

# FOREWORD

This book began as an ego trip.

Originally I was going to title it *India B.P.* (Before Pegge), because I had lived in India for seven years as a gay (what word can you substitute for *gay* now that the homosexual tribe has co-opted the word?) bachelor before we were married in October of 1952.

Another title, since discarded, was *What If?* If one of the many young women I dated had risked marrying a glamorous (ha ha), balding, underpaid newspaperman, where would I be now?

I arrived in India in February of 1945, expecting to go into China. Fate intervened. My new boss of United Press, Miles “Peg” Vaughn, asked me to delay my trip to China to help open a news bureau in the city of Bombay.

I was a very junior reporter for United Press, and I regularly sent letters home about my job and where I lived. Originally I thought that they would make good reading only for my children and grandchildren as to what Father/Grandfather did during the war.

As the years went by and I remained in India, I continued writing home, usually once a week—every Sunday or Monday. My mother saved all the letters, and I also kept copies of what I had written. They recorded my days of playing golf, baseball, swimming, etc., and of my travels within India and to the neighboring countries of Pakistan, Ceylon, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Burma—including days and weeks of partying—drinking, dancing, and eating. In re-reading them, I discovered I had created a (personal) history of the rise of the United Press news service in Southeast Asia.

During my seven years before Pegge, United Press grew from a hotel room in Bombay with an antennae on our balcony receiving news from London by Morse Code in 1945 to opening news bureaus in the Indian cities of Bombay, Delhi, and Calcutta by 1952. During those years United Press also opened a news bureau in Karachi, Pakistan, and sold news to newspapers in Colombo, Ceylon, another British Colonial country that became independent after the war. In addition to serving newspapers, United Press also numbered All India Radio, Radio Pakistan, Radio Ceylon, and Radio Afghanistan among its clients.

And for me, who began as an assistant manager in the bureau in Bombay and went on to eventually become the General Manager for United Press with responsibility for the sale of news and news coverage in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Ceylon, and Burma, it was an exhilarating experience.

My letters also reflect a portion of the history of the Indian subcontinent. I was able to witness the transformation of British colonies into the free countries of India, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma—along with the political, economic, and cultural changes brought about by the years after World War II. In my job I was able to travel extensively from Afghanistan to Ceylon and from Karachi to Rangoon. And on my “home leaves” I was able to visit Europe and the Far East after checking into the UP headquarters in New York. My father once remarked, shaking his head, “They pay you to do that!”

I was only one of a large group of hard-driving, underpaid reporters who slaved for United Press. Jim Michaels, a colleague from our time in India, and a person who has helped refresh my memory for this opus, sent me the following e-mail about the first time we met.

I recall you flew in looking for me. I was very green in those days, September of 1946. Had never worked on any newspaper except for a short stint on the *Harvard Crimson*. Peg Vaughn hired me in Bangkok in the early summer of 1945 on the recommendation of my boss in the OWI and because I was cheap labor and on the spot. My OWI boss was the late Teg Grondahl, a Swede from Red Wing, Minn. He had been a Unipresser in SF prewar and earlier a kid reporter in China in the mid-1930's. Teg told “Peg” he had a smart eager kid, Jim Michaels, “Mike” as I was then generally known. Peg hired me on the spot, in Bangkok, after the Japanese surrender. I was thrilled. I was to be a real newspaperman and a genuine foreign correspondent, glamorous—ha ha—and no more Buffalo. When I took the job, Teg told me UP would be the best training I would ever get but added if I stayed more than three years as a UP wage slave he would never speak to me again. He warned me I would generally be over my head, outnumbered two or three to one by AP, and would either learn fast or sink.

When he took me on, Peg explained UP wanted to stockpile reporters in Asia against the outbreak of the expected civil war in China. At the same time he also hired three other guys who had served during the war as AFS (American Field Service) ambulance drivers—Bob Clurman and Hugh Crumpler and Stanley Rich, all cheap, all green, three of us from Harvard and one from Princeton. \$35 a week—and watch those expenses.

To keep us busy in the meantime he sent me to Calcutta, Rich to Bangkok, Crumpler to Korea, and Clurman to India (later to Singapore). Some of us complained about getting by on that munificent stipend. Peg actually suggested we might be able to qualify for some kind of food stamps!

Now, a brief history: the United Press began (believe it or not) in 1907—almost 100 years ago. Before United Press, news sources were controlled by governments and foreign news agencies based in their respective countries. These news agencies established monopoly arrangements and divided up the news territories among the so-called Allied News Agencies. Examples: The French agency, Havas, was allotted South America and had an exclusive right among the Allied Agencies to sell news of all the world to the newspapers of that continent. Reuters, the British news agency, took the Far East and in China and Japan had the exclusive right to sell its news of the rest of the world.

In addition, these Allied Agencies, which included all the important European press associations and Rengo of Japan, exchanged news among themselves and covered their respective countries for each other. The news of France, Germany, or Italy, for example, originated with a French, German, or Italian news agency—a circumstance that did not lend itself to dispassionate, impartial news reporting.

The United Press never joined this alliance. The United Press was founded to oppose the news monopoly and immediately set out to demonstrate the worth of the contrary theory of operation—that is, that a news organization wholly independent of any other could cover the news of all the world with its own correspondents and profitably sell that news to all who wanted it, in every part of the world.

The United Press proceeded to invade the precincts of the Allied Agencies and their associates, selling a news product that was entirely its own and frankly boasted of its freedom from any taint or bias that government influence or subsidy might impose on others.

From the beginning the United Press was welcomed by the newspapers of other countries, both for its excellence and because it could guarantee freedom from any official viewpoint. In South America the United Press became the principal source of foreign news. In the Far East, until the outbreak of World War II, United Press clientele grew along with rapidly improving transmission facilities. On the continent of Europe, the United Press was serving a total of 151 newspapers when the war began in 1939.

Such was the situation in India when I arrived in 1945. Reuters had been the sole supplier of foreign news to Indian newspapers. Our United Press office—based in a hotel room—would provide Indian newspapers with their first access to an independent source of foreign news.