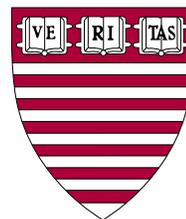


**The Business of Getting “The Get”:  
Nailing an Exclusive Interview  
in Prime Time**

by  
**Connie Chung**

**Discussion Paper D-28  
April 1998**

The Joan Shorenstein Center  
**PRESS • POLITICS**



**• PUBLIC POLICY •**

Harvard University  
John F. Kennedy School of Government

# **The Business of Getting “The Get” Nailing an Exclusive Interview in Prime Time**

**by**

**Connie Chung**

**Discussion Paper D-28  
April 1998**

# INTRODUCTION

In “The Business of Getting ‘The Get,’” TV news veteran Connie Chung has given us a dramatic—and powerfully informative—insider’s account of a driving, indeed sometimes defining, force in modern television news: the celebrity interview.

The celebrity may be well established or an overnight sensation; the distinction barely matters in the relentless hunger of a Nielsen-driven industry that many charge has too often in recent years crossed over the line between “news” and “entertainment.”

Chung focuses her study on how, in early 1997, retired Army Sergeant Major Brenda Hoster came to accuse the Army’s top enlisted man, Sergeant Major Gene McKinney—and the media firestorm her accusations (later joined by those of others) created. She delves behind-the-scenes into the role of Hoster’s lawyer, how a reporter was “selected” for the initial breaking story, and then the maelstrom of media requests for “exclusive” interviews that followed.

She lets us see, in that maelstrom, how journalists compete for the interview, the techniques and strategies they use, the role luck and circumstance sometimes play, and why—among the literally hundreds of press supplicants willing to tell Sgt. Hoster’s story—the vast majority failed.

Drawing on her own experience as well as that of fellow broadcasters such as Barbara Walters, Walter Cronkite, and Mike Wallace, she lets us see how the quest for the celebrity interview—the “get” in her title—has evolved over the past two decades. She also lets us see how the “get” phenomenon isn’t confined to broadcasters—a fact print reporters sometimes like to forget—but is common to newspapers and news-magazines as well. Indeed, in a detailed description of the competition for exclusive first excerpts from Gen. Colin Powell’s book, Chung shows us how the cross-media competition served to intensify the level of journalistic competition overall.

In a final section, Chung reflects on the “get”’s impact on TV news. Going beyond CBS producer Don Hewitt’s frank (and likely widely-shared) conclusion that “gets” are “the most disgusting” thing on television, Chung tries to give us fresh insights into the “get”’s effect on TV news, and how networks could act in order

to recover a sense of lost balance and integrity that appears to trouble as many news professionals as it does, and, to judge by polls, the American news audience.

One may agree or disagree with all or part of her conclusion; what is not disputable is that Chung has provided us in this paper with a nuanced and provocatively insightful view into the world of journalism at the end of the 20th century, and one of the main pressures which drive it as a commercial medium, whether print or broadcast. One may lament the world it reveals; one may appreciate the frankness with which it is portrayed; one may embrace or reject the conclusions and recommendations Chung has given us. What we owe Chung, for “The Business of Getting ‘The Get,’” is our thanks for giving us a carefully-crafted window of understanding into one of the most influential forces of our times.

**Richard Parker**  
**Senior Fellow, The Joan Shorenstein Center**  
**on the Press, Politics and Public Policy**  
**John F. Kennedy School of Government**  
**Harvard University**

## The Business of “Getting the Get”: Nailing an Exclusive Interview in Prime Time

by Connie Chung

Brenda Hoster woke up at 5 a.m. as usual on Tuesday, February 4, 1997. After 22 years in the Army, old habits are hard to break. This day would be different. The phone rang. Her best friend was on the line.

“You know, it’s already hit the East Coast. It’s only a matter of time before it hits here. I think you better get out of your house before daybreak.”

A plague? A twister? A meteor? Not quite. Half a continent away from Hoster’s home in El Paso, Texas, the East Coast was waking up to an exclusive, front-page story in the *New York Times*: TOP ENLISTED MAN IN THE ARMY STANDS ACCUSED OF SEX ASSAULT. Retired Sergeant Major Brenda Hoster, a 39-year-old Army journalist and public affairs specialist, was accusing her former boss, Sergeant Major Gene McKinney, of sexually assaulting her during a business trip. This, on the heels of a rash of accusations by female trainees at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland that they were raped or sexually abused by their drill sergeants.

Brenda Hoster’s friend was right. By daybreak in El Paso, at least five television camera crews were camped on Hoster’s doorstep. More would follow.

Welcome to the world of “gets,” newsroom parlance for the cutthroat competition for the big interview, the hot celebrity, the tell-all tatter *du jour*. It’s where supermarket tabloids, morning wake-up programs, afternoon talk shows, tabloid TV shows, and even the network news broadcasts collide in a mad scramble for an exclusive that will sell papers and draw viewers. It’s the symbiotic world where it’s hard to tell who is manipulating whom: the media or the newsmakers. And it is radically changing the way journalists and news organizations carry out their mission.

I should know. I was the one sent by CBS News (that’s right, the House that Murrow built) to try to snag one of those infamous “gets”: bad-girl figure skater Tonya Harding. Never mind that I held the prestigious job of co-

anchor of CBS News’ flagship broadcast, the *CBS Evening News*. There I was, camped out day in and day out at Harding’s Portland, Oregon ice-rink, along with countless other reporters, producers, bookers, and the curious, trying to “get” Tonya.

Not that it was the first time I had found myself in such less-than-dignified circumstances. Twenty-five years ago, I followed Watergate figure H.R. Haldeman to church. I’ll never forget the eviscerating look his wife gave me that Sunday morning. Haldeman was more sympathetic. He knew this was the doing of a crusty assignment editor. He took pity on this cub reporter and promised to meet me back at his home for an interview.

William Small, former CBS News Washington Bureau Chief, has two favorite stories of the lengths reporters will go for a “get.” They involve Lesley Stahl and me. Our boss in the early 1970s, he now trots us out as examples of “what makes good reporters,” namely “immense appetites to get a story.”

Stahl chased Watergate figure John Dean to his home and interviewed him through his mail slot.

I chased AFL-CIO President George Meany into an elevator. I made it into the elevator, microphone in hand, but the cameraman and soundman did not. Shown on the *CBS Evening News* that night were sounds (mostly my questions) emerging from a closed elevator door.

Another time, in 1972, I was determined to get an interview with Richard Kleindienst, who was embroiled in controversy during his confirmation hearings for Attorney General. I pursued him to a men’s-only country club in suburban Washington, the only place he thought he could find sanctuary. I barged in and was rewarded with an interview the next night.

In those days, success was getting a short interview to air on the evening news and there was no tabloid taint to stories. Nor were any of us trying to snare a long interview. *60 Minutes* and, later, *20/20* were the only news magazines and the only outlets for lengthy interviews.

But in the 1980s and 1990s, the game changed. There was an explosion of television news magazines. Suddenly *60 Minutes* and *48 Hours* on CBS and the highly successful *20/20* with Barbara Walters and Hugh Downs on ABC

---

*Connie Chung* was a Fellow at the Shorenstein Center in the spring of 1997. She is an anchor and correspondent for ABC News and can be reached at 147 Columbus Avenue, New York, NY 10023.

were joined by: *PrimeTime Live* with Diane Sawyer and Sam Donaldson, *Turning Point* with rotating anchors, and *Day One* with Forrest Sawyer, all on ABC; *Dateline* with Jane Pauley and Stone Phillips and *NOW* with Katie Couric and Tom Brokaw on NBC; *Saturday Night* with Connie Chung, later *Face to Face* with Connie Chung, and still later *Eye to Eye* with Connie Chung on CBS.

The big three networks had discovered that news magazines could be produced for half the cost of entertainment programming. If the news magazines could win big, the big bucks would follow.

Next came tabloid television news magazine spin-offs such as *Hard Copy*, *Inside Edition* and other offspring of the granddaddy of tabloid TV shows, *A Current Affair*, which had a 10-year run from the time it was created in 1986. Add to the mix the morning and afternoon talk shows (Oprah, Phil, Maury and many more), cable networks (CNN including Larry King, Fox News, CNBC, and MSNBC), long-standing early morning and Sunday interview programs, and Ted Koppel's *Nightline*. The result: no self-respecting personality in the news received only a handful of requests for interviews. Any "get" worth his or her salt was inundated.

William Small, who later became NBC News President, recalled, "In the old days, there was a pecking order. If you represented the *New York Times*, doors flew open. If you were a crusader, you wanted to appear on *60 Minutes*. If you had something to hide, you dreaded *60 Minutes*. If you were a celebrity, you wanted Barbara Walters to interview you. Now, TV has eclipsed most of print with all these magazine programs. There is competition for all these interviews like never before."

Small believes the competition "has created a fertile field for the handlers and spin doctors [the lawyers, agents, and public relations experts] to manipulate the media." The interviewee and his or her representative are in the driver's seat. They can "audition" an interviewer, ask for concessions, demand money, and require that questions be submitted in advance. The journalist will feel compelled to make pilgrimages to meet with the interviewee, make a pitch and grovel for the interview.

Television is not the only player in the "get" game. Standing, tin cup in hand, with television producers and bookers are print publications. A *New York Times* reporter will now position himself alongside the *National Enquirer*, vying for the same interview.

The tale of how the *New York Times* and one of the prime time television magazines wound up with the Brenda Hoster "get" is a study of how newsmakers, their agents, public relations people, (or in Hoster's case, her lawyer) and the media manipulate each other to get what they want. And tomorrow, today's "get" will be old news, and the competition begins again.

### ***The New York Times Gets "The Get" First***

As Brenda Hoster's lawyer, Susan Barnes became Hoster's self-anointed media advisor as well. In 1993, after the Tailhook scandal, Barnes created WANDAS (Women Active in our Nation's Defense, their Advocates and Supporters), two organizations which advocate for women in the military. According to Barnes, these organizations make a point to select cases and stories involving military women that have public policy implications.

Barnes had some experience with the media and could have "given" the Hoster story to anyone: a newspaper, magazine, television or radio reporter.

Who the reporter would be was important to Barnes. She wanted, in her words, "someone who would check sources and arrive at his or her own conclusions." She wanted a thorough, credible reporter.

"I checked Hoster out," Barnes said. "I didn't think she was a fraud. I wanted the reporter to do the same."

*Newsweek's* Greg Vistica fit the bill. In the past, Barnes had provided information to him concerning other clients or stories. She felt he was "extremely good on military issues." But she feared the magazine's New York editors "would not appreciate the importance of the story and would not give it the space needed to explain it."

Barnes had recently brokered a story with NBC's *Dateline* but decided against that program. The reporter with whom she had worked, Gary Matsumoto, had left *Dateline* for Fox.

Barnes thought long and hard. In a memo to Hoster, she wrote:

"When you 'go public,' it is important that you do so in a dignified and credible way. That is what I am primarily concerned with managing. I do not want your story to be belittled or trivialized. That is why the *New York Times* opportunity is such a good one. As you know, it is the most influential paper in the country, and the reporter, Eric Schmitt, is honest and reliable."

Barnes had assisted Schmitt on several sexual harassment stories in the last four or five years while he was the *New York Times* Pentagon correspondent.

Hoster, as a public affairs specialist, also knew Schmitt to be “a guy who had a good reputation and who did a thorough check before he does a story.” With Barnes’ reinforcement, Hoster agreed he was the one.

Barnes believes that reporters don’t like to be issued a press release. They don’t like to be “given” stories. As she put it, “I wouldn’t have gotten anywhere if I had called out of the blue.” So, she waited for Schmitt to call. She knew he would because he was working on another story she was knowledgeable about.

Schmitt did call in relation to the other story and asked Barnes, “Well, what else is going on?”

Eric Schmitt got his “get.”

When I called Schmitt to ask him how he got the Hoster story, he didn’t want to talk about it. He told me it was as if he were a CIA agent being asked to divulge secrets. Was he experiencing some discomfort that the story came to him, rather than the other way around?

He agreed to a few on-the-record quotes: “I had dealt with Barnes over the years as a source of ‘women in the military’ stories when I was a Pentagon correspondent.”

Schmitt knew Barnes to be a credible professional in her field but, like any good reporter, he began the process of checking out Hoster. He made a few calls before flying to Barnes’ office in Denver for a three-hour interview with Hoster on Thursday, January 30.

Hoster decided this was the only media interview she would do. No TV. Why? “Fear. Being on the other side of the camera; never having done it.” Barnes showed her the *Date-line* story and asked her to keep an open mind.

Schmitt flew back to New York with the Hoster interview and a list of people Hoster had given him of people she said could verify her account. He spent the weekend working on the story. On Monday morning, February 3, Schmitt dropped his bombshell story on the Pentagon. He personally delivered packets to the accused Sergeant Major Gene McKinney, as well as Army Secretary Togo West and Army Chief of Staff General Dennis Reimer. He included the allegations, requests for interviews, and his questions, asking for a reply that night. The story was to run the next morning.

By 3 p.m., the U.S. Army Criminal Investi-

gation Command had received Brenda Hoster’s thirteen-page complaint, sent certified mail by her attorney. The charges were officially filed.

Master Sergeant Phil Prater, who had taken Hoster’s old post as Sergeant Major Gene McKinney’s public affairs advisor, suddenly had the job of telling his boss the news involving the woman Prater had replaced. McKinney said he would look over the material after a meeting. Prater, meanwhile, sought advice from his public affairs superior.

Thus began a long day and night for the Pentagon.

The *New York Times* would be running the story on the front page the next morning, Tuesday, February 4, coincidentally, the same day that top brass from the Pentagon would be appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the issue of sexual harassment. (Some at the Pentagon believe the timing was far from a coincidence. Schmitt maintains that it was. “It was a fortuitous coincidence,” he said. “We would have run the story that day if the hearing had been held or not.” He said Barnes and Hoster had never discussed the hearing with him.)

By early afternoon, Sergeant Major McKinney had provided the Army Chief of Public Affairs Colonel John Smith with a statement denying the charges.

With that in hand, seven of the Pentagon’s top brass, including Army Secretary Togo West, spent the night in crisis session putting together a statement for public release.

By 9:30 p.m., Colonel John Smith phoned Eric Schmitt with a terse three-paragraph statement: the Army would investigate and McKinney denied the allegations. The statement also included McKinney’s request to be excused from the panel that was reviewing the issue of sexual harassment in the Army. (The statement missed the *New York Times*’ first edition deadline but made the next one.)

The Pentagon then sent the statement to all media outlets.

By 11:30 p.m., the weary soldiers went home to grab a few hours of sleep before the invasion of reporters at first light.

### ***How The Washington Post Missed “The Get”***

The fact that the *New York Times* scooped the *Washington Post* in its own backyard did not sit well at the capital’s venerable newspaper. Dana Priest, the *Washington Post*’s

Pentagon reporter, learned of the story when her office called her at home that night. She immediately phoned Colonel Smith and two other sources to ask, "What do you know about this?"

According to Brenda Hoster, the *Post* could have had the story as early as the previous November. Hoster had called the *Post* then, when the Army's sexual harassment panel was first announced, to tell her story. On her own, Hoster called four times. She received voice mail three times and decided not to leave a message. The one time she did speak with someone (a man), she spent 30 minutes detailing her story. No one called back to follow-up.

### **Tuesday, February 4, 1997 - Front-Page Day**

It was lunchtime on the East Coast when Susan Barnes arrived at her Denver office on the morning of February 4 to find almost twenty media calls on her answering machine.

The stampede had begun.

A media veteran, Barnes was nonetheless stunned. She told friends, "I miscalculated. I never expected this [level of] interest."

Before she went to her office, Barnes kept her scheduled interview with MSNBC on the issue of sexual harassment in the military. NBC's cable arm had booked the Barnes interview because Senate hearings were being held that day, not knowing the Hoster story would be the "get" of the day. NBC News also took advantage of that serendipity and interviewed Barnes for the *NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw*.

So, while MSNBC didn't get Hoster first, it scored the first TV interview with the person closest to the "get," Barnes. A sort of "mini-get."

Susan Barnes' experience was replicated at the Pentagon on Front-Page Day. Every army public information officer connected to the Hoster story was inundated with requests for interviews.

Master Sergeant Phil Prater, McKinney's public information officer, kept detailed records of the requests received. CBS News called and wanted to know what time McKinney usually left his office to go home. (No doubt to stake out McKinney and catch him on camera.) Knight-Ridder called to say interviews had already been done with McKinney's sister and his family; could McKinney talk? *Newsweek* faxed a letter wanting to do a story from the angle of the death of McKinney's son, a "human interest-type story" according to Prater's notes. Two callers even posed as generals, saying they needed to talk with Sergeant Major McKinney.

Prater (who suspected they were reporters) was not fooled.

As expected, most of the requests offered McKinney the "opportunity to tell your side of the story." Black Entertainment Television promised not to slander. *National Review* magazine said, "We are very open-minded." Many offered off-the-record conversations.

Hoster, meanwhile, was at the home of friends. That day, her home answering machine filled up with no fewer than thirty calls. A dentist office manager, Hoster called her boss to alert him that she didn't know what this week would bring. She said, "if the press calls, don't lie. Just tell them I'm not there and I don't have any comment. If you're comfortable with answering questions, go ahead. If they are persistent, give them Susan Barnes' telephone number."

The first call on Barnes' machine was from Mark Hooper, CBS News' assistant bureau chief in Dallas, requesting an interview for the *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather*.

How did Hooper find Barnes' name and phone number? It wasn't in the *New York Times* story. He did a NEXIS search and came up with three or four lawyers associated with military sexual harassment cases. He left messages with each of them, including Barnes.

Hooper called CBS News field producer Craig Bengtson, who was camped in Boulder, Colorado covering the JonBenet Ramsey murder case, and sent him to Barnes' office in Denver. Bengtson and other producers and camera crews, also covering the Ramsey case, found their way to Barnes' office, jamming her hallways.

Barnes remembers the CBS News producer rushing up the stairs as she was walking out of her office, saying "We have a Lear jet on standby to take you anywhere you want to go." Smiling, Barnes replied, "I only have to go to the bathroom. I don't need a Lear jet."

Barnes said Bengtson was insistent but professional and repeated what she called the CBS mantra: "Dan Rather thinks this is a very important story." (She said just about everyone who called from CBS uttered some version of the same, "Dan Rather feels strongly about this story.") Later that day, Barnes did do an interview with producer Bengtson which aired on the *CBS Evening News with Dan Rather* that night.

Back in Dallas, CBS's Mark Hooper was still trying for Hoster. He sent CBS News correspondent Scott Pelley to El Paso to find her. Pelley went to her home and knocked on the door. No response. Standing outside the door, he called

Hoster on his cell phone and left a message.

Although Hoster can't remember all the thirty or so messages on her home answering machine, she does remember Pelley's call. Pelley told me he said "I work for Dan Rather. I'm in town. We can do this, anytime, anywhere."

The CBS News correspondent tried to find the dentist's office where Hoster worked, but was told a local CBS affiliate reporter had checked it out and Hoster wasn't there.

Pelley and producer Bengtson began a dialogue with Barnes that led them to believe they might be successful in getting the exclusive with Hoster. On that basis, Pelley spent the night in El Paso.

Hoster was overwhelmed. Granted, she was a public affairs specialist, but as she put it, "I was used to setting this stuff up. I was someone else's p.r. person." This was different.

She called Barnes and asked if she could come to Denver and be with her. Barnes was distressed. "This wasn't very thought out. I never should have let her leave Denver." Should she let Hoster take a commercial flight to Denver? Should they schedule a news conference? No, she decided, she didn't want to put Hoster through that kind of "scene."

Barnes advised Hoster to do a television interview. "Do I have to?" Barnes remembers Hoster asking, terrified at the prospect. "Yeah, everybody doesn't read the newspaper," Barnes replied. After much anguish, they agreed to discuss each offer and revisit the question.

By the end of that day, Susan Barnes had received 55 media calls. By week's end, she had counted close to 150; from *Newsweek* to National Public Radio; from the *Today Show* to CNN; from the *Army Times* to even *Stern* magazine in Germany.

More importantly, the programs that have the most viewers and impact, the network television news magazines, called.

A decision had to be made, and soon.

Prime time news magazines, with their high-profile anchors, big budgets, and big ratings, have changed the quest for the "get." More than any program or any trend, however, a television news pioneer named Barbara Walters has made it an art-form.

### **Barbara Walters: Premier "Get" Getter**

Barbara Walters invented today's "get" market with exclusives on her specials, *20/20* and *World News Tonight*. She has interviewed just about every world leader in her time: China's Jiang Zemin, Czechoslovakia's Vaclav

Havel, Cuba's Fidel Castro, Haiti's Jean-Claude Duvalier, Britain's Margaret Thatcher, Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, and every American president since Richard Nixon.

World leaders know her on a first name basis. A 1993 *New York Times* piece recounted how a reporter's interview with then-prime minister Yitzhak Rabin was interrupted by a phone call. "Hello. Yes? Hello, Barbara, how are you?" After a few words, Rabin hung up. "Barbara Walters," he explained.

In his memoirs, *A Reporter's Life*, CBS News Anchor Walter Cronkite recalled how his famous satellite interview with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat opened:

"'Good morning, Walter, and how is Barbara?' was [Sadat's] greeting. He was fond of Barbara Walters and somehow we were linked in his mind. He began every conversation with me by asking how Barbara was."

In fact, that 1977 interview set off one of the great "get" battles. During the interview, Cronkite was successful in extracting from Sadat the fact that he was willing to go to Tel Aviv within a week to discuss peace. All Sadat needed was "an invitation." Cronkite quickly got a satellite interview with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin who said, "Tell him [Sadat] he's got an invitation."

Those two interviews were world class exclusives for Cronkite, illustrative of his ability and power, as the most trusted man in America, to get heads of state to speak with him and make news. Cronkite was credited with bringing Sadat and Begin together, setting off the chain of events that would lead to the first formal peace between Israel and an Arab neighbor. This was a clear example of "gets" affecting public policy.

In turn, Cronkite's news scoop set off a Cronkite-Walters "double-get" battle. According to Cronkite, he had arranged to fly with Sadat from Cairo to Tel Aviv for this historic meeting, while other reporters flew directly to Tel Aviv to cover the story. Cronkite reports, in his memoirs:

"It looked like a clean beat. But we hadn't figured on Barbara Walters, a serious mistake. She had taken an earlier plane via different route to Tel Aviv. When ABC learned of our Cairo ploy, they intercepted her and got her a charter to Cairo the next morning.

Just as we were boarding Sadat's plane, along she came, running across the field with hand upraised like a substitute entering a sporting contest. Sadat invited her aboard, and her enterprise robbed us of our exclusive."

Barbara Walters' version of this story is slightly different. She had flown to Israel to interview Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. Afterward, she got a call from ABC News President Rooney Arledge. He told her Cronkite and NBC News Anchor John Chancellor were planning to fly with Sadat from Egypt to Israel. (Cronkite said Walters is mistaken. Chancellor was not on the plane.)

At that time, there was no way to phone Egypt from Israel. Walters called the Egyptian Ambassador in Washington, D.C. requesting that he ask Sadat if she could join his airborne entourage. She got the okay and hopped a charter to Egypt.

When she boarded the Sadat plane, Walters says her network competitors were "not thrilled" to see her. On the way, the trio drew straws to decide who would go first for one-on-one interviews with Sadat. The mid-air interviews were completed and uneventful.

Then she slipped a note to Sadat's chief of staff asking if she could interview the Egyptian President, *after* he addressed the Israeli Knesset. To insure that Cronkite and Chancellor would not know what she was requesting, she drew boxes on the note for the chief of staff to check: "Yes" or "No." "Sadat and Begin together" or "Sadat alone." The note came back "Yes" was checked. "Alone" was checked.

In Israel, Walters was about to get what she calls the "biggest break of my career." She enlisted Begin himself in her effort to get the first interview in history with the two rival heads of state together. Both had agreed to be interviewed by her separately. She interviewed Begin. After the interview was over, Begin said, "Barbara, I forgot to tell you. I told Sadat, 'for the sake of our friend Barbara, let's do an interview together.' He said okay."

For Walters, it was not just a "get." It was a "double-get."

When Cronkite found out about the Walters scoop, he asked for and got a joint interview as well. According to writer Tom Shales of the *Washington Post*, Cronkite said at the end of his dual interview, "Okay now that it's over, did Barbara get anything that I didn't get?" Cronkite told me he doesn't remember saying that, but if he did, "it was probably a joke. I kidded Sadat

quite a bit about Barbara."

When ABC learned that Cronkite had also gotten the duo, the network aired a six-minute excerpt of the Walters interview in the early evening so it would precede Cronkite's scheduled airtime. The Walters interview aired in its entirety later that evening.

That was then. Today, Walters says, "viewers aren't interested in world leaders. They are not interested in foreign, hard news. They would not watch Sadat and Begin. Heads of state are very savvy. They ask 'What are your ratings?' 'Will I get an hour?' Saddam Hussein wants an hour."

Perhaps with cable television, there's another way to slice the pie. In March, CBS' king of "gets" Mike Wallace interviewed Iranian leader Hashemi Rafsanjani. Wallace recalled that Rafsanjani wanted an hour in prime time. Wallace said he knew he "can't get that on the network." Wallace came up with the idea of a deal with C-SPAN. The result was a 15-minute Rafsanjani interview on *60 Minutes* on Sunday and a re-play of the piece on C-SPAN on Wednesday, followed by Wallace's unedited 45-minute interview. According to Wallace, that bit of nudging was the difference between getting the interview and losing it.

Barbara Walters noted that *60 Minutes* can interview "a Rafsanjani" and survive because of the program's history, strength, and track record. She said she could not interview someone like Rafsanjani today on *20/20*.

Wallace believes there are few world leaders anyone would want to "get" today. As he put it, "who would you like to see and hear that you're not hearing from?"

*60 Minutes* still airs more international stories than other television news magazines. But *20/20* and the others fight a fierce battle for ratings against entertainment programming. A "get" brings viewers into the tent. As *Dateline's* Executive Producer Neal Shapiro put it, "You can't live on big 'gets' alone, but they are the bright neon sign that brings them [viewers] in."

The formula of a prime time magazine program calls for three or four stories: an investigative piece, a consumer/health/news-you-can-use piece, an emotional, tug-at-the-heartstrings story and a one-on-one interview or profile.

If the one-on-one is a "get," the network publicity machines promote it via print and television ads. The interviewer will even make the rounds with other television programs and reporters to promote the "get."

With Hoster and Barnes, it was different.

They wanted the television interview over quickly. For the duly anointed TV magazine, that would mean no time for advance promotion. No matter, getting the Hoster interview would still be a coup. The program that lands the scoop solidifies its reputation.

So who would land the big interview?

Barbara Littman of CBS's *48 Hours* was the first to call from a television news magazine. Barnes was familiar with the program. She knew it to be a one-subject hour typically, not a quick turnaround interview program. Barnes dubbed Littman "poor Barbara" because Barnes felt she did not have a fair shot. Littman called three times to make her pitch.

Karen Burnes of ABC's *20/20* took a different approach. She offered to fly to Denver, with no cameras, to meet with Hoster and just talk. The lawyer recalled the ABC News producer saying, "I understand how difficult this is. I won't pressure her." Barnes felt Hoster should move more quickly.

A booker from another TV magazine called at least five times. He offered to send videotapes of past stories his program had aired on similar cases. Barnes told him that wasn't necessary because she was familiar with the program's track record. She thinks the booker took her remarks as a commitment. Barnes found him to be "aggressive to the point of being obnoxious."

Barnes had dealt with *Dateline* producer Ty West, and decided to track him down in Los Angeles. He was covering the O.J. Simpson civil trial. Barnes told herself, "if Ty West is free, that would give *Dateline* the inside track." Ty West was not free. Anyway, Barnes felt NBC News had gained a reputation as taking a "softer" news approach. She saw Hoster's interview as hard news: "we didn't need a tender-loving care story."

Sam Donaldson of ABC's *PrimeTime Live* left at least two messages on Barnes' answering machine. She remembers his message was "nice and folksy."

Sam Donaldson? Nice and folksy? (Trust me. Sam can be very nice and folksy.) Donaldson is a veteran reporter who knows how to get the story. As co-anchor of *PrimeTime Live*, he is a major player in the "get" game.

That program, and the others like it, have radically changed the breaking news "get." Moreover, they have affected the longer lead "get" of authors, shattering, once and for all, the sedate self-image of publishing.

## ***How News Magazines Have Changed the Book "Get"***

When General Colin Powell retired as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on September 30, 1993, news organizations clamored to get interviews with him.

Colonel Bill Smullen, Powell's Executive Assistant, said Barbara Walters and Sam Donaldson both began calling his office a full year and a half before his retirement, asking for interviews. Powell agreed to a few interviews immediately after his retirement, but then he fell silent for the two and a half years that it took him to write his autobiography. He did not want to do any interviews until his book was released.

During that time, Walters kept up the pressure. She would call Colonel Smullen every six to eight weeks. She wrote to Powell. (See Appendix 1 for copy of letter.)

Walters remembers she often saw Powell at social events: "There was never a dinner I didn't mention the interview. He'd say, 'I'm not doing anything until the book comes out.'" Powell said he told Walters, "you've got to give me a raincheck."

"It got a little uncomfortable," Walters confessed, recalling a point at which there was no need for her to remind Powell what she wanted. He would look at her and only say, "I know." She would reply, "Yes, I know." (Translation: I know you can't right now, General, but when you do, I'm the one.)

Walters told me, "Early on, Powell was not that big a 'get.' But as time passed, the bigger 'get' he became." There were serious rumblings about a possible run for the Presidency. In this age of the anti-politician, Powell-mania was beginning to take hold.

Walters made a proposal like no other. She offered to do an hour-long profile on Powell (unprecedented on *20/20*) that would include trips to Jamaica where his parents were born; to Fort Benning, home of the infantry and a starting place for his career; and to the South Bronx neighborhood where he grew up.

Powell wanted to select a TV interview offer that would serve his book's promotional and business interests. Also, on a personal level, he told me he felt he had a commitment to Walters. He felt she was a "patient, persistent and understanding 'getter'." On that basis, he said when the decision had to be made, "Barbara Walters leapt out in neon lights." Random House Publisher Harry Evans felt Walters was

his first choice, as well. Walters would get the first interview.

But first, there were some ground rules. Powell made it clear to Walters that he did not discuss his positions on issues in his book and had no intention of doing so during their interview(s).

After a couple of their location shoots, Walters (who had gotten to know Powell quite well by this point) told him, "If you don't touch on the issues, people are going to say you are just flacking your book. We are giving you an hour." Powell succumbed to Walters' persuasion. By the time their lengthy interview took place, he answered questions about running for President and, for the first time, stated his positions on affirmative action, abortion, the death penalty, school prayer, and gun control.

Meanwhile, in January, 1994, twenty-one months before Powell's book came out, *Time* magazine bought the North American rights to run excerpts for a hefty \$150,000 in cash, with a couple of free advertisements thrown in.

Everything was moving along with military precision until two weeks before the book came out and the Walters exclusive was to air, and one week before *Time* was to run its exclusive cover story.

*Newsweek* blew everyone out of the water. The magazine hit the stands with Colin Powell on the cover and an eight-page layout on the still unreleased book. Somehow, *Newsweek* had gotten a copy of excerpts of Powell's book. The magazine was careful to describe the book accurately but never publish a direct word from it, to avoid legal troubles.

*Time's* editors were furious. The rug had been pulled out from under them. As Random House publisher Harry Evans put it, *Time's* Managing Editor Jim Gaines felt "de-balled." *Time* editors paid \$150,000 for the rights, and *Newsweek* scooped them.

Evans had a crisis on his hands. His deal with *Time* was in jeopardy. There was a clause that basically said if anything went haywire, *Time* would only be obligated to pay half—\$75,000—for serial rights.

*Time* magazine needed something to make its issue different. Jim Gaines demanded an interview with Powell (which was not part of the original deal for its scheduled cover story), otherwise *Time* would not put Powell on the cover.

What ensued was a contentious late night meeting. Random House had thrown Powell a book party that night. Powell remembers, "It

was a lovely New York evening but there was a problem in the punch bowl. Sweet Barbara Walters showed why she is one the tough ladies of all time."

Barbara Walters remembers it was 10:30 or 11:00 p.m. when the principals sat down at a table. *Time's* Jim Gaines insisted Powell do an interview and talk about issues. He told me he said, "I have to have an interview with Powell and I don't care if we step on Barbara Walters' interview." Walters, who had just convinced Powell to talk to her about issues, was adamant: she would agree to *Time* interviewing Powell but, she told Gaines, "the interview could cover everything in the book but leave the issues to me."

Powell recalls, "I had a wonderful time listening to them. It was fun to watch them fight."

Gaines lost his temper. He told me, "I was quite angry. There was a lot of shouting." Walters said Gaines turned against her and was downright "nasty."

According to Harry Evans, General Powell was the "magic elixir in the end." Powell's capsule summary of how he ended the bickering ran as follows: "I would give *Time* an interview to restore the value of their arrangement and compensate for the *Newsweek* scoop. But if questions came up on issues, I would go dummy." As Evans put it, Powell knew just how far to go with answers without jeopardizing Walters' exclusive.

Everyone ended up happy.

The *Time* interview included questions about a run for the White House and touched a bit on welfare reform, campaign finance reform and Medicare. The answers were vague enough so Walters had no complaints. Powell said of himself, "the artful dodger was able to get through it." The twelve-page spread, including the book excerpts, led to a front-page, above the fold, Sunday *New York Times* story by R.W. Apple. *Time* magazine was thrilled. (Any time a TV or print story or interview is picked up by the venerable *Times*, news organizations feel they've been validated. They can declare, "we made news.") That September 18, 1995 issue was one of *Time's* best sellers of the year.

With the *New York Times* story as ammunition, Evans called *Time's* editors to say Random House deserved to be paid in full. *Time* agreed.

Barbara Walters aired her Powell hour, made news and scored a 14 rating and 26 share. 19.4 million viewers watched. *20/20* was ranked number eleventh in the week's programs, ahead

of every other news magazine.

The Powell autobiography, *An American Journey*, came out the next day and eventually netted \$1.4 million for Random House.

According to Jim Kelly, *Time* Deputy Managing Editor, "What *Time* learned from this is, today, it doesn't make sense to pay so much for first serial rights to a book. For one, there is a greater chance today of the book being leaked and two, publishers have been cutting back the window when print magazines are allowed to publish." Kelly said publishers see more value in putting their authors on television. "Now, all these shows are what they are interested in."

Now, Kelly said, "the highest we've paid for book rights is \$25,000." He said for *Time's* cover story on Mary Schiavo, former Transportation Department Inspector General, *Time* was only given a 3-day window. She had to appear on *60 Minutes* first and on *Oprah* next. (*Oprah* Winfrey's book club phenomenon has caused every publisher and author to look to her first. Exposure on *Oprah* can turn any book into an instant best seller.) "We only paid \$15,000 for book excerpt rights," said Kelly, "10% of what we paid for Powell."

### **Sam Donaldson Makes His Pitch**

Back to Tuesday, February 4, 1997, the day the *New York Times* ran its front-page story detailing Brenda Hoster's allegations against Sergeant Major Gene McKinney. ABC's *PrimeTime Live* Co-Anchor Sam Donaldson heard the story on the radio at about 7 a.m. and read about it in the *New York Times*. His wife, Jan Smith, said, "Boy, this is a story you all should go after." Donaldson told her, "I'm sure we are." Why? According to Donaldson, "Because of Jennifer Maguire."

Maguire is *PrimeTime Live's* Editorial Producer in charge of booking and story development. When she saw the Sergeant Major's accusations on the front page of the *New York Times*, she thought, "This is a good story for Sam because he's done several stories on sexual harassment. When it's that competitive, it's easier to sell if the interviewer has a track record and a body of work."

During her daily 8 a.m. conference call with *PrimeTime's* Executive Producer Phyllis McGrady, they agreed to go after the story for Donaldson.

Maguire vaguely remembered reading about a lawyer who specialized in these kinds of cases, but couldn't recall the name. As she and her staff searched through old articles and notes,

she also called Eric Schmitt at the *New York Times*. Schmitt obliged her with the name.

Maguire called Susan Barnes and left a message pitching a Donaldson interview for *PrimeTime Live* the next night.

When Donaldson arrived at the office at 9:30 a.m., Jennifer Maguire called to tell him she and the executive producer had discussed it, and this "get" (if successful) would be his. "For me?" he asked sweetly. "Yes, for you," an amused Maguire replied.

Donaldson called Barnes at least twice and left messages. Barnes remembers his messages as being "pretty effective, very funny. He said, 'I know you're inundated but I want to make my pitch.' He was obviously familiar with the sexual harassment story." Barnes could tell she "didn't have to educate him."

Next, a name, address and phone search on the Internet for Brenda Hoster. Bingo. The Internet yielded an address and phone number in El Paso, Texas. The *New York Times* never mentioned where she lived, only where she worked: in Santa Teresa, New Mexico. A quick look at a map revealed Santa Teresa just across the border, a short hop from El Paso. Must be right.

Maguire passed the number on to Donaldson.

Donaldson called Hoster twice and left messages on her answering machine. "I thought if I could talk with her directly, I could make a persuasive case," Donaldson said.

Hoster recalled that in his message, Donaldson expressed a "real personal interest in my story since he had covered several sexual harassment stories. He was very knowledgeable. He said he knew what I was going through. He knew that his was not the only offer. He was very reassuring. Very polite. He was convincing that he should be the one. Persistent, but not obnoxiously so. I really got the feeling 'this guy is on my side'—that tone."

Basically, "He really sold it," she said.

Meanwhile, the Maguire team was searching for Hoster's employer, a dentist in Santa Teresa. They tried Santa Teresa information. No luck. The operator said, "I can't tell you who the dentists are."

Maguire told her staff to ask the local hospital where to go for a toothache. It turned out there were just two dentists in town. Done.

Donaldson called and asked to speak to the dentist. A nice woman said he was busy with a patient. Donaldson tried his best, Hoster remembered, even invoking his local-boy (El Paso) credentials. All for naught: the dentist

could not come to the phone, nor did he ever call Donaldson back. Hoster was more amused than annoyed with Donaldson's attempt to pull teeth.

The relentless Donaldson tried by long distance to find his old friends in El Paso, hoping they could go to the dentist's office and help him. No luck. The numbers he had for them were too old.

*PrimeTime Live* Producer Maguire called the ABC News Denver Bureau and discovered that producer Mary Marsh had already spoken to Susan Barnes. Barnes had called her back and the attorney had agreed to do an interview for *ABC's World News Tonight with Peter Jennings*. Maguire asked Marsh to take a letter from Donaldson when she did the interview and not to leave until Barnes called Donaldson back.

Maguire called Donaldson and directed him to write a letter. The never shy Maguire launched forward, "here's what you should say." The even less shy Donaldson said, "I trust you, but I know how to write a letter! I can write my own letter." "I deserved it," she later told me, "he does know." (See Appendix 2 for copy of letter.)

It was well into the afternoon of Front-Page Day and still no return call from Barnes. Maguire was getting anxious.

By late afternoon, Barnes finally called Donaldson back. "She was laughing," Donaldson said. Barnes characterized Donaldson as "corny as hell but refreshing, charming," again invoking the hometown connection.

Donaldson told me, "You can act like a big dog, but I think butter and egg works best. I guess there's a time when you have to throw your weight around. Most of the time we [journalists] are expected to be arrogant. But in these cases, I come on like Mr. Humble . . . the guy who needs help finding the bus stop."

Hoster and Barnes were ready to discuss their choice.

Both Hoster and Barnes agreed they loved Donaldson's voice mail messages. They agreed he was knowledgeable. Hoster hesitated, "But he can be abrasive. The last thing I need is someone picking me apart." Barnes assured Hoster she didn't think Donaldson would do that. Hoster said, "But he can be real tough on people." Hoster said her preference was to talk to a woman but "Donaldson really sold himself to me. That really meant something to me."

There were other factors. Donaldson and his producers wanted to do the interview for the next night but they did not offer a Lear jet as part of their pitch. Barnes didn't like the fact

that CBS and NBC both offered jets at the opening of their pitches. Donaldson's team only discussed substance: the track record Donaldson had with sexual harassment stories and, as Hoster put it, "Donaldson's convincing personal interest."

Was the fact that Donaldson called *personally* a factor? Hoster and Barnes both said they were not "star struck" by him. His personable approach was appealing.

Donaldson, who actually interviews fewer "gets" than *PrimeTime Live* Co-Anchor Diane Sawyer, says, "I'm not in the race for the big 'gets.'" But this time, he got one.

As it turned out, ABC did fly Hoster and Barnes to Washington, D.C. by private jet. Getting away from the media hoard in their respective hometowns was appealing. *PrimeTime Live's* Jennifer Maguire, fearful that competing networks would try to "steal" Hoster, asked a producer to meet them at the airport, ride with them to the hotel and make sure they were safely tucked in their rooms. This would normally be the kind of job for a production assistant, but Maguire did not have one to spare. Fortunately for Maguire, the producer was willing to help.

At 5 p.m., Donaldson conducted a fifty-minute interview with Hoster. At 10 p.m. (an incredibly quick turnaround), it aired. The nine minute, fifteen second story included not only Hoster but interviews with Barnes, a friend of Hoster's who Hoster confided in, California Senator Dianne Feinstein, photographs of Hoster, and pictures of Sergeant Major McKinney.

Earlier in the day, Donaldson wrote and faxed letters to Sergeant Major Gene McKinney, Army Secretary Togo West and Defense Secretary William Cohen requesting interviews. All declined. (See Appendix 3 for copies of letters.)

### ***Donaldson's Double "Get"***

Donaldson, Maguire and Nancy Ambrose of ABC's *This Week*, co-anchored by Sam Donaldson and Cokie Roberts, had also pitched Hoster to appear that Sunday on the ABC News interview program.

Hoster decided she couldn't just stick her toe in the water. If she was going to be interviewed for prime time television, she might as well make the rounds.

She and Barnes accepted. ABC then agreed to put them up in a hotel for the remainder of the week, knowing that Hoster and Barnes might well be interviewed by other news organizations at ABC's expense. ABC felt it was worth

the cost since Hoster had committed to the network's Sunday program.

In a whirlwind of telling her story, Hoster ended up doing about a half-dozen interviews with other news organizations in the next two days. The first after *PrimeTime Live* was not on ABC's morning program, but on NBC's. NBC's *Today Show* had pitched an interview with Katie Couric. ABC's *Good Morning America* had pitched an interview with Charlie Gibson. Hoster chose Couric because "I felt she was personable on sensitive issues." In fact, Hoster told her lawyer she would do the morning interview, "only if Couric did it."

Thursday, February 6, the day after the Hoster *PrimeTime Live* interview aired, *This Week* got a commitment from Army Secretary Togo West to appear live as well. He had yet to sit down and formally answer questions about the Hoster/McKinney case. A net "get" for *This Week*.

On Friday, West's office told *This Week* that West had not known that Hoster was also appearing and might bail out. Donaldson is sure West was informed, and told West's office, "We're going to say you agreed to do the interview but backed out."

West's public affairs advisor strongly urged the Secretary to honor his commitment. West took her advice.

### ***How a "Get" (Secretary West) Affects Public Policy***

Brenda Hoster was the first guest on ABC's *This Week*.

Hoster said she couldn't understand why Sergeant Major Gene McKinney was still on the job, while the Aberdeen drill sergeants, also accused of sexual misconduct, had been immediately relieved of their duties.

The next guests on *This Week* were Maine Senator Olympia Snowe and Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, members of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Donaldson asked them if McKinney should be suspended, as the Aberdeen drill sergeants had been. Both said they thought everyone should be treated the same.

When Army Secretary Togo West appeared as the final guest, Donaldson pressed him on the McKinney suspension issue. At first, West said, "We're in a country where allegations are not proven fact, where charges are not convictions, where accused, no matter the seriousness of the charge, are not assumed guilty until proven guilty."

But Donaldson pursued the question of

suspension. West: "We've considered it, and we will undoubtedly consider it again." Donaldson: "Still open?" West: "Still an open question."

Donaldson later told me, "Togo West is a political animal. He knew the gig was up."

Meanwhile, Master Sergeant Phil Prater, McKinney's public affairs advisor, was watching *This Week*. He called McKinney and said, "It doesn't look good. The handwriting's on the wall."

Prater was right. The next day McKinney was suspended.

Without the storm of publicity, would McKinney eventually have been suspended? Possibly. But Secretary West's appearance on *This Week*, coupled with Donaldson's persistent questioning, provided the nudge. A shining example of a "get" driving the news.

### ***How To Lose a "Get" Gracefully***

CBS News correspondent Scott Pelley had spent the night in Hoster's hometown of El Paso. He thought Barnes was ready to hop on a Lear to be at Hoster's side during an interview for the *CBS Evening News* and possibly *48 Hours*.

As he sat in his hotel room, he was surprised to see Hoster pop up on ABC's *PrimeTime Live*. That night, he called Barnes. She returned his call from her hotel room in Washington, D.C. "What caused you to go with ABC?" Pelley asked. Barnes explained, and Pelley has since kept in touch with her.

According to Barnes, the scenario with another getter was less civilized.

The booker from another TV magazine whom Barnes had described as "aggressive to the point of being obnoxious" called and left Barnes a message. "I trusted you and you abused my trust," she quoted him as saying. She added that he called her home and "berated my husband." Barnes' subsequent call to one of his superiors prompted a letter of apology, which read in part:

"[It was] relayed to me that you were upset after some of my phone messages. I completely agree with you. In the heat of the moment after finding out about the "*PrimeTime*" interview, I behaved inappropriately. I apologize for anything that may have annoyed or upset you or your husband. Please understand that it was rash behavior in a moment of frustration - completely out of character for me, as anyone on [my program] can attest. . . . I would like to learn from this experience."

The pressures from higher-ups to get a "get" are enormous, as they obviously were for

this booker. The necessity to “deliver,” to satisfy the appetite of a high-stakes magazine program, drove the booker to regrettable excess.

Barnes’ comment: “It will be a cold day in hell before I work with him.”

### **Results: The Effect On News**

Why do prime time television news magazines pursue “gets?” In my experience, the process takes a substantial amount of time and effort. The pursuit can involve many trips to meet with the subject or the person’s liaison. With so much competition for the same exclusive, is all that effort for one story worth the payoff? And what is the payoff?

“They are incredibly important,” according to Neal Shapiro, Executive Producer of *Dateline*. “It’s the big interview that causes viewers to find you and watch. It’s the difference between a 12 share and a 20 share.

Phyllis McGrady, Executive Producer of *PrimeTime Live*, explained it this way: “The numbers [ratings] you get from the ‘gets’ help you do other stories. I’m in a time period in which people want entertainment. [‘Gets’ are helpful] in order to stay in your time slot. *20/20* and *60 Minutes* are more established. People will watch no matter what.”

*60 Minutes* Executive Producer Don Hewitt called “gets” the “most disgusting thing” on TV. “This is all about the day *60 Minutes* became a profit center. The new news magazines had to perform as well as the entertainment shows they replaced. It’s called the ratings game. They are now on the prime time schedule. They’ve got to get a rating, so they won’t be a drag on the company.”

Marvin Kalb, Director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University, is even more critical. “The ‘get’ epitomizes the dilemma of TV news in prime time. News magazines must live in the culture of prime time television that is dominated by entertainment, sensationalism, hype, and glorification of stars. Modern TV news is entertainment. It’s not a search for news, it’s a search for ratings.”

“I hope its 51% news and 49% ratings,” adds *Washington Post* critic Tom Shales, “but the two things are not necessarily antithetical. Getting ratings is not a bad motive.”

Whatever the motive, “gets” have had a profound impact on the journalists who pursue them and the news organizations that air them. They also raise difficult questions about the public interest and journalistic integrity.

### **Result #1: Diversion of Resources**

When I worked as a correspondent for CBS News out of the Washington bureau in the early 1970s, I was assigned to cover Watergate. So were a half-dozen or more CBS News correspondents. (We not only competed with other news organizations to get interviews and information, but we also competed with each other.) CBS News Washington Bureau Chief William Small diverted resources from other stories because Watergate deserved the coverage. The presidency was at stake.

Few calls are as clear, however. Today, *PrimeTime Live* Co-Anchor Diane Sawyer told me she and her colleagues at ABC News laughed to discover that five letters from her network alone were sent to each juror in the O.J. Simpson criminal trial. “It’s embarrassing,” Sawyer told me, “what it says about diverting resources.” Not that ABC News was alone in its overkill. Neal Shapiro of *Dateline* said 14 people from NBC News were sent to Los Angeles during the last weeks of the Simpson trial.

Vicki Gordon, Executive Story Editor at CBS News, is responsible for getting stories and interviews for all CBS news programs. Gordon believes while some “gets” may be “juicy and fun to watch, they are junk food versus a good dinner. They obscure some of the bigger, more important stories. The proliferation of talk and prime time magazines has jacked up the value of a story. It’s hard to step away from it. It takes courage to walk away. Getting the ‘get’ becomes a game unto itself.”

### **Result #2: Internal Network Overkill**

ABC’s Diane Sawyer believes that “nothing has changed [in the news business] except the numbers. There is no new Faust in there. The difference is the quantity.”

The result of the frenzied competition for “gets” is that anyone who is thrust into the news now automatically taps a handler: a lawyer, an agent, or a publicist. As Barbara Walters puts it, “Even murderers have lawyers and agents. They are very media-smart.” Tom Shales agrees, “People are more media-wise. They are more agile at ducking the press. Usually, whatever they are in the news for is going to be more traumatic than news crews swarming around them.” When the onslaught begins, however, even the most seasoned handler has his or her hands full.

When Sergeant Major Gene McKinney was formally charged by the Army with sexual misconduct and indecent assault on May 7, three months after Brenda Hoster made her charges public, Hoster's civilian lawyer, Charles Gittins, received 100 telephone calls from reporters from 1:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., and 50 calls the next day. "It was out of control," Gittins told me. The result, he said, is that, "You don't call *anyone* back." After meeting with Gittins and others, McKinney decided to make a statement to reporters and cameras but did not answer questions. Gittins handled those.

While a "get's" decision to engage a handler may be understandable, it can also raise eyebrows. The most eyebrow-raising act of a "get" in recent memory was the decision by John and Patricia Ramsey to hire a crisis management firm, Rowan and Blewitt, only days after their six-year-old beauty queen daughter, JonBenet, was found murdered in their home the day after Christmas last year. Pat Korten, of the public relations firm, said that after the Ramseys were interviewed on CNN on New Year's Day, "the rest of videoland went crazy." "The next day," Korten remembers, he was "deluged." As he put it, "the race was on."

"The thing that astonished me, given the fact that I had been in this business . . . 15 years in journalism and 15 years in public relations . . . was the number of people from the same damn network and the same show calling." He said he received 75 to 80 calls a day for the first several weeks. In the first month, he received calls from *different* people at each of the following news organizations or programs: 23 from ABC News, 20 from NBC News (not including CNBC and MSNBC), 18 from CBS News, 17 from CNN, nine from Fox, nine from the *Denver Post*, eight from the *Boulder Daily Camera*, seven from *American Journal*, six from *Inside Edition*, five from *Larry King Live*, four from *People Magazine*, two from *Hard Copy*, two from *Montel Williams*, plus Leeza, Geraldo, Rolanda, Don Imus and radio talk show host Alan Combs. Korten said a *National Enquirer* reporter checked into his hotel avidly trying to find him.

"What happens," Korten said, "is you don't return calls to each person."

At times such as these, it helps to have a well-known name. The anchor of a broadcast cuts through. Bribery, on the other hand, doesn't. Korten remembered coming home one night to find a network morning news program had sent fruit, cookies and other goodies. "It had no

impact on me," Korten said. "I ate the cookies and threw away the fruit."

Korten shared lunch with Barbara Walters, literally. He ate half of her sandwich. "I was hungry," Korten explained. She was in Washington, D.C., where Korten's firm is located, to interview Katharine Graham of the *Washington Post* about her autobiography, and arranged the meeting with Korten. "She made a straight pitch," Korten remembers, adding, "She's the most charming person in the entire nation."

Since that time, the Ramseys have met with a group of reporters but set conditions on what they would talk about. That could have a distinct impact on whether some news organizations still want to interview them. Korten and his firm no longer represent the Ramseys.

The Ramsey "get" leads to the question of pressures on the anchor and the sticky issue of conditions and concessions.

### **Result #3: Changing Role of the Anchor**

Barbara Walters told me, "The least pleasant part of the job is the competition. All of us hate booking. I hate talking to people when friends and colleagues are going after them. It's debilitating." *PrimeTime Live* Co-Anchor Diane Sawyer told me, "If you don't watch out, the staff will come to you with six lawyers to call on an average Monday morning."

What is it about the process of pursuing an exclusive interview that can be so abhorrent to some? Is it the pilgrimage we must make to meet with the interviewee, the negotiating, the groveling, the feeling we are ingratiating ourselves?

"'Gets' have changed the role of the anchor," NBC's Neal Shapiro said. "They put much more stress on them. Because the competition is so fierce, you [the anchor] end up selling yourself and your show. What are my competitors doing? Are they writing letters? Calling? Going out to visit? In the booking trenches, God knows what people say. They start dissing other programs. It quickly becomes personal. You have to bond with people and extend yourself. Is that what journalism is all about? It was 'get the facts and cover the story.' It didn't take so much of your own personality." Now, the news division top brass will ask, "Why didn't we get this and why didn't we get that?"

"The ritual," Diane Sawyer said, "has everybody by the throat. [Everything] you have to go through: the lawyer, the publicist, the audition process. Lawyers give you other

people's letters and [have you listen to] their phone calls. It's Room 101 in [George Orwell's] *1984*; you sell out the last thing you most believe in. There is a temptation to say coded things that tip your journalistic hand. Even when you don't do it, you don't like the fact that you get into that temptation. You have to resist. You don't want to even feel you're tempted to say it. There are all sorts of temptations in that room. In that moment, you're not the same."

*60 Minutes'* Ed Bradley said, "You bet, I'm in the 'get' business, but I don't like it. I won't send flowers or a cake. For me it's phony to send a total stranger some flowers." Bradley's problem with "gets" is on a more basic level. "You put yourself up to be rejected. If someone chooses someone else over you, you will ask: 'Where did I fail? What did I do wrong?' It's not about that, but we *can* take things too seriously. It's not the end of the world."

Sawyer's basic problem is time. "I don't think it ['get'-getting] is corrupting of our business. It's corrupting of our time. If you are failing to do original reporting because you're spending your time on courtships, if you spend your resources on 'the get,' are you putting your broadcast at risk? What did you intend your broadcast to be?" The key, Sawyer believes, "is a sense of proportion, a sense of moderation." She has sought a solution with her newly-signed contract: an agreement that the network will try to help coordinate the "get" process. For her, that means, "the whole universe of us got sucked into it. Now, I will control it. I will not let it control me. I am responsible for what interests me. My best ideas that make me happy are ones coming from rocking, from floating, blanking, not from following any pack anywhere."

#### **Result #4: Conditions and Concessions**

When the headlines first hit that a 63-year-old woman gave birth, it was obvious that someone was going to go after that exclusive. The *National Enquirer* reportedly paid a healthy sum for rights to home movies and the first interview with the world's oldest mother. *PrimeTime Live* Executive Producer Phyllis McGrady considered purchasing the home videos from the *National Enquirer* (which would have included an opportunity to interview the woman) but decided against it. "The *National Enquirer* has broken stories and their facts have proven right but, in the end, purchasing rights from them [the *Enquirer*] still gives you pause," McGrady explained.

According to Howard Kurtz of the *Washington Post*, NBC also negotiated with the *Enquirer* to buy the home videos and pictures. In the end, *American Journal*, a syndicated tabloid program, bought the videos and pictures and got the first TV interview with the woman.

Tabloid newspapers and broadcast programs do pay for interviews, but other news organizations claim they do not. What the others *are* willing to do openly (and consider legitimate) is pay for expenses related to the interview, i.e., airfare, hotel, and meals.

The grey area involves any spoken or unspoken understanding that interferes with serious, objective journalism. No one disputes that there is a symbiotic relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. "Both sides have to feel they have something to gain by entering into this contract," the *Washington Post's* Tom Shales said. "It's not necessarily negative." He cautions: "[But] you don't turn over any editorial process to them [either]. That's anathema to a serious journalist."

Sam Donaldson said of his interview with Brenda Hoster, "It was supportive of her story. I believed her then and now. I don't think I owed her that. If she started backtracking, the antenna would go up. If she had contradicted herself, then we would have run it."

Walter Cronkite believes, "Most celebrity interviews are done as quid pro quo. They are seeking publicity. They are in the cat bird's seat, selecting the interviewer who will do them the most good." He sees no value in most of them.

Diane Sawyer's interview with Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley came under fire by media critics because the hour-long program included airing a music video from Jackson's current album. Sawyer said, "There were no concessions." Later, a half-hour Michael Jackson music special appeared in ABC in prime time, but network executives said there was no connection.

#### **Result #5: Tabloid vs. Legitimate News**

Tom Shales believes a serious result of the "get" phenomenon is a "blurring of what is tabloid and what isn't. When the *New York Times*, the *National Enquirer* and CBS are all beating down the same door, that troubles me. It's harder to tell legitimate news shows from the we'll-do-anything-for-a-story tabloid show. The O.J. story was a 'get-getters' paradise for weeks and months running. Serious journalists were elbow to elbow with tabloid [journalists]. Tonya Harding was the same way. News is

news. You just have to try to keep your dignity and do it in the most decorous way. What separates serious news departments from tabloid is what questions are asked.”

For Joan Konner, publisher of the *Columbia Journalism Review* and former dean of the Columbia School of Journalism, the problem isn't just the story selection, it is “how do you play the story, how long, where, how much. The blowing out of proportion of sex, violence, and mayhem—that's the low end. There is excessive coverage today. If you are giving 'x' number of minutes to Tonya Harding, I'm not getting what I need to know [that day].”

Diane Sawyer, who interviewed Tonya Harding before I did, observed, “It was not tabloid, it was a wonderful story, if intelligently done. Proportion is the key.”

Mike Wallace said my interview with Tonya Harding was fine but too much was made of the story. “To send the co-anchor of the *CBS Evening News* to Portland to follow her around like a supplicant—we wrapped her up, we owned her. I found that embarrassing.”

I was surprised when Walter Cronkite told me he thought Tonya Harding was a legitimate interview. “She was a figure in the news in a very much watched public event, the Olympics. To look at her personality, motivation, character, the question of remorse or lack of same, that's a legitimate story. It's not too tawdry or tabloid.”

If he were still anchoring the *CBS Evening News*, I asked Cronkite, could he see himself getting “gets?” “No, not on the *Evening News*,” he said initially, adding that he is “opposed to anchors jumping around the world.”

“I was as much the managing editor [of the *Evening News* as its anchor] and as such, you can't go scooting around every time there is an interview to do,” Cronkite went on. “I'd want someone to do the interview for the program. But, if I were in a dual anchor situation, I might be spared from that. I acknowledge that the prominence of the anchor can be exceedingly helpful in getting the interview and it is a worthy use of the anchor's position if this was the only way to get the interview. If no one had gotten hold of a Tonya Harding, for instance, yes.”

Can you imagine Walter Cronkite interviewing Tonya Harding? Bless him. He is still my hero.

Cronkite also said he believes Paula Jones (who accused then Governor Bill Clinton of sexual advances) is “a front-page figure, a threat to the presidency, a legitimate figure in our news.”

Ed Bradley wasn't as convinced when *60 Minutes* producer Amy Cunningham first proposed doing an interview with Jones. “Don [Hewitt] was all excited,” Cunningham said, “but Ed didn't want to do it. He thought the whole thing was tawdry. I had to work on Ed.” Cunningham pitched the interview after she read an article on Jones in the *American Lawyer* and just before Jones' case was to be argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. The thrust of the article and her pitch: they believed Anita Hill; why don't they believe Paula Jones? The conventional wisdom was shifting regarding the validity of Jones' allegations and Cunningham wanted to report the media story.

Bradley told me, “It was a story I resisted. I wasn't sure we should do it. I thought it had a big, potential tawdry factor. I told Amy, ‘Convince me.’” Bradley quoted Cunningham as saying to him, “You think it's tawdry, [but] the Supreme Court is considering her case!” At one point, Bradley even pointed to a sign at his assistant's desk that read, “What part of NO do you not understand?” Cunningham went off and negotiated the interview with Jones' lawyer. “Amy got it,” Bradley said. By the time Bradley flew to the West Coast to do the interview, he had come around. It aired in March of 1997.

Jones' lawyer, Joseph Cammarata, told me he never knew about Bradley's reluctance. The Monday after the interview aired, Bradley called Cunningham to say, “nice job.” Bradley felt it was handled well because the story never included specifics of what Jones claims Clinton did.

### **Conclusions**

What is the collective wisdom on the getting of “gets?” How steep is the downside? Is there an upside? What insights did I glean from colleagues, seasoned “getters” all, on the game as it is played and won?

- *There is nothing fundamentally wrong with going after “gets.”* As Walter Cronkite put it, “The fact that we go after newsmakers is a legitimate part of the news business. There's nothing new about it.” And there is nothing wrong with wanting to be first, even if it is just for bragging rights. Certainly viewers don't know you are first unless you make a point of telling them.

- *The real issue is degree.* With so much competition today, the real question becomes: to what lengths will journalists go to get an interview? Veteran news executive William Small asks, “Are you willing to compromise

your journalistic standards because you're so thirsty to get the story?" Reporters need to walk a fine line: sympathetic enough to "get" the interviewee but not so tame that they become the person's mouthpiece. Small's advice: "Avoid journalistic compromises. Don't make a fool of yourself or the interviewee and don't jump on the bandwagon of whatever is hot."

- *Coordination within network news divisions can help limit the overkill and restore civilized behavior.* This is Diane Sawyer's suggestion for relieving some of the insanity of the "get" phenomenon. Sawyer doesn't want to put her broadcast at risk by spending excessive amounts of time pursuing exclusives. At the same time, she's philosophical. "We're always in cycles and phases," she says. "Maybe this is a cycle in which people got a little distracted."

- *News organizations ignore stories at their peril.* This is the everyone-else-is-doing-it phenomenon and it is self-perpetuating. William Small says, "If you turn your back on a story, you lose audience, because others are not ignoring the story, and you create a big morale problem [in your newsroom]."

- *There are no easy solutions to the problems created by "gets," in part because the public isn't demanding any changes.* "The public will say it's terrible that the press would pick on this person," Tom Shales says. "On the other hand, they are dying to know about it. The public loves this stuff. They don't want to see how the sausage is made, they just want to eat the sausage." Marvin Kalb's solution is simple and to the point. "If you want to do serious news, get out of the neighborhood (prime time television)."

- *Even "gets" have their positive side.* Neal Shapiro notes that under "the old system, it would be two to three weeks before someone in the news might be seen on television. White-water figure James McDougal plea-bargained on Monday, [and] he was on *Dateline* Tuesday. The public does get served. The public does gain. And people are looking to news magazines to give them the news. No one else can give newsmakers 20 minutes to talk."

Like Tom Shales, Shapiro believes the only way any changes will occur is if "the public stops watching because they are appalled by what we did to get an interview. They will punish us. But they will never do that. Some anchors may say 'we won't do it anymore' but somebody will. Somebody will."

## **Postscript**

*\*On October 1, 1997 Sergeant Major Gene McKinney appeared in his first television interview on the premier of the CBS prime time magazine program, Public Eye with Bryant Gumbel.*

*On March 13, 1998, McKinney was acquitted of all charges involving sexual misconduct, but was convicted of one obstruction of justice count.*

## ***APPENDIX I***

Barbara Walters

February 7, 1994

General Colin Powell, USA (Ret)

Dear General Powell:

As I am sure you remember, you were kind enough to promise last year that you would do your first major interview after leaving office with me for 20/20. You then decided you did not want to do any interviews prior to the publication of your autobiography.

I hope that the book is coming along well and that we might start thinking about when we might do an interview based on your book. We would give it an enormous amount of time and attention, as well as a huge audience. I promise it will be a wonderful send-off for the book. Can you give me any idea of when this might be possible?

I am writing this rather official letter because I do not want to pounce on you every time we meet socially. I would hate for you to think, "Here she comes again." But I so much look forward to doing this interview with you.

With warmest personal wishes to you and Mrs. Powell,

As ever,

## ***APPENDIX II***

February 4, 1997

Ms. Susan Barnes

Dear Ms. Barnes:

We at PrimeTime want to interview your client Brenda L. Hoster for our program tomorrow night. We think what happened to her is both shocking and, sadly, all too common. Her decision to come forward publicly performs a great service.

We think airing her story on PrimeTime, with our ability to reach more than twenty million people, will also perform a service. She and you will make the decision as to whether she should do a television interview. Allow me to make the case why it should be with us.

My producer Shelley Ross and I have done a number of stories about sexual harassment. In June of 1992, we did a two part story about "Tailhook" which President Bush watched. The next day he fired his Navy Secretary. We did a long report early last year about the Okinawa rape case and other cases involving U.S. Naval personnel. We featured the story of Admiral Joseph Prueher who had been nominated to be Chief of all U.S. forces in the Pacific but who, as Commandant of Midshipmen in Annapolis, had tried to "hush up" the chaining to a urinal of a female midshipman. Two days before our story aired, his nomination was rushed through the Senate ahead of schedule in order to "save" it. We did a story in 1993 about a sado sexual initiation rite of new members of the U.S. Marine Corps drill team which resulted in the discontinuation of that practice. And two years ago, Prime Time did, at my suggestion, a full hour on the subject of sexual harassment in the work place.

My point is, we understand this problem and approach it with sensitivity. Our record says we aren't just "after the ratings" but after a change in attitudes toward sexual harassment. Please call me so that we can discuss this further.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Sam Donaldson

***APPENDIX III***

February 4 1997

Sergeant Major Gene C. McKinney

Dear Sgt. Maj. McKinney:

We are interviewing Sgt. Maj. Brenda L. Hoster (Ret.) for our PrimeTime program tomorrow. In that connection, I am requesting an interview with you concerning her allegations of sexual harassment by you when she was on active duty.

We want to give you a chance to address these allegations to whatever extent you desire.

Because of our deadlines for tomorrow, we need to do the interview as early in the day as possible. I shall call your office early in the morning to discuss this.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Sam Donaldson

February 4, 1997

The Honorable Togo West  
The Secretary of the Army

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are interviewing Sgt. Maj. Brenda L. Hoster (Ret.) for our PrimeTime program tomorrow. In that connection, I am requesting an interview with you concerning her allegations of sexual harassment when she was on active duty to air as part of our report.

I know of your commitment to zero tolerance when it comes to sexual harassment in the Army. You have eloquently expressed it in discussion of the on-going investigation into such allegations at Aberdeen and elsewhere. Indeed, Sgt. Maj. Hoster's attorney tells us she was impressed with your answers to our questions on This Week a few Sundays ago. I am also requesting an interview with Secretary Cohen to get his view.

Because of our deadlines for tomorrow, we need to do the interview as early in the day as possible. I shall call your office early in the morning to discuss this.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Sam Donaldson

February 4, 1997

The Honorable William Cohen  
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are interviewing Sgt. Maj. Brenda L. Hoster (Ret.) for our PrimeTime program tomorrow. In that connection, I am requesting an interview with you concerning her allegations that the Army moved to cover up sexual harassment of her when she was on active duty.

I know of your commitment to zero tolerance when it comes to sexual harassment and other forms of personal abuse in the military. Your public expression of outrage concerning recent disclosures of physical hazing in the Marine Corps speaks to that. Your view of how to deal with Sgt. Maj. Hoster's allegations is most important. I have also requested an interview with Army Secretary Togo West to get his view.

Because of our deadlines for tomorrow, we need to do the interview as early in the day as possible. I shall call your office early in the morning to discuss this.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Sam Donaldson

## APPENDIX IV

### Interviews Conducted by the Author for this Paper

Susan Barnes, Brenda Hoster's Lawyer	Diana Olick, CBS News Correspondent
Craig Bengtson, former CBS News Producer	Thomas Patterson, Bradlee Professor of Government and the Press at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
Ed Bradley, <i>60 Minutes</i> Correspondent	Scott Pelley, CBS News Correspondent
Norman Brokaw, Chairman and CEO, William Morris Agency, Inc.	Harry Phillips, PrimeTime Live Producer
Joseph Cammarata, Paula Jones' Lawyer	Colin Powell, Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Walter Cronkite, former CBS News Anchor	Master Sergeant Phil Prater, Sergeant Major Gene McKinney's Public Affairs Advisor
Amy Cunningham, <i>60 Minutes</i> Producer	Dana Priest, <i>Washington Post</i> Reporter
Sam Donaldson, <i>PrimeTime Live</i> Anchor	Colonel Marianne Rowland, Former Public Affairs Advisor to Army Secretary Togo West
Harry Evans, former Publisher, Random House	James Rubin, Senior Advisor to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright
Jim Gaines, former <i>Time</i> Managing Editor	Diane Sawyer, <i>PrimeTime Live</i> Anchor
Charles Gittins, Sergeant Major Gene McKinney's Lawyer	Rowan Scarborough, <i>Washington Times</i> Reporter
Vicki Gordon, CBS News Executive Story Editor	Eric Schmitt, <i>New York Times</i> Reporter
Lieutenant Colonel William Harkey, Army Public Affairs Officer	Elaine Sciolino, <i>New York Times</i> Reporter
Ed Hersh, ABC News Producer	Tom Shales, <i>Washington Post</i> Critic
Don Hewitt, <i>60 Minutes</i> Executive Producer	Neal Shapiro, <i>Dateline</i> Executive Producer
Mark Hooper, CBS News Assistant Bureau Chief, Dallas	William Small, Veteran News Executive
Brenda Hoster, Retired Army Sergeant Major	Colonel John Smith, Army Chief of Public Affairs
Walter Isaacson, <i>Time</i> Managing Editor	Colonel Bill Smullen, Colin Powell's Executive Assistant
Marvin Kalb, Director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University	Mike Wallace, <i>60 Minutes</i> Correspondent
Jim Kelly, <i>Time</i> Deputy Managing Editor	Barbara Walters, ABC News Anchor
Joan Konner, Publisher of <i>Columbia Journalism Review</i> and Former Dean of Columbia School of Journalism	
Pat Korten, Former Public Relations Representative for the Ramseys	
Jennifer Maguire, <i>PrimeTime Live</i> Editorial Producer	
David Martin, CBS News Correspondent	
Phyllis McGrady, <i>PrimeTime Live</i> Executive Producer	

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS FROM THE SHORENSTEIN CENTER

### DISCUSSION PAPERS

"From Bhopal to Superfund: The News Media and the Environment," Sanjoy Hazarika. September, 1994. Discussion Paper D-17. \$2.00

"Hispanic Voices: Is the Press Listening?," Jorge Quiroga. January, 1995. Discussion Paper D-18. \$3.00

"Paint-By-Numbers Journalism: How Reader Surveys and Focus Groups Subvert a Democratic Press," Alison Carper. April, 1995. Discussion Paper D-19. \$2.75

"The Nigerian Press Under the Military: Persecution, Resilience and Political Crisis (1983-1993)," Adeyinka Adeyemi. May, 1995. Discussion Paper D-20. \$3.75

"Post-Communist Eastern Europe: The Difficult Birth of a Free Press," Bernard Margueritte. August, 1995. Discussion Paper D-21. \$3.25

"The Next War: Live?" Barrie Dunsmore. March, 1996. Discussion Paper D-22. \$3.50

"The Foreign News Flow in the Information Age," Claude Moisy. November, 1996. Discussion Paper D-23. \$2.50

"Spreading the Word: The KGB's Image-Building Under Gorbachev," Jeff Trimble. February, 1997. Research Paper D-24. \$3.00

"Journalism and Economics: The Tangled Webs of Profession, Narrative, and Responsibility in a Modern Democracy" Richard Parker. May, 1997. Discussion Paper D-25. \$2.00

"Junk News: Can Public Broadcasters Buck the Tabloid Tendencies of Market-Driven Journalism? A Canadian Experience," William John Fox. August, 1997. Discussion Paper D-26. \$2.00

"Shoah in the News: Patterns and Meanings of News Coverage of the Holocaust," James Carroll. October, 1997. Discussion Paper D-27. \$2.00

### RESEARCH PAPERS

"Transmitting Race: The Los Angeles Riot in Television News," Erna Smith. May, 1994. Research Paper R-11. \$2.75

"Ownership of Newspapers: The View from Positivist Social Science," C. Edwin Baker. September, 1994. Research Paper R-12. \$2.75

"The Future of Global Television News," Richard Parker. September, 1994. Research Paper R-13. \$2.75

"The Media, the Public and the Development of Candidates' Images in the 1992 Presidential Election," Dean Alger. October, 1994. Research Paper R-14. \$2.50

"Busted By the Ad Police: Journalists' Coverage of Political Campaign Ads in the 1992 Presidential Campaign," Michael Milburn and Justin Brown. July, 1995. Research Paper R-15. \$3.00

"Framing Identity: The Press in Crown Heights," Carol B. Conaway. November 1996. Research Paper R-16. \$3.00

"The Wisdom of the War Room: U.S. Campaigning and Americanization," Margaret Scammell. April, 1997. Research Paper R-17. \$3.50

### WORKING PAPERS

"Real-Time Television Coverage of Armed Conflicts and Diplomatic Crises: Does it Pressure or Distort Foreign Policy Decisions?" Nik Gowing. June 1994. Working Paper 94-1 \$12.50

"Discourse and its Discontents," Frederick Schauer. September, 1994. Working Paper 94-2. \$10.00

Please direct any publication inquiry or request to:

The Joan Shorenstein Center  
on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy  
John F. Kennedy School of Government  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
ATTN: Publications

Telephone: (617) 495-8269 • Fax: (617) 495-8696

Web Site Address: <http://ksgwww.harvard.edu/~presspol/home.htm>