

commentary

from other pens...

Reporting is deadly in some countries

Igor Aleksandrov was the director of an independent television company in eastern Ukraine. His program "Bez Retushi" ran investigative stories about organized crime and corruption in city government.

Last July 3, assailants attacked Aleksandrov as he entered his company's offices. The station's deputy director, Sergei Cherneta, heard blows and screams, then a moan.

"I ran downstairs ... Our manager was lying in a pool of blood with his head cracked open. Two large baseball bats were left nearby," Cherneta said.

A month after the killing, a suspect was arrested. The case, which is still pending, illustrates the abuses suffered by independent journalists worldwide, according to a report this week by the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists.

Thirty-seven journalists were killed in 2001, attracting little notice from the outside world — in sharp contrast to the abduction and murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan earlier this year.

That number was up from 24 a year earlier, and most of the increase resulted from the killing of seven journalists in two attacks last November during the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan.

Yet most of the 37 killed last year were not covering wars or other conflicts. Instead, they were murdered in reprisal for reporting on sensitive topics, including official crime and corruption, the group said.

Try being a hard-hitting reporter in Haiti, for example.

After President Jean-Bertrand Aristide announced in June a "zero tolerance" policy toward street criminals, an aide from Aristide's party said the policy should be applied to Brignolle Lindor, the independent-minded news director of a radio station.

Lindor was subsequently hacked to death by a machete-wielding mob of ruling-party supporters, according to the report. Co-workers have said Lindor had received telephone death threats after interviewing opposition politicians on his talk show.

Attacks on Haitian journalists at year's end forced at least 15 to leave the country. As many as 40 others went into hiding, the study said.

There was some good news, the report found. In particular, it highlighted growing press freedoms in Yugoslavia, Syria and Sri Lanka.

China is the "leading jailer" of journalists, with 35 behind bars, the report found. In addition, officials there closed a prominent leftist monthly in China after it criticized the government's call for capitalists to join the Communist Party.

Despite problems, the Chinese press remains far more vibrant than the press in countries such as Burma, Laos and North Korea, the study said.

In North Korea, the government's efforts to control the media have helped ensure that its chronic food shortage is one of the most underreported disasters in the world.

Iran closed or suspended 20 newspapers and publications in 2001, the report said. It listed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, as one of its 10 worst enemies of the press.

The other nine include Liberian President Charles Taylor, whom the group called "single-minded" in deterring press independence; Chinese President Jiang Zemin for demanding "ideological conformity;" Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe for his "all-out war on the independent media;" and Russian President Vladimir Putin for his "alarming assault on press freedom."

The others on the list are Carlos Castano, leader of a Colombian rightist paramilitary group whom the group called "a ruthless enemy of the press;" Cuban President Fidel Castro for a "scorched-earth assault on independent journalists;" Tunisian President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali for requiring almost total press "submission;" Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad for being "openly contemptuous of press freedom;" and Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma for his "habitual censorship."

EDITOR'S NOTE: George Gedda has covered foreign affairs for *The Associated Press* since 1968.



- DARK BLACK**
ABSOLUTELY NONE OF YOUR GOL-DURN BEESWAX!
- MEDIUM DARK BLACK**
ONLY THE SHADOW GOVERNMENT IS ALLOWED TO KNOW.
- MEDIUM BLACK**
WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW WON'T HURT YOU.
- MEDIUM LIGHT BLACK**
THAT'S FOR ME TO KNOW AND YOU TO FIND OUT.
- LIGHT BLACK**
TRUST US. WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOING.

Remember the tragic blizzard of March 1931?

Remember the tragic blizzard of March 1931? Maurice Kear, 83, of Goodland does. He was a sixth grader that year, and on Monday he called *The Goodland Daily News* to ask if we were planning a story about that particular storm.

It was sort of fate that I talked to him, and found he was talking about a story I had written about several times over my newspaper career. That blizzard gave rise to an incident known as the Towner School Bus Tragedy, the misfortune that befell a school bus driver and his 20 students on the afternoon of March 26, 1931, when a snow storm blew out of the north and buried the High Plains for two days.

Kear thought on the 71st anniversary of the incident something ought to be written, and he was asking that we research the story.

Many times I have heard about the tragic incident which took the lives of five children and the driver when the bus got stuck in a ditch south of Towner, Colo. A solemn monument stands at the site of the tragedy on a back road from Towner to Holly, Colo.

The story was nationwide at the time, and thanks to coverage by *The Denver Post* a young man, Bryan Untiedt, 14 at the time, was singled out as a hero for keeping the kids awake during the 33 hour ordeal. For his efforts, he was invited to the White House to meet President Herbert Hoover.

When I was the publisher of *The Holly Chieftain*, I met another survivor, Rosemary (Brown) Cannon. She did not really want to talk about the incident, but said she did not feel Untiedt was the only hero. A number of years later, she consented to be interviewed by my wife Ava, and her account was published in 1981 in *The Lamar Daily News/Holly Chieftain*.



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The story continues to surface as an example of what can happen on the High Plains when people are unprepared, and when storms develop quickly. It's still used as a reason for schools to be cautious about storms, and for having better communications with the buses.

Other survivors contributed to a book, "Children of the Storm," published in March 2001. The authors, Ariana Harner and Clark Secret, interviewed the seven surviving riders as a major basis for their book.

The survivors of that terrible event are all in their 80s, much like Maurice Kear, but for them it remains as clear as it was 71 years ago.

Rosemary Brown was 13 when the Pleasant Hill School driver Carl Miller got lost and drove into a ditch north of the school in a blinding storm. Earlier that day, it had been 60 degrees, a fine looking spring day, but a low bank of clouds rolled in from the north. The wind picked up, the storm hit with snow and the temperature plummeted. It was quickly decided to close the school and take the children home.

Miller started out with the kids, but as soon as he drove out of the parking lot he was lost. He tried to keep going, but about a mile and a half from the school, the bus slid into a ditch and stalled from the snow blowing into the engine.

Miller told the children they would be stuck there for a while and to keep busy and warm.

Laura Huffaker was 7 at the time and remembers that to keep warm they were jumping around and swinging their arms. Huffaker said Bryan Untiedt accidentally broke a window, allowing the cold wind and snow to blow into the bus.

Miller kept the kids awake all through the night, but the next morning he decided he had to do something and left the bus in search of help.

Cannon said she had never seen anyone die. When she looked at Louise Stonebraker, 15, sitting in the back of the bus perfectly still in the snow, she thought her friend was asleep.

"I didn't cry," Cannon said. "Not even when my brother died."

Her brother, Bobbie Brown, was 11. Kenneth Johnson, 9, wanted to go to sleep and despite all the others' efforts, he died about 10 a.m. Later the children were rescued by two men, Mr Stonebraker and Mr. Untiedt. They took them to the farm of Andy and Fern Reinert, but it was too late for Arlo Untiedt, 9, and Mary Louise Miller, 9, the driver's daughter.

When asked why she survived, Huffaker credits her sister Alice, 14, at the time. "She kept me warm a lot with her hands and her coat around me," she said.

For many years, nearly seven decades, Cannon said, she felt guilt that she had survived. She hadn't been able to talk with her parent, who took the death of her brother very hard.

"I needed to cry to somebody, but I had no one to cry to," she said. It wasn't until after the death of Untiedt that she wanted to tell her children her story.

"I hate the wind," Cannon said.

I am not sure this is what Mr. Kear had in mind when he called on Monday, but as I said, it was fate that had him talk to me about the blizzard of 1931.

What's in it for you?

There comes a time in the lives of most men when you realize you've treated your cars better than you've treated your own body. You've even treated rental cars better than your own body. But it's not a rental car.

You can't ditch it in the woods and then report it stolen. Are you one of these guys? Is it possible that you haven't kept yourself in showroom condition? There's an easy way to find out. Stand in front of the bathroom mirror. Don't actually look directly into the mirror; you're not ready for that shock yet. What you do is open up your medicine cabinet and look inside. Remember how when you were young, there'd be some toothpaste and maybe some mouthwash in it? What's in there now?

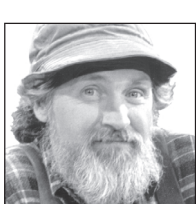
Antihistamines, anti-inflammatories, antidiarrheals, antidepressants (in case the antidiarrheals don't work). Your medicine cabinet used to be practically empty, now you've had to build on. Anti-fungals, unguents, ointments, poultices, patches, plasters, salves — all these bottles and tubes spill out onto your sink counter, the top of the toilet tank, every horizontal surface in your bathroom. Decongestants, muscle rubs, eye drops, wart remover, hair restorer, nasal sprays, denture cleaner, antacids. If this sounds like your bathroom, it's time to take stock of your health. And time to buy stock in a drug company.

URBAN IRONY

I used to live out in the country with acreage and well water and peace and quiet and all that, but for the last 10 years I've lived right downtown in a medium-sized city. In that time, I've had raccoons in my chimney, mice in my basement and bats in my belfry. I never had any of those problems in the country. That's because in a rural environment there's room for everybody. Mice and raccoons can have their area; I can have mine. But in the city, we're all sharing the same space. The tree that was the raccoon's home was cut down and turned into a deck. Mice like dark and dank and my basement is an ideal source of each. If you want to get away from animals, move to the country where they have options. If you live in a congested city, having animals infest your home is as understandable as your adult children moving back in. They have nowhere else to go.

FREEDOM 85

Signs that you may not be as ready to retire as you think you are:
— You have 47 years left on your mortgage pay-



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- ments.
- Packard has recalled your car.
- Your daughter has decided to become an artist.
- The doctors can't guarantee that you'll die soon.
- After a two-week vacation, your wife looks forward to you going back to work.
- Your retirement fund relies on a winning lottery ticket.

IT'S AUTOMATIC

I was at an antique car show this week and the biggest evolution of cars in the last 50 years is in the area of sleekness. A 1951 Chevy was tall and narrow. The cars of today are low and wide. To explain this, you have to go back a little further to when there were no cars at all. In the days of the horse and buggy, the driver and passengers sat up straight so that the bumps wouldn't throw anyone's back out. The early cars are based on the same principle. You can't make a sleek car if the people inside it need to sit up straight. So some automotive engineers made the decision that people didn't

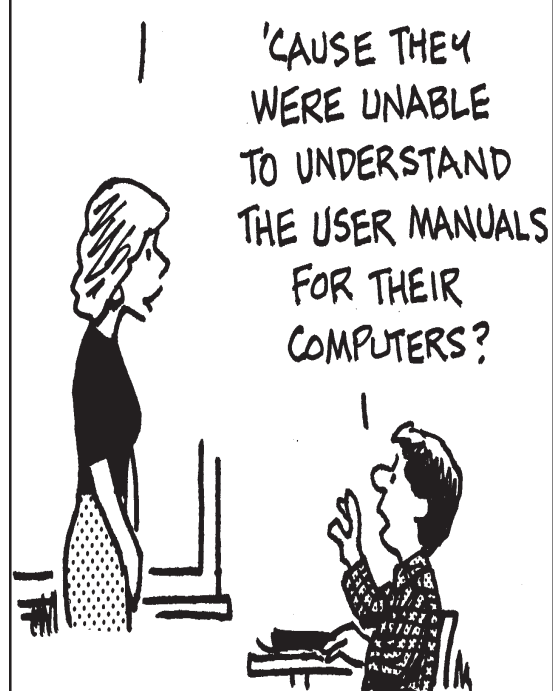
need to sit up straight. That changed everything. That's how they get the cars of today to look so sleek. They've got us all lying down. Lying down in cars. No wonder teen pregnancies are up.

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "You should never lie to your wife, but she may not want to hear all the truth all the time." — Red Green

Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story."

berry's world

CAN ANYONE TELL ME WHY THE DINOSAURS DISAPPEARED?



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