Throw Another Blog on the Fire

BY MARVIN KITMAN

Why don’t I write more often for this fine distinguished journal? It’s a question others might ask. In my case, I blame it on my being a casualty of the digital revolution. My problem began after I left Newsday as the media/TV critic in 2005. As I explained to my readers in my farewell column, “Newsday had given me a tryout and after 35 years we mutually agreed it wasn’t working out.” Not since the Acropolis and the Parthenon had there been so many splendid columns on one site. As the longest sitting TV critic in history — my couch will be going to the Smithsonian — it is the reason TV is so good these days.

In the summer of 2007, Arianna Huffington invited me to join the original 934 notable contributors to HuffPo as a media critic. Flattered, I asked a subeditor how they paid for the honor? Was it by the piece or per word, or was this something my agent should call about? She seemed surprised that I should ask such a question.

My starting salary as a media critic — where I would be writing 1,000-word posts, blogs, or whatever they called the columns — taking into account such factors as longevity, timeliness, hits — was to be zero. Nada. Zilch. Bubkus. It was definitely below poverty level at the time. HuffPo argued they were doing writers a favor, offering a platform to express their views. We were lucky we didn’t have to pay them for the honor, I gathered.

As I brooded about the pay scale, my son and other young alternative journalists said, “Do it anyway, dude.” It will make me a now person; at the time I was already a then person. It will get your name out there. Advance your career. They were right. I was soon inundated with offers to write or speak for nothing.

Not paying the workers for their labors — and not going to jail — was the start of something really big. Now if the garbagemen would pick up the garbage, the mail person deliver the mail, the dentist fix your teeth, the corporate rate executives, big banks and Wall Street guys all do their thing without compensation this would be something truly monumental. They were giving new meaning to the term slave wage.

Arianism, I soon found, was spreading. “What are we, stupid?” other proprietors of web sites were asking. “Arianna isn’t paying, why should we?” There was a Nobel Prize in economics for this someone, even though it reminded me of the Pharoh’s Method of building the Pyramids.

It was then that I decided to go on strike at HuffPo — for higher wages. It was a hunger strike. The approximately 2,324, 278 writers who seemed happy enough to blog without being paid did not join in the struggle. “Ye wretched of the earth, you have nothing to lose…etc…” did not resonate, since they literally had nothing to lose.

But it wasn’t a total loss. I had lost 32 pounds. Before I looked like Chris Christi; after I had lost one of my three chins. Be sure to check out my next book, "The Arianna Huffington Miracle Diet." Why don’t you just start a blog, my trendy friends suggested?

To blog or not to blog — that is the dilemma plaguing writer-kind since Al Gore invented The Internet. Should I cast my lot with the approximately 5, 454, 678 (the numbers increase as we read) band of brothers who are having the fun and excitement of writing for nothing?

It was Samuel Johnson who observed in 1759, “Sir, nobody but a blockhead ever wrote except for money.” This blockhead, nevertheless, decided to throw another blog on the fire.

It was then that I discovered a serious creative problem. Whenever I sat down to write a blog I couldn’t get past the ledge. I had become, as my friend Christopher Lehmann-Haupt explained, blogged, the digital age equivalent of being blocked. It turned out I was a coin-operated writer. I could always pay myself to get the creative juices flowing. But that didn’t seem like such a good business plan, either.

I mentioned all of these travails now not to alarm anyone, but to explain why I have not being joined all these other wonderful journalists. Please, not a word of this to anyone. I have a reputation as a big bucks writer to maintain.

Continued from Page 2
An Interview With Walter Winchell
Got Me a Byline and a Job

BY STEVEN MARCUS

When I was a young boy growing up in the 1940’s and early 1950’s, radio was still the dominant form of entertainment medium in most homes, including mine. I remember lying on the living-room floor next to the radio, which was on a lower shelf of one of the bookcases in the room, listening to my favorite shows: “The Shadow,” “Johnny Dollar,” “The Lone Ranger,” “The Cisco Kid,” etc.

But the show I liked most of all was Walter Winchell’s 15-minute broadcast on Sunday nights. I can still hear his staccato, high-pitched voice, accompanied by the incessant clacking of a telegraph key, as he declared, “Good evening Mr. and Mrs. America, from border to border and coast to coast all the ships at sea. Let’s go to press.”

I no longer remember any of the melange of celebrity gossip tidbits, scoops and other items Winchell delivered in rapid-fire sequence, after his introduction.

But I do remember feeling excited and very grown up. It was as though Winchell were personally informing me, a mere boy, about all the important goings on in the adult world.

Of course, I had no idea that our paths would briefly cross years later, in 1967.

In the fall of that year, I was a rewrite man at The New York Post, on a three-month tryout and very anxious about my chances of being put on staff. The Post in those days had a strict policy. To save money on health care and pension benefits, the paper would often bring reporters in for a tryout and then fire them just before the three months were up, which was permissible under the Newspaper Guild’s contract with the paper.

One day at the end of October, the Post’s city editor, Johnny Bodd, handed me a statement Arthur Godfrey had issued, announcing that he had just resigned from the board of Winchell’s charity, the Quentin Rayson Memorial Fund he had asked me to elaborate. I told him that after the Bay of Pigs episode I had been stationed in Havana, covering the TV broadcasts, while the AP bureau in Havana was shut down. “I was on the 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. shift,” I told him, “but whenever a speech by you was announced I would go back to work to team up with the night person starting at 8 P.M., when you were scheduled to begin. You always started two or three hours late, spoke for three or four and by the time it was all over I had a couple of extra days’ pay in overtime money.” Castro roared with laughter before I could turn the conversation into the “You should do this…” or “Why did you do that…?” referring not to the AP but to the U.S. government. That was my cue. When the conversation turned to that subject, he changed his respected Chief of Staff. I was impressed.

There was some casual bantering and gentle brushings from his unintended slight, since the invitation was the Havana bureau would operate in the same way AP operated in the rest of the world. He said his government would help. Castro kept talking I stepped in to pro-

Continued from Page 1

“The day we had lunch with Robaina and we told him we’d be picked up at our hotel around 8 P.M. We decided to have an early snack at the hotel, and waited. Soon enough we were driven to the presidential palace and ushered into a reception room. Out of the corner of my eye I spotted a seating chart on an easel next to a closed door and figured ‘this is going to be a quickie. He has guests coming in.” Sometimes there’s a glint at the seating chart that I realized we were the dinner guests.

And then Castro swooped into the room with the President and his entourage, giving us a tour of his olive green pressed fatigues. He jovially greeted Newhouse, Boccardi and me. Soon after that, Boccardi, inspired, like an unintended slight, suggested inviting me to what the Cubans called “the delegation,” the visitors from New York. In the late 1950’s, in the final meeting we had decided we should bring a gift of some kind, and of course it had to be non-politi- cal and in character. We settled on a couple of cigars, one of which was engraved with “Boccardi playing baseball, taken from the AP photo archives. When the pictures were unwrapped, Castro howled with delight, and told me to keep the unsmoked one as a souve- nior to “come and have a look at this.” He turned to Boccardi and said, “You must have millions of pictures at the AP.”

“Yes,” Boccardideadpanned, “but they are not all of you.” Castro was delighted with the crack, and kept showing

Continued on Page 5

Walter Winchell

Winchell over the election of a new board of directors.

“See if you can reach Winchell and get his side of the story,” Bott said.

By this time, Winchell’s career was virtu-

ally over, and he had faded from the spot- top-rated radio show, which at the height of its popularity reached more than 20 million listeners, had been discon- tinued in the late 1950’s. His syndicated column had also ended.

Continued from Page 5

Many thanks to all of you who have been active in helping Awards Chair Carol Lawton spread the reach of our contest wider than ever and put it fully online for the first time. Wendy Sclight was sensationally funny about themselves and their professional achievements in 2005 and 2010. Given that the post of Silurian is hitting record-break- ing stride.

Of course, I had no idea that our paths would briefly cross years later, in 1967.

In the fall of that year, I was a rewrite man at The New York Post, on a three-month tryout and very anxious about my chances of being put on staff. The Post in those days had a strict policy. To save money on health care and pension benefits, the paper would often bring reporters in for a tryout and then fire them just before the three months were up, which was permissible under the Newspaper Guild’s contract with the paper.

One day at the end of October, the Post’s city editor, Johnny Bodd, handed me a statement Arthur Godfrey had issued, announcing that he had just resigned from the board of Winchell’s charity, the Quentin Rayson Memorial Fund he had asked me to elaborate. I told him that after the Bay of Pigs episode I had been stationed in Havana, covering the TV broadcasts, while the AP bureau in Havana was shut down. “I was on the 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. shift,” I told him, “but whenever a speech by you was announced I would go back to work to team up with the night person starting at 8 P.M., when you were scheduled to begin. You always started two or three hours late, spoke for three or four and by the time it was all over I had a couple of extra days’ pay in overtime money.” Castro roared with laughter before I could turn the conversation into the “You should do this…” or “Why did you do that…?” referring not to the AP but to the U.S. government. That was my cue. When the conversation turned to that subject, he changed his respected Chief of Staff. I was impressed.

There was some casual bantering and gentle brushings from his unintended slight, since the invitation was the Havana bureau would operate in the same way AP operated in the rest of the world. He said his government would help. Castro kept talking I stepped in to pro-

The Shadow, “Johnny Dollar,” “The Lone Ranger,” “The Cisco Kid,” etc.

But the show I liked most of all was Walter Winchell’s 15-minute broadcast on Sunday nights. I can still hear his staccato, high-pitched voice, accompanied by the incessant clacking of a telegraph key, as he declared, “Good evening Mr. and Mrs. America, from border to border and coast to coast all the ships at sea. Let’s go to press.”

I no longer remember any of the melange of celebrity gossip tidbits, scoops and other items Winchell delivered in rapid-fire sequence, after his introduc- tion.

But I do remember feeling excited and very grown up. It was as though Winchell were personally informing me, a mere boy, about all the important goings on in the adult world.

Of course, I had no idea that our paths would briefly cross years later, in 1967.

In the fall of that year, I was a rewrite man at The New York Post, on a three-month tryout and very anxious about my chances of being put on staff. The Post in those days had a strict policy. To save money on health care and pension benefits, the paper would often bring reporters in for a tryout and then fire them just before the three months were up, which was permissible under the Newspaper Guild’s contract with the paper.

One day at the end of October, the Post’s city editor, Johnny Bodd, handed me a statement Arthur Godfrey had issued, announcing that he had just resigned from the board of Winchell’s charity, the Quentin Rayson Memorial Fund he had asked me to elaborate. I told him that after the Bay of Pigs episode I had been stationed in Havana, covering the TV broadcasts, while the AP bureau in Havana was shut down. “I was on the 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. shift,” I told him, “but whenever a speech by you was announced I would go back to work to team up with the night person starting at 8 P.M., when you were scheduled to begin. You always started two or three hours late, spoke for three or four and by the time it was all over I had a couple of extra days’ pay in overtime money.” Castro roared with laughter before I could turn the conversation into the “You should do this…” or “Why did you do that…?” referring not to the AP but to the U.S. government. That was my cue. When the conversation turned to that subject, he changed his respected Chief of Staff. I was impressed.

There was some casual bantering and gentle brushings from his unintended slight, since the invitation was the Havana bureau would operate in the same way AP operated in the rest of the world. He said his government would help. Castro kept talking I stepped in to pro-

Continued on Page 5

Walter Winchell

Winchell over the election of a new board of directors.

“See if you can reach Winchell and get his side of the story,” Bott said.

By this time, Winchell’s career was virtu-
BY GEORGE ARZT

AS I stood outside the Frank E. Campbell Funeral Parlor waiting to pay my last respects to Mario Cuomo and bracing myself against the afternoon frostiness, my thoughts turned to the topsy-turvy world of politics and my upside-down relationship to Mario.

I first met Mario when Mayor John Lindsay appointed him to be the mediator in the construction of low-income housing in Forest Hills. As in most things he did in his life, Mario did a splendid job in this role and he helped both sides reach a compromise that shrank the planned 24-story residential towers by half. Mario and I got along very well during this time. The Forest Hills mediation served to propel Mario’s career into public service, and that is when politics got in the way of our relationship.

The first time was when I put a minor item in my column in The New York Post about Mario putting his name in consideration for Lieutenant Governor. Former Governor and Attorney General with the then “New Democratic Coalition,” I used the term “Hamlet of the Hudson” to describe the long wait for his next great generative- ness. He tried to call me at home about my use of the phrase, but instead spoke with my mother. When I came home, my mother told me that “Koch isn’t Mario, and Can’t you be nice, he is a nice man,” and in her Yiddish eyes, was a “Shabbos goy.” Mario and I never worried much about the incident, nor did we realize it would be the first disagreement between us.

Eventually, Mario became the Secretary of State in the Gov. Carey Administration, and later Lieutenant Governor under Carey. He ran for Mayor in 1977 in a hard fought three-campaign race against Ed Koch, which Koch won. As the race got closer, I was called to his office and told to call Mario. It was Koch short-lived.

Mario and I would meet again in 1982, when Mario ran for Governor against Koch. Koch had just won the endorsement of Koch’s old club, the Village Independent Democratic Club. However, by that time Koch had lost a great deal of support in the club and my story on the endorsement was less than enthusiastic for this reason.

Mario called me and said, “I hate this story, I hate this headline, I beat Koch in his own club.” I told Mario that the reformers already control the club and that is why my story framed the endorsement the way it did. Mario’s response was that “Koch still fought hard to get the endorsement, and that I was nothing more than a ‘koch buster.’ Two more phone calls followed, followed by two phone calls from campaign aides and one from Cuomo friend Jack Newfield, who also knew the club leaders. In terms that my story had the wrong slant.

Our relationship only further deteriorated when Mario spread anti-semitic comments, walking around City Hall with an enor- mous Mario Cuomo campaign button. I asked around the man and learned that he was Mario’s father-in-law, Charles Raffa. Apparently Raffa was there to appear before the Board of Estimate to get back property he owned, but lost to the City for nonpayment of taxes. I wrote the story.

Needless to say, my phone rang yet again. “George Arzt? This is Mario Cuomo. The sewer runs to your desk. You just hit a poor 70-year-old Italian immigrant, who can’t even speak English, over the head. And you let the Sandy Weill’s of the world destroy the campaign finance system.” I explained to Mario that his father-in-law appearing before the Board of Estimate was a story. He did not relent in his attack, and I did not yield in my defense.

Later, during the Democratic Convention, my friend Andy Logan of New Yorker magazine approached Mario and chided him for attacking a responsible reporter. Mario said he was only defending his family, but a young Andrew Cuomo later reached out to me and apologized. It was too late; my relationship with Mario would never be the same.

But still there were many more exchanges. Once following a debate in Buffalo, he sat next to me on a long plane ride back to New York City. He looked uncertain. I told him he was out-shining Koch in the debate, but still he was concerned, “I wish I had a crystal ball to see how this is going to work out.” He should have had no fear.

Mario Cuomo won the race for Governor handily despite a New York Post poll which ran a week earlier with my byline predicting he would lose to Koch by 18 points. Mario won by 6. Mario accused me and the newspaper of making up the poll. Later he asked why in the world would I attach my name to a poll that I knew was incorrect and look like a fool a week later. Mario did not have an answer, but as far as he was concerned, I was, and had always been in Koch’s camp.

For a time that poll story was en- larged and hung each day in The Post library. Each day it ripped it off the wall and threw it in the garbage. And each day it was re-hung to my further hu- miliation.

And yet when my mother died coming home from the funeral, he was a responsible reporter. Mario said he needed Koch to endorse Andrew for Attorney General. I shrugged, and said we would take it to Ed. When I told Ed of Mario’s request, Ed said, “I don’t want to go to my grave with a feud. I’ll do it.” I’ll endorse Andrew.” Koch held a press conference at City Hall to endorse Andrew and the relationship between Ed and Mario thawed a bit, and my relationship with Mario was almost friendly again. Though, at a fo- rum on the Koch Administration, which convened on one morning in the late spring of 2006, Mario told the audience of Koch, “I like him much more than he likes me,” Ed responded to that, “He’s right!” The audience roarced in laughter but I knew Ed had mixed feelings. He couldn’t forget 1977, but he really admired Andrew.

Waiting outside the funeral parlor on this afternoon, I thought about all these incidents, and wished that our relationship could have been better. We spoke many times on policy and political strateg- egy, but there was always a great deal of wariness between us. As reporters, our role as observers can quickly shift to participant. Once Mario called me in 1977 to take issue with my story, he dragged me into the world of politics. Once, I wanted to cover the funeral of a public relations and political consulting firm. We had very little contact at this time, until one morning in 2006. I was at a breakfast with Frank E. Campbell in midtown Manhattan when suddenly a large shadow was cast over my French toast. It was Mario standing behind me. He said: “I need Koch to endorse Andrew for Attorney.” He despised the paper, but the freedom of the press was too important to allow The Post to publish.

Life went on. Mario left the Governor’s office and around the same time, I started private communications and political consulting firm. We had very little contact at this time, until one morning in 2006. I was it was a road map of Democrats to follow in the age of Reagan conservatism. He showed a different America than the “Shining City” portrayed by Reagan. I told him that right after the speech but it did not seem to matter. It is even more amaz- ing that Mario helped me have The Post - given what he thought of its reporters and the paper - when it was in its darkest hour. Many years later. He despised the paper, but it was his influence with both the courts and the F.C.C. that helped delivery the paper back to Rupert Murdoch’s ownership. Mario publicly acknowledged that he often disagreed with the Post, but the freedom of the press was too important to allow The Post to publish.

The Politics of a Relationship

Joe Varonker
Gov. Mario Cuomo in 1985 with George Arzt, then the City Hall bureau chief for The New York Post.
Interviewing Katharine Hepburn

BY BARBARA LOVENHEIM

My first interview with Katharine Hepburn occurred in the fall of 1983, soon after I began writing for The Wall Street Journal arts page. In the course of looking for article ideas, I learned that Anthony Harvey, who had won accolades for directing Hepburn in “The Lion in Winter,” was in Manhattan directing Hepburn in “The Ultimate Solution of Grace Quigley,” a dark comedy about an eccentric, elderly woman who starts a suicide society for octogenarians. I quickly pitched the story to my editor Ray Sokolov and he immediately responded: “Perrific. Can you get to her?”

Hepburn was still highly selective about granting interviews, but I had an edge: I had met and interviewed Tony Harvey in London and was confident about calling him. He immediately asked me to write a letter to her and send it to him; he would then forward it to Kate. A few days later he called me back and said, “For the letter, you want the interview, you’d better spell her name right!” Alas, I had spelled Katharine with an “a” — an egregious mistake that, he said, would have turned her against me immediately. Later I learned that whenever fans misspelled her first name, she would put a big circle around the misspelling and return the letter to the sender.

My revamped letter worked; I snagged one of only two interviews that she would do. (The first was for The New York Times.) When I finally arrived at her townhouse on East 49th Street a staggering three months later, I was more than a little nervous; her reputation for being cantankerous with reporters was well-known. The fact that the interview hadn’t helped. When I rang the bell, an elderly woman with gray hair and bushy eyebrows immediately came to the door. Phyllis Wilburon was Hepburn’s confi- dante, personal assistant, and companion who came in every day. Doydow, pleasant and petite, she brought me a cup of coffee and cookies. Despite my anxi- ousness, I relaxed and let the interview flow. I had always imagined Katharine Hepburn as tall and elegant. That’s how she looked in the Tracy/Hepburn com- edies, of which were on her walls), took me up a steep stair to the sitting room, where Hepburn was waiting. I had always imagined Katharine Hepburn as a tall elegant woman; she looked in the Tracy/Hepburn com- edies, where she always seemed to stand on an equal footing — literally and psy- chologically — with Spencer Tracy. But when I entered the modestly decorated room, I found myself staring at the back of a small woman stoking hot coals in the fireplace. Her gray hair was piled loosely on top of her head; she wore khaki slacks, a white turtleneck sweater, and a black short-sleeved jacket. Even though I was only 5 feet 5, I seemed to tower over her, and a feeling I found discomfiting, since in my mind she was not only tall, but a giant.

“So you’re Tony’s friend,” she said suddenly, as if inviting me to sit on a simple sofa upholstered in white duck. She sat in a black leather recliner at right angles to me, her shoulder draped with a white scarf. A large fluffy cat wandered in and lay on the wooden coffee table, she barked: “Set it there. I think you’ll find out that project quite well.”

We both laughed, and that seemed to break the ice. Minutes later, she called her good-natured cook Norah to bring us coffee and cookies. Despite my anx- ieties — perhaps due to them — the inter- view went very well and lasted two hours. From the first words she spoke, Hepburn had a mesmerizing effect on me; each sentence seemed charged with drama. This was not just an interview; this was a private performance. She chatted end- lessly and easily about her childhood, her adoration for her parents — a safe sub- ject that she returned to often, her views on women, her years at Bryn Mawr, and, finally, “Grace Quigley,” her upcoming film, which she described as a comedy in the “Guinness” tradition.

When I timely mentioned Spencer Tracy, she abruptly snapped, “Spencer is a friend, and that is all.” Even though Spencer’s wife, Louise, had died the year before, Kate was still wary of talking about their relationship. I wanted to dissolve into the couch. But she quickly forgot my remark — as I would later learn, she was quick to forget and forgive.

After The Journal published my article in February 1984, I called to request a follow-up interview for McCall’s. Kate told me that while she hadn’t read my article — because she never reads pieces about herself (“Quite inadvertently,” she said, “you will write something that will turn me off”) — the people around her said that the profile was very good. (I recently learned from her niece Katharine Houghton, who co-starred in “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner?” that this was hardly true: Kate read everything that was published about her, and this was her way of saying that she liked my article.) Kate then agreed to the interview.

Again I waited months — impatiently. My first interview with her had affected me deeply; on some level she personified the mother I never had — the strong, fiercely independent, successful role model I found not in my mother, but in my father. I finally met Kate in late July. This time I was more relaxed and she was less defensive. Again she talked about her parents, her upbringing, and her strong belief that people should be allowed to take charge of their own lives. “I was always in a state of terror,” she said, her eyelashes dangling in mid-air. As for being a feminist icon, she quickly demol- ished that notion: “I’ve lived my life as a man,” she said many times. “And I knew I must regret it, not having children and a family. But I made a conscious deci- sion not to get tied up in the domestic life because I thought it would bore me — I wanted adventure. I just wanted to be myself, and if you want to be yourself, you should not try to be the mother of four and the companion of a fascinating man. I never thought of having one child — I thought of having four. And I would have made a good mother. It just never occurred to me that I could have a car- reer and a family. You cannot have it all.”

As I had by this time gained her trust, she asked me to turn off the tape and then confided that when she was in her sixties and Spencer was out of work due to severe health problems, she left her career to take care of him. The picture offers she was giving her, said, were not all that great and she knew that if she was working and Spencer wasn’t, it would be the end of their relationship, and pos- sibly the end of Spencer. So they retired to their small cottage on the property of George Cukor, a close friend who had directed their early comedies. For the next five years Kate painted landscapes (sev- eral of which were on her walls), took care of the house, cooked for Spencer, and sat by him nightly to make sure he slept soundly.

Before leaving, I summoned up my courage and said I would like to work with her on her autobiography. She was silent for a few minutes, and then she said, cagily, that she would think about it. It was a strategy, I surmised, to restrain me from doing an unauthorized book on her, as (unknown to me) she was already plan- ning to have the distinguished biographer Scott Berg write the definitive Hepburn biography and publish it in 1983. Instead she offered me an autographed photograph. I selected a black-and-white photo that didn’t show up her signature well, but she showed me more natural to me in black-and-white than in color. I left, carrying the photo along with a box of brownies that Norah had baked.

A few weeks later I called to ask for pictures from her personal collection for the McCall’s article. “Tell your editor that I have hundreds in stock house. See those,” she snapped. I tried a new tack. “I’m only doing my job,” I rebutted: Af- ter all, she had often told me that the world was ruled by the strong and the weak — and if you go up the mountain, don’t stop halfway because you are tired. I had boxed her into a corner. The strategy worked and she told me to come over the next morning.

It was a Friday — two days before I was leaving for China — and it was raining, so I wore my green Burberry raincoat that I had bought in London. When I entered the house I laid my coat on a hall tree, then joined Phyllis to select photos. I was still poring over images when Phyllis and Kate left for the Hepburn family house in Fenwick, Conn., where the family had weekend. Norah, who had taken a liking to me, stayed and gave me lunch. When I was ready to leave, my raincoat was nowhere to be found. I went to Phyllis, and she figured, had swept it up with a pile of clothes lying on the bench and taken it to Fenwick.

“Better,” I told Norah. “But you’re going to China on Sunday,” she said. “You’ll need a raincoat.” She ran upstairs, returning with a paper-thin green army poncho that had belonged to Spencer and had a cigarette hole in the corner. She would have no excuses and folded up the poncho and said, “Here’s Miss Hepburn. Kate!” Norah never called her Kate; I would want me to have it.

Of course I told everyone in my tour group about the interview with Katharine Hepburn’s poncho. And when it rained during our trek on the Great Wall of China and I wore the poncho, all the cameras flashed.

When I returned to New York, I re- ceived a call from my father: Kate had called him in his office, having retrieved his number from my answering machine (remember those) and told him she had my raincoat. What’s more, she had it dry- cleaned! Well, my father never got over that. His favorite actress had dry-cleaned his daughter’s raincoat! The next day I made a date with Kate and took the poncho to her house, hoping to exchange it for her own battered poncho. No way! She would not part with the poncho. But she thanked me for the photo of me wearing her poncho on the Great Wall of China that she had always wanted to visit.

McCall’s planned to publish the 4,000- word piece with 21 photos from her personal collection in November. How- ever, Grace Quigley opened and closed before the issue would hit the news- stands. To McCall’s, I discovered that I had printed biographies she would turn 75 on November 8th. So my editor ran the article with the title “Kate at 75.” But he ran a lackluster actor as the main cover image instead of Kate. I was, of course, furious. And so was Kate!
Winchell Interview Got Me a Byline and a Job

Continued from Page 2

A couple of days after my article appeared, Winchell sent me a letter. He liked my article and was pleased to see that it had generated some interest. He wanted to work with me again and asked if I would be interested in covering the managing editor and the executive editor of a new newspaper. I was thrilled and accepted.

As I reread the article 47 years later, I was struck by how much it has changed. The world has changed so much since then. The idea of a newspaper strike seems so quaint now.

It is a shame that we have lost the sense of community that newspapers once provided. They were a way for people to come together and share their stories.

I wonder why hateful regimes choose to keep their citizens in the dark. It is more about pride and hatred of the other than anything else.

Winchell announced his retirement on Feb. 5, 1969, a year after his son committed suicide. He was 65 years old.

I had understated the amount of money that I would be earning by working for the management editor. I should have mentioned that I was also given a spot in a weekly column.

The ease with which these fanatic groups destroy lives and families is truly令人震惊. They know that when we speak of the evil that is cloaked in black, we are speaking of the faceless, nameless, voiceless citizens who choose to cover conflict in dangerous places.

The Nazis were more orderly then Isis but the differences are subtle. They know how little others around the globe have, but we are the ones who feel the brunt of oppression grow ever bolder and crawl by fear for our very lives.

I wonder why hateful regimes choose to keep their citizens in the dark. It is more about pride and hatred of the other than anything else.
For Socolow, One Last Honor

Sandy Socolow, who died on Jan. 31 in New York, was honored on Dec. 10 by the Silurians with a Lifetime Achievement Award. Socolow was too ill to attend the dinner but spoke by phone from his hospital bed as his children accepted the award for him. Socolow and his old CBS buddies recalled the funny and the inane and the serious. He was one of television’s giants as the producer for Walter Cronkite’s evening news during a 32-year run at the network. Silurians’ president Allan Dodds Frank visited Socolow in the hospital that day, and was regaled with the octogenarian’s tale of how the censors during the Korean conflict refused to allow him to do a story on prostitutes and soldiers. He cajoled and wheedled but to no avail him to do a story on prostitutes and soldiers. He cajoled and wheedled but to everlastingly chagrined was turned down.

Overseeing The Changes

Even with the title of Chief Content Officer and Executive Vice President of Time Inc., charged with exploring all the newer platforms, Norman Pearlstine told Silurians, “It’s very hard to predict where things will be five years from now.” He was speaking at the 2015 kick-off luncheon, in January, and touched on his journalistic career that began as a copy boy at The New York Times, stripping carbon copies, and eventually to a 10-year stint as Time’s editor-in-chief. He left for other jobs, including five years as Chief Content Officer at Bloomberg LP. The speed and changes in the media business still consume him. He quipped how everyone once thought the gluepot was going to be the next big thing in publishing.

Still, he conceded that the present state of publishing is rife with challenges, and even giants in the industry — including his own company — struggle to get things right.

“If we don’t transform ourselves from a company known for print, which is now 85 percent, it will be a difficult time for us,” he said.

Transformation was a major reason he was brought back to Time two years ago. He admitted that he used to believe major changes could be achieved in three to five years in the industry — but now, he says, the nearer shortshots are looking at “three to five months.”

A Prosecutor On the Stand

His career as a Federal prosecutor and as a defense counselor included some of the most famous cases of the last decades of the 20th century - from Whitewater, to the mob, to the death of Vince Foster - and Robert Fiske Jr. recalled them in fascinating detail. He did not have to embellish the stories as he spoke without hesitation at the Silurians’ November luncheon at the Players Club.

One minute he related of being next to Donald Trump as the Donald discovered a suit he had led against the National Football League — which was defended by Fiske — was worth the grand total of $1. And then Fiske as prosecutor told how he had helped sentence the infamous Harlem drug lord Nicky Barnes, who had repeatedly escaped prosecution, to a lifetime in prison.

And there were other sensational cases, including his conclusion as a Special Prosecutor that Foster had committed suicide and had not been murdered. There was a sizable percentage of anti-Clinton conspiracy theorists who insisted that Foster was murdered because he knew of alleged illegal Clinton dealings. He seemed to relish still the N.F.L. victory, which he also has detailed in a newly published book called “Prosecutor Defender Counselor: The Memoirs of Robert B. Fiske Jr.”

He recalled how Trump, and his United States Football League, had sued the established N.F.L. for more than $1.5 billion, alleging, among other things, a conspiracy to keep out the U.S.F.L. While the jury found the N.F.L. guilty on many counts, it awarded damages of $1.

Fiske recounted that John Mara, who was the Giants’ chief operating officer, was seated next to Trump when the verdict was reached.

“One Mara reached into his wallet and handed Trump $1,” said Fiske, still savoring the memory.

The Last of the ‘Murrow Boys’

Dick Hottelet, last of the famed “Murrow Boys,” died recently at age 97. I knew him from my days at CBS Radio. I was a newswriter for Radio, but I never wrote a word for Hottelet. He wrote and read his own words. He was on the air every weekday at noon. That was back in the sixties when CBS Radio was considered an esteemed news organization. We had writer-readers like Charles Collingwood and Alexander Kendrick and Stuart Novins and Douglas Edwards.

I remember being delighted when Hottelet referred to me as “chum,” until I realized that chum was what he called everybody. He had an air about him: distinguishingly in an old-fashioned European way, a gentleman, a man of the nobility.

He was born in Brooklyn.

After his noon radio gig, Dick would leave the Broadcast Center on West 57th Street and head for the United Nations. Covering the UN was his beat for CBS News, radio and television. He very seldom made air. But that didn’t seem to bother him.

In none of the many conversations I had with Dick did he once refer to the Murrow days; nor did he ever mention the Normandy invasion, or the Battle of the Bulge, two stories he had covered; nor did he talk about being imprisoned for four months by the Nazis when he was working for UPI in Berlin, or having parachuted from a flaming bomber during the war. He didn’t have to. Farewell, chum.
MARCH 2015                                             SILURIAN NEWS                                               PAGE 7

That Was Life on West 43d: Ruth and Mike

BY BETSY WADE

When that picture of the New York Times City Room does not con-
vey fully is that in my late twen-
ties, when I was the solitary female on the
third-floor copy desks, I was crazy
about most of the men I worked with, right
along with being crazy about my job.

Mike Berger was the best, but in
his case, I was just another of his wor-
shippers. Berger joined the paper in 1928, before I was born, and it was understood
that everyone doted on him. He was

generally agreed to be the finest writer on the
paper. He apparently knew almost everybody and was on a first-name basis with the headmen of Murder Inco-
rporated. His classroom education ended in the
ninth grade, but his thrust for learning was never
slaked. His long, startlingly
devoted to the City Desk, and got two thick crockery cups
I sat and waited, overflowed with my
care and nervousness, overwound and con-
thrated on the phone receiver. He
didn't have his famous hat on, but he

But even with Mike and Ruth gone,
the belief was that the Times was pro-
duct of the Newsroom, but it was
some other sort of Adler. She was by no
means a woman whose first name
she had attended the Sorbonne
and graduated from Smith, and Mike, of

We went to the cafeteria on the
11th
floor, and got two thick crockery cups

Continued on Page 8
How many artists can trace their work in a descending line straight from Gilbert Stuart, who was famous paintings portrayed George Washington and other Founding Fathers of our nation? Well, Betsy Ashton can. Her portrait of Philip Lader, former Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s, now hangs in a place of honor at the U.S. Embassy in London. Betsy attended a Chenin unveiling in November, along with Lader, the present Ambassador and Embassy staffs. Stuart’s portrait of the first American ambassador, John Adams, started a tradition of former envoys providing portraits for the Embassy. It was not an easy assignment for Betsy, who is a journalist-turned-artist and is serving as first vice president of the Silurians. She usually gets the subjects of her portraits to sit several times for a couple of hours, following an initial photo session. But it was almost impossible with Lader. He’s a globetrotter, as chairman of WPP, the advertising and communications conglomerate; as a South Carolina lawyer, and as co-director, with his wife, Linda, of the Renaissance Weekend gatherings in various parts of the U.S. Betsy had to rely on one brief sitting, photographs and a trayed as he looked when he served as

Long portrait. It turned into a yearlong

accolades of the Embassy and the Laders

from one end of the British Isles to the other end, and a depiction of the boots he wore during those excursions. So to get that all in she had to produce a full-length portrait. It turned into a yearlong task. But the finished product won the

The artist Betsy Ashton is flanked by Philip Lader, left, the former Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s, whose portrait hangs on the wall, and Matthew Barzun, the present Ambassador.

from one end of the British Isles to the other end, and a depiction of the boots he wore during those excursions. So to get that all in she had to produce a full-length portrait. It turned into a yearlong task. But the finished product won the accolades of the Embassy and the Laders and their two daughters, so Betsy says all her hard work was worth it. And now she’s working on some new and easier assignments.

— Myron Kandel

In Memoriam

Sandy Socolow, a CBS News veteran who worked alongside Walter Cronkite for many years and was a key voice on coverage of major news events ranging from space launches to Vietnam to Watergate, died on Jan. 31 in New York. He was 90. A month earlier, in December, Socolow had been honored by the Silurians with a Lifetime Achievement Award. The Bronx native joined CBS in 1966 as a writer for Cronkite, eventually becoming co-producer and executive producer of the CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite, as well as vice president of CBS News. He left CBS in 1988 and was executive producer of “World Monitor,” the Christian Science Monitor’s nightly newscast on the Christian Channel. In 1993, he rejoined Cronkite, and was executive producer of Cronkite-Ward Productions. Mort Gordon, a former reporter and editor who covered the men’s wear industry for FashionDaily, died Jan. 30 in Boca Raton, Fla. He was 70. Gordon’s journalism career began in 1952, when he joined FashionDaily as a reporter for Daily News Record in its Philadelphia edition. He was assigned to the New York headquarters in 1959 and became the newspaper’s managing editor. In 1969, FashionDaily named him publisher of its Men’s Wear magazine, a role he filled for 10 years before launching his own licensing business.

That Was Life On West 43d

Continued from Page 7

held a humble, difficult job in the Times

New Members

David Corrigan, newly retired from The New York Times, joined in the paper in 1989, filing a number of radio pieces before becoming the editor of Science Times, the weekly science section. Prior to that, he had education editor and deputy Op-Ed editor.

Charles DeLeva was a veteran journalist with a law degree, who byline continues to appear in The New York Times even though he is officially retired. He joined The Times as a copy editor in 1999 and was on staff until 2013. He is on staff in that role.

Deeve Dowshon was a Bulletin correspondent for the CBS Evening News and the anchored the CBS News program “Up to the Minute.” Prior to joining CBS, he wrote, reporter and anchored for such news organizations as NESC, CNN, Hunterdon, Metromedia and the Associated Press.

Bill Farrell was at The Daily News from 1972 to 2006 and was a reporter and feature writer for almost every section of the paper, including sports, as well as a columnist. His most communications director of Pitta-Bobel De Gaulle & Gibe and a government relations firm.

Sharynaway, now retired, was a campaign and political fellow of theoa-teer program that was broadcast over WOR Radio from 1972 to 1983. Prior to that, she was a reporter and producer for WOR Radio from 1986 to 1988 before moving to WCBS-AM as an on-air director.

Bethany Kandel’s journalism career began in 1983 as a reporter for the Bridgehampton (L.I.) Sun. She later became a reporter at The Daily News, at The Associated Press, and at USA Today. Since 1983, she has been a freelance. Elaine Lowel, who specializes in writing about food, entertaining and interior décor, was on staff as The New York Times from 1990 through 2014. She is also the author or cowriter of more than a dozen books, including “The Soup Cookbook.”

Barbara A. Rosas has been the courts for The Daily News since 1985. From 1978 to 1985, she reported on New York City and entertainment, as well as a columnist. Her most communications director of Pitta-Bobel De Gaulle & Gibe and a government relations firm.

Elaine Lowel, who specializes in writing about food, entertaining and interior décor, was on staff as The New York Times from 1990 through 2014. She is also the author or cowriter of more than a dozen books, including “The Soup Cookbook.”

Barbara A. Rosas has been the courts for The Daily News since 1985. From 1978 to 1985, she reported on New York City and entertainment, as well as a columnist. Her most communications director of Pitta-Bobel De Gaulle & Gibe and a government relations firm.

Elaine Lowel, who specializes in writing about food, entertaining and interior décor, was on staff as The New York Times from 1990 through 2014. She is also the author or cowriter of more than a dozen books, including “The Soup Cookbook.”

Barbara A. Rosas has been the courts for The Daily News since 1985. From 1978 to 1985, she reported on New York City and entertainment, as well as a columnist. Her most communications director of Pitta-Bobel De Gaulle & Gibe and a government relations firm.

The artist Betsy Ashton is flanked by Philip Lader, left, the former Ambassador to the Court of St. James’s, whose portrait hangs on the wall, and Matthew Barzun, the present Ambassador.