Guida’s ‘Salto Mortale’ A Roller Coaster Ride Through TV News

By Tony Guida

The Front Page
Wednesday October 2, 1996 is a date that will live in infamy in the archives of TV news. That’s when Channel 2 fired all the on-air talent. Nearly all their money, they don’t come in tomorrow.

Anchors and reporters on local TV know the game: like baseball managers, they’re hired to be fired. Same for their bosses, News Directors. They vanish faster than grifters on the con.

Channel 2 had four anchors in 1996; three got axed: John Johnson, Michele Marsh and me. The sportscaster, too. And the weekend anchor. And two reporters. Seven people gone in what seemed like 60 seconds.

The Daily News and The Post both made us the “goal” next morning. “BLOODBATH AT CH. 2,” screamed The Post. Even put the story above news that Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu met in secret summit in Washington, D.C.

The Daily News topped that. Gave us the whole front page. “ANCHORS AWAY!” in large type above pictures of Johnson, Marsh and me. Why are we all smiling? Maybe because the truth had set us free. The truth being that Channel 2’s ratings were lousy. Had been for many years. It’s fun to work in a place where crepe hangs from every light fixture.

I took my eight months pay and a wonderful vacation in Italy with my younger daughter. I got another job. And two thrashed memos: framed copies of both front pages for my office wall.

How’s I Doing?
When Channel 2 wooed me away from NBC in 1980 their offer to make me Chief Political Correspondent was the deal maker. Little did I know I would be the only political correspondent, but why quibble over details. If timing makes champions, arriving at ringside for New York politics in that era made me at least a contender. Alfonsine D’Amato was mauling Jacob Javits on his unlikely run to the Senate. Mario Cuomo was slouching toward Albany. And at City Hall: reigned Edward I (for Imperial?) Koch.

Of all the local TV newsrooms in all the towns in all the country, most don’t care a farting about politics, except in Presidential years. Their reporters can’t find City Hall with a GPS. But in this city at that time politics sizzled.

More precisely, Ed Koch sizzled. He javanished the “politics of me” everywhere he went. His mouth always moving, the mayor charmed or infuriated the citizenry with his often snarky opinions. No subject was off-limits. News Directors couldn’t get their fill. No matter what a reporter was assigned to a fatal car crash on the FDR or the latest lad for losing the rounds by Thursday, his story was not considered complete without a soundbite from Hizzoner. No problem. All had a TV camera he didn’t surrender. For some of us, spending part of every day with the “Mayatullah” as he once described himself was too much.

There came the time when Koch de-
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Edith Evans Asbury: Grande Dame of the New York Press, Dead at 98

By Betsy Wade

Edith Evans Asbury, a tenacious reporter for The New York Times from 1929 of her 52 years in journalism, died October 30, 2008, at her home in Greenwich Village. She was 98 years old.

Ms. Asbury retired from The Times in 1981 when she was over 70 but she still peppered colleagues with story ideas; she continued freelance writing for many years. With vision and hearing failing, she could still beat friends at Scrabble. She was in declining health for the last two years, and finally had been unable to attend the Silurians events she loved.

When, as a teenager, Ms. Asbury dropped out of college in 1929 to take her first newspaper job, women were represented in journalism in small numbers and most often in society news, writing up recipes, household hints and advice to the lovelorn. Ms. Asbury, beginning on the women’s pages in Cincinnati, forged a career against these odds, working at three daily newspapers and the Associated Press before...
Riding the Rails

By Larry Stessin

"One evening as the sun went down
And the jungle fire was burning
Down the track came a hobo riding.
And he said, "Boys I'm not turning
I'm heading for a land that is far away.
Beside the crystal fountain.
So, come with me; we'll go and see
The Big Rock Candy Mountain.

The Big Rock Candy Mountain
A famous old hobo poem

In song and story the American hobo was a true romantic, a knight of the open road who crisscrossed this country with a pack on his shoulder and a few coins jingling in his jeans. He was drawn as a free spirited rover dedicated to a simple world of miles and hobo way of life. To ballad makers Hobo Heaven was a fanciful Valhalla of strumming guitars and "bawdy blows" whose harmonicas, corroded with tobacco juice, made musical music like the accompaniment of grinding wheels and hissing steam. It was this false romanticism that lured me to ride the rails rather than sell apples on a street corner during the depression of 1932.

It was a very dark night when I approached a stationary freight train on the west side of Manhattan. Young and supple from years of Harlem handbail, I leaped into an open cattle car lighted only by the tin angel fire of fresh smoking stoves. There was no conversation – only the sounds of multiple snoring. The absence of the human voice was, as every professional vagabond knew, a barrier against alerting the "ball," as was the lingo for railroad police. In minutes I heard the footstep of a whistle and the clang of a bell which I knew from my younger days of playing hide and seek in the freight yards near Heil's Kitchen, that the deadline had come for the wheels to ride the cargo – wherever.

Once the train settled down to a steady speed I crawled towards a vacant corner and joined the snoozers. It was never clear when the shadows I first saw when I vaulted the freight car turned into two dozes seedy-clad men sprawled on a floor covered with straw and old soggy newspapers pounded into the shape of pil-

In the depths of the Great Depression, hoboos climb the catwalk of a passing freight, circa 1932.

Walking the rails.

In the late afternoon in April, when Jim Greenfield, the Times' foreign news editor, appeared at my desk at the back of the block-long newspaper and told me to come with him. As supervisor of the research team that supports the news department, I had worked with reporters and editors on all kinds of assignments, but had no idea what Greenfield wanted.

I followed him through the haze of cigar smoke to the area where the men of the masthead presided (no women then had yet achieved that rank). Peter Milholland, the assistant managing editor Abe Rosenthal, looked up as we approached, nodded and stood, so that be and Jim flanked me. Silently, they hustled me from the building and into a waiting car. I didn't even have time to grab my coat. "Hilton Hotel," instructed Peter, and we headed upstairs to Sixth Avenue and 53rd Street.

Not another word was spoken during the ride, or as we strode through the hotel lobby, or as we took the elevator to the 11th floor. "What's going on?" I wondered. We approached 1107 and Peter rapped on the door of which seemed to be a coded series of knocks.

When the door opened, I saw three familiar faces: Gerry Gold and Al Siegel, both associate foreign news editors, and Muriel Stokes, a newsroom secretary. There was also someone I didn't recognize – a fellow from the Washington Bureau named Neil Sheehan who, as it turned out, was the reason for all the subterfuge.

Jim finally broke the silence. Looking at me, he said, "I guess you want to know what this is all about. Neil has acquired a secret Pentagon study that details the history of U.S. Involvement in Vietnam, and we plan to publish a series about it. I want to stress that these documents are top secret and that it is illegal to have them in our possession. Anyone who is involved with them faces the risk of government prosecution and of prison. There are about 7,000 pages. The adventure began like this: to be the researcher on the project. But, given the circumstances and the risks, we will understand if you feel you'd rather not. No hard feelings.

"Count me in," I said, without blinking. It would never have occurred to me to be part of a sound like a monumental news story.

Suite 1107 was composed of three rooms filled with office furniture, electric typewriters, filing cabinets to the area, and I felt safe. In one of the rooms, piles of papers blanketed bin beds and every other flat surface. I randomly picked up a sheet and saw david was a "Pentagon Secret," many with hand-written notations in the margins.

Subsequently, our team was joined by three other reporters, four more secretaries and dozens of editors, copy editors and assistants. To accommodate them, six additional rooms were

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Relentless in Pursuit, On the Barricades for Newswomen

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option – despite any danger a pregnancy might pose to a patient. It was not an official policy, as Ms. Asbury determined; it was simply a ban. Its existence came to light in a letter from Dr. Morris A. Jacobs, Commissioner of Hospitals, to the president of the obstetricians at Kings County Hospital: “I do not consider it the func-
tion or responsibility of the municipal hospitals of this city to disseminate birth-
control information.”

This story involved finding people, ask-
ing one group to respond to the actions of another, pushing and pulling. Week after week, to the tune of almost three columns in the 1958 Times Index, Ms. Asbury pursued the sprawling and elu-
sive story. It was no place for flashy writing: it was a clash of powerful forces, among them the Roman Catholic Arch-
diocese of New York and the Vatican, the City of New York and the American Civil Liberties Union. Finally, on Sept. 17, the Board of Hospitals voted 8-2 to lift the ban. Ms. Asbury’s article, and a picture of the board, appeared on page 1. Following up, Ms. Asbury tracked down Margaret Sanger, the pioneer in birth-control, and interviewed her by phone. The rest of the year required Ms. Asbury to collect awards, many from partisans in the struggle, others from or-
ganizations like the Newspaperwomen’s Club. Ms. Asbury described such sto-
ries as “those long-term projects where you can hammer away and get some-
thing done.”

Her persistence and skill influenced many. Sydney H. Schanberg, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1975 for coverage of Cambodia, wrote in 2001 in the Columbia Journalism Review that when he started out, The Times had no investigative team, but Ms. Asbury would “go out on court cases and dig things up.” “She was tena-
cious,” Mr. Schanberg wrote. “She would get her teeth into somebody’s ankle and wouldn’t let go . . . [such] people didn’t care whose ox was being gored or what
sacred cow was mooing in the publisher’s ear.”

The late Sheldon Binn, an assistant met-
ropolitan editor in Ms. Asbury’s tenure, said his first impression was of someone “fashionable, like a Saks Fifth Avenue matron.” But he found out otherwise. He recalled one day she was on a telephone near him interviewing a city commissioner. Her voice was quite low, then rose sud-
denly when she said, “Commissioner, don’t give me that bullshit.” “There was nobody tougher than her,” Mr. Binn said. But the late George Barrett, long the No. 1 rewrite man at the Times, told an editor he enjoyed his duties escorting Ms. Asbury to award dinners because he

found dancing with her Pentagon Papers

Cabal such fun.

Ms. Asbury was vivacious and pretty, and as a young woman was frequently the target of unwanted sexual advances by editors and others. Her second hus-
band, the reporter and writer Herbert Asbury, was so smitten that two weeks after meeting her in March 1945 he asked her to marry him. They both scrambled to unearth their divorce papers and were married the next day in Fort Lee, N.J. As an older woman she looked dumpy and sweet, her white hair up in a bun. But to those who dealt with her, the appearance belied the reality.

Ms. Asbury was born Edith Snyder in New Boston, Ohio, on June 30, 1910, the oldest child of 16 born to Fletcher Snyder and the former Mary Myrtle Lutz. The family soon moved to Cincinnati. Mrs. Asbury told an interviewer later she was burdened caring for younger children, and the big family wore out her mother.

On May 21, 1927, when she was graduating from high school, Edith Snyder got her long hair bobbed, not unusual for the times, except she remembered the date. While she was in the chair, a head popped into the barber’s door to say: “Well, he did it!” – Lindbergh had ar-

rived to Paris on his trans-Atlantic flight. She got a scholarship and that fall en-
tered Western College, a woman’s school in Cedar Falls, Iowa, where she got a summer job on the Cincinnati Times-
Star, and dropped out of college to stay on. In 1930, she married, quit her job and moved with her three months old son Evans, an Army officer, to Knoxville, Tenn. Feel-
ing idle, she enrolled at the University of Tennessee, earning a bachelor’s and master’s degrees in English. She started doing social notes for a temporary pa-
ter, then shifted to The Knoxville News-
Sentinel. In the 1930s and 1940s, Ms. As-
bury became one of the city’s leading

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Pentagon Papers

Cabal

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transformed into temporary offices. I remained the only researcher and, as such, I had three responsibilities. The first was to gather and organize the documents. Since we couldn’t assume that there were no errors in the documents, my first obligation was to verify everything we could. We had to keep the public, check-
ing to ensure that each fact we pub-

lished would be indisputably correct – and

through my due diligence. In those pre-computer days, the sources I most relied on were the old-
fashioned ones: the Times’ gigantic cipp-
ings morgue – specifically its “French Indochina” and “Vietnam” files spanning decades of coverage, as well as presidential files from Harry Truman to Lyndon Johnson – and the Times’ ref-

erence library of 55,000 books, containing every thing from decades-old World Almanacs to the most recent volumes about Vietnam.

To avoid interrogation by curious co-

workers, everyone working at the Hilton had been directed to keep away from the newsroom – everyone but me. That is, because so many of the sources I needed were in The Times building, it was necessary for me to work there – but in a private, locked office, rather

than at my usual desk – and to shuttle to the Hilton several times a day, deliv-
rering information and conferring about new assignments.

At least, that was the plan. But my strange new patterns hardly went un-
noticed by intrepid newsroom col-

leagues, who made repeated efforts to wheedle information out of me about the mysterious project. For a while, I concocted not very credible cover sto-

ries. But eventually, many of the books, files and other resources materials were moved to the Hilton so I could work there full-time.

My second objective was trickier. I was asked to determine – surrepti-
tiously, of course – whether certain in-

formation in the documents was actu-

ally “top secret” as claimed, or if it had been previously published in either the

mainstream press or in esoteric jour-
nals. I headed to libraries with relevant collections, where, as a Times re-

searcher, I was allowed access to materi-

tals not generally available to the public. Occasionally, I made phone calls to experts, downloading my queries by e-mail. The information was for a routine story of no special significance.

And, of course, I did general research on the entire project, checking back-

ground, biographical information and other details to amplify material in the documents. A four-column chronology was written as a help-

device for comparing public and private events as they occurred. The column centered on the left page was a draft from next to it gave a public event that occurred

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The Joys of Being A Sportswriter

By Vic Ziegel

The Long Island Press no longer exists, but this oldie from 1979 was still in college. I showed up at the Press several nights a week — eight splendiferous bucks a night — to take high school basketball results over the phone and write a few paragraphs of roundup, nothing too fancy.

There were about a half-dozen of us living this fast lane. One night, much like all the other nights, the scores starting running together. And to keep awake, and avoid falling asleep, my colleague Lorin Times OTB, a very vicious SOB, I urged my fellow eight-backers to restate the same phrase in the lead of our basketball roundups. The next day, on the high school page of the Long Island Press, in a half-dozen league stories, and another on non-conference games, it was reported that Chuck Lasiname or Danny Lasiname or Gerry Lasiname led his team to victory by “performing yeoman work under the boards.”

Seven other yeoman work under the boards. And I was back the next night, accepting congratulations, another eight bucks heading my way. What did I learn? That if I ever fell off a roof and landed on my head, I would still edit stories about high school sports for the Long Island Press. That people would laugh when I repeated those lines.

Very seductive, the sound of laughter. And so I discovered, in my yeoman period, that if I wanted to continue hearing the pleasing sound of laughter, I could keep writing sports. At least until I discovered what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Nothing seems to have changed. I can still be found in the sports section, still trying to earn a smile. Makes me think, nights in Pittsburgh, Louisville, the Iona-Siena game, that maybe I did fall off that roof.

Tom Rogers, a Times sportswriter, figured me out a long time ago. Vic doesn’t write about sports, he told a mutual friend, he writes about sportswriting.

Guilty, with the usual explanation. Sports is thrilling, fascinating, exhilarating, and happens out of town often enough to accomplish wonderful things with an expense account. Like the night in Philadelphia, when the sorry Mets of the mid-60’s, scored 20 runs against the Phils, and manager Wes Westrum explained by saying his players had their hitting shoes on. So I toured the Mets clubhouse asking the players to tell me about their shoes. Clean Jones said he found his in an alley.

Gene Mauch, a long-time manager, once said, “I liked it a lot better when writers didn’t think they had to write as fast as he.”

Vic didn’t have a new car, he said, never a Pennant. And I’ll never win a Pulitzer, but it’s a great line. One of the great things about sportswriting was that you didn’t have to include the victim’s home address and get a quote about what a good person he was before climbing that tower and picking off eleven people. Sportswriting, back then, the second in Lincoln administration, was about getting the score and explaining the why of it.

They days are over. Now we have to worry about drugs, money, more drugs, more money, arrests, the increasing number of players who refuse to share their most intimate thoughts with us, college boys who don’t know how to spell college, the salary cap (and other man-made disasters), athletes endorsing sneakers, heroin kids are being killed for, and to pick three names out of a Yankee cap, Alex Rodriguez, Joe Torre and Derek Jeter.

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Postcards from the Ledge

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cised he needed a new car. The mayoral ride in those days was a black limo. This one was ripe with age. But which one is the new one? No, really, Kurlat. Daily, his decision into the greatest quest since Jason and the Golden Shuttars. Daily, he mused about the relative at- traction of each individual car in his fleet. Each day, he insisted rear-seat legroom was paramount; the car would have to be a stretch version. “I have very long legs, actually,” he commented. Daily. Daily, he spent his days rehearsing for his appearance on the next day’s o’clock news. Daily. Each afternoon the News Director assigned me to get an interview on the limo. My protests that there was no lat- est fell like as tree in deep woods. Koch was giving a speech at the Hilton hotel in midtown. I waited for him outside near the vehicle that was soon to be replaced. I told my cameraman to maintain a 2-shot for this interview, keep me on screen with Koch. I fig- uré there might beicker.

“What’s the latest on the car search Mr. Mayor?” It was like throwing pork chops to a pit bull.

Koch spied it like a trummler. Worn out…springs shot…transmission going…terribly uncomfortable. No leg- room in the back. “I have very long…”

“Did you ever think about hiring a shorter driver?”

Silence. Gradually, a thin smile creased his lips, he pointed a long indi- ces finger at me, the Cairo, “you’re very good. Tony. Unlike you, but very good.”

The piece played to rave notices on the evening news.

Charlie, Charlie, Charlie

When I was co-anchoring “Living At 5” on Channel 4 in the late 1980’s we booked Charles Kuralt as a guest. Kuralt was my idol, pure and simple, for his pure, elegantly simple writing. And that voice! Sonorous, caress- ingly musical, caressing every word like a parent with a newborn. Kuralt wrote and spoke poetry on deadline.

He was coming to the program to promote his latest book. I would interview, I thought, the way he interviewed me. I would interview him, I thought, the way I was frightened me. I had never met Kuralt. I wanted to impress him.

His book was a memoir, “A Life On The Road.” It told of his birth in 1934 as his first road trip. Fran- tic father, laboring mother, 4 hour’s drive from the Kuralt farm to the hospi- tal in Wilmington, N.C.: “I was born the next morning with rambling in my blood and fifty miles already ready under my belt.”

Kuralt has you at hello.

I resolved to make my interview with Kuralt, well…Kuraltian. Trying to emulate the master was folly, but fools rush in. I wrote and re-wrote all night. Drinking. Starch. Dozens more attempts throughout the afternoon. Getting bet- ter but I was pushing deadline.

I would come on in the final segment of the program. At 5:53 the camera’s red light flashed and I spoke: “You probably think TV news is a violent medium. Not true. No, but when you read good words accompany good pictures.”

“Charles Kuralt has been writing good words for CBS News for 33 years and now has put a few thousand of them into a book: A Life On The Road,” a sweet and humorous and in one way surprising memoir about how his intense wanderlust became a distin- guished career.

I turned to welcome Kuralt. Before I could ask a question he smiled and said simply, “That was a marvelous intro- duction!”

My heart stopped. Apparently my brain did too. I blurted, “Thank you. Uh, I wrote it myself.”

Nooooooo! My blubbering hung in the air like a guiltline. Please let the floor open wide and swallow me. Be-neath my makeup my face burned. My perspiration beaded across my upper lip. I’m told the interview went well, but I have no recollection of it. I was drown- ing in mortification.

No one else noticed. And today my only regret is that I do not have a tape of that moment.

My magna carta from thirty-five years on the tube came from Murray Kempton. A letter. A lovely document, typewritten on Newsday stationery, complete with strikethroughs, carats and penciled insertions. The date is April 25, 1985. Kempton won the Pulitzer Prize that year. He was sixty-eight. I was out of town on assignment so I sent him a teletypewriter: “Congratulations! What took them so long?”

Kempton the newspaperman wrote four columns a week for forty years. Sometimes they were incrustable but never did they contain anything less than elegant words revealing a man of dignity and grace.

Murray answered my telegram with this extraordinary gift:

“Ah, Tony. You are not the first to say — although you give your heritage you brought a particular grace to saying — that my rewards were not premature. Whether they are or not, isn’t it more than probable that had you come earlier rather than when my days are in the yellow leaf, I might be sitting here now cut by the thought that nobody cared for me? Better late, if late they are, for late is when you really need them.”

There is more. Impossible references connecting Westbrook Pegler and Tris Speaker. It is est. Kempton. He closed, “Thanks enormously and affection- ately...”

That ain’t bad either.
Ode to Flaherty

By Patrick Fenton

One evening in the summer of 1966, his head still pounding from drinking, Joe Flaherty pulled himself up out of the subway after another day loading grain on the Red Hook docks. The only part of his brain that still worked was remembering the '50s rock 'n' roll from the night before, Del Shannon and Ivory Joe Hunter, from the old jukebox in the Caton Inn on Coney Island Ave. As he made his way up Plaza St. toward Flatbush Ave., he began to remember throwing up at some point, too.

He didn’t know it, but his days as a longshoreman were about to end. He would soon leave the neighborhood bars of Windsor Terrace, where he spent his nights drinking in places like Farrell’s Bar on 16th Street, Val’s on Prospect Ave. or Boops on 17th St., with guys like Noonan Taylor, a fellow dockworker said to have once been the toughest man in Brooklyn, and cross over the bridge to Manhattan, where he would find himself instead at the Lion’s Head in Greenwich Village, drinking with people like singer Bob Dylan and poet Joel Oppenheim and newspaperman Pete Hamill. Eventually, he would be dining at Mayor Ed Koch’s table.

“Mother Muse, or Lady Luck, flashed me a wink,” as Flaherty would put it later. As he walked toward Prospect Park, somebody handed him a pamphlet announcing that Mayor John Lindsay was going to speak about the Civilian Review Board. For weeks now, Lindsay had been ridiculed by the conservative press for calling increasingly troubled New York “Fun City,” and now the gathering crowds were looking for blood. Curses were hurled at the mayor as he began to speak, and an anti-Lindsay chant went up. Flaherty thought the mob quite rude. He occasionally published short pieces in a local weekly, The Park Slope News, and now he went home and wrote about the day’s events.

“Why Has The Fun Fled Fun City?” Flaherty called his article. “He’s right,” he said of the mayor. New York, despite everything, was fun. “You can drink German beer in Luchow’s on Sunday afternoon or belt boillermakers in Ireland’s 32, or sip brandy after the theater in Shor’s next to Gleason, Arcaro and Graziano. Sit in the grass with a can of beer and watch the grace of two Puerto Rican teams playing softball. .. We have all the intrigue of the Cashbah, yet our souls are somewhere in Levittown.”

He wrote all this in longhand and gave it to a pal at The Park Slope News, Jack Deacy, who decided to send it over to Dan Wolfe at The Village Voice. The piece showed up in The Village Voice in October of 1966, featuring a photograph of Flaherty and the caption “Joe Flaherty, Village Voice columnist, a voice of the emerging ‘new journalism,’” and Norman Mailer’s campaign manager during his wild run for New York City Mayor in 1969.

Field of Dreams

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becomes a game of playing chicken with the ax. So I sat down with the other guys, go downstairs for another cup of cardboard coffee, call home, anybody’s home, until it’s finally the dreaded moment. The sports editor is standing over me asking “Where is it?” This is what you answer, kids. You say five minutes. Not to worry. If you miss once, nothing much happens. If you miss too many times, they make you sports editor.

When I covered baseball for the New York Post, the real New York Post, it was especially important that I finish in good time. Before the bars closed. The Lion’s Head was my bar of choice. If I got there at a decent hour, there was a great chance that Len Sheeter, my friend, my idol, would be at the corner of the bar. He was the champ, tough, outrageous, funny, shrewd, fearless, acerbic, but don’t get me started. I wanted to write like Lenny—as they say in TV, the same but different—and on my best nights I came close. He covered the Yankees when they won the pennant twice a year. When their clubhouse was colder than Greenland. Mickey Mantle was probably the main perp. It was no easy thing to be tough, outrageous, swindled, etc. Lenny always had a great baseball beat. Mantle told him, for his ears only, “I always thought you had a lot of guts.”
Where Vagabonds Roam

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was to find a safe place to sleep. An empty candy car which sometimes could accommodate over fifty riders was al- ways a Godsend. Sometimes there was room enough to squeeze in a space where a car could be carrying some freight or livestock. Other than that, there were three alternatives — all dangerous. One was to wedge oneself beneath the iron rods which held a car. Another was to swiftly scoop up a ladder and stretch out on the boards on top of the speeding freight car and sleep as the train picked up speed. The third was to find a passenger train, the place for a hob to sleep was standing between the blinds, with elbows bent around the rods which held the thick, black leather shades — barriers against a lowering wind.

Photo by John Verach
Hopping a freight train in search of the elusive dream.

My mind was constantly concerned where to find safer places to sleep. If mileage and a specific designation was not a goal there were always hobos juggling, but often one could snap to a warm- ing fire. However, hobo juggling was always at the mercy of the local police or the railway patrols. It was the hobo juggling that frightened them and got- ting which provided what was safest. Jails. It seemed that almost every town or farm area had vagrancy laws, legisla- tion to keep the unwanted, the shifty, the beggars by besmirching the image of the community. The average penalty if caught and convicted was three months in jail. That was a hefty sentence for a restless tribe to take. From the rumors and gossip in the boxcars there was end- less talk that vagrancy laws were not being enforced in most of the country. Cities and towns by the hundred — be- cause of the need for free labor — would give the will or the buds for the shifty’s by jailing them for months at a time. This was music to my ears and one day I de- cided to put this good news to a test.

A Profound Impact on Journalism

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that day; the third column su- mmarized a public statement by the ad- ministration about that event; the fourth column summarized behind-the-scenes meetings, conversations and decisions on that day — many of which contra- dicted the public statement in the third column. There was talk of publishing this chronology, but it was scrapped for lack of space.

The first installment of the Pentagon Papers series hit the stands on Sunday, June 13 — approximately two months af- ter the New York Times published the “secret” and tomed them through the crowded lobby and to 43rd Street, where offices six floors above the newsroom had been commandeered and converted into a restricted area. In addition to our new workplace, there was also a temporary composing room and pressroom, hastily set up exclusively for publication of the Pentagon Papers.

When I saw the way The Times played that first installment, I couldn’t believe how understated it seemed: al- though above the fold, it was neither the lead story (“U.S. Urges Indians and Pas- tafians To Use Restrain”), nor the off- lead (“Tricia Nixon Takes Views In Gar- rison Community House”). Only the following day, it appeared under the very sedate Timeses headline, “Vietnam Archive: Pentagon Papers” — the Times Three Decades of U.S. In- volvement.”

After three installments had appeared, the Justice Department issued a restrain- t order against The Times and ordered 22 people as defendants, from publisher Arthur Ochs Sulzberger to the report- ers, editors and copy editors who had worked on the series. “I believe there had been part of the team from its inception, my name wasn’t included. The explana- tion: The Times did not want a woman listed as a defendant because of the possi- bility of jail sentences. I could have done without the chivalry.

On June 30, in a historic affirmation of freedom of the press, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of The Times. With jubila- tion, we went back to work on the re- maining installments.

The following spring, champagne flowed in the newsroom when The Times was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Pub- lic Service for its publication of the Pen- tagon Papers. By that time, of course, my “secret” life had long ended. But I’m reminded of it every time I look at my gold-framed replicas of the Pulitzer Medal — one of about a dozen presented by Pulitzer to “key members of the team.” And, as always, memories of that time continue to fill me with pride in our profession.