

eChaser

Society of Professional Journalists,
Fort Worth Professional Chapter

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INFORMING THE NORTH TEXAS JOURNALISM / COMMUNICATOR WORKFORCE



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Veteran Texas newsman **Mike Cochran** received the Open Doors Award at the 15th annual First Amendment Awards and Scholarship Banquet, April 27 at the Sheraton Arlington Hotel. The Open Doors is Fort Worth SPJ's highest honor and recognized Cochran's body of work over a 40-years-plus career.

Before a record turnout exceeding 140 people, the chapter awarded \$17,500 in scholarships to 11 students — **Shelby Strickland**, Lamar University; **Mark Young**, Del Mar College; **Kaitlyn DeHaven**, Baylor University; **Tina Huynh**, Texas Wesleyan University; and **Reese Oxner, Duy Vu, Kyle Cotton, Bekah Morr, Narda Pérez, Tabitha Redder and Edward Medeles**, all UT Arlington — and announced the winners of its First Amendment Awards competition.



High school sweethearts **Mike and Sondra Cochran** have been married 59 years.

In opening, keynoter **Brett Shipp** reminded the journalists in the room that it is their responsibility to hold the powerful accountable. Shipp is a former longtime WFAA-TV investigative reporter who recently made an unsuccessful run for Congress.

Several people walked out during his statements regarding the **Trump** administration and its relationship with the media.

Shipp warned that newsgathering, especially procuring public records through the Freedom of Information Act, is becoming more difficult and expensive, and to student journalists, he urged, "You have to know, there is such a crying need for your services."

Shifting from the national stage to one more local, the night belonged to Cochran.

A recent inductee into the Texas Newspaper Foundation Hall of Fame, he was a tireless West Texas correspondent for the Associated Press (and 1998-99 Fort Worth SPJ president) who recorded history in the making, from the trials of **Cullen Davis** and **Billie Sol Estes**, to the University of Texas tower sniper, to the Colonial Golf Tournament.

Cochran finished his career at the Star-Telegram. Former Star-Telegram publisher **Wes Turner** praised his friend's work as "truthful and elegant."

"During his almost 60 years in journalism, Mike Cochran was first and always a newspaperman, and an author," Turner said. "He is a man who has made journalism in Texas and in the USA what it is today."

Cochran in his remarks lauded his mentors, including his mother, who edited the letters he sent home, and **C.E. "Pop" Shuford**, who founded the journalism department at what is now the University of North Texas.

It all began with writing "brites," the short, intended-to-be-clever items that peppered newspaper pages in the pre-Twitter days.

One day Dr. Shuford read out loud some brites written by his students, and he began with one of Cochran's. Cochran never forgot his teacher's reaction: "He took it, wadded it up, threw it to the floor and stomped on it. He called it a name, and I won't tell you what it was, but it began with 'bull.' He said, 'Well, Mike, one of these days you're gonna thank me.'"

Stints at the Denton Record-Chronicle and Abilene Reporter-News followed graduation, and then a chance to open the Associated Press bureau in the Star-Telegram. "I hopped into the AP and loved it," Cochran said. "I was a roving reporter, all over West Texas, and I thought it was the best job in the world."

Cochran is frequently asked what was the high point of his career, and he has a ready answer — covering President **Kennedy's** assassination and the aftermath. "I was at the hotel (in Fort Worth) that morning when he spoke, and I heard the news later from a copy boy, responding to the bells on the AP machine in the office, that Kennedy had been shot. I went to Dallas and remained at the hospital all afternoon."

Days later, at Rose Hill Cemetery in Fort Worth, officials asked the gathered reporters to serve as pallbearers for **Lee Harvey Oswald**. Cochran's reply was not just "no!" but "hell, no!" When a United Press International reporter stepped forward, Cochran thought twice about his decision and grabbed a handle on Oswald's casket.

There were other stories. Covering the Apollo 11 moon landing. Covering the Sharpstown scandal. Covering the Branch Davidians and the Walker Railey murder trials *at the same time*.

Not bad for a boy from Stamford, Texas, who grew up just wanting to be a sportswriter.

"Thank you, Pop," Cochran said in closing. "And thank y'all."

— *Shirley Jenkins and John Dycus*

QUICK HITS

- Texas Center for Community Journalism ad copywriting and design workshop, "Building Ads That Look Good, Read Better and Sell the Best" — Friday, May 4. [Info](#). [Register](#). It's free, but hurry!
- GFW PRSA monthly luncheon, "Meet the Media" — Wednesday, May 9, Colonial Country Club. [Info](#).
- Writers Guild of Texas monthly program, "Point of View + Voice," with career journalist/historian/exceptional teller of tales **Carmen Goldthwaite** — 7 p.m. Monday, May 21, Richardson Public Library. [Info](#).
- DFW Writers Conference — June 9-10, Hurst Conference Center. [Info](#).
- Mayborn Literary Nonfiction Conference — July 20-22. [Info](#).
- Communication & Media Camp 2018 — July 23-27, UT Arlington. Area students grades 9-12 explore careers and get hands-on experience with journalism, public relations, ads, design, web and photo. Includes five days of meals and training; scholarships available. [Info](#).
- Meetups: [North Texas Editors](#) ... [Bedford Science Fiction Writing](#) ... [DFW Self-Publishing Group](#) ... [GFW Writers](#) ... [Writers Anonymous – Support and Education](#) ... [Fort Worth Chapter – Nonfiction Authors Association](#) ... [Kidlit Critique](#) ... [Trinity Arts Writers Workshop](#) ... [The Writer's Critique](#) ... [Lonestar Sci Fi, Horror, and Fantasy Fans](#) ... [20BooksTo50k - Michael Anderle](#) ... [Fort Worth Area Journalists Meetup](#) ... [The DFW Bloggers Classroom](#)

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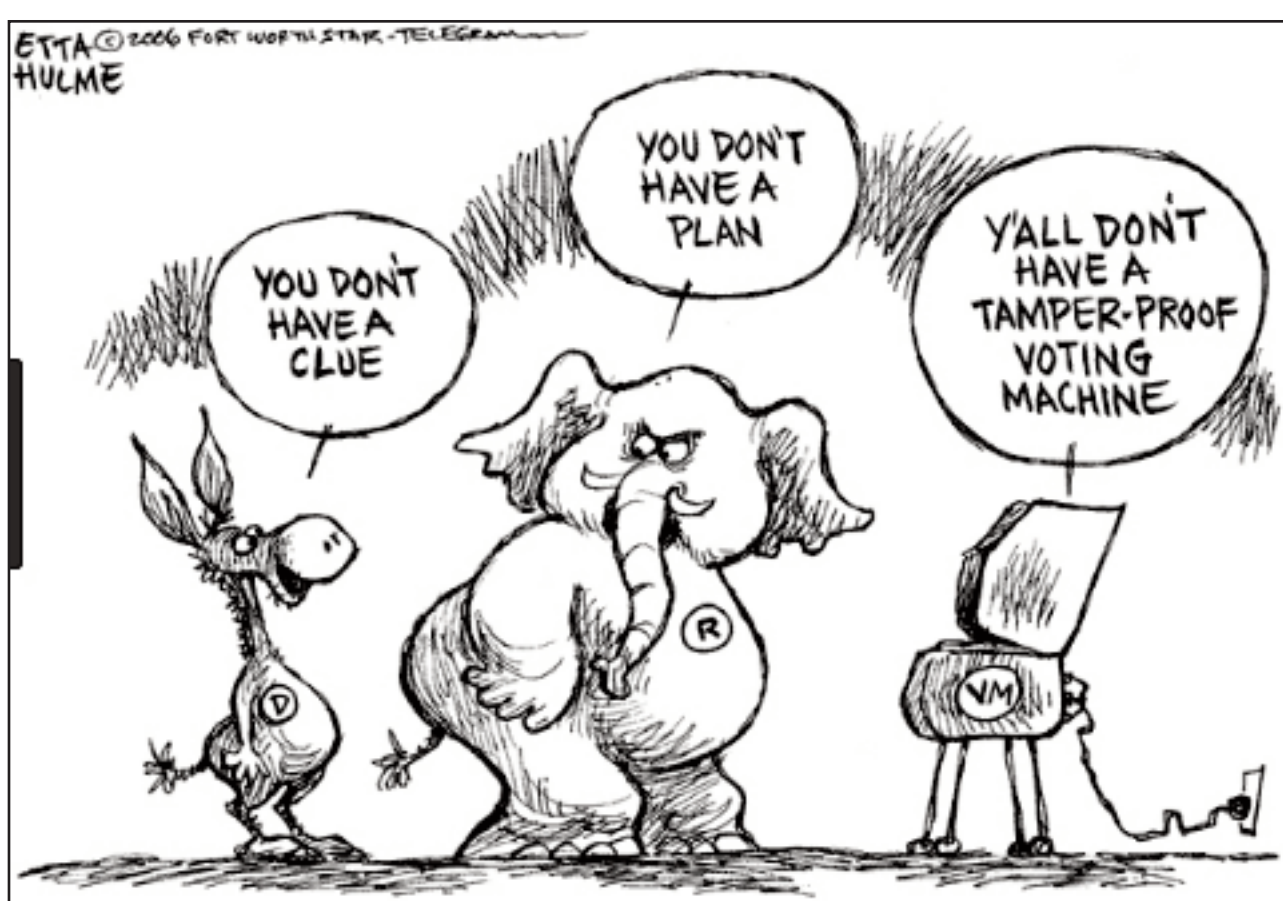
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The wit and insight of Etta Hulme

Etta Hulme's brush moved like a magic wand, enabling her to say so much in a single cartoon.

After her death in 2014, Hulme's family donated more than 100 boxes of her illustrations and papers to UTA Special Collections. Part of the collection is on display in Drawn to Politics: The Editorial Art of Etta Hulme, which runs through August at the UTA Library.

Hulme joined the Star-Telegram in 1972, according to O.K. Carter, who started working at the Star-Telegram-owned Arlington Citizen-Journal the same year.

"She was one of the few women in that era to cartoon full time for a newspaper," he said. "It was an exhilarating time with an enormous amount of editorial fodder locally, nationally and internationally."

The two journalists, who coincidentally retired from the Star-Telegram the same year — 2008 — had a few other things in common. They both briefly worked for Disney, Carter said, they both lived in Arlington, and for a number of years they were both on the Star-Telegram Editorial Board where they had plenty to contemplate — everything from Vietnam to Watergate to a celebrated dalliance of President Bill Clinton.

"We'd try to sift all this down into cogent opinion copy in the editorial department," he said. "But in my view, the tough job was the editorial cartoons. Somehow, they had to reflect situations in a sort of visual shorthand, at which Ms. Hulme was a master."

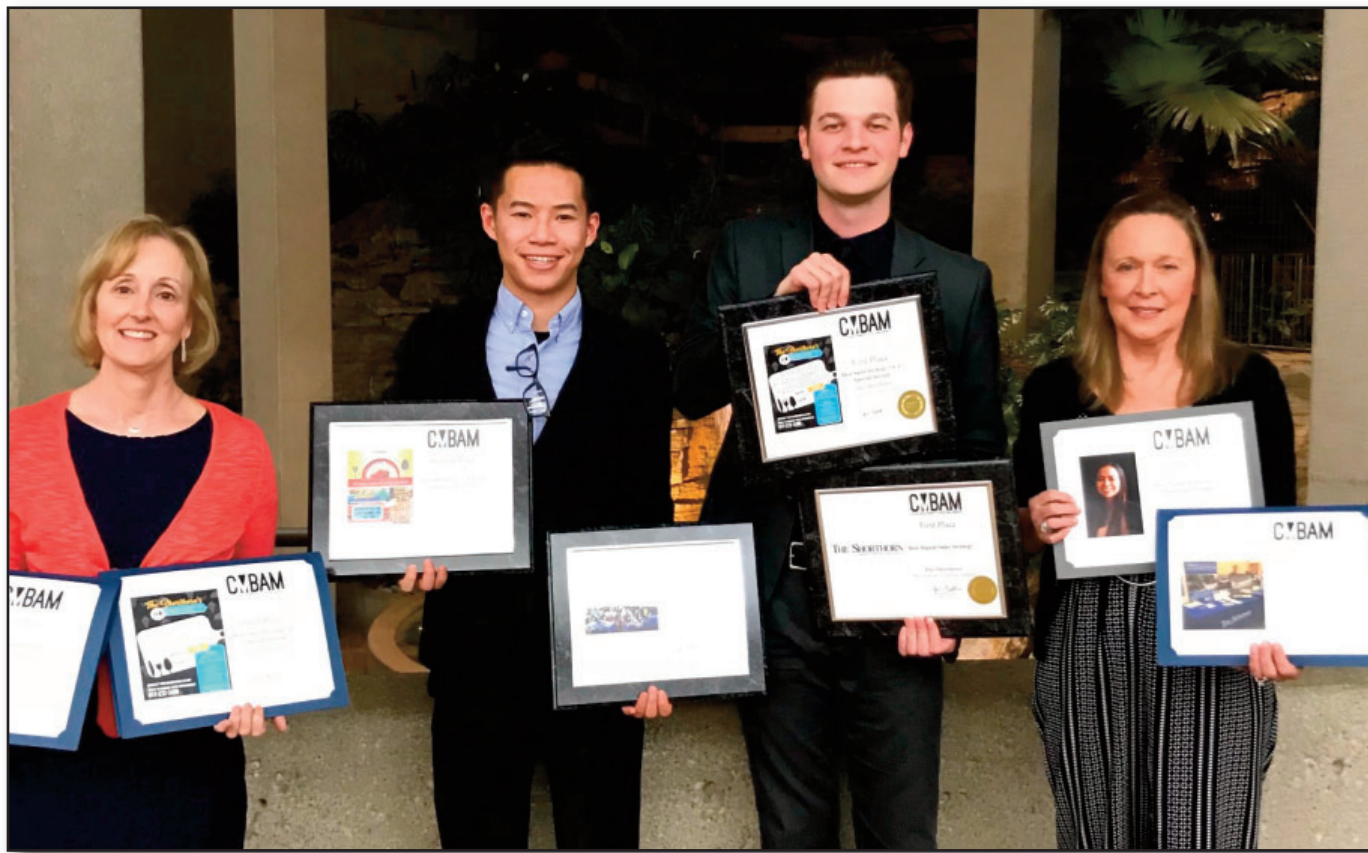
A former president of the American Association of Editorial Cartoonists (1987), Hulme also could foresee coming trends, Carter said, pointing out that Donald Trump began appearing in her work as early as the 1990s.

— Karen Gavis

UTA STUDENT PUBLICATIONS UPDATE



UTA Shorthorn campus ad rep **Kevin Le**, far left, and student ad manager **Austin Hutchinson** congratulate **Yvonne Balderas** via text for receiving an honorable mention for best public relations or marketing manager at the CMBAM convention. Helping them brandish the loot are business manager **Lori Doskocil**, below left, from the Shorthorn professional staff, and advertising manager **Tammy Skrehart**.



Work accomplished by the UTA Shorthorn ad, marketing and design teams — **Austin Hutchinson**, **Kevin Le**, **Jocelyn Alvarado**, **Yvonne Balderas**, **Julian Saza**, **Dominique Stansberry**, **Andrea Campo Ortiz**, **Erin Aley**, **Hanna Sirak** — received eight national awards, including first place in best digital sales strategy and first in best sales strategy for a special section, at the College Media Business and Advertising Managers annual convention March 27-31 in Kansas City, Mo.

Back in the newsroom, broadcast junior **Bekah Morr** has been named summer editor in chief. She will oversee daily news production and two special editions that will debut over the summer. For the fall, the UTA Student Publications Committee selected **Narda Pérez** to return as editor in chief. Pérez is among eight Shorthorn staff members to secure internships this year so far.

And a handsome interns tally it is.

- **Samantha Douty**, TAPME's Buster Haas reporting intern, Victoria Advocate (summer)
- **Colby Farr**, freelance writer, Corpus Christi Caller-Times
- **Mara Lopez**, Chips Quinn Scholars intern, Commercial Appeal in Memphis (summer)
- Bekah Morr, intern, KERA Think (fall)
- Narda Pérez, Dow Jones News Fund multimedia intern, Austin American-Statesman (summer)
- **Nick Tarrant**, multimedia intern, Star-Telegram (current)
- **Elizabeth White**, production intern, KERA (current)
- **Sorayah Zahir**, Dow Jones News Fund multimedia intern, Beaumont Enterprise.

In yet another rite of passage, The Shorthorn graduates 14 students from its newsroom this summer — **Juan Artiles**, graphic artist; **Madelyn Edwards**, reporter and editor; **Aaron Gadson**, reporter; **Nnenna Ijomah**, reporter; Mara Lopez, multimedia journalist; **Shannon Lotti**, e-newsletter manager; **Abhijit Mody**, sports reporter; **Alex Price**, photographer/videographer; **Chanel Sasso**, reporter and copy editor; **Jeremy Schack**, photographer; **Elmer Sarto**, photographer; **Dominique Stansberry**, marketing assistant; Nick Tarrant, multimedia journalist and podcasts producer; and Elizabeth White, reporter — and "they are on the hunt for jobs," says Student Publications director **Beth Francesco**. "Pass the word!"

GET A JOB. [SPJ is hiring a postgraduate intern.](#) ... The Mayborn School of Journalism at the University of North Texas invites broadcast/video journalism to begin in the fall. [Details.](#) ... The Waco Tribune-Herald seeks a government-minded watchdog reporter adept at sourcing, writing on deadline, using a variety of social media and turning out thoughtful daily and weekend packages that explain complicated concepts. [Details.](#) ... The San Antonio Express-News has a web reporting position open. [Details.](#) ... The Dallas Morning News seeks a strong writer and reporter with Dallas County government. [Details.](#) ... East Texas Baptist University will begin a search for a professor of mass communication to begin this fall. The current professor is retiring. In addition to teaching, the position is the faculty adviser for the student newspaper. E- **Tom Webster** at twebster@etbu.edu.

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Fort Worth SPJ Member Spotlight

Tim Blackwell

publisher, [Cowcatcher Magazine](#)

B.A. communication/journalism, 1985: UT Arlington

lives in Keller, Texas



how'd you get into journalism? It was my junior year at Euless Trinity High School (we were just Trinity back then) and I needed an elective. Heard that the journalism teacher was funny. I was asked to join the Palantir student newspaper my senior year to cover sports. Trinity's athletic program hadn't arrived yet, but I enjoyed reporting on the games. Plus, I didn't have to pay to get in. Adviser **David Jones** encouraged me to apply for a Women in Communications scholarship to study journalism in college, and somehow they decided to give me \$500. That was like winning the lottery, so I figured I'd better honor the obligation.

why do you stay? After 30 years in the newspaper industry, both in editorial and print sales leadership, this stuff gets in your blood. I tried detoxing for about 15 years beginning in the late '80s but it didn't work. In 2004 I was back at it with the Cowcatcher. Writing/reporting is a passion, and it's gratifying to know your work put an exclamation point on someone's life or career and that it's not quantified by an award.

should journalists feel threatened in the current political climate? I'm more worried about the industry self-destructing over its audacity, loss of focus and biased reporting than Democrats or Republicans suppressing the media. We don't need to take over small towns and neighborhoods that were the latest to be shot up by some lunatic. I was moved by Dallas Morning News reporter **Lauren McCaughy's** apology for the "invasive" media converging on Sutherland Springs, Texas, in November. As if lives in the town hadn't already been disrupted, she wrote, the media further paralyzed the community by its lack of empathy and humanity. • Americans have a growing beef with the media, believing it's biased and that it struggles to identify objective news sources. Each day, we have to re-affirm that news organizations are not inhumane bullies, they provide fair and accurate reporting of good and bad, and they hold the dregs of society and politicians in check while respecting those of the turf we roam. Honestly, I don't have a problem with the president or any other political figure calling out a journalist who crosses the line. • Also, we need more feel-good stories. Back when community journalism thrived in the 1980s, we sold a lot of newspapers because proud parents wanted to see their kid in the paper for school honors or for playing Little League. After 14 years of the Cowcatcher, it's great to see grown men and women get giddy because their modeling was worthy of print. Folks, that sells.

what's your most gratifying moment in the business? Co-authoring and publishing **Bobbye Hall's** autobiography, "Tracks from Texas to Tokyo," in 2006. She was the first lady of model trains but more importantly a fine person who influenced many, many people. The time I spent at her small Mesquite home recounting her life was memorable. And the day her life story rolled off the presses to cap an unbelievable career, the twinkle in her eye, at 96, was indescribable. I knew I had made a difference.

what tips would you give a job seeker? Align yourself with the industry and network, network, network. I got my first reporting job after a blind application for a part-time sports writer at the Arlington Citizen-Journal. From there, advancement was about relationships and perseverance.

best advice you ever received When reporting, don't take people at face value. There's a story under those layers, good or bad, and it's probably worth telling, so find it. But be objective. In business, trust can be your greatest attribute and quickest demise.

best advice you ever gave Ask your mortgage company for an interest-saver plan that allows the bank to draft your house payment in equal installments on the 1st and 15th of the month. You'll be amazed how much interest you save and how quickly you can pay off your house!

how important to a media career is working for the school paper? CRITICAL. The game has changed. Reporters today have to do so much more than we did 35 years ago, as digital media continues to evolve. True professionals not only must learn the art of interviewing and writing but they have to shoot quality video and still photos, report on camera and post to social media. Student newspapers help develop those skills.

describe the Cowcatcher The Cowcatcher began as a house rag for the local division of the National Model Railroad Association and has transformed into an independent regional model railroad/rail enthusiast publication serving the middle U.S. from the Canadian border to the Gulf of Mexico. The first issue was six 8½ x 11 pages, no color, no advertising. I had to build camera-ready paste-ups, complete with halftones, to get good enough production so it didn't look like something that came out of the copy room (when, in fact, it did). The initial press run was 20 copies. I wore a white Stetson in my column mug. Now each issue — six issues a year — is 48-56 pages, full color, and way more than 20 copies go to 14 states. And there's a website. We're blessed to have some of the most recognized model manufacturers and tourist railroads as advertisers. A little grayer these days, I wear a railroad cap in my column mug.

does anyone ever suggest that since you're doing a niche publication (perceived soft news), you're no longer in journalism? Nobody has ever said that. In fact, one reader in Houston teases that I'm a muckraker because I don't always report in rose-colored glasses about the hobby or railroad industry. But print is powerful, no matter whether covering city hall, giant railroads or how to build a 1/160-scale model. If it's written down, it has a sense of permanence, and that's defining (it also represents significant investment, equally as powerful). The American Press Institute calls journalism "the activity of gathering, assessing, creating, and presenting news and information" and is the "product of these activities." That characterizes the Cowcatcher and my pursuits. If someone did suggest that I'm no longer in journalism — bull! I strive for objectivity and accuracy while invoking as little hysteria (personal and professional) as possible. It's just that sometimes I write about those fun things that raced around your Christmas tree when you were a kid.

Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas update: The Odessa City Council will start keeping audio recordings of closed-door meetings instead of written summaries, making it easier for the public to hold officials to account if future violations of the Texas Open Meetings Act seem apparent. The agreement stems from a settlement between the city and the Odessa American in a lawsuit filed by the newspaper in June 2017. The suit alleged that the City Council violated the state open meetings law weeks earlier, when a majority voted to oust the head of the board overseeing economic development tax money following a closed-door discussion. [Details](#). ... KXAN-TV in Austin is airing a series about a Texas law that gives police discretion to withhold information if a suspect dies in custody. Legislative efforts to close that loophole failed in 2017, but it has not stopped the families who have been denied video and other records detailing their loved ones' final moments from speaking out. [Details](#). ... Austin bomber **Mark Conditt's** confession may be kept secret — forever. [Details here](#) and [here](#). ... [Video: A conversation about Texas' Public Information Act](#)

OVER & OUT | [John Dycus](#), Fort Worth SPJ

From the Colorado Press Association: The U.S. Commerce Department has announced two preliminary determinations on investigations, the results of which will impose an import tariff on Canadian newsprint companies. The impact could be damaging and far-reaching for newspaper media in the United States, with a tariff ranging up to 32 percent, and that may not represent the price increase newspaper media companies face. A coalition has formed — STOPP, or Stop Tariffs on Printers and Publishers — to fight proposed countervailing duties and anti-dumping duties on imports of Canadian uncoated groundwood papers including newsprint and other papers. [More here](#). ...

A record number of journalists worldwide are behind bars for reporting or commenting on news events, according to an annual survey by the Committee to Protect Journalists. The numbers reflect not only a "bleak climate" for journalists around the globe but also a "dismal failure" by countries including the U.S. to address the ongoing crisis. Turkey, China and Egypt are the three worst offenders in CPJ's report, jailing a combined 134 journalists out of the total 262 who are currently imprisoned worldwide. U.S. President **Donald Trump**, the report noted, has expressed admiration for Turkish President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** and Chinese President **Xi Jinping**, both of whom have been criticized for their authoritarian leanings. Trump also has praised Egypt's President **Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi**, saying they both "agree on so many things."

SPJ Factoids: [Underreporting in rural areas](#) is a nationwide phenomenon. SPJ member **Al Cross** says this is a problem because rural reporting is rarely seen as the most critical mission. Twenty percent of the nation's population lives in rural areas, so not having anyone to cover government meetings or hold officials accountable can cause bigger problems. ... Report for America aims to place [1,000 journalists in local newsrooms](#) in the next five years. Report for America doesn't get government funding, but the effort is being treated as a [national service project](#). ... In a recent survey conducted by the Annenberg Public Policy Center, 37 percent of the respondents [could not name any of the rights](#) guaranteed under the First Amendment. ... The New York Times' [student subscription program](#) has provided free NYT access to more than two million students in more than 3,000 public schools across the U.S. ... The John. S. and James L. Knight foundation announced an initiative to support strong, trusted journalism as essential to a healthy democracy. Seven projects under the [Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy](#) will bring communities and journalists together to create long-term solutions to combat misinformation.

Caught my eye. [Massive oil fields in Texas are heaving and sinking at alarming rates](#). ... [Jewelry made with upcycled gold from Dell computers](#). ... [Water-based AC cools the air without using harmful chemicals](#). ... [Why Trump's \\$1.5 trillion infrastructure plan is a disaster for the environment](#). ... [New desalination membrane produces both drinking water and lithium](#).

Closing words: "Life is for each man a solitary cell whose walls are mirrors." — playwright **Eugene O'Neill** ... "We should look inward and think about the meaning of our life and its purposes, lest we do it in 20 or 30 years and it's too late." — author and psychologist **Robert Coles**

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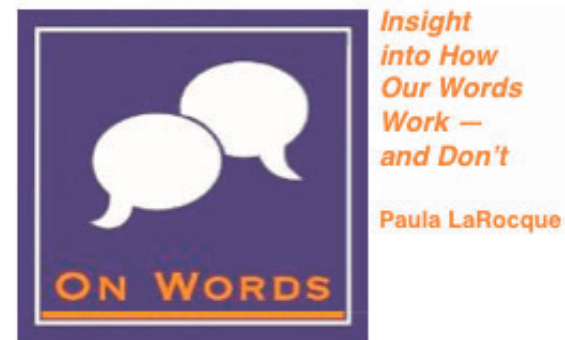
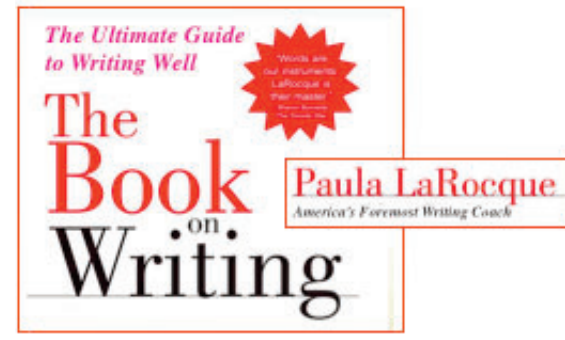
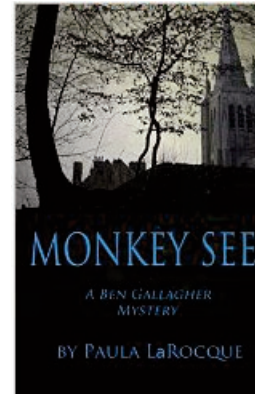
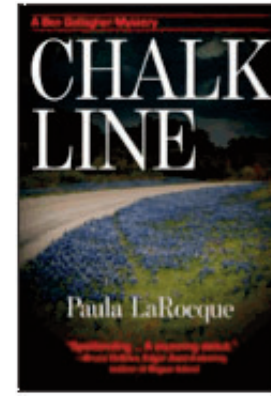
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— Maya Angelou



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