters, and I was hooked.."

At the Post, owner Dorothy Schiff gave her a first break. "I typed up a week's worth of TV listings. I wrote squibs about sitcoms and about old movies.... I worked into the early morning hours in the composing room with printers, many of them who could not hear, and they labored over hot type. I learned to read upside down."

She got her first byline less than two years later. "Women at the Post were not limited to the 'women's pages,' as they used to be called. We covered everything ... Writing about my city and state was what I had long wanted to do." And she did that, at least until Rupert Murdoch bought the Post in 1976. "To preserve my reputation, I quit and joined the unemployed."

But it happened to be a fortuitous moment for Joyce, and a transformative one for the newspaper industry. At The Times, a number of women had just filed a class action sex discrimination suit and won a settlement from the paper. One of the deals was "to hire some women fast, and since covering New York was a fundamental priority of The Times in those days, I was hired."

Ed Koch was mayor. "He was great copy. He could not stop making news." Coverage of Koch quickly led her to the role of bureau chief at City Hall, then a column, and then there was Max.

"I found the love of my life at The Times," she smiled and looked over at him. "As most



Joyce Purnick was the first female City Hall bureau chief for The New York Times.

Photo by Steven Spelotis

of you know, Max Frankel was a widower and the executive editor of The Times. I did not work directly for Max, but he was the top guy in the news department, and I was a member of the news staff. We knew. I knew. Our relationship was bound to be complicated, but we were willing to pursue it."

Finally, Joyce turned to journalism today. "A lot what's going on today is far from positive," she said. "The disappearance of local newspapers throughout the country and the cheapening and politicization of many

of those that still exist. We all know that newspapers have always been political. But as I see it, the divisions today, the peddling of distortions and outright lies, thank you Rupert, is just plain ugly and destructive."

"The profession still attracts promising young talent," she concluded. "I read and see and watch them and hear them every day. There are not enough of them in enough places, but I'm counting on them to turn things around someday. Happily, I lived through the Golden Age."

Celebrating Excellence in Journalism

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will safeguard the entire city against future storms but was optimistic because of the many individuals she encountered who are helping to advance community recovery and climate change readiness.

Elizabeth McCauley of Insider also won a Medallion for "A New Law Could Clean Up One of America's Most Polluted Neighborhoods." In a riveting video report, reporter/producer McCauley documented the dire environmental plight of Newark's Ironbound neighborhood, a four-square-mile enclave that is hometown to a major airport, a meat rendering plant, three power plants burning natural gas and New Jersey's largest trash incinerator. With striking visuals and revealing interviews, McCauley documented the dire impact that decades of toxic wastes and pollutants have had on the health and well-being of its largely working class residents. Her report also highlighted the efforts of community leaders and activists to pass legislation that would hold polluters to account and finally clean up the Ironbound community.

FEATURE NEWS REPORTING

In "Sabrina's Parents Love Her, But the Meltdowns Are Too Much," Joseph Goldstein of The New York Times offers a singularly sensitive and moving study of the Benedict family's fear and helplessness in trying to help their adopted 13-year-old daughter Sabrina, whose autism, a rare genetic disorder and aggressiveness has them all on a perilous journey. After months of cultivating sources and earning the trust of the Benedicts, Goldstein writes in spare, unsentimental prose of what happens when an autistic teenager becomes unmanageable at home.

EDITORIALS, COMMENTARY, PUBLIC SERVICE

The judging panel awarded two Medallions in this category.

The Public Service Medallion was won

by Eliza Shapiro, Brian M. Rosenthal and Jonah Markowitz of The New York Times for "How Hasidic Schools Are Reaping Millions But Failing Students." A team of New York Times reporters did hundreds of interviews and read thousands of documents to investigate the shortcomings of secular education in New York yeshivas. Acting on compelling documentation by the Times that students in some Hasidic schools were among the lowest performing on standardized tests in the state, the State Board of Regents approved regulations aimed at holding private schools to minimum academic standards.

The Medallion for Editorials was won by

Dan Janison of Newsday for "The Map Wars of New York." In a massive and deeply impactful look at the perils of unrestrained and unresponsive redrawing of electoral maps, particularly in deeply contested regions of Long Island, Janison and a Newsday team laid bare how partisan politics can lead to toxic outcomes that effectively disenfranchise voters and empower politicians whose views are all too frequently out of step with those they purport to represent.

BREAKING NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Newsday photographer Alejandra Villa Lorca's winning photograph catches the grief on the faces of the Gerhard family at the

funeral of FDNY firefighter Jesse Gerhard at St. Patrick's Church in Bay Shore on Long Island. Gerhard died of a heart attack a day after he battled a fire in the city.

FEATURE NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Insider photographer Jingyu Lin won the Medallion for her excellent portfolio of portraits of generations of business owners in Chinatown. She visited six businesses there to capture how one generation is passing the torch to a new one. Lin captured portraits of grandmothers, mothers, fathers, sons and daughters in the business spaces that connect them. The combination of space, products and portraiture highlighted the deep connection between the owners and their trade.

An Urgent Warning for the City

Anne Barnard of The New York Times cited five ways to protect New York City during a hurricane in her submission "Ten Years after Sandy's Wake Up Call, New York Has Changed Not Nearly Enough." It won one of two Medallions in Environmental Reporting and began with an overview.

Hurricane Sandy woke up New York City to an existential crisis. It made clear that climate change — rising seas, more powerful storms and extreme heat spurred by burning fossil fuels — is no abstract idea to a city built on islands and swamps. Leaders promised bold action: not just to repair the damage but to reshape New York to thrive in a chaotic climate.

A decade later, we are only just beginning to act, and the path forward is murky. The metropolitan area has seen billions of dollars committed to rebuilding and protecting hard hit areas: sweeping new laws to cut emissions and build resilience; a growing climate and environmental justice movement. Cutting-edge projects, like restoring wave-calming oyster beds and building "living breakwaters," come with revived attention to the waterfronts that first made New York a great world city.

But the verdict is clear: We have not done enough. We are

not moving fast enough. We do not have a comprehensive plan or a clear route to one, despite the energetic efforts of leaders, agencies and communities. So say scientists, urban planners, officials and front-line residents, in scores of interviews and hundreds of pages of government, academic and advocacy reports.

Dauntingly, no single solution can protect the whole city. Each neighborhood has its own topography, architecture and demographics, and thus its own needs. So, trying to grasp the whole, we explored five hard-hit areas, each grappling with its own set of challenges.

The good news: Everywhere was a ferment of experiments, collaborations, innovations. Everywhere were people who since the hurricane have changed their lives. A home health aide turned environmental researcher. An ex-contractor monitoring marsh grass. Retirees who, to protect others, let wetlands reclaim the only homes they had known. A security technician taking Fridays off to problem-solve a shared predicament with strangers from faraway neighborhoods. Can all their dynamism add up to a solution?

Silurians Press Club

The 78th Annual Excellence in Journalism Awards

2023 SILURIAN MEDALLION AND MERIT AWARD WINNERS

PRESIDENT'S CHOICE AWARD: "The Men Lost to 20 Bruckner Boulevard"
By Dan Barry and Karen Zraick,
The New York Times

BREAKING NEWS REPORTING

Medallion: "Redistricting Chaos" By Nicholas Fandos, The New York Times
Merit: "Rebuilding the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway" By Julieanne Cuba and Kevin Duggan, Streetsblog NYC

FEATURE NEWS REPORTING

Medallion: "Sabrina's Parents Love Her, But Her Meltdowns Are Too Much" By Joseph Goldstein, The New York Times
Merit: "What the Racist Massacre in Buffalo Stole from One Family" By Troy Closson, The New York Times
Merit: "The NYPD Accidentally Shot a Fellow Officer. A Queens Man May Spend Life in Prison for His Death" By Jake Offenhartz, Gothamist

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Medallion: "Always Scared" By Jesse Coburn, Streetsblog NYC
Merit: "Who is George Santos?" By Michael Gold and Grace Ashford, The New York Times
Merit: "Dilapidated Apartments, Lousy Landlords Plague NYC's Sprawling Scattered Site Supportive Housing Network," By Jeanmarie Evely, City Limits

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

Medallion: "Examining the Return-to-Office Debate in NYC; Valuable Insights into Post Pandemic Economic Recovery" By Greg David, THE CITY
Merit: "What's in the Water at PepsiCo?" By Phil Wahba, Fortune

SCIENCE & HEALTH REPORTING

Medallion: "Pandemic Failures" By Christopher Maag, The Record/northjersey.com, USA Today Network
Medallion: "Understanding the Omicron Surge" By Sharon Otterman and Joseph Goldstein, The New York Times
Merit: "Living with Covid for the Long Haul" By Linda Guadino, NBC New York

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

Medallion: "Ten Years After Sandy's Wake Up Call, New York has Changed Not Nearly Enough" By Anne Barnard, The New York Times
Medallion: "A New Law Could Clean Up One of America's Most Polluted Neighborhoods" By Elizabeth McCauley, Insider
Merit: "For NYC Tenants with Inadequate Heat, Enforcement Can Be Elusive" By Liz Donovan, City Limits

ARTS & CULTURE REPORTING

Medallion: "The Cultural Vibrancy of Working Class New Yorkers" By Alex Traub, The New York Times
Merit: "Ghosts of New York's Glamorous Past Haunts an Empty Pub" By Alex Vadukul, The New York Times
Merit: "The Godfather: 50 Years Later" By Thomas Maier, Newsday

SPORTS REPORTING & COMMENTARY

Medallion: "Dunia: Journey of Courage" By Gregg Sarra, Newsday
Merit: "The Shady Financing of Rutgers Athletics" By Jean Rimbach and Abbott Koloff, The Record/northjersey.com

EDITORIALS, COMMENTARY & PUBLIC SERVICE

Public Service Medallion: "How Hasidic Schools are Reaping Millions but Failing Students" By Eliza Shapiro, Brian M. Rosenthal and Jonah Markowitz,
The New York Times
Editorial Medallion: "The Map Wars of New York" By Dan Janison, Newsday
Merit Public Service: "Dysfunction, Death and Coverup in New York City's Jails" By Jan Ransom, The New York Times

PEOPLE PROFILES

Medallion: "The Police Lawyer's Trial" By Jake Pearson, New York Magazine and ProPublica
Merit: "The Life and Death of Daniel Auster, a Son of Literary Brooklyn" By Alex Vadukul, The New York Times
Merit: "The Mysterious Patient in Room 23: The Hermit Baroness" By George Rush and John Leland, The New York Times

MINORITY AFFAIRS REPORTING

Medallion: "Inside Internal Affairs" By Paul LaRocca, David Schwartz, Sandra Peddie and Jeffrey Basinger, Newsday
Merit: "Hard Lessons" By Journalism Students at the Craig B. Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, New York City News Service (CUNY)

BREAKING NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Medallion: "Grief in Bay Shore" By Alejandra Villa Lorca, Newsday

FEATURE NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Medallion: "The Next Generation in Chinatown" By Jingyu Lin, Insider
Merit: "Witches Paddle" By Thomas Ferrara, Newsday

SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Medallion: "Dunia: A Journey of Courage" Photo Essay by Thomas A Ferrara, J. Conrad Williams, Jr., Johnny Milano, John Keating and William Perlman,
Newsday
Merit: "Home Opener, Walk Off Win" By Thomas Ferrara, Newsday

TV BREAKING NEWS

Medallion: "Brooklyn Subway Shooting" By WABC TV Eyewitness News Team (11 pm) WABC TV Eyewitness News

TV FEATURE NEWS

Medallion: "Justice Delayed" By Walt Kane and Producer Karin Attonito, News 12 New Jersey

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AWARDS CHAIR: Jack Deacy

AWARDS TECHNICAL CONSULTANT: Ben Long

AWARDS JUDGES: Joe Berger, Jack Deacy, Allan Dodds Frank, David Andelman, Betsy Ashton, Clyde Haberman, Michael Serrill, Joyce Wadler, Bill Diehl, Scotti Williston, Mort Sheinman, Aileen Jacobson, Linda Amster, Tony Guida, Myron Kandel, Carol Lawson, Fred Herzog, Kevin Noblet, Ben Patrusky, David Margolick and Suzanne Charle

AWARDS DINNER CHAIR: Scotti Williston

Supporting Role at the Dinner: Myron Rushetsky

THE SILURIANS PRESS CLUB WEBSITE www.silurians.org

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM
AWARDS OR THE SILURIANS PRESS CLUB CONTACT:
jackdeacy@gmail.com

Steven Brill Wins the Peter Kihss Award for Excellence and Mentorship

The Silurians have had many distinguished speakers at our recent meetings, all chronicled by David A. Andelman. David is a past president of the Silurians, a CNN Opinion columnist, a former New York Times and CBS News correspondent and creator of SubStack's Andelman Unleashed. Go to Silurians.org for more about our recent speakers, including our May guest, James Stewart.

BY DAVID A. ANDELMAN

Steven Brill, winner of the 2023 Silurian's Peter Kihss Award, given to distinguished journalists who nurture younger colleagues, is the antithesis of a gentle mentor.

As Silurian board member David Margolick, instrumental in proposing Brill for the award and a product of the Brill style of journalism, observed in introducing him, "Brill read stories closely, marked them up, and demanded more — not always very nicely. Of all the Kihss winners, I suspect he is the least like Peter Kihss himself. . . . In fact, it's hard to imagine two journalists more different from one another. Peter Kihss was soft-spoken, avuncular, modest. Steve Brill is none of those things. But there are different styles of mentoring, and one is by example. Brill leaned hard on his people and got great work out of them. Which is why the top news organizations routinely picked them off. Then he'd go out and find some more."

Under the inimitable questioning of Myron Kandel, Brill began by reminiscing about his start in the news business — especially his profile of two upstart law firms launched by Jews and shunned by the industry's titans, Skadden Arps and Wachtel Lipton. "That led to my getting the idea to start the American Lawyer magazine," Brill recalled. "Okay, you're a lawyer. Your wife's a lawyer. I'm actually not a lawyer. I always have to remind people that I never took the bar exam." Instead, he became a journalist and, as it happens, a serial entrepreneur. "I've always thought the central challenge, you know, of anyone's life is to do well and do good," Brill continued. "So that's the way I measure it."

Brill leaned hard on his people and got great work out of them. Which is why the top news organizations routinely picked them off.

— DAVID MARGOLICK

Doing good, in fact, defined much of the rest of his career, and doing well came along, too. "My wife and I endowed a journalism program at Yale," Brill recalled, that "should not be anything like a journalism school — which I think is completely useless." That contradicts, incidentally, the view of our January luncheon speaker, Columbia Journalism's new dean Jelani Cobb.

"What it should do is teach people how to be reporters, give them a credential, which you can't get at an Ivy League school because Ivy League schools pride themselves on not being trade schools, but give them a credential that would help them get the jobs in journalism that they should want." And it's worked handsomely, since "the ones that I've taught, it would be about 300, I'd say half of them are working journalists."

After that, there was the hiring of James Stewart — the May Silurians luncheon speaker. "He presented a resume, and the resume said he had been an intern at the local TV station in Quincy, Illinois, and, better, had been an intern at the local newspaper in Quincy, Illinois. So, that was a slam dunk." Brill paused. "The resume left out the fact that his family owned the local newspaper and the local television station in Quincy Illinois. Just forgot

to mention that. But it worked out."

Then Brill founded Court TV. As some indication of the speed and scope of his activities, he's completely lost track of Court TV. (It's now TruTV, a digital broadcast television network.)

Along the way, there were innumerable books, including his monumental work on Obamacare that grew out of a Time cover at 26,000 words — the longest the magazine has ever published.

Finally, there is Brill's creation that has been and continues to be perhaps the most transformative of our profession. "NewsGuard is based on the notion that, every once in a while, human intelligence is better than the artificial kind," Brill began. "We read [every] website, we score them on the basis of nine criteria from 0 to 100." It's succeeding. "This year, we broke into the black, which is pretty good for a start-up and it's especially good for a start-up that tries to do good as well as do well."

Brill believes that with AI (Artificial Intelligence) the need will only multiply for a service that can distinguish between the good, the bad, and the ugly. Which is basically what Brill has been doing all his life.



Steven Brill discusses his impactful career and his mentorship of budding journalists.

Maggie Haberman — Our Rock Star

BY DAVID A. ANDELMAN

"For this crowd, you are our Taylor Swift, our number one rock star," Silurians president Joe Berger proclaimed at the November 16 lunch featuring Maggie Haberman, chronicler of Donald Trump and all his peccadillos.

At this memorable luncheon, with the largest in-person turnout since the onset of Covid, Haberman spent 58 riveting minutes under the probing questions of former Silurians president Allan Dodds Frank unveiling some of her deepest secrets about a Donald Trump she has come to know better than perhaps any other journalist today.

"He refers to us all as the enemy of the people," Haberman observed. "One of my fondest memories of covering that White House was sitting in the Oval Office with my colleague, Peter Baker, and our publisher, A.G. Sulzberger, sitting across the Resolute desk from Trump, saying directly to Trump, 'Your language about enemy of the people is enabling despots around the globe to engage in free press crack-downs.' And Trump just kept responding saying, 'I think I'm entitled to a good story from my paper.' [That's] how he views The Times, which is

what his thing with me is about. He is uniquely obsessed with the paper, and I'm just the person who covers him more often than others."

Which helps explain why Trump was so very unhappy about at least some of her reporting especially in her remarkable book, *Confidence Man: The Making of Donald Trump and the Breaking of America*. "He's been extremely angry at various aspects of the book, including beginning with reporting from February 2022 that he had been flushing documents down the toilet in the White House," which helps to explain, she says, why "I haven't talked to Donald Trump since I interviewed him in September 2021."

Inevitably, there is the question of what the world, even journalists, all too often simply miss about Trump. "He has only a handful of moves," Haberman said. "Everything is flat and the same and devoid of context — describing Meade Esposito as ruling with an iron fist, the same language that he uses to describe Xi Jinping. Everything is the same, and the context doesn't matter. Donald Trump is the same in every single context. A letter from a notorious dictator written to a sitting president is the same as trading with Page Six to

get them not to write a story about his making Marla Maples return two gold Lexuses — and instead giving them the fact that he was divorcing her, which is also in the book, if you want to read about it. That's the part that really gets missed about him."

But perhaps the single most important observation, that she tossed off almost as an aside, was a simple answer to what could be a most complex question: on what is Donald Trump most perceptive? "What he's very perceptive about," Haberman answered quickly, "is the darkness in human behavior."

The next question allowed her to elaborate. "Do you think Donald Trump understood the just-below-the-surface racism of many Americans?"

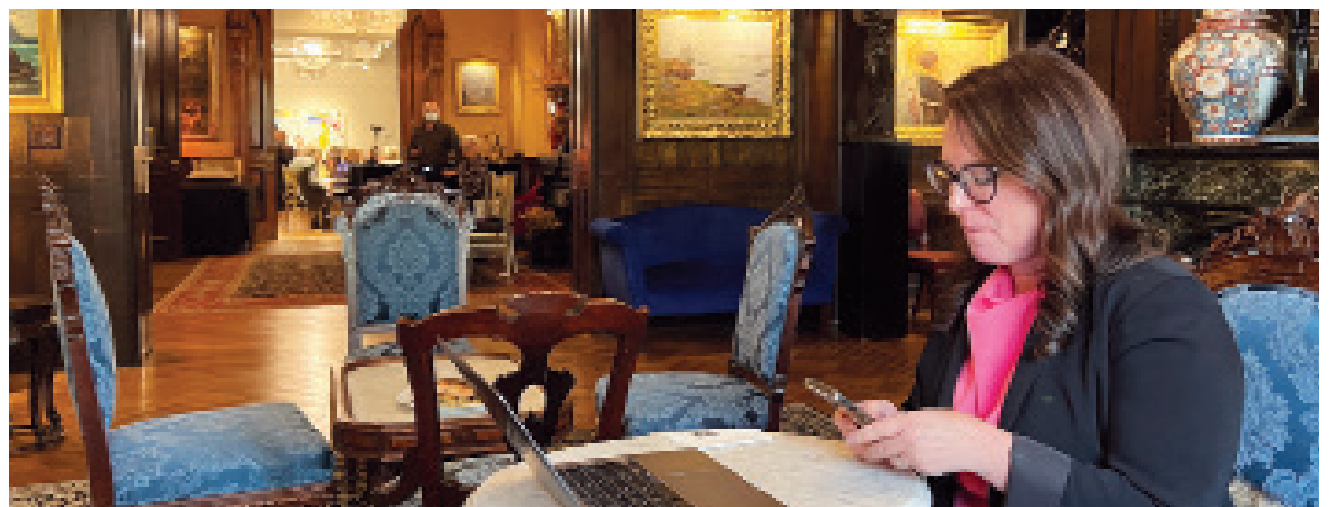
"Yes, I do."

"Better than other people?"

"I think he was more willing to capitalize on it than other people."

And he will be around for a long time. "The story of this book is about people writing Donald Trump's obit, over and over and over, and he just finds a way to come back," she said. "He is still really strong."

Whatever happens, we now have an indispensable guidebook to the land of Trump from our own Maggie Haberman.



As Silurians ate lunch before Maggie Haberman's appearance, 2022 Lifetime Achievement Award winner Chester Higgins stepped into an adjacent room to find and photograph the super-diligent reporter filling a story.

Sandra Peddie Divulges How She Got the 'Last of the Old Time Mafia Bosses' to Spill

BY DAVID A. ANDELMAN

Newsday calls their ace investigative reporter Sandra Peddie. Her publisher used S.J. Peddie on the cover of her landmark book, *Sonny: The Last of the Old Time Mafia Bosses*, John "Sonny" Franzese, because the book's editor thought "readers generally don't buy a book about the mob written by a woman." Indeed, having edited any number of mob books, this was the first he'd shepherded by a woman. "The core audience for this book turns out to be mob buffs and mobsters," Peddie observed.

Whatever you call her, Sandra's work on Sonny Franzese is a page-turner. Franzese, the centenarian made-man of the New York Mafia, took down 40-to-50 people in the course of his career. Along the way, he transformed the entertainment and music industries while building a toxic empire in his own right.

All of this, and so much more unspooled as Sandra Peddie, held a Silurian lunch crowd enthralled.

Clearly Sonny, the underboss of the Colombo crime family, defined the epigram, "only the good die young." He was 103 when he finally gave up the ghost in a Long Island nursing home, only shortly after he'd won



Sandra Peddie interviewed Sonny Franzese when he was 103 years old for her book 'Sonny: The Last of the Old Time Mafia Bosses.'

his release from prison. Oh, and after at least once trying to hit on Sandra. A decade before, when he was 93, his youngest son testified against him and helped send him back to jail.

Sandra interviewed him "multiple times as well as 130 of his friends, family members, and enemies. He, I would argue, was bigger than Gotti, certainly smarter than Gotti, and deeply admired by Gotti." In addition, beyond being "smart and tough, he never rattled

anyone out." Above all, Sandra believes, Sonny was an important subject to write about because "he embodied the rise of the American Mafia in the 50s and the 60s." By the 60s and 70s, "the mob was everywhere. They had insinuated themselves into all sorts of legitimate businesses."

Sonny was destined from birth to be a very big constellation in the firmament of American organized crime. "Al Capone carved his initials into the countertop of the social club

run by Sonny's father Carmine who was, like Sonny, a ruthless killer," Sandra told the Silurians. "Sonny murdered his first person when he was 14 and that's how he got made."

By the time Sandra met Sonny, his attitude about talking to reporters had softened. "He even invited me to his last birthday. He was very proud of the fact that he had outlived everybody, but I think there are two reasons he spoke to me. Number one, when I first met him, he was 101. And he knew he wasn't long for this world, so that kind of changes the calculation. But the other thing is, he knew I was going to do something regardless."

She pointed out that many audience members probably operated similarly. "When I do an investigative piece, I do my research, I go to the target and I say, look, I want your perspective, but if you don't want to talk to me, that's fine. I'm going to do a story with or without you, and more often than not, people do want to give me their perspective."

By then, too, she'd accumulated some material that positively delighted Sonny. "When I showed him his rap sheet, it was literally like looking at a high school yearbook. He loved it, but he also saw the depth of my research."

Columbia's New Journalism Dean Talks of Dreams and Affordability

The average journalist's salary in New York hovers right around the \$50,000 mark, though few entry-level spots are available for much more than \$45,000. So how does Jelani Cobb justify what he admits is the cost of a year at Columbia University's prestigious Graduate School of Journalism that he estimates at \$120,000 and where he's been named the new dean?

"It becomes unfeasible for a lot of people to stay in journalism if they walk out with 40 or 50 thousand dollars in debt," Dean Cobb admitted to the January luncheon Club under questioning by Allan Dodds Frank, a former Silurian president. "One of my top objectives is to raise enough money to offset the cost of our tuition."

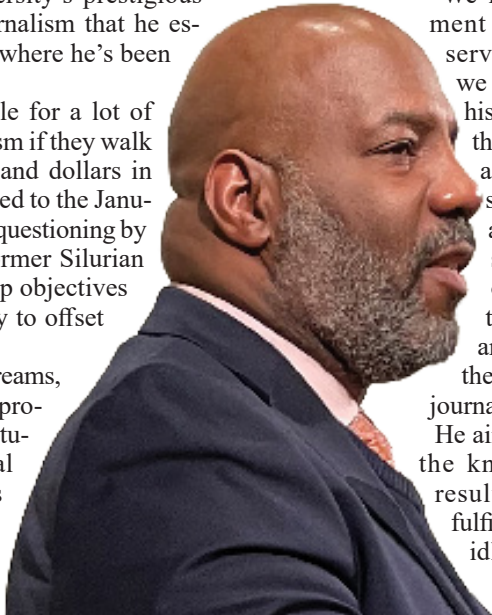
One of Dean Cobb's dreams, he said, is to "create a program where, for every student that goes into local news or nonprofit news and stays there for five years, over the course of those five years we will

pay off your loans."

For now, Dean Cobb is looking at a whole range of value-added competencies that Columbia can bring to journalism and that the school can offer its graduates.

"We have an embarrassment of riches," he observed, "the reputation we have, and having the history and the tradition that we have, we have applicants from all sorts of backgrounds and all sorts of skill sets. So, I see a pool of student perspectives, students who are really clear about the social function that journalism serves."

He aims to arm them with the knowledge that will result in a product that fulfills the needs of a rapidly changing society.



JELANI COBB

"How do you teach these kids to detect and ignore or challenge misinformation or disinformation — if there is, in fact, a difference between those two things," he said. "We want to see everyone more acutely informed about things like digital forensics. If someone is sending you a video and it purports to show Russian soldiers committing war crimes in Ukraine, how do you know that that video is what it says it is? How do you know that it is from January of 2023 and not from some unrelated conflict that happened two years ago?"

All of these abilities, Dean Cobb observed are "a growth area." And he points out, "Outlets are hiring in those areas."

Dean Cobb was a product of New York schools, particularly his home borough of Queens, so he is acutely aware of one sad contemporary reality. "Less than 10% of the high schools in New York City have a school newspaper and those newspapers are disproportionately clustered at institutions that are

in well-off communities," he said.

But there is another skill, too, that Dean Cobb is most anxious to encourage and that springs from his own background with a Ph.D. in American history and deep roots as a New Yorker writer.

"There are a lot of crucial histories that have been written by journalists and some pretty significant journalism that's been written by historians," he noted. "Reporters may need to dig into archives as historians do frequently, interviewing people, creating a cohesive narrative, and engaging the public, which I think are core skill sets that they have in common."

In the end, though, it all comes down to money. "If I do anything as a dean that's worthwhile," Dean Cobb concluded, "it will be in diminishing the degree to which finances determine somebody's ability to pursue their dreams."

— BY DAVID A. ANDELMAN

David Gelles Dissects 'The Man Who Broke Capitalism'

When Jack Welch, the CEO of General Electric, retired in 2001, the company was riding high. And then it began a long, slow descent. I never had a very good sense of just how far off the rails General Electric had gone until I listened to The New York Times reporter David Gelles regale a Silurians luncheon with tales from his book, 'The Man Who Broke Capitalism: How Jack Welch Guttered the Heartland and Crushed the Soul of Corporate America—and How to Undo His Legacy.'

"When I started looking around, I found so many other CEOs who had been influenced by Welch or actually studied directly with him. But I [also] started to see his fingerprints all over our economy," he said. "It was this system that became an insidious way for companies to do business."

The leadup to this profile is the Corner Office column Gelles has written for The Times for years. He found that "one name kept coming up, and it wasn't Steve Jobs. It was Jack Welch...Why was it that a CEO who had been retired for 20 years was still looming large in the minds of today's CEOs?"

Welch's system "involved extraordinary deal making," with more than 1,000 mergers and acquisitions in his 20 years at GE. The principal problem was that the financial engine that propelled GE stock for so long

had little to do with its roots in manufacturing. "The vast majority of the profits were coming from GE Capital. It was coming from things like high interest credit cards and commercial real estate portfolios." And so, "when the financial crisis hit, guess who is left holding the bag with one of the biggest subprime portfolios? It was GE, and that's why they needed a bailout from Warren Buffett and the federal government."

The media may be partly to blame for America's habit of celebrating "business leaders as cultural heroes," he said. "Jack Welch was a CEO who mingled with presidents, who was essentially a statesman and the impact he had on all these other CEOs, the impact he had on business school curriculums, on the boards of directors, not only at GE but it all these other companies is just unparalleled, and I think will remain unmatched for a really long time. So, I say he is why I wrote the book."

Perhaps not to celebrate but to debunk. — BY DAVID A. ANDELMAN



DAVID GELLES

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NOTABLE MOMENTS FROM OUR REPORTERS' NOTEBOOKS



The Tale of a Shirt and the U.S. Senate

BY MYRON KANDEL

I was watching a marvelous “American Masters” documentary about the Indigenous-American folk singer Buffy Sainte-Marie on PBS the other day when one name she mentioned leapt out to me. It was Robert Shelton, who pioneered the coverage of folk music as an art form for The New York Times. She credited him for giving her career a big boost when she first started performing in New York at a club in Greenwich Village.

Bob Shelton and I were fellow copy boys at The Times in the early 1950s and we became good friends. As our careers progressed, I became a copy editor on the city desk and Bob became one on the ‘Obit’ desk, which dealt with obituaries and entertainment news and critiques. At the same time, he carved out a specialty in writing about folk music, which the paper had never before covered in any depth. He was especially noted for his critical praise for an unknown 20-year-old named Bob Dylan.

Our paths crossed years later in an unusual way. It was during the McCarthy red-baiting craze, when a conservative Senate Democrat, Pat McCarran of Nevada, tried to make headlines of his own by investigating a supposed communist cabal at The Times. The committee sent a staffer to the paper with subpoenas for about a dozen people. The paper agreed to deliver them, to avoid having subpoena-carriers wandering its halls. But when the Senate staffer presented the list it included the name “Willard Shelton,” who was not a Times employee, but a left-leaning columnist whose work appeared in Newspaper Guild and other

union papers around the country.

A feckless clerk in the personnel department (that was before the title ‘human resources’ became the vogue) pointed out that there was no Willard Shelton at the paper, but there was a Robert Shelton. So the staffer crossed out the name Willard on the subpoena and wrote in Robert. That’s how the relatively junior Timesman was called to testify along with a group of much-more senior colleagues, some of whom had belonged to red or very-red organizations. (How they posed a threat to the national security was never fully explained.)

As the hearings neared, The Times announced that anyone who pleaded the Fifth Amendment to avoid testifying would be discharged. (Not exactly an act of courage on the part of the paper.) So most of those called to testify and their lawyers devised a non-Fifth strategy that involved pleading a combination of the First and Fourth Amendments.

When the hearings took place, I was an Army enlisted man stationed at the Pentagon. To show moral support for Bob and some of the others who had befriended me in my neophyte days, I attended the first day of hearings (wearing civilian clothes, of course). There was a lot of Senatorial bloviating, and it took so long that they held Shelton and some others over for a second day. He didn’t have money for a hotel room, so I invited him to stay at my apartment in nearby Alexandria, Virginia.

The next morning, as he prepared to leave for the hearing, I noticed that his shirt was rather wrinkled. “You can’t testify wearing that shirt,” I told him, and since we were about the same size, I gave him one of my blue dress



Bob Shelton, New York Times reporter (center) who bestowed early praise on a young Bob Dylan (right), later got accidentally caught up in the McCarthy-hearing frenzy in need of an unwrinkled shirt.

shirts to wear. (As my wife Thelma pointed out later, lucky it wasn’t a pink one.)

When he declined to answer the subcommittee’s questions, in accordance with the agreed-on strategy, he and most of the others were accused and convicted of contempt. The others were treated lightly, but Bob had the bad luck of appearing for sentencing before a “hanging judge” from the Southwest who was sitting as a visiting jurist in the District of Columbia.

Even though his name had accidentally been scratched onto the subpoena list, he

was sentenced to serve two years in a federal prison. Fortunately, Bob received support from the American Civil Liberties Union, among others, and after much litigation, the sentence was dismissed. Bob retained his copy-editing job at the Times and continued to cover folk music, but he never rose any higher at the paper.

I wish I could have played a greater role in resisting McCarthyism, but at least my shirt played a role, as insignificant as it was.

BTW, Bob sent it back to me, neatly laundered.

My Last Day at WCBS Brought Vivid Memories

BY JOHN METAXAS

On November 4th I anchored my final newscast on WCBS. It ended a run of 18 1/2 years at the station, my longest stint at any one job, and one of the most meaningful and satisfying professional experiences of my life.

While leaving WCBS was bittersweet, I can celebrate all that those 18-plus years meant to me. The opportunity to speak to some two million listeners every week and bring them the news in a fair and professional manner was a privilege for me and my colleagues. The opportunity both to anchor and report on the flagship station of the CBS Network — where Edward R. Murrow had broadcast, and whose photo still graces the wall — was a source of pride. For five of those years, I worked in both radio and TV, reporting for WCBS-TV during the week, and anchoring on WCBS Newsradio on the weekends.

Joining CBS in 2004 was like coming home. For the first time I was working at two stations that I had grown up listening to and watching. WCBS was also the first stop for news for those of us in the journalism profession. It also was a return to my roots, back to radio and running the board while broadcasting, which I had done as an undergraduate at New York’s WKCR-FM at Columbia University.

I had had an exciting early career before joining WCBS: working for Roone Arledge at the 1984 Olympics; covering the law as a reporter and editor at The National Law Journal; covering a presidential campaign for ABC News in 1988; investigating Donald Trump’s casino finances for six months in 1990 (with ABC News Correspondent and fellow Silurian Allan Dodds Frank) and producing reports on World News Tonight with Peter Jennings, This Week with David Brinkley, Business World with Sander Vanocur as well as for a Barbara Walters special;

going on air as a correspondent at CNBC in its early days and scooping the competition in reports on the FNN bankruptcy court proceedings; and then landing at CNN, where I spent seven great years.

Coming to local news at WCBS was a change from my earlier work. In many ways I found more truth on the streets of New York than I had found in many of the presidents, world leaders, CEOs and politicians I had previously interviewed. My reports for Channel 2 on the Hispanic people who were being attacked on Staten Island and the African American man from Queens who was exonerated after being wrongly accused of a crime showed me that, as journalists, we are at our best when we give a platform to those who otherwise would not be able to speak their truth publicly.

I will never forget anchoring on the overnight in New York when the Indian Ocean tsunami struck the coasts of Asia on the morning of Dec. 26, 2004. More than 225,000 people were killed in a matter of hours, with the death toll increasing by tens of thousands each hour. While I was not there, I was the one telling the story to people driving home from Christmas celebrations. The next day, I interviewed by phone an American tourist who had been at the beach in one of the Asian countries and who, with his wife, had swum out several hundred yards from shore on boogie boards moments before the tsunami hit. He told me that they felt only calm seas. The rising water had lifted them gently as the wall of waves, possibly 30 feet high, crashed onto the beach, presumably killing most of the people who had remained there. After the big wave receded the couple swam back to shore to find the devastation the tsunami had left behind.

And then there was the 2009 ticker tape parade for the World Champion New York Yankees. I was in it, riding through the “Canyon of Heroes” in the open press truck,



John Metaxas ended a nearly two decade run with WCBS in November, 2022.

as the crowd cheered and the endless stream of paper wafted onto our heads, broadcasting my unscripted reports live into my cell phone as Derek Jeter, just a few yards behind me on the next flatbed, waved to the crowd.

My time at WCBS was different from the first half of my career in one other very significant way — for these 18 years I was a part-time employee. That meant that I had to do other things. One of my most vivid professional memories was standing before a judge to represent a client in Federal Immigration Court one afternoon, and then heading out to cover a mayoral forum for WCBS in the evening. That’s the life of a free-agent.

I may devel-

op my own podcasting further (on Apple and at wallstreetnorth.com), or join with another organization — not sure yet. But I am determined that the next phase of my life be as interesting as the one that I have just completed.



John Metaxas, then a correspondent with CNBC, with other reporters outside a meeting of the New Jersey Casino Control Commission as Donald Trump enters for his hearing — circa 1992.

Obituaries

Mimi Sheraton, Fierce Food Critic, Generous Friend, 94

BY CLYDE HABERMAN

At The New York Times in the late 1970s, a newly divorced man had no better friend than Mimi Sheraton. Needing tasters as she headed off to a restaurant destined for her scrutiny, she on occasion rounded up colleagues whose marriages had broken up. In those days, they were almost always men, the sort who tended to be short on cash and even shorter on decent meals. Whatever restaurateurs may have thought of Mimi — and more than a few of them felt irredeemably bruised by her reviews — she had her colleagues' hearts.

Mimi, who died on April 6 at age 94, was The Times's restaurant and food critic from 1976 to 1983, but the newspaper was only one of her way stations across six decades of thinking about food, caring about food and, of course, writing about food, typically in no-nonsense prose and a brook-no-disagreement voice.

Her career took her to a slew of magazines, among them New York, Vanity Fair, Time and Condé Nast Traveler. She wrote a shelf's worth of cookbooks, restaurant guides and a resource for trenchermen, "1,000 Foods to Eat Before You Die."

As Bob McFadden noted in his stately

obit for The Times, Mimi "calculated in 2013 that she had eaten 21,170 restaurant meals professionally in 49 countries." One of the 49 was Israel, which she visited in the early 1990s with her husband, Richard Falcone. I was then The Times's Jerusalem bureau chief and spent some time with them. After a few meals, Mimi decided that Israel was in no danger of landing on any discerning diner's list of countries one absolutely must visit.

As the first woman to review restaurants for The Times, she resorted to various wigs and glasses, though how successful she was at disguising herself may be debatable. Suzanne Charlé, a Silurians board member who first met Mimi in 1973, recalled a time when Mimi, while ordering a meal, "turned her head quickly, and the wig tilted on her head."

A memorial service was held on April 17 at Frank E. Campbell. In what may very well have been a first for the funeral home, pews were dotted with laminated copies of a recipe for chicken soup. It was, of course, Mimi's recipe. No, the first step was not to steal a chicken. But it did begin with an admonition that "root vegetables are essential to this soup."

The final speaker at the service was her son, Marc Falcone, who mentioned his



Mimi Sheraton was The Times restaurant critic from 1976 to 1983.

mother's disguises. "My dad, however, dined with her always and never wore a disguise, inspiring a short-lived rumor that Mimi Sheraton was, in fact, a man," Marc said. "Her instinct about wearing the disguises was never so clearly confirmed as it was when an expensive restaurant seated us at a table so uncomfortably close to the kitchen door that every time the door swung open it revealed a photo of her with a large caption that said THIS IS MIMI SHERATON."

Mimi's diligence was legendary. How many people would gather 104 pastrami and corned beef samples in a single day to evaluate their viability in sandwiches? Or taste all 1,196 items sold in Bloomingdale's food department? Or brew 97 pots of tea to test their worthiness?

She knew what she liked and didn't like, whether the cuisine was haute or basse. Take the bagel. Who better to discuss its merits than Mimi, author of a book on the bialy, first cousin to the bagel. I once rang her up for a column on the state of New York bagels, and she wasted no time telling me, "In general, I think it's deplorable."

Ideally, a bagel should be about 3.5 inches in diameter, she explained, but most tend to be a good deal larger. Their thickness "makes them like rubber tires," she said.

As suggested by the lunches with no-longer-married colleagues, hers was a generous spirit. Linda Amster, the Times's former chief researcher and editor of "The New York Times Jewish Cookbook," said that Mimi wrote not just the introduction, but also the prefaces to sections about each course of a meal. "And," Linda said, "she also joined me at a Barnes & Noble appearance to publicize it."

That generosity was evident in Mimi's return to Midwood High School in Brooklyn, where, as Miriam Solomon, she had graduated in 1943. In 2004 she went back to help teach a writing course. She stretched the students' vocabulary via meals. "Everybody eats and has opinions about food," she said. No exception, her students found the school cafeteria's French fries to be soggy and the hamburgers rubbery. And don't start them on vegetables. "You can lead a horse to water," Mimi said with a sigh, "but you can't make it eat the broccoli."

For The Soup

- 5-6 pound fowl, preferably fresh-killed, or 7-8 pounds broiling or frying chickens, with neck and all giblets except liver
- Veal knuckle bone (optional)
- 10 to 12 cups water, or more as needed
- 2 large carrots, scraped and quartered
- 2 celery stalks with leaves, whole or cut up
- 1 medium onion

For The Optional Garnish

- Minced fresh parsley and/or dill
- 1 or 2 tablespoons cooked green peas per portion
- ¼ cup cooked rice per portion

The chicken may be cooked whole, if pot is large enough, or quartered. Place in a close-fitting 6-to-7 quart enameled or stainless-steel soup pot along with giblets and veal knuckle, if you are using it. Cover with 10 cups of water if you use broilers, or 12 if you use a fowl. Cover and bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and skim foam as it rises to the surface. Soup should cook at a smile.

When foam subsides, add all other ingredients except pepper and sugar, and with just 1 teaspoonful of salt. Let chicken simmer, partly covered, until very tender and just loosening from the bone, about 1½ hours for broilers and 2½ to 3 hours for fowl. Add more water during cooking if chicken is not seven-eighths covered. Turn chicken 2 or 3 times during cooking. Add salt, gradually, tasting as cooking progresses.

- 3 Italian parsley sprigs
- 1 small parsnip, scraped and cut in half
- ½ small celery root (celeriac), peeled
- A 2-to-3-inch length of parsley root (petrouchka), scraped and cut in half
- 1 medium leek, green and white portions, split and well washed
- Salt and white pepper, to taste
- Pinch of sugar, if needed

- Matzah Nalls or Kreplach
- Any noodle forms or soup nuts

Remove chicken, giblets, and bones and set aside. Pour soup through a sieve. Rinse pot and return soup to pot if it is to be served immediately or within 2 to 3 hours. Discard vegetables. Bones can be discarded or nibbled on. Chicken will be good only to be added in small, spoon-sized pieces to sour, or for chicken salad or pie.

The soup can be made ahead up to this point and stored in a ceramic or glass bowl. Cool thoroughly, uncovered, then cover and store in refrigerator for up to 2 days. Skim off solidified fat just before reheating. Add pepper and sugar when reheating. Store chicken separately, covered, in a bowl.

Serve soup very hot, with any of the suggested garnishes. Yield: 6 to 8 servings.

— From "The Whole World Loves Chicken Soup"

Grace O'Connor, Full of Grace and Gumption, 95

Grace O'Connor, a Silurian since 1997, an award-winning reporter and editor for the Albany Times Union for 22 years, and one of the first women installed in the Hall of Honor of the Women's Press Club of New York State, died October 29, 2022 at Branford Hills Health Care Center in Connecticut.

Paul Grondahl, a former colleague at the Albany Times Union, was moved to write an appreciation, excerpted here in part:

"She was old enough to be my mother and she kept a Holy Bible atop her beige metal desk, next to an IBM Selectric typewriter and rotary telephone.

Grace O'Connor did not drink or curse, which, along with the Bible, made her an outlier in the rough-and-tumble bygone era of newspapering.

She was on a first-name basis with half of Albany. There was only one Grace. "She was beloved by her readers



GRACE O'CONNOR

and coworkers alike," said Barb Zanella, who began as an editorial clerk at the Times Union in 1973 and worked for Grace, whom she considered a mentor and later a dear friend.

A former Baptist Sunday schoolteacher, Grace brought out the better angels of the hard-drinking, cynical 20-something reporters who worked alongside her....

"There was nothing phony about Grace. She was aptly named," said Fred LeBrun, who arrived at the Knickerbocker News in 1967, moved to the Times Union in 1970 and worked as reporter, editor, restaurant critic and columnist and who still contributes a monthly column.

Grace became a kind of den mother to an unruly crew of scribes who helped pound out the first draft of history.

She regularly quoted Scripture in her feature stories,

which graced the Times Union from 1969 to 1991. She got her start writing for the paper's five weekly neighborhood supplements, known as the Suns, and later served as the Suns' editor before becoming a general assignment reporter for the main broadsheet.... For more: <https://www.time-sunion.com/news/article/Grondahl-Remembering-a-newsroom-full-of-Grace-17567547.php>

Born in Long Branch, NJ on September 13, 1927, O'Connor graduated from Manasquan High School in 1945, and attended Monmouth Junior College in Long Branch and Rutgers South Jersey in Camden, NJ. While a teacher and director of Bethesda Lutheran Nursery School in New Haven, she was published regularly in magazines, including "Ingenué," "Teen," and religious publications.

As a community leader, she was President of the East Camden (NJ) Junior Women's Club and a member of the state board of the New Jersey Federation of Jr. Women's Clubs in the 1950's, a member of the Branford, Connecticut Women's Club in the 1960's, and served on the board of the Community Dining Room in Branford.

Meet This Year's Accomplished Silurian Scholarship Winners

Every year, the Silurians Press Club awards \$2,000 scholarships to top students at Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY, and Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute at New York University. This year's scholarship winners are:

CUNY: MARIANA MARTINEZ BARBA

John Mancini, director of the Newmark School's Reporting and Writing Program, describes Mariana as a "thorough and determined reporter" who has become its am-

bassador to the Latinx community and leader of CUNY's Bilingual Journalism Program. She has written for a variety of publications about everything from Chilean musician Mon Laferte to the persistence of Puerto Rican identity in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

A graduate of Occidental College in Los Angeles, Martinez Barba, in Mancini's words, "demonstrates commitment to equitable and inclusive storytelling in the finest tradition of our craft."

NYU: RYAN SCHWACH

Ryan has been a New York

journalist for most of his 24 years.

Born and raised in Queens, he is the grandson of a local journalist and says he first began writing at the age of 10. He was the editor of the school paper at Brooklyn College, has written and edited stories while at NYU both for school assignments and



MARIANA MARTINEZ BARBA



RYAN SCHWACH

freelancing for the Daily News and two Queens outlets, The Rockaway Times and The Wave. NYU Professor David Dent notes that he excelled not just at traditional print journalism, but as a TV reporter and photographer. "I can't think of a student more worthy of this award," says Dent.

COLUMBIA: KEVIN FLORES

Since 2017, Long Beach, California native Kevin has been producing local journalism. He is a Knight-Bagehot Fellow at Columbia in Business and Economic Journalism and co-founding editor for FORTHE.org, which, in his description, "publishes local investigative journalism and cultural coverage."

When he graduates from Columbia, Kevin intends to return home and redouble his effort to keep Long Beachers fully informed about local news and scandals.