These are hard days

And we are witnesses: Wildfires of historic size. Brutal effects of COVID-19. Protests unending and emotional. While looming over all, an election like no other.
NPPA Membership
nppa.org/join

The NPPA is an active advocate for the legal rights of visual journalists. Our work focuses on First Amendment access, drone regulations, copyright, credentialing, cameras in court, “ag-gag” laws, unaffordable assault on visual journalists and cases that affect the ability to record events and issues of public interest. Our work also benefits the public at large.

For more information: nppa.org/advocacy

JOIN @NPPA

Student, professional and retiree memberships are available in addition to numerous benefits.

For more information: nppa.org/join

DONATE

The NPPA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and is also the place to make a tax-deductible donation to the work of the NPPA.

For more information: nppf.org/donations

Sept/Oct 2020 News Photographer

The Second Cover Video Awards
Best of Photojournalism, begins on page 62

It’s all about the ‘moments’

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ON THE COVER

Photograph by Kent Porter: The Press Democrat, Santa Rosa, California

Houses burn as the Glass Fire rolls in from Napa County. Eleven homes burned in the area, but firefighters saved hundreds of others.

July 26, 2020: In Portland, Oregon more than 5,000 people protested outside the federal courthouse on the two-month anniversary of George Floyd’s death at the hands of a police officer.

Photo by Maranie Rae Staab

Story on Page 52

July 26, 2020: In Portland, Oregon more than 5,000 people protested outside the federal courthouse on the two-month anniversary of George Floyd’s death at the hands of a police officer.

Photo by Maranie Rae Staab

Story on Page 52
Regrettably, the financial loss that has been occurring has not been limited to newspapers. Like everyone else, we are regrouping but realized it didn’t speak to what is weighing heavily on my heart and mind. In a year that won’t stop chunking away at our psyche, our values and basic human decency, I’ll be damned if I don’t shout it from the rooftops.

The NPPA will not survive without its members and greater support from the photography community.

Members (and others) need to bluntly hear this. I don’t have to be as polite and diplomatic in writing as the president, Andrew Stanfill, and my boss, Akili Ram- sess, the executive director (see page 9). Being a part of the NPPA means that you are a supported member of an organization dedicated exclusively to visual journalism. For nearly 75 years, because of memberships and outreach activities, this organization has offered multiple placements for training, scholarship mentorship programs, legal advocacy and professional discounts. This organization has a track record to help uphold ethical and professional standards in the field of journalism. That’s a big deal.

The revenue from public activities was greatly affected due to the pandemic. Like everyone else, we are regrouping but have been bounced from one challenge to the next for over a year. We have adjusted our financial output to support the basic needs of a responsive office. NPPA staff consists of three paid professionals who produce it. Seeing who is/is not a member was enlightening. Members realize how fragile things are. Non-members realize how fragile things are. To survive, we adapt. But in a year that won’t stop chunking away at our psyche, our values and basic human decency, I’ll be damned if I don’t shout it from the rooftops.

None of this is normal. It is not normal to have a newsroom that is 60% to 70% of its size. NPPA staff consists of three paid professionals who produce it. Seeing who is/is not a member was enlightening. Members realize how fragile things are. Non-members realize how fragile things are. To survive, we adapt. But in a year that won’t stop chunking away at our psyche, our values and basic human decency, I’ll be damned if I don’t shout it from the rooftops.

Nothing is normal.

Thanks, SONY -- and USPS

The NPPA also depends upon the board of directors. To have a board of directors, you need people who produce it. Seeing who is/is not a member was enlightening. Members realize how fragile things are. Non-members realize how fragile things are. To survive, we adapt. But in a year that won’t stop chunking away at our psyche, our values and basic human decency, I’ll be damned if I don’t shout it from the rooftops.

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My call to action: Renew. Join. Gift a membership. Help everyone support us. And then get two people to do one of those things as well. And consider this: You don’t have to be on the business side to help NPPA. Bring your knowledge and expertise to us. Ask how you can help. There is plenty of work to go around. Being the editor of this magazine is an honor. I don’t want to be the one who turns out the lights. As a member, I hope you feel the same way. — Sue Morrow, Editor

Email Sue Morrow at smorrow@nppa.org. She has been an NPPA member since 1986.
In troubling times, NPPA works for you—and needs your support more than ever

A crisis has the ability to provide focus to the most vital priorities of existence and purpose. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NPPA has responded to the needs of our members and the greater photojournalism community as nationwide protests against police brutality and racial inequity have ensued. We marshaled resources to help our members protect themselves as they place themselves at risk to document this historic time. We raised funds to support members unable to work as the nation shut down to contain the virus. We utilized technology to stay connected and informed. As national protests broke out, we reflected internally on how to right the wrongs of our own complicity in the lack of inclusivity and diversity, and then we took action.

NPPA is a necessity for photojournalists.

We are the only national organization dedicated specifically to visual journalism. We are your greatest advocate. Our legal counseling, Mickey Osterreicher and Alicia Wagner Calzada, are on the front lines to protect our First Amendment rights. (See Pages 10 and 12.) They have provided legal aid when photographers were arrested and camera gear confiscated while covering the protests. They go before the courts and fight for fair copyright laws and work with legislators to change laws preventing independent photographers from working.

When COVID-19 eliminated our in-person workshops and events, we adapted. Using Zoom and the latest technology available, we developed webinars and interactive gatherings to continue our outreach, to learn, gain resources and stay connected.

Our News Photographer magazine editor, Sue Morrow, continues to produce and elegantly design our magazine to display the amazing work and tell the stories of the courageous visual journalists covering these history-making events.

Since 1946—74 years!—the magazine has been one of the great advantages of a membership. We want to keep producing it, but we have had to adjust the output of expenses during the pandemic. This issue is the second interactive PDF available to members while we are on hiatus from its printing. We have received positive feedback on the format.

Our achievements through these crises

We have had to reset our expectations during the pandemic. Our three-person staff and multiple volunteers have worked hard to deliver to the visual community in an online environment.

- Virtual Storytelling Workshop celebrated 60 years of the News Video Workshop.
- Virtual Video Storytelling Workshop gathered over 200 video storytellers, including speakers.
- Women in Visual Journalism Conference included 130 attendees and speakers and centered the conversation on the women doing outstanding work throughout the industry.
- We collaborated with ASMP, Fuji Forum and Photo Bill of Rights in a series of webinars and panel discussions about photojournalists’ rights, diversity and inclusion.

Collectively, hundreds of visual journalists gathered online to learn from one another. We have been encouraged by the feedback and will continue these digital efforts to reach photojournalists who could not travel to our traditional events. Additionally, the NPPA Mentorship Program has been launched again with 30 mentors and mentees have been paired to foster growth and progress over the next year.

Advocacy is here for you

This summer, our advocacy team has been working in override for NPPA members. It has provided legal training for those covering the political conventions and protests. It led us in joining with the Press Freedom Defense Fund to launch the PFDF-NPPA Legal Advocacy Initiative for journalists who were arrested or injured while covering news stories, including the continuing nationwide protests. For California members, the team’s relentless work directly affected the removal of the 35-assignment limit imposed by AB5 legislation. We cannot thank Mickey Osterreicher and Alicia Wagner Calzada enough for their accomplishments, which have had numerous positive impacts for our members.

And we still have three months to go in the year, with hefty goals. We need your help.

Build membership

We are in the final stretch of one of the hardest years that this organization has faced, and we must build our membership for a sustainable future. We are 4,600 members strong now. Our goal is 500 additional members by the end of the year as we seek organizational partners to help us as we build for the future.

How you can help

The best way to support the NPPA is to maintain your membership, encourage others to join or renew, and/or donate directly to support our activities through the National Press Photographers Foundation (NPPF).

We adjusted our membership tiers to accommodate several levels, including a retired tier. Do you know a student or professional who could benefit from joining the organization? You can gift a membership for them. It makes for great holiday giving that lasts all year! Ask for a membership for Christmas!

You don’t have to be on the NPPA board to help. If you are interested in lending your expertise to help the NPPA sustain our lifelong for visual journalists, please let us know by contacting us at director@nppa.org and president@nppa.org.

The NPPA has been in existence for nearly 75 years. Please help us help you as we launch the largest membership drive we have ever done to stay relevant, active and supportive in very troubling times.

Andrew Stanfill is president of the NPPA and can be reached at president@nppa.org. He has been a member since 2001.

Akili Ramsess is the executive director of the NPPA. She can be reached at director@nppa.org. She has been a member since 1984.
NPPA membership can offer ‘protective bubble’ in today’s troubled times

By Kathleen Cairns Heist

Millions watched as the ball dropped in Times Square New Year’s Eve, kicking off the start of 2020. No one could have predicted what would happen in the months that followed. The world is experiencing a pandemic. The country is divided and demonstrating. This year, more than 170 journalists have been attacked, and more than 50 arrested. Many of those journalists, when facing a moment of crisis, dialed the same 10 digits to get help: They contacted NPPA’s public advocacy team. NPPA General Counsel Mickey Osterreicher describes this year as the perfect storm. “We have a president who calls journalists the ‘enemy of the people,’ protests are widespread, and journalists don’t have a protective bubble from assaults or arrests.” NPPA’s legal advocacy team has helped visual journalists with First Amendment challenges, criminal cases involving wrongful arrests and even issues involving drone regulations.

Osterreicher understands journalists because, before law school, he was a newspaper photographer who transitioned to broadcast news at WKBW in Buffalo, New York, after the Buffalo Courier-Express folded in 1982. He’s been a member of NPPA since 1973. For perspective, that was when Richard Nixon was president, a Snickers bar cost 15 cents and Pink Floyd released “Dark Side of the Moon.” And though times have changed, Osterreicher says the NPPA’s mission has not. It remains the voice of visual journalists, and as he explains, membership is essential because “wearing a press credential is not supposed to be a ‘kick-me’ sign or bull’s-eye target.” Journalists work hard to find the facts and report the news, but increasingly, they have become a part of their news story. There have been reports of journalists stormed, kicked, pepper-sprayed and wrongfully detained and arrested. As an attorney with expertise in First Amendment law, he recommends journalists always maintain situational awareness while working. “It is a personal decision what risk level you are willing to take, but always be aware of your exit strategy,” Osterreicher says. “You need to be working with people who can watch your back and keep recording. In a court case that may prove crucial.”

Las Vegas Review-Journal staff photographer Ellen Schmidt followed that exact advice on the evening of Friday, May 22. She was covering a Black Lives Matter demonstration.

Protestors were reacting to the death of George Floyd, who died while in Minneapolis police custody in May. She followed the crowd walking alongside Bridget Bennett, a freelance photographer working for Agence France-Presse (AFP) when police moved in. Video captured the moments, as Schmidt and Bennett took photos of the encounter between police and protestors. They were standing on a sidewalk several yards away when an officer pushed Bennett, knocking her to the ground, then pushed Schmidt. Both photojournalists were wearing visible credentials and carrying equipment for their jobs. Yet, they were arrested by Metro Police and charged with one misdemeanor count of failure to disperse.

Schmidt explained that guidance she got at the NPPA Northern Short Course kicked in during those tense moments. She remembered the training. “NPPA had prepared me for something like this. I followed NPPA guidance on how to act.” As she was taken to jail, Schmidt also was well aware of the legal ramifications she faced. “I knew I had my publication’s lawyer on my side. I knew NPPA was in my corner.”

In February 2016, Avi Adelman found himself in handcuffs while taking photos of a woman being treated for an overdose at a Dallas train station. He was charged with criminal trespass and held for 24 hours before being released on bail. A week later, the charges were dismissed. An audio recording of what transpired helped lead to a $143,000 federal civil rights settlement against Dallas Area Rapid Transit. The night he was arrested, one of the first people he called was Osterreicher. An NPPA member since 1984, Adelman said Osterreicher helped get the lawsuit filed on his behalf.

“I never planned to get arrested,” he added, “but I knew what to do.”

From his settlement, Adelman advertises himself as the “pay it forward” thinking and has footed the bill for several other journalists’ NPPA memberships. He said that, although he likes the training NPPA offers, he finds the legal advocacy pivotal for the media’s working members. “We are here to do a story,” Adelman explains, “and we know Mickey and NPPA are there to back us up.”

Mannie Garcia has covered stories and conflicts around the world. He made what became an iconic photo of then-President George W. Bush surveying the damage from Hurricane Katrina over New Orleans from a helicopter. But Garcia faced trouble while covering a story on his home turf. He was arrested for disorderly conduct while taking pictures of police officers on a public street in Montgomery County, Maryland. Although he was later acquitted, the arrest prompted the suspension of his White House press credentials. As an NPPA member, Garcia knew where to turn. “The first person I called was Mickey. He was instrumental in helping.” Eventually, he had his credentials reestablished.

As general counsel for the NPPA since 2006, Osterreicher has fought time and again for journalists’ rights. He has testified before members of Congress arguing cameras should be allowed in federal court, telling lawmakers, “It’s a much more direct form of democracy when people can see and hear for themselves, just as our founders envisioned.”

Another key member of that team is Alicia Wagner Calzada. A past president of the NPPA, she became a lawyer after 20 years as a photographer and is well aware of the trials and tribulations working members of the media can face.

Copyright infringement is also on the legal battlefield. Calzada explains that, too often, “photography is not treated with the care it deserves. So we work to advocate and give photographers the tools and legal environment needed to protect their work.”

Sometimes their legal work is concentrated in one region where the laws may not be aligned with members’ rights. In California, for example, AB5 limited the number of assignments freelance photographers were allowed. Calzada worked relentlessly on legislative and judicial fronts to help those members navigate the new law.

Story continued on page 13
As NPPA’s counsel, we hope you have a chance to read the advocacy article on page 10. Fifteen years ago, Alicia, then president of NPPA, asked Mickey, a longtime member-turned-attorney, if he would be interested in helping to represe nt NPPA in its advocacy efforts. A few years earlier, Alicia had launched NPPA’s Advocacy Committee with a budget of zero, and she wanted Mickey to do more than just the occasional pro-hono project he had been doing. In the years that followed, we believe we have built an advocacy program that, while invaluable to the NPPA, has also become a lifeline to independent visual journalists. Mickey became an attorney in 1999 after 40 years as a print and broadcast photojournalist. He became NPPA’s general counsel in 2008. Alicia, inspired by its advocacy work, became an attorney in 2010 and is now deputy general counsel. Together we staunchly defend and protect the rights of journalists, freedom of speech and of the media.

For example, as visual journalists have been assaulted and arrested at unprecedented levels this year, NPPA has been well-positioned to launch a fierce response. Mickey has worked for many years training journalists and police on First Amendment rights. This year, as part of our Legal Advocacy program, in addition to all the other ways we are supporting our photojournalists and writers, we have launched the NPPA Advocacy Center. This center provides virtual training and assistance for journalists and police on First Amendment rights. This year, as part of our Legal Advocacy Initiative with the RCFP in support of the release of police disciplinary records in New York City and with Reporters Committee for Free Speech First produced a training video on how to respond to an arrest.

As an associative plaintiff, NPPA was a challenge: striking down Wyoming’s trespassing statute, which imposed additional criminal and civil penalties for anyone who collected research data or took photographs. Our litigation fighting state laws that violate the First Amendment continues: NPPA is currently challenging the constitutionality of a Texas ‘drone law’ as well as that of California’s AB5 labor law, which discriminates against journalists’ ability to work as independent contractors. We also successfully testified and lobbied for AB542, which removed some of those restrictions, allowing members to get back to work.

On the copyright front, this has been a year of realizing years of work as well. We submitted comments on the DMCA and Fair Use and drafted follow-up responses to senators’ questions. We are also fighting state sovereign immunity from copyright liability, which currently allows state entities to infringe photographers’ copyright with virtually no consequences. We drafted and filed several amicus briefs in related cases, including this year’s SCOTUS case Allen v. Cooper as well as extensive comments on the DMCA in pursuit of a legislative fix. All of our advocacy on this issue has highlighted the First Amendment impact when states publish photographers’ work without permission, an issue not addressed by any other amici or commentators. After advocating for over a decade against an unconstitutional photography permitting scheme in the National Park Service, this year we drafted and filed an amicus brief in Price v. Barr, a case challenging those restrictions. Our brief was joined by several other organizations and First Amendment organizations.

On top of the advocacy work we do, we also work to help you, our members, stay informed on relevant legal issues. Alicia led two copyright workshops at the Northern Short Course in March (it feels like a decade ago); led an in-person seminar and a virtual webinar to help California photographers navigate AB5, and was a panelist at the Women in Visual Journalism workshop last month. Mickey is organizing the drone leadership summit for November, which we both will participate in.

All these things are just some of what we do to fulfill our mission to protect the legal rights of visual journalists — which we believe are crucial to preserving our democracy. As “the voice of visual journalists,” we hope that our advocacy has been clearly heard, with significant positive impact on behalf of NPPA’s members and a free press.

Got a question or topic for a future column? If you are member, send your questions to Mickey Osterreicher at advocacy@nppa.org or Alicia at advocacy@nppa.org.

In early September, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed AB5, which among other changes to state labor law, iniated the 30% submission annual limit on freelance photographers and writers. Freelance photographer Erik Castro, based in Santa Rosa, explained he could have lost two-thirds of his work with a newspaper if not for the changes to AB5. Castro described the anxiety felt during those uncertain months before the change. “I got the impression they really cared. (Allicia) was always available,” Castro was quick to point out. “There are so many advantages to being a member of NPPA, they support all aspects of journalism.”

This change in AB5 was possible because of investments in NPPA memberships. In a story on nppa.org, Osterreicher and Calzada wrote: “We are proud of the advancements we made, but you still have some restrictions on freelance and in particular, freelance videographers for television clients need to pay attention to restrictions that remain.”

Right now, NPPA membership is 4,500 strong. The NPPA Professional membership is $145 per year, or $175 with a free press.

Alicia Wagner Calzada has been an NPPA member since 1979.

Alicia Wagner Calzada has been an NPPA member since 2011.
The NPPA is pleased to announce the selection of Dudley Brooks as the new chair of the Best of Photojournalism, the association’s premier contest sponsored by SONY with divisions in still photography; video and video editing; picture editing; and online video, innovation and presentation. Brooks, an award-winning photographer and photo editor, is deputy director of photography at The Washington Post, where he manages the creative strategy and production of the visual content for the features and sports sections. He is also the photo editor for The Washington Post Magazine.

“I’ve watched the Best of Photojournalism contest progress since its inception and have always been impressed by the quality of the work submitted for it,” Brooks said. “To be the chair is a great honor and I look forward to helping guide its continued significance and growth.”

Brooks brings a wealth of experience to NPPA’s efforts to continuously raise the quality and profile of BOP. Before his current role at The Washington Post, Brooks was director of photography and senior editor for the monthly magazine Ebony and its weekly sister periodical Jet, published by Johnson Publishing. He served as the assistant managing editor of photography at the The Baltimore Sun newspaper after 22 years as an award-winning staff photographer at The Washington Post.

“I’m excited to have Dudley join our team to be at the helm of this important contest,” said Andrew Stanfill, NPPA president. “I’m looking forward to the perspective he brings as someone who has worn many hats in the industry.”

Brooks will work with the individual division chairs to improve and streamline various categories and innovate for the 2020 contest, which will be judged in 2021.

“Having worked with Mr. Brooks when he was here as a judge, listening to his reasoned approach to evaluating entries and inquisitiveness about the process of the competition, I believe this will be an easy transition that will build upon the work that past chair William Snyder did over the last few years,” said Mark E. Johnson, administrative liaison with NPPA and BOP. Johnson is a senior lecturer in visual journalism and chief technology officer with the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia where BOP is hosted and the NPPA is headquartered.

“We welcome Dudley in his new role as he helps NPPA’s Best of Photojournalism competition continue to grow and adapt to current challenges,” said Akili Ramsess, NPPA executive director.

Information regarding the 2020 BOP competition will be announced in December. NPPA members can look forward to the BOP special issue of News Photographer magazine in mid-November that will feature the 2019 contest results. Originally planned to be published as the May/June issue, it was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. We are grateful to SONY for sponsoring the publication of the BOP issue during our hiatus of printing. The issues we continue to publish are digital only and can be found online as interactive PDFs.

Photo by Marvin Joseph, The Washington Post
Introducing ‘The Solo Video Journalist, 2nd Edition,’ a how-to guide for storytellers who do it all

I used to be an anomaly. When I arrived in the 10th-largest market in the country, I was one of the few who worked as a solo video journalist: a reporter who shoots and edits my own stories. There were maybe a handful of us, and the newsroom wasn’t geared toward our interests.

More than a decade later, the state of my newsroom — and most others — has been upended. According to the latest Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) survey, more than 90% of local TV newsrooms use solo video journalists — or multimedia journalists, or MMJs. More than half of newsrooms in market 51 or lower use “mostly” MMJs, and four out of five newsrooms in Top 25 markets use them in some way. Soloists are no longer a position of the future. We are present across the board in local news, and we’re finding opportunities beyond broadcast as well.

But for a long time, no book existed that offered a comprehensive overview of the position and gave instructions and advice specifically designed for it, written by someone currently in the role.

That’s why I wrote one.

Four years ago, I announced the release of “The Solo Video Journalist,” which featured interviews with nearly a dozen MMJs and broke down every step of the solo storytelling process, from shooting to interviewing to writing to editing.

Now I’m thrilled to announce “The Solo Video Journalist, 2nd Edition,” with more interviews, significant updates and advice tailored to the updated landscape of video journalism.

The core of the book hasn’t changed. My intent has always been to empower soloists — or onetime soloists — in the demanding field. As solo video journalists continue to populate newsrooms nationwide — and dominate in terms of awards, assignments and opportunities — we must continue to cultivate the talented, versatile and ambitious individuals who take these positions.

I am beyond excited that this 2nd Edition is available because I believe in its power. I received this opportunity because the original sold far beyond my publisher’s expectations — a clear nod to its necessity for aspiring storytellers in a new landscape.

And, as with the original, I’m honored that the legendary Boyd Huppert of the BBC found atypical lanes in solo video journalism. And Peter Rosen became an MMJ midway through his career. Their journeys offer road maps beyond the standard broadcast model.

And, as with the original, I’m honored that nearly 100 soloists describe what they love — and don’t love — about the job.

Most importantly, I have filled these pages with some of the most talented soloists — or onetime soloists — in the industry. Jon Shirek discusses preparation and time management. Heidi Wighahl talks about dressing for the dual roles of the job. Pauroso speaks about MMJ safety. Greg Bledsoe offers a system for organizing one’s gear. Anne Herbst, Joe Little and Mitch Pittman talk about shooting. Ted Land discusses logging and writing, and Forrest Sanders covers editing. Neima Abdulahi and Tiffany Liou dive into digital.

The “Career Chronicles” chapters think bigger. Blayne Alexander of NBC News and Emily Kassie of the Marshall Project rose from soloist roles to more traditional jobs. Sarah Blake Morgan of the Associated Press and Dougal Shaw of the BBC found atypical lanes in solo video journalism. And Peter Rosen became an MMJ midway through his career. Their journeys offer road maps beyond the standard broadcast model.

And, as with the original, I’m honored that the legendary Boyd Huppert of KARE-TV contributed the foreword — and offered insights in a chapter labeled, “Learning From The Best.”

I am beyond excited that this 2nd Edition is available because I believe in its power. I received this opportunity because the original sold far beyond my publisher’s expectations — a clear nod to its necessity for aspiring storytellers in a new landscape. As solo video journalists continue to populate newsrooms nationwide — and dominate in terms of awards, assignments and opportunities — we must continue to cultivate the talented, versatile and ambitious individuals who take these positions.

I am no longer an anomaly. And that’s a beautiful thing.

Matt Pearl, whose column usually appears in this space, turned it over to his colleague Hope Ford for this issue. His blog can be found at thedailybestblog.com. He has been an NPPA member since 2010.
The detrimental impact of proposed governmental drone policies on newsgathering

As a visual journalist, I have spent the past decade advocating for small drones as a safe and economical newsgathering tool. In that time, I have seen several waves of ill-conceived and sometimes outlandish policy proposals attempting to limit their use under false pretenses of safety and privacy.

First, civilian uses were stymied by the hand-wringing that drones were going to spy on everyone’s backyard and through everyone’s window. That was followed by the dread that drones would hit and bring down an airliner. The latest apprehension is over “cybersecurity,” fueled by trade disagreements with China. No evidence has been offered regarding a genuine threat from foreign drone technology. Yet over the past year, several proposals have been introduced or implemented to limit the use of Chinese-made drones and components – and in the process, place unacceptable new limits on how journalists gather news.

These policy decisions began in the U.S. military, with internal memos in 2017 that raised security concerns about commercial off-the-shelf drones, followed shortly after by a ban on their use. This was understandable, because those products are not made to meet military security requirements, and because the U.S. military always prefers U.S. products. But other government drone operations have been grounded with far less pretext. The most prominent example has been the U.S. Department of the Interior canceling important fire-reduction missions while phones, laptops, tablets, monitors, and other electronic devices made in China are considered such a security risk.

And hundreds of media organizations and individual journalists like me exercise that right daily to gather news and images that inform the public. In fact, journalists supported by my own organization, NPPA, are suing to overturn a statute in Texas that restricts certain kinds of drone photography, on First Amendment grounds. There is also a financial concern at stake – the current non-China drone supply chain does not have the capacity to make drones affordable or viable for media that have already invested thousands of dollars in equipment.

It is perplexing why Chinese-made drones are considered such a security risk while phones, laptops, tablets, monitors, or other electronic devices made in China are not. The focus on where a drone is made, instead of on cybersecurity protections across technologies used by the government, hurts drone users while doing nothing to address actual vulnerabilities.

Genuine technological cybersecurity concerns are already being addressed by security standards and third-party validations. A recent data security test of products made by Chinese drone manufacturer DJI showed “no evidence of [data] connections to China or to DJI”; another study by a cybersecurity firm found the company employs security best practices. For its part, DJI announced a plan to enable a Local Data Mode (LDM) which will mean that no data can be sent externally from its drones to any third party, including DJI.

All drone users and those who care about drone innovation, especially the news media, as a leading end-user of drone technology, must better scrutinize these “cybersecurity” concerns. Doing nothing to address actual vulnerabilities will not only chill newsgathering abilities and irreparably harm all drone operators, but also ground a beneficial technology that is just getting airborne.
Zoom schooling may be all the rage today, but not in our house.

Fall has arrived, and a new school year has begun. Pre-pandemic, our family decided upon a public Waldorf education for our daughter, who is starting first grade this year. I never wanted to home-school my children. I wanted to have people with degrees in primary education teach them, and I wanted her to have the daily social interaction of a classroom full of peers. We chose to send her to a Waldorf school because of its focus on the whole child, giving what we felt would be a good balance of emotional and academic growth. Yet here we are, with a pandemic in full swing. Along with many families in this country, we are facing the ultimate juggling act: having to home-school our child and maintain careers from a worn and weary home.

At the Waldorf school, screen time is militantly discouraged, and computers are not used in classrooms until middle school. So how will a Waldorf school teach young children through Zoom? We are about to find out.

Waldorf education strives to develop intellectual, artistic, and practical skills in an integrated and holistic manner, according to Wikipedia. “The cultivation of pupils’ imagination and creativity is a central focus,” while qualitative assessments play a larger role than quantitative testing. Mentally engaging, I'm not used in classrooms until middle school.

When I think about having to do all of this, maintain my fledgling videography business, tend to my 4-year-old and provide the equivalent of a full day of school programming to my 8-year-old, I get a headache. Migraines, to be exact.

Honestly, it’s too much. And I know that I’m not the only one who feels this way. So I’m going to share with you my experience with my daughter, Kaia Payne, the writer’s daughter. (Photo by Autumn Payne)

First day of first grade looked a lot different than expected for Keia Payne, the writer’s daughter.

I’ve watched her experience carefully. It’s been a process along with everyone else, and I’m not sure we are any the wiser.

Admittedly, my own stress level in the upcoming months will be higher than it has been in a long time. I’m feeling more anxious about my work than I have in a long time. The way I see it, my child’s grades are not as important as it is for us to force her into an unnatural teaching scenario. So if that means turning the camera on while taking attendance and turning it off for the lesson, then so be it because doing a fun craft with happy caregivers playing with her pets outside is going to be better for her mental health than sitting through a forced Zoom lesson in tears.

I’m willing to bet her future on it.

Her mental health is more important than grades. My mental health is more important than jumping through arbitrary hoops. We will get through this as long as we keep all of this in perspective.

Autumn Payne is an independent visual journalist based in Sacramento, Calif. She can be reached at autumnpayne.com. She has been an NPPA member since 2001.

How to help students (and yourself, too)

Eric Maierson is a freelance writer and two-time Emmy-winning video editor and producer. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife, Ellen, and their two dogs, rascals.

The poet Robert Rily once remarked that if you’re not actively helping those younger than yourself, then you are hurting them. This is particularly true for journalists.

Because our profession is a craft, it is learned by practice and experience, but it is teachers and mentors who guide us. We are indebted to those who came before us, just as we, in turn, should nurture those who follow.

I realize, of course, the immense competition in this country. There are a limited number of jobs and a seemingly ever-growing pool of new talent each year. So I understand the hesitation to help others. I’ve felt, too. But assisting students, even a little, can offer enormous benefits to professionals as well.

VISIT A CLASS, VIRTUALLY

Videoconferencing with a class is an easy way to connect with students that doesn’t require an extensive time commitment or a lot of preparation. Teachers, in my experience, are always looking for new ways to impart information and are happy to host an experienced freelance photographer for an hour or two. My general routine is to ask students before class to watch a short film I’ve edited, and then I will answer questions about the production as well as discuss issues about their own work.

Talking about my process not only helps clarify larger ideas that students may wrestle with, but it also helps me to understand my own work. Talking to a class can make everyone a better storyteller.

COACH A WORKSHOP

Short of being a full-time teacher, there’s no better way to instruct students than hands-on mentorship of coaching a workshop. Teaming up with a small group of students in an intimate and intense environment is a great way to help them quickly improve their skills. For me, it’s always been helpful to approach these situations by remembering myself at a young age. I can recall my teachers who helped me when I began. Meet students where they are. Yes, it’s easy to be a perfectionist, to see all the flaws in a beginner’s work. But your job is not to point out all of their mistakes; your job is to assist them in some small way along a much longer trajectory.

Helping students to advance even a single step is sometimes enough encouragement to keep them energized and enthusiastic enough to clear the next hurdle.

And on a self-serving note, workshops are a great place to work with peers. Almost every time I’ve coached a workshop or judged a contest, I’ve benefited from new freelance gigs afterward, even if not immediately.

OFFER YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

I’ll admit it, the thought of offering my email to a roomful of strangers still makes me hesitant. But time and again, I have been surprised by just how few students actually contact me. Two years ago, I spoke at Mountain Workshops. Of the 500-plus people in the audience that evening, may

Eric Maierson is a freelance writer and two-time Emmy-winning video editor and producer. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife, Ellen, and their two dogs, both rascals.

Illustration by Julie M. Elman
Success can look different per most situations. What was a big success for you in this position and why?

The biggest success for me has been the opportunity to work full time as a staff photojournalist. As a young woman, we’re often overlooked. I never dreamed I would find a position so quickly before I finished school, especially here in my hometown.

There are small successes every day along the way: making a photo I like during a mundane assignment; a kid excited to see his photo in the back of my camera; an email or a thank-you card from someone that was moved by one of my images. It’s an incredible feeling when the community notices and cares about what I do.

Why do you love photojournalism?

My favorite thing about being a photojournalist in my hometown is getting to show the community the way I see it and why I love it so much. I get to tell stories that would otherwise go overlooked. There are so many awful things happening in the news, it’s nice to be able to show small community stories that make readers smile.

I’ve gotten so much access to different things that most people otherwise would not. I always have a front-row seat for sports. I’ve flown in a private jet. The first golf I ever shot was of Tiger Woods. I got to be inside a burning building during a training exercise for the fire department. I got to watch a world-famous sheep shearer work and countless other incredible experiences. This is the best job in the world.

At the end of the day, I love listening and learning from people the most. If I can leave an assignment feeling like I made someone’s day, that’s a better feeling than any award.

Right, Kevin Ford shears a sheep at Providence Farm in McLeansville, North Carolina, in February.

This was a slow news day. I checked Facebook to see if there was an event I could cover so we could have a standalone photograph. Thankfully, I found out a world champion sheep shearer was in town to shear 22 sheep just down the road. It was amazing to watch. I spoke with the owner of the farm about how farms have such a calming effect on me and relieve my anxiety by watching busy chickens and other animals. She texted me the next day and thanked me for coming out and invited me back anytime I needed to relax because she really identified with what I had expressed. Like I said, hearing things like this are better than any award.
Against the backdrop of a global pandemic and economic depression, colleges and universities are trying to not only stay open but to stay relevant. The severe losses in revenue, and in some cases lawsuits from students who feel they deserve tuition reimbursements, leave far too many questions unanswered as faculty everywhere spent their summer months redesigning curricula for online and hybrid classroom experiences. In the microcosm that is visual journalism education, faculty face the additional complexity of teaching “people skills” without being able to send students into public spaces.

Inherent in the DNA of every photojournalist is the commitment to helping colleagues in a moment of crisis, whether that means offering someone a fresh camera battery at the start of an NBA playoff game or the correct spelling of a subject’s name at a crime scene. So as I began reimagining my own course material into a new learning module, I asked other educators to share some of their stories from spring 2020 and how those revelations will shape their fall classes.

Most people I spoke with had a week to make the shift to distance learning. University of Missouri educator Jackie Bell, however, had two days to teach herself how to use Zoom and shift her remaining Business Practices and Photo Story sessions online. She was also coaching staff photographers at the local newspaper.

“I found them N95 masks and got them every long lens I could find,” Bell said. “I moved the equipment locker to my garage, with wipes and sanitizers for them.”

Biggest challenges

Though adapting course material was daunting, these educators’ primary concern was students’ emotional and psychological well-being. Dr. Gabriel Tait of Ball State University said his Photojournalism, and Media and Diversity classes became counseling sessions. He changed his attendance requirements to be mandatory only on days they were turning in assignments. Tait said that for some students, going to college and living in dorms had meant they were able to escape unhealthy home situations. Now they were being told to return home. He gave out his cellphone number.

“I over-communicated with my students,” he said. “I knew that it was a strange place for them. They were engaging, they were honest, and they were really in need of...”

Story continued on the next page

From The New York Times:

In a small room of one of San Francisco’s oldest churches, the Rev. John De La Riva hears confessions amid the COVID-19 crisis. He is 7 feet away from the person sitting on the other side of the room.

“I just listen to them,” he said. “I don’t come in contact with them except their voice from that safe distance.”

Father De La Riva is a Catholic priest at the St. Francis of Assisi Church in the North Beach neighborhood. The church was established on June 12, 1849, making it older than the state of California.

Photograph by Stephanie Penn

The Rev. John De La Riva, a priest at St. Francis of Assisi.

From "Portraits of Essential Workers in California" published by The New York Times in July in collaboration with the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California, Berkeley.

TAKING VISUAL JOURNALISM ONLINE
Teaching online

Continued from the previous page

Photograph by Stephanie Penn

Andrews Oliver, a budtender at Barbary Coast Dispensary in San Francisco.

From The New York Times:

As customers walk into the Barbary Coast Dispensary in San Francisco, Andrews Oliver greets most of them by name.

Deemed essential services, dispensaries like Mr. Oliver’s have been open through most of the pandemic. Protocols for protecting workers and customers against the virus have become routine.

Mr. Oliver, for one, wears a mask at all times and makes sure fresh mugs to any patron who shows up without one. In between conversations with patrons, who include patients who have cancer and epilepsy, Mr. Oliver washes his hands and sanitizes the countertops.

“I love making sure people get the medicine they need.”

...to a life of poverty in photojournalism, I think we know what we’re in for in the teaching challenges. I feel more of an urgency to teach this stuff because of all this technology. We need to reexamine what it means to be a photojournalist in the 21st century, he added. “We’re teaching this next generation about the things that need to carry over, but also engage them in the questions about how we reframe journalism.”

Gayle recently completed her Ph.D. on the perceived credibility of professional photojournalism as opposed to citizen journalism. She hopes to contribute her findings to inform the questions raised by Tait and Koci Hernandez while moving the industry forward in a way that can save the profession. She sees the abundance of technological tools as representing the foundational principles of generating strong visuals so they can tell the truth. How to do that using an online platform?

“I am trying to be open to the universe,” she said.

Peggy Peattie is a life-long visual storyteller with nearly 40 years in photojournalism and a Ph.D. student at University of San Diego, and photojournalism instructor at San Diego Mesa College. She was been an NFPA member since 2012.
COVID-19 turns up the heat on issues simmering in photojournalism

By Tara Pikel, Ph.D., and Martin Smith-Rodden, Ph.D.

Often, the news events we cover as photojournalists are experiences and dangers outside our own lives that we choose to document and depict. In the case of COVID-19, journalists were part of the unfolding news event, very much affected by the ramifications of a global pandemic. In the midst of the coronavirus crisis, Martin and I wrote and circulated the Visual Storyteller’s Survey in conjunction with several organizations (including Authority Collecting, Catchlight, Color Positive, Diverse Photo, Everyday Projects, Flatten Photo, and Women Photograph). More than 700 photographers responded to the exploratory survey that queried visual storytellers’ experiences of working during COVID-19, trying to gather knowledge around financial uncertainty, health and safety, and the impact of identity on access, resources and professional security in the visual media industry.

What became apparent from the survey responses was an overwhelming sense of financial and health precarity that was only exacerbated by the pandemic. The limits of access to personal protective equipment for freelancers met the lack of consistent assignment work under COVID’s economic lull, resulting in a work environment that was often unsafe and uncertain for photojournalists. As many news organizations worked to respond to the extensive limits and variables introduced by COVID (while doing justice to coverage of a global pandemic), photo editors struggled to balance the health and safety of photojournalists in the field with their overstretched budgets. Kainaz Amaria, visuals editor at Vox, acknowledged this was one of the main difficulties she experienced in covering coronavirus. “There were a lot of unknowns in the early days, so I really had to rely on the wires to support our journalism,” Amaria said.

That uncertainty in newsrooms and other revenue-generating outlets for photographers translated to a crippling amount of lost wages. Of those who indicated lens-based work is most of their income, 76% said they lost more than $2,500 in wages due to coronavirus. A majority estimated that they lost $2,500 to $7,500 “since the onset of quarantining and other COVID-19 preventative measures” at the time of the survey. Beyond that, another 14% reported losses of $7,500 to $10,000, and 20% reported lost income of more than $10,000. Relatedly, more than half of the photographers surveyed (56%) also expressed some to a lot of concern that they might not be able to pay their housing costs for the next month.

Atlanta-based freelance visual journalist Dustin Chambers said he was very worried when scheduled jobs started drying up in March due to the pandemic. “Just paying rent is really difficult for a lot of (photojournalists) and certainly COVID has brought that to the forefront,” Chambers said.

Twenty-four percent of all photographers surveyed expressed little to no financial security before COVID. The data indicates many news photographers have been facing difficult financial choices and operating in a state of vulnerability even before the economic effects of coronavirus. Chambers points to the constant financial concerns of many independent photographers, saying, “We do our best to push it out of our heads when we’re day-to-day trying to make it work, but our profession is in a clearly fragile balance, and for most people the wages do not offer a cushion. If we don’t get jobs in the next month, it’s just not going to work.”

While he counts himself lucky to have been able to maintain a steadier than expected flow of news photo work during COVID, he also spoke to the reality of having all commercial work fall off while many photographers at a financial loss. Photographers drawing income from News/Editorial only, or Commercial work only — as well as those with income from both — all reported nearly the same levels of economic stability on the average, before the health crisis. However, reports of losses during COVID varied significantly depending on which of these groups they were in. Photographers who worked in only News/Editorial reported the lowest impact due to losses in the three groups, with 41% of them saying they lost $0–$2,500 during the time of the survey — an overrepresentation according to statistical tests. Those who took income from both News/Editorial and Commercial were higher reporting (60%) in losses of more than $10,000 during the health crisis, compared to 36% of those who did only News/Editorial work, reporting in that high-loss category.

This pattern is consistent with reports of commercial work falling off while many News/Editorial clients remained in need of talent during a very active time in news — and may underscore the importance of having a variety of specializations and photographic clientele.

Those who were able to take coronavi- rus-specific news assignments were met with other limitations, such as a lack of access to the medical and funeral spaces where the pandemic’s effects are most ap- parent. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) laws protect the privacy and rights of medical patients, but they also frequently dictate what journalists can and can’t see, photograph or write about.

“Transparency and access is a deli- cate negotiation with hospitals during non-pandemic times, let alone when an entire network of hospitals is under tremen- dous stress,” Amaria said. “You can see the delicate dance the few photographers who have gotten access are doing in order to shield the patients’ privacy while still being able to communicate the urgency of the moment.”

Caitlin O’Hara, a freelance visual journalist based in Phoenix, AZ, faced issues with limited access when sent on COVID-related assignments. “A few of the assignments I’ve had relied on me to find access, stay on public property and do the best I could with photographing the outside of hospitals,” O’Hara said. She described being approached by hospital se- curity and being unable to get close enough to patients or write about.

Financial insecurity, racial disparities, access and personal safety are all heightened stresses in the coronavirus era, survey shows
Survey results: COVID-19
Continued from the previous page
due to her restricted mobility on hospital campuses. “This kind of assignment is really difficult for me and it makes me feel a little bit nervous when I didn’t clear it with the hospital or other places ahead of time,” O’Hara emphasized.

In addition to financial concerns, health and patients was widespread, with both freelance and staff photographers across the country facing isolation restrictions and limitations. Stephen M. Katz, a photojournalist with The Virginian-Pilot, says he is well-versed in photographing medical facilities and procedures, but during COVID-19, patient privacy has been at a level I’ve never seen. Even the standard “10 feet behind the photographer” when photographing intubations or those she lives with. “I have been afraid to go to work during this unprecedented crisis.

Visual journalists interviewed for this study expressed myriad ways in which COVID affected photojournalists and therefore coverage of the pandemic itself, continuing research and industry expectations during and beyond the COVID crisis is necessary to understand how it has affected our community.

This historical moment demands a critical analysis of photojournalism practices in the field and the newsroom. To understand the crisis in its entirety, we must first understand the crisis in its entirety. We must first understand the crisis in its entirety. Therefore, we are engaged in a period of catastrophic change, especially as it affects marginalized photojournalists’ experiences, perspectives and knowhow. During our 20-year photojournalism career, she has been a photo editor for Newsweek and CNN, has been published in the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, NPR, ProPublica, HuffPost, and ESPN Magazine, among others. She was a 2016 Visiting Fellow at Harvard’s Nieman Foundation for Journalism and a 2019 recipient of the World Press Photo Foundation’s Initiative for her work on Latin American asylum-seekers on the border. She has been an NPPA member since 2017.

Martin Smith-Rodden, Ph.D. is an assistant professor of visual journalism at Ball State University (Muncie, IN). His focus as a researcher is that of a community-based practitioner who combines practice and scholarship of visual journalism with a scientifically informed and evidence-based practice. His interests include how his research focuses on how human behavior interacts with media content and technologies, including media effects. Other interests include the development of evidence-based practices, topics in visual ethics, diversity and inclusion in the field, as well as ongoing programs in solutions-based photojournalism. He was a professional visual journalist for 30+ years in three markets, including work at The Virginian-Pilot, from 1986 to 2015. While there, he held positions as staff photojournalist, features editor, and photography section photo editor and was a member of the staff’s photo leadership team for nearly a decade. He has been an NPPA member since 1980.
Before the fires

By Shmuel Thaler
Santa Cruz Sentinel

August 16, 2020: Lightning over the Pacific Ocean and Santa Cruz, Calif., provided an incredible light show but it also caused the CZU August Lightning Complex that burned thousands of acres over the following several days.
Overwhelmed
By Shmuel Thaler
Santa Cruz Sentinel

August 19, 2020: A massive column of smoke rises above Waddell Creek as the CZU August Lightning Complex burns along Highway 1 at the Santa Cruz/San Mateo County line on the third day of the blaze. The fire burned more than 86,000 acres in Bonny Doon, Boulder Creek, Pescadero, and Big Basin Redwoods State Park, destroying more than 900 homes, forcing more than 77,000 evacuations, and was still only 46% contained two weeks after this photo was taken.

“As a staff photographer at a small community newspaper, I know that my photos, along with the dispatches from our reporters, provide an essential information lifeline for our readers. This is especially true during natural disasters such as wildfires and mudslides. We are not just covering our county, rather, we are an intrinsic part of the community, and we take that responsibility seriously. The people who lost their homes and were evacuated are our friends and neighbors.”

– Shmuel Thaler
NPPA member since 1980
Mad dash
By Paul Karoza
ZUMA Press

September 6, 2020:
Terry Kifer and Seth Sandstrom rush to protect the 450 boats at the Sierra Marina as the Creek Fire approaches in Shaver Lake, Calif. The marina survived the fire.
Inferno
By Josh Edelson for AFP

September 7, 2020: A firefighter douses flames as they push toward homes during the Creek Fire in unincorporated Madera County, Calif. More than 175,000 acres burned forcing 45,000 people to evacuate Fresno and Madera counties.

“It seems like every year, fire season is the worst California has ever had and 2020 is no exception. And I keep hearing the phrase “we’ve never seen anything like this” over and over. Temperatures are higher, the winds and flames are more extreme and the most active fire season is months away.

On the ground during the Creek Fire in Madera County, I was in a residential community where 300-foot flames were approaching, only to find firefighters pulling out ahead of an impact. Erratic winds sent columns of ash and fire twisting and bending unpredictably. Fire tornadoes and ashlightning, produced at new spot fires and the collapse of a pyrocumulonimbus ash plume, one reaching as high as 30,000 feet, occurred multiple times a day.

I saw residents evacuating on foot along extremely narrow roads surrounded by huge dried trees as the wind brought flames closer by the minute. Entire areas were abandoned since firefighters, spread extremely thin, carefully chose their battles.”

– Josh Edelson, Independent, Bay Area, Calif.
November 9, 2020:
Driving across the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, Calif., at 11:15 a.m., the dark sky engulfs the bridge as a result of smoke from the wildfires in Northern California blocking out the sun and holding in the fog layer.
Survival

By Scott Strazzante
San Francisco Chronicle

September 10, 2020: In the wreckage of a home site along Oroville Quincy Highway, Sacramento County Sheriff’s Deputies Christie Lynn, right, and Bianca Reeve calm a mare and a second horse, left behind during the North Complex West Zone Fire near Berry Creek, Calif.
September 10, 2020: Superman, Batman and Belle play with children at the Silke Field evacuation site in Springfield, Oregon. Belle, aka Lexi Longstreet, owns Enchanted Parties in Junction City. The three decided to dress up in character and volunteer to help comfort and distract children at the evacuation site, where families are picking up food, clothing and other supplies after fleeing fire-ravaged areas. "People need to know that there’s brighter days ahead and that we can get through this together if we try hard enough," Superman said.

More than a million acres of land in Oregon -- entire towns in some cases -- have burned.

From Facebook: "I haven’t posted many stories here recently but I wanted to share something I encountered yesterday as I wandered an evacuation site for one of the largest fires. It’s hard to have hope when so many have lost everything and so many are still missing. But maybe hope is all there is now."

— Beth Nakamura

Superhero comfort
By Beth Nakamura
The Oregonian
September 17, 2020: Mariela Reyes, 13, holds her 1-month-old baby brother, Kevin, as her family collects supplies at the donation center organized by staff and faculty of the Phoenix-Talent school district, at the Home Depot in Phoenix, Oregon. Reyes’ family lost their home in Talent, Oregon, to the Almeda Fire, which consumed over 2,300 structures.
Not a movie set
By Erik Castro
for The Press Democrat

September 28, 2020: The Glass Fire caused the evacuation of hundreds of elderly residents from Spring Lake Village and Oakmont Gardens senior living centers. They waited until 2:30 a.m. before entering the Veterans Memorial Auditorium in Santa Rosa, Calif.

"Covering fires is always an intense emotional experience, but I was startled by the silence of this scene of hundreds of elderly fire evacuees in the early-morning hours. It felt like a movie set. Like a scene out of the 1970s dystopian film 'Soylent Green.' The quietness made me whisper to the first woman I photographed as she held her dog in a tight embrace. Evacuees were waiting packed together wearing masks in idling city buses or sitting on folding metal chairs in the darkness as a light sprinkling of ashes fell on their hair.

A man became extremely angry and began yelling at me not to take photos, but who could see such a scene and want to hide this from the public? The vulnerability of this Northern California region, even after years of experiencing major fires, was clearly visible this night.”

— Erik Castro

NPPA member since 2005
Vineyard respite
By Paul Kuroda
ZUMA Press

September 29, 2020:
With very mild winds, firefighter Tylor Yadon, front, and others from a Willits strike team in Angwin, Calif., sleep at the edge of a vineyard after 22 days of 24-hours on/24-hours off shifts. Tylor’s mom posted this picture on her Facebook page writing, “When you are hit right smack in the heart by a photo, this is a phenomenal capture of my Ty and some of our amazing Willits boys... I’m so proud of you all and so honored to be your mom.”

NPPA member since 2014
If the apparent gender equality at the Portland protests no longer seems remarkable, maybe that is remarkable in itself.

STORY BY DAN DEWITT


Women photographers entrenched at PDX protests
Clouds of tear gas and whistling rubber bullets. The challenge of making photographs in darkness, through gas masks, while jostled by crowds of protesters. The pressure of documenting a seemingly ominous turning point in history: federal officers in military gear descending uninvited on an American city.

“You would have thought you were covering a war zone, but this was shit happening on our own soil,” said Octavio Jones, a Tampa-based freelance photographer who covered last summer’s protests in Portland, Oregon, for the New York Times. So far, then, Jones saw what most other photographers saw in Portland.

But he also came away with an impression that, for his profession, also seemed historic. It’s the view of a veteran African American photographer in an industry long dominated by white men, a perspective born out of years of commiserating with female colleagues about being undermined in meetings, about seeing too few faces that looked like their own, about being passed over for hazardous and politically fraught assignments such as a major civil rights protest.

When Jones, 44, arrived on the front lines in Portland, he immediately noticed that roughly half of the dozen or so credentialed photographers on the scene were women. To him, it looked like equality.

“When I saw as many women as men covering the protests … it seemed like a level playing field,” he said. “I’m glad to see the industry is changing. I’m glad to see more women out there. I’m glad to see more women covering conflict, and what I saw in Portland was unbelievable.”

So did the coverage of the Portland protests represent a moment of arrival for female photojournalists, a milestone in the industry’s fight against gender bias? Female photographers on the scene are not so sure.

Many of them noted that women have a well-established history of covering violent confrontations around the globe. They were wary of dismissing the contributions of male photographers in Portland who produced great images and provided great support to their colleagues.

And Paula Bronstein, who has a decades-long history of covering big international stories, said the industry’s history of sexism was closely examined during the height of the Me Too movement.

“We’re not telling the readers of NPPA magazine anything different,” she said. “We’re just not.”

By Dan DeWitt

July 24, 2020: The 57th night of protests in Portland, Oregon.
Photo by Beth Nakamura, The Oregonian.

Story continued on the next page
Continued from previous page

Portland protests

By Caitlin Ochs, Reuters

July 27, 2020: Demonstrator Yves Mathieu East has water poured on his face after being affected by tear gas during a protest against racial inequality and police violence in Portland, Oregon.


Photo by Caitlin Ochs, Reuters

Photo by Allison Dinner, ZUMA Press

Photographers

The internet. Social media have eroded the power of traditional gatekeepers, she said, and given female and minority photojournalists the chance to display their work and control the discussion about it.

"I didn't have to deal with proving myself to some editor who might have a chip on his shoulder, and it made me realize the energy required to navigate all that," she said. "It was just me and the people, and the people responded."

1984, when she covered the environmental disaster in Bhopal, India, at a plant owned by Union Carbide, which was then based in Connecticut. She also took leaves of absence to work independently overseas. Editors allowed her these opportunities, she said, but only because "it was me being a self-starter and fairly aggressive about your personal life to do this. You have to dedicate to pursuing stories." She and Alisha Jucevic, 28, a staffer for The Columbian newspaper in Vancouver, Washington, who documented the protests for the American Civil Liberties Union and the Agence France-Presse news agency, said that they have been inspired by women editors and colleagues through much of their careers and that they were heartened, if not surprised, to find established pros such as Nakamura and Bronstein on the ground in Portland.

"It was definitely encouraging to have so many women down there," Jucevic said. They and Allison Dinner, 40, who photographed the protests for ZUMA Press, were less interested in talking about the significance of female photographers on the scene than the historic nature of the moment itself — as well as the challenges of the internet.
Portland protests
Continued from page 57
rendering it accurately and completely.
In fact, every photographer interviewed
wanted to talk about the current historic
news events.
Dinner, who is based in Boston, said
she has captured images of federal forces
clamp ing down on protests in “the Middle
East and Latin America.” But “I’d say
the biggest difference was this was in
America,” she said. “It’s definitely strange
seeing (officers who resembled) storm
troopers going down American streets. I
don’t think this is the end of it, and I don’t
know what that means” for the future of
the country.

Maranie Staab, 33, a recent post-grad-
uate of the Newhouse School in Syracuse,
has been a photojournalist for five years.
An independent photographer, she has
covered stories in Iraq, Congo, Vietnam,
Greece and along the U.S. and Mexico
border. Covering the protests in Portland
since May, she’s been teargassed, shot with
“less-lethal” munitions (rubber bullets and
pepper bullets) and has documented the
repeated abuse and arrest of members of
the press by Portland police, Oregon State
Police troopers, and federal officers.
Her motivation: Document the protests
and the corresponding reactions, which
she sees as damaging First Amendment
rights. “This is an infringement of consti-
tutionally protected rights to provide the
American public with information and the
erosion of a pillar to the American democ-
racy,” Staab said.

Staab doesn’t consider herself a spot
news photojournalist. She prefers long-
term stories with intimacy so she works
hard to establish trust and credibility with
those taking part in the protests.
“I believe in the importance and power
of journalism,” Staab said. “What is
happening here is not OK. This is tax-pay-
er funded abuse and brutality. I’ve seen
gross abuses of power go unchecked. Not
once or twice but night after night after
night. The continued indiscriminate and
July 29, 2020: Top, mothers
block the passage of a federal law
enforcement vehicle during a pro-
test against racial inequality and
police violence in Portland.
Photo by Caitlin Ochs, Reuters

July 26, 2020: Above, Sarah
Bartell, a taxidermist from Golden
Dalle, Washington, stands on the
front line dressed in a bear suit
during a nightly protest outside
the Mark O. Hatfield United
States Courthouse in Portland.
Photo by Paula Bronstein, for The Washington Post
NPPA member since 1997

July 31, 2020: Wall of Veterans PDX
organizer Leshan Terry and his son
Leshan Terry Jr., 6, fix their masks
outside the Mark O. Hatfield United
States Courthouse during a nightly
protest. Terry and his wife, Tessa, are
Navy veterans and started the Wall
of Veterans in July. Oregon Gov. Kate
Brown announced that federal law
enforcement agents would begin to
leave the city and the Oregon State
Police would take over guarding the
federal courthouse. Law enforcement
did not engage with the demonstration
on this night.
Photo by Alisha Jucevic, AFP
NPPA member since 2021

Portland protests
Continued from page 57
rendering it accurately and completely.
In fact, every photographer interviewed
wanted to talk about the current historic
news events.
Dinner, who is based in Boston, said
she has captured images of federal forces
clamp ing down on protests in “the Middle
East and Latin America.” But “I’d say
the biggest difference was this was in
America,” she said. “It’s definitely strange
seeing (officers who resembled) storm
troopers going down American streets. I
don’t think this is the end of it, and I don’t
know what that means” for the future of
the country.

Maranie Staab, 33, a recent post-grad-
uate of the Newhouse School in Syracuse,
has been a photojournalist for five years.
An independent photographer, she has
covered stories in Iraq, Congo, Vietnam,
Greece and along the U.S. and Mexico
border. Covering the protests in Portland
since May, she’s been teargassed, shot with
“less-lethal” munitions (rubber bullets and
pepper bullets) and has documented the
repeated abuse and arrest of members of
the press by Portland police, Oregon State
Police troopers, and federal officers.
Her motivation: Document the protests
and the corresponding reactions, which
she sees as damaging First Amendment
rights. “This is an infringement of consti-
tutionally protected rights to provide the
American public with information and the
erosion of a pillar to the American democ-
racy,” Staab said.

Staab doesn’t consider herself a spot
news photojournalist. She prefers long-
term stories with intimacy so she works
hard to establish trust and credibility with
those taking part in the protests.
“I believe in the importance and power
of journalism,” Staab said. “What is
happening here is not OK. This is tax-pay-
er funded abuse and brutality. I’ve seen
gross abuses of power go unchecked. Not
once or twice but night after night after
night. The continued indiscriminate and
Story continued on page 60

September-October 2020 News Photographer
September-October 2020 News Photographer
targeted attacks on members of the press in Portland (and more widely throughout America) is one of the most under-reported stories today,” Staab said.

Bronstein said she worked to capture the complete scene. Yes, it was shocking to see the antagonism of the protesters and the apparently excessive response of federal troops. “The amount of tear gas and canisters being sent into the air on a daily basis was completely absurd,” she said. “I mean full-on absurd. I kept asking myself, ‘What the fuck is going on here?’”

But the clashes were also confined to a few blocks around federal property and to what seemed like an almost predesignated late-night window. At about 11 p.m., protesters would begin shaking a fence surrounding the building and throwing objects over it. Federal officers then played a recorded message warning that these actions were unlawful, she said, “and it was like, ‘Game on.’”

But she also made sure to include images of the idiosyncratic, “very Portlandia” early evening events, such as peaceful protesters dressed in costumes, including “a woman who was a taxidermist who wore an actual bearskin.”

Jucevic, likewise, said she “was able to catch the chaos, but one thing I was trying to look out for was not just showing the chaos.” Among the photographs she is proudest of, she said, was one showing a military veteran protester behind the lines, “sharing a moment with his son.”

Jucevic was new to covering violent riots and wearing a tear gas mask. When it didn’t function properly, another female photographer was able to help her clear up the problem and get back to the front lines. And throughout the protests, she and other photographers dealt with the very real threat of being injured. Though none reported suffering serious injuries, several photographers said they were either thrown to the ground or struck by nonlethal munitions.

Ochs drew the distinction between protesting and “civil unrest … where people feel so disenfranchised they are expressing it in a much more aggressive way.”

She had encountered that before in civil rights demonstrations in Ferguson, Missouri, after the 2014 shooting death of Michael Brown Jr., and in New York City in the immediate aftermath of the May 25 killing of George Floyd.

But unlike the police at those earlier protests, federal officers in Portland were not accountable to local officials. “These agents were here, and the state did not want them here,” she said. “They didn’t have any badge numbers, and I think that was apparent in the way journalists were treated.”

Prolonged violence in American streets, federal officers violating long-accepted norms of civil rights. To most photographers, that was the most astonishing aspect of the protests in Portland.

But given the history of the profession, this was pretty astonishing as well. “There were a good number of female photographers there,” Dinner said, “but I kind of feel that in the last few years, that’s not at all uncommon.”

Dan DeWitt is a former Tampa Bay Times reporter now living in North Carolina. Contact at dandewitt1@gmail.com.

August 8, 2020: A protester reaches out after being pepper sprayed while being arrested by the Portland police. Officers continue to make targeted and indiscriminate arrests in an attempt to quell continued protests for racial equality and against police brutality.

Photo by Maranie Rae Staab
NPPA member since 2017
Chad Nelson: 
It’s all about the ‘moments’ that celebrate nobility in common people

Chad Nelson, a photojournalist at KARE 11 in Minneapolis, is the only person to have won the NPPA Photographer of the Year and Editor of the Year in the same year. And he has done it twice. He also won a third Photographer of the Year award. And he keeps those awards in Tupperware containers “stored in boxes somewhere.” It’s not that he is not proud of his work or the honors, he says, it is just not what motivates him. “Moments” move him.

As telling as what he has boxed away is what you would find ready to go with fresh batteries in the back of his news vehicle. He took a long breath to make a mental count of the cameras back there.

“There is a big Sony news camera and three SLR mirrorless cameras and seven GoPros. At our station, it is pretty common for us to do a four-camera interview.” And there’s more. “I guess seven or eight lights, sometimes there might be more in there if I am doing a live shot. I guess I am meticulous.” Always ready for a “moment.”

Early influence
As a student at Minnesota State University Moorhead, Nelson says he was “that student” who constantly peppered his professor Kevin Wallevand with questions. “Anything I wanted to ask, he was more than willing to discuss.” Nelson said, “I remember asking him, ‘When you’re next to somebody who just lost their child, how do you walk that little dance to get what you need?’ He is so good at getting those really emotional elements, the moments. Kevin appreciated that I was very inquisitive.”

Nelson pinpoints the moment when he realized the difference between “reporting” and “storytelling.” He had just spent an emotionally exhausting day, having come home from attending the funeral of a dear friend’s brother. News cameras were there at the funeral. When he flipped on the TV to watch the coverage, what he saw that night on TV was not what he had experienced in person. Those lessons he had learned from his teacher came flooding back. Everything he thought he knew about how to tell a story that honors a person’s life was missing.

“While I was there at the funeral, I heard people crying; I listened to them tell stories about how Chase Korte did everything right to become an actor in California, and he was killed by a careless driver. It was 13 years ago, and I remember even now what people said when they stood up there at the funeral. And when I watched the news that night, the stories told me how many people were at the service and how big the service was. The reporting was like mathematics on the screen. It was not what happened there that day. From that moment, I was determined that I didn’t want people to not be remembered. The stories didn’t have the ‘moments’ that connected with everybody there that day.”

Nelson envisioned himself becoming a reporter, but when a photographer job opened up at WDAY in Fargo, North Dakota, it was his teacher, Wallevand, who persuaded him to grab it. What began as classroom teaching continued in the field working side by side with his mentor.

Stories are about relationships
Chad Nelson’s Photographer of the Year and Editor of the Year entries reflect what he says he learned from Wallevand: that every person, regardless of age or circumstance, can teach us something valuable if we listen.

His stories are a collection of unlikely people forging uncommon bonds, including college students who moved into an assisted living home to live among senior citizens. The students provided companionship, and the seniors shared life’s accumulated wisdom with their teenage acolytes. Nelson’s stories celebrate the nobility in common people. Two stories in his winning entries were about janitors. One man suffered a traumatic brain injury but found employment cleaning an elementary school. There is no way to explain how, after his injury, he developed a remarkable art talent that enables him to leave cartoon messages for the children on classroom whiteboards. Another man working as a hospital janitor forged a tender friendship with a chronically ill little boy. The friendship was so close that when the boy went home and had a chance to have a fun day, he chose to come back to the hospital to spend a few moments giggling with his friend. Nelson documented the Olympic dreams of Suni Lee, one of America’s most promising gymnasts, who practices seven hours a day, goes to school and then cares for her siblings so her mother can attend to her father, who was partially paralyzed after falling from a ladder. Dozens of journalists have documented Suni’s athletic ability. Nelson focused on a daughter’s love for her father and his unwinding support for her dreams.

Nelson’s winning entry shows us the story of a man who lost his wife and, in his grief, found solace in a groused named Lulu. The man has come to adore the wild bird so much that he searches her out three times a day just to say hello. “I try to tell stories that will connect with people,” Nelson said. “That story of a man and a bird is a story that will connect with anybody who has lost someone, who is lonely, and even connected with Minnesotans, who normally would have shot that bird.”

Nelson says he is drawn to quirky people, especially people whom others might judge and dismiss. That’s what he found in a boy who crochets eight hours a day. The story of Ethiopian immigrant Jonah Larson so touched the audience that Nelson documented a day. The story of Ethiopian immigrant Jonah Larson so touched the audience.

Story continued on the next page
she chose to be photographed holding a framed picture of her friend, and that way the two friends would still be forever together in the school yearbook.

Meticulous photography

Just as Nelson does not display his trophies, his photojournalism does not call attention to itself. “I don’t want to do anything that gets in the way of connecting with the people’s story,” he explained. “I am meticulous in how I capture and edit sequences because even if the sound is turned off, sequences tell stories in ways that disconnected shots don’t,” he said. “Sound brings the video to life. Sound provides details that you don’t have to say in the copy.”

He avoids adding solemn music to juice off; you would notice my lighting. But now I go for natural-looking light. I like it best when you do not know it is lit; it looks that natural, that way the viewer can focus on the story, not on the photography.”

He still uses old-fashioned tungsten lights, not LEDs. “I still like the Omnis that other people have been using forever. I probably should make the move to LEDs, but I like the tungstens because I understand how to manipulate them more.”

Techniques are not to be noticed

Nelson travels with more than a half-dozen lights. The goal of great light is to drop the weapon, and officers fired. 20 minutes, to talk Adam out of taking his own life. Police say when Adam came out of the house, he held a gun, ignored orders to drop the weapon, and officers fired. Nearly three months later, Adam is hospitalized with critical injuries from multiple bullet wounds. As much as Nelson would like to rewrite his brother’s story and turn it into one of those uplifting tales he tells on the news, life can be untidy and unkind. But Nelson has seen how telling stories of people who have endured loss and struggled through misfortune can encourage others. He wants everyone to know that he wants to talk.

as if a teacher would have any idea what those things mean,” he said. “And once in a while today my father will call and ask if I shot some story that aired, and when I said I didn’t, he will offer a critique of what was wrong with the graphic. I think that graphics and fonts should become part of the image. The story should not stop when the graphic pops up. The font should fit the story.”

Get the beauty shot, but maybe not use it?

Nelson’s stories have a missing element, and that is by choice. “I don’t put much emphasis on beauty shots like sunsets and sunrises. I try to capture beautiful images, of course, but when I am putting the story together, I find that opening stories with a sequence of beauty shots just keeps me from getting right to a real moment where we connect with a real person. I want to get to the people,” Nelson says. “Beauty shots are really just in there for me, not the story. I remember a long time ago, a photographer friend of mine said, ‘My 16-year-old niece can take a beautiful picture, but what she cannot do is capture a moment,’ and I never forget that. It’s about moments.”

When tragedy comes calling

You might imagine, watching Nelson’s winning NPPA entries, that he spends most of his life in the delightful company of remarkable and charitable people. If only life were that kind. Like most photographers, he spends a good bit of his work life covering daily news. And in Minneapolis, in 2020, that means covering the George Floyd story. In mid-July, the story of what journalists sometimes sanitize with shorthand language like “a police-involved shooting” became personal when police shot Adam Nelson, Chad’s younger brother.

Adam had a long history of struggling with mental illness, and one evening, the family had grown concerned about him and called officers to check on him at home. When police got there, Chad’s other brother, Brent, was in the house trying, for 20 minutes, to talk Adam out of taking his own life. Police say when Adam came out of the house, he held a gun, ignored orders to drop the weapon, and officers fired.

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Left, KARE 11 photojournalist Chad Nelson puts on his mask as he arrives at an assignment. In mid-July, a story became personal when police shot Adam Nelson, Chad’s younger brother, multiple times during a warfare check. Above, Nelson wears a bracelet inscribed with a message about Adam, who is still recovering.

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When journalists reported details of the shooting, Nelson wanted to prevent a replay of that day so long ago when he watched the funeral coverage of his friend’s brother. And so, for a man who tries not to be the focus of attention, Nelson stepped up to help journalists understand something about his brother beyond what the police report would say. “He’s my brother, and I just don’t want people at home to think he’s just a sheet of paper who came over the wire,” Nelson said on the news that night. “He’s a big, hilarious, generous guy who happens to have mental health issues. He loves his family, his friends, his motorcycle, and at times he battles demons.”

One night in New York

There is one award that Chad Nelson does not keep in Tupperware, boxed away in the garage. In fact, he never even brought it home. The Radio and Television Digital News Association honored Nelson and reporter Boyd Huppert, another multiple NPPA national award winner, with a prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award.

The Murrow award celebrated the story titled, “Eddie’s Sign,” the tale of a Richfield, Minnesota, family that desperately needed a sign.

In January 1972, 9-year-old Eddie Kron was struck and killed by a car at a crosswalk just two blocks from the Kron family’s home. The family grieved but never spoke about the loss, not even to one another. Eddie’s mother, Maggie Kron, tucked away memories of her son, and for 46 years she never once stepped foot in that street crossing where her son died.

Decades later, Huppert and Nelson were there when Maggie Kron’s children and grandchildren escorted her to the intersection where Eddie took his last steps. And there she saw a sign: “Adopt a highway.” The line below it read, “In loving memory of Eddie Kron.” The story led to the Murrow Award.

Nelson and Huppert called the Kron family to say that big shots from the news world would be celebrating Eddie’s story at a ritzy black-tie dinner in New York. Members of the Kron family said they wanted to be there, even if they had to sit in the back of the room to see their son’s image on a big screen in the big city.

Nelson and Huppert walked down from the stage with their award, a medallion of Edward R. Murrow encased in glass. When the applause and back slaps ended, the journalists met the family that had watched from afar.

Huppert and Nelson talked it over, only for a few seconds, but without hesitation they handed the trophy to the family. Chad explained, “It was, after all, their story, not ours. They let us tell it.” It was quite a moment, and it personifies everything Chad Nelson says he believes about the value of journalism. “Good storytelling brings people to life. Great storytelling keeps them alive forever.”

Al Tompkins is senior faculty for broadcast and online at The Poynter Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida. He can be reached at tompkins@poynter.org. He has been an NPPA member since 2002. Evan Frost is a photojournalist for Minnesota Public Radio News, where he has worked since 2016. He graduated from the University of Montana School of Journalism and photo edited the Montana Kaimin. He’s been an NPPA Member since 2016. You can find him on Instagram @efrostee. He has been an NPPA member since 2011.

POY, EOY

Continued from previous page

openly about his brother and about mental health. He wants journalists to cover stories about how police approach people with mental illness.

Nelson’s voice changes from the enthusiastic journeyman photographer to the halting cadence of a grieving brother when he recounts that night. He finds it hard to not keep in Tupperware, boxed away in the garage. In fact, he never even brought it home.

The Radio and Television Digital News Association honored Nelson and reporter Boyd Huppert, another multiple NPPA national award winner, with a prestigious Edward R. Murrow Award.
By Nicole Vowell

What do six-legged sheep, single-ply toilet paper and the National Press Photographers Association have to do with one another? They are all part of the everyday things that make 58-year-old Boyd Huppert what he is: a nationally known “Land of 10,000 Stories” storyteller and the 2020 NPPA Reporter of the Year — a nine-time recipient.

The 36-year veteran reporter has been sharing stories with the Minneapolis market at KARE 11 news for the last 24 of those years and links much of his success to his partnership with his wife, Sheri.

“She’s been on the journey the whole time; she’s been part of the team it takes to have a successful career in journalism, particularly in TV news,” Huppert said. “We met at a county fair. I was showing livestock, and she was marching in the sheep barn. He was showing livestock. She was in a high school marching band.”

BOYD HUPPERT credits wife Sheri for much of his success as a storyteller

By Nicole Vowell

The secret to his storytelling is to never lose sight of the why. “I watch and learn from,” he said. “We met at a county fair. I was showing livestock, and she was marching in the sheep barn.” Huppert said. There was a sheep barn, Huppert said. There was a six-legged sheep born in Pierce County, Wisconsin, that year.

“The sheep had six legs; four of them worked pretty well, and the other two sort of hung off to the side. That’s where we met: standing looking at that sheep,” he chuckled.

“One of my first jobs in radio, I would give her messages on the air, nothing that would get me in trouble, but I’d do it often,” Huppert said. “I’ve never told anyone that.”

Sheri has been the soil that spreads across the land of all 10,000 stories, always there to listen to Huppert’s random one-liners. “I once came out of a gas station bathroom and told my wife I have an analogy I want to use in a story. It was an argument as thin as gas station toilet paper. I told her I was going to put that line in a story someday, and about a month later I did — that toilet paper was so thin you could see right through it,” he said.

Huppert calls this kind of environmental inspiration the art of analogy. “I’m always out looking for a line; I put the analogies I collect along the way in my back pocket with the plan to use them,” he said. He considers himself a collector of literary devices: alliteration, themes, colloquialisms, etc. “They’re these things we learned back in high school English class and forgot about because we are journalists, but fairly late in my career, I started putting them into my storytelling toolbox. They work for writing a novel, why wouldn’t they work for writing a TV news story, too?” Huppert said.

Deformed sheep and frighteningly thin toilet paper aside, Huppert said the real NASA-like launch to the storytelling he’s known for today was sparked 10 years into his career when he attended the NPPA News Video Workshop in 1994 in Norman, Oklahoma.

“It exposed me to a different way of telling a story,” Huppert said. He was confident in doing the “who, what, when, where” reporting, but he realized at the workshop that his stories up until that point lacked a depth he never knew was possible.

“I was passed over for five reporter positions at KARE 11 before I was hired. Without the workshop, I doubt I’d be working here. It helped remake me from a reporter to a storyteller. When I saw some of the speakers there, John Larsen and Bob Dotson, some people who later became my mentors, I was inspired with what they were doing with news stories.” He said that’s when he had a new challenge to pursue.

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“Going to the workshop exposed me to the type of storytelling that I would then aspire to do the rest of my career,” he said.

The 19-time National Edward R. Murrow Award winner and 120-time recipient of regional Emmy Awards said that, despite all the accolades, he still feels like he’s never told the perfect story.

“I’m always trying to figure out a way to do something better; I’m constantly in pursuit of that,” he said.

The secret to his storytelling is to never stop being a student.

“Never stop learning, and never stop watching other people’s stories with open eyes. Always ask yourself: What are they teaching me? What can I put in my toolbox from this story?” he said.

To Huppert, receiving the honor of the NPPA Reporter of the Year title is always humbling: “To be judged in a really talented peer group, this award is always meaningful. Some of the other people who submitted this year are some of the people I watch and learn from,” he said.

“I’ll never stop learning from them.”

Nicole Vowell is a media relations and communications professional working in health care in Washington, D.C. She is a #57 graduate of the NPPA NV workshop and an award-winning former TV news storyteller. She can be reached at NicoleV@washingtonhospital.org. Follow her on Twitter @NicoleVNews.
When an outstanding photojournalism staff is described, words such as passionate, inspirational, committed, creative and enthusiastic are likely to be used. And it is abundantly clear that the team at Denver’s KUSA has all those qualities.

But have a conversation with any of its 15 photojournalists, ranging from Director of Visual Journalism Anne Herbst to senior photojournalist Chris Hansen to KUSA newbie Taylor Schuss, and you will hear some atypical adjectives that make it clear to see why KUSA was this year’s Station of the Year winner.

“We are an unstoppable force. I believe this to my core,” said Herbst. “We’ve got a pretty small photo staff at KUSA, but that’s not to say we’re not mighty.”

Whether if you are fresh out of college or a seasoned vet, at KUSA you will be given ample opportunity to grow and go after projects that you love.

KUSA photojournalist Mike Grady says, “For me, it’s really a dream job … one thing that really stands out is the ability of each and every photog on the staff to pursue a story they’re passionate about. All of us get a fair shake at doing good work.”

“The range of talent with our crew is amazing,” Herbst says.

From top to bottom, KUSA won’t put you in a box. “If you are a producer who wants to shoot … we’ll teach you. Our reporters are fantastic shooters. Our photogs are talented writers. … They are my heart because of this,” Herbst says.

It remains quite clear that there is an unshakable bond in this group of photojournalists at KUSA, one built on camaraderie and a basic understanding that throughout it all, they’ve got one another’s back.

Senior photojournalist Chris Hansen put it best when he said, “I believe each photojournalist, no matter how long they’ve been at KUSA, feels that they have room to grow and that being on this team will help them achieve that growth. We all learn from each other. Pick each other up.”

This model is evident, even to newly hired photojournalist Taylor Schuss. He said, “I’ve never been surrounded by a more passionate group of journalists. The tradition of storytelling runs deep here. It inspires me to be my best every day.”

This culture begins with Herbst. Her care for her staff goes beyond what happens when they clock in every day. “I want a well-rounded team. I really want people to be happy in their personal lives. I truly want our crews to be happy and fulfilled.”

KUSA has won Station of the Year 14 times, and Herbst says, “That’s not an accident. The history of excellence just oozes out of this place. We hire such hardworking, good-hearted people who just want to kick ass daily.”

KUSA is a proven force to be reckoned with and well-deserving of Station of the Year honors. This group is a mighty force that doesn’t appear to be slowing down anytime soon.

■

Derrick Larr is chief photojournalist for 9&10 News WWTV in northern Michigan. He has been there for four years. He can be reached at derricklarr@9and10news.com.
WILDFIRE INSOMNIA

Living and working at the center of wildfires

STORY BY TRACY BARBUTES

September 28, 2020: Houses burn on Mountain Hawk Drive in Santa Rosa’s Skyhawk Community as the Glass Fire rolls in from Napa County. Eleven homes burned in the area, but firefighters saved hundreds of others.

Kent Porter, The Press Democrat

NPPA member since 1983
By Tracy Barbutes

Winds kicked up on a recent afternoon to about 25 mph, arriving from the north. The National Weather Service issued a red flag warning over much of Northern California, my county included. The warning means there’s a combination of extreme dryness, warm temperatures and high winds; conditions where any spark at the wrong time and place can lead to a wildfire.

This also means I’ll sleep lightly, if at all. During fire season, I wake repeatedly to wind gusts, the smell of smoke or pine needles plinking onto the deck. While awake, I scroll through assorted fire and weather apps and check Twitter for updated information. I think about my less-mobile neighbors and escape routes. My camera gear and evacuation bags are ready to grab on the way out the door. If conditions are unusually stressful, I’ll wonder if I will have enough time to grab everything and if I will be a viable journalist, communicating news while evacuating.

The imagination runs wild at night.

According to Cal Fire, there have been over 8,200 wildfires that have burned over 3.9 million acres in California since the beginning of the year. As of early October, over 75,000 residents have evacuated across the state. There have been 33 fatalities statewide and nearly 8,000 structures have been destroyed. The stats increase daily.

California isn’t alone in the destruction. According to the Statesman Journal in Salem, Oregon, wildfires have burned nearly 1 million acres across that state, and at least 10 wildfires were still burning at the time of publication.

There’s no shortage of statistics or remarkable imagery being shared of property being consumed by flames; eerie, Mars-like skies; firefighters in various stages of combat or weariness; as well as remnants of homes and communities in ashes.

What you’re not seeing, though, is what it’s like to live in a community under constant risk of fire. While other photographers retreat to the safety of their homes in other parts of the state, the threat and stress exist around the clock. Fire affects most aspects of our lives.

I was recently on scene at the Moc Fire shortly after it ignited a few miles from my home. After photographing for several hours, I heard on the radio my neighborhood was being evacuated. My dog was home alone, and my evacuation bags sat by the door. It was an adrenaline-filled 10-hour day, including documenting, editing, filing and evacuating.

For more than 30 straight days this summer, I lived, worked, ate and hardly slept under oppressive wildfire smoke. As the Creek Fire burned to the south, and multiple fires burned in every other direction, the EPA’s air quality values in our region tipped out well over 500, which is hazardous and beyond the upper limit of the Air Quality Index (AQI). The red flag warnings kept coming.

While scrolling through social media at 3 a.m. a few weeks ago, I came upon Kent Porter’s post referring to “wildfire insomnia.” On Sept. 8, he tweeted, “I’ve decided to keep my fire gear on for the rest of the summer.” I knew immediately I needed to reach out to this stranger enduring a similar fate.

As Kent and I commiserated recently about wildfire insomnia, a term he likely coined, he laughed, “I’ve told friends I hibernate during December, once the rains come.” He said he sleeps about four to six hours a night during the peak of fire season. (Follow him on Twitter @kentphotos.)

We shared similar stories about how we experience wildfires, as journalists and as people who have lived in wildfire country for years. We no longer see our surrounding landscapes as pristine beauty, but instead as fuel. On hikes, we note escape routes. We park our vehicles so that we can quickly exit when necessary. We’re both fairly sleep-deprived.

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August 20, 2020: Inmate firefighters work near the Moc Fire burning along Hwy. 49 near Moccasin, California. The fire threatened San Francisco’s Hetch Hetchy hydropower plant nearby. Photo by Tracy Barbutes, independent photojournalist
September 17, 2020: The Bobcat Fire burns through the Angeles National Forest in Los Angeles County, north of Azusa, California. In early October, it had consumed nearly 115,000 acres.

Photo by Kyle Grillot, AFP

NPPA member since 2010
Wildfire insomnia
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Independent photographer Kyle Grillot began covering fires with the La Tuna Fire in September 2017. He and his partner recently moved from downtown Los Angeles, where there was effectively zero fire threat to their home, to Wrightwood, California. Kyle told me recently, “I don’t get to go home and be safer. I come home from a fire, and then the wind blows, and I look around and see where I should have cleared more or where the woodpile should be moved. Even the rain is stressful. We want rain, but not too much, too soon.”

Too much rain, too soon, may cause devastating debris flows as it has throughout California’s wildfire history.

Kent Porter, who contributed to the 2018 Pulitzer Prize-winning team for fire coverage at Santa Rosa’s The Press Democrat, used to cover about a dozen fires a year. Now he documents three to four a week. “In the past month, I’ve covered an 800,000-acre fire, a 10-acre fire, a 1,000-acre fire. It’s covering the Glass and Shady fires as I write this.”

Kent continued, “The paper treats me really well. They’re good about getting us the gear and training. They’re very progressive with wildfire coverage and safety.” It’s quite obvious when talking with Kent, or viewing his social media, he’s passionate about his work and his role as a photojournalist. When he’s not photographing fires, he’s sharing wind and weather forecasts and his vast knowledge of fire behavior on social media. He does make the time to hike, fish, cook, listen to music, head to the coast or just hop in his truck and drive around. But he’s rarely without his camera gear and PPE.

The self-described adrenaline junkie and weather geek personally knew hundreds of people affected by the Tubbs Fire, which incinerated neighborhoods within the city of Santa Rosa. He said, “The Pulitizer tempered the loss. We were all suffering community grief. When you’re covering your community on fire, it’s a huge responsibility to do it with honesty and integrity. It’s a fine line of showing affection to people and sharing news. The Press Democrat staff is very conscious about community.”

Indeed. The paper partnered with a local credit union and raised $242 million for those affected by the Tubbs Fire, all of which was distributed into the community and to local nonprofit organizations.

Andy Nelson, a staff photojournalist with Eugene, Oregon’s Register-Guard, has covered numerous fires throughout his career. He said that his home is vulnerable to fire from mid-July until mid-October. “I live in the hills around Eugene and have tall Douglas firs in my neighborhood and (near) my home,” Andy said. “The potential for fire in my neighborhood is always there.” Though he and his family had go-bags ready for the recent fires, they’ve never had to evacuate.

Andy continued, “Covering the Holiday Farm Fire was more personal than any other fire I’ve covered. I was sensitive to what I shot and how I shot it. We didn’t want to be the first source of people to find out if their house had burned down, so we tended to shoot businesses that had been affected. We also know which structures that survived could be a sign of hope to people in the midst of tragedy. It’s important to be factual in the coverage but empathetic, too. Many of us are living in areas that are seeing enormous impacts from natural disasters and are being personally affected. When you live in the West, in the forest, you feel like it’s only a matter of time. When will it be my time? When that moment comes, I’m going to have to balance that drive to cover the story and the need to take care of myself and my family,” Andy said.

After covering the 2015 Valley Fire, in Lake County, California, Kent’s first really big community fire, he experienced post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He had grown up in the region, and it was traumatic to document places with which he had emotional ties. “I was having nightmares after the Valley Fire. It was really tough to watch your own community burn.”

Through the Employment Assistance Plan (EAP), he saw a counselor who specialized in firefighter and police: PTSD. The sessions helped and continue to do so. He encourages others to seek counseling if needed. “Covering big fires is bound to affect you,” he told me during our chat. “It’s a thing that’s forever marked in your brain. It will bite you big time if you don’t deal with it. The sooner you come to terms, the better off you’ll be.”

University of Oregon journalism professor and freelance multimedia journalist Dan Morrison and his wife packed evacuation bags during the Holiday Farm Fire. “Deciding what to take and what you must leave behind is gut-wrenching,” Dan continued. “If I must leave, I must leave all I have. That’s my priority.”

Kent said he’s thought about it but that ultimately, his home is in Sonoma County. “I love the community. This is where I grew up. I can’t leave my family. I love it here. I owe my career to the people who live here. I’m really appreciative of that. In 33 years, I’ve photographed a lot of people. Everything is within a two-hour reach of here, including world-class wine and athletics. It’s my community, and I love it.”

Tracy Barbutes (@tracybarbutes) is a visual journalist and writer based near Yosemite National Park, California. She can be reached at photos@tracybarbutes.com. She has been an NPPA member since 2001.
How do you teach hate?
Here’s an idea. Find a doll of a Black man. Tie a rope around its neck and hang it from a tree. Then give your preteen son a stick and smile when he beats it. Mission accomplished: passing racism and violence from one generation to the next. Christopher Capozziello photographed the scene in his reporting on the Ku Klux Klan and generations of hate in 2003.

How can you mix religion and nationalism into a message to inculcate kids in a political point of view?

Challenging power in the South. Generations of Klansmen. Religious divisions that explain who we are. These stories are incred-ibly important, and each was covered through grants from the Alexia Foundation for World Peace and is among dozens assembled in the book “From Tragedy to Light: The Alexia at 30.”

It’s an apt title. The 166 photographers who have received the foundation’s grants are socially aware documentarians who report on disorder, repression and maltreatment around the world.

How do you take a stand against a symbol of dissent and subjugation?

Show the get-togethers of African Americans whose ancestors were enslaved in South Carolina, where the capitol in Columbia hoisted a Confederate flag over its dome in 1962. Peggy Peattie, a 1997 Alexia winner, photographed churchgoers at a summer camp near Harleyville, South Carolina, and in Charleston, a woman reenacts a Confederate widow with her arms around a rather uncomfortable Black girl. The juxtapositions of past and present and subjugation and freedom ring out in her image.

These stories of America make for queasy viewing, especially after the summer of 2020. Americans aren’t particularly comfortable

*Story continued on the next page*
Alexia
Continued from the previous page

With our history, so seeing recent photos of ourselves in activities that emphasize race and doctrine is a testament both to the depth of the roots or division and to its forms that entangle us.

Documentary photography is one of photography’s longest traditions. It’s hard work, too. Peattie, working on her “Down in Dixie” reporting, describes the effort that went into getting her results: “Weeks of research, word-of-mouth introductions, then two, sometimes three, visits before I was allowed to shoot a single frame.”

Persistence pays off. After spending months making new friends and sleeping on couches across South Carolina, Peattie was invited back to photograph the rally that started the economic unrest despite the danger. Her mother had persuaded her parents to let her have her cell phones, so I stole mine back when he was distracted.

Shane had our cell phones, so I stole mine back when he was distracted. Shane was hesitant, but Alexia told her, “Mom, they don’t kill photographers.”

Photo by Sara Naomi Lewkowicz

“From Tragedy to Light” marked the Foundation’s 30th anniversary last year. The couple who run it, Peter and Aphrodite Thevos Tsairis, are the parents of Alexia Tsairis, a journalism student at Syracuse University who spent a semester abroad at Syracuse’s London campus in 1988. Before returning home she had persuaded her parents to let her go to Nicaragua to photograph civil unrest despite the danger. Her mother was hesitant, but Alexia told her, “Mom, they don’t kill photographers.”

Coming home for Christmas that year, Alexia boarded Pan Am Flight 103 on Dec. 21 in London. Minutes after taking off, a bomb exploded on the plane, which crashed in Lockerbie, Scotland, killing all 270 aboard, including Alexia and 34 other Syracuse students.

Her parents started the foundation the next year. Administered through Syracuse University, it has awarded $1.6 million to professional and student photographers who used the funding to document the ills of societies rich and poor, near and far. The book is an overview of the results. Looking at it takes some will: Getting through the scenes of immoral and often illegal activity will make you think twice about the state of the world and come away unsatisfied. And that’s part of the point. Journalists hold up a mirror to society; photographers go a step further and record the image in that mirror and pass it around.

Alexia’s namesake
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Who’s looking?
When the Alexia Foundation started giving out its grants, newspapers were still on top of the media heap, and the computer at the office — you didn’t have one at home — ran DOS. Every day, we could put a printed photograph in the hands of people all over town, in nearly every county in the country.

Story continued on the next page

Photo by Peggy Peattie
"Down in Dixie: The Battle to Remove the Confederate Flag in South Carolina"

Families gather at the St. Paul Camp Ground near Harleyville, S.C., which has been used for one week every year to celebrate the end of the harvest season, since its founding in 1880 by the A.M.E. Church.

South Carolina raised the Confederate flag over the statehouse in 1962 as the rally that started the economic unrest despite the danger. Her mother had persuaded her parents to let her have her cell phones, so I stole mine back when he was distracted. Shane had our cell phones, so I stole mine back when he was distracted. Shane was hesitant, but Alexia told her, “Mom, they don’t kill photographers.”

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Story continued on the next page
In choosing which stories their readers were exposed to, editors helped set the agenda for discussions everywhere. Those decisions always had some bias — journalistic disinterest was always a myth — but a glance through the Alexia winners, not to mention Best of Photojournalism and POYi winners, shows more attention to afflicted peoples than you’ll ever see on social media.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and more fill the time we once spent on news as we check them a remarkable number of hours per day. Those media, as their c-suite executives relentlessly remind us, are platforms, not publishers. They don’t decide which news you see the way editors do. They’re more like a grocery store. You can buy fresh vegetables, and you can buy processed junk food. What you eat is your choice.

A junk food diet is more fun, whether we’re talking candy or cat memes, but it doesn’t give us the nourishment we need to survive and thrive in a world beset by challenges. Documentary photography is the broccoli that everyone needs, but in the marketplace, it loses out to fluff and partisan wailing online.

That’s why benefactors like the Tsairises are so important. They provide a lifeline that rescues the stories people need to see.

Stephen Wolgast holds the Knight Chair in audience and community engagement news at the University of Kansas. His email is wolgast@ku.edu. He has been an NPPA member since 1994.

Alexia
Continued from the previous page

Photo by Stephanie Sinclair
"The Bride Price: Child Marriage in India"

Rajni, 5, and Kaushal, left, during their marriage ceremony on the Hindu holy day of Akshaya Tritiya in North India. Despite legislation forbidding child marriage in India, the practice continues to be accepted by large sections of society.

NPPA member since 2017

"I met 15-year-old Marzia in a hospital burn ward in Herat, Afghanistan. The teen’s television has short-circuited. Terrified of her husband’s wrath, she set herself on fire. She had been sold into marriage at 8. After meeting many young girls like Marzia, I decided to look into early marriage. What I found were kids being forced into adult roles physically, mentally and sexually in 49 countries. Young brides discontinue their educations. If they try to leave, they often fall victim to trafficking. I have tired to create a compassionate portrait of these young girls worldwide. I want people to know their haunting stories."

– Stephanie Sinclair, 2008, professional recipient

"From Tragedy to Light: The Alexia at 30"

Softback, 176 pp., $40
Syracuse University, 2020

“I met 15-year-old Marzia in a hospital burn ward in Herat, Afghanistan. The teen’s television has short-circuited. Terrified of her husband’s wrath, she set herself on fire. She had been sold into marriage at 8. After meeting many young girls like Marzia, I decided to look into early marriage. What I found were kids being forced into adult roles physically, mentally and sexually in 49 countries. Young brides discontinue their educations. If they try to leave, they often fall victim to trafficking. I have tired to create a compassionate portrait of these young girls worldwide. I want people to know their haunting stories."

– Stephanie Sinclair, 2008, professional recipient
Only in Indiana does one have a chance encounter with a pickup truck transporting a basketball goal on a county road near Winslow, Indiana. The scene was part of the magic found when the "Hoosier Hardwood" project unfolded over a six-year span. The grandparents inside the truck bought a used basketball goal for their grandson’s birthday and were transporting it to his home as a surprise gift.

Photo by Michael E. Keating

SUE MORROW | BOOK REVIEW

“Chasing Indiana’s Game: The Hoosier Hardwood Project”

Memories of the hardwood.
It’s personal.
This is personal. I grew up in Indiana watching basketball with my dad. He was a big fan of Bobby Knight when he coached the Indiana Hoosiers. When I was a photojournalism student in the hallowed halls of IU’s Ernie Pyle Hall and the Indiana Daily Student newspaper, I photographed a few games. My dad would watch for me on television. I was in heaven.

So when Michael Keating posted to social media about his new book “Chasing Indiana’s Game: The Hoosier Hardwood Project,” I immediately ordered a copy. Looking at the pictures took me back to grade school when my school’s team would travel to quintessential old gyms where the squeak of sneakers on hardwood would punctuate the stuffy air. I was in heaven.

When I lived in Bloomington during college, I had an idea to photograph the different kinds of hoops around the countryside. They were everywhere and in all kinds of conditions. Sometimes just a rim of wire. Maybe a bushel basket with a hole cut in the bottom. An era before Instagram, my idea seemed static and too artsy for a photojournalist. Dammit. I wish I had followed my gut.

Keating and co-author Chris Smith’s book has page after page of memories that establish Indiana basketball as a cult. (But who doesn’t know this?) Inspired by a photograph of his father’s 1937 basketball team, Smith started this project in 2013. The two joined forces. They researched and traveled more than 50,000 miles throughout Indiana and “talked to every local who could direct them to the next gym.”

The photographers have esteemed careers in photography. Smith traveled the United States and Caribbean making images for Fortune 500 companies and editorial outlets for over 35 years. Keating’s time as a photojournalist spans 50 years, during which he worked at the Cincinnati Enquirer.

Photographs from “Chasing Indiana’s Game” are on display at the Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame in New Castle and have been selected as one of the Indiana Historical Society’s Bicentennial exhibits. It is Smith and Keating’s goal to place a book in every public library in Indiana. Steeped in the Indiana tradition of “game on Saturday, church on Sunday,” there is a deeply rooted sense of place where basketball was woven into the fabric of the communities. The book embraces the legacy and history in its storytelling and through moments Smith and Keating photographed during games over the years of their careers. “Hoosier

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Hysteria” is real. It’s about the gyms as relics, monuments and cathedrals to celebrate the sport itself. As small towns lost their schools, the gyms fell into ruin and the sport vanished altogether. They found the remnants and even trashed trophies of the past.

They used available light to photograph the gyms no matter the conditions. The Amish barn near Bear Branch feels like a hallowed place, with “God’s light” shining through the barn’s skylights.

There are two sections of the book with pictures by Smith and Keating when they covered games early in their careers. Those are the moments that bring back my memories of raucous cheering and the smell of popcorn. And I’m in heaven.

Sue Morrow is the editor of News Photographer magazine. She can be reached at smorrow@nppa.org. She has been an NPPA member since 1986.

“Chasing Indiana’s Game:
The Hoosier Hardwood Project”
By Chris Smith and Michael E. Keating
Indiana University Press, 191 pages
Available at Indiana University Press, $25, hardcover; $12.99, ebook
Or on Amazon or Barnes and Noble

Shelbyville, Indiana, 2014
The Jac-Cen-Del Lady Eagles perform their pre-game call and response cheer before their regional semi-final matchup with Tindley High School at Southwestern (Shelbyville) High School.
Photo by Chris Smith

Huntington, Indiana, 2016
The Ft. Wayne Canterbury bench and cheer block react to an official’s call late in their semi-state loss to Lapel at Huntington North.
Photo by Michael E. Keating
Bethel Boateng, 16, left, and Natalie Boateng, 13, yell “I can’t breathe” for eight minutes while lying down on Peña Boulevard during a youth-led Black Lives Matter demonstration in Denver, on June 6, 2020.

Photography by Kevin Mohatt

Waking up in their tent the morning of Theo’s birthday, Leah Naomi Gonzales was stressed that she didn’t have gifts for her son. She put him on the bus to school and then went to go beg for money under the freeway. Afterward, she went to his school for his celebration but missed it because the bus was late. This was a very difficult day for them both.

For Gabrielle Lurie, consistency made the story of Theo and his mom possible.
Consistency. It’s not a word I routinely hear in photojournalism. Yet it’s one of the more important ideas for successful storytelling. Too often, I feel many of our conversations linger in the arena of the technical. Equipment and gear are important, for sure, but a photographer’s mental framework for success is just as important, if not more so.

My college professor Rich Beckman introduced the idea of consistency at the start of my career. As I sat in my Introduction to Photojournalism class at UNC-Chapel Hill, he stressed its importance as we began our first photo story. Core ideas such as: Be true to your word, follow up with what you say you’ll do and be consistent in showing up. These are aspects of strong, honorable, substantial work in photojournalism.

I could see this foundation in Gabrielle Lurie, 33, a staff photographer for the San Francisco Chronicle. Lurie, originally from Washington, D.C., previously worked at a photo lab for five years. Later, she freelanced for two years and in 2016 joined the staff at the Chronicle, where she has covered housing insecurity.

“I’ve covered homelessness pretty extensively in San Francisco, and I’ve always sort of felt this itch to tell the story differently,” said Lurie. While recently working on a story about encampments in Berkeley, she noticed a little boy who passed by on a scooter.

“I asked a few people in the neighborhood who said he was homeless,” said Lurie. “I was really shocked.” Lurie went to meet the boy, named Theo, and his mother, Leah Naomi Gonzales, 43. “They were just so friendly,” she said. During their conversation, the idea emerged to document a different side of being homeless.

“You have this vision of homelessness, and he (Theo) doesn’t fit that,” Lurie said. “And I really wanted to show what homelessness was like through the eyes of a child.”

The project, “Theo: Homeless at Age 7”, reveals the life of Theo Schrager from his vantage point. Lurie worked on the story from July 2019 through August 2020, with a break from January to mid-April 2020.

As I weaved through the striking images, I kept thinking about the energy and time Lurie invested. Her work has a level of intimacy that doesn’t come quickly — or easily. Woven with respect and compassion, consistency is the fabric.

“I was the most consistent person in his life,” Lurie said of Theo’s mother. “She would call me or text me if there was a problem. It’s not like I could do anything about her issues, and she knew that,” Lurie explained. “But I think just being able to call someone and tell them about what they’re going through was probably cathartic for her.”

The same goes for Theo. “He would run up and hug us because he was happy to see me or Sarah,” Lurie said.

August 2019: Theo Schrager relaxes in his hammock outside the tent where he and his mom live in Berkeley, California. They lived in a tent at Strawberry Creek Park after being unable to secure money for a hotel. For nearly two years, they have been sleeping on the streets and in hotels after their RV was towed in July 2018. Theo dreams of having a home one day where he can “bake chocolate cakes in an oven” and run around the house with a dog.

Photographs by Gabrielle Lurie

Story continued on the page 96
Ravani, the reporter). He would give us little nicknames. He called me Gab-Gab.”

Over the year, Lurie witnessed milestones and struggles. It was hard for her, too.

“I think the toughest thing was driving away from them and knowing that they’re going to be outside,” she said. “Sometimes in a rainstorm, or when it’s really hot out.”

“I guess that is what journalism is. We can’t get involved, and that can be tough sometimes.”

Gonzales suffered trauma and abuse. At times, it was emotionally charged, which spilled over into their interactions. Lurie respectfully found ways for consistent communication and engagement with Gonzales.

But soon after the story started, Gonzales became sick and was hospitalized. She needed a break, and Lurie agreed.

Then COVID-19 hit. On April 15, Lurie reached out to Gonzales, telling her they wanted to show how the pandemic was affecting her life, that it was an important chapter. Gonzales was receptive.

As they resumed, Lurie remained consistent, actively listening and giving the mother space when she needed it.

“When one of those times were difficult to navigate,” Lurie said. “It’s hard. I’m not going to lie. It’s really hard when you’re trying to tell someone’s story and they’re unhappy for whatever reason.”

“No one ever wants to create damage along the way,” Lurie said. “We do this work to shed light on their situation and hopefully do good. I think that I just never wavered from that.”

Lurie credits her husband for supporting her. “Yes, I’ll walk the dog again,” she said playfully about her husband. And support came from her boss as well.

“My editor Nicole (Frugé) said, ‘Just keep shooting. It doesn’t matter if you’ve gotten a key image from an aspect of their life; just continue with documenting their routines.’

Even if I had gotten a routine (image) many times before, I felt like it was good to push myself to go even further. The more that you go, the closer you get, the more comfortable you feel.”

She remained steadfast in her belief in the story and consistently reached out to Gonzales. “I would text her, I would email her, I would call her, even if I wasn’t going to see her.” Lurie said she would often wake early in the morning and head over to their tent around 6 a.m. to locate Theo and his mom. She would wait patiently for them to stir in their tent before greeting them.

“I wanted Naomi and Theo to know that I...
May 21, 2020: Theo holds a peanut butter and jelly sandwich his mom made him for lunch during shelter-in-place at the LaQuinta Hotel in Berkeley, California. Theo has been homeless since he was born.

November 13, 2019: Theo flexes his muscles in the mirror and says, “Look how strong I am, Mom!” as he sits on his hotel bed at the Downtown Berkeley Inn Hotel in Berkeley.

September 22, 2019: Theo Schrager grabs a bundle of balloons at Dollar Tree and yells out, “Mom, can I have them?” the day before his 7th birthday in Berkeley. They walked around Berkeley all afternoon, showered at the YMCA and took shelter in their tent at Strawberry Creek Park.
Davidson, with whom she forged meaningful relationships. After college Gabrielle spent many years working in a black-and-white photo lab as a professional spotter, retouching fine-art photographs by hand. In 2014 she decided to pursue her goals to become a photo-journalist, taking the leap to become a freelance photographer and move out West. In 2016 Gabrielle joined the staff of the San Francisco Chronicle, where she has been pursuing stills and video. Most recently she began organizing the Bay Area Women Photograph meet-ups where photographers gather for events, share ideas and collaborate on work.

In total, she spent about 40 days with them. Sometimes she would spend an entire day with them, and other times she’d just check in to see how they were doing. Often, she couldn’t find them. She remained steadfast and was present during key moments, such as when they were kicked out of a hotel, or when Theo would celebrate a birthday. It was important to Lurie to show Theo being a kid and not just someone without housing.

That’s a commitment Gonzales appreciated and how trust was built. Lurie was direct and honest about her purpose: to show how Gonzales cared for her son even in tough moments, as the lead image shows.

Gonzales’ housing voucher was about to expire, and she might be stuck on the streets much longer than anticipated. It was a delicate moment filled with pain and love. “The photo of her holding him tightly in their tent is a symbolic image for me,” Lurie said. “She’s clasping her mouth with her hands as she realizes she has another day of uncertainty in front of her.”

It’s a poignant and intimate moment that strikes at the heart of what we are called to do.

“Lurie gained the trust of Gonzales and Theo by devoting time and energy to their story. Journalism requires a foundation of consistency that can breed trust. When achieved, it can show deep insights into the lives of others and provide a sense of connection that may otherwise be lost.

I asked Lurie if she planned on following Gonzales and Theo’s story after publication. She said yes, and that she was going back to try to find them the day we spoke.

That’s the kind of consistency we should all strive to accomplish.

Ross Taylor is an assistant professor at the University of Colorado Boulder. He’s on the board of directors for NPPA and is also the chair of the quarterly multimedia. Website: rosstaylor.net. He has been an NPPA member since 1998.

Raised in Washington, D.C., Gabrielle Lurie picked up a camera at age 17. She learned photography the old-fashioned way by spending countless hours in the darkroom as a high school senior. After graduating, Gabrielle moved to New York City to attend NYU, where she studied art history and fine art photography. Gabrielle worked with photographers Mary Ellen Mark and Bruce Davidson, with whom she forged meaningful relationships. After college Gabrielle spent many years working in a black-and-white photo lab as a professional spotter, retouching fine-art photographs by hand. In 2014 she decided to pursue her goals to become a photo-journalist, taking the leap to become a freelance photographer and move out West. In 2016 Gabrielle joined the staff of the San Francisco Chronicle, where she has been pursuing stills and video. Most recently she began organizing the Bay Area Women Photograph meet-ups where photographers gather for events, share ideas and collaborate on work.

Gabrielle Lurie has been an NPPA member since 2007

Leah Naomi Gonzalez and Theo fly a kite at Cesar Chavez Park in Berkeley, California, in June. Theo ran around trying to get his kite to stay up in the air but soon became distracted by people flying their drones. He said he wanted to start a business where people could get coffee delivered by drone so that he didn’t have to leave the tent or hotel to get coffee for his mom in the morning.
August 28, 2020:
Young people congregate near The Red Lion Inn, a popular bar in the Campustown area near the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, four days after fall classes began.

Documenting a university coping with the pandemic is challenging, revealing...
August 30, 2020: University of Illinois students play basketball in a Champaign Park District court on campus six days after fall classes began. The university had removed baskets from university-owned courts before the beginning of the semester, but rims in some Park District facilities remained up. The Park District removed those rims on September 3.

I teach multimedia journalism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Because of my family’s ties to Wuhan (our daughter was born in Hubei Province in 2012), I was aware of what was then known simply as the “novel coronavirus” in mid-January, before it was a blip on the radar for most Americans. Soon I was filing audio stories for our campus public radio station and, eventually, NPR’s “Morning Edition” about canceled Lunar New Year events, a local run on masks and the anxiety within the local Chinese and Chinese American communities. I knew the coronavirus was going to be a big story — the most important story in the world, actually — but at that time, it wasn’t a visual story.

As winter turned into a frightening spring and spring into a dolorous summer, the visuals came. Better photographers than I captured the devastating impact of COVID-19, by then a household word.

As summer wound down, colleges and universities across the country were finalizing plans for a fall semester unlike any other. Illinois’ hybrid learning approach — most classes taught online, masks and social distancing required for in-person instruction — was both representative of that broad effort and, in important ways, unique. Faculty researchers developed a saliva test that returned results in less than 48 hours, and everyone on campus was required to test twice a week. The administration, in conjunction with the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, implemented an aggressive contact tracing regimen for positive tests. A mobile app allowed “Wellness Support Associates” stationed at the entrances to every building on campus to quickly verify the health status of students, faculty and staff. Only those with a recent negative test would be granted access.

From my perspective as a journalist, these efforts and, moreover, their impact on the students’ lived experiences made for a very visual, and visually underreported, story; photographs of an empty quad don’t do justice to the complexities of a university community coping with a pandemic.

Some individuals weren’t happy with the story I was trying to tell, however. A bar manager called the police to try to stop me from photographing a line of students on a sidewalk outside a local watering hole. A university administrator demanded that I delete photographs showing a housing worker in full PPE gear outside a dormitory. (I refused.) But as is usually the case when one is trying to tell the story of a community with honesty and empathy, most of my subjects respected what I was doing, and what I hope to continue to do as the strangest college semester ever continues to unfold around me.

Charles “Stretch” Ledford is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He first joined NPPA in 1984 as a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has been an NPPA member since 2010.
September 15, 2020:
Noah Livingston, a member of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Wind Symphony, uses a mask made to minimize the spread of aerosols. The mask was designed by Professor Jonathan Keeble, the School of Music’s chair of woodwinds, brass and percussion. Livingston is pursuing a master’s in flute performance.
August 15, 2020: To maintain social distancing during the pandemic, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign facilities and services employees tape off classrooms in Gregory Hall in preparation for classes to resume in August. November 20 will be the last day of in-person instruction for the fall 2020 semester.

August 22, 2020: Noah Legenski checks the COVID-19 status of Kevin Regan before allowing him into an off-campus party. All students must have had a negative COVID-19 test within the previous four days whether they are taking classes in person or remotely.

September 11, 2020: Sophomore Gavin Lancaster, left, moves out of Lundgren Residence Hall. At right, a man, who identified himself as the building’s “janitor,” removes trash. “I don’t dress like this all the time when I’m working here,” the man said. “It’s only when I’m taking the trash out of the isolation wards.” Asked if students isolated due to COVID-19 exposure, he said, “Only on the first floor.” In response, Lancaster said, “I see these guys around all the time. I don’t think they’re telling us the whole truth. I want to know if I’m living with someone with COVID.”

September 2, 2020: After a spike in positive COVID-19 tests, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign administrators sent out a notification calling for undergraduates to “limit their in-person interactions to only the most essential activities,” and “strictly avoid social gatherings under any circumstances” for two weeks. Hours after the notification went out via email, the Illini Pub Cycle made its way through the Campustown business district that borders the campus.
September 18, 2020: The film “Black Panther” was shown at Memorial Stadium at the University of Illinois for a crowd of a few hundred individuals, mostly students. The screening was the first in a series of movies and concerts sponsored by the university and designed to provide students with what Illinois Chancellor Robert J. Jones called in a campus-wide email “the kind of in-person experiences – in and out of the classroom – that college life should include.” The email further stated, “Attendance at all of these events will be limited according to local and state rules on allowable occupancy and the ability to maintain social distancing. Face coverings will be required.”
Grey days heavy with sadness and fear blanketed the city locked under quarantine. The nights were heralded by the uninterrupted wail of the sirens that moaned up and down the streets. It seemed like they never stopped. It felt like a dream — the experience of ceaseless death seemed so impossible and so sad that it couldn’t be real.

Early in the pandemic, there was some discussion of whether the language of warfare was an appropriate metaphor for the crisis of sickness then descending on the world. Appropriate or not, it was the metaphor most often used by the staff at the Brooklyn Hospital Center in Brooklyn, New York. COVID-19, with its easy and ubiquitous transmission and facility with various tools for killing, was the enemy. They talked about searching for new weapons against it. Their hospital was their ramparts, the last line of defense against the death that the virus delivered. It was the place where knowledge and compassion made a stand against the virus.

What made these people get up and fight against death 24 hours a day? Something about the years of shared commitment and mission bonded its veterans and inspired the hunger and brilliance of the newest members of the hospital’s family. They understood better than most what was at stake. They saw it firsthand.

The Brooklyn Hospital Center was a crucible — a vessel of uncommon resistance reinforced by the remarkable people who work there. Spending time with them in the hospital simplified the confusion of what was happening all around us: people were sick and they were dying and they came there to be saved. But I find it hard, even now, to explain to people who were not there what the terrible weight of that knowledge felt like. I hope that that is somewhere in the pictures.

Victor J. Blue is a New York-based photojournalist whose work is most often concerned with the legacy of armed conflict, human rights and the protection of civilian populations and unequal outcomes resulting from policy and politics. His work appears in numerous newspapers, magazines and broadcasts. An NPPA member since 2006, he is a past NPPA grant-winner and has been recognized in the Best of Photojournalism competition and POYi.
Dr. Vasantha Kondamudi, chief medical officer
“You’re right in the middle of the storm and you don’t know whether you’ll get to the other side. You couldn’t stop people from dying.”

Alexis Gomez, patient transport worker
“The first day that I went into that truck, I went home and cried for about two hours.”

Dr. Sylvie de Souza, chief of emergency medicine
“Coronavirus has made me probably even more aware of the value of human connection in treating illness, because we’re really deprived of that, the patients are deprived of that. It’s made me more vulnerable, more grateful to be there and be able to do something to help, to help those that I could help.”

Janmeet Purewal, pharmacist
“I remember just panicking. Like, how are we going to get through this? How can we do this every single day?”

Lenny H. Singletary, senior vice president
“I live in the neighborhood. I wake up every day more motivated, wanting to do the most I can to help my community.”
Christine Ciaramella, emergency medicine clinical pharmacist
“We had so many more happening per day, sometimes multiple patients crashing at the same time.”

Louie Ortiz, electric shop foreman
“When they brought those refrigerator trailers, seeing those bodies rolled in there, that was overwhelming, you know? All those bodies. It’s hard to take.”

Dr. James Gasperino, chair of the department of medicine, chief of critical care
“There’s new challenges ahead and I’m preparing myself and my team for the next wave. COVID will not win.”

Donna Mosley, clerk, emergency department
“I saw it all — tears, exhaustion, sorrow, anger, helplessness, regrets. Many times I went home and cried because I saw the anguish in their faces and their hearts.”
Pandemic fans
By Monica Herndon
The Philadelphia Inquirer

September 20, 2020: Cardboard cutouts of fans “attend” the Philadelphia Phillies game against the Toronto Blue Jays at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia. The Phillies lost their last home game of the season, 6-3.
October 2, 2020: After the homecoming ceremony at Heritage Hills High School, senior Josh Dellamuth holds a cardboard cutout of senior Abby Ruxer, his homecoming court partner, in Lincoln City, Indiana. Ruxer was quarantined and opted for a cardboard cutout instead of missing out entirely or postponing her spot on the homecoming court until basketball season.
Seeking justice

By Pat McDonogh
The Courier Journal

September 23, 2020: Two protesters hug after listening to the grand jury announcement for charges against Louisville Metro police officers who shot and killed Breonna Taylor. The only charges filed were against one officer, Brett Hankinson, for wanton endangerment for shooting wildly into adjacent apartments.

Protesters have filled the streets of Louisville for six months hoping for justice for Taylor and asking that the three officers involved in the botched narcotics raid would be both fired and charged in her death.
September 30, 2020: Twenty-four hours after the first presidential debate in Cleveland, President Trump made multiple campaign stops in Minnesota. After speaking at Duluth International Airport he boarded Air Force One. He tested positive for the coronavirus the following day.

Test result: Positive

By Alex Kormann
Star Tribune
Space-bound
By Jonathan Newton
The Washington Post
The Boeing Starliner is launched for its maiden voyage to the International Space Station from Kennedy Space Center in Florida on December 20, 2019.

RBG, the notorious
By Dave Burnett
For TIME, 1993

“There is no doubt that the passing of Justice Ginsburg has fully confirmed that the wake of her persona in this world is truly notorious. I haven’t been able to find a quote which I read twenty years ago, but its essence has never left me. It is a very simple explanation — that when the leaders of a people exercise the power of the state for their own personal benefit (and this was Ancient Rome, nothing has changed) the life blood of the Republic has been drained away, leaving little for those who remain. In so many ways it feels as if the party of Dirksen, Goldwater, and Baker has become the personal play thing of not only the President but those who should have been in charge. Maybe the Republic will endure another hundred years, and I would certainly wish it so. But the enlightened intellect of the Ruth Bader Ginsburgs of this world is so much more needed, and in demand than the spineless obsequious behavior of those who inherited that mantle."

“In 1993 TIME called me (or did I call them?) to photograph the newly nominated Judge Ginsburg, for a feature to introduce her to the TIME audience. I was to appear at 5:30 at her Watergate apartment, for a short portrait session. I arrived, as usual, a little early and was greeted by Marty, who showed me around. I’d asked for the best lit rooms (once again, Burnett the window light guy was in charge) and ended up in the front foyer. She was, as we learn in the documentary about her, running late at work, and as the sun began to disappear, I started freaking out just a little. Even with Kodachrome 200 you can only hand hold it so long... She did finally arrive about 6, and I asked her to just stand in the hallway being bathed in that last bit of evening light, and yes, please, maybe hold on to your briefcase (with the Notorious RBG lettering). To me she looked like a 4th grade schoolgirl, getting ready to head out on the first day of school. I shot a couple of rolls, but once I had this frame, at least I knew I had something. It ran the next week, a full page in TIME, back in ’93 when a full page still meant something. Her thoughtful intellect and humor are already missed.”

– Dave Burnett, September 22, 2020, Facebook post
Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the first woman to lie in state at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. “My most fervent wish is that I will not be replaced until a new president is installed,” Ginsburg said before she died on Sept. 18 from complications of pancreatic cancer. She was 87. Her death spurred debate within the presidential race about a nomination to fill her seat before the November election.
Take a knee

By Wally Skalij
Los Angeles Times

October 4, 2020:
Los Angeles Lakers players take a knee during the National Anthem before Game 3 with the Miami Heat in NBA Finals in Orlando, Florida.