

**THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS
OF A CAREER
IN INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM**

by
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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Honors Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, in the Dean's Scholar Program in International and Environmental Journalism.

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ABSTRACT

The primary goal of this thesis is to explore the challenges commonly faced by international journalists in all regions of the globe and to discover what strategies are used to overcome them, through interviews with twelve international correspondents in both print and broadcast media.

I decided to investigate five distinct obstacles faced by many international journalists. The first is the challenge of getting started in the field. Journalists are rarely well-versed in foreign affairs when they first begin, and they must move past culture shock and confusion in international situations in order to become knowledgeable. However, I found that most interviewees saw the learning process as an essential part of journalism, and that starting from scratch is preferable to arriving in a foreign country with inaccurate preconceptions.

The second is the challenge of developing successful personal relationships and raising a family while working in the field, a difficult accomplishment for both parachute and immersion journalists. I found most journalists used one of three ways to keep families together. One was to alter one's professional duties to spend more time with the family; two, to take the entire family on long-term assignments; or three, to rely on one's spouse to bear the primary responsibility for stabilizing the family.

The third obstacle is burnout caused by stress, a phenomenon faced by almost every international journalist in the course of his or her career. Decades of leaving home at a moment's notice, living deadline to deadline and often being threatened by violence take an enormous toll on correspondents. Most recognize that it is not a job one can do forever. Shifting jobs or locations is necessary not only to save one's sanity but to maintain the challenging nature of the profession.

The fourth challenge I examined is the gender and racial bias faced by female and minority journalists while working overseas. Interestingly, representatives of both groups said their minority status was more of a help than a hindrance in reporting, and aided them to either gain the trust of sources in international situations or to catch them off guard.

And the fifth challenge is simply how best to tell a story. Both print and broadcast journalists debate which is better — colorful feature writing or concise, factual accounts of the news. In the end it seems a mix of the two is best for capturing the attention of the American audience; journalists spoke of leading a story with a vivid image or single event and then “pulling back the camera” (in both print and broadcast) to get the wider picture.

These obstacles in journalists' personal and professional lives do vary with individual situations and assignments. But I believe that by investigating the trials that correspondents have shared and survived, perhaps beginning international journalists will be better prepared for the adventures ahead.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION, GOALS AND METHODS

“We are fully sensible, that to publish a good News-Paper is not so easy an Undertaking as many People imagine it to be. The Author of a Gazette (in the Opinion of the Learned) ought to be qualified with an extensive Acquaintance of Languages, a great Easiness and Command of Writing and Relating Things clearly and intelligibly, and in a few words; he should be able to speak of War both by Land and Sea; be well acquainted with Geography, with the History of the time, with the several Interests of Princes and States, the Secrets of Courts, and the Manners and Customs of all nations. Men thus accomplish’d are very rare in this remote Part of the World; and it would be well if the writers of these Papers could make up among his Friends what is wanting in himself.”

Benjamin Franklin wrote these words in the first issue of *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, on Sept. 25, 1729 — long before the now-United States had any national news correspondents, let alone international. Yet his words describe perfectly the qualities of the ideal foreign correspondent, any one of those adventurous and knowledgeable journalists whose lifelong profession is telling Americans stories about the rest of the world. Men — and women — “thus accomplish’d” are unusual but no longer rare, and America itself no longer lies in a “remote Part of the World.” The phenomenon of globalization is tying the United States closer and closer to its once-foreign neighbors, and international journalism is becoming increasingly important in defining Americans as global citizens.

Near-universal access to news via the Internet, television, print, and radio today allows anyone's curiosity about the world to be satisfied with minimal investment of time. Where are the wars this week? What are the Israelis and Palestinians saying to each other today? Has a human been cloned in Italy yet? Are the rainforests ablaze in Brazil?

One question rarely asked, however, is "Who is telling us these stories?" Despite Americans' avowed distrust of the media, they assume that the news is plain facts, existing independently of the humans who report it. If a CNN bulletin announces political riots in the Ivory Coast, no one questions how the anchor in the studio obtained that information. Yet somewhere in Abidjan a foreign correspondent roams the streets, observing and interviewing, trying to get the facts and perhaps even dodging stones. His or her name may not appear in a byline, depending on the employing news organization. But without the work of people like these, Americans would know nothing of the world outside U.S. borders save what the government says.

Stephen Hess, who published a book on international correspondence in 1996, estimated the number of foreign correspondents whose work appeared on a regular basis in the United States at 1,500 (Hess xiv). This number may seem large, but consider that it includes journalists for television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and wire services. These 1,500 alone bear the responsibility for telling the stories of 190 foreign nations and over six billion people. As CNN correspondent Jim Clancy wrote, "one of the truly amusing parts of being an international correspondent full-time is that most people think there is a massive reservoir of people who go out and

cover the world. There isn't. It's the same core group of people who hit almost every major story!"

Who are the members of this corps of men and women who tell Americans everything they know about the world outside? Contrary to what one might expect, few enter the field as experts in world affairs and foreign policy. No school exists that international journalists must attend before setting off for foreign places. Most begin their careers when they are "young, single and adventurous," in the words of CNN's Clancy. Many do not speak the language of the countries they cover, and are expected simply to figure things out as they go along. In arenas ranging from war zones to family homes, negotiation tables to rain forests, correspondents face violence, prejudice, isolation, and bewilderment as they strive to do their job.

In this thesis, my primary goal is to explore the challenges commonly faced by international journalists in all regions of the globe and to discover what strategies are used to overcome them. Foreign correspondents tend to downplay the difficulty of their work, yet all face formidable obstacles in their personal and professional lives. These vary with individual situations and assignments, but investigating the trials that correspondents have shared and survived may help beginning international journalists to prepare for the adventures ahead.

This project also seeks to discover what international journalists believe will solve the problem of waning American interest in events abroad. We in the United States take free speech for granted, and near universal access to news media has deluged us with information. Yet a 1994 poll by the Times Mirror Center for the People and the Press showed that only 6 percent of Americans could answer correctly

five basic questions on international events, while 37 percent could not answer any of the five. Overall, the U.S. performed worst of the eight developed countries surveyed (Hess 2).

Hess's findings regarding the quality of international news coverage are sobering. CNN and a handful of newspapers had maintained, and even increased, their numbers of full-time foreign correspondents. However, most newspapers relied on wire service dispatches to fill up their "World News" columns, a decision that meant summarizing nearly all events overseas with brief paragraphs instead of investing in longer, more colorful or analytical coverage. In television news, Hess found that:

"...no country, with the possible exception of Russia, was explained and presented coherently enough so that attentive viewers could believe they understood how life was lived there. The narrow span of TV foreign news, largely government related and driven by events, differed markedly from the broader and more balanced array of subjects in domestic news. International environmental problems, education, science and the arts were rarely mentioned. Half the world's 180 or so countries were never noted."

(Hess 4)

The majority of journalists interviewed for this project acknowledge they are dissatisfied with the current state of foreign affairs reporting. They attributed the lack of in-depth news to the media industry's reluctance to fund international coverage, not to individual reporters' methods. Yet obviously, the quality of any news story depends not only on resources, but also heavily upon the skill, knowledge, and personality of the reporter.

Journalists disagree on the best way to communicate the importance of foreign affairs to the American audience. Every correspondent has his or her own unique style of telling a story. Some disdain creative reporting as “feature writing,” while others maintain that telling colorful stories of people’s lives is the only way to involve an audience in a foreign world. Striking a balance between informing the public with the relevant facts and capturing its interest is one of the most difficult challenges international journalists face.

Methodology

This essay is not only an investigation of journalistic lives and methods, but an exercise in journalism in itself. Interviews with twelve international journalists about their experiences in the field formed the primary base of information for answering the central questions. Interviewing professional foreign correspondents also proved to be a rare chance for the author of this thesis to hone her own journalistic skills. As any journalist will attest, interviews form the foundation for information-gathering, whether reporting for one’s high school paper or for an international publication. Not only did the author learn a great deal about journalistic method from these interviews, but the substance of the conversations provided valuable insights into the nature of a life in international journalism.

Three University of Delaware professors — Ralph Begleiter, Dennis Jackson, Ph.D., and McKay Jenkins, Ph.D. — provided contact information for many well-known professionals in the field. To limit the focus of my research, I contacted only print and television journalists whose work has appeared in U.S. news media. I also

made an effort to include minority correspondents — women, African-Americans, and those of other ethnic backgrounds. Tracking down retired correspondents and those currently on assignment proved to be difficult, yet surprisingly, despite the hectic pace of correspondents' lives, nearly all those contacted replied enthusiastically to e-mail queries. Dates for conversations by telephone, e-mail and meetings in person were scheduled from October 2000 to April 2001. Portions of two interviews, with journalists Richard Ben Cramer and Cinnie Kennard, were recorded and transcribed, appearing as appendices A and B. I regret I could not include the complete text of every interview due to limitations of time, space, and recording capability. The biographies of all interviewed sources make up chapter two.

I first sought to contextualize the stories of those working today within the history of American international journalism. Both the technology and the goals of the field have developed significantly in the last two centuries, even more dramatically in the last two decades. Investigating repeated trends in the experiences of international journalists over the years made it possible to understand how the challenges facing today's correspondents arose.

I began my research by reading several histories of American international journalism as well as biographies and memoirs of prominent figures in the field. Correspondents' personal stories not only tell behind-the-scenes accounts of earthshaking events, but also provide valuable insight into the evolution of the roles and ethics of international journalists. The background and development of international journalism, as well as the recurring challenges faced by correspondents, will be discussed in chapter three.

I found the study of international journalism fascinating not just because it is the history of the first draft of history, but because almost every foreign correspondent gets tremendously excited about his or her work. Correspondents both veteran and novice gleefully tell stories of escaping bullets and bombs, of meeting world leaders, of wandering into forbidden places and facing unpredictable situations. Reporting from a foreign country is a thrilling challenge for any journalist, but the initial confusion and personal isolation felt when thrown into an unfamiliar situation can be daunting. These obstacles affect both **parachute** and **immersion** journalists.

Parachute journalists, or “firefighters,” leap from crisis to crisis across the globe to cover the story of the hour as fast as possible. They may find themselves in the Middle East one day and Moscow the next, or pulled suddenly from a war situation to cover an earthquake on the other side of the globe. In exchange for this exciting lifestyle, parachutists sacrifice stability in their lives and often lack advanced understanding of the situations in which they find themselves. Immersion journalists, on the other hand, I defined for the purposes of this thesis as those who remain in a single region for a year or more. They may stay in a country for decades, learning the language and culture and filing news stories from their home bureau. Both parachute and immersion journalists are essential, as today’s news audience demands both quick coverage of new crises and in-depth reports on ongoing situations. The obstacles encountered in each career path are similar, yet the lifestyles of each type of journalist demand different coping strategies. In chapters four and five, the primary challenges all foreign correspondents encounter will be examined in the context of these two categories.

Feelings of solitude and isolation are inescapable for both parachute and immersion foreign correspondents when first thrown into an unfamiliar environment. They describe experiences of culture shock and bewilderment that make it difficult to comprehend, let alone report on, foreign news. All journalists interviewed say the awkward learning process initiates good journalism, however. Chapter four investigates the challenge of facing confusion in international situations and becoming knowledgeable.

Once correspondents find themselves comfortable living and working overseas, whether immersed or parachuting, they often find themselves facing the new challenge of raising a family. Many of the journalists interviewed experienced unique difficulties — and rewards — trying to balance the demands of their careers with the interests of their spouses and/or children. The primary issues are safety, for the journalist and for his or her family; cultural differences; and the absence of one parent for extended periods of time. Foreign correspondents all have different strategies for making family life work. Some parachutists gave up big stories for a chance to be with their children, while immersion journalists often took their loved ones with them on long-term assignments.

Foreign correspondents may even become *too* comfortable, or too stressed, in their work abroad, and experience the phenomenon of “burnout.” When one has been immersed in one country too long, interest in work may decline. Stories seem to repeat themselves, and the excitement of journalism dwindles. Burnout can also occur if a journalist’s life is too hectic. Leaping from crisis to crisis with deadlines always looming pushes correspondents to their physical and mental limits. Facing

violent situations is also a significant stressor for immersion and parachute journalists alike, especially when their families are involved. Family life and reactions to stress will be examined in the contexts of both immersion and parachute journalism in chapter five.

In the last century, international journalism, like most other professions, has gradually become more inclusive of women and minorities. Progress has been slow, however. Hess's research of demographics in the field showed that in 1992, 92 percent of foreign correspondents were white, compared to 95 percent before 1980. About one-third of correspondents were women, a proportion that skyrocketed in the 1980s but has not increased substantially since then.

Female international journalists face special obstacles, including the gender bias inherent in many cultures, prejudice among colleagues, and the pressures of relationships and family. Minority journalists face prejudice as well, although their ethnicity may also aid them, depending on where they work abroad. The history of women and minorities in international journalism, as well as the unique challenges and advantages they face in the field, make up chapter six.

Regardless of background, specialty or medium, every foreign correspondent has a very definite opinion on how to best tell a story. The debate over the place of fact vs. feature reporting in international journalism rages perennially. Many, especially veteran correspondents, emphasize that reporting means facts, not "fluff" stories on people's daily lives or a journalist's personal observations of a situation. Other correspondents, most often those who choose brief overseas assignments instead of immersion, assert that the American audience isn't interested in factual

accounts of diplomatic proceedings or complicated conflicts, but in colorful stories they can relate to. This debate, and methods of melding the two styles, will be examined in chapter seven.

Finally, chapter eight will seek to answer the big question: What does it take to succeed as a foreign correspondent? And what does success mean in international journalism? Few enter the profession seeking to get rich, and seasoned correspondents know that no single story they write can change the world. Yet the rewards of international journalism equal the challenges — and often the challenges *are* rewards. Despite the difficulties, no journalist interviewed discouraged the author from aspiring to become a foreign correspondent. “What a wonderful time you’re going to have,” said Pulitzer Prize winner Richard Ben Cramer. “It’s gonna be great.”

Chapter 2

BIOGRAPHIES OF SOURCES

These are the brief biographies of each journalist interviewed for the project, including details of their lives and work. Each entry is followed by the dates and form of contact with the source, whether a phone conversation, e-mail dialogue, or in-person interview. A brief categorization of each source is also included, in this format: *Type of journalist* (parachute or immersion)/ *medium* (broadcast or print)/ *minority status if applicable* (within the field)/ *relationship status* (single/married/family). These sources are not meant to be a representative sampling of all international journalists, but rather are those with whom I was able to make substantive contact.

Ralph Begleiter

In eighteen years working for CNN, Ralph Begleiter became the network's most widely traveled correspondent after flying more than 1.5 million miles around the globe with several U.S. Presidents and Secretaries of State. He joined CNN a year after its conception, in 1981, and became State Department correspondent in June 1982. After leaving that assignment in 1994, Begleiter conceived and began hosting the weekly *Global View* program, a public affairs discussion of international issues aired globally on CNN International. From 1994 to 1995, he co-anchored

CNN's *International Hour*, shown daily during prime time in Europe, Russia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Begleiter graduated from Brown University with a bachelor's degree with honors in political science and received his master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. He began his broadcast journalism career in 1967 in Providence, Rhode Island, where he worked as a reporter and writer for WICE-AM and WJAR AM-TV, and as News Director for WBRU-FM. Before joining CNN, Begleiter reported for WTOP-AM TV in Washington, D.C.

Among the many honors Begleiter received in his career was the Weintal Prize, one of the highest accolades in diplomatic reporting, awarded by Georgetown University's Graduate School of Foreign Service in 1994.

Begleiter is now the Distinguished Journalist in Residence at the University of Delaware. Upon Begleiter's departure from CNN, colleague Judy Woodruff said he had "set the standard for international reporting in television news. He has logged more miles, covered more stories from more countries than anyone in the business, ever. But what counts more than the sheer volume of his work are the high standards he set for his reporting." (Thomas)

In-person interview April 16, 2001

Parachute journalist; broadcast — CNN; married with a son

Jim Clancy

A national and foreign correspondent for CNN since 1981, Jim Clancy currently hosts the Saturday news program *Inside Africa*, which brings in-depth news from the continent to viewers around the globe. He also anchors CNN International World News programs.

Clancy began his journalistic career in local radio and television in Denver and San Francisco. The first story that took him outside the United States was the 1981 kidnapping of Ronald Biggs, one of the “Great Train Robbers,” by private British security agents in Brazil. Clancy covered Biggs’s extradition hearing in Bridgetown, Barbados, after the ship carrying the wanted man back for trial broke down during the voyage.

Clancy next covered the Falklands War and went on to become a CNN International correspondent for bureaus in Beirut, Frankfurt, Rome, and London. He received several awards for exceptional reporting: the George Polk award for his coverage of Rwandan genocide; the Alfred I. DuPont Award for reporting on the war in Bosnia; and an Emmy Award for coverage of the famine and foreign intervention in Somalia. Despite the thrills of parachute journalism, after about 15 years he chose to become a CNN anchor to be near his wife and two young children. He now lives in Atlanta and takes occasional international assignments in the Balkans and the Mideast.

E-mail interview Feb. 11, 2001

Parachute journalist, now an anchor; broadcast; married with children

Richard Ben Cramer

Richard Ben Cramer wanted to be an international journalist since childhood, when he dreamed of writing for National Geographic. He wrote for his high school and college newspapers, and graduated from Johns Hopkins University in 1971 with a liberal arts degree. After earning his master's degree from Columbia University, he worked briefly for a small Maryland paper, *The Carroll County Times*, and then moved to *The Baltimore Sun*, where he covered police, city hall, and state politics.

In 1976, he took a job with *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. A little more than a year later, *The Inquirer* sent the twenty-seven-year-old Cramer to Egypt for two weeks to cover the Middle East peace talks. He ended up staying there for a year as the talks progressed and followed the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Cramer's stories from the front lines won the 1979 Pulitzer Prize for international reporting, and he then spent six years writing for *The Inquirer* in the Middle East, Africa and Europe.

Cramer returned to the U.S. in 1984 and freelanced from New York for magazines such as *Rolling Stone*, *Esquire*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. "I rolled off the table and I was into magazines, and I rolled off that table and went into books." Cramer said. He recently published a best-selling biography — Joe DiMaggio: The Hero's Life. Cramer has also written What It Takes: The Way to the White House, a 1,047-page chronicle of six candidates who ran for the presidency in 1988, as well as political and documentary television programs for PBS. He now lives in Maryland with his wife and children.

In-person interview Nov. 6, 2000

Immersion journalist; print — newspapers and magazines ; married with children

Jaime FlorCruz

Jaime FlorCruz, born in the Philippines in 1951, aspired to becoming a journalist from his youth. But he never guessed the way in which he would enter the field — as an exiled English teacher in Beijing who was called upon to translate for *Newsweek* magazine.

FlorCruz was heavily involved in political activism while in college — “If I hadn’t been a journalist, I would have been a revolutionary,” he says. While visiting China on a student trip in 1971, FlorCruz learned that then-President Ferdinand Marcos had declared martial law in the Philippines and blacklisted him. In 1973, his passport expired and he was stranded in China. He would not return home for twelve years.

Yet FlorCruz made the most of his unexpected situation. After traveling through China for a few years, working for a state farm and a fishing company, he began studying Chinese language and history and teaching English in Beijing. He became involved with the journalistic community there, which was growing as the government became more open. After working as a *Newsweek* researcher and translator for six months, FlorCruz got his first scoop in December 1981 with the trial of the infamous Gang of Four. *Newsweek’s* bureau chief was on vacation, and FlorCruz had a unique connection to the trial — one of his students was the son of a prominent judge, and slipped him some details of dinner-table conversations concerning the trial. The story belonged to FlorCruz.

In 1982, he went on to work as first a stringer, then a full-time journalist for *Time* magazine. In 1983 he met his wife Ana, a Filipino national who was visiting her aunt in Beijing, and a year later they were married. From 1990 to 2000, FlorCruz served as *Time's* bureau chief and was president of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China from 1996 to 1999. He is now the Edward R. Murrow Press Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and lives in New Jersey with his wife, daughter and son.

Telephone interview Feb. 28, 2001

Immersion journalist; print — Time magazine; Filipino; married with children

David Hoffman

David Hoffman recently became *The Washington Post's* foreign editor after spending five years as five years as Moscow bureau chief for the *Post*. Formerly a student at the University of Delaware, Hoffman began his career in journalism working for the *Wilmington News-Journal* in 1975. In 1977 he started covering Washington politics, for the Capitol Hill News Service from 1977 to 1978 and then for the *San Jose Mercury News* from 1979 to 1982, while also working as economics correspondent for Knight-Ridder Newspapers

He joined the *Post* in 1982 as a general assignment reporter and covered events throughout the Reagan and Bush Sr. presidencies. He became diplomatic correspondent, based in Washington, D.C., in 1990 until he left in 1992 to become Jerusalem correspondent for two years. From 1994 to 1995 he studied at St. Anthony's College in Oxford, England, to prepare for his new position in Moscow.

Hoffman received the 1998-SAIS-Novartis Prize for Excellence in International Journalism for a series of ten articles on the decay of the former Soviet military-industrial complex after the Cold War. He has been awarded numerous other honors for his coverage of White House politics and international affairs. He is finishing a book, The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia, to be published in January 2002.

E-mail interview March 11, 2001

Parachute and immersion journalist; print — newspapers; married with children

Cinny Kennard

As a broadcast journalist for nearly twenty years, Cinny Kennard has witnessed firsthand some of the most explosive global events of the late twentieth century. Kennard began her award-winning career in 1976 as a local correspondent for television stations in Dallas, Houston, and Ft. Wayne, Indiana. She became a CBS News Correspondent in 1980. In the early 1990s, Kennard covered politics in Washington, D.C., before going overseas, beginning a career as an international journalist that would bring her widespread recognition. Kennard reported on the Gulf War from the Middle East, Jordan, Israel and Iraq, and her team was awarded the 1990 Columbia University duPont Award for its coverage of the conflict. More recently, she was chief correspondent in Moscow during the violent dissension between Boris Yeltsin and his country's parliament. She also covered the war in the former Yugoslavia and conflict in Northern Ireland.

Kennard is now pursuing other interests related to journalism, teaching as an assistant professor in the University of Southern California Annenberg School of Journalism. In 1998, she also co-founded The Carole Kneeland Project for Responsible Television Journalism, “to bring ethics and standards back into local television newsrooms.”

Telephone interview April 14, 2001

Parachute journalist/ broadcast/ female/ married (as of June 30, 2001)

Peter Landesman

Thirty-six-year-old freelance writer Peter Landesman experienced a stint of intense international journalism covering the war in Kosovo in 1999 for *Stern* (a German magazine), the online magazine *Salon* and *The New York Times Magazine*. Landesman had no formal journalistic training, although he had previously written articles for *The New York Times Magazine*. He originally planned to travel only to report on the refugee crisis in neighboring Macedonia, when the Kosovo border was not yet open. Then *Stern*'s two correspondents in Kosovo, a reporter and a photographer, were both killed — “They were shot point-blank in the back” — and Landesman was asked to go in the reporter's place. He filed several stories on the death and devastation in the aftermath of the war and then returned home.

Landesman's past projects include two novels, *The Raven* and *Blood Acre*. He has also reported from Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and London. In May 2001 he returned to Croatia to continue work on a story about wartime art crime for

Atlantic Monthly. He now divides his time between New York and Los Angeles and is working on a screenplay.

Phone interviews Oct. 12, 2000 and April 9, 2001

Parachute/freelance journalist; print — magazines; divorced, now single

Don Oberdorfer

Veteran correspondent Don Oberdorfer began his career in overseas reporting covering the Vietnam War. He continued roaming the globe as a *Washington Post* writer until his retirement in 1993. When asked “Why international journalism?” Oberdorfer responded, “I have no idea.” He says a childhood friend told him that “I came off the playground and said, ‘I want to be a newspaper reporter.’”

Oberdorfer graduated from Princeton University in 1952 and from 1953 to 1954 served in Korea as a U.S. Army lieutenant. As soon as he left the Army and recovered from polio, he began working for the *Charlotte Observer*. In 1958 he became the paper’s Washington correspondent, covering, among other events, Soviet party chief Nikita Khrushchev’s first-ever visit to the United States. Three years later Oberdorfer left to become the *Saturday Evening Post*’s Washington editor and contributing editor. From 1965 until 1968 he was a national correspondent for the Knight Newspapers chain. In 1968, he voyaged to Vietnam for the first of four three-month war correspondence missions, leaving his wife and two children in the United States. His 1971 book, Tet, derived from these experiences.

From 1972 to 1975, Oberdorfer covered Japan for the *Washington Post*, then became a State Department correspondent in 1976 and a senior correspondent two

years later. He accompanied U.S. Secretaries of State on their missions for seventeen years. Oberdorfer won several awards for diplomatic reporting, including the National Press Club's Edwin M. Hood Award in 1981 and 1988, and Georgetown University's Edward Weintal Prize in 1982 and 1983. He has also authored several magazine articles as well as two books: The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era and The Two Koreas. He is now working on two more, and is married with a grown son and daughter.

Phone interview Feb. 13, 2001

Immersion/parachutist; print — newspapers and magazines; married with children

Bernard Shaw

Bernard Shaw recently stepped down from his position as CNN's principal Washington, D.C. anchor and co-anchor of *Inside Politics* and *CNN Worldview*, after more than twenty years with the network. As foreign correspondent and anchor, Shaw traveled to 46 countries on five continents in the course of his career.

Shaw studied history at the University of Illinois, then began his career in journalism in 1964 as an anchor and reporter for NUS-Chicago, one of the country's first all-news radio stations. He joined CBS in 1971, serving as Washington correspondent until 1977, when he moved to ABC. His first posting with ABC News was as Latin American correspondent and bureau chief. Shaw then served as senior Capitol Hill correspondent until he joined CNN in 1980.

Shaw has received numerous awards for covering some of the most earth-shaking stories of the past two decades, including the 1989 Tiananmen Square

protests and the 1991 bombing of Baghdad. Along with other honors, Shaw has been elected a Fellow of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), the highest distinction the society gives to journalists for public service. He is now devoting his time to being with his family and working on his autobiography.

E-mail interview, April 27, 2001

Parachute journalist/anchor/ broadcast/ African-American/ married with children

Chuck Stone

“He has been a Congressional aide, a political strategist, a radio and television commentator, a teacher, the author of three books, a leader of black organizations and a newspaper reporter, editor and columnist,” according to a 1981 *New York Times* article by Robert McFadden. Veteran journalist Chuck Stone added “international journalist” to the list by writing a celebrated series on religious conflict in Northern Ireland for *The Philadelphia Daily News*, as well as numerous columns from Africa in the 1970s and in 1991. Stone was also the first black columnist for *Daily News*, and later its first black senior editor.

Stone received his masters degree in sociology from the University of Chicago in 1951. He first experienced life abroad as an administrator for Cooperative for American Relief to Everywhere (CARE) in Egypt, Gaza and India from 1955 to 1956. From 1975 to 1977, he served as the first president of the National Association of Black Journalists, winning its Lifetime Achievement Award in 1992. Stone has written three books on blacks and American politics: Tell It Like It Is, Black Political Power in America, and King Strut. continued writing a nationally syndicated column

until 1995. Now 76, he is the Spearman Professor of Journalism at the University of North Carolina.

Phone interview April 8, 2001

Parachutist/columnist; print — newspapers; married with three grown children

Lauren Wolkoff

Lauren Wolkoff, 24, never planned to become a journalist at all, but now works in San José, Costa Rica, as a reporter for the English-language weekly newspaper *The Tico Times*. In 1998, she received her bachelor's degree in political science and Spanish from Rutgers University. In March of her senior year, Wolkoff accepted an offer to become reporter for a New Jersey paper, the *Burlington County Times*. She grew restless, however, thinking back to the adventures of her 1997 college semester in Spain. In December 1999, Wolkoff found an opportunity to work in Costa Rica, researching current events for *Mesoamérica*, a monthly Central American news journal, and teaching English.

She began freelancing for *The Tico Times* while still working at *Mesoamérica* and accepted a full-time position there in June 2000. As one of only four staff news reporters, Wolkoff has covered a range of subjects, from anti-logging legislation to a controversial media libel suit. Her commitment is only for one year, but Wolkoff says she enjoys the challenge of the job and has no plans to leave any time soon. She has also freelanced for other international publications seeking a "Costa Rica angle" on a story, such as *Newsweek*, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and the trade magazine *Ocular Surgery News*.

Phone interview March 9, 2001

Immersion journalist; print —newspaper and freelance; female; single

Alexandra Zavis

Alexandra Zavis, 29, writes news stories on 22 African nations for the Associated Press from its bureau in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. At the time of her interview she was covering the elections that resulted in the violent overthrow of the Ivory Coast's military junta.

The child of two diplomats, Zavis moved around often while young and spent several years in South Africa, where she would cover the end of apartheid and the election of Nelson Mandela as president. Fluent in French and English, Zavis “was what AP called a local hire,” she said. She was first “regularized” in the news service’s methods by working in Chicago and New York for one year, then was sent to Africa. “It’s a little like being in the Foreign Service or the army,” Zavis says. “The cool thing about AP is you do everything” — from sports matches to wars, colorful features to politics.

With seven years experience in Africa, Zavis says she has no plans to leave the field anytime soon. After a few more years, she said, she would like to move to a different area of the world, perhaps Asia.

Phone interview Oct. 30, 2000

Immersion journalist; print — wire service; female; unmarried

Chapter 3

A BRIEF HISTORY OF AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM

Every day, foreign correspondents write the first draft of world history, but the field has a long history of its own.

Today, journalism is run and regulated like many other businesses. Basic university courses teach reporting techniques and procedures, and international news services all share similar structures of overseas bureaus, bureau chiefs, and correspondents. Foreign news is packaged to be easily absorbed: in half-hour segments on CNN, in the “World News” column in local newspapers, on the Associated Press Web site, in National Public Radio bulletins. When a coup occurs in Nigeria, the first dispatches from AP correspondents hit news editors’ desks in the United States only minutes later, often accompanied by photos in perfect digital clarity.

It has taken centuries for the news media to reach this point. At one time no professional standards for fairness, ethics or style existed. Correspondents were adventurers, tourists, soldiers and poets. They wrote their stories to inspire or inflame, not merely to inform. And the news now transmitted instantly via telephone and computer once took months to cross oceans.

Although the methods and goals of international journalism have developed radically over the last few centuries, the challenges correspondents face in the field

today are the same encountered by generations of journalists. An examination of the origins of the field, focusing on print and television media, helps us understand what the profession of international journalism has become today and where it is heading.

The early days

Who was the first foreign correspondent? No one can say – all the job title really means, on the most basic level, is bringing a story back across a border to one's own people. The first ancient tribesman who crossed a river to report what lay on the other side could be called a foreign correspondent, and so could the early European explorers who told tales of cannibals and mermaids living across the Atlantic.

The history of Americans and foreign correspondence can be traced, however, as the United States itself has existed as a nation for only a little more than two hundred years. According to John Hohenberg, author of Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times, the first notable example of an American who reported news from abroad was Jared Ingersoll, a Connecticut lawyer.¹ In 1765, he wrote an account of a meeting of the British House of Commons in which delegates were debating the stamp tax imposed on the American colonies. The American Colonel Isaac Barré hotly contested the House's right to tax the colonies, asserting that British behavior had "caused the blood of these Sons of Liberty to recoil within 'em." Ingersoll duly reported the stirring words in an article first published in the May 10, 1765, *New London Gazette* and reprinted repeatedly in other colonies. The words "Sons of Liberty" became a popular phrase and Ingersoll achieved some recognition — although he promptly fell from favor after accepting a position as

British stamp distributor for Connecticut (Hohenberg 1). Two lessons from this small incident recur throughout the following centuries of international journalism. First, the American public's interest in foreign events increases greatly when its own pocketbooks are affected; and secondly, journalism and government jobs do *not* go well together.

Telegraph lines and the bottom line: global news becomes a business

As shown by the three-month delay between the writing and publication of Ingersoll's story, foreign news crept slowly between continents in the eighteenth century. But the creation of global news agencies soon changed the standards for speedy delivery of the news.

The predecessors of today's wire services were the communication systems set up by two of Europe's great financial houses in the early eighteenth century (Hohenberg 6). Before the *Times* of London ever had bureaus abroad, the Fuggers of Augsburg and the Rothschilds of London traded market news with other nations using carrier pigeons.

The first significant successful independent news service was created by Hungarian Charles Havas, who followed the financial houses' lead in using pigeons to send and receive news from abroad. In 1835 Havas established his headquarters in Paris, and within five years virtually all of the foreign news that came to France arrived through his agency. With the replacement of pigeons in 1848 by Morse's recently-invented telegraph (which was quicker and required no birdseed), the Havas

agency extended its services to England, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and finally the United States.

In 1851, a German, Paul Julius Reuter, seized upon the newly laid cross-Channel cable as a speedy way to transfer financial information under the waters to the rest of Europe. By buying cable service for an hour at a time, Reuter was able to offer the most timely stock quotations yet. The London Stock Exchange became his loyal customer, as did many bankers and businessmen. In 1858, Reuter decided to offer non-financial news bulletins to London newspapers. His first big break came with the obtaining of an advance copy of Napoleon III's speech threatening Austria. Later, in 1865, he broke the news of Lincoln's assassination two full days ahead of any other news agency by intercepting a mail ship and cabling the news back to London.

With telegraph cables soon snaking their way from continent to continent and even under the Atlantic by 1866, the big question concerning the transmittal of international news was no longer "How will we get it there?" but "How much will this cost?" The expense of renting time on the telegraph lines was a primary reason for Havas and Reuter to join forces with the German agency Wolff in 1856, in an agreement to trade news stories. In the United States, the expense of covering the Mexican War forced New York newspapers to combine resources as well, forming the first agency called the (New York) Associated Press.

In 1870, the agencies formed the Four Power news cartel and divided the world into coverage quadrants. Reuters took the British Empire, India, and the Far East; Havas claimed western Europe and South America; Wolff took eastern Europe

and Russia. The “baby brother,” the AP, was restricted to the United States, where little news of international interest was happening at the time. Such an arrangement allowed the other three agencies to reap the lion’s share of the profits, as well as to protect their respective homelands from disparaging coverage. This setup lasted for more than 60 years, with some shifting around, until the AP finally claimed its right to independent newsgathering in 1934.

The majority of European newspapers during the nineteenth century were influenced by, or were agents of, their nations’ governments. American papers were largely independent, but lacked the resources to effectively cover events abroad. In the end, it was the news agencies that truly commanded the flow of world news — although, as has been said, their coverage consisted of short bulletins, rather than long, colorful stories, because of financial constraints. “News was handled as if it had been a commodity instead of a public trust. Unhappily, there was often little to choose between the bureaucrats of governments, the barons who made personal fiefs out of news agencies, and the often whimsical autocrats of the independent papers” (Hohenberg 25).

“Specials,” scandals, and adventures

The major news agencies persevere today, through a century and a half of technological changes, and have proved their worth in efficiently gathering the world’s news. However, the creative side of international journalism emerged when individual writers sought not only to tell the facts but also to bring stories to life.

First termed “specials” in journalistic jargon, they worked for only one newspaper (or magazine or TV network, now) and pursued foreign stories with great freedom.

America sent out little news of its own to other nations in the 1800s, aside from events associated with the Civil War. The United States was not yet a major world player, and few events there rippled across the Atlantic to affect Europe. The reverse was not true, however. The success of the New York *Herald* in the 1840s proved that international news drew strong American interest. The *Herald* became the best-known paper in the United States after publisher James Gordon Bennett made it the first to have its own foreign staff. He sent “specials” to Mexico, Canada, and Europe, who sent back colorful tales of revolutions and monarchic love affairs. Bennett did his best to find — and manufacture — dramatic stories for public consumption. Perhaps the most famous of these was his 1869 command to *Herald* correspondent Henry Morton Stanley to “Find Livingstone!” (Hohenberg 39). In a display of generosity almost unheard of in journalism today, Bennett promised to supply Stanley with unlimited funds until he found the missing Scottish missionary.

Bennett’s gamble paid off. Although it took Stanley a full two years to locate Livingstone, who had been living comfortably all the while in a remote village, the dispatches he sent back to New York during that time fascinated the public. By today’s standards, Stanley’s grandiloquent prose and haphazard methods would not have been considered good journalism. But “Dr. Livingstone, I presume?” made a great story, and for a time the adventure narrative became the prototype for foreign reporting. “There is little doubt that the nineteenth-century journalist played one of

his most colorful roles as a seeker after fame and glory, a standard-bearer for the cause of empire” (Hohenberg, 41).

Newspaper publishers often created their own international news, whether by sponsoring a rescue mission, uncovering a scandal, or even starting a war. Nellie Bly, the “stunt girl” reporter for Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World*, gained fame in 1889 for circumnavigating the globe in seventy-two days. *New York Journal* publisher William Randolph Hearst referred to the Spanish-American War as “Our War,” having incited American hatred of Spain with its coverage of the sinking of the warship *Maine* in 1898. “THE WARSHIP MAINE WAS SPLIT IN TWO BY AN ENEMY’S SECRET INFERNAL MACHINE,” the *Journal*’s headline read two days after the event — yet to this day no one is sure why the explosion occurred (Hohenberg 50).

One correspondent, James Creelman, recounted being wounded in battle and awakening to find Hearst at his side: “Slowly, he took down my story of the fight. Again and again, the zinging of Mauser bullets interrupted. But he seemed unmoved. The battle had to be reported somehow. He said: ‘I’m sorry you’re hurt but’ — and his face was radiant with enthusiasm — ‘wasn’t it a splendid fight? We must beat every paper in the world.’ ” In the battle of San Juan Hill, *Herald* writer Richard Harding Davis even took a carbine and charged up the slope himself, reasoning, “I thought as an American I ought to help” (Hohenberg 52). “Dying to get the story” has always had a literal meaning in the world of foreign correspondence — and in the age of adventurer-journalists, it was all part of the game.

The AP and the New York Times reach outwards

As the nineteenth century ended, the forces of American foreign journalism grew stronger. In 1893, the Associated Press reorganized itself and renewed its news-gathering contract with Reuters and the wire service cartel. But AP manager Melville Elijah Stone did not wish to continue American dependency on European sources of foreign news, especially since Reuters was suffering financial difficulty and Havas and Wolff were under the thumb of their respective governments. Stone began quietly building up the AP's own foreign service with agents in Paris, Berlin, and Rome. In addition, another American news agency, the United Press Associations, was created in 1907 as an independent competitor to AP.

In 1896, printer Adolph Simon Ochs bought the struggling *New York Times* for \$75,000 and brought it back to life by cutting its price to one cent and printing every AP story that he could obtain about the Spanish-American War. As circulation increased, Ochs wisely invested some of his earnings in establishing his own foreign press corps and sending them to cover feats of exploration and aviation. He sponsored Commander Robert E. Peary's expedition to the North Pole in 1908 in exchange for exclusive story rights, and later, in 1929, funded Richard Evelyn Byrd's flight to the South Pole. The *Times* also pioneered the use of wireless communication to dispatch international news. In 1912 the *Times* ran the story of the Titanic's sinking the day after it occurred, on April 15, trusting in the reliability of a radio message from the ship received by the AP while other papers hesitated. This dispatch from the sinking Titanic also heralded the coming importance of radio in breaking international news.

Risk-taking and colorful storytelling made *The New York Times* and other newspapers into successful businesses and opened Americans' eyes to the emerging modern world. However, as World War I approached, the focus on foreign fun and adventure was to prove a major handicap to international journalism.

World War I and the muzzle of censorship

Newspapers the world over paid little attention to events preceding the First World War. *New York Sun* reporter Will Irwin said that the average foreign correspondent of the time was “mostly a purveyor of gossip about Americans abroad. A Pittsburgh playboy who broke the bank at Monte Carlo, or a young blood of the Four Hundred who entangled himself with a showgirl in London, was worth more space in Chicago and New York than... the rise of Social Democracy in Germany” (Emery 9).

The New York Times and others duly reported the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, but didn't consider it to be a front-page story. While correspondents abroad grew suspicious of activity in Germany and Austria, most had little grasp of European politics or history and had to figure it all out as they went along. Newspapers played down their stories until late July, when the imminence of war became apparent. Reporters flooded Belgium and Germany to witness the invasion. Many were taken as prisoners by both sides and denounced as spies or were allowed to write only under heavy censorship. This was a new experience for foreign correspondents — the warring countries had finally realized the power of the press to sway public opinion and acted accordingly. Some European

correspondents fought against censorship and succeeded in getting critical stories published, but they risked being blacklisted by their own governments. Many more reporters censored themselves so their stories would get through, like Palmer Roberts, an AP correspondent in Paris, who wrote, “We rarely had our copy cut. We had learned too well where the line was drawn on military secrecy. The important items were those we left out; and these made us public liars!” (Hohenberg 93).

French and British victories were covered in detail by their national newspapers; their losses and bungled strategies were not. Aerial fights were clean, easily romanticized and made good stories, by the censors’ standards; the bloody, muddy hell of trench warfare was off limits. In the end, it was neither of these, but the tales of submarine warfare that drew the United States into the war. In February 1917, *Chicago Tribune* reporter Floyd Gibbons wrote a firsthand account of the sinking of the American ship *Laconia* by a German submarine (Gibbons had gone aboard with notebook, brandy and life preserver in hand, hoping for such an event). The story rocked the nation. In April, the United States entered the war.

American newspapers desperate for copy sent over their sports writers, drama critics, and even gossip columnists to cover the Great War. Most of these correspondents lacked sufficient background knowledge to make sense of the situation (Emery 17). But American correspondents did have energy — they resisted censorship with vigor, frustrating U.S. and European military authorities. When General John J. Pershing first arrived in England, British censors would not permit reporters to mention where exactly he would be landing — so reporter Gibbons cabled to the *Chicago Tribune* “PERSHING LANDED AT BRITISH PORT TODAY

AND WAS GREETED BY LORD MAYOR OF LIVERPOOL” (Hohenberg 109). American newspaper editors proclaimed their patriotism, but in the war of principles, freedom of the press won out over military security. In an effort to evade censorship and beat its competitors, *The New York Times* even ordered its correspondents to cable their dispatches at the seventy-five cents per word “double urgent” rate (Hohenberg 113).

By the end of the war, the practice of censorship was firmly established, but so was correspondents’ hunger to get scoops first and beat their competitors. A formal compromise between the government and the press was yet to be reached, and wartime reporting had changed forever. Journalists had seen the unromanticizable misery of trench warfare, and knew that they could no longer just tell the heroic battle stories that the government wanted to see.

The 1920s: reshaping the global news network

After World War I, American enthusiasm for international news ebbed. “Death, consolidation, financial stringency and sheer disinterest combined to reduce the number of newspapers that considered it a duty to gather, evaluate, and disseminate foreign intelligence to their publics” (Hohenberg 133).

The news agencies had fallen on hard times as well. After Baron Herbert de Reuter, head of the company his father had created, killed himself in 1915, the agency chose to save itself from financial ruin by accepting funding from — and the dictates of — the British government. Meanwhile, Melville Stone of the AP was still hoping to establish his company as an independent source of foreign news. He began by

signing news service contracts with several South American newspapers, and finally in 1934 succeeded in breaking ties with the Reuters-Havas-Wolff cartel.

Adolph Ochs defied the newspaper trend of cutting back on overseas coverage. His main priority for *The New York Times* after World War I was to develop a foreign staff better than any other paper's, and in 1922 Ochs gave his European news manager the order to do just that. It would be expensive, but Ochs was prepared — the newspaper's profits since he had purchased it had already exceeded \$100 million. Ochs's vision was to "give the news impartially, without fear or favor," as had never been done before (Hohenberg 139).

Ochs's plan worked. Tales of adventure and scientific discovery — Einstein's experiments, Auguste Piccard's hot air balloons, and the excavation of Tutankhamen's tomb — continued to enthrall readers. Meanwhile, *Times* correspondents kept up with changing events in Europe. Reporter Anne O'Hare McCormick perceptively reported the declining state of affairs in Germany while British and French newspapers largely ignored the situation. McCormick was also one of the first to take note of the new Fascist party in Italy, describing a speech by leader Benito Mussolini as "a little swaggering, but caustic, powerful, and telling" (Hohenberg 140).

With World War II approaching, the United States had shown its ability to compete in the field of international journalism as it had in the global political arena. However, American reporters abroad were often young and inexperienced, chosen for their enthusiasm rather than any advanced knowledge of foreign affairs. To sell papers, newspapers still relied on tales of war, adventure, and "wonderful nonsense"

— like the *Chicago Tribune*'s three-month endeavor in Africa to do a picture story on “handsome love-making sheiks,” inspired by the popularity of a Rudolph Valentino film on the subject (Hohenberg 147). The special correspondents had discovered the power of the human interest/feature story, but there was more to journalism than that. They soon found another kind of story in the bewildering ordeal of global war.

Conflict on a global scale: reporting World War II

When the Japanese invaded China in September 1931, American journalists leapt to cover the conflict — but readers at home lacked interest in what was happening in unpronounceable provinces across the sea. Floyd Gibbons, the *Chicago Tribune* reporter who had defied censors in WWI, sent stories of bloody battles and massacred peasants back to the United States, as did dozens of other correspondents. However: “Few among the correspondents, particularly the latest arrivals, knew very much about the complicated relations between Chiang [Kai-Shek], the Russians, and the Chinese Communists — and cared less. That was the critical failure in much of their work. All they saw before them was stricken Shanghai...” (Hohenberg 160). This problem of inexperienced correspondents' shortsightedness resurfaced again and again (and was to continue in the present day practice of parachute journalism). Describing horrific scenes and military exploits may have drawn a few readers in, but the news had to inform, not merely entertain.

In Russia, correspondents struggled to grasp the situation despite intense censorship and government propaganda. It was no easy task. Some newspapers refused to let their writers quote Russian government officials for fear of appearing to

endorse Communist ideology. Propaganda often blinded reporters: *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent William Henry Chamberlin, for example, wrote that he first sympathized with the Communists because as far as he could see, the country was run well. He accepted the word of the government that in 1923, “there were only two hundred political prisoners in Russia, and that these were lodged pretty comfortably in places where the climate, in the euphemistic words of the Commissar, was ‘clear though cold’ ” (Hohenberg 185). As time went on, Chamberlin and other correspondents began to recognize the true degree of oppression by Stalin and his relentless Red Army, but failed to publish in-depth analysis of the situation.

In 1931, few saw the storm approaching that would soon break over Europe. In a matter of weeks after Adolph Hitler proclaimed himself chancellor of Germany on February 27, 1933, the German press, including the Wolff agency, was sucked into an immense propaganda machine. Foreign correspondents who had fallen out of favor with the Germans hastened to leave the country, while the wire services quickly dispatched the news that Germany was voiding the Versailles Treaty and reestablishing an army. No one seemed to care much. In the spring of 1935 Italy prepared to invade Ethiopia while European governments tried feebly to appease Mussolini. Again, the correspondents flocked to the battlefields and reported the devastation while under close monitoring from the Italian government. Still — no forceful reaction came from the rest of the world.

These incidents illustrate that the most essential trait of an international journalist is the ability to “see further through a brick wall” than anyone else (Hohenberg 142), to separate fact from fiction and analyze the situation. Many

correspondents developed into energetic, perceptive, and skilled writers. But the greatest were those who possessed the ability to fit pieces of the puzzle together.

When the Spanish Civil War began in 1936, *New York Times* correspondent Franz Kluckhohn was the first to point out any connection to events in the rest of Europe. He wrote that the rebels in the war drew support from Nazis and Fascists — the German Junkers and Italian bombers buzzing overhead gave incontrovertible evidence. Having revealed this, Kluckhohn felt pressure to leave Italy for fear of retribution (Hohenberg 180). Other correspondents stayed, including Ernest Hemingway, but every one there knew this would be a serious, brutal war. Gone was the age of “wonderful nonsense.” Floyd Gibbons said of the Spanish Civil War, “It is the bloodiest and costliest war, in men and money, that I have ever seen. It is horrifying to see how inhumane... men can be to each other” (Hohenberg 181). And Gibbons was no wide-eyed novice. This was his ninth war.

The turmoil in Spain ended in March 1939, but by then Germany and Britain were already fighting fiercely. And “a new type of correspondent was reporting a different kind of war,” writes Hohenberg. “The colorful, romantic figure exemplified by Richard Harding Davis [who had gleefully joined in the battle of San Juan Hill] had gone out of style. In his place had come calm, determined, professionally trained men....” (199). Some still told tales of heroism, but the greater challenge came in giving the world news untainted by nationalism. The European news agencies had either been transformed into propaganda machines, in the case of Wolff and Havas, or had become inextricably allied with their governments, like Reuters.

Covering World War II was no easy assignment for reporters, who themselves faced capture and loss of life or limbs in the field. By the end of the war, 37 out of 1,646 accredited American journalists had been killed and 112 wounded (Hohenberg 246).

Many correspondents simply filed standard news stories about the outcome of battles: who won, who lost, how many were killed. Some, like the writers for the *Christian Science Monitor* and *The New York Times*, strove always to write with the wider significance of the war in mind. And although the age of romantic-adventure journalism had ended, the story of the individual was not lost — thanks to the man who became America’s best-loved war correspondent, Ernie Pyle. He was a UP correspondent, a pacifist who said of World War II, “I’m going simply because I’ve got to, and I hate it” (Newton 96). He despised the war, but became the hero of the infantrymen whose stories he told. Pyle pioneered a new style of international journalism. He ignored official bulletins and numbers, taking the time instead to record the lives and deaths of individuals on the frontlines in a plainspoken, unaffected style. For his efforts, Pyle won both a Pulitzer Prize and the affection of thousands back home.

The biggest, most horrifying news of the war would not hit the public consciousness until 1945, when Allied armies began entering Nazi concentration camps. The scenes of monstrous cruelty and the reality of 6,000,000 dead had to be seen to be believed, yet correspondents did their best to inform the world of what they had not been there themselves to witness.

World War II correspondents had the greatest amount of freedom yet in gathering and sending material back home. They always found news to report, and the advent of telephones and radio made transmitting easier than it had ever been. Yet journalists still struggled against censorship — the two biggest revelations of the war, the concentration camps and the development of the atomic bomb, were kept well-hidden by their respective governments until it was too late for the public to change anything. Seeing through brick walls indeed proved to be the journalists' biggest responsibility, and it would only grow more difficult in the decades ahead.

“The art of denying the truth”: Cold War reporting

When World War II ended, international journalists faced a new challenge — how to make peacetime reporting as interesting as war correspondence. Some succeeded immediately, like James Reston of *The New York Times*, who in 1945 obtained and published the documents that outlined a plan for the creation of the United Nations. The U.N. soon became big news, yet excitement over the new organization dwindled as it became apparent in 1950 that the United States was going to war in Korea.

There, censorship grew even stricter than it had been in World War II. Only one official phone line ran out from South Korea, and correspondents had to stand in line to dictate their approved messages. Marguerite Higgins of the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote, “never once during the Korean War have I been satisfied with the writing and organization of a single story. I know all of us in the beginning kept thinking ‘Well, next time maybe there will be more of a chance to think it through,’

or ‘Next time I won’t be so tired’ ” (Emery 101). Everyday life wore down the reporters, who hitchhiked hundreds of miles to the front, lived off canned rations and slept three to four hours per night (114). Seventeen correspondents, including ten Americans, were killed in action in a year’s time.

In 1951, the Soviet Union proposed a truce to the miserable, unwinnable war. The U.S. government attempted to keep the details of the peace-making under wraps, but a group of journalists found out, on background, that Korea would be divided into two nations. They published it. Official sources dissembled. This would become a recurring theme in Cold War journalism; as Reston put it, “The art of denying the truth without actually lying is as old as government itself” (Hohenberg 257).

The situation was worse within the Soviet Union and its satellite allies. Correspondents could not drive their own cars or speak on unmonitored phones. A. M. Rosenthal of *The New York Times* found himself kicked out of Warsaw for writing “very deeply and in detail about the internal situation, party matters and leadership matters,” explained one Polish official (Hohenberg 260). What else was a journalist *supposed* to do?

The best Cold War stories were to be obtained by going around government authority. In 1957, a *New York Times* interview made the rebel Fidel Castro into a hero after one of its correspondents snuck past Cuban troops to find him. Five years later, the press gleefully reported the Bay of Pigs fiasco, in which Castro’s followers routed President Batista’s U.S.-supported troops. However, *The New York Times* did agree to President John F. Kennedy’s request not to publish details of Russian military activity in Cuba until after the United States had decided how to address the

threat. This was perhaps the last display of cooperative spirit between the news media and the government prior to the Vietnam War, in which the conflict between U.S. military authorities and the press would be as bitter at times as the war in the jungle.

The thickest brick wall of them all: the Vietnam War

“Advisers” was the official U.S. government euphemism for the first 10,000 soldiers sent to Vietnam before 1962. This little deception set the tone of government-media relations during the Vietnam War. The U.S. military expected the press to do its patriotic duty and play along, and at first many did. Journalists who were skeptical of official accounts were asked plaintively, “Why don’t you get on the team?” (Hohenberg 271). But to be a team player meant believing the optimistic stories from army headquarters instead of eyewitness accounts from the front, meant ignoring the stories of civilians bombed out by U.S. planes and the monk who set himself afire to protest Buddhist persecution by the South Vietnamese government.

Correspondent Michael Herr described the overall dilemma of Vietnam journalists in his memoir Dispatches:

Somewhere on the periphery of that total Vietnam issue.... there was a story that was as simple as it had always been, men hunting men, a hideous war and all kinds of victims. But there was also a Command that didn’t feel this, that rode us into attrition traps on the back of fictional kill ratios, and an Administration that believed the Command, a cross-fertilization of ignorance, and a press whose tradition of objectivity and fairness (not to mention self-interest) saw that all of it got space.... Conventional journalism could no more reveal this war than conventional firepower could win it, all it could do was take the most profound event of the American decade and turn it into a communications pudding....

(Herr 214)

As the war progressed, many journalists abandoned “conventional” reporting, i.e. basing stories on official accounts, and began investigating instead. Animosity between the American government and the press reached a head with the publication of the “Pentagon Papers” in 1971 by *The New York Times*. Former Pentagon official Dr. Daniel Ellsberg gave the newspaper a copy of a top-secret report that detailed the behind-the-scenes American involvement in Vietnam over the past twenty years. The *Times* ran the account despite protest from the government, and won its case when the matter was brought before the Supreme Court (Hohenberg 284). The *Times* won a Pulitzer for this public service in 1972; Pulitzers were also awarded for coverage of the My Lai massacre and reporting on the killing of four student demonstrators at Kent State University in 1970. In the end, journalists gained an entirely new way of war reporting, and a lasting skepticism of government briefings, from the Vietnam War. As James Reston wrote in *The New York Times* on June 27, 1971: “The nation is seething with distrust, not only of the Government but of the press, and the issue of the Pentagon Papers is merely whether we should get at the facts and try to correct our mistakes or suppress the whole painful story” (Newton 63).

Another obstacle in the way of thorough foreign news coverage was newspapers’ increasing reluctance to maintain costly bureaus overseas: in the mid-1970s, American newspapers employed fewer than 500 active foreign correspondents, compared to 2,500 at the end of World War II (Taylor 66). Television had taken over much of the business of international news, and the market

for it was limited, anyway. Ben Bradlee, editor of *The Washington Post* during the Watergate scandal, described the post-Vietnam era of journalism in his memoirs:

“The best newspapers were still involved in the pursuit of truth with conscience, and newly determined to be interesting, useful and entertaining in the process. But at the bottom of the barrel, the stain of the tabloids was spreading with the help of the television into what could be called ‘kerosene journalism’ [the practice of sensationalizing stories in the news] before they determine what’s smoking and why.”
(Newton 65)

After the Vietnam War, the “pursuit of truth with conscience” continued as the press questioned government accounts of U.S. action abroad, especially in the Middle East and Central America. The United States’s fear of Communist expansion in Latin America still loomed very real, but the threat of the technologically advanced Soviet Union seemed incongruous with the poverty and chaos reporters witnessed there. One correspondent wrote, “Washington sees everything in black and white.... When I went to Central America I was more aware of the need for balance than ever before.... I tried not to overplay the U.S. side but I knew not to play up the anti-U.S. side.... The people of Nicaragua and El Salvador were in the gray area, in the middle” (Emery 179). Journalists’ perception of themselves as independent of loyalty to the U.S. government grew stronger once again.

Television news and the advent of CNN

Television had finally become commonplace technology a few years after World War II, with 22 percent of American families owning a set in 1949. As sales

shot into the millions, one magazine predicted, “John Q. America is about to receive the greatest treasury of enlightenment and education that has ever before been given to a free man” (Neuman 157). The truth of that statement could easily be contested today, as American ignorance of foreign affairs remains pervasive, but no one can deny that television changed international journalism in amazing ways.

As television made news more visible and, for many, more accessible, it also led to the condensing of stories in order to keep viewers’ interest. Hour-long speeches would be cut to a minute or less, and in international stories what was *seen* often became more important than what was *said*. An example was the 1959 “Kitchen Debate,” in which Soviet premier Nikita Krushchev and Vice President Richard Nixon discussed politics while touring a model American kitchen on display in Moscow. Nothing controversial actually came up in their conversation, yet viewers saw the aggressive body language of the two leaders and derived an opinion that Nixon was “a leader who would stand up to the Communists” (Neuman 161). Television journalists, like print journalists, were *expected* to do their part in the Cold War by presenting America favorably, and did so until Vietnam, which television made into the first, horrifying, “living-room war.”

Television images of that war undeniably helped shape public opinion and foreign policy, as any number of media scholars will argue — but still the public witnessed events after they had already happened. Days or weeks could elapse between an occurrence and its documentation on TV. The technology of satellite broadcasting, launched in 1962, tightened the ties between policymakers’ decisions and media coverage forever. The first major international crisis to be televised in real

time was the Iranian hostage situation, in which updates appeared on the airwaves every night for 443 days (Neuman 185). President Jimmy Carter realized then the pressure exerted on leaders by real-time media coverage, which would manifest itself time and time again, from Chernobyl to Tiananmen Square to Somalia to Kosovo.

The rise of satellite broadcasting enabled the creation of CNN — the Cable News Network — in 1980, which defied all expectations in reaping great profits from showing news around the clock. CNN, although based in Atlanta, was also the first to call itself a “global news organization,” even forbidding its anchors from calling international events “foreign” (Strobel 98).

The increasing dominance of CNN in the field of overseas coverage had several lasting effects. Twenty-four-hour coverage provided greater public access to international news but also raised questions about the quality of the crisis-based parachute journalism on which CNN made its name. Viewers saw more of the reporting method called “rooftop journalism,” in which parachute correspondents would arrive at a crisis scene and rush to the nearest high-rise hotel rooftop to announce what was going on below — sometimes before they had done any actual investigation (Neuman 213).

With CNN and other major networks vying for superiority in international television coverage, the emphasis on winning the deadline race became stronger than ever. The wide-eyed American audience could watch real-time coverage of war and disaster, but increasingly often the story behind the story, the *why* of international events, was lost.

The Cold War frame shattered and the new international journalism

With the end of the Cold War in 1989, no longer would American journalists know exactly which side they were on. The lines had blurred somewhat in the Vietnam War, when correspondents had learned that they couldn't trust either side — but then, they had still stayed on the U.S. end of the battlefield. Now journalists would become more loyal to the story than to any country.

The 1991 Persian Gulf War was a testing ground for international journalists' new, more independent role in conflict coverage. Even in an age of high-speed, high-tech media access, censorship severely limited correspondents' coverage of the war to U.S.-biased military bulletins. Journalist John J. Fialka described the government's influence as "...the invisible barrier, a kind of plastic bag or cocoon of controls that the military preferred to keep around reporters in this war" (Newton 95). And this time, military security was a poor excuse for censorship, as it was fairly obvious to everyone, including the Iraqis, that the United States would win the war easily. CNN correspondent Peter Arnett was one of the first to defy traditional home-team war reporting by working for CNN from the enemy side of the frontlines. With Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's permission, Arnett broadcast from the U.S.-bombed streets of Baghdad, and was called a traitor for his action, getting more criticism for showing the enemy's side than appreciation for his bravery.

As Arnett wrote in 1996, "Today we're on everyone's side, or no one's, depending on your point of view.... The once gung ho war correspondent has become a diplomat and educator in addition" (Newton 114). Arnett's words are daunting, but many agree — today's successful foreign correspondent cannot simply run onto the

battlefield (or diplomatic playing field) knowing nothing, as did the adventurer-correspondents of a century-and-a-half ago. He or she should study and be immersed in a chosen culture first, learning what transpired there in the past. Otherwise, a journalist cannot intelligently cover the complicated conflicts in the world today. For example, any journalist dedicated to taking on the challenge of covering the Middle East must know, at the very least, the history of the Israelis, Arabs, and Palestinians dating back to biblical times; their respective religious and cultural beliefs; and the thinking of their current political leaders and movements.

Some correspondents disagree, saying one can be a successful parachute journalist without knowing the language or background of a particular country. Just get out there and tell the story you see unfolding before you, they say. Many have won Pulitzers for doing just that — Ernie Pyle in World War II, Marguerite Higgins in Korea, Richard Ben Cramer in the Middle East.

Just as in the past, the news is still told by both special correspondents — in print and broadcast — and news agencies. Most of today’s newspapers use super-speed worldwide news networks, still anachronistically called “wire services,” to supply them with foreign news. This means that even small papers, radio stations, and TV stations have access to events abroad without great expense.

But as the amount of international news available has increased, public interest has waned. How best to make the American people curious about events overseas? Some journalists believe the human-interest, or feature story, can do just that, following in the tradition of “I-was-there,” vivid storytellers like Richard Harding Davis, Henry Morton Stanley, and Nellie Bly. Others trust in

knowledgeable, factual reporting to point out to Americans why they *should* want to know about foreign affairs in today's interconnected globe. Veteran correspondents like Floyd Gibbons and James Reston were respected for their *experience* and clear-sightedness as well as their writing.

Other current issues in international journalism reappear frequently in the history of the field: censorship, isolation, prejudice, and violence. These will be explored in the following chapters through the perspectives of journalists who experienced them firsthand.

¹ In writing this chapter I relied extensively on John Hohenberg's detailed account of the history of international journalism, Foreign Correspondence: The Great Reporters and Their Times. Specific quotations from Hohenberg's book are cited parenthetically in my text.

Chapter 4

LEARNING THE BASICS OF FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE

For the majority of international journalists interviewed, the first major obstacle in their career was not finagling a way to be sent abroad, but battling bewilderment when they first found themselves on foreign ground. Whether a correspondent plans to be a parachutist or immersion journalist, first experiences abroad almost always involve feelings of cultural confusion and isolation. However, most find that their initial confusion inspires the curiosity that is essential for perceptive international journalism. Keep your eyes open and take risks, say correspondents, and the expertise will follow.

As a rule, full-time foreign correspondents start out young, when they have little experience, few personal attachments, and are willing to take risks. *Time* magazine correspondent Jaime FlorCruz's extraordinary leap into journalism proves the value of youthful versatility. Only twenty years old when he arrived in China as part of a student trip, FlorCruz found himself stranded there for twelve years. Had he been an older man with a family at home, he may have wanted to do nothing but try desperately to return home to the Philippines. FlorCruz, however, turned exile into opportunity. He traveled throughout the country, learned Chinese and eventually secured a position as Beijing correspondent for *Time* magazine.

The serendipitous (some might say catastrophic) nature of FlorCruz's start in journalism is echoed in many other foreign correspondents' "how I got started" stories. Some of those interviewed said they never planned to get into international reporting. More often they are drawn into it on a whim or by chance, and choose to stay. CBS correspondent Cinnie Kennard had always planned on covering Washington, not foreign capitals. In 1993, while stationed in Los Angeles, "I was asked to go to Moscow, and I really wrestled with it," she said. "Then all of a sudden, I realized, 'Here I am being asked to go somewhere where they're going to pay me to learn a new language.... I was paying no taxes, there was a financial incentive there — but most of all there was an opportunity to use my brain.' " Ralph Begleiter, too, had been covering domestic events when he was asked to take the place of CNN's State Department correspondent, who had been fired.

Some current journalists had never even taken a reporting class before getting into the field. Lauren Wolkoff, who writes from Costa Rica for the *Tico Times* and various international publications, was 24 when she took an unpaid internship for a news journal in San José, just because she wanted to travel. Now she is thinking about international journalism as a career. Peter Landesman developed a taste for travel and writing while in the Peace Corps in Kenya. In 1999, he found himself covering the aftermath of Kosovo in 1999, taking the place of a German journalist who had been shot and killed.

Beginning international journalists can never predict what their first-ever assignment will be. For CNN reporter Jim Clancy, it was the 1981 extradition battle in Barbados for Britain's "Great Train Robber" Ronald Biggs. Don Oberdorfer was

35 when *The Washington Post* sent him to cover the Vietnam War in 1966. Richard Ben Cramer, formerly of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, recalled how he got his first international assignment at the age of 27:

They didn't give me any warning at all. They called me up in the middle of the night.... My boss said "How fast can you be in Egypt?" And I thought it was some kind of knock-knock joke. I said, "I don't know, how fast can you be in Egypt?" He said, "No, really." I said, "You mean me?" He said "Yeah." I said, "I'll be there tomorrow."

This kind of last-minute assignment is common not only for novices but for seasoned international correspondents who specialize in crisis and conflict coverage. It can be thrilling to pack up and go at a moment's notice, but often the reporter is woefully undereducated about where he or she is going. Cramer's experience in the Middle East began with confusion as soon as he stepped off the plane. He didn't speak the language, no *Inquirer* bureau existed in Cairo and he had to operate without a set budget. All Cramer had was the number of a *Newsweek* reporter there. "If I hadn't had that phone number, I never would have gotten anywhere," Cramer said. "There were no signs in English, there were like four million people babbling, and I didn't know what the hell was going on." An experience familiar to every international journalist — but how does one prepare for, and begin reporting from, such an unfamiliar environment?

Immersion journalists

Correspondents who know they will be in a country for many months or years have the ability to invest time in learning their way around a foreign culture.

Language raises the first substantial barrier for beginning immersion journalists. Cramer turned the “four million people babbling” into potential interviewees by hiring a translator at the university in Cairo. “It’s nothing different,” he said. “You go out and you do the good street stuff that you do in, you know, an American place.”

For many, even with a translator at one’s disposal, being unable to speak in a foreign land leads to bewilderment. Yet immersion journalists must invest a great deal of time and effort to become proficient in the language of their chosen region. Don Oberdorfer used an interpreter in the four years he spent in Japan for *The Washington Post*, from 1972 to 1975. “Of course it’s a handicap, there’s no question about it,” Oberdorfer said — however, his experience in journalism outweighed his inability to speak the language. Oberdorfer pointed out that it would have taken him at least a year or two to learn the basics of Japanese, and the *Post* did not have the money or time to spend on his education.

Newspapers’ attitudes toward the necessity of educating their foreign correspondents may be changing. David Hoffman, one of Oberdorfer’s successors as the *Post*’s diplomatic correspondent, spent a year at Oxford University prior to becoming Moscow bureau chief, taking twenty-five tutorials in topics such as Russian history, politics, and literature. The effort paid off — Hoffman said he encountered “dozens” of cultural difficulties, “but all of them challenging and many of them fun.” In his online series “Letters from Moscow,” he described the frustrations of learning an utterly new language, including mistaking \$300 billion (“tree-sta”) for \$30 billion (“treed-tsit”) in a press conference on tax revenue. “A slight inflection, a different tone, and \$270 billion seems to have vanished!” Hoffman wrote. “Sometimes I have

to swallow hard and admit: I goofed. Once, my Russian teacher arrived for a lesson and I gathered my courage to answer the door, vowing to try what I had learned. ‘Goodbye!’ I declared brightly in Russian.” (Hoffman 1997)

Lauren Wolkoff studied Spanish as a major at Rutgers University, which she says was essential in adjusting to the Costa Rican culture. “Honestly, I couldn’t imagine doing it without knowing the language,” she said. She conducts about 80 percent of her daily interviews in Spanish, although she writes in English for the *Tico Times*. Wolkoff tries to meet most of her sources in person, as telephone conversations are difficult to decipher without visual cues. “I’ve gotten over my fear of asking dumb questions and asking people to repeat,” she said. And her caution has been a help rather than a hindrance: “People are relieved that I’m double-checking.”

Learning about a foreign culture through academic studies can efficiently prepare one for an assignment abroad, but correspondents also emphasize the value of just getting out with the people. When Jaime FlorCruz found himself exiled in China in 1971, he did both. For months after he first arrived, he was kept guarded in a house with four other Filipino students. “It was so closed-off, so one-dimensional,” he recalled. “In the first few months — no, years — we did not think of making a long-distance phone call. I think that was the worst punishment I went through. My universe was just shrinking.” He did not hear a rock song until 1974, he said —his musical memory blanks after the Rolling Stones. Desperate to escape his isolation, FlorCruz left to labor on state farms and a Yellow Sea fishing trawler. Eventually, he studied in Beijing to receive twin bachelor’s degrees in Mandarin Chinese and Chinese history. His knowledge of languages got him his first positions with

Newsweek and *Time* magazines; his knowledge of the people made him a perceptive and award-winning journalist.

As FlorCruz's tale shows, the real learning process begins once one arrives in a foreign environment. Wolkoff said in her experience, international journalism is the ideal profession "if you're young and looking to learn about everything. I consider myself far more well-rounded in the two-and-a-half years since I've been out of school." As one of only four reporters covering the whole of Costa Rica for the *Tico Times*, Wolkoff covers everything from political controversies to cloud forest restoration. Laughing, she admitted that she feels "like a fraud" in beginning almost every story she writes, knowing nothing about the subject. But the reporting process is all about overturning ignorance — "You become a much better storyteller and a much better reporter when you start out with the basic questions," Wolkoff said.

Parachute journalists

A journalist rushing from Washington, D.C., to Jerusalem to cover the latest violent conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians may not have much time to start with the basic questions. That individual must know at all times what is going on in the world, and since a parachute journalist is unlikely to have time to spend at a university, he or she must develop alternate methods. Jim Clancy outlined his strategy to make himself an informed "firefighter":

You keep an airline guide with you all the time. You carry your passport (or two!) with you all the time. You take enough money on one assignment to hold you over into a second, knowing that you could easily be pulled off one cooling situation to be pushed into another that has just ignited.

Unlike “fireman” reporting in the U.S., the international “fireman” must be reading volumes of news accounts on all subjects, in all regions of the world and know how to acquire information quickly. Computer skills are a must to connect to the latest information. Today, the internet makes that easy. In the mid-1980's, you had to log into our own CNN mainframe to get the latest news. It wasn't always easy, due to the diminished capacity of satellite telephones and land lines in those days.

Versatility is essential for parachutists. Driven by deadline pressures and CNN's reluctance to give correspondents much time on the \$10-per-minute satellite phone, Clancy later wrote his own computer program that could automatically retrieve or transmit data on subjects programmed in advance. And no matter how much time parachute journalists invest in preparation, it is near impossible to keep up with the pace of global news. Ralph Begleiter recounted the story of the time he was granted an exclusive interview in 1990 with the Soviet Foreign Minister aboard the minister's private airplane, a chance Begleiter had been trying to get for five years. He prepared a legal pad full of notes and questions, anticipating prime-time, front-page coverage of the interview. But no sooner had Begleiter stepped off the plane than CNN producers surrounded him and eagerly asked what the minister had said about Iraq. “Iraq?” asked Begleiter. “I didn't ask him about Iraq.” The Gulf War had been declared while he was in the air, and the story was lost in the flurry of crisis news.

Along with time and technological constraints, parachute journalists must often accept language barriers, as they never know what native tongue will be involved in the next foreign crisis, or even which continent they'll be sent to next. Only when parachutists are sent to a foreign bureau for an immersion assignment do

their news organizations sometimes provide them with preparatory language training. Canny Kennard, of CBS news, said that before she was dispatched to Moscow from Los Angeles, she was tutored by a man who specialized in quickly teaching correspondents the basics of Russian.

Of course, no parachute journalist can ever hope to be an expert in every situation he or she lands in. Yet the limits that parachute journalism imposes on cultural knowledge may turn out to be advantageous for an open-minded journalist, said freelance correspondent Peter Landesman. Before he traveled to Macedonia and Kosovo, Landesman said, he had time only to peruse a book and a few background readings before he left, and thus had little prior understanding of the long history of conflict in the area. When Landesman arrived, however, he was able to find untold stories in the aftermath of the war and survivors' tales. "It's important to be really well-versed," he said, "but it's also important not to arrive with preconceptions of what's going on. I think that's true in any discipline — it's possible to be overprepared. You want to be open to what you find. And that's not an excuse for ignorance, by the way. That's just being prepared to be open."

David Hoffman, who studied at Oxford before immersing himself in Moscow culture, acknowledged the need for firefighter journalists but re-emphasized the correspondent's duty to be informed. "You can 'parachute' in during a crisis," he said, "but anyone who has studied a country and its economics, politics, history and culture is far better positioned to understand it than someone who has not."

Landesman spoke disdainfully of "cowboy correspondents" who make a habit of dropping in on conflicts and writing first-person narratives centered around the

writer and not the news. “He comes in, looks around, writes a very sexy story, but he misses the whole f—king point,” Landesman observed. “In my mind it’s a way *not* to write.”

Whether immersion or parachutist, a good journalist aims to report informative international stories that speak to a global audience. Regardless of language and cultural differences, good foreign correspondents soon learn that news stories have meaning that crosses international boundaries. In CNN correspondent Jim Clancy’s words:

Starting out, an international correspondent sees the differences between people in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Mediterranean, etc. At some point, that same journalist will see what all of them have in common: the desire for freedom of religion, freedom of speech, democracy, a home, a job, and a better life for their children. These are the common desires that bind humanity together.

Chapter 5

THE CHALLENGES OF RELATIONSHIPS, STRESS AND BURNOUT

Once international journalists overcome their initial confusion and establish themselves as knowledgeable immersionists or quick-thinking parachutists, *getting the story* often takes precedence over everything else in their lives. Eager reporters will leap out of hotel windows, don flak jackets, track criminals, and venture into all kinds of unfriendly places to get a scoop. When first starting out in the business, foreign correspondents have great freedom because they have only editors to answer to, not spouses or children. Interviewees concur those with few personal attachments adapt better to the fast-paced and often hazardous life of a journalist abroad.

“I subscribe to an idea of sending young people out there,” said Richard Ben Cramer, who was twenty-seven when he traveled to Egypt for his first assignment abroad. “You don’t have a family, you don’t worry about your kids’ school, you don’t need an office. Let ‘em live out of the country for two years and go to hell all over the place.” CNN correspondent Jim Clancy also emphasized the advantage of being “young, single, and adventurous” when he first got started. “My colleagues with CNN who were married could not jump on board a plane at every word of a crisis developing the way I was eager to do.”

Risks seem less important to unattached journalists, who speak offhandedly of violence that might perturb ordinary travelers. Freelancer Peter Landesman went to

cover the aftermath of the war in Kosovo to replace two German journalists who were “shot point blank in the back,” he said. “I think they had found something they weren’t supposed to see.” Landesman said he was fired on twice and kept doing his assignment, although he did not take unnecessary risks. “I like my life,” he said. “These stories are very important to me, but I won’t be able to write any more if I’m dead.”

Jim Clancy as a young correspondent was sent to cover the siege of Beirut in 1982, where journalists faced the same perils as soldiers:

A car bomb shattered the East Beirut hotel where I was staying. There were electricity black-outs, water cut-offs and a steady backdrop of heavy machine gun and tank fire.

This was the first time I had ever seen flak vests issued to the press. But CNN only had one such vest, and the correspondent I replaced took it with him as he had to make his way through dangerous lines of conflict on his way out of the country (the same way I had entered). I quickly learned these vests are mostly useless, and worse, promote a false sense of security. The CBS crew had a brand new set of these vests and ventured down to the Museum crossing along the green line that separated Israeli troops from the allied Palestinian and Lebanese forces on the other side. A mortar round came over the top of a building and exploded not far from the CBS crew. As I recall, every one of them was wounded. One was hit in the head by shrapnel, others in the legs or arms. Not one flak vest had a mark on it.

Clancy had little choice about being posted to a war, as many CNN correspondents were taking turns in Beirut. But unattached, independent foreign correspondents do take unnecessary risks. Former CBS broadcaster Cinnie Kennard recounted the time in 1995 when she drove to a Croatian battlefield in an unarmored van as bullets and shells flew around her and her crew. “In retrospect it was quite a dangerous thing to do, to just drive up to a war in a minivan,” she admitted. “You

start to think, ‘Oh wow, I made it through that one. I think I’ll just try to do *this* today, and I’ll make it through the next one.’ ...Frankly, in many ways it’s stupidity.”

Of course, young journalists do have family ties of their own — not spouses and children, but parents back home who worry over their children’s safety. Kennard remembered her mother’s constant concern: “When she would turn on the TV and I’d be standing in Sarajevo, I seriously would have to say that it made her quite nervous, ...but she never tried to stop me or anything. She’d just say ‘Be careful.’ ” Some journalists’ parents *do* try to stop them. Without hesitation, twenty-four year-old correspondent Lauren Wolkoff named pleasing her family as the most difficult personal challenge she has had to contend with. Wolkoff said her parents, who live in New Jersey, approved of the job she took right after college as reporter for a local newspaper. But she grew restless, and in December 1999 decided to take an unpaid internship for a monthly news journal in San José, Costa Rica. Her parents regarded this as a step backward — they had assumed she would continue moving on to bigger papers within the United States. Today Wolkoff is enjoying the challenge of being a full-time reporter for the San José weekly *The Tico Times*, but her parents still do not support her decision to remain in Central America.

“They thought my little adventure here was done,” Wolkoff said. “They want me to come home still. They don’t want me to get married here, to have grandkids here.... My biggest fear is, ‘Am I supposed to be home? Will I ever get home?’ ”

Wolkoff said she is content to be where she is right now, however, and has no plans to return home to the United States — or to settle down permanently in Costa Rica — at the present time. The other journalists under 40 who were interviewed, AP

correspondent Alexandra Zavis and freelancer Peter Landesman, also said settling down was not part of their plans for the near future. His parents still worry about Landesman taking risky stories, he said, as did his past significant others. He simply tries to keep worrisome details from them:

My ex-wife was very tentative about my doing this kind of work. My parents don't like it, I just don't tell them much about it. I haven't talked that much about what happened to me in Kosovo. But sure, there's tremendous concern. I don't tell my mother certain details. My ex-girlfriend I told a lot.... It's part of the deal you make when you attach yourself to a journalist.... It's hard to have a relationship, I'll tell you that much. Most international journalists I know are unmarried, divorced.

CNN correspondent Ralph Begleiter agreed, saying, "The business of journalism is littered with broken families and dysfunctional families.... It's a career that demands your full-time attention, and sometimes it demands more than your full-time attention. And who gets left behind? Your family obviously gets left behind." Some, however, do succeed in keeping their relationships whole, though it is difficult to dedicate oneself to a marriage while working in the field. Raising children adds a whole new set of attachments and responsibilities that do not readily accompany a nomadic lifestyle. Foreign correspondents, parachute and immersion alike, all choose different strategies to balance their personal and professional lives — but at some point most find they must place family ahead of story, or risk losing those who love them.

Relationships and parachute journalists

Sometimes simply wanting to start a family is enough to yank a roving correspondent from his or her overseas assignments. Cramer decided to give up full-time international journalism when he met his wife, despite the thrill of his adventures afield. “It’s the greatest thing you can do,” he said of foreign correspondence. “And you can’t do it forever.... I met this girl back in Philadelphia. That was the end of me.” Cramer switched to domestic journalism and book writing, going on to marry and raise children.

Most journalists who choose crisis correspondence as a lifelong profession can not simply start staying home as their family grows. However, like Cramer, many do at some point choose family over work. Clancy spent fifteen years as a parachutist for CNN in Beirut, Frankfurt, Rome, and London and loved it, he said. He was married in Rome in 1989 and continued roaming the globe as a correspondent. But a turning point came in Clancy’s life when he had to miss the birth of his first child while he was on assignment with Combat Correspondent Pool #1 in Saudi Arabia.

You've got to understand that I was the CNN Correspondent in Kuwait just four days before the Iraqi invasion. Then, I turned around and became CNN's first correspondent in Baghdad AFTER the invasion. I spent months in Baghdad while my pregnant wife waited at home in Rome. I “switched sides” and went to Saudi Arabia as the due date drew closer, as no one could predict when the conflict might begin, if it would begin and whether anyone in Iraq would even be able to move once it did. My wife flew to New York to be with her family while I remained on assignment. It was just as the air war was in full swing and the ground war was about to begin that Kristine Jane Clancy was born.

Torn between the excitement of the Gulf War and the thrill of holding his infant daughter, Clancy decided to leave Baghdad and go to his wife. “I left the story and was forced to watch others cover it on every television screen everywhere I went in New York,” Clancy wrote via e-mail. “It was painful, I admit.” He said he never regretted making that decision. Clancy remained a correspondent in London until his second child, a son, was born. He then realized that he could no longer be in the field, away from his family, for eight to ten months per year. Soon afterward, he became an anchor for CNN, taking far fewer trips abroad.

Female parachute correspondents who decide to bear children rarely decide to continue their nomadic life. As CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour said in a 2000 speech to the Radio-Television News Directors Association:

Before my son was born I used to joke about looking for bullet-proof Snugglies and Kevlar diapers. I was planning, I told everybody, to take him on the road with me. At the very least I fully expected to keep up my hectic pace, and my passion as a war correspondent. But now, like every working mother, when I think of my son, and having to leave him, and I imagine him fixing those large innocent eyes on me and asking me, “Mummy, why are you going to those terrible places? What if they kill you?” I wince.

(Amanpour)

Some say it is no great hardship to be a roving correspondent and a parent at the same time. Don Oberdorfer, former *Washington Post* correspondent, traveled to Vietnam four times from 1966 to 1979, three months at a time, for his first opportunity at international correspondence. His two children were already born at that time, he said — “But of course you do miss some things. It’s part of the tradeoff.” Considering the thousands of mothers raising children with soldier fathers,

as well as the still-strong convention of the working-father/housewife-mother, it was perhaps an ordinary setup for the time. Oberdorfer took his wife and young children to Japan with him when he took the bureau position there. He then returned to being a parachute journalist when his children were older, from 1976 until 1993.

CNN correspondent Ralph Begleiter, who is married with a 25-year-old son, said it is essential for any journalist in a relationship to have a straightforward conversation with his or her partner *before* making a long-term commitment: “They have to accept the idea that one member of this partnership is not going to be pulling his or her load.”

Begleiter had such a conversation with his wife Barbara before he took on the duties of CNN State Department correspondent. “I made a deal with my wife,” he said. “She wouldn’t do windows and I wouldn’t do wars.... It wasn’t just a promise to her, it was a promise to our family.” Compromises like this one have helped his marriage survive happily for nearly thirty years, though Begleiter said there were rocky times along the way. He remembered clearly the time he promised his young son that he would attend his school play — “He looked at me as a kid and said, ‘Yeah, right.’ He knew my promises were hollow.’ ” Begleiter said he does not regret his career path in any way, but did not fully recognize the toll it took on his family until years later.

Fellow CNN journalist Bernard Shaw also acknowledged feelings of loss after twenty-one years as an anchor and overseas correspondent. Upon his retirement, Shaw said openly that he regretted missing so much of his children’s lives: “In retrospect, it wasn’t worth it” (Kloer). Shaw’s family held together, however, a

triumph he attributes not to any strategy on his part but to his wife's strength. "She — and later our two children — made the difference," Shaw said. "A journalist who does not have a strong, reliant, resilient, and loving spouse is a journalist whose marriage will be weakened by the sheer pounding of work demands."

Relationships and immersion journalists

The problem of separations is solved when immersed journalists bring their families along with them to overseas assignments; but then a whole host of other concerns emerges, especially in unstable or unfriendly environments. The correspondent becomes responsible for not only his or her own health and safety, but that of a spouse and children.

Jaime FlorCruz met his wife in 1983, when he had just graduated from college and she was visiting her aunt, an officer in the Philippine embassy. The two were married in 1984. They now have two children who were "made in China, born in the Philippines," as FlorCruz jokes. The most difficult challenge has not been helping them adjust to growing up with two cultures, he said, but dealing with issues every parent faces: education and health. Private schools in Beijing were very expensive, FlorCruz said, and although the Chinese hospitals were well-staffed, the medical care they provided was not what he was accustomed to. "Doctors don't feel obligated to tell you what's going on. You have to trust them," he said, recalling a few instances when his infant son suffered high fevers and doctors did not reassure them.

Certain difficulties in raising a family were unique to China, like the rule that journalists had to reside in one of four diplomatic compounds guarded by soldiers.

“Kids could hardly bring in Chinese friends,” FlorCruz said, though he said the situation is more open now. “That kind of warped your social life interaction.”

Far more serious was Tiananmen Square; the news story that rocked the globe also wreaked havoc on journalists residing in Beijing in 1989. Landesman’s strategy of keeping the danger hidden from his loved ones doesn’t work when explosive events are happening right in front of one’s family’s eyes. “That was a good reason to be afraid,” FlorCruz said. The day after students were routed, he decided to evacuate his family to the Phillipines. “I just didn’t want to worry about them. I pulled my best connection at that time” — a friend who worked for the Chinese airline. “That was a big relief for me, to get them out.” His wife and children stayed in Manila for one month before FlorCruz joined them for a visit, then all of them returned to Beijing.

Interestingly, he says the family experienced far more culture shock when they moved to the United States a year ago — junk mail, small-town life, choices in cereals and salad dressings — than his children ever did while growing up there. This suggests that immersion journalists have it easier when raising a family. Living together in a strange environment seems easier than the long-term separation parachutists must sometimes endure.

Thrill, stress, and burnout

For a foreign correspondent to reach the height of his or her abilities, there is no substitute for years, even decades, of experience in the field. Those who have learned how to overcome loneliness, culture shock, and problems in personal

relationships find themselves in possession of an amazing versatility and confidence in foreign situations. And despite the hardships, no international correspondent will say his or her job was not *fun*. As *Washington Post* correspondent David Hoffman wrote:

“All correspondents must have a feeling that every day is a vivid experience — you constantly are reminded that being a foreign correspondent never has a cruising speed. It is always breakneck, whether a story about triumph or tragedy, whether a simple lunch or a long-distance investigation, you are always on, always racing, always on a high from the thrill.”

How long can a correspondent sustain this lifestyle? Not forever, retired journalists concur. Reasons for leaving the field are varied. In Hess’s survey of former foreign correspondents, “112 cited normal rotation, 10 were expelled by a host country, 30 were promoted, 26 had personal problems, 6 wanted to leave journalism, and 10 followed spouses who had been reassigned” (Hess 108). He points out that most often, mounting pressures in multiple areas is what causes *burnout*, driving journalists to retire or at least take a sabbatical. Correspondents’ description of burnout varies, from “that point when the ratio of hassle to what gets broadcast or published becomes too high” to “too much work, too much travel and stress, too much illness” (Hess 108-109).

Family, or the lack thereof, is frequently the root of the “personal problems” correspondents cited. Sometimes correspondents simply realize they’re lonely. Canny Kennard retired from CBS to teach journalism at USC after almost being killed in a minefield near Sarajevo, which she said was a message.

I can honestly say I woke up at forty and I said, you know what? I'm looking down the back side of my life. I'm alone, I have a wonderful career, and financially I'm fine, and I know how to speak several different languages. I've had a wonderful run, but I need to readjust here. Because it's very, very difficult to have a life in that situation.

Kennard chose to get married after retiring as a correspondent. However, those who choose to raise families while working in the field are not exempt from feeling the same need for a change of pace. Begleiter, like Kennard, said he received a "message" that he could not keep running from crisis to crisis:

My wife once told me I woke up, sitting up in bed saying, 'I'm *not* getting on the plane, I'm *not* getting on the plane.'... I remember thinking, 'there's got to be something there, there's some sort of a message for me there.' There were many times when I would come home from a trip and I would call Barbara on the phone on the way home from the airport and say, 'The good news is I'm on my way home, the bad news is I'm leaving again in less than twenty-four hours because we're going to such-and-such, and I don't know how long it's going to be.'... The unpredictability of my life was driving me a little crazy....

Immersion journalists often feel the same way, although their lives are less crisis-driven. AP correspondent James Peipert and his wife, after sixteen years in Moscow, London, Johannesburg, and Nairobi, heard one of their sons say, "Dad, are we really Americans?" It was time to go home, Peipert decided (Hess 111).

Raising a family was Cramer's reason for deciding to stay in the United States and write a book instead of returning to overseas assignments, but he said beyond personal reasons, he is glad he didn't spend his life as an immersed foreign correspondent:

Because some of those guys out there who are still out there at 50 years old, I didn't like what they're like.... Everybody makes a lot of money out there because basically you're banking your salary. They get housing allowances, school allowances, things like that. So, they're extremely comfortable, they usually have some palatial apartment overlooking the big thing in the town, whether it's the Nile, the Arc de Triomphe, or whatever town they're in, you know. And they mostly spend their time complaining about their servants and their tailors. They can do the job with one hand and they don't think it matters anymore. And I didn't want to be like that. So when I found that I was covering the same ground, writing the same thing twice, I got out.

Some of the correspondents interviewed for this thesis cited losing interest in stories as the primary reason for leaving. Jaime FlorCruz, although his home in the guarded compound was no palace, felt, like those journalists observed by Cramer, that he was repeating himself after 29 years in China. "There came a point where I could finish a half-finished statement of the Foreign Minister," FlorCruz said. "I had that gut feeling about certain stories, I started to feel, that's not a story anymore. Immersion over time becomes a bad thing — osmosis."

Even parachutists, with their abbreviated stays in foreign places, observe that the number of original stories one person can tell about one situation is limited. Peter Landesman said the stories of destruction in Kosovo began to blend together and the audience grew fatigued. "People just kind of Kosovo-ed out for a while," he said. Another reason he left was the difficulty of covering the intense violence and seeing corpses everywhere, without being able to *do* anything about it. "By the time I left I was really glad to leave," Landesman said. "It's hard to feel like you're on the sidelines.... To me there's no joy in it at all. It was really kind of brutal."

Even worse is when correspondents nearly kill themselves to get the news in violent situations, then find that the story itself has been killed by callous editors back home. “I have always thought it morally unacceptable to kill stories, not to run stories, that people have risked their lives to get,” Amanpour has said. It was not only the birth of her child, but the slow demise of thorough, professional international coverage that discouraged her from trying to continue her career as crisis correspondent, she said (Amanpour).

Over and over, correspondents face the ultimate conundrum of international journalism: in order to be an accomplished reporter, one needs years of experience in foreign places and unpredictable situations — yet the many pressures of covering ever-changing global situations almost always lead to burnout. An international journalist’s skills never go to waste, however. Many leave the field to teach and to raise the next generation of journalists, as Canny Kennard and Ralph Begleiter are doing. Others become foreign affairs analysts, write books, or simply take a break. And of course, some find they can never leave. After a year off in the United States, FlorCruz said, he has recharged and begun to outline new story ideas. “I’m getting excited again.” He is now planning to return to China, thirty years after he first arrived.

Chapter 6

FACING GENDER AND RACIAL BIAS

“Fairness, truth, and objectivity” are the highest ideals of journalism — although in practice, every international journalist focuses on the first of the three. Journalists aim to report *fairly* — that is, to include all sides of every conflict in order to avoid biasing the reader. Truth is relative, as any philosopher knows. And objectivity is impossible, as no single person can ever perceive a situation without filtering it through his or her own consciousness. Behind every story lies a pair of eyes and a scribbling hand, and a reporter’s own identity and background may even determine whether a particular story is ever told. While journalists have a responsibility to inform the public of all newsworthy events, personal interest and dedication can push a story to the front page or relegate it to the back.

Traditionally, the majority of American foreign correspondents have been white males. That holds true today, although the demographics are gradually changing. Stories from around the globe, about people of all ethnicities and both genders, have been told through the filters of the white male experience. But now new stories are being told, as the perspectives of women and minority journalists are expanding the focus of the international news media.

Minority journalists

The history of African-Americans and other ethnic minorities in American international journalism is a very recent one. The first black international correspondent for a major newspaper was Wallace Terry, author of Bloods, who covered the Vietnam War for *The New York Times*. Since then, change in the racial makeup of foreign correspondents has not been dramatic — Hess’s survey in the early 1990s showed that 95 percent were white before 1980, while 92 percent have been white since then. “And significantly,” Hess pointed out, “these figures include local hires, often native journalists in Asia and Africa who work as stringers for American news organizations, usually the wire services and the weekly newsmagazines” (Hess 17). That is how Jaime FlorCruz got his start; although Filipino, not Chinese, he had been living in Beijing for several years when he began working for *Time* magazine.

Minority foreign correspondents say racial prejudice as it exists in the United States is rarely encountered in the field — after all, an American journalist working abroad is automatically a minority. FlorCruz said he only occasionally encountered prejudice in the newsroom: “There were times when I felt inferior, like [others thought] ‘you’re not an honest-to-goodness journalist.’...Most of them treated me with respect and collegiality.”

Journalists of African or Asian descent may find that when working on those continents, their ethnicity helps them get to sources and gain their trust. “It’s easier for me because I’m Asian,” FlorCruz said. “I look Chinese, I speak Chinese. I can

dress down, blend in.” Bernard Shaw, a widely-traveled anchor for CNN, wrote via e-mail, “I cannot recall encountering racial prejudice or favoritism while covering news overseas; however, I did sense a brotherhood of empathy in Egypt, Iraq and South Africa, namely, I sensed it because I was/am a man of color.” Black columnist Chuck Stone, who wrote from many African nations for the *Philadelphia Daily News*, also said many journalistic opportunities were made possible by his race. He breakfasted with the political leaders of Kenya and Ghana — “I know that wouldn’t have been done if I were white,” Stone said. He recalled another experience meeting the people of Soweto:

The officials took me. Whenever we walked up, they’d walk away. So I said, “Listen, you guys go away. Go back and leave me alone. I’ll get back.” Because I knew they weren’t going to talk to me while these white [South African] officials were with me. So they left and I got some good stories, some good interviews... If you’re white, you’re going to have a hell of a time getting stories in Soweto — ‘cause it’s all black, there’s nothing but my people in there.

However, Stone emphasized that minorities have no automatic advantage and that the effect of race on journalistic experiences depends on the individual. “Some blacks don’t have that kind of rapport. They’re turned off. They [people in other countries] treat them like Americans. If you’re comfortable being there, you’re one-of-us kind of thing, [you] have an advantage.” Stone said even when he covered the conflict in Northern Ireland his status as a minority helped him gain a rapport with Irish Catholics, “because they were the minority, they were the ones who were persecuted.... They were all kind of intrigued with me.”

Despite the presence of a mere handful of minority international journalists, it was Stone's opinion that international news coverage was not unfairly biased as a result. News is news, regardless of the background of the reporter, he said. And although race may be an advantage, a journalist's color alone cannot prevent the telling of a story. "The point is, if you do something that is favorable to them and they feel you're a friend, they don't give a damn what color you are," Stone said. "You're a hero."

The female experience in international journalism

Women journalists often face specific professional challenges due to biases based on gender, both at home and abroad. Those who cover events in male-dominated cultures are often beset by prejudice, condescension, and even threats. However, women international correspondents have found numerous ways not only to defend against gender bias, but also to take advantage of being underestimated. Through interviews with female international journalists and historical research, it becomes clear that despite the obstacles gender bias creates, being female can provide unique advantages in the field.

A brief history of female international journalists from the 1800s to 1950

If the romantic stereotype of the male international journalist is a lone ranger in a trenchcoat, the image of females in the profession has been a glamorous, and sometimes scandalous, "stunt girl" reporter. Thousands of women have covered monumental world events as full-time or special foreign correspondents, writes Julia

Edwards, author of a book on women international journalists. “But in the history of their profession women have been relegated to the footnotes or at best resurrected for amusing sidebars — anecdotes about how one posed in the nude and another slept with a general to get her story” (3).

The first American female correspondents gained popularity among readers, but editors limited them to “appropriate” subjects — travel sketches and celebrity interviews, for example, fell within the women’s domain of social and literary journalism.

Margaret Fuller was the first American woman to be a professional foreign correspondent. As a “special” for Horace Greeley’s *Tribune* in mid-nineteenth century Europe, her dispatches from abroad discussed decidedly unladylike subjects. She descended into an English coal mine to write about miners’ lives, witnessed the assassination of the Italian prime minister in 1848, and soon after served as correspondent and nurse in the European revolutions. At that time, Fuller found herself facing a dilemma shared by hundreds of women correspondents after her. She discovered in early 1848 that she was pregnant, and she could not marry the father. Fuller told no one and managed to hide her condition until shortly before her son was born in a small Italian village (Edwards 17). She left the baby in the care of a family there and went off to report from the frontlines. When she returned a year later, she found her baby malnourished and nursed him back to health, swearing never again to leave him. Greeley continued to publish what she had written in the war, profiting from the scandal about the illegitimate child. Fuller wrote no more once she took on

the job of mother, and died in a shipwreck on her way back to the United States in 1850.

Despite her too-short career and her trials with love and pregnancy, Fuller had succeeded in proving that women could be effective international correspondents. “We would have every arbitrary barrier thrown down,” Fuller wrote in 1845. “We would have every path laid open to women as freely as to men” (Edwards 12).

It would be many decades before that day came. Many more female correspondents followed Fuller, but few gained recognition for serious reporting. The American public gradually came to accept women as journalists — even more, they applauded the bravery of female foreign correspondents in wars and adventures. In 1889 Nellie Bly won the nation’s adoration for her seventy-two-day trip around the world and made it admirable, not disgraceful, to compete with men (Edwards 23). Yet it was precisely *because* of female correspondents’ gender that they were noticed in those situations. Men were still the ones chosen for serious assignments.

Women journalists frustrated by continued characterization as fragile or frivolous did turn convention to their favor. In World War II, for example, women argued that they should be sent to cover the action “from the woman’s point of view.” Many ended up on the frontlines with the soldiers and the men correspondents, just as they had planned (Edwards 5). In 1915, writer Mary Roberts Rinehart threatened to stop publishing her popular fiction in the *Saturday Evening Post* if the magazine did not send her to cover the First World War. Rinehart went and wrote of the real war — the stench of the dead in the trenches, the clouds of mustard gas, the vermin crawling on the wounded. Her experience as a former nurse and her compassion

gained her access to the frontlines and hospitals where no male journalists had yet gone (Edwards 29).

Despite the adventures of women journalists such as Rinehart, stereotypes of women as flighty and flirtatious lingered. A 1937 collection of sixteen foreign correspondents' stories, We Cover the World, includes as its sole woman representative Mary Knight, a reporter for the United Press Association in Paris in the 1930s. She is introduced as follows: "Good-looking, vivacious, daring beyond most men, and a facile writer, Miss Knight does credit to her beloved South and to the predominantly male profession which she has chosen to grace with her charms" (Lyons 276). It goes without saying that the introductions to each of the fifteen men's pieces lack similar commentary.

Reading Knight's first-person piece "Girl Reporter in Paris," it becomes obvious that beyond a few sensational news stories she wrote, her main beat was fashion reporting and features. "There is no work for a woman newspaper writer like a job as foreign correspondent," she wrote. "To me, it should be the early ambition of all women newsgatherers, because of the facilities it offers for cosmopolitan work, travel, pleasant experiences, development of ideas and skills for further writing, and the chance for by-lines on really good stories" (Lyons 286). Few serious journalists entered the field for "pleasant experiences" — yet Knight was the one chosen to represent all female foreign correspondents in this book.

Despite the condescension men accorded women journalists, many females rose to prominence in the field in Europe after World War I. Sigrid Schultz of the *Chicago Tribune* won the position of first-ever female foreign bureau chief in Berlin

in 1925. With lines like “Are two hundred men afraid of one woman?” Schultz used her femininity — without compromising her principles — to gain access to important political meetings. Anne O’Hare McCormick of *The New York Times* researched her every story exhaustively, and her knowledge and disarming personality won her private interviews with Josef Stalin, Benito Mussolini, and Adolf Hitler, among others. And syndicated columnist Dorothy Thompson’s analysis of world affairs was read by more than eight million people at the height of her career, when “her sway over public opinion was unrivaled” (Edwards, 89). Despite their successes, all these women also faced biased employers, exclusion from important events and accusations of inadequacy. Thompson summed up the dilemma of women correspondents succinctly: “She can be sure that if she is chaste, men will call her cold; if she is brilliant, men will call her ‘like a man’; if she is witty they will suspect her virtue; if she is beautiful they will try to annex her as an asset to their own position; if she has executive abilities they will fear her dominance” (Edwards 101).

Women correspondents kept trying to gain equality — and succeeding. *New York Herald Tribune* reporter Marguerite Higgins showed that women could be effective combat correspondents while covering the Korean War. She was banished from the battlefield and sent to Tokyo by an army commander simply because she was a woman, but General Douglas MacArthur allowed Higgins to return to the front. Here, her femininity and winsome image helped her gain popularity and the support of the American public, who called her “Maggie.”

Her biggest opposition came not from the public or from soldiers, but from colleagues. Some accused her of trading sex for stories, while others attributed her

fame to her “cute smile,” not her ability (Emery 118). Fellow *Herald Tribune* correspondent Homer Bigart tried to get her to leave the important assignments to him. An observer wrote of their relationship, “He had been sticking his neck out ... for several years. All of a sudden a woman appeared on the scene ready to finagle and maneuver and stick her neck out even a little further. I am afraid he was driven up the wall by her. Her willingness to sleep on the docks and seek no privileges as a woman was impressive. She had grit and courage and an ability to get her way” (Emery 103).

Not only was Higgins unafraid to get involved in the war, her writing reflected her professional attitude. “A reinforced American patrol, accompanied by this correspondent, this afternoon barrelled eight miles deep through enemy territory...snipers picked at the road, but the jeep flew faster than the bullets which nicked just in back of the right rear tire” (Emery 112). Clear, concise, vivid, and free of fluff, Higgins’s writing defied stereotypes of female prose. She later won a Pulitzer Prize for international reporting. And she refused to sensationalize her own experiences — here, she includes herself in this scene as merely “this correspondent.” Higgins even called herself a “newspaperman,” downplaying her own gender. Today, we recognize her, and other pioneer female foreign correspondents, as newswomen.

Women in international journalism today

Gone are the days when female foreign correspondents’ numbers were so small that a single reporter’s name would be linked to one global event. The growth of women’s ranks in the field has taken a long time, however. “Of the 185 foreign

correspondents in our survey who were working abroad before 1970, only 12 were women” (Hess 16). Equal-opportunity hiring, the progress of sexual equality and the fact that women have proven themselves to be competent and daring reporters increased the number of females working in the field in the 1990s to about one third of the total (Hess 16).

The animosity from colleagues that Marguerite Higgins felt has faded now that women journalists are no longer an oddity. *Christian Science Monitor* international correspondent Sara Terry said in a 1991 interview, “I don’t know that people in the newsroom have ever treated me differently because I’m a woman.... I do feel guilty about that. I know women who passed before me in this profession paid the price. I skated in on the backs of those women” (Ricchiardi and Young, 181).

Although Terry said she had never been overtly harassed, she did experience gender bias in more subtle ways. While working on her 1987 series on international child abuse, she and her female co-author met with four male editors to discuss the project. This is what she said happened:

One of the editors turned to me and said, “Look, I know this was rough. But I don’t want to see you or your writing get emotional.”

I hit the roof. I said, “I do not ever want to hear the word ‘emotional’ used again in the course of discussing this series. I think that’s a very male accusation. It implies that I, as a woman, am allowing my feelings to run away with me. What I’m saying, as a human being, is that you cannot be human and not respond deeply, and with pain, to this series.”

The word “emotion” never came up again.

(Ricchiardi and Young 183)

Sara Terry demonstrated that discrimination in the newsroom is best confronted directly, not ignored. On the other hand, bias experienced while on assignment can be put to one's own advantage, say many female foreign correspondents. How does one execute the judo move of turning prejudice into assistance, or overcome obstacles related to gender? Women journalists have many inventive ways of doing it.

A primary obstacle faced by women is gaining access to important sources who won't acknowledge them. AP correspondent Alexandra Zavis, 29, is currently working for AP's Abidjan bureau in the Ivory Coast, covering 22 African countries. The male-dominated culture in Africa can make it difficult for a female journalist to gain respect. In diplomatic situations, Zavis has found that being a woman makes routine information-gathering more difficult. She covered the South African Parliament when apartheid was beginning to be dismantled and had to invent new ways to contact officials — male journalists could easily invite them for a drink or for dinner and discuss politics then, but a woman making these invitations or accepting them presents a different message, she said.

The experience of exclusion is one shared by hundreds of women journalists. Mary Roberts Rinehart, who was the friend of soldiers in World War I, found that equality ended when the war did — she was barred from the Press Club during the postwar peace talks (Edwards 31). Journalist Linda Mathews shared a similar experience in Korea, when she “was routinely excluded from the ‘for men only’ entertainments called *giseng* that brought journalists together with government officials” (Hess 17).

Many female journalists find, however, that once they reach a source, gender is often an asset in gaining information. “It occasionally makes people take you less seriously,” Zavis said, “and they’re less careful talking to you.” Sara Terry, while working on her “Children in Darkness” series, found that in the thirteen countries she visited, men rarely treated her as a real journalist — but they paid the price. “I never thought I’d be glad for sexism,” Terry said, “but in this case I was. Officials would come right out and say, ‘Of course people break the child labor laws here. We don’t care. That’s the way it is.’ There was a frankness because they thought, ‘What can these insignificant women do or write that could threaten my position or affect me?’ They would tell us anything because they didn’t believe we had any power” (Ricchiardi and Young 185-86).

The same often holds true in conflict situations. Female correspondents are no longer banned from the battlefield as in past decades, and some have found that being female can even be an advantage in times of war. Zavis said “anxious, jumpy soldiers mellow out” when talking to a female. “As a woman you’re often perceived to be less of a threat than a man, especially a white man.” Bryna Brennan, an AP correspondent in Central American conflicts from 1986 to 1989, said being female freed her from the machismo-inspired reluctance to show ignorance about military details: “Many of my male colleagues, who had never served in Vietnam, knew as little as I about military nomenclature, but it seemed they were at times embarrassed to ask a soldier or guerrilla what type of rifle he carried” (Hess 17). And CBS correspondent Cenny Kennard recalled watching CNN’s Christiane Amanpour in action in the Persian Gulf War: “I can tell you stories of her in the Gulf, of guys just

telling her stuff, about strategy and so forth, how she got more information than a man could get. I think they often say yes to us because they don't know how to say no to a woman.”

Being female may make soldiers more friendly, but it does not offer reliable protection from violence. Zavis acknowledged that the threat of rape weighs on the mind of any woman in a war situation. Being a journalist can offer some protection, as both sides of any conflict want their story told, but offers no real security. “They just don't care who they get,” she said of the rival factions in Sierra Leone, where her predecessor was killed in 1999. Terry points out, however, that in some countries hurting women is a cultural taboo (Ricchiardi and Young 186). Kennard recalled a time when her gender may have helped save her life and the lives of her camera crew. It was 1993, when civil war almost broke out in Moscow, and a group of Russian nationalists took Kennard and her crew captive in a high-rise building: “They had the guns stuck in the cameraman's, soundman's face. I just begged and pleaded like a small girl to please not hurt them, please not hurt them. They weren't about to hurt me, they were going to hurt them. And they stopped.... And eventually let them go.”

Hess observed that women international journalists are at least as willing as men to take risks in the field. Statistically, women are twice as likely as men to be freelancers, a much riskier, less stable, and less lucrative job than full-time correspondent. Some of these freelancers are wives of international journalists, who found writing jobs from their husbands' postings, and others are young women who seek to prove themselves in the field by going into dangerous places alone. The political conflicts in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s drew women journalists in

greater proportions than men (possibly because Europe and Asia were seen as more prestigious assignments). Since 1987, Hess writes, men and women correspondents have spent roughly equal proportions of time covering conflicts, the riskiest situations of all. The stories of past and present women correspondents prove that although war journalism is not for everyone, gender is no barrier to effective conflict reporting. Zavis said of novice war correspondents, “If they panic, if they can’t work, then it doesn’t mean they’re a bad journalist. It just means it’s not their thing.” Zavis, with seven years of experience covering African conflicts, has no trouble with it.

Even in countries where violence is a minor threat, everyday harassment still affects female journalists. In the Central American nation of Costa Rica, the culture of *machismo* colors everyday life. Women, especially foreign women, face constant catcalls, sexual invitations, and attempted touching. Lauren Wolkoff, 24, who works for the San José *Tico Times*, acknowledges that sexual harassment exists as an accepted, though annoying, part of her daily life in and out of the office. “I still don’t find that it hinders my work,” Wolkoff says. “I don’t let it.” She recalled an incident a few weeks prior when she and a female photographer traveled to the rainforest in Puerto Jimenez for a story and found themselves accompanied by fifteen “ticos” (Costa Ricans), all men, who were environmentalists and a crew for a local television station. “There were moments when I felt the spotlight was on us,” Wolkoff said with a laugh. The female photographer went on a helicopter with a group of the same men, who asked her repeatedly if she had a boyfriend or would consider marrying a tico. “You learn to just accept it,” Wolkoff said of daily sexual harassment.

Many female international journalists find that even when they are focused intently on their careers, their identities as — or potential to be — girlfriends, wives, and mothers can limit their experiences in the field. Jacqui Banaszynski, whose coverage of famine in Africa for the St. Paul *Pioneer Press Dispatch* made her a finalist for the 1986 Pulitzer Prize in international reporting, pointed out how difficult it is for women to obtain overseas assignments. “Women in that situation, there’s this automatic instinct to say, ‘Well, but she just had a baby.’ Or ‘Do you think her husband would be willing to go with her? What would Joe say?’ I don’t see anyone saying, ‘What would Susie say?’ if Joe went out of town” (Ricchiardi and Young 45).

Female international journalists emphasize the benefits of holding onto their femininity in the field while keeping sexuality out of it. It is a fine line to draw, especially when many cultures make no distinction between a woman’s gender and her identity. “I’ve used my femininity and the simple fact of my womanhood every way possible, as long as the result is to get the story I’m after and as if it doesn’t involve coming on sexually to anyone,” said Terry. That meant accepting men’s patronizing if it helped her get sensitive information; using “dress psychology” by changing her clothes to influence men’s perception of her; and relying on her own feminine qualities in reporting, like “compassion, sensitivity, being a good listener, the ability to set ego aside” (Ricchiardi and Young 182). At the same time, however, professionalism is key; female journalists speak with disdain about those who cry in the newsroom or get too emotional in their work. The balance between being a nonsense journalist and an empathetic reporter is a tough one to maintain — for men as well as women.

Still, female correspondents can accomplish amazing feats by just being aware of the effect of their gender in different cultural situations. Her gender aided Kennard in becoming the only local television reporter allowed into Baghdad at the time of the Gulf War, where her coverage later won the prestigious Columbia University duPont Award. Kennard had followed the families of fourteen hostages being held by Saddam Hussein from Texas to Jordan, where she was stopped, lacking a visa. The families continued on to Iraq, while she desperately tried to obtain papers:

I spent four days at the Iraqi embassy in Jordan, begging these men to let me in. There were male reporters from different publications all over America.... And they would not give them the time of day. I am one hundred percent convinced that because I was a woman, and because I was relentless, they let me keep coming back every day after day after day. I think they began to see me as their wife, or their sister, or their daughter, feeling sorry for me, and they finally gave me the darn visa. And I was the only local television reporter in America to get in to Baghdad.... The men were furious. There were other reporters that were in the lobby of the Iraqi embassy in Jordan that were absolutely, utterly furious when I got that visa.

Most women international correspondents eventually reach a point where they feel comfortable going into any situation, whether a battlefield or a boardroom, without apprehension about a gender handicap. Indeed, being a woman can be an invaluable advantage, as correspondents like Kennard, Terry, and Zavis have found. Trailblazers from Margaret Fuller to Marguerite Higgins, as well as other women journalists working today, have made international journalism a field where women can participate without fear of bias.

Chapter 7

TELLING THE STORY

“Every issue of the paper provides an opportunity and a duty to say something courageous and true; to rise above the mediocre and the conventional; to say something that will command the respect of the intelligent, the educated, the independent part of the community; to rise above fear of partisanship and fear of popular prejudice.”

— publisher Joseph Pulitzer (Newton 124)

A story should sing. Its language, taut with meaning, should conjure vivid images in the reader’s mind so he or she can understand the reality of a foreign situation.

A story should inform. It should present concisely the essential details of a situation so the audience can easily comprehend what has occurred.

Which should take precedence in international journalism — creativity or factual thoroughness? Obviously, much depends on the journalistic medium; a story written for a travel magazine will have a far different tone than a war bulletin for CNN. But for foreign correspondents who themselves make the choice on how to tell the news, striking a balance between feature and fact presents a significant challenge.

Whereas reporting the facts is any journalist’s primary duty, it has become more and more apparent that the average American’s attention veers away from standard news accounts of foreign affairs. A story leading “Seventeen million

Africans have been affected with AIDS...” that goes on to quote statistics and government officials has little real impact on someone comfortably browsing a newspaper at home in the United States. With torrents of information coursing through television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet, Americans in particular have become adept at ignoring news that doesn’t directly affect them. Instead, an individual can now educate him- or herself only in limited, specific areas of interest. Thus a wealth of information and a paucity of understanding defines the current era, as former White House spokesman Mike McCurry has pointed out. “Information swarms you like a swarm of bees and people say, ‘get away,’ ” he said. “But sometimes something stings you” (McCurry 2001). That is the goal of international journalists today — to sting the public into paying attention to events abroad. The same American who skipped the statistics-story on AIDS may pay attention to a vivid CNN special on the dying or the poignant story of a single family affected by the epidemic.

However, a viewer may easily be shocked or saddened by a piece of journalism without *learning* anything important. A news story must contain substantive information, not only emotion and description. International journalists debate the best way to get the essential news across, but in the end the solution is a dexterous combination of storytelling, to draw the audience into the story, and informing, to provide the essential context.

The strength of narrative

“See, if you get the life of the country and put it on the page with details, then all the stuff starts to make sense.” Former *Philadelphia Inquirer* Richard Ben Cramer has a simple philosophy of international journalism; just get out to see the action, he says, and start writing. He confessed in a 1979 interview that he himself had never perused much foreign news: “I never read it because I never got a sense of the people who were caught in it” (Clark 36). Cramer’s own stories did recreate that involvement. His singular talent was the ability to bring the reader deep into an intense narrative with striking but simple language. Cramer won the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting in 1979 for stories that seized readers and drew them into the turbulent human lives in the Middle East. One of his best-known stories recounts his two-mile stroll across a barren no-man’s land, from the Palestinian side to the Israelis’, as soldiers on both sides watched him with suspicion.

RAS EL BAYADA, Occupied Lebanon — It is eerily still in no-man’s land, a two-mile testament to the lesson that people are as much a part of the landscape as houses and fences and fields.

Here, eight miles from Lebanon’s southern border, between the last Fatah commando checkpoint and the spearhead of the advancing Israelis, the chickens come out to meet you on the road. It has been 48 hours since grain was scattered for them in their yards.

(Clark 9)

In this short passage and the account that follows of the two factions’ guarded reactions to the lone journalist, the reader gains a sharp awareness of the isolation, fear and suspicion that characterized the entire relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. This powerful story refrains from discussing the scenery, or Cramer’s

own feelings. It is not sensationalized or biased toward one side. The structure of the narrative reflects the structure of the actual news: the conflict itself. It is *not* easy to do this, to write a vivid story that also conveys the news — many efforts at colorful international journalism end up sounding like travelogues. Cramer's piece by no means tells the whole story of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it does capture the reader's attention in such a way that he or she might feel compelled to find out more. It makes foreign events seem real.

Cramer said he would not write any other way. "That's what I'm there for, to be there, to see it. If you don't see it then you're some schmuck getting press conferences," he said. And according to Cramer, it is not hard to report the real action. "If you can't write a war, you can't write anything. It's happening right in front of your eyes. It's the easiest thing in the world to write. But if you're not there, it's just like a diplomatic nosebleed. 'The talks were very fruitful.' Oh good, 'very fruitful,' " Cramer said, mimicking taking notes. "What they say, what you say. You never get that stuff unless you're there."

Freelancer Peter Landesman agreed with Cramer's view. Landesman wrote several magazine pieces on the aftermath of massacres in Kosovo in 1999, where he was faced with the challenge of putting human faces on a bewildering number of stories of death. "The only reason stories are different is because of the characters involved," said Landesman, who searched for unique human experiences instead of writing standard news accounts. "A lot of this is just walking around with your eyes and ears open...of exposing yourself to whatever comes your way." For Landesman, this meant following a local farmer to a field where lay a horrific sight:

Among Suhareka's vineyards, a girl, perhaps 15, perhaps 19, lies spread-eagle in a clearing. No one knows her name; probably she was a refugee from another village. There is no clothing. Her hair, long and black, pools beneath a skull charred by the sun, teeth clenched in agony. Her body, obviously young, has burst, maggot-ridden. Worse still are her fingernails, painted scarlet red, unchipped, the perfection of a great beauty. Dead two weeks, she was led here, raped, her throat slit, not necessarily in that order, and left as she lies. One imagines her not begging for her life.

(Landesman 1999)

The fact that this young woman was killed does not itself make international news. But Landesman's vivid writing, although it makes the reader wince, also evokes a real sense of what it felt like to *be* in the killing fields that so many other stories described in the abstract. "I look for the stories that haven't yet been told," Landesman explained. "Spinning narrative and oral history — this is what makes sense out of the chaos of our lives."

The "zoom-in" news story

But can narrative alone give the audience a sense of the bigger picture? Many veteran foreign correspondents emphatically state that it is *not*, that knowledgeable factual reporting is the foundation of international journalism. Don Oberdorfer, who covered State Department activities abroad for seventeen years for *The Washington Post*, said a correspondent's primary responsibility is to find out the details of any given foreign event as well as the significance of its effects on the United States. Like Cramer, Oberdorfer said, "I certainly would not advocate going in there and just talking to ambassadors, diplomats, military officials." But an effective journalist

includes these sources in a story if necessary, and does not rely on colorful narrative to make a story, he said. “If you want to go out and be a *feature* writer, write people stories, you can do it,” Oberdorfer said in a faintly contemptuous tone. But what journalism is all about, he said, is “separating fact from fiction.” Ralph Begleiter, too, emphasized that diplomatic reporting, as opposed to the war journalism Cramer did, relies upon official sources to get the underlying stories behind international events.

Journalists who write more straight news than features often find alternative outlets for creativity. David Hoffman, former Jerusalem correspondent and Moscow bureau chief for *The Washington Post*, said he considered himself to be primarily a writer of “hard” news. Yet in 1997, *The Post* ran a series of Hoffman’s “Letters from Moscow” exclusively on its Web site. These first-person, conversational narratives detailed Hoffman’s personal observations of the Russian landscape and culture, and even his own struggles learning the language. “Both [features and hard news] are important,” he said. “Readers want to know what’s new, and they also want stories that draw them into interesting ‘windows’ on life abroad. It is sometimes hard to make foreign coverage as compelling as local concerns but well worth the effort.”

Even wire services, traditionally the providers of stripped-down, straight news dispatches, are making the effort to adapt their style to attract a larger audience to foreign news. Alexandra Zavis, AP correspondent in West Africa, said it’s not hard to find news to report — “Stories practically slap you in the face” — but nevertheless “African conflicts tend to be disregarded. It gets you a bit upset.... There’s absolutely no reason for someone sitting in Peoria, Illinois, to be interested in a coup

in Niger.” Therefore, within the last five years AP has been adding more feature stories, background information, and “as much color as we can possibly get in there” to its regular dispatches, Zavis said.

Television news networks may be following suit. Jim Clancy, former “firefighter” correspondent for CNN and now the anchor for its weekly show “Inside Africa,” shared Zavis’ belief that coverage of foreign affairs must include both factual reporting and in-depth pieces. Clancy named groundbreaking crisis stories, like the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, as some of the best journalism he’s done. But that’s not all it is about, he said:

Journalism isn't always just a story. I consider “Inside Africa” to be one of the most important things I've ever done. Why? Because it aims to dispel the way all journalists cover the continent. There is more to Africa than poverty, disease, civil war, drums and dancing. Already, our focus on the solutions rather than just the problems is giving rise to a news service that mimics our goals. That's what I want the program to do, to change the way the media and the world looks at Africa.

However, the dilemma of *attracting* Americans to such thoughtful coverage remains. “That’s been my perennial challenge,” said Jaime FlorCruz, former Beijing bureau chief for *Time* magazine. Without the context of the Cold War — a “tired, misleading formula,” he said — to frame world events, Americans have difficulty recognizing the importance of foreign news, and their attention is drawn by irrelevant things. “If you could write a story about a dog or a cat, it would be more appealing to Americans,” he said wryly. FlorCruz’s strategy is not to separate his storytelling from hard news reporting, but to combine them: “starting off the story with human

interest, then broadening to pull back the camera and tell the reader, this is the context of that anecdote and this is why it's important.”

Interestingly, many correspondents say the best stories they've done are not the dramatic accounts of war or crisis, but are instead the “human-interest/pull-back-the-camera” type FlorCruz describes. FlorCruz himself said one of the pieces in which he takes great pride was “a very unsexy story” he wrote for *Time* in the early 1980s on the phenomenal migration of 70 to 100 million Chinese farmers to cities and factories. The story worked because he placed the reader not in some government migration bureau, but out in the fields and towns, speaking with farmers and with China's most eminent anthropologist. Another of his favorite stories came from a clandestine 1989 interview with one of twenty-one students blacklisted for protesting in Tiananmen Square; again, he gained perspective on one of the twentieth century's most prominent events by writing the experience of someone who was there.

Don Oberdorfer said one of the most intriguing stories he ever wrote was a human-interest type story, an account of accompanying Soviet chief Nikita Krushchev on his first-ever visit to the United States in 1959. “It was,” he said, “like the man from the moon was visiting the U.S.”

Yet Oberdorfer also said he does not believe it is a correspondent's responsibility to turn around the lack of interest in foreign affairs. “Yes, it disturbs me,” Oberdorfer said, “but no, I don't think there's anything correspondents can do about it.” Canny Kennard agreed, saying the fault lies with news organizations.

I think the contemptuous attitude toward the public is absolutely awful — this general assumption that we're stupid, that the audience is stupid, that we don't want this news. Whoever made that assumption, I just don't know, because it's not true.... I think it's

essentially contributing to the uneducation of America. It's terrible.... Presented in a clear, concise, clever way, the American public will watch. They will watch.

Mike McCurry, former White House spokesman, pointed out the need not to abandon stories, but to keep up with them and be persistent. "It has to be a sustained and regular presentation of these ideas over and over to penetrate the clutter of information," he said in a 2001 address at the University of Delaware. However, Oberdorfer said the bottom line is the expense of overseas coverage — news organizations are not willing to invest the necessary funds, time, or space to enable thorough, sustained reporting of world affairs.

A telling example of this is Richard Ben Cramer's account of the difference between the stories he *wanted* to report in the Middle East and those the newspaper wanted:

Some of the best things that I think I did were about stories that weren't even the news in the traditional sense of the word. I did a story on when the entire nation of Egypt, 40 million people, was convulsed because that was the week of the school tests. Everybody, every kid in high school, had to take a test to determine if you were going to be able to go to university or if you were going to be a professional purse thief. The rest of your life was all determined on how you did on your test. And the whole *country* shut down, because this is such a big deal. But of course this never makes American news because it's not about geopolitics or war and peace or anything else, but it told me so much about Egypt. It was one of the best stories I ever did.

But if you ask a news editor to put it on the budget for the week, and gave him the Rhodesian War or the high school tests in Egypt, there's no question they'd pick the war in Rhodesia.

In 1971, when Cramer was writing from the Middle East, the "people journalism" that he helped pioneer had not yet become part of the mainstream media.

Today, newspapers such as *The Baltimore Sun*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* do frequently publish first- or second-page features on human interest stories abroad. However, space and time for foreign affairs is limited. Ralph Begleiter, former CNN correspondent, said he sees correspondents continually struggling to be heard:

They are the people at the other end of the string and the tin can. They are the people shouting into the tin can in Ougadougou, saying ‘There’s a hell of a good story here, let me write it up for you, I can do it in a great way, it’ll really be attractive, etc. etc.’ Then it gets through the string, and at the other end it comes out of the tin can along with a thousand other stories competing for attention, and Ougadougou — the editors say, ‘Where is that anyway and why should we put this on the front page?’

Will more media organizations’ concept of what makes interesting news change in the near future? The trend among foreign correspondents seems to be toward telling people stories *about* people, hopefully to raise awareness that events in foreign countries resemble Americans’ own more than we think. Yet crisis news still spikes CNN’s ratings, while in-depth analysis and human-interest stories do not. International journalists express their hope that publishers and producers will disengage themselves from the ratings game and choose to invest in telling the *news*, not what people seem to want to hear.

Chapter 8

SO WHAT? SUMMARY AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS TO THE DILEMMAS OF INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM

Looking back at the foreign news coverage of a century ago, we see that enormous leaps have been made in international journalism. News that once took days or weeks to cross the globe now appears on television and computer screens in seconds. Today's top foreign correspondents are dedicated professional journalists, not swashbuckling adventurers out to make money by sensationalizing stories. No longer must journalists pledge allegiance to the U.S. government or feel obligated to choose a side in war, although the issues of loyalty and censorship in conflict coverage still exist. And overall, the media focus more on global news, instead of emphasizing the differences between "us" (Americans) and stereotypes of the "them," as in the Cold War.

However, foreign correspondents now working in the field sometimes despair when they compare today's sound-bite, superficial journalism to a past when international news captured the interest and imagination of American audiences. Former CNN correspondent Ralph Begleiter observes that after 1990, opportunities for in-depth coverage declined as media businesses lost interest in funding it:

We don't see in the papers very much, anymore, longer stories about... Thailand and what Thailand is like. We see and read about Thailand when the drug trade is in the news. And then if a correspondent gets sent to Thailand, to report on the drug story,

because it's some kind of spot news, we might get a flurry of feature pieces while the correspondent is there for a while and so on.... I think we've lost that idea that you would read about another place because 'gee, isn't this interesting that the *Times* has a correspondent there and they've written an interesting piece about it.' ”

Most journalists concur that the American public does *not* pay enough attention to international news and that this ignorance is lamentable. But it is the networks and newspapers that bear responsibility for the decline in quality of coverage, they say, by demanding speed and sensationalism rather than storytelling and understanding. News organizations argue that's what the audience *wants* — but that assumption is a self-fulfilling prophecy, warns Begleiter. “I think the last ten years, and maybe even five or six years, have been extraordinarily powerful in shifting editorial control of news organizations into the hands of viewers and readers and away from the hands of professional journalists,” he says. “I don't think it's a *good* shift. I'm not sure it's reversible.”

Christiane Amanpour put it in more angry words in a 2000 address to the Radio-Television News Directors Association: “And yet, the powers that be, the moneymen, have decided to eviscerate us. It actually costs a little bit of money to produce good journalism, to travel, to investigate, to put compelling viewing on screen, and to give people a reason to watch us.”

According to foreign correspondents the world over, the solution of inadequate coverage is twofold. First, they say, news corporations must worry less about the bottom line and stop pandering to opinion polls. Any news source should be the “crown jewel” of the corporation that owns it, Amanpour argues. Let the

profits come from sitcoms and game shows; the media bear a sacred responsibility to the public to provide factual, thoughtful global news coverage.

Correspondents also recognize their own responsibility to engage the audience in everything they do, describing two specific ways to do so. One is for journalists to emphasize how international news affects real events in America. “You cannot ignore foreign stories. We cannot as a nation,” Kennard says. “Moreover, in a newsroom you’ll frequently hear the excuse, ‘What does that have to do with me?’ The fact of the matter is, if you take three fundamental components and you apply them to a foreign story, you can always find an American tie.” The three components, according to Kennard, are religion, the military, and of course economics (hearkening back to that first-ever international news story in America, which caused colonists to rage about the British taxes). Any international story can be made pertinent by examining one of these ties, she argues. Ralph Begleiter adds that “threat” is another tactic journalists can use — and use, perhaps, too often — to force an American audience to pay attention. Even without the frame of Cold War antagonism, threats such as global epidemics and breaches of U.S. national security grab the public’s interest.

Kennard agrees that simple human interest could be considered another fundamental component as well, echoing Richard Ben Cramer and others’ credo of getting out in foreign streets, villages, and battlefields to tell “people stories.” This is the second way to draw Americans into international news, in a method best expressed by Jaime FlorCruz: “At least starting off the story with human interest, then broadening to pull back the camera and tell the reader, ‘this is the context of that

anecdote and this is why it's important.' ” FlorCruz says engaging American interest has been his “perennial challenge,” and this may be the key to his success as a renowned international journalist.

Although gaining public interest is a goal of most foreign correspondents, one does not have to change the world to be successful. In a 2000 address, Amanpour quoted renowned war correspondent Martha Gelhorn, who said: “That in all my reporting life I have thrown small pebbles into a very large pond, and that I have no way of knowing whether any pebble caused the slightest ripple. I don't need to worry about that. My responsibility was the effort. I belong to a global fellowship, of men and women, who are concerned with the welfare of the planet, and its least protected inhabitants.”

What does it take to be a respected member of this “global fellowship”? Success in the field of international journalism does not simply mean collecting awards, having bylines in bold type or seeing one's face dominating the television screen. It means abiding by the highest journalistic standards, dedicating one's life to following stories, and still finding a balance between one's professional duties and personal responsibilities. Foreign correspondents cannot simply go home every night, shed their pens and microphones, and forget what they have witnessed that day. Once a journalist, always a journalist — but what makes someone a great international correspondent?

Experience and clear-sightedness are the essentials, maintains Don Oberdorfer, and in that respect international journalism is no different from reporting the news at home. He worked for newspapers in the United States for more than ten

years before going to Vietnam. “I felt my background in journalism was what qualified me to work overseas,” Oberdorfer says. His experience helped him resist the bewilderment and burnout younger correspondents felt, he said, and write accurate accounts. “That’s what journalism is all about — separating fact from fiction. You try to judge who’s telling the truth more than someone else.”

Yet every foreign correspondent enters the field lacking experience, so there must be inherent qualities that allow some young reporters to succeed where others give up. Clear-sightedness alone does not a correspondent make. For example, Walter Duranty, a *New York Times* correspondent in 1920s Moscow, was praised by colleague William Bolitho as being exceptionally perceptive: “I have never met anyone who could see further through a brick wall than he could...” (Hohenberg 142). Yet Duranty, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1932 for his pieces on Stalin’s ascendancy, also ranks as one of the worst foreign correspondents ever for lying about the Volga famine in order to avoid alienating his government sources. “The big cities and the army are adequately supplied with food,” Duranty wrote in 1933. “There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition” (Newton 15). Meanwhile, his competitor Floyd Gibbons was reporting the deaths of more than 5,000,000 in a famine for which the government was, in part, responsible. Thus it is obvious that the ability to distinguish fact from fiction is useless without an accompanying sense of the duty to report the whole truth.

Michael Herr writes that in the Vietnam War, “by some equation that was so wonderful I’ve never stopped to work it out, the best and bravest correspondents were

also the most compassionate, the ones who were most in touch with what they were doing” (227). Freelance correspondent Peter Landesman concurs that compassion is another essential trait for an international journalist. Adventure journalism by correspondents who merely report what they see at first glance may have been popular a century ago but pointless today. “Corpses look the same when they’re blown up,” he observes. “You have to be quiet and still and compassionate” in order to get the real stories.

Another example of compassionate reporting is the shift in recent years from weapons-based war journalism to victim-based journalism. Former CBS correspondent Canny Kennard, now researching a book on the subject, has observed that the recent explosion of women covering wars, beginning with the wars in the Persian Gulf and Yugoslavia, has changed standards of conflict journalism. “When I went into an area,” Kennard says, “I’d head for the orphanages and do victim-based coverage, rather than how many F-16s we had in the battlefield and how the training was. I just felt that those kinds of stories would elicit more of a response.”

Being aware of the impact of the news, and writing or broadcasting stories with specific intentions in mind, is also a relatively recent development. Veteran correspondents like Don Oberdorfer say that being conscious of the effect of one’s reporting “really gets in the way of professional journalism.” However, many of today’s international correspondents emphasize the importance of deliberately trying to engage the audience in a story in order not only to educate, but also to bring about change. For example, Kennard says the victim-based coverage in Yugoslavia may

have brought about a quicker end to the conflict as people saw the devastation wreaked on innocent people.

Christiane Amanpour described in a speech what she would say to her son, now one year old, if he asked why she wanted to be an international correspondent. “I know that I want to say, that it's because I have to, because it matters, because Mummy's going to tell the world about the bad guys and perhaps do a little good” (Amanpour). Yet Amanpour recognizes that raising her son is an enormous responsibility in itself as well. Success in international journalism also means making thoughtful and deliberate decisions in order to balance personal relationships with professional lives.

Cinny Kennard and Alexandra Zavis are two examples of women who thus far have chosen to separate their work from marriage and children. Zavis, in the early years of her career, says her plans include more travel for AP but no settling down yet. Kennard decided a family was impossible to support while on the move as a parachutist, and waited until retiring in her mid-forties to marry.

However, some correspondents are able to balance a family and their work, even if it means eventually choosing to change their professional lifestyle to improve family life. Journalists concur that missing important events at home is unavoidable, but it is still possible to be a good parent. CNN parachute correspondent Jim Clancy enjoyed ten years of roving the globe before the birth of his first daughter made him decide to become an anchor and cut back on time abroad. Jaime FlorCruz raised a close family in Beijing, dealing with the challenges of cultural isolation, medical care, and political violence as they came along. Also, media organizations do try to make

family life easier for foreign correspondents. Newspapers will now sometimes assign spouses to the same international posting, and grant time off for childbirth and childrearing. International journalism has come a long way since the day when Margaret Fuller was fired for being pregnant.

With equal-opportunity hiring leading to a stronger voice in the media, female correspondents today no longer face the once-common discrimination from editors and colleagues. Gender bias and harassment in the field is still omnipresent, especially in male-dominated cultures in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. However, as many women attest, being female can be a tremendous asset in the field: to gain sources' trust, to fool prejudiced officials, and to report from a perspective different than that of the conventional white male. Journalists of non-white ethnicities attest to experiencing many of the same advantages in reporting from a minority perspective.

The threat of violence will always stalk foreign correspondents, especially those who cover war by trade. Twenty-four journalists around the globe were killed in 2000, and 39 in 1999. (Committee) Almost every one has tales to tell of dodging shells, escaping explosions and even seeing fellow journalists captured or killed. Jim Clancy says his greatest personal challenge was dealing with the kidnapping of his colleague, Jerry Levin, in Beirut. "It was a fact that whenever the artillery duels came to a halt, the kidnappings would increase," Clancy says. "It was a very difficult environment. Add to that the daily dangers of living in a war zone. (...We had to go out each day and try to capture the frontline action.) How difficult and stressful was it? The hair fell out of my head and chin in places due to stress." Kennard's friend

and camerawoman of twelve years was shot by a sniper in Yugoslavia and the left side of her face destroyed. And Alexandra Zavis's predecessor at the AP bureau in Abidjan was shot in Sierra Leone, where "They don't care who they get," she says. Fortunately, news media organizations like the Committee to Protect Journalists are monitoring such incidents and trying to protect press freedoms. Also, Kennard says all BBC radio journalists are now required to take an intensive course in "Hostile Environment Training" before going into conflict situations, so they will be better prepared.

Preparation in any aspect of international journalism helps, correspondents say, whether basic language training, cultural studies, or just reading the newspaper. Today's beginners in the field can ready themselves for their adventures by learning about past journalists' experiences. Yet time and time again, professional correspondents say there's no substitute for just getting out there and doing your best to get the stories.

All those interviewed have different stories of their own to tell, different backgrounds, and different methods; yet they all share an insatiable curiosity and a great love for news. Putting together so many different insights and experiences, a detailed portrait of a successful international correspondent emerges. He or she must:

- "get the life of the country and put it on the page with details, then all the stuff starts to make sense." — Richard Ben Cramer
- "make up [his or her] mind as to who is credible, use textual information. You try to judge who is telling the truth more than someone else." — Don Oberdorfer

- “be really well-versed, but it’s also important not to arrive with preconceptions of what’s going on.” — Peter Landesman
- get over “the fear of asking dumb questions.” — Lauren Wolkoff
- “tackle any topic, breaking news, and sound smart about it — either by being resourceful enough to find the experts or just being smart through yourself. International journalists are successful because they’re able to break down the walls between them and their sources.” — Jaime FlorCruz
- “have a feeling that every day is a vivid experience.” — David Hoffman
- have “a real desire to learn about other people and see the world through their eyes.” — Jim Clancy.

Add all of this to Benjamin Franklin’s requirements that journalists “be well acquainted with Geography, with the History of the time, with the several Interests of Princes and States, the Secrets of Courts, and the Manners and Customs of all nations,” and it is easy to see why being a foreign correspondent is such a challenging profession. Yet the journalists interviewed all considered the obstacles secondary to the excitement of their everyday lives and the rare chance to change the world with a few words. As Richard Ben Cramer said with assurance, “It’s the greatest thing you can do.”

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Appendix A

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD BEN CRAMER, NOV. 6, 2000

On his first international assignment for The Philadelphia Inquirer:

After a while they sent me to Egypt.... They didn't give me any warning at all. They called me up in the middle of the night.... My boss said, "How fast can you be in Egypt?" And I thought it was some kind of knock-knock joke. I said, "I don't know, how fast can you be in Egypt?" He said, "No, really." I said, "You mean me?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "I'll be there tomorrow."

On starting out in the Middle East:

I was young. Twenty-seven when I went. And after a year, when I was 28, we ran out of money and I came home.... They gave me a credit card, and sometimes they'd wire me money too, but mostly I just worked their credit card and sometimes I'd get cables, [saying] literally "Don't use the credit card." 'Cause they really, they didn't have any budget. They didn't have any bureau.... They were just scrambling, because they liked the stuff and they wanted to keep me over there, but there was no line in the budget for it. I was really the New York bureau. So anyway, after a year we just plain ran out of money and they said "You'd better come home," and I wrote a last piece and came home....

I got to the [Cairo] airport and I had no idea what to do next... If they hadn't given me the name of the Newsweek guy who was based there... If I hadn't had that phone number I never would have gotten anywhere, I mean I literally, I didn't know what — there were no signs in English, there were like four million people babbling and I didn't know what the hell was going on.

On winning the Pulitzer:

I went up to Rochester to see my folks, this was the next spring, I came home, I think, in the December of '78. I had gone in December of '77, I came back a year later. And I had gone up to see my folks in Rochester, New York, and my editor calls. Same guy who sent me over here. And he said, "I just want to make sure you're here tomorrow, you know we have lunch with Simon," who's another editor at the paper. And I said to him, "Yeah, OK," I said, "I can be there. But what's with a call Sunday night about lunch on Monday?" He said, "I just want to make sure you're going to be there." I said, "Yeah, I'll be there, but what's wrong?" He said, "I'm not supposed to tell you this, but you're going to win the Pulitzer tomorrow..." I didn't even know they submitted it. I said "Horseshit." He said, "No, no, no, I wouldn't horseshit you about this, you've gotta be there."

So then I called my parents and I got my mama on the phone and I said, "Mama, tomorrow I win the Pulitzer Prize." She said "So what?"

On walking through No Man's Land for his famous story

That was a couple months down the road, three months down the road. By that time I was actually in Israel, when I could *feel* the war breaking out.... I had covered the thing that set it off, you know, there was a bunch of kids that were killed on a bus that was hijacked. I had covered that, you know, I worked on it all night, 'til 7 in the morning....

I had a rent-a-car, and I drove up to the north. In Israel, everything's within a day's drive. I drove up north and I got to the northernmost kibbutz about noon and they stopped me. I said, "Man, I gotta go. I gotta get up there." They said, "Can't do it. Can't do it."

I said, "You gotta let me." So I drove back down to Tel Aviv and I got on an airplane and I went up to Cyprus. I got the next plane out to Beirut. Got to Beirut, got another cab, and got to the end of the Palestinian line. And they said, "You can't go." I said, "I gotta go."

I was just horrorstricken that this thing was gonna go on and I wasn't there. ... My cabbie wouldn't go any further. So I just got out and walked. That was the way it started.... It was an hour's walk down and maybe an hour's walk back. I was back in Beirut... that night.

On taking risks for a story:

I was *there*, and if I couldn't get there I would have felt like a total putz my whole life, or what I thought would be my whole life. And you know, I would rather have been hurt than miss the story. You just wouldn't. You just can't do that. You just can't do that. And I knew that the paper and my boss and everybody were riding

on me.... If you can't write a war you can't write anything. It's happening right in front of your eyes. It's the easiest thing in the world to write. But if you're not there, it's just like a diplomatic nosebleed. "The talks were very fruitful." Oh good, "very fruitful." What they say, what you say. You never get that stuff unless you're there....

I didn't contact any diplomats, or ambassadors, or any of that. And I wasn't going to meet them, either, 'cause I couldn't stand that stuff — you know, talk code, and it's all lies... So I only had one choice — to get out there in the field... And it's fun, too.

...The other way's no fun.... When I first got there I started to act like a regular, a real reporter, you know... I couldn't stand it. I just didn't know what the hell I was talking about and I didn't feel like they knew what they were talking about. There wasn't anything. I think I wrote two stories like that... and then we went out to the City of the Dead... I went to this big cemetery in Cairo. This thing goes on for miles, these ancient tombs that are built above ground there, like little houses. And there were thousands of poor people living in these tombs. So I just hung out with the poor people and found out what did they think about peace. What were they all thinking about? And what they told me was that Congress wanted their lives to change if there was peace. And you'd see, you know exactly what it will cost... Because you're out there in the City of the Dead. If you're in Alexandria, getting the briefing from the State Department guy, you know it, that there's nothing to that... All the paper's going to get the next day is crap from the briefing. Your job is to get out there and see something that people can *feel*. And that's the job.'

On making a difference and ‘people journalism’:

Well, when I came back, I didn’t feel that it had made enough difference. I felt like I had been yelling at the top of my lungs and not enough people heard me... But I think it made a difference in the trade. Other reporters started doing a lot more of that. So maybe it made a little difference. But it made a big difference to me, my writing. And I think it made a little difference.... Unless you think it makes a difference, you can’t do it. ... Maybe you only get a few people every day, but when you tell them something real, they never forget it.

...If you file one slug like that, they’ll let you do whatever you want to do for the rest of your life out there because they know you know better than they do. You give them one story that makes everybody talk for a day, you’ll never have another editor problem as long as you live. Editors are never the problem. I mean, really — they want good stories. They just don’t know ‘cause all they got is the wire....

That *is* the real news, that’s the real life of the country and that’s what you’re out there for. See, if you get the life of the country and put it on the page with details, then all the stuff starts to make sense. But until you do that none of the stuff makes any sense and that’s why nobody knows anything. That’s why it’s so depressing, when you come home and they’re all worried about Cher’s miracle diet and they don’t care. Having now been a consumer of foreign news for the past 20 years I can see why they don’t care because most of that stuff doesn’t mean a damn...

On why he left international correspondence:

I'll tell you why. Because some of those guys out there who are still out there at 50 years old, I didn't like what they're like.

They're extremely comfortable. Everybody makes a lot of money out there because basically you're banking your salary... They get housing allowances, school allowances, things like that. So, they're extremely comfortable, they usually have some palatial apartment overlooking the big thing in the town, whether it's the Nile, the Arc de Triomphe, or whatever town they're in, you know. And they mostly spend their time complaining about their servants and their tailors. They can do the job with one hand and they don't think it matters anymore. And I didn't want to be like that. So when I found that I was covering the same ground, writing the same thing twice, I got out. Plus I met this girl back in Philadelphia. That was the end of me.

Appendix B

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH CINNY KENNARD, APRIL 14, 2001.

On her first international assignment:

Saddam, as a PR move, had invited the hostages' families to come visit them for Christmas. I managed to find a way to get on that airplane with them...I had dug into that story so much they could hardly say no.

Once I got to Jordan, I was stuck. The families had a visa to get in. I did not have a visa to get to Baghdad. So here I was, this local television reporter from Texas. So I get as far as Jordan, and the families are going to go into Baghdad now, they've got their visas, they're taking the Iraqi air flight and off they go. And I'm stuck in Jordan, unable to cover the story so far. So I begin to go to the Iraqi embassy in Jordan and beg, and plead and cajole. I can't even tell you, this went on for four days. I spent four days at the Iraqi embassy in Jordan, begging these men to let me in. There were male reporters from different publications all over America.... And they would not give them the time of day. I am one hundred percent convinced that because I was a woman, and because I was relentless, they let me keep coming back every day after day after day. I think they began to see me as their wife, or their sister, or their daughter, feeling sorry for me, and they finally gave me the darn visa. And I was the only local television reporter in America to get in to Baghdad.... The

men were furious. There were other reporters that were in the lobby of the Iraqi embassy in Jordan that were absolutely, utterly furious when I got that visa.

On the advantages of being female:

Christiane Amanpour, who was a colleague of mine, can tell you stories of her in the Gulf, of guys just telling her stuff, about strategy and so forth, how she got more information than a man could get. I think they often say yes to us because they don't know how to say no to a woman.

October 1993, covering near-civil war in Moscow:

In that one day alone, I think I was teargassed, shot at, avoiding bullets all day long, and at one point was preparing to go on *Face the Nation* with Bob Schieffer and was taken captive in a high-rise building by some Russian nationalists with my crew. Again, a situation where they had the guns stuck in the cameraman's, soundman's face. I just begged and pleaded like a small girl to please not hurt them, please not hurt them. They weren't about to hurt me, they were going to hurt them. And they stopped. And eventually let them go.

On why she left:

I think what made me finally take a rest in my career was I was in Sarajevo, I was in Northern Bosnia when the American troops came in, and I was there for Christmas, New Year's and my birthday, which happens to fall on December 28. I was over 40 years old, and I had crashed into a minefield that morning on my way to

do a report for CBS Sunday morning. And the car rolled into a minefield, just basically landed just inches from a mine. And we didn't blow up, explode.... We were so lucky. And I just thought, "This is a message."

On relationships and solitude:

I would watch them [male correspondents for CBS] go home for Christmas and their wife would have the Christmas tree up and they'd have everything sort of prepared. And I'd go home to nothing.

...It involves being paged in the middle of the night, it involves spending weekends, holidays, birthdays in those battle zones. The war doesn't decide that it's Christmas and we're taking a day off. There are very few cease-fires on Easter. That becomes a very challenging life for someone who really wants to live, have a partnership and children and so forth.

...I can honestly say I woke up at forty and I said, you know what?, I'm looking down the back side of my life. I'm alone, I have a wonderful career, and financially I'm fine and I know how to speak several different languages, I've had a wonderful run, I need to readjust here. Because it's very, very difficult to have a life in that situation.

On her first bureau posting:

I was asked to go to Moscow, and I really wrestled with it...Then all of a sudden, I realized, "Here I am being asked to go somewhere where they're going to

pay me to learn a new language...” I was paying no taxes, there was a financial incentive there — but most of all there was an opportunity to use my brain.

On the lack of interest in foreign coverage:

When you’re an international correspondent it’s very, very difficult to get your stories on the air.... I think it’s horrifying. I think the contemptuous attitude toward the public is absolutely awful. This general assumption that we’re stupid, that the audience is stupid, that we don’t want this news. Whoever made that assumption, I just don’t know, because it’s not true.... I think it’s essentially contributing to the uneducation of America. It’s terrible.... Presented in a clear, concise, clever way, the American public will watch. They will watch.

...You cannot ignore foreign stories. We cannot as a nation. Moreover, in a newsroom you’ll frequently hear the excuse, “What does that have to do with me?” The fact of the matter if you take three fundamental components and you apply them to a foreign story, you can always find an American tie.... I defy you to bring me a story I can’t tie to America.

On violence:

August 1995: The Croatians were trying to take back an area of Croatia.... A BBC radio journalist was killed that day. He had gone up to a burning house with one of his colleagues and he was shot. The Croatian soldiers opened fire on him from inside the house. The other thing was, we couldn’t get to the battle location. We had

this van and it wasn't an armor-plated van, it was just a regular van and we were driving up this street where the battle was essentially taking place. [This was] a very, very, very daring thing to do and frankly, I had pushed for it. The guys in the car, the male producer that I was working with, the male cameraman and the male sound man were just.... it was very, very, very pressure-filled, because there was a lot of shooting going on and shelling and so forth. And they weren't comfortable, and I wasn't, and I remember thinking, "What am I doing here? I'd rather be on summer vacation in Connecticut with my family." It was just, it was terrible.... In retrospect it was quite a dangerous thing to do, to just drive up to a war in a minivan.... You start to think, "Oh wow, I made it through that one. I think I'll just try to do *this* today, and I'll make it through the next one.... Frankly, in many ways it's stupidity."

One of my dearest friends, who was my camerawoman for twelve years in Texas and subsequently went on to CNN... was shot, the left side of her face blown off by a sniper's bullet.... She has had her whole face rebuilt at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Of course, she looks like a much different person than when we covered Texas politics together.

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