

SPECIAL SECTION

Newspro

THE STATE OF TV NEWS

TELLING THE STORY

WFAA Is First Local Station to Win Gold Baton as duPont Winners Report on Subjects From Environment to Earthquakes

By Elizabeth Jensen
Special to TelevisionWeek

The 13 winners of this year's Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for excellence in broadcast journalism are an eclectic mix of international reporting, results-oriented community journalism, sweeping inquiries into inequity in healthcare and the country's financial collapse, classic investigations into government waste and cover-up and an environmental documentary.

THE DETAILS

What: The 2009 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards for broadcast journalism
When: Thursday, Jan. 22
Where: Columbia University, New York City

It's a collection of reporting that Abi Wright, the awards program's new director, calls "very rich and diverse."

Chosen from 529 radio and television entries, the winning programs, which aired in the United States between July 1, 2007, and June 30, 2008, will be honored at an evening ceremony on Jan. 22.

For the first time, a Gold Baton, for 20 years the

highest honor granted by the awards program, will go to a local television station, longtime Texas powerhouse WFAA-TV, for its continuing commitment to outstanding investigative reporting. A Gold Baton, which is awarded only when warranted, was last handed out four years ago.

Read the Q&A with new duPont director Abi Wright at TVWeek.com.

This year alone, WFAA submitted three investigations that the jury found to be some of the biggest projects done in the eligibility period, according to juror insights provided by Ms. Wright. WFAA investigative reporters Brett Shipp and Byron Harris and producer Mark Smith juggle the major projects with other one-day stories, the judges noted, keeping numerous balls in the air.

A panel of about 75 screeners winnowed down the entries to the finalists. This year's entries, said Ms. Wright, broke down into 276 from networks, which consistently submit the most entries, and 38 from independents. Television stations were represented by stations in 49 major markets,

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VOICE OF EXPERIENCE Bob Woodruff hosts PBS' "Telling the Truth," about the duPont winners.

PROFILING BEST OF THE BEST

PBS Special Offers
Sampling of Winners
By Allison J. Waldman

Special to TelevisionWeek

On Friday, Jan. 16, PBS will broadcast "Telling the Truth: The Best in Broadcast Journalism," the annual look at the winners of the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards for excellence in the field.

ABC News correspondent Bob Woodruff will host this special "best of" compilation.

"In the past we've had CNN's Christiane Amanpour and also PBS' Michelle Martin hosting," said producer Will Cohen of Rain Media, the independent production company that makes "Telling the Truth" for PBS. "The hope is to bring some profile to the piece, so we chose people who are indicative of the level of seriousness that we want to bring to our film, out of respect to the award."

Mr. Woodruff is a particularly apt choice for 2009, as much for his personal story of survival as for his award-winning broadcast

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Congratulations
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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

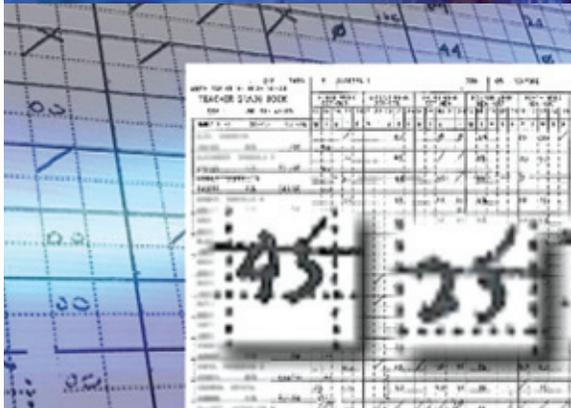
clips of the films."

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.

CNN & Christiane Amanpour 'GOD'S WARRIORS'

By Elizabeth Jensen
Special to TelevisionWeek

When it came time to judge "God's Warriors," CNN's three-part series on religious extremism, the jurors were impressed with the commitment of resources that it represented.

"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 Abi Wright, director of the awards program.

The series' correspondent, Christiane Amanpour, and the rest of the reporting team didn't have to fight to get the nine months to put it together or the six hours of airtime. The documentary, which covered several decades of religious, political and cultural history worldwide, was initiated by CNN's top news executives, including Jon Klein, president of CNN/U.S., Ms. Amanpour said.

"For six hours of programming to be commissioned by a cable network on a very, very serious subject was really extraordinary," Ms. Amanpour said of the assignment. "We were able to travel; we were able to do all the interviews necessary," including with most of those who were intimately involved in Israel's 1967 Six-Day War and the original settlement movement.

The team also ventured to less-traveled areas of Iran, where they got access to Islamic passion plays that have rarely, if ever, been seen on mainstream U.S. television.

"After that, we had the correct resources for putting it together: the

CREDITS: Christiane Amanpour, correspondent; Jen Christensen, Julie O'Neill, Andrew Tkach, Brian Rokus, Mike Schwartz, Nidal Rafa, James Polk, producers; Cliff Hackel, Dave Timko, producer/director/editors; Kathy Slobogin, managing editor; Jody Gottlieb, executive director; Andy Segal, Ken Shiffman, Mike Mocklar, executive producers; Mark Nelson, VP/senior executive producer

editing, the production and the airtime," Ms. Amanpour said.

Broken down into separate examinations of extremism in Christianity, Islam and Judaism, and studiously avoiding creating any kind of "moral equivalency" among them, the series drew a surprisingly solid audience

"For six hours of programming to be commissioned by a cable network on a very, very serious subject was really extraordinary."

Christiane Amanpour, CNN

over three consecutive nights in August 2007, beating its cable news competition in both overall viewers and key demographics.

Although some pro-Israel groups in America were critical of the pro-

gram about Judaism, their protests had little impact. The ratings, she said in an interview last year, "reinforced my belief that there are legions of viewers out there who are desperate for this stuff."

Ms. Amanpour didn't pull any punches with the series' tough language and sometimes contentious interviews, including what turned out to be the last interview with Rev. Jerry Falwell, co-founder of the U.S. Moral Majority movement, before his death. "One of the things I really don't like are these chummy, chummy interviews that seem to be the norm now," she said. "At the very least, our job is to push."

Last summer, Ms. Amanpour added a coda of sorts to the series, with a documentary on nonviolent Buddhists and their attempts to bring about political change in Burma and Tibet.

"God's Warriors," which also was honored in 2008 with a Peabody Award, has been rebroadcast on CNN, but it is as yet unavailable on DVD, because of issues clearing some of the rights to the historical footage. That disappoints Ms. Amanpour, who said she is still approached around the world by viewers who appreciated the programs.

The correspondent, who later this year will begin anchoring her first daily program, on CNN International, said she is working to, at a minimum, get portions of "God's Warriors" into schools, noting, "A lot of these documentaries are things we're struggling with as a society." ■

PRIZE WINNER CNN's series "God's Warriors," reported by Christiane Amanpour, was honored with a Peabody Award last year.



California Newsreel, Vital Pictures & PBS 'UNNATURAL CAUSES: IS INEQUALITY MAKING US SICK?'

By Allison J. Waldman
Special to TelevisionWeek

The Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards inform the industry and the public about television and radio journalism that has made an important contribution to communities and to the nation. Among the winners in the category of documentary film is PBS' "Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?," a seven-part, four-hour series that investigates how health disorders in the United States are related to income and race.

"The whole idea for many of us is to help Americans begin to scrutinize many of the myths and misconceptions that we have about health and, more basically, about race and class. Our race and class structures shape our health," said Larry Adelman, series creator and executive producer.

"Unnatural Causes" was conceived by California Newsreel with Vital Pictures as part of a larger impact campaign in association with leading public health, policy and community-based organizations.

"The conventional understanding of health is that we equate prevention with making the right choices, and seeing that the

future of health lies in better technologies, especially with drugs," Mr. Adelman said. "It's not that those things don't matter, but why is it that we're not talking about the ways in which inequality is growing in this country and has shaped health even more than diets, smoking and exercise."

The popular conception links health to medical care, lifestyles and genes, but "Unnatural Causes" erodes that assumption. "Our health is not just a product of the conventional big three—our meds, our genes and our behavior—but it's also deeply influenced by the conditions in which we live," said Mr. Adelman. "The neighborhoods in which we live, the schools we attend, the jobs we have, the money we make, the wealth we enjoy. If we can't improve those factors, then all our other efforts to improve the nation's health are ultimately going to fall flat."

The film received its widest exposure when it was broadcast last spring on PBS, and since then it's had more viewings. It also has been shown in other venues.

"In many ways, the film is being widely used by thousands of organizations around the country who are hoping to expand our

CREDITS: Larry Adelman, series creator and executive producer; Llewellyn Smith, co-executive producer; Christine Herbes-Sommers, series senior producer; Kimberlee Bassford, Franziska Blome, Julie Crawford, James M. Fortier, Ellie Lee, Randall MacLowry, Patricia Garcia-Rios, Maria Teresa Rodriguez, James Rutenbeck, Eric Stange, Tracy Heather Strain, producers

nation's debate over health," said Mr. Adelman. "What we can and what we should do to tackle health equity. Town hall meetings, community dialogues, service training, policy forums ... they're taking place all around the country. The National Association of County & City Health Officials has 137 departments around the nation and they're using it to discuss the subject."

The recognition by the duPonts is especially meaningful because it honors serious work about issues that matter, not only good yarns.

"There's drama in ideas, not just in stories. Of course we did stories, but we went back and forth from the macro to the micro, trying to look at these larger issues in a way that made a personal connection to viewers," said Mr. Adelman.

"It's like the Pulitzer Prize. It's a wonderful honor," he added. "To be honest, I don't put much stock in awards, but this is one that's really meaningful. So it's an absolute delight and an honor for all of us, not just for me. This is an award that truly looks at serious works of broadcast journalism." ■



POOR CARE The PBS documentary "Unnatural Causes" examines how health disorders are related to income and race.



2009
ALFRED I. DUPONT-
COLUMBIA AWARD
WINNER



CNN PRESENTS

**GOD'S
WARRIORS**

REPORTED BY
CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR



CNN PROUDLY SALUTES
THE 2009 ALFRED I. DUPONT-COLUMBIA
AWARD WINNERS
INCLUDING
CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR
AND THE STAFF OF CNN PRESENTS

Current TV & Christof Putzel 'FROM RUSSIA WITH HATE'

By **Hillary Atkin**

Special to *TelevisionWeek*

Provoked by shocking, violent videos disseminated on the Internet of people being beaten, Current TV correspondent Christof Putzel and his co-producer/videographer Lauren Cerre traveled to Russia to investigate the rise of a neo-Nazi faction that was inciting ethnic violence.

The du Pont Award-winning "From Russia With Hate" documents the socioeconomic factors from which the racism stems. It also gives viewers an inside look at leaders who not only condoned the violence but actually trained people to commit the attacks, some of which were captured on video and used to recruit others.

"We had to walk a fine line of not wanting to be an outlet for propaganda. It was an incredibly important story that needed to be told, so we went for it," Mr. Putzel said. "Anyone with a solid moral grounding can watch this stuff and see it for what it is."

When the borders of the former Soviet Union were opened in the early 1990s, immigrants from surrounding areas of central Asia entered the country in order to find jobs and a better life, shifting the ethnic balance of the population. Racism and discrimination against these immigrants and other foreigners, including students, was fomented by the burgeoning neo-Nazi movement, which in Russia

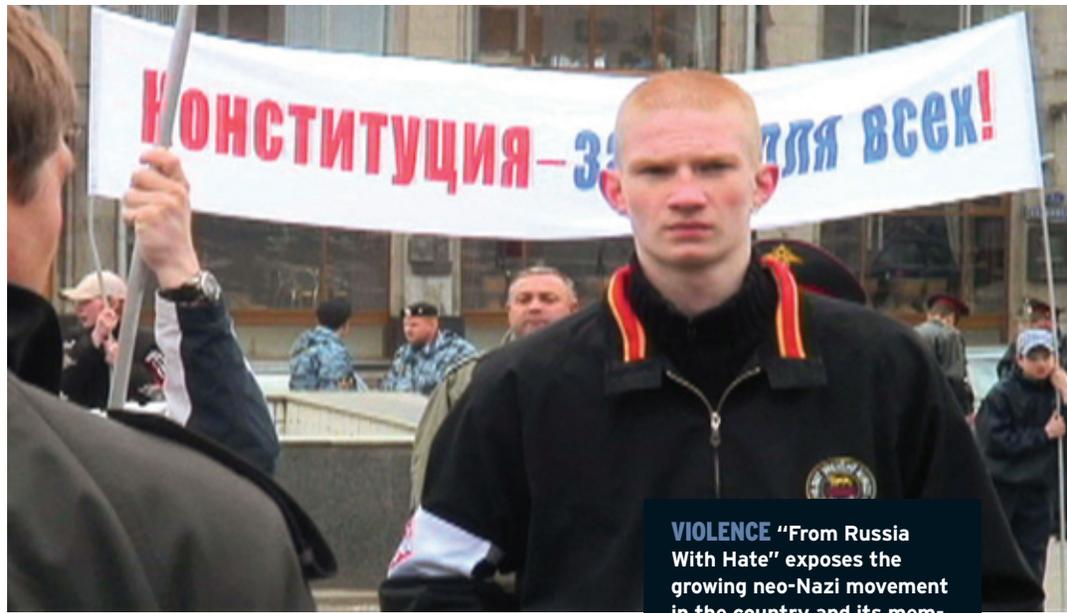
CREDITS: Christof Putzel, correspondent and producer; Lauren Cerre, co-producer; Mike Shen, editor; Laura Ling, supervising producer; David Neumann, president of programming

now is estimated to number as many as 70,000 people—half of the world's skinhead population.

Mr. Putzel went to Russia for two weeks in 2007, arriving on April 19, the day before Adolf Hitler's birthday, and a time of year that has become notorious for a spike in racial attacks. The situation is so dangerous that foreign students at Moscow universities are locked down in their dormitories because of fear for their safety during this period.

In further exposing the climate of hate that exists, Mr. Putzel spoke with an ultra-right-wing lawmaker, Nikolai Kuryanovich, who has introduced anti-immigrant legislation in Russia's parliament, the Duma, including a failed bill that would take away the citizenship of any Russian woman who marries a foreigner. His office wall was decorated with a picture featuring his head Photoshopped onto Josef Stalin's body.

"When we interviewed him, he had just come back from [Boris] Yeltsin's funeral, and he talked to us about his hopes for the country and bringing back Stalinism. It was crazy," Mr. Putzel said. "What was shocking to us is that his aide, who is a skinhead thug, had been arrested for beating up immigrants. It



VIOLENCE "From Russia With Hate" exposes the growing neo-Nazi movement in the country and its members' disturbing actions.



was surreal."

When the lawmaker was asked on camera if he advocated that kind of violence, he told the American crew that it was justified because the Russian government is not taking action.

Some of the most harrowing scenes in the piece involve Mr. Putzel's "infiltration" of a hidden skinhead training camp in the woods about two hours outside Moscow after his interview with National Socialist Organization leader Dmitri Rumyantsev, who ran a gym that was used to train young men to fight. Mr. Putzel also wanted to find out if Mr. Rumyantsev was connected to the Internet attack videos.

In the interview, the paranoid leader, who was concerned about police following him to Mr. Putzel's hotel room, admitted he morally supported the attacks. He would not reveal whether his organization provided moral or physical support.

A week later, he gave Mr. Putzel access to the secret training camp, which featured an obstacle course and hand-to-hand combat training for recruits that was part of an annual NSO initiation rite.

"We face ethnic expansion on our land and the replacement of our people with foreigners. Therefore, any form of resistance can only be welcomed. Terror, violence, explosions,

murders. Anything goes in the name of the nation," one of the NSO members said on camera.

At the camp, Mr. Putzel was introduced to a skinhead, Maxim "Tesak" Martsinkevich—whose nickname means "hatchet" in Russian—who seemed to delight in showing violent videos of his cronies beating immigrants senseless.

"He was later nailed for instigating racial hatred and threatening violence, and is serving a three-year term," Mr. Putzel said. "He fancied himself a modern-day Goebbels and saw our interview as propaganda, and didn't care what the consequences were." ■

Safari Media, ITVS, Chris Sheridan & Patty Kim for PBS

'ABDUCTION: THE MEGUMI YOKOTA STORY'

By **Allison J. Waldman**

Special to *TelevisionWeek*

PBS' weekly film series "Independent Lens" is no stranger to the duPont Awards. In fact, in 2006, "Seoul Train," a film about human trafficking, was an award-winning entry from the series.

"Independent Lens" will be honored again this week for "Abduction: The Megumi Yokota Story," a powerful portrait of a family's suffering after their daughter is abducted from Japan to North Korea. The film was written, directed and produced by Patty Kim and Chris Sheridan, and feature director Jane Campion ("The Piano") lent her expertise as executive producer.

"We were absolutely thrilled for the filmmakers, especially because they worked so hard on this film, getting the story and getting information out of North Korea. It was a real labor of love for the filmmakers, so we were really happy for them to receive this honor," said Lois Vossen, "Independent Lens" series producer.

"Abduction: The Megumi Yokota Story" tells a controversial story, but that wasn't what made "Independent Lens" interested in presenting it. "We look for great stories. Controversy tends to follow great stories sometimes, but it's not our goal to have controversy. It's our goal to have untold stories well made," said Ms. Vossen.

"Abduction" begins in Niigata, Japan, 1977, when teenager Megumi Yokota, walking home

CREDITS: Patty Kim and Chris Sheridan, writers, producers and directors; Yuko Kawabe, associate producer; Laurie McClellan, story consultant; Yuko Kawabe and Fumiko Nagata, researchers; Chris Sheridan, editor and cameraman; Jane Campion, executive producer

after school, disappeared without a trace. Government operatives had abducted her for no apparent reason, and her family searched for decades to find her. Years later, North Korea admitted the girl was part of a nefarious program to teach youngsters to become spies for the Communists in Japan.

"There are a lot of great stories out there, but they're not always well told. Sometimes there are well-told stories but they're not new," said Ms. Vossen. "We try to tell new stories that nobody has seen or that we've only heard about in a sound bite, but we haven't really had a chance to go inside the story to really learn about it. This is sort of a perfect 'Independent Lens' film because it's all of those things. It wasn't in the mainstream media. Also, the film was beautifully shot and they had great input from Jane Campion. She gave wonderful comments to them while they were making the film."

The creators connected with Ms. Campion

as the project was under way.

"She's a brilliant filmmaker and she had been a fan of their work, so they just contacted her saying they would love to have her input," said Ms. Vossen. "She wasn't involved on a day-to-day basis, but she provided artistic feedback. That was really helpful and added a lot to the film.

"Winning a duPont is actually really important because it really reaffirms the value of the work. There are so many programs out there of all kinds from how-to shows to cooking shows to dramas, etc., so to get real estate, to get broadcast time on PBS for independent film, is something we're really committed to. Every time one of our films wins an award like the duPont or an Emmy or a Peabody, it really is a tremendous affirmation to the work of the filmmakers and the value of these incredible independent films," Ms. Vossen said.

Unlike the Emmy or the Peabody, however, the duPont truly is about journalism. As Ms. Vossen said, "Independent filmmakers are some of the best journalists working today, and something like the duPont Awards absolutely affirms that and gives credit to that. These filmmakers are not just telling entertaining stories, they really are journalists, and they're digging deep and they're revealing stories that are happening around the world." ■



MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE Megumi Yokota is seen here in a photo taken by her father a few months before she vanished.

ABC News, Tim Hetherington & Sebastian Junger for 'Nightline'

'NIGHTLINE—THE OTHER WAR: AFGANISTAN'

By **Hillary Atkin**

Special to *TelevisionWeek*

Six months behind enemy lines in Afghanistan.

That's how long a team of journalists spent embedded with the United States Army's 2nd Platoon of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, gathering dramatic stories and footage for "Nightline's" "The Other War: Afghanistan" for ABC News.

The half-hour report aired on Veterans Day in 2007. With the unprecedented access given to Vanity Fair contributing editor Sebastian Junger and photographer Tim Hetherington, chief investigative correspondent Brian Ross reported on the physical and emotional struggles of the platoon's soldiers fighting in one of the deadliest regions of the war on terror.

"We have a good relationship with Vanity Fair, and we knew they were embedding for a magazine piece, and saw the possibilities of it being an important, striking piece of television, and agreed to collaborate," said "Nightline" executive producer James Goldston.

The piece documents U.S. troops being set up for fatal ambushes after trying to make peace with village elders in Taliban-controlled areas in the rugged terrain of northeastern Afghanistan. The elders often are suspected of tipping off fighters to the troops' whereabouts, setting up deadly confrontations in which they are surrounded by enemy fire.

"I found myself having a very hard time sticking my head above the wall to shoot anything with my camera," Mr. Junger said after an attack. "That was very, very hard for me. But the soldiers, they stood up, returned fire. Every soldier was, as far as I could tell, essentially operating in their unit and fearless."

Mr. Hetherington broke his ankle and had to walk a long distance with a 50-pound pack on his back in order to get help.

"One big problem is fire coming from the houses in the village where Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters put women and children on the roof so U.S. forces, under their rules of engagement, cannot return fire," reported Mr. Ross. "It is a huge frustration for U.S. forces, and has led to repeated showdowns between the village elders and the company commander, Capt. Daniel Kearney."

The embedded journalists witnessed a major battle, Operation Rock Avalanche, which was meticulously planned on what became a deadly battleground in the Korengal Valley. The operation targeted suspected hideouts of Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters. Three U.S. troops were killed, including 25-year-old Sgt. Larry Rougle, who had been shown predicting on camera that someone would get hurt. Six others were wounded.

CREDITS: Sebastian Junger, reporter; Tim Hetherington, photographer; Brian Ross, correspondent; Steven R. Baker, Madeleine J. Sauer, producers; Anna Schecter, associate producer; Karen Brenner, editor; Rhonda Schwartz, senior investigative producer; David W. Scott, senior producer; James Goldston, Kerry Smith, executive producers

"We went from being the hunters to the hunted," said Mr. Hetherington, who was with the soldiers when they were attacked. "It was a really awful sight, a very hard sight to digest, where men were in such a state of shock. I think I was in a state of shock too."

Despite the heavy toll, commanders of the platoon said they

achieved their goal of disrupting cells of enemy activity in the area. Meanwhile, in the heat of battle, there was no time to mourn their fallen comrades.

"The important thing I want to pay tribute to is the bravery of the people in the company and Sebas-



BOOTS ON THE GROUND
Soldiers face combat in "The Other War: Afghanistan."

tian Junger and Tim Hetherington, who were in an incredibly exposed position, essentially getting shot at all day, every day, for weeks at a time," Mr. Goldston said. "It is an unprecedented glimpse, the ferocity of it and the brutal conditions they were living in every day. There are very few places on network television to give a half-hour to this

kind of story. 'Nightline' is the only place to devote the time, energy and resources to these kinds of stories now."

Months later, the program did a lengthy follow-up piece in which it found conditions in Afghanistan were no better, and possibly worse. "It remains unclear what is going to happen," Mr. Goldston said. ■

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'CINEMAX REEL LIFE: THE BLOOD OF YINGZHOU'

By Hillary Atkin

Special to TelevisionWeek

"The Blood of Yingzhou District," an HBO Documentary Films presentation, takes viewers to a remote, poverty-stricken region of China, where AIDS has taken a terrifying toll on the population. Around 500 children have been orphaned by the

CREDITS: Thomas Lennon, producer; Ruby Yang, director, Qu Jiang Tao, director of photography; Ruby Yang, Ma Man Chung, editors; Brian Keane, composer; Sara Bernstein, supervising producer, Sheila Nevins, executive producer

disease, a small but heartbreaking fraction of an estimated 75,000 children affected throughout China.

In most cases, their parents were stricken after donating blood in unsanitary conditions in exchange for food and money, and some of them passed on the HIV virus to their children.

Before airing on Cinemax, the 39-minute film had a theatrical release in 2006 and won the Academy Award for documentary short subject the following year.

Filmmakers Thomas Lennon and Ruby Yang follow several children over the course of a year in Yingzhou District in Anhui, about a 10-hour train ride from Beijing. Because of the social stigma and lack of information

about AIDS, the children are seen in the film being shunned by neighbors, shuffled from relative to relative, or even left to survive on their own.

The genesis of the film was in 2003, when Mr. Lennon and Ms. Yang first worked together on a Bill Moyers series on the Chinese immigrant experience in America.

"At the end of the series, we felt like we wanted to do something more," said Mr. Lennon, the producer of "The Blood of Yingzhou District." "The AIDS issue was very scary, and no one knew how big it was. We wanted to get health messaging out to a Chinese audience, and recruited [basketball stars] Yao Ming [and] Magic Johnson and [movie star] Jackie Chan to do 30-second PSAs."

In the course of that campaign, which was widely distributed in the Chinese media, they became aware of a one-woman charity in Anhui province working with orphans, and they started filming.

"We began to understand it was a rich story and that we needed to make it as a film," Mr. Lennon said. "It was sort of a sidebar activity to the main work in China, and we didn't know it would get as much attention as it did. We followed the kids for over a year. You watch them develop and go through ups and downs."

The documentary illuminates the personal struggles of children like Nan Nan, a young girl who was spurned by relatives after her par-



ON THEIR OWN "The Blood of Yingzhou District" tells the story of Chinese children orphaned by AIDS.

ents' deaths and left in the care of her teenage sister; the Huang siblings, who vividly describe their

"The happy news is it would be completely impossible to make the film today that we did then."

Thomas Lennon, producer

ostracism at school; and Gao Jun, a young village boy whose parents died of AIDS and is himself infected.

"As I made my way through these remote villages in Anhui, I could feel

all the traditional stigmas and silences of Chinese family life. That's what I set out to capture," said Ms. Yang, the director of the documentary, who speaks fluent Mandarin and Cantonese.

The film opens and closes with Gao Jun, about whom little is known—even his age. It is only at the end that he finally speaks, yet throughout he reveals a strong desire to live, even as his relatives debate whether to keep him.

"The villagers in the region were extremely afraid of children who survived, who would normally be taken in by a relative," Mr. Lennon said. "They couldn't understand the disease, and they were terrified. Even if they were persuaded that

HIV was not transmitted by casual contact, there was so much fear that if they took a child in, their own children could suffer."

Yet even since photography began, there has been much progress.

"The happy news is it would be completely impossible to make the film today that we did then," Mr. Lennon said. "The information and understanding is so much greater, but the delivery of medical programs is still not 100%. Even in the course of a year, you saw attitudes beginning to soften. There's a strand of hope that's very strong in the film: You see villagers reconciling themselves to the care of these children. It's still a tough film to watch, but there's a lot of hope." ■



TAKING A TIP WJLA-TV's Roberta Baskin uncovered abusive practices in dental clinics after getting a tip from a fired employee.

WJLA-TV, Washington, D.C., & Roberta Baskin

'DRILLING FOR DOLLARS: CHILDREN'S DENTISTRY INVESTIGATION'

By Hillary Atkin

Special to TelevisionWeek

Opening with video of a 4-year-old boy restrained in a dental office and screaming in pain, "Drilling for Dollars" is difficult to watch, even for the experienced investigative news team that produced it.

Investigative reporter Roberta Baskin of Washington, D.C.'s Allbritton Communications-owned ABC affiliate WJLA-TV broke the story of children on Medicaid being subjected to abusive dental practices. She started working on the story after receiving a tip from one of the clinic's fired dental assistants who objected to the treatment.

"It is so disturbing," said Ms. Baskin, who also won a 2008 News & Documentary Emmy for regional news story. "How much do you show in getting attention? Kids are being tortured. [T]he makeup artist ... could barely talk, she was so upset, and a producer in editing burst into tears."

The piece focused on Small Smiles dental clinics in Langley, Md., and Washington, D.C., and uncovered how staff members are rewarded with bonuses for "upgrading" young patients from checkups to major dental work such as root canals and fillings,

which are reimbursed by Medicaid. The clinics are part of a Colorado-based national chain with more than 60 locations.

The investigative team found that assistants who were not licensed were performing X-rays on the children, and that children were not being properly protected from the radiation. Meanwhile, parents were not allowed in examination rooms and were told that federal patient-privacy practices prohibited them from being there; there is no law preventing a parent from being with a child during a medical procedure.

"The most money Medicaid pays is for a procedure, and baby root canals are the profit center, worth about \$214," Ms. Baskin said. "The piece had a three-word focus: profit over compassion. That's really the whole story. An Arab bank in Bahrain invested in Small Smiles. They were drilling for oil and drilling for baby teeth."

One challenge in reporting the story came because it took place in a medical setting and releases were needed from the parents in order to show the children in the report. Some refused because they were self-conscious about being on Medicaid.

Through a former Small Smiles employee,

CREDITS: Roberta Baskin, correspondent; Kelly Lanzara, associate producer; Richard Martin, editor; Peter Hakel, photographer; Sandy Bergo, producer; Bill Lord, executive producer

Ms. Baskin was able to obtain a policy manual that contradicted some of the things clinical directors told her in interviews.

"Four out of five dentists refuse to take Medicaid children, because the government reimburses a lot less than private insurance. That's why I wondered why Small Smiles could be so profitable," Ms. Baskin said. "They tried to get in fast, and keep a child calm, not terrorize them. Their defense is these families won't come back. That's why they do such aggressive treatment."

Over a five-month period, the station did 12 stories on the dental clinics. The Langley Park facility was shut down and some managed-care companies stopped doing business with Small Smiles outlets in Maryland. In North Carolina, there was a large court settlement after patients sued over the allegation that unnecessary dental work was performed in order to make a profit. ■

WTVT-TV, Tampa, & Doug Smith

'SMALL TOWN INJUSTICE'

By Hillary Atkin

Special to TelevisionWeek

The complex legal and emotional saga at the heart of WTVT-TV's "Small Town Justice" began on May 11, 2001, when a fatal accident on a Florida state highway killed Nona Moore and her 8-year-old daughter Lindsey. Two other girls survived the crash, which occurred when the driver of a tomato truck rolled over the family van.

CREDITS: Doug Smith, reporter; Phil Metlin, Mike McClain, producers; Craig Davisson, photographer; Lisa Blegen, executive producer

The driver, Jean Claude Meus, was a Haitian immigrant who had lived in the United States for 20 years. Although drugs or alcohol did not play a part in the crash, a jury ruled that he had fallen asleep at the wheel and sentenced him to 15 years in a maximum-security prison, a sentence equivalent to those handed down in many fatal DUI cases.

After he was incarcerated, WTVT, the Fox affiliate in Tampa, Fla., got a call, and investigative reporter Doug Smith and producer Lisa Blegen set out to determine if the punishment fit the crime. Over the course of two and a half years, they did nearly two dozen stories on the case centered in Wauchula, Fla., a rural town in the central part of the state built around family, faith and football.



"We thought, 'Wow, what a harsh sentence.' That was initially it. He really got hammered," said Ms. Blegen. "He said he wasn't asleep. We took a closer look at sentence, and a closer look at the investigation. Even the victim's sisters didn't think he committed a crime. How is the public served by this? The problems with the evidence came out later."

During their jailhouse interviews, Mr. Meus said after a car cut him off, he swerved, lost control and tipped over onto the Moores' vehicle. He said he had slept for 10 hours before the wreck.

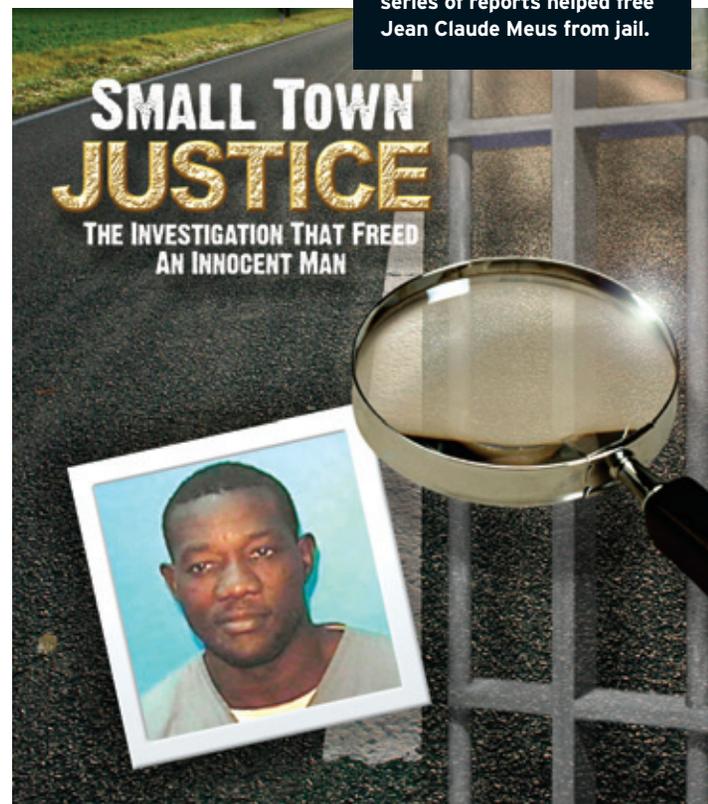
Court records show four of the six jurors had read about the accident before the trial, and the jury took less than an hour to reach a guilty verdict on two counts of vehicular manslaughter.

Mr. Smith and Ms. Blegen wondered if the defendant got a fair trial from the all-white jury in a town where emotions were running high.

They attempted to interview the jurors, but initially only one agreed to speak—and admitted the prosecution did not prove that Mr. Meus fell asleep. The prosecutor's office wouldn't talk. Family members of the victims said the truck driver's deep sorrow over the accident was punishment enough, and that they forgave him.

"When we looked at the investigation with a critical eye, we found that the Florida Highway Patrol had made numerous mistakes," said Mr. Smith. "The lead investigator went to high school with Nona Moore. That was the small-town nature of the case. Everyone knew and loved the Moores, two people were dead, but Jean Claude Meus didn't get a fair shake."

The investigative team went on to expose a story the jury never heard from an eyewitness to the accident who came forward after the first televised report. They discovered that Florida Highway Patrol



TRUTH PREVAILS WTVT's series of reports helped free Jean Claude Meus from jail.

investigators did not interview Juan Otero, the first person on the scene, and his friend—who happened to be volunteer firefighters. They were engaged in rescue efforts and saw Mr. Meus come out of the cab of the truck. An estimated 100 people were at the scene of the accident, and investigators said they did not need to interview all of them.

Ms. Blegen and Mr. Smith also brought in a traffic reconstruction expert, Wiley Howell, who showed that diagrams of the accident presented to the jury were not drawn to scale and therefore were flawed evidence.

"That diagram was one critical piece of evidence that landed him

behind bars. It was simply an approximation," Mr. Smith said. "That's how you do it in a small town. It was hand-drawn, not a computer simulation."

Mr. Meus, who always said he believed in the justice system, appealed the verdict and, after three years behind bars, walked out of Hardee County Jail a free man in April 2008.

"For both of us, the experience has had a profound effect, because he was such a positive person despite the obstacles he faced," said Ms. Blegen. "He always believed the truth would set him free. It's amazing to meet a guy like that with such faith." ■

Oregon Public Broadcasting

'THE SILENT INVASION'

By Allison J. Waldman

Special to TelevisionWeek

Oregon Public Broadcasting's documentary, "The Silent Invasion," tells of invasive plants, animals and insects and the threats they pose to the environment and agriculture. However, the story doesn't just affect the Pacific Northwest region where it was broadcast.

CREDITS: Ed Jahn, producer; Jeff Douglas, senior VP

"This is an environmental problem that's out in the wide open, in everyone's view, that nobody knows is a problem," said Ed Jahn, the film's producer and writer. "Invasive species are transforming entire economic and environmental landscapes in ways that are happening right now."

"We may not recognize that invasive species are the trigger for some of these environmental problems that we're having or even some of these economic problems that we're having. It's an environmental and economic problem," he added.

Being recognized by the duPonts is extremely important to Mr. Jahn.

"I consider this the most prestigious award you can get for something like

this. The duPont recognizes good journalism—not just good storytelling and not just good film," said Mr. Jahn. "It celebrates the journalism that's involved. I think what we did, what we tried to do, is a little bit different. It means something to get recognized by them."

The problem of invasive species had been discussed in episodes of Oregon Public Broadcasting's award-winning "Oregon Field Guide." "We've covered invasive species in individual stories. Collectively, the people who work on the show got together and realized that this is a big problem. Let's take a bigger picture to look at this. That was the origin of this," Mr. Jahn said.

As a member of the "Oregon Field Guide" team, Mr. Jahn had the material to get started on what he initially thought would be just one special episode.

"Then as I got into it, I said we should do something bigger," he said. "Once we did that, it became a documentary."

Mr. Jahn said the documentary required finding uncommon characters. The creators went to the heart of Oregon ranch country, where cowboys talked about the problems they're facing because they see the effects of invasive species first-hand.

In much the same way that "An Incon-

venient Truth" was a wake-up call to people about global climate change, Mr. Jahn feels "The Silent Invasion" can do the same for invasive species. "It took something like Al Gore's film to bring it to everyone's attention. This was the missing component in people's education about their own environment. They needed to know about invasive species. It was time for a big, environmental story that nobody was talking about," he said.

Giving viewers tools to do something about the issue required Mr. Jahn to do more than just getting PBS to broadcast the film.

"We put a lot of focus and a lot of teamwork into these other campaigns. We organized a huge campaign that included putting out a garden-wise guide for people in conjunction with the city and distributed it statewide," said Mr. Jahn. "There was also a statewide volunteer action campaign and an online hotline created that we're handing off to the state so people can report what they're finding."

The ultimate reward is winning the duPont.

"I know the kind of people who have won the duPont. These are people I admire and respect and would love to work with, so to be standing among them is an honor," said Mr. Jahn. ■



UNWELCOME Invasive species, such as the quagga mussels that invaded Nevada's Lake Mead, are threats to the environment.