

Silurian News

Published by The Silurians Press Club, an organization of veteran New York City journalists founded in 1924

SAVE THE DATE!
Silurian Luncheon
Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026

E. JEAN CARROLL,
the reporter who trumped
Trump in court (twice), in
conversation with political
commentator
**MOLLY
JONG-FAST**



JANUARY 2026

Molly Jong-Fast: Marching Fast Forward in the Steps of Greatness

The Molly Jong-Fast whom we encountered at our first luncheon of the Silurian 2025-2026 season on Sept. 17 was surprisingly different from the opinionated and sometimes strident political reporter that we watch on MS Now, and read in The New York Times, Vanity Fair and other top-tier media, and listen to on her eponymous podcast, Fast Politics. That day, the Silurians and their lunch guests saw the very empathic and very complex person inside. We saw a bit of the real Molly Jong-Fast—the daughter, the wife and mother, the writer.—THE EDITORS

BY DAVID A. ANDELMAN

As Joyce Wadler—savvy reporter, Silurian and spot-on moderator for guest speaker Molly Jong-Fast—noted in her opening

Celebrity is the closest thing we have to magic in modern American life. It is like a powerful elixir that makes people change their feelings about you, and it gets you things, it changes the calculus. And I think it's very addictive.

— MOLLY JONG-FAST

remarks that afternoon, when your grandfather was Howard Fast who wrote *Spartacus* and went to jail for refusing to name names to the House Un-American Activities

David Margolick: An Ode to Better, Funnier Times

BY DAVID A. ANDELMAN

“An ode to better times, to the secular Ashkenazi Jewish culture of the 1950s and 1960s, in which Jewish writers one-upped each other’s jokes while munching on corned beef and pickles, where Christian performers learned Yiddish to join the milieu, where stars supped on lobster but still said Kaddish in synagogue for their parents.”

That’s the image Linda Dayan painted for her readers in the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, describing David Margolick’s magisterial biography *When Caesar Was King: How Sid Caesar Reinvented American Comedy*. Indeed, I’ve been waiting for quite a few years since Margolick first shared with me some pages of what is truly an ode to the man who Tony Guida

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David Margolick, author of the acclaimed Sid Caesar bio, *When Caesar Was King*, and moderator Tony Guida shared facts, video clips and laughs—lots of them—with an enthusiastic audience at the Nov. 19 Silurians luncheon.
Photo by Steven Speliotis



Molly Jong-Fast and moderator Joyce Wadler enjoy a lively exchange on Sept. 17, discussing Jong-Fast’s bestselling memoir, *How To Lose Your Mother*, about her life and struggles as the daughter of feminist icon Erica Jong, who is now in the throes of dementia.

Photo by Steven Speliotis

Sept. 17, the newly minted best-selling author proceeded without hesitation into the spotlight of the Grand Gallery of the National Arts Club where a rapt roomful of her peers awaited her presentation at the

Silurians Press Club’s first luncheon of the 2025-2026 season. Really, though, in Molly Jong-Fast’s telling, the relationship with her mother very much came first. Then came the book.

As Joyce Wadler continued in her introduction, “Molly has written about being a fat, lonely kid, about her addiction to drugs and alcohol, of going into rehab at 19, and being

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Julian Zelizer on The Historic Limits of the Possible

BY DAVID A. ANDELMAN

It was Richard A. Baker, the historian of the U.S. Senate, who Richard Galant, then managing editor of CNN Opinion, called upon 17 very long years ago when he was in the market for an authority to comment on the “unusual fact that we had two senators running against each other for president—Barack Obama and John McCain.” Without hesitation, Baker directed Galant, who introduced the speaker at the Oct. 22 Silurians lunch, to Princeton’s resident scholar, Julian E. Zelizer, “one of the leading political historians of our time.”

Truly. And an honor (full disclosure) for your humble scribe here to have considered him a most valued fellow CNN commentator for at least a brief period and now fellow Substack writer. Galant then commended Zelizer’s “ability to recall the whole of American political history, going back more than a century, is extremely impressive.” But there’s way more than that—as he quickly dove in to impress the packed group that was his audience at the National Arts Club.

“I think,” Galant continued,

Journalism is facing massive challenges in covering this president... The long-form article has been displaced by the TikTok video.

— JULIAN E. ZELIZER

right to do this. He reminded the public that presidents since Thomas Jefferson have been impounding money. His advisors were not subtle in defending him. The Senate majority leader was livid. The intent of Congress has been flouted. And this question must be faced up to and a solution found, even if it means going to the Supreme Court. The President complained that the press were making such a big deal of all of this. The President already hated the press from his first term complaining that he had suffered the most devastating attacks on TV.



Julian E. Zelizer — distinguished historian, Princeton professor and author — commanded the lectern on Oct. 22 and put political and journalistic history, plus a dose of tempered optimism, into perspective. Photo by Steven Speliotis

“The story though is not about President Trump. This story took place in 1972. The legislation was the Clean Water Act, the Senate majority leader was Mike Mansfield and the president was Richard Nixon. In other words, the nation has wrestled with the problem that we have faced in recent months before—an imperial presidency. Indeed, this country was founded in a revolt against centralized power.”

Of course, Zelizer was not unaware of the power the press can and should wield—then and now. “Every generation of journalists has different challenges that they need to overcome,” he continued. “Until the 1970s—the advent of Bernstein and Woodward—investigative

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President's Report

What We Needed: A Good Laugh

Dear Silurians,

What a treat it was to join with my fellow Silurians in a good laugh.

We all needed it.

It was a long laugh. It was many laughs. It was unexpected.

Things had not been going well for journalists. The president of the United States was demolishing much of the White House—and that was only the damage we could see. Media outlets large and small were trying to adjust to a rapidly changing business environment. Conflict was everywhere and wars were raging.

But at our Nov. 19 luncheon, here were Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca in bathing suits as the off-camera crew sprayed (until they poured, and then flung) cold water on them, in a sendup of an iconic scene in *From Here to Eternity*, and we were all giggling at the silliness.

We don't usually come to the Silurians lunches to enjoy ourselves in that kind of frivolous way. But we do come for the camaraderie and the lessons we may learn. And longtime member David Margolick explained to us how and why he wrote his acclaimed biography, *When Caesar was King: How Sid Caesar Reinvented American Comedy*. David and Tony Guida not only engaged in a lively discussion but also had the good sense to show videos of some of the classic TV sketches performed by Sid Caesar and his superb cast.

Every speaker this season has turned out to offer a refreshing point of view. In September, Molly Jong-Fast provided a rollicking account of her extraordinary family life that led to *How To Lose Your Mother*, her eye-opening account of being Erica Jong's daughter.

People have related to the book, Molly told moderator Joyce Wadler, not because of who her mother is, but "because it's the story of being a daughter... The goal is to describe a difficult mother-daughter relationship in a way we can all relate to."

In October, Julian Zelizer, the Princeton historian, op-ed columnist and Substacker, gave us real insight into President Donald Trump's war against the media. His comments put our anxiety into a historical perspective—our country has survived even worse times.

"Today, we face an imperial presidency," he said, referring back to the Nixon administration. But the media have changed since then.

"Investigative journalism and reporting have become permanently entrenched," Zelizer added. "Vastly more information is available quickly to journalists as they cover what is happening in Washington."

In December, Sam Tanenhaus, the former editor of *The New York Times Book Review*, spoke about his biography of William F. Buckley Jr., the pioneer of modern conservative media. (This luncheon took place after this issue went to press.)

I hope you enjoyed these gatherings. Thanks very much to all the club members who helped arrange them.

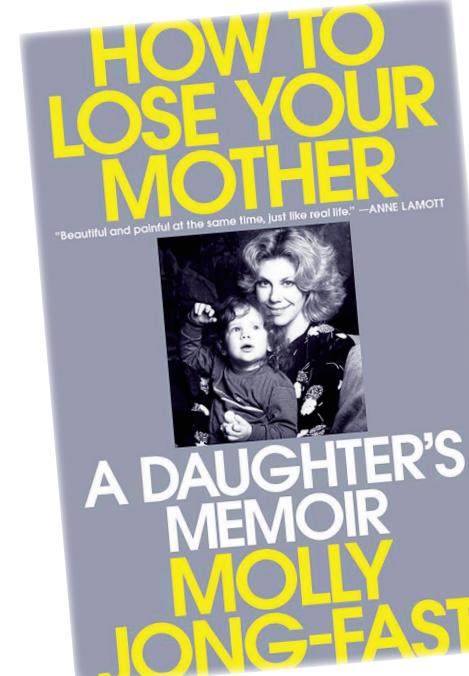
If you missed any of the lunches, the good news is that you can catch up by watching the videos on the Silurians web site: www.silurians.org. The even better news is that we have a strong lineup of speakers planned for the start of 2026, beginning on Jan. 21 with E. Jean Carroll, the journalist who successfully sued Donald Trump for sexual abuse and defamation. Molly Jong-Fast will moderate what is sure to be a lively, fascinating discussion.

Wishing you a very happy new year!

Aileen Jacobson,
President



Molly Jong-Fast: Marching Fast Forward



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sober since—that's about 30 years. Her latest and fifth book, *How to Lose Your Mother: A Daughter's Memoir*, is about her relationship with her famous mother, Erica Jong, and the elder woman's descent into dementia. The memoir has generated praise for its honesty and wit. It also has sparked outrage. *The Times* said "the book at times was like reading a score settling, but also a loving elegy." The book also made it to *The Times* bestseller list in three weeks.

"So, what was it like," Joyce wound up, "being the daughter of the writer who coined the infamous expression for casual sex—'the zipless fuck'?"

"It's, I think, the reason why people have related to it—not because it's a story of being the daughter of Erica Jong, but because it's the story of being a daughter. I had, for a long time, wanted to write a book. I come from a family of books. I understand how sacred it is to be able to write a book and what an ask it is of people to buy that book."

It all began with the utterly ill-considered thought of one publisher who believed Molly would be the perfect fit for an opus about "how women stopped Donald Trump." After telling this publisher in no uncertain terms that "it's a stupid idea and also that's not going to be a fun book to write or read," Jong-Fast got to thinking about the book that she should be writing. "I wanted to write a book that you could read in 2025 or in 2045 and be like, this is something that is real," Jong-Fast continued.

So, she did write it—for which we readers are all grateful. "The goal is to sort of describe a difficult mother-daughter relationship in a way that we can all relate to," Jong-Fast said. "I think this is really true that I don't exist—and the women of my generation do not exist—without the sacrifices that my mother and the women of that generation made for us."

But much of all this goes deep into her own past and especially that of her remarkable family. As she put it, "Celebrity is the closest thing we have to magic in modern American life. It is like a powerful elixir that makes people change their feelings about you, and it gets you things, it changes the calculus. And I think it's very addictive. I saw this with my mom and I saw this with my grandfather. No one has ever loved being famous the way Howard Fast loved being famous."

Which could perhaps help explain why Molly Jong-Fast had only some brief qualms about unpacking some rather sordid business about herself, her alcoholic mother now afflicted with dementia, and much of the rather stunning dynamic of the deep relationships of this inter-generational family.

"My mom always wrote about me. Always, always, always. Endlessly and mostly pretty nice," Jong-Fast smiled thinly, then added, "and she had always said, 'you know you will write about me.' Writing about your children is not child abuse, which I thought was exactly right. It's not. It's not 100 percent kosher, but it's not abuse."

But there's even more involved. "You don't ever get to say uncle, right? Once you're locked in that kind of death spiral, there is no way out. My mom would be celebrating this



Erica Jong and daughter Molly Jong-Fast in July 2022. A year later, the elder Jong's struggles with dementia turned serious.

Photo courtesy of Jutharat Pinyodoonyachet for The New York Times

book. Likely, she would say, 'we don't agree on some of the facts, but did I mention it was on *The New York Times* bestseller list?'" That got a good laugh from Jong-Fast's audience of any number of writers, most lusting after

I think this is really true, that I don't exist—and the women of my generation do not exist—without the sacrifices that my mother and the women of that generation made for us."

— MOLLY JONG-FAST

a slot on that very list where her books have succeeded her mother's works.

And then, there came the moment when Jong-Fast's mother just began to come apart. "For me, my terrible year was 2023. I started to see my mom just disappear, and I thought I should write about this, because I would run into friends who had parents the same age who were having these terrible situations. So, I said, I think this will be a story that other people are going through. I can write about it in a way that other people can relate to."

Her underlying theme, though, was even more basic: "What is our purpose on this planet? When you start getting into this, I've been having this sort of slow-rolling, middle-age crisis for the last decade."

But especially, there is her enormous debt to her mother, or as Jong-Fast put it: "I don't exist without her. She was the person who gave me the entitlement to think that I could

be on television as a middle-aged woman, the person who said you should be in *The New York Times* multiple times. You don't do that stuff unless you have someone who is telling you that you are entitled to stuff that no one is entitled to in any way, shape, or form."

As for her mother today? "She is where she is at this moment, not to get too Yogi Berra." Jong-Fast returned to that theme as her coda:

"The whole point of her, the whole spirit of her, was that you tell the uncomfortable truth, that makes you look terrible, too. We always said everything to each other. You cannot look at this relationship through normal lenses. There are no right answers. When you get to this point, you just have to do the best you can."

Inevitably, of course, there were doubts. Every writer has those. As Jong-Fast put it, "For a minute, when I finished this book, I thought, 'oh my god, I've ruined my life!'"

I had finally got out of being Erica Jong's daughter. I'm on television. I write these columns for *Vanity Fair*, people like them. I do this podcast. Some people even think I'm related to Kim Jong! And then I write this book. And I thought, this is so stupid. For a whole weekend, I thought this is a terrible idea. And then it hit *The New York Times* bestseller list. I am a genius, so I really did feel like I did a good job. And you know, I made a little money. When you get to this point, you just have to do the best you can."

David A. Andelman is a past president of The Silurians, a former New York Times and CBS News correspondent, and creator of SubStack's global "Andelman Unleashed."

Julian Zelizer on The Historic Limits of the Possible

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reporters had been marginalized as gossip columnists or even worse. Irresponsible partisans. Agitators only interested in smear and bringing down leaders. Unfairly, the syndicated columnist, Drew Pearson, for example, and Jack Anderson both faced this kind of criticism all the time."

The context today is not dissimilar.

"Today, we face an imperial presidency. Once again, the president has weaponized the Department of Justice to go after his opponents while enacting a massive unpredictable and unstable tariff

program. Based on claims of emergency power through which he maintains a very strong hand on the economy, he's pressured individual law firms, universities and media organizations into deals, with threats of federal money, threats of regulatory action. There are federal troops and federalized National Guard forces that are in the streets of major cities and a deportation process has rounded up undocumented persons without due process."

Still, Zelizer was not uniformly without hope: "A lot has changed since the early 1970s, much of it for the bet-

ter, and we need to remember that, including for the press. Journalism has changed in ways that have left the institution better positioned to handle the challenge of the moment. Investigative journalism and reporting have become permanently entrenched.

"With far more diversity in media, outlets have opened up greater opportunities for unestablished reporters, and vastly more information is available quickly to journalists as they cover what is happening in Washington."

He conceded that "jour-

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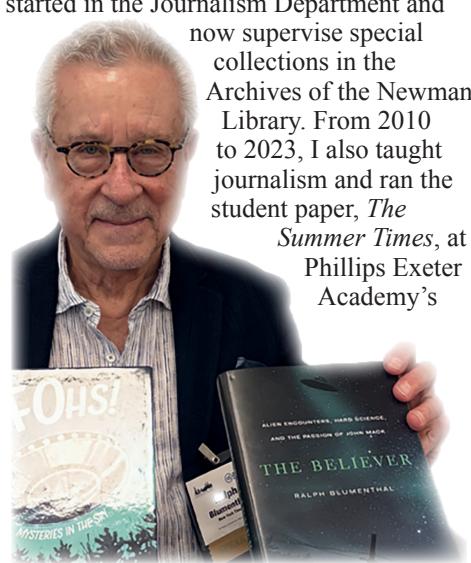


Welcome to Beyond -30-

This column is a repository—a treasure trove, really—of what some Silurians are up to these days. If the title initially confounds, let us remind you that, in the days of typewriters, print journalists flagged their final page with the numeral 30, offset by hyphens and/or circled, to signal that the pages had not gotten mixed up. The end mark -30- signaled that the piece was finished. It telegraphed “the end.”

The END. Dem’s frightening words for any veteran—journalist or otherwise. That said, for many Silurians, “the end” simply signals a new beginning. Courses worth teaching (or enrolling in), books to be written, speaking engagements, conferences to moderate, documentaries to be made, content platforms like Substack (David Andelman, Francis Flaherty, Arlene Schulman and Joyce Wadler are already posting their news and views there). And let’s not overlook producing—and hosting!—your own podcast. The takeaway? Our full-time work might have ended. But we are not finished.

Here is a round-up of what some of us are up to.—THE EDITORS



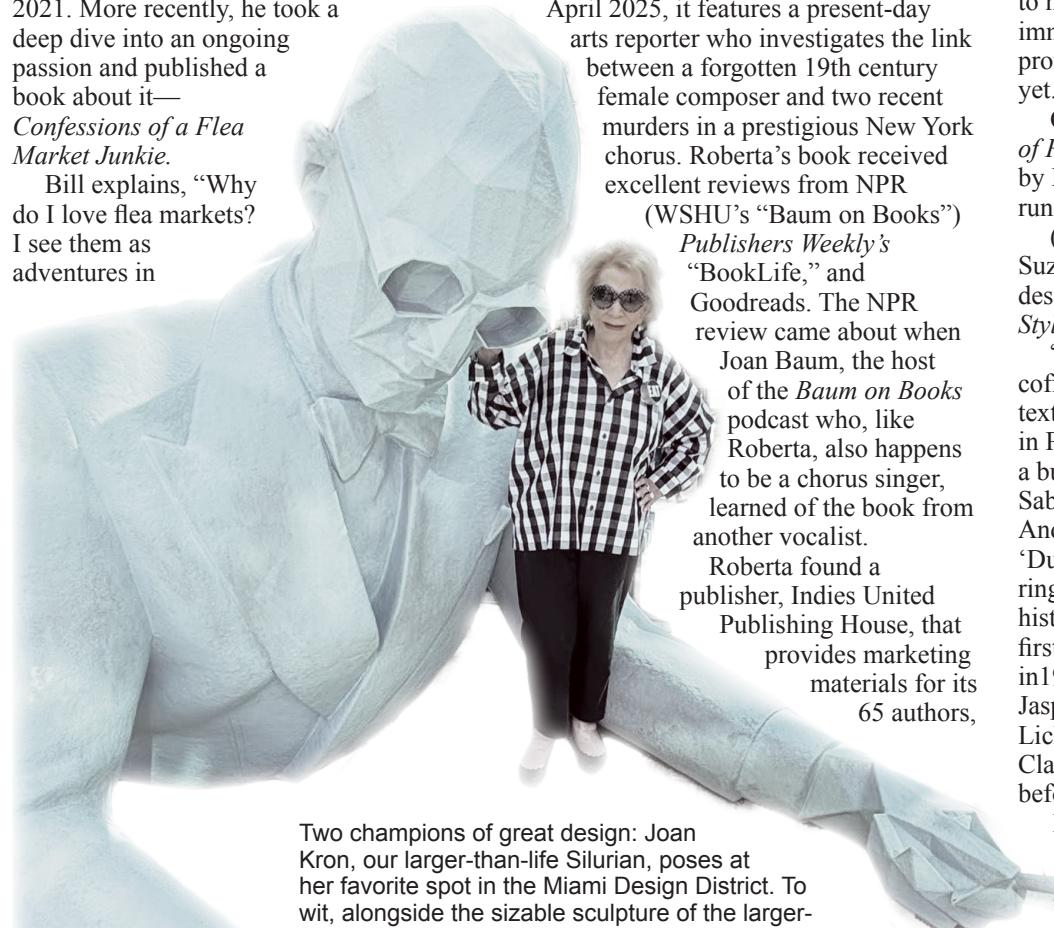
RALPH BLUMENTHAL

summer program for international high-schoolers. My latest non-fiction book, *The Believer: Alien Encounters, Hard Science, and The Passion of John Mack* came out in 2021, and in 2023, I and my wife, Deborah, a children’s book author, published a picture book, *UFOHS! Mysteries in the Sky*.

I still contribute articles to *The Times* and other publications. So much for retirement.”

Bill Diehl released his memoir, *50 Years of Celebrity Chatter (Or the Time I Interviewed A Porn Star Naked)*, in 2021. More recently, he took a deep dive into an ongoing passion and published a book about it—*Confessions of a Flea Market Junkie*.

Bill explains, “Why do I love flea markets? I see them as adventures in



Two champions of great design: Joan Kron, our larger-than-life Silurian, poses at her favorite spot in the Miami Design District. To wit, alongside the sizable sculpture of the larger-than-life architect Le Corbusier.

Photo by Carlos Rodriguez

Ralph Blumenthal says, “I wrote -30- when I retired from *The New York Times*, after 45 years, in 2009. But then I quickly reneged with an appointment as a Distinguished Lecturer at Baruch College, where I remain almost 16 years later. I started in the Journalism Department and now supervise special collections in the Archives of the Newman Library. From 2010 to 2023, I also taught journalism and ran the student paper, *The Summer Times*, at Phillips Exeter Academy’s

finding new treasures. Old newspapers and *TV Guides* are favorites. I found a *New York Journal-American* from 1961 with the banner headline, ‘Astronaut Back Alive.’ That was Alan Shepard. A *TV Guide* from 1954 is special with comic Red Buttons on the cover. I love taking photos of dogs at flea markets—I found one named Shirley Temple and a pair of dogs, Lucy and Ricky! One time, there was a man with a cat named Orpheus on his shoulder.

“During my 50-year career at ABC Radio, I interviewed many A-list celebrities. But once, at the Grand Bazaar market on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, I bumped into Bernadette Peters. ‘I’m looking for my jeweler!’, she told me. And we had a photo together.

“This is actually my fourth book. Is another waiting in the wings? I’m 85. But I’ll never say never.”

Roberta Hershenson chose her given name, “Roberta Mantell,” as the pen name for her debut novel, *Angels’ Blood: Murder in the Chorus*, because she had never used the full name before. She was called by a nickname growing up, and the surname “Mantell” disappeared when she married young.

The book, a music murder mystery spanning two decades, reflects the author’s life in journalism and music. Published in April 2025, it features a present-day arts reporter who investigates the link between a forgotten 19th century female composer and two recent murders in a prestigious New York chorus. Roberta’s book received excellent reviews from NPR

(WSHU’s “Baum on Books”) *Publishers Weekly’s “BookLife,”* and Goodreads. The NPR review came about when

Joan Baum, the host of the *Baum on Books* podcast who, like Roberta, also happens to be a chorus singer, learned of the book from another vocalist.

Roberta found a publisher, Indies United Publishing House, that provides marketing materials for its 65 authors,



ROBERTA HERSHENSON

who then market their books themselves.

“Marketing has been like starting a new career for which I am unqualified, with nothing at stake except the success or failure of the book I worked on for eight

years,” Roberta says. “It has its highs and lows, like being featured at a Yale Club book talk one day, and wondering where all the buyers went a week later. I am adjusting and have gone back to writing the second book in the Piper Morgan Mystery series.”

How did a painter who became an award-winning photographer who then morphed into a longtime photojournalist and arts reporter for *The New York Times*, wind up writing a murder mystery? “I never intended to write a mystery,” Roberta says. The idea came to her during the intermission of a Messiah concert she was singing in as a chorus member. “Writing the book gave me a chance to dive full-heartedly into the subject of music, which has been a major interest all my life,” she said. “Discrimination against women in music also fired me up as a plot point.”

One lesson that Roberta says she learned as a debut novelist is to avoid punctuation in a title. “Angels” is plural, though people often put the apostrophe before the “s,” she explains. Another lesson is to check carefully for other books with the same title. “I

somehow missed an older *Angels’ Blood* in a different genre, so I never fail to use my descriptive subtitle.”

Joan Kron, who proudly owns up to turning 98 on January 9, 2026, moved to midtown Miami in March 2023 and immediately set to work on a new book that promises to be her most revealing project yet.

Coyly titled *The Renegade Housewives of Pop Art*, it will be published in Fall 2026 by Pointed Leaf Press, which is owned and run by fellow Silurian **Suzanne Slesin**.

(An interesting side note: Joan and Suzanne co-authored the seminal 1978 design book *High-Tech: The Industrial Style and Source Book for the Home*.)

“This new book will be a large-format, coffee-table book with loads of pictures and text,” says Joan. “It will focus on my capers in Philadelphia in the 1960s when I was in a business partnership with the late Audrey Sabol, producing art multiples—you know, Andy Warhol’s perfume, Roy Lichtenstein’s ‘Durable Dishes,’ Robert Indiana’s ‘Love’ ring in solid gold—and putting on historic art exhibitions, including the first East Coast Pop Art show in the U.S. in 1962. In our exhibitions, we featured Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein, George Segal, Ed Ruscha, Claes Oldenburg, Marisol, and Christo—before most museums ever did.”

Here’s a bit of Kron’s multi-platform backstory:

Following earlier reporting stints for *New York Magazine*, *The New York Times* and the *Wall Street*



Bill Diehl bumped into Bernadette Peters at the Grand Bazaar Flea Market in Dec. 2023. The star blurted out, “I’m looking for my jeweler!”

Journal, Kron was for 25 years (1991-2015) the Contributing Editor-at-Large for *Allure*, where she invented “the plastic surgery beat.” In 2017, she made Hollywood

hay from her “psychology-of-beauty expertise” by co-producing her debut film,

Take My Nose... Please!,

which took a

light-hearted (some would say subversive) look at women, comedy and plastic surgery. It had a short run in theatres in NYC and L.A. (required for Oscar consideration) and then streamed on Hulu for three years and is still available on demand on Amazon Prime. In addition, the film earned Joan a \$10,000 Knight Award at the Miami Film Festival and the Audience Award at Berkshire Film Festival.

As for Joan Kron’s unabashed candor about turning 98, she explained such laudable yet uncommon transparency to *The New York Times* in a 2012 profile: “I never lie about my age,” she told the paper of record. “I tell everybody about my age because I don’t think women have enough role models.”

Mike Rezendez is writing a biography of the legendary New York writer and columnist, Jimmy Breslin, for Simon & Schuster—a very different beat than what we’d expect.

As a member of the global investigative team at The Associated Press, Mike revealed the systemic cover-up of child sex abuse in the Mormon Church, and exposed financial corruption in the Catholic Church during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earlier, Mike shared two Pulitzer Prizes while working for the *Boston Globe* Spotlight Team—one for breaking the story of clergy sex abuse in the Boston Archdiocese, and a second for covering the bombing of the Boston Marathon. Mike was running the marathon when the bombs exploded and worked into the night covering the tragedy.

On Dec. 8, Mayor Eric Adams named Silurian **Patrick Smith** the Interim Chair of the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), following Pat’s decades of experience across journalism, communications, public policy and New York City politics.

In case you didn’t know, Pat is a 12-year veteran of the New York Post (as Night City Editor, City Hall reporter, special-assignment reporter and Brooklyn editor), following earlier career stints at Bucks County Courier Times and the *Philadelphia Daily News*, who went on to serve as the Public Affairs

Director to then Brooklyn Borough President Howard Golden. In 1992, he advised Bill Clinton’s Presidential campaign on how best to message and campaign throughout

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MIKE REZENDEZ

THE IRREFUTABLE POWER OF COMMUNITY REPORTING

(Or How—and Why—I Made the Leap from Local Scoops To A National Podcast)



In Sept. 2023, a group of publishers from the nation's largest and smallest media outlets traveled to the U.S. Capitol as part of their efforts to lobby Congress for a bill to protect local journalism. Adam Stone (at center, in the windowpane patterned shirt) is standing behind Sen. Chuck Schumer.

BY ADAM STONE

On July 12, 2025, *The New York Times* published a front-page story “UnitedHealth’s Campaign to Quiet Critics,” which included an account of the insurer’s apparent attempt to chill my Westchester County-based investigative reporting.

Let me put this scenario into perspective: United Healthcare is the largest health group in the U.S., serving 50 million customers worldwide and ranking third on the Fortune 500 list. This mega-corporation wanted to silence my local watchdog news outlet—emphasis on local.

“While we do not know which current or former Optum employee disclosed the patient information to you, such disclosure is subject to both civil and criminal penalties, and under federal law it is a crime for a person to aid and abet another in obtaining or disclosing individually identifiable health information without authorization,” a portion of a March 26, 2024 letter from the company to me stated. (Editor’s note: Optum is a subsidiary of UnitedHealthcare.)

Bolstered by what I can only describe as the basics of journalism, I not only resisted pressure to remove audio from our website—audio featuring an internal conversation I’d obtained from a whistleblower in which local executives laid out an alleged upcoding scheme designed to bilk money from the federal government—I also used the incident as fuel to redouble my efforts.

On Nov. 5, in partnership with Peabody- and Emmy-winning producers, we launched *SICK CARE*, a new podcast that builds on my now nearly three-year, 22-part written series, which debuted in December 2022 in the local news outlet I publish in Westchester County, N.Y.

Bitten by the entrepreneurial bug, I had started the newspaper group in 2007 after about a half dozen years as a professional newspaper beat reporter. While the 17-plus years that followed were rewarding, the work of being a publisher—rather than a full-time journalist—pulled me away from my true passion.

By 2022, 15 years after launching my newspaper group, I felt the itch to return to investigative reporting, worn down by the less creative demands of print publishing.

Around that time, I received an email from a reader asking us to cover Optum’s acquisition of our independent local doctors’ group. Optum, of course, is the giant UnitedHealth subsidiary, which basically employs 10 percent of U.S. doctors, keeping many restrained with restrictive noncompete pacts. I decided to dig into the story myself, returning to real reporting for the first time since 2007, the year I started Examiner Media, as chronicled in *The New York Times* at the time by Silurian Joe Berger.

The reporting began innocently enough, with a column about how difficult it had become for local patients to get anyone at the medical group to pick up the phone.

But one local story led to another, which led to another. By last year, I found myself breaking national scoops in our little rinky-dink local newspapers.

In March of last year, I obtained internal communications from sources revealing for the first time that the U.S. Department of Justice was investigating UnitedHealth for anti-competitive practices. That scoop allowed legal authorities to use my reporting as timeline evidence in a situation I didn’t yet know about—alleged insider trading by top UnitedHealth executives, including Brian Thompson.

As we all know, Thompson, the late UnitedHealth CEO, was tragically assassinated in December 2024 outside a Midtown Manhattan hotel. I abhor violence.

After the news broke, an award-winning podcast producer in Kentucky, Sean Cannon, started searching for information about UnitedHealth. He found a *Wall Street Journal* piece about the DOJ probe, but it was behind a paywall and he wasn’t a subscriber. So, he kept Googling.

That’s when he landed on my story about the federal inquiry and noticed that my report had published a day before the *Wall Street Journal* story that sent UnitedHealth’s stock plunging. (*The Wall Street Journal* had seen my piece, and followed up with additional reporting for a cover story the next day, crediting my work).

Then Cannon discovered my long, exhaustive series—published in our little no-name Examiner small-town paper by the outlet’s owner.

“What is going on here?” he wondered, as he describes in the debut episode of *SICK CARE*.

Long story short: Sean Cannon drove a dozen hours from Kentucky to Mount Kisco, and we spent a couple of days in a makeshift



SICK CARE is the pithy, double-entendre title of Adam Stone’s watchdog podcast, which launched in November.

former long-time producer of *This American Life*.

We intend to shine light on the dark corners of the corporate medical industry in the United States—and also illuminate a better path forward, including how the best of Eastern and Western medicine can combine to create more holistic care, moving us away from a profit-driven, disease-treatment model.

Sadly, I had to shut down our four print community newspapers in early 2025, because of the difficult economics. But I’m still at it with a digital incarnation of *The Examiner News*. Efforts like *Sick Care* (and our separate “Local Matters Westchester” interview show, which I co-host) are helping to reimagine what a community journalism outlet can and should do now and moving forward, in an age of AI that diminishes the value of low-quality content but enhances the value of high-impact local reporting.

I’ve developed a wide network of healthcare sources and, as a result, we’ll have a steady stream of relevant guests on the show. From patient stories to insider accounts to doctors’ and nurses’ frustrations and aspirations for the future, and a ton more.

I hope that the *SICK CARE* podcast helps awaken more people to the unacceptable status quo. And I also hope that it inspires optimism about a better path forward.

I’d be honored if you’d listen to our quick-moving debut episode, *Introducing SICK CARE*, on Apple or wherever you listen to your podcasts.

Adam Stone is the founder and publisher of Examiner Media. His work has received numerous New York Press Association honors, including Writer of the Year category honors, Freedom of Information reporting, column writing, editorials, and sports coverage. He earned the A-Mark Foundation Investigative Reporting Award for his in-depth series on corporate medical care and, in June 2024, he received a Silurians “Excellence in Journalism” Merit Award for Health and Science Reporting for “Your Care Has Been Outsourced.” In December 2025, Stone became a member of the Silurians Press Club.



In June 2024, the Silurians bestowed a Merit Award for Health and Science Reporting on Adam Stone of Examiner Media, shown here with then-president Joe Berger, for “Your Care Has Been Outsourced,” his investigative piece about inequities in the healthcare system. The results of that investigation provided impetus for Stone’s new podcast, *SICK CARE*.

Photo by Steven Speliotis

This Optimistic ‘Silurian Newbie’ Is Grooming The Next Generation of Journalists

By CATHI STEELE

I’m a Silurian newcomer, relatively speaking, as I was accepted into this esteemed press club in July 2025. Like you, I’m concerned about—and sometimes downright distraught over—the perilous climate in which journalists and media find themselves.

And yet, I see a future of possibilities.

Today, our population is barraged by all kinds of messaging and caught up in a storm of divisive rhetoric and confusion. Powerful political and economic forces present themselves as an overwhelming force magnified by an electronic medium to cow people into submission and divide the population.

Despite, or in fact because of that, I find that there are growing numbers who do care about the truth and about how everyday people are impacted by the actions of the rich and powerful and want to do what they can in response.

Do I self-identify as a veteran journalist? Without a doubt I do. However, I’m still at the grind full-time as the editor of *Collective Endeavor*, a quarterly print magazine published by Women’s Press Collective (WPC) and based in the Kingsbridge section of the Bronx. WPC has a circulation of 2,000, primarily reaching women and men in NYC and a smaller readership across the U.S. and abroad, including (would you believe?) Solothurn, Switzerland. The publication currently runs 16 pages and is distributed through a mailing list of subscribers, as well as in-person at community information tables and speaking engagements.

The magazine covers topics of concern to the WPC membership. Members come from the ranks of media workers, i.e., reporters, photojournalists, designers, press operators and printers. They also include those who join for assistance with writing, designing and printing their own publications, as well as those who are of like mind with WPC’s mission. Simply put, community organizations and individuals from marginalized communities sign up to access the benefit of WPC’s publishing and printing services and training to produce their own print media.



Women’s Press Collective (WPC) has modest Bronx headquarters, yet a mighty mission: training would-be journalists, as well as local activists from marginalized communities, to write, edit, design and publish professional-looking newspapers, magazines and even basic flyers for their respective audiences and constituencies.

Photo courtesy of Women’s Press Collective (WPC)

In 2025 alone, *Collective Endeavor* magazine covered a campaign to stop the closure of a public hospital in Brooklyn, an activist community theater that enacted the history of black midwifery tracing back to slavery, and union members from the *Daily News* fighting hedge-fund owner Alden Global Capital for a contract and a newsroom. The magazine also reported a presentation by the former New York editor of *Ramparts* magazine, Sandra Levinson, who regaled her audience about the scoops they published during the Vietnam War, as well as the struggle to sustain independent media.

Our volunteer team keeps us afloat. With an all-volunteer staff, WPC unites veterans of the industry and working professionals with young people and others to produce publications where stories that matter can be told. More than 150 volunteers participate in the various functions that make the organization run; these include teaching writing and editing as well as mechanic skills to fix our presses, setting up information tables in the community, mail-outs, (wo)manning the phones and more. There is a core volunteer staff of 25. We are women-led, but not exclusively women. WPC trains both women and men from all walks of life how to do reporting, editing, photo-curating, graphic design, desktop publishing and pre-press set-up—essentially, how to produce publications, including how to operate offset printing presses.

In-kind donations of paper and ink, coming from local print shops in New York City as well as national paper distributors and mills, buoy us. Print shops donated our offset printing presses, and volunteer press mechanics and operators maintain the presses and other equipment that was donated. Other support comes from organizations in the print industry, such as the Printing Graphic Scholarship Foundation. WPC meets supportive neighborhood businesses through canvassing in the community to spread WPC’s message and gain volunteers and support; these include local



When she is not editing *Collective Endeavor* magazine, Cathi Steele, who is one of our newest Silurians, teaches Fordham University students the how-to’s of journalism and the importance of an accurate, unbridled press.

Photo by Taylor Ha/Fordham University

businesses like Ann & Tony’s Restaurant in Bronx’s Little Italy and Ranger Plumbing Supply, and Graziella’s Restaurant in Brooklyn. These allies donate for sponsor displays in the magazine as well as making in-kind donations of goods and services that help to forestall cash outlay. Religious institutions, including Riverside Church in Morningside Heights and St. Mary’s Episcopal in Harlem, and others also contribute. None of the funding comes from government or other sources; hence, no strings attached.

My backstory

I learned about WPC from a volunteer I met at Park Slope’s Seventh Heaven Street Fair in 1994. She was staffing an information table. I was 23 years old and looking for my place in the world. I set my head and my heart to learning the nuts-and-bolts of building independent, community-based publications.

From 1995 to 2001, I volunteered full-time with an organization in Western Massachusetts and published the *Western Massachusetts Alliance News*. This publication provided low-income workers in Berkshire County with a voice and connection with others in the area, to unite and address poverty conditions there.

In 2001, I relocated to my hometown of Columbus, Ohio, and launched the newsprint tabloid *The Mid-Ohio Worker* to provide the news and views of low-income service and temporary workers in the area. I was the publisher and main writer for the first year until I recruited additional staff and built the newspaper to quarterly editions with a circulation of 1500 newspapers distributed through a mailing list of a membership, subscribers, and through outreach such as literature tables and speaking engagements.

During that time and as a result of the integrity of this publication and the organization it spoke for, *The Columbus Dispatch*, a Gannett-owned daily requested our assistance with their 2017 AP award-winning series “Dividing Lines.” Based on a study that ranked Columbus the second most economically segregated city in the nation, I worked with reporters to liaise with communities of low-income warehouse and other service workers to tell their stories for the series.

Young people want truthful, relevant news

I find hope in the resurgence of youth who have a passion for accurate news that is relevant both to their lives and to the world in which we live. These young people are excited about the power of the written word.

Through the Fordham University Center for Community Engaged Learning, professors from the Communications and English departments partner with WPC. These educators have added WPC as part of their course curriculum. Some are budding journalists themselves; others are looking for truthful, relevant news. By collaborating with us, even faculty members learn new skills and, more importantly, new passion for the importance of the news.

Fordham University students who participated with WPC last semester had these reflections:

“The goal isn’t to write about oneself, but bring about change by shining light on the reality of those who have been silenced in the past,” noted Ryan Fitzgerald, who is majoring in English.

“I realized that this kind of journalism is not just about reporting; it’s about relationship-building and collaboration. I’m grateful that Fordham partnered with WPC, allowing students like me to engage directly with this kind of commun-

ity-driven journalism,” wrote graduating journalism student Matea Damevski.

And the student Yoselyn Perez reflected that “writing is not only an individual skill but also a communal act that depends on trust, access, and collaboration. Seeing how WPC empowers communities to print and circulate their own words reminded me that the written word has both political and creative power.”

Not all youth are submerged in social media

WPC provides a place for experienced journalists to extend their expertise to lift the next generation.

We teach these students that words matter and that—to paraphrase the words of Supreme Court Chief Justice Hugo Black in 1971, writing for the majority in the *New York Times Co. v. United States*, AKA the “Pentagon Papers case”—“the press is meant to serve the governed, not the governors.”

A call to action

WPC is a wonderfully fulfilling opportunity for veteran journalists to mentor not only students but also grown women and men who want to work in journalism, because all generations need media that tell the truth. I hope you find my message inspiring enough to motivate yourself to find a way that you too can work with WPC. That’s my call to action to all of you, my fellow Silurians.

Cathi Steele is the editor of Collective Endeavor and former publisher of The Mid-Ohio Workers Association, Western Massachusetts Alliance News and a proud new member of the Silurians Press Club. Find out more about Women’s Press Collective (WPC) at womenspresscollective.org



Here is a hard fact (as well as the hardware) of publishing: Lisa Daniell, who, like Cathi Steele, also joined the Silurians only this past July, introduces one Instagram-era student to WPC’s printing press.

Photo courtesy of Women’s Press Collective (WPC)

David Margolick: An Ode to Better, Funnier Times

Continued from Page 1

describes as "the Mount Rushmore of American Comedy" for this "meticulously investigated and eloquent biography." Indeed, it was on the third Wednesday of November, with Tony as interlocutor, David Margolick brought his own special brand of genius and humor to a packed luncheon audience of his fellow Silurians at the National Arts Club. "Now what?" Margolick spread out his hands and shrugged slyly at Tony. "You've praised the book, so thank you, and good night."

Well, not exactly. There was not a little left to tell. To begin with "there are 20 million people watching this as it unfolds and there it is. Live TV—90 minutes a week, 39 weeks a year." And then, Margolick begins peeling back the curtain, little by little, for his audience as he does so masterfully in his book—about Sid and the world that fed his machine.

"Every morning, Sid would go to the bathroom and puke when he first came in. It was a very competitive atmosphere," Margolick began.

Then, talking about his own creative process, "One of the first jobs of a writer really is to disabuse people of the myths. And one of the myths was that [Sid's] writers room was a wonderfully happy place, where everybody was working in concert and supporting one another and frolicking around and coming up with this novel comedy every week. But in fact, it was an aggressive and unhappy and very competitive place."

Margolick recalled the story, as he put it, "Two writers who hated each other happen to run into one another on the street. And one of them said,

'You know, we really should get together sometime. Why don't you and your wife come over sometime for dinner.' And the other one replied, 'We don't eat anymore.'"

Still, as Margolick continued, Caesar's show was "where many of the most famous and most ingenious and elaborate sketches appeared. The writers room of lore [had] seven writers; at one time, Larry Gelbart, Mel Brooks and Neil Simon were all working for Caesar in that one room. Part of the reason for the atmosphere there, Margolick observed, was the explanation given by the late Carl Reiner, one of a broad gamut

of writers and comics with close ties to Sid Caesar who Margolick interviewed: "Sid Caesar was shortchanged on charm."

But Margolick certainly isn't. Halfway through our lunch hour, Tony took a detour and played a clip from an 11-minute sketch culled from the kinescope archives of Sid Caesar. As the light went up at the end, Margolick explained how that scene got "the longest and lustiest laughter before—or since—in the history of television. And I should say to all the journalists in the room, beginning with Arthur Sulzberger, that I learned at *The Times* you never say anything is the first, or the most, or the only, because inevitably you got a letter, right? But my claim that this is the longest laugh in the history of television remains uncontradicted."

The arc of Sid Caesar's career continues through from the earliest silent film comics. "Chaplin and Buster Keaton and other comedians of that era, Laurel and Hardy. He talked about them all the time as the major influences in his life and, later on, he restaged silent comedy on his show, and it's really brilliantly done down through to the advent of color television."

This in turn allows Margolick a transition to a footnote in his work. "Footnotes are a great, underutilized resource among writers and particularly newspaper writers because we don't have the option of using them. And often you have stories that are just a slight distraction, but they're too good to leave out. That's what footnotes are for," said Margolick, then, referring to his book, continued: "So, barely 8,000 color televisions were made in the first six months of 1954 and the competition for them was intense. The publisher of *The New York Times*, Arthur Hays

Sulzberger, tried wrangling one from NBC through Jack Gould, the veteran TV writer for *The Times*. "It is not clear whether he wishes to have a set on loan or to purchase one," an NBC executive wrote to General Sarnoff. This thing went to the very top of NBC—what to do with Arthur Hays Sulzberger, how to handle him, and how to keep him happy. Going back to the quote, from the executive, "In view of Mr. Sulzberger's importance, I am bringing this to your attention to see what can be done." I think they probably ended up loaning him one. He may never have returned it, but I don't know

about that. But you get a story like that, and you think you gotta use that in the book somewhere. You can't leave that out." Margolick pauses and looks out at his audience. "Especially since his son is here tonight... Oh, his grandson. I'm sorry. Yeah." (Note: Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr. was in the audience, sitting directly across from Margolick.)

Not much else to be sorry about, though. Margolick riffs on it all. But especially the food, about which Sid was obsessed. "The reason we had the book party at Barney Greengrass, Sid knew that he had really arrived, he said, when he could order sturgeon from Barney Greengrass and 'I didn't care even if it was five dollars a pound I could have as much as I wanted.' That to him was an indication that he really had hit it big."

"One of my challenges doing the book was to describe why there are so many food-obsessed sketches," Margolick continued. "A classic is Sid going to a health food restaurant. All Sid wants is a steak and they're bringing out these plants. Lunch is served in a flowerpot, and you eat it with trowels. It's like a forerunner of the scene in *Annie Hall*. There's a lot of forerunners in Caesar's comedy. One of my challenges was to describe what there was in Caesar's humor that was Jewish. One of the conclusions was that he's so obsessed with food."

The best explanation he got about the Jews' fixation with victuals came from *The Times'* late food critic, Mimi Sheraton. Over breakfast, Margolick asked her, "What's the difference? I mean the Italians care about food every bit as much. And she said, 'Yes, the Italians are just like the Jews. But without the panic.'"

So, what finally led to Sid's downfall? Part of it, believe it or not, was Lawrence Welk—specifically, the expanding audience to which the mild-mannered accordionist's variety show and its inoffensive lineup really appealed.

"Caesar was peddling an elite intellectual kind of comedy, and people in the sticks felt that Caesar was kind of talking down to them, and they resented him," Margolick recalled. "ABC, which was the third network at that point and really just getting started, put Welk against Caesar in the final season, and he clobbered him in the ratings. The popular taste was changing. And television was catering to these larger, more rural au-



Video clips of skits by Sid Caesar, including this one of his and Imogene Coca's hilarious sendup of the beach scene in *From Here to Eternity*, brought laughs and renewed appreciation for Caesar's—and author Margolick's—genius. (View the video of the luncheon at Silurians.org.)

diences."

This grew into decades "when he was really out of commission," Margolick said. "Comedians who remembered how important he had been in their careers tried to prop him up and keep him out there. People like Jackie Gleason, not a guy known for his generosity to put it mildly, had him on his show many times, just to sort of keep him alive. Johnny Carson had studied all of Caesar's famous sketches and brought him on. Dick Cavett was another one who had him on many times."

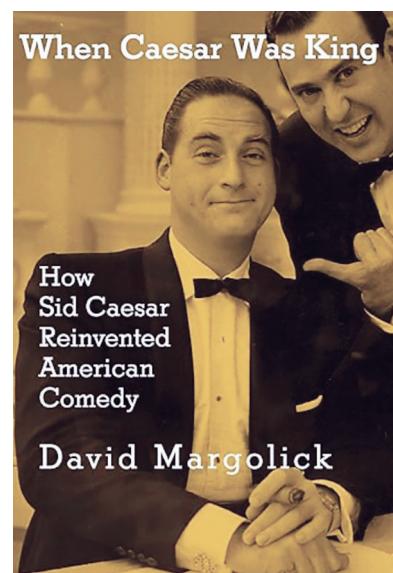
"In the end, there were so many who wanted to restore Sid Caesar to his pedestal, and that was another reason why they were never begrudging with me," said Margolick, singling out Mel Brooks and Woody Allen for the interview time they gave him.

"Sid was not known for his one-liners, but he had a good one about Mel: 'When I found Mel, he was living underneath the hovel.' He found Mel and plucked him out from beneath the hovel."

So why exactly did David Margolick write *When Caesar Was King*?

Simple. "It was for a Jewish book series, and I wanted to write a book about a Jew who would make me laugh for a change. Groucho Marx had already been taken."

David A. Andelman is a past president of The Silurians, a former New York Times and CBS News correspondent, and creator of SubStack's global "Andelman Unleashed."



Margolick's book got rave reviews.

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Brooklyn. Pat then spent nearly 30 years at

Rubenstein PR, where he

rose to Managing

Director and led many

public policy-driven

initiatives, including founding

the Quinnipiac University Poll and growing

the NYC Veterans Day Parade to the largest

in the nation.

Pat retired in 2020—or had planned to. About taking on the role of Interim Chair of a watchdog agency, Pat said that the CCRB "plays a vital role in public safety for all New Yorkers," adding that "I look forward to leading in a diligent, fair and unbiased manner."

In May 2025, **William Weinbaum**

was named to the 2025 Hall of Achievement class at the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications at Northwestern University. The Hall of Achievement is the highest honor Medill bestows on its graduates.

Willie—a digital journalist and



PAT SMITH

television news, feature, investigative and documentary producer and director for ESPN—is no stranger to accolades from his peers. The Silurians have singled out this esteemed member with four first-place Medallions; the most recent was awarded at the June 2022 "Excellence in Journalism Awards" dinner for his report "A Handshake from a White Teammate Signaled Jackie Robinson's Arrival in America's Game." For collaborative and individual work, he has received a CableACE Award, Dateline Award, NABJ Salute to Excellence

Award, National Headliner Award and Telly Award, as well as multiple Sports Emmys®, Deadline Club awards, New York Festivals awards, Military Reporters & Editors Association awards, and Peabody awards. Before joining ESPN in 1995, Willie was a producer for This Week in Baseball, Major League Baseball Magazine, and news and events coverage for more than 150 Sports News satellite subscriber stations.



WILLIE WEINBAUM

Got Something to Brag About?

To share personal or professional news with your fellow Silurians for publication on our Website and/or in Silurian News, go to https://bit.ly/silurians_brag_sheet or use this QR code:



A Reporter's Tenacity Unravels – and Then Helps Her Chronicle – Her Family's Wartime Secrets

BY KAREN A. FRENKEL

My training is as a science writer and technology journalist and producer. I covered all the technologies that make your mobile phones smart. I wrote for trade and national publications and produced two documentaries about technology and society for Public Television.

During the past 11 years, I transitioned from my beat to narrative nonfiction with the *Family Treasures Lost and Found* project, which includes my recently published memoir and tie-in documentary. Both chronicle my investigative quest to fill gaps in the survival stories of my Polish-

talks and screenings followed by Q&As that took place at Holocaust museums in L.A. and Houston, and in synagogues, and Jewish Community Centers nationwide.

It's been extremely gratifying that readers and audiences have responded positively. They recognize that all survivors' stories are extraordinary and precious, and that my parents' tales were highly unusual because they were not in concentration camps. My refugee father fled Poland in early 1939. Just before he left, he married an American tourist who was the daughter of the owners of Ratner's, the famous dairy restaurant on the Lower East Side. She turned out to be a gangster's moll and—well, to

reasons for their reticence. Because my father was silent about his past, I assumed he had been shielded from fascism and exterminationist antisemitism. But I learned that my father was often in mortal danger as a student at the University of Vienna Medical School, where Austro-fascist students regularly rioted and beat up Jews.

I did not know that he witnessed the *Anschluss* (when the Germans marched into Austria in March 1938) and received his degree only because he was a foreign student.

Had he been an Austrian Jew, he would not have graduated. And shockingly, the French ship on which he sailed to Havana Harbor in May 1939 arrived when the *St. Louis* was at anchor. Like its German Jewish passengers, my father and other Jews were not permitted to disembark. It still pains me to contemplate how that must have hurt him.

My mother minimized her plight, too, but did record her oral history for the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. I drew on it and a rare family archive of photos, museum quality oil and pastel family portraits, and correspondence inherited from my great-grandparents, who fled Berlin in late 1940. But growing up hearing my mother's stories and transcribing her Fortunoff testimony was very different from seeing the locations where incidents occurred. I could not imagine her terror when she had to get a stamp at a Gestapo

Headquarters until I walked into the dungeon-like building in 2016 and saw the backyard where Jews faced firing squads. And I had suspected that as a young, beautiful teenager my mother was at the mercy of her German "employers." But the MeToo movement, which arose concurrent with this project, revived my suspicion that she had been sexually abused. That remains unconfirmed, however.

Initially, I was reluctant to convey my family's story in the form of a memoir. I felt I did not have enough memories of my father and, regardless of the genre, I wanted to remain in the background, because I felt that my parents were

more interesting than me.

As I made my discoveries, I wrote a narrative nonfiction account similar to an historical novel except that the characters—my relatives—were real. But the feedback was: Who is the omniscient narrator? Who are you? What do you think of and how do you feel about what you learned?

Addressing those questions in a memoir meant forsaking some of my training as a journalist; I could report scenes, but this genre required that I comment on and interpret them. At first, it was challenging to insert my opinions, but then I found it liberating. And when details eluded me, I filled in the blanks with conjecture, trying out scenarios based on what I already knew of my relatives' personalities and predilections.

Producing the documentary

I wanted to show people how a journalist thinks and follows leads to uncover facts. — KAREN A. FRENKEL

required thinking more visually, and we were constrained by the lack of footage and images, especially for my father's side of the family. The lead of my memoir, which describes my paternal grandmother's suicide and my attempts to ask my father about her, could not work for the documentary.

We did not have images that would draw in audiences. Instead, we lead with my maternal great-grandparents' rare, huge and visually stunning collection, which showed viewers some of the urban, assimilated Jewish culture the Nazis destroyed.

Also, obtaining archival footage of the cities where the action took place was crucial, but it posed dilemmas and required discretion. For example, we wanted to be respectful of Jewish women who were raped by Ukrainians and Poles during pogroms when the Nazis invaded Lwów, now Lviv, Ukraine. We did not have permission from those women to show photos of



them being abused, and yet we did not want to sanitize the record of such atrocities.

We were hampered again in showing my failed attempt to find jewels my grandfather had buried in his house in Lviv. The footage I shot was not interesting enough, and

after letting the audience down, where would we take them from there? But in my memoir, I described my lifelong yearning to find the stash—anything, really, that would reveal something about my grandparents' taste and sensibilities before the Nazi onslaught.

There were storytelling advantages and disadvantages in both media, and I enjoyed tackling the tradeoffs, but they had in common the greatest challenge for this project: how to structure the story so that readers and viewers would not feel shunted from one thread to another. The solutions for each medium were different, however. Film is so much more nonlinear than prose, for example.

In the end, I solved many mysteries, gained newfound admiration for my parents, and found a profound connection to my lost grandparents, uncle and his bride, and numerous great-aunts and great-uncles. I learned that you can love people you've never met. And that is the real treasure.

Editor's note: For more on Karen A. Frenkel's memoir and documentary, visit www.familytreasuresmemoir.com and www.familytreasuresfilm.com.



Karen Frenkel (right) managed to uncover lost and hidden documents of her family, including fake, life-saving IDs. Here, she and Marcia Rock, the director of her documentary, assess a photo.

Jewish parents and sole surviving grandfather.

Like many refugees, my dad refused to talk about his past and he died young, so I never got to talk to him adult-to-adult. My mom glossed over parts of her wartime travails posing as a Catholic Pole and surviving as a slave laborer in Germany. As a result of the trauma they endured and their reluctance to describe it when I was growing up, I knew little about my grandparents, my uncle and his bride, and numerous great-aunts and great-uncles. I felt compelled to find answers to questions I had accumulated since childhood, so I probed their fates, too.

My memoir and two film versions, a 75-minute feature for the public and a Five-Part Series of shorts edited for classrooms, are for everyone concerned about the struggle for survival, empathy, human rights and dignity, regardless of background. Even though readers may not have had experiences like the specifics of my family, they can put themselves in my relatives' shoes and relate to emotions similar to those they, themselves, have felt. For every family has secrets and everyone suffers loss. I also wanted to show people how a journalist thinks and follows leads to uncover facts.

Last June, I was honored to give a book talk at the Roosevelt Reading Festival in Hyde Park, which C-SPAN covered. In October, the Museum of Jewish Heritage sponsored a virtual interview with me for its series "Stories Survive." The 75-minute documentary premiered in September 2024 at the Center for Jewish History in New York City. The director, Marcia Rock, and I taught a webinar sponsored by the Museum of Jewish Heritage for educators interested in teaching the Holocaust with our Five-Part Series. Other

find out more, you'll just have to read my book.

A major challenge was trying to overcome Holocaust fatigue and showing that my family's stories are still, unfortunately, relevant. There are 123 million men, women and children displaced worldwide due to persecution, climate change, and other factors. Structurally, a major storytelling hurdle was interweaving my arc as I made discoveries with my relatives' stories of survival so that readers and audiences would not feel dragged from one thread to another.

Filling gaps in my parents' stories enabled me to more fully appreciate their wartime travails and the

Julian Zelizer on The Historic Limits of the Possible

Continued from Page 2

nalism is facing massive challenges in covering this president in 2025." And these challenges are legion both within and from the outside. "The long-form article has been displaced by The TikTok video," Zelizer continued. "The fragmentation of popular culture, where everyone can stream whatever they want, whenever they want, makes it easier for people to tune out politics altogether."

He then turned to MS Now's Chris Hayes, quoting from his book *The Sirens' Call: How Attention Became the World's Most Endangered Resource*. "If you can't be heard," Chris Hayes wrote, "it doesn't matter what you say and right now it's both easier than ever to shout. And harder than ever to be heard."

So, what's happened exactly? "Commercial pressures leave these organizations moving from one story to the other in search of clicks, content and viewers. Gallup's most recent poll found public trust in the news media to produce accurate information has fallen to its lowest level in five decades. Only 31 per-

cent of Americans say they trust the mainstream media a great deal or a fair amount—slightly less than the 36 percent who say they don't trust it at all."

And what about those water-cooler moments? "Woodward and Bernstein's reporting could spark shared national conversations—water-cooler moments. The water cooler has been displaced by the individualized water bottle," Zelizer smiled thinly. Moreover, with dramatic transformations in media ownership (remember the long-standing Graham family, stewards of the *Washington Post*, now in the hands of Bezos and Amazon), Zelizer observed "boardroom considerations about what to publish might not always align anymore with what's best for the public interest."

On a broader scale, Zelizer continued, "Much of politics is no longer national. We have seen excellent reporting on the rise of autocratic regimes in parts of Europe, on conservative populism on anti-immigration movement, that's taking place around the globe, coverage

that situates American politics within a global context. Understanding the past and this kind of discussion throws light on what's happening right here." [As "Andelman Unleashed" seeks to do every week, if you will pardon the aside!] And as Zelizer himself pointed out, central to the entire media as well as the political landscape are twin realities of "polarization and partisanship," which he wrote about in his newest book, *In Defence of Partisanship*, as well as every week in his Substack page, "The Long View."

Zelizer was particularly anxious to encourage today's journalists to look at Instagram, even TikTok, as vehicles for reaching the emergent new and younger consumers of information today. "How do you bring the news to the places where people are going to consume them when they're under 30?" he asked. "We've seen these challenges in American journalism before. In 1954, Edward R. Murrow demonstrated the power of television."

Eventually, of course, Zelizer was asked (by former *Times* reporter and Silurian Leslie Wayne) about

the hour he engineered for Trump to spend on Zoom with a small group of journalists. Zelizer described it as "definitely the most unusual thing I've ever experienced in my career." His takeaway? Trump "clearly felt at a certain level that he could persuade the historians about how to think of himself. It was the brand or salesperson kind of thinking. And there was a kind of element of how he fits in history that he cares about."

Indeed, in the end it all does come back to history, of course. "I'm just more worried about what will the place of historians and the writing of complex, complicated, not always positive, not always negative history be 20, 30 years from now. It's the same kind of pressure the press is facing. I still remain optimistic that we will figure a way out of it. But I think that's the threat that I start with, not about how to cover President Trump."

David A. Andelman is a past president of The Silurians, a former New York Times and CBS News correspondent, and creator of SubStack's global "Andelman Unleashed."

Obituaries

‘The Heart and Soul of the New York Post,’ Myron Rushetzky, 73, Loses Battle with Cancer

BY JACK DEACY

Myron Rushetzky, 73, the legendary gatekeeper to the raucous *New York Post*’s City Desk during a 40-year career there, who later served on the Board of the Silurians Press Club, died of glandular cancer on Aug. 15 at NYU Langone Hospital in Manhattan.

“He fell in love with newspapers at the *New York Post*, and newspapers and the *Post* loved him back. He became the heart and soul of the paper,” said journalist and author Susan Mulcahy, who began her career as a copy girl at the *Post* under Myron in 1978 and graduated to write for the famous Page Six gossip page.

In 2024, she and Frank DiGiacomo coauthored *Paper of Wreckage: The Rogues, Renegades, Wiseguys, Wankers, and Relentless Reporters Who Redefined American Media*, an oral history of the *Post* from 1976 to 2024. It surprised no one when Mulcahy and DiGiacomo dedicated the book to Myron Rushetzky.

After his retirement from the *Post*, Myron became a Silurian and was soon invited to join its Board of Governors where he served for more than a decade. He worked closely with me to plan and make sure that the annual Silurians “Excellence in Journalism” Awards Dinner ran smoothly. Myron also was a regular at the check-in table at the Silurians popular monthly lunches. As the gatekeeper of the

Post’s City Desk, Myron said he was “in the eye of the hurricane,” answering incoming calls that in pre-internet days was the paper’s connection to breaking news.

His reach was global, reflected in this obituary which appeared in *The Jerusalem Post*: “Like a triage official in a hospital, he knew exactly where to send such calls—news editors, beat reporters or the rewrite desk. And he knew when to hang up on the crazies.” Hannah Brown, who wrote that obituary, also had been one of Myron’s copy girls and credited him with getting her started in a journalism career. She was not the only one.

One of Rushetzky’s duties at the *Post* was overseeing the training and scheduling of copy boys and girls—the support staff in pre-digital days that ran copy, photos, layouts wherever they had to go.

Generations of future well-known journalists got their start running copy for Rushetzky, including *New York Times* White House correspondent and Silurian Maggie Haberman.

Early in his career at the *Post*, Myron began sending birthday and anniversary cards to colleagues at the *Post* and at other newspapers; eventually, he also sent greeting cards to their children. Year after year, his list grew and grew to hundreds of recipients. Point in question: Myron became well known to Hallmark Cards staff who enrolled him in a special rewards program that provided him with



The heart and soul of the newsroom: Myron Rushetzky (left) stifles a smile as a newsroom colleague presents him with a mocked-up *New York Post* that depicts the new retiree as the cover story. Rushetzky served the Silurians wherever he was needed.

Photo by Brian Zak/NY Post

discounts. And then there was Bank Myron. In the 1980s when ATMs were scarce, Myron provided interest-free loans to his *Post* colleagues. After he took a buyout from the *Post* in June 2013, Myron established Post Nation, a large email community of his former *Post* colleagues, reporting to them on births, book events, honors, retirements and deaths.

When he was diagnosed with cancer in the spring of 2025, Myron only shared the news with a few close friends. As a result, many *Post* and Silurian colleagues

and friends were unaware of his grave condition. But as word slowly trickled out, friends and colleagues rallied as best as they could. In fact, on Friday afternoon, August 15, scant hours before Myron’s death, former Silurian President David Andelman and his wife, Pamela, spent 30 minutes at his bedside at NYU Langone.

David told us that Myron “was breathing, yet totally unconscious” and that “laying atop his stomach was a copy of that day’s *New York Post*.”

Rest in peace, Myron.

Milton Esterow, Who Brought an Investigative Edge to Stories About Nazi-Looted Art, Dies at 97

On October 9, one week after Milton Esterow’s passing, his daughter Judith Esterow informed The Silurians of his death. She wrote, “Milton was a long-time member of the Silurians as well as a multiple recipient of Silurians awards. His first was in 1967 for his Page 1 *New York Times* story on a fake Greek horse at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Other awards followed during his tenure at ARTnews. He died peacefully at home at age 97, and had been working on a freelance piece for The Times until three weeks before. He loved attending the monthly Silurians lunches and much enjoyed chatting with old colleagues and meeting new fellow journalists.” Here are excerpts from the obituary that appeared in The *New York Times* by staff reporter Jeré Longman.—THE EDITORS

Milton Esterow, a *New York Times* arts journalist who, in 1972, bought and reinvigorated *ARTnews* magazine and, at both media outlets, helped bring an investigative edge to culture reporting, especially regarding artwork looted by the Nazis, died on Oct. 3 at his home in Manhattan. He was 97.

Mr. Esterow joined *The New York Times* as a 17-year-old copy boy in 1945, became assistant to the director of cultural news before he left the paper in 1968, and returned nearly a half-century later as a freelancer.

A draft of his final article, about the restitution of art stolen during the Holocaust, was submitted before he died and remains scheduled for publication in the near future.

Mr. Esterow found his niche at *The Times* by bringing the toughness of his early coverage on the crime beat to culture reporting. On Nov. 16, 1964, his article about treasures stolen by the Nazis appeared on the front page of *The Times* under the headline “Europe is Still Hunting Its Plundered Art.” It inspired him to dig further into the topic, leading to his book *The Art Stealers* (1966).

“This had never been done at the paper before, doing investigative journalism, getting behind the scenes and interviewing the key players, the artists, the collectors, the dealers, the scholars,” Mr. Esterow said in a 2009 lecture at the University of Southern California.

Itching for a bigger role, he left *The Times* to run the publishing division of

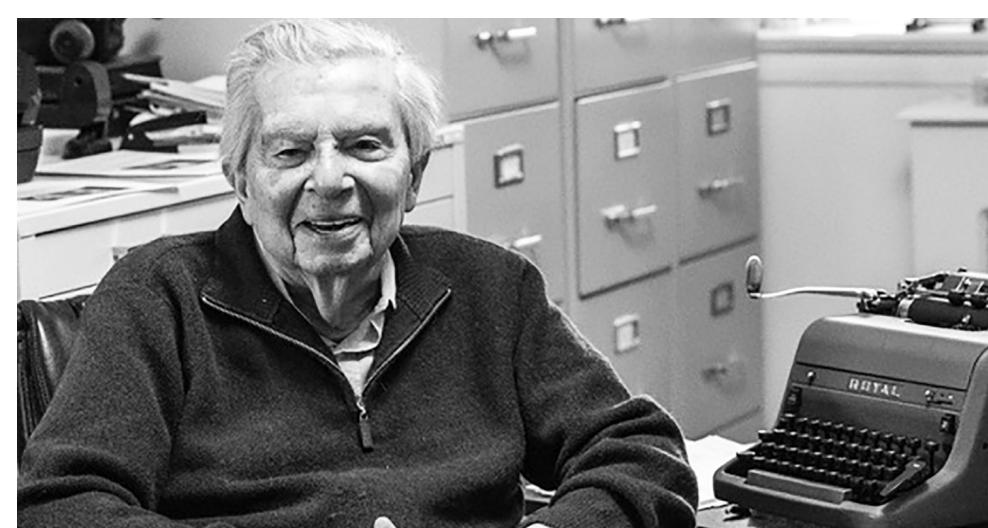
Kennedy art galleries in New York and, in 1972, to lead an eight-person investor group in purchasing *ARTnews* from *Newsweek*, then a division of The Washington Post Company.

ARTnews, a monthly founded in 1902, was the nation’s oldest arts magazine, but it was adrift financially, with a circulation of only about 30,000. Mr. Esterow instituted a makeover, moving beyond the publication’s traditional focus on reviews to broaden and sharpen its coverage of what he called the “fascinating and mysterious” happenings of the art world.

Under his stewardship as publisher and editor, *ARTnews* became one of the most widely circulated art magazines. It won a National Magazine Award for general excellence in 1981 and George Polk Awards for cultural reporting in 1980 and 1991, the latter for investigating art stolen by the Soviets during its occupation of Germany after World War II.

In 1984, Mr. Esterow received a tip that a monastery in Mauerbach, Austria, was rumored to house thousands of artworks confiscated by the Nazis. (An estimated 25,000 Jewish homes were sacked in Austria.) He and his wife flew to Vienna, where the minister of the Federal Monuments Office of Austria, pounding on his desk, declined to let him visit the monastery, as Mr. Esterow recounted in his 2009 lecture.

He told the minister that such a defensive posture made him suspicious and that “maybe you’re hiding something.” The interview quickly ended. Back home, Mr.



Crusading Journalist and Champion of Restitution: Milton Esterow in his Upper East Side home office in February 2023. Three weeks before his death, Esterow was finishing up a freelance piece for *The Times*.

Photo by Cheryl Alberman

Esterow and Mr. Decker on behalf of the country, saying they had “contributed to Austria facing its past honestly and thereby becoming, in a way, a better country.”

Milton Esterow was born on July 28, 1928, in Brooklyn. His father, Bernard Esterow, owned a small grocery. His mother, Yetta (Barash) Esterow, managed the home. At 10, Milton published a neighborhood newspaper that he sold for two cents a copy. On joining *The Times*, his first assignment as a copy boy was to buy the latest edition of *The Daily Racing Form* for the managing editor, who placed his horseracing bets with Mr. Esterow’s boss, the chief copy boy.

After being promoted to reporter in 1948, Mr. Esterow dropped out of Brooklyn College, figuring he would learn journalism by practicing it over studying it.

In addition to his daughter Judith—a former associate publisher of *ARTnews*—he is survived by another daughter, Deborah Rothstein; three grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and four step-great-grandchildren. His wife of 74 years, Jacqueline (Levine) Esterow, died in May.