Soul for Sale
Confessions of a Philadelphia Spin Doctor
By Ed Eisen
DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my wife Marion who encouraged me to write this memoir and painstakingly edited the manuscript, my son Seth, whose victory over Hodgkin's Lymphoma gave us new hope and John McCandlish Phillips, a brilliant New York Times reporter whose prayers reopened closed doors.
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Part 1: A SHORT HISTORY OF A LONG CAREER

CHAPTER 1: A Saturday Night Firing 10
CHAPTER 2: The Lone Ranger Rides In 15
CHAPTER 3: A Witch’s Tale 21
CHAPTER 4: Mission Accomplished 31
CHAPTER 5: Miracle on Market Street 41
CHAPTER 6: Redefining Success 51

Part II: THE FACELESS

CHAPTER 7: A Warehouse for Children 62
CHAPTER 8: Hope, Love Live Here 67
CHAPTER 9: Free At Last 73
CHAPTER 10: The Manna Maker 76

Part III: THE FAMOUS

CHAPTER 11: Soup with Mother Teresa 80
CHAPTER 12: Pope Paul VI and John Paul II 85
CHAPTER 13: Sen. Edward M. Kennedy 90
CHAPTER 14: The Rev. Martin Luther King 95
CHAPTER 15: A late 20th Century Charles Lindbergh 98

Part IV: THE INFAMOUS

CHAPTER 16: Invitation from the Mafia 105
CHAPTER 17: Madman of Lock Haven 107
CHAPTER 18: An American Tragedy 116
CHAPTER 19: High Hangs the Noose 123

Part V: INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

CHAPTER 20: Scofflaw Chaser Lived, Died Well 129
CHAPTER 21: Feds Flunk Security Test 137
CHAPTER 22: A Town Running Dry 142
CHAPTER 23: The Singles Club  148
CHAPTER 24: The Grave Salesman  155
CHAPTER 25: Reporter vs. 4th Grade  163

Part VI: SPIN 101  166

CHAPTER 26: The Great Junk Food Test  169

Acknowledgments  174
About The Author  177
Photographs follow Page 60
PART 1:

A SHORT HISTORY OF A LONG CAREER

My career as a disc jockey, TV booth announcer, newspaper reporter, editor and PR consultant spanned 52 years. That’s a lot of deadlines. Yet someone wise once counseled: less is more. And so, dear reader, I’ve abridged a long career into a short history of but six chapters. The rest -- from Chapters 7 to 25 -- represents, hopefully -- the best of what I wrote in over half a century on deadline. Part VI is my take on spin and my personal mea culpa.
Introduction

This is a story about a kid who grew up in Brooklyn when Franklin Delano Roosevelt was president and the New York Yankees won the World Series. It’s a story of 52 years on deadline. Yet that might lead you to believe I spent over half-a-century in the vineyards of ink as some Clark Kent character trying to dodge bullets and leap tall buildings. In truth, there were other deadlines: broadcast deadlines, copy writing deadlines, PR deadlines and more. The clock was always ticking, the pressure always on.

That’s the good part. The bad is that when you take your focus off your dream to trade it for shekels, that dream may turn sour. So this is a chronicle about switching careers for a bigger paycheck to become what some would call a spin doctor, a flack, a public relations consultant. For young people making career choices -- perhaps in journalism or public relations -- my choices may serve as an instruction manual on what not to do.

In the beginning, I worked for a little but loved it a lot. I was a top 40 DJ, then a broadcast news reporter and a TV booth announcer. Once I did a stint as a traffic reporter from a convertible with a flat tire. There were 15 incredible years
with *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and two great newspapers, now long gone -- *The Philadelphia Bulletin* and *The Fort Lauderdale News*.

There were scores of investigative pieces like the one on how the feds flunked a security test in Philadelphia 30 years before 9/11. Perhaps the most compelling was a one-year series on Pennhurst State School and Hospital about children housed in one of Pennsylvania’s most notorious warehouses for the mentally retarded, a story about man’s inhumanity to man.

There was the article about Martin Luther King coming to a news conference in Philadelphia two years before his assassination. Senator Edward M. Kennedy attending the funeral of a young woman who died in the car he accidentally drove off a narrow bridge near Martha’s Vineyard.

And then, suddenly, I switched hats. I became a defender of law firms hungry for new clients, accountants seeking increased profits and bankers in need of polishing an image. I earned more money. But, in the end, the sell-off wasn’t worth it. That’s how *Soul for Sale* wound up as the title of this book. This is not to suggest that the world of PR did not have its rewards.

For example, I found myself one afternoon eating chicken soup with Mother Teresa, a life-altering moment. And then there were the two popes I never traveled to Rome to meet. But I told their stories, tales that appeared in newspapers all over the world. Not bad for a Jewish kid from Brooklyn.
A modern-day Charles Lindbergh hired me to help find his missing daughters with a $2 million bounty. There had been nothing quite like this manhunt since the Lindbergh kidnapping of 1932. I convinced Steve Lopez of Soloist fame, that this was a tale worth telling. “Where Are My Girls?” wound up on the front cover of Time Magazine.

Once I worked to connect folks in Philly to boxing champ Joe Frazier with a new fangled bill-paying system called Pay-By-Phone. It was a nice gig. Today Joe’s glove sits on my bookshelf.

Ultimately, I found my way back to my first love -- journalism. The comeback lasted but four years. It was an answer to persistence and the prayers of a New York Times reporter. And just when my career was looking up, The Philadelphia Bulletin closed, shuttered 26 years before print journalism began to go bust. At 48, I was back knocking on doors, hawking products and services that many newsmen wouldn’t sell to a junk dealer. Yet there I was back in PR, the enterprise at which many Clark Kents and Lois Lanes are now finding a new home.

This book will take you on a roller-coaster ride. You’ll begin in the worlds of broadcasting and print journalism. Then, you’ll traverse into the arena of commerce and even religion as my own personal life took some twists and turns. You may begin to question the motivations behind your own career choices. Have your decisions been based on passion or money? For example, my son holds a

-8-
Master’s degree in Transformative Art. He’s a painter, sculptor, teacher and performing artist. Seth has a modest income but loves his work.

My story is also a remembrance about the famous, the infamous, the faceless in society, a personal tale about abandoning a dream to put bread on the table, a short story about a long career that mirrors the history, drama, and laughter of 52 years on deadline.
Chapter 1

A Saturday Night Firing

What is success? I’ve learned that for some, success is failure turned inside out.

So it was for me back in 1982, the year *The Philadelphia Bulletin* closed, ending -- so it seemed -- a 15-year career in print journalism, a career marked by a series of writing awards including one from the Freedom Foundation. Yet, when you’re 48, opportunities for reporters can be scarce. I banged on a lot of doors that year. One ultimately opened at *The Press of Atlantic City*, a smaller newspaper in a vacation and casino city, a minor player in a world of major metros. Yet when the offer came -- I accepted -- though with little enthusiasm. *The Press of Atlantic City*, I mused. Could this be my last hurrah? Better grab it before your career in journalism gets as stale as yesterday’s headlines.

After all, we were a family of six. Gwen, our first child, was 23, completing her Masters in Family Therapy at Temple University in Philadelphia. Steve, at 21, was in London, in his final year studying film. Seth, at 17, was a talented high school senior majoring in art. And Stacy, our last child was 13, in junior high school and already asserting her independence. Marion, my wife of 23 years and
five years my junior, had a full plate. She had always been a stay-at-home mom. Clearly, this was a family that needed to eat. And the roof was leaking.

So I took the job. Yet the telltale signs of doom were written all over my decision. I would not be working as a reporter, the passion that drove me to writing as a teenager. I would be editing other people’s work: inserting commas, fixing syntax, writing headlines, far removed from the front line: covering political scandals, corruption in high places, the so-called trials of the century. I went from extolling heroes and vilifying bad guys to stumbling with a computer system I had never before used while speed reading through reams of copy.

My assignment was to sit at a rim, a horseshoe-shaped desk with a string of other copy editors, feverishly dotting the I’s and crossing the T’s before the paper rolled onto the streets of Atlantic City the next morning. Copy editing, may well be the most thankless job in the world. To get there each day my roundtrip commute from Philadelphia was 135 miles daily followed by a 40-hour week of drudgery. My paycheck was but a fraction of what I earned as a reporter at The Bulletin. Worse yet, I worked the late shift until 2 in the morning. That included weekends and holidays.

Yet I was determined to make the most of it, to hang in, to view the position as an opportunity for an aging newsman. The rim was akin to a bank’s back room, absolutely necessary, but hardly the glamour pit of what was to become a
vanishing industry. I viewed myself as a middle-aged performer whose Broadway gigs had dried up. And all that was left were the cruise ships headed for the Caribbean.

The man who hired me was an affable, broad shouldered Scotsman. In his early 70s, Chuck Reynolds served as editor and publisher of The Press. His was a strong voice over the years, particularly in support of casinos as a stimulus package for a dying city. He understood my dilemma and reached out to hand me an anchor. “Ed, you sure you want this job?” he asked before posting my name onto his payroll.

I lied, answering in the affirmative. A month later I realized I had made a terrible mistake. The computer system continued to confound me, slowing my pace at a job that required both speed and accuracy. I sat in a room peopled with writers and editors in their 20 and 30s, folks who were at the beginning of their careers, not the end.

The fun, the excitement, the wonder of reporting, crafting a story, seeing your byline on Page 1 the next day had vanished, perhaps forever. That notion saddened me each day as I arrived at the one-story, red brick building in Pleasantville. When the deadline arrived early the next morning, when the presses started rolling around 2, I headed back to Philly, tired, unfulfilled, crawling into bed 90 minutes later. I
would ask myself: “Is this all there is? Is this the way the grand dream is supposed to play out when you hit 48?”

Vets put dogs to sleep with greater kindness. This, I reckoned, was the end of the line, the graveyard. Yet, I would not allow myself to admit defeat, to quit. Where else would I go? So each afternoon my wife packed a little brown bag with a sandwich and an apple. Then she would send me off with a hug and a wish for a better day.

That day arrived one Saturday night. Publisher Reynolds called me into his office. He reminded me that the three-month probationary period had ended. “Ed, I’m sorry,” he said. The sadness in his voice was genuine. He had wanted me to succeed. “I’m going to have to let you go. This will be your last night.”

The words landed with a thud. Surely it was no surprise announcement. Yet my emotions at that moment registered a sense of regret and embarrassment. I had failed for the first time in the pursuit of my chosen career field. I was hurt, humiliated, my palms sweating. Yet, in some strange way I was relieved that someone else had pulled the plug.

My mind whirled: “You idiot. How could you fail in the singular career pursuit you had spent 15 years cultivating? How could this be? I ended up -- not drunk, not drugged -- yet a casualty of a Saturday night firing.
Chuck Reynolds’ last words: “Now, Ed, I want you to know that just because
you didn’t make it here, should not be a sign you’re a failure. I’m sure you’ll do
well with something else in life.” Chuck Reynolds passed away years ago but
today those prescient words still ring in my ears.

The last paycheck would be mailed to my home. The meeting lasted about
seven minutes. Outside his door, I stood for a few minutes in the small newsroom,
gazing at the blinking computer monitors. I left the building and walked to my
wife’s car. I had driven 10,200 miles over those last three months. The Olds was
leaking oil. I sat at the wheel; tears began to flow. I wept for what I viewed as the
tragic end to a grand career, a final chapter gone up in smoke. My years in the
business flashed before me as if I were sitting at an old drive-in, peering at the big
screen. My mind whirled back to another time, to how it all began.
Chapter 2

The Lone Ranger Rides In

It all started with a couple dozen milk crates back in the mid-40s. Wooden boxes, repositories for fresh quarts of pasteurized milk that somehow appeared miraculously on our doorstep each morning. The milkman would drop off the empty crates along a traffic island in the Fairview section of Collingswood, N.J.

I would pile the wooden boxes into an igloo-like rectangle that mirrored a little kid’s vision of a radio station control room, housing a toy microphone and a headset. It was there just a mile from the Black Horse Pike that this young Brooklyn transplant began to parrot the deep baritone of announcer Fred Foy: *A fiery horse with the speed of light! A cloud of dust and a hearty ‘Hi-Yo, Silver!’ The Lone Ranger!*” I imagined the clatter of hooves and Rossini’s “William Tell Overture” pounding away in the background.

I was seven and it was easy to morph from one pipe dream into another. Next time I would become that nerdy comic book character, Clark Kent, the famed
scribe for The Daily Planet. In 1948, fiction became reality when a sports writer from The Camden Courier Post spoke to our 8th grade class at Hatch Jr. High School in the Parkside section of Camden.

Here was this nattily attired real-life Clark Kent recalling how the Philadelphia Eagles had become the National Football League champs during a blizzard; how Citation wound up as the 8th horse to win the Triple Crown and how Joe Lewis knocked out Jersey Joe Wolcott in the 11th round to win the world boxing title for the 25th time. I was forever hooked by the tales of this reporter whose name I can’t even remember.

What I do remember are the words of my elementary school teacher telling our class that someday we’ll discover our gift, a gift, Mrs. Mills said, was God-given. “What will yours be?” she asked. “When you discover it, I hope you use it wisely.” How many of us have gifts stored like grain, gifts molding in the depths of our souls?

I was lucky. Short, freckle-faced, nerdy with a mop of red hair, I knew what I wanted to do before my 13th birthday. By the time I entered 9th grade, I was named editor of the school magazine. A year later my name appeared as editor on the masthead of Camden High School’s Castle Crier. In 1954, when I graduated, the yearbook entry read: “Ed Eisen, future Ollie Crawford.” Crawford was The Philadelphia Inquirer’s vaunted front-page poet-in-residence.
Through those early years my parents played a significant role. Pop -- as I called him -- was a Polish refugee, no taller than 5 foot. His formal education ended in the 6th grade. That’s when his mom and dad put him aboard a ship bound for America to escape the creeping Nazi threat invading Europe. Pop never saw his family again. He brought onto the ship a small suitcase and a gold watch. Two weeks later he disembarked at Ellis Island. The watch was gone. With the help of a bearded shipboard friend, Billy Eisen set out for his uncle’s house in Chicago. He was 11.

He slept in a varmint infested basement, hated school, dropped out and ran off. Billy Eisen lived the hobo life for several years hopping freight trains from Chicago to LA, exhilarated with his poor man’s vista of America. Often he dined on trash can waste. By the time he was 16, Pop was married. But he didn’t stay put for long. He enlisted in the U.S. Army, fibbing about his age. World War I was winding down. He was sent to Germany and was wounded in the first two months of battle. Upon his return to the states -- this time to Detroit -- Pop learned that his new wife had died during childbirth, felled by a national epidemic, Spanish influenza. A son, Samuel, was born with a pinhole in his heart. Pop, a youngster himself and always on the go, was unable to care for his son. The child was raised in an orphanage. Later Samuel went on to became a civil engineer, fearful all his life of undergoing the surgery that could have corrected his congenital heart defect.
His illness -- coupled with blindness in his late 50s -- ended his life. To this day it remains a mystery why Pop never allowed my mother or me to meet my half-brother. Billy Eisen carried the secret with him to the grave.

To support himself and send Samuel to college, Pop worked as a hospital orderly -- cleaning, scrubbing, polishing floors. He saved $500 to send Samuel to college, a debt that was repaid when the young engineer launched his career designing bridges. Pop met my mother working in a hospital in Brooklyn. He was 35. During World War II when I was six, my parents moved to South Jersey. Pop found wartime employment at the New York Shipyard in Camden. In 1946, he was back cleaning floors again, this time in Philadelphia. Sometimes he directed a crew to work the bigger jobs in banks, cafeterias, insurance companies, even the old Philadelphia Daily News. By the time I was 11, I would tag along to lift chairs onto desks, swish a mop or run a buffing machine. Pop punched a clock and hung his hat at a place called City Cleaning Co. at 401 N. Broad St. Some years later I would hang my hat directly across the street at 400 N. Broad, headquarters for The Philadelphia Inquirer, then owned by the late Walter Annenberg.

With Pop’s earnings and my mom’s acumen for saving a penny, my dad presented me with a Smith Corona soon after I entered junior high school. For me, it was a treasure from which I banged out my first school play and my first news story.
Writing opened many doors. I was invited to do a weekly radio show on WCAM in Camden, a small station in the shadow of a big city. Yet there I was -- finally -- using not a toy but a real microphone to broadcast school news to a real audience. And there wasn’t a milk crate in sight!

When I started my freshman year at Temple University my dad came home with a proposition, as he called it, a proposition that still rings in my head. “Eddie, my boss at City Cleaning Co. has made a wonderful offer. Mr. Cohen is getting older. He wants to retire soon. He wants to sell his business. He said we could work for him and pay him back over the years. Would you come in with me?”

Now you have to understand my pop. Billy Eisen was a headstrong man, very proud, given to outbursts of rage for real or imagined insults, many of which were directed toward my mom. Mom was a diminutive woman, standing slightly over four feet. A native of Latvia, raised by a grandmother, she sold apples on the streets of Riga at 5 to help support two younger sisters. Her mother had died in childbirth.

Mom was near death at 73 and I remember my father crying: “I love her so much, I would drink her bath water.” Pity. The earlier years were not happy.

Lillian Eisen had a penchant for asking questions that often impugned his judgment. The acrimony was endless. Yet Pop also possessed an enormous capacity to love, to cry, to cherish those closest to him. His lack of education
didn’t keep him from excelling in other ways. Paula Herbut, the old Philadelphia Bulletin’s religion writer, once described him as a “cantor without portfolio.” Fact is, Pop sang during the Jewish High Holidays in synagogues all over Philadelphia. Son of a cantor who perished in the Holocaust, Pop was self-taught. And he possessed yet another talent. With his broken English, he would offer impassioned pleas for donations, appeals made at synagogues from West Philadelphia to Elizabeth, N.J., orthodox synagogues, with dwindling worshippers and shrinking budgets. His sermons -- often spoken in Yiddish -- carried such a powerful message that grown men would often weep.

And so there he was on this Monday morning, my Dad, in the kitchen of our home on Bradley Ave. in Camden. He had been working all night. He sat at the table sipping the tea Mom had set before him. He was a little guy whose calloused hands were silent testimony to his years of hard labor. He repeated again his proposition: He wanted me to join him in the business of cleaning office buildings.

“Pop, I said, “you don’t understand. I want to write for a living. I don’t see my future at City Cleaning Co.”

The old man was visibly crushed. The look of excitement turned to sadness. Billy Eisen was a man accustomed to disappointments. He said goodnight and went to bed. It was 8 a.m.
Chapter 3

A Witch’s Tale

The road from the graduating class at Camden High School in 1954 to the general assignment desk at The Philadelphia Inquirer took 12 years. It was a path littered with more than a few twists and turns.

The fact that I got there at all is not a tribute to great writing talent. There were far better scribes who stumbled, smarter entrepreneurs who bombed and dulcet toned DJs who crashed. Mine was a journey that straddled all those slippery slopes.

That I succeeded at all over these 52 years is a tribute largely to three things: a God who lifted me up on the darkest days, a wife who encouraged me and dogged persistence. Many quit after rejection. I survived because I strived to seek the next ‘yes’ after enduring scores of ‘no’s’ on my career path. I learned in my teens when I hawked Fuller Brushes -- that life, like sales --- is a numbers game. Hang in long enough and a door is likely to open. The key: keep knocking. From early on, my career target was radio. Only later did I see journalism as a road more stable. Now the journey is even tougher. In today’s struggling newspaper market,
only the most committed, the most talented, the most persistent are likely to survive.

My earliest passion was to someday study at the Pasadena Playhouse in California. Perhaps write a screenplay. That was not to be.

It has been said, if you aim at nothing, you will succeed at hitting nothing. So I pursued radio with a passion, discovering later that a far wiser strategy is to build a reputation as a print journalist. As a top-40 disc jockey, it didn’t take long to recognize that broadcasting -- as exciting a career field as it appeared -- can be a highly discouraging pursuit, akin in many ways to a career as an actor. You stand atop the heap today. Tomorrow a better voice, a smoother style, a prettier face takes center stage. Suddenly you’re out. Out as in canned, dispatching tapes and resumes once again. Let me tell you what radio was like when I started back in the mid-50s.

Television was coming of age. Radio was in a struggle for survival, just as newspapers are today. Soap operas -- including my beloved Lone Ranger -- were vanishing from the AM dial. The sound of hooves were heard again but this time as moving pictures on tiny screens. What emerged was a hip-swinging Elvis Presley, the Beatles and dozens of other white entertainers who began to mirror black rhythm and blues singers. A guy by the name of Gordon MacClendon sat in a restaurant one day and noticed that teens --- soon to be known as baby boomers -
would play the same songs over and over again on the jukebox. Why not make radio programming like that, MacClendon reasoned. His formula worked: the repetition of short play lists saved local radio from extinction. A new concentration on delivering local news began to dominate the airwaves. The deeper, the brassier the voices, the wider the audience appeal. Philadelphia -- like other major metro areas -- had radio stations building their brand on top hits and big personalities.

It was in this milieu that my radio career was launched first in high school, then as a freshman at WRTI at Temple University, and then at WWBZ, a small 1,000 watter in Vineland, N.J. Egg farmers were its prime commercial audience. I remember bombarding the station with phone calls and letters while working the night shift as a copy boy at the old Philadelphia Daily News. Nothing seemed to work. Later the station manager told me it was my persistence that won the day.

My paycheck was $55 a week. My job was to ferret out local news, work weekends and take the trash out at night. The summer passed and as I was preparing to enter my sophomore year at Temple University, WWBZ fired its morning DJ. I was offered the slot and decided to stay. I remember how my mom -- a lady with but a 4th grade education -- pleaded that I remain in college. Years earlier this diminutive woman from Latvia labored long hours as a seamstress in New York’s overcrowded garment industry. Lillian Koppel innately understood
the value of an education. Sadly, I failed to heed her pleadings. My thirst for broadcasting overcame her objections. It was a thirst born of the same dreams that propel others to New York and Hollywood for careers in show business. Call it the 15 Minutes of Fame Syndrome, a condition more often than not terminating with a curtain that never rises.

My schedule at WWBZ went something like this: Get up at 4:30 a.m., get dressed, drive off the farm on which I lived while making an effort to avoid hitting the chickens on the way out. I would open the station at 5:30 a.m. At 6, I would start spinning records, announce egg prices and tout Purina, the champion chow for chickens in the 50s.

On weekends I hosted a call-in record show. Young fans -- mostly teenage girls -- multiplied like locusts. One of them, Wanda, a 17-year-old, invited me to visit her home in Blackwood, N.J. “I want you to meet my Mom,” Wanda said. “It will be a real kick.”

It was. Ten minutes into our conversation I was convinced Wanda’s mother, Penelope Dernakowski (not her real name) was a natural for a witch’s role on TV. She began by reading my palm. “There is good news and bad,” she said, her dark eyes peering at the meandering lines on my sweaty palms.

“Some day soon you will take a long trip,” she drawled, her voice trailing off. “It will be a trip for pleasure, a trip that will change your life.”
Surely, a line with a familiar ring, I thought, preparing for a witch’s brew of fantasy. As I took in the long chin, the pale face and two missing teeth, I conjured up scenes of turban-clad fortunetellers forever spinning tales of calamity and joy. Yet Wanda’s mother was decidedly different. Mrs. Dernakowski was unlike the caricatures I had seen in movies and at the 50-cent reading parlors in old Atlantic City. There was no pointy hat, no black fingernails, no broomstick awaiting launch. There was just this thin, bony figure in a polka-dot housedress, seated at a wooden kitchen table.

As I was preparing to leave, I thought: “Here’s someone’s mother who could perhaps tell me whether my head is brimming with pipe dreams, whether my vision for a career in communications is but a fantasy. Will it all come crashing down?”

What this naive kid learned was that witches are rarely precise, their prophecies are more general than specific. Mrs. Dernakowski didn’t say much about any of these matters except to confirm that I would experience “great success” as I traveled “for business and pleasure.” Then she took a deep breath, sadness filled her eyes. “Later in your life, “ Mrs. Dernakowski said, “something terrible will happen to someone close to you.” I pressed for details.

“My vision is too awful to tell. I cannot go on,” Wanda’s mother winced, her hands trembling. “But this I can tell you: You will survive. You will have difficult
times. But it will end well.” Tears tread its way down her cheek. The visit was over.

I never saw Penelope Dernakowski again. Yet I must confess the old lady’s message haunted me all these years.

It haunted me as I traveled across the continent, across oceans. I spent two years in Karlsruhe, Germany with the 7th Army. My hope was to transfer to Armed Forces Radio in Stuttgart. That was not to be. Competition was staggering. I served my time employing the singular skill I taught myself in the seventh grade. I served out my time as a clerk-typist.

A singular event highlighted my military experience. I entered a writing competition for servicemen sponsored by The Freedom Foundation. My piece on Protecting America’s Freedoms took a first place award. For me, the bronze medallion was a validation that a career in communications was a right choice.

On my return to the states, I resumed my search for work in radio. Doors appeared closed. Four months later I was hired at WJTN, a radio station in Jamestown, N.Y. I worked as a broadcast news reporter and hosted a Saturday night teen record show. My boss bore a name I found appropriate for his line of work: Hap Hazard. That was his real name. Once he was nearly electrocuted by an improperly wired tape recorder. On another occasion Hap and I teamed to provide traffic reports from a convertible in snow clogged downtown Jamestown. Hap was
driving and I provided color. Suddenly our public service turned into a public hazard. A rear tire blew. We held up traffic on a two-lane highway for 50 minutes. My ad-lib routine, the station manager told me, was not my strong suit. He suggested I find another line of work.

When I returned to Philadelphia, Marion and I were married. I met her 12 months earlier at a rooftop dance at the Jewish Y at Broad and Pine sts. I was 22, she was 17, in her senior year at Philadelphia’s Olney High School. Two redheads whose personalities contrasted like Mars and Venus. Marion was outgoing, vivacious, a good listener. And I -- a born cynic, always seeking an audience --- found one in this comely strawberry blonde. Yet our timing for tying the knot was less than perfect. Not only was I unemployed in August of 1959, but her dad had just undergone a heart attack. Marion’s mom insisted that a downsized wedding proceed as planned. Our honeymoon consisted of two days in Atlantic City.

After that, we moved into my mother’s apartment in West Philadelphia. Marion went to work for her aunt as a fundraiser. I continued to pound doors at radio outlets all over the region.

It was November 1960 and I had for long harbored the notion of working in a place where it was warm year round. One night I came home and asked Marion if she would consider a move to either California or Florida. She chose Florida. For Marion -- who had never traveled beyond the shore -- the move spelled adventure.
For me, the move represented a fresh start in new surroundings. There was no pre-planning, no job prospects. My new bride and I packed a U-Haul and drove off to Miami in my 1956 Ford Fairlane. We had never visited there before. My hope was that a change in venue would deliver a more promising future. We rented an apartment and on Thanksgiving Day -- instead of celebrating with our family, now 1250 miles away --- we broke bread with newfound friends on the lawn outside our apartment. That night a newly wed couple from New York borrowed our silverware, blankets, and pillows. The next morning they were gone, their apartment empty. Gone, too, were our wedding presents.

By Monday, our fortunes brightened. Marion was hired as a clerk at a clothing maker. For me, the job hunt continued. Marion was encouraging. She believed good things were around the corner.

One day I found an ad in Broadcasting Magazine for an opening at a television station in West Palm Beach. The manager at WEAT-TV hired me on the first interview. Mornings I moved into a tiny sound booth from which I introduced the news anchors. Afternoons I spun records for the station’s radio operation.

Things went well for six months. Then new owners moved in and suggested I might be happier elsewhere. Their complaint: diarrhea of the mouth. I suggested it could be fixed. They insisted my problem was incurable. There was a plus side to all this, I reasoned. I was knocking on doors without having to trudge through
three feet of snow and Jamestown’s cold winters. Marion had faith in me, believed I would find the right job and encouraged me to keep trying. Every once in a while I would remember Mrs. Dernakowski and her prophecy. Sometimes it provided hope that better days were around the bend.

When I wasn’t job hunting, Marion and I would spend a hot summer afternoon in a cool movie theater in West Palm Beach. The price was only 50 cents; a worthy escape from what in reality was appearing like a bleak future.

Among the venues at which I left an application was the Florida State Employment Service. “We don’t have a reporter-broadcaster category,” a counselor informed me. My resume, I learned, was ultimately filed in a category classified as clerk-typist.

Months passed. Our wedding safety net was becoming depleted. Gwen, our first child, was born at Good Samaritan Hospital in West Palm Beach. At this point I began to entertain the notion that perhaps our Florida junket was ill advised, poorly planned.

A week later I took a phone call from the manager of a radio station in Babylon, N.Y. He invited me to fly out for a two-week tryout as a newscaster. I booked a flight. On the day I was scheduled to leave a car pulled into our driveway in Lake Worth. A tall, 20-something guy stepped out. He rang our doorbell and
identified himself as Tom Alston. Tom was bureau chief at a newspaper in Ft. Lauderdale. I had applied for a job earlier at the paper’s Pompano Beach satellite office. Yet nothing had come of it. Tom was moving to an editor’s slot at *The Ft. Lauderdale News*. The paper was seeking a replacement in its Delray Beach bureau. Apparently, my resume turned up during a search at an unlikely venue: the Florida State Employment Service in West Palm Beach!

“Would I be interested?” Alston asked.

I drove to Ft. Lauderdale for the interview that changed my life. There I met the man who was to become my boss and mentor for the next six years -- Barc Bowman. I canceled my flight to Babylon.
Chapter 4

Mission Accomplished

My six years at The Fort Lauderdale News played a major role in transforming me from a wannabe to a journalist -- from amateur to professional. Barc Bowman -- the man who became both my mentor and my editor was a taskmaster, my toughest boss in 52 years on deadline. As an editor, he was a man with the precision of a surgeon. No missing commas, no dangling participles, no sloppy leads escaped his critical eye. As a mentor, he urged me not to shy from badgering public officials with tough questions, to produce stories that were well balanced, reported thoroughly, that would keep opinion out of news columns.

Bowman --- like others -- was attired daily as the professional he was: white shirt, tie, trim haircut, military bearing. I remember coming to work one morning, the shadow of my just shaven whiskers on display. “Hey, Ed ... what are you shaving with?” he asked. I told him I used a Remington. “It’s not doing a good job, kid, ” he said. “Switch to a razor,” he counseled. And so that’s what I did for the next 24 years. Bowman stopped by our house for dinner three times. I don’t think it was my writing that impressed him. It was Marion’s cooking.
This was an era when an eraser and glue pot were a reporter’s chief editing tools. Computers would not become common place for another 19 years. *The Fort Lauderdale News* - then owned by Al Gore’s father -- would become my Bachelors from Northwestern, my Masters from Columbia.

When my writing skills failed to meet expectations, the story either didn’t make the paper or its edited version became a prized learning tool. It was an era when appearance counted for a lot. A new reporter walking into the city room in jeans and T-shirt -- commonplace today -- would have seen a career go up in smoke.

My experience at *The News* -- first in the Delray Beach bureau, then as Pompano Beach Bureau Chief, and in my last two years, as an editor in Ft. Lauderdale -- gave me some good insights on the news gathering business. One was to listen. Another was to withhold snap judgments and a third was to write a story that allowed all sides to be heard. It was this insistence on balance that is so often missing from news reporting today.

My early beats included twice-daily checks at police stations in Broward County and wall-to-wall coverage of small town politics. It was not until many years later that newspapers discovered what was among the factors driving down circulation: blanket political coverage.
What drove up coverage was hurricanes. Readers wanted to know every
detail. Yet in my six years at the paper I stepped into the mouth of a hurricane but
once. It was Cleo in 1964. I was assigned to write a color piece as I set out on foot
along North 18th Street in Pompano Beach. I remember Marion screaming as I
inched past our carport: “Don’t go,” she cried. “Promise to come back to me!”
From the doorway, she was holding in her arms our six-month-old son, Steve.
Gwen, our 2-year-old daughter was screaming, clinging to her mom’s leg. A few
hundred feet away, I loosened my grip on a light pole and dashed for cover into a
7-11. How fleeting life can seem when you plod through a storm on assignment to
capture that feeling of terror for readers. Once I alighted from the store, the worst
had passed.

Another time I had a date on a fishing boat with the first known male to
undergo sex reassignment surgery. Her name was Christine Jorgensen. When he
was a boy toying with dolls, George just wanted to be a girl. By the time he was
man enough for the Army -- all 93 pounds of him -- he felt like a woman girdled in
the wrong body. So the son of a carpenter from the Bronx sailed off to Denmark,
where in 1952 surgeons transformed George into Christine.

The coming out of Christine Jorgensen was the most shocking surgery of the
early 60s. “Nature made a mistake, which I have had corrected," the ex-GI wrote
to her parents back in New York. ‘I am now your daughter.'
Jorgensen was visiting in South Florida. So I thought a date with this most prominent of male-turned-females might be good copy. The paper footed the bill for the fishing expedition. As it turned out, the big event was a bust. Christine caught three sea bass. And that was the most exciting thing that happened on my big date.

Living conditions for farm migratory workers in Delray Beach were deplorable: little barefoot children grew up in two-by-four stucco structures with no running water. Parents picked corn in nearby fields. I wrote a multipart series that prompted a state investigation. The articles embarrassed a few politicians, but changed nothing. It was a disappointing development but also a good learning experience: making journalism a career choice will not necessarily change your world. If that’s what you need to do, consider politics.

On a lighter vein, there was my interview with Jackie Gleason, the late, great TV comic of Honeymooners fame. Gleason was doing a special at the Biltmore in Palm Beach. I met him backstage for an interview and photo. My camera flash malfunctioned twice. The Great One -- as they called him -- was miffed. “What’s a matter wit ya?” he bellowed. “Can’t they give ya a camera that works?” It was a humiliating moment. Gleason cancelled the interview.

Once I wrote about a series of engineering errors made at a multimillion-dollar pier under construction in Pompano Beach. New revelations appeared in the
paper almost weekly. One day I took a call from an executive of the company overseeing the work. He suggested I move to Jacksonville where I could serve as the firm’s public relations director. Although, I didn’t know what that job entailed, I surmised it was a place I didn’t belong. Only years later did I come to understand what the embattled engineer had proposed: Lucrative lure to silence a nosy reporter. I regret that I failed to recognize what a great story that would have made. The incident went unreported. I had a lot to learn.

When I look back at those yellowing pages of The Ft. Lauderdale News, a flood of memories come surging back. Mostly, I marvel at how my writing has undergone a sea change. Banging out several stories a day, plus taking photos, (even when the flash failed) was a great learning lab for a 20-something journalist. What I learned was how to listen creatively, ask questions, and discern truth from spin. The real feat --- never learned to this day --- was how to accurately unscramble scribbled notes and transform them into readable prose. A course in shorthand would have helped.

Now that my byline appeared almost daily in The News, other opportunities tumbled in. I was asked to deliver local news reports at radio stations in Delray and Pompano Beach. Later, I was reporting for a top rated-operation in Miami, WGBS. Then I became the South Florida correspondent for KYW NewsRadio’s predecessor station, WRCV. The dual career both in radio and print journalism that
had for so long evaded me was now a reality. My confidence level soared. Just in time for new challenges that lay ahead. The station manager at WDBF in Delray Beach invited me to attend Sunday morning services at his church. I stalled. He persisted. A month later I was fired.

The year was 1966. Marion and I had been in South Florida since 1960. Now was the time, I reasoned, to wade into what I considered the big leagues: Philadelphia. This was the city where Marion had grown up, the city where the grandparents of our two children lived. Could I make the cut? Was I good enough? Would this be the year that a silly witch’s prophecy would be fulfilled?

We were on vacation in Philly when two jobs offers floated in: one was at the new KYW NewsRadio; the other across the street from the place where my dad had worked so many years cleaning floors. The news director at KYW offered a six-day a week reporter’s slot. It was tempting, an offer that could have reopened those once-closed doors in big market broadcasting. Meanwhile, the city editor at The Philadelphia Inquirer offered a five-day a week job for the same pay. For me, it was a no brainer. My early broadcasting career was too checkered. Full time radio and TV positions carried too much risk for a man with a third child on the way. I went with The Inquirer, a choice I never regretted. Marion was thrilled. I remember how we jumped up and down with joy as we broke the news
to our parents: We were coming home. And, after all, the paper was where I wanted to be since my days at Camden High School. Indeed, it was the journey that took 12 years to achieve. Never once did it occur to me that I was entering one of the late, great bastions of a career field that was heading for the graveyard.

When I started working at The Inquirer the typewriter was king. Back then, typewriters were simple manual affairs with black ribbons. Reporters used pencils, erasers and glue pots to correct and edit. Piecing it all together was like knitting a blanket for Wilt Chamberlain. As you tacked on changes with your glue pot, the final story could well exceed six feet in length. Dozens of linotype machines turned molten lead into columns of type. Type was set into metal frames and pressed into enormous rounded discs attached to giant presses. News changed so rapidly that three press runs were required nightly to remain competitive with the bigger circulation Evening Bulletin.

I chronicled stories of the famous, the infamous and the faceless in society, most long gone today. People like Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, the Rev. Martin Luther King and Golda Meir, Israel’s fourth prime minister. I covered plane hijackings, race riots, bizarre suicide murders, even a deathbed confession of a mass murderer in Lock Haven, Pa. It was a job for which I should have been paying Walter Annenberg. Instead, he paid me. My job was my front row seat to history. It was where I had always wanted to be.
Stories of blood and gore seemed to draw the best in me. Deathbed confessions from killers, politicians caught in a web of lies, con artists selling graves and dance lessons to lonely widows. Editors appeared to cast me as the male counterpart of the 1930s sob sisters of journalism whose stories about sensational topics built readership. Folks I interviewed -- from pols to crooks often sang freely when I opened my notepad. To be sure, I was conned by the best. Experience taught me to become a hard-nosed skeptic.

Stories wound up in the paper from a myriad of sources: Wire services, an editor’s hunch, an anonymous phone call. That’s how I wound up with one of the best stories of my career. The tip came from a distraught father whose daughter was institutionalized at a place called Pennhurst State School and Hospital, an isolated, ancient warehouse 25 miles west of Philadelphia.

Now it can be told. Linda Taub was 17, blind and retarded since birth. Her father, Allen Taub, was a businessman who baked cheesecakes for a living. His sweet creations were named after Linda. Taub was so anguished, so overwrought by the conditions his daughter endured that he called one night while I was working the rewrite desk. In hushed tones he described just how bad things had become at Pennhurst. Near tears, he pleaded that I make an unannounced visit to the institution. “Bring a photographer,” he urged. I did. The conditions were so appalling, so cruel and inhuman that pictures and stories ran for a year
in *The Inquirer*. Then one day I got word from my editors: No more. Readers
don’t want to eat their breakfast while being repeatedly reminded about the
Commonwealth’s treatment of its most vulnerable of citizens. I stopped writing the
gut-wrenching reports. Sad to say it took another 20 years for a governor to close
down the place. I will remember the stench of Pennhurst for as long as I live.

Another article was the brainchild of the paper’s new City Editor, Harry
Bellinger. Bellinger flew me to Miami Beach during a prolonged Philadelphia
garbage strike. There I interviewed then Mayor James H.J. Tate. The mayor’s wife
stood in the doorway of his motel room blocking my entrance. That’s as far as I got
before the door was slammed shut. In the end, I flew some 1,250 miles for a few
brief quotes. But the story, penned in a whimsical, questioning style, landed on the
front page. The piece took the mayor to task for fleeing the stench of the city. But
Tate – unlike BP – had a good excuse. He was recovering from surgery.

Another time a story about a bizarre killing of a newly graduated Philadelphia
physician by his mother-in-law in Georgia received a statewide publisher’s award.

There was the article that declared in the lead that the Beatles were dead.
They were being replaced, I opined wrongly, by a new singing rage, the Monkeys,
a pop singing quartet. Teenyboppers descended on Philadelphia’s Civic Center like
a plague of locusts. It was sheer pandemonium, the shrieking and hysteria. My
overnight prediction in 1967 was a tad off. The Monkeys flamed out within a year.
Indeed, those were heady years. I was at the top of my game. But nothing lasts forever. And so it was with my dream job. Other obligations -- a growing family and a desire for a bigger paycheck -- beckoned. In all, I spent five years at *The Inquirer*. Leaving was a career choice I shall always regret.
Chapter 5

Miracle on Market Street

My happiness quotient dived like the Dow after I left journalism even though my paycheck saw a handsome uptick.

I spent nearly two years as Director of Public Relations at one of Philadelphia’s most prestigious medical centers, Thomas Jefferson University. It was a fine place to work. Before pancreatic cancer took my mother’s life at 73, she asked from her bedside at Jefferson: “But Eddie, how could you leave The Inquirer? I thought that was your dream job.”

Mom was right. I was earning $12,000 a year in 1971. Jefferson offered $17,000 plus a ton of benefits. Simply put -- with a family of six -- it was hard to say no.

Yet there was never any pressure from Marion to bring home a fatter paycheck, to consider how we would finance a college education for our growing family. The pressure was self-inflicted. I remember Marion’s reaction when I shared with her the Jefferson offer. “You mean I can have cleaning lady?” she beamed from a hospital bed. Marion had just delivered Stacy, our fourth child. So that’s the way it was with our marriage, now in its fifty-first year. I was Mr.
Outside, tending to my career. Marion was Mrs. Inside, tending -- as they say -- to home and hearth. I always believed she had enough organizational skills to manage a small factory. Yet her choice was always to remain the stay-at-home Mom. She was there to listen to the aches and pains of her family. Only once did she interfere. We’ll get to that later.

A few weeks after leaving the paper, I ran into Inquirer Executive Editor John McMullen. He invited me back to his office.

“What’s the matter, Ed?” he prodded. “You don’t look happy.” I confessed that I missed The Inquirer. “I’ll tell you what,” he said without any hesitation. “We liked your work here. You can have your old job back if you want to return. I’ll give you a $10 a week raise.”

I told McMullen I’d think about it. A few days later I called to say ‘no.’ It was a decision I had made on my own. There was no prompting from Marion. Simply put: it was about dollars, a decision that forever altered my career path and the dream I had harbored since I was a kid.

Jefferson became a whole new world for me, an incredible learning experience in public relations. It was at Jefferson that my mother spent the last two weeks of her life. When she died not a single bill followed.

I learned a lot about hospitals, physicians, the healthcare system, and how a huge medical center functions. Back then, the director of the
hospital governed with an iron fist. Often that would prompt large and small skirmishes on the big campus. But Frank Sweeney was rarely overruled.

Once rumor spread that Frank Sinatra had been admitted to the hospital. *Inquirer* columnist John Corr called for confirmation. I told him it wasn’t so. That was no spin. Next day his column opened with photos of Sinatra and me. The piece was headlined, “Say It Isn’t So, Eddie.” My veracity was jokingly questioned. A simple *no* turned into a 17-inch story. Dr. Sweeney cautioned that good PR happens when the spokesperson is invisible. Leave no fingerprints behind. Tone it down, I was admonished. Suddenly, the consequences of my new career choice dawned on me: Success was dependent on promoting the client, not the spokesman. I learned quickly that the best spin doctors work without leaving a footprint.

Another time one of the city’s most beloved radio DJs was admitted for heart bypass surgery. He did his show daily from bedside. The accolades for the medical and nursing staffs went on for days. Then came the operation. Infection set in and the popular broadcaster lost his leg. Jefferson was named in a major lawsuit. The accolades stopped. Lesson learned: Want to be a hero in the world of PR? No press is preferable to bad press. Yet a man I once covered as a reporter -- Mayor Frank Rizzo -- would always say: “Just spell my name right, Eddie. I don’t care what you say!” Believe me: Rizzo cared.
It was hard to shake the reporter mentality. But I was learning. We made national headlines with stories on research, Tay Sachs disease, and innovations in fighting cancer. We won a national competition for a daily feature aired on KYW NewsRadio called *You and Your Child*. Once I let down my guard for the Women’s Board. It was a fund-raising event staged at Philadelphia’s historic Head House Square. I paraded about as Thomas Jefferson in wig and tights. The ex-reporter never felt more ill at ease.

As time passed, I continued to grieve for the career I had forsaken. The Inquirer’s McMullen left and returned to *The Miami Herald*. A new regime followed, headed by what was then one of the country’s largest newspaper chains, Knight-Ridder. Under Executive Editor Gene Roberts, the paper saw its best years, taking 17 Pulitzer prizes.

But the business was changing. Department stores were closing. Advertising revenues began a downward spiral. Years later I learned that *The Inquirer* had rolled out a marketing plan designed to topple the competing *Philadelphia Bulletin*. Again and again, Wall Street failed to find the paper’s return on profits sufficient to stay committed. In 2006 *The Inquirer* and *Daily News* went on the bloc. When the paper was sold again, former advertising and PR executive -- Brian Tierney -- won the competition to rescue my beloved paper. Now Tierney’s gone,
replaced by his creditors. When and how will it all end? No one knows for sure. What we do know is that the future of a whole industry is in peril.

Novelist Thomas Wolfe titled his great American epic, “You Can’t Go Home Again.” So it was for me -- at least I thought -- that I could never go home again, never return to the news business. A few surprises were in store.

In 1974 I was hired as an account executive at the city’s fifth largest advertising and public relations agency, Gray & Rogers. The firm was a major contributor to Catholic charities and won a national competition for the “Pope Account,” the biggest worldwide event of its kind to arrive in America in 50 years: The 41st International Eucharistic Congress, a huge ecumenical event that drew over a million visitors to the city. That’s how I wound up heading worldwide media relations for the Congress. In such an unlikely role, Mother Teresa and two popes became my clients. It was probably the first time in history that a Jew was getting out press releases for the Vatican.

How we earn a living is how many perceive ourselves. Perhaps if I had worked on an assembly line sinking cherries into chocolate shells, I might have seen the world differently. But having grown up in the vineyards of ink -- journalism -- my self-image was that of a skeptic, always questioning, always engaged in digging further. That was me, by this time a balding Clark Kent, all grown up in suit and tie waiting for the next assignment. I must confess that even
after all those years in PR, I found myself unable to wash the printer’s ink from my soul. That’s why PR had been a poor fit. Even when things were going well, there was this tugging inside that I had exchanged my God-given gifts for filthy lucre.

PR, you see, is about perception. Great presentation skills are likely to carry the day. You need not be a Hemingway to land a job in PR. A resume that touts media experience -- particularly in print or broadcasting -- is always a compelling entry fee. A pretty face will put you out in front of the pack. But brace yourself: a reporter will likely rewrite that news release you’ve been so carefully crafting. His or her byline will appear under the headline, not yours. And you may never recognize your literary efforts when the story finally runs. The spin is likely to be different. And Holy Mackerel! Don’t be surprised: Your client’s name may be zapped out.

This learning curve took awhile to process. How the media played my stories was often a disappointment. The biggest loss -- both for me and my clients -- was loss of control. To this day, I must confess, the transformation -- from journalist to spin doctor -- was never complete. As I worked in the industry, I was forever sensitive to finding an open door, a door back into journalism, what Thomas Jefferson coined, the Fourth Estate, an estate whose future rests on shaky grounds.

In one of my frequent trips to Manhattan on behalf of my assignment with Pope Paul VI, I called a reporter whose story consumed a whole chapter in Gay
Talese’s epic about *The New York Times*, “The Kingdom and the Power.” John McCandlish Phillips was considered one of the most gifted writers at the paper. He was on assignment one day interviewing a man who was a ranking official of the American Nazi Party. The tall, lanky Phillips, the legendary writer remembered for having kept a Bible on his desk, asked Daniel Burros to confirm that he was raised as a Jew. Suddenly, Burros threatened to kill Phillips if the revelation made the paper. The article appeared a week later. Upon reading it, Burros shot himself to death.

I called John to see if he could offer some advice on re-entering the newspaper business. We both appeared to have much in common: Over the years each of us had pursued our own separate spiritual journeys. Phillips came to know Jesus as a young man. I grew up as an Orthodox Jew and came to the Messiah while working as a reporter in South Florida. From these similarities a long friendship developed. John came to Philadelphia in 1975 to speak at our Messianic Jewish Congregation on Chestnut Street. I met his colleagues, some of the top writers and editors at *The Times*. Among them was Nathaniel Nash, the Frankfurt Bureau Chief at the paper. Nathaniel was later killed when the airplane carrying Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown crashed into a Croatian mountain. All of these newsmen were well-educated, respected journalists, devout believers.
Both John and I had a long-standing love affair with journalism. John gave me a copy of his book *The Bible, the Supernatural and the Jews*. He signed it, “To Ed Eisen. A fellow laborer in the vineyards of ink.” To this day, the tome sits on my bookshelf. Over the years he became a friend, a mentor, a spiritual advisor. He prayed for me. And he encouraged me not to abandon my search for re-entry into journalism.

One day I received a call from a prospective employer in one of America’s great tornado alleys, Kansas City, Missouri. The new president of the Kansas City School Board had seen my resume and asked me to fly out. I did. Three days of interviews followed. In the end, I was offered a top-paying position as the executive’s speechwriter. I flew back to Philadelphia elated, a new sense of validation coursed through my veins. I was convinced this was where God wanted me. When I shared the news with Marion, her face reddened, tears welled in her eyes. Her mood did not match mine. “What?” she sighed. “You want to move your family again? You moved us all over Florida. Then to Philadelphia. Now this. I’m not going,” she cried, stomping out of the room.

In all these years of marriage that confrontation marked the first time Marion blocked a career decision. Until that time she had played the role of good listener, counselor, supporter. Bottom line: I didn’t take the job.
Three months later, one cold day in January 1978 another door opened. It was the door that had appeared forever closed: I was hired as a business writer at The Philadelphia Bulletin.

The announcement came by phone. I accepted and hung up. Then Marion and I stood transfixed in our tiny kitchen. Our eyes met. We took a collective deep breath. The next moment we were jumping up and down with joy, tears flowing. “Aren’t you glad we waited?” she cried. I agreed.

I accepted the position with uncertainty. I had been away from print journalism for six years. I knew nothing about Wall Street or business writing. Now the pressure was on. I had to learn and learn fast. My new editors put me through a series of journalistic hoops: writing a multi-part series on the demise of a major health care company, another on high-risk loans fostered by the CEO of a top financial institution. The banker was forced to resign and the series won a Philadelphia Press Association award. Later I did a series on shenanigans in the city’s hiring practices that involved Philadelphia Mayor Bill Green. I was promoted to City Hall Bureau Chief and invited to teach broadcast news journalism at Temple University. I think of that period as the miracle on Market Street. That is, 30th and Market, former home of The Bulletin.

Four years later The Bulletin closed after 134 years in business, an early victim of reader and advertiser flight. The paper was dropping nearly $3 million a
month when the last edition was published on January 29, 1982. The autopsy report: Not enough advertising revenue in the region to support two major newspapers. I was among the 1,943 employes who lost their job. That’s how I wound up as a copy editor at The Atlantic City Press, my last hurrah in journalism.
Chapter 6

Redefining Success

So there I was at 48, sitting in my wife’s car on the parking lot of The Press of Atlantic City, victim of a Saturday night firing, remembering all those years on deadline. The crushing dismissal at The Press represented the first time in 15 years in which I had failed to succeed in the newspaper business. Where, I wondered, would I go from here?

Well, where I went early that morning was home, to bed. And when I arose the next day I was in no mood to reinvent my career. I was in no condition that day, nor the next to do anything but brood. I, too, had been to the mountaintop, a place that had fulfilled my childhood dreams. And now I was in the valley.

On Day 4, I arose with the realization, the imperative to find work. A family of six gets hungry. There was a mortgage to pay. The roof was leaking. And this time the doors to the world of journalism appeared forever shut. This time for good.

What to do? Suddenly an old idea alighted in my head. What if I could leverage my skills as a writer to engage in the very antithesis of what good journalists rarely do? I would hang my own shingle. I would return to PR, the business I had left four years earlier with so many conflicts. A dumb idea? Perhaps. But in my funk I didn’t see an acceptable option.
This time, I reasoned, I would be in control. Success or failure would be my call because I would be running the show. Yet there was a key issue I failed to recognize. As a publicist, visibility in the marketplace would be the highest priority for my clients. In 1982, the primary source for exposure was print and broadcast media. The internet had not reached the level of importance it has today. Yet even the most skillfully crafted pitches are subject to the whims of editors and reporters. Failure to produce results can have a terribly deleterious effect on whether you eat steak or hamburger. Another downside was that as a one-man shop, I was staking my family’s future on making this venture work in an overcrowded and competitive industry.

In journalism the mandate is to present two sides of an issue. In PR, the mission is akin to that of a lawyer: make your client shine, present the positives, shroud the negatives. An article, for example, in* The New York Times* or 90 seconds on the* NBC Evening News* could transform a PR consultant into an overnight success. From the start, I worked to steer away from spin, lobbyists, and politicians.

I promised myself that if I had any doubts about the direction in which a client was pushing, I could always resign. And, of course, if I failed to deliver, the client had the option to terminate me.
I recognized that PR was about winning the battle for public acceptance. It was about the selective distribution of information to please not one but multiple masters: your client, his audiences, and of course, the media. If you please one, you could lose the other. So starting out with even the best of intentions -- at the end of the day -- one could be left with conflicts. But what else was there? Mopping floors was an option I had dismissed years ago. The train was leaving the station. I climbed aboard with a reservoir of doubt and re-emerged as a spin doctor reborn. A chameleon in white shirt, tie and balding dome.

My first call, on my first day as an independent consultant -- working from the old Smith-Corona my dad had bought me -- was to the marketing department at a major insurance company. I asked if they needed someone with strong print media experience.

The answer was immediate: “Come on in.” I was handed a writing assignment for which I charged $60 an hour. In the first 10 hours, I earned $600. “Goodness,” said Marion: “Five more clients like this and we could retire to Laguna Beach, Calif.” It was the kind of money I had never seen before in the news business.

My next client was a large, center city law firm. They wanted to know if I could get a story about a new hire onto the business pages of The Inquirer. I crafted the piece, called an old contact at the paper and the article appeared a few days later with a two-column photo. Now I was billing at $75 an hour. New
business started rolling in: an accounting firm, a PR agency that needed someone to deliver national placements, a clinic for people with eating disorders. Most new clients had one basic question: “Contacts. Do you have contacts?”

Once I took a call from a member of the Mafia who was doing jail time at a Philadelphia prison. He asked me to represent his son, incarcerated at Allenwood. He had just been named *Prisoner of the Year*. I needed the account but I turned down the offer. After all, an unhappy result could permanently end my newly reconstituted career.

Another time I represented a multimillionaire banker who offered a $2 million reward for his missing daughters. The girls turned up in Switzerland with their mother after the story ran on the front cover of *Time Magazine*.

“Tell the truth,” I told my clients from the day they signed on with me. Straight talk will ensure your Mr. Nice Guy image. And the media will love you. I soon rediscovered that to sell a client’s tale to the media, sizzle -- rather than straight talk -- was the magic bullet that would cook the steak to perfection.

As a first-time entrepreneur, I soon discovered that PR is more about sales, presentation, and signing the next big client. It was more about who was in your address book than if you write like Thoreau. I devoted months to prospecting
for new clients, mailing scores of pitch letters, making hundreds of phone calls, squeezing the palms of untold numbers of corporate suits. If the stars lined up right, the fruit of such labors might be one in 500. Frustrating yes, but I understood if I were to be successful, persistence would take me there.

Among the negatives with which I had to deal was the fact that Eisen & Associates was a one-man operation. My chief competitors were primarily PR firms with Center City or suburban addresses. These organizations were staffed with writers, graphic designers, researchers, and skilled pitchmen. Yet what they often lacked were experienced ex-newsmen. The industry suffered from bungled PR practices of the past, practices that marred the credibility of the profession and cheapened public perception. Many reporters characterized us as hucksters, carnival barkers, spin doctors. Some in the media ignored us or handled our inquiries with contempt. I confess that in 32 years pigeonholed with such labels, I am surprised that I had any success at all. I shudder when I consider the trees that were felled on my clients’ behalf. If the truth be told I papered my way into the trash bins of some of the world’s most prominent media outlets.

Anyone considering a career in PR should know it’s a risky business. I’m afraid to count all the hours I expended in crisis management on behalf of law firms, accounting firms, hospitals, psychiatrists, bankers and other well-heeled enterprises.
Sometimes I recycled old ideas to craft new ways of producing ink for my clients. For example, President Roosevelt promised a chicken in every pot during the Great Depression. For the Allied Florists of the Delaware Valley I developed a strategy to persuade every woman, in every home, to own a vase of cut flowers. Thus was born *The Flower Man*, a show I produced as part of the noon news. News Director Paul Gluck positioned the 90-second piece as an audience-builder on the old CBS station in Philadelphia. My client’s cost for the airtime was zero. The only expenditure was my $2200 a month retainer. Gulp! In six months the client ran out of money. And I was back on the phone again beating the bushes for new business.

Another time I sold the virtues of a healthy lunch to millions of Americans for a food management company. To promote the idea I used the accidental death of an albino rat. The poor rodent choked while munching on a wholesome wheat cracker. The second rat survived remarkably on junk food. It was supposed to be the other way around: Boy bites dog. That’s what makes news. The Associated Press loved the foul up. The story ran nationally. It was an embarrassing moment for my client. Lesson learned: No ink is preferable to bad ink, not the other way around as one-time Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo once tried to convince me.

Once I was engaged by a Bala Cynwyd psychiatrist. He was seeking maximum exposure for a program honoring 11 physicians and scientists, among
them John Forbes Nash, subject of the smash hit movie, *A Beautiful Mind*. Nash appeared at the dinner but the university that was asked to sponsor and present the awards pulled out without explanation. With invitations already mailed, the good doctor found himself backed into a corner. He was forced to give the awards in his own name. He also bought most of the tickets to fill the seats. The result: exceedingly slim media coverage. Credibility vanished overnight.

Did I miss journalism? You bet I did.

Every time I entered the front doors of *The Inquirer* and walked past the guard station to drop off a story or chat with a reporter, my mind flashed back to that period of time that coming to work each day was a gift for which someone was actually paying me a salary. And I was naive enough to believe the euphoria would last forever. Some days I would stroll through the halls of the paper to pitch a story, sometimes to just stand there and gaze in wonderment at those huge presses sitting idly in the quiet stillness of an afternoon. The presses remain silent, the thunder stilled -- vanished like the horse and buggy -- a 21st Century reenactment of a bygone era. The dinosaurs are dying.

I gaze about the walls that have been my home office for 26 years. More memories come galloping back. There’s the photo of boxing champ Joe Frazier and me. He’s autographing a big, red Tuf-Wear glove: “To Ed Eisen. Boogie, Bookie. Joe Frazier.”
Nearby sits the champ’s glove, a reminder of the time Frazier appeared in ads punching out a telephone when Germantown Savings Bank was promoting an electronic innovation for bill paying.

There’s the framed *Time Magazine* front cover. Banking exec Bipin Shah and his missing daughters are staring out with the stark cry: *Where Are My Girls?* That story led to their recovery. Elsewhere a photo of a young reporter teaching a class of 5th graders at an elementary school during a long Philadelphia teacher’s strike. Another with me in a black fedora clutching a briefcase. The headline: *Federal Courthouse Flunks Reporter’s Security Test.* It ran decades before the horror of 9/11. There’s a picture of a young disc jockey of 19, holding a stack of records.

On another wall is a framed cover from a magazine, *The Self-Employed Professional.* “Ed Eisen Stands Alone: PR Man for Two Popes,” reads the headline.

My favorite is a reprint from Page B7, the last issue of *The Philadelphia Bulletin* dated Jan. 28, 1982. The headline: *Cable-Free TV?* It was my last story.

Memories. Fifty-two years of memories, peering out from the walls as I write, silent ghosts from another era.

Sometimes I recall the words of my old boss at the *The Atlantic City Press*: “Now, Ed, I want you to know that just because you didn’t make it here, should not be a sign you’re a failure. I’m sure you’ll do well with something else in life.”

-58-
The answer for some may be yes. For others no.

When the final curtain descended for me in the world of PR, the episode was vividly etched in my brain. I was representing a citizens group that had engaged me to create a media firestorm that would kill the proposed construction of a 17-story condo on an abandoned Superfund site in Ambler, Pa. Our winning argument: Runoff from a nearby creek during construction would pollute the Schuylkill. Construction would pose an environmental hazard to thousands in nearby communities.

I made arrangements with a top environmental expert to provide testimony supporting his ominous forecast. The professor -- who taught at a prestigious Philadelphia university -- agreed to unveil his report days before a scheduled public hearing. I set up a news conference just outside his office. Print and broadcast reporters assembled for what all believed was going to be the BIG story. The story was that the good professor failed to show. He vanished down a back stairway. I never spoke to him again. (The university claimed I had failed to secure approval for the news conference staged on its property. I argued that the professor had committed to handling administrative approvals.) In all my years in PR, that incident represented my worst nightmare. As far as I was concerned, the no-show destroyed my credibility. I resigned from the account, pulled down my shingle and left the business for good.
Had I become a failure? Had I failed my family or myself? After all, I managed to send our kids to college. Gwen became a social worker and gave us four grandchildren. Stephen, a video producer, died of melanoma at 33. Seth moved to San Francisco and became a teacher and performance artist. Stacy works as a recruiter in the healthcare industry. She gave us a granddaughter. As for me, I didn’t wind up mopping floors like my dad. No one went to jail on my watch. And with my own personal trials in the business of knocking on doors, I reckoned it was time to help others do it. So I became a volunteer career consultant, ESL teacher and memoir writing coach. Marion and I traveled to 23 countries. Now in the autumn of my life, I can say things turned out well. I survived heart disease, prostate cancer and acoustic neuroma. Marion survived Barrett’s esophagus and medical misdiagnosis. Never a dull moment. We live in the same modest house we bought 43 years ago in Philadelphia.

Some would suggest I have redefined the meaning of success. Did I turn some bad lemons into lemonade? Was that witch’s prophecy fulfilled? (Remember Mrs. Dernakowski?) You, dear reader, be the judge.
Billy Eisen, cantor without portfolio, as seen in a feature story in The Philadelphia Bulletin, November 29, 1980. (Photo courtesy CBS Corp.)

Ed Eisen, aka Ed Masters, top 40 D.J. at WWBZ, Vineland, N.J., 1956. (Photo courtesy of John Fallows)

Teaching a 4th grade class during a teacher strike in Philadelphia, October 17, 1970. *(Photo courtesy of The Philadelphia Inquirer)*
My wife Marion and me.  
(Photo courtesy of Steve Fineman)

That's me in overcoat and Russian fedora leaving the federal courthouse in Philadelphia after the Feds flunk security test, March 5, 1971, The Philadelphia Inquirer. (Photo courtesy of The Philadelphia Inquirer)
Boxing champ Joe Frazier and me, April 1977. (Photo courtesy of Gray & Rogers)

The boxing champ’s glove. (Photo courtesy of Josh Gold)
P.R. Man for Two Popes:
Ed Eisen Stands Alone

BY DAVID MOORE

The editorial offices of SEP have set up elaborate safeguards to hold at bay the importunities of P.R. folk. Initial callers are vetted through voice mail. Those circumventing this checkpoint get passed on to a managing editor who runs the show from a bunker of reinforced concrete, 30 floors beneath the earth’s surface. She wields her invective to such shocking effect that it’s shorted out three censor devices installed on her phone. Only one man could slip through this high-tech fortress.

This story wasn’t supposed to be written. Or, maybe the story was scripted from the start and I just didn’t—could’t—know it.

I was close to assigning a story on the subject of media relations to a man who built a 30-plus year career becoming an expert on the subject. As we went back and forth over specific coverage, something began to gnaw at me. I fought its power as best as I could but, in the end, gave in to its inescapable rightness. The writer himself was the story. Like a jazz riff, Ed Eisen’s long career in journalism and media relations is remarkable for the continuities running beneath improvisation. He started off in the 1950s spinning Patti Page and Teresa Brewer songs for top-40 radio. The 1960s found him hosting talk radio, producing television news and editing The Fort Lauderdale News. In 1966, he went to work as a reporter for The Philadelphia Inquirer and garnered several awards covering the gritty underbelly of American culture. In 1968, during a wave of terrorist fright, Eisen won a Philadelphia Press Association award by planting a phony bomb in a government building to expose its poor security.

Time Magazine: How free publicity helped bring these girls home.  
(Reprint courtesy of Time Magazine)

President Clinton’s former Press Secretary Mike McCurry and me at World Affairs Council meeting in Philadelphia, June 1996.  
(Photo courtesy of World Affairs Council)
By EDWARD N. EISEN
Of The Bulletin Staff

A printed flyer dropped off at homes in Northeast Philadelphia today!

"Microwave antenna brings in first-run movies, sports... without the cable, without monthly charges. Easy to install or we can install for you, complete unit on sale now. Only $29.95!"

"An ad in the personals section of a weekly advertiser placed at the doorsteps of Philadelphia homes announces:

"Movie Channel - Antennas installed from $399. No monthly charge, perfectly legal."

Six of 14 dealers listed in the Consumer Yellow Pages of the Philadelphia telephone directory offer to install the device for around $25.

And a sign in the window at a center-city electronics supply store trumpets: "See all the movies at home tonight with this antenna. Complete microwave package."

A salesman at Arch Electronics, 13th and Arch Sts., is center-city Philadelphia, gives a prospective customer a sales pitch on the wonder of the metal dish ($250) and a less costly ray gun-shaped gadget ($12.50).

"All the instructions are in the kit, ma'am."

And he adds reassuringly, "sure, it's legal. No one can tell you they own the airspace over your roof."

A salesman said he could not recommend an installer, nor would a demonstration be possible inside the store.

The black market in microwave antennas is booming in Philadelphia, which is still unserved for cable. The pirate contraptions intercept only pay-TV microwave signals available in this area.

The originator of that signal is a major national firm - Home Box Office (HBO), owner of Time Inc. HBO is going to court all over the country, contending that microwave piracy is illegal and violates federal broadcast law. Although the firm has not filed suit in Pennsylvania, an HBO spokesman said the firm's lawyers will be around.

Rather, said a 1979 FCC memo, the stations operate on high-level microwave radio frequencies that require a special converter attached to the antenna to enable reception by a standard television set. The unauthorized conversion of those frequencies for nonpaying customers is illegal, according to the FCC.

Charles Sonnenberg, president of ACS, said he and his installers regularly hunt for video pirates. They're easily spotted, Sonnenberg said. The antennas atop their roofs are primarily solid, shiny metal dishes. The type he installs are color-coded and rib-webbed to withstand wind resistance.

Last year, Sonnenberg sent out 1,000 letters to homeowners with bootlegged antennas on their roofs and asked them to start paying a monthly fee for the service.

"Most people don't even bother to respond," Sonnenberg said. "Others deny that it's illegal. Or they say our prices are too high."

"They claim they have no microwave antenna. Or they say they're using the equipment for ham radio or to improve their stereo systems. That's a lot of hooey. If they're doing that, what are they doing with a down converter on their roof? It's a red flag."

But Sonnenberg also realized that he was walking a tightrope. So far, none of Philadelphia's rooftop pirates has been prosecuted. And when he really wants is a day in court, but good public relations, he said.

"If we want to convert them into good customers," he said, "I'm going to court. The pirates who illegally install the equipment have another story. One who would identify himself only as Todd said he had a flyer to homes in Northeast Philadelphia offering to put in free HBO service for only $29.

"I knew it was questionable," he said. "But I didn't realize it was settled by the courts. I only make about $50 profit on the job. Another guy does the installation for me. If anything goes wrong, he has the aggravation of going back up on the roof and fixing it for a transistor burns out or the rain gets into some other part. There's been a lot of hassle.

"But I never think anyone is going to get away with it. The problem is, my profits are being eaten up by return calls."

He said someone else installs the antenna and the equipment is shipped to him from a firm in Arizona.

"Technically, HBO can't do anything about it. There are ads in the Yellow Pages. I'm not at risk. I call the FCC and they said I could install these antennas."

Voller said he could not identify to whom he spoke at the FCC.

The owner of a Mt. Airy electronics shop that has a large ad in the Yellow Pages said he could install the bootleg antenna, but he attempted to talk a prospective buyer out of the sale.

"I want you to understand," he spoke sternly. "You hire me and I'll take you to the FCC. But you take all the responsibility."

Later, when the prospective buyer called back and identified himself as a reporter, the owner said he did not like to do this kind of work, "but there are so many guys out there running these things - I'm just trying to stay in business and make a living."

At Delco Television Service on W. 1st St., an employee said the devices are installed all the time.

"We haven't had any problems," he said.

But when a reporter called back and asked to speak to manager Mark Goldstein, Goldstein said he only installs one a week is a week.

"I don't even keep them in stock," he said. "I'd have to get someone else's equipment. And I can't guarantee reception."

Among those who refused to do business with the microwave "shopper" was Sammy Borda at Sammy's TV, 2160 S. 67th St.

"I wouldn't even deal with one of the HBO franchises."


(Photo courtesy of The CBS Corporation)
PART II:

THE FACELESS

There are many in society who are faceless. The homeless man who lives out of a shopping cart on a downtown city street. Those swelling the lines in a welfare office. The bag lady who flops down for the night in an empty subway station. Often they are our most fragile of citizens, their minds and bodies broken by alcohol, drugs and neglect. As a newspaper reporter I saw them close up at one of Pennsylvania’s most notorious warehouses for the mentally retarded. The warehouse is long gone. What follows was part of a yearlong series I wrote that first appeared in The Philadelphia Inquirer on July 7, 1968. The investigation led to a handful of patchwork reforms at Pennhurst State School and Hospital that ended in its closing 19 years later. To this day I am haunted by those sad little faces.
Chapter 7

**A Warehouse for Children**

Blind and retarded since birth, Linda Taub is stored in a huge, overcrowded, woefully understaffed warehouse for human beings.

The 17-year-old Northeast Philadelphia girl lives with 2,781 others in this antiquated, turn-of-the-century institution for the mentally retarded on the banks of the Schuylkill safely 35 miles west of Philadelphia.

The warehouse has a name. It’s called Pennhurst State School in Spring City, Chester County, the second largest of nine in the state, a monument to man’s inhumanity to man.

Pennhurst operates on a budget of $5.90 a patient per day, the smallest stipend given to any institution in the Commonwealth.

There are 420 attendants here, unable to administer to the needs of their clients, a staff overwhelmed by the sheer number of sick and dying.

For Linda and at least 600 others, Pennhurst is a nightmare, a hellhole, a place where life exists on a subhuman level. Swarms of flies mix with naked bodies. The pervasive sound -- babbling -- fills the air. It is mixed with an acrid odor, the ever-present stench.

Linda Taub’s home is a ward with 82 closely packed cribs. Twisted and helpless patients stare out, some manacled to the prison-like cages.
Two to three attendants look after their needs.

In another ward, grown men sprawl naked on the floor, a floor still wet from the mop that removed a pool of human waste a few minutes ago.

Flies dangle in stillness from sticky yellow strips of paper that extend from a high ceiling.

Hyperactive men and boys circle, jump and weave about a crowded day room. Some are as young as eight, others in their 40s.

In ward C-67, a hundred women stampede as a visitor approaches. Arms reach out, prodding, touching. A woman in her 50s cries, “Mama, mama.” These are the wards that house the less challenged, the “naughty,” who have been deposited here for two days discipline.

A three-year-old girl, Pennhurst’s youngest, deaf and blind, lies face down on a bed. It’s not yet been determined whether she is a candidate for this hell on earth.

In Pennhurst’s 278-bed hospital, an 18-year-old boy with a dwarfed body and an enormous head -- fluid-swollen -- lie immobile.

A new admission is under treatment for a leg that has burst with swelling, pus oozing, is fed with an intravenous to provide protein. Outside -- in the five Southeastern Pennsylvania counties that feed Pennhurst -- parents are banging on
the door, pleading for admission on behalf of needy children. There are 1,400 on
the waiting list.

Yet, even here there is hope. On the second floor of a rambling building
where crib cases are housed, a therapist works with a 7-year old
boy. Mrs. Frank Frederick of Pottstown is explaining how numbers work.

Repeatedly, she is interrupted as others in the room compete for her attention.
She restrains a hyperactive youth and gets back to the wide-eyed boy, eager,
groping to learn how to count. “I just wish there was time to teach these children to
tie their shoes or wash their faces and not miss their ears,” she tells a visitor. “But
they’re holding their own for what we can do for them.”

The federal government is involved in three grant programs at Pennhurst
aimed at making the place more than a mere custodial institution.

For 14 months Linda Taub participated in one of these ambitious projects. She
failed to respond and was returned to the aimlessness of her ward. For $60,000 a
year, Uncle Sam insists on results.

One thousand patients -- not as severely handicapped as Linda --
help run the institution. Without them -- on the Pennhurst farm, the dairy, the
kitchen, and the laundry --- Pennhurst would fold. For their labors they receive
nothing.
The man who runs Pennhurst is Dr. Leopold A. Potanski, a 56-year-old psychiatrist who has been with the state 31 years, 12 of them as supervisor.

Dr. Potanski is a practical man, a realist who claims a certain amount of “professional gratification” when a pathetically limited child has learned to mouth his name.

Ideally, Dr. Potanski would like to see Pennhurst leveled to the ground, and a new place, with smaller living units, built from scratch.

Instead, he’s settling for a new 300-bed wing, the first constructed here since the ‘50s. It will serve hyperactives of both sexes. Work begins in three years.

Dr. Potanski could use more than 800 attendants, double the number of his present staff. But the legislature’s budget of $6.7 million contains a 908-employee limit.

That includes everyone from physicians to maintenance men to a single exterminator. So Dr. Potanski settles for an additional 70 attendants.

Sadly, he can’t find them. At $75 a week, the uneducated and inexperienced find better paying jobs in Chester county, one of the lowest unemployment areas in the nation.

Dr. Potanski regrets the plight of his charges. “We’ve tried to stimulate these kids as much as possible,” he says. “But we haven’t had much success. We can’t find those willing to work with patients in such large numbers.”
Yes, the numbers are staggering. Of Pennhurst’s 2,781 population, 73 percent are low-grade functioning, with often-immeasurable IQs. Of this number 325 are bedfast.

There’s a staff of 13 physicians, two physical therapists, 30 registered and two practical nurses to tend 51 patient wards.

Dr. Potanski points to what he characterizes as “progress.” When he arrived 12 years ago, the population of Pennhurst had swelled to 3,640. Since then he’s managed to trim the census by 859.

Over the years there have been small armies of reporters, photographers, legislators and judges trooping through the place. They have left appalled and sickened.

Two years ago as a result of one such visit the legislature appropriated some $936,000 to improve conditions. But the money didn’t wind up at Pennhurst. It’s being used, instead, for planning an institution for the retarded at Byberry in Northeast Philadelphia.
Chapter 8

After the first of a series of articles appeared in The Inquirer describing inhuman conditions at Pennhurst State School and Hospital, I traveled to Madison, Wis. to report on another state institution that provided a different type of care to a population even more challenging than Pennhurst’s.

Hope, Love Live Here

MADISON, Wis. -- There is a place of hope here for the mentally retarded where big and small miracles happen every day. It’s called the Central Wisconsin Colony and authorities say the facility represents a medical model for the country.

The American Association issued the report for Mental Deficiencies. By contract, another state institution for the retarded --- Pennhurst State School and Hospital in Spring City, Chester County, Pa. -- delivers only 57 percent of standards. The subject of a week long television series,” Suffer the Little Children,” Pennhurst is a shameful monument to neglect in the Commonwealth.

A visit to the Colony turned up some stark contrasts:

• Toys hang from the ceiling. At Pennhurst ceilings are covered in sticky paper and dead flies.
• The Colony is home to boys and girls -- severely and profoundly retarded -- clothed in the pretty greens and blues and pinks worn by normal children. At Pennhurst its denizens wear rags.

• At the Colony 97 percent of the census is grossly retarded, compared to 73 at Pennhurst. Yet, learning programs abound everywhere at the Colony, almost nowhere at Pennhurst.

• At the Colony, Eugene, a 6-year-old hydrocephalic, whose fluid-swollen head measures 48-inches in circumference, lies on the grass. He is giggling, kicking a ball with his heels. A watchful attendant hovers nearby.

There are no back wards at the Colony, no foul odors, no discipline that degrades ... no gut-wrenching reminders of Pennhurst. What there is, is an abundance of human compassion, a hope that tomorrow may bring change. That and a determination that failure only means, “let’s try it another way.”

Such is the guiding principle of the man who runs the Colony. He is Henry Stevens, 55, a mild-mannered educator who has built a reputation as a mover and shaker in mental retardation.

Superintendent Stevens is a recipient of the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation International Award in Mental Retardation, an honor in his field comparable to a Nobel Peace Prize.
Stevens became the Colony’s first employee 10 years ago when his concept of care was but a vision. At that time the Colony was 110 acres of vacant land. Central Colony was conceived to handle the most difficult cases requiring intensive and prolonged medical and nursing care. It was the kind of care that could not be provided elsewhere.

Wisconsin built the Colony and a reputation as a progressive state in the treatment of its most fragile of citizens.

Stevens, a native of Wisconsin, was then superintendent of the Edward N. Johnstone Training and Research Center in Bordentown, N.J.

He returned to Wisconsin, where he had once been superintendent of the South Colony Training School in Union Grove. That’s when his vision of care sprang into action.

Today Central Colony is a $14 million facility with 10 connected yellow brick buildings. From the outside, it looks like a school. From within, a hospital.

A visit to the Colony radiates charm and warmth. Multihued curtains adorn the windows. Flowers are everywhere. Floors are spotless and a highly sophisticated air exchange system removes odors.

At the Colony there is no such thing as a hopeless human being. A patient lying immobile on his back sees nothing but the ceiling, says Stevens. “Sit him up ___ whatever it takes -- and he sees the world.”
Hope abounds everywhere. It’s there on the faces of the 1,035 patients who live here. Patients from a 3-year-old boy -- to a 67-year old man.

At Pennhurst, an IQ in the 60s is common. At the Colony it’s rare. Most of the population registers an IQ barely over zero. Such statistics do not faze those who labor here. One pediatrician smiles broadly when the issue is raised.

“We ignore IQs and mental age as much as possible,” says Dr. Mary Hurst. “Tests are very formal and because a child cannot recognize colors, does not mean he cannot be taught to feed himself,” she says.

At Pennhurst it is common practice to discipline higher-level patients if they fail to respond to training. They are placed in foul-smelling, overcrowded wards with those more severely challenged.

At the Colony such measures are considered degrading. There is fear among experts here that such practices can cause depression and even further regression.

Tranquilizers -- when administered at the Colony -- are given orally. Superintendent Stevens questions the practice of using intramuscular tranquilizers, a common practice at Pennhurst. “I’d fire any member of my staff who tried it,” he says.

A physician at Pennhurst -- accused of using such a method for treatment is under suspension.

Simply put, Pennhurst is as different from the Colony as a cesspool
from a breath of fresh air. Some reasons that may explain why:

- Pennhurst receives $5.90 per patient, per day from the Commonwealth. Progressive Wisconsin provides $21.42 per patient.

- Pennhurst operates on a budget of $6.7 million. Irony of ironies, the institution requested thousands less from the state. The Colony operates on a budget of $7.2 million and asked for a million dollars more.

Stevens says he’s not afraid to battle for his patients. “The Legislature knows we’re doing a good job. They know our budgets are not padded. They have confidence in our staff and they know when we speak, we speak with integrity and honesty,” he says.

Pennhurst is nearly 806 patients over capacity with 2,781 warehoused there today. The Colony has 1,035 patients. It is more than 200 under capacity.

Pennhurst has a staff ceiling maximum of 900, among them 120 attendants, the heartbeat of the institution. But its pay scale for attendants is $175 weekly. It is forever recruiting to fill positions that few want. By contrast, the Colony has a starting scale of $103.

The Colony maintains a volunteer staff of retirees who assist in the care of patients. Volunteers spend 20 hours weekly with their charges -- working, playing, feeding and showering them. It’s done with love and attention. They receive compensation of $1.77 an hour from the state.
At 83, Hans Baur, is the oldest foster grandparent in the nation. When “his” Johnny, age 11, grabs Baur’s hand, he says, he must be ready “to run.” Johnny, says a grateful Baur, learned to feed himself.

Several years ago the Colony petitioned the legislature to fund four new buildings. The legislature approved but another government agency balked. Citizens demanded that funds be provided. The result: The Colony received more than it asked for: a grant for six, not four buildings.

The last medical accreditation rating report on the Colony found the facility exceeded all standards. With few exceptions, Pennhurst never attained such accolades. The Pennsylvania institution is, in fact, the very antithesis of the Colony as it continues its uphill crusade to serve Pennsylvania’s most fragile of citizens.

*Philadelphia Inquirer, July 21, 1968*
Chapter 9

Free At Last

After more than 40 years of living regimented lives as the wards of Pennsylvania in an institution for the mentally retarded, Sam and Allen are free men.

Free to wake at the crack of dawn and brew some coffee. Free to open a savings account at a bank. Free to board a bus for work, sip beer with old friends, live life as they’ve never known before.

Sam, now 52, was a patient at Pennhurst State School and Hospital since he was nine. Allen, 62, was admitted to the Spring City, Chester County institution at age 13. Both are blind and retarded.

Both became free men in November thanks to a federally funded program geared to prepare the institutionalized blind and retarded for a return to community living.

Ironically, say Pennhurst officials, had Sam and Allen been able to handle their blindness, they never would have spent most of their lives at Pennhurst in the first place. They are but mildly retarded.
In all, according to the program’s director, George Kopchick, 15 men and women have made it out into the community since the project started in 1967 with a $60,000 grant. None had to return. There are now 32 others preparing for the big exodus.

Among the grads is a 31-year-old woman who married an attendant at Norristown State Hospital. The couple now has a baby. Another man lives near Spring City and works as a post office mail handler. Still another keeps things sparkling at McDonald’s.

Allen was interviewed on his job as a pot washer in a Pennhurst lunchroom. He is a tall, stooped man with a big smile, a furrowed brow and a head of white hair. For years Allen was promised he’d make it to the outside. He was repeatedly disappointed.

“I feel free,” he says. “I can go shopping when I want. I play my guitar when I’m home. Boy, this is the life,” he smiles, recalling other days at Pennhurst. Days, he says, when he worked at the institution for no salary. “They used to curse me and call me names. It’s good to come back and work here.”

Allen rises at 4:30 A.M., fixes breakfast in the Phoenixville apartment he shares with Sam, then boards a bus that takes him to Pennhurst. The bus drops him a mile from the institution. Allen, with the help of a cane, makes it the rest of the
way --in the snow, in sleet, in rain. “When the ice is on the ground you’ve just got to take it easy,” he says.

Once he took a cab to work. It made him feel good, important. But he doesn’t do it any more because it left him nearly penniless for the rest of the week.

Sam answers the door at the three-bedroom apartment decorated with pictures on the wall, two couches, a bed, a radio and a TV set. Sam, a short, gregarious fellow with a thick crop of black hair, offers a running monologue about world events and catastrophes. He cites late ball scores like a computer and cheers Willie Mays’ coup of the biggest money contract in baseball.

Sam is unemployed. He spends most of his time keeping house. The pair splits the $120-a-month rent. Somehow they manage to pay their bills and entertain old Pennhurst friends.

Sam remembers his days at Pennhurst and has few kind thoughts. “It was a cruel, brutal, rough place,” he says. “A guy could get killed there.”

Sam says he is happy now. He likes his freedom.

He would like to find a job as a box packer. He’s also looking for a wife. “But girls aren’t too easy to come by,” he laughs.

Free at last.

*Philadelphia Inquirer, March 3, 1971*
Chapter 10

The Manna Maker

Ninety-four-year-old Blanche Kohn made a confession yesterday.

“I hate fund-raising!” she said with the kind of candor found mostly in the very young or the very old.

It was not particularly the best of times to make such a pronouncement. For there in the small room at the Sheraton Hotel in center city was her son, Max, an executive with the Philadelphia Crime Commission, two of her six grandchildren and some United Way bigwigs.

And in a few minutes Philadelphia’s first lady of fund-raising would be ushered into a ballroom filled with some 800 civic leaders and volunteers to receive a gold medal and be honored as the 28th winner of the Citizen Volunteer Award, United Way’s highest accolade.

No matter. The words were uttered without hesitation, matter-of-factly, by the lady in the pink frock who proclaimed she was in perfect health, “thanks to the good Lord.”

When asked what advice she had for novice fund-raisers, she had none -- except to proclaim her disdain for the job.
It’s exhausting and grueling, she said, “but I didn’t want to just sit home and do nothing. There was a whole community out there that needed help. Somebody has to do it.”

And so, while her late husband mixed concrete, her father headed the Philadelphia school board, her brother established the law firm of Wolf, Block, Schor & Solis-Cohen, Blanche Kohn knocked on doors for the first United Way (then called the Welfare Federation) appeal in 1921.

But even before that she was raising money.

“Not for me,” she said. “We were trying to buy sheet music and pianos.”

That was 1908, when Blanche and a friend were giving piano lessons at 5-cents for 30 minutes.

When 12 pupils were assembled, the fee doubled to 10 cents. Then she co-founded the Settlement Music School, which today boasts an enrollment of 3,000.

Between piano lessons and United Way campaigns, Mrs. Kohn was a volunteer for the American Red Cross, the American Cancer Society, the Israel Emergency Fund, the Crime Prevention Association and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

And when not otherwise occupied, she was a board member of the Association for Jewish Children and the Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia and treasurer of the Visiting Nurse Association of Philadelphia.
And eons before feminism became part of the vernacular, Mrs. Kohn was on the equal opportunities forefront. She became the first female vice president of Reform Congregation Rodeph Shalom.

Every Saturday morning, the frail form of Blanche Kohn still fills a front pew next to the rabbi’s wife at the Main Line synagogue. With a nurse, a car and chauffeur at her disposal, the lady who will be 95 on May 31 still attends meetings. And, she says, her health is just fine, thank you.

Keeping busy is her prescription for happiness, she said with a wink.

Son Max chimed in: “Mom has this rule. She only attends one meeting at a time.”

PART III:

The Famous

Who are the famous and what defines them as such? As a reporter and public relations consultant I met some of the world’s most prominent men and women from the world of politics, sports, religion and business. Here are but a few.
Chapter II

Soup With Mother Teresa

It was April 1975. The diminutive figure in the white and blue sari was bent and fragile, yet the hand extended was firm and warm. The private meeting on the upper floors of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia will be forever etched in my memory: Mother Teresa, the beloved Roman Catholic nun from the streets of Calcutta was having lunch with this Jewish kid from Brooklyn.

What an improbable union, a rare moment, a flash in my life that lasted but 48 minutes but dramatically changed me from the inside out.

Moments later we were sitting in this wood paneled room with its long table, chatting quietly over a bowl of steaming chicken soup. Mother Teresa said grace and now the world-renowned minister to the unwanted, unloved, was speaking of her visit to raise funds for the Missionary Sisters of Charity. The miracle worker from India appeared tired but as she spoke quietly of her work, of the needs of the poor all over the world, her passion, her singular commitment, the earnestness of her appeal tolled for me like the sound of a shofar on Yom Kippur.

I could see my father -- a Jewish cantor without portfolio -- begging the question: “But son, what were you doing there? Didn’t you feel out of place? Didn’t you sense that perhaps this was a job better left for a non-Jew?”
My Dad was from the old school. As a child he grew up in Poland, emigrated to America as a boy of 11 almost two decades before the Holocaust and the invasion of his homeland by the Nazis. Yet he had known persecution. He had felt the sting of anti-Semitism where he labored as a hospital orderly. The irony was that when he was hungry and alone on the streets of Chicago, it was a Roman Catholic priest standing at the door of a church who reached out to Billy Eisen, fed him and provided a place to sleep for the night. Pop should have understood.

“But son, what were you doing in such a place?” How did you come to meet such a person?” he pressed for details. Pop -- as I called him -- should have understood. Sadly, he did not.

I told him that an odd convergence of circumstances brought the nun and the ex-reporter together. For many years I was a staff writer and editor at The Fort Lauderdale News and later The Philadelphia Inquirer. Yet it was not my career as a journalist that brought Mother Teresa and me together. In 1974 I joined a public relations agency called Gray & Rogers, a major contributor to Catholic charities. The agency won a nationwide competition to promote the largest Catholic event to gather in Philadelphia in 50 years: the 41st International Eucharistic Congress. The event -- August 1-8, 1976 -- was held the same week Legionnaire’s Disease felled 13, took the lives of two men and forced the closing of the famed Bellevue-Stratford Hotel. CBS anchor Walter Cronkite called to ask if the tragedy would
shut down the event that would draw 1 million people to the city. The Congress --
three years in the planning -- would go on, I told him.

So it did and some pretty big names arrived in the city: President Ford,
Princess Grace of Monaco, and a Polish-born man by the name of Karol Wojtyla.
Wojtyla was the Papal legate later to become Pope John Paul II.

Gray & Rogers assigned me the Herculean task of making the event a
household word around the world. Still hanging in my office is the first press
release I drafted. The headline: “Pope Paul Announces Hungers Theme for
Eucharistic Congress in U.S.” Sadly, Pope Paul VI remained in Rome, too frail to
attend.

So how did it come to be that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia approved my
appointment to head what was largely a Catholic event? The reason was summed
The writer was quoting my boss, David Ferrell, a Gray & Rogers, vice president.
“One of the smartest things I did,” said Ferrell, “was to put Eisen on the account. I
knew of his being Jewish. But I didn’t know he was a Messianic Jew (a Jew who
believes that Jesus is the Messiah). And he had no hang-ups on the Roman
Catholic Church.
“After all, we were being paid to do a P.R. job, with the integrity of the Church and the job at stake,” said Ferrell. “The Church accepted Ed and complimented his work.”

So that explains how Mother Teresa and I came to sit together for a bowl of soup on that day, one year before the Congress opened. She was in Philadelphia to raise funds for her work and to tell the world about her plans to attend a Congress whose theme underscored her life mission: Hungers of the Human Family.

I remember telling her that I was Jewish. “That’s wonderful,” she smiled, her eyes widening, somewhat taken aback. “The founder of our faith was also a Jew. As Christians we have much with which to thank our Jewish friends.”

It was still in the room after that. For me, that stillness became a life defining moment to hear the nun from Calcutta speak so. As I sat there my thoughts flashed back 33 years to a Catholic schoolyard in Collingswood, N.J. Three girls pounced on me as I took a short cut home. “Dirty Jew,” they screamed. How things had changed!

I had wanted to tell Mother Teresa -- but did not -- that I -- like her revered Saint Paul -- had a transformation experience 13 years earlier. My experience did not turn the world upside down as Paul’s had. But clearly, I could never have represented the Roman Catholic Church to the international press corps without such a transcending experience. So meeting Mother Teresa on that cloudless April
day defined my mission for the Congress and two popes as if sirens had just gone off in my soul.
Chapter 12

Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II

The news release that follows was the kickoff announcement for the 41st International Eucharistic Congress. For 18 months we inundated the media with stories that brought more than 1 million pilgrims to Philadelphia including President Ford, Mother Teresa, Princess Grace of Monaco and the man who would become the next pope, Karol Wojtyla.

Would you believe that even for an event as sacrosanct as this, spin played a role? Here’s how:

Congress leaders insisted that news stories focus on the spiritual aspect of the event: Hungers of the Human Family. More specifically, Jesus Christ. As months passed, we found that the secular media was providing minimal coverage. It was at that point I counseled a change in our communications strategy. The focus should be on who is coming to the Congress, I argued. With names such as President Ford, Mother Teresa and Princess Grace, I convinced John Cardinal Krol and other church leaders to allow a more promotional tactic. In short, that’s how a new message was developed. Call it spin if you like but our focus on personalities worked and media attention was reawakened.

Some 1,000 members of the news media descended on the city to cover the event. One evening I took a call from CBS anchor Walter Cronkite. He wanted to
know whether the Congress would be canceled because of an outbreak of Legionnaire’s Disease in the city. I told him there were no such plans. What follows is the first news release of hundreds that were distributed to media outlets long before the advent of the Internet and e-mail. A confession: I worked on this account for nearly two years. Yet in all that time I never met either Pope Paul VI or Pope John Paul II, the papal legate who came to Philadelphia when it became clear Pope Paul was too frail to make the trip.

**Pope Paul Announces Eucharistic Congress in U.S.**

VATICAN CITY (Thursday, March 27, 1975) Pope Paul VI announced here on Holy Thursday that more than one million world Catholics are expected to gather in Philadelphia during America’s Bicentennial for a spiritual assembly on hungers of the human family.

The week-long event -- Aug. 1-8, 1976, is the 41st International Eucharistic Congress, marking the first time in 50 years the assembly of bishops, priests, religious and laity has been held in the United States. The Pope is expected to participate.

The Pope made the announcement during celebration of the Mass of the Lord’s Supper at St. Peter’s Basilica, on the anniversary of the historic event.
“The human family has a hunger that is more basic than the hunger for food,” said the head of the world’s 551 million Roman Catholics. “It is a hunger for God.”

It is to this hunger that pilgrims from all over the globe will direct their attention upon their arrival in Philadelphia. Planned are a series of liturgies, theological and liturgical conferences, music and art events and special exhibits. Christians of other major denominations have been invited to participate.

The closing Papal Mass will be at Philadelphia’s John F. Kennedy Stadium. It is expected to draw more than a quarter million people.

Pope Paul said the 41st Eucharistic Congress comes at a time of great erosion among all religious faiths. “In the United States alone there are 101 million Americans who have no religious commitment,” the pontiff declared.

It is here where Congress planners are directing a major emphasis. A yearlong program of spiritual renewal is planned for every parish church in the country. It will begin in late 1975 and concentrate in special liturgical and cathectical observances in Lent, 1976. Catholics will be asked to display social concern for physical hunger through fasting and sacrificial giving to the world’s poor.

During Congress week participants will offer special attention to eight basic hungers within the human family. These are the hungers for God, food, freedom and justice, love, truth, understanding, peace and for Christ. Special days are being
set aside to pray for suffering Christians, the elderly, youth, ethnic and national groups.

In announcing the theme, “Hungers of the Human Family,” the Pope also displayed the symbol for the Eucharistic Congress. It is a simple, yet eloquent graphic showing two stylized hands holding the Host, the real Body of Christ received in Holy Communion at Mass by Roman Catholics.

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, 5th largest in America with 1.3 million Catholics concentrated in a 5-county area, is host for the Congress. Overseeing the direction of the Congress is the Board of Governors, a 42-member panel of church, civic and business leaders with nationwide representation. Chairman is Philadelphia’s John Cardinal Krol.

Charged with all planning aspects from housing to programming are ten committees with a total national membership of more than 400.

Six thousand rooms in Philadelphia have already been booked for the assembly along with all available hotel-motel space within a 60-mile radius of the city. Also reserved are the city’s two large stadiums, the Spectrum, civic center, and two music halls. A vast network of local national and international facilities is being coordinated to expedite travel arrangements for visitors.

The theme and symbol for the Congress was sanctioned by an ad hoc committee of American bishops serving as liaison with the National Conference of
Bishops in the United States, as well as the Board of Governors of the 41st International Eucharistic Congress.

In the week preceding Holy Thursday, two key Congress leaders had an audience with the Pope at the Vatican to receive final approval for plans. They also met with the Permanent Committee for Eucharistic Congresses. The clergymen are the Most Rev. Martin N. Lohmuller, Auxiliary Bishop of Philadelphia and the Rev. Walter J. Conway, Executive Secretary of the Congress.

The central purpose of the Congress is to focus upon the Holy Eucharist, the core of sacramental life in the Catholic Church. This serves to unite and strengthen the Church and to increase understanding and devotion to Christ in the Eucharist.

The most recent Eucharistic Congress was held in Melbourne, Australia in 1973. The first and only Congress held in the United States was in Chicago in 1926.
Chapter 13

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy

I was among a throng of reporters and photographers who covered the funeral of Mary Jo Kopechne who died in a car driven off a bridge by the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. Notepad in hand, I am pictured along with the senator in a two-page spread that ran in Life Magazine on Aug. 1, 1969.

Kennedys Attend Rites of Car Crash Victim

PLYMOUTH, Pa, -- Sen. Edward M. Kennedy came to this small mountain community on Tuesday to attend the funeral of Mary Jo Kopechne, the young woman who died last Saturday in the car he accidentally drove off a narrow Massachusetts bridge into 10 feet of water near Martha’s Vineyard. Crowds began gathering as early as 7 A.M. outside the red brick church, built by Irish Catholic immigrants 96 years ago. The spectators wanted to be in position for a glimpse of the famous senator.

Kennedy stepped out of a limousine at 9:30 A.M. as a crowd of about 700 surged forward in uncontained excitement and nearly broke through police lines. Many with cameras jostled for position.

The senator, hatless and in a blue business suit, wore a heavy neck brace. His shirt was open at the neck and his tie was loosened. His features were drawn. He  

-90-
kept his head slightly down and looked neither to the right or left. The funeral marked his first public appearance since the accident.

With Kennedy were his wife, Joan, wearing an off-white coat and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Ethel Kennedy, in a black dress and veil.

Mary Jo, 28, once worked as a secretary for the late Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. Her parents, Joseph, an insurance agent, and Gwyn -- who moved from Kingston 25 years ago and now live in Berkeley Heights, N.J., arrived early for the funeral of their only child.

They already were seated in the front pew on the epistle side of the 600-seat St. Vincent’s Church when the Kennedys arrived. The Kennedys were taken into the church rectory. Don Gifford, an aide to the senator, took the Kopechnes there to meet them, supporting Mrs. Kopechne by her right arm across a 25-foot-wide grass plot between the two buildings.

The two families, according to a church spokesman, introduced themselves and “consoled and sympathized with one another.” The only outsider present throughout the meeting was Lemoyne Billings, a New York executive and close friend of the late President John F. Kennedy, who escorted Mrs. Robert Kennedy.

At 9:30 A.M., the church bells began to toll and 10 minutes later eight pallbearers carried the mahogany steel casket into the church. The two families entered the church through a door near the altar.
Six of the pallbearers were cousins of Ms. Kopechne. The other two were Gifford and David Hackett, a former assistant to Robert Kennedy. They worked in the “Boiler Room” -- a secret-delegation counting headquarters during the late Sen. Robert Kennedy’s Presidential campaign -- with Ms. Kopechne.

Kennedy sat in the third pew from the front of the gospel side, his wife at his left and Ethel Kennedy at his right. The other pews were filled and many stood along the side of the church as the Right Rev. Msgr. William E. Burchill began celebration of the Low Requiem Mass.

The “Ave Maria” and “Mother at Your Feet is Kneeling” were sung during the Mass by Rosemarie Carey, a sister of Plymouth Mayor Edward F. Burns.

Msgr. Burchill delivered no eulogy. When the 25-minute Mass was concluded, the casket again was carried over the red carpet covering the center aisle and was followed by the Kopechnes and the Kennedys.

At the door of the church-- as the crowd outside began to cry in anticipation, “he’s coming, he’s coming” -- Kennedy stopped and stood for several seconds alone, his wife waiting a few feet in front, apparently bringing his emotions under control.
As the senator stepped out into the hot, overcast morning, the crowd again surged toward him. State and local police surrounded the Kennedys and had to fight the way clear to get them into the limousine.

The cortege of some 70 vehicles traveled five miles to Larksville Cemetery at the top of Larksville Mountain, which overlooks the Susquehanna River and Wilkes-Barre. The trip was slow. Frequently the cortege was brought to a standstill by crowds that moved into the street from both sides.

The funeral at St. Vincent’s had been Mary Jo’s wish. Three years ago she attended the funeral of an older cousin there, after which she turned to her parents and exclaimed:

“I love this church -- this beautiful church. If I ever die, I want to be buried here.”

The dead girl was buried near her grandmother and her great-grandmother in a grave that had been prepared by her uncle, George Matthews, who is caretaker of the cemetery.

The gravesite rites were brief and ended with a recital of the “Our Father” by Msgr. Burchill.

Six of the seven young women who worked with Miss Kopechne in the “Boiler Room” attended the Mass and burial. Some of them were among those in
attendance at the reunion of the late Sen. Kennedy’s campaign workers that preceded the fatal accident.

Newsmen approached Kennedy on his arrival at Cape Cod, but his only statement was: “I have just been to the funeral of a very lovely girl and this is not an appropriate time to comment.”

The Kennedys then stepped into a car and returned to their home.

The two families met briefly once again over coffee at Kingston, Pa. before the senator and his party left for the airport to return to Cape Cod.

Chapter 14

The Rev. Martin Luther King

This is a story for which I took a lot of heat from reporters who attended a news conference in Philadelphia with Dr. Martin Luther King. Apparently I ruffled more than a few feathers when I asked Dr. King -- two years before his assassination: “There are many in society who say, ‘I want the black man to be my brother ... but not my brother-in-law.’ Do you feel that this may be the elephant in the room to which many whites fear?” Dr. King appeared stunned: “You simply don’t understand what we are working so hard to accomplish,” he responded indignantly. This confrontation was edited out of the published story. But a reporter from a weekly paper who attended the conference excoriated me in print for posing the question.

Dr. King Denies ‘Black Power’ Beat Rights Bill

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said here Monday that those who claim fear of Black Power contributed to the defeat of the 1966 Civil Rights bill are using this as an excuse for inaction.
“They weren’t prepared to act in the first place,” the head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference said at a press conference prior to his appearance Monday night with James Meredith at Convention Hall.

Dr. King declared that the death of the open housing rights package spelled the end of “justice, the death of democracy” in America.

Conceding there has been a loss of “liberal contributors” to all civil rights movements, he said he could not spell out specific reasons. “There has been a plurality of causes...many liberals have turned their interest to Vietnam, there’s been some confusion over Black Power....”

King, speaking at Emmanuel Baptist Church in North Philadelphia, said it was because of this decrease in contributions, civil rights leaders must rely more “on white persons of goodwill and more than ever before on the black community.”

Evidence of the fact that the Nation has not yet accepted the Negro community, said Dr. King, is to “look at every church in America at 11 A.M.” Here, he said, still sits the segregated congregation.

Commenting on the dissension and splinter groups in the civil rights movement, Dr. King said that “no movement worth its salt has not locked in healthy debate ... in peaks and valleys of confusion.”
He compared Philadelphia to any other major city that is beset with “terrible housing, defacto segregation in schools ... Girard College,” and other conditions that contribute to racial disturbances.

Later at Convention Hall, Dr. King was asked if he saw anything encouraging in the handling of civil rights problems in Philadelphia.

“If there is anything good, I’m not aware of it,” Dr. King replied.

He added that “progress has been made in most of our cities, but not enough progress. There is a long way to go before all the problems are solved.”

Meredith, who was shot and wounded by a sniper on a Mississippi march last June, remained silent through most of the conference.

*Philadelphia Inquirer, September 27, 1966*
Chapter 15

Late 20th Century Charles Lindbergh

The news release that follows represents one of the most compelling assignments in my career as a public relations consultant. The story was about a late 20th century kidnapping that reminds many of the Charles Lindbergh toddler abduction that unleashed a worldwide sensation in 1932. In my client’s case, his ex-wife kidnapped her two young daughters. The girls were recovered 22 months later in Lucerne, Switzerland. Bipin Shah, the girls’ father -- spent $3.2 million of his fortune in the cat and mouse chase. The tale ultimately wound up on the front-cover of Time Magazine. Spin played a pivotal role. When I was invited to tell the story to the world, I told Mr. Shah that unless we differentiated this kidnapping from thousands of similar events, coverage would be slim to none. My suggestion was to offer a reward similar to what was done 67 years earlier in the Lindbergh case. Mr. Shah took my counsel: We announced a $2 million bounty. That drove the story to the front page of newspapers and broadcast outlets all over the world. There were thousands of tips and bounty hunters emerged from everywhere. The FBI entered the case. Yet no one ever collected a dime. Bottom line: the worldwide publicity generated by the case was worth tens of millions.
$2 Million Offered for Missing Girls

PHILADELPHIA --(December 18, 1997) The electronic banking wizard who helped transform an automated teller machine system into a national giant, today announced a $2 million reward for information leading to the return of his two young daughters missing since last June.

“I’d like to see the girls home by New Year’s. It’s going to be very lonely here without them,” said Bipin C. Shah, shaken and visibly upset as he spoke from his home in Philadelphia’s suburbs.

The girls vanished into thin air on June 8. Sarah Lynn, 8, is hauntingly remembered from a photo of a sandy, blonde-haired child with strikingly large, green eyes. Her sister, Genevieve (Vivi) Marie, 6, has brown eyes and a darker complexion that mirrors her father’s Indian background. Vivi is distinguished by birthmarks on her chest that laser treatments have not yet erased.

The United States District Court in Pennsylvania issued a criminal warrant for the arrest of Shah’s ex-wife, Ellen T. Dever, 42, on charges of unlawful travel across state lines to avoid prosecution in child concealment. The Philadelphia Office of the FBI has joined the search.
Meanwhile, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children placed into circulation thousands of posters identifying the little girls and their mother. Ellen Dever is blonde, 5-foot-5, with blue eyes. She wears glasses or contact lenses. Investigators believe all three have assumed false identifications.

Payment of the reward is backed by a $2 million line of credit from a federally insured local bank. The former CoreStates Financial executive cautioned that no payout will be made if the award claimant physically or emotionally harms the mother or children.

Shah and his wife were divorced six years ago and shared custody of the girls. He believed his wife of six years ran off because Dever was fearful she would lose the children in an ongoing custody battle. All the troubles began, he said, after he rebuffed her attempts at reconciliation.

“I’m appealing to the public for help,” said Shah, “because we’ve been frustrated in every attempt we’ve made to locate my daughters.” Over the past six-months the self-made millionaire spent over $700,000 in an exhaustive search that reads like a mystery thriller. Forty private investigators and two bounty hunters combed four countries targeting cities in England, Australia, and Italy, including the home of Dever’s sister in Florence. In all, investigators checked out 11 sightings including those in Hawaii and the continental United States but no new evidence turned up.
Shah had 20,000 posters printed and distributed to English-speaking public, private and parochial schools around the world. Former FBI and CIA agents were recruited for the search. Among the strategies was the money trail.

Nearly $600,000 in proceeds from the virtual overnight sale last May of Dever’s home in Radnor, a Philadelphia suburb, were traced to banks all over the world. The money moved from financial institutions in Blue Bell, Pa. to London, Isle of Man, and finally Zurich, Switzerland. It was at the Swiss bank -- ING -- that Shah met an impenetrable roadblock. The institution -- backed by Swiss law -- refused to cooperate with investigators. Meanwhile, Shah found that all of his ex-wife’s credit cards were canceled. Unpaid debts totaled some $50,000.

“We believe she and the children have taken on new identities including Social Security numbers,” said Shah. He was led to this conclusion when Dever’s ex-boyfriend turned over to Shah a copy of a book she gave him. Its title: “How to Create A New Identity.” Published by a division of Citadel Press, the author is anonymous.

According to a federal warrant, Dever rented a moving van around May 14 from Budget Rent-A-Truck. The van was returned to Marietta, Ga. on May 19. She and the children moved into her parent’s home in Phonexville, Pa for three weeks. She left on June 8, saying she was going on vacation and would return June 11. From that point on, said Shah, virtually no trace of them has been found.
Shah said the $2 million reward would be split among those whose information leads to return of the children to their father. Friends, family and present investigators are excluded. The Philadelphia Regional Office of the American Arbitration Association will determine any dispute among claimants over the reward monies.

“I want to bring my children home so they don’t have to live in hiding all their lives. I want them to go back to school, to see their friends, their parents and grandparents,” he said tears flowing from his eyes. “And I’m prepared to spend my last dime doing it.”

The loss of his children has taken a terrible emotional toll on the executive whom American Banker magazine once characterized with the quizzical headline: “The Bill Gates of Payment Systems?”

“I’ve abandoned my business interests. I haven’t left the house for six months other than to meet with investigators,” said Shah.

When the ordeal is over and the children are returned, Shah said he is committed to starting a nonprofit foundation to help parents who have lost their children but lack the financial means to launch a worldwide campaign as he has done.
“I never realized how little help a case like this gets in the richest nation in the world,” he said. “Nonprofit organizations exist but I believe I can enhance the service.”
PART IV:

THE INFAMOUS

There’s a special cache about the infamous. Books, movies and TV glamorize them. Reporters love to chronicle their stories. But whoever heard of the Mafia courting a PR guy? This series on the infamous features a proud Mafia dad, a crazed serial killer, a mentally deranged mother who murders her new son-in-law and an arsonist interviewed from a jail cell.
Chapter 16

When I was hired by what was once Philadelphia’s fifth largest advertising and public relations firm, one of my clients turned out to be the late Pope Paul VI. That's odd because I happen to be Jewish. After the Pope was back in Rome and I opened my own PR shop, I received a call from a Mafia chieftain serving time at a Philadelphia prison. The caller assumed I was religious when he read an article in The Philadelphia Daily News that depicted me holding a photo of the Pope. Would I represent his son, just named Prisoner of the Year? What would you have done?

Invitation from the Mafia

Have you ever been faced with a moral conundrum?

For example: You’ve just received a call from an incarcerated Mafioso. He asks me -- a former Philadelphia Bulletin newsman turned PR guy -- to represent his son.

Joey (The Butcher) Rabinowitz (not his real name) calls from Holmesburg: “Hey, Ed,” says Joey. “Got a minute?”

The voice is clearly South Philly. Joey saw this piece about me in The Philadelphia Daily News. “It says you were the Pope’s PR guy. You must be a religious man. Are you Catholic?” Joey prods.
“No,” I tell him. “I’m Jewish. But the Archdiocese of Philadelphia hired me anyway to promote the Pope during his U.S. visit.”

“How would you like to handle PR for Frankie, my son? He’s a good kid. Doing a little time at Allenwood. But he’s just been named Prisoner of the Year.” Rabinowitz tells me Frankie has written a screenplay about growing up in the Mafia. A Hollywood critic turned in a glowing review.

Rabinowitz waxes on, pushing the envelope: “Could I get the kid on Oprah? How about a piece in People Magazine? How much would it cost?”

I hear myself saying: “$5,000 a month.” Then I swallow hard pondering the longevity of my career as an independent PR guy.

Next, I call the FBI. The agent tells me even the Mafia is entitled to good PR representation. I check with a colleague, the top PR guy at PECO, once a crack newspaper reporter. “Go for it, Eddie, he says. “That’s $60,000 a year.” I consult my wife. “Are you crazy?” Marion shrieks. “If they don’t like your work, you could wind up at the bottom of the Delaware.” For would-be entrepreneurs, a PR 101 advisory admonishes: When in doubt, pay heed to thy wife. I did. That’s how I lost $60,000 and, who knows? Perhaps a swim in the Delaware.
Chapter 17

I snuck into the hospital emergency room where Leo Held was dying. At that moment the room was unguarded. The balding lab technician of Lock Haven, Pa., had been a school-board member, Boy Scout leader, secretary of a fire brigade, churchgoer and affectionate father. Gasping, he spoke his last words to me: “I’m sorry I didn’t get No. 13.” An elderly widow, who lived near Held’s home, survived the brutal massacre.

Madman of Lock Haven

LOGANTON, PA -- Leo Held, devoted father, husband, civic leader -- and killer of six --- was buried here Saturday in a closely guarded ceremony punctuated by a few anguished cries from his widow.

There were only four young boys on the street and less than 50 persons inside the Ramm funeral home when the service began at 2 P.M.

Reporters and photographers were kept across the street by police. Sheriff Fred Yarrison explained: “Mrs. Held wanted this to be a private funeral and that’s the way it’s going to be.”

A half hour later, the service was over and those inside the chapel filed out rapidly, climbed into cars and rode a quarter mile to Fairview Cemetery.
Held’s wife, Alda, last to leave the funeral home, appeared on the point of collapse. Sobbing audibly, she was virtually carried into a black limousine by three friends.

Then came the light brown coffin, draped with the American Flag, carrying Leo Held. Six brothers of Elmer loaded it onto a hearse Weaver, one of Held’s victims.

As the procession prepared to leave, Harold Brungard, Held’s brother-in-law and a cashier at the Loganton National Bank, leaped out of his car when he saw a reporter begin talking to one of the people who had attended the service.

“Don’t talk to that man,” Brungard shouted. “Don’t say a word.”

Then the procession drove away and 20 minutes later, Leo Held was buried --less than 100 feet from another of his victims, Floyd Quiggle.

Buried with him in the rich, brown Sugar Valley soil are the reasons for the massacre. What motivated Leo Held’s rampage last Monday morning, when he killed six persons and maimed a half-dozen others?

In this tiny farming borough of 500, people are still shaken. And 17 miles to the north in industrial Lock Haven, where five of Held’s victims perished, people still ask: Why?
In all, the mad carnage touched the lives of 54 young children, wives, parents, brothers, sisters -- the shocked and bereaved survivors who buried their dead last week in six separate funerals.

In Clinton county restaurants, barber shops and tap rooms, they are saying that this little piece of God’s country encircled by the majestic Alleghenies in North Central Pennsylvania now carries a stigma. It will go down in history, indelibly marked with other cities of tragedy.

The victims of Leo Held’s two-hour rampage were neighbors, workers, members of a car pool from which the father of four was booted for reckless driving by his superiors at the Hammermill Paper Co., in Lock Haven.

Held, a tall, balding 200-pounder, who wore glasses, had been a lab technician at Hammermill for 21 years. But his greatest love was hunting. He was an expert marksman and had an impressive collection of rifles and handguns.

State police have reconstructed this series of events that took place sometime between 7:15 A.M. when Held left his neat, brick home on Anthony Ave. and 9:21 A.M. when he lay sprawled in his back yard, his body riddled with four bullets that ended his life two days later.

Held entered the Hammermill plant through a side door just before 8 A.M. He was armed with a .38-caliber revolver, a high-powered rifle and a second handgun.
In cold silence he strolled through the factory. Twenty minutes later five lay
dead and four wounded. Fifty other employes crouched behind desks and office
machines in witness to the massacre.

Quietly, intently, Held walked from office to office letting loose with a
fusillade that killed Richard Davenport, 32, the quality control supervisor. Then,
Donald Walden, 31, superintendent of manufacturing. Then, Allen Barrett, 44, a
lab assistant, C.H. Edwards, 62, superintendent of wastes and his brother-in-law,
Weaver, a lab technician.

Six other employes were wounded. Leaving his fellow workers amid the
grotesque splotches of blood on the floor, Held quietly left the building. He
climbed into his new blue station wagon and drove off. He drove two miles to the
Piper Aircraft offices at Lock Haven airport. There he shot and wounded Mrs.
Ramm, a member of the three-month defunct Loganton-to-Lock Haven car pool.

Mrs. Ramm was hit as she crouched, hiding behind a counter. Howard
Graves, the airport manager, arrived after the shooting. He firmly took hold of
Held’s hand and led him from the building. Held made no attempt to molest
Graves.

Mrs. Ramm is the wife of G. Schuyler Ramm, the undertaker from whose
funeral parlor Held was buried Saturday.

At 8:52 A.M. Held parked his car across from his own house on
Anthony Street and walked up to the Quiggle home. He found the door unlocked. He strode into the living room where Quiggle proudly displayed his collection of rifles in a locked glass gun case. Ignoring the key in the door, Held smashed the glass and removed half dozen rifles.

Next, he went upstairs and found the Quiggles in bed. He killed the self-employed steel hauler and put a bullet in his wife’s neck.

Quiggle’s 4 1/2 -year-old daughter, Jody Lynn, witnessed the tragedy. She lay hidden under her parent’s bed. An older son was in school.

Held then walked across the street and entered his own house. No one was home. His wife, Olga, 37, was at her job at a Jersey Shore plastic factory and his three sons and a daughter, ranging in age from 18 to 12, were in school.

There was a knock at the door. Outside were three Lock Haven city policemen. Held darted out a side door. He fired three shots at Police Chief Dormer G. Orndorf. Orndorf returned the volley with his .38-caliber revolver. The third shot fired hit Held in the left shoulder. He spun and dropped his rifle. Then Held raced across his yard in the direction of the home of Mrs. Ella Knisley, a 71-year old widow, a woman reportedly marked to be Held’s 13th victim.

Assistant Police Chief William B. Ryan fired two shots from a high-powered telescopic rifle. One struck Held in the right leg. The other knocked the weapon from his hand and spun him sprawling on his face.
“I can’t take any more of this,” he cried.

Six state police closed in. Held reached for his second handgun and shouted:
"Come and get it."

Patrolman Joseph L. Sanders fired the fourth shot hitting the suspect in the left wrist. Held dropped his revolver and collapsed at 9:21 A.M. He was removed, unconscious to Lock Haven Hospital that was already in turmoil handling Held’s victims.

Word about the multiple tragedies soon spread throughout the quiet mountainside. Newsmen and photographers from all over the country rushed to Clinton County. Telephone lines were jammed. A police officer flew 28 miles to Williamsport and returned with 17 pints of blood.

The Hammermill Paper Co. shut down for two days. Then at 6 A.M. Wednesday Leo Held mumbled his last words and died. An autopsy revealed death was caused by a blood clot and other complications brought about by his wounds. None of his family was at his bedside when he died.

But the three nurses who attended him in the heavily guarded intensive-care unit said he was very polite. He said “please” when asked about his son, Larry, an 18-year-old freshman at the Hazleton branch of Penn State University. He complained about his chest pains. He said he couldn’t breathe and uttered these words before shutting his eyes forever. “I had one more to go.”
Most people talked about Leo Held as the stalwart community leader, the dedicated Christian. He was twice elected to the Sugar Valley Joint Area School Board. He rarely missed a meeting.

He was a leader in scouting. He worked at his job at the paper mill long hours and was on call day and night.

He was an enthusiastic hunter and firearms collector and spent much of his free time loading his own shells. He was a crack shot and he practiced Sundays at a target range near his home.

Leo Held was a churchgoer. He attended the Evangelical United Brethren Church with his family. Then suddenly, he stopped. If he had any problems, he told no one. He talked little, either about himself or to others.

He served as a clerk in the Army in Japan and prepared for his job at the mill with a two-year chemistry course at Lock Haven State College.

This was the side of Leo Held that everyone knew. But there was another side. It was revealed last March to his neighbor, Mrs. Knisley. She told a justice of the peace that Held charged at her with a pitchfork and later struck her over the head several times with a club. Held denied it in court. He claimed she struck him first and slipped. The case was thrown out. The justice of the peace, an elementary school teacher, claimed there was no evidence to support it.
Ironically, Held was headed for Mrs. Knisley’s back porch with two pistols tucked under his belt last Monday when he was gunned down.

In the summer of 1966, Held complained to his family physician of nervousness and insomnia. He believed people were talking about him at work he told Dr. Rudolph Parsons. The physician couldn’t draw anything specific from Held suggesting that he was blowing issues out of proportion. Dr. Parsons gave Held a tranquilizer and some fatherly advice. Held never returned to the doctor’s office.

W. Edward Meyers, president of the Loganton National Bank, said he has known Held all his life. “He was difficult to get along with. Slow to make friends,” Meyers said. “He would complain if someone was burning leaves and smoke came over into his yard.”

Others who knew Held said he was under severe financial pressure since his wife was in an automobile accident last April. Her car smashed into a house trailer near Jersey Shore. A woman was seriously injured. Others said he was pressed on mortgage payments for his $15,000 house, but according to Held, his financial affairs were in order.

He was reportedly angry with his superiors at Hammermill for bypassing him on a promotion and raising, instead, the pay of his brother-in-law Weaver.
Company officials, however, denied that Weaver had received a promotion or was due for one.

Then there was the matter of Held’s reported disenchantment with the people in the car pool who threw him out for driving recklessly over the treacherous Loganton-to-Lock Haven Rd.

This was the side most people kept to themselves. A surgeon who attended Held before he died advanced the theory that a combination of many pressures building inside an introverted man, schooled in the art of killing, could trigger the type of massacre that occurred Monday. Some say it appeared as if his victims were charted for death. No one really knows.

*Philadelphia Inquirer, October 29, 1967*
Chapter 18

This story and a sidebar article on Dr. Jean Burgoyne, won a Keystone State Publishers Association award for Best News Feature.

An American Tragedy

GLENWOOD, Ga. - Elsmer Laden Smith held his rough, dirt-soiled hands to his face and wept.

A tall, stooped man with wire-rimmed glasses, the 59-year-old pecan dealer was a pathetic sight standing here in the doorway of his southern Georgia home.

“Please,” he begged, “if you see my daughter, tell her to write. Tell her I love her more than anything in the world.”

Smith’s daughter, Dr. Jean Burgoyne, 27, is a resident in dermatology at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia. She also is a new widow.

In a jail cell in nearby Laurens County, Ga., is Jean’s mother, Mrs. Bernice Smith, 57, a retired schoolteacher and the sister of a county school superintendent.

She is charged with the murder last Saturday of Jean’s husband of seven weeks, Dr. Brenton C. Burgoyne, a third-year resident in ophthalmology at Philadelphia’s Wills Eye Hospital.

-116-
There are those in this small, clannish community of 750 who believe that awful murder a week ago had racial overtones. Dr. Burgoyne’s neighbors say he had been branded by his in-laws as a Communist, a half-breed and an Indian.

He was none of those things. He was the son of white, Methodist American missionaries serving in Nepal where he was born 32 years ago.

Thus unfolds a new American tragedy of a prominent Wheeler County family brought to the brink of disaster and scandal. It has been a tragedy that has set daughter against kin, a tragedy that has left a father a crushed man and a loving mother a murder suspect. A shocked community asks how and why.

The reasons are somehow tied to Wheeler County, this small, poor rural area 110 miles west of Savannah. Wheeler County is 306 square acres of solitude. There are no bars because Wheeler is a dry county and its people are mostly Baptist, conservative and staunchly pro-Wallace and Maddox.

It’s a backwash part of the world with an aging, declining population where land and hard work is everything to a man. It is their pride, their joy, and it gives them stature among their peers.

But not enough for their children who began making the exodus for the larger cities 20 years ago. “When our kids pick up and leave for the big cities and don’t even bother to come home for Christmas there’s going to be a natural resentment
built up,” said a county official who asked to go nameless. He didn’t want to be identified with the murder.

But murder has recently become Wheeler County’s lot this year in what had always been regarded as an almost crime-free community (with the exception of moonshining.)

Last Saturday’s murder marked the third one here in five months and 12 days. This is an accurate count because Glenwood Police Chief Marcus Bridges keeps tabs on such things.

He is a friendly, loquacious man, like many of the country folks here. Chief Bridges was leaning up against a car on quiet 3d Ave and 2d St., the heart of Glenwood, where the Seaboard Coast Line cuts the stamp-sized town in two.

“’This is a nice, peaceable sort of place,’” he said. “’We don’t have trouble. We don’t make trouble. Now these three murders have put a black spot on the county.’”

Last Mother’s Day another Glenwood mother was charged in the shooting death of her son-in-law. He was felled when he arrived at the woman’s house for reconciliation with his wife.

When his wife refused to leave with him, he carted her over his shoulder to a pickup truck. That’s as far as he ever walked. The mother-in-law is now appealing a 15-year jail sentence.
On Independence Day, a Wheeler County woman killed her former husband after he entered her trailer and shot her druggist boyfriend. The druggist survived.

In last week’s tragedy, authorities say, Mrs. Smith pumped two bullets from a .38 caliber revolver into her physician son-in-law’s throat and lungs. The confrontation occurred in the Smith home after the mother lured the couple to Georgia from Philadelphia, officials say.

Dr. Burgoyne had planned to return to Nepal with his wife to help cope with the widespread incidence of eye disease there. He was dead 20 minutes after he met his new mother-in-law for the first time.

Neighbors who grew up with Bernice Smith in Glenwood claim she has been deteriorating for 10 years -- that she’s been under heavy medication for some time.

In 1967 she spent two weeks under psychiatric care. Her retirement as an elementary school teacher a few years ago was prompted, some say, by an automobile accident that left her seriously injured.

About two weeks before last Saturday’s slaying she was released from an area hospital where her husband claims she was being treated for heart trouble. Others in the community know better. They say she is dying of cancer.

Her weight has dwindled to about 100 pounds and her face has taken on a shallow, yellowing complexion. She was given special dispensation to be
incarcerated in an adjoining county so that she might be near her personal physician.

Mrs. Smith was born and reared in a house only a short distance from the murder scene, seven miles west of Glenwood where two-lane Route 19 and 46 intersect.

Her mother is buried in a cemetery near here. Her father, a Mormon, is still living. He resides in Salt Lake City, Utah where the Burgoynes first met in medical school and fell in love.

Elsmer Smith, a quiet, docile man who has spent long periods away from home in his travels as a pecan dealer, was born 17 miles from here.

Contrary to early reports he is neither wealthy nor is he a plantation owner. He is a hard worker and has managed to make a modest income to keep his family in comfort and pay for his daughter’s education through medical school.

He owns about 85 acres of farmland, which is considered “peanuts” in this part of the country. An acre sells for $200. The land lies dormant most of the time. Farm labor supply is scarce.

His brother, a wealthy farmer in nearby Montgomery County, signed a $2,000 property bond to free his sister-in-law on assault charges brought by Jean.
Henry O'Connell, the only eyewitness to the shooting, is an old man who lived with the Smiths along with their 9-year-old adopted son, Jimmy. O’Connell is free on $2,000 bail, also on assault charges.

Neighbors claim they had been hearing Mrs. Smith threaten to kill her son-in-law for months. “But she was always full of threats. We just paid no mind to her,” said Mrs. Wyman Phillips.

Mrs. Phillips and her husband run the corner grocery store and gas station across from the Smith home. Last Saturday Mrs. Phillips found her old friend had not been making idle threats.

She realized that moments after the shooting when Jean raced into the store to call for help. About 10 minutes later Bernice Smith approached and Jean fearfully took cover.

Mrs. Philips recalls that Mrs. Smith was carrying a piece of galvanized pipe in her hands. “Where is that bitch?” Mrs. Phillips quoted Bernice Smith as saying. “I told her Jean had left. Mrs. Smith went out the side door looking for her with the pipe still in her hand.”

Those who knew Bernice Smith say they feared her and they liked to keep on her “good side.” One elderly woman said, “Boy, if you crossed her once that was the end.”
Her husband, they say, cowered before her while for years she dominated her daughter’s life. Folks here say Mrs. Smith was so possessive of Jean she wanted her neither to marry nor leave Wheeler County.

At Lauren County jail Sheriff Maurice Johnson says Mrs. Smith continues to talk about her daughter with adoration. “She hasn’t denied she killed Jean’s husband,” said the sheriff. “She’ll openly tell you that.”

Inside the Smith living room clothes are in disarray everywhere. The once neatly kept house is a shambles. Elsmer Smith says he is preparing to bring some of his wife’s belongings to her cell.

On a paneled wall there is a picture of a lovely, smiling Jean Smith in those days before she became Mrs. Burgoyne. On another wall a shotgun rests in a rack. A second weapon is missing from its place.

Two huge barking German shepherds guard the entrance to the run-down one-story frame house that is reached by driving onto a narrow, blacktopped path behind a closed and boarded grocery store Smith owns.

Elsmer Smith is a big, hefty man when he stands up. He has the look of one who has toiled all his life. And now, his head is bowed. Sadly, he is a man who sees his long efforts crumbling before him, crumbling into the earth to which he has become so close.

*Philadelphia Inquirer, October 31, 1970*
Chapter 19

High Hangs the Noose

Herb Steigler lives in the shadow of the hangman’s noose, convicted of setting a fire that killed his youngest child and his wife’s parents. Yet the nagging question remains: Did He or Didn’t He?

Inside a coffin-shaped maximum security cell at New Castle County Correctional Institution near Wilmington is a picture of a small, smiling girl.

Christine Lynn Steigler was six when she died in a house fire a jury said her father started. Now her father, Herbert F. Steigler, occupies the cell, condemned to hang.

When they brought Herb into the warden’s office the former Lutheran Sunday school teacher offered a warm, engaging smile and a firm handshake. A pipe jutted from his mouth. He would light and relight it many times in the next few hours.

I asked about the picture in his cell.

“Chrissy was my little girl,” he began. “The baby of my family. If I did this thing I could not stand to look at her.” His eyes met mine directly.

“I may be guilty of a lot of other crimes. But the crime of setting my house on fire and killing my own flesh and blood and my wife’s parents, of that, I am innocent,” he said.
Yet a jury of eight men and four women were convinced Herb Steigler was the cold, calculating killer the prosecution made him out to be. They saw him as a super mutual fund salesman beset with debts of $63,000, a man trying to bail out with $104,000 in fire and life insurance. They saw him as a man the prosecution characterized as an adulterer and embezzler.

They saw Herb Steigler as the man who, on the morning of Oct. 19, 1968, placed 10 plastic, metal and glass containers of gasoline about his $35,000 Cape Cod home in a Wilmington suburb while his wife and family slept.

Chrissy died in the fire along with her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Swertferger. Steigler scooped up his 11-year-old son David from a first-floor bedroom and ran from the house. Moments later he placed a ladder against the house and rescued his wife, Arlene, 37, from a second-floor bathroom. Another child, Sarah, 14, was sleeping at the home of a girlfriend.

On five occasions, Steigler testified during the trial, that he tried to reenter the house. Once his wife restrained him “because she knew I wouldn’t make it out alive.”

“If I knew the amount of gasoline in there, would I try to get back in?” he asked, waiting for an answer. Steigler broke the silence. “Many times I lie on my bunk and I wish Arlene had not stopped me. She would have been spared the embarrassment of all this.”
Herb Steigler is a likable, gregarious sort of guy, a giant of a man on a 6-foot-4-inch frame. And when he told me he was glad I came, I could not help but believe him.

Born 38 years ago in Harrison, N.Y., Steigler was an ambitious youngster who displayed signs of business savvy even before he reached his teens.

In high school and college he sold tickets for the New Haven Railroad where his father worked as an agent. He met his future wife as a freshman at Harrison High. Herb and Arlene were inseparable from the beginning. She was always on the sidelines while he played football and basketball. They were King and Queen of the Junior Prom and on graduation day the two tall ones were paired walking down the aisle together.

Steigler’s graduation yearbook reads, “Herby... he has risen to the heights of success.” A football scholarship took him to Syracuse University in 1950. Arlene transferred from a small college in Vermont to be near him.

Herb played end on Coach Ben Schartwalder’s team that made it to the Orange Bowl.

Steigler called the trial “a mockery of justice, a circus” And he posed many questions, which still remain unanswered.

“How do the authorities explain the strange car in the driveway, the rubber gloves found in the basement, the open dining room window, the desk drawers
pulled out, the voices heard 20 to 30 minutes before the fire?” The answer, Steigler says, is that outsiders set the blaze.

He’s now willing to submit to a lie detector test or a psychiatric examination to prove he’s both innocent and sane.

Steigler has been behind bars since Dec. 3, 1968. For his wife and surviving children the years of waiting have been hell. They are convinced he’s innocent. So is his minister and members of his church who raised funds for legal costs, held two prayer vigils and rebuilt his burned-out house.

Arlene Steigler lives in a small apartment now with David and Sarah. She visits Herb for a half-hour each Saturday, meeting his steadfast gaze through a square-foot glass peephole.

Steigler is considered a model prisoner. He has conducted church services and was released from lockup to work in the prison print shop.

His tiny cell is a storehouse of books, investment pamphlets, family pictures and mementoes.

Herb Steigler may be New Castle’s biggest optimist. He told me before I left that he is convinced the truth will come out someday and that somewhere in another place, another courtroom he will escape his appointment with the hangman.
PART V:

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

Investigative reporters peer into stories that shed light into dark corners. My work at The Philadelphia Inquirer and the old Philadelphia Bulletin focused on greed in high places, security lapses, and private enterprises that abused the public trust. Some of the most compelling work is reprinted here.
Chapter 20

Scofflaw Chaser Lived, Died Well

M. Murray Adler was a kid who grew up in a poor North Philadelphia neighborhood.

After becoming a constable 13 years ago he dined on steaks, smoked 35-cent Bances cigars, wheeled about the city in leased late-model Cadillacs and maintained a $50,000 home near Coral Gables, Fla.

A portly man with a big smile, a firm handshake and a bull dog-like look, he was piloted about Miami canals in his new 37-foot fishing boat by a retired Air Force major.

He held memberships in two country clubs, boarded his eight-year-old son at a private school outside Philadelphia and lavished gifts on family, friends and those who could help him along life’s sometimes-rugged pathways.

If he had a vice, it was food. Friends knew him as a compulsive eater, and once, in the office of Traffic Court President John Patrick Walsh, he came upon some candy in the jurist’s desk. “Don’t eat it!” Walsh warned. “It’s stale.”

The plea was ignored.

A week ago M. Murray Adler, 49, died of a heart attack in the shower of his Florida rancher. He was preparing to attend the Bar Mitzvah of a friend’s son.
City Controller Tom Gola believes Adler died a rich man, a man who may have embezzled millions in city moneys while he went about his job as a scofflaw chaser for the Philadelphia Traffic Court.

Gola believes that instead of deducting his $4 collector’s fee and turning over the remaining fines to the city, Adler kept much of the money for himself. He handled the huge New Jersey file and, Gola feels, thousands of New Jersey residents wound up paying the pistol-packing Adler once and then paid again to the city traffic court.

The D.A.’s office is currently poring over Adler’s special escrow bank account into which he allegedly channeled $1 million over the last eight years. Gola says the account contained fines which never reached the city.

He died just four days before a scheduled appointment with Gola. The Controller had warrants prepared charging him with extortion, embezzlement, false pretense and fraudulent conversion.

Like the thousands of Jersey scofflaws he pursued with a vengeance, Murray Adler was something of a scofflaw himself. He died owing thousands of dollars to creditors.

Some of the bills included $1,800 for meat, $495 for fish, and $795 on a credit card account. His Olney ave. office was padlocked early last week to prevent
destruction of records. A private collection agency was being illegally operated there.

Adler was eulogized at his closed coffin funeral here last week by Rabbi Frederick Kazan as a man “whose intentions were usually good, but he didn’t always follow through.”

For some Adler was a “prince of a man.” Others feared and hated him. “Look,” said his 30-year-old friend, writ -server Edward Cohen, “being in this business, you don’t become popular. It’s not a popularity contest. He treated his family right and that’s what counts.”

Another writ server said, “he could be your friend one minute and stab you in your back the next. But I know he’d pick up people who were down and out and he’d give them a job even if he didn’t need them. In a way he was a hell of a guy.”

Then there is the owner of a posh dress shop to whom Adler owed $1,786: “I was afraid of him,” she said. “He had a foul mouth and he carried a .38.” On one of dozens of occasions when she called him on the phone about his growing account, Adler replied, “If you send me a statement, I’ll break your neck.”

At the Kings Bay Yacht and Country Club in South Dade County, Fla. where Adler and his second wife spent much of their time, he was well liked and considered a generous tipper. But some of his Florida neighbors considered him a “mystery man” who spent little time at his palm tree-lined waterway home.
Once a curious neighbor followed him to find out where he spent his time. But the Philadelphia mystery man could not be found.

Adler was born on Sept. 17, 1921 at 31st and Montgomery ave., the youngest of two brothers and two sisters. He was a big, husky man with short, kinky dark hair and a big smile for everyone.

He weighed more than 300 pounds when he was hit by his first heart attack two years ago. This, friends said, was all the motive he needed to pack up and move to Florida.

He sold his twin home in Mount Airy for $23,000 and in January 1969 settled on a $29,000 stucco just west of Coral Gables. He added a few rooms in the last two years and trimmed about 100 pounds from his ample frame.

He hired a yardman, bought a dog, which occasionally required a baby sitter when he flew into Philadelphia twice monthly. His personal secretary and two deputies handled business here.

The secretary, Mrs. Helen Burgess, was hospitalized Friday “for extreme nervous shock.

Nights his Florida home was illuminated by spotlights, not uncommon in that part of the country, but a neighbor observed, “I got the feeling he was afraid of something.”
Adler was a sporty dresser, always well groomed in a sweater, blue blazers and a cigar jutting from his mouth. He was seen often in his 1970 twin diesel fishing boat, the third he has owned in two years. He named the craft Redhead II for his son, Matthew.

More than a year ago Adler asked Judge Walsh to fly down to Florida and spend a weekend with him. The judge didn’t accept the invitation. Later he invited the jurist to dinner. The judge turned him down again.

One man who didn’t turn Adler down was Harry Karafin, former Inquirer reporter.

Karafin was convicted two years ago on 40 bills of indictment charging blackmail and corrupt solicitation. He is free on $75,000 bail on appeal of a four-to-nine year prison term.

Adler and Karafin met when Adler was in the collection agency business in center city. Business was failing and Karfin introduced Adler to the late City Councilman Joe Hersch. Then Hersch headed the Traffic Court here and threw the traffic scofflaw business to him.

“It was like a ticket to Broadway,” said one Adler pal. “Karafin put Adler on Broadway and kept him there.” Before the former Inquirer management fired Karafin for his extra curricular activities he and Adler formed Kaye Communications, Inc. in 1962.
Together they tried to market a telephone speaker magnification gadget. The deal fell through and they lost $1,400.

Judge Walsh is among those who are extremely dismayed at the charges leveled against Adler.

“Even before his body is cold they hit him with all this,” the jurist said. “I never had any suspicion of him until all this was called to my attention. If I did, I would have gotten rid of him a long time ago. I think he worked in good faith. He was very active. He was one of the best men I had.”

In 1964 Adler’s name flared prominently in the press here when a highway patrolman hauled him before a judge on a speeding ticket. After paying the $15 fine, Adler turned to the judge and said:

“Your honor, I have four traffic scofflaw warrants against Patrolman George Mitchell.” Turning to Mitchell, he said, with a touch of bravado in his voice, “I place you under arrest.”

He cultivated friends and associates with a keen sense of discretion. Those who served him well, he repaid with gifts.

He wined, dined, played cards with the owner of a dress shop. Even took her and her son to a Phillies baseball game only to warn her later to stop pestering him about payment for the hundreds of garments he purchased on credit over a 10-year period.
“He was the kind of guy who could ingratiate himself with you, he’d get under our skin.” the woman said.

“Sometimes he would be your personal friend, other times he would turn on you like a mad dog.”

He ran up a cigar bill at one store for $500 and “settled” -- as was his custom -- for $100. “He was a real hustler,” said Judge Walsh. “He went around with a telephone in his car and he’d spend his time laying on a guy. He’d pay for his information about people. He spent money to get money.”

In his trips over the past two years to Philadelphia he would take a suite at the Barclay. Suites run between $45 and $110 a night.

The retired Air Force major who piloted Adler about in the craft was unpaid. Unpaid like so many friends Adler had cultivated over the years with flowers, meals, dresses, and cigars.

In 1965 he became angered over the way in which a city auditor was checking his books. He gruffly shoved the man out the door of his Olney ave office.

Adler appeared in Gola’s office on Sept. 29 and was ordered to return for another accounting last Wednesday.

He said then that he planned to get out of the writ-serving business in Philadelphia and hopefully get into the same kind of work in Miami.
“But it’s rough to get in,” he told Gola. He told Florida neighbors that he wanted to go into a boat dealership. To others he said he’d like to start a trailer park.

A friend of long duration said M. Murray Adler appreciated “good service in all respects and he was willing to pay the price for it.”

Meanwhile, Tom Gola is concerned how the mystery man of Coral Gables lived the life of a prince on money that belonged to Philadelphia.

*Philadelphia Inquirer, May 16, 1971*
Chapter 21

This is an account of a visit I made to the Federal Courthouse in Philadelphia, a week after a bomb exploded in a Pentagon washroom. My editors asked me to check security measures at the Philadelphia facility. Later it was determined that the device set off at the Capitol was the work of the Weather Underground, a Vietnam War protest group. The terrorist attack occurred 30 years before 9/11.

Feds Flunk Security Test

I spent 91 minutes Thursday morning walking the cavernous corridors of the Federal Courthouse in Philadelphia toting a black briefcase. Inside was a ticking alarm clock that could have been a bomb.

My mission: Test the security in this major Federal facility that houses the U.S. District Court, the Eastern District Third Court of Appeals, the Post Office, dozens of courtrooms, judges chambers, the offices of the U.S. Attorney General and area congressmen.

Could a terrorist leave a bomb here with the same ease in which an incendiary device was deposited in a Pentagon washroom last week by the Weather Underground? The newspaper’s inquiry was prompted after officials claimed security at Federal installations had been tightened since a kidnap-escape took
place in a California courtroom last August. A Superior Court judge and three others were killed.

 Sadly, security in Philadelphia also flunked the test.

 It all began at 10:07 A.M. when I stepped nervously into the Post Office section of the building clutching a black briefcase. The alarm clock was wrapped in two wool socks and a pair of striped shorts. The briefcase also contained two books, a newspaper, a tomato and egg sandwich and a pack of Lifesavers.

 I was dressed conservatively -- clean-shaven, medium sideburns, a herringbone overcoat, black boots and a Russian fedora. It was cold outside.

 Ninety-one minutes later I left the building undetected. I had covered the corridors of all six floors and even walked a flight of steps to a restricted seventh-floor area.

 There were no guards above the second floor. Office workers were friendly. Twice I was greeted by “Hello Commissioner.”

 I was eyed suspiciously only once when a guy walked into the men’s room and found me standing beside my briefcase jotting notes on a pad.

 At one point things were getting so dull I left my briefcase on a chair in the fourth-floor office of U.S. Attorney Louis C. Bechtle. I returned five minutes later and retrieved it. The secretaries never looked up.
Getting into the sprawling courthouse was a snap. I followed a lady with a big, brown shopping bag. “Where do you want to go?” she was asked. She said the post office. A guard directed her to the left.

Next, it was my turn. Two security guards looked me over casually. One asked me to sign the register. I did and placed 10:15 A.M. beside my name.

“Any identification?” he asked. I provided my driver’s license.

“Where are you going?” he asked. I feigned confusion. “Civil rights hearing?” he offered.

“Yes, yes,” I said thankfully. I spotted three guards on the second floor. I walked up to one with the clock ticking at my side. I asked for Rep. William Green’s office.

I was directed to the third floor. I walked into 3036 and spotted Green behind a big desk. He looked up curiously. I told an aide I was looking for a colleague. I left hurriedly.

I visited men’s rooms on the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth floors. It was monotonous after awhile. I used the facilities only once. Finally, I left my briefcase in Men’s Room 4019. Minutes later, three men walked in and immediately exited. I was sitting on a chair outside waiting for something to happen. Anything. Nothing happened. I walked into the Men’s Room again and
found my briefcase as I had left it. My tomato and egg sandwich was still neatly in its wrappings, untouched.

I dropped into Sen. Hugh Scott’s office and said, “Hi.” People passed in the hallway and smiled. The guy, who spotted me in a men’s room earlier, eyed me suspiciously for a moment. This, I thought, was it.

My cover was about to become unraveled. Hooray for U.S. Security!

“Nice day, isn’t it?” the security officer nodded.

I walked past the sixth floor courtroom of U.S. Commissioners Tully Leomporra and Edward Furia. The sign read: Restricted Area. That led to the seventh floor elevator room. The door was locked.

A second stairway took me to the basement where a work crew completely ignored the guy with the ticking clock and Russian fedora.

From the basement I found it impossible to leave without using an elevator. All doors were locked.

A female employe looked at me in surprise. I asked: “Is that stairway door locked? Boy, they’re really clamping down.”

The woman was toting a big bag and when we arrived on the first floor she asked the guard whether he wanted to search it. “Maybe I have a bomb!” she laughed. The guard stared impassively, stone faced.
The humor was lost on him. As I left through the Chestnut Street exit as I had entered. I didn’t even sign out. No one questioned me.

“Gee,” I thought, “I better go back and sign out. The poor guy could be canned for failure to follow security procedures. I did an about-face and signed out at 11:38 A.M.

*Philadelphia Inquirer, March 5, 1971*
Chapter 22

A Town Running Dry

GREENWICH, Conn - The Rolls Royces and Bentleys glide along East Putnam St. in this picture-perfect town with the fresh-scrubbed look such elegance demands.

Flags are at half-mast for departed Gov. Ella Grasso, but otherwise it appears it’s business as usual for the 60,000 people who live in this posh bedroom and corporate headquarters community, 40 miles northwest of the Big Apple.

Well, almost.

There are some telltale signs of trouble:

The town’s red fire engines are turning a sandy brown. They’re serving martinis from paper cups at the Greenwich Country Club. Bottled drinking water at 69 cents a gallon is moving briskly at the supermarkets. Electrolux, the vacuum-cleaner maker, shuts down every Friday now.

Then there’s the clatter of drillers’ rigs on the front lawns of estate homes, in the driveways of car washes and at the entrance of a community hospital, sinking down as far as 600 feet in some cases for a dwindling resource: water.

“It’s frightening ... but the latest status symbol in Greenwich is to give your wife a well for her birthday,” chuckled Mrs. Mary Jane Merks as she gathered with friends for pre-dinner cocktails one day last week.
It’s becoming common practice these days for visitors to bring their hosts 10-gallon jugs of water. Well-drilling is becoming so prevalent that there are two-week waiting lists.

Drillers say their business is booming at a time when they otherwise would be idled by cold weather. It’s not unusual for artesian wells that draw water from deep within the earth to cost more than $5,000 at $7 a foot.

Yes, the little town with the big estates owned by the likes of actor George C. Scott, big league pitcher Tom Seaver, singer Diana Ross, syndicated financial columnist Louis C. Rukeyser and movie producer Joseph E. Levine is going dry.

And what’s happening here is recurring all over the Northeast. Even in southeastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey the difference is only one of degree.

Water here is not merely conserved or restricted but rationed ...

45 gallons a person per day. And it’s become a way of life since mid-January, as Greenwich seeks to cut consumption by 60 percent. Last week the town hit the 27 percent level.

Things appeared worse only two weeks ago, when Greenwich was reporting less than a 20-day supply of water in its four reservoirs. This weekend’s rains and thawing ice and snow brought levels up to a 56-day reserve. Storage capacity is at
23.2 percent, still an alarming drop since late last August when the figure was 58 percent.

But there is no panic here. No hoarding. Only 20 customers have been cited for violations -- leaky faucets, washing cars, taking a bath. The penalty: two days without water, a mere hand slap sanctioned by the Connecticut Public Utility Commission. A second violation costs five days without water; a third, no water for the duration of the drought.

Officials say the emergency has created a strong sense of public spirit, and elicited cooperation between the community and business. Making their headquarters here are Amax, Electrolux, Arnold’s Bakeries, Avco, Lone Star Industries and an impressive list of others.

The town’s chief executive, First Selectman Ruth Sims, says she’s trying to be a model citizen. That means a three-minute shower every other day. Then she reuses the water to flush the toilet, wash the kitchen floor and nourish wilting houseplants.

Mrs. Sims worries a lot about what town planners call Condition Red. Condition Red is what will happen if spring rains don’t materialize and storage capacity in the town’s reservoirs drops from this weekend’s 23.2 percent to 8 percent. That means 200 million gallons in storage.
Should levels plummet to such a point, the tap would be turned off to homes in Greenwich. Exceptions would include firefighting, hospitals and nursing homes.

Three hundred portable johns would be placed at the police station, the public library and 23 other strategic locations. Military-style slit trenches would be dug.

The tab: $500,000 a month.

“We’ve got the contractors lined up,” says Selectman Sims, “but where the funds would come from is another question.”

Mrs. Sims says she bears no animosity toward New York Mayor Edward Koch, who joked recently that one could detect residents of Greenwich by their smell.

Her first reaction was to brand the remark “crude, insensitive ...people are suffering here.” Now Mrs. Sims says she has recovered. “I even sent him a Valentine’s Day card.”

The town itself is putting down six exploratory wells near its reservoirs. And the Army Corps of Engineers is exploring the possibility of extending antiquated mains for region wide water sharing.

At the Connecticut-American Water Co., manager Joseph Yates blames Greenwich officials for failing to call an emergency last August when reservoirs began taking on the appearance of moon craters.

“You don’t wait until you have 19 days of water in storage before
you call a water emergency,” says Yates. “We’ve almost hit bottom and now we’re crawling back up again.”

Many of the townspeople blame both the water company and the politicians for the Greenwich dilemma. Some assail the utility for permitting unchallenged corporate growth with an antiquated water supply that is now working a hardship on long-established residents.

“They’ve got an archaic water system in this town,” says Carlo Cantavero, a builder and beauty shop owner. “There are 25,000 people who come into Greenwich every day to go to work. Only 10,000 people are going out. Do you realize how many toilet flushes that amounts to?”

But not everybody in Greenwich is hurting.

A third of the town is on private wells that reach deeply into the ground, far beyond the dwindling local water table. Rig drillers say some of the wells are picking up supplies from sources as far away as Maine and New Hampshire.

Columnist Rukeyser says that’s why he doesn’t worry. A deep well, he says, plus speaking engagements that keep him out of the city frequently are his personal response to the problem.

At the door of ABC sportscaster Frank Gifford’s four-acre spread off a rural country road, stood his wife, Astrid. She told a visitor: “I don’t know whether Frank would want me to say this…but he really sympathizes with the people in
town. But we’re really not affected. We have a 50-foot well here. Well, maybe it’s deeper.”

Back in town, Fire Chief John Titsworth says he worries about people like the Giffords who are within his 50-square mile fire-fighting jurisdiction. A fire in an area not served with hydrants, he fears, could be a problem if not enough water is available. “So far we’ve been lucky. Nothing has gone down yet.”

On Putnam st., Fred DeCaro is grinding his teeth. He’s already sunk $10,000 into two wells that have come up virtually dry. Greenwich Hospital, with 300 patient beds, is experiencing the same misfortune.

DeCaro runs Carl’s Auto Bath. Business has been booming, but he hasn’t had the water to serve his customers. DeCaro is required to close -- sometimes in the early afternoon -- once a 2,500 gallon daily quota is hit. “My survival depends on finding water down here,” he says.

Meanwhile driller Duane Turlish shouts over the grinding rat-tat-tat of his rig: “Drilling a well,” he says, “is like shooting craps. But if it weren’t for this drought, I’d be sitting home.”

Chapter 23

The Singles Club

The outgoing director of Pennsylvania’s Consumer Protection Bureau as a “high priced dance instruction operation” attacked a Philadelphia social club, which advertises as a Single Mingle, Saturday. Bette G. Clemens, the number one consumer advocate in the state, identified the facility as the Singles Club, which operates from the second and third floors of a building at 1621 Chestnut st.

“It’s a tragedy that fraud is involved in loneliness,” Mrs. Clemens said as investigators from her office wrapped up a four-month probe into the club’s activities. Activities included selling prepaid “dance and fun” contracts from $39 to $7,000.

The investigation was launched in September when complaints started piling up with the Philadelphia Better Business Bureau from widows, divorcees, a former nun and a female physician.

“This place is nothing more than a cover-up for the old-fashioned dancing school routine,” Mrs. Clemens said. “They get you to the point where you are too embarrassed to say ‘no.’ And then those who do have a gripe are later too embarrassed to file a complaint,” she said.
One former club member wrote the Better Business Bureau: “Widows and divorcees are very vulnerable to loneliness and many are unable to cope with male domination. Their salesmanship is much like sexual domination. You don’t give in out of a desire but out of weakness.”

New members were attracted by this ad running in area newspapers: Single Mingle, Age 30 to? Lots of nice activities, $2 to join. For info call Ms. Ivy, LO 9-3340.

Advertised literature on the club boasts a membership of 3,142 but a dance instructor there estimated there were 400 members. James F. Schad, the former owner, sold his interests effective Dec. 1 to a man he identified in a letter to the Better Business Bureau as “Mr. Danielle.” Yet Schad continues to place advertising for the club.

Investigators for the Bureau of Consumer Protection said the method of operation has not changed.

“Danielle,” a former dance instructor at the club, told The Inquirer that his real name is J. Daniel Klein. He agreed to an interview and arranged an appointment, But when two reporters arrived at the club, a receptionist said, “Mr. Danielle has no comment.”

Among the charges filed with the Better Business Bureau by complainants were these:
- High-pressure sales tactics used by dance instructors -- called counselors -- to induce members to sign up for progressively high-priced dance contracts.

- Counseling sessions that turn out to be confrontations with several male staff members badgering a member to sign for higher fee contracts.

- A policy that restricts African-American membership.

- Women are asked during socials to sign up for a weight-reducing plan. Attempts are made to sell men’s hairpieces. (Former owner Schad continues to run Hair, Inc., housed in the same building as the Singles Club. He has bought an interest in Patricia Stauffer Reducing Salons here.)

- Promises of trips to far-off places while failing to announce that extra fees will be required for vacation packages. The bureau could find no one who had signed up for European and other trips.

- Personally escorting members in a taxicab to a branch office of the Oxford Finance Co. to induce them to sign a loan for a prepaid “dance and social contract.”

Oxford, whose main office is at 6701 N. Broad st., did the paper work on about 100 of these contracts, according to branch manager J.M. Tuszi. Tuszi said he severed his relations with the club in November after complaints started pouring in.
He said the contract holders are legally required to continue their monthly payments despite their disenchantment with the club.

Meanwhile, Oxford president Aaron Gold reached at another office said he was unaware of the paper Tuszi had been writing. “It was not good paper because these people didn’t receive value for their money. If you gyp people, you’re not going to get paid.” In a phone interview, Gold vowed the complainants would be absolved of their obligations to his company.

While Schad and Klein have been unavailable for comment, Wayne Bennett spoke freely. Bennett, a tall, handsome goateed man, works as a salesman for Schad at Hair Inc. Formerly he was a dance instructor for Schad at the Singles Club.

“If people spend $100,000, they are getting value for their money,” he said. “If you learn to dance, it can open a whole new life for you. As far as pressure is concerned, no one held a gun to anyone’s head for more lessons. That to me is high pressure,” Bennett said.

A reporter, claiming he was a fountain pen salesman, walked into the second floor reception office of the club one day last week. He applied for membership.

“I’m sorry,” said Miss Ivy, the receptionist. “We just can’t take people in off the street. Would you come back in 15 minutes and one of our counselors will interview you?”
The “fountain pen salesman” returned and filled out a card with a bogus name, address and phone number.

When the reporter returned 10 minutes later he was introduced to his counselor, an attractive young woman in a miniskirt who led the newsman to a tiny room for an interview.

Several minutes later after the counselor had established the fountain pen salesman was really a pen franchise dealer and earned more than $10,000 a year, she brought him to a third floor ballroom where she insisted he fox-trot with her.

Ten minutes later the reporter was told his rhythm was fine but he’d need some dance lessons. On the way back to the interview room the counselor picked up the application from the reception desk and smiled brightly, “You’ve been approved.” Then she introduced the prospective club member to Danielle.

Back again in the cubicle, the counselor began writing on a white, printed sheet of paper. For $39, she said, the new member would get nine activities. “Isn’t that wonderful? Just $4 an activity! Do you want to ok this?” she beckoned handing the reporter a pen for his signature.

“I thought it was just $2 to join?” the newsman asked.

“Well, that’s just for membership,” she explained. “That would just entitle you to receive our mailings.”
The reporter said he’d like to take the contract home to study. “Why, that’s not necessary,” said the counselor. “You either think that will be beneficial to you or you don’t.”

The reporter said he’d think about it and promised he’d be back the next day and bring a friend. He returned, bringing another reporter. The two identified themselves with their real names. The receptionist ordered them out of the building.

One day last week two African-American women were asked to “shop” for membership in the club on behalf of The Inquirer. Both were employes of the Better Business Bureau.

One, Denise Myers, who said she was 27, was told by the receptionist she was “too young.” The minimum age was 30, Ms. Myers was told. Myers then handed the receptionist a piece of literature setting out the age minimum at 25. “I’m sorry sweetie,” said the receptionist, “we meant to change those cards.”

The second woman, Virginia Bruce, 53, said she’d like some information on membership. “We can’t take people in off the street,” said the receptionist. “We’ll send you the information.”

A female physician was approached during her second lesson on a $39 contract to sign up for $1,000 worth of instruction that would entitle her to join the organization’s Society Club.
Her counselor whittled the price down to $500 when she protested. On her second visit, two staff members informed her, “We’ve got a real surprise for you.”

She was escorted in a taxi cab to a branch office of Oxford Finance at 1607 S. Broad st., where she was induced to sign for a $400 loan. “I felt a certain amount of emotional obligation to pay,” she said.

Five lessons later the counselor said his standing would be hurt if she didn’t sign up for a competitive dancing course called the Bronze Plan. He said it would cost $7,000 and a $3,000 down payment was required.

Out of the question, the 31-year-old doctor said. “They finally agreed to take $500 for “Preliminary Training” in the program. And she made another escort trip to Oxford Finance.

The physician said those she found at the dance “were lonely people, mostly shy, some of them obese, they lacked sexual attraction. It wasn’t what one would call a sophisticated group.” She said the Society Club could hardly be characterized by what they billed themselves: the cream of society.

*Philadelphia Inquirer, January 17, 1971*
Chapter 24

The Grave Salesman

The stranger who stands smiling in your doorway tonight may be tall and handsome and as polished as a brass button.

“Let me put you at ease,” he said. “I’m not here primarily as a salesman.” The man at your door is, in his words, a “counselor.”

What the counselor fails to say is that his mission is to induce you -- plain and simple -- to sign a contract on the spot. And he wants you to okay some “extras,” extras could tie you up financially for the next six years. He may be a tad bit shy at first. But be assured he is among a fleet of grave salesmen representing 18 memorial parks in this area.

A memorial park is distinguished from the traditional cemetery in that the dead are buried in a new, green space devoid of those cluttering tombstones. The gravesite is marked by a bronze memorial laid flush with the ground.

To be sure, most of the parks in this area are legitimate, profit-making organizations performing a real service to the community. But the Better Business Bureau carries a portfolio of complaints on at least three operations that have drawn the ire of the public.
An Inquirer reporter sought a job as a salesman at a fourth park and was hired on the spot. He was schooled as a “word technician” and taught the five “hot points” to achieve success: pride, profit, love and fear.

Once you’re in someone’s home, the new recruit was told, it was important to reel off a not too-wordy “opening” that hooks the customer.

“I have one of the most unusual jobs in the world as well as one of the most challenging,” is regarded as a good opener.

The park manager -- one of two men who trained this reporter -- laid it out quite graphically: “This work is like seducing a pretty girl... you’ve got to be patient and stay at it.”

A second instructor -- who in one week grossed more than $600, in commissions -- said, “you must be a good actor in this business, sincerity counts, don’t talk too much, you could talk yourself right out of a sale.”

Salesmen are required to memorize their opening pitch and deliver it in a friendly, low-key manner. One salesman was fired at this park because he had developed the unbecoming habit of completing a pitch and then inserting his finger in his nose.

Should it suddenly dawn on the customer that he’s not in the market for a grave, the salesman is instructed on how to handle such objections. “I’d like to see before I buy” is a standard customer response.
To this the salesman is taught to reply in an easy, off-the-cuff manner: “What do you expect to see out there? You won’t see a circus. You’ll see green grass, blue sky, and trees.”

Forty-five minutes to two hours later, the counselor pulled out a contract. There was no fanfare. The customer is not asked whether he wants a grave. Instead, he’s asked: “Now, what is your birth date?”

The counselor may already have told you that you can cancel in 72 hours. Or that the park will buy back your grave anytime you like. Neither of these statements is true. Read the contract carefully.

Somewhere are the words:

“This is a non-cancelable contract.” And if you think you can sell your grave at a profit, think again. Some of these parks have long lists of people waiting for years to sell. Buyers are scarce.

The Better Business Bureau is aware that salesmen for several parks here are using such tactics. But they -- like the State Justice Department, Bureau of Consumer Protection -- have been unable, up-to now, to bring anybody to trial. The parks, they believe, are operating within the framework of the law.

The natural target of the promoters is the elderly, those on social security and pensions, veterans, the hard-of-hearing -- generally those who can least afford the luxury of owning a grave.
Prospects come from the obituary pages of newspapers, license plate numbers, telephone directories and from a list of six names each prospect is asked to provide before the presentation is wrapped up.

Many leads come from church or synagogue membership lists. The memorial park, which hired this reporter, was required to return a 10 percent commission to a religious institution for each grave sold through its membership lists.

Some counselors gain entrance into a home with an offer for a free grave for a veteran, free dishes for mom or a $200 gift certificate. The dishes often turn out to be cheap plastic. The free grave could wind up costing you more than $800 including interest and carrying charges. The gift certificate is a promotion to induce you to buy a combination estate.

The free grave promotions -- advertised here widely --- were conceived with the news that there is no longer any space for veterans at Beverly National Park in South Jersey. That’s true. And, in fact, there are no free national burial grounds available for a 100-mile radius of Philadelphia.

So naturally, veterans are attracted to these private memorial parks which lure them with talk of a free grave. True, the grave is free. But the salesman who comes knocking at your door may tell you the gift is yours only as part of a total package. The “package” may include a grave at the regular price for your wife, two concrete vaults and a bronze memorial.
What the salesman is not likely to tell you is that the government will ship the monument to you ... free. That kind of candor, however, would cost him the commission on a bronze memorial sale. The bill: somewhere around $425 that includes an $80 commission.

And if the park also happens to offer tombstones, the salesman may not disclose that piece of information, information that would lower the price of the final sale. The salesman receives no commission on tombstones. The winner there is the tombstone maker.

Your attorney may advise you that it is both prudent and thrifty to buy a grave before you need it because costs are rising at the rate of 10 percent a year. Besides, buying before the need arises can spare your family considerable expense and anguish. Be warned, however, that you should buy a grave with the same caution with which you purchase a house.

Here is a typical sampling of some of the complaints received by the Better Business Bureau and The Inquirer’s Action Line:

A Mayfair nurse said a saleswoman presented her family with two free graves that wound up costing her more than $800 in interest and carrying charges over six years at an annual rate of 7.34 percent. “She left us with the idea that ... well, here it is, here are your free graves, they’re included in the package, take it or leave it.”
An Ambler man only wanted his free grave. When the salesman departed, he left the veteran empty handed. The man wound up driving to the park to claim his bonanza.

Others were told they could cancel their contract by calling the sales office. Instead, they received a coupon payment book from a local bank. One man who read his signed contract after the salesman left learned to his surprise the park would back up nothing the representative said. Caution: Be sure all commitments are in writing.

One 73-year-old widow on Social Security, whose son has an incurable disease, was unable to continue her monthly payments. She was threatened with removal of her old furniture. A Chester couple was promised the park would sell their gravesites anytime they wished. The couple has been waiting three years for a buyer.

The Justice Department has been attempting to get one park to change its advertising. Their promotions target the lucrative veterans’ market. The state wants the park to make clear in it’s advertising that it is not a government-sponsored program, nor is it endorsed by a public agency.

The Veterans Administration refused to enter the fracas because only a portion of its name was used in the ad. “We personally abhor their business tactics but we can’t get into this,” a spokesman said.
On the second floor of the administration building of one park is a classroom with a blackboard, photos of the top salesmen of the month and year. There are also sales charts and graphs, witness to their high achievements. The vice president said about 1,500 plots are sold each year with the average sale running about $600. He said last year’s business was $1 million. This, he said with pride, are “very good numbers.” Salesmen, he said, earn 14 percent commission, “but we’d rather bring them in on a straight salary so they don’t feel the pressure of having to make sales.”

The executive vice president of the park claims “99 percent of the complaints are cover-ups for people who change their minds to get out of a contract. “If they can’t eat it, sit on it, drive it, or make love to it, they don’t want to pay for it.”

The vice president added: “We don’t pressure anyone. Our people are not salesman. They are counselors. We don’t believe in beating anyone up over the head.” At the park where a reporter took the job as a salesman, he was told not to lie “because they’ll find you out.” But the instructor said “little white lies” are okay.

As an example of how to achieve even higher goals, the new hire was taken to a section of the park and shown where a prominent Philadelphian “lies” in a $10,000 estate. On his bronze memorial the great philanthropist is eulogized: “And when he fell in whirlwind, he went down as when a lordly cedar green with bough
goes down with a giant shout upon the hills and leaves a lonesome place against the sky.”

*Philadelphia Inquirer, December 13, 1970*
Chapter 25

Reporter vs. 4th Grade

If you want to lose your cool, your mind or your voice in six hours, try teaching a consolidated fourth-grade class of some of the brightest and most backward kids in the Philadelphia school system.

This is what I did Friday at J. Hampton Moore Public School in Oxford Circle as striking teachers picketed outside the building at Longshore and Summerdale aves.

The day wound up with my nine-year-old son, Stephen, telling me he didn’t learn a thing in my classroom. That’s odd. I learned plenty.

I learned that classrooms manned by parent volunteers are destined to fail. At best, parents can be successful babysitters or bullies. When they come unprepared to teach new math and the three R’s in a classroom of mixed learning abilities, they may rethink volunteerism.

I stepped out of my house Friday morning, walked across the street, and passed the gloomy-looking pickets into Moore. I met Principal Isadora Snyderman in the hallway. A worried look creased his tired face.

“Here I am,” I announced, bubbling with enthusiasm. “I’m ready to teach.”

“What are your credentials?” he asked pleasantly enough. I wanted to tell him that my teaching experience for the past 10 years was limited to potty training
three children. My face reddened as the thought entered my mind. “I’m a writer,” I said meekly. A desperate look settled on Snyderman’s face. You could feel for the guy.

Not a teacher showed up. On normal days, 1,000 kids attend Moore. Friday was the second day of a Jewish holiday. Besides that, many parents kept their children home when they learned of the strike. Two hundred youngsters made an appearance. Kindergarten and first grade were dismissed.

Then parent volunteers and four substitutes arrived for “combat” duty. I became the 11th volunteer and was inducted unceremoniously into classroom 217.

My fourth graders consisted of 17 children, five whites and 12 black youngsters. The boy who became my biggest discipline problem turned out to be the most gifted artist in the classroom. He was also the poorest reader.

What my supercharged eight and nine-year-olds accomplished in the next six hours would not likely make good reading in an educational journal. At times I felt had reported to the wrong classroom. Could this be a missile base? Flying spitballs punctuated the air. Most of the 12 boys behaved like cannonballs, up and out of their seats every two minutes. They went to the bathroom so often that I got the distinct impression my presence in the room prompted a floating crap game inside the lavatory.
My first mistake was an attempt to teach fourth graders from the side of the room sitting at a desk. Snyderman came in and suggested that I stand at the front of the class. “More control that way,” he smiled encouragingly and walked out.

Control. Ah-ha. That’s what was lacking here, I decided. And that’s how I stumbled onto a somewhat successful strategy to quiet the tide of restless feet fleeing to the restrooms.

The secret: Fun and games. I divided the class into four teams for spelling and reading exercises. They were permitted to choose their own captains. The team with the lowest point score won. I was proud of myself.

Kids who previously were unable or unwilling to read words like “stars” and “drum” were now anxious to win a pocketful of candy for their team.

Whoever said you can’t chew gum and work at the same time? My young charges were now chewing candy and spelling at the same time!

At lunchtime I brought home Kevin because he forgot his bag on the school bus. If I have to go back on Monday, I may have the whole class for lunch. This experience has the potential to write a new chapter in student-teacher relations. Pity my poor wife. She’s hoping the strike ends by the weekend.

*Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 17, 1970
PART VI:

Spin 101

Lest you leave this tome still unenlightened on the definition of spin, allow me to parse the word. Spin is hyperbole, hyperbole that often borders on exaggeration or worse yet, an outright lie. Spin doctors use it frequently to turn a negative into a positive. Ditto for lawyers, lobbyists and industrialists.

Take, for example, those six domestic cigarette manufacturers who testified before Congress in 1998 that there was no evidence that nicotine is addictive and smoking may cause cancer.

Clearly that testimony was the work of high-paid advisers, spin doctors, schooled in the art of crisis management, aimed at controlling the message and too often making the unpleasant more palatable for public consumption. The strategy backfired and the cigarette company chieftains were harshly criticized.

Another example:

A major drug manufacturer was sued over ghostwriting practices employed to persuade physicians to prescribe a hormone replacement drug. The company hired a PR firm to write an article conveying the benefits of the drug, retained a physician to sign off as the article’s author and then
found a professional journal to unwittingly publish the findings. Once in print, the
drug firm distributed the article to its sales reps who passed it on to physicians as
proof that the company’s drug is safe and effective. In defending its actions, the
company maintained the article was fair, balanced, and scientific.

For my part as a PR consultant, I made it a practice to stay within the bounds
of truth. My sin was to seek the strongest presentation of a story to grab eyeballs.
What journalist is not guilty of a like offense? The difference, of course, is that the
ethical journalist presents both sides of an argument unless the writing takes the
form of a commentary or opinion piece. That, of course, is not the role of a PR
consultant. His job is comparable to that of a defense attorney. The lawyer has a
license to spin. The spin doctor does not.

Were there weapons of mass destruction found in Iraq? No, say most experts.
Yet, conservative talk show hosts and many conservatives argue to this day that
WMDs were moved from Iraq to Syria and buried. That’s spin taken to the edge of
credibility.

For years President Bush and his spokespersons insisted that the sign on the
USS Abraham Lincoln in 2003 -- Mission Accomplished -- was no exaggeration.
Yet, as the President left office in 2009, Bush conceded that this memorable piece
of spin was a regrettable mistake.
Closer to home, I too, regret my use of spin when a healthy rat became the object of outrageous spin. He dined on my client’s tasty school cafeteria food and choked to death. Lesson learned: Death is never funny. Even if the departed is but a rat. And that’s my mea culpa as you will see in the tale that follows.
Chapter 26

Every good spin doctor knows that a generous mix of certain elements will attract media coverage like bees to honey: kids, food, pets and a scientific experiment. So with this formula in mind, I created for the old Blue Ribbon Services Company, “The Great Junk Food Test.” The release that follows was an invitation to the news media to see how two albino rats fared during a school experiment with junk food vs. the nutritious variety. The rat on a healthy diet died accidentally choking on a saltine cracker. After the story broke in papers around the country, Blue Ribbon received scores of letters from animal lovers protesting what they assumed was the company’s cruelty to animals. We followed with a letter from our president proclaiming that we, too, cared about animal rights and lamented the passing of Nut, as he was called. As you can see, the news media ... ate it up.
The Great Junk Food Test

What happens to a body when it eats a regimen of junk food 24 hours a day, seven days a week for 10 full days?

Sixty sixth graders at Harrison Township School in Mullica Hill, N.J. will find an answer to that question on Thursday.

That’s the day they will tally up the initial results of what happened to Nut and Honey, two baby male albino rats, guinea pigs in a classroom experiment on the virtues of a nutritious diet.

On April 11 the kids in Mrs. Cathy Dilks’ three science classes carefully weighed and recorded the weights and characteristics of the two rodents.

Honey tipped the scale at 50.7 grams. Nut weighed in at 32.6 grams. Honey was placed on a 21-day diet of what most kids crave: potato chips, soda pop, orange peanut marshmallow, and sourball candy. Empty calories, yes, but to sixth graders -- candy heaven.

Nut was placed on the types of foods Philadelphia-based Blue Ribbon Services prepares daily in the school cafeteria, foods some kids learn to hate: peaches, pears, and bla-ah ... milk. You get the idea.
How will it all end? On April 21 the rats will be at the halfway point in Blue Ribbon’s Great Junk Food Test. After the third week, solid chow will replace the Pepsi and potato chips in Honey’s cage.

For the next 14 days the two rats will feast on what the kids eat in the school cafeteria.

The youngsters are charting the course of Nut and Honey in such areas as behavior (Is anyone growing weird?); eating habits (Are potato chips still favored after 10 days?); texture (Is anyone’s fur coat getting ratty?); and, of course, weight. (Will pop, chips and sour balls make a rat or a kid fat and sloppy?)

Julie McGrath, a registered dietitian with Blue Ribbon Services, created and supervises the junk food study. Blue Ribbon Services is the largest independently owned and operated food management organization in the mid-Atlantic region. The 43-year-old firm serves a quarter million people daily in 75 schools and 1,300 factories in a three-state area.

Want to know how a rat copes with a carbonated soda diet? Stay tuned.

*News Release, April 1988*
This article is a reprint from The Philadelphia Inquirer in which Blue Ribbon defends its cafeteria program. While harmless enough, the story is a good example of how the media is too often duped by spin doctors.

School Rat Mourned
By Laura Quinn
Inquirer Staff Writer

The president of a Philadelphia company that supplies food to school cafeterias said yesterday that it was “purely coincidental” that a rat choked to death on a cracker supplied by his firm.

In an experiment similar to those performed often in other schools, sixth graders at Harrison Elementary School recently fed one rat junk food and another food from the school cafeteria to observe the effects of different diets. On Thursday the rat eating the cafeteria food died.

“In all these years of providing this program at no extra cost to school systems, we have never lost a rat,” said Richard Levin, president of Blue Ribbon Services, which has sponsored similar experiments at Harrison and other schools over the past three years. “The loss was purely accidental,” he said in a press statement issued yesterday.

Levin spoke gravely of the late rat, whom the class called Nut.
“To the best of our knowledge, too much excitement and a hurriedly swallowed Saltine did Nuts in,” the president said. “Be assured he was humanely buried and mourned by the sixth-grade class at Harrison Township School. The experiment is continuing with a new set of rats.”

Levin said he received about a dozen calls from people contending that the Gloucester County elementary school was inhumane. But he said the company would continue to offer the experiment -- intended to demonstrate the benefits of sound nutrition -- to other schools.

In fact, two new rats were delivered to Harrison on Thursday.

“We believe firmly that despite the sudden departure of Nuts, the experimental rat program at Harrison Township School ... and in other schools in the two-state area should be continued,” he said.
Acknowledgments

Jacob Gold had just pummeled me with a barrage of questions. It was a scenario to which I was somewhat unaccustomed. Normally it would have been the other way around: the veteran reporter lobbying queries at the banker, the politician, the lobbyist. But on this rainy afternoon in the Poconos, a 9-year-old was interrogating his grandfather.

Jacob wanted to know whom I had met during my long career in communications. “Were they famous?” he prodded. I rattled off a list: Mother Teresa, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, boxing champ Joe Frazier, comedian Jackie Gleason, a serial killer, a mobster and a few others who acquired either fame or infamy.

My grandson asked if any were truly famous. “They were,” I assured Jacob. Sometimes kids will say the darnest things, like: “So Grandpop, why don’t you write a book?”

I didn’t think much of the idea at the time. What could I say that had not already been said? The years flew by and one day I told Jacob – now a teen -- that his idea was bearing fruit. “Will I be in your book?” he pressed. “Don’t forget, I’m the guy who gave you the idea.”
Indeed you are, Jacob. And I hereby acknowledge that to the world. There are others, also, to whom I offer my deepest gratitude. One is my wife Marion who convinced me there was a song inside that needed to be heard. So did the seniors at retirement communities in Pennsylvania and New Jersey where I taught creative writing for years.

My thanks to retired New York Times reporter John McCandlish Phillips, a mentor and friend who has been an inspiration since the mid-70s. John didn’t like my earlier title: 52 Years on Deadline. Thus was born Soul for Sale. Thanks also to John’s friend, author Bette Filley in Issaquah, Wash. Bette boldly outlined what was needed and wrote on a copy of her own paperback, “get that book in print and I’ll be one of your first customers!”

Thanks also to my old Bulletin colleagues Gunter David and Art McGuire. They lauded my early drafts and encouraged me to move forward. Also to Gunter’s son, acclaimed Star Trek author Peter David. Peter sent the manuscript to his agent. Sad to say, it was among my earliest rejections. My artist son Seth suggested the book was too short. Strong, down-to-earth criticism came from Bill Hoffmann’s Writer’s Group in Dresher, Pa. Their recommendation was to seriously consider fictionalizing the whole story. I didn’t take the advice. But I appreciated months of serious debate over the merits of my manuscript. Thanks
also to my long-time spiritual adviser and friend Herb Links. Tears glowed on Herb’s face as he read the story. Clearly, he got the message.

It has been written that the last shall be first. So great thanks goes to my oldest grandson, 19-year-old computer guru Joshua Gold who handled the technical aspect of publishing an online book. Thanks also to years of savvy expertise from Lancaster-based Webmaster Dan Young at ProWeb Associates. To all of you … my everlasting gratitude.
About the Author

Ed Eisen’s career in communications spans 52 years. He was an award-winning reporter at three major metropolitan newspapers, a broadcast news reporter and public relations consultant whose clients included two popes and a world-boxing champion. He taught broadcast news journalism at Temple University and has crafted hundreds of profiles on the famous, the infamous and the faceless in society. He makes his home in Philadelphia with his wife Marion. The couple has three adult children and five grandchildren. Today Ed works as a freelance writer and memoir writing coach.

Since the early 90s, he and Marion have taught English classes to immigrants and launched the Russian Jobs Network, a free career placement program. In memory of his late brother, Ed also volunteers for RFB&D, Recording For the Blind & Dyslexic in King of Prussia, Pa.