



K A P P A T A U A L P H A NEWSLETTER

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President's Column

On writing history ...

I attended the recent conference of the American Journalism Historians Association, an annual gathering with an egalitarian feel. AJHA's fall conference brings together a variety of scholars, from doctoral students to leading lights.

I was invited to participate on a panel on the "Art of Writing History," which was organized by Pat Washburn of Ohio University. He noted in proposing the session that conference panels often address the how-to of research but "no one talks about the writing part."

The panelists — all of whom, incidentally, are KTA members — offered a number of insights about what arguably is the most exacting phase of scholarly work: the writing.

The panelists' observations resonate beyond journalism history. No matter what the discipline, the writing phase can be the toughest and most demanding. Almost no one claims that writing is easy.

No such claims were raised by the panelists, who also included Maurine Beasley of Maryland and Michael Sweeney of Ohio.

Beasley offered useful context, pointing out that historical writing ideally "should make a well-reasoned contribution to a scholarly discussion with a clear beginning, middle, and end. "Don't be afraid of making a mistake or being criticized," she said, adding, "History is a never-ending process of interpretation and reinterpretation."

Washburn described how he writes — a manner that struck me as painstaking. He said he crafts a sentence and works on it until he's satisfied. Then, he moves on to write the next sentence. He said he never revises, never works from a

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Hall, Maguire receive grants

Holly Hall and Miles Maguire have been awarded Chapter Adviser Research Grants.

Hall (Arkansas State) will use her \$800 grant to study "super injunctions" and "anonymized orders"—tools used by courts in the United Kingdom to restrain the publication of information. These tools can create serious tensions between freedom of speech, freedom of the press and privacy. They also potentially can foster harmful perceptions of what should be an open, transparent justice system.

The tools were effective with traditional media, but the advent of social networking sites such as Twitter adds a new dimension of complexity. Hall plans to evaluate the practicality of super-injunctions and anonymized orders in the Age of Twitter.

Maguire will study journalists who have received the so-called "genius grants" from the MacArthur Foundation. The no-strings-attached awards are bestowed in a variety of fields by the foundation and cite little more than creativity and promise as reasons for selection.

The MacArthur awards are unusual in that they look both backward and forward, recognizing past accomplishments while providing funds for future activities. Several

journalists have been awarded MacArthur grants, which offers an opportunity to see if the selection and performance of fellows has affected the journalism profession.

Maguire will concentrate on MacArthur Fellow Thomas Whiteside, who is probably best known for his coverage of Agent Orange, the herbicidal mixture used extensively in Vietnam. His reporting led directly to the Senate hearings that prompted the suspension of the chemical.

Although Whiteside is known for his work on scientific and technical topics, he also experimented with different writing styles, including one piece that has been described as "journalism as prose poem." Maguire's award is for \$1000.

Since approval August 2002 by the KTA National Council at the annual meeting in Miami Beach, Chapter Adviser Grants totalling \$16,775 have been awarded to 20 people.

The program is designed to provide research assistance to advisers and to recognize and reward them for their work with KTA. The annual deadline for proposals is Oct. 1. Informations and application forms can be found at www.KappaTauAlpha.org/awards.html.

Get aboard the 'Two More' campaign

Please join the "Two More" campaign this year.

The campaign is aimed at increasing acceptance rates of those eligible for KTA. The idea is simple: of those who have not responded to the invitation to join, try to get acceptances from two of them.

The simplest and most effective method is to simply followup the original invitation with a phone call or email. If that fails, contact the student's adviser, or try to speak with the student in person.

If you don't already use the KTA and Matter of Honor Brochures, plan on doing so. The KTA brochure is available in hard copy and each is in digital form. KTA headquarters annually contacts advisers in January about ordering brochures.

Be sure that invitees understand that the initiation fee is a one-time fee. Inductees receive a keypin, gold-embossed certificate and card and lifetime verification of their membership (a common request by would-be employers, graduate schools and government agencies).

Minutes of St. Louis National Council meeting

The annual meeting of the National Council of Kappa Tau Alpha was held Aug. 11, 2011 at the Renaissance St. Louis Grand Hotel. W. Joseph Campbell (American) presided. Twenty-three chapter advisers and officers and one guest attended.

Campbell welcomed new adviser Andi Stein (Cal State-Fullerton). Campbell noted that Year One of KTA's Second Century was very successful. Among the highlights: Keith Sanders marked his 20th year as executive director, a new chapter was established at Indiana University, chapter adviser research grants were awarded to Chris Allen (Nebraska-Omaha) and former president Karen List (U-Mass), the KTA web site was revitalized and revamped, the Mott-KTA Book award was presented for the 57th successive year, a quiet campaign was launched to encourage each chapter adviser to recruit two more members, the Newsletter was published twice and a President's Column was introduced.

Year One brought some sadness, Campbell noted, citing the death of William H. Taft, KTA executive director from 1962-

1991. Members observed a moment of silence. Campbell congratulated Andy Mendelson (Temple), 2011's William H. Taft Outstanding Adviser Award recipient.

In concluding, Campbell noted that it had been several years since the executive director's honorarium had been increased and he and Vice-President Peter Gade (Oklahoma) proposed an increase to \$10,000. The proposal passed unanimously.

Campbell then called on Sanders for a financial report and proposed budget. Sanders noted that KTA should end the year in the black, which was unusual for a fiscal year in which a two-year supply of pre-printed certificates (with gold emboss) was scheduled. He presented a proposed budget for FY 2011-2012. The financial report and budget were approved.

Sanders then presented his Executive Director's Report. He thanked Mott/KTA book judges Abigail Foerstner (Northwestern), Terri Johnson (Eastern Illinois), Miles Maguire (Wisconsin-Oshkosh), Jane Marcellus (Middle-Tennessee), Jim Scotton (Marquette), Tom Schwartz (Ohio State), Maggie Patterson

(Duquesne), Campbell and Gade. He noted that the new chapter at Indiana held a very impressive induction ceremony and initiated 16 members. Following up the financial report, he noted that the Society's solid financial condition is something to brag about in today's economy.

Sanders explained that the "Two More" campaign to have advisers go after students who hadn't accepted the invitation to join KTA had modest success despite being rolled out late. Overall, 32 chapters inducted at least two more members than the previous year. Twenty-two chapters were down two or more. Most impressive were gains at Tennessee-Knoxville (+22), Illinois (+21) and Virginia Commonwealth (+20). Perhaps most impressive, given the enrollment, was the 12 member increase at Hampton, where Joy McDonald vigorously promotes KTA.

Sanders concluded his report with a few brief personal comments about Taft and referred to the Winter 2011 Newsletter for a recap of Bill's KTA legacy.

There being no further business, Campbell adjourned the meeting.

the art of writing history ... and more

(Continued from page 1)

draft. (He does add pertinent new material he later finds.)

Sweeney, on the other hand, spoke to the importance of self-editing. "I don't think of myself as a great writer," he said. "I think of myself as a great editor." He advised agonizing over lead paragraphs to entice the reader. Sweeney also suggested reading what you've written out loud, to gain a keener sense of how the words flow and interact.

I offered a view that "productivity can be something of a forced march." If meaningful and unyielding deadlines can be imposed, the writing can flow. Or has to.

I described an approach that I've used to impose meaningful deadlines. It's the one-way wager. That means I will pay an agreed-upon amount of money--sizeable enough to hurt--should I not meet a deadline for completing a project draft.

The draft can take the form of a research paper submitted to AEJMC. The organization's many divisions and interest groups effectively allow submissions of multiple research papers (essentially, emergent draft chapters).

I made a one-way wager with a colleague a few years ago: I would submit five conference papers by AEJMC's deadline. Making deadline not only meant I didn't lose the sizable sum of money. It meant that I had five emergent chapter drafts ready for revising, massaging, reworking. Those drafts became chapters in my latest book, *Getting It Wrong*.

The one-way wager was, for me, an effective way to clear the highest hurdle in writing--completing a draft. But it works only if you're sure the other party to the one-way wager will take your money.

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Similarly, many choice nuggets of new information were supplied by the 6000 pages of FBI files on Anderson's boss, columnist Drew Pearson, which were helpfully supplied to me by Prof. Michael Sweeney of Ohio University (who seemed nearly as glad to unload these boxes of documents, which he had used for his earlier research, as I was to receive them). In addition, Pearson's papers at the University of Texas included memos Anderson wrote about his efforts to dig up dirt on Nixon long before he was president. And the private archives of Nixon advisors John Ehrlichman, Charles Colson, and Robert Mardian produced new material that further flushed out details about the White House battle with Anderson. (In Ehrlichman's case, he jotted down notes on his calendar quoting the President's instructions to investigate Anderson for homosexuality—a preposterous allegation but one that served as a reminder to leave no stone unturned in searching archival records.)

The National Archives proved invaluable. Its collections from Watergate prosecutors and from Nixon's presidency, including the files of aides H.R. Haldeman and John Dean, documented their zealous efforts to target Anderson at the President's behest. Nixon's pre-presidential files also recorded the long-running feud between the politician and the columnist. And I stumbled onto evidence Anderson's own corruption in two remote sections of the National Archives—the JFK assassination papers and a 1963 Senate hearing on foreign lobbying, both of which contained testimony about bribes allegedly paid to the investigative reporter.

In the end, the Nixon White House tapes proved to be the most important—and challenging—source of new information. Surreptitiously recorded on automatic voice-activated technology, they captured embarrassingly frank discussions in real time and offered the single most illuminating record of the President's war on Anderson. However, they were also often muffled or scratchy, making them difficult to hear clearly. With the help of student research assistants, I transcribed dozens of previously unpublicized White House tapes and hired an audio engineer to make the words more comprehensible. I was also

careful to have at least two sets of ears listen to each recording to try to ensure accuracy as much as humanly possible.

Oral history interviews were also critical to my research. Anderson himself was the most valuable of these sources; he spent dozens of hours answering my questions—and, before that, those of the ghostwriter for his memoirs. These interviews were taped and I had them transcribed. Watergate burglar E. Howard Hunt also granted me a lengthy interview in which for the first time ever he admitted details of his role in an aborted White House plot to assassinate Anderson. I did

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Jack Anderson continued
to torment government
officials."**

not know that my interview with Hunt would elicit such a confession when I traveled to interview him at his Miami home; but I did know that the opportunity to meet the conspirator who helped topple Nixon's presidency was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I could not resist regardless of what information it produced for my book.

The sheer volume of the material I unearthed was overwhelming. It was like trying to put together a 10,000-piece puzzle—with a third of the pieces still missing. After all my efforts, the best I could hope for was partial, not total, reconstruction of the past, which inevitably still contained gaps, missing pieces of information, unanswerable questions, unknowable answers.

To try to understand all of this as best I could, I drew up a time line and organized my book based on chronology, "the spine of history and the key to causation," as the popular historian Barbara Tuchman has characterized it. "Events do not happen in categories—economic, intellectual, military—they happen in sequence," Tuchman added. "When they are arranged in sequence as strictly as possible down to the month, week, and even day, cause and effect that may have been previously obscure, will often become clear, like secret ink." This definitely turned

out to be true in my research.

Indeed, except for a flashback about the White House plot to murder Anderson that opens my book, I wrote the manuscript largely in chronological fashion. At the same time, I tried to maintain strict standards of academic rigor by providing extensive endnotes; but I also avoided irrelevant scholarly asides that might detract from the genuinely dramatic narrative arc that characterized the battle between these two larger-than-life protagonists.

The result was a manuscript about twice as long as my publisher had commissioned. Ultimately, we compromised. It was, I think, a better book because of this compromise.

The most unexpected part of this odyssey occurred in 2006, a few weeks after Anderson died: two FBI agents came by my house, flashed their badges, and demanded to rifle through the 200 boxes of personal papers that I had persuaded the journalist to donate to my university. The FBI claimed that these archives, which were in the process of being catalogued, contained classified papers leaked to Anderson decades before—and announced that they now wanted to use these documents to prosecute the leakers. I was shocked, and so was Anderson's family. We went public about the FBI's heavy-handed plot to rifle through a dead reporter's files. Editorial condemnation was swift and unanimous across the political spectrum and all over the country. The Senate Judiciary Committee held hearings on the case and I was called as a witness to testify. Senators from both parties excoriated the FBI, which quickly backed down. In death, as in life, Jack Anderson continued to torment government officials.

As for my book, the hardback was published in the fall of 2010, the paperback in the fall of 2011. The entire process was the most creative and challenging intellectual exercise of my life. Thanks to all my friends and colleagues, especially at KTA, who helped along the way.

Finally, I encourage readers to check out additional material about my book, including audio and video links, at www.poisoningthepress.com.

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A Look at 'Poisoning the Press'

Mark Feldstein received the Mott-KTA Research Award for the best book on journalism/mass communication of 2010. Here he describes the evolution of Poisoning the Press: Richard Nixon, Jack Anderson and the Rise of Washington's Scandal Culture.

In the summer of 2000, I ended a twenty-year career as an investigative reporter and embarked upon a new one, as a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. And I needed a topic for my dissertation. I put together a dozen possible subjects to pursue and sat down with my faculty advisor, Prof. Margaret "Peggy" Blanchard, for guidance. I never got past the first idea on my list: a biography of syndicated columnist Jack Anderson. She embraced it immediately and I set out to work.

Anderson is largely forgotten today, but in his heyday—from the 1950s through the 1970s—he was the most famous and feared investigative reporter in the US, loved and loathed for his pioneering exposes, which ranged from classified national security secrets to politicians' sex lives. My goal was to resurrect him from the dustbin of history and put his work in its proper historical context. But it was a daunting assignment. For one thing, the written record he left behind during his fifty-year career was staggering: twenty books, more than 10,000 syndicated columns, thousands more magazine and newsletter articles, radio and television broadcasts, speeches and interviews—literally millions of words in all. Along with his correspondence, memos, and reporters' notes, his papers filled some 200 boxes.

Luckily, Peggy Blanchard was a wise woman, and she urged me to narrow my topic. Instead of tackling the entirety of Anderson's life for my dissertation, I decided to focus on his battle with Richard Nixon, both before and during his presidency. Even this proved more ambitious than I originally realized because Nixon had generated even more historical records than Anderson: tens of thousands of documents obtained by federal investigators during the Watergate scandal; unprecedented number of memoirs of Nixon aides that were written to pay legal bills or rehabilitate their reputations; and nearly 4000 hours of the

(in)famous Nixon White House tapes. Throughout it all, like Forest Gump, Jack Anderson appeared and reappeared, dogging Nixon for a quarter century.

Once my dissertation was complete, I began the process of turning it into a book. Originally, I anticipated expanding it into a full-length narrative biography of Anderson's life and career, one in which his battle with Nixon was just a small part. But the book publishing industry was starting to undergo the same kind of economic turmoil that print journalism was also experiencing, and I discovered that publishers had little commercial appetite for an Anderson biography; he had simply become too obscure and distant a figure for such lengthy treatment. Luckily, I once

"My obsessive perfectionism led me to take another three years to finish my research."

again found a wonderful mentor, a Manhattan literary agent named Alice Martell. Her advice was the same as Peggy Blanchard's: narrow my topic by focusing on Anderson's battle with Nixon. I put together a book proposal and sample chapters, and Alice shopped it to publishers all over New York. Several were interested but in the end the choice came down to two: Oxford University Press, an academic publisher, and Farrar, Straus and Giroux, a trade publisher. Ultimately, I decided that I wanted to reach a wider popular audience and so I chose FSG.

The process afterward should have been an easy one. After all, my dissertation provided the foundation for this book, and with a looming deadline and relatively modest word count, my publisher wasn't expecting much more than what I had already written. But my obsessive perfectionism led me to take another three years to finish my research. Like a man possessed, I tracked down hundreds of additional books and articles, and thousands of primary source documents, housed in dozens of archives around the

country. I filed Freedom of Information Act requests with fifty different agencies of the federal government, conducted more than 200 oral history interviews of my own, and tracked down dozens of hours of taped interviews with others.

It proved a fascinating adventure. Although many archives and interviews turned out to be worthless, a select handful produced incomparable new information. Still others fell somewhere in between. The problem, of course, was that I couldn't anticipate which archives or interviews would prove fruitful and which wouldn't; and so I cast my net as widely as possible, never knowing what I might turn up.

Unfortunately, I encountered many roadblocks along the way. Various federal agencies and the Nixon estate refused to release records, citing national security and personal privacy even though virtually all of the individuals involved died long ago. The CIA's response to my F.O.I.A. request, for example, consisted mostly of news articles or other material already available to the public—with government paperwork often so heavily censored as to be worthless. Other agencies withheld documents that Anderson himself had publicly disseminated more than three decades earlier,

Thankfully, Anderson's papers contained many of these documents, as well as his original columns, drafts of articles and speeches he delivered, and letters and photos going back to his childhood. Other primary source documents were also quite helpful. It took years of prodding, but Anderson's 2000-page FBI file, although heavily redacted, offered incomparable insights into the muckraker's long battle with FBI director J. Edgar Hoover, who scrawled delicious insults about Anderson in shaky handwriting: "jackal," "rat," "skunk," and "lower than the regurgitated filth of vultures." The FBI files also revealed that Anderson had previously cultivated Hoover and benefited from his leaks before turning on him and exposing his corruption (even rifling through his garbage looking for evidence of homosexuality by Hoover).

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