

none of the “scars” of their life together. “The scars that a face-lift removes,” says Doniger, “are the body’s memory, in a form visible to others, of what the mind may have forgotten.

Our scars may be the strongest signs of who we really are: Perhaps, at the final reckoning, the whole body will disappear, and only our scar tissue will be there to testify for us.”

Let Sprawl Sprawl

“How Cities Green the Planet” by Peter Huber and Mark P. Mills, in *City Journal* (Winter 2000), Manhattan Institute, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Follow Portland’s lead and ring America’s cities with “urban growth boundaries” and greenbelts? That’s what some foes of “sprawl” urge. But it’s a bad idea that would result in “less wilderness, not more,” assert Huber and Mills, senior fellows at the Manhattan Institute and the Competitive Enterprise Institute, respectively.

Yes, suburbs consume more land than cities do—but rural life eats up even more. City and suburbs should be regarded “as a single economic entity, growing organically together,” in their view. “The suburbs wouldn’t exist but for the city and its jobs and money.” And the city could not survive without its suburbs as a refuge from its “worst excesses and pathologies.” Stop the growth of suburbs, Huber and Mills argue, and you will send the refugees further out into the countryside, just as digital prophets are predicting. Cyberpundit Nicholas Negroponte, for example, foresees the digital world “redistribut[ing] jobs and wealth,” with the result being a flow of people “out of, not into, cities.”

One of the virtues of sprawl, Huber and Mills argue, is that it *saves* land. “Cities grow

not because they sprawl out from the center, but because they draw people in from the [rural] periphery . . . far beyond the suburbs.”

Over the last three decades, the authors calculate, about 95 million acres of farmland farther from the city “returned to wilderness or began . . . doing so.” Some 25 million acres, meanwhile, have been consumed by development—perhaps half of it “farmland that gave way to suburbs.”

Today, cities, suburbs, and local roads cover about 27 million acres, and highways a like expanse. The total of 54 million acres—though more than twice the area occupied in 1920—is less than three percent of the two billion acres in the lower 48 states. (Antisprawl activists often also count as “developed land” some 90 million acres of farmsteads, field windbreaks, barren land, and marshland, say Huber and Mills.)

Rural life consumes far more land than suburbia, Huber and Mills argue, and if anti-sprawl activists ultimately succeed, a wave of Information Age emigrants on new 10-acre farmettes will show us just how much more.

PRESS & MEDIA

Eyes on the Prize

“Journalism’s Prize Culture” by Alicia Shepard, in *American Journalism Review* (Apr. 2000), Univ. of Maryland, 1117 Journalism Bldg., College Park, Md. 20742-7111.

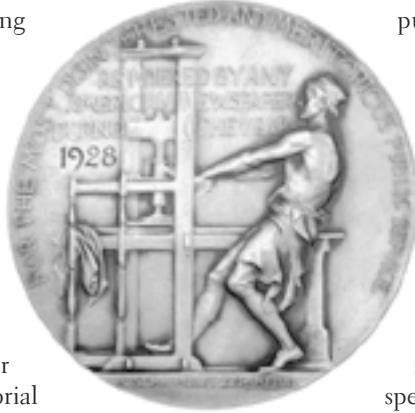
“We are the most self-congratulatory industry this side of Hollywood,” says Peter Leo, a (prize-winning) columnist for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. He’s talking about the news biz and its well-known fondness for showering itself in awards. In the frenzy for journalistic Oscars, are readers getting shortchanged? asks Shepard, a (prize-winning) senior writer for the *American Journalism Review*.

Some 230 newspapers and 14 syndicates

and chains submitted 1,516 entries (and \$75,800 in handling fees) for this year’s Pulitzer Prizes. There also were 650 entries for the TV and radio equivalent (the Alfred I. duPont awards), and 1,320 print entries and 60 online ones for the American Society of Magazine Editors’ National Magazine Awards. And those are just the most sought-after laurels. There are at least 200 national contests, and scores of state and local ones.

“Nothing illustrates the powerful passion for prizes quite so vividly,” Shepard says, “as the fact that for months on end, worrying about contests will be someone’s full-time job” at many large news organizations, such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (which won many Pulitzers during the 1970s and ’80s, under editor Gene Roberts). The payoff? Reporters who bear the “Pulitzer Prize-winning” tag usually find their services in greater demand, while winning newspapers take on new (if not necessarily permanent) allure for ambitious scribes and editorial overseers, near and far.

Defenders argue that the prizes not only reward deserving journalists but spur others to do better, including even publishers. “Newspapers get embarrassed when they don’t ever win,” says Roberts, now a journalism professor at the



The Pulitzer Prize

University of Maryland, College Park. “That’s a pretty good signal to send. The message is: They could be winning if they spent time, money and newshole [space for news] on good stories.”

Others worry that the frantic pursuit of prizes distracts news organizations from more important, less glamorous work. “Rather than devoting buckets of money to a knock-em-dead five-part series that has Pulitzer or duPont written all over it,” writes Shepard, critics “say resources might be better spent on more local gumshoe reporting or daily beat reporting.” And for those already in those essential jobs, it can be

demoralizing to see designated “stars” given oodles of time to work on megaprojects remote from “a paper or station’s core responsibilities.”

The No-News Media

“Media to Government: Drop Dead” by Stephen Hess, in *Brookings Review* (Winter 2000), 1775 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Asked to define “real news,” a veteran journalist once said it is “the news you and I need to keep our freedom”—meaning, mainly governmental and political news. By that standard, most Americans now get much less real news than they did a few decades ago, contends Hess, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and long-time observer of Washington journalism.

In 1997, according to one study, only one-fifth of all the stories on the front pages of the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, on the network TV nightly news programs, and in *Time* and *Newsweek* were about government. Twenty years earlier, the proportion had been one-third.

Washington no longer gets the lion’s share of the news media’s attention, Hess points out. Newspapers he examined in 1978 averaged 12 Washington stories a day, and 45 percent of their lead front-page stories had a Washington dateline. Twenty years later, the

newspapers averaged only six stories a day from the nation’s capital, and took only 36 percent of their lead stories from there.

“As the ’90s evolved, our papers showed less and less interest in any news from Washington,” says Robert Rankin of the Knight-Ridder chain’s Washington bureau. In response, his bureau added national “theme specialties” such as science, religion, and consumer affairs to its traditional White House and congressional beats. Other Washington bureaus did the same.

Network TV news shows also have paid less attention to Washington in recent decades. And while local TV news operations started paying *more* attention in the early 1980s, capitalizing on the new availability of commercial satellites and lightweight video cameras, the novelty eventually wore off, Hess says, and station managers concluded that Washington stories simply “didn’t excite viewers.”