



The View From Here

Photo by Caroline Salguero



THE SCENE FROM THE WALL STREET JOURNAL OFFICES AT ONE WORLD FINANCIAL CENTER ON SEPTEMBER 18, 2001. How did 9/11 change your understanding of the world? How do you think your work as a reporter will be affected by the attacks? What can journalists do to meet the challenges raised by 9/11? What can you do to be better prepared for covering stories related to terrorism and international affairs?

FAILURES OF IMAGINATION, PP. 16-31:

Why did some editors of *The New York Times* believe that Carlotta Gall's story was improbable? Was it because of a reluctance to "believe bad things of Americans," to believe bad things about the Bush Administration, or was it another reason? Would you have felt the same way? What role do the media play in creating the image of a country that can do no wrong? Is it a healthy belief? Why do reporters often feel pressure to be part of "the pack"? Why was there so little public outrage when the story about the Gonzales memo was published? What techniques can an editor employ to feature, bury, or control a story? If you were a reporter covering the abuse scandal, how would you have gotten to the bottom of the story? How would you surmount roadblocks such as skeptical editors and uncooperative government and military sources? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Read the December 26, 2002 story by Dana Priest and Barton Gellman in the *Washington Post*. Analyze the story. How did they piece it together? What made their work so extraordinary? As a class, create a list of questions to ask a newspaper editor about how he or she decides which stories to investigate and then publish, and where to place them in the paper. Invite an editor from your local newspaper to come in and answer your questions. Should newspapers try to shape opinion or reflect it? What are the risks and rewards of each option? Why do the media often focus on personalities rather than on issues? Imagine you are the executive editor of a newspaper or TV news operation, who must be mindful of the bottom line. Write a memo to your staff explaining your position on those questions. Select one item from the event timeline. Research and write an article examining the issues surrounding that event, how they played out and their implications.

Talking Points

AT THE CORE of many of the stories in this issue is the importance of challenging one's assumptions. Reporter Carlotta Gall and her editors had to free themselves from believing that the U.S. government could sanction torture. Reviewer Bill Berkeley lauds several Persian-language authors who cut through the stereotypes of Iran that are commonly accepted in America. Two other articles justly celebrate the reporting of J. Anthony Lukas and I.F. Stone. Lukas took accepted ideas about hard news and objectivity and tossed them out the window. The result was his classic work of new journalism, *Common Ground*. Stone was a digger who looked for the truth in the small print of government reports, not in official statements.

The lesson? Here's one: When you report a story trust your own eyes and ears. After reading about these great journalists, come up with a few more lessons of your own.

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SILVIO'S SHADOW, PP. 32-41:

How did Berlusconi use his media empire to build his career and consolidate his power? Are conditions in the United States ripe for a Berlusconi-type figure to assume power? Why or why not? If so, name the media barons you think would be most likely to win high office, and say why. Should there be safeguards against a person using his power in the media to gain political office? Why or why not? Would you work for a news operation whose chief had such ambitions? Explain. How does the media's focus on personality reporting help boost the careers of people like Berlusconi or Arnold Schwarzenegger? What can be done about this? Reread what the story says about Berlusconi's debating techniques. Would they be effective here?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES: Compare and contrast Berlusconi's political career — including his methods of consolidating power, his political style, and his policies — with that of President Bush. After rereading the last section of the article, write an essay about objectivity in journalism, using Richard Viguerie's statement as a jumping-off point. In your essay, discuss whether you agree or disagree with Berlusconi and the American conservatives on objectivity. What might be the implications for the media and for America if their point of view were to prevail?

COPYRIGHT JUNGLE, PP. 42-48:

What is a copyright? Who and what are supposed to be protected by copyright? What does the term "fair use" mean? Do you think "fair use" rules are fair? Why or why not? Why is the principle endangered, according to the author? What could happen if fair use were severely curtailed? Read Kevin Kelly's article in *Wired* on

book publishing. Then read John Updike's response. Whom do you think is right? Why? If you were a published writer, how would you feel about Google's publishing project? Explain. Do you download music from the Internet? Do you think it should be illegal to do so? Why or why not? Do you agree with the music industry's attempts to curtail free downloading? Why or why not? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Find and discuss examples not mentioned in the story of copyright protection being used to censor ideas. Research any recent court case involving copyright. Read the arguments made on both sides and the jury's or judge's opinion (in the appeal, too, if applicable). Analyze the arguments and the verdict. Was it fair? What are the implications of the case in regard to extending or limiting copyright protection? What are some guidelines you can suggest for a reporter who wants to make use of copyrighted material but also doesn't want to run afoul of copyright laws?

Between the Lines

- 1) Why do you think the story about Ohio in the 2004 election (p. 3) didn't get the press attention it deserved?
- 2) Do you agree or disagree with Bree Nordenson's professors (p. 6)? Should reporters seek out stories with happy endings?
- 3) What impact do you think Al-Jazeera International will have when it goes on the air?
- 4) Would you take a drug test as a condition for employment? Why or why not?

Quick Takes

- 1) Research what the various investigations have turned up about the 2004 vote in Ohio (p. 3). Weigh the evidence and write an article explaining whether you think the election was stolen.
- 2) Examine and rate the online efforts of five major news outlets. What do you like or not like about their sites? Explain what you think each one can do to improve its online presence.

KNOW THINE ENEMY, PP. 50-56:

What is Iran's importance as a player in the Middle East? What is the significance of Bill Berkeley's visit with his driver's family? When it comes to Iran, why have American reporters had a hard time getting it right? How could they do a better job of reporting on Iran? **ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES:** Research the history of the relationship between the United States and Iran. Explain why tensions between the two are running high. Read any one of the books mentioned by Berkeley. How does it illuminate the situation in Iran? As an example of reporting, what are its positives and negatives? What important lessons does it hold for those who report on the country?

BUILDING BRIDGES, PP. 56-58, THE VITAL TROUBLEMAKER, 59-61:

What made J. Anthony Lukas and I.F. Stone such terrific reporters? In which specific areas did they excel? What was the importance of their work? What can you as a young reporter learn from both Lukas and Stone?

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES: Read selections from *Common Ground* and from any collection of Stone's reporting. Compare and contrast their reporting and writing styles.