Donald Trump: Press Siren

BY ALLAN DODDS FRANK

Covering Donald Trump has always been a challenge. The one aspect of his behavior that constantly tests reporters is that his credibility is always suspect. There is never a guarantee that anything he says or asserts can be taken as absolutely true. Being completely truthful is not and has apparently never been part of Trump’s modus operandi.

Thinking about the thousands of people I have interviewed during my four decades as a newspaper, magazine and television reporter, I am hard-pressed to think of anybody like him.

I have been following Trump and his business adventures since I first interviewed him 32 years ago for a story in Fortune. His media savvy was apparent to all even then, long before he polished his close-ups for 14 years as a television game-show host. Unlike other executives who were terrified by reporters, Trump always relished publicity. And he knew that if an investigative reporter was sniffing around, the best way to understand the challenge and control the damage was to call the journalist back right away.

In 1984, he was a hyper-ambitious young developer active in local politics with a rich father and a burning desire to be more than a regional celebrity. His first big national play was his grand plan to drive the U.S. Football League to greatness and take a bite out of the National Football League.

My first interview with him – in his office at the Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue — was cordial and only a little combative. But even then, it was obvious his relentless self-promotion generated waves of overstatements, exaggerations and misrepresentations. Fact-checking him clearly was going to be a nightmare.

As an owner of the New Jersey Generals, Trump had flushly signed some big stars, including running back Herschel Walker, who lent the new U.S.F.L. enough appeal to garner a $15 million contract from ESPN to broadcast football in the spring.

Some U.S.F.L. owners thought the league — by creating a bidding war — could stockpile enough talent to force the N.F.L. to create two or more new franchises in exchange for collapsing the U.S.F.L. and absorbing its star players. That deal — split among the U.S.F.L. owners — would have generated huge profits or even better: stakes in N.F.L. franchises that might now be worth more than $1 billion each.

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From the Southeast Corner

BY BETSY WADE

G uys who insist on the last word usually pound on desks or slam doors. Nothing like that fits Theodore Bernstein. But at The New York Times between 1948 and 1969, the last word was his. He stood over the composing room stone and told the makeup when to let page 1 go. Of many final words, that was the last indeed.

It was said that printers all recognized his writing and when a correction in that script went to the copy cutter, the page would not lock up without the new slug.

In this period, when Bernstein was news editor and then top-ranked assistant managing editor, he goaded, lifted out jewels valued at $163,300. His boss and ally, the managing editor Turner Catledge, a Southerner, was news editor and then top-ranked assistant managing editor, he goaded, would not lock up without the new slug.

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Continued on Page 4
President's Report

BY BETSY ASHTON

We got off to a grand start this year with a room-capacity crowd for our January lunch at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Our 1st speaker was Columbia Journalism School Peter Gelb, Son of legendary New York Times and Columbia Journalism School Arthur Gelb, who resides quite at home with the crowd of journalists and was open about the challenges of dealing with the influx of diversification and financial crises of the world’s most expensive art form. He included video clips of opera, adding great music and high energy to our lunch. If you missed it, go to our website, www.silurians.org, where we have links to our recent speakers.

Our next speaker, in February, was Dave Qui, who was as enthralled, as she spoke about ‘money money money. And I made sure I bought a copy of her latest book, “How to Make Your Money Last: The Beginner’s Guide.”

We also have a new board member, Michael Serrill, formerly president of the Overseas Press Club; he accepted the board’s invitation to fill the seat left vacant by a colleague for so many years. When not co-chairing our Awards Program, or refining the numbers and settings on our members’ directory contact list, and getting the submission invitations out to news organizations, managing the times get to get our judging panels have already been lined up and we are just waiting for the March 1 submissions to get in. Meanwhile, you can check out our website for full details. Note that our Annual Awards Dinner is to be held on Wednesday, May 18, 2016. Our "The Chemistry of Winning," the Third Annual of the National Arts Club, because the NAC dining room is too small for that event.

Michael says he and his wife, who live on top of the numbers, reports that we wound up with 313 dues-paying members in 2015, which was a high water mark since we began keeping track in 2005. We picked up 26 new members; eight members died. We also had 37 new members sign up in July and August. We had no no-shows but had a number of non-payments of dues for two years. But we’ve already had six new members sign up this year. We also had 26 new members paid their 2016 dues, which is a month earlier than usual. We thank you for that. We also thank those who added special contributions to their dues payments, many of whom have been members for five years or more. The Silurians are in good financial health.

Our final note is a reminder that it is important for all members to reserve your room for your lunch rather than walk in. The National Arts Club needs to know the number who will be attending the lunch and the time they will be attending the event, so that they will have enough food and place settings. We have one person miss the lunch reserved last month, because walks-in had filled the seats and no extra settings were available.

Please do not cancel your reservation. Do so two days before the event if you do not want to be charged. The NAC bills us the number we guaranteed two days before the event, or the number that show up on the list. Therefore, no shows cost the club money. We stood to lose $450 one month because we had nine no-shows. We have had to charge to no-shows for the meal they missed. Obviously, if there is a storm, we will make exceptions.

If you have an event you want to see, please contact the Board’s representative, Bernie Kirsch.

And with that said, I look forward to seeing you on the 25th. All the best.

2016 Dates

Wednesday, March 16 — Lunch, with guest speaker Mitchell Barnhouse, the Brooklyn District Attorney.

Wednesday, April 20 — Lunch, with Robert Caro as our speaker

Wednesday, May 18 Annual Awards dinner at the Players

Wednesday, June 15 — Lunch, with guest speaker Sree Sreenivasan, head of Digital by Linda Goetz Holmes, who served as the Silurian well exceeded for so many years. When not co-chairing our Awards Program, or refining the numbers and settings on our members’ directory contact list, and getting the submission invitations out to news organizations, managing the times get to get our judging panels have already been lined up and we are just waiting for the March 1 submissions to get in. Meanwhile, you can check out our website for full details. Note that our Annual Awards Dinner is to be held on Wednesday, May 18, 2016. Our “The Chemistry of Winning,” the Third Annual of the National Arts Club, because the NAC dining room is too small for that event.

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Mary McGrory: Read All About Her

BY ALLAN DODDS FRANK

“Mary McGrory: The First Queen of Journalism” by John Norris is an extended love letter about the great journalist whose reporting and writing lit up Washington for more than five decades.

I read Ana Marie Cox’s review in The New York Times, I knew that she — and Norris the biographer — got Mary. Cox was enthralled by McGrory’s style as an indefatigable doorknob refusenik who refused to accept “no comment” for an answer.

As I moved up away from the school boards and sewer zoning hearings of the suburbs and into the city, on the corner just south of Capitol Hill, my desk was not far from her little glass-walled office that adjoined the newspaper’s building. By the mid-1970s Washington was being besieged by homeless people who often slept in the winter over foul hot air grates into the steam heating system network that warmed government buildings, including the White House.

Trying to convince the President to kill the proposed D.C. county charter bill, one of her countless crusades. Mary resisted the installation of computers that had taken 250 years to establish? Did she realize that by admitting Allan Frank, Yale line of questioning was: “Did Giamatti be Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti. The story was in the spotlight together, at a center table — with Ben Bradlee and Art Buchwald at the next table, Joe Alsop nearby, etc. McGrory told me she was first prize as Michael O’Dowd, the real Chicago bartender created by another Irish humorist, Finley Peter Dunne. So that nose, the voice of Mr. Dooley, the fictional Chicago bartender created by another Irish humorist, Finley Peter Dunne. The story was in the spotlight together, at a center table — with Ben Bradlee and Art Buchwald at the next table, Joe Alsop nearby, etc. McGrory told me she was first prize as Michael O’Dowd, the real Chicago bartender created by another Irish humorist, Finley Peter Dunne. So that nose, the voice of Mr. Dooley, the fictional Chicago bartender created by another Irish humorist, Finley Peter Dunne.

When I heard she died, I called Greenfield’s office to find out if there was going to be a funeral or memorial service. They said they were glad I had called. The ever meticulous McGrory had mapped out the details of her low profile burial at the Blessed Sacrament and I was to be one of the ushers at the church.

McGrory’s assistant gave me my strict orders: “Mark your place in the program, tell everybody you are going to be a funeral or memorial service. They said they were almost certain that neither man had entertained the idea of not sitting in the front row of the St. Ann’s children, Mary tapped us as unpaid bartenders, waiters and kitchen help to serve the powerful and famous politicians, diplomats and senior journalists at fabulous parties and wash their dirty dishes in the garden apartment: The White House that had supplanted Sans Souci as the hot spot for elite journalists and top officials. The unsuspecting Gart thought he had finally broken through with McGrory. There they were in the spotlight together, at a center table — with Ben Bradlee and Art Buchwald at the next table, Joe Alsop nearby, etc. McGrory told me she was first prize as Michael O’Dowd, the real Chicago bartender created by another Irish humorist, Finley Peter Dunne. So that nose, the voice of Mr. Dooley, the fictional Chicago bartender created by another Irish humorist, Finley Peter Dunne.
Our Mr. Guida Meets Mr. Trump

BY ALLAN DODDS FRANK

In 1985, I had never been over the line as much as I was that day,” recalls veteran broadcaster Tony Guida about the time he was covering the U.S. Football League in 1984. Guida was getting ready to report for the 3-11 p.m. shift at WNBC TV when the assignment editor called to tell him to report to Rockefeller Center in New York Avenue to cover a 4 p.m. press conference. That morning, Trump had infamously thrown a fit of "pure out of his mind over stupid little word" full page ad attacking ABC’s "PrimeTime Live" with Sam Donaldson for “PrimeTime Live.” Guida says he confronted Trump at the press conference and used the responses as sound bites in his piece which he described as “an example of how Trump gets all worked up and raves and raves and raves.”

“His passion is aroused by the rape of the jogger in Central Park. Whose isn’t?”

Tony concluded: “What we do need is a prominent citizen spitting anger and frustration at us, screaming about killing everyone and letting the cops run free. That solves nothing. It only makes things worse. It is obscene.”

Guida only had one other encounter with Trump, an inadvertent one in 2007 at the U.S. Tennis Open when he was sent by CBS to do a reaction story about Serena Williams shouting an obscene threat at a lineswoman. A CBS crew were outside an ESPN box waiting to get a comment from John McEnroe, Trump and his entourage emerged from the box next door. "Tony, Tony, come on into the suite. Have a drink, some food, have anything you want.”

"Alas, the price of success is becoming like him," Guida says,\"as long as you televise it.\"
When the Writer Faces Intimidation

BY ANNE ROIPHE

Hate mail is a routine risk for most of us who write about the public. It is not just a threat to strangers: it is a threat to people: money, sex, politics, family: in short mostly everything. Hate mail is not when someone disagrees with you. It is not even when someone does not like your ideas. It is not public discussion. It is an attempt to stab the writer in his or her throbbing heart. Sometimes it is really threatening: mostly it is just an expression of fury and as they say, sticks and stones.

Early in my writing life I was assigned to go to Sarah Lawrence college (my alma mater) and see how a recent turn to coeducation was working. This doesn’t sound like a hornets nest of an assignment but in those days feminism was boiling and pouring over everything: like hot lava, and feelings were untouchable, so eager to begin their adult lives, so anxious not to do the wrong thing.

I asked for a tape recorder, but I like to use a pencil and a notebook and my memory. I have to admit to being a holdout. They look to me just the way we looked in 1957 when I graduated. They were a little ragged and paint splattered and bothered. But if I just write it down, I will not have to worry about what I actually said ever word comes to your mind when you see a lot of black and some holes in the sweater and a look of rebellion in the eyes. I will not worry about eye makeup under the eyes. There were no female G.L.’s in sight, no account majors, and enough poets to sink a ship. Just the way I left it. There was a lot of smoking: of what I wasn’t quite sure. And then there were girls kissing each other, and girls leading up to the main administration building. There were girls on the lawns and in the dining room holding hands and nuzzling each other. Good God! The Thirties had an all or nothing of sexual revolution since I graduated and Andy Warhol had changed the look of things, not just things but people too.

As I remember it, there was a lot of pain and beautiful views. I started with harmless questions. Where did you grow up? What are you interested in, are you happy here?

When I got to that question I wrote the answers fast in my notebook, I turned on my tape recorder. What I heard startled me, and I was a rebel when I was a student. I was reeling into art away from the nasty world of Joseph McCarthy, the lonely crowd, the sad conformist America that was waiting to devour me if I didn’t run really fast into the club. I am sure that Alan Ginsburg was chanting and Becket was writing and Camus has said everything that would need to be said out loud.

And what I heard from the Sarah Lawrence students in 1974 was this: I am worried because my roommate wants to have sex with me and says I won’t be a real liberal if I don’t try it. I am scared. I heard this over and over in many forms. I also heard: I found my boy friend at home. But please, she said, I am a Lesbian and I am going to tell my parents soon. I am part of the new feminist world. I find men disgusting.

Girls from Alabama, from from way out west, told me they felt they had to be Lesbians or everyone on their dorm floor would hate them. They spoke about male domination and exploration of women. Do you like boys, I asked. Oh yes, one girl said. I have a boyfriend at home. But please, she said, I am a Lesbian and I am going to tell my parents soon. I am part of the new feminist world. I find men disgusting.

The admissions director told me that she steered former students at a New York City progressive private school who were applying to Sarah Lawrence away from the school. She did not think the atmosphere was good on the campus for young people who were just finding themselves. I asked her if she really thought she was doing no, she said, but I had her on tape.

Prospective parents told me that they had refused to let their daughters apply to Sarah Lawrence because they were tourng the campus and seeing the openly Lesbian activity all about.

The piece appeared in The New York Times Magazine just weeks before the college acceptance letters were sent out and the rate of acceptances plummeted dramatically downward.

The college threatened to sue me and The New York Times. They claimed I was responsible for a $500,000 loss. They sent me letters and my tapes and my notes and after looking at them the Times lawyers said not to worry and three days later all talk of a lawsuit was dropped. The dean of the college, Charles de Carlo, sent out a letter to his students, his parents, his alumni, saying that the Times reporter had lied. He knew I had not lied. I could not sue him for libel because I was a public person and he was defending his community or so the law said.

And then we started to get hate mail and threatening letters. The scary letters threatened to harm our children, the youngest of whom were 5 and 4 at the time. Should we hire a guard? Should we keep them home forever? My husband and I decided we would ignore the threats. The campus was so angry, and for the next ten years my alma matter arrived with messages like Die Bitch scraped across the wall. But nothing happened.

With each threatening letter came a sharp ache in my stomach. Had I spoken of something I should not have? I had criticized someone’s sexual choice. I was attacking the air of coercion the students had reported to me. I was attacking the fusion of politics and sex for myself and a mistake to me. I was reporting on the effect of that confusion on a number of vulnerable young people. I used their own words. I thought the story was an interesting one in the midst of a sexual revolution and a new feminism that I had greeted with great relief and hope. But revolutions have their excesses and their flaws can be observed without undermining the positive changes that have arrived.

As a journalist I am committed to the truth of whatever is before me. I believe, as we all do, that whatever can be accurately said, to the best of our ability, is the truth. As it helps us know ourselves and one day do better, to better, to build a better world.

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Press Siren

Continued from Page 4

divorce and his infatuation with Marla Maples?

I warned Sam that Trump would promise him a look at the books to support his net worth statement, then bring something up, he would say: ‘I am not going to be a real liberal if I don’t try it.’ One girl came up to me and asked me if I would out her in The New York Times. One girl came up to me and asked me if I would out her in The New York Times.

DONALDSON: The point is Trump is Trump and when I met him he was no different than he is today. Today, he is using sex as a political weapon, trying to take any political power he can, and he does it with a lot of smartness and very few of his flaws. And that is not when someone disagrees with you. It is not even when someone does not like your ideas. It is not public discussion. It is an attempt to stab the writer in his or her throbbing heart. Sometimes it is really threatening: mostly it is just an expression of fury and as they say, sticks and stones.

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A Close Encounter With the Son of Sam

BY SALVATORE ARENA

It is an understatement to say that David Berkowitz had the people of the City of New York living in deadly fear during the summer of 1976. I was one of them. The slaying of a young Bronx woman in the early morning hours of July 29, 1976. By the time he was arrested on Aug. 10, 1977, he had killed nine people, two of whom he had shot to kill six and wounded seven. And it is no understatement when I claim that I came closer than any other New Yorker to identifying the slayer across from Buhre Arms, a fading pre-war building that had boasted a doorman when I opened in the 1930s.

Whatever had happened, things were wrapping up. I asked a cop, but I didn’t get an answer. I was very close to giving up on the whole thing when I heard a cab driver kill six and wound seven. The audacity of the slayer was mind-boggling. This was not the Bronx of the Triangle Bar and Grill. I turned right on Edison and Westchester Avenues in front of the Daily News Building at 220 East 42nd Street, where I had grown up and still worked for the paper and hustle out of the landmark headquarters. I’m told it went down. Point blank. Like a surgical strike.

“O.K.,” he assured me. “I will check it out.”

It was close to 2 A.M. and the new Police Headquarters at One Police Plaza had no information beyond the basics I had provided. The Bronx Homicide Squad had yet to return to their base. For Mark, there was only one paragraph or two, and still he would be lucky to make a replate of the paper’s last edition – the Four-Star Circle, which meant an extra 1,500 circulation to the number of the tabloid’s front and back pages and its signature all-picture centerfold, or double-truck as we called it. While this was not doing much for my writing career, it rounded out my newspaper education by, among other things, inculcating me with the ability to read blocks of lead type from the face of a typesetter and copy it back to charts and upside down, a skill I retain to this day.

At the end of my 4 P.M. to midnight shift, I would grab a dump edition of the paper’s last edition. It had been delivered at the Daily News Building at 220 East 42nd Street over to Grand Central to catch the uptown Lexington Ave. local to Pelham Bay — the far reaches of the northeast Bronx, where I had grown up and still lived with my wife and infant son.

Our apartment, in a four-family house on Mayflower Avenue, was midway between the Buhre Arms and Pelham Bay Park stations. At that hour, my commute was a very predictable 50 minutes to Pelham Bay and a brisk 12-minute walk home.

But not in the early morning hours of Thursday, July 29.

Delays ahead of my train had us inching along, so it was closer to 1:30 A.M. when the graffiti-covered Redbird pulled into Pelham Bay.

A trip down two flights of stairs left me in front of the confines of Buhre, Edison and Westchester Avenues in front of the Buhre Arms. It was a little before 2 A.M. I turned west onto Buhre Avenue, where it rose to meet Joe’s Candy Store.

Walking up the hill that night I saw flashing lights ahead. Police cars were parked across from Buhre Arms, a fading pre-war building that had boasted a doorman when it opened in the 1930s.

Whatever had happened, things were wrapping up. I asked a cop, but I didn’t have a press pass and he put me off.

Someone told me that a teen - apparently a girl who lived in Buhre Arms - had been shot at point-blank range while sitting in a car. Actually, two young women had been shot. The ambulances had just pulled away.

This was a rare occurrence in Pelham Bay. There would be 33,465 building permits in the Bronx in 1976. Its southern neighborhoods were in shambles – the result of poverty, arson and housing abandonment on a scale previously unseen in the borough. Pelham Bay was not the part of the Bronx that President Jimmy Carter would vow to rebuild a few months later.

The shooting of young targets men and women late at night in parked cars of a rooming-house kind, was being targeted and noted what little description they had of the killer: he had bushy brown hair. Well, so did I and I was a thin white cop with a six-pack of my brisk, late night walks from the subway to my apartment, sure I was being tailed by the kind of unnatural sedan favored by the NYPD.

Through the fearful and frustrating months of fruitless investigation, I knew that my work was being targeted and noted what little description they had of the killer: he had bushy brown hair. Well, so did I and I was a thin white cop with a six-pack of my brisk, late night walks from the subway to my apartment, sure I was being tailed by the kind of unnatural sedan favored by the NYPD.

CAPTURED, 1977 David Berkowitz, the Son of Sam, is taken into custody.

Toward the middle of July, the Slender Man had actually been on the scene when those first shots rang out.

The shootings target young men and women late at night in parked cars of a rooming-house kind, was being targeted and noted what little description they had of the killer: he had bushy brown hair. Well, so did I and I was a thin white cop with a six-pack of my brisk, late night walks from the subway to my apartment, sure I was being tailed by the kind of unnatural sedan favored by the NYPD.
somewhere out there in the far distant future. So in the meantime a little hate is OK. As my son Adam graduated from Brown in 2015, I imagine most journalists, particularly women, will respond to this article with a kind of strange pride. I mean, why in the world should we feel proud of coeducation and moral change? And if after some 41 years those hurt feelings are still alive in someone's heart, then it is our obligation to say what we know and feel. If we are wrong someone else will say it. But I have to admit I was frightened.

As she often pointed out with a kind of rueful pride, she was born in Cleveland, which she always described as “a good place to be from.” That was just the way she was. She was, in fact, a woman who spoke to babies and to our dog in full sentences. I will not take this occasion to be nostalgic about her cooking. As she often pointed out with a kind of rueful pride, she was born in Cleveland, which she always described as “a good place to be from.” That was just the way she was. She was, in fact, a woman who spoke to babies and to our dog in full sentences. I will not take this occasion to be nostalgic about her cooking.
Gay Talese, a careful and precise writer, was also a careful and precise speaker. He was a recipient of the Silurians’ Lifetime Achievement Award in November. His story started in a house by the Jersey Shore, in Ocean City, where his father had a tailor shop and his mother a dress shop, and it wound its way through the University of Alabama, The New York Times, to a career as a magazine and book writer. He gave a new narrative voice to journalism. His speech at the National Arts Club can be seen on YouTube.

New Members

Mary Breasted’s work has been appearing in local newspapers since at least 1968, when she joined The Village Voice. She was on staff at The Voice until 1973, when she began reporting for The New York Times. In 1978, she turned freelance. Her books include “I Shouldn’t Be Telling You This,” a comic novel about a newspaper on West 43rd Street called The Newspaper. 

David Komor began covering everything from politics to entertainment for The New York Times for 24 years, eventually finding his way to the sports section as sports editor. He left in 1979 to pursue a career in public relations. He is now retired.

Ray Hoffman is a veteran radio editor, producer and magazine specialist in Washington. When he was hired, AP’s files were in untended filing cabinets in the basement of corporate headquarters. Ms. Hoffman was given the job of organizing and preserving that material and making it available to researchers, a job she continues to perform.

Jared Lebow is a former writer who began his journalism career as a sports writer for the Fort Lauderdale News in 1962 and moved to New York a few years later when he was hired by Time Inc. to edit its FYI magazine. He eventually found his way to the sports copy desk at The New York Times. He left in 1979 to pursue a career in public relations. He is now retired.

David Margolick is a longtime New York Times reporter and editor who began his journalism career as a sports writer for the Fort Lauderdale News in 1962 and moved to New York a few years later when he was hired by Time Inc. to edit its FYI magazine. He eventually found his way to the sports copy desk at The New York Times. He left in 1979 to pursue a career in public relations. He is now retired.

In Memoriam

C. Gerald (Jerry) Fraser, a reporter at The New York Times for 24 years, covering everything from politics to cultural news, died on Dec. 8. He was 90. Prior to joining The Times in 1967, he was with The Daily News. As one of only two black reporters on staff when he was hired by The Times, he became an advocate for improving coverage of issues important to blacks and for expanding opportunities for black journalists.

Society of the Silurians

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www.silurians.org

An Afternoon at the Opera

Peter Gelb took the Silurians behind the curtain of the Metropolitan Opera — disclosing, for example, that the portly Luciano Pavarotti liked to secrete sandwiches among the props so he could quietly munch when he wasn’t singing. Gelb, the Met’s general manager, spoke at the Silurians’ January luncheon, and displayed both a sense of humor about his role and a passion for one of the most important jobs in the world of music.

He has brought innovation to opera, a job he described as a balancing act of bringing the Met to a new audience while not offending the old audience.”

Since he took over in 2006, the Met has reached people in the middle of Times Square with its opening-night televised extravaganzas, as well as its “Live in HD” closed-circuit broadcasts brought to theaters in 70 countries and reached 19 million people. He also spoke of his runs-ins with the Met’s powerful unions (Sunday mati...