

SEJ Journal

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Rachel Carson: 'No peace for me if I kept silent'

By LINDA LEAR

Editor's note: Forty years ago, Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" gave America a taste of a new era of scientific question and environmental uncertainty. Some today still debate how right Carson was. But there is no doubt that her impact has been enormous. "Silent Spring" ranks today among the most significant pieces of non-fiction writing in America. What follows is an excerpt from an introduction to the 40th Anniversary Edition of "Silent Spring," written by Linda Lear, a renowned Carson scholar and SEJ member. (Published by Houghton Mifflin.)

In 1936 Carson landed a job as a part-time writer of radio scripts on ocean

life for the federal Bureau of Fisheries in Baltimore. By night she wrote freelance articles for the *Sun* describing the pollution of the oyster beds of the Chesapeake by industrial runoff; she urged changes in oyster seeding and dredging practices and political regulation of the effluents pouring into the bay. She signed her articles "R.L. Carson," hoping that readers would assume that the writer was male and thus take her science seriously.

A year later Carson became a junior aquatic biologist for the Bureau of Fisheries, one of only two professional women there, and began a slow but steady advance through the ranks of the agency, which became the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1939. Her literary talents were quickly recognized, and she was assigned to edit other scientists' field

reports, a task she turned into an opportunity to broaden her scientific knowledge, deepen her connection with nature and observe the making of science policy. By 1949 Carson was editor in chief of all the agency's publications, writing her own distinguished series on the new U.S. wildlife refuge system and participating in interagency conferences on the latest developments in science and technology.

Her government responsibilities slowed the pace of her own writing. It took her ten years to synthesize the latest research on oceanography, but her perseverance paid off. She became an overnight literary celebrity when *The Sea Around Us* was first serialized in *The New Yorker* in 1951. The book won many awards, including the National Book
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Inside Story

It's best to prepare for the worst

By MIKE DUNNE

Each day, two dozen trains use a century-old tunnel beneath Baltimore's busy downtown streets, and nobody is the wiser.

But, in midafternoon July 18, 2001, a diesel engine towing 60 freight cars rumbled into the Howard Street tunnel and something went terribly wrong. Federal investigators have yet to figure whether rails buckled or cars came off the track, but sparks from the derailment apparently ignited the train's cargo—paper, wood pulp and a variety of chemicals. More than an hour passed before fire trucks arrived to find black smoke billowing from both ends of the 1.7-mile-long tunnel.

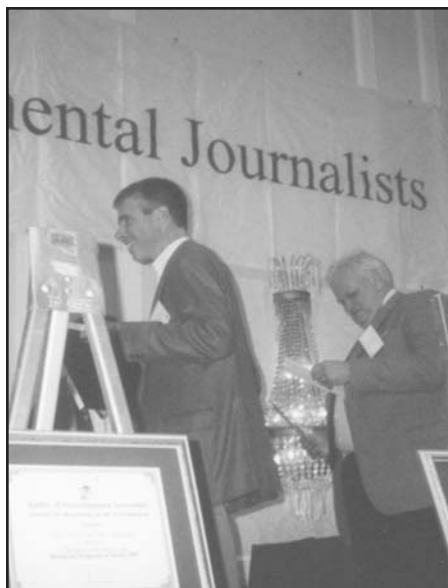
It was the beginning of a story that would last for days—with follow-up sto-

ries that lasted into the fall. *The Baltimore Sun's* team of Heather Dewar, David Michael Ettlin, Del Quentin Wilber, Marcia Myers and Michael James won the Society of Environmental Journalists' inaugural Awards for Reporting on the Environment in the print category of deadline reporting.

"Their coverage was thorough, well written, informative and clear" as first the dramatic story of the derailment unfolded into follow-ups where readers learned the "frightening background on how many trains with toxic materials regularly pass through the city," the citation said. "In sum, the *Sun's* staff provided an impressive example of journalistic teamwork at its best."

SEJournal asked Assistant State Editor Tim Wheeler, who is responsible
(Continued on page 13)

PHOTO by Kevin Camody



Ralph Haurwitz (left) and Jeff Nesmith, *Austin American-Statesman* reporters, collect award in SEJ's inaugural contest. See story, page 5.

Joining SEJ family can be fun and essential

The first time I heard about the Society of Environmental Journalists I was brand new on the environment beat, and I have to admit I didn't pay the group much notice. The environment job was my first high-profile assignment at *Newsday*, and I was focused on just one thing: not blowing it. Anything else, including joining a journalism group, seemed like a distraction.

Eleven years and what seems like a thousand stories later, I'm the new president of SEJ. My promise to you is: I'll try not to blow it. SEJ is an amazing organization and a precious resource for its more than 1,200 members, and for the broader journalism community, too. It's not a distraction; it's an essential part of being a competent environmental reporter.

It's too bad I didn't figure that out right away, but it isn't surprising. For obvious reasons, most reporters are much more comfortable observing than joining. We're accustomed to keeping our professional secrets to ourselves, and to letting our stories do the talking. We'd rather go our own way than work in a group.

I remember the uncomfortable feeling of walking into my first SEJ conference in 1993, in Durham, North Carolina, and knowing almost no one. I remember thinking, "Shouldn't I be back at the office doing something productive, like writing a story?" As I walked through the hotel lobby I saw someone I recognized as Jim Detjen, SEJ's founding president. I introduced myself, and the next thing I knew I was involved in a free-wheeling, hour-long conversation with a half-dozen reporters from around the country. Many in that group, including Jim, are still my friends today.

The next day at the plenary lunch, I sat next to Marianne Lavelle, whom I had never met before. Marianne works at *U.S. News* now but at that time she was with the *National Law Journal*, where she had just won the George S. Polk Award for some amazing stories about environmental racism.

Within a year, we were writing a book together.

That wasn't all that happened at my first SEJ conference. A field trip to an EPA lab in Research Triangle later turned into a story about long-distance ozone transport. A hike through the Duke Forest became an article about the long-term effects of a carbon dioxide-enriched atmosphere. An SEJ contact I first made in Durham eventually helped me land a job teaching environmental reporting to journalism graduate students at New York University. And about halfway through the conference I realized that, in addition to all the networking I was doing and all the practical knowledge I was absorbing, there was another key benefit of participating in SEJ: it was fun.

I flew back to New York with a pocketful of business cards, two notebooks crammed with story ideas, and a new sense of the possibilities of the Society of Environmental Journalists.

From there, it seemed easy and natural to get progressively more involved in SEJ. After organizing panels at subsequent conferences and writing a couple of articles for *SEJournal* I ran for a

seat on the board, eventually becoming vice president for programs and, since October, the seventh president of SEJ.

Along the way, I discarded some of my old prejudices of how journalists are supposed to act. I realized that we don't have to be lone gunslingers to be topnotch reporters. In fact, we can get a lot better at what we do by learning from each other. And we can help our profession, too, by sharing what we know with newcomers to our field and by acting collectively to meet challenges from the outside, including curbs on the free flow of information, cut-backs in newsroom budgets, and ever-increasing pressure to "dumb down" the news.

I discovered that SEJ's organizational values are identical to my own, and that being involved in SEJ – like teaching every fall, or writing a book – keeps me as energized about being an environmental reporter today as I was 11 years ago. I think that's why so many journalists who get involved with SEJ end up staying on the environment beat for many, many years. SEJ keeps us fresh and fired up.

In October, as I walked through the hallways of the Wyndham in Baltimore, I saw a lot of new faces and wondered how many were taking that first awkward step toward joining our community, as I was back in 1993 in a similar hotel lobby in Durham. As president, one of my priorities is to make that transition as easy as possible by ensuring that everyone feels welcome, and that our programs are meeting the needs of all of our members: rookies and veterans, print and electronic journalists, and teachers and students, too.

We recognize that many SEJ members cannot attend those amazing annual conferences, so we're working hard on programs such as mentoring, *Environmental Journalism Today*, *SEJournal* and *TipSheet* that bring to our entire membership many of the best elements of our conferences: rich content, timely news tips, and a strong sense of community. Our new awards program—already a huge success in its first year – is another key component of our strategy to build community and encourage the best of our profession.

Those programs and others succeed for two deceptively simple reasons: members want them and are willing to devote their time and energy to making them a reality. Volunteerism is the fuel that makes SEJ go, and we can always use more of it. That's a second top priority for me: to make sure that all of our members' ideas are valued, and that their volunteer energy is utilized to the fullest. So please contact a member of the SEJ board or staff if you have an idea or a concern that you think we should address. We're easy to reach: complete contact information is available at SEJ's fast-growing web site, www.sej.org, as is just about everything else you'd ever want to know about our organization. You'll also see a "How to Volunteer" page with information on the many ways you can pitch in.

So go ahead, take that first step and get involved in our community—the sooner, the better. ❖

Report from the Society's President



By
**Dan
Fagin**

SEJournal

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The Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) is a non-profit, tax exempt, 501(c)3 organization. The mission of the organization is to advance public understanding of environmental issues by improving the quality, accuracy and visibility of environmental reporting. We envision an informed society through excellence in environmental journalism. As a network of journalists and academics, SEJ offers national and regional conferences, publications and online services. SEJ's membership of more than 1,200 includes journalists working for print and electronic media, educators, and students. Non-members are welcome to attend SEJ's national conferences and to subscribe to the quarterly SEJournal.

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Spring '03.....February 1, 2003

Summer '03.....May 1, 2003

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New federal security act threatens information freedom

By JAMES BRUGGERS

Journalists will find it more difficult to do their jobs under the new Homeland Security Act. And the public may simply have to learn to trust that government and industry will work together to keep our communities safe.

Access to information provisions in the Homeland Security Act have been called by Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., the “most severe weakening of the Freedom of Information Act in its 36-year history.”

The problem for environmental journalists: sweeping exemptions from the FOIA for businesses considered part of the so-called critical infrastructure, including dams, chemical plants, oil refineries, and pipelines.

“This law creates tremendous hurdles for journalists who want to give their readers, viewers and listeners information about environmental threats in their communities,” said Ken Ward Jr., chair of the Society of Environmental Journalists First Amendment Task Force, and staff writer at the *The Charleston (W.V.) Gazette*. The task force objected to the measure’s Freedom of Information Act exemptions in letters to Congress, with several other journalism groups. It will continue to monitor its effects on the First Amendment and educate journalists about its impacts.

“Most importantly, it will make it more difficult for us to track whether the government is really doing a good job of protecting us from terrorist threats,” Ward added. “The bill gives the government a blank check to keep important public health and safety information out of the public’s hands.”

“This law creates tremendous hurdles for journalists who want to give their readers, viewers and listeners information about environmental threats in their communities.”

—Ken Ward Jr.
Chair, SEJ First Amendment Task Force

There are two main problems, according to Lucy Dalglish, executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, which is fighting FOIA infringements on many fronts.

“If a company voluntarily submits information about a vulnerability in the infrastructure—let’s say a chemical spill—that information could no longer be used in a civil or criminal proceeding brought by local authorities or neighbors who were harmed by drinking water that was contaminated by the spill.”

She fears a rash of voluntary disclosures by companies that want to use this act for immunity from responsibility.

Also, government employees who disclose this information face the chilling prospect of jail time and loss of a job. Congress earlier rejected an effort to criminalize leaks of actual classified

information.

What happens next is unclear, said Robert Lystad, whose lobbying for the Society of Professional Journalists in the Senate helped craft compromise language acceptable to several journalism groups. But that language was dumped at the last minute.

“Under the legislation, private companies are encouraged to supply the new Department of Homeland Security with information pertaining to critical infrastructure. In the spirit of national security, some companies may indeed supply this information.”

Yet, the public may never know because of the FOIA exemption, he said.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., helped craft the compromise language with Leahy and Sen. Bob. Bennett (R-Utah). He voted against the bill in part because that compromise was not included in the final version.

The compromise, Levin said in a statement read for the

Congressional Record, would have made sure that records subject to disclosure by another agency would remain available under FOIA even if a private company submits the same information to the new department.

“It could prevent the federal government from using critical infrastructure information in a civil suit seeking to protect public safety,” Levin said. “Finally (the bill) could result in a criminal penalty against a whistle blower who leaks the kind of information presented to the new department on critical infrastructure.

“The principles of open government and the public’s right-to-know are cornerstones upon which our country was built. With this bill, we are sacrificing them in the name of protecting them.”

Last July, Bennett called the compromise “an appropriate balance.” He said it would have allowed the private sector to share crucial information with the government without fear that it will fall improperly into the hands of competitors or terrorists, and it preserves public access to information through existing FOIA procedures.

After the Senate approved the act without the compromise language, Bennett argued that the measure “will increase the flow of information about our nation’s vulnerabilities” and denied that it would “give companies cover to break the law or conceal bad acts as many would have us believe.”

The American Chemistry Council, representing 180 chemical companies, celebrated the passage of the act.

In a press release, ACC President and CEO Greg Lebedev commended President Bush’s leadership and said that the president and Congress “deserve a standing ovation for advancing the security of our communities and the critical elements of our infrastructure which keep our country running.”

ACC spokesman Chris VandenHeuvel downplayed Levin’s concerns about the act’s impact on the First Amendment. VandenHeuvel said he believes that any information that companies already provide the government under right-to-know laws will still be available to the public and press.

He conceded, though, that questions of access over the legislation may end up in court.

(Continued on page 6)





SEJ's first awards contest reaps entries and praise

By EMILIA ASKARI

The Society of Environmental Journalists first annual awards contest produced an amazing 257 entries, 70 new members and a wide range of news and feature stories that judges praised for their depth and poignancy.

"There was a rich feast of work," according to one judge, distinguished professor Geneva Overholser of the University of Missouri.

Another judge, Robert Braile of the Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources, said, "The experience of judging these entries was quite honestly poignant, reminding me of why I got into this business 25 years ago."

Reporters from nine countries, as far away as Australia, covered topics ranging from a tunnel fire in Baltimore to the Bonn climate-change negotiations. They covered health threats from dental fillings, mercury-laden fish and pipelines. They detailed intricate debates over proposed logging in Alaska, whaling and the changing Oregon coast.

The award winners and finalists were announced in October at SEJ's annual conference in Baltimore.

The judges, who included veteran journalists such as Overholser and CNN environment-unit guru Peter Dykstra, were asked to select works representing excellence in covering environmental topics. The panels picked winners in eight categories, but declined to award first place in the broadcast deadline-reporting category. The remaining judges were: Braile, Len Ackland, University of Colorado; Emilia Askari, *Detroit Free Press*; David Baron, author; and Jayne Bruns, ABC News. Also, Sharon Collins, CNN Headline News; Jeffrey Dvorkin, National Public Radio; John Faherty, *The Arizona Republic/KPNX*; Noel Grove, freelance journalist and author; Erin Hayes, ABC News; and Paul Irvin, Radio and Television News Directors Foundation. And, Randy Lee Loftis, *Dallas Morning News*; Peter Lundquist, Gannett Co., Inc.; Richard Manning, author; Betsy Marston, *High Country News*; Manuel Perez, CNN.com; Deborah Potter, NewsLab; Steve Ross, Columbia University; Bob Thomas, Loyola University; and Al Tompkins, The Poynter Institute.

The SEJ Awards Committee selected the judges and enforced the rules set initially by the SEJ board. The panel was chaired by SEJ board members Perry Beeman of *The Des Moines Register* and Natalie Pawelski of CNN (now a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University). Other committee members were: Amy Gahrn, online content consultant; George Homsey, radio and print freelancer; Peter Lord, *Providence Journal*; Mike Mansur, *The Kansas City Star*; and Tom Meersman, *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*.

Minor changes are in store for SEJ's national awards, bestowed for the first time on Thursday, Oct. 10, during the society's annual conference in Baltimore. When the next round of contest rules are announced in early 2003, members of SEJ's awards committee say the number and scope of categories will be tweaked.

The awards ceremony in Baltimore commenced with a tremulous blast from the trumpet of Perry Beeman.

Winners in eight categories were summoned to the stage by awards committee co-chairs Beeman and Natalie Pawelski of CNN. Referring to themselves as "the Whoopi Goldberg and Billy Crystal of SEJ," the pair handed out trophies and \$1,000

checks to first-place winners in eight categories. Up to four finalists also were named in each category.

Judges did not select a winner but did name a finalist in the category, "Outstanding Deadline Reporting, Broadcast."

"I was very heartened by the quality of the entries and by the scope of the entries," Pawelski said afterwards. "It was great to know that so much environmental journalism was being done. It was also a very good way of fulfilling SEJ's mandate, improving the visibility of environmental journalism and highlight the best of what we're doing."

In addition, more than 70 journalists submitting contest entries decided to join SEJ.

Entries for the 2003 contest will be accepted until April 1, 2003. Work must be published between March 1, 2002 and February 28, 2003.

The 2002 winners

For Outstanding Feature Reporting, Print: Scott Harrison Streater, Gannett News Corp., *Pensacola (Florida) News Journal*, for several stories on local environmental issues including "Hidden Hazard: A Look at Our Environment's Effect on Our Health."

Finalists were Jeannette Batz of the *Riverfront Times*, St. Louis, Missouri; Scott Sonner of *The Associated Press*; Sara Shipley of *The (Louisville) Courier-Journal*; Kenneth Weiss and John Johnson of the *Los Angeles Times*.

For Outstanding Small Market Coverage, Print: Paula Dobbyn of the *Anchorage Daily News* for a series, "Native Logging: A Clear-cut Legacy." Finalists were John Manuel of the *North Carolina Insight*; Scott Streater of the *Pensacola (Florida) News Journal*; Hal Clifford of *High Country News*; and Jondi Gumz of the *Santa Cruz (California) Sentinel*.

For Outstanding Deadline Reporting, Print: A team from *The Baltimore Sun* for tunnel fire coverage. Finalist was Claire Miller of *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Post*.

For Outstanding Series, Print: Jeff Nesmith and Ralph K.M. Haurwitz of *The Austin American-Statesman* for "Pipelines: The Invisible Danger." Finalists were Tom Knudson of *The Sacramento Bee* and Ben Raines of the *Mobile Register*.

For Outstanding Feature Reporting, Broadcast: Guy Hand and Chris Ballman of Living on Earth / World Media Foundation for "Tongass National Forest." Finalist was Scott Miller of KING-TV in Seattle.

For Outstanding Program or Series, Broadcast: Vince Patton and Terry Renteria of KGW-TV, Northwest News, Channel 8, Portland for "Oregon's Changing Coast." Finalists were Robin White of KUSP-FM, Santa Cruz; Gary Strieker of CNN; a team from KSTP-TV in St. Paul; and a team from KTRK-TV in Houston.

For Outstanding Online Coverage: Francesca Lyman of MSNBC for her "Your Environment" columns on the Trade Center attacks, dental fillings and dairy products. Finalists were a team at *Grist* magazine and a team at OneWorldJourneys.com.

For Outstanding Small Market Coverage, Broadcast: Heather King of KOMU-TV in Columbia, Missouri.

The finalist for Outstanding Deadline Reporting, Broadcast was a team from KGW-TV in Portland, Oregon.

—Emilia Askari



FOIA...from page 4

The prospects for reviving the Senate compromise language are dim, Lystad added. "With the Republicans assuming majority control of the Senate, my best guess is that they will not want to disturb the legislation as passed," he said.

The White House has been forcefully against the Senate compromise language.

In a statement, President George W. Bush stated: "The United States Congress has taken an historic and bold step forward to protect the American people by passing legislation to create the Department of Homeland Security. This landmark legislation, the most extensive reorganization of the Federal Government since the 1940s, will help our Nation meet the emerging threats of terrorism in the 21st Century."

Lystad fears a dangerous precedent has been set.

"Private industries may become more emboldened to seek exemptions from the FOIA for other information that is supplied to the government," Lystad said. "Or the government itself may take the initiative to expand the types of information that they believe should be exempt from disclosure."

Congress may be willing to make only a "few minor changes" next year, Dalglish said. "Our only hope is that journalists explain to the public what the impact of this legislation is going to be."

James Bruggers writes for The (Louisville) Courier-Journal, is an SEJ board member and serves as the SEJ board's liaison to the SEJ First Amendment Task Force. Contact him at jbruggers@courier-journal.com.

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Application Deadline: **March 3, 2003**

Three stories and whoopee. What a conference.

By **CHUCK QUIRMBACH**

A year or two back, when SEJ announced that its 2002 conference would be in Baltimore, a boatload of pop culture flotsam bobbed through the inner harbor of my mind. Baltimore--let's see, there's "Unitas...Berry...Touchdown!" ...Detective Frank Pembleton... and Randy Newman's "beat-up little seagull, on a marble stair."

Oh, I realized that seagull of song would have spent time on Chesapeake Bay. But besides the bay, I hadn't thought much about the environmental dilemmas and delights of Maryland, not-my-Maryland.

However, when you've talked your way to all the SEJ annual conferences except the first one, (in 1991, my beautiful but colicky newborn daughter was crying a river,) you know that SEJ staff and the conference chairs plan gatherings that will not only showcase the hometown environmental issues, but let you catch up on doings in most other regions and the nation. The mix has always been enough to sell to my enlightened editors (and won't that adjective be a revelation to them.)

When this year's conference agenda brochure arrived, I spied a few story possibilities. Then I checked the anemometers measuring W's Winds of War against Iraq and remembered what risk assessment training taught me about the odds of meeting the snipers who were terrorizing parts of Maryland and Virginia. Fears eased, I headed east.

Day one, as others rose early and climbed aboard buses for all day tours that included surprise Secret Service inspections and fender benders, a flock of us slept until late morning. Then we carefully got on a left-lane loading bus and headed on a half day tour of the Patuxent Research Refuge near Laurel, MD.

First stop at Patuxent was a vernal pool that brought a new twist on the journalistic tradition of looking under rocks. Instead, we lifted boards to look for frogs, snakes and salamanders. I believe two members of our party slipped on the boards. But no human or amphibian was hurt. We then put the critters in clear plastic bags—froggy bags?—and passed them around before releasing our catch.

Next, there was a tour of Patuxent's bird banding lab, from which the nation's bird banders obtain their bands and to which people are asked to report where they have found banded birds that are dead. The lab director gave everyone sample bands, and there was brief talk of people becoming engaged.

The final highlight at Patuxent was a visit to the area where adult whooping cranes (the conference brochure was right, they are whoopers) are encouraged to procreate—so as to supply crane chicks for a non-migrating flock of whoopers in Florida and the migrating flock scientists are training to fly between Wisconsin and Florida. (I saw some of last year's progeny at the Necedah National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin.)

At Patuxent, we met a male whooper named "Lonely" who



had killed at least one mate and was kept in a pen by himself. But Patuxent crane technician Jonathan Male explained (and I have this on audio tape) that Lonely is still a useful breeder. Lonely's semen, Male said, is obtained the following way: "You go in, you grab the bird, turn the bird around, you put the bird between your legs and massage the thighs of the male. Then he gives you a sample. Then you grab the female and she's struggling and you do the same thing, and she relaxes and takes that sample and just will fall at your feet kind of thing."

Print reporters snickered, while I did the radio reporter's standard smile and head nod. I thought that while Mike Royko once alleged PBS had an obsession with the sex lives of insects, public radio listeners in Wisconsin would hear about whoopers making whoopee.

That night, back at the hotel, the juices (competitive) were flowing as SEJ gave out its first environmental reporting awards.

One former radio reporter who now works for a newspaper suggested she had become a "real" journalist working in print. That left some radio reporters to think of ancient and modern cultures that have also valued the oral tradition.

Friday morning brought a plenary session mainly devoted to population and over-consumption. (Slyly, SEJ had not supplied free breakfasts that day.) 86-year-old former Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson proved he is still very quotable and has become an adept book promoter. A later chat with Nelson about his new book led to story number two for back home.

A networking lunch and the latest in SEJ's tradition of small group panels followed. Then, after a late afternoon assurance from Beth Parke and the SEJ Board that the organization's finances had not gone under water, the conferees followed blue SEJ footprints to various hospitality suites offering everything from salmon to suds (Milwaukee-speak for beer.) The more suites one attended, the more those footprints seemed to weave.

That could be why most people chose not to walk and took the SEJ bus to the evening reception at the National Aquarium. I could swear the aquarium's pot-bellied seahorses resembled some male reporters, while the screaming piha--whose males are said to have the loudest voices of any bird in the world-- reminded me of TV anchors I have tried to forget.

For me, Saturday morning brought me an eclectic selection of eggs, pastries and a chat about the eight-hour ozone standard—as the SEJ Beat Breakfast continued its fine tradition of expanding minds and waistlines.

Then it was off to a second day of concurrent sessions. It was a tough choice between critters, cancer clusters and other topics. I chose a discussion on urban sprawl that led to another story (my third one of the conference) when Smart Growth America released a major report the following week.

A second workshop just before lunch introduced me and my tape recorder to a Republican activist who has been pushing green issues throughout the Midwest.

At lunch, we had a lively and balanced discussion of Bush policy and the November elections. Massachusetts Democratic Rep. Ed Markey observed that the president's attitude toward air pollution controls seems to be "regulate softly and carry a big inhaler."

Multiple breaths of fresh air followed as SEJ cranked up the Saturday afternoon mini-tours. Kayaking in the Baltimore harbor had a sign-up list that nearly went off the page. But some of us with rails-to-trails recreation trails in our home states (Wisconsin is number one in r-t-t miles) bused to a bike rental shop and did about 10 miles of biking on the gorgeous North Central Railroad Trail, a ways north of Baltimore. It was a good workout and good reminder that the next federal transportation bill will include a debate over more bucks for bike trails.

Still tender, I made sure to find a padded chair at that night's inaugural SEJ Coffeehouse. Impresario Amy Simmons unearthed some excellent musical talent, including SEJ members Amy Gahrn, Orna Izakson and Richard Milner. The witty David Helvarg gave SEJ a Baltimore chop worthy of Wee Willie Keeler.

Simmons is talking about a coffeehouse repeat at SEJ's next annual conference in New Orleans. Until then, the words of Sunday's Rachel Carson panelist Roland Clement should wear well: "Search, report, keep your head down and remember Rachel Carson."

Chuck Quirnbach reports for Wisconsin Public Radio.

Get this: Freelancer actually liked membership meeting

By CYNTHIA BERGER

I don't know why I'd never been to an SEJ meeting before. Maybe the dates didn't mesh with my schedule, or the department wasn't funding "non-essential" travel that year.

This year, there would be no excuses. As a freelancer, I could set my own schedule. And the 2002 conference was in Baltimore, Maryland—just a short drive from my "electronic cottage" in central Pennsylvania. So the trip wouldn't break my budget.

Looking at the online agenda, I knew I'd have a hard time choosing which sessions to attend. Bioterrorism? Frankenfish? Smart Growth? Hmm, if I volunteered to be cloned, I could attend them all.

Then there were the field trips. I could see the results of a river clean-up firsthand, from the bow of a canoe; commune with endangered whooping cranes at the Patuxent Wildlife Research

Center; or slurp oysters on the half shell while learning about efforts to restore the crusty mollusks to Chesapeake Bay.

I mulled the options as I drove to Baltimore early on Oct. 10 under gray, drizzling skies. At the conference hotel (the Wyndham Inner Harbor) registering and finding my way around was a breeze. Kudos to the conference organizers.

For a freelancer like me, the next three days were heaven. I caught up with old friends and made new contacts at the "Network Lunch" and "Beat Breakfast" sessions, collected an armload of story ideas at the scientific poster session, and—after taking in talks on wetlands, water pollution, and over-fishing—got a chance to talk with real, live scientists, face-to-face, instead of over the phone.

Besides stuffing my brain with enviro-facts, I picked up
(Continued on page 18)



Something fishy in Baltimore

By DAVID HELVARG

I don't mean to be paranoid but has SEJ sold out to the fish Mafia?

I mean how many aquarium receptions can one outfit hold? Plus those dolphins are beginning to make me nervous. Ever wonder what's behind their suspiciously fixed grins?

The jellyfish and invertebrates at the National Aquarium were, I admit, quite lovely and also reminded several members to check in with their editors. Of course what you can't do at SEJ is drink like a fish. With those overpriced no-host bars you have to make a vow of either poverty or sobriety, or else visit the corporate/NGO hospitality suites for free beer and more fish.

Save Our Wild Salmon (for the entrée) made its second annual appearance at SEJ, although this year they were smoked by WWF's Grand Marnier salmon (apparently if you liquor them up they're more likely to spawn).

I'm not saying that the 12th annual conference didn't reaffirm the key role of environmental journalism in American media, provided you're willing to define as an environmental story bomb damage assessments of Iraqi power plants.

This year's conference was located at the elegantly overpriced Wyndham Hotel whose maintenance staff includes deep ecologists morally opposed to elevator and card key technologies.

The Thursday tour I went on included the usual questioning of journalists' qualifications to report on things we know little about. "How many of you have been in an oyster hatchery before?" we were asked, a rather personal question I thought.

After a wet day learning about bivalve-killing diseases they served us a pile of raw oysters. I ate some, but only after politely waiting 10 minutes for my colleague from the *Los Angeles Times* to finish his.

Thursday night we had the rough but heartfelt first annual SEJ journalism awards. Cod knows I don't mean to carp, but "Mercury in Tuna" as a prize winner? Tell me the fish Mafia wasn't involved in that! Nonetheless I predict these awards will soon be known as the Pulitzers of Pollution.

Friday morning Gov. Parris Glendening welcomed us to Maryland and spoke of his commitment to biodiversity, particularly the rehabilitation of lame ducks.

This was followed by a panel of experts talking about what they saw as the "taboos" of environmental journalism which apparently includes overpopulation, consumption and the spread of invasive experts. Nick Eberstadt of the American Enterprise Institute used the old public speaking trick of insulting your audience, suggesting environmental journalists are ignorant of economics. Wall Street analysts by contrast will soon be gaining new insights into predator habitats in places like Lompoc and Atica.

There were a wide variety of panels on topics including Pfiesteria, "Pharm Pollution," Bioterrorism and "Do critters have rights?" (it's a ruff legal argument). There were also skills development sessions like, "Selling the TV Enviro story" ("Julia Roberts brave decision to eat tuna sandwich! Pictures at 11:00") Reporters also had a chance to meet face to face with public affairs people from EPA and DOI talking about the Bush admin-

istration's environmental efforts or, failing that, could go to their rooms and watch two hours of Fox News.

Additional panels ranged from depleted fisheries (if your motto was "Spawn till you die" you would be too) to air pollution and Asthma (including some of the usual hacks) to an insider's look at big environmental groups (from inside the CATO institute that is). Meanwhile it rained catfish and dogfish. They could have renamed their local fish wrap the Baltimore Rain.

I missed the annual SEJ business meeting but when I got home they were plastering my livingroom wall, so I think I got a feel for the exciting parts.

There was a long multi-course lunch session on the Bush administration's environmental policies Saturday. There were also to-go granola bars for those interested in its achievements. Among the administration's new greener policies is the military's replacement of lead bullets with tungsten. They still kill "evildoers" but leave ducks unharmed.

Saturday's mini-tour choices included kayaking past a SuperFund site, visiting urban brownfields or touring old buildings full of lead paint and sick children. Personally, I wanted to opt for the one where you drank arsenic-laced water, then studied the bruising patterns. Instead I went to another fish lab with a "bio-secure" closed system aquaculture project in the basement ("there's no way these walking catfish will ever escape their tanks").

Later we had an SEJ coffee shop and talent show that was bold and impressive without actually crossing the line into lively. I wouldn't argue environmental journalists are inherently more talented, it's just that political and other reporters don't have as much free time to practice.

Luckily we'll need lots of free time to prepare for next year's conference in New Orleans where among other topics, we'll learn about the impact of hurricanes, also Jello shooters and sex on the beach (which can lead to severe erosion of morals).

Due to SEJ bylaws forbidding the organization from holding more than two consecutive conferences in interesting cities, the 2004 conference will be held in Pittsburgh.

"Blue Frontier" author David Helvarg appeared on the panel "Can you make a living writing environmental books?" Donations can be sent via SEJ.

Three elected to board

At the SEJ membership meeting held on Friday, Oct. 11, 2002, in Baltimore, and through absentee voting, SEJ members have re-elected three people to the SEJ board: Peter Fairley, Mark Schleifstein and Carolyn Whetzel.

Also in Baltimore, the board selected its officers for the coming year: Dan Fagin, president; Perry Beeman, first vice president/programs committee chair; Peter Fairley, second vice-president/membership chair; Peter Thomson, treasurer; Carolyn Whetzel, secretary. ❖

Archives as a source of news

By ROBERT MCCLURE

Radioactive waste spread around “as if it were fertilizer.” Fuel burned so that radioactivity was scattered to the winds. Disposal of irradiated goats, mules, dogs and pigs. Humans required to drink radioactive mixtures. A city ready to spend big bucks on a hopelessly contaminated piece of waterfront property.

All this came to light as a result of Lisa Davis’ reporting on the San Francisco Naval Shipyard at Hunter’s Point for *SF Weekly*.

The investigation revealed “troubling evidence that the Navy conducted nuclear research and mishandled radioactive waste on a vastly greater scale than has yet been revealed,” Davis reported in a riveting two-part series in May 2001.

While the investigation required significant amounts of time devoted to interviewing and other traditional journalistic research, it hinged on material Davis found in government archives.

I use archives
for every story.
Reporters who
aren’t using
these are
hamstringing
their careers.

—James Neff
The Seattle Times
they can be helpful on deadline once you are proficient. Neff recalls signing in at an archive early in the first Bush administration as presidential nominees were coming before Congress for confirmation. Scanning the list of those who had signed in earli-

er, Neff saw the name of Bob Woodward. The log showed he had stayed just 40 minutes. Obviously, Woodward has mastered the art of archival research on deadline.

“These materials are so little used,” Neff said. “They are precisely catalogued and they are just vast. They are measured by the cubic foot.”

National parks, universities, historical societies, state governments—the list of entities that maintain these kinds of records goes on and on.

Fifteen regional National Archives centers contain material that is particularly useful to reporters for local or regional news outlets. They are located in Anchorage; Laguna Niguel and San Francisco; Denver, Atlanta; Chicago; Boston and Pittsfield; Kansas City; Lee’s Summit, Mo.; New York City; Dayton, Ohio; Philadelphia; Fort Worth and Seattle. Old federal court files, agency records, census materials and more are located there.

The first thing to learn about archival research is the types of materials you can expect to find. Consult “finding guides” that detail what sorts of records are found in which parts of a collection. Each archive has its own organization system, somewhat akin to its own Dewey Decimal system. Increasingly, finding guides can be located online.

Yes, the material is old, Neff says, but “any time a company or individual is swept into the news, we want to know more about it. ... It’s the same reason we check the civil (court) index for anybody we are backgrounding.”

Ira Chinoy, the *Washington Post* computer-assisted reporting specialist who is teaching and studying at the University of Maryland, is teaching what appears to be the first college course on archival research, focusing on the National Archives.

Chinoy says reporters covering the environment might be able to use archives to illuminate a number of subjects, such as contamination around nuclear facilities or toxic waste dumping. Old aerial photos may reveal a changing coastline or changing patterns of deforestation and urbanization, he suggests.

The two-time Pulitzer winner says of the National

(Continued on page 18)



Some Web sites to get you started:

<http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html> is a comprehensive list of special collections, arranged geographically. You can find out in general what sorts of records are maintained, the volume of material, and who to contact for more information.

<http://www.nara.gov> is the main page of the National Archives and Records Administration, which includes the National Archives in Washington, D.C., and College Park, Md., as well as the fifteen regional NARA facilities. This massive records collection is searchable at http://www.archives.gov/research_room/federal_records_guide/.

http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/c_clctns.html gives location and other information about papers of former members of Congress.

<http://www.hunterinformation.com/corporat.htm> is a directory of corporate archives, from AA World Services, Inc., to the YMCA.

<http://lcweb.loc.gov> is the Library of Congress. Live it, learn it, love it. Neff describes it as “a journalist’s heaven.”

<http://archives.chadwyck.com/> is ArchivesUSA, a commercial service covering more than 5,480 repositories and indexes to 132,396 special collections. You can get a free trial before signing up and paying money.

Rachel Carson...(from page 1)

Award for nonfiction, and Carson was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She was lauded not only for her scientific expertise and synthesis of wide-ranging material but also for her lyrical, poetic voice. The *Sea Around Us* and its best-selling successor, *The Edge of the Sea*, made Rachel Carson the foremost science writer in America. She understood that there was a deep need for writers who could report on and interpret the natural world. Readers around the world found comfort in her clear explanations of complex science, her description of the creation of the seas and her obvious love of the wonders of nature. Hers was a trusted voice in a world riddled by uncertainty.

Whenever she spoke in public, however, she took notice of ominous trends. "Intoxicated with the sense of his own power," she wrote, "[mankind] seems to be going farther and farther into

Can anyone
believe it is
possible to
lay down
such a barrage
of poisons on
the surface
of the earth
without
making it
unfit
for all life?

—Rachel Carson

more experiments for the destruction of himself and his world." Technology, she feared, was moving on a faster trajectory than mankind's sense of moral responsibility. In 1945, she tried to interest *Reader's Digest* in the alarming evidence of environmental damage from the widespread use of the new synthetic chemical DDT and other long-lasting agricultural pesticides. By 1957, Carson believed that these chemicals were potentially harmful to the long-term health of the whole biota. The pollution of the environment by the profligate use of toxic chemicals was the ultimate act of human hubris, a product of ignorance and greed that she felt compelled to bear witness against. She insisted that what science conceived and technology made possible must first be judged for its safety and benefit to the "whole stream of life." "There would no peace for me," she wrote to a friend, "if I kept silent."

Silent Spring, the product of her unrest, deliberately challenged the wisdom of a government that allowed toxic chemicals to be put into the environment before knowing the long-term consequences of their use. Writing in language that everyone could understand and cleverly using the public's knowledge of atomic fallout as a reference point, Carson described how chlorinated hydrocarbons and organic phosphorus insecticides altered the cellular processes of plants, animals and, by implication, humans. Science and technology, she charged, had become the handmaidens of the chemical industry's rush for profits and control of markets. Rather than protecting the public from potential harm, the government not only gave its approval to these new products but did so without establishing any mechanism of accountability. Carson questioned the moral right of government to leaves its citizens unprotected from substances they could neither physically avoid nor publicly question. Such callous arrogance could end

only in the destruction of the living world. "Can anyone believe it is possible to lay down such a barrage of poisons on the surface of the earth without making it unfit for all life?" she asked. "They should not be called 'insecticides' but 'biocides.'"

In *Silent Spring*, and later in testimony before a congressional committee, Carson asserted that one of the most basic human rights must surely be the "right of the citizen to be secure in his own home against the intrusion of poisons applied by other persons." Through ignorance, greed and negligence, government had allowed "poisonous and biologically potent chemicals" to fall "indiscriminately into the hands of persons largely or wholly ignorant of their potentials for harm." When the public protested, it was "fed little tranquilizing pills of half-truth" by a government that refused to take responsibility for or acknowledge evidence of damage. Carson challenged such moral vacuity. "The obligation to endure," she wrote, "gives us the right to know."

In Carson's view, the postwar culture of science that arrogantly claimed dominion over nature was the philosophic root of the problem. Human beings, she insisted, were not in control of nature but simply one of its parts: the survival of one part depended upon the health of all. She protested the "contamination of man's total environment" with substances that accumulate in the tissues of plants, animals and humans and have the potential to alter the genetic structure of organisms....

In 1962, however, the multimillion-dollar industrial chemical industry was not about to allow a former government editor, a female scientist without a Ph.D. or an institutional affiliation, known only for her lyrical books on the sea, to undermine public confidence in its products or to question its integrity. It was clear to the industry that Rachel Carson was a hysterical woman whose alarming view of the future could be ignored or, if necessary, suppressed. She was a "bird and bunny lover," a woman who kept cats and was therefore suspect. She was a romantic "spinster" who was simply overwrought about genetics. In short, Carson was a woman out of control. She had overstepped the bounds of her gender and her science. But just in case her claims did gain an audience, the industry spent a quarter of million dollars to discredit her research and malign her character. In the end, the worst they could say was that she had told only one side of the story and had based her argument on unverifiable case studies.

There is another private side to the controversy over *Silent Spring*. Unbeknown to her detractors in government and industry, Carson was fighting a far more powerful enemy than corporate outrage: a rapidly metastasizing breast cancer. The miracle is that she lived to complete the book at all, enduring a "catalogue of illnesses," as she called it. She was immune to the chemical industry's efforts to malign her; rather, her energies were focused on the challenge of survival in order to bear witness to the truth as she saw it. She intended to disturb and disrupt, and she did so with dignity and deliberation.

After *Silent Spring* caught the attention of President John F. Kennedy, federal and state investigations were launched into the validity of Carson's claims. Communities that had been subjected to aerial spraying of pesticides against their wishes began to organize on a grass-roots level against the continuation of toxic

(Continued on page 12)

Remembering Rachel

Journalist's job: identifying the coming prophets

Editor's note: This is a partial transcript of a speech in October, 2002, by Roland Clement, the first national biologist for the Audubon Society, who previewed the galleys of "Silent Spring" before its publication in 1962 and defended Carson for years against her detractors in the chemical industry. He made these comments at the SEJ Annual Conference in Baltimore.

It's very important to put Rachel in context and this panel has done a wonderful job of putting Rachel in context. When I accepted the invitation I outlined a response and I sent a copy to Linda (Lear, Carson's biographer and another member of this panel). And I said Rachel Carson was a good marine biologist before microbiology necessitated the invention of a term like organismal biology. And Linda said you'd better explain that. Otherwise, they'll think you're a dirty old man. But of course the adjective applies to organ and to organism. So now universities are having to organize departments of organismal biology in order to teach the type of biology I grew up on.

Linda introduced you to the prophetic nature of Rachel. I like to see the prophet as one who reads the implications of the ruling orthodoxy. It's your job to try and identify the coming prophets of our day.

I'm here apparently because I'm one of the last of the environmentalists who knew Rachel Carson, briefly, if you will. Let me tell you about that. I knew Rachel from reading her. I had read the "The Sea Around Us" and I knew she was one of our greatest writers. In 1961, shortly after I joined the National Audubon Society's staff in New York, the retired president...put a set of galleys on my desk. And they were Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring."

He said tell me what you think of this. The publisher has asked us to endorse the book. I read it carefully and I recommended that we endorse the book. But for reasons of their own, the officials of Audubon decided not to stick their necks out....

But, of course, I corresponded with Rachel as a consequence of that manuscript and the book, itself. And in 1963, when Audubon caught up with its neglect and gave Rachel the Audubon medal, at the pre-dinner drinking bout, if you will, in those days, Rachel and I met and we went to the corner of the room and sat down for 10 minutes and compared notes about what had been happening....

Rachel only warned us about the problem. She didn't tell us how to solve it. That's up to us.

In 1950, when she was writing, pesticide sales amounted to \$100 million a year. Today, they're a billion dollars a year.

Shortly, after her book appeared, Sen. Abraham Ribicoff called an important public hearing. And during a break in that hearing...he came to me and said, Clement, if you want us to ban DDT, don't mention exports. So you see the Congress had already settled with the industry that, sure, we're going to ban it in this country, where it's already losing its effectiveness and there's a public reaction against it. But we're not going to get in the way of corporate profits....

And the National Academy of Sciences tried twice to deal

with the controversy and twice failed. And then a third time they organized a traveling symposium. They chartered an airplane and put about thirty of us on it and sent us around the country to look all the pesticides study centers, including corporate and government....On a trip like this after arguing all day, you get on the plane and you fly to the next stop and everyone relaxes. During that relaxed period I learned all the top scientists of industry had not read Rachel's book, although they were arguing against Rachel. Their PR departments had told them this is bad for business so knock this lady all you can.

I spent a dozen years arguing this thesis that Rachel developed for us. ... One of my friends had become a big professor at the University of Maine. He called me and said we're a land grant universityI came everybody was polite. But I was up against four spokesmen for the use of DDT. Everybody said obviously I'm a nice guy but it's too bad I don't understand the implications and I've sort of taken the wrong side. The way we used DDT..it didn't harm anybody and it's rather necessary for agriculture.

It was rather discouraging....

So you people working for the press know what I'm talking about. Your bosses are more interested in selling than in discussing the verities of environmental questions. I have a nice daughter who calls me an "irrational optimist." And in a sense you all are. And I am delighted that you are. I was pleased to learn about this organization. It represents a sense of vision about the possibilities of the future. We are at a low point in our civilization's history but we're in a tremendous transition right now. And it's important to hang in there and try to make people realize what we're up against.

As an old timer, I can tell you that things change. The neo-classical economists dominate the issue. But Joe Stiglitz, one of their own, is now telling them that the Washington consensus on these things is being turned around—globally if not internally as yet.

So it's important to realize that the present system dominates the world. Our hegemony economically and militarily, for instance, is a flawed system. It's built on cheap resources, which we take from other people mostly. It's built on cheap labor, which is why we should all be for a minimum wage. It's built on government subsidies...and it's built on looking the other way while industry pollutes.

Now, all these foundations of our commercial dominance are being questioned. And they will be questioned increasingly in the future because it's beginning to hurt. And this is why it's time to rethink. And the way to rethink is to invite everybody to think.

This is part of your job as journalists, to call attention to the possibilities out there. I know you're struggling under what Ben Bagdikian called the monopoly of the media. And Robert McChesey warned us that big media means poor democracy. But you can discount people like Julian Simon, for example, and the new clone in Sweden, Mr. Lomborg. And if you look around a little bit, you find an Australian named Ross Poole has

(Continued next page)

pollution. Legislation was readied at all governmental levels to defend against a new kind of invisible fallout. The scientists who had claimed a "holy grail" of knowledge were forced to admit a vast ignorance. While Carson knew that one book could not alter the dynamic of the capitalist system, an environmental movement grew from her challenge, led by a public that demanded that science and government be held accountable. Carson remains an example of what one committed individual can do to change the direction of society. She was a revolutionary spokesperson for the rights of all life. She dared to speak out and confront the issue of the destruction of nature and to frame it as a debate over the quality of all life.

Rachel Carson knew before she died that her work had made a difference. She was honored by medals and awards, and posthumously received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1981. But she also knew that the issues she had raised would not be solved quickly or easily and that affluent societies are slow to sacrifice for the good of the whole. It was not until six years after Carson's death that concerned Americans celebrated the first Earth Day and that Congress passed the National Environmental Policy Act establishing the Environmental Protection Agency as a buffer against our own handiwork. The domestic production of DDT was banned, but not its export, ensuring that the pollution of the earth's atmosphere, oceans, streams and wildlife would continue unabated. DDT is found in the livers of birds and fish on every oceanic island on the planet and in the breast milk of every mother. In spite of decades of environmental protest and awareness, and in spite of Rachel Carson's apocalyptic call altering

(Continued...)

written a book explaining why there's so little morality in modernity. And of course it's because the modern system discourages more morality.

So, as an old-timer, I say:

Search.

Report.

Keep your head down.

And remember Rachel.

—Rowland Clement

Americans to the problem of toxic chemicals, reduction of the use of pesticides has been one of the major policy failures of the environmental era. Global contamination is a fact of modern life....

Rachel Carson left us a legacy that not only embraces the future of life, in which she believed so fervently, but sustains the human spirit. She confronted us with the chemical corruption of the globe and called on us to regulate our appetites—a truly revolutionary stance—for our self-preservation. "It seems reasonable to believe," she wrote, "that the more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the universe about us, the less taste we shall have for the destruction of our race. Wonder and humility are wholesome emotions, and they do not exist side by side with a lust for destruction."

Linda Lear is the author of "Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature."

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Prepare for worst...(from page 1)

for environmental coverage and a former environmental writer himself, and environmental reporter Heather Dewar to talk about how *The Sun* produced the award-winning story. Their stories point out how both their newspaper and their city and state officials were unprepared to deal with a chemical accident like the tunnel derailment and fire. Dewar makes a few suggestions on how reporters can be better prepared.

One reporter, who had just arrived from Seattle where tear-gas had been used to break up riots over world trade issues, asked where the newspaper's gas masks were, Wheeler recalled. The newspaper didn't have any.

SEJOURNAL: Tell me about how *The Sun* covered the tank car derailment and tunnel fire.

WHEELER: Word that a train was on fire in the tunnel reached *The Sun* newsroom around 4:30 p.m., about a half-hour before the paper's editors usually meet to determine what stories will be published the next morning. When we flipped on nearby television sets, we saw that TV news cameras already were broadcasting the hellish scene.

Metro Editor Sandy Banisky summoned editors and reporters to the center of the newsroom, where she announced that we would need to respond quickly and in force to what appeared to be a major late-breaking story. More reporters and photographers were promptly dispatched to help out those who were already there or on the way.

As reports began to pour in, the news quickly grew worrisome. At least some of the chemical cargo was hazardous, raising the possibility the fire could be releasing toxic fumes or might trigger a violent explosion. People at the scene reported an acrid odor and burning eyes.

Shortly after 5 p.m., baseball players and fans assembling for an Orioles game that night were ordered to evacuate Camden Yards (the Baltimore Orioles baseball park), near one end of the smoking tunnel. Soon afterward, police began closing major highways into and through downtown, creating gridlock out of an already jammed rush hour....Some TV announcers urged residents of one neighborhood near the tunnel to leave their homes, while firemen asked people to stay indoors, sweltering with windows closed and air conditioners off.

Adding to the confusion—and heightening fear—was the vagueness of information about what the risks were. Fire and emergency officials seemed unable or unwilling to release the train's manifest detailing just what was on board. Environment beat reporter Heather Dewar got on the telephone to see if she could find out from state officials, who are supposed to be notified when hazardous materials are spilled or released into the air.

Of the multi-syllabic chemical names being thrown around at the scene, many of them garbled initially, one was immediately recognizable: hydrochloric acid. With 10 years of experience covering environmental issues before becoming an editor, I knew it was a highly corrosive liquid that could cause severe burns on contact with skin or eyes, and fumes could cause coughing and shortness of breath.

Another chemical name being mentioned was even more troubling: hydrofluoric acid. Used to etch glass and metals, it can burn through skin to destroy bone, cause permanent blindness,

serious damage to lungs, and even death. What's more insidious, skin contact with relatively low concentrations won't cause pain or burning sensations until hours later—by which time serious injuries have already occurred.

Realizing that we could be sending reporters and photographers into harm's way, I warned Sandy that we did not know for sure what was on the train, but that there could be some very dangerous substances leaking or burning. I urged her to tell all of our staff on the streets to exercise caution, and to leave the scene promptly and seek medical help if they felt any burning or had trouble breathing. But I recognized that those instructions would do little to protect our people if they were enveloped in an acid-vapor cloud.

Like many news organizations, we'd never planned for covering a chemical emergency. We had had plenty of practice scrambling to cover weather disasters—blizzards, hurricanes and tornadoes. We even had a plan, though it was badly outdated, for covering an airplane crash at Baltimore-Washington International airport. But nothing like this.

With about two dozen reporters on the streets or working telephones, we pulled together enough information to write four stories about the fire and its impact for the next day's paper. One of those stories, on the tunnel's history, noted that fire officials had acknowledged more than 15 years ago that they worried about the risks of shipping hazardous materials underneath the city by rail. "The problem would be just getting in there to fight the fire," a federal transportation safety official had said. "If you had an explosion, fire could shoot out both ends like a bazooka."

There were no explosions, but the heat inside the tunnel soared to 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit. At least 22 people, including two firefighters with chest pains, were treated at hospitals, most for respiratory or eye irritation. But officials assured Dewar, our environment reporter, that air monitors had not detected any toxic fumes emanating from the tunnel.

As the underground fire continued to burn out of control into the night, though, we still didn't know exactly what chemicals the train had been hauling. Our police reporter on the scene—more used to dealing with shootings than chemistry—managed to get a verbal rundown from officials in the emergency command post, but the chemical names he called in were garbled. With the deadline looming, I finally got a spokesman for the railroad on the phone and convinced him to read the train's manifest to me—enabling us to report that nine of the 60 rail cars carried chemicals.

We ran a box in the next day's paper listing the six different compounds and their potential dangers to people. Instead of carrying hydrofluoric acid, the train had two tankers full of fluorosilicic acid—often added to drinking water supplies to prevent tooth decay. This substance can still be extremely toxic, causing severe burns if it is inhaled or touches skin.

With no information that toxic chemicals were leaking or burning that first night, our stories the next morning skirted the issue. None of the headlines, or subheads, talked about threats to the public, except to characterize the train's cargo as "toxic" and "dangerous." The top of the main story focused on the disruption caused by the fire and water-main break before identifying the chemicals on the train and briefly mentioning what harm they

(Continued on next page)



Firemen outside Howard Street tunnel in downtown Baltimore

could do. A state environmental official was quoted saying that air monitors at both ends of the tunnel had picked up no whiffs of either acid or other “compounds of concern.”

The fire raged on for four more days, and our reporters maintained a round-the-clock vigil outside the tunnel while we published three or four stories a day on the struggle to control the blaze. In the end, although one car of chemicals was consumed by flames, and another tanker full of hydrochloric acid leaked, though downtown traffic and commerce were disrupted, no one was killed or disabled by the fire. Many breathed a sigh of relief, saying it could have been much worse.

On the fire’s second day, we reported that the train that had derailed and caught fire was just one of countless shipments of hazardous materials that pass unheralded through the city by rail. After the crisis was past, we found that the city’s plan for dealing with chemical leaks and fires, though mandated by federal law, was woefully inadequate; for example, it didn’t even mention the underground rail tunnels. Fire officials, who had refused to let us see the plan during the five-day emergency, acknowledged afterward that they had never consulted it.

Our reporting on the cleanup from the tunnel fire, and the search for clues to what caused it, continued through the rest of the summer. There were two sequels to the train fire—a small chemical fire in a pharmaceutical factory that forced nearby residents to evacuate, and an underground explosion of chemicals that had apparently leaked into sewers from the derailed train weeks before. We began looking into the potential risks to the community from the many hazardous chemicals that are stored and used at factories and water and sewage plants around the Baltimore area. Our environment reporter had proposed months earlier writing about the “worst case” chemical accident scenarios on file with the government, but until this disaster, this important story was not

one we’d devoted much time or space to telling.

Before we could get that story into the newspaper, though, Sept. 11 raised new fears about terrorists targeting chemical plants and shipments. Our environment reporter completely overhauled her lengthy investigative piece to focus on those threats as well as the far more likely dangers from accidents. By then, however, many in the public were more concerned about giving terrorists ideas than about being warned of hazards they lived with. Her two-page package and bulls-eye map of chemical danger zones that appeared in October 2001 elicited complaints as well as praise, even though we withheld significant details about the nature and locations of the chemicals stockpiled in our area.

The blanket coverage we’d given our city’s tunnel fire proved to be a good newsroom rehearsal for the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks when we dispatched teams of reporters to New York and Washington to respond to that disaster. Again, we gave little thought to the environmental health hazards reporters might face at Ground Zero—concerns that firefighters and emergency workers have since raised.

Since those disasters, the paper’s top editors have devised a plan for publishing in the event the downtown newsroom or our remote printing plant are unusable, whether because of fire, flooding or some act of terrorism. But we have yet to draft a similar blueprint for covering chemical emergencies, in part because the daily drumbeat of news has denied us the luxury of time to reflect on it. Also, it would be very difficult to put on paper all the different disaster scenarios that might unfold or to envision how we would cover each one.

Perhaps the best preparation for covering unexpected—but not unanticipated—environmental calamities like the train fire is to have people on staff, either environment beat reporters or research librarians, who know the issues and how to get technical

information quickly. Beyond that, it helps to have good relationships with scientists at the local colleges and universities, whom you can consult for quickie courses on chemistry and toxicology, among other things.

SEJOURNAL: Heather, getting information on a breaking story like this can be difficult. What did you do?

DEWAR: It wasn't that difficult to find out what was on the train. I talked to the second in command of the emergency response team. He was someone whom I dealt with pretty frequently. I had his cell phone (number) and pager.

There was a delay in getting the manifest from CSX and I am not sure I remember the reason why... I was getting conflicting confirmation from the beginning but later in the evening, maybe about three or four hours later, there was a press conference at which there was a poster-sized blow up of the manifest. We had the photographer take a picture of it.

My part of the story was not on the train, it was whether the city had a response plan and whether they were following it.

They did have an emergency response plan, but it had not been upgraded in years, and it didn't even mention the tunnel. We kept asking the city for a copy of the plan and they said there was only one copy and it was in use. There were supposed to be copies in other places, like the hospitals.

I found one in the public library. I copied part of it. It was about 400 pages, so the newsroom sent down an intern with lots of quarters and we made a copy. When I read it, it was out of date and they had no plans for responding to such an accident (as the train derailment in the tunnel.)

We did a story on that. The mayor was furious. They were furious with us for reporting that because the line—the official reading of what this accident was all about—was it was a dangerous situation and firefighters had acted heroically to put out this fire. They did act heroically. No one wanted to hear that the fire department was not as prepared as they should have been. There should have been preparations. It was predictable and it should have been prepared for.

The city has always been a city of dirty industry and dangerous industry. There are a lot of chemical plants in the southeastern portion of the city... The last few years, emergency response had not gotten a lot of attention. The assistant chief in charge of emergency response had other duties, like investigating fires... The city didn't have a single full-time person assigned to emergencies. The chemical companies did their own safety. The result was that response was left in the hands of the companies.

SEJOURNAL: Tell me about the follow-up stories you did, especially using the RMPs (Risk Management Plans, required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Risk Management Plans outlined the potential impact of chemical leaks and accidents from plant sites):

DEWAR: I looked at worst-case scenarios...and the most likely (accident) scenarios. We were interested in what chemicals were reported in the city, what the risks were. The scenarios showed again that to say there was no plan was an understatement. There are industrial areas surrounded by blue-collar neighborhoods. There are rail lines that run alongside Camden Yards and run through the middle of the city.

One of the (worst-case) scenarios was a chlorine tank failure that could happen during a baseball game. One of the things that

did happen (in the derailment aftermath) was CSX agreed not to run chemical trains through the tunnel while the baseball game was going on.

The city didn't take it (lack of planning for hazardous chemical accidents) seriously—until Sept. 11th.

I had finished (the RMP-scenario based) story the Sunday (before Sept. 11). It was about a 70-inch story about what chemicals were out there and what the scenarios showed. We reworked them into a story about how everyone assessed the risk of chemical terrorism. Everyone agreed there was a problem.

After the RMP info ran, the mayor put together a group to look at security. There was security around the plant perimeters, but there was not much security along rail lines and rail yards. There is still a large network of rail sidings with lots and lots of tank cars. Now there's better security in the plants and they keep the chemical cars on site when deliveries are made. But they still don't have an evacuation plan. They still don't work well with the hospitals.

There is a local emergency planning committee, but the drills are small in scope. A few years ago they did a drill with a chlorine tank car leaking on a siding. But it was surrounded by plants all around. They never did a drill on a tunnel fire, or a major accident on I-95 or the city's beltway.

No one had any idea what kinds of chemicals go through the town on those lines... The Maryland Department of the Environment now has a more specific idea. They have updated their chemical emergency response plans.

SEJOURNAL: What are some of the things you wish you had done before the accidents? What are things reporters can do before the accident happens?

DEWAR: Do something we didn't do—have a copy of the emergency response plan in the newsroom. We now have an up-to-date copy and it gives a rough approximation of what is stored where.

Know who the emergency response people are, in advance, both at the state and city level and have pager and cell phone numbers. I already had a good relationship with them and it helped.

Know how to access Material Safety Data Sheets and how to read them and what information they can give you. (MSDSs are designed to give workers emergency and health information on toxic substances.)

Have something like an OSHA (Occupational Health and Safety Administration) chemical manual, something that will give you a rough idea of what the hazards are of a chemical. Have something that will explain the signage used on tank cars and trucks.

Timothy Wheeler handles *The (Baltimore) Sun's* environmental coverage as an editor supervising the paper's science, medicine and other specialty beats. He spent a decade covering the environment during 16 years as a reporter at *The Sun* and its afternoon counterpart, *The Evening Sun*. He can be contacted at tbwheeler@aol.com

Heather Dewar is on leave from *The Sun* while she works on a master's degree in science writing at Johns Hopkins University. Heather can be reached at hdewar@earthlink.net

Mike Dunne is environment reporter at The (Baton Rouge) Advocate.

The Hydrogen Economy: The Creation of the Worldwide Energy Web and the Redistribution of Power on Earth.

By Jeremy Rifkin.

Tarcher/Putnam. 295 pages. \$24.95

During the OPEC oil embargo of the 1970s, Americans got a sense of just how handcuffed their economy can be by a Middle East cartel.

A generation later, though, it's questionable whether that message ever made a lasting impression. Even with the yo-yo price fluctuations of late, fears about gas shortages have by and large faded with our memory of those long lines at the pump.

What makes Jeremy Rifkin's new book fascinating is that it is forward-thinking, yet timely with a look at issues that have arisen since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. It's also comprehensive as an historical overview of the global energy inequities.

"We are increasingly vulnerable to threats and disruptions from without and within, making this moment in post-industrial history the most precarious in memory," he writes.

When I started reading "The Hydrogen Economy," I would have been satisfied if it had just whetted my appetite more about the hot topic of hydrogen fuel cells—one which I hope to explore in greater detail as my mid-life career progresses.

It quickly became apparent this is more than a book about fuel cells.

First, it's an ambitious, panoramic view of how the world's energy history was shaped by its geography, politics, balance of power, industrial advances and, yes, even its religions.

Then, Rifkin makes a good case for why market forces and continued globalization will make fuel cell technology inevitable, despite the enormous start-up costs.

His long-range forecast for America is bleak if the warning signals about oil, coal, natural gas and other fossil fuels are not heeded in time, while he is encouraged about the potential hydrogen fuel cells have for leveling out the playing field and spreading wealth among nations.

Rifkin, an author of many previous books, is president of the Washington-based Foundation on Economic Trends and is an internationally-known social critic who has served as a lecturer and government and corporate advisor.

What he has crafted with "The Hydrogen Economy" is a work that is probing and intense, yet perhaps a bit too academic and scholarly at times to latch onto the layman.

He shows how the Industrial Revolution led to a reliance on fossil fuels. He delves into the relationship between oil and Islamic fundamentalism, explaining why religion and oil do indeed mix in the Middle East.

The breadth of Rifkin's reporting is fascinating and impressive, yet the number of elements he pulls together to set up his argument can be distracting and top-heavy. This is a book capable of both enamoring and frustrating you. The meat-and-potatoes discussion about fuel cells comes more than halfway through the book.

Still, it provides the necessary vision that environmental writers need, especially after learning that 85 percent of the

world's energy comes from fossil fuels—40 percent oil, 23 percent natural gas and 22 percent coal.

Plus, as Rifkin notes, experts believe the "golden age of oil has already passed" because only 41 sizeable oil fields have been discovered since 1980, while consumption keeps growing.

It's not just the obvious consumer-driven goods such as sport utility vehicles and air conditioning that are sapping those resources: In one part of the book, the author points out that the world's food supply would not be nearly as plentiful as it is without all the oil used to power farm machinery, fertilize land, fend off insects and transport goods to metropolitan areas.

Rifkin shows how a hydrogen-based economy could result in as much impact on society as coal and steam power did at the beginning of the Industrial Age. Dry as the topic might sound, his book provides the kind of forest-from-the-trees perspective journalists can use to help visualize an emerging issue.

—Tom Henry, *Toledo Blade*



**PACIFIC HIGH:
ADVENTURES IN THE COAST RANGES FROM BAJA TO ALASKA**

By Tim Palmer

Island Press, 468 pp. \$28.00

WATERSHED—THE UNDAMMING OF AMERICA

By Elizabeth Grossman

Counterpoint, 238 pp. \$26.00

When scuba diving you're often whipsawed between the macro and the micro, between looking out across sand, reef and kelp forest at big pelagic intruders or getting entranced by small bits of natural aquaria filled with gem-like interactions of life.

Environmental literature often reads like that, either taking on vast tracts of territory, or else concentrating on quite detailed subsets of issues and conflicts.

In "Pacific High," Tim Palmer goes for the macro, covering the 3,600 miles of the Pacific Coast mountain range from Baja to Alaska, following spring north in a nine-month sojourn with his wife Ann in their tricked out camper van, a kind of yurt on wheels complete with canoes, kayak, mountain bike, computer and Coleman stove.

He writes of their travels of discovery in a crisp, craftsman-like style with few literary pretensions although he's not above telling us how "Jellyfish like colorless gelatin pizzas blobbed in the waves" of Baja or discussing the "vagaries of mountain morphology" in which Alaskan flowers bloom "in curvilinear mosaics." At heart, however, this is a book about the journey more than the scribe.

He covers much territory that I've been privileged to live in, hike, drive and sail and manages to acquaint the reader with wild and not so wild places from San Ignacio to Malibu, Eureka to Icy Strait with many a side trip into the realms of air quality, ecology, immigration, earthquakes, logging, sprawl and the Pacific upthrust.

Unfortunately as we go over hill and dale with Tim and Ann we sometimes begin to feel like we're with good friends who've

just returned from a fabulous, exotic vacation and brought back 700 slides they're anxious to share with us. Sometimes less is more, and an editorial trail diet designed to slim this volume down would not have been unkind to the trees.

Despite Palmer's obvious dedication to protecting the many landscapes, watersheds and ecosystems they encounter along the coastal range, theirs is at heart a transitory tale, a point he willingly acknowledges in appreciative descriptions of various parochial activists fighting to preserve their home patches of mountainscape and culture.

Still, while the coastal range is an under-appreciated physical phenomenon, it is both too large a geological reality to face a unifying threat and too vague a territory to arouse the strong passions of a single mountain range like the Sierra Nevada or almost any large patch of water, be it sweet or salty.

Certainly one of the more charismatic characters found in both Palmer's book and Elizabeth Grossman's "Watershed—The Undamming of America" is that heroic, Homeric traveler of seas and conqueror of rivers, the migratory salmon.

The salmon is to the Pacific Northwest what the bald eagle is to the nation as a whole, a living symbol of courage, tenacity and identity. Unfortunately, between logging, development and the damming of almost every major river in America, wild salmon are going extinct throughout much of their historic range.

Scientists have determined that removal of four marginally productive dams on the Snake River in Eastern Washington would be the most effective way to restore salmon runs on the Columbia and the Snake. But in the 2000 election campaign George W. Bush stated his opposition to breaching the dams, while Al Gore, waffling like a spent fish, promised to instead hold a Northwest "salmon summit."

The story of the lower Snake River Dams and the conflict over taking them down is one of ten fascinating tales in Grossman's "Watershed." What her book isn't is a history of (the approximately 75,000) dams in America, the Herculean efforts required to build them and the slow realization of their limits as sources of energy, recreation and irrigation.

Rather this book is about the ecological and social benefits derived from removing those dams that are no longer serving much purpose other than straight-jacketing rivers and killing fish. "...slowly, we are relearning what a river is and how to live with one," Grossman explains. This year 63 dams in 16 states will be removed, the most dramatic and visible sign of a river revival movement that is gaining momentum as fast as a rocky chute into a class-four rapids.

Grossman takes the reader across America on a journey from the immediate past (the breaching of the Edwards Dam on Maine's Kennebec in 1999) to the still visionary future (the late Dave Brower's ongoing campaign to tear down Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado and return Lake Powell's waters to the river).

"In early 2001, wild baby salmon hatched and swam in a stretch of the Kennebec that is flowing freely for the first time in over 160 years," she reports from the field, canoe, trail and pickup truck as she travels on and in various rivers and river communities that have begun to realize that by saving salmon, shad, alewife, striped bass, sturgeon and other fish, they're also saving

themselves.

Of course, as with any human endeavor there's also conflict and fear to report, the loss of the familiar (flatwater reservoirs good for jet skiing) and the danger of the unknown (many small dams were built for flood control). And there's the unique fun of deconstruction for restoration.

"Most of the rural people don't like the federal government, but love the military," she quotes a Fish & Wildlife biologist who witnessed the Marines blowing up a North Carolina dam as part of a military training exercise. "The thing about explosives" he chuckled, "is people really enjoy them."

And clearly Elizabeth Grossman really enjoys telling stories of how cautious, pragmatic but determined efforts to restore damaged ecosystems can provide us both hope and benefit.

She tells of eating wild salmon at a barbecue and a friend's joke that "Environmentalists eat endangered species." But of course that's the aim, to restore fish that are handsome and admirable, plentiful and delicious to eat. Also to be able to have wild mountain ranges to travel during an endless spring of discovery and Pacific romance, or even just to know that there are books out there whose recounting of nature's work may inspire others to join in.

—David Helvarg, *BookShelf* editor



A PLAGUE OF RATS AND RUBBER VINES—THE GROWING THREAT OF SPECIES INVASIONS

By Yvonne Baskin

Island Press/Shearwater Books 2002

In a world shrinking because of an increase in global trade and travel, the economic and ecological impacts wrought by invasive species can no longer be ignored. In some cases, it may already be too late to react.

That's the premise of "A Plague of Rats and Rubber Vines—The Growing Threat of Species Invasions," by Yvonne Baskin. Baskin, a Montana-based science writer and author of a 1997 book, "The Work of Nature," who paints an occasionally grim picture of how humans have diluted, mixed and meddled with the planet's biological wealth, often with troubling consequences.

Written in an easy-to-read style, Baskin makes her case using plentiful examples, from the so-called Cinderella Snail that once promised economic miracles in the Philippines yet managed the opposite, to the dreaded zebra mussel, the tenacious Kudzu vine and the vanishing iguana. She writes candidly and authoritatively on the propagation of feral goats overrunning parts of the Galapagos Islands, and the common house sparrow that lived and bred innocuously in Europe, but "exploded" upon arrival in North America and New Zealand.

As she put it, "Take the house sparrow, a rather sedentary bird that fledges three to five chicks each year in its European homeland. What formula could have warned the acclimatizers and their like—had they cared—that this sparrow would rapidly take much of the New World by storm? Yet nineteenth century observers reported sparrow pairs producing 24 fledglings per year as the birds exploded across North America, and 31 fledglings per year in New Zealand."

In the Galapagos National Park, feral dog packs were killing

off the iguana population in the late 1970s. It prompted a captive-breeding program to bring back their numbers. Baskin noted that “few of the nitty-gritty details of reptile husbandry were known then, such as how to get males to breed with females instead of killing them, and how long and at what temperature to incubate iguana eggs.” Studies of free-living iguanas helped provide the answers. Further, many of the dogs, pigs, cats and rats preying on the iguanas were eliminated, but such eradication efforts are becoming increasingly more difficult. Sharpshooters have now been hired to reduce the goat population.

On a small island east of Auckland, the author and a companion peered under thickets to catch sight of a kokako, New Zealand’s largest surviving native songbird. According to Baskin, the kokako belongs to an ancient family of wattlebirds that exist only there, yet her foray into the bush ended before she had heard its organ-like call. Such an observation might easily have been forgotten by the reader, considering the book is laden with examples of decreasing biodiversity, but Baskin relied on popular culture to cement her point. “The kokako’s song reverberates through the sound track of director Jane Campion’s 1994 Oscar-winning movie, “The Piano,” which portrays British colonists carving out a settlement in New Zealand’s primeval forests in the 1850s,” she wrote. “In that era, male and female kokako regularly greeted the dawn with resounding and complex duets. These days, seeing or hearing a kokako in the remnants of those forests is rare.”

For environmental journalists looking to grasp the concept of invasive species in a way that might be easily conveyed to their readers, this book is a necessity. “A Plague of Rats and Rubber Vines” is both reference tool and map for what is being done to

Archives...(from page 9)

Archives: “There are Pulitzer prizes and PhD dissertations buried in that place.”

Chinoy’s tips for using archives:

- Because of the way some archives are organized, you may have to think about your subject differently. For instance, the National Archives are not organized by subject, but rather by “provenance”—the agency that generated the records. So if you’re working on something about toxic waste, you may have to consult sections on the EPA, Army, FBI and so on.
- Don’t expect to do this kind of research in a hurry.
- Know ahead of time from using secondary sources—books, memoirs, newspaper stories, scholarly journals and reference books, for example—to outline historical context that will help you recognize the significance of documents, photographs, films, maps and other materials you encounter. Neff, for example, found pictures of President Nixon shaking hands with known mobsters. But that took tedious work looking through a magnifying glass at the day-to-day contact sheets of White House photographers—the grip-and-grin stuff.
- Archives have strict rules for handling records. Learn them and follow them.

Robert McClure covers environmental affairs for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

help nature fight off the introduction of plants and animals in regions where they have no place being. Baskin quotes Donald Kennedy from a 2001 article in the journal *Science*: “Modest gestures have been made, such as special laws regarding ballast pumping and used tire inspection. But there is neither a general strategy for dealing with these invaders nor a widespread awareness of our vulnerability. We have made the globe a biological Cuisinart, and we will either have to deal with the consequences or use our scientific capacity to improve forecasting and monitoring.”

Baskin acknowledges that some governments are taking steps to thwart the impact of invasive species by adopting new regulations on importation, and by funding efforts to bring problem species under control. Still, mistakes are made daily at airport and dockside customs desks which allow invasive species to enter regions amid nursery stock, eventually establishing themselves where they don’t belong and could cause catastrophic problems. Seed packages sold by international companies routinely cross over political borders without ecological concern. Planes, trains and automobiles all contribute to this process.

Certainly the problem of invasive species differs by region, but the effects are measurable and, in most cases, the culprits can be traced back to their point of origin. It’s here that the environmental journalist can play a major role, partnering with biologists to identify the invaders and increasing the level of public awareness. After all, a species invasion can begin innocently enough with grandma tucking a few green shoots into her pocketbook while visiting relatives in Cambodia, and replanting them upon returning home to St. Louis.

—David Liscio, freelance journalist

Actually liked...(from page 7)

useful tips on “how to get your environmental book published” at one of several sessions on “the craft” of environmental reporting. As for the field trips, I ended up touring several sites connected with the Baltimore Long-term Ecological Research Project—something I’d written about but never before seen.

In retrospect, though, the annual membership meeting made the biggest impression on me.

I know, I know—this realization surprised me, too. The meeting agenda was hardly earthshaking. After listening to reports on the society’s financial status, membership and program plans, we cast votes for new members of the board of directors.

When you work alone, as I do, it’s easy to slip into feeling that you ARE alone. The business meeting—more than the overall conference—reminded me that I’m part of a larger community. Seeing the officers and board members—people who, until then, had just been names on a page, made me reflect about all the hard work that went into the conference and all the human effort that’s behind SEJ resources like the *Tipsheet*, the SEJ web site, the *SEJournal*.

These resources are delivered to my workplace reliably and seamlessly, week after week, like electricity or running water. Like electricity and running water, they’re something I’ve come to depend on. Like water and electricity, they’re easy to take for granted. Not any more.

—Cynthia Berger

Society of Environmental Journalists Awards for Reporting on the Environment Contest Entry Form—Must be postmarked by APRIL 1, 2003

Each of your entry's five copies must have a copy of this form attached to the front. For complete rules and FAQs, see www.sej.org.

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- Outstanding Small Market Reporting, Broadcast**: up to four stories, broadcast on TV or radio stations, syndicates or networks, in markets collectively under 1 million households.
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For group entries, please indicate how you prefer the cash award to be divided:

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I certify that this entry is complete and complies with all rules of the contest, and that the work was published or aired between March 1, 2002 and Feb. 28, 2003. I acknowledge that incomplete or ineligible entries may be rejected by the Awards Committee.

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Many thanks and good luck with the contest!

Journalists, submit your stories to the SEJ-BEAT listserv by visiting www.sej.org and clicking the *EJToday* link. When you're there, select the "Submit a story" option.

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ALASKA

► **Wilderness or wasteland?** Some view the 19.8 million-acre Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as wilderness habitat for a spectacular diversity of wildlife. To disturb this unique area would be a crime. Others see a desolate landscape inaccessible to most people. To not extract oil beneath the refuge's coastal plain would be a waste. So which is it—wilderness or wasteland? Amy Gulick did a 21-day web-cast from the Arctic Refuge and Prudhoe Bay to explore the controversial oil debate. The story won a 2002 Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Award presented by the Society of American Travel Writers Foundation. Contact her at info@amygulick.com. See the story at <http://www.oneearthadventures.com>.

ARKANSAS

► **Arkansas spurns plan for colony of cats:** Arkansas officials want no part of a plan to expand the Florida panther population into wilderness areas outside of Florida, especially if it means bringing the endangered species back to the Ozark and Ouachita mountains. Amy Schlesing of *The Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* reported that story on Oct. 28. See the story at http://www.nwanews.com/adg/story_arkansas.php?storyid=10282

CALIFORNIA

► **Atrazine questioned:** One of the most widely used pesticides in the United States appears to be causing developmental defects in a common Midwestern frog, according to a new study that has sparked a debate over a chemical long considered environmentally safe. University of California—Berkeley biologist Tyrone B. Hayes reported that the study is the first

evidence from field studies to show a link between atrazine and health problems in a native species of amphibian in the United States. The *San Francisco Chronicle's* Carl Hall wrote the story Oct. 31. Contact him at carlhall@sfchronicle.com. See the story at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2002/10/31/MN126536.DTL>

COLORADO

► **Cloud seeding approved:** State officials reluctantly okayed Denver Water's request to launch a massive cloud-seeding program this winter, but called the project scientifically questionable and likely to detract from the state's need for more water-storage reservoirs. The Nov. 5 story was written by Garden Editor Jerd Smith of the *Rocky Mountain News*. Contact him at (303)-892-2301 or smithj@RockyMountainNews.com. See the story at http://www.rockymountainnews.com/drmn/local/article/0,1299,DRM_N_15_1524392,00.html

GEORGIA

► **Sludge studies:** University of Georgia microbiologist David Lewis clashed with the EPA this year when he published studies linking human illness with land application of municipal sewage sludge. He found people living near fields spread with Class B biosolids had an increased risk of *Staphylococcus aureus* infections. Lewis claims the EPA, which disputes his findings, is too cozy with the sludge industry. Indeed, public documents show the EPA paid more than \$660,000 in grants to an industry lobbying group for a "National Biosolids Public Acceptance Campaign." Debbie Gilbert wrote this story Aug. 19 for *The Times* in Gainesville. Coverage also included a sidebar on Gainesville, one of the few Georgia communities that composts its municipal sludge. Debbie can be reached at dgilbert@gainesvilletimes.com or (770) 532-1234, ext. 254.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

► **Polluters pay less:** Polluters have paid 64 percent less in fines for breaking federal environmental rules under the Bush administration than they did in the final two years of the Clinton administration. The Bush administration is forcing fewer polluters to pay fines and the penal-

ties are much smaller. Contact Knight Ridder News Service's Seth Borenstein for details on the Nov. 5 story. Reach him at sborenstein@krwashington.com or (202) 383-6102.

► **NEPA under fire:** Elizabeth Shogren of the *Los Angeles Times'* Washington Bureau reported on Nov. 3 that the Bush administration is working to prevent environmental impact statements from blocking or stalling energy production, logging and other controversial uses of federal lands and waters. The administration is making the case that the National Environmental Policy Act applies only to activities that could potentially cause major environmental damage. See the story at: <http://www.latimes.com/la-na-nepa3nov03,0,6728908.story>.

FLORIDA

► **Manatee promise broken?:** Two years ago, Gov. Jeb Bush thrilled environmentalists when he promised to beef up protection for manatees, which he called "my favorite mammal." But now, wildlife advocacy groups say the governor has failed to deliver. The groups say Bush promised to add more law enforcement officers to keep speeding boaters from hitting manatees, but hasn't done so. Julie Hauserman of the *St. Petersburg Times's* Tallahassee Bureau reported the story Oct. 18. Contact her at (850) 224-7263. See the story at: http://www.sptimes.com/2002/10/18/State/Manatee_groups_say_Bu.shtml.

IDAHO

► **Water war:** The State of Idaho and the U.S. Forest Service are in mediation over who gets limited water. At stake is the amount of water available for fish and more than 20,000 floaters on rivers designated wild and scenic by Congress. Also at issue is the fate of up to 3,000 rights to use water for irrigation, mining, hydroelectric power, drinking, cleaning and industrial purposes from Stanley to Leadore. An Idaho Supreme Court decision in 2000 said Congress reserved to the federal government rights to water when it declared six Central Idaho rivers as wild and scenic. A state judge ordered the state and the U.S. Forest Service to participate in mediation to quantify how much water is legally reserved. Rocky Barker reported the story for the *Idaho Statesman* Aug. 19. Contact

him at (208) 377-6484 or rbarker@idahostatesman.com. See the story at <http://www.idahostatesman.com/story.asp?ID=18032>.

IOWA

► **Hog scents:** An Iowa county forged a voluntary agreement with farm groups that has kept new hog confinements farther away from homes than state law requires, *The Des Moines Register's* Perry Beeman and Lynn Okamoto reported Oct. 20. The Palo Alto county good-neighbor policy, which even turned up in the campaign for governor, has applied to dozens of new projects. Everyone seems to agree it would never stand up in court, but it works, anyway. Call Perry Beeman, (515) 284-8538 or email at pbeeman@dmreg.com.

► **Yellowstone Park controversy:** U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Ia., demanded an explanation when an Iowan who is one of Yellowstone Park's veteran seasonal rangers lost his job after complaining about bison-poaching in the park, *The Des Moines Register* reported Oct. 16. Robert Jackson is well known in the Yellowstone area for his fight against "salting," which is used to lure elk from the inner parts of the park closer to the borders, where hunters pay big fees for the chance to shoot them. Jackson typically works during the fall hunting season, but wasn't invited back this year despite a settlement he reached with the park service earlier. The remains of the dead elk draw bears to more-populated areas, endangering both the bears and people, Grassley charged. He demanded an explanation from Interior Secretary Gale Norton, who didn't immediately offer one. Contact Perry Beeman, (515) 284-8538 or pbeeman@dmreg.com.

► **E. coli bacteria:** A series of water samples taken by *The Des Moines Register's* Perry Beeman and analyzed by the state's certified laboratory found potentially dangerous E. coli bacteria capable of fighting off common antibiotics are present in some state-park swimming areas, the *Register* reported Aug. 4. Results of water-testing by the *Des Moines Sunday Register* are the first indication—although a small one—that so-called superbugs are spreading to Iowa's recreational lakes. Many doctors and scientists have warned for years that the overuse of antibiotics in people and livestock will breed bacteria that will mutate to resist the most common and successful of those drugs. People sick with illnesses that have been fairly easy to handle could find themselves sicker and harder to treat. Infections could last longer and force doctors to try several medicines to find one that works. Contact Perry Beeman at (515) 284-8538 or pbeeman@dmreg.com

► **Water quality:** Iowa will shelve plans for special pollution limits in 111 waterways because state law limits the data water experts can use to classify them as "impaired," *The Des Moines Register* reported Aug. 20. That means Iowans could face health threats, higher water-treatment costs and smaller stringers of fish. John Olson, a water-quality worker for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said most of the 111 lakes, rivers and wetlands taken off the state's impaired-waters list probably are seriously polluted, but data are lacking. They were on a 1998 list of 157 waterways reported to federal authorities but not on the updated list released Monday. Call Perry Beeman, (515) 284-8538 or pbeeman@dmreg.com.

KENTUCKY

► **Coughing in Kentucky:** The 2002 smog season went down as among metro Louisville's worst in recent years, according to preliminary data from Kentucky and Jefferson County agencies. The measurements of ground-level ozone exceeded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's most restrictive standard 78 times over 26 days, the data show. By comparison, it exceeded that standard just 10 times on seven days in 2001 and 19 times on 10 days in 2000. Louisville *Courier Journal's* Jim Bruggers reported the story Oct. 24. Contact him at jbruggers@courier-journal.com. See the story at <http://www.courier-journal.com/localnews/2002/10/24/ke102402s300866.htm>.

NEW YORK

► **New York air woes:** The state's air quality was worse this past summer than any other year since the state began tracking it in 1996, based on a report released Thursday by the American Lung Association of New York State. *Albany Times-Union* reporter Claire Hughes wrote the story Nov. 8. Contact her at chughes@timesunion.com. See the story at <http://www.timeunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=70195&category=FRONT&BCCCode=HOME&newsdate=11/8/2002>.

MAINE

► **Contaminated water:** TCE was detected in the groundwater around the town office in Glenburn, Maine. The town office is the site of a former Air Force Radar Tracking Facility affiliated with a missile launch site in Bangor, Maine. While the military has yet to accept responsibility for the contamination, low-levels of TCE persist in the groundwater used by nearby homes for drinking water. The story describes the contamination, why nothing is being done about it and how TCE might have gotten into the groundwater, and also addressed contamination from the military on a statewide scale. A second feature is a profile of Tammy Collins, a resident of a mobile home located next to the town office where TCE has been detected. Collins is concerned about her family's health and frustrated by the response of government officials. A third piece focuses on the history of the missile launch site. The Sept.-Oct issue of the paper is available online at www.mainecommons.org. Contact author Catherine V. Schmitt at Catherine_Schmitt@umit.maine.edu.

MARYLAND

► **Oil spill:** Maryland officials are calling a \$2.7 million plan to restore the damaged ecosystem in Patuxent River the most extensive effort of its kind in Maryland since passage of the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990, adopted in the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska. Raymond McCaffrey of the Washington Post reports on Dec. 23. See the story at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A27451-2002Dec22.html>

MISSISSIPPI

► **Paint problem:** Mississippi's lead-based paint removal program has been jeopardized by a dispute over a state law federal officials say hinders punishing polluters. Johnny Beason, who runs the lead program for the state Department of

Environmental Quality, says that disagreement could end up hurting children in low-income families. "Lead-based paint is a health issue," Beason said. "It would be a disaster for Mississippi if the state lost this program." Reporter James V. Walker reported the story Sept. 30. Contact him at jvwalker@clarionledger.com. See the story at: <http://www.clarionledger.com/news/0209/30/m02.html>.

UTAH

► **Radioactive reaction:** Voters dumped Initiative 1 in the Nov. 5 election. The proposed radioactive waste law, the target of a multimillion-dollar opposition campaign by Envirocare of Utah, had received more than two "no" votes for every one cast in favor. Staff writer Judy Fahys of the Salt Lake Tribune wrote the story. Contact here at fahys@sltrib.com or at (801) 257-8792. See the story at: <http://www.sltrib.com/11062002/utah/13834.htm>

WEST VIRGINIA

► **Flooding on coalfields:** Jeff Young of West Virginia Public Radio produced a half-hour documentary on the aftermath of heavy 2001 and 2002 flooding in the coalfields of southern West Virginia. The documentary, "The Flood Next Time," focused on whether the coal and timber industries are partly responsible for the flooding and what is being done to prevent future such events. It was broadcast on Sept. 23 and repeated on Sept. 24. The story is available at <http://www.wvpubcast.org/dateline/special.htm>. Contact Young at jyoung@wvpubcast.org.

► **Wind farm worries:** Young was also one of several West Virginia reporters who produced pieces on windpower and the proposals for new wind farms in the mountains of eastern West Virginia. Young produced a public radio piece on Sept. 30 about debate among state environmentalists about the proposals. While state environmentalists generally support wind power, some also worry about the impact of huge wind farms on bird populations and the state's natural beauty. *Charleston Gazette* reporter Jim Balow produced several such stories, including a Sunday take-out on Oct. 6. Balow can be reached at balow@wvgazette.com.

► **Governor's landfill friend:** Brian Bowling of the *Charleston Daily Mail* revealed that Gov. Bob Wise stepped in to help a landfill operator who had made contributions to Wise's 2000 election campaign. In a Sept. 3 article, Bowling quoted the governor saying that the contributions "had absolutely nothing to do" with his involvement in the case. At the governor's office's insistence, the state Department of Environmental Protection extended a compliance deadline for landfill operator Pasquale Mascaro. Contact Bowling at brianbowling@dailymail.com.

► **Impoundment warnings not heeded:** Ken Ward Jr. of *The Charleston Gazette* reported on an internal Mine Safety and Health Administration report that showed that MSHA investigators botched their enforcement of safety rules at the Martin County, Ky., coal slurry impoundment that failed in October 2000. In a Sunday piece on Nov. 3, Ward reported that MSHA officials failed to heed warnings that the impoundment had major problems. Ward can be reached at (304) 348-1702 or

kward@wvgazette.com.

WISCONSIN

► **New governor green friendly?:** The Nov. 5 elections brought Wisconsin its first Democratic governor in 16 years. Environmentalists are pleased that Democrat James Doyle is taking the reins. They are hoping Doyle appoints environmentally friendly people to lead major state agencies and implements green-oriented policies. But Republicans have taken over control of both houses of the Wisconsin Legislature, and are unlikely to give Doyle much of what he wants. Like many other states, Wisconsin is also dealing with a projected budget deficit. That may limit either side from starting new environmental programs. For more information, contact Chuck Quirnbach at Wisconsin Public Radio, (414)-227-2040) or quirnbach@wpr.org

► **CWD worries Wisconsin:** Deer hunters took to the woods in November amid ongoing concerns about Chronic Wasting Disease in a small portion of the state's deer population. The number of hunters was expected to be below most other years, despite urging from state wildlife and tourism officials that hunters go ahead and shoot deer. In a few months, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will have results of statewide deer sampling for CWD. The federal government has agreed to pay for two studies assessing any human health risk from the disease. Many news outlets have covered the CWD story. The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* has grouped its stories in a link on the paper's website. Go to www.jsonline.com

U.S.

► **Pesticides in food:** Using organic foods may do your children's health a favor, writes MSNBC "Your Environment" columnist Francesca Lyman. Parents who feed their children organically grown food can substantially lower the levels of pesticide residues to which their kids are exposed, according to a study published in the *Environmental Health Perspectives* journal, which for the first time compares how much of the chemical enters the body in organic diets versus conventional ones. The story ran Dec. 18. Lyman can be reached at chicha19@attbi.com. See the story at <http://www.msnbc.com/news/846826.asp?0cv=CB20>.

CANADA

► **Bears better behaved:** The number of bears that had to be destroyed because they wandered into city limits to search for food dropped significantly this year, according to Northern Bear Awareness. Reporter Mark Nielsen of the *Prince George Citizen* wrote the story on Nov. 7. Contact him at (250) 562-2441 or mnielsen@princegeorgecitizen.com. See the story at: <http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/20021107/20021107n3.html>.

► **BDE harming harbor:** Toronto harbor is one of three Great Lake hot spots contaminated by a flame-retardant chemical already banned in Europe as a hazard to human health. A study by a federal government researcher pinpoints Toronto's Leslie Street Spit and two industrial regions on northern Lake Michigan as having the highest concentrations of the toxic chemical called BDE, for brominated diphenyl ether. Peter Calamai wrote the story Oct. 28. Contact him at (416) 869-4300. ❖

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