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Note: This article is pretty old (2007) - the situation is now MUCH WORSE in 2016

Media Dishonesty Matters

By [Randall Hoven](#)

We are being fed false and misleading information, in matters big and small. It has come from trusted sources such as established newspapers, experienced journalists, Pulitzer Prize winners and Nobel Peace Prize winners. It has been going on for a long time, sometimes by carelessness and sometimes by deliberate lying. I have compiled a list of 101 such incidents.

Did you know that *Time* magazine and other news organizations had a Vietnamese communist on full-time staff in Viet Nam during that war? Do you remember that ABC, CBS and NBC have *all* rigged cars or trucks with explosives or other devices to make them look dangerous on TV, or that *Consumer Reports* lied about the Suzuki Samurai enough to put it out of business? Do you know that multiple "veterans" of the Viet Nam and Iraq wars who told of atrocities there were never even in the military? Did you realize reputable news organizations such as the *Boston Globe* and Reuters cannot tell the difference between a real soldier and a toy doll, commercial pornography and soldiers committing rape, a burning tire dump and a bombed building, a fired and an unfired rifle round, or footage of the North Pole and a clip from the movie *Titanic*?

When it comes to President Bush, the media have lied about his National Guard service, lied about his serving a plastic turkey to troops in Iraq on Thanksgiving and then made a big deal about that phony story, lied about his speeches, quoted him by removing the words he actually used, and admitted they would use a harsher standard with him than his opponent John Kerry. To this day, they criticize his administration's handling of the Katrina crisis, which was actually one of the most successful rescue and recovery efforts in history, but barely mention their own huge and egregious mistakes in reporting on that event.

My original lists were published in *American Thinker* on [August 16](#) and [August 20](#), 2007. Since then I have added several and subtracted a few.

The subject of my list is not just journalism, but any dishonesty as related to the public debate. For this reason I included more than journalists. Historians and other "non-fiction" authors especially could be included. On a case by case basis, people of perceived moral authority and sufficient notoriety were included, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. I also needed a certain amount of clarity and credibility in the offense.

For these reasons, I removed three people from my previous lists. [Maria Bartiromo](#) was removed because her conflict of interest was just not solid enough. The Citicorp executive she was involved with caught greater grief than she did. [Joe Biden](#) was removed because politicians' speeches should be out of scope, or else the list would be nearly infinite. [Jacob Epstein](#) was removed because, while he definitely plagiarized, his was a work of fiction with no apparent "public debate" connection. There are [multitudes of plagiarizers](#).

I did receive a few complaints for not having "conservatives" on the list. There turns out to be a good reason for that: there just aren't that many who pass the criteria for clear dishonesty in the public debate. It is probably also related to the fact that so few journalists are conservative. Some people did send me "conservative" candidates for my list, but they told me more about the submitters than the people on the list. I [suspect Media Matters was the ultimate source](#) of most or all of them.

Also, I just did not vet the list for political leaning; I have no idea of the leanings of Mitch Albom, Jim Van Vliet, or a host of others on the list. However, I did add Doug Bandow, Michael Fumento and Armstrong Williams, all for "pay for play" type offenses, and all leaning to the conservative side.

So here is the list, in alphabetical order. And for those who don't know, or who would love to accuse *me* of plagiarism, there is a source for every item in the list, embedded in the name. Any quotes should be traceable to that source. (I've already been accused of plagiarism, but from those who read unauthorized copies that did not include the embedded links, instead of the original *American Thinker* article. That's right: I was accused of plagiarism because I was plagiarized.) While I provide a source for every item, a single source is not usually sufficient to prove anything. You might have to do some of your own searching if you remain unconvinced of a party's guilt. Space is limited.

The Dishonest 101

- 1. [ABC](#), Food Lion story (1992). Fraudulent techniques and probable fabrication. Two ABC producers lied on their resumes to get jobs at Food Lion. They each wore a wig hiding a tiny lipstick-sized camera, and each carried a concealed microphone. It's possible they shot footage of mishandled food by doing the mishandling themselves. Food Lion sued ABC and a jury awarded it \$5.5 million.
- 2. [ABC 20/20](#) "Exploding Fords" story (1978). Staged footage. Similar to the later NBC "exploding" GM trucks episode, ABC aired "grossly misleading crash videos and simulations, withheld the same sorts of material facts about the tests, and relied on the same dubious experts with the same ties to the plaintiffs bar... viewers were shown a crash fire and explosion without being told it had been started by an incendiary device."
- 3. [ABC 20/20](#), "Buckwheat" (of the Little Rascals) story. (1990). Fell for hoax. "In 1990 the ABC program 20/20 was hoaxed into believing that Billy "Buckwheat" Thomas was alive and working as a grocery bagger in Tempe, Arizona. (Thomas actually died in 1980.) A segment broadcast October 5 with narrator Hugh Downs featured an impostor."
- 4. [AFP/Yahoo News](#) (2007). Fell for hoax/lie. Ran a picture with the caption "**An elderly Iraqi woman shows two bullets which she says hit her house** following an early coalition forces raid in the predominantly Shiite Baghdad suburb of Sadr City." But the picture was of unfired cartridges, which could only have "hit her house" if they were thrown at it.
- 5. [Mitch Albom](#), *Detroit Free Press* (2005). Lying/fabricating. In his sports column, he described alumni players at a basketball game who were not even there.
- 6. [Stephen Ambrose](#), historian/author (2002). Plagiarism. He was almost a book "factory", writing eight books in five years. But that apparently came easier when parts were copied from other books, without attribution.
- 7. [Pham Xuan An](#), *Time* (1960's). Communist spy reporter. Pham Xuan An was a "Viet Cong colonel who worked as a reporter for U.S. news organizations during the Vietnam War while also spying for the communists... He was the first Vietnamese to be a full-time staff correspondent for a major U.S. publication, working primarily for *Time* magazine... his job as a spy was to uncover and report the plans of the South Vietnamese and U.S. military... he was considered the best Vietnamese reporter in the press corps." He died in Viet Nam in 2006, where he had been "promoted to major general and was named a Hero of the People's Armed Forces, with four military-exploit medals."
- 8. [Peter Arnett](#), CNN, NBC, *National Geographic* (1999-2003). Lying, bias, treasonous behavior. CNN fired him in 1999 for his reporting the *Operation Tailwind* story (see below). NBC and *National Geographic* fired him in March 2003 for being interviewed on Iraqi TV during war, in which he stated that the U.S. war plan had failed. "It was wrong for Mr. Arnett to grant an interview to state-controlled Iraqi TV, especially at a time of war," said NBC.
- 9. [Associated Press](#) (AP) (2005). Fell for hoax and phony photo. The AP ran a story, with a photo, about a soldier held hostage in Iraq. The photo turned out to be that of an action figure doll; there was no such soldier.
- 10. [Doug Bandow](#), columnist (2005). Failure to disclose potential conflict of interest. "The Copley News Service revealed it had suspended syndicated columnist Doug Bandow for allegedly accepting payments from Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff to write positive stories about Abramoff's clients." Bandow said, "It was a lapse of judgment on my part, and I take full responsibility for it."
- 11. [Mike Barnicle](#), *Boston Globe* (1998). Lying/fabricating and plagiarism. Totally made up stories, including one about a black kid and a white kid with cancer. Also used quotes from George Carlin as his own. Fired from the *Boston Globe*.
- 12. [BBC](#) and many others in the looted National Museum of Iraq story (2003). False reporting. The [BBC stated](#) on April 12, 2003, that "The museum's deputy director said looters had taken or destroyed 170,000 items of antiquity dating back thousands of years. 'They were worth billions of dollars... The Americans were supposed to protect the museum.'" By May, the *Telegraph* (UK) was reporting "They now believe that the number of items taken was in the low thousands, and possibly hundreds."
- 13. [Scott Beauchamp](#), *The New Republic* (2007). Lying. TNR hired this U.S. Army private and husband of one of its own staff to write first-hand accounts from Iraq. One of his accounts, supposedly demonstrating the dehumanizing effects of the Iraq war on him and fellow soldiers, occurred in Kuwait before Beauchamp even entered Iraq. Other parts of his writing are likely false, and if not, constitute military crimes on his part. In fact, his anonymous writing from a war zone is likely against military rules. This story is currently unfolding.

- 14. [Nada Behziz](#), *The Bakersfield Californian* (2005). Lying/fabricating and plagiarism. Writing mostly on health issues, she plagiarized from the *New York Times* and AP, made up sources, and got basic facts wrong. An investigation counted 29 fabricated or plagiarized articles. She also lied on her resume. She was fired.
- 15. [Michael Bellesiles](#), professor of history, author of *Arming America* and recipient of Columbia University's Bancroft Prize. Lying/fabricating. He made "myth shattering" claims about the history of guns in America that were based on fabricated historical records. He resigned from Emory University.
- 16. [Jayson Blair](#), *The New York Times* (2003). Lying/fabricating. He fabricated parts or all of at least 36 stories. He, along with his bosses Gerald Boyd and Howell Raines, resigned from the NYT.
- 17. [Doris Bloodworth](#), *Orlando Sentinel* (2004). Lying, or reporting with no substantiation. "The *Orlando Sentinel* has run a lengthy correction for articles in 2002 and 2003 saying federal authorities had confirmed that a jailed Jordanian had advance knowledge of the World Trade Center attack. The actual source was a lawyer for the Jordanian, and even he says the information was unconfirmed. The *Sentinel* declined to name the reporter. It was Doris Bloodworth, who resigned earlier this year after botching a story about an OxyContin patient who turned out to have had a cocaine conviction." The *Sentinel* also ran a lengthy correction to Bloodworth's OxyContin story.
- 18. [Ron Borges](#), *Boston Globe* sports writer (2007). Plagiarism. The *Globe* suspended him for two months "after allegations that he had plagiarized a portion of a football column from another sportswriter." He retired from the *Globe* when his suspension ended.
- 19. [The Boston Globe](#) (2004). Fake photos, fake story. *The Boston Globe* published pictures alleging U.S. troops raped Iraqi women. The pictures turned out to be commercially available pornography.
- 20. [Paul Bradley](#) *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (2006). Lying/fabricating. Made up his story on reactions to President Bush's speech on immigration. He fabricated interviews. He reported on an event in the first person, yet he was not even in the same town. He was fired.
- 21. [Rick Bragg](#), *The New York Times* (2003). "Drive-by" reporting. "Bragg's defense -- that it is common for *Times* correspondents to slip in and out of cities to 'get the dateline' while relying on the work of stringers, researchers, interns and clerks -- has sparked more passionate disagreement than the clear-cut fraud and plagiarism committed by Blair. The issue, put starkly, is whether readers are being misled about how and where a story was reported." He resigned.
- 22. [Fox Butterfield](#), *New York Times* (2000). Lying/fabricating and plagiarism. In 2003, a federal jury ruled that "the New York Times and one of its reporters libeled an Ohio Supreme Court justice" in an article published April 13, 2000. The jury found that the article was "not substantially true". He also "had lifted material from a story in *The Boston Globe* while [reporting, ironically, on plagiarism](#) by a Boston University dean".
- 23. [Thom Calandra](#), Marketwatch.com (2005). Conflict of interest. He profited by selling stocks shortly after giving them positive write-ups in his newsletter. The SEC brought suit against him, which was settled.
- 24. [Jimmy Carter](#), former U.S. President, Nobel Peace Prize winner and author of *Palestine: Peace, Not Apartheid*. Lying, plagiarism, bias. His book was so full of errors, including doctored maps, that his chief collaborator, Kenneth Stein of Emory University, resigned his position with the Carter Center. Carter's book was condemned by Alan Dershowitz and the Simon Wiesenthal Center, among others.
- 25. [CBS 60 Minutes](#), the "Runaway Audi" (1989). Fake footage/manufactured evidence. "... drilled a hole in an Audi transmission and pumped in air at high pressure. Viewers didn't see the drill or the pump -- just the doctored car blasting off like a rocket. The story starred a mother who had run over her six-year-old son. On the air, she insisted that she had had her foot on the brake the whole time. When her \$48 million claim came to court in Akron, Ohio, in June 1988 the investigating police officer and witnesses at the scene testified that after the accident the distraught mother had admitted that her foot had slipped off the brake. The jury found no defect in the car."
- 26. [CBS 60 Minutes](#), Illinois Power story (1979). Erroneous reporting. "The next day, the company's stock fell in the busiest trading day of its history. Illinois Power replied quickly to the story, however, producing a 44-minute videotape that served as a rebuttal to the show. The company sent it to customers, shareholders and investors, corporate executives and other journalists. It was a point-by-point reply to all of the assertions made on the show. In January 1980, CBS admitted to inaccuracies in the story."
- 27. [CBS 60 Minutes](#), another phony Vietnam vet story (1995). Fell for hoax/lie. Largely because of this *60 Minutes* piece that painted Joe Yandle as a troubled Viet Nam combat veteran, his prison sentence was commuted. In a follow-up story, Mike Wallace interviewed Yandle who admitted he had never served in Vietnam. A host of other phony combat veterans are uncovered [here](#).
- 28. [CBS, Dan Rather](#), *The Wall Within* (1988). Fell for hoax, liars. This documentary had Dan Rather interviewing six Viet Nam veterans who told stories of slaughter, cruelty and the horrors of war. "You're telling me that you went into the village, killed people, burned part of the village, then made it appear that the other side had done this?" Rather asked. "Yeah. It was kill VC, and I was good at what I did." It turned out that only one of the vets served in combat and their stories were false.
- 29. [CBS, Dan Rather, Mary Mapes](#) (2004). Fell for fake documents. CBS used forged documents from a non-credible source in claiming George W. Bush received favored treatment in the Air National Guard.

- 30. [Chris Cecil](#), *Cartersville Daily News* (2005). Plagiarism. "The associate managing editor of a small Georgia newspaper was fired for plagiarizing articles by a Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for *The Miami Herald*, including copying a passage about his mother's battle with cancer. Chris Cecil, 28, was fired from *The Daily Tribune News* of Cartersville on Thursday after the *Herald* pointed out six to eight columns written since March that contained portions from work by Leonard Pitts Jr."
- 31. [Philip Chien](#), *Wired News* (2006). Lying/fabricating. He made up sources and quotes in at least three articles. *Wired* withdrew the stories.
- 32. [Ward Churchill](#), Chairman of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado. Lying and plagiarism. He lied about his credentials and ethnic background to get a job in the first place. His "research" was laden with fabricated evidence, plagiarism and referencing his own previous writings under pseudonyms. He is worthy of Mary McCarthy's quote about Lillian Hellman: "Every word (s)he writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'." He was fired.
- 33. [CNN](#), *Operation Tailwind*, *CNN NewsStand* (1998). Lying/fabricating. The televised special claimed that the U.S. military used nerve gas in a mission to kill American defectors in Laos during the Vietnam War, but the story had no factual support. CNN later retracted the story.
- 34. [CNN and Eason Jordan](#) (2003). Admitted bias, slanting the news. Eason Jordan, CNN's news chief, admitted that CNN withheld reporting on Saddam Hussein's atrocities so as to continue getting favored treatment from Saddam.
- 35. [Consumer Reports](#), Suzuki Samurai rollover story. (1988) False reporting. After *CR* reported that the Samurai "easily rolls over in turns", Samurai sales plummeted. Suzuki sued Consumers Union, parent of *Consumer Reports*, and the suit was settled in 1999, with CU admitting that "Samurai's real world rollover accident performance was within a range with other utility vehicles" and that "National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and others have criticized the CU tests."
- 36. [Janet Cooke](#), *Washington Post* (1980-1981), Pulitzer Prize winner. Lying/fabricating. Her series on "Jimmy's World" about an 8-year-old heroin addict was totally made up.
- 37. [Katie Couric](#), "Katie Couric's Notebook," *CBSNews.com* (2007). Plagiarism. In the first place, her blog is largely written by someone else. That someone else copied material from *The Wall Street Journal*, without attribution.
- 38. [The Daily Egyptian](#) (2005). Fell for hoax. This student newspaper wrote a series about the family of a soldier in Iraq who subsequently died, except that the whole thing was made up.
- 39. [Alexis Debat](#), *ABC* and *Politique Internationale* (2007). Lied. "Since 2002, [ABC] has employed Debat as a counterterrorism consultant and sometimes reporter." He "had faked an interview with Sen. Barack Obama that he published under his name in a French journal, *Politique Internationale* [and] had published other alleged interviews in the same journal with Sen. Hillary Clinton, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, former Microsoft chairman Bill Gates, and former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. It turns out, ABC itself later reported, the interviews were apparently fabricated."
- 40. [Allan Detrich](#), *The Toledo Blade* (2007). Doctored photos. He submitted 79 photographs that were altered. "The changes Mr. Detrich made included erasing people, tree limbs, utility poles, electrical wires, electrical outlets, and other background elements from photographs. In other cases, he added elements such as tree branches and shrubbery." He resigned.
- 41. [Maureen Dowd](#), *New York Times* (2003). Serious misquoting. She cut words out of one of President Bush's statements, using quotation marks, to imply he said al-Qaida is no longer a problem. He was really referring only to those who were dead or captured.
- 42. [Stephen Dunphy](#), *Seattle Times* associate editor and business columnist (2004). Plagiarism. He used significant quotes (e.g., seven paragraphs at a time) from other sources on multiple occasions. He resigned.
- 43. [Walter Duranty](#), *The New York Times* (1930s), Pulitzer Prize winner. Lying. This man visited Stalin's Russia and wrote that nothing untoward was happening there -- no famine, etc. In fact, up to 10 million people died in the Ukraine famine. His writings matched Russian propaganda almost exactly. His Pulitzer Prize still stands.
- 44. [Joseph Ellis](#), professor at Mount Holyoke College and historian/author (2001), Pulitzer Prize winner. Lying. He falsely claimed military service in Vietnam and incorporated his war "experiences" into his college courses on "The Vietnam War and American Culture". Mount Holyoke censured him and suspended him without pay for one year.
- 45. [Diana Griego Erwin](#), *Sacramento Bee* (2005). Lying/fabricating. The *Bee* was "unable to verify the existence of 43 people she named in her columns". She resigned.
- 46. [Hassan Fattah](#), *New York Times* (2006). Fell for a hoax. Did a front page story about the man in one of the famous Abu Ghraib photos. But it turned out that the man who claimed to be the one in the picture, who provided details for the story, was not the one in the picture at all.
- 47. [James Forlong](#), *Sky News* (2003). Fake story, fake footage. He presented footage from a missile test as actual combat in Iraq. He subsequently committed suicide.
- 48. [Jay Forman](#), *Slate* (2001). Fake story. He wrote an article describing the fictitious sport of Monkey Fishing as real. *Slate* later published an apology and admitted details were fictitious.
- 49. [James Frey](#), author of *A Million Little Pieces*, Oprah Book Club. Lying. Virtually the entire "nonfiction memoir" of his vomit-caked years as an alcoholic, drug addict, and criminal was fabricated.

- 50. [Michael Fumento](#), syndicated columnist and author (2006). Failure to disclose potential conflict of interest. He failed to disclose when he wrote articles mentioning Monsanto that Monsanto gave money to the Hudson Institute, where Fumento was a fellow. Scripps-Howard News Service severed ties with him.
- 51. [Michael Gallagher](#), *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (1998). Information theft. "Mike Gallagher had illegally tapped into Chiquita's voice mail system and used information he obtained as a result in stories questioning Chiquita's business practices in Latin America." The paper agreed to pay Chiquita Brands International over \$10 million and run an apology on the front page three times.
- 52. [Andrew Gilligan](#), BBC (2004). False/unsubstantiated reporting. He reported that the UK government had exaggerated the threat by Saddam to justify going to war. His report was largely based on an interview with weapons expert David Kelly. His story was found to be "defective" and his claims "unfounded" by Lord Hutton's investigation. Gilligan resigned and Kelly committed suicide.
- 53. [Stephen Glass](#), *The New Republic* (1998). Lying. "Glass, a 25-year-old rising star at *The New Republic*, wrote dozens of high-profile articles for a number of national publications in which he made things up... he made up people, places and events. He made up organizations and quotations. Sometimes, he made up entire articles. And to back it all up, he created fake notes, fake voicemails, fake faxes, even a fake Web site - whatever it took to deceive his editors, not to mention hundreds of thousands of readers." He was fired.
- 54. [Jacqueline Gonzalez](#), *San Antonio Express News* (2007). Plagiarism. She admitted "she used, without attribution, information from a Web site for a Christmas Day column. Later research uncovered further examples of plagiarism in two other columns."
- 55. [Doris Kearns Goodwin](#), historian/author (2002). Plagiarism. Large portions of her book, *The Fitzgeralds and the Kennedys*, were lifted from multiple other sources without attribution. She took a leave of absence from PBS.
- 56. [Linda Gorov](#), *The Boston Globe* Super Bowl spouse abuse story (1993). Lying or falling for hoax. Gorov reported that wife abuse increases dramatically during the Super Bowl, following a narrative started by a coalition of women's groups. The *Washington Post* can be credited with investigating, and found that the sources for the original story evaporated under scrutiny, and that reports from women's shelters showed no increase in cases during Super Bowl, in direct contradiction of Gorov's story.
- 57. [Adnan Hiji](#), Reuters (2006). Doctored photos. He doctored dozens of pictures of the 2006 Lebanon-Israel conflict. Reuters later withdrew all 920 of his photos from sale. (See more on middle east "fauxtography", including blog-famous "Wailing Woman" or "Flat Fatima", "Islamic Rage Boy", "Green Helmet Guy", "Mickey Mouse" rubble, Israeli "missile" hole in ambulance, dead guy walking, etc., [here](#).)
- 58. [Alex Haley](#) (1977), Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Roots*. Plagiarism. He settled a lawsuit for \$650,000, admitting that large passages of *Roots* were copied from the book *The African* by Harold Courlander.
- 59. [Mark Halperin](#), ABC News (2004). Admitted bias. He wrote a memo to news staff telling them to hold George Bush to a stricter standard than John Kerry: "Kerry distorts, takes out of context, and makes] mistakes all the time, but these are not central to his efforts to win. We have a responsibility to hold both sides accountable to the public interest, but that doesn't mean we reflexively and artificially hold both sides 'equally' accountable when the facts don't warrant that."
- 60. [Jack Hitt](#), *New York Times* (2006). Lying, or at least really sloppy research. He wrote a story about a woman in El Salvador who was sentenced to prison for having an abortion when she was 18 weeks pregnant. It turned out that "her child was carried to term, was born alive and died in its first minutes of life." In short, her crime was infanticide, not abortion.
- 61. [Houston Chronicle](#), Light Rail Controversy (2002). Admitted bias. An internal memo outlined how the paper would promote the light rail project in Houston and do research into Tom Delay and other light rail opponents. That would be creating the news rather than reporting it.
- 62. [Michael Isikoff](#), *Newsweek* (2005). False/unsubstantiated reporting. The *Newsweek* article claimed that a U.S. interrogator at a Guantanamo Bay had flushed a Koran down the toilet (2005). "Anti-U.S. fanatics seized on the report to stir up riots that have left more than a dozen people dead in Pakistan and Afghanistan." There is no evidence such a thing ever happened, and most of us wonder how it would even be possible.
- 63. [Eason Jordan](#), CNN (2005). False accusations. He accused U.S. forces in Iraq of deliberately targeting and killing journalists. He apologized and resigned.
- 64. [Jack Kelley](#), *USA Today* (2004). Lying. *USA Today* concluded of "the star" of its news staff: "Jack Kelley's dishonest reporting dates back at least as far as 1991."
- 65. [Martin Luther King](#), Doctor of Theology, Nobel Peace Prize winner (1950's). Plagiarism. Parts of his PhD thesis were plagiarized. A Boston University committee found that he was "responsible for knowingly misappropriating the borrowed materials that he failed to cite or to cite adequately... that is a straightforward breach of academic norms and that constitutes plagiarism as commonly understood." The committee chairman added, "under no circumstances would the atmosphere under which he did his work condone what Dr. King did. It's incredible. He was not unaware of the correct procedure. This wasn't just done out of ignorance." His degree was not revoked, but the university did attach a letter to his dissertation explaining the plagiarism.

- 66. [Lewis Lapham](#), *Harper's* (2004). Lying. Reported on the Republican National Convention before it happened, then justified himself. He was caught "describing events from this year's Republican National Convention before it convened." When caught, Lapham "both *apologized* for the fictionalizing, calling it a 'mistake ... a serious one' and a 'mix up,' and *defended* it as 'rhetorical invention' and 'poetic license.'"
- 67. [Jason Leopold](#), *Salon*, *Dow Jones*, *Truthout.org* (2002-2006). Lying. Leopold "was caught making stuff up in a 2002 *Salon.com* article, self-admittedly 'getting it completely wrong' in pieces for Dow Jones, and had his own memoir cancelled because of concerns over the accuracy of quotations." In 2006 he reported that Karl Rove was indicted by Patrick Fitzgerald, when he wasn't. He was fired from multiple organizations.
- 68. [Dennis Love](#), *Sacramento Bee* (2001). Fabrication and plagiarism. "The Sacramento Bee fired Love for plagiarizing and fabricating material in his stories on the presidential campaign."
- 69. [Jesse MacBeth](#), anti-war star (2006). Lying/fabricating. "Jesse MacBeth stoked opposition to the Iraq war in 2006 when he spoke out about atrocities he committed as a U.S. Army Ranger serving as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. MacBeth, 23, of Tacoma, claimed to have killed more than 200 people, many at close range, some as they prayed in a mosque. He spoke at an anti-war rally in Tacoma and appeared in a 20-minute anti-war video that circulated widely on the Internet. Trouble is, none of MacBeth's claims was true."
- 70. [Herbert L. Matthews](#), *New York Times* (1957-60's). Liar or fool; the Walter Duranty of Castro's Cuba. "Matthews' flat declaration that Castro was an anti-communist would, of course, come back to haunt him. And though that was the most extreme example of the extraordinary credulousness with which Matthews treated Castro's claims, it is by no means the only one. Bluntly put, virtually everything in Matthews' story is a lie."
- 71. [Rigoberta Menchu](#), author of *I, Rigoberta* (1983), Nobel Peace Prize winner (1992). Lying/fabricating. She claimed her autobiographical book "is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people." However, "Menchú augmented her own story with that of the Indians of Guatemala generally, reporting experiences she either did not have or could not have witnessed and misrepresenting the violent history of her area of Guatemala to support her own cause as a Guatemalan guerrilla organizer."
- 72. [Greg Mitchell](#), editor of *Editor & Publisher* (2006). Lying. He admitted to fabricating a story in his younger reporting days.
- 73. [Bob Morris](#), *Orlando Sentinel* (1993). Plagiarism. "The Sentinel discovered that Morris had written a column for the paper in October 1993 that was essentially the same as one published eleven years earlier by Mike Harden... Punishment was moot since Morris was no longer on the Sentinel staff. But the paper published an apology to its readers and made a cash settlement to Harden."
- 74. [National Geographic](#) and paleontologists, (1999). Fell for hoax. Philip J. Currie and other paleontologists "announced the discovery of *Archaeoraptor* at a press conference in Washington, D.C., at the National Geographic Society" in October 1999 (SN: 11/20/99, p. 328). "At the time, they called it a missing link between birds and dinosaurs." Later, "red-faced and downhearted, paleontologists are growing convinced that they have been snookered by a bit of fossil fakery from China. The 'feathered dinosaur' specimen that they recently unveiled to much fanfare apparently combines the tail of a dinosaur with the body of a bird, they say."
- 75. [NBC](#), *Waiting to Explode* segment on *Dateline NBC* (1992). Faking evidence and footage. NBC demonstrated the explosive danger of GM trucks' gas tanks by showing one actually explode in what appeared to be normal circumstances. "NBC said the truck's gas tank had ruptured, yet an X ray showed it hadn't; NBC consultants set off explosive miniature rockets beneath the truck split seconds before the crash -- yet no one told the viewers."
- 76. [New Orleans Times-Picayune](#) and many other newspapers reported rumors, hoaxes and lies related to hurricane Katrina. The *NOTP* came clean and critiqued itself and others saying, "media coverage of Hurricane Katrina was marred by the widespread reporting-sometimes attributed to public officials-of murders and rapes that apparently never took place". Also see [Popular Mechanics](#) for a refutation of Katrina myths.
- 77. [Christopher Newton](#), Associated Press (2002). Lying. "The Associated Press accused Washington bureau reporter Christopher Newton of journalistic fraud last month and sacked him. The AP alleges that in at least 40 of the many hundred stories Newton wrote for the wire service between Jan. 13, 2000, and Sept. 8, 2002, Newton quoted sources who appear not to exist."
- 78. [NPR](#), [CNN](#) and others on the "Jenin massacre" (2002). Lying. CNN reported: "There's almost a massacre now taking place in Jenin. Helicopter gun ships are throwing missiles at one square kilometer packed with almost 15,000 people in a refugee camp . . . This is a war crime, clear war crime." However, the actual "death toll was 56 Palestinians, the majority of them combatants, and 23 Israeli soldiers."
- 79. [Michael Olesker](#), *Baltimore Sun* (2006). Plagiarism. "Veteran Baltimore Sun columnist Michael Olesker, who has been in a high-profile feud with Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich, was dismissed yesterday over several instances in which he used, without attribution, wording similar to that employed by other journalists."
- 80. [Ken Powers](#), sportswriter for *The Telegram & Gazette* (2005). Plagiarism. Powers "was fired on Thursday after an investigation determined that he had not only plagiarized parts of a recent column from a *Sports Illustrated* writer, but had borrowed from other writers in the past without proper attribution."

- 81. [Reuters](#), Lebanon coverage (2006). Fake/staged photos. A burning tire dump as the scene of an Israeli bombing, Photoshopped bomb smoke, etc. during the Lebanon-Israel conflict.
- 82. [Reuters](#) Russia's North Pole coverage (2007). More fake photos/footage. "Reuters has been forced to admit that footage it released last week purportedly showing Russian submersibles on the seabed of the North Pole actually came from the movie *Titanic*." The mistake was caught by a 13-year-old Finnish boy.
- 83. [Bart Ripp](#) *Tacoma News Tribune* (2004). Lying food critic. "Ripp took food for free and made up fake interviews... The Tacoma News Tribune admits its restaurant critic messed up. They believe Ripp lied and that he made up at least 25 sources he quoted in his articles." Ripp quit when confronted.
- 84. [Tim Ryan](#), *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (2006). Plagiarism. This entertainment reporter wrote multiple articles with words lifted from other sources without attribution. He was fired.
- 85. [Mirthala Salinas](#) anchor for Emmy Award winning newscast on KVEA-TV in Los Angeles (2007). Conflict of interest. She was having an affair with LA's mayor while reporting on him. "Telemundo and Mirtha Salinas have mutually agreed to end our employment relationship effective October 1," station spokesman Victor M. Franco [said](#).
- 86. [Uli Schmetzer](#), *Chicago Tribune* (2004). Lying. "The Chicago Tribune said Wednesday it fired a freelance writer and former longtime foreign correspondent for the newspaper after he admitted fabricating the name of a source he quoted making disparaging remarks about Aborigines in a recent story from Australia."
- 87. [Ruth Shalit](#), *The New Republic* (1995). Lying/fabricating and plagiarism. She was fired.
- 88. [Gail Sheehy](#) author (1976). Plagiarism. "Manhattan Journalist Gail Sheehy, in preparing her 1976 bestseller *Passages*, borrowed enough from [UCLA Psychiatrist Roger] Gould's unpublished research that the psychiatrist sued for plagiarism. The suit was settled out of court, with Gould receiving \$10,000 and 10% of Sheehy's royalties."
- 89. [Eric Slater](#), *Los Angeles Times* (2005). Inaccuracy and plagiarism. "The LA Times ran a lengthy Editor's Note that outlines the inaccuracies, 'substandard' reporting methods and unverifiable quotes in two stories by reporter Eric Slater." He was fired.
- 90. [Patricia Smith](#), *Boston Globe* (1998), Pulitzer Prize finalist. Lying/fabricating "An award-winning metro columnist for *The Boston Globe* resigned Thursday after being asked to leave by the paper's editor, who said she admitted to fabricating people and quotes in four columns this year." "I attributed quotes to people who didn't exist."
- 91. [Barbara Stewart](#), *Boston Globe* (2005). Lying/fabricating. "*The Boston Globe* acknowledged yesterday publishing a partially fabricated story by a freelance reporter about a Canadian seal hunt that had not taken place."
- 92. [Evan Thomas](#), *Newsweek* (2004). Admitted bias. Thomas said, "Let's talk a little media bias here. The media, I think, wants Kerry to win. ... They're going to portray Kerry and Edwards as being young and dynamic and optimistic and there's going to be this glow about them ... that's going to be worth maybe 15 points."
- 93. [Nina Totenberg](#), *The National Observer* (1972). Plagiarism. She was fired by *The National Observer* for plagiarism. "Totenberg had allegedly lifted several paragraphs from a *Washington Post* story and dropped them into a piece she was writing about former House Speaker Tip O'Neill for the now-defunct *National Observer*." She is currently legal correspondent for NPR.
- 94. [Jim Van Vliet](#), *Sacramento Bee* (2005). Misrepresentation and plagiarism. "The reporter watched the game on television at a location away from the stadium. He filed his story without telling editors at The Bee his true location, leaving the impression he covered the game from the ballpark. In addition, it was discovered later that the story included quotes from other media outlets that were unattributed and old, made to reporters on a previous occasion before the day of the game." He no longer works there.
- 95. [Brian Walski](#), *The Los Angeles Times* (2003). Doctored photos. The *LA Times* admitted that it "published a front-page photograph that had been altered in violation of Times policy."
- 96. [Washington Post](#) (and others), "Plastic Turkey" story (2003). Lying or false reporting. The *Post* and a host of other media, including the *New York Times*, reported that President Bush was photographed with a plastic turkey rather than a real one when he visited troops in Iraq on Thanksgiving. The story was used to paint the White House as a public relations spin machine, with policy just as fake as the turkey. But in fact, the turkey was real. Multiple newspapers issued corrections.
- 97. [Gary Webb](#), Pulitzer Prize winner, *San Jose Mercury News* (1996). Lying. He wrote the series of articles saying the CIA under President Reagan brought crack cocaine to Los Angeles. "Major parts of Webb's reporting were later discredited by other newspaper investigations. An investigation by the Los Angeles Police Department found no evidence of a connection between the CIA and the drug traffickers. In 1997, then-Mercury News executive editor Jerry Ceppos backed away from the series, saying 'we fell short at every step of our process.' Webb was transferred to one of the paper's suburban bureaus." He committed suicide in 2004, but remains a hero to many conspiracy theorists.
- 98. [Armstrong Williams](#), TV show host and columnist (2004). Pay for play. He was paid by the Bush administration to promote Bush policies on his TV show and in his columns. He did so without disclosure. Unlike Maggie Gallagher and Michael McManus, he was paid directly for the content of his show and columns, not government brochures. Plus, his pay was much more significant: \$241,000. He also settled a lawsuit with the government for failure to fulfill a contract.
- 99. [Duff Wilson and Jonathan D. Glater](#), *New York Times* Duke Lacrosse reporting (2006). Flawed reporting. The NYT stories generally painted the prosecution as strong and the defense weak. As it turned out, the charges were dropped, the

defendants completely vindicated and apologized to, and prosecutor Nifong was himself put in jail. The *NYT*'s own "public editor", Byron Calame, stated "the article last August had left me concerned that Times journalists were not sufficiently skeptical in relying so heavily on the [prosecution investigator] Gottlieb notes." Calame does assure us, however, that "most flaws flowed from journalistic lapses rather than ideological bias."

- 100. [Bob Wisehart](#), *Sacramento Bee* (1994). Plagiarism. "*Sacramento Bee* editor Gregory Favre fired TV columnist Bob Wisehart the second time he plagiarized. For the first offense, Wisehart got a five-month suspension even though his plagiarism involved hundreds of words taken from Stephen King's book *Danse Macabre* for a television column about horror shows."
- 101. [Micah Wright](#). Author and anti-war activist (2003). Lying. Claimed to be a former U.S. Ranger and combat veteran. His book, *You Back the Attack! We'll Bomb Who We Want!*, was endorsed by novelist Kurt Vonnegut and historian Howard Zinn. He was never in the military.

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Update: Entry number 102 is [Fox News](#)

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July 9, 2008

Make That 102 (Fox News)

By [Randall Hoven](#)

Liberals can now relax. Fox News can now be added to my Media Dishonesty Matters [list of 101 incidents](#), making the new list 102. A common gripe about my list was, "Where is Fox?" Well, up until July 2, 2008, Fox hadn't done anything bad enough to merit making it. Now I think they have.

As *Media Matters* [summarizes](#) it:

"During a segment in which *Fox & Friends* co-hosts Steve Doocy and Brian Kilmeade labeled *New York Times* reporter Jacques Steinberg and editor Steven Reddicliffe "attack dogs," Fox News featured photos of Steinberg and Reddicliffe that appeared to have been digitally altered -- the journalists' teeth had been yellowed, their facial features exaggerated, and portions of Reddicliffe's hair moved further back on his head."

Media Matters provides a video clip of the segment, as well as side-by-side comparisons of the photos. I could detect no hint that this was sarcasm or a spoof. And the photos were seriously inaccurate and unflattering without being obvious caricatures. I've seen Doocy and Kilmeade before. *Fox & Friends* is an informal morning show, mixing a little goofiness with the news. But there was nothing in this segment that made clear the photos were doctored. You would have thought the journalists really looked like the pictures shown on Fox.

Editor and Publisher [quotes](#) Bill O'Reilly as saying

"Well, some folks at the Times are outraged, as are the far-left loons over at Media Matters. Now, this is rich. Because, here are the caricatures the New York Times used of me when they slashed my book 'Culture Warrior.' Nice images, aren't they? You notice the horn in there? Isn't that nice? OK! So let me get this straight, New York Times people, we can't mock you, but you can mock us. Am I getting this? If the Times editor Bill Keller would wise up, perhaps their business might improve."

A [video](#) of O'Reilly saying this is provided by *Media Matters*. He described the Fox photo of Steinberg as an "unflattering caricature." The images of O'Reilly by the *Times*, however, were clearly cartoonish drawings, not photos. No reasonable person would think he really has a horn. But a reasonable person would think that Steinberg and Reddicliffe look like the photos shown on *Fox*.

It is probably true that Fox pulled an *inside joke* on Steinberg and Reddicliffe, a joke that would be obvious to them and other journalist insiders. But Joe Audience would not have caught the joke. I didn't, even when I knew to look for it.

This is not as egregious as, say, *Time* magazine using a communist spy to help them report from Vietnam during that war, or Jayson Blair fabricating just about everything he wrote for the *New York Times*. But it might rank with ABC falling for a guy pretending to be "Buckwheat" of the Little Rascals, or *Slate* for a story on the fake sport of "monkey fishing."

Fox News, welcome to the club.

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