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NORTH ADAMS TRANSCRIPT/BERKSHIRE EAGLE ARTICLES

PUBLISHED BY

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AND DANIEL PEARL FELLOW

AT ALFRED FRIENDLY PRESS FELLOWSHIPS

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2006 Reflections on American Journalism

By Ghanashyam Ojha

Daniel Pearl Fellow

Senior Reporter, The Kathmandu Post

Kathmandu, Nepal

Hosted by The Berkshire Eagle and North Adams Transcript

I feel exhilarated to express what I learned during my brief stay in the United States as a Daniel Pearl Fellow. The fellowship program enriched my language, helped improve my perspectives to view the world and made me a more confident journalist. After six months, when I review my journalistic skills and knowledge, I feel much indebted to the Daniel Pearl Foundation and Alfred Friendly Press Fellowships for a huge transformation in me. It's something like a transcendental feeling which I received working in a newspaper here.

Having been born into, grown up and lived through problems--both political and economical in the developing country of Nepal--I had never gotten an opportunity to look out to the outer world. Journalists in developing countries find themselves confined within limited space and form a parochial view of the world. Lack of opportunities, meager payment and political and economical challenges force journalists in developing countries to downsize their potential and ambition. The fellowship taught me to deal with the problems and pursue the ambition.

As I was keenly interested to know more about the role of media to strengthen democracy in the United States, I found media here are more vibrant and corresponding to their values. The media has robustly maintained its independent position in the United States. It has remained a powerful means to sensitize people about their rights, values and democracy. Although the 9/11 incident has perceptibly affected the media and its unrestricted freedom is challenged, press freedom is still something taken for granted in the United States. The sense of being free has enriched the level of consciousness among Americans. I think it is an invaluable asset I gained in the United States.

I learned to become a successful journalist. I improved my writing skills and learned a lot about chasing story ideas. I learned about feature stories; especially investigative stories. Various conferences, which I attended during my stay here, also provided me knowledge about the situation of print journalism in the global perspective.

Besides sharing my knowledge with my colleagues and boss, I will try to apply my expertise of feature writing in my newsroom. News writing in the United States, where English is the first language, is definitely more cultured and richer in terms of language

than in my country where English happens to be perceived sometimes not only the second but the third or fourth language.

I will try to be more specific while writing news stories back in my newspaper. I will also try to help my peers and juniors to be more specific while using English words and I will help them to make their language richer.

As my newsroom doesn't have an organized bureau for investigative reporting, I think I will propose to my editor and news editor to set up a separate investigative news bureau. It will further accelerate our search for investigative stories. Similarly, workshops from experienced journalists, is a necessary part of a newsroom. I will talk with my boss to help organize a workshop, at least once a month, where younger journalists will get an opportunity to gain knowledge about journalism and its values. I was much impressed by the workshops at The Poynter Institute in Florida. The one-week workshop made a lot of difference in my news writing.

Another important idea I gained here is research. Although we provide background to some developing stories, we don't usually tend to do research on any story in my newsroom. I found that research is one of the most powerful means to make a story rich. I will discuss it with my boss and will encourage all the reporters to do research before heading out for any story. It will help the reporters gain a complete knowledge of the story and a reporter can develop expertise on the subject.

Deadline writing is also another essential part, which I will have to share with my boss. Writing on deadline is very challenging but it is very important for a daily newspaper. I will share my knowledge on how to write on deadline. Prior knowledge of the story and ruminating over the story angle on the way to office makes it much easier to write a deadline story.

Being a Daniel Pearl fellow, I feel I have a responsibility to disseminate Pearl's message for humanity and love. My visit to Los Angeles with the Pearl family and Daniel Pearl Foundation representatives, further strengthened my commitment towards Pearl. It also provided me an opportunity to understand Pearl and his message. Besides sharing my journalistic knowledge in the newsroom, I will introduce Pearl and his message to my boss and peers.

As the workshop with Dr. Gary Weaver has been instrumental in this regard, I think I should first let my boss know about my knowledge through my work.

It's a challenging job to let your peers feel that you have learned something very valuable in the United States. It's a gradual process and frequent sharing of knowledge that makes the peers realize the difference you have made in your perception. Once my peers feel I have learned something valuable, it will create an environment for me to pass my knowledge onto them. And I won't let the opportunity go by and it will make them feel that my stay in the United States was valuable.

I think it will take some two months for me to celebrate my success. Once my bosses and colleagues realize that I learned something invaluable in the United States, I am sure it will draw their attention. And it will be the happiest moment for me when they will rejoice with my much cultured, much refined and well-armed stories.

U.S. brings surprises in first weeks

By Ghanashyam Ojha, Advocate

April 7, 2006

This is the first of an ongoing series of columns that Ghanashyam Ojha, visiting Daniel Pearl Fellow from Nepal, will write for The Berkshire Eagle, North Adams Transcript and The Advocate during his five-month fellowship. It is his first visit to the United States.

Being a journalist from a developing country, I was keenly interested to know about U.S. media's response to the White House and Pentagon - especially after the Iraq War. It's intriguing to find that American media, leaving few, are dismayed to find that it was their mistake to support President Bush in his mission to attack Iraq.

I sensed this dismay in many Americans, also. They are, in fact, not warmongers, as against how they are viewed widely in many countries.

I started observing the United States immediately after I landed in Washington Dulles Airport on March 19. I had already been through 30 hours of travel. Incredibly, wide multiple-lane roads drew my attention on my way to my hotel in Washington. Eight-lane highways and four lanes in the city was a huge thing for me, as there are only two-lane roads in my country. I found the traffic a very crazy thing, as I had never seen such traffic movement in my country. Sights of car accidents, some terrible, on roadsides, hinted to me of some instances of reckless driving in the United States. However, police presence at every corner reminded me of the strict implementation of traffic rules.

"Don't try to bribe these traffic police. Otherwise, you will be in trouble." This remark from a journalist friend in North Adams surprised me because most of the traffic police in my country take bribes while regulating traffic.

In fact, it's a common thing. The officers don't make much money and are glad to take a few rupees, while the offenders are happy to get off without paying a higher fine.

Most interestingly, I found the air in Washington, D.C., much cleaner than in Katmandu, where I live, despite such huge traffic. It's the gas, which I came to know later that cars and buses in the United States use, so that there is lesser pollution. I just can imagine how polluted is my city due to petrol and diesel. Sometimes we have to cover our mouths and noses with cloth to block out the fumes.

It was really strange for me not to notice any army personnel in the streets of the United

States. People here want army men in barracks and only police in the streets. They view the police as a civilian force and want them to safeguard citizens' rights. But army men in my country are found in the streets, whereas police are confined to guarding their stations. It's the army personnel that have been exercising civilian authority in the name of terrorism in Nepal.

American people's craze for the spring season really impressed me. They get overwhelmed with glee, not only for spring but also for blooming flowers - they were very excited to see cherries blossoming everywhere in Washington, beginning from late March through the second week of April.

During my two-week stay in Washington, I met bunches of exhilarating Americans swarming to the Tidal Basin, the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial and any number of places to take a view of the blossoming cherries. Old couples walking hand in hand, women pushing babies in carts and squirrels frolicking in parks made me forget my home at least for an hour.

A gathering organized by Free Spirit, an association of journalists in Washington in late March, was another remarkable impression for me. Freedom Spirit had organized the huge gathering to honor 101 excellent journalism students across the country. It was really a great way to encourage journalists from the upcoming, vibrant generation to pursue their careers. Many youths in my country are reluctant to become journalists due to growing political instability. And there is not sufficient effort from senior journalists to encourage youths in pursuing journalism.

Interestingly, it was also an opportunity for me to see the way Americans celebrate gatherings. They begin their celebration by tossing down drinks, followed by a meal. Varieties of American foods are another part of great fun for me. I haven't yet been able to figure out American food items - sandwiches, seafoods... Oh, I thought, I would go crazy without rice. But after three weeks, I have begun to enjoy many American foods.

Dr. Gary Weaver, a professor at The American University, who taught us about U.S. culture, really impressed me. At first, I felt it uncomfortable to call Dr. Weaver by his first name. People in my country use titles like sir, Mr., Madame., Dr., etc., when speaking to someone senior to them. But it's interesting to find that Americans don't like titles because everybody for an American is equal - without titles. It is, in fact, the American value to regard everybody as equal, irrespective of class, caste and positions. I found it an impressive idea to promote equality in society.

It was also a great surprise for me to see underground Metro trains in Washington. It was equally strange for me to see people getting into trains by just inserting their tickets. I can imagine how tough the conductors would find it to collect fares if automatic ticket machines were not set at Metro trains. For me, Metro trains were simply great because over 30 percent of the area in my country is not linked by transportation - let alone underground trains!

I also got the impression that the 9/11 incident has had a deep impact in the lives of Americans. The tragedy has seriously challenged the Americans' age-old belief that they are safe. It has widely escalated the sense of fear in the mind of Americans. Although the setting up of a Department of Homeland Security is a positive development to protect Americans from any impending terrorist attacks, I believe many Americans have not yet been able to free themselves from the sense of fear in their minds. I found that Americans feel much more insecure after 9/11.

I think it's worth mentioning my conversation with a journalist from Kansas City Star newspaper, one of several "mentors" who are working with visiting journalists. He was worried that most American youths don't read newspapers. He said it is a challenge for the American government to make youths aware about both national and international issues. It made sense to me. I was happy to learn that many publications are free, so as to encourage youths to read newspapers.

Hard lessons in American bureaucracy
By Ghanashyam Ojha
North Adams Transcript
Thursday, June 29

Editor's note: Since reporter Ghanashyam Ojha of Nepal is working at the Transcript and The Berkshire Eagle through a Daniel Pearl Fellowship, it was perhaps fitting that he had frustrating dealings with the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, similar to those Danny Pearl had while working on his first newspaper job in North Adams in 1986.

I finally got a Massachusetts motor driving license on June 22. At a time when the United States has been plunged into the war against terrorism, when Democrats and Republicans are at loggerheads in a race to display a hold over Congress and when Americans are being ripped off by exorbitant gasoline prices, my obtaining a driver's license may sound inconsequential. Americans seem thirsty to hear more about what Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran says, what the terrorists' next move will be and why gasoline price soar at a threat from a crazy guy.

But I underwent such a nightmarish experience while trying to get a driver's license from Massachusetts that I think I could have stopped the wacky guy of Iran from blubbering if I had just used all the energy and time I wasted over the past three months against the war on terrorism.

Growing up in my country of Nepal, where bureaucracy often pains the people, I had a feeling that bureaucracy in the United States was going to be superb by contrast. I was wrong. I got a very bad impression of this country's so-called bureaucratic supremacy, and the experience provided me an opportunity to observe with what incongruity the federal and state governments function.

The Social Security office and Registry of Motor Vehicles are closely situated in North Adams, less than a mile apart, but they are at opposite ends of the Atlantic when anyone has to deal with both of them together.

Unaware of my long journey ahead, I went to the Registry office in March and filled out a form for a learner's permit. I found that the Registry required a Social Security number to initiate the entire process, so I knocked on the door of the Social Security office on Main Street. Here I found that because I was working as a Daniel Pearl Fellow and not drawing any salary, I wasn't entitled to a Social Security number. But the lady at the

office was a great help. She provided me a denial letter, which the Registry would accept in lieu of a Social Security number, so I could get my permit.

Back at the Registry, however, the lady refused to accept the letter. She said it was different from previous letters she had received from the Social Security office. I went back to the Social Security Office and got a new letter. But the lady at the Registry said it should be written in bullet form — not in paragraphs.

Being a complete novice to the bureaucratic systems of the United States, I had no choice but to go back and knock on the door of the Social Security office.

The nice lady there was again very helpful. She even said she admired my column published in *The Advocate* and *Transcript* and welcomed me to North Adams. I thanked her, and she typed another denial letter, using a copy of the old form to satisfy the Registry's requirement and noting the agency's updated changes to the form in ink.

But the next day, back at the Registry, the lady refused to even initiate my learner's permit process. She said I didn't have an electricity or water bill or other necessary evidence to prove I was a resident of North Adams. I had letters from the editors of *The Advocate* and the *North Adams Transcript*, as well as from my fellowship program, but that was not sufficient proof of residency, the lady said.

The Social Security office officially believed I lived here, but not the Registry.

Thank God I had a letter from the Bank of America in my room. The bank had sent me an account statement. I tried this form and it worked. The Registry believed I lived in North Adams!

But the lady then read the new letter from the Social Security office and said it was unsuitable — she said the Registry couldn't accept a letter in which anything had been crossed out in ink. Seeing my frustration, a colleague at the *Transcript*, Maggie, shared a bitter experience she had with the Registry office. On her visit, there had been no customers in line, and the two clerks on duty were chatting at the desk. Maggie said she approached one of the ladies and was perplexed when the lady told her she couldn't help her because she hadn't pressed a button to take a ticket. The lady insisted Maggie had to take a ticket with a number even though there were no other customers!

This helped me to have a broader view of motor registry offices in the United States.

Finally, I got a finely typed letter, with no cross-outs, no ink spots and no offending paragraphs. I didn't even fold the letter, and I went back to the Registry office, sat for a test and got my learner's permit.

Having had a bitter taste at the North Adams Registry office, I decided to take my road test in Pittsfield. Because I was used to driving on the left side of the road in my country, I first decided to join a driving school and take some lessons. I joined a school in

Pittsfield, paid \$140, took a six-day intensive driving course and made an appointment for a road test.

Three days before the test, I got a very bad impression of a state police officer. I was riding to work at The Berkshire Eagle with a fellow reporter, and the trooper pulled him over, saying he had not yielded to a car. The trooper agreed to let him off with a warning but then said, "I have to give you a ticket, though, because you were not wearing a seat belt." This was not true. My colleague had been wearing his seat belt but had taken it off so he could get out his registration and driver's license. We both tried to tell the trooper that, but the smart guy was intransigent. He issued the ticket (which my colleague plans to appeal).

The same colleague came with me to my road test in Pittsfield, and who was the person administering the test but the same state trooper! I managed to drive perfectly. I made my three-point turn and stopped in all the right places. But in the end, the trooper failed me because the rear wheel of my car touched the curb when I was parallel parking. Many people have since told me that should have made no difference, but I vowed never again to allow my rear wheels to touch the curb.

I rescheduled the test and practiced my parallel parking. When the test date arrived, I was happy to see a different inspector this time around. I ended up driving for only about 3 minutes and never did have to parallel park. Moments later, I was a happy man, with my Massachusetts driver's license in hand!

I had read Daniel Pearl's humorous account of his similar bureaucratic hassles with the Registry back in 1986, when he was trying to change the license plates of his California car and register in Massachusetts. Somehow my experience, frustrating as it was, furthered the kinship I have felt with him because of my fellowship in his name. It is another shared experience, and I know that somewhere up there he is laughing about it, and this makes me laugh as well.

But your Registry's rigid bureaucracy and overly stringent adherence to sometimes ridiculous rules are no laughing matters. Nepal bureaucracy can be a pain, yes, but it's nothing like this!

Ghanashyam Ojha, senior reporter for the Kathmandu Post, has an international driver's license but Massachusetts does not recognize such licenses from Nepal and a handful of other countries. He worked at the Transcript this spring and now is working at The Berkshire Eagle as a Daniel Pearl Fellow through the end of August.

Daniel Pearl's Registry saga, "Going to the top won't get you to the bottom of bureaucracy," was published Aug. 28, 1986, by the North Adams Transcript. It can be found in "At Home in the World," his collected writings, with a foreword by his widow, Mariane Pearl, edited by Helene Cooper, (Dow Jones & Co. Inc. 1997).

Peace talks culminate in historic agreement
by Ghanashyam Ojha
North Adams Transcript
November 9, 2006

KATHMANDU, Nov. 7 - Putting an end to the 11-year armed insurgency, the seven political parties and Maoists on Tuesday reached an agreement on both political and arms issues.

Following a series of meetings since May, with the restoration of democracy, the political parties and Maoists today reached consensus over the issues of arms management, monarchy, interim parliament and interim government and constituent assembly elections.

The leaders of seven political parties and Maoists signed a final document comprising six major points, prepared today, late night, after a meeting held at Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's residence at Baluwatar. Monarchy. The parties and Maoists agreed to decide the fate of monarchy through the first meeting of the constituent assembly. The CPN-UML, an ally in the Seven Party Alliance (SPA), which had been pressing for referendum to decide the fate of monarchy, however, tabled its note of dissent over the issue.

Interim government/peace accord

The meeting decided to form the interim government by Dec. 1. And both the government and Maoist rebels will sign a comprehensive Peace Accord by Nov. 16.

Interim parliament

The total number of lawmakers in the interim parliament will be 330. Of the total 330 seats, NC, UML, NC (Democratic), Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Peoples' Front Nepal (PFN), Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP) and Nepal Sadbhawana Party (NSP-both), will have their respective berths in the existing parliament.

NC has 75 (including Upper House), UML 73, RPP eight, PFN five, NWPP one and NSP (both) five seats in the current parliament. Maoists will get 73 seats in the interim parliament. Similarly, the remaining 48 extra seats will be divided among eight parties, including Maoists, civil society and other smaller parties. However, the distribution of extra seats will be decided later.

Earlier, the UML had insisted on getting at least one berth more than the Maoists in the parliament. They also decided to form the interim parliament by Nov. 26.

Constituent assembly elections

The meeting decided to take up the mixed system (proportional and geographical) for the constituent assembly elections. The UML also tabled its note of dissent over this issue, as it had been pressing for proportional system in the elections. There will be separate ballots for two different elections. They also agreed to set the eligible age for casting vote at 18. Earlier, the Maoists had demanded that it should be 16. And the Constituent Assembly elections will be held by mid June.

Arms management

The Maoists will separate their arms from their combatants and lock them in storages by Nov. 24. The key of the lock will be with the Maoists, but the storage will have an electronic device in which the siren will go on if there is movement in the storage, and it will be supervised by the U.N.

They will also set up seven major divisions, besides 21 smaller subdivisions, to put their combatants. The Maoists will discuss it with the U.N. and the government regarding the area and number of arms and combatants to be put in different cantonments. So far, the Maoists had demanded that they would use their Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) with weapons for the security of their leaders, the meeting finally agreed that the Maoists will discuss the issue with the U.N. and the government, once the Maoists join the interim government by Dec. 1

The Berkshire Eagle

Pearls Friends Hope for Accurate Movie
by Ghanashyam Ojha
Berkshire Eagle
July 30, 2006

PITTSFIELD -- Sixteen years ago, he left Berkshire County and later started at The Wall Street Journal. Four years ago, he was killed.

But people here still cherish their memories and friendships with Daniel Pearl, especially when they hear something new about him.

Pearl, who started his journalism career from the North Adams Transcript and The Eagle, made his comeback into those old memories of Berkshire County residents when they heard that Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie would play the role of Pearl's wife, Mariane, in an upcoming Hollywood movie. Jolie's husband, actor Brad Pitt, is a producer of the film.

The movie, based on the book "The Mighty Heart," written by Mariane soon after her husband was killed by terrorists in Pakistan in 2002, is supposed to reflect Pearl's life, his love for Mariane and his life as a journalist.

Glenn Drohan, editor of The Advocate in North Adams and someone who remained a lifelong friend after working with Pearl in his early days at the Transcript and The Eagle, said he is skeptical but hopeful about the upcoming film.

"Hollywood has a way of trivializing truth and glorifying spectacle, and I doubt that Angelina Jolie, however glamorous, can match Mariane Pearl's natural beauty and intelligence," he said. "Still, if this movie brings some recognition of Danny's integrity, humor, zest for life and compassion for all humanity -- and with luck, much-needed money to the Daniel Pearl Foundation -- it will be worthwhile."

Drohan said he is still coping with his grief over Pearl's brutal death, which was reported by his captors on Feb. 21, 2002.

"Danny brought joy wherever he went and taught me a lot, not only about good journalism, but also about appreciating life on so many levels," he said. "I've always said Danny collected friends like cooks collect recipes -- and kept all of them. That is evidenced in part by the music festivals throughout the country on or near his birthday.

His memory lives and is cherished in the Berkshires, Atlanta, Washington, California -- wherever he lived or worked."

John Barrett III, the mayor of North Adams, who calls Pearl the brightest journalist he has ever met, said he hopes the movie will tell the complete story of Pearl.

"It should reflect Danny's life, beginning from graduation to the tragedy he met in Pakistan," Barrett said.

Barrett fondly remembers Pearl's "mischievous" side. The mayor recalled one humorous event in which Pearl disguised himself as a woman so as to report on a male dance revue and then broke the story in the Transcript.

"I just loved his sense of humor," Barrett said. "Therefore, I find 'mischievous' as an appropriate word to describe him."

Barrett, who has served as mayor for more than 20 years, said, "Lots of journalists came and went in my 23-year career, but Danny didn't go. He is still in North Adams."

Daniel Bellow of Great Barrington, another of Pearl's friends who worked with him at The Eagle, is pleased to hear about the movie but concerned how the film might define Pearl and how it will negotiate his death.

"I am interested to see how they will handle it," Bellow said.

Although Bellow began his journalism career with a dream to become a foreign correspondent, he changed his mind after Pearl's death.

"Danny's death changed my life. It changed my perspectives [in how I] look at the world," said Bellow, who worked at The Eagle and is now a real-estate agent and potter. He is also a freelance writer.

Lewis C. Cuyler, who was the business editor at The Eagle when Pearl joined as a reporter, said Pearl's story should be told to the world.

"I am so glad he is being celebrated, and the world should know about Danny as a journalist," he said.

Unfolding those past memories, Cuyler said, "You know, I was in my late 50s and he was in his early 20s. ... To my surprise, he got it. He was very respectful."

Nick Noyes, who became Pearl's friend when they worked at the Transcript, has been organizing an annual musical program coinciding with Pearl's birthday in October ever since he was killed.

Noyes invites Pearl's friends, some people who know Pearl and some who want to know about him.

"It's a kind of informal gathering," said Noyes, who works as the public relations director at the Berkshire Visitors Bureau in Adams.

"I just want to keep the memory of Danny and hold this kind of musical program because the entire world celebrates it as the World Music Festival in Danny's memory," Noyes said.