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JOAN SHORENSTEIN CENTER ON THE
PRESS, POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

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I N D E X

P R O C E E D I N G S

(9:03 a.m.)

MR. JONES: Let's begin. I'm Alex Jones, I'm the Director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. And I want to welcome you to what we have always looked forward to as a sort of follow up colloquy after the Goldsmith Awards, to talk about journalism, to talk about investigative journalism and especially to talk about the future of journalism.

What I'm going to do this morning is to first go, in alphabetical order, by news organization, and ask the finalists, each of them in turn, representing, I mean a spokesman or two from the organization, however you want to sort of arrange it, but to talk for a few minutes about the piece that you did, the challenge, the project and especially the problems that you had that you found you had to overcome.

I think that obviously I know each of you could probably talk for a whole morning about what you did, and how you did it and what not, if you would focus especially though on problems that you ran into that you had to find solutions to and how you approached

finding those solutions. Let me start with Mei-Ling Hopgood from the *Dayton Daily News*.

Mei-Ling, if you would, speak into the microphone there.

If you recall, the *Dayton Daily News* did the series on the Peace Corps.

MS. HOPGOOD: Hi. We met resistance from the Peace Corps immediately. My colleague, Russell Crow, actually began the series, I joined it about six months into the investigation, but initial contacts with the agency were lukewarm, a little bit responsive. They did provide some reports that they had on safety, but then they stopped answering his calls altogether. He filed Blair requests and they went unanswered, so I joined the project in September of 2002 and we decided we need to file a lawsuit because they were not responding at all to our requests.

So a lot of our reporting came from traveling around the world, contacting relatives here in the US, getting medical and criminal files from them, getting actually more detailed criminal files from some other countries than we did the Peace Corps itself. After we did file the lawsuit, they became more responsive but,

before, they redacted names of countries, names of government employees, country directors. I mean we could derive them but we had to rely a lot on networks of volunteers to flesh out the stories, the assaults that were sort of mentioned in the Peace Corps IG reports and by hearsay through other volunteers.

The Internet was a really great resource, Peace Corps volunteers are all over the Internet and they are telling you all their business, so you can usually contact them that way, but there is a very strong network of Peace Corps volunteers that we used as well.

MR. JONES: We were contacted, as I'm sure you are well aware, from some people in the Peace Corps who have objected to the series and complained that they felt like it gave a distorted view. How widespread is that view within the Peace Corps and how have you dealt with that?

MS. HOPGOOD: Well it was important, right up front, to say in our story that we were not taking away from the positive experiences of those who did not have assaults against them, who had good experience in the Peace Corps. There are many and we acknowledged that, but what we were taking a look at is the agency's

treatment of crime against volunteers and their handling of actually incidents. It's a little bit similar, I try to explain it to people that when we cover crime, as journalists, I mean we do do stories about safety programs, etcetera, but we cover it in a different light.

And we have written and many other media have written great, happy stories about the Peace Corps, I mean I don't think that's lacking. But that particular group of volunteers who wrote to the Goldsmith, and I don't know who else, they had been very active, it's just a small group of them. But if you look on chats of Peace Corps volunteers, the dialogue about it is very varying, depending on their experience, but I mean we expected that. It's a very, it's a sort of a sacred, well it's not sort of, it's a sacred cow agency and there are very noble intentions and people who do good work in the agency, we were never--

MR. JONES: How did you come to do this series?

MS. HOPGOOD: Me or the paper?

MR. JONES: Well the *Dayton Daily News*.

MS. HOPGOOD: Russell keeps, he collects all GAO reports and IG reports, and he knew of this

database, this assault database, and the team in Dayton, sort of brainstorming the ideas they had on their plate, they picked this one to pursue.

MR. JONES: And is the *Dayton Daily News* a news organization that does projects like this all the time?

MS. HOPGOOD: Absolutely, absolutely. I mean I've been with the *Dayton Daily News* for a little more than three years, and I've come from larger papers, and one of the things that attracted me is their ambition and their desire to do these projects and the commitment, financially and journalistically, to do these projects.

MR. JONES: Who owns the *Dayton Daily News*?

MS. HOPGOOD: Cox Newspapers.

MR. JONES: I don't think the *Atlanta General Constitution* does that.

MS. HOPGOOD: I can't comment on that.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: You know, it's really interesting, this is not about Cox in particular, but it really strikes me that Cox is a newspaper family. This is a private company and it's one of those families that does, I think, and should aspire to being like the

Grahams and the Salzbergers and such, but there has not been a huge amount of evidence of that. Does this mark a change in attitude or has this always been there at *Dayton*?

MS. HOPGOOD: Well, at *Dayton*, they have always been committed to investigative journalism, I mean Russell has been doing these investigations for years and years. They were a Pulitzer winner in 1998 for a medical, perhaps, I think, they also won the Goldsmith that year, they are very dedicated to this. I think the other papers are learning, but I can only really speak from my experience at *Dayton*.

MR. JONES: Interesting, thank you.

Now who is, Paul, are you going to speak for *Asbury Park*? It's not that Douglas can't speak as well, but there is sort of one that would take the lead--

MR. D'AMBROSIO: I would go to Skip when it comes to the report.

MR. JONES: Okay, fine. If you would, tell us a little bit about your problems.

MR. D'AMBROSIO: Well the series was talking to public service and, initially, the problems were the

real lack of information, financial information, about legislators. We wanted to take a look at the financial conflicts of lawmakers in our state. And this really stemmed from an investigation we started a year earlier concerning the State Senate President, John Bennett, and we found he had, by the virtue of his power and position in the State Senate, amassed number of municipal government attorneyships, which paid him well over $200,000 a year.

So he had $100,000 job here, a $12,000 job here, a $15,000 job here, by virtue of all those jobs, he was able to increase his public pay to astronomical levels and his pension to boot. When we wanted to look at the financial records of everyone, there was really a real dearth of information, the financial reports they do have to file are vague and well shielded from really revealing any good, critical information.

So what we did was we built our own database, we got the information, the paper records, that we could, we turned them into a database and then we started backgrounding people as best we could, who is connected to what corporations, and what law firms and so forth, we used different varieties of sources to

pull this all together.

The other problems we ran into included politicians starting to treat us as a political enemy, so we were being attacked by both Republicans and Democrats, and everyone was saying you are working for the Republicans, no, you are working for the Democrats. We were getting it from both ends, essentially. John Bennett's best defense was, he said at a press conference, yes, everything the press wrote about me is true, but it's because they are working with the Democrats that they are out to get me, and that was his theme throughout the whole year concerning his pay to play, essentially, getting no-bid contracts from the government.

MR. HIDLAY: Alex?

MR. JONES: Absolutely.

MR. HIDLAY: Paul, if you could, also talk about the bond database that we were able to get because that was really critical, because bonding is an area--

MR. D'AMBROSIO: One of the valuable aspects of the series was we were able to obtain, from a private vendor, a list of all public bond transactions in New

Jersey, so that totalled -- James, how much, about $54 billion? It was about $54 billion, 3,000 bond deals in the state over a five year period. Looking at that, we were able to see John Bennett and all the law makers, how much they made off the bond deals because as a bond attorney, you work for the township floating these bonds.

And it really became a cash cow for the state and municipal government and political parties to say hey, we are not going to raise taxes, let's go and put a bond out there and as part of that, let's give the bond work to our favorite law firms and the fees generated from that totalled hundreds of thousands of dollars over the years.

MR. JONES: You know there really is an impression, as I suggested last night, that New Jersey is like Russia, in terms of its culture of sort of tolerance of corruption. I mean is that a fair, I'm sure it's not fair, is it an accurate rendering of the way people respond to revelations like the ones that you all put before them?

MR. HIDLAY: If I can jump in on that one, I think that it's a cultural corruption that's been

allowed to flourish because the newspapers in the state, collectively, have not done a good enough job of really focusing attention on that, thinking that readers really don't want to know about that or for whatever reason. This work, as everyone around the table can attest, takes a great deal of time, and effort and commitment. In the case of this particular project, a number of newspapers had nibbled around the edges, as had we, as had the *Courier Post* when I was the editor there.

You know, you might look at an individual law maker or an individual public official, but no one had ever looked at the system, in totality, because it took so much resources to do it. At the peak of this project, we had twelve reporters and six editors working on it, that's the kind of commitment, and we did it in a five month period of time because we wanted to get it done before the election. And so I think it shows, in a way, how, particularly as we get into the era of corporate ownership and clustering of newspapers, there is a way that smaller newspapers can combine forces to do the kind of work that the much larger newspapers have been noted for for long periods

of time.

But it takes, you know, a lot of organization, and planning and commitment from the editors at all of these newspapers. We got everybody together in kind of a war room sort of approach, and that was the start of the brain storming, but we had the top editor form all seven Gannett newspapers in New Jersey there, we had like the projects editor, whoever Paul's equivalent would be at that newspaper, and then a reporter or two from each paper, and we just started brain storming and put everything up on a blackboard to sort of look at the themes.

And we initially were just going to look at the law makers but what we ended up doing was looking at the lobbying system, the political boss system, and then we also tried to look at the issue of how could we get more information about them, thinking ahead to sort of being solution oriented, and the final day of the series looked at solutions.

But talk, Paul, if you would, also about the financial disclosure form, what we did there, which we got attacked a lot for this.

MR. D'AMBROSIO: We felt, with this coming out

six weeks before the election and us discussing the financial conflicts, it was extremely important for us to give the public a view, the best view we could, of the financial holdings of the officials. So, in New Jersey, everything is "public" but hidden in Trenton, there is nothing on the Internet. If you want to get them, you have to take a trip to Trenton, shell out ten bucks to get a copy of the financial statement forms. No one, no voter, is going to do that.

What we did is we took 1,500 pages of financial disclosure forms, scanned them in and put them up on the web, and every day we linked to that at and we said if you want to check out your elected representative, go here, but beware, it's not really full disclosure. What we did to follow that up was we got the Washington State disclosure form, which is generally considered the best in the nation, we sent copies to all the candidates and all of the elected representatives, and we said we would like you to fill this out, to fully disclose and become truly transparent to the voters, all your holdings, and your income and your financial interests of your family. About 55 guys did that.

MR. JONES: Out of?

MR. D'AMBROSIO: Out of probably 220, 230 candidates and incumbents, but that was a start because the story that we followed up with was most of the legislature doesn't want you to know what their holdings are and what their conflicts are, and that started a big debate on trying to make politics in New Jersey much more transparent to the voters.

MR. JONES: And how much did the voters really respond?

MR. D'AMBROSIO: My basic fear, and Skip can attest to this, was we were about to publish 38 pages over eight days on politics in New Jersey, and we write about politics everyday and my thought was is New Jersey voters and readers so jaded it's going to be like ah, so what? But the response was quite overwhelming, we received hundreds of letters, people were outraged, we got air play on the biggest radio station in New Jersey for weeks on end, and our website with the financial disclosure forms, the first two months, got 80,000 hits.

So people from all over the state were tuning in and looking at this stuff, and the real true test of

this was some of the biggest offenders, such as John Bennett, they lost the election. A year ago, it was unheard of, he was in a safe seat in a Republican district and, six weeks after this ran, his numbers plummeted and he lost the election, essentially, and so did his running mates. So the Republican district went Democrat, based on the ethics issue, and a few others lost on the ethics issue too, and it became the central theme, during those six weeks, ethics, that candidates were talking about.

They were no longer talking about taxes, and school funding and all that, they were saying hey, how can I be a cleaner candidate? Or how can I fulfill the public's need to have a clean candidate run for office? That sent shock waves through the legislature, after the election, because if John Bennett could go down, pretty much anyone could go down. And as of this week, the ruling Democratic party introduced a 25 point reform plan, which addressed pretty much all the topics we noted in the series, so that is very encouraging.

MR. HIDLAY: Already, before that had been unveiled, there were more than 50 ethics reform bills that were introduced in the legislature that are being

debated as we speak. And the other interesting phenomenon is that it's trickled down to the local level, towns are starting to enact bans on that nepotism, regulations on campaign finance contributions to take away this perception of corruption, and we continue to get letters. We continue to do stories, obviously, on this and also other corruption issues at local and county levels and the letter traffic is just incredible.

Our Letters to the Editor editor said he had never seen this kind of response, he had been at the paper for 25 years and had never seen this kind of response on one topic. I think we got more than 300 letters just in that period of right after the series ran, letters and e-mails.

MR. JONES: What was the impact on the *Newark Star Ledger* of this series?

MR. HIDLAY: Well, again, the difference about this series, as I said, they, and *The Record*, and obviously *The Press* and other larger papers that have the ability to do this kind of work had really nibbled around the edges of the story, they had done individual law makers, different things like that, but no one had

ever kind of put it all together. They sort of studiously ignored it for quite a while but, now, everybody is covering it because it's really that and property taxes are the two biggest issues in the state right now.

But part of the issue also, I think why this became the sort of the lightening rod that it is, is because we focused such intense editorial page pressure on it and we followed up the series, the investigative series, the *Asbury Park Press* did, with an eight part editorial page series to sort of mirror the investigative series, and the paper proposed a six point good government reform plan that we took right out of basically the solutions that experts had suggested.

And we said this is real simple to fix this problem, here is what needs to be done; and then each day we wrote basically a very long, detailed editorial about each of the six reform planks. And we did some unusual things, on the first day and the last day of the editorial page series, we remade the whole look of the editorial page and we actually devoted the whole editorial page to this subject, layering it in

different ways to, again try to focus attention. We referred back to the series online, for anybody that hadn't seen it, and that got a great deal of attention.

And also the other thing that's interesting, in the era of the Internet, there is a Website that I believe the *Times* owns called politicsnj.com, which is kind of like an umbrella site that just links out every day to anything related to politics and any news organization's website. So that got the series and the follow up editorials a tremendous amount of statewide play, well beyond the circulation of *The Press* or the collective Gannett newspapers and that, again, kept that sort of attention focused on it.

But I think that intense editorial pressure did rub a lot of people the wrong way, you know, we've taken some criticism over that, saying that well you're being too forceful, or too bombastic or whatever.

MR. JONES: You are trying to tell us too much about what we ought to think, as opposed to just--

MR. HIDLAY: I guess, I don't know. I mean I think what it is is that we are very aggressive, the tone on the page is not real diplomatic, it's very provocative and it says, you know, this is a cesspool

and we should clean it up.

MR. JONES: Has the Gannett company been inspired by this to invite you to use this as a model that they might use in other places?

MR. HIDLAY: Yeah. In fact I'm going to be speaking at an internal publishers meeting in April to talk about how we did this and how we can combine forces more frequently in states where there are clusters, to try to do more of this kind of reporting.

MR. JONES: Has it had an impact on the circulation or the sort of reception of your various small newspapers in New Jersey?

MR. HIDLAY: We haven't seen any noticeable increase in circulation, we are fighting the same battles that every daily newspaper in America is fighting, circulation continues sort of a slow slide. What we have seen is immense increases in traffic on our website as a result of this.

MR. JONES: Let me interrupt the series to go to Linda Greenhouse for a moment, about a subject that I know is going to come up again and again, as we got through this, and that is the availability of records, the state of Freedom of Information in the wake of the

Patriot Act. Where do you see us now and where do you see us going?

MS. GREENHOUSE: Right, as Skip was talking, I was thinking about the impact of the Internet on reporting and on public information generally, which has been obviously enormously powerful and beneficial, both in sort of profound ways that the *Asbury Park Press* experienced and then in just sort of daily ways that I do my job. When I started covering the Court, if there was a decision, you basically couldn't have a knowledgeable conversation about it with anybody that hadn't physically been at the Supreme Court to receive it, unless somebody, fax machines were even kind of primitive in the 1970s.

And now the court has a website that's pretty good and, within half an hour, a Supreme Court decision is up and you can discuss it with anybody in the country. And on the Patriot Act, maybe I'm not experienced enough, but I'm not sure. I mean the Patriot Act is giving more access to law enforcement to more stuff, I'm not sure it's giving less access to the public. Tell me what your question is about.

MR. JONES: Well, for instance, there are

limits on libraries, there is just a general perception that the attitude is don't make information available, if you can possibly avoid it, and that the legitimacy of simply wanting to know something, like these financial disclosure records, may well be that you are not going to be, what had been on the web, for instance, and was increasingly on the web, is now increasingly not on the web. The access is being curtailed, the Freedom of Information spirit and letter of the law are being interpreted much more narrowly now.

MS. GREENHOUSE: I'm not actually sure of the extent to which that's happening on the ground, versus the kind of buzz around the Patriot Act and the feeling that, you know, one's library records would be open to subpoena without your knowing about it and that kind of thing, but I'm not actually, of course, if it is happening, we wouldn't know it, I suppose. But whether that has had a chilling effect on this kind of stuff, I kind of doubt actually, I think there is a gap between the rhetoric and the reality of it.

MR. JONES: Well let me ask, I mean those of you who are here and have been on the front lines of

this in the past year, have you found the same as before, better, worse? Any sense, yourself of where the state of available information is, whether it's greater, lesser or the same?

MR. BARSTOW: I'm going to completely disagree with Linda.

(Laughter)

MR. BARSTOW: It actually is getting, I think, dramatically worse. If you look, and you have to look at this in a number of different ways, first of all, at the federal level, with the federal Freedom of Information Act, and then you have to look at the various states with their state, each state has its own Freedom of Information Act, and I don't know of a single state, anywhere in this country, where the trend line is toward more openness. Everywhere, it's toward less openness, everywhere there are attempts in the legislature, state legislatures especially, to close records, to close down more records.

And very often, they are using terrorism, security, things like that as a rationale for closing down records. And on the federal level, well it's never been a great day for the federal Freedom of

Information Act and certainly the Justice Department has given instructions to the federal agencies to take a very restrictive view of the federal Freedom of Information Act. And I think people who are using the federal Freedom of Information Act to try to get at records are running into a deep resistance.

Part of it is driven by 9/11, part of it is driven by a kind of a, I think, you know, it's driven by kind of an innate desire for secrecy that's especially strong right now, in this particular administration. So I think that there is a real shift, there is a closing down and it's a real challenge for us, at least in my experience.

MR. JONES: Chuck Neubauer and Richard Cooper, your series on the Senate, did you run into access problems? Or how would you characterize your own experience?

MR. NEUBAUER: Having heard Linda talk about the Supreme Court, the Senate isn't quite as closed as the Supreme Court but it's pretty close to it. The Senate and the House have both exempted themselves from the Freedom of Information Act, records that you could get on a state legislature and how they do business,

you can get at the state but you can't get from the US Senate or from the House, they have made it real hard to get records. I mean the one plus thing that Congress has done, the Library of Congress, is on the web now, they post all the bills, and they post through Thomas and you can look up stuff there, which is really useful.

But Congressmen don't have to tell you any of their internal deliberations or have their staffs talk to you about why something is in a bill or how it got there, and I think we've all seen this. I mean looking at these appropriations bills, there is little riders that change a policy and you are lucky if you can figure out who put that in there, it's a very closed system.

And just to throw in a thing about what David was saying about the Freedom of Information Act, I mean I don't know if it's the federal Freedom of Information Act, if it's post terrorism or not, but we've requested a lot of stuff that had nothing to do with terrorism, and you request records on a refinery from the EPA and the first thing you are told is that oh, well we are asking the company you've requested the records on to

look at the stuff first to see if they want it released. Well these are federal records, why does, you know, it's kind of like the corporate right to privacy, I don't think it exists in the Constitution but that's what they are doing.

And I'm sure, like everyone at this table, I still am getting, the stories ran last year, we are still getting letters saying we are still working on your Freedom of Information request.

(Laughter)

MR. NEUBAUER: And then they pull the thing and it's like or do you want us to stop, I just refuse to let them off the hook.

MR. JONES: Talk, if you would, about your experience in pursuing this story.

MR. COOPER: Could I just add to that?

MR. JONES: Sure.

MR. COOPER: First, I think we would both highly endorse what David said about the government, it's given a whole new rationale for withholding information. That's not a new impulse in Washington, but it's given a very strong one and a hard barrier to overcome. The other thing is that I think the public's

perception of how open the federal institutions, and particularly the Congress are, is quite at variance with what the reality is. As Chuck said, what we did and what he did mostly was try to match up money from a source with the things that the legislators were doing.

You would think it would be a matter of clear public record who wrote which parts of a law, it's not, you can almost never tell who introduced the rider, especially if it's done in conference committees, which is where a lot of it is done. A lot of things are done by staff, there would be a consensus reached and then sort of, outside the public spotlight, the details are written into the law. Unless somebody will tell you, it's very hard to know how that happened. That seems so elementary that you wouldn't imagine that was a barrier.

We were dealing with the relatives and the children of members of the Senate, primarily, you would think it's fairly easy to find out who the children of senators are, it turns out it's not, they won't tell you. I mean that seems bizarre to me, that you wouldn't own up to your own children, but--

(Laughter)

MR. COOPER: --that doesn't seem to be a problem for senators. Chuck did lots of nexus searches and you know, social notes, little births and deaths, to figure out who the children of Trent Lott were.

(Laughter)

MR. COOPER: And Ted Stephens and a whole bunch of others. It's amazing how hard it is to find out the simplest public things, and of course, you can go to birth records, but is this exactly the Ted Stephens? How can you be sure? Somebody needs to, you look for somebody to confirm that, if they won't do it, it's very tough.

MR. JONES: When you were doing your series, did you run into overt resistance or was it more a matter of obstacles to finding out what you needed to know?

MR. NEUBAUER: Well, I mean, first off, with the senators, maybe half of them talked to us and half of them didn't, so I mean you've got that resistance right there. One of the more amazing things was I could never get, part of the story, one of the stories mentioned Trent Lott and his son Chet, and I could never get Trent Lott's press people to even call us

back, I mean they just --. I'm from Chicago and at least, usually, somebody would call you back eventually to say no, we are not going to talk to you.

I mean there was definite resistance. One of the things we focused on was a big land bill that Senator Reed did in Nevada and in Nevada, since 87 percent of the land is controlled by the federal government, he is kind of like Senator and zoning planning czar to Nevada. And it was, Reed did talk to us but they weren't about ready to let the staffers, who put certain things in, talk to us, I mean it just isn't done. And one of the things we found with the senators, I mean they talk a little more than your Supreme Court justices but basically, they talk to you once, maybe.

MR. JONES: What kind of a response did you get after it was published?

MR. NEUBAUER: Well resounding silence, I mean on the part of the Senate. I mean they don't have very, they have very lax ethics rules and it's a club and in the Senate, it's is really interesting, which I didn't realize, but everything is done on a consensus basis so, unlike the House, there really is a thing

where they do try to get along, so you don't have other senators saying, you know, Senator Stephens has become a millionaire doing business deals with some of the people he has helped. You don't have other senators saying, you know, we should investigate this, it just doesn't happen, it's pretty much club-like. But to give credit, both Senator Stephens and Senator Reed have said that maybe we need to look at the rules again. I take that as kind of a victory.

MS. GREENHOUSE: Just to make a comment on the appropriations process, and this of course is not a 9/11 related thing but I think it really goes back to the budget so-called reform process that came in in the mid `80s and set up this two-track authorization and appropriation. And it really is a systemic journalistic challenge that I'm not sure many news organizations are meeting. I did spend a little time covering Congress and you know, everybody gives a big heap to the president's budget request that comes out in January, and pages and pages.

Trees have died, whole forests have died for the president's budget request, which is, aside from a couple of policy headlines, there is no relationship to

what's going to come out of the appropriations process at the end, which you say is highly secretive and really, this is a general comment, I think would merit a lot more day to day reporting than it probably gets right now.

MR. JONES: And one of the raps on the press is that it makes it very difficult to govern because it does seem to want to stick its nose in every deliberation, therefore, people can't really make the deals, strike the bargains and do the things that actually make the wheels of government turn. Do you buy that, Richard Cooper?

MR. COOPER: Well I guess I wish there were more truth to that than there is because it seems to me the wheels turn just fine in the direction that the people who are turning the wheels want them to turn in. I mean the percentage or the fraction that we learn and report, compared to the total, it seems to me, is very small. I mean we explore things, other people have here, little corners and pieces, and it takes us maybe a year. I think we probably spent most of last year working on this one set of stories.

There were 10,000, I mean it's a million in the

Naked City, maybe not quite that many in Washington, but there is no limit to the number of stories like that that are there to be done, and we are not nearly scoring up the works.

MR. JONES: Does anybody want to speak for less intrusive coverage here? Quite seriously, I mean I think there is an argument to be made that the intrusive, often negative, coverage, which is what it tends to be often, is discouraging good people from going into politics, it's creating a climate of negativity that has depressed voting and so forth like that. This is a group of people that spends a lot of time in investigative reporting often on government, and I am sure, for instance, in the State of New Jersey, one of the things that was being said was this is the kind of thing that's going to keep good people from running for office because you are sticking your nose in their personal affairs, you are trying to get at what their finances are, it's none of your business and this is exactly the kind of thing that will keep good people out of politics.

Paul?

MR. D'AMBROSIO: Yeah, I think we heard that

from some professors who covered the topic, saying the more you write about this, the more voters are going to be tuned out of the system. I think, based on the response we got, it was totally the opposite. Once the public feels they are empowered, that they do have the right to toss out the scoundrels, it involves more people into the process and the voting system.

MR. HIDLAY: One of the things we did was we actually ran an explainer box on how to register to vote with every day of the series and then, when we did the editorial page series, we ran a chart that took up most of the op-ed page that listed every district, every legislative district in our circulation area and the town that were in it because most people don't know. The average citizen, I think, goes well I don't know what district I'm in because they cross so many different municipal boundaries.

We listed them and then who the incumbent was and who the challenger was, their e-mail address, their snail mail address, their phone number and encouraged people to call them and let them know. And a lot of them heard; we heard that anecdotally that they heard a lot from voters. And then on the day, on the Sunday

before the legislative election, we did a major enterprise package on the whole issue of the importance of voting, and it was all built around real people and them engaging themselves in the system. We profiled a woman who hasn't missed voting in an election for, I don't know, 20 years or something, or 25 years, and had her talk about why it's important, as a citizen, to exercise your right to vote.

We had a Q&A with a democratic congressman, Rob Andrews, who was very articulate and outspoken on this issue of corruption in government, he is sort of one of the crusaders in New Jersey to try to clean things up. And then we had a whole piece about people who were just struggling to make ends meet because of all the costs. We tried to analyze how much government is taking from, you know, just basically average people's salaries for all the different things and again, connecting into the issue that corruption is like a hidden tax in New Jersey, it's driving up the cost of living.

MR. D'AMBROSIO: I just want to add that what we did see, in the district where Senator Bennett was from, we had above average voter turnout, and that's, I

believe, due to when there is true political competition, people will get involved in the system. The problem with Jersey is we have 40 legislative districts and maybe five of them are competitive, and the people in the non-competitive districts, there is one district where there were no Republicans running and you had a ten percent turnout. When politics becomes more competitive, and I think that's where newspapers come in, to make it more competitive, you will see much more participation in the electoral system.

MR. HIDLAY: And most of the politicians on the non-competitive districts are the worse offenders of this corruption.

MR. JONES: David Barstow, your series was focused mostly on private enterprise but it was focused also on the lack of government oversight of something that, theoretically, government should be monitoring. If you would, tell the story you told in my class yesterday about the tipping point for you about when you knew this was a serious story, and how that sort of, you know, has sort of been threaded through that concept, through the series, as it's evolved.

MR. BARSTOW: We actually had sort of two series; one that ran in January, one that ran in December, and the series that ran in January focused on this very large pipe corporation and our story began with actually a tip to my partner, Lowell Bergman, on an airplane on 9/11, as it turns out. His plane was grounded and it just so happened that on his airplane was a government official, who was an old source of his, and they got chatting, where are you going? What are you doing? And the official said well I'm going to Tyler, Texas to investigate a death at a pipe plant there, and the official said did you know that if a company wilfully violates safety laws and that causes the death of an employee, that that's only a misdemeanor?

And Lowell thought that was interesting and he scribbled that down, and this sort of tip languished for several months while we were all running around on 9/11. But when the tip sort of came, we decided to start pursuing it, and I went with Dave Rummell here down to Tyler, Texas to begin sort of looking into this situation. Sort of the moment that I realized we had a story came in an interview I did with a gentleman who

had worked pouring iron in this plant for over 40 years, he had burns, scar marks, all up and down his arms. His arms were sort of speckled with white patches where the skin had flaked away over years and year of pouring iron in this foundry.

And he started telling me what it was like when this company that we were writing about had purchased this foundry in 1995 and had proceeded to lay off approximately more than half of the workers, and yet had insisted that the production quotas remain the same, that the line had to keep moving just as fast but with half the workers. And he started describing how they had laid off relief workers, and the relief workers are important because if you needed to go to the bathroom, you had to have a relief worker come in and take your place on the line while you went to the bathroom.

And he explained how, because they had laid off relief workers, he was unable to take bathroom breaks, and this is really terrible in a foundry, especially because it's so hot in there that you have to drink a tremendous amount of fluid in order to just keep from passing out. And this guy started crying as he told me

about having to urinate in his pants, on the line of this foundry, in the year 1999, in the United States of America, and I thought at that moment, boy, I don't know what this story is but there is something here.

And when I went back to New York, and I sat in the office of the executive editor of the *New York Times* and explained this story to him, I told him this very anecdote and said I don't know where we are going here, but there is something to be looked at, there is something to be gotten at here. And that was a kind of, I guess, a mental image for me that carried me through many, many, many months to come of hard slogging and reporting with a bunch of other really talented journalists at the *New York Times* and "Frontline".

MR. JONES: One of the things that I think that often happens, both on the journalistic side and on the receiving end of journalistic inquiry, is that people infer the reasons for what is happening, why the journalists are doing what they are doing and the journalists, in kind, are tempted, and I certainly know this applies to me, to make connections, to draw lines between the dots that may seem clearly true and clearly

obvious, that may not be quite as true as they look. One of the things that struck me about David's story was something that looked to be very, very true, and something he was talking about running into but was not true.

And it also strikes me that in the case of, for instance, the series you are doing on the Senate, the causality, the direct line, is something we often sort of declare. Is Trent Lott's son's career as a lobbyist directly related to Trent Lott's doing things for a lobbying interest? It certainly looks that way and I don't know what the standard of proof should be. David, if you would, talk about the situation you described yesterday and the sort of reasoning, the clear reasoning that the company had for why the *New York Times*, had singled it out of all the abusive companies in the world to go after, with all of these resources, and all the power and all the prestige of the *New York Times*.

MR. BARSTOW: This is a very private company owned by the McWane family in Birmingham, Alabama, one of the wealthiest families in the country, and a family that had never, ever, ever faced any significant press

scrutiny whatsoever. And it was of course this great mystery to them, why on earth would the *New York Times* be looking at us? And the theory that they came up with had to do with our executive editor, Howell Raines, who also is from Birmingham, Alabama, and who in fact knew the McWane family or knew of them.

And in fact, even maybe more pertinent, had gone to college with a man who wasn't a member of the family but who was the chief executive officer of this company for many years and in fact, actually, they were in the same fraternity. And in fact, actually they had had a little dispute over a girlfriend at one point.

(Laughter)

MR. BARSTOW: And so of course, naturally, the inclination there is that this was payback time, and it had nothing that, it was completely, as I said in the beginning, it was literally one of those great moments in journalism where this little tip on an airplane, from a chance encounter, sort of grew and blossomed into this 36,000 words in the *New York Times* and an hour long "Frontline" documentary.

MR. JONES: Do you think that anyone in the company believes that story about 9/11 and sitting on

the plane?

(Laughter)

MR. BARSTOW: Well it's true. I think, yeah, I think they probably do, I think they do. Howell might have been upset about the girlfriend, but he wasn't that upset.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: Well you know what I mean, you journalists in the room, especially, how tempting it would be if you came across a relationship like that, imagine it in a story you are doing, to sort of say well this is of no importance whatsoever, when in fact it is of no importance but it certainly doesn't look like it's of no importance. How do we sort of keep from making those leaps, that kind of intellectual honesty that says wait a minute, don't assume anything like that?

I find it very, very seductive to make those kinds of leaps, especially ones that look like that they have been hidden, one that you've come across, like a gold nugget in a mine that makes the connection. Have any of you ever had that kind of an experience before?

Richard?

MR. COOPER: Well, sure, I mean I guess I'm tempted to say that's what editors are for. But for me, there is a filter, in the kinds of reporters who are at this table and in most others, that makes you stop and say well, is this just a coincidence? Is this really cause and effect? An example, in our case, we found more examples of relatives getting money than we used because we had an internal rule that we had to be able to show that there was a connection between what the senator, what the parent did to benefit the giver and the gift.

In other words, if we just found that senator X's son was getting a lot of money from somebody who the senator was generally sympathetic with, well that didn't meet the test, we had to show that there was a particular provision or some series of transactions that the company needed or the interest group needed, and that there was money passing there. So we didn't just infer that if you got money, it must be for corrupt reasons. And you just lay out the facts and you lay out what the senator says, if he is willing to explain it, and of course then the readers have to

decide.

But you can't know, for an absolutely certainty, in most cases, people don't confess, sort of unlike television, on the drama side, so you do have to go on the circumstantial evidence sometimes. And, of course, you can make mistakes--

MR. JONES: Well assuming you are just, I don't doubt that these connections are real. I mean I think you would be very hard pressed to find a senator, who has actively opposed a lobbyist's interest, that has a son thriving in a very sort of beneficial way in that same interest. Did you find anything like that, by the way?

MR. COOPER: I don't think we did, did we?

MR. JONES: Did you ever find a senator's sibling or kid that was working for a group that the senator actively opposed? Did that happen?

MR. COOPER: No.

(Laughter)

MR. COOPER: We did not track down all the children of every member of the senate. We are endeavoring to do that but we haven't got there yet. It could exist.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: They are not in "Who's Who?"

MR. COOPER: Some, I guess, but it doesn't seem there were, no.

MR. JONES: Go ahead.

MR. NEUBAUER: And we all had a working theory and, when we got into this, at first, people were saying well the special interests are buying the father's votes by hiring the sons, and what we learned that no, basically the fathers were already doing work for the special interests. John Brough, Sr. is like the big guy representing the regional Bell companies in the Senate, he has been for years, but now two of the regional Bells are paying his son a couple hundred grand a year, and what we found was it wasn't that the regional Bells, I mean they already had Senator Brough on their side and philosophically, he is one their side.

MR. JONES: The quo came before the quid.

MR. NEUBAUER: Yeah, yeah. And they also use, because in their minds, if they use it as a defense, they will say well I would have done this anyway, whether they hired my son or not, which is probably

true, they just don't see that well maybe your son shouldn't be collecting money for this.

MR. JONES: Yes?

MR. GUP: Can I ask a question?

MR. JONES: Yes. In fact, this is a conversation that you are all invited to join in so, if you have questions, absolutely.

Ted Gup?

MR. GUP: I have a question for David Barstow. This is apropos of Alex's observation, I think, in the *LA Times* series and in other series that you read, you never can ascertain what the state of mind is, you can infer and extrapolate from the circumstantial evidence if it was a causative factor in some decision or whatever, and that seems to be the standard. It's not absolute proof or state of mind, unless there is an admission, which is extraordinarily rare. So, really, I think the standard usually is full disclosure and let the public decide how tight the fix is between this set of circumstances and the option.

Applying that standard to Howell Raines' personal situation, vis-à-vis the story, why not disclose it? That is I have seen situations,

personally, in which personal animus has actually played a role in, if not the initial assigning, in the allocation of resources to a story. I have seen that, and I realize how awkward that would be and I would loath having to be a part of that decision. But how is it, in their interest of full disclosure, that you could decide, very early on, this is not germane, that the public does not have a right to weight this themselves?

MR. BARSTOW: We have never, I mean this hasn't been some deep, dark secret, we have been, even in our earliest, I think even in our website on the web, I think, we even talked about how the story came about and Howell's connection to this company, or this sort of brush back in college with this guy who had been the CEO of this company was not any sort of deep, dark secret. So I think, I don't know, I'm trying to think, precisely, how we did disclose it--

MR. GUP: In the series itself, I didn't--

MR. BARSTOW: Right, in the series itself, we didn't and I don't know, I guess--

MR. GUP: And I'm not saying that you should, I'm just trying to understand how you wrestled with

this, if you did at all.

MR. BARSTOW: Well we certainly were prepared to wrestle with it and deal with it if, for example, the company had tried to make this a part of their defense. If they had raised it themselves in any of their communications with us, in a formal sort of way, that this is all about some vendetta over a girlfriend in college, then we would have dealt with that, we would have had to deal with it. I guess we weren't really --. Howell was not deeply involved in the series itself. I mean I had an initial conversation with him precisely because I wanted to know do you know this family?

I didn't know, at the time, when I first went down to Tyler, Texas, and so we had this conversation about it. And then we didn't really deal with him much on it until much later on in the process, so it wasn't like he was sort of driving us on, you know, go get `em boys, it wasn't like that at all.

MR. GUP: You know, I can just hear someone in the Senate saying it wasn't as though the senator personally drove this action on, it was a staff decision. In other words, I mean I'm just trying to

apply similar standards, and I would probably come out where you came out but I'm not sure that I would understand or be able to reconstruct or justify why, and that's why I asked the question.

MR. BARSTOW: I mean it's a good question, I just think that I think we were more than prepared to deal with it in a very forthright manner, if anyone, the company never raised that and, at the end of the day, they never raised that as some cause and effect.

MR. JONES: Mei-Ling?

MS. HOPGOOD: I just wanted, it's not exactly the same thing, but the Peace Corps actually, and former Peace Corps volunteers, there was a group of them that launched a smear campaign against us before the series came out. Again, the Peace Corps volunteers and returned Peace Corps volunteers are very connected Online, a letter went out from the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Association with the agency's statement saying that we are publishing false data. Basically, the letter that came to Goldsmith was taken from their letter but what we did was publish it up front.

The Peace Corps wrote us a formal letter outlining these things and, on the first day of our

series, we published everything that they said and we had a response. And on our web, we facilitate a chat in which we are, I mean those volunteers that had problems were able to vent what their concerns were. So I mean I think we made a policy of being very up front about whatever it is they are saying about our series, even before it even started, so that's something that we had to deal with.

Well there is personal accusations, you know, why we did this, for awards, and they are calling Senate and House hearings because of my connections in Congress, which is, I find, really humorous, but we try to err --. I mean the Internet is a place where everybody is going to see that stuff anyway, but we tried to, up front, publish letters, the concerns that the agency had, and I thought that was a great decision.

MR. JONES: Joe Stephens, what is Lynn Downy's secret animus toward the Nature Conservancy?

(Laughter)

MR. STEPHENS: Well it all goes back to an old girlfriend, oddly enough.

(Laughter)

MR. STEPHENS: There is an amazing similarity here.

Our pieces on the Nature Conservancy and the Environmental Movement actually go way back. My co-writer, who couldn't be here today because he is traveling abroad, David Ottaway, has a long time in*

* +(nprofit organizations, internationally, and the influence they have, and he had just started backgrounding some major nonprofits, and ran across the Nature Conservancy and notice, first of all, their size was tremendous, over $3 billion in assets, and they are located a couple of miles from our office in Washington, and was intrigued by this and just kind of read up on them.

And nothing much happened because 9/11 happened, and the whole world changed for a while and everyone was off running in different directions. And after the dust settled from 9/11, my editor at the time, Marilyn Thompson, asked me to join David and just look at this organization, what's going on. And we just approached it like we would any other large institution, whether it be a government agency or it be a business, like Enron. We just checked everything out and very soon, it was very interesting that they had trouble answering a lot of very basic questions.

And speaking about FOIA earlier, one of the interesting things is I have not had a lot of luck with FOIA but I keep trying, darn it.

(Laughter)

MR. STEPHENS: So the first thing I did when I

came onto the project was I pulled out of the files one of my standard FOIA form letters and I forwarded it to six or seven agencies to see what comes back, and some of them still haven't come back, two years later. But about three days later, I think it was, I received a call from the number two man at the Nature Conservancy and he said would you come over to my office? Okay, so I went over and he said well you have been FOIA'ing everything on us, I said well how did you know that? And he said well we've had a whole series of calls from the FOIA officers at these agencies, and that was a first in my recollection.

I file these all of the time, sometimes on stories I'm not actually working on and really don't ever plan to do. It's just kind of you throw these things out and keep the FOIA officers in business, and maybe they'll return the favor by giving you a document one of these days. And then he made the request, he said I would like you to drop these FOIA requests and we'll open up our files to you, and that also was a, that was a rather strange request, and I said well I'm happy you are going to open up your files, but I think I'll leave these FOIA requests in, we'll just see if we

get the same thing from both sides.

And so the story kind of went from there and asking very, very basic questions, such as how much is your chief executive officer paid, became these long, labored, involved discussions that went on endlessly and often, on a number of these questions, every time you would speak with the, at the Conservancy, you would get a different answer or a different dollar figure, and it did not breed confidence from fairly early on.

MR. ASHE: Do you see any long range changes that have occurred as a result of your stories now? I mean in terms of reforming. I mean you read them periodically--

MR. STEPHENS: Right, right--

MR. ASHE: --or is it business as usual?

MR. JONES: Can you repeat the question?

MR. STEPHENS: Oh, yes, the question is have we seen any real substantial reforms because of our reporting, and yes and no. We've done probably a dozen follow up stories talking about various changes, the Conservancy never uses the word reform. They've reorganized their board, they've announced that virtually every different practice we've written about

in our series, that they've stopped and won't do it again. But I've never seen them actually acknowledge having done something wrong.

So it's this interesting situation where they say we've decided to do X and, in a number of cases, they've specifically said --. You know, we had a whole day on them drilling for oil on a nature preserve, underneath the last nesting ground of North America's most endangered bird and, in the process of doing this, the number of these birds fell in half to, at the time we wrote the story, I think they estimated there were 14 of these birds left in the wild. And they drilled underneath and they said the birds had thrived under this arrangement, and yet their internal documents said that there was a good possibility that deaths were related to the drilling and it definitely had increased the probability of death in these birds.

Well after our series, very shortly after, they made an announcement we will no longer drill for oil on any of our land, but they said that had nothing to do with our story. So--

MR. JONES: Did you get those internal documents through FOIA, through access to their files

through a whistleblower? How?

MR. STEPHENS: We got reams of documents from a whole bunch of different sources. In that particular case, that had been filed as an exhibit in a lawsuit in Texas that no one had ever examined before. The lawsuit was about something else entirely but it just happened that there was a biological opinion, and it was an interesting also too in that another major nonprofit, the Russell Sage Foundation, had accused the Nature Conservancy of stealing.

And they actually used the word theft, millions of dollars in oil from them, that the oil that the Nature Conservancy had drilled for really wasn't theirs, which was a whole different issue, which was quite interesting. And in the process of this, someone had put in, as an exhibit into this lawsuit, just kind of a parenthetical oh, by the way, a bunch of these birds have died and we may have been partially the cause.

MR. JONES: As you were doing this story on the Nature Conservancy, did you find a lot --. I mean, for instance, David, talking about his story, has said that there was an enormous well of people from the company

who were willing to talk to him, who were former employees in some cases, and whatnot. Was this a situation in which what was going on at the Nature Conservancy was viewed as a scandal within the Nature Conservancy or by the members of the Board of the Nature Conservancy? Or was it something that basically everyone sort, in a more of a Peace Corps kind of response. I mean this is an institution that's an iconic one, we are for our team and we don't welcome this.

MR. STEPHENS: We definitely had both. I think we were aided in the fact that the kind of people who dedicate their lives to working for nonprofit and working in the environmental movement, they tend to be very ideological and they are kind of individual thinkers, they are not institutional thinkers. And so we definitely we could prey on that, you know, look at your own conscience in whether you should tell us what's going on or not, or you really think this should be secret.

Now, on the flip side, a number of people, especially at other environmental groups who had great problems with how the Nature Conservancy operated, time

and again, similar language was used that the environmental movement, it's like a religions and you don't bad mouth people of other denominations, you keep it within the church, and not wanting to give the greater environmental movement a bad image and look like it's any other big institution, so it cut both ways. A lot of what we learned about was not widely known, although some of the trends and mindsets at the Conservancy were widely known and greatly of concern.

One explanation that even other environmental groups, who didn't like the way the Conservancy operated at all used was well we are coming at the evil forces from all sides, and GreenPeace, for example, can go out and be the crusaders, and that the Conservancy is kind of the stealthy side. They put on business suits, and go to board meetings and act like they are part of them, and they can get some money that way, which also seemed a little devious to me, that it's kind of this grand left wing conspiracy when it gets painted, and some members of the environmental movement are going to act like they are not really part of us or think the way we are, and it's still going to come out for the greater good.

It's very interesting and I think you'll find that most institutions, even nonprofits and environmental groups, they all operate and think ultimately, as they grow, much like other big institutions, there is not a lot of difference.

MR. JONES: How do you compare the availability of information about a public company, for profit company, and a nonprofit, be it a philanthropy or some other kind of nonprofit organization? What is the state of the law when it comes to what information is available?

MR. STEPHENS: There is very little for nonprofits. Nonprofits file a tax return on Form 990, which is public, but those forms are not very revealing at all. The information is rarely fact-checked by anybody, the IRS is terribly understaffed for nonprofits and you are able to put down virtually anything you want. Many years ago, this is probably 20 years ago, I remember checking a family foundation, this is unrelated to the Nature Conservancy, and this one had had a lot of financial setbacks and their for-profit company had gone under.

And I decided to check the family foundation,

and pulled their 990s and the last page of the 990 was a handwritten note from their accountant that said this foundation's major asset was a building valued at over a million dollars, and someone sold it and we don't know what happened to it this year.

(Laughter)

MR. STEPHENS: And this had just said it in the 990 and the IRS had never even read this, apparently, and I called up the IRS and said what are you guys doing about this? They said that note is in there, really?

MR. JONES: Linda?

MS. GREENHOUSE: The *Post* did, speaking of the *Washington Post* and *Nature*, the *Post* did another very interesting series, which I think was yours, on the National Zoo.

MR. STEPHENS: Right.

MS. GREENHOUSE: Which of course is a federal agency that led, the *Post* reporting led to the resignation of the zoo director a couple of weeks ago. And just as a *Post* reader, I was curious as to where that came from because, in my mind, it raised some of the issues that Alex had raised about assumptions and

causation. There were implicit allegations there that the mismanagement that ensued had caused the deaths of animals, to some degree it happened when they poisoned Red Pandas, but the older animals that died, old animals die. And I was just wondering, as a reader, whether the dots were all connected in a non-tendentious way in that series. I just wondered whether you had any thoughts on it.

MR. STEPHENS: I thought it was a very interesting series and I thought it was well done. The most striking thing about that series, to me, was the fact that the National Zoo had gone back and altered many of their records, after the fact. After reporters from the *Post* started asking about the records, they went back and changed facts about the deaths of these animals. And then, when asked about that later, when it became apparent that documents were changing, they said oh well, these are living documents, these are meant to be changed.

(Laughter)

MR. STEPHENS: Apparently, after reporters ask for them, they are meant to be changed an updated.

MR. JONES: Yeah?

MR. COOPER: Well actually the one group we haven't heard from and Alex would understand me asking if, the WTVF--

MR. JONES: We're getting to that, they are next. Thank you, Richard.

In fact, let's move forward then. Here we have a local television station in Nashville, Tennessee, a governor and a, you know, basically an ongoing, multi part series in which the governor, I'm sure, believed that you were trying to do what you were doing, and not for journalistic but for some either ideological or personal reasons. Am I wrong?

MR. STAPLES: I think now is the time for Phil to talk about that old girlfriend.

(Laughter)

MR. WILLIAMS: Well actually the governor had several excuses for what we were doing and none of them had anything to do with his own conduct, of course. This was really, it's been a two-year focus on the ethical conduct of Tennessee public officials, the first part of it, "Friends in High Places", dealt with no-bid contracts given to friends of the governor; the second part, "Perks of Power", we really moved on to

the legislature and the Perks enjoyed by state lawmakers; and the third part, the perks enjoyed by the University of Tennessee president.

When we began investigating the governor and his friends, we met with great resistance, first from a public records perspective because we were asking for the public records from the very people we were investigating. And so what should have been a fairly routine request for information quickly became quite antagonistic. And finally, as much as you want to maintain that strict sense of objectivity, when you realize that the subjects of your investigation are stonewalling, then it becomes much more adversarial, just by its very nature.

We held off on running the first stories for two weeks, and that was because we were waiting to give the administration a chance to provide us the appropriate response, and they kept coming up with excuses for why they could not cooperate with the story. They were in the middle of a tax debate, and then the governor had an economic development trip. And finally, after holding off on the story for two weeks, I got a phone call from the press secretary

informing me that they simply had decided not to cooperate, and that was about 10:30 one morning and we decided well, the governor has to go to lunch, so we went and waited outside the capitol, near his car, to at least give him a chance to not comment on camera.

The response, very quickly, these were about 60 stories, three documentaries. After, I believe, the third story ran, the governor's highway safety office pulled $160,000 in highway safety advertising from the station in retaliation. And then the governor also basically, as some of our colleagues here have mentioned, the governor began attacking us, holding conversations with Capitol Hill reporters, talking about what we were doing was supermarket tabloid journalism, and that this was exactly what was wrong with the state of journalism in America today.

And for a lot of our colleagues, especially our colleagues in print, this was a perfect reason for them to ignore the story because the defense that we encountered is a defense that a lot of people have encountered, was well you are not reporting on anything that's legal. Of course the people who were taking advantage of the perks were the ones who wrote the laws

so in many cases it was not illegal. In the minds of voters, it wasn't right but, so you got into this argument, that I'm sure a number of people have run into, legal versus right.

But the impact from the contracts investigation, within a few months, there were FBI raids on businesses that received state contracts, where the companies were owned by friends of the governor. And then, after 18 months of investigation, this past week, there was the first indictment of a state labor department official, where a friend of the governor was named as an unindicted co-conspirator, so he is next.

MR. JONES: Did the *Nashville Tennessean*, which is the Gannett newspaper in Nashville, did they ignore this story?

MR. WILLIAMS: Initially, yeah. In fact really, I believe, the first story that they picked up may have been when our investigation became an issue in the campaign for the US Senate because now Senator Lamar Alexander was on the board of one of the companies that got $180 million in contracts. And so Senator Alexander, Lamar Alexander's opponent, Bob

Clement, raised our stories and the investigation that came from our stories as an issue in the campaign. And then, interestingly, the governor, in a news conference he had, accused us of doing our investigation to help Bob Clement defeat Lamar Alexander. And when I pointed out to him that I did not think that the FBI was working for Bob Clement, he thought that was an "asinine" response.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: Victor Ashe, you know, the Mayor of Knoxville and a Republican, the former Mayor of Knoxville and a Republican, and Knoxville is where the University of Tennessee is based and where especially the part of the story involving the President of the University of Tennessee, your station was not the only, you were not the only ones pursuing that story, I know that there were others as well. But, Victor, from your perspective as a political figure and a Republican in the state, were you even aware that this was happening? Is this something that you--

MR. ASHE: Are you talking about UT or the--

MR. JONES: No, I'm talking about when the issue about the friends of the governor getting these

no-bid contracts.

MR. ASHE: Well the statewide media did a very poor job of--

MR. JONES: Why don't you grab one of these microphones, you can come use this one.

MR. ASHE: I think one of the things that happens in the media is when one outlet or one venue gets the story, then the others tend to sort of step away from it, and it's only when it becomes of such magnitude that you can no longer avoid it, like an indictment, that the others will take note, and you all can respond as to whether that's professional rivalry or what the real issue is.

MR. JONES: Rivalry.

(Laughter)

MR. ASHE: Particularly in a few of the two newspaper towns that are left, when one newspaper gets a hold of it, the other will ignore it as well as they can and, often, they like drawing media will. In this case, it was like fraud opinion and it really didn't get the statewide coverage that it should have gotten, it also got coverage in middle Tennessee where they are located. And obviously since I follow the political

scene, I knew about it. But to suggest I knew a lot about it, it didn't get covered in Knoxville in the, we are down to a one newspaper town, it didn't cover it, and a lot of alternative, it's not the *National Scene*, which is much more active alternative newspaper.

So, as a result, it really never got around. I mean the indictment came forward is of this woman who, frankly, is just an unknown figure, it may be a little bit like Watergate. I think the first couple indictments were really minor players but they led to other things and it may, in this case, lead to other things, I don't know if it will or not. And we are talking about, by the way, the former governor, not the current Governor of Tennessee, in this regard.

But the station did a great job, but I think they were out by themselves. I don't think their colleagues in the electronic media, the radio, I'm not even sure Steve Gill, the talk show host, picked it up, maybe. I mean you could answer that. Nashville has several radio talk show hosts that normally feed on things and even they didn't seem to pick up on it, and the former governor was not a very popular figure. His unpopularity had more to do with his advocacy of the

income tax than it did with this, this sort of was icing on the cake, in terms of his sagging popularity, but his basic reason for being unpopular was the tax. In his view, a tax reform, in the public's view, a tax increase that he was pushing. He almost fell below double digits, in terms of his, he was probably down to 20 and below when he left office, in terms of the popularity.

MR. JONES: I should say that Tennessee has a history of putting its governors in jail--

MR. ASHE: But I also might say, in terms of Lamar Alexander, and I don't know his role in this, obviously, but I mean he followed Ray Blanton who did go to jail.

MR. JONES: That's what I mean.

MR. ASHE: But Lamar, as governor, was considered a reformist, to clean up the mess, a straight arrow type of governor. Since he left office, there probably has been other business deals. To my knowledge, we did, but he sort of was Mr. Straight Arrow at the time he served as governor.

MR. JONES: But when Lamar Alexander became governor, he became governor early, at the urgent

action of the legislature because Ray Blanton, the democratic governor that preceded him, was selling pardons and emptying Tennessee's jails, and the Democratic legislature, you know, the same, they had to swear Lamar in quickly or he would have done it 100 percent, apparently.

MR. ASHE: It was his way of reducing over-crowding.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: He eventually went to the penitentiary.

MR. WILLIAMS: I think you're saying that Tennessee is the Jersey of the South.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: There are plenty of Jerseys around.

Carol Bradley, you worked for a newspaper in Nashville at one point, does it sound right to you that the Nashville newspapers would ignore a story like this?

MS. BRADLEY: Yeah, that sounds par for the course. It's a real competitive town, or at least it was when there were two papers, and I think it's harder

to ignore a story that's in print but you can kind of hope that no one saw the TV story. So, yeah, and I think, partly, people assumed that by the time a reporter, like Phil, comes out with the story, he's got so much else waiting to come out that, to try to match that quickly, you are just going to be eating his dust the whole way. And that's maybe not the right reason to ignore a story but I think that's very prevalent.

MR. JONES: One of the things that I think is a genuine problem, I mean this is a genuine problem, if you were a reader of the *New York Times*, you did not know what the *Dayton News* or the *Los Angeles Times* or the *Washington Post*, for instance, did about these stories that have national implications, all of those do, and vice versa. I mean this is the practice, that you ignore the initiative reporting, often at enormously expensive cost of other highly credible news organizations.

Why are we so bound by this? Why can't we seem to crack this, especially, maybe not with breaking news, but especially with massive, expensive investigative projects that lead to remarkable revelations, like all of these pieces, all of these

series represent, on national issues? Why does the *New York Times* ignore what the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* do? Who would like to address this?

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: Linda, I know they tried to make you national editor, if you had been national editor, would you have ignored these stories?

MS. GREENHOUSE: It's way above my pay grade. But I think Carol's point is a very valid one, the extent that somebody is putting you into these projects and you are going to look, you either sort of reprint it or you are going to look kind of pale and thin, on just crediting them. And it's a discussion that needs to be had a high level because obviously you make a good point, it's a systemic issue. But I'm not sure there is a one-size-fits-all answer, I think it probably needs to be tailored to the particular story and its particular resonance for your own readership and so on but, yeah, it does need to be looked at.

MR. JONES: I subscribe, I live here, of course, in Boston, and I have the *Boston Globe* and the *New York Times* on my door step every morning, and I read both and I had found, somewhat to my surprise,

when I got here, they I needed to read both of them because the greater power of the *New York Times* is also its greatest weakness, and this goes for the *L.A. Times*, and the *Washington Post* and the other major newspapers. You get the advantage of the people who work for the *New York Times* writing for you, and giving you their vision and version of what's on in the world and what's important but if they don't write it, you don't see it.

Whereas the *Boston Globe*, even though it's owned by the *New York Times* company, has a policy of not publishing anything from the *New York Times* service. It does take the *Washington Post*, and the *L.A. Times*, and the Associated Press and others, so it's not just that these series might more likely appear in critic form in the *Boston Globe*, but that the vision of what is happening in the world that's important is something that is made from a different perspective because they are looking at it more as what's out there to choose from, rather than what do we have today from our people in here, and here, and here and here.

And it really does give you a different

selection of views, especially in the A section, international/national news area. It's quite fascinating and it's something that annoys the hell out of the *New York Times* company, that they will not, the *Boston Globe* will not. Marty Barrons, the editor, will not use the *New York Times*, and that's what I hope continues. Yes? Into the mic, if you would, it's right here.

MR. CARLSON: I would just offer this observation that just like great imperial power of the United States Military, it's limited, no matter if you are the *New York Times*, or the *Boston Globe* or anything else, and I can understand that after an agency or any one of these great papers has put in a year of a team of reporters, that's a huge investment and really, what is there left to do? If you tried to cover, defensively, every story that anybody does of such enterprised reporting, I think you would just be, you would have little small items and you wouldn't have your own identity, you wouldn't be doing your own work.

And from our point of view, when we did the book, *Embedded*, we saw a lot of great work and we felt, a lot of people have said that when they've read any

one newspaper, that they weren't really covering the war well, and I guess the answer to that is to really understand the scope of journalism or any investigative piece, you really have to have the enterprised reader. And we looked at a million things and we thought the coverage was great, but we saw it as a worldwide coverage. And I just don't think you can apply those resources, so I would agree with that, the current practice of somewhat ignoring it until we are forced to.

MS. BRADLEY: I just want to add, in defense of the papers or TV stations who don't pick up the ball and also run with it, it's not as if people are sitting at their desk all day looking at what the competition is doing, people have their own stories, there are stories that are scheduled to run at a certain point. And I think one rule of thumb in the business is don't lose sleep worrying about what the competition is doing, go forward with your own stories.

MR. JONES: Richard and then Bryan.

MR. COOPER: Well I have a differeing, slightly, and you're right about the parent and I agree with the reasons that have been given. In fairness to

the Alaska papers, the Fairbanks paper ran our story on Ted Stephens in almost their entirety, which was, for their news role, a considerable strain. And the Anchorage paper wrote very long, detailed stories about our stories that essentially reprinted large parts, and in Louisiana, the stuff we did on Senator Burrough was also picked up in one of the local papers, so it's not an invariable rule. We were somewhat surprised, and of course pleased, but it does sometimes happen.

MR. JONES: Bryan?

MR. STAPLES: As far as the competitiveness, the stories in Nashville, the other stations in Nashville, one of the reasons that they didn't touch the story is that they couldn't touch the story, they didn't have what we had, they weren't going to have what we have. As Carol was saying, they were kind of eating his dust, so to speak.

And the other thing is these stories define who you are as a station, as a paper, so the *New York Times* is largely the *New York Times*, the prestige you were talking about, because of story, after story, after story that they've done over the years.

Now for the *Los Angeles Times* to start taking

stories from the *New York Times*, I mean your own identity, the stories are who you are, so that's why I don't see a day where the *Los Angeles Times* is going to run all kinds of stories that are in the *New York Times* because, at that point, they cease being the *Los Angeles Times* that you come to read.

MR. JONES: Do you really think the day won't come when the *New York Times* sort of turns its front page over to the *Los Angeles Times*?

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: They've really got better stuff today and we are just going to print their front page.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: Is this yours? Is this original?

MS. GREENHOUSE: No, it's not original, you can leave it there.

MR. JONES: This is relative to the connect the dots idea, I guess, when you hear hoof beats, think horses, not zebras. Investigative reporters think zebras. I think conclusion therefore is --. Where did this come from? Just sort of like an aphorism, original one, from Linda Greenhouse, you heard it here

first.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: Yes?

MS. MACKINNON: I just have a practical suggestion maybe, a way to address this problem using new technology, all of these stories are on the web. Okay, so you might not know about them, if you are an individual reader, unless you are being a very aggressive, active searcher on the web. But why couldn't the Shorenstein Center or somebody affiliated with the Shorenstein Center set up a web log or a website that links to all the best investigative journalism happening around the country every week, saying these are the best stories going on at this time, this one in New Jersey, this one in LA and so on. And if you want to know the best stuff that is being uncovered nationwide, you come to this one website and you can see what's going on, so maybe that's something to consider in the future.

MR. JONES: Do you want a job?

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: Rebecca is a Shorenstein Fellow from CNN and she has been investigating, she has

started her own blog this semester and I think blogging is something that she has decided is the wave of the future. I think that's a great idea.

MS. MACKINNON: But I think this is longer--

MR. JONES: I think that's really an interesting idea.

MS. MACKINNON: --where you could really use it.

MS. HOPGOOD: You can look at IREs, investigative reporters and editors, to look at, they do log those every week and every time it comes out, and they write us and ask us how we did our stories, etcetera. Romaneska does, you know, marks on a--

MR. JONES: Romaneska's stuff is especially about the media.

MS. HOPGOOD: It is, but I mean a lot of our stuff ends up on there.

MR. JONES: I like it, I mean I think Romaneska should really change to a title that's more accurate, mediagossip.com, the sort of first stop for most journalists every day. Yeah?

MR. GUP: I just wanted to go back to that issue of competitiveness, I think it works at two

levels, both at the individual and the institutional level. At the individual level, when you get a rocket up your backside in the middle of the night from an editor saying why the hell didn't we have this, the natural inclination is to say it's not real.

MR. JONES: Or it's not important.

MR. GUP: Or it's not important. And I actually think that I've seen a change, institutionally, I think that that initial impulse to knock down the other guy's story is not as common now, I think there is more comedy. And I've certainly seen both in the *Times* and the *Post* in how they relate to each other, that there is a little more willingness to pay respect to each other on stories. I don't think, because I remember you would write a story and you would get a call from someone from the *Times* saying such and such said he didn't say that, or such and such's assistant secretary said that that was taken out of context.

The impulse really was not just to ignore, it was more destructive, in terms of the service ethic for the public, it was to actually shoot it down, and I don't see that as prevalent today as it was. I would

be curious to see if others think that.

MR. JONES: Richard?

MR. COOPER: I think that's right and, since I sometimes work as an editor, the rocket, I mean now, at least what we say is that there is just no way to match it. I mean Saturday night, you are doing desk duty in the bureau and they look at the *New York Times* website and there is one of your stories, I mean you just have to say that sounds like a terrific story, there is no way we can run that down tonight, they've been a year on it, we'll just have to live with it. If it's on the wires, run some of it.

MR. JONES: What has been the experience of those here, as far as having things picked up, maybe not the *Times* being picked up by the *Post*, but through your news, I'm sure all of the stories that you did went out on a news service and so forth, like that.

MR. STEPHENS: Well didn't the *Post* pick up, do follows on some of your guy's stuff, Richard and Chuck?

MR. NEUBAUER: That's right, and they actually ran the Stephens story.

MR. JONES: The *Post* ran the *L.A. Times* Stephens story?

MR. NEUBAUER: Yeah, I found it was kind of remarkable actually.

MR. JONES: Has that happened somewhere before?

MR. NEUBAUER: Well not to me.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: This is man bites dog.

MR. BARSTOW: We had sort of maybe a similar experience to you guys in that in Birmingham, one of the Birmingham newspapers republished our entire series verbatim, and this is a big deal family in Birmingham who had done a lot, they had bestowed many millions of dollars on good works in this community. And it resulted in a very tough editorial in the *Birmingham News*, and the Mobile paper also reran the thing. And a lot of newspapers out there, they didn't necessarily run the whole thing, it was too long for them, but they ran pieces. And in the second series that we did, the Louisville paper reran the story about the guy who died in the trench in its entirety.

So I was talking about this actually with Joe Langveld, the former executive editor of our paper, just the other day, and he has this great saying, he says you just can't steal an elephant. And so when we

see something really great in the *L.A. Times* or the *Washington Post*, I mean you just can't steal an elephant, you just say, way to go, bravo, I wish I had that story.

MR. JONES: There is another dimension to this of course and that is the phenomenon of something being given a huge amount of time and effort with Dayton, or some other place like that, and then a major newspaper doing essentially the same story and getting the credit for it when, in fact, it started in Dayton, and all of a sudden it becomes the *New York Times*, or the *L.A. Times* or the *Washington Post* that made all these revelations about the Peace Corps. How does that phenomenon work?

MS. HOPGOOD: I don't know that that's happened to us yet, but it did actually. Our story, I mean we collaborated with the other Cox newspapers, at least initially. Atlanta ran our stories, almost every one of them, of course not in the entirety, but we did versions, varying versions, for different newspapers. It did go out on the Cox wire and it appeared in newspapers, and it did appear in the larger newspapers but as probably about five graphs in the *Washington*

Post and other large newspapers, but I mean we did get some coverage.

What is extraordinary for ours is that we get amazing amounts of hits internationally and from word of mouth with Peace Corps volunteers. I mean it is like, I mean people tell each other about it, if you are going to go in the Peace Corps, read this series first, be informed. We are being read by at least people considering the Peace Corps, so the Internet has been great for a smaller paper like *Dayton*. All our Cox newspapers also still have links to the series, so it was a collaborative effort within our company as well.

MR. JONES: Again, let me invite those of you who are here in the audience to join this conversation, if you have questions or want to raise issues, you are most welcome.

Before we leave this, I want to also, though, introduce another question and have this group discuss it because it's something certainly that concerns me a lot, and that is if you are looking around the corner or over the horizon at this kind of reporting, and you are taking into account the sort of economic and

changing world we are in with digital technology and such, what do you see as the prospect for this expensive kind of reporting?

It doesn't take just courage, it takes money and the money is, you know, increasingly tight. There are very few news organizations that don't feel that, whether they act on it or not. And I wondered if you could give me some sense of what you see happening or whether, if you see something like a tradeoff being made between, for instance, big projects, which are maintained but the state coverage of the legislature, the meat and potatoes, is paying the price. I mean do you see resources dwindling for the kind of news or verification that investigative reporting is, at its sort of peak, but that includes a lot of other kinds of reporting as well, and it is all under pressure? Who would like to, Paul, how would you react? And don't pay any attention to the fact that your editor is sitting over here.

(Laughter)

MR. D'AMBROSIO: Well I think we are fortunate that we have a publisher who believes in investigative work, and he did commit the resources time and news

space for that, which may be a rare event, in these days, in journalism. I think what needs to happen is you have to have more buy-in from the people making these decisions, and the way you buy that in is to say readers read this because they want to, it has a great impact on our community. We had such an intense reading and, just reading letters to the editor, people were quoting stories that were on like A10, and they were getting deep into the series, understanding what was going on.

And that I think drives reader loyalty, and that helps maintain reader interest in the paper. So I think, once our message gets across, it will, a lot of these papers will essentially devote more resources to that.

MR. JONES: Well let me ask you, Skip, I mean this is not a joke question, it's a serious question, is this great series that was done instead of something or in addition to something?

MR. HIDLAY: No, it really was in addition to something. I mean we have a great commitment to local news and sort of the philosophy I think of most mid-size, small or mid-size newspapers, like the *Asbury*

Park Press is that local news is our franchise. And in Jersey, state news is really local news because there is no real statewide electronic media, we are kind of in the shadow of New York, the shadow of Philadelphia, kind of caught between, so the only place that our readers are going to find out about what's happening in Trenton really is from us, or from the *Star Ledger* or the *Bergen Record*.

So we kind of view that very much as if that's part of covering local news, but I think to kind of pick up on what Paul said, in the sort of fractured media environment that we live in, I mean we are not just competing against the *Star Ledger*, or maybe some smaller dailys or some weeklys, we are competing against the Internet, you know, and all the information that's available there, all the hundred stations on cable TV now, so we've got to, to survive, newspapers have to give readers a reason to read us. And I think the most compelling reason to read us is journalism that makes a different, high impact investigative journalism, enterprise, things that are going to tell readers about the world immediately around them, the closest, in the state, and the town or the city that

they live in, and that tells them things they need to know, as citizens and voters, and that they respond to it.

I mean I think that this whole idea of shorter stories and quicker presentations, to be more like the electronic media, is really off base, I mean I think that readers, and we've shown it. I mean three pages, I was amazed that the publisher agreed to give us that much newsprint, really, because we had debated putting some of the things on the web because we were worried about overwhelming readers. And Paul is exactly right, the feedback we got was so deep and a couple of the, I got invited to speak to a couple of senior citizen taxpayer groups, after the series, and they just lined up at the microphones.

And there were two and three hundred people that came to hear these talks and they just said do more of this, this is what we want you to do, we want to know more about our local officials in town, our state officials, keep it up. We've continued to do it and have had several regulatory stories already this year on different aspects of corruption and again, the feedback just continues to be very positive. So I

think that the future of investigative journalism is very strong, not only at the *Times*, and the *Post* and the *L.A. Times*, but at the mid-sized and smaller papers.

And the real future that I hope is, as you get more consolidation and these clusterings, people will look at the possibility, editors will put aside traditional rivalries and say okay, we can combine forces and get the resources needed to do a major investigation.

MR. JONES: But you know you can combine forces and do things that are feel good and appealing without being serious, and that don't have the down side of making powerful people angry. That's also one, and this is not, I'm not trying to single out any company, Gannett or any other one, but I think that there is no question that people who are publishers and editors in newspapers across the country feel a great deal of pressure about their numbers. They say this, and you know, I don't think there is any question about it, and it's disturbing.

MR. D'AMBROSIO: Ultimately, controversy sells, no one wants to read a 38 special about how nice and

fluffy the legislature is because that is what they expect, what they want to see is what's my official doing and how is it effecting me directly, the tax payer. And once we presented that, that's where the impact came and the interest came, so investigative reporting, once it's realized it does generate reader loyalty, and interest and even circulation increases, that's the future of newspapers.

MR. JONES: Paul, you're right.

MR. HIDLAY: It distinguishes you from the cacophony, the media cacophony.

MR. JONES: Mei-Ling, I would like to get your response to this.

MS. HOPGOOD: Well I mean, again, as I said before, the *Dayton Daily News* has always been committed to this, and we just got a new publisher, for the last two, they had been journalists, this one is not, and we don't know. I mean he says he is committed to this sort of journalism because that's--

MR. JONES: What is his background?

MS. HOPGOOD: He just came up through the ranks of business, a business background, and he was the basically mentor of our former publisher, Brad Tilson,

who was a State House reporter back, way back, and so he has heard Brad say this is very important to us, this is very important to us, and he has watched. He has been around when *Dayton* won the Pulitzer. So I mean we are hopeful but, seriously, we don't know what is going to happen. But it seems like the company is committed, our editors are definitely committed, so I'm confident in that.

MR. JONES: Well probably the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* will be the last ones to go down, but sometimes I get the feeling that we are sitting in a pond, and there are these little islands, and the water is rising and these individual newspapers, like *Dayton* and like the *Asbury Park Press* and so forth, are increasingly isolated from what's going on most other places, at least that's sometimes my sense. On the other hand, as I said, this year we got more entries than ever before, many of them were absolutely first class, terrific things.

I guess I also wonder, though, is there, is, effectively, what's happening a budget getting smaller and the discretion really is how are you going to spend that money? You can spend it on one great project but,

if you do that, then you are going to basically strip yourself of the ability to do a lot of more routine but very important kinds of journalism.

MS. HOPGOOD: And I'll be honest when I say I know a lot of my colleagues back in Dayton, there is a certain respect and admiration for what we are doing but we are short staffed, I mean we are hideously short staffed, we have many positions still open. There is a feeling, you know, all this money goes into us traveling all over the world doing the Peace Corps story, but we can barely cover what's happening in our community. I think it's, to me, I mean it's not a direct, it's a different budget but at least, I mean, frankly, that is a pressure in Dayton.

MR. HIDLAY: Can I add to that?

MR. JONES: Yes.

MR. HIDLAY: I think one of the other issues though that we've seen is that if you set the tone as the editor, which I have, that we want to do this kind of reporting, and we are going to do it and it's important at every level, and Paul is outstanding at taking younger reporters and training them. As the investigations editor, he will do projects himself, but

then he will also guide other local reporting efforts that have an investigative bent to them, and what we've seen is this incredible flowering of the staff wanting to do this kind of work.

And being, when they are out in the beats, checking the detail that connects the dots, that says okay, well wait a minute, this police chief is turning in overtime, why is that? He is a police chief, isn't he supposed to be exempt? Then all of a sudden it turns into an investigative story about a police chief who has charged the town that he is in $120,000 in overtime over three years, and it all coincidentally happens six months after he and his wife declare bankruptcy. A very, very good, hard hitting local news story in a town, and that was done by a reporter with like three years experience that Paul guided.

So I think it doesn't all have to be big, major projects, like the Peace Corps or the investigation of the legislature, that this is our role under the First Amendment is to be the watch dogs, and you just have to set the tone in your news room that that's the kind of reporting you are looking for. And, as an editor, you can't be afraid of getting the powerful, upset and

angry at you, you have to be willing to take the phone calls, which we do.

MR. JONES: Fair enough.

Richard Cooper, you've been at the *Los Angeles Times* for many years.

MR. COOPER: Yes.

MR. JONES: And what about you, is it--

MR. COOPER: Well, in our case, I should say that, a few years ago, we were bought by the Tribune Company, and there was, among the veterans at the *L.A. Times*, a kind of let's see what happens now. So far, they have increased the commitment and, certainly in Washington, they have hired a brilliant woman named Deb Nelson, who is a tremendous investigative reporter and editor. She has built a team that seems to grow faster than anything else in the bureau, although the bureau, as a whole, has been growing too.

So I think Skip is right, I think papers see these stories as a way to distinguish themselves. In an era of cable and Direct TV, the feel good news market is super saturated, I mean the sort of how to redecorate your house on a budget, you can't compete with the 24/7 cable channels that are doing nothing but

that, or cooking and all that stuff. They are not doing this sort of reporting. If there is anything that might be endangered, it may be the local, the spot news, the greater depth and penetration on the reporting there because the budgets are zero summed.

And my impression is it's not the investigative stuff that's suffering right now, people see that as a market, as a very valuable market thing, it creates buzz, it creates talk, it makes you something that people pick up and read at a time when maybe even chains that, for a while, took their market for granted and thought they didn't have to invest much in the editorial, have come to realize that there is this huge option, not of going to another newspaper, just not reading it at all. And so the investigative stuff, in my impression, is in very good health.

MR. JONES: Bryan?

MR. STAPLES: Alex, I just wanted to respond on the television side of that. Five or six years ago, when you came to the station, our station in Nashville was neck and neck with NBC. We are a CBS affiliate at the NBC station, and we basically used the investigative name brand, "News Channel 5 Investigates"

and people began to know us as that. They see these stories, they hear the stories, and they go into the market and they are like did you see Channel 5 last night? Phil Williams had this awesome story, people start flipping over.

Investigative reporting, like he was talking about, it gives people a reason to read the paper, well it also gives them a reason to tune into the news and usually what happens is we are a metered market and we can run a series on a Monday and you see the number, and Tuesday night the number goes up, and you can tell that people have talked about the story, and they've told their friends and family, like you've got to tune in and see what the story is about.

So investigative reporting, just to follow up on what he said, is a perfect way to make your name, it's a name brand, really, I mean it's a way to brand yourself.

MR. JONES: Well I can only say that I would like to end on that very happy note, that's given me an inspiration. But before we end, I have some presentations to make to the finalists, if you will.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: Let me say, once again, how proud I am that the Shorenstein Center and the Goldsmith Awards are something that have found each other. This award, every year, is something that I do find very inspiring and something that we certainly believe is one of our privileges to support and embrace. We are very proud to be in the company of such distinguished journalists. Linda Greenhouse, thank you so much for being here with us, and congratulations to all of you, we admire you greatly. Thank you, we are adjourned.

(Applause)

(Whereupon, at 10:58 a.m., the session was concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the preceding transcript is an accurate record based on the recordings of the proceedings taken:

Before: ALEX JONES, Moderator

In the Matter of:

THE GOLDSMITH AWARDS SEMINAR

Date: March 18, 2004

Place: Cambridge, Massachusetts

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Martin T. Farley Date
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