

DUPONTS

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58 medium markets and 35 small markets (although no small-market award was given). Radio producers submitted 73 entries, up from 45 last year.

Unlike last year, not one of this year's winners is for work concerning the Iraq war. But reflecting the changing military priorities of the U.S., ABC News' "Nightline" is being honored for its harrowing combat reporting from eastern Afghanistan.

Three of the other international reporting awards will go to reports from Asia, an area of the world that has been receiving increasing journalistic attention, partly because of China's hosting of the Summer Olympics.

NPR Honored

NPR, which won three awards this year, is being honored for its adroit change of plans when its reporters traveled to China to prepare reports in advance of the Olympics and instead found themselves in the middle of the devastating Chengdu earthquake.

HBO's Cinemax is taking home an award for China coverage as well, for its emotional look at children with AIDS living in remote villages.

Public television's ITVS won for its film about a Japanese couple's 30-year search for their daughter, who was kidnapped by North Korean spies.

Another of the awards for international reporting goes to CNN for "God's Warriors," its three-part globe-spanning examination of religious fundamentalism in Islam, Christianity and Judaism, which jurors praised for the network's investment of time and resources. "The ambition of that

series, and the sweeping nature of it and the time and effort that went into it, yielding such incredible results, really made it award-worthy," said Ms. Wright.

Courageous Current

Current TV, former Vice President Al Gore's 3-year-old cable network and Web site, won its first award, for what the jurors dubbed a "courageous" documentary about the rise of neo-Nazi hate groups in Russia.

That report, which was spurred by viral videos that the reporter found on the Internet, aired on cable as well as online. The duPont program, mindful of the increasing amount of Web-only news broadcasts coming from places such as "Frontline World" and newspapers including the Washington Post and the New York Times, in 2008-09 will expand its entry categories to include Web-exclusive news broadcasts.

"We're looking to the future; we're looking to what's happening right now," Ms. Wright said.

On the domestic side, public radio and public television undertook extensive investigations into complicated financial stories. The judges were impressed with the clear language in a collaboration between NPR and "This American Life" on the subprime mortgage crisis, a program that has proven to have a lengthy life online as the financial crisis has deepened.

PBS' series "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?" meanwhile, took scientific data and translated it into individual television-friendly stories and economic disparities in healthcare. "I watched it when it aired and I remember it really caused me to examine, 'Wow, if my ZIP code is really affecting my lifespan, what does it say about this



ASIAN PRESENCE Cinemax Reel Life's "The Blood of Yingzhou District" is among winners covering issues in Asia.

country and what can be done?" Ms. Wright said, expressing admiration for the program.

Oregon Public Broadcasting contributed an examination into the environmental destruction caused by invasive species, while National Public Radio was honored for its reports on the high rate of sexual assaults of Native American women.

Results-Oriented

On the local front, the jurors chose to single out reporting that got results in the community. Frequent winner WJLA-TV in Washington was honored for its investigation into corrupt pediatric dental clinics, which were later shut down, while Tampa's WTVT-TV is taking home a baton for its reports that freed a truck driver wrongly convicted of causing a fatal accident.

The awards, which were established in 1942 and have been administered by Columbia since 1968, will be presented Thursday, Jan. 22, in the traditional ceremony in the rotunda of Columbia University's Low Memorial Library. CBS News anchor Katie Couric will host, with NBC News' Hoda Kotb and "This American Life" host Ira Glass joining her to present the gold and silver batons. ■

SPECIAL

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journalism. In January 2006, soon after becoming co-anchor of "ABC World News Tonight," Mr. Woodruff suffered severe brain injuries while on assignment in Iraq. Despite the difficulties including aphasia, which hampered his ability to speak, he has recovered and has returned to broadcasting.

"The work he did beforehand was an enormous part of his career, but his profile recently has had to do with what he went through in Iraq," said Mr. Cohen. "And we wanted to bring someone in who has gone through the wringer as a journalist. It's pretty clear that he's been very thoughtful about his experience and he brought a lot of that to the interviews he did for us."

Following the Process

"Telling the Truth" uses interviews with the reporters and producers of the duPont winners, and the programs demonstrate how great journalistic work emerges from America's radio and television newsrooms each day.

"This is the fourth time we've done the documentary. We work in conjunction with Columbia University to produce an hour for WNET that essentially gives you a profile of all of the winners," said Mr. Cohen. "All are mentioned, but we usually focus on a handful of those that we get a little more in-depth about. Behind the scenes, how the pieces got made, the approaches that the journalists took. We build the piece off of interviews with those particular winners and then

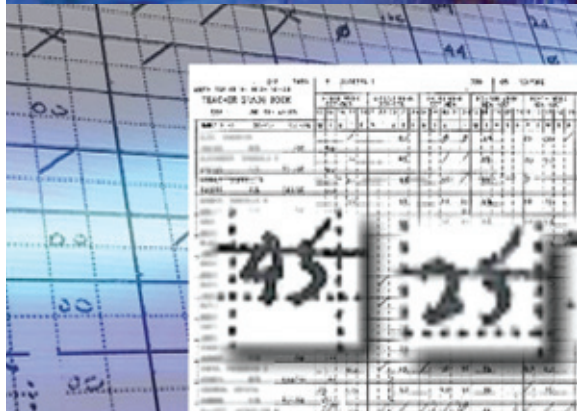
clips of the films."

There are common denominators involved in most of the winning projects.

"Many of the traits I think you can assume—tenacity, curiosity, not being willing to settle for half a story," said Mr. Cohen. "A lot of these stories take a lot of years to make. Some get turned out really fast, which is another kind of challenge, but many of these pieces are real labors of love and the people have lived those stories. Part of what the duPonts means is that they are getting recognition after all those years of digging. It means a lot."

The winners who are interviewed and whose films are featured in "Telling the Truth" this year include a piece from ABC's "Nightline." "The Other War: Afghanistan" was reported by Sebastian Junger and Tim Hetherington, who spent a good chunk of 2007 in Afghanistan, said Mr. Cohen. "Something like that, I think, reminds you that journalism is hard every time. Every one of these stories is a battle, but a battle in a different way. You never can predict how it's going to be hard, just that you know it's going to be hard.

"The thing I came away with this year is the extraordinary cross-section of pieces we get to work with, and that's partly a credit to the awards, people doing journalism in all kinds of different forms," Mr. Cohen added. "Films, TV, radio, new media—it's a real range of stories, and people are very articulate when they talk about what went into making them. It's pretty inspiring to hear them and it gives you a real sense of pride in the field and in the practice." ■



PLAYING HARD WFAA-TV's "A Passing Offense" examined pressures to give Dallas-area student athletes passing grades.

WFAA-TV, Dallas

'MONEY FOR NOTHING,' 'A PASSING OFFENSIVE,' AND 'THE BURIED AND THE DEAD'

By Elizabeth Jensen

Special to TelevisionWeek

In the 20 years the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards jury has been handing out a Gold Baton, the award—its most prestigious—has never gone to a local TV station.

This year, it's going to WFAA-TV, the ABC affiliate in Dallas/Fort Worth, which earned the top honor for what the jury saw as the station's continuing commitment to outstanding investigative reporting. The award caps a strong year for WFAA, which won a Peabody Award on the strength of four reports from its News 8 Investigates team.

The station, owned by Belo Corp., is a frequent duPont winner. Last year, producer Mark Smith and correspondent Byron Harris won a Silver Baton for "Television Justice," a three-part report on how the Murphy, Texas, police force collaborated with NBC's "Dateline: To Catch a Predator" sting operations.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Harris are back this year with "Money for Nothing," an investigation into lack of oversight at the U.S. Export-Import Bank that resulted in fraudulent loans.

Mr. Smith teamed up with correspon-

dent Brett Shipp for the other two reports in the entry: "A Passing Offense," which examined pressures at area schools to fabricate passing grades for star athletes, and "The Buried and the Dead," which exposed safety problems with faulty gas couplings that caused deadly explosions.

"These guys have been at it for a long time; they have incredible contacts," said Abi Wright, director of the duPont awards program. "Their success has built on itself as they have maintained excellent work over the years. It's basic shoe leather, and their station backing them, because it takes support to do that kind of work. That's one of the goals of awarding this kind of work: to give positive reinforcement, positive feedback to stations."

Tips from the community triggered two of the three stories in the winning package, but Mr. Harris and Mr. Shipp said it was basic follow-up, through Freedom of Information Act requests and poring through boxes of documents, that got the stories on the air.

The real reward in the reporting, said Mr. Harris, a 34-year WFAA veteran who won his first duPont in 1978, "is if you can get to the

CREDITS: Byron Harris, Brett Shipp, reporters; Mark Smith, producer; Kraig Kirchem, editor-photographer; Michael Valentine, executive news director

'aha' moment with the documents."

The WFAA reporters benefit from being "the only game in town," Mr. Shipp said, adding, "All the other stations in town have stripped their investigative units bare." By contrast, WFAA "has the reputation of giving a damn about true journalism and making changes in the community, state, country."

Stations that don't, he added, will be "the architect of our own demise. When we don't expect quality journalism, we give people a reason to turn us off."

The award to WFAA comes at a time when many local stations are under financial pressures that some fear could mean less money and time for investigative journalism.

The award to WFAA, said Ms. Wright, is first of all to honor the excellence at the station, but "also to send a signal, to boost morale at these stations that are working so hard, and doing more with less." ■



Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Gold Baton Winner



Byron Harris
Investigative Reporter



Kraig Kirchem
Investigative Photographer



Michael Valentine
Vice President/News



Brett Shipp
Investigative Reporter



Mark Smith
Investigative Producer

BELO

Belo salutes the *News 8 Investigates Team* of WFAA-TV
in Dallas/Fort Worth, the only local station
to ever receive the prestigious Gold Baton.