



The First Amendment Center – Ethics in Journalism

Journalist Plagiarism/Fabrication Scandals

(Reporters listed in alphabetical order by last name)

(Originally compiled by [Gordon Belt](#) on April 7, 2004; updated May 24, 2007)

- **Khalil Abdullah (Macon Telegraph)** – Khalil Abdullah was fired after editors discovered that an article he wrote contained passages plagiarized from The San Diego Union-Tribune, and he later admitted lifting material from other news organizations. An investigation found at least 20 stories by Abdullah that contained passages and quotes lifted from other news sources, including *The St. Petersburg Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The (Baltimore) Sun*, *The New York Times*, and *The Associated Press*. – Source: [Macon Telegraph](#) March 7, 2004.
- **Nazish Ahmad (South Florida Sun-Sentinel)** – On May 19, 2005 the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* revealed that it began investigating the work of a high school intern and freelancer, Nazish Ahmad, who used passages from a March 7 *Miami Herald* article without attribution to her May 18 story in the *Sun-Sentinel*. The review found that Ahmad used material without attribution in five of 10 of her articles. Source: “The Unethical Timeline,” compiled by Kara Wedekind, [American Journalism Review](#), August 2005.
- **Leena Ajinkya (CNNfn.com)** – *CNNfn*, the financial news network, dismissed writer **Leena Ajinkya**, saying that one of her articles which ran on January 15, 1999, closely resembled a personal-finance column published in the *Wall Street Journal*. Source: “CNNFN DISMISSES WRITER FROM ITS ONLINE SERVICE,” [Wall Street Journal](#), January 18, 1999.
- **Mitch Albom (Detroit Free Press)** – Best-selling author and columnist Mitch Albom apologized to readers of the *Detroit Free Press* for incorrectly reporting that two former Michigan State players were in attendance at the 2005 Men’s Final Four NCAA basketball game in St. Louis, Missouri. He said he wrote the column before the game took place and based the column on what former Michigan State players Mateen Cleaves and Jason Richardson told him they planned to do. He said he wrote the column in the past tense, as if the events already happened, because the story had to be filed Friday afternoon – a day before the game – but would appear Sunday. *The Free Press* said in a correction that Cleaves and Richardson were not at the game against North Carolina after all because their plans changed due to scheduling conflicts. In a letter to readers that appeared on the front page, Carole Leigh Hutton, publisher and editor of the *Free Press*, said the paper is “undertaking a thorough review of the situation,” and would report what it found. The *Free Press* assigned five reporters and an editor to review more than 600 columns by Albom. Although the investigation turned up no pattern of inaccuracies, it did find that Albom sometimes used quotes from other news outlets without credit. The review – the results of which were printed on the front page and two full pages inside of the paper’s May 16, 2005 edition – found that other *Free Press* columnists also failed to give credit for quotes gathered by other news organizations. Hutton said the problems reflect a lack of familiarity with the paper’s rules on attribution and pledged to take steps to address them. Immediately following the paper’s investigation, Hutton reported that Albom along with four other employees were disciplined. Hutton’s letter did not identify the other four employees, but said that Albom and the four each had a role in putting the column into the paper and had the responsibility to fix errors before the column was published. The letter also did not describe the disciplinary action taken, but did say that

Albom would resume writing for the *Free Press*. Text excerpted from: "Mitch Albom apologizes to readers for error in column," [The Associated Press](#), April 8, 2005; Carole Leigh Hutton, "A Question of Ethics: Columnist's error being investigated," [Detroit Free Press](#), April 8, 2005; "Albom, four others disciplined after newspaper review," [The Associated Press](#), April 23, 2005; "Detroit Free Press review finds problems with attribution in Albom columns," [The Associated Press](#), May 17, 2005; Carole Leigh Hutton, "Letting our ethics policy drive our reporting," [Detroit Free Press](#), May 17, 2005.

- **Stephen Ambrose** – Historian Stephen Ambrose admitted lifting several sentences in his best-selling books from other authors, although he said his footnotes adequately attributed the passages. At least six books by Ambrose have been questioned for including material that closely resembles passages by other authors, most notably the work of Thomas Childers, which appeared without attribution in Ambrose's *The Wild Blue*. Many of Ambrose's peers have said footnoting the passages is not enough. Source: [Associated Press](#), "Author Stephen Ambrose defends himself against plagiarism accusations," February 1, 2002.
- **Julie Amparano (Arizona Republic)** - The Arizona Republic, after hiring a private investigator to research whether her sources existed, fired columnist Julie Amparano in August 1999 when it could not find many of the people she quoted in her column. Amparano denied the allegations that she made up the quotes and said the paper didn't give her enough time to find the sources herself. However, repeated quotes in her columns were attributed to one name -- a "Jennifer Morgan," described with several different occupations – and one of the numbers she gave her editor as someone she interviewed whose identity could be verified turned out to be a relative. Text quoted from: David Daley, "Caught in those little white lies," [The Hartford Courant](#) (Connecticut), September 9, 1999; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **George Baghdadi (Cox News)** – George Baghdadi, a Syrian journalist who has worked for *USA Today* and *Time* magazine, among other Western news outlets, took responsibility for a Cox News Service story that contained fabricated quotes and plagiarized material, but blamed their origin on a 26-year-old assistant working for him. The story, which was written by longtime Cox contact reporter Craig Nelson, moved on the New York Times News Service Nov. 20, 2005 and appeared in several papers around the country. Reported from Damascus, Syria, the article examined the popularity of an Arab version of the classic Barbie doll. Similar articles written by the *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times* senior foreign correspondent Susan Taylor Martin ran in January and May that same year. Editors at the Times alerted Cox to the similarities on Nov. 22 and Cox immediately launched an investigation into the matter. Cox Newspapers' Washington Bureau Chief Andy Alexander, who spearheaded the inquiry, said that Nelson was unaware that material supplied by Baghdadi had been fabricated from the earlier Times stories. Text excerpted from: Jay DeFoore, "Cox News Corrects Plagiarized Story, Apologizes for Errors," [Editorandpublisher.com](#), November 30, 2005; Susan Taylor Martin, "The doll that has everything - almost," [St. Petersburg Times](#) (Florida), May 15, 2005.
- **Janet Bagnall (The Montreal Gazette)** – In a July 13, 2005 column on the Bush administration's position on the Kyoto Protocol, Bagnall, a columnist for *The Montreal Gazette*, used material from a column by Nicholas Kristof that was published in the *New York Times* on July 3, 2005. Six paragraphs of Bagnall's column on the environmental record of Portland, Oregon were taken, with only minor changes, from Kristof's column on the same subject. In an apology to readers, Bagnall explained that the plagiarism was inadvertent. Bagnall stated that she printed out Kristof's column in the same text type as *The Montreal Gazette*, along with other information including notes made several weeks earlier based on the original source both Kristof and Bagnall consulted. As punishment, Bagnall was formally reprimanded by the paper and her column was pulled for several weeks. The Gazette also took steps to minimize future instances of plagiarism, including drawing up a more detailed and rigorous policy regarding plagiarism and how to avoid it. Text excerpted from: Andrew Phillips, "From the editor," [The Montreal Gazette](#), July 22, 2005; Janet Bagnall, "What motivates suicide bombers is a

mystery," [The Montreal Gazette](#), July 22, 2005.

- **Mike Barnicle (Boston Globe)** - A longtime columnist for *The Boston Globe*, Barnicle was forced to resign in 1998 after being accused of plagiarism and fabrication. Barnicle wrote an October 8, 1995 column about two young children with cancer that could not be confirmed. Prior to his resignation, he was suspended for two months for using George Carlin jokes without attribution. Today he's a columnist for the New York *Daily News*, constantly appears on television as a pundit and frequently fills in for Chris Matthews on MSNBC's *Hardball*. Sources: [USA Today](#), May 22, 2003; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Thom Beal (Rocky Mountain News)** – In August 2005, the *Rocky Mountain News* newspaper in Denver, Colorado published an apology to readers after it discovered that deputy editorial page editor Thom Beal "inappropriately duplicated wording" from a *Washington Post* article about intelligence reports of purported uranium sales to Iraq. Beal resigned following the incident. Text excerpted from: John Temple, "Editorial did not meet standards of the news," [Rocky Mountain News](#), August 5, 2005.
- **Nada Behziz (The Bakersfield Californian)** – Behziz, a reporter at *The Bakersfield Californian*, was fired one day after a reader alerted Californian editors that a quote from a front page story was allegedly taken from a study of smokers' children that had been widely published in national news stories. The paper was also unable to verify the existence of at least two people quoted in Behziz's story. Behziz denied that she had intentionally plagiarized and said *The Californian* is engaged in a "witch hunt." She also claimed that she "did not fabricate sources," and that her notes support the existence of the sources that could not be found. The entire incident prompted the paper to review its internal review policies for checking sources and stories in the future. A subsequent investigation by *The Bakersfield Californian* revealed serious problems in more than a third of the stories written by Behziz. The investigation turned up alleged problems including plagiarized material, factual errors, misattributed quotes and information, and sources whose identities could not be verified, including seven doctors and a UCLA professor, according to the report. Behziz, 25, served as the paper's health writer from February 2005 until she was fired on October 17. Her byline appeared on 96 stories. Text excerpted from: Joe Strupp, "'Californian' Reporter Fired for Ethical Lapses," [Editor & Publisher](#), October 19, 2005; "Bakersfield paper details alleged wrongdoing by former reporter," [The Associated Press State & Local Wire](#), November 16, 2005.
- **Michael Bellesiles** – Professor of History at Emory University, Bellesiles resigned after fellow academics alleged fraud in his research conducted for his 2000 book, *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture*. *Arming America*, which addresses the history of gun culture in America, posited that guns were not nearly as prevalent throughout American history as previously thought. Initially praised for its innovative use of probate materials as evidence, winning Columbia University's Bancroft Prize, several researchers alleged Bellesiles falsified evidence to support his thesis. Source: [The Emory Wheel](#), "Bellesiles resigns as fraud investigation ends," October 25, 2002.
- **Bjoern Benkow (Mann Magazine/Aftonbladet)** – Norwegian journalist Bjoern Benkow fabricated an interview with Microsoft co-founder and chairman Bill Gates in an article entitled "Big Bill" which was published in the Norwegian magazine *Mann* and a Swedish tabloid daily *Aftonbladet*. In the four-page interview, Benkow claimed he spoke to Gates during a two-hour commercial flight in Europe. According to Microsoft Norway spokesman Eirik Lae Solberg, Gate's personal assistant Craig Beilinson informed Microsoft that the interview never took place and that Gates did not fly in a commercial carrier at the time the journalist allegedly met him. Text excerpted from: "Microsoft Norway: Scandinavian media published fabricated Bill Gates interview," [Associated Press](#), August 2, 2006.
- **Steve Berg (Minneapolis, MN Star Tribune)** – *Star Tribune* editorial page writer Steve Berg, who wrote two pieces containing similarities to two commentaries in *The New Yorker* magazine, returned to work on Jan. 2, 2007 after a newspaper review did not find

further problems in his work. Editorial page editor Susan Albright stated that the review of a year's worth of Berg's work found only the two "improper and unfortunate" instances of "nonattribution," concluding that "At the same time, we discerned no intent to deceive on the part of Berg, and his performance over 30 years has otherwise been exemplary." In the two articles in question which ran in the *Star Tribune* on Nov. 10 and March 27, 2006, Berg took notes on pieces written by Hendrick Hertzberg of *The New Yorker*, intending either to directly quote him or otherwise include some of his views. Later, in consulting his notes, Berg inadvertently failed to distinguish which parts were direct quotes and which were paraphrased ideas, resulting in the writing of phrases that included an unattributed, improper mix of views. The unattributed work was discovered by the Twin Cities-based conservative blog PowerLine, which has long accused the *Star Tribune* of having a liberal bias. In response, Berg stated that "Reacting to a right-wing blog, the newspaper found unintentional insufficient attribution in a fraction of 1 percent of my work. I'll put that up against anybody." Text excerpted from: "Star Trib plagiarism probe clears writer," [The Associated Press](#), December 16, 2006; Susan Albright, "Editor's Note," [Star Tribune](#) (Minneapolis, MN), November 15, 2006; Kate Parry, "Can a writer unintentionally plagiarize?" [Star Tribune](#) (Minneapolis, MN), November 18, 2006.

- **Jayson Blair (New York Times)** – Jayson Blair resigned May 1, 2003 after the New York Times began an internal review of an article he wrote about the family of an American soldier then missing in action in Iraq and since confirmed dead. The article incorporated passages from one published earlier by The San Antonio Express-News. Further investigation revealed many more instances of plagiarism. Spot checks of Blair's previous stories also found errors in fact and possible fabrications. Sources: [New York Times](#), May 2 and 11, 2003; [Washington Post](#), May 8, 2003.
- **Donna Block (The Daily Deal)** – *The Daily Deal*, a business and financial publication, ran a correction saying it "failed to cite CNN.com as the author" of a December 20, 2000 piece. *The Daily Deal* writer, Donna Block, says "it was my error in forgetting to put the attribution in." Editor in Chief Robert Teitelman says Block was disciplined, but he did not want to say how. Source: "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **The Bhopal Chemical Disaster (British Broadcasting Corp.)** – LONDON -- In December 2004, the British Broadcasting Corp. retracted a broadcast, saying it "has fallen victim to an elaborate hoax" timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Bhopal chemical disaster in India. In a correction posted on its Web site, BBC said its BBC World television program ran an interview with a bogus Dow Chemical Co. official who said the Midland, Mich., company admitted responsibility for the Bhopal disaster in 1984. In the interview, this person also claimed the company had established a \$12 billion fund to compensate victims' families and survivors of the disaster. But BBC then retracted the report, saying in a statement: "The person did not represent the company and we want to make it clear that the information he gave was entirely inaccurate." Dow Chemical confirmed this: "This is a fake statement and it is not from Dow Chemical," said Kay Yau, a Hong Kong-based spokeswoman for Dow Chemical. BBC said excerpts from the interview were also carried on news bulletins on Radio 2, Radio 4 and Radio Five Live. BBC said on its Web site that it is investigating how it was deceived. Earlier this year, the BBC was rocked by a reporting scandal that included a bruising battle with the United Kingdom government. A judicial inquiry criticized a May 2003 BBC Radio report disputed by Prime Minister Tony Blair on the intelligence leading to the Iraq war. The public broadcaster is in the midst of major examinations of all its operations, because the royal charter that sets the conditions and terms of its operations is up for renewal in 2006. The charter comes up for renewal once a decade. Excerpted from: "BBC Says Interview With Dow Chemical On Bhopal Was Hoax," [The Wall Street Journal](#), 6 December 2004. (Copyright (c) 2004, Dow Jones & Company, Inc.)
- **Ron Borges (Boston Globe)** – **[UPDATED]** Boston Globe editor Martin Baron handed down a two-month unpaid suspension to sports writer Ron Borges after discovering that Borges plagiarized another reporter's article for his "Football Notes" column. Borges

copied numerous passages from a Feb. 25, 2007 article written by Mike Sando of The News Tribune in Tacoma, Wash. Sando had submitted his piece to an online notes-sharing network used by Borges and other sports reporters across the country. Borges did not credit Sando, but a disclaimer at the bottom of his column did acknowledge that "Material from personal interviews, wire services, other beat writers, and league and team sources was used in this report." On May 18, 2007, Borges announced his departure from *The Boston Globe* to pursue new projects in sports journalism. Sources: Sylvia Lee Wingfield, "Boston Globe suspends sports writer amid plagiarism allegations," [The Associated Press](#), March 6, 2007; Jessica Heslam, "Globe denies more plagiarism by sports columnist," [The Boston Herald](#), March 8, 2007; "Borges is leaving Globe," [The Boston Globe](#), May 19, 2007.

- **Paul Bradley (Richmond Times-Dispatch)** – The Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch fired reporter Paul Bradley in May 2006 for fabricating part of a story published on May 17, 2006 that was intended to gather reaction to a speech President George W. Bush's delivered in Herndon, Va. on the subject of immigration. Bradley's fabrications included an interview that did not occur with the director of a center for day laborers and the misrepresentation that he had visited the center by using a Herndon dateline. A description in the story of 50 workers sitting at picnic tables waiting for work was taken from The Washington Post. Immediately following Bradley's dismissal, The Times-Dispatch asked an outside consultant to review Bradley's work over recent years for any additional instances of fabrication or plagiarism. Bradley had worked for the Times-Dispatch for 14 years. Excerpted from: "Richmond Times-Dispatch in Va. fires reporter, citing fabrications," [The Associated Press](#), May 27, 2006.
- **Rick Bragg (New York Times)** – Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Rick Bragg was suspended for two weeks for not crediting the work of an unpaid intern who wrote a story that appeared with Bragg's byline. Bragg freely admitted that he did little firsthand reporting for the June 2002 story about Florida oystermen that prompted Bragg's suspension. Bragg hired a young substitute reporter to do his reporting for him and flew from his home in New Orleans to Apalachicola to make a brief turnaround trip so he could score an Apalachicola dateline on the reporting done by his hired assistant. According to Washington Post staff writer Howard Kurtz, Bragg paid his fill-in reporter only with lunch and rent money. As the story mushroomed, Bragg's response was, essentially, that everyone at the Times did it. When that provoked an uproar among his colleagues, Bragg resigned. "My job was to ride the airplane and sleep in the hotel," the New York Times correspondent said from his New Orleans home. "I have dictated stories from an airport after writing the story out in longhand on the plane that I got from phone interviews and then was applauded by editors for 'working magic.' . . . Those things are common at the paper. Most national correspondents will tell you they rely on stringers and researchers and interns and clerks and news assistants." Citing a "poisonous atmosphere" at the Times in the wake of the Jayson Blair scandal and investigations into his own reporting, Bragg resigned. "Obviously, I'm taking a bullet here," Bragg said of the suspension. "Anyone with half a brain can see that." But, he said, "I'm too mad to whine about it." Not long after ending his distinguished newspaper career with controversy, he joined the firestorm of publicity that surrounded the Jessica Lynch story by co-authoring "I Am a Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story," a chronicle of the West Virginia soldier and prisoner of war in Iraq who was portrayed as a hero for her gallant fight and her rescue. Bragg continues to write books and makes several public appearances each month to promote his books. Sources: Howard Kurtz, "Suspended N.Y. Times Reporter Says He'll Quit; Rick Bragg Decries 'Poisonous Atmosphere,'" [The Washington Post](#), May 27, 2003; Rowland Nethaway, "'Drive-by journalism' latest blow to the Times' reputation," [Cox News Service](#), May 30, 2003; Kilen Mike, "Author Rick Bragg to talk about Jessica Lynch story," [Des Moines Register](#), April 13, 2004; Hillel Italie, "Jessica Lynch agrees to \$1 million deal with Knopf for book co-written with Rick Bragg," [The Associated Press](#), September 2, 2003.
- **Brazosport (TX) Facts "Fill-a-Stocking"** – *The Facts* newspaper discontinued its "Fill-a-Stocking" charity drive after learning that a submitted story about a needy foster child was fabricated. It told the story of "John," a hurricane evacuee who supposedly had

been separated from his mother for months. The paper received \$1,070 in donations after publishing the fake story, written by a Child Protective Services caseworker. The annual holiday initiative, which started in 1982, featured daily stories during the holidays about needy foster children and encouraged readers to donate to a fund that helped pay for special needs not covered by other sources. After the fabrication was discovered, CPS officials reviewed more than 20 of the as-yet unpublished stories and determined most of them reflected only minor changes designed to mask the identities of children, but at least seven stories appeared to include misleading information about drug use, fictionalized descriptions of their personalities and incorrect information about the degree of parental abuse or neglect they suffered. Publisher Bill Cornwell said the newspaper relies on its "Fill-a-Stocking" sources to provide factual information, not "creative writing." Text excerpted from: Jen Sansbury, "CPS says worker's story fake," [Brazosport Facts](#), December 1, 2005 and "CPS review finds more stories embellished," [Brazosport Facts](#), December 3, 2005.

- **Kathleen Breeden (The Harvard Crimson)** – In November 2006, the *Massachusetts Daily Collegian* reported that cartoonist Kathleen Breeden was removed from the staff of Harvard University's campus newspaper, *The Harvard Crimson*, for allegedly copying ideas for her political cartoons. According to a Crimson press release, the cartoons were copied from Stephen Breen of the San Diego Union-Tribune and Walt Handelsman of Newsday. Sources: Eliana Johnson, "Harvard University Newspaper Fires a Cartoonist," [The New York Sun](#), October 31, 2006; Cara Grannemann & Eden Univer, "Harvard journalists accused of plagiarism," [Massachusetts Daily Collegian – University Wire](#), November 7, 2006.
- **Jonathan Broder (Chicago Tribune)** – Middle East correspondent Jonathan Broder resigned from the *Chicago Tribune* in March 1988 after writing a story that contained some material taken, without attribution, from a story by Joel Greenberg, who wrote for the Jerusalem Post. Broder had been a full-time reporter with the Tribune since 1979. Source: "Tribune Mideast Reporter Resigns Over Story Resembling One in Another Paper," [The Associated Press](#), March 2, 1988.
- **Lloyd Brown (Florida Times-Union)** - Brown, the editorial page editor of the *Florida Times-Union* in Jacksonville, resigned after a committee found instances of plagiarism and improperly attributed material in editorials. Publisher Carl Cannon said he accepted Lloyd Brown's resignation after the panel found three instances of plagiarism and other times when borrowed material was not properly attributed in editorials dating back to 1996. The Times-Union review was prompted by an Oct. 12 article in *Folio Weekly*, a Jacksonville weekly newspaper, which raised the allegations of plagiarism. The story, written by former Times-Union editorial writer Billee Bussard, accused Brown of viewing Internet pornography on his office computer, engaging in sexually explicit telephone conversations, and making sexist and insensitive remarks toward herself and other women co-workers. Brown, 65, was later hired on December 20, 2004 for an \$80,000-a-year job as a writer for Florida Governor Jeb Bush, but resigned within a month of taking the job citing "Sensationalized news stories" as a reason for his departure. Sources: "News in Brief: Editorial page editor quits in Fla. plagiarism scandal," [Philadelphia Inquirer](#), November 3, 2004; "BUSH HIRES WRITER ACCUSED OF PLAGIARISM; EX-NEWSMAN ALSO FACED CHARGES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT PAPER," [Sun-Sentinel](#) (Fort Lauderdale, FL), January 8, 2005; "Governor's embattled aide quits," [The Miami Herald](#), January 19, 2005.
- **Jim Burns** – In May 2005 Jim Burns, the press secretary for New Mexico's Republican Rep. Steve Pearce, resigned after admitting he plagiarized material in a newspaper column published under the congressman's name. Burns said he copied large parts of a column about energy policy that ran in the *El Defensor Chieftain* of Socorro in April 2005 from the Web site of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank based in Washington, DC. *El Defensor* Editor Dana Bowley said the newspaper went to the foundation's Web site and found the column copied almost word-for-word. The paper criticized the column in an editorial. Burns, a former reporter for United Press International, also said there may have been other instances of plagiarism in speeches

and columns he has written on Pearce's behalf since taking the job in January. It is common for congressional staffers to draft speeches and guest columns for their bosses, but it is considered unacceptable to reproduce others' words and ideas verbatim without attributing them. According to Pearce's chief of staff Greg Hill, the congressman was unaware of the plagiarism. Text excerpted from: "New Mexico Congressman's press secretary resigns after acknowledging plagiarism in column," [The Associated Press](#), May 5, 2005.

- **Raad Cawthon (Philadelphia Inquirer)** – In October 2000, *Philadelphia Inquirer* Chicago correspondent Raad Cawthon resigned after being accused of plagiarizing material from the *Chicago Tribune*. A Tribune editor had informed Inquirer editors that similar phrasing and quotations had appeared in a story the Tribune published and a story by Cawthon that appeared eight days later in the Inquirer. Excerpted from: "Inquirer reporter resigns after accusation of plagiarism," [The Associated Press State & Local Wire](#), October 23, 2000.
- **Chris Cecil (Daily Tribune News, Cartersville, Ga.)** – Cecil, a former associate managing editor of the Cartersville, Ga. newspaper *The Daily Tribune News*, was fired for plagiarism on June 2, 2005 by publisher Charles Hurley. An investigation of Cecil's writing began after an Atlanta-area reader of *Miami Herald* columnist Leonard Pitts, Jr. wrote to him noting several similarities between a column Pitts wrote and one Cecil had purportedly written. Pitts researched the *Daily Tribune News* web site and found that Cecil had written at least eight columns since March that were taken in whole or in part from his own work. The thefts ranged from the pilfering of the lead from a gansta rap column to the wholesale heist of an entire piece Pitts wrote about Bill Cosby. In that instance, Cecil essentially took Pitts' name off the byline and replaced it with his own. In an explanation to the Associated Press, Cecil blamed a mentor outside the newspaper whom he said added the plagiarized material to his columns without his knowledge. "This is the first and only time I've asked someone outside my office to review my work and render an opinion on that," Cecil told the AP. "Unfortunately, it proved to be a very huge mistake on my part. I deeply regret it and offer my sincere apology." When he heard of Cecil's explanation Pitts laughed and said, "Let's just say that I am a little skeptical." Excerpted from: Leonard Pitts Jr., "Chris Cecil, plagiarism gets you fired; In My Opinion," [The Miami Herald](#), June 3, 2005; Andrea Jones, "Cartersville editor fired for plagiarism," [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), June 4, 2005.
- **Philip Chien (Wired News)** – On August 9, 2006 online technology publication *Wired News* removed three articles from its Web site after editors could not confirm the authenticity of at least one source. All three stories were written by freelance writer Philip Chien, a Florida author and space enthusiast who quoted and cited Robert Ash. In the articles, published in June and July, Chien described Ash as a "space historian" and an "aeronautical engineer and amateur space historian." When a *Wired News* senior editor telephoned Ash to verify the quotation, Ash said he was not a space historian and never conducted an interview with Chien. *Wired News* editors became suspicious when they discovered that the contact information Chien provided for Ash was a free Hotmail account that included the name Robert Stevens in the address. Chien had quoted a man named Robert Stevens in at least three articles he wrote for newspapers, referring to him variously as a retired engineer, a NASA engineer and an amateur astronomer. *Wired News* editors were also suspicious about another of Chien's sources in the space industry named Ted Collins, who editors traced to another Hotmail account to an Internet forum about the space shuttle. Chien acknowledged he created the Ted Collins Hotmail account and used it in an attempt to mislead editors. Chien said Collins died in 1997, but said he liked his quotes so much he wanted to use them posthumously in the past three months. Text excerpted from: Rachel Konrad, "Wired News Pulls Freelancer's Stories," [Associated Press](#), August 10, 2006.
- **Janet Cooke (Washington Post)** – Cooke became infamous when she won a Pulitzer Prize for a fabricated story that she wrote for the *Washington Post* about a child drug addict. Cooke's story, entitled "Jimmy's World," which appeared in the Post on September 29, 1980, was a profile of an 8-year-old heroin addict. The story provoked

so much sympathy among readers that city officials organized an all-out police search for the boy which was unsuccessful and led to claims that the story was fabricated. In spite of these claims, the story won the Pulitzer Prize in 1981. However, two days after the prize had been awarded, the Post returned the prize and offered a public apology, claiming that the paper was a victim of a hoax. Cooke admitted that she had fabricated the story and resigned. Sources: "The End of the Jimmy Story," [The Washington Post](#), April 16, 1981; Bill Green, "Janet's World – The Story of a Child Who Never Existed, How and Why it Came to be Published," [The Washington Post](#), April 19, 1981.

- **David Cragin (San Jose Mercury News)** – Mercury News reporting intern, David Cragin, who was suspended in December 2000 when it was discovered that he had written a story bearing strong resemblance to a story published in the *Washington Post* a month earlier, was subsequently terminated after more evidence of plagiarism emerged. Cragin, who had been working since July 2000 at the Mercury News' San Francisco bureau, was suspended after a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter researching recent articles on San Francisco housing costs noticed similarities in the Post and Mercury News stories. A subsequent review of all of Cragin's work for the Mercury News found that he also plagiarized work from other publications, including an article published in the Chronicle three years ago. Excerpted from: "SECOND MERC NEWS INTERN FIRED FOR PLAGIARISM," [The Quill](#) – The Society of Professional Journalists, March 1, 2001.
- **The Daily Evergreen (Washington State University)** – An Oct. 3, 2002 story in Washington State University's student newspaper, *The Daily Evergreen*, entitled "Filipino-American history recognized," contained material copied verbatim from a Web site which was incorrectly translated from Spanish to English. It read in part: "On Oct. 18, 1857, the first Filipinos landed on the shores of Morro Bay, California, on a Spanish galleon called the Nuestra Senora de Buena Esperanza, which translates to 'The Big Ass Spanish Boat.'" The correct translation is "Our Lady of Good Hope." The Web site from which the material was drawn, [www.pinoylife.com](#), posted an explanation on its site saying the passage was intended to be farcical. The error gained national attention, appearing on the Poynter Institute Web site. Kim Na, a freshman journalism student who wrote the story, said that the translation looked suspicious, but said she ignored her instincts because the story was the first she had written for *The Evergreen* and the Web site looked official. Three other student journalists also reviewed the story, but while the passage was questioned by at least one student editor, no one suggested it be removed because the information appeared on a Web site that appeared to be credible. The incident caused embarrassment for *The Evergreen's* student journalists, turned the paper into a national example of plagiarism and poor judgment, and provided unexpected learning opportunities for many on campus. Text excerpted from: Robert Marshall Wells, "Front-page blunder teaches hard lessons; Web-site joke gets WSU newspaper in trouble," [The Seattle Times](#), Oct. 9, 2002.
- **Emily Davies** – A March 2006 article published on *Women's Wear Daily* online claimed that details included in a proposal for a highly-sought after memoir by former British fashion journalist Emily Davies were not true. The article claimed several incidents, including Davies having dinner with designer Donna Karan in Tokyo and attending a party for actress Jennifer Lopez at Donatella Versace's Italian villa, either did not happen or were inaccurately portrayed. The article also alleged that Davies quoted without attribution from a 1998 *New York Times* article about finding a job in the fashion industry and used excerpts from a 2004 shopping column by Susie Boyt in the *Financial Times* so as to make it appear that she had interviewed the writer. In a statement Davies denied any plagiarism or fabrication and her boyfriend Jonathan Gornall told the London newspaper, *The Independent*, that Davies accepted she had erred in sourcing some quotes to herself but said it was "entirely innocent." Source: Andrew Buncombe, "Fashion writer accused of plagiarism over book proposal," [The Independent](#) (London), March 25, 2006.
- **Ken Davis (Hartford Courant)** - Sports writer Ken Davis lifted nine paragraphs from the work of a Syracuse sports writer. Davis was suspended for a month. Source: Karen Hunter, "On Borrowed Lines," [Hartford Courant](#), March 14, 2004.

- **Jonathan P. Decker (Christian Science Monitor)** – *The Christian Science Monitor* removed an article from its Web site by freelance writer Jonathan P. Decker, saying “the editors determined that the reporting did not meet Monitor standards.” According to Monitor editors, Decker’s April 18, 2005 article, “Can mutual funds that hedge give you an edge?” bore too many similarities to an article in the online financial journal TheStreet.com. Days after Decker’s article was published, editors at the Monitor got calls from TheStreet.com, noting that four paragraphs in the Monitor piece were remarkably similar to those in a similar article by its own writer, Gregg Greenberg. Decker, according to the Monitor’s Managing Editor Marshall Ingwerson, confessed that he had used Greenberg’s piece as a source and had come too close to the original. The editors concluded the article did not meet the paper’s editing standards and published a note for readers. The Monitor has since “banished” Decker from contributing to its paper for a period of two years. Text excerpted from: Brett Arends, “Plagiarism flap afflicts the Monitor; Stately paper maintains ethics by banning writer,” [The Boston Herald](#), May 5, 2005; Katharine Q. Seelye, “USA Today Reporter Quits Over Lifting Quotations,” [The New York Times](#), May 6, 2005.
- **Michelle Delio (Wired News)** – Delio, a freelance journalist writing for the online magazine *Wired News* whose stories covered subjects that ranged from computer viruses to the September 2001 terrorist attack, was the subject of a fact-checking investigation commissioned by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s *Technology Review* magazine. In March 2005 *Technology Review* retracted two Delio stories about the dismissal of Carly Fiorina as chief executive of Hewlett-Packard Co. after officials told *Technology Review*’s editor-in-chief, Jason Pontin, that they could not identify a Delio source. The magazine pulled all 10 of Delio’s articles from its Web site – including the two that were retracted – and hired Susan Rasky, a journalism instructor at the University of California, Berkeley, to investigate their accuracy. Rasky’s report said she could not identify the source in the Hewlett-Packard stories, whom Delio described as a longtime employee who was Hungarian and had the initials “g.s.” Four other stories “each mention one or more sources whose existence and/or quotes we could not verify,” Rasky wrote. Delio admitted making mistakes and said she should have kept her notes to help verify sources, but insisted that she fabricated nothing and declined to reveal her source for the HP stories. *Wired News* subsequently hired Adam Penenberg, a former Forbes.com reporter who teaches journalism at New York University, to review Delio’s stories. In 1998, Penenberg exposed fabricated articles by **Stephen Glass** in *The New Republic*. Penenberg’s review determined that dozens of people cited in articles by Delio, primarily during the past 18 months, could not be located. Nearly all the people who were cited as sources and who could not be located had common names and occupations and were reported to be living in large metropolitan areas. Delio continued to deny any wrongdoing. In a private e-mail Delio sent to *Wired News* executives in April 2005 and obtained by *The Associated Press*, she wrote “I don’t understand why my credibility and career is now hanging solely on finding minor sources that contributed color quotes to stories I filed months and years ago.” Delio said that among the hundreds of articles she wrote for *Wired News*, there “isn’t one story that contains fabricated news.” Sources: Ted Bridis, “Review finds fault with online journalist’s stories,” [The Associated Press](#), May 9, 2005; Hiawatha Bray, “More of writer’s stories faulted,” [The Boston Globe](#), April 22, 2005; Ken Maguire, “Review raises doubts about reporter’s accuracy,” [The Associated Press](#), April 21, 2005.
- **Doug DeNicola (WISC Channel 3)** - WMTV Ch. 15 reporter Leigh Mills heard a noon report on WISC Ch. 3 about the Ridgewood Country Club Apartments in Fitchburg, Wisconsin that sounded uncannily familiar. In fact, it was her story straight from the WMTV-15 Web site, being read on the WISC-3’s noon show. She mentioned it to her boss, news director Jim Dick. Word spread, and eventually WISC news director Carmelyn Daley contacted Jim Dick him to let him know they’d gotten wind of the situation, investigated and were firing morning news executive producer Doug DeNicola for plagiarism. “We did have an incident with a staff member regarding material that was not generated by our news staff and that person was terminated,” says WISC station manager Tom Bier. DeNicola doesn’t dispute the details, although he doesn’t call

it plagiarism because he didn't put his name on another's copy. But he feels the punishment for a one-time offense was "draconian." He admits he found the information doing a Google search on Ridgewood. Rather than pulling details, he copied it. "I felt guilty for going to a competitor's Web site to find information, but I was pressed for time," says DeNicola. "It's definitely a fine line and I agree I crossed it. I broke the cardinal sin of journalism." He adds that he's leaving the field of journalism, but is interested in public relations work. Text excerpted from: Melanie Conklin, "Crossing Line Costs Journalist His Job," [Wisconsin State Journal](#) (Madison, Wisconsin), April 3, 2005.

- **Allan Detrich (Toledo Blade) – [NEW]** *Toledo Blade* photographer Allan Detrich resigned on April 7, 2007 after acknowledging that he altered a photo of Bluffton University baseball players kneeling March 30 at their first game after a bus crash killed five players in Atlanta. Detrich also altered 57 other pictures that were either published in the newspaper or on its Web site. A Pulitzer Prize finalist in 1998, Detrich erased people, tree limbs and utility poles from some of his photos. In two sports photos that were not published, Detrich inserted a hockey puck and a basketball. In reviewing Detrich's work the newspaper said it found that a total of 79 of the 947 photos he submitted since Jan. 1, 2007 had been altered. In response, the Associated Press also removed access to 50 images created by Detrich from AP's photo archive. Detrich later apologized in an e-mail to Jim Merithew of the San Francisco Chronicle, a friend of Detrich. "What I did was wrong, and I apologize," Detrich said. "My actions have hurt me, my friends and family, and I regret that. Hopefully my error may help others in the future, so they don't fall over the same cliff I did." Sources: John Seewer, "Newspaper says photographer altered more pictures," [The Associated Press](#), April 15, 2007; Ron Royhab, "A basic rule: Newspaper photos must tell the truth," [The Toledo Blade](#), April 15, 2007; Jim Merithew, "Gray Matters: 'What I did was wrong, and I apologize,'" [SportsShooter.com](#), April 17, 2007.
- **Detroit News** – In December 2000, *The Detroit News* apologized for copying a paragraph from a suburban weekly. Publisher and Editor Mark Silverman, who called the incident plagiarism, would not reveal how a reporter and an editor were disciplined. Source: "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Ben Domenech (WashingtonPost.com)** – On March 24, 2006, Conservative blogger Ben Domenech, hired by The Washington Post Co.'s Web site, resigned his part-time position just three days after his debut amid a flurry of allegations of plagiarism. He relinquished his position at the *Washington Post* after a liberal Web site posted evidence that he had plagiarized part of a movie review he wrote for *National Review Online*. In addition, previous allegations of plagiarism in Domenech's writing for the College of William & Mary student newspaper surfaced. Jim Brady, executive editor of WashingtonPost.com, which operates independently from the newspaper, said he would have dismissed Domenech if he had not offered to quit first. He said there was "enough smoke" in the allegations of plagiarism "that we needed to sever the relationship." Domenech, an editor with Regnery Publishing and a former Bush administration aide and Republican Senate staffer, was criticized by a number of liberal bloggers for his inflammatory rhetoric, but it was not until the plagiarism evidence surfaced that some conservative bloggers joined in the calls for his firing. Domenech said he resigned because "if the firestorm gets past a certain level, there's nothing you can ever say that will be taken seriously...It's reached the point where there's nothing I can really do to defend myself." Despite the pattern of plagiarized articles, Domenech still maintains that he did not knowingly use other people's writing without attribution. He said most of the allegations, from his time at the William & Mary student paper, were from his freshman year, and that while he believes the unattributed material was inserted by his editor, he cannot prove it. "When I was 17, I was certainly sloppy," said Domenech, who did not graduate from college. "If I had paid more attention, none of these problems would have happened." Sources include: Howard Kurtz, "Post.com Blogger Quits Amid Furor," [The Washington Post](#), March 25, 2006; "Conservatives Turn on New 'Wash Post' Blogger, Urge Him to Step Down," [Editor & Publisher](#), March 24, 2006.

- **Eric R. Drudis (Medill News Service)** – Northwestern University's *Medill News Service* released a statement in November 2000 saying it could not verify two stories, which had been written by Drudis, who was a student at the university. The *San Jose Mercury News*, the *Philadelphia Daily News*, and the *San Francisco Examiner* later could not find proof that sources from 17 of Drudis' stories had existed. Source: "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Stephen Dunphy (Seattle Times)** – *Seattle Times* associate editor and business columnist Stephen H. Dunphy resigned in August 2004 after acknowledging that he plagiarized the work of other journalists. The plagiarism was discovered by an alert reader who wrote to *The Times* pointing out that a story by Dunphy that was published on Jan. 19, 1997 contained seven paragraphs that were originally published in the *Journal of Commerce's* AirCommerce Special on March 25, 1996. The reader came across the two stories about the expansion of airports in Asia while doing research and was troubled that Dunphy's story gave no credit to the *Journal of Commerce*. Another instance occurred in April 2000 when Dunphy picked up without attribution several anecdotes and some language from the book, "About This Life" by Barry Lopez. A follow-up investigation by the newspaper revealed three other instances where questions were raised about Dunphy's writing. Dunphy acknowledged taking "careless shortcuts that in the end constituted plagiarism" and apologized to his readers before resigning. Text excerpted from: Michael R. Fancher, "Times business columnist resigns over plagiarism," [The Seattle Times](#), August 22, 2004.
- **Dick Ellis (The Janesville Gazette, Janesville, Wisc.)** – Outdoor columnist Dick Ellis changed the name of the subject of his Sept. 15, 2005 column from Bob Swann to Rob Naus. The column was about two adjacent ponds in Dane County, Wisconsin. One was damaged by Canada geese while the other flourished, partly because Swann and his dog kept the geese away. At Swann's request, Ellis gave him a fictitious name, however, Ellis did not confer with Gazette editors before changing Swann's name, and he did not inform them. Swann said he wanted to protect his identity and thus the ponds. Ellis referred to Swann as Rob Naus, which is a play on Swann's name. Ellis had used Swann as a source previously and had used his real name. Source: Scott W. Angus, "Gazette drops columnist after writer makes up phony name," [The Janesville Gazette](#), September 29, 2005.
- **Joseph Ellis** - Professor of history at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, winner of the National Book Award for his biography of Thomas Jefferson and of a Pulitzer Prize for *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. In Ellis' case the integrity of his scholarship was not in question. Instead it was the stories of his experiences in the Vietnam War with which he regaled his students that proved his undoing. In June 2001 *The Boston Globe* revealed that Ellis' actual military experience consisted of ROTC at William and Mary College and teaching history at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Although he claimed to have served in Gen. William Westmoreland's Vietnam headquarters and as leader of a platoon that passed near My Lai shortly before the 1968 massacre there, military records show that he never left the East Coast. In August 2001, Ellis was suspended for a year without pay. Source: [Reason](#), "Disarming History," March 1, 2003.
- **Steve Erlanger (New York Times)** – In an editor's note published by the *New York Times* on December 9, 2005, the *New York Times* acknowledged that two paragraphs from an article by reporter Steve Erlanger about the films of Israeli director Amos Gitai were virtually identical to a passage in an article by Michael Z. Wise in the August issue of *Travel + Leisure* magazine. According to the *Times*, Erlanger "inadvertently mingled" his own notes with portions of an electronic version of Wise's article in his computer, and then used them in his own article without attribution. Text excerpted from: Steve Erlanger, "Dramatizing the Mideast's Cacophony," [The New York Times](#), November 28, 2005, Editor's Note Appended December 9, 2005.
- **Frank Esmann** – Danish TV journalist Frank Esmann lifted at least 20 passages from

Walter Isaacson's 1992 book about former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger entitled, "Kissinger: A Biography" and translated them into Danish for his own book, "Kissinger," which hit bookstores in October 2004. Esmann's Danish publisher pulled the biography from shelves after the plagiarism was revealed in *The Berlingske Times*, Copenhagen's leading daily paper. Source: Keith J. Kelly, "Kissinger Bio Pulled In Denmark," [The New York Post](#), October 16, 2004.

- **Brad Evenson (Canada's National Post)** – In July 2004, medical reporter Brad Evenson lost his job after it was alleged nine of his articles contained fabricated quotes and sources, including one story that quoted a non-existent young woman who reportedly had her breasts removed because of an "oversized fear" of breast cancer. Sources: "Let Post tell all on plagiarist," by Antonia Zerbisias, [Toronto Star](#), July 15, 2004; "Post drops columnist for alleged plagiarism," by James Adams, [The Globe and Mail](#), November 6, 2004.
- **Michael Finkel (New York Times Magazine, freelance writer)** - In 2002, the New York Times magazine fired contributor **Michael Finkel** after discovering that the young Ivory Coast cocoa worker he profiled was a composite. Text excerpted from: Howard Kurtz, "That's Incredible; To Rivals, Jack Kelley Was Too Good to Be True," [Washington Post](#), March 29, 2004.
- **Catherine Fitzpatrick (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)** – Fashion reporter Catherine Fitzpatrick was forced to resign after Journal Sentinel editors, acting on a tip, found similarities between a story Fitzpatrick wrote about the history of bikinis and an article found on the Internet. Editor Marty Kaiser promptly suspended Fitzpatrick without pay, deleted her story from the newspaper's online archives and on June 26, 2003 published an "Editor's Note" to readers which stated that Fitzpatrick gave partial credit to the reporting of Steve Rushin in a February 21, 1997 issue of *Sports Illustrated*, but much of the reporting and writing in Fitzpatrick's article actually came from an Internet report whose authorship was uncertain. Source: [Milwaukee Magazine](#), "The Bikini Jungle," October 2003.
- **Jay Forman (Slate)** – Forman fabricated a June 7, 2001 article entitled "Monkeyfishing," which described a fishing excursion in the Florida Keys. This involved taking a boat to an island occupied by monkeys and casting for them like fish, using fruit for bait. New York Times reporter Alex Kuczynski uncovered some purposely misleading exaggerations in Forman's article and established beyond all reasonable challenge that no monkeys were actually hooked, none "came flying from the trees, a juicy apple stapled to its palm," lines were not cut to free them, and so on. Source: [Slate.com](#) "Monkeyfishing: Slate Apologizes," June 25, 2001.
- **Bryan L. Fuell (Virginia Gazette)** – **[NEW]** In May 2007, *Virginia Gazette* sports reporter Bryan L. Fuell was fired after supervisors discovered that he lifted passages from published stories and passed them off as his own work. A report published by the Gazette on May 2, 2007 said that Fuell included passages from a Jamestown High School student newspaper in a story with his byline published on Feb. 10. Two other stories, both published on April 25 under Fuell's byline, included passages copied from *ESPN.com* and *The Washington Post*. Source: Shawn Day, "Reporter Dismissed for Plagiarism," [Daily Press](#) (Newport News, Virginia), May 3, 2007.
- **Peter Gammons (ESPN.com)** – On March 21, 2005 baseball writer Peter Gammons issued a "readers note" explaining that he did not cite material from *Los Angeles Times* reporter Steve Henson in a sidebar to one of Gammons' columns on ESPN's web site. Source: "The Unethical Timeline," compiled by Kara Wedekind, [American Journalism Review](#), August 2005.
- **Ion Garnod (Libertatea – Bucharest, Romania)** – Quoted from Reuters -- A Romanian tabloid says it has fired a reporter for making up a story about a couple who named their son Yahoo as a sign of gratitude for meeting over the Internet. Earlier this month,

major Bucharest daily Libertatea published a story saying two Romanians had named their baby Yahoo and printed a picture of his birth certificate. The news was widely picked up on the Internet. "It was the reporter's child's birth certificate, which he modified," said Simona Ionescu, Libertatea's deputy editor-in-chief. "We fired him." She said Ion Garnod, who had worked for the paper for several years, had admitted inventing the story to look good. "If it were real, it would have been a good story indeed," Ionescu said. Garnod was not available for comment. Source: "Reporter fired for Yahoo baby hoax," [CNN.com](#), January 24, 2005.

- **Steven Glass (New Republic)** – Glass made up stories, printed as fact. Was fired after a Forbes reporter alerted TNR editor Charles Lane that an article about a teenage computer hacker ("Hack Heaven") was full of fabrications, and Lane's own investigation confirmed that Glass had made things up wholesale in many New Republic pieces. A subsequent investigation found 27 of his 41 TNR articles contained elements that could not be confirmed. [Slate.com](#), "Glass Houses" May 15, 1998; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Jacqueline Gonzalez (San Antonio Express-News)** – In January 2007, Gonzalez, the Watchdog columnist and administrative assistant to *Express-News* Editor Robert Rivard, resigned after admitting she used, without attribution, information from Wikipedia, a free Internet encyclopedia, for a Christmas Day column. Later research uncovered further examples of plagiarism in two other columns. Text excerpted from: Bob Richter, "Express-News staffer resigns after plagiarism in column is discovered," [San Antonio Express-News](#), January 2, 2007.
- **Doris Kearns Goodwin** - In January 2002, as journalists probed the biographies and works of several high-profile historians accused of plagiarism, Goodwin acknowledged that her 1987 book "The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys" contained sections of text taken without attribution from another author. Goodwin's work contained "dozens and dozens" of passages from Lynne McTaggart's 1983 biography of Kathleen Kennedy. Goodwin said the copying was accidental, the result of a longhand note-taking system that didn't distinguish between her own observations and passages from other texts. Both she and McTaggart said they had reached a settlement years earlier that included an undisclosed payment and revisions to Goodwin's book. Since her admission, Goodwin took a leave from PBS' "Newshour with Jim Lehrer," where she had been making regular appearances, and some universities rescinded speaking invitations. Source: [Associated Press](#), "Pulitzer board still reviewing status of historian Doris Kearns Goodwin amid plagiarism charges," April 8, 2002.
- **Robin Gregg (New York Post)** – Freelance journalist Robin Gregg admitted to plagiarizing a story from the *National Enquirer* concerning the relationship between Wal-Mart and the Kathie Lee clothing label. The article appeared in the *New York Post* on May 15, 2003. Source: "Post Deceived by Freelancer," [The New York Post](#), May 20, 2003.
- **Diana Griego Erwin (Sacramento Bee)** – Award-winning columnist Diana Griego Erwin resigned from her job at *The Sacramento Bee* after managers at the newspaper began having concerns about the veracity of reporting. In an explanation to readers, *Bee* Executive Editor Rick Rodriguez wrote that Diana Griego Erwin could not adequately answer questions that first arose in April 2005 about whether "people mentioned in several recent columns actually existed." Managers at the *Bee* said concerns about Griego Erwin's work began when an editor could not get satisfactory answers to questions about a column Griego Erwin wrote about a fatal fistfight between fans after a Sacramento Kings basketball game. Those familiar with the situation said Griego Erwin could not provide more details to confirm the identities of an unnamed bar and a bartender who she had quoted in the man-on-the-street-style column. An internal investigation into several other Griego Erwin columns revealed 43 cases in which individuals named by the writer could not be authenticated as real people. Griego Erwin came to the *Bee* 12 years ago. She began her career as a freelancer for *The Los Angeles Times* before working for the *Denver Post* and the *Orange County Register*. In 1986 she

was a lead reporter in a *Denver Post* investigation that won a Pulitzer Prize for public service for articles about missing children. She also won a George Polk Award at the *Post*. Text excerpted from: James Rainey, "Newspaper Columnist Resigns After Inquiry; The Sacramento Bee says Diana Griego Erwin could not confirm the identities of her sources. The writer says she did nothing wrong," [The Los Angeles Times](#), May 13, 2005; Dorothy Korber and John Hill, "Bee publishes results of Griego Erwin probe," [The Sacramento Bee](#), June 26, 2005.

- **Edward Guthmann (San Francisco Chronicle)** – In an editor's note appended to an article written by reporter Edward Guthmann in October 30, 2005 about suicides on the Golden Gate Bridge, the *San Francisco Chronicle* admitted that portions of Guthmann's article contained material that had appeared in the October 13, 2003, edition of the *New Yorker* magazine. According to the *Chronicle*, the story contained quotes that should have been attributed to the *New Yorker* and used language nearly identical to that of the magazine. The *Chronicle* never mentioned whether any disciplinary action was taken against Guthmann. Text excerpted from: Edward Guthmann, "Lethal Beauty, The Allure: Beauty and an easy route to death have long made the Golden Gate Bridge a magnet for suicides," [San Francisco Chronicle](#), October 30, 2005, Editor's Note Appended.
- **Tim Haas (Bozeman Daily Chronicle)** – Sports Editor Tim Haas was suspended in October 2003 after Chronicle editors learned that Hass' October 22 column, "UND alum says keep Bison-Sioux rivalry alive," was largely taken from a column written by Jeff Kolpack that ran in *The Forum* on October 17. The column dealt with the football rivalry between the University of North Dakota and North Dakota State University, one of the oldest in college football. Source: [Associated Press State & Local Wire](#), "Montana sportswriter suspended for lifting column," October 24, 2003.
- **Steve Hall (Indianapolis Star)** – On Aug. 27, 1999 Indianapolis Star and News television columnist Steve Hall was suspended for three weeks without pay and reassigned after editors at the paper noticed a story he had submitted for publication was similar to one published in a different newspaper. Hall's story was never published. After an internal review of Hall's work disclosed additional examples of plagiarizing work by writers for other publications, the Star fired Hall in September 1999. Hall acknowledged his lapse, but told WRTV in Indianapolis that he felt the punishment was too harsh, according to the Associated Press. "Because of time pressures, I made a stupid mistake and violated a sacred law of our profession," he said in the statement. "I apologize to our readers and my family, co-workers and friends." Excerpted from: "Indianapolis Star columnist accused of plagiarism and fired," [The Associated Press](#), September 8, 1999; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Steven Helmer (Press Enterprise)** - A reporter for Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania's Press Enterprise, Helmer was fired after he admitted to fabricating at least one person. Editor Jim Sachetti says there is evidence that Helmer, who was hired in March 2000, may have invented other sources as well. Source: "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **James C. Hendrix (Fort Wayne News-Sentinel)** – After an alert reader caught similarities in three articles written by Hendrix, a free-lance writer, and those written by other reporters, editors at the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel we were able to establish by using Google, the Internet search engine, that Hendrix had lifted whole passages from other newspapers and other sources and passed them off as original material. These stories appeared in the *Ticket!* section and reported on various plays. On Jan. 6, he wrote about "No Exit," on Dec. 2 about "It's a Wonderful Life" and on Nov. 18 about "You Can't Take It With You." Hendrix apologized for misrepresenting the work as his own and is no longer writing for The News-Sentinel. Source: "Thanks to reader for spotting freelancer's plagiarism in The News-Sentinel," [Fort Wayne News-Sentinel](#), January 8, 2005.
- **Michael Hiltzik (Los Angeles Times)** – On April 20, 2006 the *Los Angeles Times* suspended the blog of Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Michael Hiltzik after he admitted

to posting derogatory remarks on both his *Times* blog and on other Web sites under names other than his own in response to a running feud between Hiltzik and conservative bloggers in Southern California. In an online editor's note, the *Times* said that its policy, both print and online, is for "editors and reporters to identify themselves when dealing with the public." Later, in an editor's note published on the *Times* web site on April 30, the *Los Angeles Times* said it would discontinue Hiltzik's column and Internet blog and Hiltzik would be reassigned after serving a suspension. Sources: Howard Kurtz, "Los Angeles Times Yanks Columnist's Blog; Hiltzik Accused of Using Pseudonyms," [The Washington Post](#), April 21, 2006; "L.A. Times discontinues Pulitzer-winning reporter's column, blog over use of assumed names," [The Associated Press](#), April 30, 2006.

- **James S. Hirsch (Wall Street Journal)** – Hirsch was dismissed for including a false statement in a story. In a piece on *Boston Globe* columnist Mike Barnicle, Hirsche had written, "The Globe is owned by New York Times Co., which declined to comment." But Hirsch had not called the Times Co. for that story. Source: "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Robert Hughes (Time)** – *Time* magazine ran an apology for a November 2, 1998 article by art critic Robert Hughes, the lead of which resembled the lead of a review by art lecturer Patricia Macdonald. Hughes said in the apology, "To my embarrassment I seem to have cannibalized it, but it was entirely unconscious." Source: "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Victoria Ilyinsky (The Harvard Crimson)** – In October 2006, Harvard University's campus newspaper, *The Harvard Crimson*, announced its discontinuation of senior Victoria Ilyinsky's column "On Language," citing Ms. Ilyinsky's failure to attribute the examples she used in an October 16 column about the evolving use of the word "literally" to a 2005 Slate magazine piece and to a blog. In her article, headlined "The Word is Killing Me, Literally," Ms. Ilyinsky used, without attribution, the same quotations - one from Louisa May Alcott's "Little Women" and another from F. Scott Fitzgerald's "The Great Gatsby" - that Jesse Sheidlower used in a 2005 Slate magazine column titled "The Word We Love to Hate, Literally." Ms. Ilyinsky's column was canceled and the article removed from the paper's Web site when it emerged that a statement by Ms. Ilyinsky - "When an NFL sportscaster said last month, talking about the Giants comeback victory over the Eagles, that the winners had literally put a bullet in coach Andy Reid's head, I had a feeling there wasn't much shooting going on" - was lifted from a blog linked in Mr. Sheidlower's Slate piece. "It turned out she hadn't seen the sportscast herself, and in the article she implied that she'd watched the game," the paper's president, William Marra, said of Ms. Ilyinsky. Mr. Marra said Ms. Ilyinsky's misrepresentation was a violation of Crimson standards. Text Excerpted from: Eliana Johnson, "Harvard University Newspaper Fires a Cartoonist," [The New York Sun](#), October 31, 2006; Cara Grannemann & Eden Univer, "Harvard journalists accused of plagiarism," [Massachusetts Daily Collegian - University Wire](#), November 7, 2006.
- **The Iraqi WMD Stories (New York Times)** – The New York Times conceded in its pages that some of its prewar and early occupation coverage of Iraq had not been "as rigorous as it should have been." The paper criticized itself for relying too heavily on Iraqi defectors provided by Ahmad Chalabi and his Iraqi National Congress as sources; it named the deficient stories; and it berated itself for not re-examining the defectors' claims as new information surfaced. Source: [Slate.com](#), "Previously thought to be true," June 4, 2004.
- **Ivanhoe Broadcast News** – In a March 16, 2006 article by Michael Stoll on the *Grade The News* web site, Stoll reported that syndicated multimedia medical reporter Dr. Dean Edell's byline appeared at the top of press releases and TV reports that he did not report, film or write for the San Francisco television station KGO Channel 7. Many of Edell's stories were taken verbatim from a low-profile news service in Florida called *Ivanhoe Broadcast News* which mails out prepackaged video reports to more than 100 TV stations across the country and allows local reporters to put their names on stories they did not

report without mentioning *Ivanhoe*. *Ivanhoe* also permits stations omit geographical information, giving viewers the false impression that their stories were locally produced and the patients and doctors quoted in the stories could be their neighbors. Paul Little, president of the National Association of Medical Communicators, was critical of this approach stating, "That's plagiarism... I think the airing of any piece of video, when the viewer is not aware of the true source of the video, is unethical." Kelly McBride, ethics group leader at the Poynter Institute agreed saying, "Even if you do have the writer's permission, it's plagiarism... The problem is it's a deception to the reader, saying that you've written this piece." For his part, Dr. Edell said he was less concerned about attribution than accuracy. He said *Ivanhoe* has an excellent reputation inside the business, and he, an M.D., vets each story on its scientific merits. Text excerpted from: Michael Stoll, "Prominent TV news doctor puts own name on pre-fab reports: San Francisco station also ran press releases under his byline on Web," www.gradethenews.org, March 16, 2006.

- **Jeff Jacoby (Boston Globe)** – In July 2000, Jeff Jacoby, an editorial page columnist for the *Boston Globe*, was suspended for four months for not citing other sources in a July 3 piece on the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Editorial page editor Renee Loth stopped short of calling his action "plagiarism." But the paper found that his July 3 column was based on accounts that have appeared "in other publications and books and on Web sites for years" and failed to alert readers to those other sources. Sources: "Boston Globe suspends ed-page columnist," [The Quill](#), August 1, 2000; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Daniel Jeffreys (Daily Mail – U.K.)** - Daniel Jeffreys, a Daily Mail reporter based in the US, who covered the execution of a British citizen, Tracy Housel, in Georgia. "On Tuesday night in Georgia," wrote Jeffreys, "Tracy Housel became the first British citizen in seven years to die in a US execution chamber. I watched as a witness through a glass screen in the neighboring room." Only he didn't. Jeffreys, a gifted writer who delivered big features for his employer over many years, was with the rest of the British reporting pack in a car park outside and witnessed nothing on that March evening. He might have got away with it. Unfortunately, several colleagues got angry calls from their editors wanting to know why they, too, had not witnessed the execution. The reporting pack turned quickly on one of its own and leaked the deception to the diary columns of *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. Source: Toby Moore, "Time for reflection: Dubious journalism damages careers," [Financial Times](#), May 22, 2004.
- **Gregory M. Jones (Roswell Daily Record)** – Jones, a sports editor of the Roswell (N.M.) Daily Record, was fired for fabricating part of a news story about a golf tournament in which he quoted a fictional character from the movie "Caddyshack." Source: [CBSNews.com](#), "Caddyshack Quote Smokes Editor," July 7, 2003.
- **Jonathan Kandell (Wall Street Journal)** – Kandell, a former assistant foreign editor and occasional foreign correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal*, was fired by the Journal after similarities between a story he wrote and a book on a related topic were pointed out. Kandell's article was about three Soviet-bloc economic managers who had triumphed over the bureaucratic constraints of Communism. Within days of publication of Kandell's article, the Journal received a letter from a reader saying how closely the article followed the John W. Kiser III book, *Communist Entrepreneurs*. Kiser himself eventually wrote to the Journal saying Kandell's article "was obviously drawn almost entirely" from his book, citing twenty-nine passages as proof. Kandell denied the charges, stating that this was a simple case of independent but parallel reporting. Kandell was fired and eventually sued the Journal for libel, stating that his professional reputation had been damaged. Since the Journal never formally accused Kandell of plagiarism, the paper's attorneys stated in court filings that the paper could not be accused of libel for inferences drawn by outsiders concerning the dismissal. Source: Daniel Lazare, "The Kandell Case: Plagiarism at the Wall Street Journal?" [Columbia Journalism Review](#), January/February 1991.

- **'Katie's Notebook' (CBS News) – [NEW]** An April 2007 commentary by CBS Evening News anchor Katie Couric on the joys of getting her first library card was substantially lifted from a *Wall Street Journal* column by Jeffrey Zaslow. In the first-person commentary entitled "Katie's Notebook," much of the script for Couric's account was copied from Zaslow's March 15, 2007 article, "Of the Places You'll Go, Is the Library Still One of Them?" without attribution. A spokesperson for CBS News stated that Couric had not read Zaslow's column and the producer who wrote the script for Couric failed to acknowledge Zaslow in research for the commentary. CBS News apologized for the plagiarized passages and said the commentary was written by an unnamed network producer who had since been fired. Sources: Howard Kurtz, "'Katie's Notebook' Item Cribbed From W.S. Journal," [The Washington Post](#), April 11, 2007; Bill Carter, "After Couric Incident, CBS News To Scrutinize Its Web Content," [The New York Times](#), April 12, 2007; Jeffrey Zaslow, "Of the Places You'll Go, Is the Library Still One of Them?" [The Wall Street Journal Online](#), March 15, 2007.
- **Jack Kelley (USA Today) –** A team of journalists found strong evidence that Jack Kelley fabricated substantial portions of at least eight major stories, lifted nearly two dozen quotes or other material from competing publications, lied in speeches he gave for the newspaper and conspired to mislead those investigating his work. Kelley resigned from the newspaper in January 2004 after he admitted conspiring with a translator to mislead editors overseeing an inquiry into his work. Source: Blake Morrison, "Ex-USA TODAY reporter faked major stories," [USA Today](#), March 19, 2004.
- **Michael Kinney (Sedalia Democrat) –** *The Sedalia (Missouri) Democrat* fired Michael Kinney after an investigation revealed that Kinney had plagiarized sports columns and parts of a movie review. An investigation into Kinney's writing began after a reader called the paper in May 2003 to report the similarities between Kinney's movie review and one by Roger Ebert, a nationally syndicated columnist. Source: [The Quill](#), "MO paper fires reporter for plagiarism," August 1, 2003.
- **Kodee Kennings Hoax (Daily Egyptian) –** In August 2005 *The Daily Egyptian*, a student newspaper at Southern Illinois University, issued a complete retraction and apology for a series of stories it published about a little girl whose mother was dead and whose father was serving in Iraq after the newspaper discovered that it was part of an elaborate hoax. Gullibility, sentiment and the failure to call the Department of Defense all led to the publication of 8-year-old "Kodee Kennings" touching letters to her father with the 101st Airborne in Iraq. After two years, and after "Kodee's" father was purportedly killed in Iraq, the whole story was exposed as a hoax perpetrated by a former SIU broadcast journalism student, **Jaimie Reynolds**, of Marion, Ill., who portrayed herself as the girl's guardian. Reynolds acknowledged her role in the hoax and said former student reporter Michael Brenner was in on it, a charge he strongly denies. Brenner, who wrote the first story about "Kodee," says that he was duped by Reynolds and that he remains puzzled by why Reynolds concocted the story, noting that no one was ever paid for the false stories and columns. Reynolds convinced the newspaper's staff that she was the guardian of "Kodee Kennings," who was actually the 10-year-old child of an Indiana couple who believed she was acting in a documentary. The man she introduced as the girl's father was played by Patrick Trovillion, an acquaintance of Reynolds who said he believed he was portraying a cocky soldier in a legitimate movie. Reynolds paid Trovillion \$100 to play the role of the soldier. The story was complete fiction, all the names used were fake, and staff members at the newspaper now believe Reynolds was actually writing the heart-rending columns under the little girl's name, and even impersonating her in telephone interviews. The story unraveled after Reynolds, who went by the name Colleen Hastings to *Daily Egyptian* reporters, alerted the paper that "Kodee's" father, "Dan Kennings," had been killed in action in Iraq. Background checks by the student newspaper and others quickly determined that there had been no such person in the military. Sources: Liam Ford, "Hoax ripples beyond SIU," [Chicago Tribune](#), August 29, 2005; "Man says he was duped into playing part in student newspaper hoax," [The Associated Press State & Local Wire](#), August 28, 2005; Kevin McDermott and Doug Moore, "Staff of student newspaper is looking for lessons in 'Kodee' hoax," [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), August 28, 2005; Meta Minton, "Former Daily Egyptian editor says he was an

idiot," [The Illinoisan Southern](#), August 27, 2005.

- **Mitchell Krugel (San Antonio Express-News)** – Sports Editor Mitchell Krugel admitted to using four paragraphs from a June 19, 2000 column by Gil LeBreton, of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Krugel's piece on Tiger Woods ran June 20 with a tag line that said, "wire services contributed to this report." Krugel and Editor Robert Rivard wrote apologies to readers. Source: "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Al Levine (Atlanta Journal-Constitution)** – According to the AJC, staff writer Al Levine copied passages from the Daytona Beach News-Journal and the Orlando Sentinel without attribution. The passages in question, one in 2005 and one in 2004, quote Daytona Beach, Fla. residents and race fans before and during the Daytona 500 NASCAR race. An investigation by the AJC revealed that Levine did not talk to those people. In its Saturday, April 23, 2005 edition the AJC published an apology by editor Julia Wallace and noted that Levine "regrets his actions, apologizes and has resigned." Source: Julia Wallace, "To our readers," [Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#), April 23, 2005.
- **James Lewis (WSMV-Channel 4, Nashville)** – Television reporter James Lewis resigned following a piece in which he reported that Metro Nashville police officers arrested a McDonald's employee when the worker sold a Big Mac to a hooker, thus violating a law against giving "nutrition to a prostitute." In researching his piece, Lewis did a Google search that returned, among other items, a fictitious December 2004 *Nashville Scene* humor column, "The Fabricator," which he used in his package wrap-up. "The Fabricator" story reported the McDonald's bit, complete with absurdly funny and fictitious quotes from Police Chief Ronal Serpas. WSMV news director Andrew Finlayson says Lewis recognized his mistake almost immediately, before the Metro Police Department or anyone else even had time to call and complain. "The package he did was all straight-up reporting," Finlayson says. "What James did was make a terrible mistake of emphasizing something that was clearly not true.... He didn't realize [the Scene] did joke news articles." Finlayson says Lewis quickly apologized to the staff and anchors, and subsequently an on-air apology was read about the erroneous report. "He was beside himself," Finlayson says. "I said, 'James, I understand, but you didn't check it out yourself. And you didn't attribute.' He said, 'I know.'" In the end, an embarrassed Lewis, who after a radio and newspaper career started in television when he was 50 years old, resigned. He says that his unknowing regurgitation of fiction as fact was "a bad mistake." Finlayson accepted Lewis' resignation with "personal regret and with understanding." Text excerpted from: Liz Garrigan, "Desperately Seeking the News: A Career Ender - WSMV's James Lewis resigns after reporting a morsel he got from the Scene's Fabricator," [The Nashville Scene](#), October 13, 2005.
- **Dennis Love (Sacramento Bee)** – Love, a political writer for the Sacramento (CA) Bee, was fired for stealing quotes and information from such publications as USA Today, the Boston Globe and the Dallas Morning News and for quoting characters he had invented. The transgressions came to light after the paper's deputy capitol bureau chief, checking on a quote from a political science professor he did not recognize, discovered that a section of Love's story on the Electoral College was almost identical to one in *U.S. News & World Report*. An investigation was quickly launched, which uncovered this passage in a Love piece after former U.S. Senator and Vice-President, Al Gore's Senate vote on a gun control bill: " 'It was one of the most symbolic acts in the history of gun-control legislation,' says Warren Deering, a Washington-based author who writes frequently about gun issues." The paper's investigation discovered that Warren Deering did not exist. In admitting to the charges Love said, "The bottom line is, I did the wrong thing and the Bee did the right thing. I'm very sorry that it happened." Text excerpted from: Howard Kurtz, "The Circus Comes Back To Town... Bad Bee Behavior," [The Washington Post](#), November 27, 2000; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Karen Mamone (Hartford Courant)** – Jennifer Frank, editor of *Northeast* magazine, explained in a note to readers that free-lance food writer Karen Mamone's work would no

longer appear in The Courant because "editors found plagiarized material while editing two columns." Neither column -- submitted months apart -- appeared in the newspaper. "What was plagiarized were the histories of recipes, nearly word for word," Frank said. "In some cases, the actual descriptions of the food or drink, again, word for word, and the entire structure of columns -- which followed structurally, paragraph by paragraph, the websites that were being plagiarized." Source: [Hartford Courant](#), June 1, 2003.

- **Douglas Martin (New York Times)** – The New York Times acknowledged that a June 27, 2000 obituary of British spy-trainer Vera Atkins used material from London's Times. It said five passages "closely reflected the phrasing" of the London paper's obituary. Source: [AJR](#), March 2001.
- **Brian Medel (Chronicle Herald, Halifax, Nova Scotia)** – On September 15, 2005, Brian Medel, a bureau chief for the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, wrote his weekly hunting/fishing column on the subject of dogs and porcupine quills. An alert reader sent e-mails to the paper pointing out that much of the column had been lifted from a website. In all, 362 of Medel's nearly 800 words were first written by Dr. T.J. Dunn, a Wisconsin veterinarian. The original work appeared on *ThePetCenter.com*. A follow-up investigation by the *Halifax Daily News* revealed an additional column which was called into question. Medel's August 25 column on deer features more than 200 words -- some slightly changed, but 116 word for word -- that first appeared on an ESPN website, *espnoutdoors.com*. They were first written by Brian Murphy, of the (US) Quality Deer Management Association. After an investigation, the Chronicle-Herald's managing editor Terry O'Neil published an apology to readers after concluding that Medel had plagiarized material in some columns and stories. Medel was suspended for six months without pay by the newspaper. Text excerpted from: David Swick, "Plagiarism betrays bond between journalists and readers," [The Halifax Daily News](#) (Nova Scotia), October 6, 2005; "Halifax Chronicle-Herald suspends veteran reporter in plagiarism case," [Canadian Press NewsWire](#), January 4, 2006.
- **Rev. William W. Meissner (Boston College)** – The Boston Psychoanalytic Society said in a statement that a yearlong review by its ethics committee found that the Rev. William W. Meissner's book "The Ethical Dimension of Psychoanalysis: A Dialogue" had "excessively paraphrased" the work of Syracuse University professor Ernest Wallwork and borrowed ideas without attribution. Meissner, the author of 27 books, has denied the allegations, saying his 2003 book appropriately credited Wallwork's 1991 book, "Psychoanalysis and Ethics." He declined to comment further Thursday through Boston College spokesman Jack Dunn. Source: "Professor Cited in Plagiarism Probe," [Associated Press Online](#), January 6, 2005.
- **NBC Universal Sports** – In May 2006, an unnamed freelance writer was dismissed from NBC Universal Sports after copying two passages from a 2002 episode of "The West Wing" in his script for a feature that preceded NBC's coverage of the 2006 Kentucky Derby. The short feature, which was preceded by a commercial for the final two episodes of "The West Wing," looked at the difficulties faced by Michael Matz, Alex Solis and Dan Hendricks. Matz, a trainer for a horse named Barbaro, survived a plane crash in Sioux City, Iowa, then led three children to safety. Solis broke his back in a track spill two years ago but rode the horse Brother Derek in the Kentucky Derby. Hendricks, Brother Derek's trainer, was paralyzed in a motocross accident. In the script, read by NBC's Tom Hammond, Matz was extolled because he "ran into the fire to save the lives of three children." Hammond paused dramatically and added, "Ran into the fire." The two-hour opening episode of the fourth season of "The West Wing" included a plot line in which two pipe bombs exploded and killed 44 people in the swim team's facility at the fictitious Kennison State University in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Martin Sheen, who plays President Josiah Bartlet, delivered a speech praising the rescuers who "ran into the fire to help get people out." He paused and added dramatically, "Ran into the fire." The Derby script summed up the changed lives of Matz, Solis and Hendricks by saying that the "funny thing about life is that every time we think we've measured our capacity to meet its challenges, we're reminded that that capacity may well be limitless." In "The West Wing," Bartlett said, "The streets of heaven are too crowded with angels, but every time

we think we've measured our capacity to meet a challenge, we look up and we're reminded that that capacity may well be limitless." The similarities between the Derby feature script and the script for the episode of "The West Wing," written by Aaron Sorkin, were discovered by a reader who sent an e-mail message to *The New York Times*. Text excerpted from: Richard Sandomir, "NBC Admits Plagiarism In Feature Before Derby," [The New York Times](#), May 11, 2006.

- **Kathleen Nelson (St. Louis Post-Dispatch)** – In July 2000, a story by sports columnist Kathleen Nelson of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* on the dangers of having youngsters focus on one sport at a young age, included two quotes and "some phrasing" from an Associated Press story, but lacked AP attribution. The paper printed a clarification four days later and a lengthy column on July 23 by reader representative Carolyn Kingcade that called the incident an "ethical error." Martin, a 15-year Post-Dispatch veteran, received no formal punishment. Sources: "Policing Plagiarism, [Editor & Publisher Magazine](#), August 7, 2000; Carolyn Kingcade, "Writers and newspapers lose credibility when information is not attributed properly," [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), July 23, 2000; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **Newsweek Guantanamo Story** – *Newsweek* issued a formal retraction of a flawed story that sparked deadly riots in Afghanistan and other countries, after the magazine came under increasingly sharp criticism from White House, State Department and Pentagon officials. The story by *Newsweek* reporters Michael Isikoff and John Barry published on May 9, 2005, charged that guards at Guantanamo Bay had desecrated the Koran. The story quoted an anonymous government official as saying that a forthcoming military report would say that guards flushed a copy of the Koran down a toilet to incite detainees into talking, but the source later told the magazine he could not be certain about the information. The short article, in the magazine's "Periscope" section, was linked to riots in Afghanistan and Pakistan that killed 17 people. Text excerpted from: Howard Kurtz, "Newsweek retracts Guantanamo story; Item on Koran sparked deadly protests," [The Washington Post](#), May 17, 2005; Peter Johnson, "Even a few sentences can have a huge effect," [USA Today](#), May 17, 2005.
- **Christopher Newton (The Associated Press)** – *The Associated Press* dismissed reporter Christopher Newton in September 2002 after the news agency could not confirm the existence of people quoted by name in a number of his stories. AP reviewed Newton's stories after receiving inquiries from three crime experts and a reporter for *The New York Times* about two experts he quoted in a piece about crime statistics. Editors then found a number of additional stories quoting people whose existence could not be verified. Most of these quotes were attributed to individuals with academic credentials or working in policy research. Newton maintained the interviews that were questioned in the crime story were valid, but he was unable to provide any corroboration after they were challenged. Newton apologized to his editors, but insisted he had never fabricated news content in any way. Text excerpted from: "AP dismisses reporter after editors unable to verify experts quoted in his stories," [The Associated Press](#), September 17, 2002.
- **Elizabeth Nickson (Canada's National Post)** – Nickson was dismissed in November 2004 after it was learned that a column she wrote in 2002 contained five sentences that should have been attributed to a 2001 article originally written by columnist Jonah Goldberg of the National Review Online. Nickson was the second writer in less than five months dismissed from the National Post for questionable actions. In July, medical reporter **Brad Evenson** lost his job after it was alleged nine of his articles contained fabricated quotes and sources. Source: "Post drops columnist for alleged plagiarism," by James Adams, [The Globe and Mail](#), November 6, 2004.
- **Michael Olesker (Baltimore Sun)** – Michael Olesker, who wrote a column that appeared twice a week in the Maryland section of *The Baltimore Sun* for 27 years, resigned on January 3, 2006 just two weeks before his 30th anniversary as a Baltimore columnist amid allegations of plagiarism from other newspapers. Charges of plagiarism surfaced

after supporters of Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich questioned Olesker's Dec. 12 column in which he quoted a passage from a 2003 article in the *Washington Post* without attribution. Olesker and Sun political editor David Nitkin had become embroiled in a First Amendment lawsuit against Gov. Ehrlich when the governor issued an order in November 2004 prohibiting state executive branch employees from speaking with Olesker and Nitkin. The ban was imposed after Nitkin disclosed a state proposal to sell preserved forestland in St. Mary's County to a politically connected construction company owner. Olesker explained in a correction to his Dec. 12 column that he took notes from the 2003 article and other sources in preparation for an interview. Twenty months later, when Olesker was preparing to write the Dec. 12 column, he returned to the notebook and confused the research notes with notes from the interview. An Ehrlich spokesperson, however, accused Olesker of being a "repeat offender," also accusing Olesker of inventing quotes from meetings that he did not attend in May and November 2004. Most recent allegations against Olesker came on January 4 in an e-mail from Gadi Dechter, a media reporter at the *Baltimore City Paper*, an alternative weekly, who reviewed Olesker's columns during the past two years and found instances in which the columnist had apparently used the work of journalists at *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* without attribution. Dechter found Olesker's columns included work of *Sun* colleagues as well. Text excerpted from: "Baltimore Sun columnist quits amid charges of plagiarism," [The Associated Press State & Local Wire](#), January 4, 2006; Douglas Tallman, "Sun says Olesker confused notes, issues correction," [The Gazette](#) (Gaithersburg, MD), December 30, 2005; Michael Olesker, "Continuing the pattern of playing dirty politics," Correction Appended, [The Baltimore Sun](#), December 12, 2005.

- **Antonietta Palleschi (CanadaComputes.com)** – The Canadian technology news web site, CanadaComputes.com, fired Toronto-based freelance writer Antonietta Palleschi after she plagiarized work that had appeared in three major U.S. newspapers, including the San Jose Mercury News, and on two popular U.S. Web sites. A partial review of columns written by Palleschi found she had copied large parts and, in some cases, virtually the entire work, of previously published stories by, among others, San Jose Mercury News Personal Technology Editor Mike Langberg and Larry Magid, a well-known tech columnist and broadcast commentator who writes a freelance column for the Mercury News. Palleschi's byline appeared on at least nine columns since last July that were nearly identical to what had appeared earlier in the Mercury News, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post or on Web sites CNet and ABCNews.com, according to a review by Magid, CanadaComputes and the Mercury News. Excerpted from: "WRITER FIRED FOR COLUMN PLAGIARISM FREELANCER COPIED FROM PAPERS INCLUDING MERCURY NEWS," [San Jose Mercury News](#), June 13, 2001.
- **Samir Patel (University News – Univ. of Missouri-Kansas City)** – In April 2006, EFilmCritic.com, an online movie-critiquing publication, accused Samir Patel, a writer for the University of Missouri-Kansas City's student-run newspaper University News, of more than 50 incidents of plagiarism. EFilmCritic.com claimed that Patel lifted paragraphs written by 15 different eFilmCritic.com contributors, plagiarizing 38 movie reviews that were published in University News over the course of 13 months. After editors at the University News verified the instances of plagiarism Patel, a graduate student and English teaching assistant in the UMKC College of Arts and Sciences, resigned. Source: Mara Rose Williams, "Film critic quits UMKC paper; Web site accuses student writer of plagiarism," [The Kansas City Star](#), April 11, 2006.
- **Ken Parish Perkins (Fort Worth Star-Telegram)** – *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* television critic Ken Parish Perkins resigned from the newspaper after an examination of his work revealed several instances of apparent plagiarism. A caller to the paper pointed out that one paragraph in Perkins' November 10, 2005 article about the ABC series *Lost* was repeated verbatim from *Entertainment Weekly* with no attribution. A further check of Perkins' stories and columns from the present to July 2003 revealed several instances when Perkins used a whole sentence or long phrases from another writer's work without giving credit or attribution, a violation of the Star-Telegram's ethics policy. Text excerpted from: "TO OUR READERS" and David House, 'Star-Telegram' TV critic resigns after plagiarism inquiry," [Fort Worth Star-Telegram](#), November 18, 2005.

- **Lisa Tortoreti Pezzolla (Kearny Observer)** – In April 2006, *The Morning Call* newspaper in Allentown, Pa. complained to Pezzolla, publisher of the New Jersey weekly *The Kearny Observer* and author of the *Observer* column “A Word with the Publisher,” after reading her April 13 column, which it said liberally cut and pasted entire sentences from *Morning Call* finance reporter Gregory Karp’s April 3 piece on how to save money on gasoline. Following up on the story, the *New York Daily News* conducted a spot check of Pezzolla’s writings and in its “Lowdown” column alleged that Pezzolla lifted exact phrasings, sentences and even full paragraphs verbatim from online sources on topics ranging from the death of Pope John Paul II to cystic fibrosis to the celebration of Presidents’ Day. In one instance cited by the *New York Daily News*, the entire opening line from a 1998 *CNN.com* story on coping with loss during the holidays ran in her column. Pezzolla denied the plagiarism accusation, blaming her staff and an unidentified disgruntled ex-employee. “My people edit whatever I do,” Pezzolla replied. “Something seems a little funny here, and I think I know what it is. It’s somebody that, as of a week ago, is no longer here.” Text excerpted from: Lloyd Grove, “Lowdown – Is publisher copy thief?” *New York Daily News*, April 17, 2006.
- **Eric Pfeiffer (Washington Times)** – In a February 10, 2006 *Washington Times* profile of Sen. Barack Obama, reporter Eric Pfeiffer lifted material from a *Chicago Sun-Times* piece on the same subject which was published a month earlier. In the article, Pfeiffer described portraits in the Illinois Democrat’s personal office and quoted Mississippi Republican Sen. Trent Lott and Daily Kos blog founder Markos Moulitsas. However, Pfeiffer never visited Obama’s office nor interviewed Lott or Moulitsas. “I definitely made a mistake in not including the attribution,” said Pfeiffer, a former *National Review Online* writer who began writing for the *Washington Times* for just over a week when he wrote the Obama profile. While Pfeiffer claimed that he made an honest mistake and fully intended to credit the *Sun-Times*, Moulitsas accused him of “outright plagiarism.” *Washington Times* Managing Editor Francis Coombs said Pfeiffer “acknowledged a stupid mistake” and the *Times* ran a correction the following day. Coombs said the editors will review Pfeiffer’s other stories before deciding what action to take. Text excerpted from: Howard Kurtz, “A Nose for News, Tweaked By the No’s for News – Second-Hand Research,” *The Washington Post*, February 13, 2006.
- **Don Plummer (Atlanta Journal-Constitution)** – Reporter Don Plummer resigned amid allegations that he used unattributed passages from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* in a March 3, 2006 story about a suspended chiropractor from Pittsburgh who was convicted of cocaine possession in Cobb County, Georgia in 1993. An *AJC* editor discovered similarities in both articles as a follow-up story was being discussed. Plummer said the publication of the article occurred because of a miscommunication between him and his editor. Plummer claimed that the story was not complete and was still a work in progress when he submitted the article, stating that the paragraphs in question included information that he was planning to update and localize for Georgia readers. However, Hank Klibanoff, *AJC*’s managing editor for news, said Plummer submitted the story to his editor knowing it was for publication and without pointing out that some of it had been taken from the Pittsburgh paper. Plummer had been with the *AJC* for nearly 14 years. Text excerpted from: “Reporter resigns amid allegations of using unattributed passages,” *The Associated Press State & Local Wire*, April 29, 2006.
- **Ken Powers (Worcester Telegram & Gazette)** – Powers, a beat writer for the NFL’s New England Patriots, was told to return home from Jacksonville, FL where he was covering the Super Bowl after he allegedly plagiarized parts of his column from Sports Illustrated writer Peter King. The newspaper published a correction, saying “Substantial portions of a column originally written by Peter King and published Jan. 24 on the Sports Illustrated Web site were printed Jan. 30 in the Sunday Telegram under the byline of Ken Powers.” The Newspaper later fired Powers after an investigation revealed that this was not an isolated incident and that he had lifted material from other publications on at least six occasions. The Newspaper Guild Local 31041 in Providence, Rhode Island has since filed a grievance with the paper on behalf of Powers citing wrongful termination. Sources: Jay Lindsay, “Plagiarism questions raised about newspaper’s sports column,”

[The Associated Press State & Local Wire](#), February 3, 2005; Katharine Q. Seelye, "Sportswriter at Massachusetts Paper Is Fired for Plagiarism," [The New York Times](#), February 4, 2005; Joe Strupp, "Worcester Sportswriter Fired for Plagiarism Files Grievance," [Editor & Publisher](#), March 11, 2005.

- **Mona Prufer (Myrtle Beach Sun News)** – Prufer, a features editor for the Myrtle Beach (SC) Sun News, resigned for "including original work by others without attribution" in a books column and in a cooking column. Sources: "Editor resigns amid plagiarism allegations," [The Quill](#), March 1, 2001; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **The Reidsville (NC) Review** – An editor and two reporters at *The Reidsville Review* newspaper resigned after the writers were accused of inventing quotes published on the front page of their newspaper. **Jeff Sykes** resigned as managing editor and apologized to *The Reidsville Review's* subscribers in a column published on July 28, 2005. Reporters **Brook R. Corwin** and **Michael Pucci** also resigned. Corwin and Pucci invented quotes in May for the daily "Two Cents Worth" feature, which includes a small picture of a person, along with their name and response to a question. Some of the photos that appeared in the newspaper were copied from [Thefacebook.com](#), a college social networking Web site. Sykes said he learned of the deception earlier this month. He said he verbally disciplined both reporters, but now believes he made a mistake by not immediately firing them. Corwin had been with the newspaper for 10 months and Pucci joined the staff in January 2005. Sykes worked at *The Reidsville Review* for three years. Text excerpted from: Carla Bagley, "Newspaper lifts photos, makes up quotes for daily feature," [Greensboro \(NC\) News & Record](#), July 27, 2005; William L. Holmes, "N.C. News Editor, Two Reporters Resign," [Associated Press](#), July 28, 2005.
- **Martin Renzhofer (Salt Lake Tribune)** – Renzhofer accepted a demotion after admitting to plagiarism, failing to attribute a 180-word passage lifted from an Internet site in his column about an HBO documentary. A reader noticed the identical wording and contacted Tribune's reader advocate. Source: [Associated Press](#), "Salt Lake Tribune reporter who admitted plagiarism takes demotion," July 3, 2002.
- **Glenn E. Rice (Kansas City Star)** – Glenn Rice, a reporter on *The Kansas City Star's* Missouri desk, was reassigned after the newspaper received a complaint that Rice plagiarized material in a May 2002 review of jazz singer Dianne Reeves. The review contained material taken nearly verbatim from the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* of Fort Lauderdale and *The Seattle Times*. After receiving the complaint, *The Star* conducted a larger examination of his work. Mark Zieman, editor and vice president of *The Star*, said that Glenn's music coverage "revealed serious problems that had to be addressed." The plagiarism was not made public until a year later, when *The Pitch*, an alternative Kansas City weekly, reported the incident. In July 2003 Rice resigned as treasurer of the National Association of Black Journalists where he had served for nearly four years. Text excerpted from: Eric Palmer, "Star staffer resigns post as association's treasurer; Reporter disciplined last year for plagiarism," [The Kansas City Star](#), July 9, 2003.
- **Richmond Times-Dispatch** – A photographer responsible for a *Times-Dispatch* business section cover photograph about a Goochland candy maker that resembled a Dec. 2004 *Richmond Style Weekly* cover was fired in August 2005. "We learned that the photographer had seen the Style photo while at the candy company, and was told of the similarity, but submitted the picture anyway as original work," writes managing editor Louise Seals. "That is visual plagiarism and that is why we have dismissed the photographer." A review of the article also found troublesome similarities between the Metro business article and Style's that raised questions about several newsroom processes. The Metro Business article was written by a summer intern who has since returned to college. Text excerpted from: Poynter Online – Romenesko News, "Times-Dispatch fires photographer for visual plagiarism," August 29, 2005; Louise Seals, "Ethics Case: We Erred, and Now We Are Taking Action," [Richmond Times-Dispatch](#), August 28, 2005.

- **Bart Ripp (The News Tribune, Tacoma, WA)** - Bart Ripp, a reporter for *The (Tacoma, WA) News Tribune*, resigned after one of his editors, seeking to verify a name in an article Ripp wrote, couldn't find the person in several phone books. She found no such person in an extensive database that has records on virtually every adult. She checked the names in the remainder of the article. She found no record of five of the six people quoted. Ripp offered no explanation for why we could find no record of the people he quoted. *The News Tribune* checked other articles Ripp had written over the past few years. In two restaurant reviews and three feature stories he quoted 10 people of whom they could find no record. Source: [The News Tribune](#), March 7, 2004.
- **Neil Rosenthal (Boulder Daily Camera)** – Daily Camera “Relationships” columnist Neil Rosenthal lifted whole sentences and passages from the book “Why Is It Always About You?” without direct attribution and without quotation marks. Rosenthal, who was a Daily Camera contributor, mentioned the book twice in his column, but that did not let him off the hook. “I am convinced that it was never his intention to plagiarize,” says editor Colleen Conant. “But in journalism this is an offense for which the writer gets no second chance.” Source: “Daily Camera columnist canned over plagiarism charges,” [Poynter Online: Romenesko](#), July 7, 2003.
- **Tim Ryan (Honolulu Star-Bulletin)** – Veteran entertainment reporter Tim Ryan was fired after reports of plagiarism surfaced on national and local web sites, including *Wikipedia*, *Regret The Error*, and *The Hawaii Reporter*. Among Ryan’s alleged instances of plagiarism was a story about cellist Haimovitz in which information in Ryan’s article was duplicated from an interview Haimovitz gave to *National Public Radio*. In another instance, Michael Snow wrote for Wikipedia that an editor for the online encyclopedia found several paragraphs in a Dec. 22, 2005 Ryan review of a History Channel documentary, “were strikingly similar to the text of the Wikipedia article” on the program. Wikipedia said its investigation linked Ryan stores with four other incidents of possible plagiarism, including stories published by the *Sacramento Bee* and *Eonline*, as well as information posted on *Google*. In a front-page letter, Editor Frank Bridgewater listed six Ryan stories, dating back to 2001, that were updated at the newspaper’s Web site with a correction or editor’s note. Text excerpted from: “Honolulu Star-Bulletin reporter fired for plagiarism,” [The Associated Press State & Local Wire](#), January 14, 2006.
- **Manuel Santelices (Cosas Magazine)** – **[NEW]** In May 2007, *Radar* magazine accused the Chilean magazine *Cosas* of stealing material from its March/April 2007 issue for an article about boorish celebrity behavior entitled, “Toxic Bachelors.” The *Cosas* article, “Solteros Toxicos,” published under the byline Manuel Santelices featured the same celebrities and direct translations from the *Radar* article. A lawyer representing *Cosas* stated that Santelices “did not warn of any similarity of his work with other publications,” adding that since the journalist had contributed reliably to the magazine for more than 25 years, “we did not doubt that his work fully responded to the upright norms always practiced by *Cosas*.” In response to *Radar*’s accusation of plagiarism, *Cosas* withdrew the issue in question from newsstands, but kept Santelices on as its New York correspondent. Source: Adam Andrew Newman, “Accused of Plagiarism, Magazine Withdraws Issue,” [The New York Times](#), May 14, 2007.
- **Uli Schmetzer (Chicago Tribune)** – The Chicago Tribune recently dropped as a contract writer one of its veteran correspondents, Uli Schmetzer, who made up an Australian psychiatrist and attributed to him a derogatory quote about Aborigines that was exposed by an Australian blogger. Source: [Washington Post](#), March 29, 2004.
- **Ruth Shalit (The New Republic)** – Shalit, another writer for *The New Republic*, left her job after documented cases of plagiarism in August 1994 and again in June 1995. Those accusations of plagiarism were based on a close resemblance between several passages and sentences in articles she wrote and material in articles by other reporters on the same subjects. At the time, Ms. Shalit said she had confused her typewritten notes with articles downloaded from the Lexis-Nexis data base. *The New Republic* printed apologies over both incidents, and at the end of 1995, after a critique she wrote about affirmative action at *The Washington Post* and continued criticism over the plagiarism accusations,

Ms. Shalit took a six-month leave of absence. When she returned in 1996, she moved away from the often-scathing critiques of Washington institutions and people that had earned her a reputation as one of journalism's rising stars and a lucrative contract with *GQ* magazine. Instead, she began writing cultural criticism, book reviews and trend pieces, and maintained a generally low visibility. But her case drew revived attention last spring when another New Republic writer, **Stephen Glass**, was found to have fabricated large parts of articles he wrote. So, Ms. Shalit said, she decided it was time to make a fresh start in "a field where I could use of all my talents and be judged for who I am instead of on the basis of mistakes I made when I was a dippy 23-year-old." She went on to develop advertising campaign strategies for an ad agency in New York and wrote columns for the online publication *Salon*. Text excerpted from: Matthew J. Rosenberg, "A Writer With a Past Turns to Advertising," [The New York Times](#), March 15, 1999.

- **The Shukan Kinyobi** – Japanese weekly magazine *Shukan Kinyobi* has admitted it plagiarized parts of wire reports from the nation's two largest news services. The magazine issued an apology to Kyodo News Service and Jiji Press Monday in letters signed by Chief Editor Hajime Kitamura. The story in question -- about the Liberal Democratic Party -- ran in the Sept. 16 issue, according to the magazine's editorial department. Some sentences in the story duplicated parts of wire reports from both of the news agencies, both distributed Sept. 12, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported Thursday. The magazine does not subscribe to either of the news services. The plagiarism was only discovered after a reader's query led to an investigation of the article. Text excerpted from: "Japanese magazine admits plagiarism," [UPI](#), October 6, 2005.
- **David Simpson (The Tulsa World)** – *The Tulsa World* (Okla.) dismissed its longtime editorial cartoonist David Simpson on November 10, 2005 after allegations of plagiarism surfaced involving a cartoon that appeared in the World in June. After an investigation, the newspaper revealed that Simpson re-created an editorial cartoon published in the *Hartford Courant* in 1981. According to Simpson, he mistakenly believed that he had created the cartoon after he found an unsigned copy of it in his creative files. He redrew the cartoon, which then was published in the June 7 edition of *The Tulsa World*. The *Hartford Courant* originally notified an editor at *The Tulsa World* of the suspect cartoon in August. The editor failed to respond or notify the World's owners of the allegation. By November 7, a *Tulsa World* reporter found the cartoons at issue on a Web site, www.editorialcartoonists.com, where the original artist, Bob Englehart, had posted his concerns. Notification of World management and ownership followed immediately. World Publisher Robert E. Lorton III met with Simpson on Tuesday, November 8, who had apologized to Englehart, and suspended him for a week pending an investigation. By Thursday, November 10, Simpson was dismissed from the newspaper's staff. Simpson, who was recently inducted into the Oklahoma Cartoonists Hall of Fame, joined *The Tulsa World* in 1992 after a long career with *The Tulsa Tribune*. Text excerpted from: "World cartoonist loses job after plagiarism investigation," [The Tulsa World](#), November 11, 2005.
- **Eric Slater (Los Angeles Times)** – Eric Slater was fired from *The Los Angeles Times* after an inquiry revealed that Slater's March 29, 2005 story about a fraternity hazing incident at Cal State Chico had several inaccuracies and fell far short of *The Times'* own reporting standards. Beyond the specific errors, the newspaper's inquiry found that the methods used in reporting the story were substandard, including the use of quotations from two anonymous sources that could not be verified. Separate from the March 29 article, a review of an earlier story by Slater on the same subject revealed another error. On March 31, 2005 *The Times* published a correction of four errors in the March 29 article and subsequently dismissed Slater. Text excerpted from: "For the Record: Editor's Note," [Los Angeles Times](#), April 19, 2005.
- **Brad Smith (Tampa Tribune)** – On April 28, 2005 *Tampa Tribune* Executive Editor Janet S. Weaver said in a statement that reporter Brad Smith resigned after fabricating part of an article on the towing industry. Smith wrote about a woman leaving a night club and discovering her Jeep had been towed. While the car had been towed, the woman was at home that night and had lent the Jeep to a friend. Source: "The

Unethical Timeline," compiled by Kara Wedekind, [American Journalism Review](#), August 2005.

- Patricia Smith (Boston Globe)** – Smith resigned from the *Boston Globe* in 1998 after she admitted fabricating people and quotes for columns. Smith, who was a finalist for the 1998 Pulitzer Prize, admitted to making up most or all of four different columns. Today, she's an acclaimed poet, has written two plays, teaches writing and has written for *Ms.* magazine and online publications. Source: [USA Today](#), May 22, 2003.
- Tom Squitieri (USA TODAY)** – According to a statement released by USA TODAY Editor Kenneth Paulson on May 5, 2005: "An article written by USA TODAY staff writer Tom Squitieri and published on March 28, 2005, included quotes taken from *The Indianapolis Star* that were not attributed to the newspaper. Statements made by Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., and Brian Hart, of Bedford, Mass., first appeared in a May 7, 2004, article on armored Humvees by Ted Evanoff of *The Indianapolis Star*..." Squitieri apologized and later resigned. An award-winning, 16-year veteran who has reported for USA TODAY from around the world, Squitieri was an outspoken critic of Jack Kelley, the star correspondent ousted in 2004 and later found to have fabricated parts of at least 20 stories over more than a decade. The inquiry into Squitieri's work began after a copy editor found a sentence in Squitieri's Humvee story in March that was almost identical to one from the Web site [InsidetheArmy.com](#). The editor deleted the sentence and reported the finding to Adele Crowe, the paper's standards editor – a position created in the wake of the Kelley debacle – who began an examination of Squitieri's work. The single sentence was "enough to raise suspicion," Paulson said. Three days later, Star Editor Dennis Ryerson wrote Paulson about the quotes ripped off from his paper's 2004 story. Sources: "USA TODAY reporter resigns," [USA Today](#), May 5, 2005; Howard Kurtz, "USA Today Reporter Resigns; Tom Squitieri Used Other Paper's Quotes," [The Washington Post](#), May 6, 2005; Katharine Q. Seelye, "USA Today Reporter Quits Over Lifting Quotations," [The New York Times](#), May 6, 2005.
- Siddharth Srivastava (International Herald Tribune)** – Srivastava, a freelance journalist in New Delhi, India, wrote an article published on Dec. 1, 2004, "India's women seek 'people's justice,'" for the *International Herald Tribune* in which several passages were copied verbatim, and without attribution, from an article by Randeep Ramesh that appeared in *The Guardian* of London on Nov. 9, 2004. Srivastava's article was also reprinted in *The San Francisco Chronicle* before the plagiarism was discovered. The *IHT* published an apology. The *Chronicle* went further, publishing a note about the plagiarism and stating that Srivastava's work would no longer appear in its newspaper. Text excerpted from: "Editor's note," [International Herald Tribune](#), January 25, 2005; "Corrections," [The San Francisco Chronicle](#), January 9, 2005.
- St. John's Telegram (Newfoundland)** – In March 2005, the Newfoundland newspaper *St. John's Telegram* informed its readers that it had discovered at least seven instances of plagiarism published over a period of several years by an unnamed reporter who is no longer with the newspaper. The information involved was background information that was copied verbatim from a variety of websites and other sources. The plagiarism was discovered after editors stopped one suspected story from publication and a further investigation revealed a "pattern of improper behavior." Though the *Telegram* issued an apology, it never revealed the name of the reporter in question. Text excerpted from: "Apology," [St. John's Telegram](#), March 4, 2005.
- Kim Stacy (Owensboro [KY] Messenger-Inquirer)** – Kim Stacy was fired in May 1999 for fabrication. She had written five front-page columns about her dying of cancer, a disease she never had. Stacy told editors she lied because she did not want to reveal that she had AIDS, but then admitted she had lied about that as well. Source: "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- Marcia Stepanek (Business Week)** – *Business Week* fired reporter Marcia Stepanek for plagiarizing part of an article on computer privacy that had appeared two months earlier

in *The Washington Post*. Stepanek was dismissed after an internal inquiry found that her October 30, 2000 report on the company Pharmatrak was, in part, lifted from the newspaper's August 15, 2000 account. Stepanek denied the charges, claiming that there was no intent to plagiarize. "I was sloppy with my notes but nothing more. I have a great deal of respect for The Post and its writers, and as a journalist I never intentionally use material from someone else's story without attribution," she said. The *Business Week* piece not only included similar language to that of a Post story by Robert O'Harrow Jr. but, in one case, a virtually identical quote. *Business Week* Editor in Chief Stephen Shepard said he could not confirm that Stepanek had gotten the information independently. Text excerpted from: Howard Kurtz, "Business Week Fires Writer for Plagiarism; Story on Computer Privacy Was Similar to Post Article," [The Washington Post](#), February 10, 2001.

- **Barbara Stewart (Boston Globe)** – *The Boston Globe* severed its relationship with freelance journalist Barbara Stewart in April 2005 after the paper discovered that she had partially fabricated a story about a Canadian seal hunt that had not taken place. The *Globe* ran a correction to Stewart's story after a Canadian government official contacted the newspaper to dispute the news account. Stewart said she had done much of the reporting about the hunt in advance and "wrote a top assuming [the seal hunt] was going to start on Tuesday," foreign editor Jim Smith recalled. Smith said Stewart could not remember whether she spoke to a hunter who said the annual event was about to begin on Monday night or Tuesday morning. "Clearly, that doesn't in any way forgive the many errors that took place on her part and on our part," Smith said. Stewart, who was writing her third story for the paper, was a metro reporter for the *New York Times* from 1994 to 2004, writing mainly for suburban weekly sections and for the *Orlando Sentinel* before that. Text excerpted from: Howard Kurtz, "Boston Globe Admits Freelancer's Story Included Fabrications," [Washington Post](#), April 16, 2005.
- **Alex Storzynski (amNewYork)** – Alex Storzynski resigned from his position as editor of the free commuter newspaper, *amNewYork*, after newspaper officials found that a story he wrote contained unattributed passages from the *Washington Post*'s web site. According to officials at *amNewYork*, *Newsday* and their parent, Tribune Co., certain passages and quotes in Storzynski's June 1, 2005 cover story about W. Mark Felt coming forward as 'Deep Throat' – the *Washington Post*'s famous anonymous source in the 1970s Watergate scandal – originally appeared in a May 31 article by [washingtonpost.com](#). *Newsday* spokesman Stu Vincent said Storzynski "had every right to use information from those stories, but he did not make it clear that some of the content in his *amNewYork* story had been taken from the [washingtonpost.com](#) story." The *amNewYork* story did refer to staff members of the *Washington Post*, but did not directly attribute any information to the Post. Storzynski denied plagiarizing saying, "It was clear that those were statements from the *Washington Post*." Storzynski said he is now working on a screenplay, which he expects will be made into a film in about two years. "I decided to pursue this opportunity," he said adding, "It's become apparent that *Newsday* is trying to take over *amNewYork*'s newsroom." Storzynski left the *New York Daily News*, where he shared a Pulitzer Prize for editorials, in 2003 to run *amNewYork*'s newsroom. Text excerpted from: James T. Madore, "Editor quits over story attributions," [Newsday](#), June 18, 2005.
- **Shinika Sykes (The Salt Lake Tribune)** – Shinika Sykes, who reported on higher education in Utah for *The Salt Lake Tribune*, was fired on August 28, 2006 after editors found that she plagiarized numerous paragraphs from a story about student government spending for a music festival originally published in the University of Utah's student newspaper, *The Daily Utah Chronicle*. Forty-two out of 155 lines were copied from *Chronicle* writer Dustin Gardiner's version to Sykes', including direct quotes from sources. Text excerpted from: Paul Beebe, "Tribune reporter dismissed following plagiarism complaint," [The Salt Lake Tribune](#), August 29, 2006; "Utah Reporter Fired for Plagiarism," [The Associated Press](#), August 30, 2006; Patrick Muir, "Reporter fired for copying U. Utah student's work," [The Daily Utah Chronicle](#), August 29, 2006.
- **Nick Sylvester (The Village Voice)** – In March 2006, the weekly alternative newspaper,

The Village Voice, suspended senior associate editor Nick Sylvester after he admitted fabricating material for a cover story titled, "The Secret Society of Pickup Artists." In the article about the effect that Neil Strauss' book, "The Game," had on the singles scene, Sylvester closed with a description of a night in which he and three television writers from Los Angeles tested strategies for picking up women at a Manhattan bar. In an editor's note on its Web site, the Voice wrote, "That scene never happened." It attached a note from Sylvester, in which he said the account was "a composite of specific anecdotes" shared by two of the alleged participants. Sylvester, who also wrote for the online music magazine *Pitchfork*, joined the Voice staff in 2005. Sylvester resigned from *Pitchfork* after the magazine asked him to quit after the fabrication allegations surfaced. Text excerpted from: David B. Caruso, "Village Voice suspends editor over fabrication," [The Associated Press](#), March 3, 2006.

- **Scott Taylor (Winnipeg Free Press)** – Taylor, a sports writer for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, resigned after being accused of plagiarism in an article written about NFL rule enforcement. Taylor denied the charge of plagiarism stating that he willingly resigned at a meeting with Free Press editor Nicholas Hirst and was unaware the paper would be issuing an apology and accuse him of plagiarism for his November 5, 2004 column. "I resigned over a number of things. It was part of the discussion on Friday but it wasn't at the top of the list," Taylor said, adding he shook hands and cordially parted company with Hirst. In Hirst's printed apology, a claim was made that the column in question "wrongly presented" a quote from the American newspaper *USA Today* "as the original work of a Free Press writer." Taylor denied the claim. "I never even saw that story," he said. While the Free Press did not name the writer, Taylor said he was immediately identified by other media. "Whether it's true or not, it's basically a death sentence," said Taylor. "I can't defend myself from it." Source: Taylor denies plagiarism; Free Press Writer Quits," [Winnipeg Sun](#) (Manitoba, Canada), November 25, 2004.
- **Thomas Vincent (South China Morning Post)** – Thomas Vincent, a British reporter working for the English-language *South China Morning Post*, was fired in December 1998, shortly after he produced an article for the Post's soccer supplement that he attributed to himself although it later emerged that most of the piece had appeared previously in London's *Sunday Times*. Vincent sued the paper in a Hong Kong court which later awarded him \$171,426.70 (\$21,978 U.S. dollars) for wrongful dismissal on the grounds that the newspaper had terminated Vincent's contract without prior warning. By October 2003, however, an appeals court reversed the earlier ruling, saying that the judge in the case erred in awarding Vincent compensation. *The Post* was awarded court costs, but still was required to pay \$79,120 for contractual end of year payments to Vincent. Text excerpted from: "Judge erred in ruling on dismissal of plagiarist," [South China Morning Post](#), October 15, 2003; "Hong Kong court tells newspaper to compensate journalist fired for plagiarism," [Associated Press](#), May 3, 2002.
- **Kaavya Viswanathan (The Record, Bergen County, NJ)** – Viswanathan, a Harvard University sophomore, was accused of plagiarism in her debut novel, "How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life," after extensive similarities were discovered between Viswanathan's novel and two works by author Megan McCafferty. Also, *The Harvard Crimson* student newspaper, alerted by reader e-mails, reported that "Opal Mehta" contained passages similar to Meg Cabot's 2000 novel, "The Princess Diaries." *The New York Times* also reported comparable material in Viswanathan's novel and Sophie Kinsella's "Can You Keep a Secret?" The plagiarism allegations caused *The Record* newspaper of Bergen County, New Jersey to investigate roughly two dozen articles that Viswanathan wrote while a summer features intern at the newspaper in 2003 and 2004. A preliminary review by editors, conducted by reading and using Google searches, did not reveal any problem with her writing. *The Record* will also vet her articles through LexisNexis, a public records database. According to *The Record's* editor Frank Scandale, "In Kaavya's case, there were no indications, no alarms, that any of her stories were made up." Scandale added that interns typically are given lighter stories with little deadline pressure constraints very different from those Viswanathan undoubtedly labored under while trying to finish her book and carry a full course load at Harvard. After the plagiarism allegations, Viswanathan's two-book deal with publisher

Little, Brown and Co. was canceled. Text excerpted from: Hillel Italie, "Young Harvard author's book deal canceled," [The Associated Press](#), May 3, 2006; Catherine Hollahan, "Teen loses book deal; More novels apparently plagiarized," [The Record](#) (Bergen County, NJ), May 3, 2006.

- **WBTV News (Charlotte, NC)** – "A WBTV television news producer was fired for plagiarism after the station discovered that a report on a Monday, February 21, 2005 newscast contained two sentences copied verbatim from a story in Sunday's *Charlotte Observer*. The story, about development in Cabarrus County, was published in Sunday's Cabarrus Neighbors section and available online on charlotte.com. The script, read by anchor Tonia Bendickson, included the first paragraph of the story, written by Observer reporter Ronnie Glassberg. WBTV's news director Dennis Milligan said he learned about the verbatim duplication when Scott Verner, editor in the Observer's Concord bureau, called to complain about the lack of attribution after hearing Glassberg's story read on the newscast. The station aired an apology to its viewers and the newspaper in its 6 p.m. newscast on February 23. Saying it was a personnel matter, WBTV would not identify the producer responsible for the story, but a memo to newsroom staff said the person had been fired. Producers work behind the scenes, directing reporters and photographers, assembling scripts and organizing the newscasts." Source: Mark Washburn, "Producer is fired for plagiarism," [The Charlotte Observer](#), February 24, 2005.
- **Stephen Wigler (Baltimore Sun)** – Music critic Stephen Wigler was fired in November 1999 after a reader pointed out that his Nov. 15 review of the Baltimore Opera's "La Traviata" included an unattributed excerpt from "The Metropolitan Opera Guide to Recorded Opera," Sources: "Newspaper music critic dismissed for alleged plagiarism," [The Associated Press](#), November 26, 1999; "Ethical Lapses," [American Journalism Review](#), March 2001 compiled by Lori Robertson and Christopher Sherman.
- **R. Foster Winans (Wall Street Journal)** – Winans, a reporter for *The Wall Street Journal*, was convicted in 1985 of various mail and wire fraud charges -- stemming from insider trading on information that was to appear in his *Journal* column -- and served nine months in prison. Today he says he's "fulfilled" as a ghostwriter (12 books), and his book about his own case was a best seller. He also has launched a lecture career, speaking to law enforcement groups and journalism, law and business students about his precedent-setting case and his views about insider trading, white-collar crime and corporate wrongdoing. Source: Maria Puente, "Disgrace, dishonor, infamy: They're not so bad anymore," [USA Today](#), May 22, 2003.
- **Gabriel Wisdom (Public Radio's 'Marketplace')** – In his June 13, 2005 commentary for the public radio show 'Marketplace' about the money immigrants bring into the US economy and a theory that the money could be strengthening the dollar, investment adviser Gabriel Wisdom lifted, virtually word for word, several lengthy passages from an article written by journalist Daniel Gross for his 'Moneybox' column on the *Slate Magazine* web site. During the segment, Wisdom also suggested questions to 'Marketplace' interviewer, Lisa Napoli, which were lifted from the *Slate* article. "It certainly looks pretty incontrovertible that Wisdom appropriated complete phrases from somebody else's work," said 'Marketplace' executive producer J.J. Yore. Wisdom, who works for California-based American Money Management and hosts a call-in show on KLSX in Los Angeles, told the *Washington Post* that he twice credited author and securities executive Michael Panzer, whom Gross extensively credited in his piece for the theory about immigrants, but said that attribution was edited out by producers. Wisdom also said that he did not realize some of the ideas came from Gross and that he should have credited him for a "terrific" *Slate* column. 'Marketplace' dropped Wisdom as a contributor and will broadcast an on-air apology, is scrutinizing previous segments involving Wisdom, and is conducting a review of its relationship with freelance contributors. 'Marketplace,' which is produced in Los Angeles by American Public Media, is carried by public radio stations across the country. Text excerpted from: Howard Kurtz, "'Marketplace' Drops Contributor Over Plagiarism," [The Washington Post](#), June 24, 2005; Gregory Alan Gross and Karen Kucher, "KPBS, 'Marketplace' drop local contributor in plagiarism flap," [San Diego Union-Tribune](#), June 24, 2005.

- **Alex Wolsky (Michigan Daily)** – Wolsky, a writer for the *Michigan Daily*, a University of Michigan student newspaper, was fired after the paper discovered that Wolsky plagiarized five articles, mostly album reviews, published in the paper in 2003 and 2004. Source: “The Daily will not tolerate plagiarism,” [University Wire](#), November 17, 2004.
- **Elizabeth Wurtzel (Dallas Morning News)** - Wurtzel was fired by *The Dallas Morning News* for plagiarism, then went on to write for both *New York* magazine and *The New Yorker*. Now she writes best sellers, including *Prozac Nation* and *Bitch*. For the latter book, she appeared topless on the cover with her middle finger raised. Source: Maria Puente, “Disgrace, dishonor, infamy: They’re not so bad anymore,” [USA Today](#), May 22, 2003.
- **Yomiuri Shimbun** – The Japanese newspaper, *Yomiuri Shimbun* reprimanded two editors and a writer for publishing an article in its weekly magazine that was based on Internet sources with content believed to be from the *Nikkei Business* magazine. The *Yomiuri Weekly* cut the salaries of the magazine’s chief editor and another editor, and suspended the latter from work for a week. The magazine also cut 10 percent from the payment for a contract writer who interviewed sources and wrote the article under the editor’s instructions. The article in question was a feature on Yoshiaki Murakami, and investment fund company president, in the *Yomiuri Weekly*’s October 30, 2005 edition. Text excerpted from: “Yomiuri Shimbun to reprimand editors, writer over plagiarism,” [Japan Economic Newswire](#), November 18, 2005.

UPDATE: Journalists Paid for Opinion

Recent ethical controversies involving journalists/columnists who were paid by the government:

- **Miami Herald Media Co.** – In a September 8, 2006 article, the *Miami Herald* revealed that at least 10 South Florida journalists received regular payments from the U.S. government for programs on Radio Marti and TV Marti. The payments totaled thousands of dollars over several years. Those who were paid the most were veteran reporters and a freelance contributor for *El Nuevo Herald*, the Spanish-language newspaper published by the corporate parent of *The Miami Herald*. **Pablo Alfonso**, who reports on Cuba and writes an opinion column, was paid almost \$175,000 since 2001 to host shows on Radio Marti and TV Marti. *El Nuevo Herald* freelance reporter **Olga Connor**, who writes about Cuban culture, received about \$71,000, and staff reporter **Wilfredo Cancio Isla**, who covers the Cuban exile community and politics, was paid almost \$15,000 in the last five years. Alfonso and Cancio were dismissed after *The Miami Herald* questioned editors at *El Nuevo Herald* about the payments. Connor’s freelance relationship with the newspaper also was severed. Other journalists receiving payments from the U.S. Office of Cuba Broadcasting, which runs Radio and TV Marti, included: *Diario Las Americas* opinion page editor **Helen Aguirre Ferre** and reporter/columnist **Ariel Remos**; Channel 41 news director **Miguel Cossio** and reporter **Juan Manuel Cao**; and syndicated columnist **Carlos Alberto Montaner**, whose opinions appear in the pages of *El Nuevo Herald* and *The Miami Herald*. Total payouts since 2001 range from \$1,550 to Radio Mambi commentator **Ninoska Perez-Castellon** to \$174,753 for *El Nuevo Herald*’s Alfonso, the government payment records show. The payments to journalists were discovered in documents obtained by *The Miami Herald* as a result of a federal Freedom of Information Request. As a result of this controversy, Jesus Diaz Jr., president of the Miami Herald Media Co. and publisher of *The Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald*, resigned. In a letter to readers, Diaz said the company would reverse course and grant “amnesty” to two *El Nuevo Herald* reporters and a freelance contributor who were dismissed. He also said that an internal probe determined that six other employees of *El Nuevo Herald* received payments from Radio Marti and TV Marti during the past five years. No disciplinary action was taken against these reporters. None of the nine or anyone else at the company can accept money from the U.S. government-run broadcasters in the future, Diaz said, and conflict-of-interest policies will be strengthened throughout the company. Text excerpted from:

Oscar Corral, "10 Miami journalists take U.S. pay," [The Miami Herald](#), September 8, 2006; Martin Merzer, "Herald publisher will resign..." [The Miami Herald](#), October 3, 2006; Katharine Q. Seelye, "Miami Publisher Steps Down Over Payments to Reporters," [The New York Times](#), October 4, 2006.

- **Doug Bandow** – Bandow, a senior scholar at the Cato Institute who wrote a column for the Copley News Service in addition to serving as a Cato fellow, resigned after revelations that he took payments – around \$2,000 an article – from the lobbyist Jack Abramoff in exchange for writing columns favorable to his clients. Bandow, acknowledged to executives at the organization that he had taken money from Mr. Abramoff after he was confronted about the payments by a reporter from BusinessWeek Online. Copley suspended Bandow's column. While he did not take government money the source of his payments, Mr. Abramoff, is at the center of a far-reaching criminal corruption investigation involving several members of Congress, with prosecutors examining whether he sought to bribe lawmakers in exchange for legislative help. Abramoff built a powerful lobbying business largely through his affluent Indian tribe clients in the late 1990s. He paid Bandow during those years to advance the causes of such clients as the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. In one column in 2001, Bandow extolled the free-market system that had allowed the Marianas to thrive, saying that fighting terrorism was no excuse for "economic meddling" – the same position that Mr. Abramoff was being paid to advance. In an earlier column, in 1997, Bandow defended the gambling enterprise of the Choctaws. (Text excerpted from: Anne E. Kornblut and Philip Shenon, "Columnist Resigns His Post, Admitting Lobbyist Paid Him," [The New York Times](#), December 17, 2005.)
- **Peter Ferrara** – Ferrara, a senior policy advisor at the Institute for Policy Innovation, also acknowledged that he had taken money from lobbyist Jack Abramoff in exchange for writing certain opinion articles. Unapologetic, Ferrara was quoted as saying, "I do that all the time. I've done that in the past, and I'll do it in the future." Ferrara, who was an influential conservative voice on Social Security reform, among other issues, said he does not see a conflict of interest in taking undisclosed money to write op-ed pieces because his columns never violated his ideological principles. Ferrara began working at the Institute for Policy Innovation after the period during which he wrote the op-ed pieces for Abramoff. Earlier, he worked at the activist anti-tax organization Americans for Tax Reform. Ferrara would not say which publications have published pieces for which Abramoff paid him, but a review of his work shows that he wrote articles for *The Washington Times* that were favorable to the Choctaw Indians and the Mariana Islands. He also wrote a 1998 book called *The Choctaw Revolution: Lessons for Federal Indian Policy*. Ferrara says the tribe paid him directly for his work on the book, which was published by the Americans for Tax Reform Foundation and is still available for sale on Amazon.com. (Text excerpted from: Eamon Javers, "Op-Eds for Sale," [BusinessWeek Online](#), December 16, 2005; Anne E. Kornblut and Philip Shenon, "Columnist Resigns His Post, Admitting Lobbyist Paid Him," [The New York Times](#), December 17, 2005.)
- **Maggie Gallagher** – The Washington Post reported that syndicated columnist Maggie Gallagher was touting Bush's "healthy marriage" initiative while working on the program under a \$21,500 contract from the Department of Health and Human Services (Source: Howard Kurtz, "Bush Urges End to Contracts With Commentators," [The Washington Post](#), January 27, 2005).
- **Audrey Lewis** – Writer Audrey Lewis admitted in January 2006 that Richard M. Scrusby, the former chief executive of HealthSouth, paid her through a public relations firm to produce several favorable articles for *The Birmingham Times*, a black-owned weekly in Birmingham, Ala., that he reviewed before publication during his fraud trial in 2005. Scrusby was acquitted in June 2005 in a six-month trial in Birmingham on all 36 counts against him, despite testimony from former HealthSouth executives who said he presided over a huge accounting fraud. Lewis claimed to have received \$10,000 from Scrusby through the Lewis Group, a public relations firm, and another \$1,000 to help buy a computer. Lewis also said that Charles A. Russell, a spokesman for Scrusby and a prominent Denver-based crisis communication consultant, was involved in providing her

with financial compensation, writing her a personal check for \$2,500 at the end of May 2005. Lewis said she was disclosing the details about the financial arrangement because Scrushy still owes her a significant amount of money. James E. Lewis, the publisher of *The Birmingham Times*, said that he was unaware of financial ties between Lewis and Scrushy (Text excerpted from: Simon Romero and Kyle Whitmire, "Writer Says Scrushy Paid Her to Write Favorable Articles," [The New York Times](#), January 20, 2006).

- **Michael McManus** – The Department of Health and Human Services confirmed having hired Michael McManus, who writes a weekly syndicated column and is director of a nonprofit group called *Marriage Savers*. Mr. McManus was paid \$10,000 to help train counselors about marriage, an arrangement first reported in USA Today, but officials said he was paid for his expertise rather than to write columns supporting administration policies (Source: Anne E. Kornblut, "Third Journalist Was Paid To Promote Bush Policies," [The New York Times](#), January 29, 2005).
- **Dave Smith** – Documents released by the Agriculture Department show it paid a freelance writer \$9,375 in 2003 to "research and write articles for hunting and fishing magazines describing the benefits of NRCS (National Resource Conservation Service) programs." Three articles by the writer, Dave Smith, appeared late last year in two magazines aimed at hunting and fishing enthusiasts. Neither identified Smith as having been paid by the government. (Excerpted from: Mark Memmott, "Agriculture Dept. paid journalist for favorable stories," [USA Today](#), May 11, 2005; Click [HERE](#) to view the entire article).
- **Mike Vasilinda** – Freelance journalist and 30-year veteran of the Tallahassee press corps, Mike Vasilinda, provided public relations work as well as film editing services to more than a dozen Florida state agencies, according to a *New York Times* report. His Tallahassee company, Mike Vasilinda Productions Inc., earned more than \$100,000 over the last four years through contracts with Florida Gov. Jeb Bush's office, the secretary of state, the Department of Education and other government entities that are routinely part of Mr. Vasilinda's news reports. Vasilinda was also paid to work on campaign advertisements for at least one politician and to create a promotional movie for Leon County. One of his biggest state contracts was a 1996 deal that paid nearly \$900,000 to film the weekly drawing for the Florida Lottery. Meanwhile, Vasilinda's reports continued to be shown on CNN and most Florida NBC stations. Vasilinda sells his reports through Capitol News Service, the television news company he founded and runs in Tallahassee. NBC and other stations subscribe to Capitol News Service and can then download and broadcast any segments done by Mr. Vasilinda's company. Vasilinda said his business dealings with state government did not influence his reporting because he had not personally promoted any government programs or appeared in any of the videos his business produced. But Bob Steele, a journalism ethics professor at the Poynter Institute, said Mr. Vasilinda's state government work "certainly raises some red flags" in the wake of disclosures this year that three journalists (Williams, Gallagher, and McManus) were accepting government contracts to promote programs. (Excerpted from: Chris Davis and Matthew Doig, "Journalist Is Contractor With Officials In Florida," [The New York Times](#), March 29, 2005).
- **Armstrong Williams** – In January 2005, media outlets reported that a company owned by Armstrong Williams, a conservative commentator and columnist, was paid \$240,000 by the Education Department to promote the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Williams' contract called for him to produce two TV ads and two radio ads featuring then-Education secretary Rod Paige. It also required him to promote NCLB in his syndicated TV and radio shows and newspaper column. Williams said he never intended to promote the law covertly and never urged anyone else to do so, stating that his only offense was writing about NCLB in his syndicated column without mentioning the contract to Tribune Media Services. However, the Government Accountability Office, Congress' non-partisan watchdog, found that the contract violated a ban on "covert propaganda" and the Justice Department pursued Williams under the False Claims Act, which deals with false or fraudulent billing. By October 2006, Williams agreed to pay \$34,000 to the U.S. Government to settle the case against him. Under terms of the settlement, Williams

admitted no wrongdoing. (Text excerpted from: "An undisclosed paid endorsement ignites a debate in the public relations industry," [The New York Times](#), January 12, 2005; Greg Toppo, "Pundit Armstrong Williams settles case over promoting education reforms," [USA Today](#), October 22, 2006).

[BACK TO TOP](#)

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