

Biblio File

Barbara Gregorich had three poems about Inuit stone-carved bears published in the January 2009 issue of Cricket: "All Bear," "Get Down" and "Sniff, Sniff." ...



Barbara Gregorich

Charlotte Herman's children's novel, *My Chocolate Year*, has been named a Sydney Taylor Notable Book, by the Association of Jewish Libraries. ...

Robert Loerzel was interviewed Jan. 14 on WBEZ Chicago Public Radio about William Lorimer, the Chicago

Republican boss who was ousted from the U.S. Senate in 1912 after being accused of obtaining his seat through bribery. Loerzel wrote about the parallels between Lorimer and Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich for the Huffington Post. Loerzel also co-wrote a feature story on Chicago's leading movie people for the February issue of Chicago magazine. Also, Loerzel will talk about how to do historical research at the 6 p.m. March 10 meeting of the Independent Writers of Chicago. The meeting is at National-Louis University, 122 S. Michigan Ave., Room 5008, Chicago. ... **Andrea Cheng's** children's book *Where the Steps Were* was selected by "Choose to Read Ohio," a project of the State Library of Ohio designed to promote reading across Ohio. Also selected was **Anne Hagedorn's** *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of the Heroes of the Underground Railroad*. (*Beyond the River* also is the Hildene, Mass., History Book Club's current book for discussion.) ... In an online piece titled "The Real Housewives of Crook County" on Dec. 17, Michelle Malkin quoted **Jim Merriner's** Chicago magazine article. ... **Carol Felsenthal** wrote the cover story for the February issue of Chicago magazine on Michelle Obama. Felsenthal

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History of clubs is history of Chicago, too, author says

BY THOMAS FRISBIE

Researching a book about the history of Chicago's clubs ran the gamut from easy to impossible, author Lisa Holton told Society of Midland Authors members at their regular monthly program on Jan. 13 at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago.

Holton, who began her career as a business writer at the Chicago Sun-Times and today writes about business history and other topics at her own firm, The Lisa Company, is author of 11 books. Her most recent is *For Members Only: A History and Guide to Chicago's Private Clubs* (Lake Claremont Press).

Representatives of some clubs were happy to talk about their history, but that wasn't always true, Holton said.

"These folks would not speak on record in a lot of these clubs," she said "It really did bother me. As a reporter you want to find out as much as you can."

Nevertheless, Holton did find out a lot. *For Members Only* tells a story of how the clubs in Chicago helped shaped the city, as the Commercial Club of Chicago did, for example, by fronting the money for Daniel Burnham's lakefront plan.

"It was a wonderful chance to visit Chicago history through a single topic," Holton said. "What I loved about the project was learning how the private clubs were such an extraordinary window into

how politics, wealth and architecture figured into all of it."

Pointing out the Cliff Dwellers' Sullivan Room, Holton recounted how it is named for the great Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. Isolated late in his career, Sullivan had no new major commissions when noted architects Nelson Max Dunning and George Nimmons, both Cliff Dwellers members, came to his aid. They made sure his dues, which he no longer could afford, were paid, and they helped to set up one of his last architectural commissions, a series of printed renderings that illustrated his philosophy of architectural ornament.

"They worked with other Cliff Dwellers members to put this project together," Holton said. Club members also made it possible for Sullivan to write his autobiography in the last two years of his life, *The Autobiography of an Idea*, she

said. A significant part of the writing was done at the Cliff Dwellers, she added

"I really like the story for two reasons," Holton said. "First of all, I believe a lot of people think private clubs are all about exclusion and secrecy and sometimes infighting, and believe me, as I researched this book, that can be true in a lot of cases. But clubs succeed because they provide a second family for people in ways that their families at home and work cannot."



Lisa Holton

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with Shawn Shiflett

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also been posting online commentaries, including one on Leon Panetta, the proposed CIA head and former chief of staff for Bill Clinton. Also, on Jan. 15 the Chicago Reader interviewed Felsenthal about why she posts commentaries for the Huffington Post. And on Jan. 8, the Kansas City Star wrote: "Carol Felsenthal has done it again. The Chicago investigative journalist –



Carol Felsenthal

and author of the most damning expose of Bill Clinton's post-presidential career, *Clinton in Exile* – is back with disturbing evidence that that very nice man, Roland Burris, may have had something to do with the wife of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich getting a very nice \$80,000-a-year job in August." ... The film, "Santa Claus in Baghdad," made from the title story of **Elsa Marston's** book *Santa Claus in Baghdad and Other Stories About Teens in the Arab World*, had its main premiere this past summer at the Rhode Island International Film Festival, and has had premieres and screenings in several other places plus honors from a couple of other fairly large film festivals. Marston organized a showing in Bloomington, Ind., on Dec. 21. On a zero wind-chill day, the crowd in the more-than-jam-packed-auditorium at the public library responded warmly to the film. The program also included a discussion by a local media film-reviewer and Marston; a musical interlude on the oud (a Middle Eastern stringed instrument) by a Turkish musician; and a reception with Middle Eastern food. Plans are under way for a second Bloomington screening later this winter on the Indiana University campus. The book has already had three printings, and the film maker (Raouf Zaki of RA Vision Productions, near Boston) and Marston continue to explore ways to promote both the film and the book. ... **Jane Hamilton**, 2007 SMA Adult Fiction finalist, has a new book: *Laura Rider's Masterpiece*. Publishers Weekly said

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Writing professor sees a bright future for fiction

Shawn Shiflett, a Columbia College professor, is the author of the critically acclaimed 2004 novel *Hidden Place* and an Illinois Arts Council Fellowship winner. Shiflett and **Stephanie Kuehnert** (author of *I Wanna Be Your Joey Ramone* (2008, MTV Books), and the upcoming *Ballads of Suburbia* (MTV Books)) will present the Feb. 10 Society of Midland Authors program, "The Future of Fiction." (Additional panelists may be announced).

Literary License: A recent report by the National Endowment for the Arts said the endowment believes a 25-year decline in fiction reading has reversed. Have you seen any evidence of this?

Shiflett: Yes, I have seen evidence of this both in my students at Columbia College Chicago, the proliferation of reading groups, and even with the emphasis on reading that my own children are getting in grade, junior high, and high school. The question is, what kinds of fiction are they reading? Fantasy? Science Fiction? Horror? Graphic novels? Young Adult? The answer, of course, is all of that and more. A very promising development is in Young Adult Fiction, a genre that is increasingly expanding its boundaries of acceptable subject material and therefore helping to develop the literary fiction readers of the future.

Literary License: In your writing, how do you develop your characters?

Shiflett: My own characters often start with real people or, more often, combinations of several people whose contradicting traits free them into the realm of the "wholly imagined." They may be people whom I knew very well. Other times, they are several images of people whom I saw for brief moments, encounters, or saw for no more than an "image flash" out a car window. Sometimes they are characters that I thought were only bit players in a

February 10, 2009, program

Cliff Dwellers
200 S. Michigan Avenue
22nd floor

6 p.m. - Social Hour
7 p.m. - Program

Free - members, teachers, students
\$5.00 - general public

novel until they started to elbow everyone else off the stage. Those are the most fun characters to develop, as they seem to write themselves and are completely out of my control. They challenge me to write by the seat of my pants. Alberto in

Hidden Place is such a character, as are Jay and Otto, too.

Literary License: Are the changes in the publishing industry affecting serious fiction writers?

Shiflett: Technology might actually prove to

be "the friend" that saves literary fiction by keeping publishing costs down, and allowing for new ways of publicizing books, etc. The book as we know it today — an object made of paper that occupies shelves in our homes — will vanish, maybe even a lot sooner than we realize, but our basic need for story in print will continue, even if the form of the object that we hold in our hands changes.

Literary License: At one point in writing your book should an author begin to look for a publisher?

Shiflett: That's a complicated question that really depends on so many different factors.

Literary License: What's your next book?

Shiflett: Set in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood, *Hey, Liberal!* is about a white kid in a predominately African-American high school right after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Q&A
with
**Shawn
Shiflett**



Oh, baby – Spoonfeeding the news media with success

“We made it!”
That is what my wife and I said to each other as we looked at our first newborn, Elizabeth Katherine.

What Elizabeth said back was, “GAAAAAAAAAAAA,” which I’m guessing means “Hooray!” in Infantish.

As we look back on 2008, I think it’s fair for us all to triumphantly say, “We made it!” We overcame many obstacles to get here (mine included diaper training and breathing exercises) and now we have the year 2009 and a baby staring us in the face.

If you don’t actually have a baby in front of you, let’s pretend that the media is your baby. What are you going to do to take care of it this year?

How to take care of a media baby

Feed it (tiny servings).

Just as you wouldn’t use a giant spoon to feed your child mashed peas, you wouldn’t send an essay to get a

reporter’s attention. They don’t have time for that. All they have time for is subject lines (from e-mails). So make sure yours is a good one. If the reporter does read further, use two lines and two lines only to state your case and how it will appeal to their audience. Less is more ... effective. This year, think brevity.

Do what makes it laugh (again & again & again)

I have a theory that whenever a baby laughs, anyone around the baby becomes transfixed and suddenly making the baby laugh again is the most important thing in the world. Try thinking that way about receiving a media mention. Once that happens, make achieving another mention the most important thing in the world. Think about what you did or said that grabbed the reporter’s attention. Perhaps

“Think about what you did or said that grabbed a reporter’s attention. Perhaps you contacted a reporter with new information about a previously published story. Whatever you did, take note and do it again.”

you contacted a reporter with new information about a previously published story or you linked your story to a pertinent issue in society.

Whatever you did, take note and do it again!

Buy tiny baby accessories (for every occasion)

I actually see a lot of people doing this for their dogs these days, but that’s beside the point. If it’s going to rain, make sure you have a baby umbrella. If it’s sunny, have baby sunglasses. My point is that you never know what the media is going to need, OR want. Having photographs, charts, graphs and other supplemental materials and information can score major bonus points with reporters. The trick is to not initially shove it down their throats. Mention that you have “such and such” should they need it to help their story. They will then let you know if they want it.

You are now prepared for a harmonious year with your media baby. Just be thankful media babies don’t come with dirty diapers, spit-up binkies or college funds. Ahhh the true joys of parenthood!

E-mail Tom Ciesielka at tc@tcpr.net or call (312) 422-1333.

PR Tips
from
Tom
Ciesielka



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Hamilton laces “her narrative with winning humor.” ... **Blue Balliett** was profiled in the Jan. 10 Chicago Sun-Times. The newspaper said the 53-year-old author of three best-selling children’s novels wants people – particularly aspiring kid writers – to know that doing what she does for a living is itself often a very untidy business. Characters jabber away in her head – even after she’s finished writing a novel. Balliett once wrote 180 pages of a book, only to realize it wasn’t going to work and needed to be thrown away. Story ideas tiptoe up and slither into her brain at all hours of day and night. ... In a Jan. 17 Newsweek essay, **Joseph Epstein** wrote, “I don’t have enough knowledge of etymology to know whether *thrift* is the root of the word ‘thrive,’ or *thrive* the root of the word ‘thrift,’ but no nation can hope to thrive without the ethos of *thrift* at its core.” Also, Newsday in a review of Epstein’s latest book, *Fred Astaire*, called it “delightful little volume.” ... **Ray E.**

Boomhower was scheduled to give a slide presentation and discussion about Lew Wallace of Indiana at New Castle-Henry County Public Library on Jan. 10. ... On Jan. 14, the Jackson Free Press mentioned Brock Clarke’s “wonderful nuggets of characterization” in his book, *An Arsonist’s Guide to Writers’ Homes in New England*, an SMA 2008 Adult Fiction finalist. ... **Mark Eleveld** wrote a profile in the Jan. 11 Chicago Sun-Times of poet **Kevin Coval**, who has read his poetry at several SMA poetry programs. ... The School Library Journal called **Bonnie Dobkin’s** 2008 book *Neptune’s Children* “a captivating survival tale to add to collections.” ... *My Mistress’s Sparrow is Dead: Great Love Stories, from Chekhov to Munro* (Jan. 8, Harper) includes a story about adolescent longing by **Stuart Dybek**. ... **Kevin Coval, Richard Jones, Quraysh Ali Lansana, Haki Madhubuti and Martha Modena Vertreace-Doody** are among the poets who contributed to an anthology in celebration of Barack Obama’s inauguration,

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A Writers' Congress: Chicago Poets on Barack Obama's Inauguration." A reading was scheduled for 6 p.m. on Jan. 20 in the DePaul Student Center, 2250 N. Sheffield Ave., Room 314. The anthology was published by DePaul University's Humanities Center and the DePaul Poetry Institute. **Stuart Dybek** wrote on the book jacket: "These poems celebrate both the hope embodied in the man, Barack Obama, and a renewed hope for the promise of American democracy. So natural an act as praise seems a wondrous release after the necessity to protest the previous eight years of disastrous American policy." ... Congregation Solel in Highland Park, Ill., held a service this month to commemorate a visit and talk to the congregation by Dr. Martin Luther King in 1966. The commemoration was organized by **Michael H. Ebner**, a long-time congregant and retired Lake Forest College history professor. ... **Jean Bethke Elshtain** will be one of the speakers next month when Union University in Jackson, Tenn., holds a conference in honor of the 15th anniversary of the publication of Robert P. George's book *Making Men Moral*. ... The Jan. 18 Chicago Sun-Times ran a feature on **Richard Cahan** and **Michael Williams'** new book, co-authored with Nicholas Osborn, *Who We Were: A Snapshot History of America*. "The draw of turning the pages of *Who We Were*," the Sun-Times wrote, "is that we come upon insights from our past. This random walk through history is a rewarding one." ... On Dec. 30, Blogcritics reviewed **Paula Kamen's** *Finding Iris Cheng: Friendship, Ambition, and the Loss of an Extraordinary Mind*, saying, "In retrospect, Kamen realizes that the incomparable drive, desire and competitiveness Chang displayed throughout her life may have been indicative of a manic side." ... **Harry Mark Petrakis** was honored in September at the opening of the Dunes Acres exhibit at the Westchester Township Historical Museum in Indiana. ... A commentary on new senator Roland Burris by **Thomas Frisbie** appeared in the Jan. 20 Chicago Sun-Times.

New Books

THE SUBVERSIVE COPY EDITOR:
ADVICE FROM CHICAGO
(OR, HOW TO NEGOTIATE GOOD
RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR
WRITERS, YOUR COLLEAGUES, AND
YOURSELF)

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
APRIL 15, 2009

Each year writers and editors submit more than 3,000 grammar and style questions to the Q&A page at The Chicago Manual of Style Online. Some are arcane, some hilarious — and one editor, **Carol Fisher Saller**, reads every single one of them.

All too often she notes a classic author-editor standoff, wherein both parties refuse to compromise on the "rights" and "wrongs" of prose styling

In *The Subversive Copy Editor*, Saller casts aside this adversarial view and suggests practical strategies for keeping the peace. Emphasizing habits of carefulness, transparency, and flexibility, she shows copy editors how to build an environment of trust and cooperation. One chapter takes on the difficult author; another speaks directly to writers. Throughout, the focus is on serving



Carol Fisher Saller

the reader, even if it means breaking "rules" along the way. Saller's own foibles and misadventures provide ample material: "I mess up all the time," she confesses. "It's how I know things."

Writers, Saller acknowledges, are only half the challenge, as copy editors can make plenty of trouble for themselves. (Does any other book have an index entry "terrorists. See copy editors"?) The book includes helpful sections on e-mail etiquette, work-flow management, prioritizing, and organizing computer files. One chapter addresses the special concerns of freelance editors.

Saller's emphasis on negotiation and flexibility will surprise many copy editors. The Chicago Q&A presents itself as a kind of alter ego to the comparatively staid Manual of Style.

THE BEAR MAKERS

FRONT STREET
NOVEMBER, 2008

In **Andrea Cheng's** new 170-page children's book, *The Bear Makers*, Kata, 11, lives in post-World War II Hungary. Her once-successful father is depressed, her mother illegally sells stuffed animals, and her older brother flees to the West. The School Library Journal wrote: "Kata's clear, first-person voice never loses the child's point of view. Even as her older neighbor changes enough to rebel against her parents' demands that she become a Young Pioneer leader, Kata only sees that Eva has again become her friend. Thoughtful readers, however, will see between the lines and find enough detail to understand something of the political background and the family's precarious situation."

BATH MASSACRE: AMERICA'S
FIRST SCHOOL BOMBING

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS
APRIL 15, 2009

Arnie Bernstein's new book is the definitive tale of a forgotten story, the deadliest act of school violence in American history. On May 18, 1927, a consolidated school in the farming town of Bath, Mich., exploded.

Simultaneously a fire broke out at the farm of Andrew Kehoe, a local farmer and member of the school board. He drove his truck to the school site, motioned to the superintendent, then set off a case of explosives in the truck cab, blowing the two men apart and killing several others. At the end of the day, 38 children and six adults, including Kehoe and his wife, were dead. The book includes interviews with survivors (people in their 90s) and previously unpublished



Arnie Bernstein

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photos of the killing field. New York Times best-selling writer Gregg Olsen says of the book: "With the meticulous attention to detail of a historian and a storyteller's eye for human drama, Bernstein shines a beam of truth on a forgotten American tragedy. Heartbreaking and riveting."

CANONICALS: LOVE'S HOURS

FINISHING LINE PRESS
2009

David Radavich's new poetry collection features love poems based on the standard liturgical hours, evoking time from dawn to dusk, the turning of seasons, the coming of night. Moods shift from anticipation and discovery to absence and loss and finally to redemption and healing. Radavich, a professor of English at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, says the publisher, Finishing Line Press, has created a beautiful volume suitable for gifts to friends and loved ones.



David Radavich

THE ADVENTURES
OF CANCER BITCH

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA PRESS
FEBRUARY 16, 2009

Cancer is **S.L. Wisenberg's** muse, and Cancer Bitch is her blog. Drawing on a wealth of personal, literary and historical sources, from Jewish liturgy to the first crude mastectomies, from Anne Frank to Emma Goldman, *The Adventures of Cancer Bitch* creates an image of a politically engaged, self-aware woman facing a daunting disease with humor, well-founded fear and keen intelligence.

Wisenberg's writing has been compared to a mix of Leon Wieseltier and Fran Lebowitz.

REMARKABLE CREATURES:
EPIC ADVENTURES
IN THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGIN
OF SPECIES

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT,
FEBRUARY 1, 2009

Sean B. Carroll, 2006 Adult Nonfiction Winner, has written what Publishers Weekly calls "a thoroughly enjoyable book" about the people who have made the most significant discoveries about evolution.

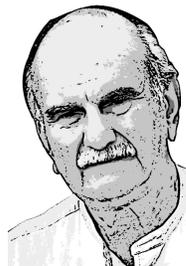
THE SHEPHERDS OF SHADOWS

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIV. PRESS
NOVEMBER 24, 2008

Thirty-one years after **Harry Mark Petrakis** wrote his historical novel *The Hour of the Bell*, which was set in the first year of Greece's war of independence from the Ottoman Empire, he carries the narrative forward with his new book, *The Shepherds of Shadows*.

Woven through the novel are stories of the love of a young guerrilla fighter for a Greek girl and her child, born of a brutal rape, as well as the love of the scribe, Xanthos, for a village woman widowed by the war.

Patrakis, author of 21 books, has created a modern epic based on one of the most savage conflicts in European history.



Harry Mark
Petrakis

Correction

The Writers on Writing column in the November-December issue of *Literary License* cited an incorrect occasion at which **Joseph Epstein** addressed the Society of Midland Authors' annual dinner. Mr. Epstein spoke after his book *Snobbery: The American Version* won the 2003 Nonfiction Award.

SMA History

A 1925 edition of *The Century Magazine* includes an article by Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor, first president of the Society of Midland Authors.

In the article, Hobart quotes a letter written to him in 1891 by Eugene Field, the essayist, children's author and *Chicago Daily News* columnist.

"If you intend to follow writing as a profession, you must cultivate your skin until it becomes hide - the hide of a pachyderm," Field told Chatfield-Taylor. "I believe it is better to be antagonized than to be patronized. Go right along doing the best work of which you are capable and you are bound to succeed in spite of the ill will of some people. There are in the midst of us many who, incapable of ambitious endeavor, themselves, envy and hate those who do try to do somewhat and to be somebody. Do not let these creatures worry you. After a while they will be only too glad to fawn upon you."

Letters to the Editor

Thanks for putting the blurb about my California book tour in *Literary License*.

I also wanted to tell you that I really liked the brief part about the history of the organization: People can't learn too much about the really important history of our region.

Jane Anne Morris

Literary License

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When CNN's 'happening now' means: 'Not very much happened – a while ago'

Longtime SMA member Mervin Block is a broadcast writing coach as well as an author. He has written news at three TV networks and he teaches newswriting workshops for TV and radio newsrooms around the country. Here, he analyzes CNN's coverage of a story about Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich.

BY MERVIN BLOCK

“Happening now,” the anchor Wolf Blitzer exclaimed recently, “a CNN exclusive – our own Drew Griffin – he catches up with the embattled Illinois governor, Rod Blagojevich, and asks him about the scandal that has state officials now moving to try to force him from office. Stand by. You’ll see it for the first time.”

Then Blitzer delivered several other headlines and said emphatically, “You’re in the Situation Room.” Time: 5 p.m., Dec. 12. Immediately, an announcer said, “This is CNN breaking news.”

Blitzer resumed: “But first we have some breaking news [as the announcer just said] we’re working on – exclusive, brand-new video just coming into the Situation Room right now — an exchange between the embattled [again!] Illinois governor, Rod Blagojevich, accused of trying to sell Barack Obama’s Senate seat, and our own Drew Griffin of CNN’s Special Investigations Unit. State officials are now moving to oust Blagojevich. Will he step down? I want you to listen to what he said.”

So what viewers were about to see was described not only as exclusive but also as breaking news – and happening now. It sounded as though we were about to hear something big, something important. And Blitzer told viewers to listen. But if they weren’t already listening to him, how could they hear him say they should listen? Also, listeners might wonder, How come he didn’t tell viewers to watch?

Next, videotape of the CNN reporter in Chicago intercepting Blagojevich as he left

his lawyer’s office and identifying himself: “Governor, Drew Griffin with CNN. Can you say anything to the people of the state of Illinois, sir?” No reply. State of Illinois? Most of us are already aware that Illinois is a state. Or was Griffin asking about the state of Illinois’ economy? And why did Griffin ask a yes-or-no question? Especially when we all knew that the governor could answer a question. But we didn’t know whether he would answer a question. In any case, don’t preface an interview (or would-be interview) by asking whether the subject could or would answer a question; just ask your question.

A few questions a reporter might have asked: What’s your response to the allegations? How do you plan to defend yourself?

What’s your side of the story?

How do you explain this to your family – and friends and neighbors? How does it feel to see your private phone conversations spread around the world?

A reporter might have time for only a few of those questions, but at

least he’d be steering clear of yes-or-no questions. Don’t ask a yes-or-no question unless you want a one-word answer.

Griffin: “Do you have anything to say?”

[Almost the same as his first question.]

Blagojevich: “I will, at the appropriate time, absolutely.” [Suggested response for the reporter: “I’ll give you all the time you want – right now.”]

Griffin: “Are you going to resign, sir?”

Blagojevich: “I’ll have a lot to say at the appropriate time.” [Suggested reporter’s response: “Why not right now?”]

Griffin: “Governor, are the authorities right in their petition, that criminal complaint? Did you do what they say you did?” [The governor, who’s a lawyer, was highly unlikely to answer those two questions. And indeed he didn’t.]

As the governor slid into his car, Griffin asked, “Governor? Just 30 seconds for anybody? For the state of Illinois?”

Again, no response. And that’s how it ended. Griffin had asked six questions,

more or less, all yes-or-no. The governor said next to nothing, only that he’d have something to say at the right time – but nothing now.

When the tape ended, Blitzer chatted with Griffin and told him bluntly: “At least, he answered one of your questions. At least, he stopped a little bit [on the way to the car] — not very much, though.” (CNN re-ran the Griffin-Blagojevich encounter on several newscasts that night. And the next day, CNN re-ran the tape on at least four newscasts.)

When Blitzer had introduced the story, he said it was happening now, that it was breaking news and exclusive. But Griffin’s attempted interview was played on tape, so it was definitely not happening now. Breaking news? Breaking, it was, but hardly news. After all, we assumed Blago would talk when he thought the time was right. As for exclusive, that’s true: no other reporter was present. Blitzer had promoted the encounter as an exchange, but it was small change.

One hour later, Blitzer again promoted the so-called exchange as taking place at that very moment. He said on his 6 p.m. newscast: “Happening now: the embattled Illinois governor talks exclusively to CNN. . . . Listen to what he said in this exclusive exchange.”

Two days later, on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 11 a.m., on Late Edition, Blitzer re-played the Griffin-Blago encounter. When the clip ended, Blitzer told Griffin briskly that Blago “obviously didn’t answer. . . .”

Now he tells us – after he sells us. The story Blitzer peddled as exclusive, breaking news and happening now turns out to be no grabber, just a gabber. CNN does have a huge news hole to fill, so running the Griffin-Blago exchange was justifiable. But from start to finish, CNN’s handling of the story was bad news.

Mervin Block offers more writing tips at mervinblock.com and in one of his books, Broadcast Newswriting: The RTNDA Reference Guide. To get free updates like this one, e-mail mervinblock-owner@google-groups.com

*Writers
on
Writing:
Mervin
Block*

