Silurian News

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LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT LUNCHEON

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Mort Sheinman, Distinguished Editor, Writer, Photographer, World Traveler and Mentor Wins Lifetime Achievement Award

By Myron Kandel

Long before the concept of "multi-tasking" became a familiar term, Mort Sheinman had become an ace practitioner of that skill in a variety of ways. As he rose through the editing ranks at Fairchild Publications, he won a well-earned reputation as a "writing editor" who could produce a major obituary under deadline pressure as well as a lengthy magazine piece on some exotic clime he had visited (for which he often produced some memorable photographs as well).

All that, in addition to his editing duties, including managing editor of Women's Wear Daily and initial managing editor of W magazine. His multi-tasking prowess also extended to his lengthy service for the Silurians, where he wore the hats of president, treasurer, membership chairman, website editor and board member (usually several at the same time).

So, for all those outstanding journalistic accomplishments, he is a worthy recipient of the Silurians Press Club's Lifetime Achievement Award.

His interest in the news goes far back to his boyhood when he was already fixated on newspapers. At age eight, he was outside his apartment house in the East Bronx on Dec. 7, 1941, when a friend told him the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. Mort immediately went to his father's copy of the Sunday Daily News to find more details, only to discover there was nothing there about it. When he expressed his puzzlement, his father explained that the newspaper only described the previous day's news. That was good to know, Mort recalls, and as he tells the story today, 82 years later, it helps illustrate his intense, but sometimes skeptical, passion for journalism.

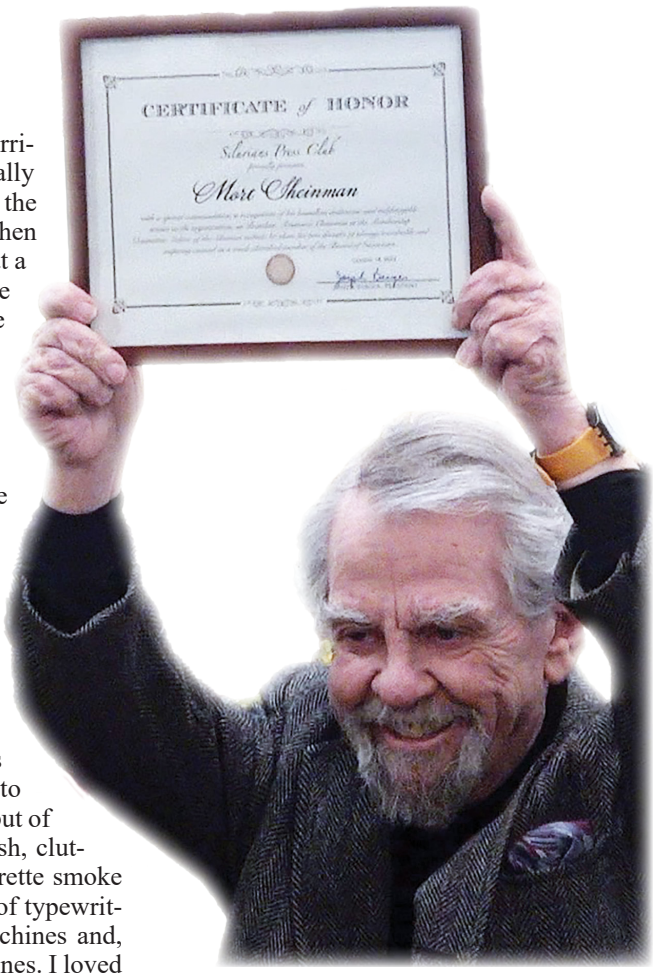
A few years later, he demonstrated his appetite for extra work when he helped his junior high school English class produce a mimeographed newspaper. And when his composition teacher said he was "a good writer," he was hooked. At Theodore Roosevelt High School, he covered sports for the school paper, The Square Deal. So it was only natural that upon enrolling at City College he applied to join The Campus, one of several student newspapers. He said he wanted to cover sports, and the sports editor, Marvin Kalb (who was to become another Lifetime Achievement winner with his brother Bernard), put him on. Like many aspiring young journalists of that day, he spent as much time working on the paper as he did in class. He also contributed articles to a Bronx local paper.

> The newsroom was right out of The Front Page. I loved it and wound up staying for 40 years.
>
> — Mort Sheinman

After spending 1954-56 in the Army, where he became a skilled radio operator and then an instructor at Fort Dix, he was ready for a big-time news career. But jobs were tough to find, and he finally obtained a copy boy spot at the Daily News, at $35 a week. He later moved to being a tabulator in sports, mainly compiling baseball box scores. He says the hours were terrible and the work boring, especially after the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants left town, so when a friend told him of an opening at a monthly trade publication in the women's field, he grabbed it. The magazine was named Hosiery and Underwear Review, and despite its glamorous name its articles were mostly puff pieces about advertisers.

But Mort was eager for more journalistic challenges and as he became acquainted with Women's Wear Daily, he admired its strict wall between news and advertising. He applied for a reporting job there, and as he told Herb Hadad in a 2013 piece in the Silurian News: "My interest in women's fashion was nil, but it looked like a fun place to work. The newsroom was right out of 'The Front Page' — noisy, raffish, cluttered — all below a fog of cigarette smoke and punctuated by the clacking of typewriters, the chatter of telegraph machines and, of course, the jangling of telephones. I loved it and wound up staying for 40 years."

He aggressively covered Seventh Avenue, and when the textile industry editor retired, he was given that editing responsibility, which involved supervising and mentoring other reporters. About the same time, WWD was broadening its coverage to include pop culture, sports, politics, travel and other elements of society in the U.S. and abroad. Mort jumped at the chance to write about those as well, even as he rose through the managerial ranks to become managing editor, a post he held for nearly 30 years until his retirement in 2000. When W magazine was started in 1972, he also became its first managing editor. Talk about multi-tasking.



Mort Sheinman received a special award honoring his service on the Silurians board — and then learned about his Lifetime Achievement Award. *Photo by Steven Speliotus*

As a writer, he specialized in one-on-one interviews, and he could call the shots on the people he chose. It was an eclectic range, including comics George Burns, Sid Caesar and Phil Silvers; political figures like Mayor John Lindsay, Ramsey Clark and Roy Cohn; Leo Durocher and Marques Haynes in sports, and such other luminaries as Margret Truman, Margaret Mead, Peter Max, Jules Feiffer and David Douglas Duncan. He particularly enjoyed meeting and writing about journalists whose work he admired. A partial list of them includes William L. Shirer, Studs Terkel, John McPhee, Clifton Daniel, Gay Talese, Chet Huntley, Tom Wolfe and Tom Wicker. Asked to name two favorites,

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Joanne Edgar and Letty Pogrebin, two of the founders of Ms.Magazine, and Roberta Gratz, the moderator, presented a lively look back at the past 50 years of the revolutionary magazine.

Ms. and the Women's Movement: 'Every Article Was Like a Wakeup Call'

By David A. Andelman

"It was a movement, and it was so much more than a magazine."

That's how Joanne Edgar, one of the founding editors of Ms. Magazine, described this extraordinary experiment in journalism in response to a question by writer Roberta Gratz, who moderated November's panel celebrating the 50th anniversary of Ms. Alongside Edgar was fellow founder Letty Cottin Pogrebin.

And then there was Gloria Steinem. "In 2020, I wrote an essay-review about the Off-Broadway play 'Gloria: A Life'," said Silurians vice-president Aileen Jacobson as she introduced the panel. "This reminded me of how much worse it was back in the 1950s and '60s and '70s than we care to remember." Steinem calls herself a hope-a-holic in the play. "She still has hope."

For the next hour there was indeed so much hope, and so many memories. Gratz started by recalling her early days as a New York Post "copy boy" in 1963. "I answered to 'boy' as reporters and editors needed someone to carry copy from one point to the other," she continued. "Frankly, I never thought about it or even felt awkward answering to 'boy' until the first black copy boy came along, and they all switched to 'copy' instead of 'boy.' These were pre-women's movement days.

Then came the first issue of Ms. magazine. Every article was like a wakeup call."

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President's Report
Achievement and Teamwork

Dear Silurians,

In choosing Mort Sheinman to be our Lifetime Achievement honoree, we on the governing board were impressed not just by his transformation of Women's Wear Daily into a lively, entertaining and consequential chronicle of the fashion industry. We were also aware of his importance to the Silurians. For Mort, as much as anyone, has devoted himself for two decades to sustaining the Silurians Press Club as a lively, entertaining and consequential collective of the city's veteran journalists.

He spent three years as the club's treasurer, five years as the website editor, 15 years as membership chair and two years as president. All those hours he put in earned him not a cent. But he had the gratification of knowing that he helped provide his fellow professionals with the pleasures of a monthly gathering where esteemed or provocative speakers rake over the journalistic issues of the day, reveal how they went about covering a big story, or answer questions and concerns that have been gnawing at us.

All the while he offered members a chance, over a sumptuous lunch, to reminisce with friends they once worked with and acquaint themselves with new faces.

In pondering the meaning of Mort's service, I thought that readers of this newsletter might want to know something about a few of the current crop of volunteer Silurians Press Club officers who are doing the same jobs that Mort did so well for the same pay and the same motivations. I'll admit my purpose may be a tad calculating — I want readers of this column to consider volunteering to serve on the governing board and tackling some of the time-consuming but necessary and often very gratifying jobs.

Aileen Jacobson, the vice president, puts together the issues of the Silurian News you get to read twice or thrice a year, drafting members to write informative or amusing stories, editing their content, writing headlines and assembling the whole package into an attractive megillah.

Karen Bedrosian Richardson makes sure we don't go broke and fulfills that mission with remarkably detailed monthly reports of income and expenses that would gladden the heart of the most suspicious CPA. Like her predecessor Linda Amster, Carol Lawson, the club's secretary, keeps us honest by faithfully recording the arguments and actions of each board meeting, which might otherwise fade in a fog of aging-brain forgetfulness.

Our membership chair, Suzanne Charle', keeps the score of joiners and leavers, investigating who is or is not squared away on their dues and making sure we're as large as we say we are. It was nice to learn from her that the membership roster survived the pandemic practically unscathed.

Ben Patrusky, one of the longest serving governors, has had the unenviable job of recruiting members to serve as officers, a task which he performed with the political forcefulness of a Lyndon Johnson and the seductive guile of a Casanova. He will be hard to replace.

Jack Deacy has for many years painstakingly engineered our annual contest celebrating the best in New York area journalism. With a gracious Martha Stewart-like touch, Scotti Williston has organized the dinner honoring the contest winners.

Allan Dodds Frank has skillfully overseen the scholarships we hand out to outstanding journalism students at the area's colleges. Armed with the club's

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Lamenting the Loss of the Elegant and Expert Sports Writers of the New York Times

By David A. Andelman

Former New York Times sportswriters Ira Berkow, Gerry Eskenazi and Harvey Araton reminisced about good times and lamented the demise of their department.

"You go to a sports story for the voice of the writer and the expertise the writer brings," Silurians' president Joe Berger said in his tribute to three of The New York Times' most brilliant sportswriters.

Assembled at October's Silurians' luncheon at the National Arts Club were Ira Berkow, Gerry Eskenazi and Harvey Araton, moderated by Newsday columnist Neil Best.

All three had been effectively silenced with The Times' purchase of The Athletic – replaced, as Berger noted, by "wall-to-wall coverage of curling and cricket."

Whatever happened, the four asked collectively, to flavorful and insightful coverage of the Yankees, Mets, Jets, Giants, Rangers, and superb Olympic roundups every four years?

Springing from the minds of two hedge fund managers, The Athletic, which replaced the entire sports department of America's flagship daily, is still losing money while costing its readers the wonder, the texture, the images, the institutional memories, and collective experiences.

Ira Berkow has written 26 books and was part of the team that won a Pulitzer Prize for The Times; the 8,000 bylines of Gerald Eskenazi are the second most in Times history; and Harvey Araton covered 10 Olympics, many as a Sports of The Times columnist.

Berkow started off, hardly sheepishly, with an admission: "I don't read the sports section anymore of The Times." Eskenazi chimed in, "It was as if all these 46 years I had put in and all the people that I worked with—as if we didn't exist anymore."

The explanation Eskenazi said he got from one of the paper's last sports editors was simple: "More than 50 percent of The New York Times readers are not New Yorkers." Still, the paper had become a repository of great writing and editing, with a share of quirkiness as well.

Nonetheless, there was a nod that the nature of journalism had changed.

As Berkow saw it, the handwriting was on the wall several years ago when The Times stopped running baseball box scores. "A baseball box score is a gem," Berkow said. "It tells you the whole story about the game itself and it was fun to see."

When talking about journalism, Eskenazi recalled that his youngest son corrected him that "it's not just newspapers. Journalism isn't what we all grew up with." He said the "new reality" is "that the papers are looking to see how many people read the online stories and that they might get more hits with Manchester United than they do with the New York Yankees…Maybe we're all old fashioned to think that the print should carry the day."

Araton recalled that he had attended many Times staff meetings where reporters and editors argued about the scope of coverage. He said that he had initially been in favor of covering all the New York beats.

"But that slowly changed," Araton said, partly because access to athletes had become increasingly restricted by team owners. "A lot of it has become just wasted money and manpower to staff these games night after night when all you're doing is providing what the wires can provide—and you're also at a time when money" is tight for many newspapers.

"That's where The Athletic really began, with all the cutbacks around the country and the reduction in staff…The Athletic was founded to do all the things that newspapers weren't doing, which is to staff every team." Subscribers can program the service to "send the stuff that I'm interested in—if it's Penn State football or the Yankees or Liverpool or Manchester United or whatever."

Gerald Eskenazi hit on a central problem faced by The Athletic in replacing the sports department: "Do we know who they are? Do they know who their readers are? They don't represent The New York Times because I don't think they grew up with its culture. They didn't grow up with the culture of New York City, and this is a problem.

Who exactly was responsible for replacing the sports department with The Athletic? Berkow thought it had to be the Sulzberger family. Araton's view was more nuanced. "The Times had a billion-plus in their cash reserve…You don't sit on a lot of cash; you try to invest it and grow your business." He pointed to the Times' successful acquisition and integration of Wirecutter, which reviews and recommends consumer products.

[Editor's note: On November 8, the Times reported that in the last quarter, The Athletic lost $7.9 million, bringing the total loss since purchase to $68 million. The paper still projects that The Athletic will turn a profit after three years, and said that total subscribers had surpassed 10 million, with a net increase of 210,000 digital, but a loss of 70,000 print subscribers.]

Leave it to our esteemed president, himself a Times veteran, to sum it all up, turning to our three venerable guests of honor. "What's been lost in this conversion to The Athletic is the wonderful voices of people like yourselves, and the expertise of people like yourselves, and that's a huge loss."

Newsday columnist Neil Best moderated the panel.

Mort Sheinman Wins Lifetime Achievement Award

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he mentions the zany and multi-talented Zero Mostel, who often described himself as "a painter who acts for a living." Mort says he spent a delightful afternoon with Mostel in his studio, and found him to be funny and exuberant. "Part of what he tells you is indisputably true, and the rest is doubtful, but that's the way it is when you talk to Zero Mostel," he wrote. "He is many men and many moods and they all add up to Zero."

Mort Sheinman writing a story for WWD by the light of a lantern on the night of Nov. 9, 1965, when a massive power failure threw New York and the entire Northeast U.S. into darkness.

The other favorite was the British-born journalist, TV host and historian Alistair Cooke. Mort spent some hours with Cooke in his upper Fifth Avenue apartment (a far cry from Mostel's littered Chelsea studio) and found him to be "friendly, urbane, erudite and intelligent."

Mort also developed a desire to travel, which he combined with a growing interest in photography. When he came back from a three-week trek in Nepal, he was asked to write about the trip. It took him less than a week to turn out an eight-page special section that featured 25 of his own photos. That led to a sideline that eventually included trips to exotic places around the world, which he wrote about for WWD, W and other publications.

An accolade that particularly pleased Mort was being named to the City College Communications Alumni Hall of Fame in 2003, joining such notables as A.M. Rosenthal, Dan Schorr, Carl Spielvogel, A.H. Raskin, Ben Grauer and Arthur Gelb. He says he was honored to be part of that group.

Adding another arrow to his post-retirement quiver, he joined the Silurians in 2003, was elected to the board two years later and president three years after that. He helped rescue the society from near-insolvency and lifted the organization to new membership levels. When he resigned from the board after 18 years this past October, he received a multitude of tributes. For example, former president Allan Dodds Frank said, "Mort's attention to detail, on matters ranging from small to large, his kind heart and wise counsel to subsequent Silurian presidents were especially appreciated." In presenting him with a special President's Award, current president Joe Berger cited his "boundless dedication and indefatigable service."

It was a fitting recognition for an extraordinary multi-tasker.

Tales Told by Winners

By David A. Andelman

If there was a surfeit of intelligence under the roof at the National Arts Club on June 21, 2023, it certainly was not artificial. This was the evening the Silurians Press Club paid tribute to the best and brightest of journalism in New York for the past year. And as our president Joe Berger prepared to present the gold medallions and merit certificates, he asked and answered the central question:

"Are we still committing journalism in 2023? Yes, we are!"

And in the course of a magisterial evening, the evidence spooled out before us, or as Joe Berger continued, "As you hear the roster of winners tonight, think about what they had to go through to produce the exceptional journalism."

Since the full list of awards and judges alike is available in the last issue of Silurian News and reprised most effectively on our website, to capture the real flavor of this special evening in June, our space here might best be served by some of the tales told by winners of just how they did arrive at the podium.

Feature News Reporting: Joe Goldstein / The New York Times:

Joe Berger: "For his honest, unsentimental, depiction of a family coping with an autistic daughter, a teenager who had become unmanageable at home."

Joe Goldstein: "I'd just like to thank the Benedict family which let me into their lives in a moment of extreme crisis, which was an extraordinarily trusting thing for them to do and I hope I did their plight justice."

Business and Financial Reporting: Greg David / The City

Allan Dodds Frank: For his examining the 'return-to-office' debate in New York City, David's extensive and insightful reporting uncovered how people and companies work in New York in the post-pandemic era, what the changes may mean to the economy, and addresses the main issue about workers: Will they ever return?

Greg David: You know, I spent 35 years and two months at Crain's New York Business as editor, when in March 2020, they called me up and said they could no longer afford me. Having covered every major crisis in New York since I got here in 1985 in my book, I would have been psychologically impaired for the rest of my life if I sat this one out. But The City, with Jere Hester and now Richard Kim, came to my rescue, and I've been able to cover this great story. And what else could anyone want?

Television News Feature Reporting: Walt Kane / News 12

Tony Guida: To our perennial winner for a harrowing piece — a distillation of their four-year investigation into years of sexual abuse of pre-adolescent boys by a former Sheriff of Warren County, New Jersey.

Walt Kane: First and foremost, I want to thank survivors who are willing to trust us with their story, [especially a] courageous man, who I can only refer to by his initials WM. I promised them that we would do justice to their story when they trusted us to tell it. And I hope they agree that we did.

Public Service Reporting: Eliza Shapiro, Brian M Rosenthal, and Jonah Markowitz / The New York Times

Allan Dodds Frank: To this investigative trio for their hard-hitting [investigation of] how Hassidic schools are reaping millions but failing their students. The fallout from this reporting prompted New York regulators to up the minimum standards for educating students in parochial schools. Their extensive reporting and documentation exposed how badly many Hassidic students are educated in the system where religious instruction ignores the basic fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Jonah Markowitz: Thank you to the folks who came forward, former Yeshiva students, their parents. It was true bravery. It was a very difficult story to tell and they came forward with their stories and that's who deserves all the praise.

Sports Reporting: Gregg Sarrah / Newsday

Tony Guida: This amazing story of a high school wrestler from the Congo, horribly disfigured as a child at age six, eventually adopted by a Long Island family, joined the wrestling team at Long Beach High School and rose to the New York state wrestling championship.

Gregg Sarrah: "Duniya Sibomana is now officially adopted and a citizen of the United States. Duniya Sibomana Rodriguez. His story is compelling. He was attacked in the jungle by a troop of chimpanzees. The three playmates he was with, six years old, died. He survived the attack, was brought to the United States. The doctors did 14 surgeries on him to restore most of his face. He was fostered by three families. They brought him out to the beach and they said, we want you to meet Isaiah Byrd. And he meets this kid who's going to be fostered in the same community.

Both of them have a disability, and Isaiah Byrd says, "Wow, what happened to your face?" And Duniya looked at him and he said, "Where are your legs?" Isaiah Byrd said, "They were amputated." Duniya said, "You want a lift?" He picked him up and carried him on the beach, all the way to the front to get ices. They became best of friends. The people who were fostering Isaiah Byrd then adopted Duniya Sibomana. So you have a kid who was on the brink of death, comes the United States, doctors care for him. He gets fostered, and now he's officially part of the Rodriguez family. He's a New York state wrestling champion and the story continues. He's only in ninth grade, so you've got three more years of following his story. And I want to thank him and his family for giving me the opportunity to be a part of it and write about it.

Tony Guida: Is there any greater endorsement for the profession of journalism than what you just heard? I mean, we get paid to do this kind of thing, or at least, I used to get paid.

Investigative Reporting: Jesse Coburn / Streetsblog NYC

Allan Dodds Frank: Just when you were worried about public safety in New York, you learned that one of the most dangerous places to be around is a school. And it's not the drug dealers, the teen gangs, the pedophiles who are a cause for concern. It's the drivers. Utilizing a massive data crunch, Jesse Coburn brilliantly shows us what the public and government officials should have known for a long time. The streets around schools need to be protected way better than they are…. He crunched millions of data points and figured out that it's really dangerous to be around the school.

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Winners, their guests and Silurians who attended the Excellence in Journalism Awards dinner mingled, chatted, ate and drank with smiles on their faces during the cocktail hour and the dinner, where medallion winners spoke from the podium and others got to stand and bow. *Photos by Steven Speliotus*

Finding a Home and a Profession at the New York Herald Tribune

By Steven Marcus

The New York Herald Tribune, once one of America's best newspapers with a glittering array of prize-winning reporters, columnists and critics, folded more than 50 years ago. Today, the paper, for most people, is a distant, nearly forgotten memory. But not for me.

The Trib, as it was affectionately called, gave me my first job in journalism, as a copyboy, and my memories of the paper are indelible despite my brief sojourn there.

I was an unlikely hire. I had never written for either my high school or college newspaper. Nor had I been a stringer for any of the New York or suburban dailies. But I had always liked to write, and journalism was in my DNA. My late father, Victor Marcus, was a copy editor on the Trib's national news copy desk.

When I told my father I might be interested in journalism, he got me an interview at the Trib for an opening as a copy boy. I was hired, and in June of 1962, just a week after I graduated from college, I reported for work.

When I entered the city room that first day, I knew I had found a home. The atmosphere was informal and relaxed – except when deadlines approached. Reporters and editors (almost all of them were men in those days), worked in their shirtsleeves, their sleeves rolled up, their ties loosened and their collar buttons unbuttoned.

The Trib was a writers' paper. The staff included war correspondents Homer Bigart and Marguerite Higgins; Red Smith, Walter Lippman, Judith Crist, Virgil Thomson, Walter Kerr, and Tom Wolfe and Charles Portis who went on to write best-selling novels ("Bonfire of the Vanities" and "True Grit," respectively.)

Tribune editors (l-r) Jim Bellows, Raymond K. Price, Jr., Murray M. (Buddy) Weiss, Clay S. Felker, Richard C. Wald and publisher John Hay Whitney (far right) during the paper's last years.

I worked Tuesdays through Saturdays, and Saturday was my favorite day. It was typically a slow news day, with an early deadline, and in the late afternoon, a group of reporters would gather around a desk and swap anecdotes.

There was an informal competition to see who could tell the most outlandish and entertaining story. I stood at the periphery of the group and took it all in. Alas, I don't remember any of the stories, but I do remember one reporter, Newt Fulbright, a transplanted Texan, saying in his Texas twang, "Ah'm goin' to tell yew one on that."

Six months after I joined the Trib, my idyll there abruptly ended. On December 8, 1962, members of the typographers union went on strike at four of the New York City dailies and five other dailies, including the Trib and two Long Island papers, voluntarily shut down.

Initially, I received a small weekly stipend from the Newspaper Guild. But after several weeks, I and the other employees who had been thrown out of work were also eligible for unemployment benefits. In my case, the strike pay and unemployment benefits totaled more money than the paycheck I received when I was working. "I think I can do this for a while," I thought.

But my father had other ideas. "This might be a good time for you to look for a job as a cub reporter on a suburban newspaper," he said.

So I made the rounds of papers in New Jersey, Westchester and on Long Island. Ultimately, the Courier-News, a Gannett paper then located in Plainfield, N.J., hired me as a reporter. The strike finally ended on March 31, 1963, 114 days after it began.

The Trib offered me a clerk's job, a step up from copyboy, but there was no guarantee that I would ultimately become a reporter. So I decided to stay put. "I'll apply again in a couple of years when I have some experience as a reporter," I thought.

In 1966, the Trib, The World Telegram and Sun and the Journal American, all in dire financial straits, announced plans to merge into a single publication, The World Journal Tribune.

In September of that year, the new publication launched. By then, I was working nights for The Associated Press in Philadelphia, and I raced across the street to the all-night newsstand at the Amtrak station to buy a copy of the new paper. It looked like a mess to me, and I had a bad feeling about its chances of success.

The merged publication folded less than eight months later.

On April 23, 1966, the last day the Trib published as a separate entity before being folded into the World Journal, members of the Trib's Washington Bureau sent out a series of poignant, eloquent messages to the editors in New York.

"We taking water slowly," one message read. "Power almost gone. List increasing. Understand your situation similar. ... Some fear about casting off in lifeboats in icy seas, unknown waters. But what the hell. She's been a good old ship which kept afloat long after finks ashore said she was doomed to sink. So down we go, lads, but with our ensigns flying and guns firing. ... And may truth in print, and honesty in reporting, and integrity in publishing reign foreverrrrrrrrr-rrrrrrrrr."

Ms. and the Women's Movement: 'Every Article Was Like a Wakeup call'

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So how did it begin? In "a tiny, tiny, tiny three-room suite, really three closets put together," said Pogrebin. "Then along came Clay Felker. Gloria was a writer for New York Magazine and did have a sort of seismic effect on him." Steinem from the get-go was always blazing the path to so much more. "Clay Felker agreed to put it on the [New York Magazine] cover and say, this is your chance to preview this radical amazing revolutionary new magazine. And of course, anything that had Gloria's name attached got attention."

The first issue — intended as a monthly on newsstands — sold out in eight days, and "not just in urban areas or on college campuses, but in tiny little towns in Texas," Pogrebin continued.

Then Edgar picked up the narrative: "It does take money to publish a magazine. We wanted a mainstream color magazine that was accessible in supermarkets and that everyone could afford. Two-hundred-thousand people sent in the little cards, they wanted to subscribe." The card had said six dollars a year. "Even if this was 1971-72, even then, that six dollars wouldn't pay. We were at the point of going to press, so the only way we could change it at that point, way before computers, was to cut out the six and turn it upside down and make it a nine. So we charged nine dollars a year for the first subscriptions." [Today, a year's print subscription is $30.]

Not long after, Gloria introduced the folks to big money — Kenny Rosen, who with the assurances Steinem would be along, brought Bill Sarnoff "and we ended up with a check for a million dollars. This was real money back then." Edgar continued, "they had to take a minority interest because the whole point of Ms. was that it would be woman-owned and we'd control it."

So how different was Ms.? "It did allow women to feel heard," Pogrebin said. "They weren't just asking for 43 ways to make hamburger or how to turn potholders into lampshades, how to satisfy your husband in bed after you've put four kids in the tub and in bed. Here we were saying, tell the truth about your life and your life means something."

From its first day, Ms. made news. "Anything we did made news," Pogrebin recalled. "I have a picture of myself marching on The New York Times. That made news because I was marching on The New York Times for equal employment listings." That meant letting women engineering graduates look for the same jobs their male classmates were exploring. It also meant that in print, women should be able to be called Ms., not just Miss or Mrs. "I mean the world was using Ms. and The Times wasn't."

Pogrebin added, "One of my favorite memories picketing The New York Times over the use of the term Ms., they'd write an article about Gloria, and they would say Miss Steinem of Ms. Magazine." Eventually, the Times changed.

The reality was that from its first days Ms. was indeed even more a movement than a magazine. "We picked our issues in our articles based on what was happening in women's lives around the country and also around the world," Edgar pointed out. "We did a whole bunch of special events. We had a Ms. Metric mile race, in Madison Square Garden before women could run the metric mile in the Olympics. We had a concert at the Philharmonic. We lobbied for the ERA until we became a non-profit and we couldn't directly lobby anymore."

Yet today there is a need for Ms. as much if not more than ever. "It's a different need now because times have changed," Edgar said. "We've gone through big changes, some victories, a lot of backlash. Once the abortion backlash started Roberta wrote an article in Ms., and we used the same photograph of the woman who had died from a botched abortion" as had been used in an earlier year.

Gratz recalled how in 2015, at a march in Washington, "I saw placards with that image, and I said to my daughter, 'Laura look, do you realize that's the image that was in my article?' She says, 'Ma, that picture's all over the place.' I didn't know that it's become iconic and it should be."

Indeed, the abortion issue led to one of the most memorable moments — a two-page spread that said "We have had abortions" with signatures from 53 women, from Billie Jean King to Judy Collins, Anaïs Nin, Susan Sontag, Lillian Hellman, Grace Paley, Barbara Tuchman, and Nora Ephron, who'd never had an abortion but insisted on signing anyway.

Of course, the entire landscape of issues has broadened as people recognize new problems. "No women in the room, in the negotiating rooms in the peace talks of any of the countries that are in the midst of conflict," Pogrebin pointed out. "That's a universal problem. The movement is everywhere. If you have a daughter who got discriminated against playing the sport she wanted or she's part of a team that has to do their practice sessions in a smaller gym without any lights. 'Why is my team

underfunded? Why don't we have clean uniforms?'"

Which brought up the generational issue. "My daughters have no idea what it was like to be a working mother at our time," Gratz concluded, "and our granddaughters just take it for granted. I'm not sure that they have the same urge to change at this point."

Tales Told by Winners

Continued from Page 3

Jesse Coburn: "We basically joined a bunch of New York City data sets together that no one had ever thought, I guess, to put together and sort of came across this alarming finding that rates of car crashes and injuries are much higher near schools than pretty much anywhere else in the city. So we just took it from there."

Environmental Reporting: Anne Barnard / The New York Times

Tony Guida: Her story was entitled "Ten years after Sandy's wake up call, New York has changed. Not nearly enough."

Anne Barnard: "We're so grateful to people in the five neighborhoods that we wrote about. Honestly, there were probably 15 other neighborhoods that we knew should have been in there. We talk a lot about climate trauma. We talk about climate grief, but I've been mostly a war reporter on and off during the last 20 years. When I was finishing this story, I was reaching the breaking point of dealing with PTSD. This is something we don't talk enough about in journalism and our industry. We are too scared to talk about it because we feel like our sources have been through more. There's always some journalist who's been through more and although it didn't really have to do with this story when it was published, when I was coming to the point of filing this story, I was at my own breaking point after 20 years of covering wars….But when we are vulnerable, we can rely on our institutions to support us and to be with us."

President's Choice Award: Dan Barry and Karen Zraick / The New York Times

Joe Berger: "This award is given for a haunting and remarkably detailed account of how three construction workers — two undocumented immigrants and a homeless man —l ost their lives in three separate incidents on the same building project, converting an old ice factory on Bruckner Boulevard into a charter school."

Karen Zraick: "This story started with a tip about a construction site where the tipster thought there were two deaths in two years. The tipster didn't even know that actually, there was a third death in less than three years at this one site, which is extremely rare and extremely troubling. That led us into a world of people whose stories are often untold, many of whom are undocumented, who work in construction, who are building our city every day. We struggled a little bit in the writing with the term "voiceless," whether these people were voiceless, and we didn't use it in the end. We settled on 'the often unheard'."

Joe Berger, of course, had the final, really epiphanic word: "It's journalism like that that makes you very proud of being in this profession."

David A. Andelman is a past president of The Silurians, a CNN Opinion columnist, former New York Times and CBS News correspondent.

Silurian president Joe Berger (far right) introduced the ProPublica panel with Stephen Engelberg, David Andelman and Paul Steiger.

A Peek Behind the Curtain of ProPublica, a Revolutionary Enterprise that Urges Other Publications to "Steal Our Stories"

By David A. Andelman

The astonishing revelations about Justice Clarence Thomas began with a threat from Paul Steiger's wife.

The longtime managing editor of The Wall Street Journal was on the cusp of retirement, having reached the ridiculous compulsory retirement age of 65. "My wife said the first time I find you at home in sweatpants, it's not divorce, it's murder," Steiger recalled to a packed luncheon meeting of Silurians at the National Arts Club in September. "And lo and behold, I got a phone call from a billionaire couple named Herb and Marion Sandler."

They were giving away boatloads of cash and felt a "growing need for investigative reporting." How about, say, $10 million a year, just to get you started? Steiger said yes to the offer. And so, 15 years ago, ProPublica — which this year unfurled those headline-making Thomas reports — was born.

Enter Stephen Engelberg, editor of the Portland newspaper The Oregonian, whose Pulitzer entries had caught Steiger's eye, following a stellar career as a New York Times correspondent in early post-communist Poland, followed by a star turn as The Times' investigative editor. He became the founding managing editor of Steiger's fledgling enterprise and is now its editor-in-chief.

Some 1,100 resumes promptly flooded in as soon as it became known what kind of game was afoot. Real estate mogul Sam Zell, owner of the Los Angeles Times, only helped the process by suggesting to his staff, "If I say you put f'in puppies on the f'in front page that's what it'll be." Not surprisingly, of the first 18 hires, a half dozen were from the Los Angeles Times.

Then there was the "secret sauce." As Engelberg put it, you hire "curious, energetic people, send them in promising directions, and let them follow their instincts. The story should come from the bottom up, not the top down."

One of the first was Sheri Fink's scoop in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina — the inside story of a leading New Orleans hospital where doctors played god, injecting with lethal doses of morphine patients they thought might not be capable of fleeing flood waters rising inexorably from floor to floor in the facility.

Steiger said eighteen got the yellow diamonds pinned on them. "A number died." He said a relative of one patient sent a boat to the third floor window, rescued the patient. Engelberg recalled, "The New York Times decided to put it on the cover of their magazine."

David A. Andelman, Silurian president emeritus and moderator of the luncheon event (and author of this article), recalled he had voted to award the same piece a National Magazine Award.

An editor at ProPublica must "be more patient than you could imagine," Engelberg said. "Because great reporters will ultimately — through the chaotic, misdirection, errors, and then redirection — they will find their way. And if you trust great reporters with great ideas, you're going to end up with stories like this."

"If there's any secret source—it boils down to trust your reporters," Engleberg said. "With almost every success ProPublica ever had, there was a moment where a sane person would have quit before the good stuff arrived."

The Clarence Thomas investigation began with ProPublica's top editors musing that 2024 would be "an epochal year for American democracy, Engelberg said, "and we should have a group of people who are thinking about various aspects of the democratic system under threat, or change, or stress." One of these was the courts. What better court to begin with than the United States Supreme Court?

> With almost every success ProPublica ever had, there was a moment where a sane person would have quit before the good stuff arrived.
>
> — Stephen Engelberg

"We were lucky to be able to search the internet in all kinds of creative ways," Engelberg recalled. "I will say this, there is an ability now through software to search for people's photos, people put stuff on Facebook, and it's out there and we found photos of Harlan Crow…That was a sort of a great starting point. So, we did the first story, and then one of the reporters who was on a television appearance after that got a call from somebody who said, you know, Crow bought Thomas's mother's house in his hometown. And we thought, oh, that's nuts.

"But the reporters got on a plane Monday morning at eight o'clock, got to the courthouse by lunch and had the records by dinner. And there it was. You know, we had to do a lot more work to kind of figure it all out." But they had it, and indeed it went from there.

Clearly, ProPublica has come a long way from its earliest origins. From 25 editorial employees, it has grown to 180 reporters and editors — while Engelberg's Oregonian saw its staff shrink to 70 from 420 full time editorial slots. From ProPublica's first-year budget of $10 million, "coming into the 2016 election, we were planning a 2017 budget of roughly $17 million," Engelberg said. "So, we had expanded 70% from the Sandler days. After Trump was elected, things changed. And today's budget is roughly $41 million. It all [still] comes from donations. Basically, the model is somebody other than me on the business side raises lots of money, and I spend it."

Indeed, there is an entire page on the ProPublica website whose headline is "Steal Our Stories." That's precisely what the editors and board of ProPublica want, even as they continue to partner with relevant media around the world—from the Washington Post to The New York Times who often vie to partner on any number of stories, to several Liberian outlets that featured a ProPublica probe of "an American run charity in Liberia, with the people who ran it abusing the children in their care," said Engelberg. That sent demonstrators into the streets of Monrovia "chanting and waving signs about ProPublica." Somewhat surprisingly in these litigious times, ProPublica has been sued, but "we've never settled, we have prevailed each and every time, but the expense is not trivial," Engelberg said. Clarence Thomas and his wife have not been among those who've threatened or sued. "We don't hear much from them, interestingly enough. My sense is that if they have anything to say, we'll read it in the Wall Street Journal editorial page."

So, what's next going into yet another extraordinary election year? Well, ProPublica has been thinking about that. "I think we have to continue to play the role in the democracy that the founders and people expect us to play, which is to be very clearly nonpartisan," Engelberg said.

What are the unique ProPublica lanes for 2024? "The whole idea of ProPublica was, we don't want to do a better story by 10% than what other people are going to do anyway," Engelberg said. "We want to find a lane that hopefully is different and add something to what our very fine colleagues are doing. Money is a big thing for an organization like ours to cover. It's harder and harder to track it. But you know, my email address is on the internet. If anybody has any brilliant ideas [about] covering 2024, feel free to send them to me."

Sort of like how they found out about Justice Thomas's adopted child whose tuition was paid by Harlan Crow. "That came from a teacher in the school," Engelberg smiled, "So I mean people do call, and we follow up on it, and it is often quite productive."

Dennis Duggan Award Winner Making Her Mark

CUNY student Safiyah Riddle (pictured) was awarded the Silurians' annual Dennis Duggan Award at the September meeting. See her acceptance speech at Silurians.org.

Here is the nomination letter by John Mancini, who oversees the Newmark Journalism School's NYCity News Service and its reporting and writing program:

"Safiyah, who will be interning at Reuters after completing an impressive spring stint with THE CITY, has made her mark at the Newmark J-School with strong, empathetic reporting for the school's NYCity News Service and professional outlets including Hell Gate NYC.

"She started her internship at THE CITY with a series of scoops on tenants facing eviction because the city Department of Social Services failed to pay vouchers. The New York Amsterdam News was among the outlets that re-published her exclusive findings.

"Safiyah is determined to amplify the voices of those who often find themselves at the mercy of the bureaucracy, with work that stands solidly in the tradition of Dennis Duggan. "She covered the Lower East Side for her initial reporting class. Her first assignment was reporting on botched tests that found dangerous levels of arsenic in the water at New York City Housing Authority's Jacob Riis Houses.

"Immediately, Safiyah showed one of her best traits as a journalist: She gets people to trust her. Residents invited her into their apartments and shared deeply personal stories about the chronic conditions that had them worrying about their health long before the arsenic scare."

President's Report: Achievement and Teamwork

Continued from Page 2

best Rolodex, David Margolick has drawn some of our most notable speakers. Myron Rushetzky and Betsy Ashton, with assists from Karen and Scotti, are the luncheon gatekeepers, making sure everyone pays the piper. Steve Marcus runs the contingency fund that offers members ample financial support when times get hard, a fund that fortunately has seldom been tapped.

In addition to Mort, we have been blessed with a murderers' row of former presidents — David Andelman, Mike Serrill, Myron Kandel, Betsy Ashton, Allan Frank and Tony Guida — and former officers like Linda Amster — who have hung around after their terms were up to make sure the club continues to run smoothly and in tune with its bylaws. It is a tribute to how much the club has meant to them. Like Mort, Myron Kandel has been both a club conscience and an institutional memory. And David Andelman, an award-winning foreign correspondent, has even taken on writing up accounts of our luncheons for our website and newsletter.

A new governor, Mel Laytner, has brought a fresh eye to our business practices, saving us money, and is making sure our website continues to function after the departure of Fred Herzog. And Chester Higgins has recruited journalists that have helped diversify and enrich our membership.

I have learned that as with an orchestra it takes an assortment of distinctive talents performing at high energy and commitment to run a club. We have been fortunate indeed with the governors we have. More than offering us monthly camaraderie their work has made us proud to have had careers as journalists.

Your president,
Joe Berger

Obituaries

Marvin Kitman, Newsday's Legendary Satiric TV Critic, 93

BY MORT SHEINMAN

Marvin Kitman once claimed he never watched television until someone paid him to do it.

"I may be crazy," he said, "but I'm not stupid."

Nonetheless, Kitman devoted much of his life — including more than 35 years as the television critic at Newsday — in front of a TV. His views of the medium weren't exactly what television executives wanted to read, but that mattered little to Kitman, whose iconoclastic, irreverent and witty verdicts made his syndicated column one of Newsday's most popular features.

A long-time Silurian who made several appearances as a luncheon speaker over the years, Kitman died of cancer on June 29 at the Actors Fund Home in Englewood, N.J., not far from his home in Leonia. He was 93.

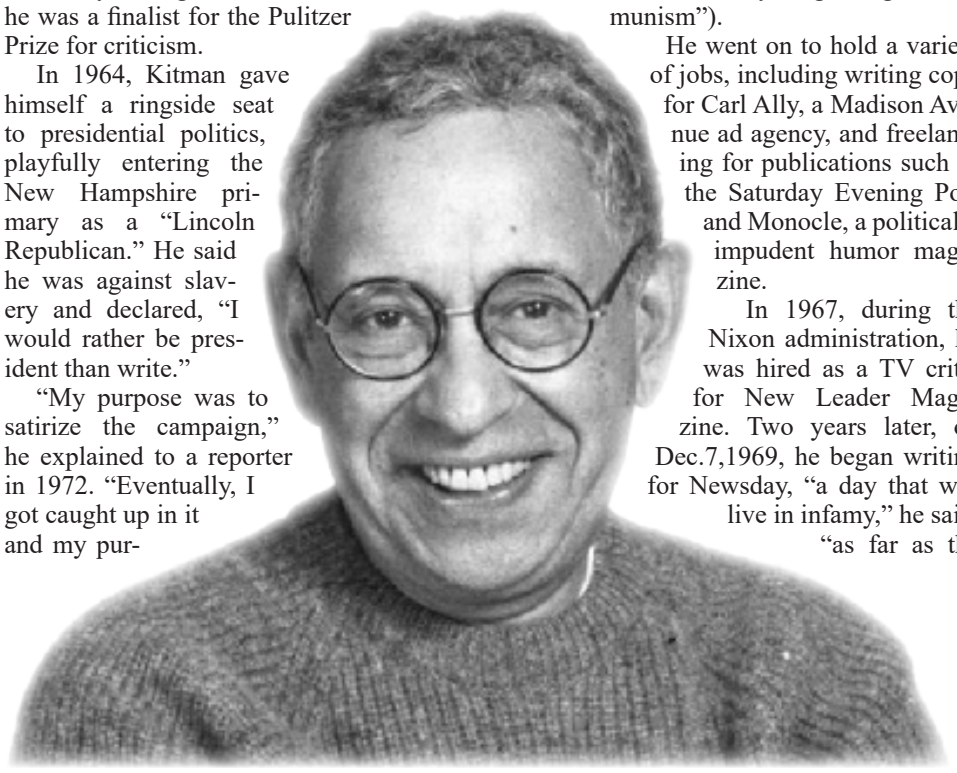
Kitman's critiques had nothing to do with the size of a particular program's viewing audience. He was generous with praise for such innovative programs as "All in the Family," "Seinfeld," "M*A*S*H" and "Monty Python's Flying Circus," and he skewered numerous shows that drew major audiences — "Laverne & Shirley," "Three's Company" "Dallas" and "Charlie's Angels," for example — labeling them "pap."

As befits a critic, he exuded self-confidence. While enrolled at CCNY in the 1950s, he wrote a column for one of the student publications. It was modestly called "I'm Never Wrong." He titled his first book, a 1966 memoir, "The Number One Best Seller." It wasn't, but it launched his career as an author. Other books that followed included "George Washington's Expense Account" (1970), a Kitmanesque view of how the nation's first president handled his swindle sheet, and "The Man Who Would Not Shut Up: The Rise of Bill O'Reilly" (2007). His last book was "Gullible's Travels: A Comical History of the Trump Era" (2020).

His honors include a Folio Award in 1988, a Humor Writing Award from the Silurians in 1991, and a Townsend Harris Medal from City College in 1992. In 1982, he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for criticism.

In 1964, Kitman gave himself a ringside seat to presidential politics, playfully entering the New Hampshire primary as a "Lincoln Republican." He said he was against slavery and declared, "I would rather be president than write."

"My purpose was to satirize the campaign," he explained to a reporter in 1972. "Eventually, I got caught up in it and my purpose was to become the president. People are always bringing it up, but I'd like to forget the whole thing. I'm a sore loser."



Marvin Kitman

Image courtesy of Newsday

Kitman was born on Nov. 24, 1929, in Pittsburgh. His family moved to Brooklyn, where he graduated from Brooklyn Tech High School, one of the city's elite institutions. After graduating from CCNY in 1953, he served two years in the Army, writing for the post newspaper at Fort Dix, N.J. ("the last time I did anything to fight communism").

He went on to hold a variety of jobs, including writing copy for Carl Ally, a Madison Avenue ad agency, and freelancing for publications such as the Saturday Evening Post and Monocle, a politically impudent humor magazine.

In 1967, during the Nixon administration, he was hired as a TV critic for New Leader Magazine. Two years later, on Dec.7,1969, he began writing for Newsday, "a day that will live in infamy," he said, "as far as the TV industry is concerned."

As the newly minted TV critic for one of New York's daily newspapers, Kitman quickly proclaimed that his qualifications for the job were outstanding.

"I once ran for president, so I can interpret political stories," he said. "When Dick [Nixon] does — or doesn't — hold a press conference, I know what he's doing. I went through all that myself. And I have no background in TV, per se. I never used to watch it. As a freelance writer, I was afraid of becoming addicted. As a result, I have a fresh eye. And the reruns . . . a lot of critics are against reruns. I love them. I never saw the program the first time."

Kitman's fear of becoming addicted to the tube once he became a critic proved groundless. "I'm too busy writing about television to actually watch it," he said.

His last column for Newsday ran on April 1, 2005.

From 1981 to 1987, Kitman himself appeared on television as a media commentator on "The Ten O'Clock News" on WNYW (formerly WNEW) in New York. His commentaries were also heard on the old RKO Radio Network.

When his days as a columnist were over, Kitman presented his thoughts on a blog, commenting on everything from websites run by multimillionaires who exploit writers by underpaying them to political scandals involving the people who ran his state.

Commercials, he once said, provide television's most educational moments.

"If you can teach a kid, at an early age, that advertisers lie," he said, "that's educational."

Stephen M. Silverman, Editor, Mentor and Author on the Celebrity Beat, 71

BY FRAN CARPENTIER

On July 6, 2023, we Silurians lost one of our finest, although our late colleague would be hard-pressed to see himself that way. Never a hard-edged gumshoe type of journalist, Stephen M. Silverman — reporter, editor, book author, ghostwriter and mentor — was a former news editor at Time, Inc.

But he built his distinguished reputation covering the happenings and the history of Hollywood and Broadway — the "celebrity" beat — first as the chief entertainment editor from 1977 to 1988 at the New York Post and, beginning in 1995, as the founding editor of People.com. There, he essentially pioneered that magazine's digital platform in addition to unearthing and reporting headline-worthy stories for the next 20 years.

Stephen had been born and raised in a Los Angeles suburb just 19 miles from the movie capital of the world, so you could easily presume that the world of celebrity was his birthright. Accurate or not, Stephen made no apologies for it.

In fact, one time when he was asked by the media database website MuckRack to cite the most common misperception of the oft-dissed gossip pages, Stephen nimbly replied, "That it's fluff." In Stephen's mighty hands, the celebrity beat was anything but.

As Kate Hogan, his former colleague at People.com, explained, Stephen "spent 20 years running breaking news coverage on the then burgeoning People.com," adding, "He ultimately became known for his masterful celebrity obituaries, some written for stars of Old Hollywood whom he knew personally."

STEPHEN M. SILVERMAN *Photo by Zac Stuart-Pontier*

"As an editor, [Stephen Silverman] was a magician with words, a grammar genius, the person we all turned to for advice on a perfect lead, a better headline, a little tweak to our text," Hogan said. "He was a loving paternal figure to so many of us who had moved to New York City at a young age, away from our families and seeking such a connection. On holidays he'd invite colleagues over to share a meal; he threw fabulous Super Bowl parties where none of us watched the game but had a blast… There was no one like him at People, nor will there be here again."

Stephen Meredith Silverman was born on Nov. 22, 1951, in West Covina, Calif., a suburb of Los Angeles. His father, Raymond, owned a grocery store and, later, a liquor store. His mother, Shirley (Garfine) Silverman, was a homemaker.

At West Covina High School, Stephen edited the school newspaper, graduating in 1969. Four years later, he earned a B.A. in history from the University of California, Irvine, then moved east where, in 1975, he received a master's degree from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Once he'd settled in New York City, Stephen never looked back.

Stephen was the author of 14 books — 12 of them about the entertainment world. They include David Lean, Dancing on the Ceiling: Stanley Donen and His Movies, Movie Mutts: Hollywood Goes to the Dogs, and Divas! The Fabulous Photography of Kenn Duncan. He also wrote for Vogue, Esquire, Smithsonian, the Times of London, the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, the Los Angeles Times and the Wall Street Journal, which described him as "a veteran journalist and historian of popular culture who writes with verve and mischief."

Stephen also was an adjunct professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and appeared on Today, CBS This Morning, 20/20, Dateline NBC, PBS, CNN, MSNBC, Fox Business, NPR, Australia's Nine Network and the BBC. He lived in Manhattan's financial district.

Stephen went after a story no matter how low the odds for success. An example: Despite two-decades' worth of entreaties from journalists, Sir David Lean, the 11-time Academy-Award-nominated director and two-time best director winner for The Bridge Over the River Kwai and Lawrence of Arabia, repeatedly pushed back on all efforts that would lead to his official biography. Ultimately, it was Stephen who won

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Obituaries

Lou Sepersky, Journalist, Activist, Civic Leader, 87

By Roberta Hershenson

You couldn't miss Lou Sepersky at a Silurians luncheon. Tall and lanky at 6'4, with a rakish head of salt-and-pepper hair, he would tower over the table with his unassuming personality and ever-ready smile. Lou, a journalist who found his true calling in community leadership, advocating for issues ranging from transportation to women's rights and civil rights, died of cancer on Sept. 18 at his home in Manhattan. He was 87.

"He had a progressive mind and understood that civil and women's rights were everyone's concern," said Leida Snow, his wife of more than 41 years and a fellow Silurian. Lou went south during Freedom Summer in 1964.

From 1962 through 1975, Lou reported for the Staten Island Advance, The New York Post under Dolly Schiff, UPI, and McGraw Hill, as well as two New Jersey newspapers: the Herald News in Passaic and the Hudson Dispatch in Union City. But as a lifelong Democrat and New Yorker, with a Bachelor's degree in political science from Drake University and a Master's in history from the University of Michigan, Lou decided "to get his PhD in New York politics," Leida said.

From journalism he segued to community activism, serving for more than 50 years on Community Board 6, which encompassed his home district of Manhattan's East Side. First appointed to the board by Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, he was subsequently reappointed by every succeeding borough president.

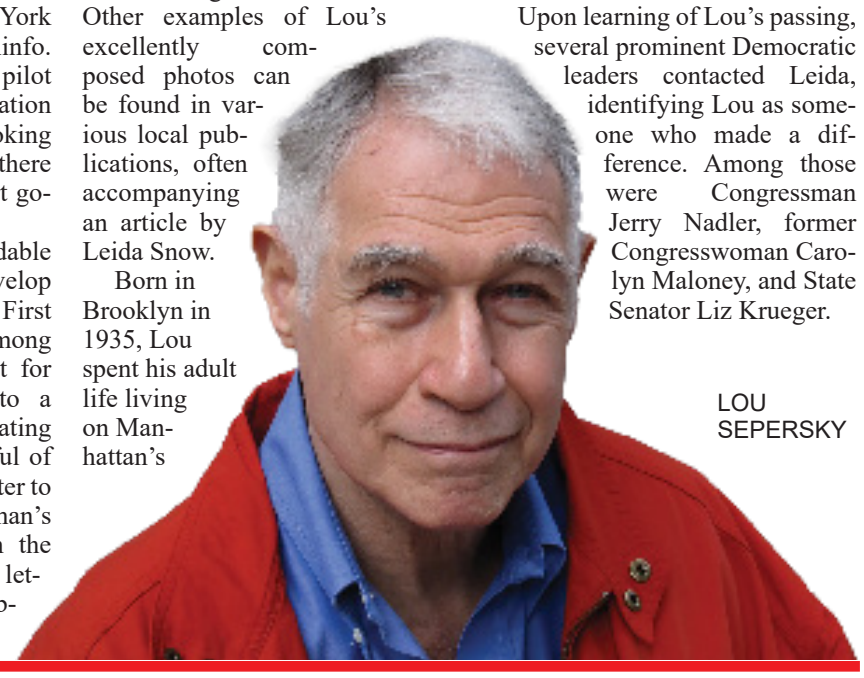
He served as Board Chair for two years but was happiest working behind the scenes. A list of his leadership positions reads like a paean to grass-roots activism. He was chair of the Transportation Committee, a longtime member of the Land Use and Waterfront Committee, and also served on the Parks, Landmarks and Cultural Affairs Committee, the Public Safety Committee, and other committees.

As a transportation advocate, one of Lou's most passionate causes was the Second Avenue Subway, which he championed tirelessly as early as 1998. Books, newspaper articles, and reports identify him as a "concerned citizen" who pressed for a "full build" Second Avenue subway at hearings and meetings and worked with elected officials to assure funding for the project. He also pushed unsuccessfully for the JFK AirTrain to continue through to Manhattan, telling the New York Post in 2001 that the $64 million spent on the train was a "colossal waste of money" since it ends in Jamaica.

When a plan arose for the East 34th Street Heliport to hold events like tai chi, farmers' markets, and a beer garden, Lou was there to talk sense. The now-defunct New York and Chicago website DNAinfo.com quoted him in 2017: "A pilot traveling in an emergency situation does not have the option of looking out and saying, 'I can't land there because there's a rock concert going on,'" he said.

Lou advocated for affordable housing in the plan to redevelop two Con Edison parcels along First Avenue south of the U.N. Among the ways he showed support for women was by donating to a group now called Women Creating Change, among only a handful of men to do so in 2019. His Letter to the Editor advocating a woman's right to choose appeared in the New York Times in 1982. His letter on congestion pricing, published in the Times in 2007, still is relevant.

Lou's other roles included serving as the Community District 6 historian and working as a photographer who gravitated to politicians as his subjects. His photo of the late Democratic Congressman Ted Weiss, who served in the House of Representatives for New York from 1977 until his death in 1992, hangs in the Ted Weiss Federal Building in Lower Manhattan. Other examples of Lou's excellently composed photos can be found in various local publications, often accompanying an article by Leida Snow.


LOU SEPERSKY

Born in Brooklyn in 1935, Lou spent his adult life living on Manhattan's East Side — for decades in the East Fifties with Leida. She described him as a passionate New Yorker who was on "the right side" of every important issue. The couple chose to remain in New York during the Covid pandemic while many others left, just one of the many issues they agreed on.

"Lou loved to walk around the city — everything was a show," Leida said. "The thing that hurt was he couldn't do it at the end."

Upon learning of Lou's passing, several prominent Democratic leaders contacted Leida, identifying Lou as someone who made a difference. Among those were Congressman Jerry Nadler, former Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, and State Senator Liz Krueger.

Stephen M. Silverman, Editor, Mentor and Author on the Celebrity Beat, 71

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the confidence of the legendary director. In his 1989 Boston Globe review of Stephen's critically acclaimed biography David Lean, the film critic Jay Carr wrote that the "pleasure" of Mr. Silverman's "chatty, cant-free survey of Lean and his films, apart from the fact that [Silverman's book] is the first, and probably last, to get the notoriously taciturn Lean to talk for the record, lies in the behind-the-camera images that become so effortlessly a part of Silverman's diligent reporting and interviewing." What superpower did Stephen unleash to persuade Lean to open up to him? Stephen told United Press International, "I guess I just got him at the right time,"

Not all of Stephen's books were about the entertainment world. In recent years, Stephen became a well-regarded cultural historian — first in 2015 with the publication of The Catskills: Its History and How It Changed America, and again in 2019, with The Amusement Park: 900 Years of Thrills and Spills, and the Dreamers and Schemers Who Built Them.

After authoring those two books, Stephen had been giving monthly after-dinner lectures at the Mohonk Mountain House in New Paltz, N.Y., musing about the enduring allure of the Catskills. In early May, the last time we'd emailed one another, Stephen confessed that he regretted several of these upstate New York speaking engagements because they'd prevented him from attending the monthly Silurian luncheons and hearing the speakers and enjoying the camaraderie of his colleagues.

Stephen's last book — Sondheim: His Life, His Shows, His Legacy (Black Dog & Leventhal), which was published posthumously on September 19, 2023 — is filled with his signature intelligence, unimpeachable information and lively writing.

Stephen was that breed of journalist that all of us long to be: the sort that top editors and book publishers reach out to when they need a secret weapon to tackle a hefty subject or to finish up a book project that, in the original author's hands, has gone to dreck. (Yes, Stephen also ghostwrote for the Big Five.) When the publishing industry had a void to fill — a big void — that's when Stephen's phone would ring. To wit, shortly after the death of Stephen Sondheim in November 2021, the Hachette Book Group reached out to Stephen to write a biography of the legendary artist. Stephen delivered his insightful, well-researched, lively manuscript in record time.

Silverman was a very private person, and few if any of his friends knew about his failing health. (Yes, Stephen also ghostwrote for the Big Five.) When the publishing industry had a void to fill — a big void — that's when Stephen's phone would ring.

Ever the avid dog-lover, on May 6 Stephen posted to his Facebook page a photo of himself sitting proudly in the front row on opening night of the 2023 Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show at Madison Square Garden. A week later, he took ill and was hospitalized, never to return home. Stephen died on July 6, at the age of 71. The cause of death, according to his executor Diane Reid, was renal disease.

Stephen left no immediate family, but he is survived by his niece, Sarah, whom he proudly escorted down the aisle at her June 2017 wedding in California.

Excerpt from SONDHEIM: His Life, His Shows, His Legacy

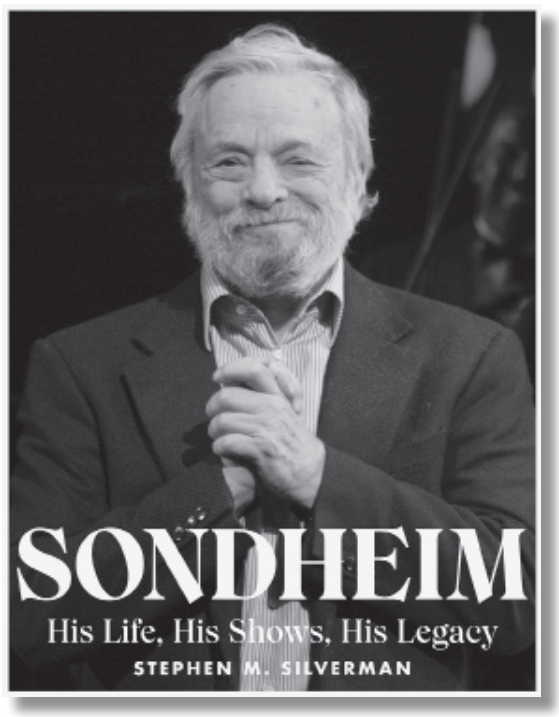
"Writers write what they want to see on a stage," Sondheim said in 1994, as Passion, his chamber musical about obsession, was set to premiere on Broadway. The show, he said, "is about how the force of somebody's feelings for you can crack you open, and how it is the life force in a deadened world."

Taken collectively, Sondheim and his musicals changed the game, by redefining the genre, aligning life's misfortunes to melody, and making the art of making art inclusive to outsiders.

And all in rhyme.

His body of work advanced both the soundtrack of people's lives and the manner of the American musical—where traditional song-and-dance shows had not only shied away from issues but generally acted as a buffer against life's inauspiciousness, which Sondheim's works took as their focal point.

"If I consciously sat down to write something that would send people out of the theatre really happy," Sondheim said, "I wouldn't know how to do it."



Stephen's last book — Sondheim: His Life, His Shows, His Legacy — was published posthumously on September 19, 2023.

Unpredictability was his calling and his path. This was apparent from youth, which he spent as a protégé of Oscar Hammerstein II. "Write what you believe, and you'll be ninety-nine percent ahead of the game," Hammerstein told him.

"As soon as he put it into those competitive terms," said Sondheim, "I never used his kind of imagery again."

As history bore out, Sondheim's nonconformity was worn as a badge of honor; witness his professional collaborations with Jerome Robbins, Leonard Bernstein, Hal Prince, James Lapine, and others.

"Modern literature is full of difficult, challenging artists who toiled in obscurity until the public caught up with them and made them famous," contemporary literary critic Adam Kirsch observed. "Sondheim presents the much rarer case of an artist who started out at the heart of the establishment and moved away from it as his work became more ambitious and complex."

Like a Shakespeare sonnet, a Sondheim lyric is knotty and dense, even if Sondheim shook off any suggestion that he was a poet. "A poem you can read at your own speed," he would counter. "You can't do that with a song. A song exists in time."

Similarly, he shunned classifying Sweeney Todd as an opera, despite its being sung through: "Opera is designed to show off the human voice," he said, "but Sweeney is about telling a story and telling it as swiftly as possible."

Granted, upon first exposure, critics often did not know what to make of his work.

"I try not to read my reviews," he said, "but there's always some friend who'll come along and, under the guise of trying to comfort you, let you know that you've been speared."

The public wasn't particularly certain of what to make of his shows, either, sometimes finding them esoteric or beyond their grasp.

"I've never thought for one minute: 'Oh, this line, oh, this dissonance is going to turn this audience off. I'd better change it.' Not once. That's a fool's game. To try to prejudge while you're writing is a waste of time."

Both critics and the public did catch up with him, however, mostly through later revivals, reimaginings, and revues.

In contrast to his leading lady, Desirée, in A Little Night Music, Sondheim did not risk losing his timing late in his career.

If anything, contrarian that he was, he did the opposite. "

Obituaries

Warren Hoge, Who Covered Wars and World Crises for The Times, Dies at 82

By Joe Berger

What was he doing there?

Though it turned out superb journalists and writers, the New York Post Warren Hoge worked at in 1971 was a place filled with rough-edged people like me from blue-collar, borough, or striver backgrounds and more than a handful of oddball characters, all led by a Bogart-tough editor-in-chief.

The City Room itself, located in a run-down building along West Street's elevated highway viaducts, was exquisitely gritty, with its battered typewriters, spikes, pencils and carbon-copy writing "books." This engaging seediness was especially true of the lobster shift — 1a.m. to 8 a.m. — that I was first assigned to as a rewrite man.

Yet there was Warren, our night city editor, suave, cultured, urbane not urban, with the blueblood credentials to match — a Silk Stocking district upbringing with stops at Buckley School, Phillips Exeter, and Yale — and he was delighted to be there.

Warren Hoge attended a concert at Carnegie Hall with fellow Silurian David Margolick, who took this photo and called him "indomitable and curious until the end."

Warren, who died on August 23 at the age of 82 at his home in Manhattan, reveled in the rough-and-tumble of deadline journalism as if this was real life and where he came from a fairy tale. But he was never haughty or condescending. He traded New York and Washington gossip with the best of us, graciously bemused at times but not dismissive.

He was a cunning observer. If memory serves, he explained Dolly Schiff's clinging to a money-losing Post because she didn't want to wind up as just another "old lady on the Upper East Side with a small dog."

I remember, too, how he hired Joyce Wadler. After first rejecting her, telling her that the Post needed to hire more minority reporters, he swiveled after she responded with a letter peppered with mock Spanish phrases claiming she had discovered that she was an adopted Puerto Rican. "So, White Boy, if you'd like to discuss this development over a plate of rice and beans, call me," she said. Warren not only got a good chuckle out of the letter but was grateful for having struck a goldmine of edgy humor.

Of course, he had a different man-about-town life outside the Post, squiring movie and journalistic stars like Sally Quinn and Candice Bergen. More than a few of us wished we went through life with his grace and joie de vivre. And, damn it, he was movie star-handsome as well.

When he made it over to the Times in 1976, the place seemed a more appropriate fit, even though Abe Rosenthal, Arthur Gelb and many other editors and reporters had the same proletarian pedigree as those at the Post.

Warren's talent as a journalist snared him assignments in Rio de Janeiro and London (in his career he reported from more than 80 countries) and titles at the Times of foreign editor, Sunday magazine editor and assistant managing editor.

But whatever his job, Warren savored the tightly managed frenzy of putting out a paper every day.

Warren was as graceful, sophisticated a writer as he was a person. His magazine profile of Cary Grant, a fortuitous match of writer and subject, stands out in my mind for its revealing, lilting portrait of the icon of debonair charm. A line Warren elicited from Grant when Warren asked him how he viewed death still resonates: "You know, when I was young, I thought they'd have the thing licked by the time I got to this age."

Warren Hoge started his illustrious career at the Times in 1976, the year he was photographed by Chester Higgins Jr., now a Silurian, for the New York Times.

He also issued tender profiles of the residents of the hillside favelas, beleaguered by violence and poverty, and of ordinary Brits mourning the improbable death of Princess Diana. And he was a sensitive, appreciative manager, as countless responses to his death made clear.

Warren was a longtime and avid Silurian and it was at one of our dinners a little more than a year ago that Warren, pale, shockingly thin and walking with a cane, told me, "I've been thrown a curve" — a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. But Warren did not hide his illness, showing up at events like the Silurians' awards dinner last June in a wheelchair, aided by his wife Olivia, enjoying the camaraderie even as he knew it would not be long before he would, as he put it, be "leaving."

Warren was born April 13, 1941 in Manhattan, the son of a trademark lawyer with ancestral roots among the early colonizers of Virginia. His mother was a socially prominent patron of opera and classical music and Warren had a lifelong passion for choirs and opera. A stint as a reporter for the old Washington Star led to a Washington bureau chief appointment at the New York Post. In 1970 he moved to New York as city editor and later was elevated to assistant managing editor. The Times hired him in 1976 as a reporter and, within a year, he was named deputy metropolitan editor.

After three years in New York, he was posted to Rio de Janeiro, where he married Olivia Larisch, the daughter of a Spanish count and countess. They had a son, Nicholas, who survives him, along with Olivia; two stepdaughters, Christina Villax and Tatjana Leimer; his brother, James, who served as a publisher if the Chicago Sun-Times and the New York Daily News; his sister Virginia Verwaal; and six step-grandchildren. His other sister, Barbara Hoge Daine, died in 2001.

A fitting epitaph for Warren might be an adaptation of a line he used in his evocative 1977 profile of Cary Grant: "The newspaper world that created Warren Hoge is now the stuff of sepia photographs. Warren, however, still radiates in living color."

Frank Leonardo, Crack Photographer With Gifts of Gab and Camaraderie, 70

By Anthony Mancini

His email handle was Frankie Shutter.

Who first called him that is lost to memory. But the sobriquet fit him like a glove: His wit was rapier sharp; he could tell a joke with the timing of a seasoned tummler. And we who knew him basked in his flash of light.

And, oh yeah, he was a news photographer, one of the best.

Frank Leonardo's gifts of gab and camaraderie were on full display about once a month when a group of us pre-Murdoch New York Postniks congregated for breakfast at an Upper West Side diner to schmooze and reminisce. It was like Old Jews Telling Jokes except two of us were Italian. We told newspaper war stories. We vied for equal time, like GOP wannabe presidential candidates at a Fox News debate.

But Frank was often a step ahead of us. He was the only shutterbug among a bunch of scribes, but that didn't seem to matter.

He was well-read, a polymath and just as attuned to the literal side of a news story as any writer. He sometimes pissed off his reporting partner at interviews when he lay down his camera and chimed in with questions of his own for the subject. Most of us, however, tolerated the habit. "They were good questions," said Clyde Haberman, a charter member of the breakfast club.

While Frank might sometimes seem to think that a word was worth a thousand pictures, that doesn't mean he wasn't a crack photographer. He copped two awards from the New York Press Photographers Association, first prize in breaking news for a photo of a fireman carrying a rescued child down a ladder; and second prize for the photo of a diving polar bear, which is still a source of mirth for the Leonardo family.

"I know that category was called 'animal,'" said Frank's wife Barbara Garson, "because I remember laughing at the plaque which read 'Frank Leonardo Second Class Animal.'"

But he did not seek plaudits.

"He never entered photos into any contest, including the Press Photographers," Garson confided. "In that case, I believe a former girlfriend did it for him."

Frank was born in Brooklyn in 1937. His father Thomas, also a photographer, was killed in action in World War II when Frank was eight years old. He and his mother Helen then moved to the Parkchester section of the Bronx.

This early history of loss and upheaval became the blueprint for a bumpy road. Garson said young Frank dropped out of, or was kicked out, of five New York City high schools before getting his act together and receiving a diploma from Theodore Roosevelt Night School in the Bronx. Talk about a Rough Rider! He then somehow won a scholarship to NYU, where he earned a degree in geology.

Along the way, Frank met and married his first wife Dorothea Snyder, mother of his two children, Cecilia and Thomas, who survive him.

Meanwhile, his early interest in geology seems to have waned and — Voila! — he landed a job as a news photographer for the influential French news service Agence France-Presse.

FRANK LEONARDO

Thus was launched a 40-plus-year career of catching magic in a moment of history. Frank was the pool photographer on the roof of Montreal City Hall on July 24, 1967 — before the term paparazzi was coined — when General Charles de Gaulle electrified thousands of wildly cheering Quebecois and stirred an international uproar by declaring, "Vive le Québec libre" ("Long Live Free Quebec").

Though Frank, says his wife, was not dazzled by celebrity he was deeply impressed by de Gaulle's magnetism and stature. No record exists of whether he felt the same way about The Fab Four when on February 7, 1964, the Pan Am Boeing 707 landed in New York with its precious cargo of The Beatles. A photo of their raucous arrival at JFK records his presence among the scrum of photographers gathered behind a metal barrier.

Frank also appeared in the famous documentary movie "Harlan County, USA" where he is seen filming a picket line of striking coal miners in rural Kentucky.

He also witnessed the real-life event that inspired the 1975 Sidney Lumet movie "Dog Day Afternoon" when three shotgun-toting men besieged a Chase Manhattan bank in Brooklyn in an abortive attempt to trade hostages for money.

But Frank had little interest in the glamorous or thrilling sides of his profession. In his leisure time he enjoyed puttering with his 20-foot-long Cadillac Fleetwood Brougham ("He could fix anything," said a family member) and he was an avid kite flyer. He owned dozens of kites, which he liked to fly in the Sheep Meadow using a deep sea fishing rig to "have his own set of wings to become a bird in flight," to paraphrase Mary Poppins.

Frank Leonardo's final job before retiring was as photo editor at CMP, a computer trade magazine. In this position he once asked a major photo agency to send him photos of subway turnstiles. One of the photos bore his own byline. "He called them wondering where they got it and they volunteered some pay," said Barbara Garson. "That was the only time he ever followed up any newspaper photo of his."

That was Frank.

He died of cancer on July 26 at age 86.

The shutter fell and the light is extinguished.