

Media: Changes in Investigative Reporting, p1

A presentation by Joe Barile of key ideas of 3 known and respected media personalities, gathered by Tom Thomas for our viewing, study, and discussion at our COJ Explorers Group in large and small groups, on June 14, 7:00 pm at the Seventh Day Adventist church on Guinda in Palo Alto.



- 1) Investigative Reporting Workshop founder [Charles Lewis](#), formerly of *60 Minutes*,
- 2) [Interview](#) by Mark Cohen of two top investigative reporters, Jane Mayer with the New Yorker and Deborah Nelson, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and director of Carnegie Seminar at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland.
- 3) [Bill Moyer's interview of Marty Kaplan](#), director of the USC Norman Lear Center, interested me not so much for the answers gleaned but for the questions his answers prompted.



Thank you, Tom, for the resources you sent to me and others in the group. They seem address the topic very well, and I will try to summarize them adequately. I would like to submit and receive a few questions I have to the group, to utilize this info in our lives.

MY SUMMARY OF IDEAS PRESENTED FROM THE ABOVE SOURCES:
(most crucial facts to be presented at the meeting will be bold here, others can be picked up from a pdf copy of my notes.)

[“The New Journalism Ecosystem Thrives”](#) article reports:

- 1) **the number of newspaper reporters covering Philadelphia fell** from 500 to 220 from 1980-2005 (a 66% drop);
- 2) while the **number of public**



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Charles Lewis,

above.)

relations positions in the country doubled from 45,000 to 90,000. (These put their spin on whatever they want by whomever pays them.)
3)but new flowering of **online nonprofit news has risen** (Investigative Reporting Workshop i-Lab created a data base of the ones doing impressive and important work nationwide. (See the map of the 60 notables

From [the larger report](#) and video comes the following points:

- 4) The number of **newspaper editorial employees nationally has dropped 33%** from 60,000 in 1992 to 40,000 in 2009. (Reflects #1 above.)
- 5) **Cost of investigative reporting (i-Teams) is too expensive, often unsustainable.**
- 6) **Fewer journalists to hold those in power accountable.** “Even as journalism shrinks, the news still exists...¹
- 7) **Of the 60 “good” the online non-profits, only 13 or 22% are very transparent** by posting their IRS Form 990 which the financial details of salaries, funding sources...
- 8) **"Great reporting is still being done by the traditional media, but there is very little of it. It is the nonprofit model that shows the most promise...**
- 9) "Nonprofit journalism works because its owners and managers have escaped the short-horizon straitjacket into which American business in general has tied itself," said Meyer. ([See bottom of article.](#))

[Trends of Investigative Reporting](#) from Whistle Where You Work by Mark Cohen, Director, Government Accountability Project (GAP), interviewing Jane Mayer Investigative Reporter with The New Yorker and Deborah Nelson, Pulitzer-prize winner, etc. (see above).

- 10) **All reporting is investigative. All reporters have a responsibility to investigate.** (Jane)
- 11) **Requires tenacity, independent reporting, complete**



Mark Cohen,
Exec. Director
of Government
Accountability
Project

¹ *The Death and Life of American Journalism*, by McChesney and Nicols

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Jane Mayer of The New Yorker

documentation about some problem. (Deborah)

12) Anyone who is **in Washington has to double check everything** presented because there is this industry “cropping reality” to fit their agenda (lobbyists, public relations #2)

13) **With a popular President with little opposition, it’s difficult to get at the facts.**

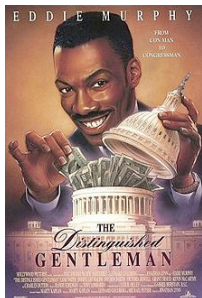
14) **Iraq war had very little skepticism** when pres. rolled out a war (except [Knight Ridder](#), [Walter Pinkus](#), [Bob Drogan](#), and a few others who were sometimes vilified).

- 15) **Who’s driving the agenda?** the news makers or media indep. assessing what’s going on here; watch dog vs stenographer to admin. press secretary.
- 16) **Takes long time to investigate, eg 3 weeks to investigate Swift Boat incident on John Kerry, but three seconds to pass on a lie.**
- 17) **If the reporters do not do it, the public will not know what it’s not reading about.** Difficult for a small newspaper to do.
- 18) Pro Republica is new online well funded to get out investigative stories is a good model.

Bill Moyers interview of [Marty Kaplan](#) was my favorite and probably the most relevant to this topic (although listed under another) because it deals with WHY the readership is falling from real news stories like investigative reporting. Yet I found him going all over the place, possibly lead there by Moyer’s line of questioning.



Marty Kaplan
Renaissance Man



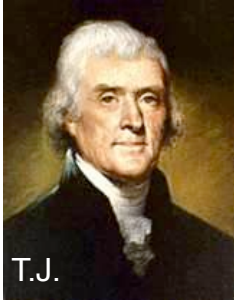
19) Eddie Murphy in 1992 movie, *The Distinguished Gentleman*. shows the corruption of Congress then. Written by Marty Kaplan, and one of the most versatile people I ever heard of. The same laws still apply says he.

20) **Moyers: A prominent Washington senator told a group of lobbyists that they were the life blood of the city.**

21) **The culture of congress is so hermetically sealed from the rest of the Country to make this (above) statement without impunity. (Kaplan)**

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- 22) President of CBS (Kaplan): **“Superpacs might be bad for American but they are a boon for CBS.”**
- 23) **When people hear negative charges against stations and government, they are turned off and don’t even want to vote.**



- 24) **The Founders could not imagine that a small group of people to be so influential. and environment which facts, truth, accountability are just not entertaining. News isn’t covered in local news. Typical half hour contains 22 seconds of local news. Consultants lie that news is boring and rates poorly.**
- 25) From the ads they are making their money. Not checking on the accuracy of an ad.
- 26) Hearst management is example of pushing its reporters and public to seek the truth.
- 27) **In the 1980’s CBS put the news division inside the entertainment division.**
- 28) **Consequence of moving news into entertainment. Education and Journalism were intended to make our democracy work. Consequence: we’re not smart.**
- 29) **Special interest group polarized sides makes entertainment of news.**
- 30) Straightjacket of Objectivity? (Moyers) Some people say... but objectivity is this phony notion of balance rather than fact checking. (Kaplan)
- 31) [Walter Lippman](#) concept of spectator democracy. The more diversion, the less news, the better off the corporations.
- 32) Do people prefer the entertainment over the news because news is depressing. Self medication with humor or entertainment. But not completely hopeless situation because of public outcry.
- 33) Content of Republican debate was more about entertainment and Brands name, reality show to dazzle, enthrall us, and enslave us.
- 34) Break in debate to go to sponsors. The purpose of debates in order to have commercials.
- 35) **People do not have a sense of history.** Amnesia. Iran should be covered through the prism of Iraq.
- 36) We bend ourselves into euphemistic pretzels to avoid calling something a lie, wrong, etc. Admiration for playing the game.

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- 37) **The brain is wired to be entertained. We start stupid. Mini dramas being used to vote one way or another. Propaganda is irresistible.**
- 38) **The internet is the Wild West. Toxic and need to go on a media fast...to high desert without media.**
- 39) **So much misinformation out there, that on issue after issue we have opinions and not facts, and we despair...**
- 40) Big Data and Big Democracy. We're giving bits of ourself up. Data mining.
- 41) **Push journalism (old days) an editor delivers package what you need to know. Pull journalism is what you want is what we will give you.,** eg. Time mag cover on pet friendships vs European edition on news. Voting with your clickers. Audience demand.
- 42) (Moyers) Orwell's Big Brother or Aldous Huxley's Brave New World? (Kaplan) **As Neil Postman said in Amusing Ourselves to Death: "There's no business *but* show business." We are equally guilty because it's such fun to be entertained. Consequences, is that as in Brave New World, is that we're in a constant stupor, we have continual partial attention to everything and tight critical attention to nothing.**



MY OWN BRIEF RESEARCH FROM OTHER SOURCES:

1) [Franklin Center Builds Nationwide Network of Investigative Reporters.](#)

“While traditional media outlets are downsizing, the Franklin Center is stepping in to fill the void. Franklin-networked reporters are now in over 40 states, breaking stories about government corruption, political kickbacks, and other unethical schemes.” SOUNDS GOOD BUT **when I checked out the author of this article who is [Robert Bluey](#), director of [The Heritage Foundation](#), a conservative think tank (vs. [Brookings Institute](#), the liberal counterpart), I became suspicious. Not bad, just has its own leanings. Balance of power. Nice to know one's agenda before investing all sorts of time. Resented the liberal sounding pitch.**



Robert B. Bluey

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- 2) [Top 50 Political Blogs of the Year \(2009\)](#); liberal and conservative. Even the Liberal Huffington Post panders to the prurient not important stories of sex scandals.
- 3) **PBS is still one of my favorites. The nightly news is in depth, calm and rational, and seemingly objective.**



QUESTIONS I (WE) HAVE ABOUT ALL OF THIS?

- 1) With internet access and the ability to read and pass on forwards, opinions, etc., are not we all reporters? How so?
- 2) Do we have an obligation to pass on corrections from <http://www.snopes.com/> and/or <http://www.factcheck.org/>, when they find a falsehood in a forward sent or received?
- 3) Should we be trained in investigative skills so we can see what's true and what's not?
- 4) What are these investigative skills? How do you determine truth in buying a product or buying into a presentation or an opinion?
- 5) Point out an error in a forward received is an art, and what are some ways which work for you in doing this? Should one do so and just let the misinformation run on? Why or why not?
- 6) Is there a way to politely talk about politics?
- 7) Do we have models? (Thinking of David Brooks, Mark Shields, Gwen Eifel of PBS)
- 8) Do we have to guard against over entertainment?
- 9) How does one guard against over dosing on the world's problems?
- 10) Is there a balance? Is it different for each person? How so?
- 11)

SEVERAL COMMENTS FROM THE 20 OR SO IN ATTENDANCE:

Please forward these on to the COJ Explorers group or me to forward to that group if you are not a member and would like to alert the group of your comments. I do not want to misrepresent your comments, there were so many good ones. -Joe

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