H A R V A R D U N I V E R S I T Y

JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

JOAN SHORENSTEIN CENTER ON THE
PRESS, POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

THE GOLDSMITH AWARDS

Tuesday
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John F. Kennedy, Jr. Forum
Littauer Building
Kennedy School of Government
Cambridge, Massachusetts

BEFORE: ALEX JONES
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P R O C E E D I N G S

(6:05 p.m.)

MR. ELLWOOD: Good evening everyone. Welcome to the Kennedy School and the John F, Kennedy, Jr. Forum. I am David Ellwood, I'm the Dean. This is a very special night, it happens once a year, and it's always an extraordinary gathering of even more extraordinary people.

Let me start by welcoming Walter Shorenstein, here in front of me. He is another extraordinary human being, he helped endow, he did endow the Joan Shorenstein Center for the Press, Politics and Public Policy. But he is really something of a renaissance man who has done and been involved in public policy, in business, in real estate, throughout the world, for many, many years, and a very good and kind supporter of this school. Let's all give Walter Shorenstein a very big hand.

(Applause)

MR. ELLWOOD: Vision is in short supply these days, but not when Walter is in the room.

The Shorenstein Center, as all of you know, promotes very serious probing analysis into how the news media affects public policy in the United

States and around the world. Through its teaching, through its research, through its public engagement, the Center really does examine closely the media's impact, and it feels as though there has never been a more important time for the media, both in terms of the way it's changing but also because the media plays an ever more increasing role as being a potential watchdog, a place where people are held to account, and where new ideas can come forward.

It's also my pleasure to note that Robert Greenfield is here with us tonight. Robert is right here.

(Applause)

MR. ELLWOOD: He is chairman of the board of the Goldsmith-Greenfield Foundation, and it is their generosity that makes this program and the celebration of these extraordinary journalists possible.

The Goldsmith Awards are intended to encourage a more insightful spirited public debate about government, politics and the press, and we are here tonight to honor reporters who have really done that. So I want to especially thank Walter and Bob for making the evening possible.

And now let me introduce the director of the Shorenstein Center and the Lombard Lecturer on Public Policy, Alex Jones. He is a Pulitzer Prize

winning journalist and has been the Center's director since July of 2000. He is the co-author, along with Susan Tift, of two books, *The Patriarch: The Rise and Fall of the Bingham Dynasty*; and *The Trust: The Private and Powerful Family Behind the New York Times*. And indeed, between 1983 and 1992 he covered the press for the *New York Times.* In short, he is an ideal person to be here leading the Shorenstein Center and we are very, very fortunate and thrilled with the job, fortunate to have him here and thrilled with all that he's doing and all that he has yet to do, including tonight's events.

Alex Jones, thank you.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: Thank you very much. Thank you, David.

This is always a very happy night for the Shorenstein Center. This year marks the 15th Anniversary of the Goldsmith Awards program and each year we look forward to this night as a real high point of the Shorenstein Center's year. If I may so also, a high point for American journalism.

You heard David's account of how the award was created, that Bob Greenfield and the Greenfield family really made it happen. But there was of course a back story, Bob Greenfield, then a Philadelphia lawyer, had a client named Berda Marks Goldsmith, who

had told him of her intent to leave him her entire estate. Bob, remarkably, declined to accept it, and went searching for a good way to use the money for a purpose that Berda would have approved.

She was passionately interested in good government and followed the news ardently. She was particularly outraged at misconduct by people with public responsibility. Eventually, Bob connected with Marvin Kalb, the Shorenstein Center's founding director, and the result was the Goldsmith Awards in Political Journalism, which include the Investigative Reporting Prize, the Book Prizes, fellowships and the Career Award. All through the generosity of what became known as the Greenfield Foundation, of which Bob is chairman.

The Greenfield Family is most remarkable, and I am very glad to say that some of them are here tonight. Bob and his wife Louise, Dr. Bill Greenfield, who is the Foundation president, and his wife Joan, Emily Clark, Claudia Cleary, Lauren Greenfield, Ron and Jill Feldman, Michael Greenfield and his fiance Elaine, and Ben Greenfield. It's a family affair, as you can see. Also with us is Deborah Jacobs, the Foundation's administrator.

For many years Bob was the family's representative on the Goldsmith panel of judges.

Michael has now most ably succeeded him in that post. Without the Greenfield Family's continued support and good faith this night would not be possible, and I ask that you join me in saluting and thanking the Greenfield Family.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: One of the pleasures of this night is also to have a chance to publically thank the man principally responsible for the existence of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Walter Shorenstein. David has already given him a tribute, I want to do my own, briefly, if I may.

Walter is 91, we should all be 91 like Walter Shorenstein is 91. Last year he celebrated his 90th birthday by taking over the Four Seasons restaurant in New York and inviting several hundred of his closest friends. This fall he will do the same thing again, but this time, to mark the 20th anniversary of the Shorenstein Center, which bears his name and is his proud legacy to the world. It is his enduring spring of drive and optimism that led Walter to start with $1,000 in his pocket after World War II and build a fortune in real estate. But is his passion and keen engagement with the world that led him to endow the Shorenstein Center as a memorial to his

daughter Joan, a highly respected journalist at CBS who died far too young, of breast cancer.

I ask that you join me once again in a round of applause for Walter Shorenstein.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: The first Goldsmith Awards are the Book Prizes. making those presentations will be my colleague, Tom Patterson, the Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press at the Kennedy School.

MR. PATTERSON: Thank you, Alex.

I wanted to thank the Greenfield Family too for making these awards possible.

The Goldsmith Book Prize is actually two awards, one for an academic book and one for a trade book, and except for that distinction the criteria for both awards is the same. It must be a book that's been published within the last two years, and it must be a book in the field of press and politics, broadly defined, that would include, for example, public opinion.

This year the selection committee, which included Fred Schauer, Marion Just in addition to Alex and myself, reached its verdict in record time, an indication, I think, of the enthusiasm we have for these two award winning books.

The prize winner in the academic category

is *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. The author is James Stimson, the Dawson Distinguished Professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The late Harvard Professor Vio Key once wrote, to speak with precision a public opinion is a task not unlike coming to grips with the Holy Ghost. Divinely inspired or not, *Tides of Consent* is authoritative, this is one of the best books of the past half-century on public opinion. And a key to Jim Stimson's analysis is a finding that the critical players in public opinion are not like the people seated next to you tonight, not the people who take a deep interest in politics and are well informed about politics, nor are they the partisans of the right or of the left, instead they are the mildly interested citizens who sit in the political center.

When they finally get pulled into an issue, that is when public opinion begins to move, and it moves on the margins. And if it moves enough it gets the attention of the media and the political elite, and then it starts to matter. And if it moves enough and substantially in a certain direction, the result will be new leaders, new policies, and a change essentially, in the political order.

Jim writes, modestly, that he has only

scratched the surface of a theory of public opinion. And he's right, there is a dynamic quality, an ever-changing quality to public opinion, including the possibility that it's weakening as a force in American politics. Historically, when a president's approval rating is low and in decline, the out party can count on picking up 25 to 30, perhaps more, seats in the midterm elections.

A couple hours ago I looked at the Cook Political Report, and his most optimistic version for the Democrats is maybe 15 seats, and I think that is perhaps tendency to the effect that money and gerrymandering are having on the impact of public opinion. Hopefully at a future award ceremony I will have Jim Stimson here to tell us whether that is true, and more importantly, why. But tonight we are honoring his *Tides of Consent*.

Jim, it's a great book, please step forward to receive your award.

(Applause)

MR. PATTERSON: As I mentioned at the beginning, we also award a Goldsmith Prize to the best book in the trade category, the type of book you are as likely to encounter in a book store as in a classroom. This year's Goldsmith Prize in the trade category goes to *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime*. It's

author is Geoffrey Stone, the Kelvin Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Chicago Law School.

This book is a must read for anyone who cares about free expression. As Geoff documents, America does pretty well on free expression issues, except in wartime. And he affirms in his bok the sad truth of the claim of Francis Biddle, who was FDR's wartime attorney general, said: "The Constitution has never greatly bothered any wartime president, nor, it seems, has it bothered the Supreme Court." Stone concludes that the Court has not: "in a single instance over-protected wartime dissent".

Now the foundation of Professor Stone's analysis is the six times from the Alien and Sedition Acts of the John Adams Administration, to the Vietnam War of the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, where war and free expression collided. He finds a numbing sameness to the thinking and rhetoric of wartime leaders, whether they are from the Federalist Party, the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. They have been inclined to want to stifle dissent and to see those actions as relatively harmless.

If I recall correctly, Woodrow Wilson wrote his own speeches, but I think he could have been acting as the current president's speech writer when he

said that the only target of the 1917 espionage act were those people: "who had poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life."

Despite his overall gloomy assessment, Geoff Stone is an optimist, noting that there have always been dissenting voices, although usually at the second tier of leadership, and that we seem somehow to learn from our past mistakes. The treatment of Arab-Americans since 9/11 is greatly different than the way Japanese-Americans were treated after Pearl Harbor.

Perilous Times is an extraordinary book, this is the seventh book award, if I count correctly, for that book, including the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award and the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for History.

Geoff Stone, please step forward to receive your award.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: Thank you, Tom.

The Goldsmith Prize judges may at their discretion award a special citation to a journalist or a piece of work that they deem particularly distinguished, but which falls outside the bounds of the Goldsmith Award itself. This year the judges unanimously voted for such a citation to honor the work of Nicholas D. Kristof, a columnist at the *New York*

Times.

Al Jazeera and the American Jewish World Service don't agree on much, but they do agree on Nick Kristof, they call him a hero. For the past two years Nick Kristof has devoted much of the power of his forum at the *Times* on the op-ed page to exposing savagery that the world might not otherwise have seen. He is credited with saving thousands of lives by forcing the world to see, to really see the genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan.

In doing so, Nick Kristof has been called our national conscience. He has made repeated trips to Darfur, where hundreds of thousands of Africans are dying, as Arab militias ravage their villages. In his travels, he has been shot at, has had to pass through desolate no-go areas, laced with landmines and bandits, where United Nations and humanitarian groups hesitate to go.

Kristof called on Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice to go to Darfur, and to her credit, she answered the call a month later. There are undoubtedly hundreds of thousands of refugees in and from the Darfur region who owe their lives to this formidable humanitarian journalist, said Robert Devecki, past president of the International Rescue Committee. Many of the voices in Nick Kristof's reports from Darfur

have been women's voices. Samantha Power, of the Kennedy School's Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, who has written a Pulitizer Prize winning history of genocide, says that Kristof's relentless willingness to put his life on the line, to sneak back into Darfur to issue new reports, is in stark contrast to the news media's neglect of genocide in the past.

Nick is a Phi Beta Kappa from Harvard, a Rhodes scholar, he's the winner of a Pulitzer Prize, with his wife, Cheryl Woo Dunn, and many other awards. But somehow, one suspects that the awards mean relatively little compared to the work itself.

In his column this past Sunday, Kristof reported that Sudan's government, having killed several hundred thousand members of black African tribes in darfur, has now begun sending militias to kill more of the same tribesmen in neighboring Chad. The good news is that he has at last gotten the attention of the Bush Administration and there is hope for international intervention.

Mr. Kristof is now conducting a competition in which college students are vying to accompany him on yet another visit to Darfur, I had a student mention it to me only yesterday. She is going for the shot.

The Goldsmith Citation for 2006 reads as

follows:

In an inspiring mixture of reporting and advocacy, Nicholas D. Kristof aroused the conscience of the world with his courageous coverage of genocide in Darfur, at the risk of his life he went to Sudan and bore witness to the savagery being visited on defenseless people, and in riveting prose, he used his platform at the New York Times to demand action from an international community that had tried to avert its eyes and deny responsibility.

Please join me in honoring Nick Kristof.

(Applause)

MR. KRISTOF: Thank you.

Thanks very much. Alex said I needed to sing for my super, but I promise to sing very, very briefly. I am of course delighted to be here, but in this case I am just back from the Chad/Darfur border, so I am particularly glad to be back.

I also wanted to remind us all that while we are celebrating journalism and authorship today there are a couple of categories of people who we also need to remember and who make our work indispensable. One of those categories is the people who, especially when we are working abroad, our interpreters, our fixers, those who our facilitate all the work we do,

and particularly in places like Darfur, it's tremendously risky for them.

On one trip last November I found a university student who spoke in English and I turned him into my interpreter, he was a 21 year old young man. And then the next day the secret police tried to arrest him at a checkpoint. What was particularly commendable for him is that after that, after we sort of worked that out, he kept on interpreting for me.

There is another category of people who are indispensable, our sources, who take so many of the risks. Again in Darfur, for example, there was one young woman named Noura, who her father had been killed by the Janjaweed, then she had been gang-raped. She was willing to speak to me on the record, to be photographed, and this is a woman who by doing so was at risk of being arrested for adultery, since she was charging rape but did not have four male eyewitnesses who could determine that it was rape. And she was also at risk for being charged with defaming the state, and for a lifelong stigma. Those people, those categories of people are absolutely indispensable and I think we also need to remember them today. They do a great deal of the work, they take all of the risks, and they usually get none of the credit.

So thank you all very much.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: Each year the Goldsmith judges scrutinize scores of first rate investigative newspaper and magazine stories and television pieces. They are charged with choosing six finalists for the Goldsmith Prize, which we consider a very special kind of awards for investigative reporting. Our particular brand of investigative reporting is focused on work that holds government to account, with special emphasis placed on the actual or potential impact of the work.

This year's finalists, as a group, represent more pure impact than any group of finalists in memory. Each of them plowed into conventional wisdom or collective ignorance, like a locomotive. Tonight we honor them all, and I shall talk about each of them in turn, in alphabetical order, based on their news organization.

The purpose of the Goldsmith Prize is to encourage this kind of very difficult and often expensive work. At a time when news organizations, especially newspapers, are facing daunting new competition from the web, and in many cases cutting budgets, news budgets, it is worth noting that all the finalists this year come from newspapers. The fact is that the vast majority of serious reporting in this country is done by newspapers, and this vital core of

news is in real jeopardy, as the news business is caught in a technological revolution. This stellar group of finalists displays just what could be lost if newspapers should decide they can no longer afford to do this kind of work.

Let me briefly describe the process of judging the Goldsmith Prize. We have a panel of five judges, while I oversee the judges I have no vote. Our judges panel always includes representatives of quality journalism from both print and broadcast. In addition, we seek someone from the world of government, in the belief that this perspective is essential to our judging of this particular award. And we also have a designated place on each year's panel for a representative from the Greenfield Family, whose vision in establishing the prize continues to be our guide.

The judges are sent all the entries, and must choose fifteen that they think are the worthiest contenders. We then assemble all the entries that are on any of the five lists of fifteen. In January, the judges come to Cambridge and discuss each entry on that long list, one by one. Any judge who is associated with a news organization whose entry is being discussed does not take part in those deliberations. As a further safeguard, when it comes time to judge all judges mst vote for a full slate and cannot vote for an

entry from their own organization. In other words, if an entry from your news organization is in contention, you must vote, but you must vote for someone else.

The judges choose six finalists, which are announced immediately. They then choose the ultimate winner, which is not disclosed until tonight. I can tell you that our judges worked very hard and take the process very seriously. This year they named a slate of finalists that is especially outstanding.

The first Goldsmith finalist that we honor tonight is the work of a team of reporters from *The Blade*, of Toledo, Ohio, who began last April with a simple curiosity about a rather strange investment that the State of Ohio had made with public funds. Normally such money is invested in the most conservative way, but in Ohio *The Blade* had found that millions of dollars had been invested in the unregulated world of rare coins, one of the most speculative investments imaginable.

A prominent local Republican and coin dealer was deciding how the money should be invested, and a state official who handed over the money claimed that it had proved one of the state's better investments. But *The Blade* had discovered that not only had the coin dealer made more than a million dollars in commissions and fees, the paper also

disclosed that of the rare coins, two of them, worth more than $300,000 had been, no kidding, lost in the mail. *The Blade* began to pull this enticing thread and as they pulled they found that they were unraveling not only a blatant fraud on the taxpayers, but a whole conspiracy of deception, special dealing and influence peddling.

By the end of May *The Blade* revealed that up to $12 million in state funds was missing from the money supposedly invested in coins. The coin dealer was facing criminal charges and the state was out of the rare coin business. By the end of July the scandal had reached all the way to the governor, two of his top aides were convicted and fined for taking gifts from the coin dealer. And not long after, Governor Bob Taft was himself convicted of criminal charges related to the coin scandal, a first in Ohio history for a sitting governor.

The Blade went on to pull the string all the way out, and in the end had linked Coingate to an elaborate fund raising, money laundering and influence peddling scheme related to the Bush reelection campaign. The paper had been relentless in seeking answers to who gave what millions and what did they get in return. And it all started with pennies, nickels and dimes.

Please join me in honoring the Goldsmith finalist team from *The Toledo Blade*: Joshua Boak, James Drew, Steve Eder, Christopher D. Kirkpatrick, Jim Tankersley and Mike Wilkinson.

Gentlemen, please stand.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: Our second finalist came from *Copley News Service*, a Washington based operation that is part of the family newspaper company that owns *The San Diego Union Tribune*. Once again, the story began by pulling on a thread until a whole carpet unraveled. Last June the *Copley News Service* reported that a defense contractor with ties to Republican Randy `Duke' Cunningham, of San Diego, took a $700,000 loss on the purchase of the congressman's house. This happened while the congressman, a member of the highly influential Defense Appropriations subcommittee, was supporting the contractors efforts to get tens of millions of dollars in contracts from the Pentagon. While the contractor was taking a beating on his purchase of the congressman's house, he was reeling in tens of millions of dollars in defense and intelligence related contracts. This sudden success came after a rather long dry spell and seemed to coincide with his decision to invest in the congressman's home.

The Duke, meanwhile, had taken the $1.7

million he had gotten from selling his house to the contractor to buy an even more expensive one. What appeared to be an unseemly bit of quid pro quo became, with further investigation, one of the most egregious examples of congressional malfeasance in memory. By the end of the month the Duke broke his silence to say he had showed poor judgement, but had acted honestly and honorably.

By early July a federal task force was looking into the situation and had searched the Duke's home and the Washington office of the defense contractor. The Duke's lawyers denounced the whole thing as an appalling abuse of government power.

Then it turned out that the Duke had sold a boat for a $400,000 profit to a businessman convicted of bid-rigging, of a bid-rigging scheme who later said he got advice from the Duke on how to pursue a presidential pardon. In mid July the Duke announced he would not seek reelection.

The *Copley News Service* team continued to report aggressively on what was eventually revealed to be a pattern of bribery and corruption that was all but unimaginable, or maybe not so unimaginable. In November, Randy, Duke Cunningham, one of the nation's most influential congressmen and most prominent figures in the Republican Administration politics, admitted

taking more than $2.4 million in bribes. The evidence was so overwhelming, he had no choice.

Earlier this month he was sentenced to eight years, four months in federal prison. The behavior of Duke Cunningham was a betrayal of monumental proportions, and the role of *Copley News Service* was not only to pull the threat on the actions but to explain how the corrupt system worked, how to, as the contractor who was the Duke's co-conspirator put it, grease the wheels. It was a journalistic performance of the highest order.

Please join me in honoring Jerry Kammer and Marcus Stern, of the *Copley News Service*.
(Applause)

MR. JONES: Our third finalist is "Guardians for Profit", from *The Los Angeles Times*. Imagine, if you will, that you are unlucky enough to be old and essentially alone. You still have your buttons, as my wife's grandfather used to say, but you were vulnerable, and maybe not as nimbly able to deal with this confusing world as you once were. But you are still independent and you certainly are capable of managing your own affairs.

Now imagine that someone that you have never met or even heard of, an utter stranger with no links to you at all, is nonetheless able to go to a

judge and have herself appointed your legal guardian. And as your legal guardian, for your own good of course, that person can simply assume control of your life, decide how your money is spent, and effectively end your ability to be independent.

The Los Angeles Times lifted a lid on a new and growing business in California in which professional conservators identify elderly people that theoretically are unable to look after themselves. These guardians are entrepreneurs in a new field, in which they can charge exorbitant fees, loot assets, choose doctors, screen mail, and decide what relatives can visit and which cannot. They find their victims by trolling in senior citizen centers, and when they find a likely prospect they go to court and get them declared incompetent.

The Los Angeles Times team found one conservator who had used a client's money to pay his own taxes, another decorated his apartment with an elderly ward's Chinese paintings. A third hired her son to invest the client's savings, the son paid himself a handsome commission, the investments tanked.

Probate courts enabled these and other outrages, approving conservator's fees and financial reports with little or no review. Despite their growing importance in our increasingly elderly society,

next to nothing was known about the conservators, neither the courts nor state officials could say how many there were or how many people were under their care.

The L.A. Times took three years to look deeply, and they found a horrific pattern. In more than half the cases judges had appointed conservators on an emergency basis, bypassing safeguards such as an interview with the would-be ward, to make sure that he or she was indeed incompetent.

They also found how difficult it was to escape the embrace of such a guardian once you were ensnared. Helen Jones, for instance, was 87 and suddenly found herself with an unsought guardian who was rapidly going through her carefully saved nest egg. The *Times* told of her frustration at being brushed off by the court as she tried to free herself. Her story, and others, prompted outrage and a move for reforming what had become an invitation to victimize a host of people who were all but helpless to resist.

Please join me in saluting Evelyn Larrubia, Robin Fields, and Jack Leonard of *The Los Angeles Times*.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: Our next finalist is *The New York Times*' revelation on December 16th, that the Bush

Administration was engaged in spying on Americans without first getting permission from the courts. It was a blockbuster that has set off seismic tremors throughout the country. As reported in *The Times*, soon after 9/11 President Bush secretly authorized the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on Americans and others inside the United States to search for evidence of terrorist activity. Fair enough. There was a procedure established by congress for just such wiretapping, it required that first a special court which reviewed the situation, grant a warrant. What made the report such a blockbuster was the fact that the Bush Administration had unilaterally decided that it did not need to seek court approval and was spying inside America on callers without first getting the warrants.

The Times reported that under a presidential order signed in 2002, the intelligence agency had monitored the international telephone calls of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people inside the United States, looking for links to al-Qaeda. The Bush Administration had sought to keep the program secret and had gone to great efforts to persuade *The Times* not to publish, on the grounds of national security.

For a year *The Times* made the controversial decision to hold its fire while more

reporting was done. Then, despite a new effort by the president to stop the story, *The Times* decided that the fact of domestic spying was too important to keep from the public, and further judged that the public could be told the truth without giving up any genuine secrets, effectively *The Times* made the same decision it had made more than three decades earlier during the Vietnam War, when it published the Pentagon Papers.

The paper's judgement then and now was that the information was vital to the American public and that even though it had been classified the reason for doing so had more to do with embarrassment than legitimate security concerns. As you all know, the Bush Administration has struck back with a fury. The president has defended the spying as within his wartime powers.

The administration has also unleashed an effort to identify and punish those who revealed the information to *The Times*. Some conservatives have argued that *The Times* should be charged under the Espionage Act with treason, and the reporters should be forced to give up their sources or go to jail. There have been many others, on both sides of the political spectrum, who have seen this case as one that goes to the heart of the critically important question of how many of our civil liberties do we want to give up in

what appears to be a permanent war on terror.

And riding along with that vital concern is the question of whether we want a free and independent press that will take the risk and grave responsibility to report information such as the domestic spying story.

Please join me in honoring Goldsmith finalist James Risen and Eric Lichtblau, co-authors of *The Times* powerful revelation on domestic spying. (Applause)

MR. JONES: Our fifth Goldsmith finalist is *The Washington Post's* coverage of the Abramoff scandal. If the GW Bush era had a consummate insider it would have to be Jack Abramoff, a man who knew how to get things done in today's Washington. His most lucrative clients were newly wealthy Indian tribes, who were seeking permission to establish gambling casinos and needed government permission to get the job done. Jack Abramoff was the man to see for that, with his list of pals that ranged from congressional aides and bureaucrats, including the Deputy Secretary of the Interior all the way to then House Majority Leader Tom Delay, the most powerful man in congress.

What no one knew until a team of reporters from *The Washington Post* told them, was how much of his lobbying success was built on a foundation of greed,

fraud and corruption. Throughout 2005, *The Post* revealed Abramoff's web. The paper reported that he leveraged his long term ties to the conservative movement into close political relationships with lawmakers, such as Delay, and then used that influence to manipulate congress and then federal agencies.

For instance, one article entitled: "How a Lobbyist Stacked the Deck", told of Abramoff's campaign to defeat an anti-gambling bill for a client. The paper detailed how Abramoff had gotten insider help from a top Delay aide, had used Ralph Reed and others to manipulate religious-minded voters and launched a secret direct mail attack on house conservatives, who would normally have been his allies but were opposed to gambling.

The Post effectively owned the Abramoff scandal. In one article they laid out the special attention Abramoff lavished on Delay, and how corporations linked to Abramoff were the funders of a so-called public advocacy group with close ties to Delay. They then detailed how funders had been rewarded by legislative favors. Another focus was the Abramoff effort to cultivate contacts in the Interior Department, to crush the efforts of a band of impoverished Louisiana Indians to establish a casino that would have competed with Abramoff's clients. The

revelations cascaded on and on.

Abramoff has now pleaded guilty to federal corruption and fraud charges and to testify against lawmakers, Capitol Hill aides, former business associates and government officials. The scope and importance of the Abramoff scandal, one of the most far reaching in the checkered history of congress, would be largely unknown if not for the persistence and skill of the team of *Washington Post* reporters.

Please join me in honoring Goldsmith finalists Susan Schmidt, James V. Grimaldi and R. Jeffrey Smith.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: Our sixth Goldsmith finalist is also from *The Washington Post*. Under any circumstances covering the world of intelligence is extremely difficult, and this has only become compounded by the cloak of secrecy that has come down since 9/11.

Dana Priest covers intelligence for *The Post*, and she set out in 2005 to answer the question, how is the United States fighting the war against terrorism? A simple question to ask but profoundly difficult to answer. By the end of the year she had provided *Post* readers with a remarkable account of how the CIA is waging the battle, and her findings have

rocked the world.

Among her most disturbing revelations were that the CIA maintained secret black site prisons in several democracies in eastern Europe and elsewhere, and brought to light suppressed tales of CIA wrongdoing, such as the death of a young Afghan man at the secret salt pit in Afghanistan, and how the agency worked to cover up its mistaken imprisonment of a German citizen.

One of the constant themes of her coverage was to explain how the CIA relies on and works closely with intelligence agencies in other countries. How is she able to do this? She drew on years of source building and used her own resourcefulness, tenacity and a kind of realistic paranoia. She had to go to great lengths in contacting and protecting her sources. In a chapter out of John Le Carré or perhaps from Bob Woodward's handling of deep throat, she devised her own form of tradecraft, with night meetings, creative e-mails and phone techniques, and expensive travel abroad to confirm information and gather more.

Not surprisingly, her revelations prompted an angry outcry from the agency and throughout the world. The disclosure of the secret prison system was key to pushing through Senator John McCain's anti-torture legislation over administration objections.

There were calls in the House and Senate for investigation of her work, and her revelations prompted a storm of commentary and debate around the world. The essential point of her report was to add information and knowledge to the ongoing debate over the appropriate limit of the government's counterterror campaign.

Please join me in honoring our sixth Goldsmith finalist Dana Priest.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: It is now time to announce the winner of the Goldsmith Prize for 2006. Before I announce the judges' choice, please join me in a final round of applause for the distinguished work represented by all the Goldsmith finalists.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: This was a remarkable year for the Goldsmith Prize. Never have so many really important investigations come at once, investigations that in each case had national, even international ramifications. For the judges the choice of an overall winner was especially difficult. Ultimately, the judges elected to award this year's Goldsmith Prize to the story, among this rich group of important investigative journalism that they felt was most important to our democracy. They sought also to send a

message affirming their support for the journalistic courage displayed when a news organization publishes information vital to the public, even in defiance of the most powerful and determined opposition, and at significant risk.

The Goldsmith Prize for Investigative Reporting for 2006 goes to James Risen and Eric Lichtblau of *The New York Times* for "Domestic Spying". (Applause)

MR. LICHTBLAU: Well thank you very much. This is a great honor to be up here, especially in light of, as the Dean said, the tremendous competition. Looking around the room, any one of these finalists would have been a great selection.

It's been a tough couple of years for media, we've gotten pounded over Jayson Blair and Jack Kelly and any number of things. I'd like to think that all the finalists kind of speak to the point that the fourth estate still has an important role to play in the media, and all six of these finalists were stories that powerful people didn't want the public to know. And we can still play a role in that. So thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. RISEN: Thanks very much. This is a great honor and I personally wanted to thank Phil

Taubman and Rebecca Corbett, who are our editors here tonight. Getting this story in the paper took enormous courage by *The New York Times* and I think it was a great public service by *The New York Times*. And I just want to thank all the editors there who made that possible. Thanks.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: In the Summer of 2004, on the eve of the Democratic convention here in Boston, the Shorenstein Center convened a very special event. Right here where I stand were Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, Dan Rather, Judy Woodruff and Jim Lehrer. They spoke about convention coverage and the realities of the news business and how that affected the quality journalism that all five had invested their lives to create.

Within a year they were all gone from their high profile jobs, with one exception. As it happened. that survivor was also the one that steamy afternoon who spoke with greatest heat and anger about what he saw happening to news. He used the opportunity to do something he disciplines himself not to do on the "News Hour", he scolded, in what could only be called high dudgeon. The three networks had decided not to cover the Democratic and Republican conventions gavel to gavel. In 2004, the hours devoted to the

conventions were being cut as never before. And Jim Lehrer was, here is a word you don't you usually associate with him, he was pissed.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: I think starting tomorrow, he said, I think we are going to have four of the most important eight days we could possibly have as a nation. We are about to elect a president at a time when we have young people dying in our name overseas. We just had a report from the 9/11 Commission that says we are not safe as a nation, and one of these two groups of people is going to run our country.

With that, he effectively shook his finger at the three major network anchors who had been saying that they were helpless when it came to using their influence to press for more convention coverage. You guys are a hell of a lot more important than you are willing to admit, he fairly roared. It was not vintage Lehrer, at least not the controlled, carefully modulated Lehrer we see on "The News Hour". But it was the passionate and worried Lehrer who lurks behind that quiet-spoken composed one.

Earlier in that conversation the Jim Lehrer who has an endless appetite for debate and discussion on "The News Hour" had been explaining his perspective on political polarization. This is our

business, Lehrer said, to reflect varying views, the fact that they are strongly held is terrific from our point of view, because that means people are going to watch us and be with us with a little more vigor and a little more interest. He has been shaping that vigorous debate as co-anchor and then sole anchor of "The News Hour" for over twenty years.

He became a newspaper man after three years in the Marines. Then took a flier and became a host of a local experimental news program in Dallas. He came to Washington with PBS in 1972 and was teamed with Robert McNeil the following year to cover the Senate Watergate hearings. They began "The McNeil-Lehrer Report" in 1975, which became "The McNeil-Lehrer News Hour" in 1983, the nation's first full hour news program.

In 1995, Robert McNeil retired but the program sailed on, as "The News Hour with Jim Lehrer". All those years have brought virtually every award and honor for broadcast journalism. His perceived even-handedness and tone of sincere inquiry, rather than gotcha, has lead to his being chosen to moderate ten nationally televised presidential debates. More important, the program has been true to its original journalistic vision, under the very close scrutiny of its founder, who still guides "The News Hour" and

defines its thoughtful, probing and civil way of examining the issues of the day.

There is of course another side to Jim Lehrer, besides the journalist. Those who work for him know that despite his intense focus on the program he also finds a way to sequester himself in his office and write novels. His latest, the 15th, is *The Franklin Affair*, which was published last spring. He has written two memoirs, three plays, and untold reams of doggerel verse that leans toward the sarcastic. And if he has an obsession it is his lifelong fascination with buses, as in Trailways and Greyhound. Among his talents is an ability to assume the bored and piercing voice of a bus station announcer--

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: --issuing a call for a bus about to depart, reciting in order every windblown town and wide place in the road where the bus will stop. Why did he learn these routes, in order? Perhaps that's what comes of being born in Kansas.

During his career he has come to embody a constancy and clarity of mission that journalism needs now more than ever, a certainty about what is appropriate and the standards that at least on his program are going to be observed. They are generally the same standards he started with.

It is my great pleasure to introduce the winner of the Goldsmith Career Award for Excellence in Journalism, the Executive Editor and anchor of "The News Hour": Jim Lehrer.

(Applause)

MR. LEHRER: *May I have your attention please. This is your last call for Continental Trailways 8:10 p.m. Silverside air-conditioned thruliner to Houston, now leaving from Lane 1 for Arnez, Ednog, El Camp, Peirce, Lawton, Hongerford, Candleton, Beasely, Rosenberg, Richmond, Sugarland, Stafford, Missouri City and Houston. All aboard! Don't forget your baggage, please.*

(Applause)

MR. LEHRER: I know what you're thinking, that's one really weird guy.

(Laughter)

MR. LEHRER: The bottom line is I went to a little junior college in South Texas my first two years of college, and at night I worked as a ticket agent at the Trailways Bus Depot, and I have just proved that if you learn something early and you learn it really well, you'll never forget it.

(Laughter)

MR. LEHRER: It was also the first time I was paid money to speak into a microphone.

Look, I am delighted about this award, and it is not false modesty when I say I accept it in the names of the people who, hundreds of people past and present, who have worked on "The News Hour". Journalism, broadcast journalism in particular, is the ultimate collaborative medium, it takes 18 people just to make it possible for me to look out at a red light every evening and say: Good evening, I am Jim Lehrer. So I accept this award for those 18 people and the hundreds of others I have worked with in these now almost 30 years.

It is 30 years actually, it's not almost 30 years. In fact, your timing is absolutely terrific, we have just celebrated our 30th year. And as Alex said, it started in 1975. He left out the fact that when it started it had the worst title in the world when it began, it was called "The Robert McNeil Report". Can you imagine a worse title for a television program. And after six months they consulted my mother and changed the name to *The McNeil-Lehrer Report"*, and many wise people at the time said this is a crazy idea, because what we did was one story a night, for 30 minutes. And they said, that's ridiculous, nobody is going to sit in front of their television set and watch a report on only one story.

We persevered, we hung in there, and in

1983, as Alex said, we went to an hour. It prompted one idiot TV critic to say, oh my God, I thought they already were an hour long.

(Laughter)

MR. LEHRER: But anyhow, we persevered and we are still there. And we are there mostly and primarily and always because of the hard work and talent of a group of very classy, important professional journalists. But there are some basics that underline our operation. Several years ago I was asked by a seminar, a journalism seminar out in Aspen, if I had any guidelines that I used personally in the practice of journalism, and if I did, would I mind sharing them. Well here is part of what I sent them.

Do nothing I cannot defend.

Cover right and present every story with a care I would want if the story were about me.

Assume there is at least one other side or version to every story.

Assume the viewer is as smart and as caring and as good a person as I am.

Assume the same about all people on whom I report.

Assume personal lives are a private matter until a legitimate turn in the story absolutely mandates otherwise.

Carefully separate opinion and analysis from straight news stories and clearly label everything.

Do not use anonymous sources or blind quotes, except on rare and monumental occasions. No one should ever be allowed to attack another anonymously.

And finally, I am not in the entertainment business.

Those are our guidelines.

(Applause)

MR. LEHRER: And those guidelines, as they say at church, in the part of the country where Alex and I come from, that is the scripture from whence my brief message will come tonight. Because I believe several of them touch on some of the critical issues of our practice of journalism at the moment. A moment, by the way, that in many ways is a moment of absolute panic.

As Alex said, newspaper circulation and profits are down, so are the ratings of the nightly news programs. Sound the alarms, cable news and internet bloggers and the satellite and other radio talk shouters, and the late night comedians are teaming up with things called Yahoos and Googles and iPods and MP3 players and other strange things to put us out of

business.

I say to you tonight that is absolute nonsense. Wait a minute please, I believe, as somebody said before this, I think the only thing we have to fear is fear itself. I think we need to look at a few basics. The bloggers are talkers and commentators, not reporters. The talk show hosts are reactors and commentators, not reporters. The comedians are entertainers and commentators not reporters. The search engines search, they do not report. The iPods and MP3 are mere machines, as are cable television and satellite radio.

All of them, every single one of them have to have the news first to exist, to thrive, or to put it in another way, first there must be the news. David Letterman tells a joke about Dubai and the ports; nobody is going to laugh if they don't already know about Dubai and the ports. Nobody is going to laugh. Jon Stewart reports a made up news story about Danish cartoons; nobody is going to get it unless they know about the real news story concerning Danish cartoons. A blogger or a radio talker comes unglued about a shotgun accident or somebody named Michael Brown or Jack Abramoff or Barry Bonds or Donald Rumsfeld or Howard Dean or Governor Taft or Duke Cunningham.

They and their varied readers and

listeners have to know who these people are and what the fuss is all about or it isn't going to work. Whatever the route it may travel to the blogger, the screamer, the comedian, the search engine, the whatever, it has to start with one of us, one of us in the real news business. One of us straight reporters, one of us journalists who was there, as Nick has been there in Darfur, or one who read the original document, as many in this room have done to win the awards they have won tonight and the recognition they have won and deserve, or the persons who did the original interview, did whatever it took to make it news in the first place, to bring it to the attention of all others in the information and reaction food chain.

There was a report out just yesterday from the Project for Excellence in Journalism, which was in the papers this morning, and it made this point dead on, saying that little if any original reporting is done by the bloggers or anybody else except the established news organizations. And you talk about the point that was made here just now, by the recognition of the six of you journalistic teams, and what came from that, all kinds of things came from that, and it started with you all, it started with reporting and it always starts with reporting.

What concerns me is there has been a

growing tendency among some of us to stray from some of these basic principles that make us unique from all the others, to go with stories before they are not quite ready, to spice them up a bit with over the line commentary to raise the volume, and worst of all, to make entertaining people one of our purposes.

I tell people all the time, if you want to be entertained, go to the circus, don't watch "The News Hour". I never want anybody to confuse the news with entertainment or me with the clowns.

(Laughter) (Applause)

MR. LEHRER: But there is even a very strong competitive reason for us to stick to our journalistic guns, because we have the field all to ourselves, none of these others can tell a joke or shout anything unless we have been there first. Now that does not mean, I'm with Alex, that does not mean that we should not adjust to the new information environment, there are technology and cultural developments that are revolutionizing the way our good, sold, needed news is delivered and distributed.

Most newspapers, while sticking with their core mission to report the news, certainly the newspapers represented here tonight are. But many of them, some of them in desperation, others in quiet acknowledgement of reality, are trying bold things with

the internet and other technologies to amortize their news collecting costs and spread their reach beyond the traditional ink on paper newspaper delivered to the front door. Television networks and news programs, including ours, are making our segments on demand for iPods and all other kinds of pods. Partnerships between and among various media delivery modes are proliferating, more and more are coming, and that is the way it must be.

My point is simply that in the rush to modernize, to innovate, to survive in the new environments, that we don't lose sight of our purpose. That whatever the delivery system, the information platform, as they are called now, we journalists are there to report and cover the news in a straight and professional way. Whether the news consumer is ultimately an old fogey reading the newspaper in a library in front of the fireplace or a 14 year old getting the latest on a pink iPod with her name engraved on the case, the story, the first story, the straight news story, the investigative story, from which all commentary screams and jokes flow, originate in the eyes, ears, judgements and presentations of people who report the news for a living, if not a calling.

And it's not only just about our

reporting, there is also evidence that the role of the news gatekeeper is not only not going away, it's coming back big time. There is an increasing amount of news noise and noise about the news, out there in the blogosphere and the satellite, iPod and other spheres, people are busy, they want some professional, unbiased unagendaed assistance in sorting through it all, to help determine what is important, what is not so important, before they go off and read the editorial page or listen to the commentators or to be shouted at or to be entertained about, that is what we journalists have always done. There is no question that the nature, the machinery. and certainly the looks of the gatekeepers must change, but like it or not, there will always be a need for animals like television anchors who present the end result of the story sorting, they just won't always be, or never be probably just old white men like me anymore.

A major problem we mainstream gatekeepers have now is a loss of substantial credibility and trust that it takes to do our work effectively. Our arrogance, among other things, has gotten in the way. That is fixable, all of it is fixable. I happen to believe there is nothing wrong with the basic practice of journalism in America today that a little humility and a lot of professionalism and transparency couldn't

cure, the very traits we want others that we report on to bring to the table.

That has to come along with the realization or re-realization that journalism is still about the story. Newspaper owners and network executives and Wall Street financiers must be in on it as well, they too must remember that Thomas Jefferson said our democratic society is dependent on an informed electorate, and that means being dependent on us, the journalists, to report the information from which opinions and informed votes flow. It also may mean leaving the huge profits to the search engines, as well as the shouting to the shouters and the entertaining to the clowns.

Again, I am delighted to be here to accept this award on behalf of my colleagues at *The News Hour"* and I would like to say as a professional journalist, if you are to be known by the company you keep, please remember me always for the company I kept tonight with these fellow and sister journalists.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: We have time for some questions. And I will invite you if you have a question, there is a mic here and here and over here. If you would, please, a question, not a speech, and

please also identify yourself before you ask.

Over here.

MR. GRUDEN: Hi there, my name is Ned Gruden, I'm a masters candidate here at the Kennedy School.

Thank you very much for your address, I agree with you. But I have one question about the business pressures facing the industry and how that might affect the quality of journalism. You said that it's possible to get the quality back and all it takes is humility. But within the face of such tremendous business pressures, is that really possible at this current junction?

MR. LEHRER: Well, I probably oversimplified, as one tends to do. I just happen to believe there is a business case to be made for good journalism. Because the clowns are going to beat us if we try to compete as entertainers. The shouters are going to beat us if we try to become shouters. If we stick with our guns, if my thesis is right, and I don't know if it's going to be right, it's just my thesis at this point. I think if we stick to our guns and stay in the journalism business, that is where, because we are needed, all these other things are spinoffs of us, that's my case. And I believe the business case needs to be made. I know it's hard to do, particularly when

you have corporations that are not satisfied with 10 percent profit, they want 20 percent, if they get 20 they want 25. But I think a business case can be made, that's the only point I'm trying to make.

MR. JONES: Yes, right here?

MR. VALERI: My name is Valeri, I'm from Africa, a mid career student.

My question to you would be what has been the most difficult part of your job?

MR. LEHRER: What is what?

MR. VALERI: What is the most difficult part of your job?

MR. LEHRER: The most difficult part of the job, I will quote my best friend and former partner Robert McNeil, when he was asked this question, he said the worst thing about his job, when he was still doing "The News Hour", he said, and I would agree with him, it forces you sometimes to take seriously people you wouldn't otherwise take seriously.

(Laughter) (Applause)

MR. CUCRECA: Thank you again for coming to our school, and congratulations on your well deserved honor.

MR. LEHRER: Thank you.

MR. CUCRECA: I'm a first year student at the Kennedy School, my name is Nick Cucreca.

My question relates to your speech, and a little bit to the first question as well. Very few people are currently getting their news from in-depth reports, more and more people are starting to get their news from glossed over reports. And I guess my question is how do we get more people to watch programs like "The News Hour"? How do we get more people to care about the in-depth reporting like the reports that were done today?

MR. LEHRER: Well, if I had, if Alex had given me three more minutes to speak what I would have said is that those of us who feel as strongly as I do about this is not only essential to the democracy, it;'s also a competitive advantage, there's a competitive advantage in presenting serious news. You can go out and sell that point, you can make that point. Go to the original source, this thing yesterday was amazing, I mean everybody says they get their news from the bloggers. One percent of the blogs do any kind of original reporting at all.

Look at these award winners here, I mean every story here, either nationally, internationally, from a state point of view or a local point of view, started the discussion, started the shouting, started the jokes, started the discussion within the country, within the community, within whatever the scope of the

readership was. And that point needs to be sold. Instead of backing off and oh my God, we've got to get into somebody else's business, we are in the business that counts and we should sell it. And there are a lot of folks in the journalism business that say no, no, no, we've got to emphasize other things. I'm saying don't do that any more.

MR. BULGER: My name is Ben Bulger, I'm a grad student at Harvard Ed.

What I wanted to ask you is about the Democratic and Republican national conventions, arguably they've changed significantly in the past fifty years. And some news organizations have argued that there is actually less news content, that the American people don't want to follow the conventions as those in previous generations, those who were very interested. What do you think needs to happen so that the public and news organizations feel that covering these conventions are actively worthwhile doing.

MR. LEHRER: All right, look at the front pages of these newspapers. If you're a reader of the *Toledo Blade*, the *Toledo Blade* has a contract with readers in Toledo and the Toledo area, and they know that: "Taft Declared Guilty", that's saying to their readers the editors of the *Toledo Blade,* by their headline and by their reporting, they said this is

really important. And that means something to the people of Toledo.

NBC, CBS, ABC, with one hour condensed of the Democratic and Republican convention, they're saying to the audience all over the United States, we don't think this is a big deal. I think we have power, as I said to these guys up here that day, as Alex is saying, come on, we have power, use it. Because yes, the nature of conventions has changed, there's no question about it, it used to be they were easy to cover, as journalists, they were covering car wrecks, you just had to show up, people don't do that anymore.

But it's still a major story, it's just a different kind of story, you have to bring different resources to the story, you have to bring interpretive things rather than the old-fashioned cop shop things to the story, that's all. And I think if we did that and if the networks take the position and everybody else took the position that they were important, as important as I think they are, I think the public would come around. Just as they think the people in Toledo knew this was important because the *Toledo Blade* led their paper in such a dramatic way with it.

MS. POND: Hi, I'm Kathleen Pond, I'm a freshman at the College.

What is the future of online subscription

and how should newspapers differentiate themselves, given that their readership is increasingly diversified, and no longer as regionally specific?

MR. LEHRER: As somebody who asks questions for a living, I am now going to blatantly dodge your question.

(Laughter)

MR. LEHRER: That is not my area of expertise, and I am not going to act like it is. There are a lot of people here, John Carroll, all kinds of folks in this audience, a lot of these newspaper folks, who could answer that question a lot better than I can. I would tell you what I've heard, rather than experienced, it would be meaningless information for you. I'm sorry.

MR. PROBARKA: Hello, my name is Raoul Probarka, and I'm a first year student at Harvard College.

MR. LEHRER: Yes, I met you earlier.

MR. PROBARKA: Congratulations once again, Mr. Lehrer.

MR. LEHRER: Thank you.

MR. PROBARKA: You are in a position of change, as a news anchor, and my question is, how did you feel, as a news anchor, when a majority of Americans believed Saddam Hussein was linked to al-

Qaeda and the attacks on 9/11, that perception, and the news media's role? Could you speak a little bit about that?

MR. LEHRER: Well, there is nothing more frustrating for somebody in our line of work than to see polls that show the American people or the Victoria, Texas people believe something that you know as a reporter is not so. And there is no way to look at that information.

Wait a minute, I'm, not talking about it from an opinion point of view at all, but you just know that isn't so, at least based on the reporting, the best thing you read. And not your own reporting as much, but also other people's reporting, and all I ever do when that happens is just feel terribly frustrated, and realize we have to do a better job.

There are people who, keep in mind that for every reporter who is out there trying to get it right, there are 30 people out there trying to get it spun, and they're trying to spin the reporters, they're trying to spin the editors, they're trying to spin the executive producers, they're trying to spin the anchor people, it's all part of the process. And it's not neat and tidy and it is never ever going to work out exactly the way --.

I mean all you've got to do is read Nick's

column about Darfur, his columns about Darfur, I mean this man is angry, you can tell, he comes through the paper when you read it. And he is angry because of the very points you're making, why isn't the United States of America, forget about the rest of the world, up in arms about the genocide of Darfur? And he is doing everything he can, and he's upset because everybody else isn't doing what they can, and more importantly, I bet, Nick, forget what other people, you're really upset that people don't get it yet, they still don't get it. And that is just the frustration of being in our line of work.

MR. CROWLEY: Congratulations.

MR. LEHRER: Thank you.

MR. CROWLEY: I'm Dan Crowley, I'm a senior from Dorchester.

MR. LEHRER: You're what?

MR. CROWLEY: I'm a senior citizen from Dorchester.

(Laughter)

MR. LEHRER: Okay.

MR. CROWLEY: Am I correct in thinking that the BBC enjoys a deeper international trust and credibility than American media? And if so, what can the American industry do to enhance trust and credibility on the international scene?

MR. LEHRER: I think the answer, I don't want to be --. I'll tell you what, I think the same answer applies to everything, trust and credibility overseas flows from trust and credibility at home. And we have had a lot of difficult times in journalism recently. And I think, and I know every newspaper person in this room will agree with me, that sure there have been the Jayson Blairs and the Jack Kellys and all that sort of thing, but there has been a terrible deterioration of local news coverage, or people identifying with their newspaper.

What's the point if you're going to read five newspapers and they read identically the same? Maybe have one local reporter or two or three. You know, trust and credibility is something you don't just one day wake up and get it. You lose it, and a lot of them have lost it, and now they have to rebuild it. And the way you rebuild it is by doing stories about things that people care about. And you may have to tell them they care about it, as a journalist that is your decision to make, you decide, we think this is important and we're going to lead the paper with it, or we're going to spend some money doing the story. That is part of what the practice of journalism it's all kinds of little things.

But I'm less concerned about our

credibility as journalists overseas than I am at home right now, to be honest about it.

MS. CLARK: Hello, my name is Monica Clark and I am a senior at the College, former news exec for the Harvard Crimson.

I noticed tonight that none of the nominees for the prize are of color, which seems to reflect a larger trend in journalism. And I'm wondering what effect you think this lack of diversity has on the news that's reported, and what steps need to be taken to improve it?

MR. LEHRER: Well, at "The News Hour" we have a very, very strong affirmative, I believe I can defend us on, if you have a news organization I think you should have every kind of person there is, racially, otherwise, race is just one of the types of people that should be represented in a newsroom, not because you want black people to cover black news and white people to cover white news, quite the contrary, people just come from different backgrounds, they have different everythings.

So that's why we do it, and we are very, we have a very rigid thing at "The News Hour". Of the senior correspondents, well, I'm not going to give you a lot of figures, but I know them by rote. And the worst problem we have, and it's extremely difficult and

sometimes we fail miserably, is not so much in our personnel, you can control that pretty easily, you just have to work at it, the people you hire. But our guests, the people we bring on the air, and there are gaps on racial and gender lines in various expertise areas.

So you want to have, you're always weighing, you want to bring the best minds to bear on the subject. Well the best minds have been mostly white male, and I remember it was particularly the case during the Balkans, when the Balkan war was going on, everybody who ever studied the Balkans, I'm convinced, was a 49 year old white male.

(Laughter)

MR. LEHRER: And I'm beating up on folks. You touched on something really important, and it's extremely important to me and extremely important to us at "The News Hour" and I'm not saying we do a perfect job, because we do not. But we are conscious of it and I am beating up on people all the time, and I try to practice what I preach.

Yes?

MS. ROTUNDO: Hi, I'm Suzanne Rotundo, I'm a student here, and have the great privilege of being a student of Professor Jones this semester.

MR. LEHRER: Is he really a good teacher?

(Laughter)

MS. ROTUNDO: There's an answer here, you know later.

(Laughter)

MS. ROTUNDO: No, it's a fabulous class.

My question to you is about your role in the presidential debates, and what makes in your mind when you reflect, your job having gone successfully, what debates do you feel went well? And which ones perhaps didn't go as well as you wanted?

MR. LEHRER: I look upon those things as things that I survive and escape from intact.

(Laughter)

MR. LEHRER: It's not like doing a television program, you do a television program, and in the unlikely event I screw it up, I can look out at the red light and say sorry, I'll try to do better tomorrow night. If you screw up a presidential debate you can affect who is going to be the next President of the United States, and I am conscious of that all the time.

My bottom line, and I know this is going to sound holier than thou, but it happens to be the truth, you'll just have to live with it. But when I finish a presidential debate my hope and my prayer is that nobody is talking about me, that nobody is talking about any question I asked, nobody is talking about how

tough I was or how this or that I was, they're talking about the answers of the candidates. Because the debate is between them, it's not about, I'm not even functioning in a journalistic way, I'm not there to ask questions and follow, it's a thing to try to get them to debate each other and engage. So, if that happens, things start, it's 90 minutes, and it's over in my mind in 90 seconds, just whaa, it's over.

But there is no one debate, they all come together in one excruciatingly difficult way.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: Jim, in addition to this handsome framed placque that is for your Career Award in Excellence in Journalism, we also have for you a Harvard Chair.

MR. LEHRER: Oh my God.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: With your name on it. You can put that on the wall and pretend it's a degree if you want.

(Laughter)

MR. JONES: Jim Lehrer, thank you.

(Applause)

MR. JONES: I want to remind you that tomorrow you are invited, all of you are invited, to attend a discussion with the Goldsmith finalists and

winners on the dicey state of investigative reporting. That will take place at 9:00 in the morning on the top floor of the Taubman Building, which is the building directly across the courtyard here. We will have a continental breakfast starting at 8:30 and then we will begin at 9:00. And I feel I can promise you an interesting morning.

Again to all finalists and winners, my sincere congratulations. And quite sincerely also, as a citizen, my thanks.

Thank you all.

We are adjourned.

(Applause)

(Whereupon, at 7:33 p.m., the session was concluded.)

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

Date: March 14, 2006

Place: Cambridge, Massachusetts

_____ 03/27/06

Martin T. Farley Date
Advance Services