

In Print & On Air

Curtis Rodgers, dean of admissions at the School of General Studies, on the trend for young professionals to use graduate school for launching career changes: "There are many students that we see switching from finance, technology and law to an intense field like medicine. There are also a growing number of liberal arts professionals like dancers and actors who come back to education to take up careers in teaching, economics, business. ... [Such students] have a wider skill set and end up becoming much more compelling and sophisticated workers." (*Wall Street Journal*, 7 March '06)

Xavier Sala-i-Martin, professor of economics, on French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin's renewed campaign to protect French industry: "There's a neo-nationalism in Europe. They don't even believe in their own project. They say they want a big market for capital and goods, but when it doesn't go well, they resort to neo-protectionism." (*Newsweek International*, 13 March '06)

NY1 News report on the Columbia-led study of babies born to women living near the World Trade Center who were pregnant on 9/11: "Columbia's Center for Children's Environmental Health is following 300 non-smoking women who lived within two miles of the twin towers and were pregnant when the attacks happened. The study says babies born to these women were smaller and had lower birth weights than babies born farther away. [A]t least half...had significant levels of toxins that could increase their risk of cancer." ("Babies Born Near WTC Site Feel Effects of Terror Attacks," 12 March '06)

New York Post feature on the March reunion of Columbia Review alumni: "Few undergraduate college literary magazines have been staffed ... by as much talent as the *Columbia Review*. Many of its distinguished alumni will gather this Saturday in Morning-side Heights to read and reminisce at what is being called the *Review's* first-ever reunion. Authors from the 1930s to the present will include Pulitzer Prize winners (Richard Howard and Louis Simpson), a former poet laureate (Daniel Hoffman), and well-known names such as Luc Sante and Paul Auster. Recent editors, Jennifer Glaser and Sarah Robinson, will be on hand to welcome them." ("Rare Literary Union at Columbia," by Gary Shapiro, 9 March '06)

Faculty Perspective

Press Is Still Powerful—But Growing Meeker

By Evan Cornog

It was Thomas Carlyle, a British historian of the 19th century, who popularized the term "fourth estate" in reference to the press. Carlyle credited an earlier man of letters, Edmund Burke, with the phrase, saying that Burke had observed that in addition to the "three estates" represented in Parliament—king, lords and commons—there was a "fourth estate," the press, more powerful than them all.

This notion of the power of the press is a popular one among American conservatives (although if the press is as liberal as they claim, it is hard to reconcile that notion, and the idea of the press's power, with the current Republican ascendancy in all branches of the federal government). Another testimony to the power of the press is the way that reporters have become targets of violence by both sides in the Iraq conflict. Scores of news people have been killed since the war began, and they continue to be prime targets.

But if the press is powerful, it seems not to be well respected. Jayson Blair, the Dan Rather report on President Bush's Texas Air National Guard service (or lack of it), and other sins and stumbles of what bloggers call the MSM (mainstream media)—all have sapped the profession's reputation. And the more recent fiasco surrounding James Frey's fictionalized memoir, *A Million Little Pieces*, provoked the apologetic outrage of the nation's empathy-in-chief, Oprah Winfrey.

If journalists are currently unpopular, they are not ignored. I can recall no time

when the news media were so central to the national conversation. The latest evidence of the centrality of the news media to our current state of affairs is the fact that two of the five films nominated for Best Picture in this year's Academy Awards are bio-pics of journalists, *Capote* and *Good Night, and Good Luck*.



Edward R. Murrow in *Good Night and Good Luck*.

Truman Capote's strenuous pursuit of the story of the murder of a Kansas family in his book *In Cold Blood* provides a rich portrait of the journalist as anti-hero, and Capote's intellectual seduction of his most important source, the murderer Perry Smith, walks a fascinating line between infatuation and cynicism.

Capote's despair when Smith and his fellow criminal, Dick Hickock, are granted a stay of execution, thus postponing the longed-for conclusion of Capote's magnum opus, is brilliantly rendered. But the portrait Philip Seymour Hoffman gives of Capote as a bribe-giving, insinuating and duplicitous

man (he lies to Smith about the book's title, which he knows will upset his prime source) hardly paints a bright picture of journalists.

In contrast, *Good Night, and Good Luck* presents a worshipful picture of one of the classic heroes of American journalism, the CBS broadcast icon Edward R. Murrow. The bad guy is the oily red-baiting Sen. Joe McCarthy.

In the film, Murrow is the embodiment of that liberal media figure of conservatives' nightmares—and, indeed, Murrow's combative style was nothing like the dexterously cautious tone of the so-called mainstream media today. Murrow launches a crusade against what he sees as McCarthy's bullying, and helps to put the bully in his place, in spite of the possible (and actual) costs to him, his friends and CBS. The film overemphasizes Murrow's role in defeating McCarthyism, but Murrow's reports on McCarthy really did exemplify what Carlyle meant by the press's potential to function as a fourth estate.

Today the press is perhaps more timid, but it has grown even more central to the distribution of power in America. This year's Oscars testify to a national concern with the role of the press in our society. It may be that the two phenomena are inextricably linked—that the press' growing importance has required it to rein in its earlier, crusading spirit. Is that a good thing, or not?

Evan Cornog is publisher of the Columbia Journalism Review and associate dean of the Graduate School of Journalism. He wrote this article originally for the Star-Ledger of Newark, N.J. (26 Feb. 2006).

National State Attorneys General Program Encourages Law Students to Pursue Public Interest Careers

In conversation with program founders Ellen Chapnick and James Tierney

Columbia Law School's National State Attorneys General Program (NSGAP) celebrates its second anniversary this month. The brainchild of Ellen P. Chapnick and James E. Tierney, the program is the centerpiece of the Social Justice Initiatives launched by the law school three years ago to further the mission of assisting students to consider careers as public interest and human rights lawyers.

The Record asked Chapnick, who serves as dean for Social Justice Initiatives, and Tierney, a former Attorney General of Maine who now lectures at the law school, for a brief progress report.

Why was the program launched initially, and what has been accomplished thus far?

James Tierney: Our original goal was to bring together attorneys general, the academic community, private practitioners and advocacy groups in order to discuss a multitude of vital issues that are facing state attorneys general. We have now held conferences on corporate governance, global warming, labor law enforcement and the regulation of charities.

Ellen Chapnick: The NSGAP has enriched the range of programs on offer at Columbia Law School (CLS) by increasing awareness about the important and interesting work done by state attorneys general and by encouraging more students to seek summer and postgraduate employment in those offices. We have done so by inviting law school students to participate in our conferences; by inviting attorneys general (AGs) to address law school classes; by offering one-on-one counseling sessions with Jim Tierney to interested students (he has ten years of experience as a state attorney general); and by fostering three law school classes on the role of the AG.

Can you point to any success stories yet?

Ellen Chapnick: Most state government offices do not hire students immediately after graduation, but we do have a couple. One student, who came to CLS after a career as an analyst on Wall Street, worked in the New Jersey AG's office upon graduation and has since accepted a position with the U.S. Attorney's Office for NYC's Eastern District. Another student went to the New York AG's office after working as a public defender and at the war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone.

According to the program's Web site, attorneys general are playing a more activist role, getting involved in policy that crosses state lines. What are some of the most striking examples?

James Tierney: AGs regularly work together on litigation. As the federal government withdraws from protecting consumers, the environment and enforcing antitrust laws, AGs are working to fill the gap on a nonpartisan basis. In that sense, public advocacy by state attorneys general can be seen as essential to the maintenance of a just society.

The program recently held a conference on oversight and regulation of charitable organizations by attorneys general, focusing on the case that arose out of the diversification efforts of the Hershey Trust. Can you tell us a bit more about this case—why was it so controversial?

Ellen Chapnick: The conference took the diversification efforts of the Hershey Trust as its point of departure because it is a well-known case that provides a lens for thinking about whether the role of the attorney general is restricted to the traditional duties of enforcing the donor's intent or if it mandates protection of a broader public interest. We listened to a presentation by the lawyer who was Attorney General of Pennsylvania during the Hershey case. He said he construed his duties as embracing the public interest under the circumstances of this case. This was followed by reactions from expert academics, some of whom thought his responsibility had been more limited.

Any plans for future conferences or publications?

Ellen Chapnick: We expect to present a large conference and several smaller conversations in the next 12 months and to encourage publications in connection with these events. However, we do not have specific topics yet as we still need to consult with our advisory board, particularly the AG members. And we are now engaged in fact-finding to determine the best next steps to follow up the significantly increased interest among AGs in the oversight and regulation of charitable organizations, as a result of our recent conference.

For more information on the National State Attorneys General Program, go to: www.law.columbia.edu/center_program/ag



James Tierney conferring with a law student.