

SEJ Journal

The Quarterly Publication of the Society of Environmental Journalists

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The roots of journalism: Take readers on a journey

BY ROBERT McCLURE

Bo Emerson remembers looking forward to what his paper's reporters thought of as "the great Appalachian adventure:" hiking the first few hundred miles of the Appalachian Trail as part of a five-newspaper, tag-team series that took readers along on the 2,174-mile trek from Georgia to Maine.

A walk in the woods, Emerson thought: "It was all upside as far as I was concerned."

Then came the day when the *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* reporter had to find his way to the trailhead "in the middle of god-awful nowhere." And then he got to start walking – in the rain. It was 35 degrees.

That night in his tent, Emerson thought: "Maybe I've gotten myself in over my head."

The journey story is far older than journalism. Long before ink-stained wretches, "Exodus" and Homer's "Odyssey" became classics.

John Updike tells us to "startle and engage" our readers. Well-handled journey stories are a surefire way to pull that off.

Readers of the Appalachian Trail series "got a huge kick out of it," Emerson recalls. Told in serial form as any effective journey story is, the project is still remembered by some readers 10 years later, Emerson says.

I was curious about how much the journey form is employed nowadays in our craft, so I put out an inquiry on one of my favorite research tools, the SEJ-Talk listserv.

That turned up some examples, but few recent ones. Exceptions include Robert Sullivan's 2006 road trip book "Cross Country" and *San Francisco Chronicle* outdoors writer Paul McHugh's conquering of the Northern California coast by kayak in 2005.

Most came from the 1990s, when I and *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* photographer Sean Dougherty did two series based on an Everglades canoeing odyssey (it would also be fair to call it an orienteering disaster) and a tamer sail through the Florida Keys.

Around that time journalists also explored the Mississippi River, Puget Sound, North Carolina's Neuse River, Vermont's

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Inside Story:

Award winner: Focus on eco damage being done now

By MIKE DUNNE

Like many environmental reporters, Ken Weiss of the *Los Angeles Times* knew that convincing editors who prefer to report on politics, wars and celebrities that spending time and money to look at the health of the planet's oceans was a pretty hard sell.

But sell it, he did. The result: The 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Journalism. He shared it with former science writer Usha Lynn McFarland and photographer Rick Loomis.

His winning entry was "Altered Oceans," a five-part series on problems facing oceans today – not in the future. That is one of Weiss' pieces of advice: Focus on the problems now, not some future "threat."

SEJournal asked Weiss how he pulled it off and to give us the "Inside Story."

Q: How did the idea for the story begin? Where did it come from?

A: The idea began to form shortly after I took on a new beat

covering the coast and oceans. I needed to steep myself in this new subject and began attending scientific conferences. During the sessions, scientists paraded to the front of the room to give their PowerPoint presentations. I was startled by what I saw. It seemed that no matter what scientists were studying – a specific type of fish, or the amount of coral cover or kelp forest growing from the seafloor – the charts pretty much looked the same. What had existed in the 1950s and 1960s had plummeted in recent decades. The drop came so fast some scientists call these waterfall charts. I was riveted and this impression launched my quest. I started asking, "What's going on in the oceans? And why?"

Q: What were your primary sources of information?

A: I spent a lot of time with marine scientists, interviewing them, reading their papers. They were my guides to figure out what's happening in the oceans. I like to think of any scientific

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SEJ's name: A tweak might add members – or not?

By **TIM WHEELER**

The Society of Environmental Journalists is 17 years old this year, and like many teenagers is grappling with questions about what it is and what it wants to be when it grows up. Not that we aren't all grown ups here, but how do we maintain our identity and role as a beacon for covering the environment in a radically changing news industry? In that introspective vein, a member of SEJ's board recently proposed changing the group's name to the Society *for* Environmental Journalism (italics added to emphasize the differences).

Board member Peter Fairley, a freelance writer in Victoria, British Columbia, argues that changing SEJ's name would help broaden the group's appeal among journalists who aren't full-time environment beat reporters. It also might help, he suggests, in combating the frequent misperception – by outsiders, and even by some editors and reporters – that SEJ is a group that advocates environmentalism rather than quality reporting on the environment.

On the first point, Peter, a former chairman of SEJ's membership committee, said he's seen too many instances of members quitting SEJ because they have switched beats and no longer cover the environment full-time. SEJ's membership has slipped from a peak of around 1,400 in 2004-05 to around 1,300 today – no surprise, given the staffing cutbacks at newspapers and radio and TV stations. Fewer reporters means fewer full-time environmental beat reporters.

Just because someone stops covering the environment full-time doesn't mean he or she has to quit SEJ. It's open to all working journalists, students and educators who share the vision of an informed society through excellence in environmental journalism. Many who switch beats continue to touch on the environment in covering health, science or business, for instance.

"But because they are no longer 'on the beat,'" Peter points out, "they question whether they fit into SEJ."

I know what Peter's talking about. It's been a decade now since I gave up *The Baltimore Sun's* environment beat. For a few years after that, I did wonder whether I really belonged in SEJ anymore. I bounced from higher education to transportation and state government, and even had a general-assignment beat for a while, roaming Maryland beyond the Baltimore Beltway to bring back news and features on a wide variety of topics. But I found that my own interest in the environment, honed in a decade on that beat, repeatedly drew me to stories with environmental themes. And I became an editor for a while, largely because it gave me a chance to shape *The Sun's* environmental coverage while supervising that and other beats.

When I went back to reporting a few years later, I wound up with the paper's new growth beat, where my awareness and

knowledge of environmental issues frequently comes in handy. Along with the stories I write about long-distance commuters and aging Boomers putting elevators in their homes, I report on how suburban sprawl consumes farmland, forests and wildlife habitat, and how it contributes to air and water pollution. I appreciate how many of our environmental issues can be traced pretty directly to where and how we've chosen to live on the land – a perspective enhanced by my 17 years with SEJ.

Needless to say, I've stuck with SEJ because I've retained a passion for environmental coverage despite my other journalistic pursuits. The environment is too big and far-reaching a topic, really, to be relegated only to environmental specialists. But amid the upheaval in mainstream news media and the growth in "new media," SEJ needs to broaden its message and its appeal to those, as Peter puts it, "for whom the environment is an interest (even a passion), but not a full-time beat."

I know what Peter's talking about as well when he notes the serial misperception of SEJ as a hotbed of environmental activists, aka "tree huggers." I tried, with only limited success, to straighten out a conservative blogger and former newspaper editor recently after he cited SEJ as one of the "activist pressure groups" he alleges has infiltrated American newsrooms and is trying to "police what we read, hear and see about the great issues of our time." This critic's upset because we don't urge journalists to give equal time to the dwindling skeptics of climate-change science. But editors and news directors also occasionally equate caring about environmental issues as a news topic with advocating for a particular solution. It's a constant job of SEJ's board, staff and membership to educate other journalists and the public about the distinction.

Would SEJ's perception issues evaporate if it became the Society for Environmental Journalism? The conservative blogger who blasted SEJ kept getting our name wrong, despite my attempt to set him straight on that score, among other things. He did point out that others, including other journalism groups, had also botched SEJ's name at times. Not much of a defense for someone who presumes to lecture on journalistic ethics, but just one example that names don't mean much to those who don't care to understand you.

Your name is what you answer to, not who you are. While some names carry more baggage than others, what usually matters is what's behind the name. It's in that spirit that SEJ's board has batted the name-change proposal around a little, and likely will do some more in an upcoming meeting. This is not the weightiest question the board is wrestling with these days, but it does touch on those deeper questions of what SEJ is and what

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Report from the Society's President



By
**Tim
Wheeler**

SEJournal

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- Fall 2007August 1, 2007
- Winter 2007.....November 1, 2007
- Spring 2008February 1, 2008
- Summer 2008.....May 1, 2008

Investigative reporting can produce a 'higher obligation'

By PAUL D. THACKER

"We told you not to write this. You're now terminated for insubordination."

It was a truly surreal moment, capping off months of turmoil at my job as a reporter for the news section of *Environmental Science & Technology*, a science journal published by the American Chemical Society. I didn't really know what to say because I had already accepted a new job and turned in my two weeks. I only had two days left.

But a couple of thoughts did flit through my head such as "Can you really fire someone when they've already quit?"

At this point, a Human Resources staffer handed me my final check and then followed me to my office to clear out my desk. Avoiding any eye contact, she then escorted me down the elevator and out the front door. It was late September 2006 and I had a week to kill before starting a new job.

But I believe that what led me to resign last September probably was set in motion months earlier. In February 2006, Bill Carroll, an executive with Occidental Chemical, called some of the society's publishing executives to complain about my reporting. The American Chemical Society is a nonprofit that is run by an elected board and Bill Carroll was the president.

Because of Carroll's call, my editor, Alan Newman, had to defend me to his bosses. In a three-page letter, Newman responded to Carroll's characterization of my reporting as "anti-industry" and "liberal," and that my articles were "not news" but just "muckraking." Specifically, Carroll had cited my articles "Hidden Ties" and "The Weinberg Proposal."

In the first article, I documented a hidden campaign by industry lobbyists and the PR firm Pac/West Communications to undo the Endangered Species Act. Pac/West had previously run a multi-million dollar covert public relations drive to pass President Bush's Healthy Forest legislation in 2004.

The article on the Weinberg Group, a product defense firm, grew out of a letter written by the Weinberg Group to DuPont that I discovered in EPA's docket on PFOA, a chemical used to make Teflon and other non-stick products. In this letter, the Weinberg Group detailed a campaign they hoped to organize for DuPont to protect them against lawsuits and federal regulations on PFOA. The Weinberg Group suggested creating studies to show that PFOA was not only harmless but actually beneficial and offered to find expert scientists that could help DuPont to prove this.

Newman bristled at Bill Carroll's attack on my reporting and ended his memo to the ACS publishing executives by saying he was deeply troubled that some individuals feel that they can "go to the top of ACS" as their way to respond. "This is not a genuine attempt to engage in an open and transparent conversation on issues of national importance," he stated.

Newman added that we had tried to be transparent in our reporting, posting interviews and documents with the story. He ended by saying he stood behind the stories and they had revealed valuable information to the environmental science community.

Hoping that the issue was settled, I went back to my report-

ing. But more problems soon came. Newman had announced that he was retiring that summer and was tying up some loose ends. However, when he wrote my annual review, he told me that his boss, John Ochs, asked him to insert a sentence in my review stating that I needed further training in investigative journalism.

Newman refused to listen and the review went through without the amendment. "Overall Paul has exceeded his expectations," my review read. "Paul had an outstanding year."

But I was already beginning to think it would definitely be my last year at ACS.

After Newman retired, Britt Erickson replaced him as my editor. I told her that John Ochs had complained that I "needed training in investigative journalism" and suggested that I go to the Investigative Reporters and Editors meeting that was coming up in a few weeks. She agreed.

While I was at IRE that June, a producer who had worked with Bill Moyers contacted me about some of the stories that I had written. He was putting together a series on investigative journalism for PBS and wanted to know if I could help. One of his assistants called me a week later at my office and said that what they really wanted was to feature one of the PBS episodes on my reporting.

Of course, I was thrilled. But the next day, Britt sent the producers an email stating that ACS did not want me to appear on PBS.

This was the first of many signals that people were trying to force me to leave. The producer called me later that night and asked why my publication wouldn't let me appear on the PBS series. "What is going on at your job?" he asked.

When I sent an email asking for clarification and if there was something wrong with my reporting, Britt's boss responded, "The decision was Rudy's. He is currently on vacation, and I don't know whether he wants to revisit the issue upon his return." Rudy Baum is the editor in charge of publishing at ACS.

Hours later, a producer from MSNBC contacted me to appear that night on the Keith Olbermann show to talk about global warming. Again, I was told, "No" by the people above me. The person who appeared on Keith Olbermann that night was Elizabeth Kolbert, a writer for *The New Yorker*.

Numerous other reporters at ACS had been allowed to talk to the media about their work at places such as NPR. Later that week, I pitched a new story based on documents obtained from a FOIA request I filed in December. After battling with NOAA lawyers for more than six months, I obtained internal emails from NOAA showing that the White House had been clearing NOAA press releases on global warming and approving agency scientists to speak to the press about climate change and hurricanes. One person choosing the scientists was a Republican media operative who wanted to ensure that only scientists who felt there was no link between hurricanes and global warming were allowed to be on television.

But when I pitched the story in a news meeting, Britt Erickson told me that the publishing executives at ACS were not happy with my reporting. "They are not keen about these types of stories," she said. When I asked if I could freelance it for another publication,

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SEJ 2007 annual conference at Stanford University, Sept. 5-9

By CAROLYN WHETZEL

California has it all: beautiful beaches, rugged mountains, redwood forests, arid deserts, stunning national parks, thriving metropolitan areas and, this year, California has SEJ.

The scenic San Francisco Bay area is the backdrop of SEJ's 17th annual conference, Sept. 5-9.

Conference organizers are busy recruiting top scientists, policy experts, industry representatives, and elected officials from the Bay Area and beyond to participate in the conference Stanford University is hosting at its campus.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and members of California's congressional delegation are among the invited speakers.

Climate change impacts and policies, air pollution, water, oceans, nanotechnology, regulating chemicals, land use, energy policies, and the environmental impacts are among the dozens of topics that will be explored throughout the five days. More than a dozen sessions are planned to help reporters and journalism educators hone their craft.

Stanford's Environmental Molecular Science Institute is offering a free pre-conference workshop, "Atoms to Ecosystems: Effects of Contaminants on Humans & the Environment," Wednesday, Sept. 5. This all-day program focuses on mercury and arsenic in the environment, and includes breakfast and lunch and a one-night lodging stipend. Check the Web for details.

Campus walking tours, a dinner reception, and SEJ's annual environmental journalism awards kick off the five-day event on Wednesday afternoon at Stanford's beautiful Frances C. Arrillaga Alumni Center.

Democracy Now!'s Amy Goodman will moderate a high-level Wednesday evening plenary on energy policies that features a panel of visionaries including former Secretary of State George Shultz, Environmental Defense's Fred Krupp and Stanford University's Paul Ehrlich.

On Thursday, participants climb aboard buses to see firsthand how California is tackling some of its environmental challenges. One bus heads to the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, California's key source of water. Other buses take off to the Port of Oakland, San Francisco, Cargill Salt Ponds, Elkhorn Slough, Salinas Valley, Monterey Bay and the Altamont Pass windmill farm.

Friday's opening plenary will put climate change front-and-center when Seth Borenstein, science writer for The Associated Press, moderates a panel of experts including The Weather Channel's Heidi Cullen, *Sacramento Bee's* executive editor Rick Rodriguez and Stanford University climatologist Stephen Schneider. This panel will discuss recommendations for more effective news coverage, impacts and possible solutions to the story of the century.

Concurrent sessions on Friday and Saturday will follow these tracks: The Climate, The Ocean, Environmental Health, Energy and Resources, The Pacific Rim, The Policy and two craft tracks including a Freelance Pitch-Slam, back by popular demand, where writers read prepared pitches in 60 seconds to a panel of editors from magazines that publish environmental stories. Editors then will briefly critique the queries, explaining why the pitch would or would not work in their publications, and ways to improve pitches. Writers will gain connections and tips for getting assignments. While no editor will be prepared to give out assignments on the spot, last year's pitch led to published stories. Pitchers are encouraged to prepare for this as if they were writing a careful email query note.

Saturday mini-tours will include on- and off-campus sites. Green buildings, the San Francisco Bay environs, Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory, Crystal Springs Reservoir, and Jasper Ridge will be among the destinations.

Sunday the venue switches to Stanford's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve for breakfast. Attendees can choose from a menu of tours to learn about the preserve's rich ecological history and cutting-edge research. Later, National Public Radio's John Nielsen will interview Patricia Limerick of University of Colorado's Center of the American West about the ecological history of the West.

Lake Tahoe in the High Sierra will be the destination and focus of this year's post-conference tour. Veteran reporters from the region lead this three-day learning and recreational adventure that will examine the impacts of development on the lake that spans the California-Nevada border.

Check www.sej.org often. The agenda is updated as new speakers and session details are added. You'll also find travel and lodging information there, as well as links to Stanford University's website, speakers list, exhibitors list, and help finding a roommate (members only). In August, you'll be able to sign up online for beat dinners instead of scrambling on site. This levels the playing field for attendees arriving on Friday morning who often find the beat-dinner sign-up sheets full.

Given the complex environmental changes under study the world over, this may be one of the most important conferences you attend. Don't miss this opportunity to meet with scientists, policymakers, experts and others, and to network with your colleagues. Join us in California Sept. 5-9.



**Find FOIA tips
at SEJ.org**

The effects of climate change on journalism as we knew it

By BUD WARD

Good journalism and the society it exists to serve can be the real winners if environment reporters loosen their death-hold grip on what has been their keystone issue, possibly the story of their lifetime.

The climate change issue must morph from the environmental and science desks to the entire newsroom. In turn, knowledgeable environmental journalists, while of course continuing to report, will gain value as critical mentors on other beats.

They may not at first see it that way, human nature being what it is (and environmental reporters, let's stipulate, are humans). Already signs have emerged of sniping between reporters. Enviro reporters contend their non-"e" newsroom buddies – and particularly those political and politicized shrews in shrinking Washington, D.C., bureaus – will likely screw things up.

That could happen. But it need not if knowledgeable environmental reporters play the critical mentoring role in reporting on impacts of climate change.

Over the past year or so, climate change has gone from the arcane and distant environmental wonk issue editors love to hate to the front-page above-the-fold/prime time media cause celebre. It's a feeding frenzy: All aboard the bandwagon, the gravy train feeds live at 5.

It's everywhere! It's everywhere!

Enough clichés already.

As it happens, responsible coverage of the issue for many is not only long overdue but sorely in need of big-play gravitas given the serious implications and the strong scientific underpinning.

Now think about this. Is it truly a bad thing that the likes of Tom Brokaw, Maureen Dowd, Bill Moyers, ABC News and Bill Blakemore, NPR's "All Things Considered," and Thomas Friedman have taken up the reins? Is it really so troubling that elected climate skeptic par excellence Sen. Jim Inhofe, an Oklahoma Republican, skewered Brokaw, CNN and the AP's respected science writer Seth Borenstein in the same breath?

Isn't that the flip-side of being publicly teased by Warren Buffett? Momentarily embarrassing perhaps, but...I'll take it.

An intriguing aspect of the vastly increased coverage and concern over climate change is that it comes at a time of profound change in the very nature of what we once disdained to call the "journalism business." The pace of change on climate change is outpaced only by that facing the news media covering it.

It may be not just the issue of climate change and the underlying structure of the journalism business that are changing. It may also be the very nature of covering that issue.

But will that change necessarily be for the better?

The current (will it be fleeting?) warm-and-fuzzies about climate change, and perhaps even trying to do something about it,

have few precedents in the environmental field. Go back to the founding of SEJ in the late 1980s – the environmental bullishness sparked by the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska's Prince William Sound, by the 60 Minutes/Alar on Apples media frenzy, by the 20th anniversary celebrations of the first Earth Day.

Go back earlier. Then-President Richard M. Nixon proclaimed the 1970s as "the environmental decade" with the founding of the Environmental Protection Agency, the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and lots more. And there was the short-lived campaign of the Senate's "Mr. Environment" (Democrat Edmund Muskie of Maine) for the presidency.

A civil-rights precedent?

Don't stop there. Step a bit further back in history. There was a point in the early to mid-'60s in coverage of the civil rights movement in the South where, it seemed, a critical mass of the news media appeared to reach a collective, though individual, judgment: "Balancing" the Martin Luther Kings, Medgar Evers, and "Freedom Fighters" against the Bull Connors of Birmingham, Lester Maddoxes of Georgia and George Wallaces of Alabama no longer made for responsible journalism.

This was the era of legendary editor Ralph McGill at the *Atlanta Constitution* and of Biloxi-born Jack Nelson, of the *Constitution* and later the *L.A. Times*, whom the *Economist* called "a reporter with a magnificent obsession for getting at the facts."

Fast forward now to 2007. Think Bill McKibben. Think Ross Gelbspan. Think Philip

Shabecoff. These are, or have been, among the "big names" tilling the environment and climate-change beat.

Like early civil-rights reporters, they were accused of being advocates rather than traditional reporters. Similar criticism has been leveled at Brokaw, Moyers, Blakemore and, in the columnist category, Dowd and Friedman.

For himself, Gelbspan, a prize-winning reporter for many years with the *Boston Globe*, has no doubts that he has moved from traditional reporter to advocate to activist.

Conventional news reporters still need to have a "displaced detachment" about the issues they cover, says Gelbspan. He says journalists remain "obligated to present a full picture, regardless of his or her feelings, like a lawyer needs to defend the client, guilty or not." Readers and viewers must have not an inkling of the reporter's druthers, he insists.

But Gelbspan joins those pulling no punches in disparaging the media's "false idea of journalistic balance" for too long under-representing the degree of scientific consensus on climate change. Speaking by telephone from his home in Boston, Gelbspan reminds us that traditional balance plays well in reporting on political campaigns or policy options. "But when it's a

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E-Reporting Biz



By
Bud
Ward



Donations blast expectations in challenge-grant fund drive

By **CHRIS RIGEL**

The May 31 deadline had arrived. Donations and pledges to SEJ's 21st Century Endowment Fund slowed to a trickle and, for the moment, stopped. Staff plugged in the last numbers and waited for the report to emerge on the screen. The total: \$125,308.96.

"Wow," said Peter Thomson, SEJ's endowment committee co-chair.

In June 2006, the Challenge Fund for Journalism told SEJ it would give 50 cents for every qualifying dollar SEJ raised, up to \$103,000. SEJ members and friends gave that and then some, so CFJ will soon send SEJ a check for \$51,500.

"Qualifying dollar" was the tough part. CFJ, a collaboration of the Ford Foundation, the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, awards these challenge grants to help organizations learn how to increase their funding base. Qualifying donations include only donations from new donors or an increase of dollars over the highest cumulative donation in one year since 2003 from prior donors. Because of SEJ's strict standards, the donations could come only from individuals, universities and foundations.

And come they did. The total blasted

past the \$103,000 target and just kept growing. To help spur the slow start (in the first seven months, SEJ raised less than \$18,000), Board President Tim Wheeler, reporter for *The Baltimore Sun*, offered a Valentine's Day gift – and a challenge of his own – to SEJ members: for the last two weeks in February, Wheeler would match all donations dollar for dollar, up to \$5,000.

Wheeler's match met with stunning success and inspired more board challenges. Jim Bruggers, environment reporter for *The (Louisville, Ky.) Courier-Journal*, offered up "Bruggers' Blitz," a 48-hour, \$1,000 challenge, soon to be followed by *New Orleans Times-Picayune's* Mark Schleifstein's "Crescent City Challenge" for another \$1,000; BNA's Carolyn Whetzel's "Golden State Challenge" for \$2,500; the "Capitol City Challenge" from Cheryl Hogue, *Chemical & Engineering News*, for \$1,000; a \$1,000 challenge from Jeff Burnside, reporter for WTVJ News 6 in Miami; and, two weeks before the deadline, author and freelancer Peter Thomson's "Thomson Family Challenge," agreeing to match every donation up to \$10,000.

SEJ's board of directors donated a total of \$21,083 with 100 percent involvement. SEJ's full-time staff was also 100

percent on board, donating collectively \$2,980. The staff at headquarters in Jenkintown also pooled their AMEX points, an annual perk, to purchase an 80-

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Commemorative Gifts

In memory of **Thomas and Evelyn Berschler**: \$1,000, donated by Sharon Friedman

In memory of **Kevin Carmody**: \$12,500 donated by Corinne Irwin, \$1,000 by the Grodzins Family Fund, \$1,000 by Chris Rigel

In memory of **Richard and Adele Friedman**: \$1,000, donated by Ken Friedman

In memory of **Thomas and Evelyn Berschler**: \$1,000, donated by Sharon Friedman

In memory of **Christopher Reuther**: \$100 donated by Susan Booker, \$40 by Janet & William Fincannon, \$50 by Richard & Sharon Hemmer, \$25 by Hedda Leonard, \$15 by Heather Livingston, \$50 by Samuel Wilson

In memory of **Michael Rivlin**: \$1,000 donated by Kathrin Lassila

Books on pollution, Katrina and some new posts

By **JACKLEEN de LA HARPE**

Christy George won a Gracie Allen Award from the American Women in Radio & Television. Her radio show, Oregon Territory, won in the public affairs category for "Tidepooling with Jane Lubchenco." Listen here: www.opb.org/programs/oregonterritory/episodes/2006/0721/

Joy Horowitz, freelance journalist and formerly on staff at the *Los Angeles Times*, writes that her book, "Parts Per Million: The Poisoning of Beverly Hills High School," is due out in July from Viking.

Sara Shipley Hiles, a freelance journalist, is one of seven reporters who were commissioned to write the newly released book, "City Adrift: New Orleans Before and After Katrina." Published by LSU Press, the book documents how the Katrina disaster was less an act of nature than a manmade catastrophe. Sara's chapter is about the environment – the sinking soil, the disappearing wetlands, and how New Orleans is increasingly at risk.

Dan Rather wrote the foreword. To order the book go to www.sarashiplehiles.com/news.php. Hiles teaches journalism part time at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Ky.

Wendee Holtcamp, freelance writer, wrote 50 online animal profiles for Discovery Channel's Planet Earth series, specifically for the "Mountains, Jungles, Shallow Seas, Deserts, and Forests" episodes. www.planet-earth.com (click "animals up close"). Also, a success directly out of the SEJ conference Pitch Slam, Holtcamp's piece "Sympathy for the Devil," highlighting new research to save the imperiled Tasmanian devil, was published in the March '07 issue of *Scientific American* magazine.

Debbie Schwartz joins Beloit College in August as visiting professor of journalism and media studies. Her recent book, "Writing Green: Advocacy & Investigative Reporting About the Environment in the Early 21st Century," was released a year

(Continued on page 9)

Media on the Move



Donations... (from page 7)

gig iPod and a Bose SoundDock to offer in a drawing for any member making a minimum \$50 donation before the May 31 deadline. (See sidebar.)

SEJ added 205 individuals to its donor base, 132 of them members. A total of 278 members gave, more than doubling the number of member donors during the challenge cycle, bringing the percentage up from ten to twenty.

The drive focused on raising money for SEJ's 21st Century Endowment Fund, but not all donations were destined for the endowment fund, including a \$25,000 grant from The Campbell Foundation for general support and a \$1,000 donation from Sharon Friedman to help underwrite the new student category in SEJ's Awards for Reporting on the Environment.

Similarly, not all donations met the criteria for the Challenge Fund for Journalism match. A grant from the Hopwood family foundation for \$20,000 would not be counted because Hopwood had previously donated \$50,000 to help with SEJ's 14th Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, Pa. Donations from New York University and Loyola qualified for the

endowment fund, but not for the CFJ match, which allowed donations solely from individuals and family foundations. Also, gifts from prior donors that did not exceed prior donations were not eligible for the CFJ match. So the endowment committee juggled two streams of income that sometimes merged and sometimes split. The \$125,308.96 listed above is the amount that qualifies for CFJ's challenge and will generate the \$51,500 match.

The endowment fund totals reach far beyond the \$103,000 target: \$141,197.62. With the CFJ grant, SEJ's 21st Century Endowment will increase by almost \$190,000, more than doubling the fund.

"We're extremely gratified by this outpouring of support for sustaining SEJ as a resource and guiding beacon for quality environmental journalism," said SEJ President Tim Wheeler.

The Great SEJ iPod Frenzy

Once the 80-gig iPod and Bose SoundDock arrived at SEJ HQ, staffers Beth Parke, Linda Knouse, Carol Nolen and Chris Rigel felt the depth of their sacrifice. They all wanted to take it home.

Over the weeks, one or another could be found in Rigel's office, looking longingly at the box by the bookshelf marked The Great SEJ iPod Frenzy.

Being strong and upright sorts, on June 1 SEJ HQ staff put all the qualifying names into a candy tin and drew out...(unfolding the tiny piece of paper)...(reading)...Jodi Peterson!

Peterson, a reporter at *High Country News* and SEJ member since June 2002, said she'd never won anything before. Welcome news to the staff, who hoped the winner wouldn't be someone who'd just won the lottery and couldn't care less about an iPod—even an 80-gig one. Peterson also said that she and others at *HCN* had recently been saying how good it would be to have an iPod to do interviews with.

"I'm delighted that the equipment is going to someone who can use it in environmental reporting," said SEJ Executive Director Beth Parke.

Congratulations Jodi!

Chris Rigel is SEJ's associate director.

SEJ board holds election Sept. 7

SEJ's 2007 board election will be conducted by absentee ballot and during the annual meeting to be held Friday, Sept. 7, at Stanford University's Graduate School of Business in the ground-floor café. Active and academic members will vote at that time to elect representatives for those two categories.

This election will fill four active seats and one academic seat on the Society's board of directors. The active seats, each for three-year terms, are now held by Perry Beeman, Cheryl Hogue, Peter Thomson and Tim Wheeler. The academic seat is held by Bill Kovarik. July 23, 2007, is the deadline for eligible SEJ members in the active and academic categories to file as candidates for the election.

Board members give a substantial amount of time and energy to keep SEJ vital for reporters covering the environment. Members who value SEJ's programs and resources can give back by contributing their knowledge, experience and creativity through board service.

Board members are expected to attend board meetings (four annually, with occasional conference calls), serve on committees, help raise funds and assist the society's staff in planning and executing programs such as annual conferences, annual journalism awards, *SEJournal*, membership drives, Web site, etc. Some assistance is available for board travel to board meetings other than those coinciding with the annual conference. Please contact SEJ Executive Director Beth Parke for details.

To file for a seat on the board, submit a one-page candidate statement by July 23, 2007. It should include biographical information (may include a photo) and its length must not exceed one side of a sheet of 8.5" by 11" paper. Email a PDF or Microsoft Word document to crigel@sej.org or mail your statement to Elections Coordinator, SEJ, P.O. Box 2492, Jenkintown, PA 19046. (E-mail is preferred.) Please contact Chris Rigel at (215) 884-8177 or crigel@sej.org to confirm receipt. Do not fax statements.

To be a candidate for office, or to vote either absentee or at the annual meeting, you must be a member in good standing, i.e., your annual dues must be current as of July 10, 2007, and your employment must conform to SEJ's membership eligibility requirements. (For more information about eligibility, please visit www.sej.org/join/index1.htm.)

The candidate statements will be posted on SEJ's Web site on or after July 24. Access instructions will be mailed to SEJ members along with ballots on or after July 24 and no later than Aug. 9. Hard-copy statements will be available upon request.

Candidates will have an opportunity to make a two-minute statement during the annual meeting, just prior to the balloting.

If you have any questions about the election procedures, please contact Chris Rigel, elections coordinator, at (215) 884-8177, or Paul MacClennan, elections committee chair, at (716) 837-2298.

Report probes multiple sources of global mercury pollution

By **CHERYL HOGUE**

Reporters can approach mercury pollution from a number of angles. They may focus on fish tainted with the neurotoxic element. They may delve into the release of mercury by coal-burning power plants. Or they may investigate the impact of small-scale gold miners in the developing world who use the liquid metal to extract gold particles from sediments. They also might look into what will happen to big supplies of mercury once used by the chemical industry to generate chlorine.

Until recently, data on the sources, uses, releases, and trade in mercury worldwide were scattered or unavailable. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has pulled together this information to assist countries as they consider steps toward a comprehensive, worldwide effort to reduce health and environmental risks from mercury. UNEP presented that report in February to its governing council.

As well as being an authoritative source of global mercury facts and figures, the report is packed with story ideas.

Small-scale gold mining, primarily in the developing world, is the largest source of mercury pollution – even more than coal-fired power plants – “and is a serious global poverty and health issue,” according to the report. It also accounts for the biggest slice of the global market for mercury.

Miners run crushed bits of gold ore through a sluice and add mercury. This traps the gold in an easily extracted lump of amalgam. Excess mercury ends up in the air, soil or waterways. Later, the amalgam is burned in the open air to release the gold – a process which is the primary health problem for miners and nearby communities, UNEP says. This type of gold mining accounts for 650 to 1,000 metric tons of mercury releases a year, or about a third of all human-caused mercury pollution.

Mercury is already relatively inexpensive – its price has dropped during most of the last 40 years, UNEP reports, and now sells for about \$2 per pound. Although many mercury ore mines

have closed in the past decade, China has upped its mining of the metal in recent years, primarily for using the element as a catalyst in making vinyl chloride, UNEP says. Kyrgyzstan also mines mercury.

The metal could become more available and even cheaper in the next decade or so – and some worry that this could cause mercury pollution to increase from small-scale gold mines in the developing world.

The source of this new mercury supply is the chemical industry, which for decades has used huge chambers containing mercury to convert salt water into chlorine gas and sodium hydroxide. Chlorine is a major building block for modern plastics, chlorine bleach, solvents, drugs and other synthetic substances. Sodium hydroxide, more commonly known as caustic soda, is used for making soap and oven cleaner. Industry is switching from chlor-alkali plants to cleaner, more efficient technology.

Chlor-alkali plants pose two threats to the environment. First, when they operate, they release mercury. Second, and perhaps of greater concern, is after a facility is decommissioned, when its mercury can end up on the world commodity market. Europe has 40 or 50 of these facilities still in operation, and industry indicates it will shut them down by 2020, which could make about 11,000 metric tons of mercury available for sale, UNEP says. (The U.S. has far fewer chlor-alkali plants – about nine.)

The UNEP report is titled, “Status report on partnerships as one approach to reducing the risks to human health and the environment from the release of mercury and its compounds into the environment and report on supply, trade and demand information on mercury: Note by the Executive Director.” Identified also as UNEP/GC/24/INF/17, the document is available via www.unep.org/gc/gc24/information_documents.asp.



Cheryl Hogue reports for Chemical & Engineering News.

MOTM... (from page 7)

ago but not announced. Schwartz writes that her students in environmental advocacy at Loyola University Chicago regarded the book as an unexpected view of advocacy, one they had never considered. (See review on page 23.)

Robert Lee Hotz resigned after 14 years from *The Los Angeles Times* to join *The Wall Street Journal*. He will take over the paper's well-regarded Science Journal column, which was pioneered by **Sharon Begley**. He will also be involved in reporting projects.

Anne Paine of *The Tennessean* in Nashville has returned to a fulltime environmental writer beat. The beat was dropped several years ago and was recently reinstated under a new administrative structure.

Cleo Paskal (cleopaskal.com) has been made an associate fellow at Chatham House (chathamhouse.org.uk) in London, where she is specializing in the geopolitical and security implications of large-scale environmental change. As part of her new duties, she will be on a panel at Chatham House's “Climate Change: Politics versus Economics” conference on June 25 and 26. Along with fellow panelists, including the Danish Foreign Minister, she will discuss climate change, foreign and security policies.

Snagged a new job or won an award? Contact Jackleen de La Harpe at jackdelaha@yahoo.com.

Studying smaller newspapers; basing coverage on scientific evidence

By JAN KNIGHT

Regional differences in biotech news show that U.S. views are more diverse than national coverage suggests, recent research indicates

Academic studies of environmental news often focus on nationally circulating “elite” newspapers because they are easy for researchers to access, they reach large numbers of readers and, research suggests, they set the agenda for smaller news outlets.

But a recent study indicates that smaller circulation newspapers might play a large role in determining how certain issues are perceived by the U.S. public and might more accurately represent public opinion.

Focusing specifically on agricultural biotechnology coverage in one newspaper in Missouri and four newspapers in Northern California, the study results indicate that local newspapers frame biotech issues in more “diverse and complex ways” than their elite counterparts. Studies of elite dailies show that they tend to frame biotech issues in similar ways – often in terms of scientific progress and economic benefits more than potential risks – “leading one to believe that perhaps U.S. public opinion also reflects this monolithic view,” the researcher suggested.

The study’s author, a communication specialist with Oak

Ridge Associated Universities in Tennessee, conducted a computerized content analysis of 860 biotech news articles appearing in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and 296 biotech news articles appearing in the Northern California newspapers from 1992 to 2004. The California papers included *The Oakland Tribune*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Jose Mercury News* and *San Mateo County Times*. The researcher selected these papers in part because they represented geographic regions where interest in genetically modified foods is high.

She found that newspapers in both regions framed biotech issues similarly in some ways, including emphasizing potential public health risks, scientific research focusing on toxin in Bt maize (also known as the Cornell butterfly study), and European reaction to GMOs.

A clear but weak environmental frame emerged only in the *Post-Dispatch*. This frame reflected news coverage of environmental groups’ criticism of shipping biotech foods to Africa and regulatory approvals of GMOs, according to the researcher. Meanwhile, the Northern California newspapers sometimes framed biotechnology in terms of “Frankenfoods” while the Missouri paper did not, reflecting “the more controversial nature of GM foods in Northern California,” the researcher stated.

Government agencies such as the FDA, EPA and USDA, which regulate research and development of biotech products, dominated information sources used in newspapers of both regions. They both also often turned to the World Trade Organization as an information source in coverage of European opposition to GMOs.

The Missouri paper relied more on private industry sources than the California papers, which the researcher attributed to Monsanto’s presence in St. Louis, the biotech company’s headquarters, and the Biotechnology Industry Organization’s \$50 million media campaign to shape biotech as a positive story in the late 1990s. Monsanto was mentioned in two-thirds of the *Post-Dispatch* biotech articles and in about one-fifth of the Northern California articles, according to her data. Other “probiotechnology” news sources appearing in the Missouri paper included Aventis, Bayer CropScience, the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center and the National Corn Growers Association, according to the study.

Opposition groups also appeared as dominant sources in both regions. Greenpeace was a common source in both but more commonly used in Northern California, where newspapers also often turned to Jeremy Rifkin for information.

The researcher concluded that “subtle but unique differences exist” in how biotech is covered in different U.S. regions: In Missouri, journalists mainly framed the biotech story in terms of biotech’s economic importance to the region, while in Northern California journalists mainly framed biotech in terms of controversy. She added that the dominant news sources she found in the coverage “appeared to have the financial or staff resources to devote to their various media campaigns,” helping them frame, via the regional news media, biotech issues in ways that matched each region’s political values.

(Continued on page 18)

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Farm bill's future could carry heavy environmental impacts

By SCOTT FABER

Farmers and ranchers manage more than half of the American landscape, so it's no surprise that agriculture has a significant impact on the nation's environment. That's why environmental reporters should keep a close eye as Congress renews the Farm Bill this year.

Agriculture remains the leading reason that approximately 40 percent of America's rivers, lakes and bays fail to support fishing, swimming and other public uses. In particular, runoff from farmland contains nutrients that ignite a chemical chain reaction that ultimately reduces dissolved oxygen in rivers, lakes and bays.

Perhaps the best example is a 5,000-square-mile "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico where oxygen levels are too low to support marine life. Roughly three-fourths of the nutrients reaching the Gulf are washed off farms in the Midwest, according to federal scientists. Improperly stored or applied animal waste also contributes to poor water quality and occasionally poses threats to human health.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture counts more than 100 counties where the amount of manure produced by livestock cannot be safely applied to cropland. Farmland runoff also transports sediment that reduces water clarity and buries important habitat for fish and other aquatic life.

The conversion of habitat to grow crops and raise livestock is also the leading threat to endangered and threatened wildlife species, and most rare species now depend upon the management of farm and ranch lands for their survival. Many freshwater species are especially imperiled, and habitat loss caused by agricultural activities is a leading reason.

Although farmers have improved the efficiency of water use, water withdrawals for irrigating farms remain the leading use of freshwater in America and a major threat to imperiled species such as salmon.

Agriculture is also a major source of air pollution in some regions, increasing particulate matter and the emissions of ammonia, and pesticides often drift far from their intended target, posing threats to public health and the environment.

Agriculture also impacts the earth's climate. In particular, land conversion releases carbon stored in the soil, fertilizer applications contribute nitrous oxide emissions, and animal waste storage "lagoons" emit methane, a powerful global warming gas.

Many farmers are taking steps to address these environmental challenges. For example, farmers have dramatically increased the use of "conservation" tillage practices that reduce soil erosion. About 41 percent of farmers employed "conservation" tillage practices in 2004, up from 26 percent in 1990. As a result, annual soil erosion from cropland fell by more than 600 million tons between 1982 and 1997, according to USDA.

Farmers have also installed millions of acres of "buffers" of grasses and trees to intercept and filter runoff from farms. Farmers have also dramatically reduced the conversion of wet-

lands and grasslands to grow row crops, although rising demand for corn to produce ethanol has placed new pressure to plow up pasture and rangeland. In particular, farmers now annually restore more than 200,000 acres of wetlands through USDA's Wetlands Reserve Program.

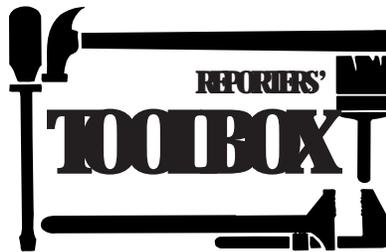
Nevertheless, each year more than 100 million acres of farmland still erode at unsustainable levels and less than 40 percent of farmers test their soil before applying fertilizers. Less than 10 percent of farmers employ technologies that link fertilizer applications to soil needs.

Many farm and ranchland management practices that benefit the environment can also reduce farm costs, such as improving the efficiency of chemical and water applications. But many of the best management practices create new costs and risks. To offset these costs and risks, farmers frequently seek cost-sharing assistance from USDA. But roughly two-thirds of farmers offering to share the cost of cleaner air and water or wildlife habitat are annually turned away due to funding limitations. The expansion of these USDA conservation programs is already a central focus of the renewal of the Farm Bill, which was last passed in 2002 and must be renewed this year.

Nearly 180 members of the House of Representatives have co-sponsored legislation to increase annual USDA conservation spending from \$4 billion to more than \$7 billion.

These bills, H.R. 1551 and H.R. 1600, would double spending on water quality and wildlife habitat restoration incentives, provide funds to restore 3 million acres of wetlands, and protect more than 10 million acres of farmland and ranchland from sprawl. The bills would also reform conservation programs to encourage "cooperative conservation" projects that link farmers together to address local environmental challenges, and to place the greater focus on the restoration of buffers and other special habitats. The Bush Administration has also proposed to increase annual conservation spending by nearly \$1 billion annually, and has proposed to create regional watershed projects to improve water quality and solve water shortages.

Farmers also stand to benefit from a cap on carbon emissions that permits the sale of carbon offsets. In particular, farmers participating in a cap-and-trade program will be able to generate "carbon credits" from the adoption of better fertilizer and tillage practices, through the restoration of grasslands, wetlands and forests, and through the capture of methane emitted from animal waste lagoons. Many farmers are already generating carbon credits for sales on the Chicago Climate Exchange, but the value of carbon credits will increase by a factor of ten or more should Congress adopt a cap on emissions.



Former journalist Scott Faber now is the farm policy campaign director for the environmental group Environmental Defense.

SEJ members recommend an inspiring mix of favorite novels

By MICHAEL MANSUR

There are the obvious choices – the fictional accounts of global-warming catastrophe or the influential novels of the budding environmental movement, like Edward Abbey’s “Monkey Wrench Gang.”

But when *SEJournal* recently asked members about their favorite environmental fiction, a host of surprising and inspiring choices flowed forth.

Members cited books for a variety of interesting reasons.

They inspired them as a youth.

They left them with a strong sense of a special place.

They demonstrated the connections of a community to its environment.

Or they simply entertained.

Some of the most-often recommended novels included Abbey’s classic, Barbara Kingsolver’s “Prodigal Summer,” John Steinbeck’s “Grapes of Wrath” and Peter Matthiessen’s novels, including “Killing Mr. Watson.”

Some members noted historic novels – such as James Fenimore Cooper’s “The Pioneers,” published in the 1820s. Historians have traced early American conservation ethic to Natty Bumppo and Judge Marmdule Temple’s debate on conserving fish and forests.

“Fenimore couldn’t always write all that well, but he could sure make up some names,” wrote Randy Loftis of *The Dallas Morning News*.

Craig Saunders recalled Farley Mowat’s “Lost in the Barrens” and Daniel Dafoe’s “Robinson Crusoe” as early inspiration about the natural environment.

“Even painfully outdated English books like Arthur

Ransome’s “Swallows and Amazons” encouraged my imagination to run wild and to view every bit of green space as a wondrous place of adventure,” Saunders said.

Seth Borenstein, Associated Press science writer, noted that the historically-significant “The Jungle,” by Upton Sinclair, is often not remembered as fiction.

Roger Archibald nominated George R. Stewart for “Earth Abides,” “Fire” and “Storm,” which he said inspired the National Weather Service to start giving women’s names to hurricanes).

Even further back, Archibald noted the historical fiction of Kenneth Roberts, author of “Northwest Passage,” “Rabble in Arms” and “Arundel.” (I still cringe at the thought of those guys having to eat their shoes to survive the Maine winter during their disastrous retreat from Quebec.)

Erik Curren recommended novels set in the future or inspired by environmental disaster, including these on global warming:

- “The Coming Global Superstorm,” by Art Bell and Whitley Strieber, which inspired “The Day After Tomorrow”
- Bruce Sterling’s “Heavy Weather”
- “Mother of Storms,” by John Barnes
- Kim Stanley Robinson’s trilogy (lots of weather damage to Washington, DC!): “Forty Signs of Rain,” “Fifty Degrees Below” and “Sixty Days and Counting.”

In the same vein, but more literary, Curren recommended T.C. Boyle’s “A Friend of the Earth.” Published in 2001, Boyle’s novel is set nearly 25 years later when global warming has collapsed the biosphere, and 75-year-old environmentalist Ty Tierwater is eking out a living as caretaker of a pop star’s private zoo when his second ex-wife reenters his life.

(Continued next page)

SEJ top fiction picks

This is the ever-increasing list of fiction nominated by SEJ members as recommended reading, especially for environment writers. Works followed by an asterisk denote multiple nominations.

Abbey, Edward
Down the River
The Fool’s Progress
Hayduke Lives
The Monkey Wrench Gang*
Alexie, Sherman
Indian Killer
Atwood, Margaret
Oryx and Crake
Barr, Nevada
Blind Descent*
Endangered Species*
Ill Wind*

A Superior Death*
Track of the Cat*
Baxter, Charles
Shadow Play
Bell, Art and Whitley Strieber
The Coming Global Superstorm
Bissell, Sallie
In the Forest of Harm
Boyle, T.C.
A Friend of the Earth
Brunner, John
The Sheep Look Up
Callenbach, Ernest
Ecotopia
Chabon, Michael
Summerland
Cody, Robin
Ricochet River

Cooper, James Fenimore
The Pioneers
Dafoe, Daniel
Robinson Crusoe
deBuys, William
River of Traps: A Village Life
Dickinson, Peter
The Poison Oracle
Doig, Ivan
Mountain Time
The Sea Runners
Winter Brothers
Duncan, David James
River Teeth
The River Why*
Dykeman, Wilma
The French Broad
Elton, Ben
This Other Eden*
Gloss, Molly
Wild Life

Gould, Steven and Laura Mixon
Greenwar
Richard Grant
Rumors of Spring
Grisham, John
The Pelican Brief
Guterson, David
Snow Falling on Cedars*
Harrison, Jim
A Good Day to Die
Hiaasen, Carl
Native Tongue*
Tourist Season*
Hockenberry, John
A River Out of Eden
Kelton, Elmer
The Time It Never Rained
Kesey, Ken
Sometimes a Great Notion

Feature

Some members said that obvious themes ran through their favorite novels.

“For some of the authors I listed, a predominant theme was learning to live with the environment, or dying in the attempt, e.g. Jack London in practically all of his books and stories, and Mark Twain in “Roughing It,” wrote Merritt Clifton of *Animal People*. “The underlying theme in ‘The Lord of the Rings’ trilogy is the desperate effort of the field and forest people, the hobbits, elves, dwarves, and better humans, to prevent the orcs and other evil forces from turning their homes into blighted extensions of Mordor.”

Clifton continued: “The Lord of the Rings” could be viewed as a fable about Luddite resistance to the Industrial Revolution; but the hobbits *et al.* were specifically opposed to coal-and-forest-burning industry.

“They had no objection to using sustainable technology such as windmills, sailing ships, and vehicles propelled by animal power. The orcs used gunpowder as a weapon. Gandalf and his allies used it only for fireworks.”

Some fiction cited by members included plays.

“Ibsen’s play, “An Enemy of the People,” features a doctor in a small town with a resort spa, who has determined that the water is contaminated,” wrote James Schwab.

“He attempts to disseminate this news, only to run into a brick wall of opposition because everyone fears that his news will be the death of the community’s golden goose, as it were.

“Now a century old, it is a classic forerunner of many modern situations with suppressed information about threats to the local economy if the environmental bad news gets out. I think it is must reading.”

Regional fiction or novels that bore deeply into a particular place were popular choices, including “Chesapeake” by James Michener, in which the stories of various families are woven throughout the story to reveal the character of the bay.

Valerie Brown suggested “Summerland” by Michael

Chabon. Set in Puget Sound, it captures the local atmosphere and explores the environmentalist/anti-development theme.

Sol Sussman recommended “The Time it Never Rained” by Elmer Kelton (a Western writer from San Angelo, Texas, former editor of *Sheep and Goat Raisers* magazine and *Livestock Weekly*). The book explores the drought in the Texas Hill Country in the 1950s.

Mimi Morris, a Tennessee freelancer, nominated regional writers far from her – Minnesota and even colder northern climes. William Kent Kreuger’s series follows Sheriff Cork O’Connor, whose jurisdiction includes part of the (fictional) Iron Lake Ojibwe reservation near the Boundary Waters in Minnesota, she wrote. The sheriff is himself part Anishinaabe, and a lot of the stories deal with social and cultural changes arising from new development in a formerly isolated area after the opening of a casino. The lakes and forests and extreme weather of the area are a vivid and determining presence in all the stories, as are the varied spiritual connections to the land held by his characters.

Dana Stabenow writes three different crime fiction series set in Alaska. Her style is an acquired taste, Morris wrote, but Stabenow’s first novel won the Edgar and a lot of people find her books addictive. “The sense of place is enough to make me think I’d like to live there, if only I were a whole lot tougher.”

Professor William Kovarik noted novels set in Appalachia including Wilma Dykeman’s “The French Broad.” In it she writes “...this is the chronicle of a river and a watershed, and a way of life where yesterday and tomorrow meet in odd and fascinating harmony... Dwellers of the French Broad country are learning an ancient lesson in all their natural resources; it is easy to destroy overnight treasures that cannot be replaced in a generation, easy to destroy in a generation that which cannot be restored in centuries.”

Michael Mansur writes for The Kansas City Star and is editor of SEJournal.

Kingsolver, Barbara The Poisonwood Bible* Prodigal Summer*	Mowat, Farley Lost in the Barrens	Robinson, Kim Stanley Green Mars	Heavy Weather
Le Guin, Ursula The Lathe of Heaven	Munroe, Jim Everyone in Silico	Forty Signs of Rain	Schismatrix
The Word for World is Forest	Neely, Barbara Blanche Cleans Up	Fifty Degrees Below	Watkins, Paul Archangel
Lesley, Craig River Song	Nichols, John The Magic Journey	Sixty Days and Counting	For Kids
The Sky Fisherman*	The Milagro Beanfield War	Russell, Mary Doria The Sparrow	Giono, Jean The Man Who Planted Trees (there’s also an animated film by Frédéric Back and CBC/SRC.)
Storm Riders	The Nirvana Blues	Sinclair, Upton The Jungle	Schweres, Michael The Environment Angel and the Children from the Smoking Mountain (recommended age group: 10+)
Winterkill	Perry, Thomas Death Benefits	Silko, Leslie Marmon Ceremony	Dr. Seuss The Lorax
MacDonald, John D. A Flash of Green	Powers, Richard Gain	Speart, Jessica Bird Brained	Udry, Janice May A Tree is Nice
Macleon, Norman A River Runs Through it and Other Stories	Quinn, Daniel Ishmael*	Black Delta Night	Viorst, Judith The Tenth Good Thing About Barney
Peter Matthiessen At Play in the Fields of the Lord	Ransome, Arthur Swallows and Amazons	Border Prey	
Far Tortuga	Rathbone, Julian Greenfinger	Coastal Disturbance*	
Killing Mister Watson*	Robbins, Tom Fierce Invalids Home from Hot Climates	Gator Aide	
Michener, James Chesapeake		A Killing Season	
		Stegner, Wallace Angle of Repose*	
		Stephenson, Neal Zodiac: An Eco-Thriller	
		Sterling, Bruce	

Thanks to all who gave so generously to SEJ's '06-'07 Challenge Fund drive

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Sandra Phinney
Marcia Scully
Gar Smith

Journey... (from page 1)

Long Trail, Missouri's Katy Trail, Florida's Suwannee River, New England's Connecticut River, Iowa's Des Moines River, Virginia's

Chocolocco Creek. And Evan Brandt in 2001 did a standalone tabloid recounting the annual Schuylkill River Sojourn for readers of the Pottstown, Pa., *Mercury*.

Book authors employ the form, too, perhaps most notably William Least Heat-Moon, whose "Blue Highways" traces the author's meanderings across the country off the interstates. Heat-Moon's "River-Horse" offers glimpses of near-disaster and fun, punctuated by passages recounting journeys of early explorers, as he crosses the continent by canoe, kayak and motorboat.

"River Dogs" was what the t-shirts worn by reporter James Eli Shiffer and photographer Chuck Liddy said when they set off to chronicle the Neuse River for the *Raleigh News & Observer*.

Inspired by a *Hartford Courant* canoeing series by Steve Grant, editor Trish Wilson began asking a different set of questions about the Neuse River, whose pollution problems had been so thoroughly chronicled by *News & Observer* reporters.

"I remember saying: What does it look like?" Wilson recalls.
(Continued next page)



Photo courtesy ROBERT MCCLURE/Carl Seibert

Reporter Robert McClure and photographer Sean Dougherty paddle through the Everglades' "River of Grass" on an odyssey that saw them get lost and drenched, and then had them sleeping in their canoe in an alligator hole.

James, West Virginia's New, and Tennessee's Cumberland.

In 2000 and 2001, Elizabeth Bluemink even took on Alabama's

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“We were getting pretty weary of doing the usual environmental story,” she said. And for readers, “There are only so many times you can read the words regulators and EPA and zoning.

“It’s hard to write vivid environmental stories that really celebrate the earth, that really acknowledge that earth is an interesting place.”

Journey stories can do that. Want to try it?

Reporters and editors who have pulled off the journey story successfully stress that planning ahead is key. So is a lot of reporting, so that you understand the turf you’re covering and the issues you’ll explore.

Logistics have grown easier in recent years – you can take a satellite phone and file from most anywhere. “The technology now is excellent,” Emerson says. “Take advantage of that.” No more photographers souping film in motel bathrooms.

But how will you eat? Where will you sleep? Who will you interview, and how will you find them?

Remember also that most every journey hits at least one significant hitch. But that’s not always a bad thing. At the time, getting lost in the drench of an Everglades storm and spending a night in an alligator hole made me miserable, cold and, yes, a little scared. But it made for great copy.

Consider a curve that fate threw to Don Hopey of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on his portion of the Appalachian Trail series. Before leaving, Hopey tracked down Earl Shaffer, a recluse who was the first to through-hike the AT. But the condition of this pre-interview interview at Shaffer’s remote, electricity-less shack was no note-taking.

Weeks later on the trail, Shaffer was to meet Hopey. They’d hike. They’d talk. Hopey would have a sure-fire fast read about a really unusual man.

When the time came, though, a footsore Hopey learned Shaffer wasn’t going to walk with him, after all.

Caught Shaffer-less on the trail, Hopey resurrected notes he’d taken on the way home from his non-interview based on what he could recall. “I was driving with one hand and writing with the other all the way back to Pittsburgh,” Hopey says. In the end, Shaffer’s no-show became part of Hopey’s story.

Moral: Plan, plan, plan. “You can’t just strap some shoelaces on your boots and throw on a backpack,” says Hopey, who has also done journey stories on canoeing the Allegheny River and biking the Oregon coast.

Careful preparation will pay off in the copy, too. Hopey arranged to meet then-Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt in Shenandoah National Park – “the secretary of the Interior in his natural habitat,” Hopey says – and was able to write about issues such as acid rain.

You’ll have to get over your fear of the first person to pull this off. Example: In the *News & Observer’s* Neuse series, the interplay between the gruff, outdoors-savvy photographer Liddy (“think Marine” says editor Wilson) and Shiffer (“a gentle soul”) became part of the story.

Ideally, you should decide early in your preparation whether you plan to file during your journey or afterward. Although filing from the odyssey seems to be most popular, it would literally not have been possible for me – no cell-phone coverage in remote reaches of the ’Glades, at least then. In my case, my readers and I greatly preferred a serialized account

written after my return.

In preparing, don’t forget to steep yourself in the history of the area you’ll be describing. In addition to travelogue and issues



Photo courtesy of ATLANTA JOURNAL & CONSTITUTION

Reporter Bo Emerson of the *Atlanta Journal & Constitution* takes notes in front of Long Falls, on the first day of his 2,174-mile hike along the Appalachian Trail. “You can tell that I look both moist and cold. It had been raining off and on and was 35 degrees.”

primer, your journey story can take readers back in time to better understand their current world.

Also, be creative about alternative ways to tell your story. When Mike Mansur of *The Kansas City Star* traveled with Heat-Moon for parts of the boat journey that became “River-Horse,” he sent back audio tapes of Heat-Moon talking about his latest adventures. Thousands of readers dialed in to listen with each new installment of *The Star’s* stories.

Today, blog posts or videos of the adventurers would probably reach even more viewers.

No matter how much you plan or how well your plans work, the journey itself will be the key – for you and your readers/viewers.

Updike said he wants a story to “end by giving me a sensation of a completed statement.” The beauty of a journey story is that you’ll know when you’ve gotten there.

Robert McClure covers environmental affairs at the Seattle Post-Intelligencer with an emphasis on natural resources. He owns far too many topographical maps.

Research... (from page 10)

“Missouri’s more industry-oriented frames resonated with its more conservative leanings, while Northern California’s more oppositional frames resonated with its more liberal leanings,” she stated, confirming that “oppositional viewpoints exist in some local newspapers, perhaps more so than in national news” and that “a range of voices and perspectives about biotechnology do in fact exist in news media coverage of biotechnology in the United States.”

For more information, see Catherine E. Crawley, “Localized Debates of Agricultural Biotechnology in Community Newspapers: A Quantitative Content Analysis of Media Frames and Sources” in *Science Communication*, Volume 28, Number 3 (March 2007), pp. 314 – 346.

Accurate reporting and apportioning coverage by the weight of the evidence should be tools of the environmental journalist’s trade, researcher suggests

Public policy is greatly affected by public attitudes. Public attitudes, in turn, depend a great deal on mass media portrayal of events and issues. This dependency is especially strong, research shows, when it comes to scientific and environmental issues because most people obtain information about these issues from the mass media. As sociologist Dorothy Nelkin put it, the public understands science “less through direct experience or past education than through the filter of journalistic language and imagery.”

A recent qualitative study explored this dynamic by examin-

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ing mass media portrayal of two public “fear issues,” nuclear power and global warming. The researcher, a television science journalist and 2006 Nieman journalism fellow, traced the history of the two issues, including news media coverage. Among other things, he concluded that environment reporters should follow science journalists, who aim to assess evidence before determining which sources offer balanced viewpoints.

The researcher first noted that traits of the two issues greatly differ. Nuclear power, discovered in the late 1930s and first known as a devastating weapon of war in the 1940s, nonetheless was largely welcomed by the press and the public in the 1950s as a potential source of electric power. It did not become a solidly controversial issue until the 1970s and into the 1980s, primarily because of the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl nuclear power plant accidents. These events, among others, captured media attention and led to decidedly negative framing of nuclear power, greatly impacting its use in the United States, he suggested.

The issue of global warming developed more slowly and with conflicting scientific viewpoints about its impacts. In essence, global warming was intangible – it was not accompanied by clear visual icons such as steaming nuclear power plant towers – and it required an understanding of climate versus weather changes and other scientific explanations. Ultimately, the less tangible quality of global warming made it less likely to receive media attention: “Whereas the media had seen immediately that nuclear energy was, for better or worse, a world-transforming, highly newsworthy subject, global warming had no such obvious traction,” the researcher wrote.

Today, despite several decades of media coverage of both issues, the public appears to be “extraordinarily confused about nuclear issues” and “has a flawed understanding of global warming – seeing it as linked to general ‘pollution’ and causally connected in some way to atmospheric ozone depletion,” the researcher stated.

Environmental journalists can help correct this situation by taking a cue from science journalists, who focus on “gathering and evaluating various types of relevant evidence and rigorously checking sources and facts” and apportioning coverage “according to the balance of evidence,” he stated; simply “balancing opposing views may be neither fair nor truthful.”

The author encouraged journalists to report two dimensions of stories about nuclear and global warming risks: a narrative of the issue and “the psychological subtext” of what the public thinks about the risks. Journalists “should strive to be accurate and avoid distorting the science, but getting to the heart of risk tales involves ... not only understanding the objective facts of the danger, but also navigating the way their audiences feel about the risk issue while telling a gripping, scientifically accurate story.”

For more information, see Jon Palfreman, “A Tale of Two Fears: Exploring Media Depictions of Nuclear Power and Global Warming” in *Review of Policy Research*, Volume 23, Number 1 (2006), pp. 23 – 43.

Jan Knight, a former magazine editor and daily newspaper reporter, is a former assistant professor of communication at Hawaii Pacific University in Honolulu, where she continues to teach online courses in writing and environmental communication. She can be reached at jknight213@aol.com.

Oceans... (from page 1)

discipline as a big jig-saw puzzle spread out on a dining room table. Most scientists spend their careers studying one piece of the puzzle, or maybe how a couple of pieces fit together. All of that is valuable information to nail down the specifics. But these bits of information don't always get at the larger, underlying issues. Then I found a number of scientists who after spending decades focuses on a piece or two, stepped back to ask, "What does the whole puzzle show?" They were invaluable to help me distill six file drawers of material.

Q: So, you are taking on the oceans. A big topic – covering most of the surface of the planet. Did you use an outline or some other mechanism to help you organize the material? If so, how flexible do you view it? How do you manage the information you found?

A: I didn't really have an outline, per se. Actually, I suppose you could say I had many outlines, which continued to evolve. I began by writing a lengthy memo to propose the series to my editor. In that initial memo, I tried to lay out the topics I hoped we would include. The memo was quite sweeping, at first. It was re-written and re-written as I continued to do more reporting. But many of those initial topics were lost in the winnowing process, as ideas got bounced back and forth with a pair of editors. At one point, the project was six parts – not five, as it ended up – and one of the editors helped me make the brutal decision of losing one of these offspring. It was painful. I hated it. But this editor was right. Less can be more. And so I ended up taking the first-day story of 120 column inches and melding it with the second-day story that another 100 column inches. The combined first day story was about 130 inches.

Q: This is a big story with lots of travel. How did you sell it to your editor? What made the difference?

A: It was a tough sell, to be quite honest. There were many reasons for this. First, I think, was the time commitment. I was asking for a year to do this project. We have a bunch of investigative/projects reporters. But I'm not one of them. I'm a beat reporter, covering the environment. So that was asking a lot by someone who is typically helping fill the paper on a regular basis. And I also sought permission to go pretty much anywhere reasonable to get the story, with approval for each trip, of course. That was another significant commitment. A third reason was the subject matter itself. Environmental stories tend to lose out to those perceived to have a harder edge: war, and terrorism, gang shootings, bare-knuckled politics and even celebrity-justice issues. In my view, too many environmental stories are focused on future forecasts or conditional speculation on what will happen in coming years. That undermines the importance of environmental coverage in the eyes of hard-boiled editors. It also subjects environmental stories to "Chicken Little" criticism from industry lobbyists and professional contrarians.

So I set a standard for the series: How can we show that these changes in the oceans are affecting people now, or harming wildlife now. The idea was to try to make it real and immediate and not focused on some future threat. Fortunately for the purposes of the series, it's not very hard to find all sorts of bizarre and creepy tales to grab the attention of our top editors. There are hordes of sea lions and dolphins that keep washing up on our

shore every spring, and people all over the world getting sick from bacteria and algae, as well as coastal residents in Florida who find it hard to breathe when algae-produced neurotoxins are carried ashore by the sea breeze.



Photo courtesy of THE LOS ANGELES TIMES/Rick Loomis

Tons of trash are held back from entering into California's Long Beach Harbor after rain washed it down from the Los Angeles area. A crane was brought in to remove the trash, which includes many plastics, and haul it away.

So I think it was the potential to tell these stories that made the difference. That said, I don't know if the idea would fly today. We've been hit by round after round of buyouts, layoffs and budget cuts, as are so many other newspapers. I was lucky in my timing.

Q: You obviously spoke with a lot of scientists and read a lot of journal articles and papers. What is the key to making the technical simple for the reader?

A: That's our job. We're translators. Still, it takes work. It can be tough sledding to read some of these scientific papers. Yet, read them we must. We need to understand the science so we have the confidence to translate it and figure out ways to bring it to life.

After way too much reading, I traveled to places to show
(Continued next page)

Oceans... (from page 19)

these stresses on the seas and their impacts that have been carefully laid out in obtuse language in science journals. That portion of the reporting was one extending ground-truthing mission.

Of course, I had a lot of help. The scientists themselves, even though they often write in jargon for an insider group of readers, were wonderful. They are all super smart and have thought deeply about their topics. So with a little verbal prodding – and sometimes generous doses of alcohol – they led me to some of the best characters to interview and most telling places to visit. They helped me find fishermen whose bodies are covered in rashes, and coastal residents forced to the emergency room during Red Tide outbreaks, and dozens and dozens of regular folks to talk about their experiences with virulent bacteria and algae and other problems surfacing in the oceans.

Q: Were you surprised by the results you found? In the end did you find out something that was different from what you expected?

A: I was surprised how similar the problems are, popping up all over the world. Many of the things I wrote about had been reported in local newspapers and TV stations. But usually they are reported as isolated, bizarre, local phenomena that often defied explanation. What hadn't been done before is a hard look at the global patterns and teasing out the scientific inquiry as to

what's making all these happen. Again, I had backup: A bunch of smart scientists who have spent decades looking at the stresses on the seas and the blowback that is coming back to haunt us.

Q: What kind of response did it get from readers?

A: The response was big. Really big. It surprised me. More important, it really surprised the top editors at the paper. As I mentioned earlier, environmental stories get lost in the crush of hard-boiled news coming out of Iraq and Washington, D.C., and even the Los Angeles Police Department. So the idea that this "soft" environmental story would resonate with readers really shocked them. The House Oceans Caucus ordered up copies and sent them to every congressional office as a "must read."

The interest in Congress helped me coax our editors to do a rare reprint of the series. Thousands and thousands have gone out. We also made a DVD of web presentation – 10 short videos, graphics, photos and the articles. That was prompted by scores of teachers ranging from Harvard's School of Public Health to Ms. Baker's second-grade class in Monrovia asking for copies of the videos and stories so they could use them as teaching materials. Instructors wanted to show them in their classrooms and didn't have on-line connections that made it possible to view them off our website.

(Continued next page)

Biz... (from page 6)

question of scientific fact, the issue of balance goes out the window." He calls the current scientific consensus on fundamental climate science issues "as close to truth as we can get."

Gelbspan says he spent his first four or five years covering climate change strictly as a traditional news reporter, "balance" and all. The underhanded tactics of science-deniers and "the incredible resistance one encountered in this country to hearing about the seriousness of the issue" tipped him toward advocacy, he said.

"I was learning more about the robust science, and it being thwarted. And the impacts were becoming more visible, but nobody was making the connections," he says.

That called for a "more forceful" approach to his writing.

"If I were covering the Iraq war, I would have been able to be more balanced, because the public is really paying attention, and there's no stifling of debate on the issue," he says.

So where does it all lead? Must it inevitably lead to mainstream reporters becoming what SEJ cofounder Robert Engelmann labeled "greens with press passes"? Is that what the public, or journalists, really want?

Not necessarily.

Recall N.Y.U. journalism Professor Mitchell Stephens' calling for "news analysis organizations" to take the place of traditional "news organizations" as a way of competing and surviving in the current media maelstrom. (*CJR*, Jan/Feb 2007)

Reporters need not be, and most dare not and cannot be, "greens with press passes" for society to "get it" on the pressing science and implications surrounding climate change. That science is sufficiently robust to withstand the most responsible investigative reporting.

Some of our most respected journalists have not moved far away from the more traditional approach.

The New York Times' Andrew Revkin remains agnostic on the issue while recognizing the strength of the underlying science.

Speaking not long ago on the West Coast, Revkin opined that "I am in fact a person first and a writer second."

"How, then, does a reporter, whose job covering the environment requires dispassionate detachment, reconcile those constraints with the passions and points of view that inevitably emerge in a fully lived life?" he asked.

Referring to Rene Dubos' "The Despairing Optimist," Revkin allowed that "it was possible to have a positive attitude even in the face of daunting data on the adverse impacts people were having on the planet." He likes to apply that "despairing optimist" label to himself.

"Journalism is probably the purest example of a calling in which you have a discontinuity between the personal and the professional," Revkin said in those remarks. Save for columnists, "you are literally not allowed to exist as a person."

Revkin acknowledges finding the news process "exasperating, even dehumanizing." But one passion "has been preserved ... my passion for the truth. Of course, there is no truth, really, just a trajectory toward understanding."

He cautions reporters to be aware of "how much we don't know along with how much we have learned."

Change is coming. Change in climate and change in journalism. Journalists thinking their work can influence the former should think too about how it might affect the latter.

If so, perhaps neither journalism, nor the climate and the society dependent on it, need suffer on their watch.

Bud Ward is an SEJ cofounder and honorary member.

Q: Talking about the *LA Times* multi-media presentation, what were some of the new skills you needed for that? Did you think about multi-media as you went along, or do it sort of after the fact?

A: This was my fifth time doing videos for our website to accompany articles that I have written. So, I guess you could say I've learned a few skills along the way. I'm fortunate in that the *LA Times* has trained a number of still photographers to shoot video. So I was paired up with a very talented photographer, Rick Loomis, who shot most of the videotape. He's great with gadgets, like many photographers. That spared me having to learn how to operate delicate machinery and all those confusing rows of buttons on the camera. And, we have a talented video editor, John Vande Wege, who is a master at wrestling a lot of videotape into a cogent form.

So mostly that left me with doing the most creative part: focusing on stories we need to tell. What should we be video-taping? What do we want to show? How do we do it? Who gets interviewed? Etc. It's not all that different than what we do as witnesses with our notepads and pencils.

And I've found that storytelling is storytelling, no matter what the medium. Writing stories for the newspaper and writing video scripts are not all that different, except that scripts must have shorter, tighter sentences with smaller words. All that said, adding multi-media component adds quite a bit of time. It takes longer in the field, as you pre-interview experts or eyewitnesses and then coax to go "on camera" later. And the post-production work takes a tremendous amount of time.

Q: If someone else wanted to do a project like this, what three pieces of advice would you give them?

A: If you get a chance to do something more ambitious: 1) Don't wait. 2) Do it now. 3) Hurry.

Q: I know *Times* science writer Usha Lee McFarling also reported and wrote on part of that project. How did that decision get made and how did the two of you communicate and make things work?

A: Usha is a talented science writer who had done a lot of early reporting at the *LA Times* on the impact of climate change. She wanted to work on the project and did so for a brief period of time before she left the paper. Her time was limited so she and I carved off one piece for her to work on: The final article that

looked at how stoking the oceans with extra loads of carbon dioxide from tailpipes and smokestacks is literally changing the chemistry of the seas – making them more acidic.



Photo courtesy of THE LOS ANGELES TIMES/RICK LOOMIS

Brian LaPointe, a marine scientist with Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in Fort Pierce, Fla., and research assistant Rex "Chip" Baumberger descend to 80 feet to sample the partially treated sewage flowing from Hollywood, Fla. Although sewage treatment plants knock down bacterial levels, they do not remove nutrients that feed explosive growth in marine algae.

Q: If someone is just starting out on the environment beat, what three pieces of advice would you give to them?

A: 1) Try to entertain readers with a little sugar sprinkled in the castor oil stories.

2) Whenever possible, focus on the here and now, instead of stories about the future, or conditional threats.

3) Find the scientific experts in the field and immerse yourself in the science. That way you can fortify your copy with known facts and avoid the he-said, she-said coverage that does little more than confuse our readers.

Read the series and see the multi-media presentation at www.latimes.com/news/local/oceans/la-oceans-series,0,7842752.special

*Ken Weiss covers the coast and oceans for the Los Angeles Times. He was the lead writer of the five-day series entitled *Altered Oceans* that appeared last summer in the newspaper and remains on the web site: www.latimes.com/oceans. The series has won a number of national awards including the Pulitzer Prize for explanatory reporting, the Overseas Press Club award for web coverage of international affairs, the George Polk Award for environmental reporting, Columbia Journalism School's John B. Oakes Award, the Scripps Howard Foundation's National Journalism Award and the American Geophysical Union's Walter Sullivan*

(Continued on page 28)

The energy of wind and the role of environmental advocacy

A Big Wind: Hot air fuels the debate

CAPE WIND: MONEY, CELEBRITY, CLASS, POLITICS, AND THE BATTLE FOR OUR ENERGY FUTURE ON NANTUCKET SOUND

By Wendy Williams and Robert Whitcomb

PublicAffairs, \$26.95

Reviewed by JIM MOTAVALLI

In his private moments, Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) is reportedly willing to admit that despite being a renewable energy champion and a staunch opponent of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, he is also firmly against the “Cape Wind” project (130 turbines in Nantucket Sound) because “it’s where I sail.”

And, according to this new book by Wendy Williams and Robert Whitcomb, that argument really captures the essence of the opposition to this zero-pollution project. Environmental issues revolving around bird kills and whale migrations aside, this is a turf war, fought over some very exclusive real estate.

It’s not just Ted Kennedy. Opposition to Cape Wind cuts across the ideological spectrum. Ted’s nephew, Robert Kennedy Jr., one of America’s most prominent environmentalists, is also a bitter enemy of the wind farm because “it’s in the wrong place.” His allies on the issue include two powerful Republicans, Sen. John Warner (R-Va.) and former Massachusetts governor and current presidential candidate Mitt Romney.

What they have in common is either a home base in the big-ticket Cape communities (the Kennedys) or a connection to its money (Romney, Warner). Ironically, many of the big fortunes were built on the kind of extractive industries (coal, oil) that Cape Wind is trying to put out of business. The Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound has spent an incredible \$15 million to stop the project, which would be located five miles off the Cape’s southern coast on a shoal seldom actually visited by the yachts of the mega-rich.

To hear the alliance tell it, however, these gently spinning turbines constitute a major industrial threat to the environment and public safety. According to the alliance’s website, “Covering 24 square miles, the plant would consist of 130, 440-foot wind turbines connected to a central service platform holding 40,000

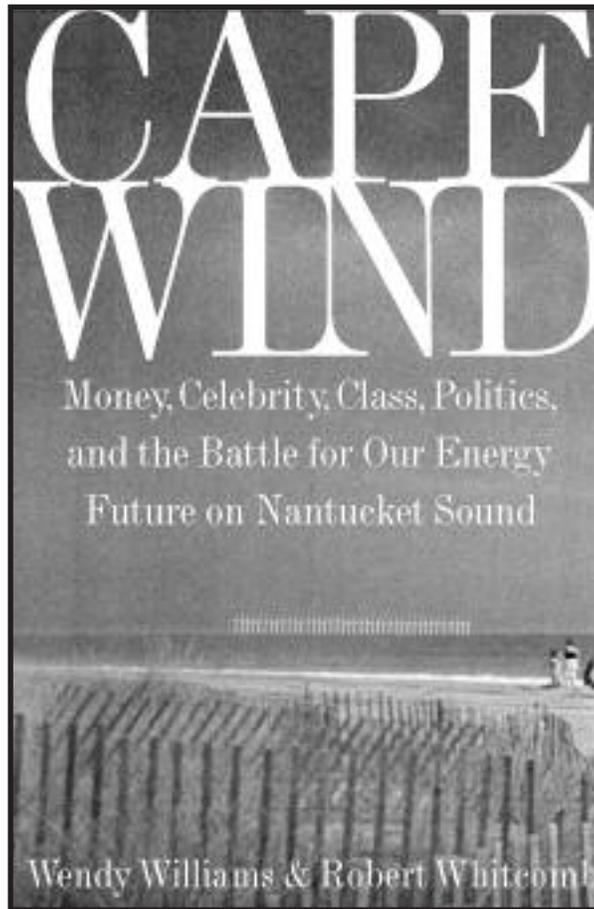
gallons of transformer oil and 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel, with a helicopter pad on top.” Rather than an effort to protect a private playground for the rich, the Alliance changes the subject by casting fishermen as the victims: “This project would block off a productive fishing ground to a group of people already struggling to make a living,” the group says.

“Cape Wind” tells the story of energy developer Jim Gordon and his epic, Sisyphus-like struggle to license his project. It’s not an objective, just-the-facts book. Williams, a freelance journalist who lives on the Cape, and Whitcomb, a staffer at the *Providence Journal*, clearly consider the Alliance’s arguments threadbare and scientifically questionable. They detail the opposition’s attempt to kill Cape Wind with an endless battery of lawsuits, bill amendments and public hearing takeovers. The flip-flopping of Mitt Romney, who wants to be seen as a clean energy advocate while simultaneously appeasing his rich donors with carefully stage-managed anti-wind press conferences, is one of the highlights of the book. But when each obstacle is removed and Gordon is still standing, the inevitable refrain is, “Why are you still here?”

Even if you agree with Ted Kennedy that Nantucket Sound is a “national treasure” and that today’s boaters should enjoy the same view as the Pilgrims, you might enjoy reading “Cape Wind.” The authors’ accounts of ideological confrontations in quaint New England town meeting rooms are richly detailed and quite funny. And as you meet larger-than-life characters like the ultra-rich Rachel “Bunny” Mellon, who calls project supporters “traitors to their class,” you’ll also absorb great swaths of Cape history and fascinating environmental facts.

One of the ironies of Cape Wind opposition is that the status quo harms wealthy residents far more than the wind project ever will. Who knew that “untouched” Cape Cod has terrible air quality, in part because it gets its power from the antiquated Canal Electric Station in Sandwich, which releases 3,000 pounds of pollutants (including nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide) per hour? The plant burns bunker fuel, #6 fuel oil, and “Cape Wind” includes a graphic description of what happened in April 2003 when a single-hulled tanker dumped 100,000 gallons of this sludge-like water pollutant into Buzzards Bay.

(Continued next page)



Luckily, the exclusive homes on nearby Oyster Harbors were spared.

It's unclear if the Cape Wind project will ever win final approval, though state licensing appears assured. There will still be federal hurdles, and a thicket of lawsuits to overcome. Meanwhile, other wind farms, such as the 40-turbine New York Power Authority project off Long Island's Jones Beach, are proceeding with relatively minor public controversy. Luckily, Bunny Mellon will not be able to see those turbines from her veranda.

Jim Motavalli is editor of E/The Environmental Magazine and editor most recently of the book "Green Living."



Book chronicles debate over advocacy in e-journalism

WRITING GREEN: ADVOCACY AND INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY

**By Debra Schwartz
Apprentice House, \$18.95**

**Reviewed by KRESTIA
DeGEORGE**

If you've been on the SEJ listserv for any length of time, odds are you've witnessed – or participated in – at least one debate about advocacy. Do journalists have any business taking sides in the stories they cover? And if not, where does reporting end and advocacy begin? Do both sides of a story deserve equal play, even if the facts tend to line up on one side? Are there some environmental values that have become so widely held that, like human rights or civil rights, they can be taken for granted as good things by reporters covering them?

If you've been involved in these debates you also know that the many answers to those questions are as varied and nuanced as the members that make up SEJ.

"Writing Green: Advocacy and Investigative Reporting About the Environment in the Early 21st Century" is a book-length effort by SEJ member Debra Schwartz to address these questions more fully.

Schwartz's approach to tackling the issue of advocacy in environmental journalism is somewhat unorthodox. Instead of trying to set down a straightforward narrative that describes the advocacy issue, she provides case studies. In each of the half-dozen chapters, a short profile of a journalist precedes some samples of his work. These fine examples of environmental journalism alone are worth the price of entry. What follows is the meat of the book. Here Schwartz includes extensive interviews

with her subjects that cover topics from their interest in the environment beat to their reporting process. But she's at her best when she's querying them about the central question of advocacy in reporting.

Here's a sample from her interview with David Helvarg, who has done time in both the mainstream media and the non-profit sector.

"How and where do you draw the line between advocacy and environment reporting?" Schwartz asks. Helvarg's reply includes the following: "There are differences between environment reporters and other investigative reporters. There was this self-flagellation I found with environment reporters that I never found

with other investigative reporters looking at political corruption or national defense issues and AIDS. In the last 30 years environmentalism has become a social ethic. Considering yourself an environmentalist and reporting on the environment – if you're a good journalist (i.e., one who doesn't slant facts and other information) – is no different than a national defense reporter considering himself or herself a patriot. We have shared values as a society and environmental protection has been one of them."

Compare this to an excerpt of the response to the same question, in the following chapter, from Tom Meersman at the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*: "The journalist doesn't take a side. You can come to conclusions and use research and facts to say this is a significant problem, you can somehow quantify that, but that doesn't mean you provide a solution. My job is to identify and document and portray and put out there an issue that should have public attention, then let people talk about it, and let other people decide what needs to be done. To

me that's enough."

In addition to Helvarg and Meersman, readers hear from Tom Bayles, Charles Pekow, Paul Rogers and Dale Willman – names that will be well-known to many SEJers. Each brings a different perspective and set of experiences to the book's central question. Schwartz doesn't try to arbitrate between the variety of responses she elicits. In fact, she hardly offers much context beyond the introduction. Flip the page after the final chapter's interviews and you'll find yourself in the appendices.

The result is something akin to the print version of being at a panel discussion with six smart colleagues or an engaging SEJ listserv discussion.

Krestia DeGeorge is interim editor of the Anchorage Press, an alternative weekly in Anchorage, Alaska.



Viewpoint... (from page 4)

she said that she had to think about it and would get back to me.

I soon met with Rep. Brad Miller (D-N.C.) and some staffers from the House Science Committee to discuss the emails that I had obtained. We all agreed that the emails showed a troubling pattern of White House suppression of agency scientists. Staffers with Sen. Joe Lieberman's office also told me that the emails were proof that something fishy was going on at NOAA.

A little later, Britt told me to stop reporting on the NOAA story because Rudy Baum did not want me to write it. He was not happy with the story I had done on the Weinberg Group, she said. "You need training in investigative journalism," she added. A meeting was arranged with Rudy Baum for July 11.

Baum began the meeting by critically examining several stories that I had written. The article "Hidden Ties," he said, was not really a story because it's "not news" that industry would support attempts to roll back environmental regulations. I just don't see what the story is, he said.

He added that he would not have run the story on the Weinberg Group, an article that he characterized as a hatchet job that lacked professionalism. Particularly, he was not happy that I had run a transcript of my interview with Matthew Weinberg. "That does not meet journalistic standards," he said.

I made some slight protests, pointing out that many news organizations such as Frontline regularly run transcripts of their interviews to increase transparency and add credibility to the reporting. But Rudy was not to be dissuaded, adding that I was too immature for investigative journalism. "You are not ready for this type of reporting," he said.

ES&T, ACS officials respond:

The policy of ACS, as expressed in the ACS governing documents, clearly prohibits interference in editorial decisions by anyone on the staff of the society or in its governance structure. Editors of ACS publications exercise complete control over the content of their journal or magazine. Any suggestion by Paul Thacker to the contrary is entirely without merit.

Britt Erickson and I were uniformly unimpressed with Paul's journalistic skills, and we told him so. We said that, especially on his investigative stories, he needed much more editorial supervision than *ES&T* had the resources to devote to him. We did not tell Paul that he could no longer work on such stories, only that he needed prior approval to work on them. As to the specific case of the story on the Weinberg group, it was a hatchet job and running the transcript was embarrassing to Paul and *ES&T* because Paul's questions were almost incoherent.

— Rudy M. Baum, Editor in Chief, *Chemical & Engineering News*

Bill Carroll, former ACS president, wrote to say he did not interfere in the ES&T editorial process but did question editors about whether the stories were more appropriate for Chemical and Engineering News, another ACS publication, because the stories were critical of industry. Carroll added that he chaired the compensation committee but it does not evaluate or award bonuses to editorial employees.

On Aug. 3, I met with some reporters at NPR to discuss my situation and go over the emails I had gotten from NOAA. I knew that I had a great story, one the public needed to hear. I was considering just giving the emails to NPR or *The New York Times*. But my friend at NPR told me to hold onto the emails and get ACS to put their refusal in writing. If that didn't work, then he would take the emails and NPR would run the story.

I sent Britt an email requesting to freelance the article, and asked for a written response. A couple of hours later, Britt asked me to come into her boss' office. When I closed the door behind me, Britt said, "We're not going to give you anything in writing. You can't write this article for us, and you can't write it for anyone else. If you want to write this article, you need to go ahead and leave ACS."

I thanked her for the response and left.

At this point I began my job search in earnest, putting out resumes and contacting friends. I also met with a staffer on Rep. Henry Waxman's Committee on Government Reform and gave them copies of the NOAA emails.

About then, I also learned that publishing executives and senior editors at ACS get bonuses based on how well the publishing operation performs. These bonuses are approved through the committee on executive compensation. The chair of that committee, I discovered, was none other than Bill Carroll. It was definitely time to leave.

In mid-September, I accepted a job and turned in my two-week notice. Based on the NOAA emails, I wrote a story "Climate-controlled White House" for Salon. The day the article came out, Waxman released one of the emails that I had passed to his committee. That email was covered by six different news organizations including ABCnews.com, Reuters and the Associated Press, as well as dozens of blogs.

ACS terminated my employment that Friday, but I had expected as much. A few weeks prior, Jeffrey Dvorkin with the Committee of Concerned Journalists had warned me this might happen. But he also said the story needed to get out. "You may have a higher obligation that the public has a right to know," he wrote.

In November, a package of stories that I submitted to the SEJ annual awards contest won second place. The package included the stories "Hidden Ties" and "The Weinberg Proposal." The emails I gathered from NOAA have been discussed multiple times in congressional hearings that have examined political interference in government science.

While some may dismiss this as an isolated incident at ACS, I worry that what happened to me is part of a pattern that continues to play out at an "independent" nonprofit that maintains strong ties to industry. In 1995, the *Columbia Journalism Review* reported that *Chemical and Engineering News*, also published by ACS, killed an investigation into Ashland Oil after an executive from the company flew up from Kentucky to meet with executives at ACS. The reporter on that story was Wil Lepkowski.

"What happened to you is very similar to what happened to me," Lepkowski told me.

Paul D. Thacker is a former journalist and member of the SEJournal editorial board. Since writing this article in February he has left journalism to take a job as an investigator for Sen. Chuck Grassley's Finance Committee, investigative and oversight projects.

Biodiesel pollution and other climate-change impacts emerge

By MIKE DUNNE

Rising gas prices, global temperature and concern for about how chemicals interact with the environment and health were all topics of good environmental journalism during the second quarter of 2007.

While pump prices soared, there were a lot of stories about alternative fuels, but one Midwestern reporter focused on the pollution more than the discussion of potentials.

Iowa's ramped-up ethanol and biodiesel fuel production led to 394 instances over the past six years in which the plants fouled the air, water or land or violated regulations meant to protect the health of Iowans and their environment, wrote **Perry Beeman** of the *Des Moines Register* on June 3.

"In addition, many biologists consider the industry's most prevalent environmental issue the water pollution and soil erosion that will accompany the increased corn production needed to meet ethanol's soaring demand," he wrote.

"The buzz about biofuels centers on a huge environmental perk," he wrote. Corn-based ethanol burns cleaner than gasoline, emitting 20 percent less of the heat-trapping gases that contribute to global warming and ethanol made from corncobs and switchgrass would cut the load by 90 percent. But little is written about pollution.

Beeman said later the "biofuels pollution package was a multi-pronged reporting experience. At the heart was a FOIA request for all state notices of violations and orders issued to the plants in the past

six years, basically the period in which the industry boomed.

"Also helpful were dozens of interviews and a series of symposia on the topic at Iowa State University and in Des Moines," Beeman said. Another symposium is planned for this fall at the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

"I also scoured hundreds of articles, permit applications, actions in other states, court records, research papers, symposia proceedings, industry websites and documents, white papers from interest groups and other information," he said.

Global warming, or climate change, continued to be a hot topic for journalists.

Associated Press science writer **Seth Borenstein** wrote about the wire service's analysis of state-by-state emissions of greenhouse gases which ran in newspapers around the country the first weekend of June. "America may spew more greenhouse gases than any other country, but some states are astonishingly more prolific polluters than others – and it's not always the ones you might expect," he wrote. The biggest culprit: coal-fired power generation plants.

Brad Williams of the *Knoxville News and Sentinel* wrote April 8 about climate change indicators:

"In the 1960s, Knoxville had four white Christmases. In 1976, it had one, but there have been none since, according to Dale Kaiser, scientist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory's Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center." Kaiser studied four decades of snow reports in 16 cities. The area, once in hardiness zone 6 for plants is now in zone 7, he wrote.

Plans by energy company TXU and others to expand coal-fire electrical power plants in Texas exposed "gaping holes in the state's air pollution rules... But a *Dallas Morning News* review shows that most bills before the Texas Legislature aimed at making the state's air permit system tougher are dying without getting a committee hearing. Others, including bills to halt new coal-plant permits until rules can be tightened, have gotten a hearing but seem destined to get no action," wrote reporter **Randy Lee Loftis** on April 30.

Mike Stark of the *Billings Gazette* wrote about how climate changes impacts in Montana could affect the huge grizzly bear and much smaller animals and plants in Yellowstone National Park. "All ... of the most important food groups for the bears – whitebark pine nuts, moths, cut-throat trout and winter-killed elk and bison – could potentially be affected by global warming. The difficulty, though, is predicting how," he wrote in an April 30 story.

Chemicals and their interaction with the environment and health were popular.

While diet and exercise are big factors in the explosion of obesity, several recent animal studies indicate environmental exposure to some commonly used chemicals may also fatten people, **Elizabeth Grossman** wrote in the *Washington Post* March 12. "The evidence is preliminary, but a number of researchers are pursuing indications that the chemicals, which have been shown to cause abnormal changes in animals' sexual development, can also trigger fat-cell activity – a process scien-

(Continued next page)

President... (from page 2)

role it ought to play in a changing journalistic world. It's just one element in our discussions about how SEJ can enhance environmental reporting at a time when the environment is gaining prominence as a story and an issue for society.

What do you think? Would a name change help SEJ appeal to non-specialists in journalism? Would it keep others from seeing green when they hear our name? Or would it just confuse matters, divert us from more meaningful ways of addressing our membership and perception challenges?

One thing's for sure: As we mull this proposal, we're mindful that SEJ's founders named it the Society of Environmental Journalists to reflect a grassroots emphasis – that this is a society of, for and by journalists. We don't plan to change that, regardless of the name.

See you at Stanford in September, I hope.

Tim Wheeler covers growth for The Baltimore Sun.

Beat... (from page 25)

tists call adipogenesis,” she wrote. Some of the chemicals seen as possible culprits include marine paints, pesticides, and food and beverage containers. She cited a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study of bisphenol A.

A spokesman for the chemical industry later dismissed the concerns. A top official of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), Jerry Heindel, said the suspected link between obesity and exposure to “endocrine disruptors” is “plausible and possible.”

“Does a chemical used to make foam cushioning for North Carolina furniture and bedding also make neighbors sick?” asked **Bruce Henderson** of the *Charlotte Observer* on May 2. State authorities, who shut down a foam plant in 1997, still have no answer, he reported. For years, health agencies have wrestled in a behind-the-scenes struggle with an industry determined to protect its interests. Up to six

neighborhoods near foam plants will be studied although research money approved five years ago dries up in September.

Lisa Stiffler of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* was one of many reporters to write over the past few months about the ubiquitous presence of polybrominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs. They “are everywhere: in your TV, your computer, your toaster and your sofa. They’ve been in use since the 1970s. The global demand for PBDEs was 200,000 tons in 2003 alone.” But, they also bioaccumulate.

Elizabeth Shaw of the *Flint Journal* in Michigan wrote that chemical pollutants that can damage the brain and central nervous system are on the rise from the exhaust stacks at General Motors’ local truck assembly plant. The plant released 138,375 pounds more of such chemicals, called neurotoxins, into the air in 2005 than in 2004, according to the latest state and federal reports. That’s an increase of

nearly 28 percent, she wrote April 8 based on the Toxics Release Inventory.

Ben Goad and **David Danelski** of the *Riverside (Calif.) Press-Enterprise* wrote about problems stemming from a lack of a national drinking water standard for perchlorate, a rocket fuel. Some pregnant women, infants and other people face significant health risks, members of Congress said. The story ran April 25.

Alex Nussbaum of *The Record* wrote March 20 about the conflict between northern New Jersey’s chemical plants and the state’s efforts to require better security from possible terrorist attacks. New Jersey’s rules require 140 manufacturers, water treat-

ment plants and other users of hazardous chemicals to meet state security standards. The federal government adopted a similar measure last fall, but New Jersey’s security rules require more including ordering the study whether they can cut the use of hazardous chemicals.

Stories related to land use and pollution also made news.

Mike Belt of the *Lawrence (Kan.) Journal* wrote about mining’s legacy in southeast Kansas and part of Oklahoma. “Rick Schultz never knows when the ground underneath him might disappear,” he wrote in his lead March 20. The remains of long-abandoned coal mines are below the surface of the lands farmed by Schultz and others.

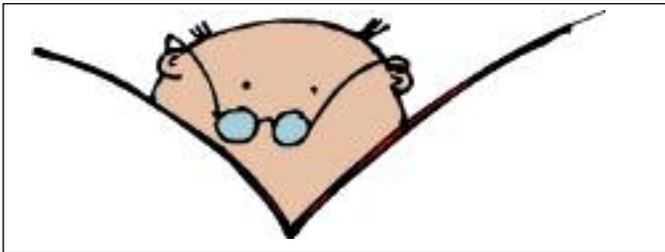
In Oklahoma, officials are using federal assistance to evacuate residents of an old mining town, fearing an entire community could be swallowed up by collapsing coal and zinc mines. Wastes from the old mines also contaminate groundwater.

Sammy Fretwell of the *Columbia State* wrote about a Utah company’s effort to dump more nuclear waste in Barnwell County, which met a “crippling defeat” in the South Carolina Legislature. “South Carolina wants out of the nuclear waste disposal business after three decades of owning a landfill for the country’s radioactive garbage,” Fretwell wrote March 29.

“Time bombs” lurk beneath California, poised to taint groundwater wells, pollute waterways, ruin property values and threaten lives, wrote **Russell Carollo** of the *Sacramento Bee*. The danger: More than 1,000 confirmed and suspected military sites, the largest number in the country, are spread across the Golden State. Many were abandoned decades ago but may still be contaminated with toxic chemicals, bombs and other munitions or even radioactive waste, he said after a six-month examination.

The data came from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Formerly Used Defense Sites, a database of military sites closed prior to 1988.

Catherine Clabby of the *Raleigh News & Observer* wrote about how members of Congress raised questions about the National Institute of Environmental
(Continued next page)



Limerick Corner

A reporter up in Point Reyes Station
Covered bioremediation
The scum did confuse
The reporter with ooze
And effected complete degradation

Send your Limerick on a journalism
topic to lkhouse@sej.org

Health Sciences. They also demanded personal and professional financial records. Its \$710 million budget pays for studies on environmental risks to human health, she wrote on April 25.

Ken Ward Jr. of the *Charleston Gazette* continued to scrutinize the coal industry. In a May 6 story, he wrote that three West Virginia environmental groups have challenged the state administration's move to give 76 mining operations waivers from the state's limits on the toxic selenium.

As usual, the green beat covered lots of other angles and breaking stories.

Dan Vergano and **Patrick O'Driscoll** of *USA Today* wrote one of many stories on disappearing honey bees. Beekeeper David Hackenberg said, "The honey was still there. There's young brood (eggs) still in the hive. Bees just don't do that."

One November night last year, Hackenberg found 400 hives empty where he winters his bees in Florida. Another 30 hives were "disappearing, dwindling or whatever you want to call it," and their bees were "full of a fungus nobody's ever seen before."

It's about more than honey. Bees pollinate 90-100 percent of at least 19 kinds of fruits, vegetables and nuts nationwide, from almonds and apples to onions and broccoli, they wrote May 1.

But the problem is not yet evident everywhere. **Mike Dunne** of the *Baton Rouge Advocate* wrote May 14 that Louisiana beekeepers have not seen signs of what has been called colony collapse disorder.

Donald G. McNeil Jr. of *The New York Times* was one of many reporters to write stories about tainted pet food. Toxicologists, monitoring the American food supply for traces of melamine after it was found in pet foods, said that even if there were small amounts of it in the American food supply, it would be unlikely to pose much of a threat to humans. The story ran May 2.

Rick Weiss of *The Washington Post* also wrote about tainted Chinese food imports – and the fact that the Food and Drug Administration refused 298 shipments. "These were among the 107 food imports from China that the Food and Drug Administration detained at U.S. ports just last month, agency documents

reveal," along with more than 1,000 shipments of tainted Chinese dietary supplements, toxic Chinese cosmetics and counterfeit Chinese medicines, Weiss wrote April 30.

Jondi Gumz of the *Santa Cruz (Calif.) Sentinel* did a story about a celebrity stylist who decided to create her own cosmetics without synthetics – rather than continue to use traditional, chemical-based cosmetics – to improve her health and the health of her customers. The story ran May 13.

Michael Hawthorne of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote about electricity generation utilities trying to spin their hot-water discharges as one way to help keep urban waterways too warm for invasive fish.

Hawthorne's May 8 story said the aging plants "suck up nearly every drop of the Chicago and Lower Des Plaines rivers to cool their massive equipment, then churn it back out as hot as bathwater, sometimes hotter than 100 degrees. Illinois has banned the process at newer plants because it can kill fish or discourage them from sticking around."

A solution now proposed by the state would cost such utilities \$800 million in upgrades. Now, the utilities "even suggest that killing all of the fish in the rivers might be a good thing" to keep Asian carp at bay and contained from entering the Great Lakes, Hawthorne said.

Nathan Crabbe of the *Gainesville Sun* wrote about how pollution in some Florida springs could cause reproductive changes in aquatic species and have implications for human health, according to emerging science on the issue. "Rising nitrate levels in the springs of the Suwannee River basin have long been linked to algae growth that disrupts aquatic ecosystems," he wrote but also, new research suggests nitrates could

also affect reproduction and lead to allergic reactions.

Also along the shores of the Great Lakes, the *Toledo Blade's Tom Henry* wrote about a new form of toxic, blue-green algae – stringy stuff that balls up in the shape of marbles as it rises to the surface and forms thick mats along the shore." It is also resistant to freezing, Henry wrote in an April 24 story.

Henry has taken on some editing duties and started writing a Sunday column.

NewFarm.org recently posted a story written by a veterinarian who sits on the National Organic Standards Board, which advises the USDA about the national organic rule. The vet takes a somewhat controversial stand about the limited use of antibiotics to treat sick animals in organic herds without the animal having to be removed from the herd permanently. Canada is now hammering out its own national organic standards, the website said. Here's the URL: www.newfarm.org/features/2007/0507/antibiotics/karreman.shtml

Mike Dunne, assistant SEJournal editor, writes for The Advocate in Baton Rouge, La.

The SEJ lost tour...

Hey, where's our bus?



Don't YOU miss the bus!

Register for SEJ's 17th Annual Conference today!
Sept. 5-9. Hosted by Stanford University.

Oceans... (from page 21)

Award for excellence in science journalism. Before coming to the L.A. Times in 1990, Weiss spent six years in Washington, D.C., as a correspondent for newspapers owned by The New York Times and as a reporter for States News Service. He began his journalism career at a small daily, the Montgomery County Journal, in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. He received a bachelor's degree in folklore from UC Berkeley, where he was editor of the college newspaper, the Daily Californian. Weiss was born and raised in Southern California. Like way too many Californians, he suffers from an incurable addiction to surfing.

Mike Dunne, assistant SEJournal editor and creator of the Inside Story, reports for The Advocate in Baton Rouge, La.



Photo courtesy of THE LOS ANGELES TIMES/Rick Loomis

Fishers off the coast of Georgia find they can make more money catching cannonball jellies in a few hours than spending a week at sea in pursuit of the elusive Georgia white shrimp. Jellyfish populations are exploding around the globe because of human activities: a combination of removing competitors and predators by overfishing and supplying more food by a flood of nutrients, such as ag waste, sewage and sediment streaming off the land.

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