



Overseas Press Club
of America

Weekly Bulletin: Nov. 13, 2020

Greetings!

Please enjoy this week's installment of the Bulletin. The OPC has been busy with two online events this week, so we have two recaps with video clips to share as well as previews of events coming up in December. Here is a table of contents with hyperlinks direct to the full versions on our website:

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Jim Laurie Recounts 'Coming of Age' Memoir

Amid Indochina Wars

When OPC member Jim Laurie landed in Cambodia at age 22 in the early 1970s, he reckons he was “the greenest combat reporter in Cambodia and Vietnam at the time.” Laurie, an award-winning broadcast journalist who covered Southeast Asian conflicts and aftermath for NBC News and ABC News, wrote a memoir of his experiences, titled *Last Helicopter: Two Lives in Indochina*.

During an online OPC program on Nov. 12, he described the book as a “coming of age” story for a young journalist navigating the trials of war reporting, as dawn broke on the revolution and rise of the Khmer Rouge. OPC Past President David A. Andelman, who also covered the region and met Laurie during his first assignment in Cambodia at the time, moderated the discussion.

Laurie said part of his motivation for writing the book was a quest to answer his own long-held question about the nature of survival: “Why under extraordinary and horrible conditions, do some survive, and some do not?”

The book focuses on the story of Soc Sinan, a 21-year-old woman he met during his travels in in the early 1970s. The two fell in love and spent less than a year together before he was pulled away in 1972 to cover the Vietnam War for NBC News. He returned to Phnom Penh in 1975 as the Khmer Rouge was at the gates of the capital.

[Laurie’s book is available from Amazon.com here >>](#)

[Read the Full Recap Here](#)

Click the window below to watch a recording of the whole program, or [click here](#) to see a playlist of clips.



Cornelius Ryan Award Winner Calls Lack of Vaccine Transparency 'Bad News'

by **Chad Bouchard**

For about a decade, journalist and author Katherine Eban reported on lapses in the production of generic drugs for the U.S. market, ultimately piecing together a picture of massive fraud and scant oversight for a system that provides the majority of generic drugs sold in the U.S.

Her decade of investigative work is distilled in her book, *Bottle of Lies: The Inside Story of the Generic Drug Boom*, which won this year's Cornelius Ryan Award for best non-fiction book on international affairs.

There had been small efforts to reform the system after Eban's book came out in May 2019, including congressional hearings looking into U.S. Food and Drug Administration oversight of foreign drug plants, "but then COVID hit," she said, and progress quickly evaporated.

On Nov. 10, 2020, the OPC hosted an online program with Eban, whose grim look at the pharmaceutical industry has taken on new and chilling relevance as the world races to find treatments and vaccines to curb the coronavirus pandemic, amid easily gamed FDA inspection systems, lack of transparency in pharmaceutical companies and regulators, rampant data fraud and even less oversight than when the book was published.

"We have FDA inspectors who can't go into plants overseas [due to COVID-19 restrictions], we've got countries that have threatened to cut off exports to our country, we have a huge struggle to get everything from starting chemicals to glass vials," she said. "The whole question of our global drug supply has proved to be really dangerous and inadequate in an age of COVID."

[Read the Full Recap Here](#)

Click the window below to watch a recording of the whole program, [or click here](#) to see a playlist of clips.



People Remembered: Seymour Topping

The OPC is saddened to learn that longtime OPC member Seymour Topping, a veteran foreign correspondent and editor

who cut his teeth during China's civil war at the end of the 1940s, died on Nov. 8 at the age of 98.



After serving as a United States Army infantry officer in the Pacific during World War II, Topping joined The Associated Press in 1948, where he covered conflicts in China and Southeast Asia. He joined The New York Times in 1959, where he served as chief correspondent, foreign editor and managing editor in Moscow and in Southeast Asia for more than three decades. He was assistant managing editor, deputy managing editor and managing editor from 1969 to 1986, when he was appointed director of editorial development. He retired from the paper in 1993, becoming the San Paolo Professor of International Journalism at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and an administrator of the Pulitzer Prizes until his retirement in 2002.

A New York Times obituary chronicles [his career here](#).

Click the button below to read more and see video links to some of his participation in OPC events over the years.

Read More



In 2014, OPC Past President William J. Holstein spoke with Topping along with his wife Audrey Topping for an archival video memoir filmed and edited by their daughter, Lesley Topping. This is Part 1 of a two-part interview.



In February 2016, Topping spoke at a [day-long OPC event with Russia hands](#) to discuss the country's past and future.

Upcoming OPC Events

Dec. 2: OPC Award Winners Share Their Stories
The David A. Andelman and Pamela Title Award

Time: 12:00 p.m. (noon) Eastern Time

Jane Arraf, who has covered the Middle East for three decades, will join the OPC for an online program to discuss her work for NPR's Rough Translation podcast, titled "DIY Mosul," which won this year's David A. Andelman and Pamela Title Award for best international TV, video, radio, audio or podcast reporting showing a concern for the human condition. Gregory Warner, Marianne McCune and Jess Jiang also worked on the winning story.



Arraf, who was recently named as Baghdad bureau chief for The New York Times, will be joined by moderator **Doyle McManus** of the Los Angeles Times, who served as head judge on the award jury.

[Listen to the winning podcast episode here >>](#)

RSVP Now



Dec. 15: OPC Award Winners Share Their Stories The Whitman Bassow Award

Time: 12:00 p.m. (noon) Eastern Time

Join the OPC for a discussion with this year's winners of the Whitman Bassow Award, **Tom Warren** and **Katie J.M. Baker** of BuzzFeed News, who won for their series, "[WWF's Secret War](#)."



The head judge for the award, **Kim Murphy** of The New York Times, will moderate.

RSVP Now

OPC Members Covering COVID-19

OPC member **Adi Ignatius** co-hosted a conversation with Anthony Fauci and other national health officials at the National Cathedral [on Nov. 12](#), including Luciana Borio, a member of President-elect Joe Biden's coronavirus task force. According [to a piece by the Religion News Service \(RNS\)](#), Fauci said families considering whether to gather for Thanksgiving should assess risks including "age, underlying conditions, travel,



testing and quarantining of people who wish to dine together on the holiday.” The Ignatius Forum is an annual event at the cathedral with experts on current affairs. The forum was attended virtually by more than 7,000 audience members and by about 10 staffers and Ignatius family members who were at the cathedral in person.

OPC member **Valerie Hopkins**, who won the OPC Foundation’s 2013 Jerry Flint Internship for International Business Reporting, is covering COVID-19 from Eastern Europe, most recently with a piece [on Nov. 12](#) about Hungary becoming the first EU state to begin trials on Russia’s COVID-19 vaccine. She wrote that an acquisition by Budapest and entry into the EU market “would represent a symbolic win for Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine, which has been criticized by some experts for its rapid pace of approval and limited publicly available information on its efficacy.”



Please send us your personal anecdotes, photos, and links to published pieces related to COVID-19 to info@opcofamerica.org, and we will publish them on our website and share with members. You can also share those stories directly with members on our [OPC Connect](#) group on Facebook, or tweet us [@opcofamerica](#).

People by Chad Bouchard

SCHOLARS

Krithika Varagur, OPC member and Sally Jacobsen Fellowship winner in 2019, is launching a new column on the Life and Arts desk at The Wall Street Journal called “At Work,” about the modern workplace. Varagur had an OPC Foundation fellowship with The Associated Press in New Delhi.



AWARDS

OPC member **Brent Stirton** won two [2020 Siena International Photography Awards](#) for Best Author and Storyboard categories. Both awards recognized his series “Pangolins in Crisis,” which focuses on the plight of the world’s most illegally trafficked mammals. The photos are available to view [on his personal website here](#).



UPDATES

OPC member **Anita Snow** was among those covering election aftermath over the last week, with reporting from Phoenix for The Associated Press [on Nov. 7](#) with Trump supporters protesting election results in the narrow-margin state, with a



crowd of more than 1,000 Republican Party figures calling into question whether voting machines had any discrepancies. The piece included coverage from reporters in several other states including New York, Michigan and North Dakota.

Meanwhile, OPC member **Tracy Wilkinson** covered election aftermath [on Nov. 10](#) from DC for the Los Angeles Times, with quotes from Joseph Biden saying he would not be hamstrung by President Trump's attempts to undermine the transition of power, and calling Trump's victory claims "an embarrassment."

OPC member and Foreign Press Association President **Ian Williams** wrote a tribute [on Nov. 3](#) to Irish and British journalist Robert Fisk, who died on Oct. 30 at the age of 74. Williams wrote that Fisk, who covered sectarian battles of Northern Ireland as well as conflicts in the Middle East from Beirut over many years, "brought a sense of history that Western media pundits on drop-in visit tend to lack, the cable and internet sock-puppets pontificating from faraway studios. Not least of his assets was that he lived in the region and spoke Arabic – and did so directly to ordinary people."



MEDIA NEWS

The **Columbia Journalism School** announced [in September](#) that it would create a Center for Global Journalism named for founders Simon and June Li, who founded the new center with a \$5 million gift. In a release, Columbia University President Lee C. Bollinger said the initiative would "deepen and extend Columbia's commitment to international engagement by supporting journalism students and alumni who want to report on global stories, at a time when the need for serious journalism on matters of international concern has become inseparable from society's progress."

PEOPLE REMEMBERED

OPC member and award-winning veteran correspondent **Gordon F. Joseloff** died [on Nov. 9](#) at the age of 75. Joseloff covered London, Moscow, Tokyo, and other world capitals for United Press International and CBS News for more than 20 years. He founded the WestportNow news site and served as editor and publisher covering his home corner of Connecticut since March 2003. He resigned as editor but remained publisher when he was elected first selectman of Westport in November 2005, and resumed his editor duties after resigning from the political post in 2013. At CBS, Joseloff started as a writer for Walter Cronkite and Dan Rather, later covering major world stories including the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. boycott of the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympics, the start of the Solidarity trade union movement in Poland, the



Soviet shoot down of Korean Air Lines flight 007, the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India, the overthrow of President Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, and the illness and death of Emperor Hirohito of Japan.

People Column November 2020

New Resources

TRAINING AND PROGRAMS

On Nov. 19 from 9:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Eastern Time, the **International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF)** will host a panel titled "Seeking Justice for Femicide in Mexico Through Poetry, Journalism and Law." Speakers will include Washington state Poet Laureate Claudia Castro Luna, Justicia para Nuestras Hijas founder Norma Ledezma Ortega and Seattle Times visual journalists Corinne Chin and Erika Schultz. The session will be moderated by ProPublica investigative journalist Vianna Davila. [Read more and register here.](#)

From Dec. 4 to 6, the **Arab Journalists for Investigative Journalism** will host its 13th Annual Regional Forum virtually for investigative journalists and supporters of independent media. The forum calls for attendees to "join more than 1000 Arab and international investigative journalists, coaches, editors and supporters from more than 30 countries," with more than 40 panels and hands-on workshops. [Read more and register here.](#)

The **International Center for Journalists (ICFJ)** hosts programs to equip journalists in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with the latest tools to "sort fact from fiction online and use social media to support quality journalism." The program, in partnership with the Facebook Journalism Project, offers online courses with regional experts. [Read more and register here.](#)

The **International Journalists' Network (IJNet)** on Nov. 5 posted an article with mental health tips for coping after reporting distressing and traumatic stories. The piece covers self-care and self-compassion, not suppressing emotional reactions to distressing experiences, calming down your body, talking to trusted listeners, cathartic activities and more. [Read more here.](#)

More Resources

- **First Draft** has been hosting a series of presentations on COVID-19 for journalists, and you can [browse the archives here.](#)
- **Columbia University's Brown Institute for Media Innovation** has compiled a large repository of documents on COVID-19 via FOIA requests. [Explore the database here.](#)
- **ACOS** [assembled](#) a substantial list of COVID-19 resources for journalists, including links to practical safety advice, funding opportunities, hardship and

- emergency funds, and reporting resources such as guides for fact checking.
- **ICFJ** [launched](#) a page for COVID-19 resources for journalists.
- **Rory Peck Trust** has a [resource page](#) for pandemic coverage. It includes safety guidelines, funding sources, job opportunities and online training

The OPC has added these links to a special COVID-19 section on the member-only [Resources](#) page available to members who have logged in. Watch that page as we share more. Click the button below to go directly, or find it in your Member Dashboard under "Resources."

If you have any issues accessing the resources page, please contact Chad Bouchard at chad@opcofamerica.org for credentials.

[OPC Resources Page](#)

Press Freedom Update

by Chad Bouchard

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) will present its 2020 Gwen Ifill Press Freedom Award, for extraordinary and sustained achievement in the cause of press freedom, to lawyer Amal Clooney during the organization's virtual International Press Freedom Awards [on Nov. 19](#). The event will be hosted by Lester Holt of NBC News and chaired by Patrick Gaspard, president of Open Society Foundations. Maria Ressa will interview Clooney during the event. Other award winners to be honored are Bangladeshi photojournalist Shahidul Alam, Iranian freelance journalist Mohammad Mosaed, Nigerian newspaper founder Dapo Olorunyomi, and Svetlana Prokopyeva of the U.S. Congress-funded broadcaster Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Russia, known as Radio Svoboda.

Reporters Without Borders, best known by its French acronym RSF, is calling for supporters to sign a petition to urge G20 capitals to obtain concrete press freedom improvements in Saudi Arabia, and to push for the release of the country's 34 jailed journalists. Saudi Arabia is set to host the G20 summit virtually from Riyadh from Nov. 21 to 22. [Read more and sign the petition here.](#)

Meanwhile **RSF**, along with 16 other press freedom organizations, [is also calling for](#) Mexico to honor its commitment to address impunity and increasing attacks on journalists in Mexico as the one-year anniversary of a mission launched in November 2019 with little progress, RSF said in a release. The Mexican government had "failed to fulfil its commitments, and the freedom of expression situation in the country is worsening," the release said. The group, **ARTICLE 19**, has documented a 45 percent increase in attacks against the press in comparison to 2019, with at least seven journalists assassinated with possible links to their work.

The **Foreign Press Association** is calling for sustained resistance to the I-visa rule changes and asked for input on a joint campaign to keep up the pressure on Department of Homeland Security. Though the official comment period on the rule has passed, FPA President Ian Williams [on Nov. 5](#) called for “concerned media and human rights organizations and officials to follow on from their submissions to the Federal Register and to coordinate a joint campaign with us against the restrictions.”

