OPC Scholar Luncheon to Feature Keynote from Reuters’ Clare Baldwin

BY JANE REILLY

Clare Baldwin, OPC Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning special correspondent for Reuters, will be the keynote speaker at the annual Overseas Press Club Foundation Scholar Awards Luncheon on Friday, Feb. 28 at the Yale Club. The event will begin with a reception at 11:30 a.m., followed by the luncheon in the Grand Ballroom which will end promptly at 2:00 p.m. The reception, which is held in the Yale Club’s Rooftop Terrace, will also feature an exhibit of archival photographs by famed Time Inc. photographer Ben Martin.

Bill Holstein, president of the OPC Foundation, said he was especially pleased to have Baldwin headline the Foundation’s signature event. “Clare Baldwin reflects the best values that we seek to instill in our winners. In 2018, Clare was part of the three-person Reuters team that won a Pulitzer for exposing a campaign of deadly violence by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. She also won the prestigious Hal Boyle award from the OPC for that body of work. Then the very next year, she was part of the Reuters staff awarded the Pulitzer for exposing the military reporting took them across all fifty states, from the Dakotas and Oklahoma to New York and Virginia.

Kristof has been an OPC member since 1998. He is an op-ed columnist for The New York Times and previously served as bureau chief in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Tokyo. WuDunn worked at the Times as a business editor and foreign correspondent in Tokyo and Beijing, and now works in finance and consulting. They have coauthored four previous books together: A Path Appears, Half the Sky, Thunder from the East, and China Wakes.
Baldwin has also written about cyber threats, pro-democracy protests, sanction-busting and government bailouts. A native of Alaska and a Stanford University graduate, she previously wrote for The Frontiersman newspaper in Alaska, Wired magazine, The San Francisco Examiner, The Fairbanks Daily News-Miner and The Peninsula Clarion.

The luncheon will also feature the presentation of a combination of scholarships and fellowships to 16 graduate and undergraduate college students aspiring to become foreign correspondents. Holstein is especially pleased to announce the first award in the name of Deb Amos and Rick Davis. Holstein noted, “Deb Amos, an award-winning correspondent for NPR and they became a husband-wife team covering the Middle East for decades. Rick, a former NBC News correspondent, passed away in 2019 and Deb has chosen to endow this award in both their names in support of high-quality Middle East coverage.” Amos is First Vice President of the Overseas Press Club and the Ferris Professor of Journalism in Residence at Princeton University, University of California-Berkeley, New York University, Stanford University, University of California-Riverside, UCLA and Yale University. “These young people inspire me every year because they want to travel down what I regard as the sacred path of bearing witness. They just want a chance. Our imperative is to help train them and keep them safe as they explore the world,” Holstein said.

Events for the 2020 winners will last three days starting on Thursday afternoon, when the Foundation will host a media training panel at Reuters for the award winners. That evening, Reuters will host the traditional reception for current and past winners of OPC Foundation awards at the news organization’s Times Square headquarters. On Friday, besides addressing a distinguished audience of more than 200 luncheon guests at the Yale Club, the award winners will meet with Holstein and veteran international journalists in a pre-luncheon breakfast and with several foreign editors following the luncheon. For many, said Holstein, the opportunity to meet and observe prominent journalists in action is as valuable as any monetary award.

On the Saturday after the luncheon, the OPC Foundation will offer a full day of risk assessment and situational training for the winners at the Craig Neumnark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY. Frank Smyth, president and founder of Global Journalist Security, a hostile environment training firm based in Washington DC, will lead the program. Those who participated in the past called the experience invaluable. “We have a responsibility to make sure our winners engage in the world’s stories in ways that keep them safe,” Holstein said. “We will continue to do what we can, as sponsors of the ACOS Alliance, to see that journalists throughout the world have the training and support they need to do their jobs as well and as securely as possible.”

Up to 10 of this year’s winners will receive fellowships to work in the foreign bureaus of the Foundation’s media partners, including The Associated Press, Reuters, Bloomberg, The Wall Street Journal, and the GroundTruth Project. The fellowships ensure that the awardees gain valuable experience and insight working with veteran editors and reporters. In 2019, the Foundation funded fellowships across Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Middle East. The Foundation picks up the cost of the airfare and one to two months living expenses for the winners.

Holstein is grateful to Bloomberg, which again hosted the judging in December and to the dedicated panel of judges who chose the 2020 recipients: Allen Alter, Bob Dowling; Joe Flies of The Wall Street Journal; Allan Dodds Frank; Bill Glazsall of Volker Alliance; Holstein; Adam Horvath of The Wall Street Journal; Catherine of CNN; Larry Martz; Kate McLeod; Maria Mercader of CBS News; Ellen Nimmons of AP; Jim Pessinos; Michael Serrill; Steve Swanson of the Bronx Botanical Garden; Ed Tobin of Reuters; Karen Toulon of Bloomberg, and Tiffany Wu of Reuters.

Luncheon tickets are $85 for OPC members and $150 for non-members. The Foundation encourages media and corporate support at its three levels of giving: Benefactors, $9,000; Patrons, $6,000; and Friends, $3,000. Tables seat 10. All proceeds benefit the OPC Foundation. For further information, contact Jane Reilly at 201-819-2639 or email further information, contact Jane Reilly at 201-819-2639 or email

Watch for email event reminders for details on how to RSVP.

OPC Kicks Off 2020 with Winter Party

In the Myth of Chinese Capitalism, OPC member Dexter “Tiff” Roberts explores the reality behind today’s China and pulls the curtain back on how the Chinese manufacturing machine is actually powered. On March 17, Roberts will discuss his work during a Book Night at Club Quarters.

Roberts lived in Beijing for two decades working as a reporter on economics, business and politics for Bloomberg Businessweek. He focuses on two places: the village of Binghuan in the province of Guizhou, one of China’s poorest regions that sends the highest proportion of its youth away to become migrants; and Dongguan, China’s most infamous factory town located in Guangdong, home to both the largest number of migrant workers and the country’s biggest manufacturing base. Roberts brings to life the problems that China and its people face today as they attempt to overcome a divisive system that poses a serious challenge to the country’s future development. In so doing, Roberts paints a boot-on-the-ground cautionary picture of China for a world now held in its financial thrall.

The event will get underway at 6:00 p.m. Watch for email event reminders for details on how to RSVP.

Tiff Roberts to Discuss ‘The Myth Of Chinese Capitalism’
Farnaz Fassihi Covers Precarious Events in Iran

BY CHAD BOUCHARD

A s the New York Times correspondent covering Iran, OPC Governor Farnaz Fassihi has been in extra high gear since before the new year, keeping up with assassinations, attacks, mass protests, the tragedy of a downed jetliner, and volatile Iran-US brinksmanship.

“Iran is a big and significant story both in terms of what is happening inside the country and its standoff with the United States. As an Iranian-American journalist and someone who has covered the story for over 25 years, I feel a responsibility in telling the story accurately and with context and nuance,” Fassihi said in an email.

News from Iran had already heaped upon in November, when security forces shot and killed up to 600 people who had taken to the streets after a fuel price increase sparked unrest and in- flamed calls for ousting the Islamic Republic’s leadership. In December, she broke the news of a mass killing in the southern city of Mahshahr where Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps backed by Iran and Gen. Qassim Suleimani, the commander in charge of most Iranian intelligence and military operations abroad over the past 20 years. “Iranian sources in Iran were warning that killing Gen. Qasem Soleimani spells war,” one of her earliest tweets read after the news broke. “Official reaction will begin with a strike,” she wrote.

Fassihi tweeted more than 30 times in the first day while the story was developing, sharing confirmation of events from her sources as well as videos, photos and context, all while writing the next-day Times piece that summarized the attack and immediate fallout.

Her reporting was featured on the Times podcast The Daily on Dec. 3 and Jan. 7, when she shed light on the worst violence in Iran for 40 years during the uprising and the impassioned reaction of activists and other supporters, including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s emotional prayer for the dead over Soleimani’s coffin. Among those Fassihi talked with at the time was an Iraqi American who at 22 was an old university student. She asked why he attended.

“And he said, knowledge General Soleimani was out there making me feel safer. He was like a security umbrella above our

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OPC Remembers Jim Lehrer’s Career and his President’s Award in 2009

BY CHAD BOUCHARD

J im Lehrer, longtime PBS News- anchor and recipient of the OPC’s President’s Award in 2009, died on Jan. 23 at age 85. Lehrer worked for 53 years at NBC News as a correspondent for 36 years, starting in 1983, and moderated a dozen presidential debates. His career started at Dallas newspapers in the 1960s, where he covered the assassination of John F. Kennedy for the Dallas Times-Herald. He moved to PBS in 1972, where he met his longtime NewsHour cohost Robert MacNeil, and remained until his retirement in 2011.

Past President Allan Dodds Frank honored Lehrer with the President’s Award during the OPC’s 2009 Annual Awards Dinner. Dodds Frank said Lehrer “has been my friend and colleague since 1973, my business partner in MacNeil-Lehrer Productions, and the first person I go to when I have a serious dilemma to resolve personal, moral or professional.”

Below is an excerpt from the certificate he received from the OPC for his President’s Award.

“As he steadfastly enlightened us with news from around the world, his distinguishing brilliance has been his seemingly simple quest for the truth,” the certificate read. “He is a multi- talented inspiration who gives us concise questions, level deliveries, intelligent explanations and unmatched perspective night after night.”

In his acceptance remarks, Lehrer shared credit with the show’s creator, Robert MacNeil, as well as the show’s news staff. Lehrer joked that the program was launched with “the single worst title in the history of television. It was called the Robert MacNeil report. And I was a simple humble Washington correspondent. But in a few months, my mother interceded, and it became the MacNeil-Lehrer report.”

He also joked about his first time broadcasting publicly over a microphone, which was as a ticket agent at Kansas City’s Continental Trailways bus depot in South Texas. He said one of his duties “was to do what I’m going to do now, which is speak into a microphone truthfully: ‘May I have your attention, please,’” he said, affecting the emphatic, robotic tone of an announcer. “This is your last call for Continental Trailways, 8:00 p.m. silver- side, air-conditioned through-liner to Houston.”

In a statement, the OPC said Lehrer had made big.

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OPC SCHOLARS

2017 Ernest M. Freedman Scholar Marina Walker Guevara was named the executive editor of the Pulitzer Center. Previously, she was the director of strategic initia- tives and network at the Interna- tional Consortium of Investigative Journalists, where she managed the award-winning Panama Papers and the Paradise Papers, and had won for The Washington Post, The Miami Herald, and Mother Jones, among others. “I am very excited to join this innovative and ambitious team that renews my journalistic and underreported stories, and brilliantly bridges newrooms and classrooms,” Walker Guevara said in a Pulitzer Center update. “There has never been a greater need around the world for the Pulitzer Center’s mission.”

A. J. Naddaf, who won the inaugu- ral OPC Scholarship in 2019, penned a story for The Associated Press on Jan. 22 about the impact of Lebanon’s financial crisis and strict bankings. The story grabbed attention from readers, rising to the AP’s top ten reads on the organiz- ation’s app. Amid protests and violent clashes, he wrote that the country had united “both rich and poor in anger against corrupt politicians who have brought this country, reeling from economic collapse, and a banking system they accuse of holding their deposits hostage.” Naddaf went to Beirut on an OPC Foundation fellow- ship with the AP.

2019 JF Stone Scholarship winner Niraz Manek is a consultant for the Centre for Humanitarian Dia- logue, a private diplomacy organiza- tion based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He was previously at Bloomberg News, where he was regional corres- pondent in Addis Ababa from 2017 to 2019.

Jacob Kushner, who won the Na- than S. Bienstock Memorial Scholar- ship in 2013, wrote an op-ed for The New York Times about the fate of a famous dancer and survivor of the 2015 Nice attacks on Bastille Day. He had been a greater need around the world for the Pulitzer Center’s mission.”

2015 Nathan S. Bienstock Memorial Scholar- ship winner Ben Taub chronicled the story of Aamir, an Iraqi refugee falsely accused of being a member of an ISIS hit squad, for The New York Times. Taub wrote, “Having just discovered whether she made any difference at all. Sister Gracy could never expect to see her vindicated, finally and in a place like South Sudan.”

2016 David R. Schweisberg Mem- orial Scholarship winner Alissa Greenberg is now a contributing editor at Bay Nature, a magazine dedicated to the nature in the San Francisco Bay Area. She was previ- ously a contributing writer at Pacific Standard, and has written for The New Yorker, The Washington Post, and The Los Angeles Times, among others.

2017 OPC Scholarship winner Marie Ottonello was named as the president of the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington, D.C.

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PEOPLE

Marina Walker Guevara

by Emily Brown and Chad Bouchard

Nadaf

Greenberg

Niraz Manek

by Ben Taub

SEWELL CHAN

Deputy Managing Editor

Los Angeles Times

El Segundo, CA

Active Non-Resident

Elizabeth Donovan

Science Po Journalism School and Columbia University Journalism School

Paris

Student

Mya Guarnieri Jaradat

Columbia University

New York

Student

Ben Taub

Staff Writer

The New York Times

New York, NY

2015 Charles S. Slichter Scholarship winner

By CHAD BOUCHARD

Farnaz Fassihi’s reporting went into overdrive following the U.S. drone strike near the Baghdad airport on Jan. 3 that killed several high-level officials, including leaders of Iraqi militias and by killing Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the commander of most Iranian intelligence and military operations abroad over the past 20 years. “Iranian sources in Iran were warning that killing Gen. Qasem Soleimani spells war,” one of her earliest tweets read after the news broke. “Official reaction will begin with a strike,” she wrote.

Fassihi reported the story accurately and with context and nuance,” Fassihi said in an email.

News from Iran had already heaped upon in November, when security forces shot and killed up to 600 people who had taken to the streets after a fuel price increase sparked unrest and in- flamed calls for ousting the Islamic Republic’s leadership. In December, she broke the news of a mass killing in the southern city of Mahshahr where Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps had covered a group of ethnic Arab men in the marshes and opened fire.

In late December, she wrote that police befreed up security forces for a second time to remove protesters at the graves of those killed in November. US forces conducted airstrikes on facilities in Syria and Iraq that the Pentagon said were linked to pro-Iran militias, and demonstrators stomed the US-embassy in Baghdad.

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2014 Irene Corbally Kahn Scholar-ship winner Portia Crowe reported for Public Radio International on Ugandan farmers lighting both sides of the police against French oil multinational Total SA, which plans to drill 400 wells across a 600-mile pipeline to Tanzania. The proj-ects could displace as many as 50,000 people. “The Tlingit suit alleges that Total’s subsidiary, Total Uganda, and the sub contractor it hired, Acama Consulting, forced farmers to sign compensation agreements under pres-sure or intimidation and deprived them of the rights to their land before compensation was received,” Crowe reports. “They asked for about $5,700 per acre, but when a team of govern-ment ministers and gun-toting soldiers turned up in town several weeks later, Nkayako said some of her relatives were intimidated. They agreed to ac-cept about a quarter of the payment they originally asked for in August 2018.” Read more about Crowe’s ca-reer in our Q&A feature on page 11.

Max de Haldevang, 2015 Reuters Fellowship winner, was one of 120 reporters to comb through 700,000 pages of documents, dubbed the Luanda Leaks, to expose how Isabel dos Santos, the daughter of Angola’s former president, used her power and privilege to amass wealth and influence. De Haldevang has been out of one of the poorest countries on the planet. “De Haldevang writes. “But instead of turning to leaked files seen by Quartz,” lighti-ng those who benefited from where he works as a reporter, high-lights the need for “strong, independent journalism.” He writes that “shooting the messenger remains a fact of life for journalists today. They are intimidated. They agreed to accept about a quarter of the payment they originally asked for in August 2018.” Read more about Crowe’s career in our Q&A feature on page 11.

AWARDS

OPC member Christiane Aman-pour of CNN and PBS hosted the 2020 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards on Jan. 21. Mi-chael Barbaro of The New York Times podcast The Daily served as her cohost. She told the audience during opening remarks that jour-nalists and storytellers have been maligned, silenced, imprisoned, tortured, and killed for centuries, and that “shooting the messenger remains the favorite pastime of the rich, the infamous, the powerful.” she said. “We have the ability and we have the duty to rise above all this calumny and abuse that comes our way. We have the duty to stay calm and just carry on.” This year’s honors cov-ered a range of issues including im-migration, political corruption, and abuse of power, with three winning stories focused on sexual assault. Half of the 16 winners were from public media outlets, including six for PBS. For international stories, CNN won for its coverage of the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, PBS Newshour won for reporter Jane Ferguson’s ground-level couverage of the human impact of war in Yemen, and PBS’s POV and American Documentary won for a documentary about the fight for jus-tice for “comfort women” enslaved by Japanese troops in World War II.

UPDATES

Longtime OPC member Andy Kates, former correspondent for The Associated Press in Moscow and for the UN, is spending his retire-ment years conducting workshops on “Coping with Disinformation.” Working through the League of Women Voters, the News Literacy Project and others, Andy leads the sessions at public libraries and other schools and other regions. The schedule can be found at www.jwvus.org. In early January, Andy was interviewed about the program on a local public access TV station.

OPC Secretary and Bloomberg edi-tor Paula Dwyer helped write the introduction to the 90th anniversary edition of Bloomberg Businessweek. “The first issue of this magazine appeared on Sept. 7, 1929. In its black, red, and gold art deco cover was free and the resources to charter a small plane and taking him to Moscow, Rome, Bonn, Warsaw and others, for a radio audience on Jan. 13 in St. Augustine, Florida. He recalled early days in Hong Kong in the late 70s and having the resources to charter a small plane to cover Vietnamese refugees fleeing war in Southeast Asia. “Those days, if you tried to do that, you’d be fired,” he said to host Scott Grant on WOSU. He also talked about his latest book, 1941: The Four Germanies Lost the War, which explores tactical blunders such as invading Russia and declaring war on the U.S., which he argues set the stage for Nazi defeat four years later. “1941 was the year Germany attacked the whole world. And if you attack the whole world, eventually your things are not going to come out so well for you,” Nagorski said. He has written seven books, five of them re-lating to World War II, including The Nazi Hunters, which he discussed as an Hachette Book Night in June 2016.

Isaah Aangee Tharoor, OPC Governor and foreign affairs writer at The Washington Post, reported from the Davos World Economic Forum, from 2019-2021, which he discussed at a panel at UC Santa Cruz North America at UCSC. “It will also be a chance for all of us to understand how the profession has changed and the challenges – in both the Middle East and the United States – that its practitioners confront.”

PEOPLE REMEMBERED

Karl E. Meyer, longtime foreign correspondent and editorial writer for The Washington Post and The New York Times, died on Dec. 22 in Manhattan at the age of 91. Meyer covered Fidel Castro’s revolution in Cuba, the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion, the Soviet Union’s invasion of Czechoslovakia, among other big stories of the 20th Century. He co-wrote a book about the Bay of Pigs, along with Times colleague Tad Szulc, entitled The Cuban Invasion: The Chronicle of a Disaster. After earning a Ph.D. in political science from Princeton University in 1956, he began his career in foreign affairs at The Washington Post and served as the paper’s London bureau chief from 1965 to 1970, and then served as head of its New York bureau. He joined The New York Times editorial board in 1979, where he served until 1998 as the senior writer on foreign affairs, and later served as editor of the World War II, which explores tactical blunders such as invading Russia and declaring war on the U.S., which he argues set the stage for Nazi defeat four years later. “1941 was the year Germany attacked the whole world. And if you attack the whole world, eventually your things are not going to come out so well for you,” Nagorski said. He has written seven books, five of them re-lating to World War II, including The Nazi Hunters, which he discussed as an Hachette Book Night in June 2016.

OPC member and former Treasurer Abigail Pesta wrote a piece for Notre Dame Magazine about former Congolese child soldier Heritage Munyukari, and traced his journey from life on the battlefield to becom-ing a pastor in Rochester, New York. She wrote that he was abducted as a child soldier for rebel groups three times and forced to fight twice before he finally confronted his captors: “I told them to kill me, I won’t fight. I had found Jesus.” He was beaten for his refusal, and witnessed his village and loved ones being massacred by the rebels. But Pesta wrote that he discovered religion in Burundi and eventually fled to the U.S. on a UN re-settlement program. He was ordained in 2015 and uses his personal experi-ence to guide immigrants through practical and personal challenges. She wrote that Munyukari “wants immi-grants who come to America to know that they belong here, that they have a place here.”

Karlo Radek, who is also a journalist, was a guest on The Tournament of Shadows: The Race for Empire in Central Asia. He also authored The Thieves Thieves about archeology.
PRESS FREEDOM UPDATE...

by Emily Brown and Chad Bouchard

Brazilian prosecutors charged journalist Glenn Greenwald with aiding in crimes on Jan. 21, following a series of 2019 stories on Greenwald’s news site The Intercept. Inter- cep’t editor-in-chief Ricken de Brito accused Brazilian authorities of violating the terms of his visa. “The longer journalist Philip Jacobson remains held in detention, the more direfreedom of speech in Indonesia does to its reputation as a democracy with a free press,” said press freedom advocate Shawn Crispin, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ’s) senior representative for Southeast Asia representative. “It is deeply unacceptable,” said CPJ’s Europe and Central Asia program coordinator. “Authorities should immediately release the journalist’s press credentials, and should ensure that passes are granted in an impartial manner.” Hundreds of protestors gathered outside the former offices of Turkey’s Agos newspaper to demand justice for Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. Dink was murdered in 2007, and his case remained open for a decade, though the case was later closed in 2018 due to insufficient evidence. The known attacks on journalists underline the attack, as identified by the One Free Press Coalition. The list included Daphne Caruana Galizia, whose murder case is under investigation by the Maltese government, journalist on hunger strike who has been tortured and hospitalized, and Aleksandar Vulin, an imprisoned Russian journalist whose whereabouts are unknown. The Foreign Correspondents’ Club, Hong Kong expressed “grave concern” at the Hong Kong government’s decision to bar Ken- neth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch (HRW), from entering the territory in mid-January. Roth was set to hold a news confer- ence Jan. 15 at the FCC to release the rights group’s yearly report, which is critical of the Chinese government. OPC member and former Governor Emma Dita, communications direc- tor for HRW, said Roth’s bar from entering Hong Kong was “a worrying development.” Highlights include broader issues in China, including rights and Turkish-Armenian reconciliation. “We won’t stop following Hrant’s murderers. Whether they shed light on this or not, as Hrant’s brothers, we will continue to be here,” said Hakan, a supporter at the protest. Reporter Thomas Jacobi was at- tacked by far-right demonstrators in Greece on Jan. 19. Jacobi, a corre- spondent for French publication La Croix and German broadcaster Deutsche Welle, was approached by a group of 10 men who beat him for several minutes until bystanders stepped in. He was left with a head injury, a bloody nose, and a broken cell phone: “Greek authorities must thoroughly investigate the targeted assault of journalist Thomas Jacobi and ensure that he can continue his work without fear of retribution.” The unknown attackers included the chairperson of the EU’s European and Central Asia program coordinator, Guilhaoua Sane. Journalists have been assaulted and detained by police officers in Beirut while covering the recent protests of government corruption and slow economic growth, according to CPJ. Greg Demarque, a photographer for the Britax-based Executive Magazine, was beaten and detained by cops on Jan. 15, according to CPJ and local press freedom advocates. Re- porter photograph Esaam Abdullah was beaten by riot police on Jan. 14, according to an MC-Mo- don, which ran a photo of two police officers beating Abdullah. Masked attackers broke into the of- fices of Chinese newspaper El Mer- curio de Antofagasta on Jan. 13, according to CPJ and local news sources. The unknown attackers sacked and damaged several offices, stole equipment, and set several fires. Around 20 employees were in the office at the time of the attack, which lasted for around 15 minutes. It is the third attack in three months on the El Mercurio media company. The Washington Post’s Editorial Board wrote on Dec. 23 that Saudi Arabia’s attack on the journalist Jamal Khashoggi was “a shameful travesty of justice.” Follow- ing a closed hearing and a closed court, the family of Khashoggi was advised that five people implicated in the Oct. 2, 2018, killing had been sentenced to death, and three more were given prison sentences. None were named. The result is an insult to Khashoggi’s family and to those, including a bipartisan congressional majority, who have demanded accountability in the case.”

Fassihin Continues From Page 4

of country, that’s a sentiment that I heard over and over,” Fassihin said.

She said there are many Iranians who did not love and respect Soleimani, but instead that it was crucial that he was remembered in the event as a terrorist in the attack against U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria and “single-handedly the most re- vened and influential character in Iran.” The pace of news surrounding Iran remained relentless in the following days, with the retaliatory missile strikes against U.S. military targets in Iraq, and Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 getting shot down Jan. 8 soon after takeoff from Tehran, killing 176 pas- sengers and crew. Fassihin humanized victims by delving into their lives, posting messages from loved ones and reporting on funerals. She translated a tweet from a Tehran MP who called on Khamenei to “take a look” at the pain and agony of a grieving mother being held back by security forces from attending her son’s burial. On Jan. 21, she tweeted “Best line I’ve heard about the impact of Ukrainian Airlines tragedy on Iranians: ‘This flight had 176 dead and 83 million injured.’”

Most recently, Fassihin’s Jan. 26 piece “Anatomy of a Lie” examined what led up to the missile attack against a jetliner, and the immediate cover up that ensued. She wrote that authorities feared admitting the mistake would undermine some of the public support the gov- ernment had galvanized without admitting Soleimani’s assassination and Iran’s retaliatory missile strikes. “They advocated covering it up because they thought the country couldn’t handle another crisis,” she added. She was a ranking member of the Revolutionary Guards. 
UPCOMING EVENTS

Book Night: Nichols Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn
Club Quarters
6:00 p.m. Feb. 20

Book Night: Dexter ‘Tiff’ Roberts
Club Quarters
6:00 p.m. March 17

RUSSIA

I n the first pages of Between Two Fires [Tim Duggan Books, January 2020], journalist Joshua Yaffa introduces us to the “wild man,” an archetypal Russian personality coined by socialist Yuri Levada in 2000. The wily man, according to Levada, “not only tolerates deception, but is willing to be deceived, and even… requires self-deception for the sake of his own self-preservation.” The wily man adapts to the rules of the state and uses them for his own benefit. Yaffa follows eight Russians with different degrees of “wileness” as they try to balance their personal ambitions and the desires of the oligarchy.


One of Yaffa’s subjects is Heda Saravota, a Chechen activist who works with the government to bring home the families of ISIS recruits. The nature of her work requires cooperation with Ramzan Kadyrov, the president of the Chechen Republic, who’s known for his violent and uncompromising rule. When she meets families at the plane, she holds up a sign for the media that reads: “We thank Putin for our children.”

“When I see his picture or hear him speak, I remember that he destroyed thousands of our people’s lives,” says Saravota. But she knows this has come home the families of ISIS recruits. The nature of her work requires cooperation with Ramzan Kadyrov, the president of the Chechen Republic, who’s known for his violent and uncompromising rule. When she meets families at the plane, she holds up a sign for the media that reads: “We thank Putin for our children.”

“From the beginning, it was clear that the families of ISIS recruits were going to be a challenge. And while the families of ISIS recruits were going to be a challenge. And while

Countries reported from: Ghana, Togo, Kenya, Uganda, Tunisia, Bulgaria, Greece, UK, France, US, Canada. In February I’ll be reporting from Niger.

When and why did you join the OPC? I won the OPC Foundation’s Reuters Scholarship in 2014, which funded an internship with Reuters’ East Africa Bureau in Nairobi, Kenya. I’ve remained a member of the OPC ever since.

What first drew you to international journalism? I’m not someone who came to journalism because of a love of writing or storytelling and then later found international reporting. My passions have always been international development and foreign affairs, and I chose journalism as a way to build a career in those fields.

Major challenge as a journalist: As a freelancer, my biggest challenges are getting paid fairly and getting paid on time. There are frustrating but pale in comparison to what I faced as a staff reporter covering investment banking in New York and London, where my pay was higher, but I faced sexism in the workplace and sexual harassment from sources.

Best journalism advice received: Take notes. It’s easy to get overwhelmed on assignment and even lose sight of the story. Write down every detail – even things that don’t seem significant at the time. You never know what will be useful later, and if nothing else it will add texture and colour to your work. (Paraphrased from Steve Coll.)

Worst experience as a journalist: As a reporter at Newsday on Long Island, I had to literally stop the presses one night because of a factual error I’d made in the lead of a cover story (Newsday still prints its paper in-house, or at least it did then). I felt sick about it for days but have been an extra vigilant fact-checker ever since.

Today, as reporters increasingly bear the weight of covering immigration issues, editors often request a reporter to check their work at all times. This increases the risk of introducing errors, but also raises ethical questions about the potential impact on individuals.

Unaccompanied South Sudanese child refugees in northern Uganda. It was difficult for obvious emotional reasons, but also because it raised ethical questions about how or if to report on these children told me in private that they felt abused or unhappy with their foster parents. One specifically said he did not want to tell NGO staff about it, and I had to make a judgment call – as both a journalist and a human – on whether or not to say something.

Journalism heroes: Certainly Bakimini Callimuichi and Nahid Ayad. Marie Colvin genuinely influenced my decision to go into journalism. Her story always stuck with me and I had chills when, years later, I attended the launch of Lindsey Hilsum’s biography of the Frontline Club in London and was able to meet Paul Corvsy and Colvin’s best friend Jane Wellesley and hear stories about her standing in that same room. One thing that really stood out to me from Hilsum’s book was how Colvin’s circle of friends carried her through the difficult periods; I think when you travel frequently for work and are sent on emotionally challenging assignments, those strong, supportive relationships are indispensable.

Dream job: I love what I do now – working all over the world on whichever stories feel most important. That said, as a freelancer, I do think I’ll eventually miss having friends and sick leave. If I could find a staff job that allowed me to do essentially the same thing, I now do, with the same degree of independence, that would be the dream.

Favorite quote: “The world is like a Mask dancing. You do not see it well, you do not stand in one place.” – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Where you’re most eager to visit: I would love to spend time in Beirut.

Most over-the-top assignment: A nine-hour road trip from Sofia to Athens with an Albanian man who spoke no English – and four-urns full of recently-cremated ashes in the backseat. The immigration officials were already suspicious when we pulled up to the Bulgaria-Greece border and handed over our foreign passports. Then they asked what we had in the back…

Most common mistake you’ve seen: Unnecessary reverence. There’s no need to be starry-eyed or overly grateful for access, regardless of how important an interviewee might be in politics, business, or culture. Our job is to speak the truth to power.

Twitter handle: @PortiaCrowe

Want to add to the OPC’s collection of Q&A’s with members? Please contact patricia@opcofamerica.org.
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