# The consequences of deception

Deception is a red flag word among jour-nalists these days. Some editors avoid discussions about deception by saying that their staffs are clean — they have company policies never to deceive. Other editors, perhaps more honest, admit that their reporters use deception occasionally to get a story and hold up dramatic, often self-serving stories, to illustrate how the technique is sometimes worth it.

The editors are correct in agreeing that deceptive techniques are troublesome and in need of justification when they are used. But, without a clear understanding of just what is wrong with deception and without an understanding that journalistic deception means more than masquarading, many deceptive practices will continue without ustification for their use.

Deception, for purposes of this discussion, is any action or inaction which is intended to mislead the receiver of the communication. This definition is purposefully broad to cut hrough the rationalizations of "I didn't say I was a doctor; I just didn't say I wasn't." Deception by omission is as dangerous a praclice as deception by commission.

Deceptive practices cannot be justified by

pointing to the good story that resulted from he undercover work any more than lying can pe justified simply by showing that you liked the results of your lie. There are other long erm consequences to be considered along with the short term success.

As a general rule, deceptive practices are wrong because they are "parasitic." Decep-tion, like lying, only works because people exsect other people to be truthful with them. We expect that the new student is, indeed, a student and not a law enforcement officer or an undercover reporter from the local daily. We expect the instructor to be a teacher and not a Soviet spy. We expect that people who act as hough they sympathize with us in a time of risis to be people who are genuinely sup-portive and interested in our welfare. When deception works, it works only because we generally take people at face value.

This sort of trust is necessary for in-

lividuals to relate to one another in society. It akes too much time and psychic energy to always be on guard. We operate on trust, levelop judgments based on a person's role or actions and are taken in, shocked, angry and thereafter suspicious when we find we have een deceived.

Perhaps the shock and anger is greater when we discover that the deceptive party is a journalist. An undercover law enforcement officer may be a threat to a criminal, but a epresentative from the powerful press is a hreat to all. Journalists have the power to ake an unguarded statement or action and ell the whole community.

#### Unwarranted use can damage public trust in journalists

There is also something strangely inconsistent about the notion of journalists deceiving people. Story subjects, sources and readers alike trust journalists. They trust that journal nalists will listen carefully, interpret fairly and print accurately. If it were not for this public trust in the practice of journalism, the journalistic product would not sell. There would be no audience. If not for public trust, story subjects and sources would not give needed interviews. When they deceive, journalists play havoc with the very trust they need to maintain their business.

Yet, journalists do deceive and probably deceive on an almost daily basis. Within the broad definition offered above, deception occurs every time that a reporter feigns ignorance to encourage a source to open up. The reporter pretends that she/he doesn't know information which may influence what the source savs.

Now, this sort of deception is obviously different from a reporter who works as an aide in a nursing home for the purpose of getting a story, but these deceptive practices differ in degree, not kind. These examples mark points at eigher end of a deception continuum. The lack of full disclosure on the part of the interviewing reporter is the least serious; the masquarading in the nursing home is the

Here, I will discuss four different degrees of deception: primary lack of identification, passive misrepresentation, active misrepresentation, and masquarading. They are not equally wrong. They require different justifications for avoidance and for use. An analysis of different degrees of deception may help journalists become more careful in using the difficult-to-avoid lower level deceptechniques and more judicious in avoiding the higher levels.

A low level of deception, and one common in many student and professional news organizations, is what I'll call primary lack of identification. Here, the journalist declines to identify him/herself at the very start of checking out a potential story.

The journalist may be following up a tip in going out to a store to ask to see an appliance advertised at an unbelievably low price. The reporter may call a firm and ask if the owner will be in and then go out for an interview which might be impossible to get otherwise. The reporter might go to a rental office and ask if there are apartments available, ap-proaching the rental agent in his/her honest identity of being a student, a Black, Hispanic,

but without the adjunct identification of a iournalist.

No active lie is at work in any of these situations. But, simply presenting oneself without disclosure of the journalistic role is a form of deception. The journalist is concealing that identity becase she/he understands that the journalistic role might get in the way.

I he primary level of investigation sets this misrepresentation as a low level type of deception. Supposedly, the journalist might have happened upon the same information when truly being 'off the job.' She/he is not acting in any way that is different from a normal consumer. This form of deception is acceptable if the reporter is doing no more than checking out the possibility of a story. If there is no story, the investigation is dropped. It is morally permissable, but not obligatory, for the journalist to tell the merchant that she/he was checking out a lead. No information was used in print. No privacy was violated in the process. No relationship is fostered by the journalist. The potential story subject is not acting in any way different from the public actions expected. No story is printed.

It is obligatory for the journalist to provide proper identification before the investigation proceeds past this point and certainly before any information is recorded for publication. When a source of story subject is talking for publication, she/he has a right to know that this is the case. People may react differently for publication from their general actions, even from their general public actions

This freedom to act in a relaxed manner is something I consider a privacy need. One's public self may naturally be a little more circurnspect and controlled than the self shown at home, but even that public self is less protected and less protective than the self presented for on the record interviews. It is the fear of losing control over the use of self that makes "big brother is watching" threats

I can imagine a situation where I am at the local airport, pursuing my hobby of learning to fly a small plane and being approached by a friendly stranger. After some discussion the stranger announces that he is a reporter and wants to interview me for a story. Now, he may have suddenly thought of that idea, or he may have spent the last two days hanging around the airport looking for the right subect for his feature on student pilots. That fact is irrelevant and I won't feel deceived as long as he makes his intentions known before an

on-the-record interview begins.

A mark further up the deception scale, assive misrepresentation, differs in intent from the point of primary lack of identifica-tion. Passive misrepresentation occurs when the reporter is collecting facts for publication, often when the reporter attends an open meeting or lecture, when the participants don't realize that there is media coverage. Again, the notion that a person's public self may be different from the self presented for publication is essential here. Passive misrepresentation becomes an ethical issue when it's clear to the reporter that the story subject does not know that a reporter is present. The reporter is misrepresenting him/herself in not making the fact known. Imagine a meeting of students discussing

gay rights, or a meeting where women are discussing the horrors of being victims of sexual assault. Persons who speak at these gatherings may assume that they are discuss-

ing topics which will be understood and appreciated by those attending the meeting. The speakers might be more protective of what they say if they know it is "on the record." They may prefer that their names not be us-They may well feel damaged and betrayed when they unexpectedly read their statements in the paper.

Ethically, the reporter is obliged to provide:

journalistic identification as quickly as possible. Even if the reporter did not start out intending to deceive, it is unfair to wield the power of the press with no sensitivity to the expectations of persons attending the meeting. The press has a responsibility toprotect those they encounter just as the most powerful party in any power relationship incurs special obligations.

Passive misrepresentation should be stopped as quickly as possible. The reporter should identify him/herself after the meeting, if not before, and should work at that point to develop as much usable material as possible through working openly as a journalist. The argument against the need for the reporter to identify him/herself — "The reporter is representing the public and only writing what any person would see or hear at this meeting" is well countered even by the pragmatic argument that learning something so that one can share it with other people requires greater than average knowledge or understanding of the topic.

If nothing else, the reporter's possible misinterpretations need to be checked out. If a person misinterprets something said at a meeting, the effect is not nearly as devastating as when a reporter misunderstands something and passes that misunderstanding on to the rest of the community through the publication.

Active misinterpretation, the next mark up the deception scale, is an even more serious form of deception because now the reporter is doing more than collecting information with the intention of publication. Now, the reporter is actively making the story subjects or sources think that she/he is a supporter or sympathizer to gain information. Active misrepresentation can exist even if the reporter identifies him/berself as a journalist. Insincere empathy creates a serious deception. The reporter is going out of his/her way to elicit trust that goes beyond the normal social interchange.

A particularly insidious story comes to mind. In one case, a reporter was planning to show how lack of parental support results in teenage suicides and suicide attempts. The parents she interviewed know only that the reporter was researching a story on the tragedy of teenaged suicide. The reporter empathized with the parents about the personal loss and guilt. She elicited enough trust so that parents told her details about the suicide victims' troubled lives. The reporter then wrote an article using the information provided to illustrate how the parents' actions or inactions had lead to the children's deaths. The parents, of course, had not been given the chance to respond to this hypothesis since they were not told the true purpose of the interviews.

The article, which fortunately was not published in this form, would have caused the parents tremendous grief and would have betrayed the trust that the reporter purposefully cultivated.

Active misrepresentation occurs by omission as well as commission. A not uncommon example on the student publication level occurs when a student journalist, legally registered for a class, uses material greaned

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# End vs. means

### Comparing two cases of deceptive practices

By Deni Elliott

William Coughlin, managing editor for the Wilmington (North Carolina) Morning Star thought it was important to justify his staff's unusual action in "creating the news" when a team of reporters and editors showed that people looking and acting like terrorists could infiltrate security at the Camp Lejeune Marine base.

Coughlin justified the mock terrorist raid in the June, 1984 issue of Washington Journalism Review, by stating that ducting the operation was the only way to show the precise state of security, or lack of security, at the base." He believed that the situation was extreme enough to create the news. I believe that it was extreme enough tojustify the deceptive journalistic techniques that were necessarily part of "Operation Heyjoe."

Charles Anderson, executive editor of the Wilmington Morning Star, said recently in a telephone interview that "no deceptive practices were involved — we didn't misrepresent ourselves." While technically true in that the journalists did not say they were something they were not, the reporting team did masquerade as mock terrorists. They set aside their usual role of reporting by observation and interview to see what would happen to people who acted as the reporters thought terrorists infiltrating the base might act.

The operation was planned to show that security was lax at an important Marine base nine months after 241 Marines died in a terroristic attack in Beirut and at the same time

that 300 miles north, extra precautions were being taken in Washington D.C. based on "intelligence reports that terrorists were preparing to strike next in the United States."

The journalist-terrorists attacked the base by land and by water, with one reporter disembarking from a boat and walking unquestioned to a general's house. The reporter was given permission by the general's wife to use the bathroom. At the same time, two bearded reporters each drove trucks "filled with empty boxes that looked as though they might contain explosives" through separate gates at the base. The trucks met as planned and "pulled up in front of 2nd Division headquarters, in position to drive through the glass doors had this been, as in the Beirut bombing, a suicide mission.

The Marines did not detect the reporters as the team planted notes that read "Operation Heyjoe was here" instead of bombs and as took photographs of one another completing their mock terrorist mission. Before the operation, the journalists knew that their analysis of lax security might have been wrong; they knew that it was possible that they would be caught.

Coughlin says, "We instructed team members to carry their Morning Star ID cards and to acknowledge their identity as soon as they were challenged. If we were stopped, we would then write a story on the effectiveness of security at the base."

The journalist-terrorists were not stopped. Operation Heyjoe was a success, an alarming success. And the operation illustrates one of the few situations in which journalistic masquerading is justifiable.

In my accompanying article on deception, I argue that deceptive journalistic practice must be acknowledged and justified and I presented a series of questions to help determine when the more serious forms of deception are justifiable. The questions help clarify why the Morning Star's team should be praised for their actions

Why do the readers need this Information?

They need the information primarily to further public discussion on terrorism. Dealing with terrorists' tactics is a new phenomenon for the U.S. government and its citizens. Each terrorist bombing or kidnapping is met with shock and general helplessness. Yet, terrorism is an international problem from which the U.S. clearly cannot escape. Informed public knowledge and discussion, the basis for the democratic way of life, is necessary in trying to better deal with terrorism in the future and in circumventing terrorist action when possible. Proof that a major military base could be infiltrated by terrorists is an important piece of information to be added to the public and governmental discussion. However, bringing the problem to public awareness in a dramatic way is a necessary, but not sufficient condition, for judging the action appropriate.

2. Would your readers support your in-formation gathering techniques even if the story you hope to find isn't there?

On the basis that much more discussion on

terrorism is needed and that the story was not obtainable any other way, readers should support such a story. In fact, according to Anderson, reader response was neutral or positive aside from reactions from retired or active military personnel. Most importantly, the Morning Star staff had already decided how to handle the story if the terrorist raid didn't work. The journalists recognized that a story on security against terrorist attacks is important whether that security is adequate or

3. Have you exhausted all other means for obtaining the information?

It's clear that a mock raid was the only way to check out the speculation. Coughlin seems right in saying that if they just published their belief, "the Marine Corps would deny it and our readers would not believe it."

4. What are your arguments against law enforcement officers doing this uno reover work rather than reporters?

A security risk of this magnitude ought to be of interest to the government, but officials were no more likely than the public to believe that the base was so vulnerable. Military personnel certainly could not be approached for assistance in the raid. It doesn't take too much imagination to guess what would have been said by the local police if Coughlin had approached them, saying, "Hey, we think security is lax at the base; why don't you guys do a mock raid to check it out?"

One of the arguments in favor of law enforcement officers conducting undercover investigations instead of journalists is that it is less likely that innocent bystanders will be harmed through an undercover police investigation. The police are only interested in those who commit crimes; everyone is a target for undesired exposure in an undercover journalistic investigation.

In Operation Heyjoe, there were no "innocent bystanders" to consider. Presumably every Marine on the base should be securityconscious; all personnel should be aware of the actions of obvious civilians. The resulting story named no names aside from the base commander, and it focused on base security as a whole. This is a different sort of report from one that might damage uninvoived individuals in the publicity fallout.

5. Does the reporter understand all of the risks of the assignment?

The team's six weeks of planning and debate on the issue of creating the news makes it clear that everyone involved felt the risks at least as deeply as they felt the need for the operation.

6. If the problem is great enough for higher level deception practices, what changes are likely to occur through exposure? Is the potential change a great enough benefit to offset the certain damage created in public

trust? According to Coughlin, the likely changes did occur. "The day after publication of our article on Feb. 27," Coughlin writes, "security was tightened at Camp Lejeune. Cars were stopped at base roadblocks, vans and trucks were searched at the gates and sentries peered into pizza boxes being delivered to the base." He adds that, "as a result of the raid, the Marine Corps is negotiating with Onslow County authorities to gain control over the New River where it flows through Camp Lejeune.'

The only damage to trust that is likely to occur is to the trust of the Marines on base and, hopefully, to the trust of military personnel on other bases as well. The military may be

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### onsequences

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from that class to write a story for publication.

No matter how well the story illustrates the apathetic student body or the unacceptable practices by the instructor, the teacher and students will feel betrayed by unknowingly and unwillingly becoming grist for the journalistic mill. The feelings of betrayal and lack of trust in the publication will continue long after the facts of the story are forgotten.

Masquarading, which falls at the far end of the deception continuum, is the most serious form of deception. When a reporter mas-quarades, she/he role plays, becomes something she/he is not for the sole purpose of getting a story. The reporter pretends to be an aide in a nursing home, a pet owner approaching the humane society with a sick animal, a recently transferred high school student, a woman considering an abortion. In reality, the journalist is not at all the role being played. "Undercover Reporter at Middleton High School" and similar stories are dramatic. But, the undercover "discovery" that students are smoking dope between classes pales against the serious lack of trust that the unwilling story subjects and the readers feel for the newspaper that uses such tactics.

Deceptive practices are wrong, in general, because of the harm these practices cause, but they are theoretically justifiable in specific cases. The amount of justification needed depends on the seriousness of the intended deception. For the lower level forms of deception, primary lack of identification and passive misrepresentation, avoidance is needed rather than true justification for the act. Reporters may, on occasion, make a phone call or walk into a store without pressidentification first.

Reporters may find themselves caught in assive misrepresentation when, despite lack of intent to deceive, the story subjects do not know that a reporter is present. One should be judicious in their use, however, because these types of deception, as well as the others, help erode public trust. They are not as serious as the other types discussed here because of the innocent way that use of these techniques may develop. As long as the reporter uses open reporting techniques to pursue the story for publication, she/he will not be in danger of sliding further down the deception scale.

The deceptive activities at the higher end of the scale - active misrepresentation and masquarading — do require justification.

These activities do great damage to the trust that people need for general societal relationships and for relationships with journalists in particular.

No matter how good the resulting story, the insidious nature of the information-gathering will not be soon forgotten by readers or by those taken in. This great harm can only be balanced by equally great benefit. It won't do to call the information "important." "Importance" is vague notion and has been used too often to excuse journalistic excess. Careful consideration, as suggested by the following list of questions, can help editors and reporters decide if the information is worth pursuing through higher level deceptive means.

- 1. Why do the readers need this information?
- 2. Would your readers support your information gathering technique even if the story you hope to find isn't there? This question is important because you probably have little solid information or you wouldn't be using the deceptive technique in the first place.

If you have enough solid information, the story could be written without undercover work. Whether the reporter finds what she/he hopes or not, public response is the most important consequence to consider.

3. Have you exhausted all other means for obtaining the information?

4. What are your arguments against law enforcement officers doing this, undercover work rather than reporters? The result of a law enforcement investigation is likely to harm fewer people than a journalistic undercover investigation. Law enforcement officers are only interested in the persons performing criminal acts. Everyone is vulnerable in a journalistic investigation and anyone in the situation may be unwillingly ex-

posed in the resulting story.

5. Does the reporter understand all of the risks of the assignment (to self and to the practice of journalism in general) and has she/he been given the chance to turn the assignment down?

6. If the problem is great enough for higher

level deceptive practices, what changes are likely to occur through exposure? Is the potential change a great enough benefit to offset the certain damage created in the public

Deception is a dangerous and tempting tool Reporters and editors should realize the various types of deceptive practices used within the industry and realize that they are all problematic. In deciding to use deception, journalists should keep in mind that the point of view from which to judge the necessity of its use is not from the journalists envisioning a splashy headline. The best point of view is that of the readers and story subjects who will have their trust in the industry put on the line again through use of the technique.



## means

more suspicious of outsiders coming onto base. In a time of terrorism, this is how it

Consider, in counterpoint, the case of infiltration into a high school reported in last year's SPJ/SDX Ethics Report. Albuquerque Tribune reporter Leslie Linthicum spent two weeks in a local high school, masquerading as a transfer student. The reporter described her resulting stories by saying,

he articles explored the social divisions that (physically) split the school's campus, detailed when and where illegal drugs and alcohol were used by students and reported students' attitudes about education.

"Several stories uncovered a startling lack of teacher involvement in education. Film, filmstrips, guest speakers and in-class writing and reading assignments were pre-sented during two-thirds of the class periods I spent as a student. In one class a teacher didn't address her students once during my two-week stay."

Submitting this case to the same analysis given Operation Heyjoe shows why Operation Heyjoe is justifiable in a way that the undercover high school investigation is not.

cover nign school investigation is not.

1. Why do readers need this information?

Linthicum writes, "Education is an important story, but is one usually bathed in rhetoric. Taxpayers and parents, it seems, no longer have a clue about what goes on in the institutions they fund and trust with their children daily." That assertion is more open to question and charges of ambiguity than the claim that terrorists could infiltrate a Marine base. But education is an important issue.

Jack McElroy, now assistant managing editor for The Albuquerque Tribune, was city editor at the time of Linthicum's in-vestigation. In a recent telephone interview, McElroy explained that the purpose of the investigation was "to heighten the level of public debate, to increase attention on the school system." "It's difficult to find many issues more important than education," according to McEiroy. He pointed out that feachers hold a "public trust."

Certainly taxpayers and parents need information about problems at the school to help improve education. But that information, unlike the information uncovered at the Marine base, could have been obtained in other, less deceptive ways. McElroy stated that the information uncovered in Linthicum's investigation was "almost exactly the same" as information discovered in an earlier masquerade when another Albuquerque Tribune reporter worked for two weeks as a substitute teacher.

2. Would your readers support your information gathering techniques even if the story you hope to find isn't there?

Probably not in this case. A high school is an on-going community, and a two-week stay in that community is not likely to uncover any more about the community than the surface problems Linthicum reported. Linthicum reports, "Countless people said to me after the series ran, 'If you lied to get the story, how can I trust what you wrote.' "These readers concerns illustrate the damage to public trust brought about through undercover lournalism.

Sometimes deception is necessary and worthy of reader support, but why would readers applaud deceptive techniques that could only be expected to uncover information that is already obvious to every eacher, school administrator, student and Moot parents?

3. Have you exhausted all other means for intoining the information?

Linthicum writes that she is convinced that her story would have been different if she had spent two weeks working openly as a reporter at the school. Yet even with the reporter's conviction, there is no suggestion by Lin-thicum that she or her editors attempted to obtain the needed information in other ways.

Information concerning drug and alcohol abuse on school grounds and stories describing dreary, uninvolved teachers are attainable by other means. Literally any bona fide high school student could supply information on where different "groups" hang out on campus; many could detail when and where drugs and alcohol are sold and used. High. school newspapers around the country document these problems.

Linthicum provided no evidence to support her initial claim that information obtained in a straightforward manner would reflect "the public relations interests of school officials or the selfconsciousness of teachers and students." In fact, this reporter's seemingly "objective" perspective of a deceptively enrolled student may be the most biased view possible. More than one high school student journalist has bad a story rejected by the school publication when research was based solely on being a participant-observer as a student in a particular class.

H wever, McElroy states that obtaining information was secondary to raising the level of public debate on education. Undercover reporting was the method of choice because of the attention it created. McElroy reports that the paper was "flooded by response . . . the entire city was talking about it." He suggests that other, more open investigations do not receive the same sort of response and, thus, do not encourage public debate.

Encouraging public discussion on timely issues is an important role for the media. I based my argument for the justifiable action of the Wilmington Morning Star on the need for public discussion on terrorism. Yet when balanced against the damage done to public

trust by deception, encouraging public discussion is not enough. The proposed undercover investigation must have this important mission coupled with the inability to obtain the

story by less deceptive means.

It is also not clear that public attention to timely issues can be raised only by deceptive journalistic techniques. For example, reporter Dolly Katz at The Detroit Free Press wrote a provocative seven-part series on in-competent doctors last April, naming names and detailing the chilling effects of medical misjudgment. The investigation was based on records obtained without misrepresentation and on extensive follow-up interviews and research. The Free Press was flooded with response, and the series ignited discussion on medical competency which continued long after the articles ran

 What are your arguments against law inforcement officers doing this work rather than undercover reporters?

Since The Albuquerque Tribune was not sure "exactly what would be observed or reported," according to McElroy, it is unlikely that law enforcement officers would have been interested. However, if the purpose of the investigation had been to uncover a drug ring or other illegal activity, the police would have been a better alternative for the protection of innocent bystanders.

Unlike the Marines at Camp Lejeune, teachers, school administrators and students should not have to be on guard for infiltrators into the school community. Uncertainty as to whether people are really who they say they are may well interfere with the learning process. Classrooms are evolving, growing communitles-of-learning built, in part, on the trust established among the learners and between the teachers and learners.

By infiltrating the classroom communities publishing what was observed, the newspaper put teachers, students and administrators on notice that anything said or done may end up as grist for the journalistic mill. It's possible that the distrust fostered by The Albuquerque Tribune may worsen an

already problematic situation. Trust is least as fundamental to learning as is a we developed lesson plan.

Does the reporter understand the risks the assignment?

McElroy says that those involved discusse the risks but says that use of such technique is "not anything new" to The Albuquerq. Tribune, explaining that "while we suffe some damage to credibility, we do think w make some gains.'

make some game.

6. If the problem is great enough for highe level deceptive practices, what changes arilkely to occur through exposure? Is the potential change a great enough benefit to off set the certain damage created in public

While McEiroy reports that the three or four months after the publication were filled four months after the publication were filled with public concern about education, nationally as well as locally, he says that it's hard to tell how much impact the specific publication had. McElroy now states, Tribune has decided against any future undercover reports because of the obvious questions about their credibility and fairness "

Deceptive journalistic techniques do grab public attention, but these techniques grab attention as a slap across the face grabs an individual's attention. The shock value of the information sought should be greater than the shock value of the reporting technique. Many issúes and situations need public discussion and debate; a few of these, as that exposed by the Wilmington Morning Star, cannot be brought to the public's attention in any other

Deception should be used rarely and used judiciously when used at all. Perhaps the best and easiest test for deciding whether to use deception in a journalistic investigation is to proceed only if the deception will be aggressively defended by the readers in light of the seriousness of the information to be un-

#### Too innocuous to check

## hen a non-story made news

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By Johathan Friendly

When The Boston Herald's gossip columnist reported that a fancy Boston restaurant had refused to seat former President Carter because he was not wearing a coat and necktie, other news organizations found the story too amusing not to print and too innocuous to need verification.

The story was inaccurate. This is a case study of how it came to be published and then widely repeated around the nation.

Not only did the rebuff never happen, according to Carter aides, but neither The Herald nor any other news organization ever called to ask about it before carrying the report.

The original item was written by Norma Nathan in her column, The Eye, on May 12, It said:

'Rosalyn Carter can't complain about her Copley Plaza chums. The ex-First Lady checked into the hotel during a brief book tour for her new 'First Lady

From Plains' and checked out smiling at the service.

"Not so husband Jimmy. He was turned away from the dining room when he showed up in his cardigan for dinner. He was really rather put out,' said Someone Who Was There, so much so that Secret Service pranced into the plaza and said, 'That's the president.'

"All the more reasons he should wear a jacket,' sweetly smiled maitre d' Ursula Stadt. Jimmy ate elsewhere.

We never saw him after that, and he never came back,' said top Copley man, Alan Tremaine. No sweater girl, Ros sent a copy of her book to Tremaine. Autographed. On the jacket. Of course."

The Boston bureaus of The Associated Press and United Press International noticed the account. In rewriting it before sending it out on their teleprinters, each added that the rebuff occured recently. The AP identified the writer as the Eye columnist; UPI simply credited The Herald.

In an interview, Nathan said that the incident occurred in 1980 and that she was simply "cleaning out an old

notebook" to make more interesting a current item about Rosalyn Carter in Boston. She said Tremaine had told her about the incident and that she had not tried to verify it with Carter because it was "a minor historical note."

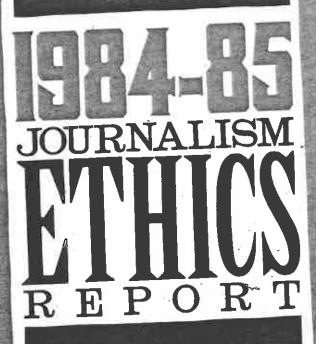
She said she had not meant to suggest that Carter was in Boston with his wife or that the incident was recent. She said readers could tell that because she had referred to "the president," and Carter left the White House three years ago.

She said the news services "got it all garbled."

Tremaine was out of the country and could not be reached. William H. Heck, general manager of the Copley Plaza, said Jimmy Carter, then a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, was turned away from the Cafe Plaza in 1976 for not wearing a jacket and a necktie, but not by Ursula Stadt and not over the protests of Secret Service agents.

Heck said, however, that Carter was then seated in another, less formal restaurant in the hotel and enjoyed a

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