

# Silurian News

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

Celebrating Excellence!

**THE SILURIANS  
PRESS CLUB  
AWARDS DINNER**

National Arts Club  
June 12, 2024  
Cocktails 6 p.m.  
Dinner 7 p.m.

JUNE 2024

## Honoring Eloquence and Excellence in 2024 Silurians Awards for Outstanding Journalism

By MICHAEL SERRILL  
Silurians Board of Governors

One of the biggest New York stories in 2023 was the sudden arrival of tens of thousands of migrants from around the world. Many were bused in by Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas in his zeal to punish “liberal” northern cities for their unofficial status as “sanctuaries” for the hordes of homeless refugees wandering the world. Others arrived after hearing that New York was, by law, required to accommodate them.

The crisis that the migrant flood created for the city also presented a unique challenge for local journalists eager to cover every aspect of this complicated news story. That test was met and surpassed by The New York Times in a series of stories and photographs by reporters Andy Newman, Dana Rubinstein and Julie Turkewitz, and photographers Todd Heisler and Juan Arredondo. Their efforts earned them one of two President’s Choice Awards in the Silurian Press Club’s annual Excellence in Journalism awards.

Newsday was the other President’s Choice winner, with a monumental series titled “Feeling the Squeeze: The High Cost of Living on Long Island.” The 12-part series, complete with charts and videos, paints a deep, comprehensive and affecting portrait of how hard it is for many middle-class and low-income Long Islanders to get by in a time of rising prices for virtually everything.

The New York Times and the Newsday teams will receive Medallions at the Silurians Awards Dinner at the National Arts Club on June 12. They will be two of the 23 Medallions honoring local journalist to be awarded this year.

The Times won a total of seven Medallions and three runner-up Merit awards. Newsday took two Medallions and four Merits, while THE CITY, an ambitious online news service, brought home three Medallions and two Merits.

Another winner of multiple awards was The Record/northjersey.com, which won two Medallions and a Merit, while Bloomberg News earned a Medallion and two Merits. The New York City News



**EYE TO EYE.** A rare and personal moment between photographer and subject was captured by freelancer Stephanie Keith, who was shooting the trial of cryptocurrency executive Sam Bankman-Fried for Bloomberg News. As Bankman-Fried was leaving court Keith caught this striking image — and won a Breaking News Photography Medallion.

Service at CUNY’s graduate journalism school earned a Medallion with a package on the migrant crisis, headlined “The Newest New Yorkers,” which won in the Minority Affairs category.

“The quality of the competition this year was as high as it has ever been,” said Awards Chairman Jack Deacy. “Whether the category was breaking news, feature and sports photography, arts and culture reporting or coverage of business scandal, the judges had a hard job choosing the best from a host of excellent entries.”

Silurians President Joe Berger said of the Times migrant entry, “The team combined vivid, revealing photographs and eloquent, compassionate reporting and writing on the burden the surge has created.”

Newsday’s deep dive countered any popular notions of Long Island as largely a land of McMansions and the Hamptons. The stories point out that 19 percent of residents in Nassau County and 26 percent in Suffolk don’t make enough money to meet their basic needs — and that with rising inflation,

particularly in housing prices and rents, the situation is worse than it was just four years ago. The project went beyond reporting the facts to offer solutions in the form of links and telephone contacts for agencies and other critical resources.

This is the 100th anniversary of the Silurians Press Club. Our local Excellence in Journalism awards began in 1945. But as local news outlets die by the dozens, it is more important than ever to honor those who go all out to cover news, and scandal, from their home communities. Following are our Medallion winners this year.

### BREAKING NEWS

The Medallion goes to William K. Rashbaum, Jonah E. Bromwich, Ben Protess and the Staff of The New York Times for their coverage of the Manhattan district attorney’s indictment of Donald Trump. The Times team broke the news that a Manhattan grand jury had indicted former President Trump in a case centered on his hush-money payment to a porn actress. Beyond this

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**A TWO-YEAR PROJECT.** Jonah Markowitz of The New York Times won the Feature News Medallion for his photo essay, “Dawn to Dusk on the Corner Where Bangladeshi Brooklyn Gathers.” Markowitz spent two years photographing and videotaping the Bangladeshi community in the Kensington neighborhood of Brooklyn. As he got to know people, he gained access to religious services — including this gathering of men from all over New York City — dance performances and other activities that told the story of this fast-growing New York community.



1924 - 2024

**SILURIANS PRESS CLUB**

Celebrating 100 Years of  
Excellence in Journalism

## President's Report Pursuing Truth

Dear Silurians

At a much-anticipated luncheon in April, Joe Kahn, the executive editor of The New York Times, scanned the room packed with Silurians and took note of the fact that he was “talking to a group of veteran journalists who all know” that journalists need to be independent and impartial in their coverage. The contrast with the younger reporters on his staff, he suggested, is striking.

“I think people are, in my view, less open to vigorous debate from rival sides on the key and divisive issues of the time,” he said.

In his two years at the helm, Kahn has been confronting a new generation of journalists who speak of impartiality as an illusion and want to press for a more activist, even partisan approach. To much of his audience, his candid talk about the resulting tensions in his shop was eye-opening.

We Silurians have devoted decades of our lives to the idea that our credibility, authority, and respect comes from being open to exploring alternative views in the articles we write, the photographs we shoot, and the ways we rank the news.

Sure, each of us may have firm opinions on the controversial issues and personalities we cover. And I doubt any of us wants to fall into the trap of “both-sideism,” giving equal weight to each antagonist in a controversy even if an antagonist’s view is blatantly abhorrent.

Moreover, no newsroom is entirely neutral. There are some fundamental values that undergird much of American reporting and are taken for granted: we prefer democracy to tyranny, deplore discrimination by race, ethnicity or gender, and would like to see poverty eradicated. The quarrels arise once we burrow into the underbrush of details in how those values are worked out.

Our journalistic training taught us to get acquainted with those who differ and give them an appropriate, if not necessarily equal, voice that explains their way of looking at things. We don’t hide facts just because they conflict with our own perspective or don’t fit comfortably into a preconceived narrative. As Daniel Patrick Moynihan famously said: “Everyone is entitled to their own opinions but not to their own facts.”

With the rise of Donald Trump in politics and a national polarization, newsrooms have perhaps struggled with such questions as divisively as at almost any other period in journalism’s modern history. There have been heated disputes over coverage and placement of articles on the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, the Gaza war, the 2016, 2020 and 2024 presidential election campaigns and more.

One obvious example: how to call out a president’s patently false statements. Kahn, in a 2023 interview, was unflinching. “When the evidence is there, we should be clear and direct with our audience that we don’t think there are multiple sides to this question; this is a falsehood. And the person repeating this falsehood over and over is guilty of lying.”

In the ideal, journalism can resolve conflicts over objectivity through steadfast, diligent reporting — digging until the reporter gets what Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein once called “the best obtainable version of the truth.” Then let the readers make up their mind.

When newsroom journalists express strong personal opinions on controversial issues, the reader or listener may agree with the viewpoint but also lose trust in the content of the reporting as well as that of the newspaper or website that hosts the reporter. As Leonard Downie Jr., a former editor of the Washington Post, **Continued on Page 5**



# Excellence and Eloquence in 2024



**BASE BALL ON LONG ISLAND.** Newsday photojournalist Thomas A. Ferrara spent several months capturing the devoted players who use rules that hark back to the 1800s. For more than 40 years this has been a pastime for teams who play in fields and pastures, wearing heavy woolen caps, but no gloves or other protective gear. Ferrara won the sports photography Medallion for “The Throwbacks: Vintage ‘Base Ball’ on Long Island.”

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scoop, the Times report was a model of thoroughness, not just in detailing the known facts, but in explaining the rationale behind the indictment and — equally important — the pitfalls that could cause the case to fall apart.

### FEATURE NEWS

The Medallion goes to John Leland of The New York Times for “New York Stories.” Leland shows what an eye he has for a fetching or poignant tale — or three in this case — and an ability to paint it in all its granular complexity. His story of a dog walker who happened to latch on to what is likely a valuable Chuck Close painting was charmingly played as an O’Henry-like saga, with surprising twists that gripped readers. He also compassionately told the story of an 8-year-old whose emotional issues were missed by his prestigious private school, and unflinchingly rendered the voices of New Yorkers who have been protesting the waves of asylum-seeking migrants. As his editors wrote, he has a “resistance to oversimplification” and an “ability to render even messy characters with tenderness and empathy.”

### INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

For this important category, one news organization, THE CITY, pulled off a hat trick. The judges were so impressed with three separate investigative entries by the online news organization that they decided to give its reporters the Medallion for all three. In the first, Bianca Pallaro and Reuven Blau spent months looking into the company, Keefe Group, that supplies commissary goods to Rikers Island and a host of other correctional facilities across the nation. They found that Keefe consistently overcharges inmates and their families, despite signing a contract forbidding them from exceeding market prices. In the second investigation, a big team of City reporters probed Mayor Eric Adams fundraising operation in his 2021 election and found that he benefited from infusions of money from straw donors. In the midst of THE CITY probe, six Adams campaign associates were indicted. The third story, reported in conjunction with City Limits, Type Investigations and Columbia Journalism School, found that some 8,600 children who lost a parent in the Covid pandemic were being deprived of necessary services by the school system — and that people of color were disproportionately impacted.

### BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

Veteran investigative reporter Susan Antilla takes the Medallion in this category for her riveting piece for Business Insider on an insurance agency in Pennsylvania, the

Arias Organization, whose ultimate owner is Globe Life, the NYSE-listed insurance giant. “Obtaining leaked documents, video, emails, text messages, court records, and interviews with current and former agents,” she wrote, “I was able to uncover a culture of pervasive sexual harassment, sexual assault, and customer fraud at Arias — a culture so unhinged it felt like a story from another time.” The measure of this story’s power is in its impact. After the piece, and several follow-ups, were published in Business Insider, Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway sold its 6.6 million shares of Globe Life. Several criminal and civil investigations are underway, and the Texas Rangers are rethinking the name of their playing field, Globe Life stadium.

### HEALTH AND SCIENCE REPORTING

The Medallion winner is “Aging in New Jersey” by Scott Fallon and Lindy Washburn of The Record/northjersey.com and the USA Today Network New Jersey. In their illuminating multi-part series, Fallon and Washburn target New Jersey’s burgeoning over-60 demographic, addressing the labyrinthine challenges of elder care and age-related issues. Their comprehensive coverage offers highly pragmatic guidance, untangling the complexities of elderly healthcare and financial planning, making sense of the patchwork of services available to New Jersey seniors. Deeply researched and richly sourced, the series goes a long way towards equipping older adults and their families with knowledge essential to navigating this daunting terrain and enhancing the quality of life during the golden years.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

The Medallion goes to “Hazards Next Door” by James M. O’Neill, Scott Fallon, Steve Janoski, Kristie Cattafi, Ashley Bak-erzak, Lindy Washburn and David Zimmer of The Record/northjersey.com and USA Today Network New Jersey. Sparked by an 11-alarm fire in Passaic that threatened to reach three million pounds of chlorine and other hazardous material housed in a nearby facility, and born of a year-long investigation, this seven-part series looked into the perilous reality of hazmat storage sites lying in proximity to residential neighborhoods. The team working the series uncovered and mapped 156 hazmat storehouses in New Jersey, pinpointing the risk of potentially catastrophic fire posed by these depots, many lying within a few hundred feet of schools, homes, libraries and entertainment venues. The series also featured stories on firefighter and hospital training for hazmat events, town evacuation plans, how to prepare if you live near such a site, why some storage facilities are located close to public housing,

and North Jersey’s long history of industrial disasters.

### ARTS AND CULTURE

The winner is “Inside The Hogwarts of Fashion” by Alex Vadukul of The New York Times. Writing in vibrant prose, Vadukul captured the hopes, dreams and excitement of students at New York’s public High School of Fashion Industries, a little-known trade school where most students live at or below the poverty level. Vadukul followed the aspiring teenage designers, parents, teachers and an assistant principal as they prepared and executed a show full of sass, the most extravagant in the school’s history. It took place in the same trendy downtown space as last year’s Vogue World, which was presided over by Anna Wintour. “For those taking part,” Vadukul wrote, “the chance to showcase their garments at the same site as the Vogue event brought with it a sense of fantasy and affirmation.”

### SPORTS REPORTING

Kevin Armstrong of the Newark Star Ledger wrote “Ghanaian Grace,” an enthralling portrait of Ransford Gyan, a 17-year-old soccer phenom at Newark’s St. Benedict’s Prep. Gyan grew up playing barefoot in a remote village in Ghana. He led his St. Benedict’s team to an astounding 101-game win streak. Children in Newark whispered, “Black Messi,” comparing him to the greatest soccer player in the world. Gyan will attend Clemson University and aspires to play in the World Cup for Ghana, or the U.S. if he can gain citizenship.

### PUBLIC SERVICE

The Medallion for Public Service reporting goes to Amy Julia Harris and Jan Ransom of The New York Times for their investigative series “Mentally Ill, Homeless and Mishandled by New York.” Their five-part series is public service at its best. These two fearless investigative reporters invested countless hours over the course of more than a year interviewing not only resistant city officials, politicians and health-care administrators, but homeless, mentally ill men and women who are inhumanely classified as “criminals,” yet who, these reporters proved time and again, are the real victims. They are victims of a multi-layered system that repeatedly failed them, one misstep after another. And the stories had impact, winning the attention of city officials who have started to institute changes in the system. The judges declared, “Harris’s and Ransom’s articles are the epitome of great journalism and bona-fide public service.”

### COMMENTARY

The Medallion for Commentary is awarded to Joyce Wadler for her trio of Substack pieces: “New York Times Tech Reporter Leaves Wife for A.I. Tramp,” “Hello, Fellow Book Club Members, I Hope My Selection Doesn’t Make You Despise Me” and (channeling a key obsession of the late Joan Rivers) “Have You Done Something Nice for Your Vagina Today?” The judges agreed that Wadler has a gift both for sardonic humor and for genuinely astute observations of contemporary life, with all of its foibles, challenges and contradictions.

### PEOPLE PROFILES

The Medallion goes to “Anderson Cooper’s Newest Assignment: Grief (His Own)” by Rukmini Callimachi of The New York Times. With heart-wrenching sensitivity, Callimachi revealed the depths of the grief that CNN anchor Anderson Cooper has experienced over deaths in his family. They spoke during a tour of his home for the real estate section. As he displayed mementos, Cooper confided memories of his mother, the heiress and entrepreneur Gloria Vanderbilt, who died in 2019, and the decades-earlier untimely deaths of his father Wyatt Carter Cooper, and of his older brother Carter Cooper, who died by suicide. He told Callimachi, “I just find it sort of haunting, this idea that everyone just disappears.”

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# Thomas Maier: Master of Sex, Mafia and Streaming Platforms

By DAVID A. ANDELMAN

It would not be unreasonable to call Tom Maier a master of sex. Well, certainly chronicler, even animator, perhaps eventually even a muse of sex, if his remarkable book and TV series about Masters & Johnson also makes it to becoming a Broadway musical, which is possible. But certainly his talk at the Silurians' February lunch was spellbinding.

During his 40 years at Newsday, from which he retired this May, Tom discovered that a lot of what goes into a big newspaper project could also be a book or a television show, and voila, the Tom Maier machine is born.

"I came in one day and the editors said, hey Mayo, we want to do our own story on Dr. Masters, you know that sex guy who's retiring, and get him on the horn and see if we could do something. So I got him on the horn, and when I got off the phone I said, wow, a man and a woman who are not married studying love and sex, not necessarily in that order." Then they got married.

"They're married for 20 years and have become world famous," Maier continued. "They become the go-to source on all of this thing called the sexual revolution. Then they get divorced and nobody knows why. And I said, well that's a book and more. Sure enough, when the book came out, you know the old New York Times ad that said 'I got my job from The New York Times?' Well, I got my TV series through The New York Times. They reviewed it in the daily paper on Saturday and then the next day, on Sunday. So we had a couple different people knock on our doors and say, 'I want this as a movie.' We went with Sony and they developed it and they sold it to Showtime."

Early on, Maier learned that there was one real currency in which Hollywood trafficked — "two letters that are very important: it's called IP, intellectual property. Your book is that property, they refer to it as IP. 'He gives very good IP.' So, having that IP, I noticed that suddenly people were asking me, 'What else do you have kid? You know you had this TV show that's a hit.'"

What that meant was sudden stardom. "I was invited to lunch by Peter Roth and he actually introduced me to Chuck Lorre, who



Tom Maier gave a spellbinding talk at February's Silurians Luncheon.

Photo by Steven Spelotis

made millions for Warner Brothers, and he was so proud to introduce me to Chuck. Of course, I had no idea who Chuck Lorre was, but I have subsequently learned a lot about Chuck Lorre." And a lot more about Hollywood.

Through all of this, Maier never let up on his investigations at Newsday, where there was always a paycheck. "Basically, I would get home from Newsday about 6 or 7. We'd have dinner, then I would work from nine until one every night, and then get up shit-faced and go to work the next day. On weekends, I'd do about five to six hours. If you do something for the book every day, by the end of the year, lo and behold, you have a book and it is manageable."

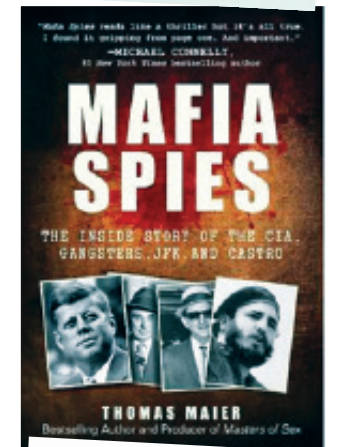
Then along came books on Castro, Kennedy, and one called "Mafia Spies," with

the subtitle "The Inside Story of the CIA, Gangsters, JFK, and Castro." Maier thought it could be a great drama. Wrong. Covid appeared. "We couldn't sell it as a drama." Then he got a phone call at home in the middle of a Zoom meeting: "We sold it as a documentary." [The docu-series starts July 16 on Paramount+ and Showtime.]

"It's framed around two gangsters, and so in many ways it was kind of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, meets Godfather Part 2," Maier said. "It's really the story of Sam Giancana and then, in Las Vegas, a guy named Johnny Roselli — their relationship, these two buddies, two very different types of men, but also very bloody killers. Johnny was a really suave guy, worked for Harry Cohn at Columbia Pictures, dated Lana Turner, Donna Reed. So the idea of fol-

lowing them, that's the grabber for me."

Along the way, Maier learned how to pitch to Hollywood. "I would give them about a 10-page memo. The first two or three pages had to do with the plot, then another two or three pages were just paragraphs elaborating the key characters because television is so character-driven, and then the back third of it had to do with how this could be translated into a multi-part series. That's really the key when we talk about IP. When somebody like Peter Roth looks at this, they're saying, if this works, it generates about four to five hundred million dollars for the company." That's real money in any language, any medium.



Tom's first novel, "Montauk to Manhattan," arrives July 9.

## Excellence and Eloquence in 2024

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### MINORITY AFFAIRS REPORTING

The winner is "The Newest New Yorkers" by The New York City News Service, a unit of The Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. Students, directed by Professor Jere Hester, smothered New York's migrant crisis with excellent reporting and writing on every aspect of the newcomers' plight. Picking up on Mayor Eric Adams' complaint that the influx of migrants would destroy the city, the News Service looked at the actual cost of feeding and housing the 130,000 new New Yorkers. (The total is now over 180,000.) They described the legal clinics that have sprung up to help the migrants apply for asylum and for housing, and focused in on how local health and humanitarian groups have stepped up to provide services. The package of stories singled out African and Bangladeshi migrants for separate stories, and revealed how the influx puts new pressure on the city's overwhelmed mental health services. All in all, the judges concluded, "The Newest New Yorkers" did an excellent job of putting the migrant crisis in perspective and blunting fears that the immigrants would damage a city that once welcomed the poor and tempest-tossed."

### BREAKING NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Two striking photos by photographers from Bloomberg News and THE CITY won Medallions.

Photographer Stephanie Keith, a freelancer for Bloomberg News, was covering the trial of cryptocurrency executive Sam Bankman-Fried, who was charged with fraud and money laundering. As he was leaving court one day, Keith caught him in an extraordinary photo. The photo, which freezes chaos

and movement, captures a rare and personal moment between the photographer and the photographed.

The second Medallion is for "Image of a Bloodied Man," by Ben Fractenberg of the online news outlet THE CITY. Fractenberg was covering a street vigil for Jordan Neeley, a homeless man who had been strangled to death in a subway car by an ex-Marine who thought Neeley was threatening passengers. At the vigil, a confrontation between police and an unidentified man resulted in the man being battered bloody by police. The result was captured in Fractenberg's remarkable photo.

### SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

The award goes to Newsday photojournalist Thomas A. Ferrara for "The Throwbacks: Vintage 'Base Ball' on Long Island." Ferrara spent several months documenting the players and the teams who play the game as it was played in the 1800's, in fields and pastures, wearing heavy woolen caps and uniforms and without gloves or protective equipment. Ferrara even created physical tintype portraits of the players with an antique 4x5 camera.

### FEATURE NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

This award was won by Jonah Markowitz of The New York Times for his photo essay, "Dawn to Dusk on the Corner Where Bangladeshi Brooklyn Gathers." Markowitz spent two years photographing and videotaping the Bangladeshi community in the Kensington neighborhood of Brooklyn. He got to know residents in restaurants, homes and businesses and gained access to delivery rides, religious services and dance performances. The result was this visual story of

this fast-growing New York community.

### TELEVISION BREAKING NEWS

WABC Eyewitness News at 11PM wins the Medallion for their in-depth coverage of the Manhattan Grand Jury's indictment of former President Trump for a "hush money" payment to an adult film star days before the 2016 election. WABC's more-than-13-minute report revealed that Donald Trump's lawyers learned of the unprecedented indictment only minutes before the rest of the world. Though the specific charges against Trump were still unknown, the station's report indicated the indictment contained 34 charges, all felonies.

### TELEVISION FEATURE NEWS

Walt Kane and Susan Ottovino of News 12 New Jersey win for "Victims of the System," a harrowing report on sexual assault victim Lena Morrison. Her "rape kit" went untested when prosecutors declined to pursue the case, so Lena recorded conversations with her assailant. He said, "I'm sorry for raping you." Prosecutors declined to accept the confession. The judges said the report shines a harsh light on the disrespect and suspicion too often inflicted on sex abuse survivors.

### DIGITAL VIDEO REPORTING

A Medallion goes to videographer Michael Karas of The Record/northjersey.com for his 19-minute documentary, "When Naje Seabrooks Called for Help." This story traced the tragic death at the hands of police of a young man in Paterson, New Jersey, who had been instrumental in helping troubled neighborhood youths. When the man — Seabrooks — suffered his own men-

tal health crisis and called police for help, an altercation broke out in which they shot him. Before the fatal encounter, Karas had interviewed Seabrooks about his community outreach work and felt compelled to tell his story.

### DIGITAL VIDEO REPORTING

A second Medallion goes to Yoav Gonen of THE CITY for a video investigation called "NYPD's Abuse of Authority and Interference Unearthed in Brooklyn Gun Incident." The story revealed how two high-ranking NYPD officials intervened in 2021 to release a retired police officer who had been charged with menacing three juveniles with a gun. Reconstructing the events by using footage from 36 cameras located inside the station house, outside surveillance locations and on officers' body cams, THE CITY documented what really happened. Refusing to accept the police department's denial of access to the videos, Gonen persisted, using Freedom of Information Act requests to obtain the vital footage that finally told the true story.

### RADIO/AUDIO FEATURE REPORTING

The Medallion for the Radio/Audio category goes to veteran radio journalist Ashley Milne Tyte for "When Everything Goes Digital, Older Adults Can Be Left Out" which appeared on Marketplace Tech. In fact, her frustration with the way her own "perfectly competent" mother struggled to obtain customer "service" spurred her to do the story. One conclusion: since virtually everything we do has moved online, many older people — especially poorer ones — are left out in the non-digital cold.

# Silurians Press Club

## The 79th Annual Excellence in Journalism Awards

### 2024 SILURIAN MEDALLION AND MERIT AWARD WINNERS

**PRESIDENT'S CHOICE AWARD:** "New York's Struggle to Respond to the Migrant Surge"  
By Andy Newman & The Staff of The New York Times

**PRESIDENT'S CHOICE AWARD:** "Feeling the Squeeze: The High Cost of Living on Long Island" By The Staff of Newsday

#### BREAKING NEWS REPORTING

Medallion: "Coverage of the Manhattan District Attorney's Indictment of Donald Trump"  
By William K. Rashbaum, Jonah E. Bromwich & Ben Protess, The New York Times  
Merit: "Coverage of the Arrest in the Gilgo Beach Murders" The Staff of Newsday

#### FEATURE NEWS REPORTING

Medallion: "Selected New York Stories" By John Leland, The New York Times  
Merit: "Three Stories About New York City's Mishandling of the Migrant Crisis"  
Lana Nahmias, Fola Akinnibi, Maria Paula Mijares and Sarah Holder, Bloomberg News

#### INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Medallion: "Investigative Pieces on Rikers Island, the NYPD and Mayoral Campaign Finances"  
Bianca Pallaro, Haidee Chu, April Xu, Katie Honan, Tom Robbins, George Joseph, Reuben Blau & Yoav Gonen, THE CITY  
Merit: "Coverage of the Senator Menendez Corruption Case" The Staff of The Record/northjersey.com  
Merit: "Ghost Tags: 'Inside New York City's Black Market for Temporary License Plates'" By Jesse Coburn, StreetsblogNYC

#### BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL REPORTING

Medallion: "The Ugly Business of a Toxic Workplace" By Susan Antilla, Business Insider  
Merit: "Big Cannabis Comes to New York" By Rosalind Adams, THE CITY

#### SCIENCE & HEALTH REPORTING

Medallion: "Aging in New Jersey" By Scott Fallon and Lindy Washburn The Record/northjersey.com USA Today Network  
Merit: "Inside the ME's Office Where Opioids Fuel Surge in Deaths" By Sharon Otterman, The New York Times  
Merit: "Your Care Has Been Outsourced" By Adam Stone, The Examiner

#### ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING

Medallion: "Hazards Next Door" By The Staff at The Record/northjersey.com USA Today Network"  
Merit: "Efforts to Block Gas Bans are Growing: Will it Work in New York?" By Mariana Simões, City Limits

#### ARTS & CULTURE REPORTING

Medallion: "Inside The Hogwarts of Fashion" By Alex Vadukul, The New York Times  
Merit: "Will AM Radio Survive?" By Verne Gay, Newsday  
Merit: "Strong Island's in the House: When Hip Hop Ruled Long Island" By Rafer Guzman, Newsday

#### SPORTS REPORTING & COMMENTARY

Medallion: "Ghanian Grace" By Kevin Armstrong, Newark Star Ledger

#### EDITORIALS, COMMENTARY & PUBLIC SERVICE

Public Service Medallion: "Mentally Ill, Homeless and Mishandled by New York" By Amy Julia Harris & Jan Ransom, The New York Times  
Commentary Medallion: "Several Stories" By Joyce Wadler, Substack  
Public Service Merit: "Eric Adam's is Starving New York City's Universal Pre-K Program" By Fola Akinnibi, Bloomberg News  
Commentary Merit: "Stories of New York" By Alex Vadukul, The New York Times

#### PEOPLE PROFILES

Medallion: "Anderson Cooper's Newest Assignment: Grief (His Own)" By Rukmini Callimachi, The New York Times  
Merit: "Meta's True Believer" By Emma Hinchliffe, Fortune  
Merit: "The Parable of a Book Collector" By Arlene Schulman, Next Avenue

#### MINORITY AFFAIRS REPORTING

Medallion: "The Newest New Yorkers" By New York City News Service, Craig J. Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY  
Merit: "The Deed Finders" By George Joseph & Samantha Maldonado, THE CITY  
Merit: "Obituary of Disabled Boy Scout Greg Wittine" By Alex Traub, The New York Times

#### BREAKING NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Medallion: "Image of Sam Bankman-Fried" By Stephanie Keith, Bloomberg News  
Medallion: Image of a Bloodied Man," By Ben Fractenberg, THE CITY  
Merit: "Rainbow Blaze" By James Carbone, Newsday

#### FEATURE NEWS PHOTOGRAPHY

Medallion : "Dawn to Dusk on the Corner Where Bangladeshi Brooklyn Gathers" By Jonah Markowitz, The New York Times  
Merit: "It's not the place, it's where it's located" By Adi Talwar, City Limits  
Merit: "Ducking in the Rain" and "The Dance: A Father, Daughter and Their Dream" By Steve Pfost, Newsday

#### SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Medallion: "The Throwbacks: Vintage 'Base Ball' on Long Island" By Thomas A. Ferrara, Newsday

#### TV BREAKING NEWS

Medallion: "Manhattan District Attorney's Indictment of Donald Trump" WABC TV Eyewitness News Team At 11

#### TV FEATURE NEWS

Medallion: "Victims of the System" By Walt Kane and Susan Ottovino, News 12 New Jersey

#### DIGITAL ONLINE VIDEO REPORTING

Medallion: "NYPD's Abuse of Authority and Interference Unearthed in a Brooklyn Gun Incident" By Yoav Gonen, THE CITY

#### DIGITAL VIDEO REPORTING

Medallion: "When Najee Seabrooks Called for Help" By Michael Karas, The Record/northjersey.com

#### RADIO/AUDIO FEATURE REPORTING

Medallion: "When Everything Goes Digital, Older Adults Can Be Left Out" By Ashley Milne-Tyte, Marketplace Tech

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**AWARDS CHAIR:** Jack Deacy

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# A Silurian Pioneer Remembers Her Job at the Daily News, 1948-1999: I've Had a Great Run

By BILL DIEHL

It was another time. The New York Daily News, at the height of its circulation, once operated "The Information Bureau."

People could walk into the paper's famous 42nd Street lobby, ask questions or call in by phone and get answers from a team of researchers.

Dorothy Rogers, now 98, was 21, a graduate of Barnard in 1948 when she landed a job as one of the researchers at the bureau. It would be the first of several other jobs she held until she left the paper in 1991.

Recently I had a chat with Dorothy and she reminisced. Dorothy said questions ranged from serious to ridiculous.

BD: *Serious?*

DR: Once, a well spoken man who gave his name and badge number as a New York City police officer said, "I'm embarrassed as hell to ask, but could you tell me where the women's prison is located?" Another caller, a man, wanted to know how he could join the FBI. There was this one: "My husband has died and I found a lottery ticket in his pocket. What's the winning number?" A secretary called at lunchtime and asked, "Quick! How many calories in a Martini?"

BD: *Ridiculous?*

DR: There was an eclipse. We were inundated with calls from hysterical women who thought it would cause their children to die. One mother asked, "When are they going to call it off?" Nixon-McGovern election day

and a man said he couldn't find his polling place and it must be a McGovern tactic. A woman said she was getting married. Did she need a doctor's prescription? A man wanted to know if Franklin D. Roosevelt was Adolf Hitler's first cousin. Will Good Friday be on Monday this year? Is the zipper on Tiny Tim's pants in the front or on the side? What is Frank Sinatra's maiden name? Is there a law that if you commit adultery you lose your right to vote? I saw Albert Einstein on the subway and I want to buy a picture of him so I can recognize him when I see him again. What woman has the most babies in one sitting?

BD: *Celebrities?*

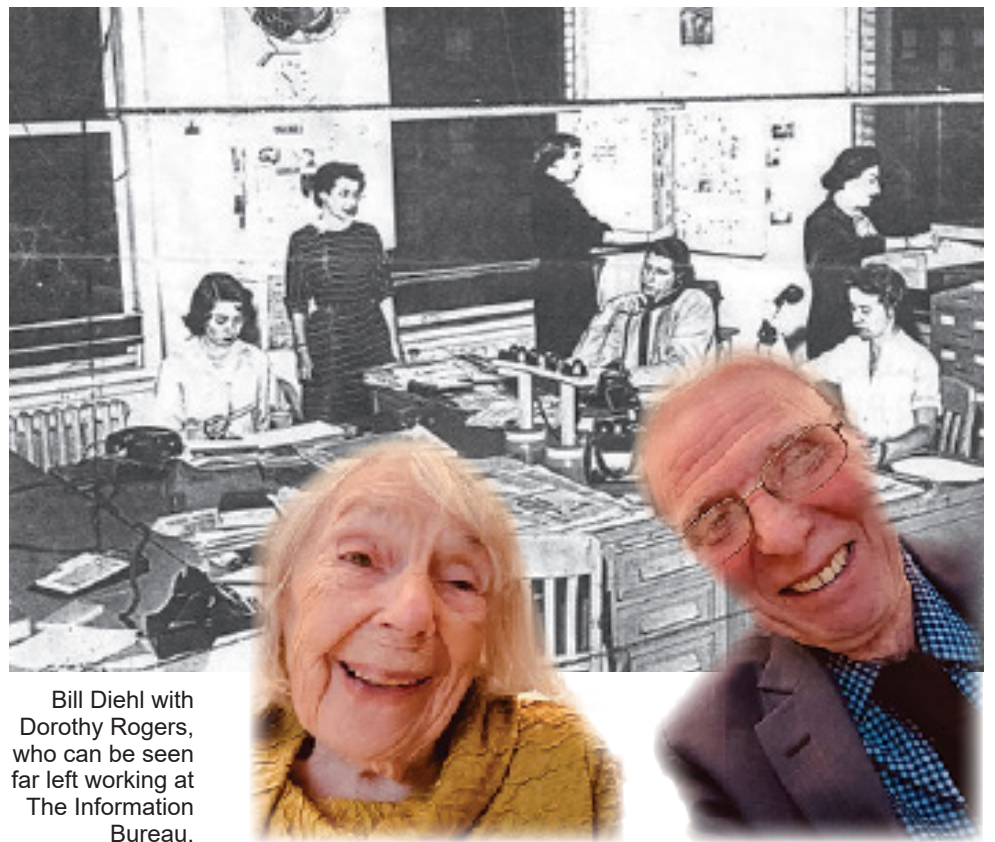
DR: They filmed scenes at the Daily News for the Superman movie and I saw its star Christopher Reeve. Once President Reagan came in to meet the paper's editorial board and his secret service hung out in my office.

BD: *Did you meet some of the Daily News reporters?*

DR: Once, columnist Jimmy Breslin called on a weekend and I guess he just wanted to vent and complained the Daily News didn't want to pay him what he wanted so he was going to work for the Long Island paper, Newsday.

BD: *You live alone in the Village. What's your life like now?*

DR: I don't read the Daily News anymore. It's not much of a paper. I read the New York Times and Washington Post on my iPad. On



Bill Diehl with Dorothy Rogers, who can be seen far left working at The Information Bureau.

TV, I watch the evening news with David Muir on ABC.

BD: *Donald Trump wants to be President again.*

DR: That scares the hell out of me. If he

wins, I think I'll leave the planet.

BD: *Do you care about being remembered?*

DR: No, I'm just grateful for having lived a good life. I've had a great run.

## A Journey Through Writing with E.B. White and Charlotte's Web as Guides

By JOAN KELLY BERNARD

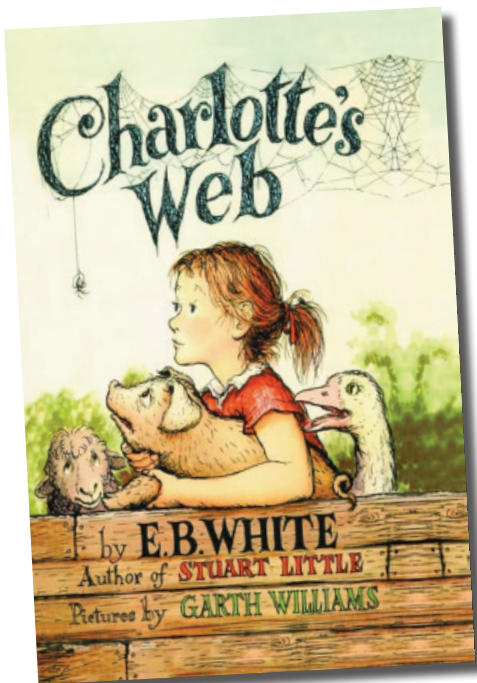
Last September, when my sister Marilyn asked me to speak to her book club about writing, I was flattered, but at a loss. My writing — over 50-plus years — has been as a journalist and, more recently, public relations for the American Museum of Natural History. Surely the Tuesday Book Club, founded in 1928, wanted to hear from a "real" writer, a novelist or playwright.

Like many journalists, I had always dreamed of writing fiction. Early in my career, I actually confessed that to Henry Grunwald, then editor in chief of Time Inc. He had asked the old interview question: Where do you see yourself in five years? And I said, "Living on a lake in Pennsylvania, with a small apartment in New York, writing novels, visiting my publisher one or twice a year." As soon as I said it, I thought, "I will never get a job here." But to my surprise, he said, "I like to hire reporters interested in writing fiction." He said something about their having a love of language and curiosity about the human condition. I was relieved — although it didn't matter. There was no job; he was only meeting with me as a favor to a friend.

I did get the small apartment in Manhattan, and a series of jobs in journalism.

My first published piece, however, was in high

school. Everyone in my class at my Roman Catholic school was supposed to enter an annual contest with an essay on "The Signs of a Religious Vocation and How to Recognize Them." I had nothing. Desperate, I resorted to the first person and what do you know? I



won! The prize was dinner with the Bishop, being published in the diocesan newspaper, and the humiliating experience of reading aloud to the whole high school over the PA how "I want to be a nun." Come to think of it, perhaps this was my first and only published piece of fiction.

If you had asked me when I was 12 what I wanted to be when I grew up, I would have listed a succession of careers: entomology, archeology, anthropology, aviatrix. But whichever I chose

— and it turned out none of them — I was also always planning to write. It was around that same age I read "Charlotte's Web" by E.B. White.

On the 60th anniversary of its publication in 2012, I was asked to write a piece for the museum's member magazine about how White and the book's illustrator, Garth Williams, were helped by a museum curator with both the name of their central character — Charlotte A. Cavatica — and her anatomy, genus and species of barn spider, *Araneus cavaticus*. Working on that story, I discovered something about myself. You may remember Charlotte crowing about her "magnum opus," which was the egg sac she produced near the end. For

all the decades since I'd read the book, I thought her "magnum opus" was the writing she did to save the life of her friend Wilbur, the pig.

It would take a psychiatrist — and luckily I'm married to one — to figure out how I conflated having children with a career in writing.

Remember in the old movies when a reporter would call the newsroom and say, "Get me rewrite!"? I sometimes wondered if I'd have found it easier to

do that. It is so hard to fill a blank page. I love reworking material given to me, editing, cutting. In a way, rewrite is what I do now mostly for the museum — or "repurposing" as it's called in the world of social media. A curator writes an intense scientific paper, our science publicist translates it into plain English for a news release, and I condense that into a breezy blogpost for the museum's website. And I love it. Who wouldn't? Writing about butterflies and dinosaur bones and trips to the edge of the known universe! The career gods saved the best for last.

Not that I didn't enjoy my years as a news reporter for CBS. I was there in San Francisco when Geraldine Ferraro became the first woman ever nominated by a major party to be vice president. And at the Kennedy Space Center — then known as Cape Canaver-

al — I watched Sally Ride become the first American woman to go into space. Heady stuff.

But just to keep me grounded, what really got my nieces and nephews excited was when I mentioned a Newsday story I did on Walter Hudson. I will forgive you — no, maybe even congratulate you — for not remembering that before "My 600-Pound Life" and "1,000-Pound Sisters," Walter Hudson was the 1,200-pound man who had to be rescued in 1987 when he got wedged in a doorway in his Long Island home. "WALTER HUDSON?!" they said, "YOU KNEW WALTER HUDSON?!"

Another word on E. B. White. He offered the best shorthand description of cool-headed revision. Before handing anything in, I have to have time — as White put it — to "let the body heat out of it."

I learned from my moth-

er, who grew up on a farm, that it is a milking term, setting aside the filled buckets to cool. White had a farm in Maine — where he first encountered the barn spider that inspired Charlotte — so, of course, Mother's explanation was just right.

When Mother died in 2022 at age 99, I wrote her obituary and quoted her saying when her own mother died at age 90, "The longer you have them, the more there is to miss." Months earlier, when a much-beloved brother-in-law died suddenly, I helped write and edit his obituary too — relieved that, as with Mother, I could offer our family something: writing skills I'd acquired over a lifetime.

In 2016, I wrote another obituary, this one for the Silurian News, headlined "Martin Hollander: Newsday's Serious Man." To steal from Charlotte now, perhaps these constitute my "magnus opus."

## President's Report: Pursuing Truth

Continued from Page 2

said of reporters: "As representatives of news outlets, they give up some personal rights to free expression."

During the two years I've been president — the irrepressible and dedicated Aileen Jacobson takes over in June — and during the tenures of my predecessors, we have featured speakers whose articles, books, cartoons and photographs encompass a wide assortment of views. But for the most part, these journalists excelled because they told their stories with nuance and complexity.

Maggie Haberman has covered Trump in all his mendacity and razzle dazzle yet has retained the sources within Trump's camp who trust she will convey their side of the

story accurately and fairly. In "Hollywood Ending," Ken Auletta documented Harvey Weinstein's sexually predatory behavior in all its sordid and pitiful detail. Yet, he made sure to explain how a crass cad like Weinstein was also able to produce sensitive, groundbreaking films.

The Internet has convulsed print journalism irretrievably, but the age-old principles still apply. If we're to avoid becoming a media industry where outlets and platforms imitate Fox News in its strident partisanship, young people, even before college, must be helped to understand the value of impartiality in pursuit of the truth, which as we know, is often elusive and paradoxical.

Your president, Joe Berger.

# Learning Chinese, Exposing More Voters to the Information They Need: The New York Times' Joe Kahn Faces Challenges

By DAVID A. ANDELMAN

From his earliest days, Joe Kahn “actually never imagined doing anything else, to be honest, so it wasn’t a choice between journalism or some other thing.” And now, he’s the executive editor of The New York Times, traveling to the National Arts Club to regale a crowd of Silurians at their April lunch with tales from Eighth Avenue and far beyond.

For more than an hour, Kahn detailed his vision of today’s Times as “something really worth reading and remembering ... something that captures a moment for the history books.” How he got to this moment in his own career was somewhat less direct.

It all began with his high school newspaper where he realized “if you actually want to get ahead in the business, you must [not only] just put the articles on the page, but write them.” Onward from there at The Harvard Crimson as an undergraduate, he quickly discovered “it can easily take over your life.” Then it was out into the real world, where the Dallas Morning News took him on as an intern and eventually made him a bureau chief. In Plano, Texas.

At that moment, his most easily imagined career path suggested “if I played all my cards right, five years later on I might be able to cover the Dallas City Hall or, if that went well, the Austin bureau — a State House reporter in the Texas Capitol.”

Instead, China loomed large. “In those days, the late 80s, China was just emerging,” Kahn recalled. It looked like it was going to be a big story in the future and there were very few people there, including The New York Times, who had any training in the language.” So, Kahn went back to school to learn Mandarin, and then to Beijing.

He arrived just in time for Tiananmen Square and the flourishing democracy movement. Kahn had gone to report on Mikhail Gorbachev’s visit to Beijing for the Dallas Morning News. “I ended up staying long after Gorbachev to cover the student demonstrations,” he said. “And then on June 4, 1989, famously, the crackdown finally happened on the student protests, so that became a pretty big story for me. I stayed a couple weeks after, enduring the imposition of martial law, and eventually I was picked up. They said this is a violation of your visa and martial law and they booted me.”

China, he pointed, out was “not happy to have reporters running around at that time,” but then “I look at our reporters around the world now and the risk that they’re taking with their stories, today is absolutely on an-



New York Times executive editor Joe Kahn at April’s Silurian Lunch.

other level,” Kahn said. “They treated me relatively with kid gloves, escorting me to the airport.”

At the peak, Kahn pointed out, The Times had “10 correspondents in China, but we also invested at that time in a Chinese language journalism website that had another 30 people working for it, doing original journalism in Chinese to serve a Chinese audience. Al-

most all of that is gone. We were banned as a website. The Chinese website we have is also banned.”

China remains a challenge. “We struggled for years. We were down to one correspondent in China. We recently got one more. We would like to go back to having many more than that. But at the moment, there’s no opportunity. So, we have five people in

Taiwan. We have people in Hong Kong. It’s a little bit Back to the Future. The people on the periphery of mainland China have, as part of their responsibilities, coverage of the mainland. It’s back to the cultural revolution. We are still determined to get good coverage of China in our report.”

But for Kahn today, there are broader challenges as his horizon has widened — greatly.

“We have 10 million subscribers and a lot more than that come to us occasionally,” he explained. As executive editor, Kahn sees a critical need to expand this number geometrically, especially in this election year. “There are tens or hundreds of millions of people who are not navigating to major websites to get their news,” Kahn said. “They’re getting it passively, usually in vertical video, in their feed, and unless we’re investing to repackage our coverage and help make it available to them, they’re not going to see it.”

But especially before November, “I want to make sure that not only every reader of The New York Times, but every curious voter in the country has the information they need to understand the stakes in this election,” he said.

“We can’t control the election result. We can do everything in our power to make sure that the largest number of people possible are armed with the information they need to make those decisions before November 5th.”

*David A. Andelman is a past president of The Silurians and creator of SubStack’s Andelman Unleashed.*

## Brooke Kroeger Chronicles Strides Forward and Setbacks for Women in Journalism

By DAVID A. ANDELMAN

It took the incomparable Anne O’Hare McCormick 14 years and a change of publishers to catapult from New York Times stringer to staff reporter. A year later, she became the first woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in a major journalism category. She interviewed Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin and numerous other men by the time publisher Adolph Ochs, who never hired a woman, died in 1935 and Arthur Hayes Sulzberger took over and made her the first female Times editorial board member.

It took another 14 years for a woman to win a second journalism Pulitzer.

But none of this was much of a surprise

to Brooke Kroeger, who expanded on her remarkable book “Undaunted: How Women Changed American Journalism” as the Silurians Press Club luncheon speaker in March.

Kroeger begins her tale well back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. “It was interesting to me to see why everything that had been figured out in 1890 had to be figured out again in 1970,” she told her audience.

Under questioning by Silurians governor Mel Laytner, Kroeger remarked that her goal was to examine what turned out to be “a continuum looking from 1840 when we first have mass journalism to the present and establish the patterns along the way. You could see how it’s really a story of progress.”

This took her from the heyday of the women muckrakers in the 1890s, really the first investigative journalists — the likes of Ida Tarbell, Ida B. Wells, and Nellie Bly — into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century where, repeatedly, women “created opportunity for a moment and then faded away from exposure and lack of sustained interest.” Then along came Vietnam.

“God bless Vietnam,” Kroeger said. “That was really helpful. A lot of us got hired when men went to war, which had also happened in World War I and it happened in World War II. These were points where women came into the field, and then many had to leave, either to marry or because they really weren’t that good at it. But it did summon woman power. That certainly happened, and then by the 1970s, the women didn’t go away. I mean, we really did have permanent positions.”

Now, she continued, “we’re at a point where women represent about 40 percent or 45 percent of the field today — in leadership not that high, but much higher than ever before.”

Certainly, through her years as a reporter, she’s had her own taste of the kinds of misogyny that have bedeviled so many of those she’s chronicling. “When I left Tel Aviv, and I was the only woman in the press corps,” Kroeger recalled, “the American ambassa-



Brooke Krueger at the Silurians March luncheon.

*Photo by Steven Spelotis*

dor made some very nice remarks, and then concluded ‘we’re just really going to miss Brooke’s legs.’ I mean really. For four years: the Sabra and Shatila massacre, the end of the Camp David accords, war in Lebanon, bombing the Iraq reactor, a really busy time. And that’s what he had?”

Then there was a question from her audience that seemed to bring matters full circle: “I’d love to hear your thoughts about whether women bring qualities to journalism that men can’t quite match.” Kroeger paused, replying thoughtfully, “I don’t think so. I think individuals bring qualities to journalism that are important, and I just don’t think it’s gender related. We see compassion, we see all sorts of things from all kinds of people.”

Then the final question: “Where do you think we are in terms of real equal opportunity?”

“You know, I think we’re there,” Kroeger responded. “I think the problem is the industry is incomplete.” She thought back to one of the doyennes of journalism on the women’s page — Charlotte Curtis. “She’s the exception because she turned that into a power nexus, and I thought that was important to recognize. She also set the standard for style sections across the country. So, I do give her her due. She was unique, but that gave us a place to do all kinds of things.”

Style, under Charlotte Curtis, was not all about women. It was about life, a life well-lived.

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## Obituaries

# Thelma Kandel, Author, Artist and Silurian Supporter, 91

BY MYRON KANDEL

Thelma Kandel was more a Silurian than most of us, although she never paid any cash dues. She supported my membership for 57 years, and was first lady during my two separate terms as president. She was my partner in our joint contribution of several thousand dollars to bail out the Society from the brink of insolvency many years back and was a regular attendee at dinners and luncheons. She was a firm believer in the club's mission of encouraging collegiality and journalistic excellence. She died on Feb. 21, 2024, at age 91. We were married for nearly 70 years.

Thelma wrote two books and helped on a third, along with many freelance magazine and newspaper articles. She also worked as an editor at Boardroom Reports and as an assistant to two editors at Business Week. Her first book, published by Simon & Schuster and titled "What Women Earn," was a ground-breaking examination of the status of women in 60 different occupations. It won high praise for illustrating the gender differences that existed then (and still do).

She was eligible for Silurian membership, but as a child of the Depression, she was very thrifty and felt that one membership was enough for the two of us. Our journalist daughter Bethany, however, was a dues-paying member for a while.

In addition to her journalistic work, Thelma's favorite accomplishments were artistic. She was an eclectic self-taught artist with a quirky eye. As a young stay-at-home mother, she began making bracelets and necklaces from beads and bangles she bought in Manhattan's bead district. While there, she also had the idea of using silver-colored metal beads in the forms of dots and dashes to make necklaces of people's names in Morse code. She didn't sell any, just gave them to favorite relatives and friends. But the president of the American Stock Exchange was so intrigued by one she had given to his wife that he commissioned Thelma (for a modest price) to make necklaces for the wives of the chief executives of the companies that were newly listing on the exchange. One CEO was so impressed that he asked her if she would make a thousand for him. She demurred.

Then, some 30 years ago, she fell under the influence of Joseph Cornell, a reclusive Queens artist who produced



Thelma and Myron Kandel

boxes and collages filled with nondescript metal and wooden objects and vintage newspaper and magazine clippings, which now sell for millions. She began filling the walls and bookshelves of our Upper West Side apartment with art works of her own made of random pieces from streets, sidewalks, dumpsters, yard sales and thrift shops in New York and around the globe. There are now more than 150 of them and she relished being called "an artist of lost and found." I'm sure some will end up in a museum some day.

Befitting her skill as a wordsmith, they carry clever titles. One of my favorites shows a tiny metal airplane heading *downward* on a background of model railway tracks. It's titled "The Wrong Brothers." Another – Thelma's favorite – is modeled after a Cornell piece showing elaborate fishing lures. He named it "Lobster Quadrille." Thelma's version consists of colorful fly-fishing hooks on a background of a cracked mirror in an antique box that she called "Calamari Quadrille." It had been hanging in a hallway for years when one night she passed it in the dark and noticed that the flies were glowing. That gave her an extra kick, and she delighted in showing it off to visitors with the lights out.

She loved to rescue damaged dolls. One of her works consists of three doll heads resting on unusual metal bases,

which she called her "Salvador Dollies." She was an anti-smoker and another, consisting of tobacco-related items, was titled "Nicotina: The Evil Temptress."

As an avid reader, she hated to see damaged books thrown in the trash, so she developed a sideline of folding discarded books into artistic shapes. She refused to sell any, but those recycled volumes now are valued and displayed in homes around the world.

She was also an avid salvager (with my help) of larger pieces and she liked to show off furniture and other items we rescued from the streets of New York and elsewhere.

One of her first acquisitions was a marble-topped oak chest being discarded in a suburb of Bonn, West Germany, when I was the correspondent there for the New York Herald Tribune in the mid-60s. She had noticed piles of discards outside old houses on specified days of the month. It seemed that diplomats from newly-independent African and Asian countries preferred to furnish their recently-acquired residences with Danish Modern furniture and accessories, so they were getting rid of the old stuff. She made me reclaim that dust-covered oak chest on our way home from a black-tie dinner at the U.S. ambassador's home. I grumbled that it was dirty and I was wearing a new tuxedo, but she insisted. Guess who won? And she liked to tell with great relish how, on another occasion, she just edged out an antiques dealer for a valuable piece of old pottery, only to be greeted by some German words she had never heard before.

Back home, we found a bamboo bookcase in a snow-bank on Madison Avenue on the way to a CNN colleague's elegant Christmas party. Another was a rectangular coffee table made of some exotic metal that was sitting on Amsterdam Avenue bearing a sign that said "Take me." She took it, hailed a cab, and it's now in a place of honor in our living room, along with the bookcase and other found items.

In addition to material pursuits, she was a compassionate wife, mother, grandmother and friend. When Covid hit, she opened our address book and phoned more than 100 relatives and friends to offer solace, encouragement and good wishes. She hadn't spoken to some of them in years, and sometimes there were tears at both ends.

So living with Thelma Kandel was always an adventure, and I was blessed to have her as my wife.

## A Tradition of Charitable Giving: The Long and Winding History of the Silurian Contingency Fund

BY STEVEN MARCUS

More than 50 years ago, several senior members of the Silurians had become increasingly concerned with the continuing loss of newspaper jobs — a trend that started during the Great Depression — and the growing number of ex-newspaper people facing financial hardship.

The Silurians had to do something to help address this crisis, the senior members decided.

And so, on July 1, 1953, the Silurian Contingency Fund, as it was then called, was created. The fund's first chairman was George E. Sokolsky, a long-time Silurian. Sokolsky has been virtually forgotten, but he was a prominent right-wing radio commentator, newspaper columnist and author who was active in the 1920s through the 1950s. In 1963, a year after Sokolsky's death, the fund was renamed the George E. Sokolsky Silurian Contingency Fund.

The fund's objective, according to its mission statement, was simple and direct: "to render financial assistance to New York City newspeople who have met with adversity or illness and need financial assistance." In 2005, the mission statement was expanded so that the fund could also "award scholarships to outstanding students in New York area schools who are pursuing careers in journalism."

The fund was created as an independent charitable entity, separate from the Society

of the Silurians, with its own board of directors. The fund was given the sole power to select applicants who needed help and to determine the amount of the grants. To protect the privacy of the recipients, their names are known only to the fund's board of directors.

Because the fund was a charity, contributions, which were accepted only from Silurian members, were tax deductible.

I could not determine from the contingency fund's records available to me how much money the fund has awarded in grants over the years. But a letter I came across reported that the fund provided grants totaling more than \$8,000 in its first eight years. Undoubtedly, thousands more dollars have been provided since then. For example, in the early 1990s when The Daily News fired 174 reporters, editors and other employees, the fund launched a fund-raising drive to help those who had been laid off.

Also during that period, when the ownership of The New York Post was in limbo, the paper's insurance carrier warned that it would cancel the health insurance coverage for all Post employees unless the monthly premium of \$50,000 was paid immediately. The contingency fund stepped in and paid the premium.

The fund started out on the right foot by obtaining certification as an approved charity from the IRS and the New York State

Charities Bureau. But by 2005, the fund's designation as a certified charity had been revoked due to a failure to file annual tax returns. An effort was made to get the designation restored and, based on my incomplete records, there are indications that the certification was restored by 2008.

Unfortunately, due to a series of mishaps and miscommunications, the fund subsequently fell out of compliance again.

In 2017, when I took over as president of the fund, my first order of business was to get the fund back in the good graces of the IRS and the New York State Charities Bureau. It took nearly two years and the expenditure of thousands of dollars in legal and accountant's fees, but in 2019 the fund was reinstated again as a charitable organization.

Steps were also taken to set up a closer relationship between the fund and the Board of Governors of the Silurians. The president of the board serves an ex officio member of the fund's board. And I serve as a liaison between the fund and the Board of Governors and attend the board's monthly meetings.

At the moment, the contingency fund's assets total a little more than \$10,000 – barely enough to pay the annual premiums for the next several years for liability insurance for the fund's directors.



Radio commentator George E. Sokolsky was the first chairman of the Silurian Contingency Fund in 1953.



Over the years, the Fund has helped newspeople from titles including the Daily News and New York Post.

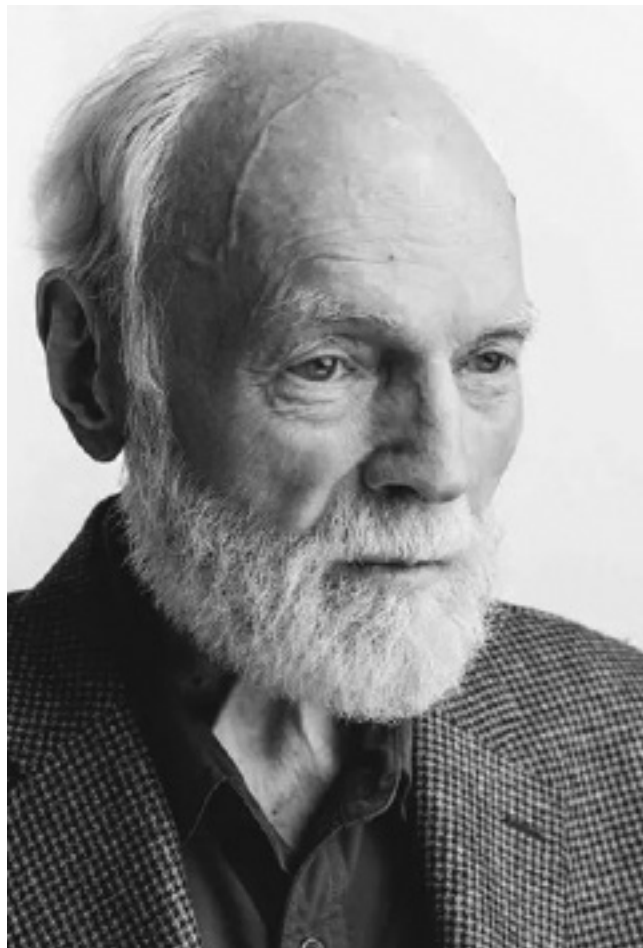
But the long-term financial outlook is promising.

Charles Bennett, a longtime New York Times City Hall reporter and Silurian who died in 1982, set up a trust that named the fund as a secondary beneficiary. The primary beneficiary, a niece of Bennett's, receives six percent of the trust's assets annually. Upon her death, the contingency fund and two other nonprofit organizations will divide the remainder of the trust. Currently the trust totals more than \$600,000. So the contingency fund could ultimately receive about \$200,000, assuming the trust's assets continue to grow.

In the meantime, donations to the fund would be most welcome. Even small donations of \$10, \$15 or \$20 (remember they are tax deductible) would help. Simply write a check payable to the George E. Sokolsky Silurian Fund and mail it to me at 160 West 96th St., Apt 15M, New York, NY 10025.

## Obituaries

# Ed Fancher, Village Voice Co-Founder, Publisher, Soldier, Psychologist, 100



ED FANCHER

BY HOWARD BLUM

Courage – that’s the quality I first think of when I remember Ed Fancher, who died last September at the age of 100. Sure, there were a great many things to admire about Ed. After all, he was a man of many parts.

Along with Dan Wolf and Norman Mailer, he had been one of the founders of The Village Voice in 1955 and then had served as the paper’s publisher for the next 20 years. He was also, during his years at the Voice as well as for decades afterwards, a practicing psychologist.

Perhaps it was his training as psychologist that helped make talking to him such a pleasure; his eyes would fix on you with a deep and genuine interest and he always listened with a polite attention. And he was a tweedy, elegantly handsome man; he cut quite a figure in his bachelor days in the Village before his marriage to Vivian (who died in 2020) and his becoming a father to Emily and Bruce.

But for me, it was his courage that always filled me with respect and a large measure of awe.

Ed’s courage was, in one very large part, nothing less than sheer bravery. Raised in upstate New York, he had attended the University of Alaska largely because he liked to ski. But when World War II broke out, he joined the Army and, because of his prowess as a skier, found his way to the elite 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division. The unit was thrown into combat in the snow-covered mountains of Northern Italy. Much of the fighting was hand-to-hand, and Ed made his way through it all resigned, he told me, that he would never come out of it alive.

He didn’t like to talk about the war, but there was a photograph in his study in his penthouse apartment on 11<sup>th</sup> Street that caught my attention and, when I pressed him, he shared a story. It was a photo of a rifle-carrying Ed in combat fatigues standing alongside two partisans. As Ed matter-of-factly explained, the three were a scout team that had made their way up the seemingly insurmountable rocky cliffs of Riva Ridge in the dead of night. And it was their daring reconnaissance that provided the intelligence which enabled the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division to launch a successful surprise attack against the Germans encamped in the Po Valley. And Ed, despite the risk, had led the way — once in the recon mission, and then again in the attack.

But Ed also had a moral courage, too. In the Sheridan Square office of the *Village Voice* (where I had first met him) he shared an office with Dan Wolf, and together the two men formulated the paper’s guiding philosophy. It would be a writer’s paper, a paper that would speak the truth to power, and also let its writers share their thoughts and ideas, no matter how divergent, from the mainstream. It took a great deal of courage to do this back then, just as this sort of no-holds-barred journalism requires a great deal of courage now, too.

But Ed never backed down. Not in war. And not in peace. He was a man of honor, and he will be missed.

*Howard Blum is a former staff writer for the Village Voice who, after working as an investigative reporter at the New York Times, went on to write several bestselling books. “When The Night Comes Falling: A Requiem for the Idaho Student Murders,” will be published in June by HarperCollins.*

# Malachy McCourt, Author, Actor, Politician, All with Irish Flair, 92

BY CLYDE HABERMAN

Malachy Gerald McCourt, who was at various points – and in no special order – an actor, a saloonkeeper, an author, a dishwasher, a dock worker, a radio host, a smuggler and a Bible salesman – chose in 2006 to add political candidate to his résumé. He ran for New York governor that year.

Actually, showing his Irish roots, he said that he was “standing for office.” Why American pols run for office and those on the other side of the Atlantic stand is not clear. Could it be that our politicians need a head start? In any event, Malachy ended up quite admirably in third place as the Green Party nominee. If only he had managed to pick up another 3,044,544 votes, he would have edged out the fellow who did win, Eliot Spitzer.

The sad part of it, he decided when I interviewed him before the election, is that American politics can be hopelessly grim. Their essence is “the inculcation of fear – fear and the evil of your opponents, what awful, dreadful, less-than-human beings they are,” he said. “Until elected. Then they say ‘We have to get behind them.’” Not much has changed on that score except perhaps the get-behind-them part.

Malachy died in March at age 92, weighed down with more ailments than need be listed here. Inevitably, he was at times paired and compared with his older brother, Frank McCourt, who died in 2009 and whose runaway best seller, “Angela’s Ashes,” affirmed that being wretchedly poor is not an ideal way to grow up. “I was blamed for not being my brother,” Malachy lamented. But he bore that burden well. Fact is, he had a best seller of his own in 1998, “A Monk Swimming,” the title evoking how as a boy he had misheard the Catholic reference to Mary as “blessed art thou amongst women.”

In his splendid New York Times obituary, Sam Roberts quoted Malachy’s advice to anyone writing a memoir: “Never show anything to your relatives.” Back in 1977, the brothers McCourt were trying out a play they had written, “A Couple of Blaguards,” which they declared to be “a lighthearted look at Ireland.” Unfortunately for them, their mother, Angela, was in the audience

during one performance, and she stood up and said, “It wasn’t like that! It’s all a pack of lies.”

As the years passed, Malachy decided that “every day above ground is a good one” and that a desirable goal for us all is to “stay on right side of the grass.” When I interviewed him during his race for governor, he dutifully ran through his campaign themes – serious matters for sure, like his opposition to capital punishment, to tuition charges at public colleges and to the then-raging war in Iraq. But he had other issues as well. Perhaps reflecting an instinctive Irish distrust of anything British, he wanted New York to drop its claim to be the Empire State. He favored a tax on tobacco so high that a single cigarette would cost the same as a gallon of gas.

Oh, and he was prepared to triple the tax on chewing gum. Gum chewers look stupid, he decided. And then all too many of them simply spit it out. “It does terrible things to the sidewalk and the subway,” he said.

But while his gubernatorial race was in no way intended as a joke, he cautioned against taking oneself too seriously.



MALACHY MCCOURT

Terminal solemnity is the curse of all too many in the political class, he said (and, he might well have added, of more than a few journalists). To reinforce the point, the

well-read Mr. McCourt offered a quotation from the English writer G.K. Chesterton: “Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.”

## Scholarship Winners Have Wide-Ranging Journalism Plans

The Silurians Press Club awards \$2,000 scholarships to students at three New York-area journalism schools.

**Curtis Rowser III**, a student at New York University’s Arthur L. Carter Institute for Journalism, accepted his award at the April luncheon. He has a bachelor’s degree in communications from Old Dominion University and a master’s in Sports Industry Management from Georgetown University. His special interests are basketball, hip-hop, culture reporting, criminal justice and personal essays. He’s been published in *amNY*, *Brooklyn Magazine*, *Epicenter-NYC*, *Timeout NY* and has two regular columns in *SLAM Magazine*.

**Alexa Foust**, of Columbia University’s Graduate School of Journalism, earned a bachelor’s degree at Boston College in Philosophy and Psychoanalytic Studies. After interning in the Massachusetts prison system and working as a paralegal for a few years, she decided she wanted a career in news and accountability reporting. She



CURTIS ROWSER



ALEXA FOUST

focused her studies on criminal justice and court systems. This summer, she will be a fellow at *The Maine Monitor*, a non-profit local accountability publication. She will continue writing stories on underreported communities and the juvenile correctional system in Maine.

**Mia Hollie**, of CUNY’s Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, is a New Jersey native who previously managed *Morpho Magazine*, a print and digital magazine by and for women and non-bi-

nary people of color. Hollie, who is part of the J-School’s Local Accountability Reporting concentration and Data Journalism specialization, wants to produce stories about underserved communities. A graduate of The Pennsylvania State University, Hollie has written for the *Mott Haven Herald* and for CUNY’s *City News Service*. She is set to intern this summer at *Chalkbeat*.

The Dennis Duggan Award went to **Khushali Haji**, also of CUNY, who is interested in immigrant and South Asian communities in New York. As an undergraduate she studied urban design at CEPT University, Ahmedabad. Haji wrote for the *Brooklyn Paper* about Muslim and Jewish musicians finding common ground in Coney Island, and reported for *Documented* on a regular gathering in Brooklyn’s Little Bangladesh for English lessons, chai tea and discussions on domestic abuse. Haji is slated to intern this summer at *New Narratives* in Liberia.