
Over the years, the Post has won 47 Pulitzer Prizes, and hundreds of other awards. But these days, like every other American newspaper, The Washington Post is struggling with bottom line concerns, all heightened in a digital age of lightning speed, looser standards and severe competition. Post editors are also engaged in another struggle defined, perhaps, as a struggle for the very soul of journalism. How do they preserve the depth and breadth, the insights and integrity that once defined The Washington Post when anyone and everyone could also reach roughly the same number of readers with uninformed and unchecked ticker items that are currently defined as news? It’s a tough question, I know, and it’s made tougher by the fact that year after year the number of Post readers continues to drop. In 2007, for example, the Post sold almost 700,000 copies every day from Monday to Friday. In 2012, that number dropped to roughly 462,000; in five years, a drop of about 250,000 copies, a merciless decline in circulation. And why? A loss of advertising, of course, and the lure of the internet.

Two reporters have recently been entrusted to reverse this decline, if possible, and somehow save one of America's great institutions, The Washington Post. They are executive editor Martin Baron and managing editor Kevin Merida. Marty Baron, Marty likes to be called Marty, has been a journalist since 1976 working first for The Miami Herald, then The Los Angeles Times, then The New York Times, then back to The Miami Herald, then to The Boston Globe and now to The Washington Post as executive editor,
which is the top job. Along the way, he was twice named Editor of the Year, and he has a way of winning Pulitzer Prizes.

His managing editor is Kevin Merida who started his career at The Milwaukee Journal before moving on to The Dallas Morning News. Twenty years ago in 1993, he joined The Washington Post where his first beat was Congress. He’s written books, won many awards, he’s taught journalism and for the past four years, he's been the paper’s national editor.

Gentlemen, welcome. And let’s start with those merciless statistics that I spoke about a moment ago. Marty Baron, you are one smart guy and everybody knows it, and this is not a White House briefing so you can level with us. (Laughter) Why in God’s name would you take on this job, which has been called Mission: Impossible?

MARTY BARON: Well, first of all I take it on because it’s The Washington Post and because it has the history and tradition and sense of mission that you spoke of. Secondly, I think what we do is incredibly important and so for me it's just a great honor to be involved in this enterprise and to work with a great group of journalists like those who work in the newsroom of The Washington Post.

Third, I don't think its Mission: Impossible. I think that I'm actually an optimist. And I should point out that while you cited the circulation declines, and that's for the print newspaper, our readership is actually, if you look at total number of readers, the total number of readers has actually expanded tremendously.

MARVIN KALB: That would be including the website?

MARTY BARON: Online, yes. And we're talking tens of millions of readers online every month. So the reach of The Washington Post, the reach of our journalism, is greater
than ever. And so you can't judge the number of people reading us by solely the number of people who are subscribing to the newspaper.

MARVIN KALB: Okay, fair enough.

MARTY BARON: So, there's great opportunity in that. There are new ways of telling stories, and I'm actually optimistic about our future.

MARVIN KALB: Okay, well let’s get to that. I mean, one of the first things you said when you took this job was, and I'm quoting, “We face a digital future. It has great promise and also great challenges.” Now, I want to talk about the promise first, but I'd like you to talk about it in a way that persuades us that you're going to reach this Promised Land without abandoning the quality and the integrity of the paper. How are you going to do it?

MARTY BARON: Well, I think that we do it every day. We have new, powerful ways of storytelling; we can reach far more people. There are tremendous financial pressures, but I think we know what our values are. And one thing we know is the reason that people continue to come to The Washington Post are those values. Those values are absolutely core to what we do. If we didn’t adhere to those values, we wouldn’t have any readers. And I think that we have to continue to maintain those values.

So the question is how do we extend those values in new media, on new platforms, and tell stories in new and particularly powerful ways? And that's what we're endeavoring to do. But I don't think that we would ever abandon those values that have been at the center of The Washington Post for many, many decades.

MARVIN KALB: I think the question is not that you want to abandon those values; it's that the financial structure of the industry has changed so dramatically that it may be step
by step being taken out of your hands. And I think that is, to some degree, a definition of our concern.

**MARTY BARON:** I don't think it’s out of our hands. I think the one way to ruin the business of *The Washington Post* is to abandon the values. I think one way to main the business of *The Washington Post* is to adhere to those values. The question is whether we can tell stories on different platforms in new media and tell those stories in particularly effective ways and draw larger and larger audiences on the web. And then also find ways of making money on the web, which is a huge challenge.

But I think one way to guarantee that we would go out of business is to, in fact, abandon those values. We would have no reason to exist; we would have nothing that sets us apart from anybody else out there.

**MARVIN KALB:** Well, then let me ask you, you mentioned about the promise and the challenges, and you've touched on the promise. But let’s deal with the challenges for a moment. And I have to point out what it is that your publisher, Katharine Weymouth, said when she was asked whether you'd have to “cut costs across the board.” And her answer was, “Of course.” Now, go ahead. In cutting costs across the board, that almost in and of itself defines one of your principle challenges. You've got to have money to run this.

**MARTY BARON:** Well, we do have to have money to run this, it’s a business. We can't forget that. And there's no question that we have to cut costs. And the reason that we have to cut costs is because we have less revenue, so there's a direct relationship between the two. That forces us to make choices and so we've been in the process, *The Washington Post* and every other news organization, and not just newspapers, by the way, but television networks, radio networks, you name it, are having to make these choices, magazines, you name it, all of them have been making these choices.
So we make choices about what do we want to focus on. Well, once we've made those choices about what areas we want to focus on, we need to do those extremely well. So it’s true that we may choose to stop doing certain kinds of things, but what we choose to continue doing, we will continue to maintain the high standards.

MARVIN KALB: What, then, do you feel that you'll be dropping and what will you be emphasizing?

MARTY BARON: Well, I think that that's a process that we go through over a long time and the Post has already made those decisions, some of those decisions, before I got here. So for example, they used to have correspondents all around the United States. They no longer have correspondents all around the United States. Of course, they maintain a strong-- we maintain a very strong presence here in Washington and covering the federal government, covering politics and policy. We have bureaus all around the world. All of those are still central to our mission.

But one of the decisions that was made is that we can abandon the bureaus that around the country, that that wasn't necessarily central to the mission of The Washington Post. There are other things that we’ll be looking at over a period of time. I've only been there for three months, so I'm still in the process of thinking that through.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. Kevin, I want to ask you a question that is based on a quote from Steve Coll, who’s going to be the dean of the Journalism School at Columbia, and he had your job about ten years ago. And he says that, “The great digital journalism of our age has yet to be created.” So first, do you agree with that? And if you do, what is it going to look like? What will be the distinctive features of this new age?
KEVIN MERIDA: Well, we're seeing it-- I mean, Steve's a good friend of mine and a visionary when he was at the Post. But, I mean, we're already seeing it. One of the things we know about our business is that we have some extraordinarily creative people in newsrooms, I mean, in the storytelling phase, and we're constantly-- we're in an inventive phase. I mean, we're seeing it on video, people are consuming it-- will consume journalism more and more on video. We have a very big video initiative that we're launching that, you know, involves politics.

MARVIN KALB: What does that mean, you're going to hire reporters who have been fired from the television networks? They’ll begin to work for the Post?

KEVIN MERIDA: Our journalists are doing video and that's a very big, important storytelling form.

MARVIN KALB: When they go out to cover a story, forgive me, they’ll be carrying a camera with them?

KEVIN MERIDA: Well, sometimes they're carrying a camera. We have video journalists who are sometimes going out doing independent work as journalists. We have-- the journalism business now, there's so many new jobs that have continued to be created. All kinds of jobs that are, you know, involving bringing audiences to our work, video journalists, producers. And we're constantly creating journalism that hasn't been invented before.

I think in the future, not only will we be having more interactive components, we're doing more with graphics, we're doing things--
MARVIN KALB: What makes that better journalism? I mean, supposing you're interactive. I mean, there's a war going on in Afghanistan and you're interactive with who, the soldiers who are fighting?

KEVIN MERIDA: If you can show, let's just say for instance, a war in Afghanistan, if you can pinpoint where the places where the war’s going on, you can show people on a map where the action is engaged. If you can get the readers out there to react and respond, if you can get correspondents talking back to the readers--

MARVIN KALB: You don’t need to do that on the web? You're not doing that in the--

KEVIN MERIDA: Yeah, but journalism is more than just the newspaper.

MARVIN KALB: I know, but you're making it sound as if it is all-- it’s the Promised Land and we're hiring people all over the place to do all of this additional work. Let me point out to you, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which you probably covered at one point, reports that from 2001 to 2011, ten years, newspaper employment has dropped from 404,000 to 239,000. That's a loss of 165,000 newspaper jobs. Now, how can losses of that sort not affect the quality of what it is that you're doing?

KEVIN MERIDA: Well, you're doing different things. I mean, you look at the kind of work that we're doing, we have to live in the times we're living in. You know, there are lots of people in our country that are out of work, the jobs that have been lost in different industries, we've created new industries. We can't be as journalists blind to the times we're living in, it’s a different place. Our job is to report on the change that's happened in society. Part of that change is how people are getting information and how they're coming to it.

MARVIN KALB: Marty?
MARTY BARON: Let me just interject here. So, no one’s going to maintain that we haven't lost anything over the last several decades with the impact of the internet on the business. The impact of the internet on this business has been absolutely profound. It's been a huge disruptive force. But it’s not true that all of media coverage has shrunk by those statistics that you just cited from the BLS. In fact, if you look at media writ large, it’s actually a growing profession. There are all sorts of new websites that are out there that aren’t newspapers in the traditional sense of the word.

They're doing journalism, they're doing good journalism, they're doing journalism in new forms. They represent incredible opportunities for young people who are getting into the field. They represent incredible opportunities to reach people in new ways and to tell stories in new ways.

And the other thing that I would mention is if you actually look back-- you know, when I got into the profession, it was in 1976 full time, and I was at The Miami Herald then and it was a tremendous newspaper, wonderful paper. But, it got bigger over time. And if you look at The Washington Post at the time of Watergate, which you cited in your opening remarks, it was a much smaller newspaper than it ultimately became. But it was able to do Watergate and it was able to do a lot of other great journalism as well.

MARVIN KALB: Very true.

MARTY BARON: So just because you're smaller doesn’t mean you can't be good. You can be good, you can be smaller and you can direct your efforts in all sorts of ways.

MARVIN KALB: That’s a very good point. Warren Buffett, who we all know, is the great oracle of Omaha, he’s bought 28 newspapers in the last 15 months, so that's a pretty good vote of confidence. He told his stockholders last month that success, however that
be defined, cannot be the result of cutting either the news content or the frequency of circulation, publication. Now, I'm saying myself, “That's fine if you've got the money.” His business model is produce comprehensive, reliable information. At the same time have a sensible internet strategy. Do you agree with Mr. Buffett and why?

**MARTY BARON:** Which part of it?

**MARVIN KALB:** I'm interested in your sense of his business model and whether you can incorporate that into the *Post*? I must say, it sounds--

**MARTY BARON:** Look, I'd be taking a huge risk to disagree with Mr. Buffett given how wealthy he’s become taking his own advice. So, I have to start with that. That said, let me just point out that he’s buying a particular kind of newspaper. He's not buying a major metropolitan newspaper like those I've worked for. He's not buying *The Los Angeles Times*, he’s not buying *The Miami Herald*, he’s not buying *The Boston Globe* where I've worked.

**MARVIN KALB:** What is he doing?

**MARTY BARON:** He's typically buying newspapers in small towns, or newspapers in somewhat larger cities that have a very small town feel; Omaha would be an example, or Tulsa, places like that. He has a newspaper in Buffalo which he's owned for a very long time. So, those are very different kinds of places and the focus of his efforts is entirely on local coverage. It’s a different model for those newspapers than it is for major metros, and certainly for *The Washington Post*.

Now, I think what he’s saying about cutting is that that's not the only route to success. You can't only cut and then expect to be successful. And I completely agree with that. We have to find new ways of earning revenue, we have to find new ways of telling
stories, we have to find new ways of connecting people. When people are connected all the time via the internet, that's how people are connected most of the time. Walk anywhere, everybody is-- they're barely looking at where they're going because they're looking at their device. If you go into any train station and look at people waiting for a train, they're all looking at their device. That's what they're doing. That's how they're connected and they're typically connected through mobile devices.

And if that's where they are, that's where we need to be. And it's unfortunate for those of us who've been in the business a long time that the economics of that business are much more difficult than they used to be. But, we have to be there.

**MARVIN KALB:** But I want to ask you about that. In the old days at CBS, my boss, William Paley, one day stood before all of the correspondents and he said, this is almost a direct quote, you guys cover the news. I've got Jack Benny to make money for me. Jack Benny made money on the entertainment side, news never made any money. So I'm thinking today in the newspaper business, who's your Jack Benny and where's your pot of gold? I mean, where is it?

**MARTY BARON:** Well, I don't know--

**MARVIN KALB:** Where's the beef?

**MARTY BARON:** I'll just say this, I don't know where the pot of gold is because if I did, I'm leaving right now and I'm going to pick it up. But I have no idea where the pot of gold is. The reality is that newspapers in a previous era made a lot of money. They made a lot of money. Their profit margins were quite substantial; 40 percent, 50 percent, sometimes-- if you made 25 percent, you said you were generous, that you were putting all this money into the newsroom.
MARVIN KALB: What's the Post making today?

MARTY BARON: It's not making. It's not the right color. So we're working on that and we're turning that around and other newspapers have turned around as well. And it’s a different model today. So we don’t have a Jack Benny. We have ourselves, and we have to rely on ourselves to find ways to return ourselves to profitability.

MARVIN KALB: Kevin, if times got tougher for you and the Post, would you consider as a business model what the New Orleans Times Picayune did, namely to publish a print edition only three times a week?

KEVIN MERIDA: I don't think so. But, we don’t know what the future holds because we're standing here. You know, right now, we're producing some really great journalism that doesn’t seem like it would need to worry about that. I mean, I think that you haven't mentioned in the discussion about the economics is that we're producing some tremendous journalism. I mean, award-winning journalism on things that are really important with our authority, with our kind of high standards on things like the targeted killing and drone phase of war. In this country, we've been leading the way on that kind of coverage. Tremendous projects.

MARVIN KALB: But Kevin, we have come to expect that from The Washington Post. The fear is that given the current economic constraints, you may not be able to do that, that's our concern.

KEVIN MERIDA: But we are still doing it. I mean, that's what I'm saying. Is that as we speak here, we are doing that despite the very statistics that you rattled off. We're still doing the work that brings people to us.

MARVIN KALB: Do you object to the statistics?
KEVIN MERIDA: No, they are--

MARVIN KALB: Are they wrong?

KEVIN MERIDA: The statistics about decline of circulation, they are what they are. But we live in the world that exists now. And as Marty points out, people are consuming their information differently. I still get the newspaper delivered to me. I go down and walk down and take my dog down at the end of the driveway, I pick it up, comes in plastic. I take it out, I go and put it-- and then I read it. But I also have an iPad tablet and you see people on subways with that. They get it quickly, they have their phones, and they want to get information where they are when they want it. And we have to provide a lot of different kind of journalism. And I think that's exciting for the people who are doing it, and it's exciting for those who are looking for the kind of authority and consistency we do that.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. Marty, your predecessor, Marcus Brauchli, was on this program a couple of years ago. And I asked him whether he would accept government support if it came to that. Would you?

MARTY BARON: No.

MARVIN KALB: Flat out no?

MARTY BARON: No. I'm completely opposed to that idea. I've objected from the day that it was advanced and I think that we have to be completely independent of government. We cover government, and we shouldn’t be on the public dole. Absolutely, no.
MARVIN KALB: What about outfits like the Ford Foundation, large foundations? If I'm not mistaken, you do take money from Ford?

MARTY BARON: Yeah, we have several reporters who are actually funded by Ford for investigative work.

MARVIN KALB: For investigative reporting?

MARTY BARON: For investigative work, yes.

MARVIN KALB: How much money is involved there?

MARTY BARON: Do you know?

KEVIN MERIDA: Yeah. I mean, it’s the amount that was about $500,000 over a period of time.

MARVIN KALB: Is this the only such arrangement that you have?

KEVIN MERIDA: Well, we continue to have relationships with-- there are a lot of people doing good journalism that we have relationships with, like ProPublica. We publish a lot of ProPublica projects, we work with a number of nonprofits who are doing work, particularly in the investigative realm. And I think that's a model that you'll continue to see in the future.

MARVIN KALB: What is your competition today? When you get up in the morning and you pick up that paper and you look at what you have done, what's your competition? What's in your mind? What is X doing?
MARTY BARON: We have a lot of competition. We have more competition than ever before. And it depends on whether you define competition by the journalism or you define competition in the advertising world, and competition for dollar revenues. So our competition for the journalism? When I get up, obviously I look at The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, you look at outfits like Politico, look at other websites. I look at The L. A. Times, I look at my old newspaper, The Boston Globe, not so much for competition although they do great work. I look around at what other people are doing. So, there's that.

But our competition for money is from everybody. Google News, which doesn’t actually do any journalism but aggregates journalism, then collects advertising revenue around that aggregation, Yahoo!, which--

MARVIN KALB: Wait a minute, explain to me about the Google News? You mean they're making money that you feel the Post ought to be making?

MARTY BARON: Well, you know, of course I think we should be making that money, but I'm not saying--

MARVIN KALB: No, no, explain to me why--

MARTY BARON: Look, I think you know that Google News aggregates news reports from a variety of sites. They then sell advertising surrounding that. So if you search on something, you click on something, it indicates that you're interested in this specific kind of subject and they can sell advertising around that. They have a huge audience, Google News does. So does Yahoo!, so do a number of other sites and they sell advertising around it. And in many instances, in the instance of Google News, in all instances, they haven't done a lick of journalism. They didn’t do any reporting, it’s merely the work of somebody else and they're profiting from the work of other people.
MARVIN KALB: And they're also getting the money that you might have gotten from an ad that would have been placed at the Post?

MARTY BARON: Yeah, that's true. Now, they would say that we're making money from the fact that they're directing readers to our website and that's true, too. So Google and Google News are what is frequently known as a frenemy. They're both a friend and an enemy and that's their position, they're a frenemy.

MARVIN KALB: I want to take a moment now to remind our radio, television and online audiences that this is The Kalb Report, I'm Marvin Kalb, and our guests are Marty Baron, executive editor of The Washington Post, and Kevin Merida, who’s managing editor of the Post. Tell us what a normal day, if there is such a thing, is like at the Post when you come in, how do you structure your day?

KEVIN MERIDA: Well, we have a number of news meetings. Usually--

MARVIN KALB: I mean, do you start the day the day at nine a.m. with a meeting?

KEVIN MERIDA: Well, each department usually meets individually, all of the departments, news departments, they have their own meetings and they're planning their coverage. And those meetings are at 9:00 and 9:30. We have a 10:00 story conference that brings all of the editors and people involved in every aspect as we go through what's trending and what's been happening on our website and we look at that and we talk about the day. And we prepare for the coverage during the day, discuss it and what's going to be-- what we think may be in the paper the next day.

MARVIN KALB: Is that when you would assign a reporter to cover X, Y, Z, a developing story?
KEVIN MERIDA: Well, I mean, those discussions really-- when we're talking about the next cycle, you're sometimes assigning reporters-- people are assigning reporters right now, I'll bet you, if something happens. I mean, now we're in the instant business. If something develops, we're assigning reporters when it happens and that is an ongoing process throughout the day into night. Late email conversations when things develop, early morning email conversations.

MARVIN KALB: I was going to ask you about that, Kevin. I think we're all old enough to know when there were newspapers that went to bed and editors could then go home and go to bed themselves.

KEVIN MERIDA: We don’t go to bed.

MARVIN KALB: But you don’t go to bed.

KEVIN MERIDA: Because the world doesn't sleep. So at any given time, you know, things are happening. We have our home page, editors are overnight, and--

MARVIN KALB: The home page being the online edition of the paper?

KEVIN MERIDA: Right. And so we have the ability to publish at any time. So, any time something breaks or develops, we have the ability to publish. And as you know, it’s 5:00 a.m. somewhere or 6:00 a.m. somewhere in the world.

MARVIN KALB: How do you divide up your time between the print edition and the web edition?
KEVIN MERIDA: Well, the time spent, we have teams of editors, they're conjoined because, in a sense, we're publishing throughout the day so we're constantly monitoring the way stories are doing. We have analytics that let us know how stories are playing.

MARVIN KALB: You have analytics?

KEVIN MERIDA: Ways of measuring stories.

MARVIN KALB: What does that mean?

KEVIN MERIDA: It means it lets you know people are reading stories at any given time, how many people are coming to a story.

MARVIN KALB: Supposing there are a few people coming to a story that you consider important, what do you do?

KEVIN MERIDA: We make our own independent judgments and stories that are important that are based on our news value, things that we think are in the public interest, we play them and give them the kind of prominence they deserve.

MARVIN KALB: And what about-- you're not telling me, are you-- or do you think I'm accepting the idea that if there are not a lot of people that are tuning into one story that you're not going to load the paper with that story?

MARTY BARON: No, we don't do it that way. I don't know anybody who does it that way for sort of how we're going to play things in the newspaper. You know, first thing I would say is--

MARVIN KALB: On the website and the newspaper?
MARTY BARON: On the website, we will look at-- there will be metrics. So if this is being live streamed, we would know how many people are actually watching this program at this moment and whether it’s going up or down and where are they coming from and how much time are they spending. I hope a lot of time, because we've got a lot to say. And we would have all that information. Certainly on the website, if it turns out that people are not coming to that story, that's likely to move down in prominence and something else is likely to move up in prominence.

But how we play it in the newspaper could be something entirely different. First of all, there's a different audience or readership for the newspaper. And we apply our values whether it’s on the website or in the newspaper as well. There will be many instances where we say this is just important and it’ll achieve prominence on the site for a long period of time whether it’s getting a lot of traffic or not.

MARVIN KALB: Do you know that there are different people reading the paper from the people who are reading your website? Is it a different kind of person?

MARTY BARON: It tends to be, yes.

MARVIN KALB: What's the difference?

MARTY BARON: Well, people who read the newspaper tend to be older than people who are reading on the website. The people reading the paper actually spend more time than people who are on the website. So, people who are reading on the website are coming from all over the country and all over the world. People who are reading the newspaper happen to be in this region because that's where it’s available. It's not available all over the world. So yeah, there are substantial differences.
MARVIN KALB: No but Marty, you said before and you're saying it again and again in the course of our conversation, that we are seriously in this digital age now. There's no fooling around. And that being the case, why don’t you spend-- if that be the future, why don’t you spend most of your time on the web and spend most of your money on the web? Why deal with the print edition if that's the past?

MARTY BARON: Right. Well, I didn’t say it was the past. I said something was the future. So the print edition--

MARVIN KALB: Well, if something’s the future, something--

MARTY BARON: Might be the past, but it’s not the past at the moment. It’s very much part of the present, okay? So the reality is that we actually make more money from the print edition than we make on the web. So it’s very important to us and people, they spend a lot of time with the print edition, they pay good money for the print edition. They pay a lot more money than they're paying for us currently on the web which is zero to get onto our website at the moment, although we're introducing a paid subscription model in short order.

MARVIN KALB: You're changing that?

MARTY BARON: So we make a lot more money with print than we actually make on the web at the moment. And that's true of most news organizations that have their origins in a traditional print newspaper.

MARVIN KALB: So you're staying with your print edition because at the moment, it's where you're making money?

MARTY BARON: Yes. If it weren't, we would--
MARVIN KALB: But in your mind, the future of journalism is in the digital age?

MARTY BARON: Sure.

KEVIN MERIDA: That’s the present. Now it’s the present.

MARVIN KALB: It’s right now?

KEVIN MERIDA: Yeah.

MARTY BARON: It’s where most people are getting their information.

MARVIN KALB: Marty, I noticed in looking up your résumé that you have an MBA which seems to me a perfect background for an editor today. And I'm wondering, how much time in the course of a day do you spend on the economic side of the newspaper’s life and the editorial side? How do you guys divide it up?

MARTY BARON: Well, we don’t have any clear lines of division, actually, but I don’t spend a lot of time on the economics of the newspaper during the course of the day. Obviously, there's a period of the year where one focuses on the budget and there are times, perhaps, during the year if things are not going well, you're forced to focus more attention on that.

Then there are issues of strategy and then there are issues all the time about new ways that people want to advertise on the web and is that something we would approve or not approve. It doesn’t require an MBA to go through that analysis. Most of the things that I learned as part of an MBA I don’t use on a day to day-- I don't do any present value analysis or anything like that.
**MARVIN KALB:** When you're thinking about the importance of the coverage of the war in Afghanistan and you're thinking about the number of reporters you ought to have there, and the number of reporters you have there, economics plays a role in that decision, right?

**MARTY BARON:** Yeah, sure.

**MARVIN KALB:** Okay. Now, do you have what you would like around the world today, the number of reporters?

**MARTY BARON:** Of course not. I'd love to have double, triple of what we have. That would be great. I'd love to have actually a newsroom that's triple the size that we have--

**MARVIN KALB:** Yeah, but I notice that in the paper--

**MARTY BARON:** Of course I would.

**MARVIN KALB:** --you have a lot more Associated Press stories and you have a lot more stories that are not literally produced by *The Washington Post* people. Now, there's a reason for that, because you can't afford to have *The Washington Post* people, I guess?

**MARTY BARON:** We would like for our people overseas and our people generally to be doing stories that are distinctive to *The Washington Post* and not spending most of their time doing stories that replicate what other people are going to do. So if AP is going to do a certain kind of story, and Reuters is doing the story and Bloomberg’s doing that story and some other wire service is doing that story, FP or whoever it might be, it may not make much sense for *The Washington Post* to be doing that story unless there's a
reason for *The Washington Post* to be doing that story. So, we’ll take the AP for which we pay a tremendous amount of money.

**KEVIN MERIDA:** And I would say I don't think that we've not had the coverage we wanted out of Afghanistan. You know, I don't think that economics has caused our coverage to suffer. We have a terrific correspondent there now in Kevin Sieff and we have great expertise in the newsroom that we constantly send over, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Greg Jaffe and others, some of the most distinguished reporters in the national security realm in the country.

**MARTY BARON:** You know, most newspapers, and the *Post* is among them, when we need more people, we're going to send more people to do the kind of journalism that we need. When I was at *The Boston Globe* and we were covering the Afghan War and the Iraq War, a newspaper of that size, we had a dozen people covering each of those wars. We normally have 12 people in Afghanistan and Iraq, but we maintained 12 people in that country when our country was at war.

**MARVIN KALB:** Does it have to do with the number of Americans being killed, that you have that many journalists covering a story? In other words, I remember Senator McCain saying years ago that when the numbers will go down on casualties, the American people will lose interest in it and they’ll lose interest in it, in part, because it’s not covered. It's not right up in front of them. And yet, all kinds of things may be going on there that I'm sure you guys would like to know a great deal more about.

**KEVIN MERIDA:** Just to remind you and the viewers, we kept a Baghdad bureau longer than practically anybody.

**MARVIN KALB:** Really?
KEVIN MERIDA: You know, we had a Baghdad bureau all the way to the end and had a reporter there, the late Anthony Shadid, won the Pulitzer Prize for the coverage, and then another one. So, I do think that we've shown a commitment to cover the important events internationally that are of interest to Americans here.

MARVIN KALB: I think that what I really ought to say at this point is that you're talking to somebody who loves newspapers. I mean, I love the feel of the paper. I cannot imagine breakfast without a paper.

KEVIN MERIDA: We might get you an iPad, though Marvin, and let you look at our new app.

MARVIN KALB: No, no, no, I'd much rather read your paper or have the feeling that I'm getting everything that I got when I read the paper today. And that is the issue that comes in. I must confess that there are days when I feel as if *The Washington Post* is vanishing in front of me, that sections of your paper are four to six pages that used to be at least double that. Sports, I can't get enough of, your use of non-*Washington Post* sources, obviously because you can't afford to use *Washington Post* sources. So the question in my mind is assure me and through me your reading public here, assure me that there will be a *Washington Post* to pick up every day three years from now, five years, ten years. What do you say?

KEVIN MERIDA: Let me just say something about your interest because I know you like sports, you mentioned that, today the Nats opened up. We had one of the really terrific baseball writers in the country in Adam Kilgore.

MARVIN KALB: Yes, you do.
KEVIN MERIDA: We have probably the leading baseball columnist over time in the country, Tom Boswell. We have Sally Jenkins, another one of the most terrific sports columnists in the country.

MARVIN KALB: Absolutely.

KEVIN MERIDA: So, I mean, if you're reading our sports page, you're getting some of the greatest talent you can find anywhere. I don't think that talent’s leaving. I mean--

MARVIN KALB: No, but I'm asking you a different question, Kevin. I'm asking you whether ten years from now I'm going to be comfortable knowing that tomorrow morning I'm going to pick up that paper and get the same first class news coverage.

KEVIN MERIDA: I mean, ten years from now, Marvin, we don’t really know what's going to happen. We don’t know if the National Press Club is going to be here in ten years, you know?

MARVIN KALB: Oh, yes.

KEVIN MERIDA: We don’t know if this particular building is. I hate to say that to the people at the National Press Club, but the thing is is that we’ll be producing terrific journalism and delivering it to people the way that they consume it. And I think that's probably what we’ll be doing. I think that's a pretty clear answer, I hope.

MARTY BARON: Get that iPad, okay? (Laughter)

MARVIN KALB: Do you live with an iPad?

MARTY BARON: I have an iPad, iPhone and Mac Book Air.
MARVIN KALB: Are you a Twitterer?

MARTY BARON: Yes, I do as a matter of fact. I'm surprised you're not following me. (Laughter)

MARVIN KALB: Why is Twitter important to you?

MARTY BARON: Oh, I don't know that it’s important to me but in the rank of things that are important to me. But first of all, it’s an incredible reporting tool. You can use it for all sorts of reporting purposes; following people who are expert in their field and what they're reading and what they think you ought to be reading. I think it's tremendous that way. For coverage of breaking news events for a reporter, if people are Tweeting out of, let's say, a train crash you can see what they're saying. You can contact them directly, you can verify their actual existence and that they're there. You can find witnesses very quickly. So from that standpoint, it’s a tremendous reporting tool.

On top of that, it’s great for us to tell people to let people know what we're doing and to get more readers for our own journalism. Tell people that. I use it mainly to talk about journalism issues. I don't actually talk about them, I alert people to things that I think are interesting. And that way, I can-- which is an area which-- I mean, you may argue based on what I've said so far, but an area of presumably some expertise that I have. And it also keeps me out of trouble from getting into areas that I shouldn’t get into. So I stick essentially to--

MARVIN KALB: What about-- lets talk for a minute or so about an outfit like Politico. And what I have in mind here is specifically Politico has attracted in a very brief period of time a lot of political junkies. And I'm wondering, since you obviously want to keep your political junkie readers and don’t want to lose them to an outfit like Politico, why do
you think they are having the success that they are having now with circulation and readership and web attraction, if that's the right word? Why do you think that is the case? And are they doing something that you guys would like to do also?

**KEVIN MERIDA:** I mean, I think that we have a lot of niche sites that have sprung up in a lot of different realms, whether that's Politico, BuzzFeed or Huffington Post that do different things. And that's the nature of the world. They happen to be in an area that is an important franchise area of coverage for us. They're just one player out there. I think what we do to a greater extent is we are broader and deeper than they are. And I think people come to us for our authority.

You know, we probably have the person who would be voted-- if there were a poll taken by peers of political journalists, Dan Balz is the leading political journalist in the country. I'm going to guess if he were on a ballot, he'd win that among his peers.

**MARVIN KALB:** I'd vote for him.

**KEVIN MERIDA:** Because of 40 years of consistency. And another group of tremendous political reporters coming up, Phil Rucker is a young guy, our chief White House correspondent, Scott Wilson, won both of the major White House correspondent-- the two major awards for White House coverage last year. And that's because of the authority he brings to the subject. So I think that people will still come to us for-- we had a record year of visitors to our site, to our coverage online last year because of the election campaign.

**MARVIN KALB:** Sure. And that would be understandable. I'm wondering when you both got into this business, it wasn't a business in which Twitter would play as prominent a role as you've described a moment ago. Who were your mentors then when you were
starting? You're both from the 1970s era. Who were the people you looked up to and why?

**KEVIN MERIDA:** Go ahead, Marty.

**MARTY BARON:** (Laughter) If I'd known Kevin, he would have been my mentor. But I didn’t know him at the time. Well, it's interesting. I mean, just as an aside, I got into the business in 1976 full time and it was a terrible recession then and newspapers were hurting and fortunately I was still able to get a job. And I've told young people who are getting into the profession that it was a bad year in the newspaper business when I got in in 1976, and it’s been a bad year every year since. I made a whole career out of it. So just because we have an industry that's gone through rough times doesn’t mean you can't make a real nice career out of it.

You know, over time I had a variety of people, colleagues, Barry Bearak who writes for a-- he wasn't a mentor but he was somebody I very much admired. I worked side by side with him at *The Miami Herald* and he's now at *The New York Times*, one of their tremendous, tremendous writers that I admire.

**MARVIN KALB:** Am I hearing you say that there was no mentor out there to whom you looked up? Kevin?

**KEVIN MERIDA:** I think that--

**MARVIN KALB:** Was it just a job?

**KEVIN MERIDA:** No. I think when I first started in, I got into journalism in part during the Watergate era when journalism schools were filled. It was a hot profession and
that was really attractive. I was really interested in investigative journalism and that was the direction I first started.

The mentors I had coming up, like probably a lot of us, they may or may not be people that you've heard of. Les Payne who was an editor and an investigative reporter for Newsday, was one of the people that-- Milton Coleman was another one, Bob Maynard. And when I got into political reporting, David Broder who took me aside when he would see me out on the trail and I was a young political reporter and he was somebody I looked up to and really admired.

MARVIN KALB: He was quite an extraordinary reporter.

KEVIN MERIDA: Yes.

MARVIN KALB: An extraordinary reporter. In the running of the Post, there's a battle now which one talks about a great deal because hard news and opinion. And more and more it is said journalism writ large is drifting towards opinion and that newspapers, particularly, are trying to hold to the hard news anchor but are being pulled toward opinion as well. What is your sense of the strength of that pull toward opinion? And is it a good thing for our democracy? Two big questions.

MARTY BARON: Yeah, that's a very big question. I'm not just talking about newspapers here but in the media generally. I think there is a very strong pull toward opinion because it attracts a lot of users online. And I think that people know in television in particular we've seen that with the way that television has evolved, is that audiences are drawn to a media outlet that essentially affirm their preexisting point of view of the world.

MARVIN KALB: Like conservatives to Fox?
MARTY BARON: To Fox and others--

MARVIN KALB: The liberals to MSNBC.

MARTY BARON: Liberals to MSNBC or something like that. That's a trend, a clear trend--

MARVIN KALB: Is there a newspaper equivalent of that?

MARTY BARON: Not exactly, not exactly. And I think the readers of *The Washington Post* and of most mainstream newspapers want us to adhere to the traditional standards. Most of the readers of a physical newspaper for sure are people of traditional values, traditional standards. They’ve been with us for quite some time and they want us to hold to those standards. So that's what we try to do.

MARVIN KALB: But you were describing them before as old people.

MARTY BARON: I did not say that. I did not say that. I said they were older than what you will find online. That's all I said.

MARVIN KALB: Oh, I see.

MARTY BARON: I didn’t say they were old people.

MARVIN KALB: But what is the age of your group that reads the paper?

MARTY BARON: I don't have the demographics handy, but we have a range.
MARVIN KALB: Like in the 60s?

MARTY BARON: No. I mean, we have people who are in their 60s reading it, but we also have people--

MARVIN KALB: Oh yes, I remember those days.

MARTY BARON: I haven't had the pleasure yet, Marvin. But we have people who are young, students in college, everybody's looking at us online of all age groups. So and also the printed edition as well.

MARVIN KALB: Marty, you've been described as a great editor. You have been described as a great editor. What does a great editor do? (Laughter)

MARTY BARON: You're asking impossible questions here. Well, other people have to arrive at that judgment first of all. I'll just talk about what I try to do and I think Kevin tries to do. And that is we try to find talented people and allow them-- and create the conditions that allow them to do their best work. And that's what I try to do. I'm not necessarily the smartest person in the room. I don't necessarily have all the answers. I'm not the most expert in all the fields that we have to cover. What we want is we want to have a newsroom, a talented newsroom, an energetic newsroom and people who are most expert in their fields, people who are energetic and aggressive in their coverage, people who do dig deeply and do go beneath the surface. That’s what we want, people who do have strong values and who are honest and honorable in their approach to journalism.

And so you try to give them the opportunity to do their best work and create those conditions. It's not easy. You spent a good portion of this session pointing out all the pressure on our industry and so that bears down on us. But amid all of that, one of the responsibilities, the obligation of an editor, is to try as best you can to insulate the people
who are in your newsroom from that so that they can focus on their work and try to give them whatever guidance you can about how to go about it and how they should allocate their time and their resources.

MARVIN KALB: It's a good answer, sir. Mr. Editor, that was a good answer.

MARTY BARON: Thank you.

MARVIN KALB: Kevin, are you satisfied with the--

KEVIN MERIDA: He’s a terrific editor.

MARVIN KALB: No, no, answer my question.

MARTY BARON: Let him finish, he’s on the right track there.

MARVIN KALB: You wanted to compliment your boss?

KEVIN MERIDA: No, yeah, he is a terrific editor. I mean, I think also is that, you know, it is hard what we do. A lot of the most talented people could be doing other things. It’s an extraordinarily creative newsroom and so you have to trust your teammates, that's one of the things, and give people confidence, empower them to lead where they are, you know? And that's how you create the kind of place. You want a vibrant newsroom and we have to have the kind of newsroom where we're all in it together. And I think that that gets set from the top.

You know, I think he’s come in from the outside, Marty, and he both has the values that we all recognize, people who've been at the Post a long time, but he also has allowed
people to say, “You know, let's go out and do good work” and giving people the ability to do that.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. We've got a little bit of time left, but I'd like to ask you sort of a concluding question. Together, you guys represent more than 70 years of journalistic newspaper experience. It's gray haired journalism and--

KEVIN MERIDA: That's your opinion.

MARVIN KALB: There are any number--

MARTY BARON: Some of us can reject the premise of the question, but that's all right.

MARVIN KALB: But you'll still answer the question. (Laughter) There are journalism students out here in the audience. What kind of advice would you give them now fully taking into account all of the problems that you know you face, but the promise that you spoke about earlier that still resides at the heart of a vibrant journalism?

KEVIN MERIDA: It's the greatest time of their lives, and it’s a great time to be in our business despite some of the dour kind of-- the discussion that we've had about our economics. Because it’s an entrepreneurial time and most of the young people now, they’ve grown up with the technology that we're playing with and have been in. They have the fast twitch muscles. And you look at the median age of The Washington Post, it's never been younger. You know, it's a different model. It’s not like you go, when we came up Marvin, you go to the small paper and work your way up from Galveston on up to the next medium paper. People are coming in now because we're inventing new jobs for them with audience and engagement teams, social media teams, mobile editors. There are lots of new jobs, video journalists.
And it’s a younger and younger profession. So we need people to be inventive and to develop apps and to think about how can we bring information in cooler ways, in more vital ways, to the people who consume it? And it’s their time. So I would tell young people it’s a great time to be a journalist.

MARVIN KALB: You've got about 30, 40 seconds, Marty.

MARTY BARON: I would say the mission of journalism remains, endures. I think it's critical, even more critical these days when we're faced with all the pressures that you were talking about. So I think that presents tremendous opportunities. For young journalists getting into the field, the first thing is to learn the core values that we have. The second is to learn how to report and how to write. The third is to learn all the new tools that are critical to our profession now whether that's video or social media or all sorts of-- or actually some actual engineering-- would be really helpful, too, the ability to program and code is critically important.

So I would hope that they would learn all those new tools and be able to apply all those traditional values and that sense of mission to all the new platforms that have presented themselves.

MARVIN KALB: Marty, thank you, thank you both. I'm terribly sorry to say that our time is up. I want first to thank our audience, which has been most attentive and I thank you for that. I also want to thank the many people watching and listening to this program. And most especially, I want to thank our guests who withstood all of my questioning in good spirit and for sharing their insights into the running of a great American institution, namely The Washington Post in really tough and testing times. But that's it for now. I'm Marvin Kalb, and for all of you who believe in a vibrant and exciting press, as Ed Murrow used to say, good night and good luck. (Applause) Thank you very much, thank you.
Ladies and gentlemen, for the last hour I've been asking the questions and I thank you for tolerating that. But now, it is your turn to ask questions and there are two microphones, one there and one here. And let me start on the left. If you would identify yourself and ask a question? No speeches is what I mean.

STEVE: That's all right. My name’s Steve, I work and live in the city. Thanks a lot, Marvin, for the forum tonight, thank you fellows. Could you guys, to whatever degree, discuss the pending pay wall, the effect of the express as an adjunct to the main Post paper? And this is probably one of the few chances the pair of you are going to get an opportunity to do so, could you laud some of the people who've been a part of your Jack Benny crew; people who've done features, Dana Priest, Karen DeYoung, Rajiv Chandrasekaran, that sort? Thanks.

MARVIN KALB: Would you like to comment on that?

MARTY BARON: I'll talk about the pay wall and maybe Kevin can add on some of the other subjects. So, I think we've announced that we're implementing a pay model, we don’t call it a wall. It’s an open gate, actually and you're invited all to come through the gate. But look, we've been giving away our work, our journalism, which costs money to do. It costs a lot of money to send people to Afghanistan and people to Iraq and to Maryland and to Virginia, which is important to our mission as well, critically important to our mission. Somehow we got to get paid for that work, and advertising isn't paying the bill the way that it once did where it used to pay 80 percent of the-- essentially, 80 percent of the revenues of the company. That's not the case anymore.
So, many newspapers have, and many news sites, have launched pay models whereby they charge a subscription. We have been late to that and for various reasons and it's a complex economic proposition. And so the company has now announced that it is going to implement a pay model by this summer and we haven't announced the pricing yet, but I imagine we will shortly. And we need people to pay for the work that we do, so that's why we're doing it.

MARVIN KALB: That's pretty much what The New York Times did a year ago, isn't it?

MARTY BARON: More than a year ago, yeah.

MARVIN KALB: More than a year ago?

MARTY BARON: Two years ago, or something like that, yeah.

MARVIN KALB: But that's the model-- I don’t mean the model, the only model, but that kind of pay wall is what you have in mind? The people who buy the newspaper are not going to have to pay for the web information?

MARTY BARON: The people who subscribe to the newspaper will get access online as part of their subscription. But people who don’t have a subscription to the newspaper, if they use the site a certain amount, then they would actually have to pay a subscription in order to do so.

MARVIN KALB: Okay. I can't see you all because of where that light is, but please?

DIANE SINES: Thanks. My name’s Diane Sines and as someone who started my career at The Washington Post 30 years ago, I'm a huge fan of the newspaper and really want to see it thrive. I have two quick questions. One is will The Washington Post reinstitute a
science and environmental news section and give *The New York Times* a run for its money now that it's dismantled its environmental pod? There are a number of us that are working on climate science issues that really want to see more coverage of climate science.

**MARVIN KALB:** Please just ask the question.

**DIANE SINES:** And then the second one is what is *The Washington Post* doing to recruit employees of color to cover a very racially diverse city? I believe Washington is still majority African American city and I would like to see it recruit more employees of color.

**MARVIN KALB:** Thank you.

**KEVIN MERIDA:** Well, I'd say on the first question, we do have an environment page on Mondays. You know, maybe you're referring to Juliet Eilperin who's one of our--probably one of the top environmental journalists in the country recently was reassigned to the White House beat, but she's still writing about the environment from the White House perch. And we also just-- we're replacing her and we'll continue to be strong on the environment and science. We have a pretty robust health, science and environment team right now.

On diversity, it's a subject we talk about a lot and in fact we recently met. There's a committee in the newsroom that's been looking at trying to find ways to expand our recruiting beyond the traditional places. And we're constantly trying to bring in more journalists of color and identify them, first, and when there are openings try to consider them and hopefully increase that pool. But we have some-- obviously some tremendous journalists of color working there now. And I think we’ll continue to grow those ranks.
MARVIN KALB: Thank you, Kevin. Yes, sir?

JOSH GIBSON: Hello. Josh Gibson, Kennedy School alum. I wanted to know what your plans were for the ever-diminishing metro section. If someone teaches one of the pandas how to play for the Redskins during a snowstorm, you've got it covered. But beyond that, it seems like a lot of metro news coverage is suffering. People like Mike DeBonis aside, it’s getting smaller and smaller. What are your plans for keeping that local focus to a local paper?

MARTY BARON: Right. Well, it hasn’t gotten any smaller than it was from the day I arrived, so put it that way. (Laughter) And I'm very determined that we have robust metro coverage. I've been asked a lot about it because I came from a metro newspaper, so if anything people were criticizing the selection of me because they thought I'd be focusing too much on local coverage at the expense of national and international coverage. I don’t plan to do anything at the expense of national and international coverage, but I do think that we need to focus very intensely on what we're doing here locally.

And I think that we have done a lot of good work. Most recently this past Sunday, we had a fantastic story on the front page about the governor of Virginia and his unusual ties, I would say, to a very unusual company. And that was an agenda-setting story. It required in depth reporting and it was great accountability journalism and I would hope that we would continue to do more of that. And I think that there have been many other examples of that as well.

So you can be sure, as Kevin well knows, we've spent a lot of time on that subject talking about how we can do more. I think we did a great job of covering the Virginia legislature and covering the Maryland legislature during these past sessions and there's a lot more we can do, I agree with you on that, and we're very determined to do that.
MARVIN KALB: Good, thank you. Yes, please?

TOM RISEN: Hi, my name is Tom Risen. I've been a full time journalist for five years now. I have a question I think follows a lot of the theme we've heard tonight. Could you comment on how one of your competitors, The Washington Examiner, has canceled daily publication to be a weekly political commentary magazine? Does this mean that local coverage is not as profitable as it used to be, that political commentary is more profitable? Could you comment on the Examiner’s move, please?

MARVIN KALB: Kevin?

KEVIN MERIDA: I mean, I can't comment on why they made the business decision they made. I mean, we obviously are rooted here, so we're as much a part, as big a local paper as we are a national and international news organization. We're anchored here, our chairman, we have strong ties to the community in this region. And so we've demonstrated you can be profitable and there's a place for strong local coverage. So, I don't know why they made the decision they made, but it doesn’t affect our decision.

MARTY BARON: I don’t know much about their decision either, other than what they’ve said. But free local newspapers, which was once declared to be the future of the business, is evidently not the future of the business and there are a couple of reasons for that. I've seen it elsewhere, there are a lot of free newspapers that came into existence and have since gone out of business. And the reason is that they derive no circulation revenue, which is increasingly important to the business. So they have none of that. And the other is that if it’s free, people tend to be less engaged with the product and the advertisers know that. And so the publications can only charge lower rates for their advertising.
I don't know whether those two factors played into the decision here, but that has affected other free newspapers around the country.

**MARVIN KALB:** Thank you very much. Yes?

**ESTHER FRENCH:** Hi, my name is Esther French and my question is a follow-up on the pay model question that was asked earlier. I wanted to ask, so other major newspapers have implemented this model and so I'm wondering why the Post did not make this decision years ago. And also, what specific mistakes is the Post seeking to avoid as they move forward and learning from what other newspapers have done? Thank you.

**MARTY BARON:** Well, neither of us was involved in the decision or non-decision of the past not to implement a pay model here. I think it’s a lot more complex than people realize. Obviously, online a lot of the money is generated through advertising and in order to get that advertising, you have to keep your paid views and your so-called unique visitors up. And if you start to implement a pay model, then you will see those page views take a hit. And so people were concerned about that.

Also for the Post, it's particularly important to have people around the country and around the world reading our work. And so I imagine there was a decision not to put that in any jeopardy at the time. But what we're finding now, typically I think all sites are finding this, is that we generate more and more page views. We boast very proudly of all the page views we have and the growth. But actual ad rates, the rates for advertising online, have actually flattened out and actually started to decline. So even if you generate more page views, you're not necessarily going to generate more revenue.

So now we're looking-- so the sort of Promised Land that Marvin was talking about before, or the pot of gold, the gold at the end of the rainbow, we haven't found that. And so, now people say, “Well, we've got to get subscription revenue online in addition to the

**MARVIN KALB:** Do you think when you have that that you will be able to turn a corner on the financial pressure issue?

**MARTY BARON:** You know, we hope that it means substantial additional revenue. Nobody's looking for the silver bullet. There's no one at *The Washington Post* who says, “This is the silver bullet.” Hasn’t been the silver bullet for *The New York Times* either and we have a very different economic model than *The New York Times* for a variety of reasons. But, it’s one more thing, one more piece of the puzzle, and if it is-- and obviously any incremental revenue is welcome.

**MARVIN KALB:** Yes, please?

**ALYSSA GORD:** Hi, my name is Alyssa Gord and I'm one of Gil Klein’s journalism students at American University. I just wanted to ask you as someone who’s looking into your field, considering how many fewer employees there are within specifically newspaper journalism with the multimedia workload pressures, and Kevin you said yourself we don’t sleep, how can you insure a healthy workplace and what types of people are drawn into and away from your profession now?

**KEVIN MERIDA:** Well, we do sleep, we just don’t all sleep at once. (Laughter) But, I think that’s very important to me and we give-- you know, we're not in, for the most part, a clock punching business where you're working set hours. And so with that comes a lot of responsibility, certainly when a story breaks, sometimes people work long, incredible hours. When Newtown happens, people were working around the clock and because they feel the adrenalin of that, they're responsible as journalists. But when they need to go to
their kid’s soccer game, when they need to visit a sick aunt, when they have something that they're struggling with, we understand that and we encourage them to leave and take the time to be with their family.

And so we try to recognize that you're only going to be good as a journalist if you're a well rounded human being, too. That’s part of it because we're not just living at 1150 15th Street. So, I think that’s the environment that we try to create at the Post.

MARVIN KALB: And so Kevin, you opened the door. Where are you going to live in about a year or two?

KEVIN MERIDA: Where am I going to live?

MARVIN KALB: Yeah, if that particular place that you just mentioned, now very famous address? Where you going to go?

KEVIN MERIDA: I don't know where we're going to end up being. We're just in the beginning stages of--

MARVIN KALB: Why don’t you just stay where you are?

KEVIN MERIDA: --looking at that. You know, you always can improve and expand and get bigger and better newsroom. You know, change is good, Marvin. We’ll get you an iPad. (Laughter)

MARVIN KALB: Yes?

DAVID PAULSON: I'm David Paulson, a GW alumnus. You spent a fair amount of time talking about the economics of the Post, but you made no mention of whether
income the Post has, like from TV stations, cable stations, and also Kaplan. Now, can some of that money be used to help offset perhaps some of the losses or decreased income from the Post?

**MARTY BARON:** Well, I'm not the CEO of the company, the chairman of the company. I'm just the executive editor of The Washington Post, so I don’t make those kinds of decisions. But I think the decision making at the Post is very similar to what it is at other news organizations which have a variety of units, some of which may be in the news business and some of which may not be in the news business. And that is that every unit needs to support itself. We can't be on the dole, The Washington Post sort of depending on Kaplan or the cable operations or some of these others to subsidize our business forever. Maybe in a bad year we can count on them to sort of help out. But, if you were in that business, you wouldn't much appreciate the fruits of your labor are going to help The Washington Post rather than be reinvested in your own business.

And I've never seen that happen anywhere else. Certainly, as I said, in a bad year it can sustain you, but it can't go on forever. Ultimately, The Washington Post needs to be a profitable business. It needs to find a sustainable model and it can't be on the dole from other companies that are within the parent company umbrella.

**MARVIN KALB:** Thank you. We've got time for two more questions, one on each side, starting there, please?

**CHARLES:** Hi, I'm Charles. I'm one of Gil Klein’s journalism students at American University. I was curious with the Post eliminating the ombudsman position and some of the reasoning behind it and why does The Washington Post feel they want to replace for reader representative? Because I know we've talked a lot about the Post’s traditional values, and I feel like the elimination of the ombudsman position goes against that core values of The Washington Post.
MARTY BARON: Well, I don't think having an ombudsman is a traditional value of *The Washington Post*. It was a position at *The Washington Post*. The traditional values of *The Washington Post* would be honest, honorable, accurate, fair, things like that. We still adhere to those values. Now, the purpose of the ombudsman was to take complaints from individuals who felt that somehow we were not adhering to those traditional values, that we had not fulfilled our obligations as journalists.

But the world has change. We have a lot of critics out there, they're all on the web. And they make their views known and people can exchange ideas. The notion of an ombudsman position that was invented, I guess, 40 years ago, or something like that, where he or she was the only person you could go to to get answers to your questions, it’s just no longer the case. People are sending me emails all the time and I get them answers. I'm sure Kevin gets lots of emails and he responds to those as well. All of the reporters, their emails are in the newspaper and they can respond.

And now, in addition to that, we have a reader representative who can get answers for people if they don’t feel that they're getting proper answers. All of us are meeting with people regularly. I have a group of people who are coming in in a couple of weeks who have grievances about a particular issue, and I'm going to meet with them. So, we do a lot of that and I'm not sure that a traditional ombudsman role where he or she is writing a column every week or every other week to address one particular issue that's of interest to him or her is the most effective model for answering the kinds of questions and concerns that we get from the general public.

MARVIN KALB: If we could have one brief question and one brief answer, we’ll wrap it up now?
SETH EISEN: Seth Eisen, I'm an avid newspaper reader. A couple of years ago, there was considerable discussion about the not for profit model from newspapers and then the discussion just disappeared. What's the current status of that approach?

MARTY BARON: Well, we know what not for profit means, actually. So we've had a not for profit model and we're not so happy with it. (Laughter) So, if you're talking about, let's say, a nonprofit structure, I mean the reality is there are newspapers that have that. So *The St. Petersburg Times* is owned by Poynter and they have a nonprofit-- they're subject to the same pressures that we do. They have to get advertising, they have to get readers, they're subject to the same disruption from the internet. There's virtually no difference except that they-- traditionally, they didn’t have the same kind of profit margins as other news organizations which were not nonprofits.

But these days, people's profit margins are diminimus anyway, even if they're making a profit. And so, the idea that somehow being a nonprofit is going to insulate you from the financial pressures is just a nonstarter. You're still subject to the economy, to the disruption from the internet, from the difficulty of getting advertising to the kind of ad rates that you have, all of those sorts of things. So it doesn't protect you.

So it never went anywhere because it didn't actually protect you. And on top of that, the public companies that own newspapers are not just going to give away their newspapers. They're going to sell them because typically if they're in a public company, they have a fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders to get the best possible value out of those. And there may be a nonprofit that buys one or two over a period of time. There's some talk that a group of interested in *The L. A. Times*, also a former newspaper of mine. You can tell I've worked a few places. But there's a group that wants to buy it and is talking about possibly putting it into a nonprofit. But even if that happens, it does not mean that *The L. A. Times* will not be subject to the same sorts of pressures that every other news organization is subject to.
MARVIN KALB: Marty, thank you very much, and Kevin, thank you both for coming here and sharing your time with us. And I think for being so candid and open and nice in the way in which you've responded to my questions. I thank you very much indeed, and thank you all for coming. Thank you. (Applause)

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