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Journalists on the Front Lines

Erika Llenza

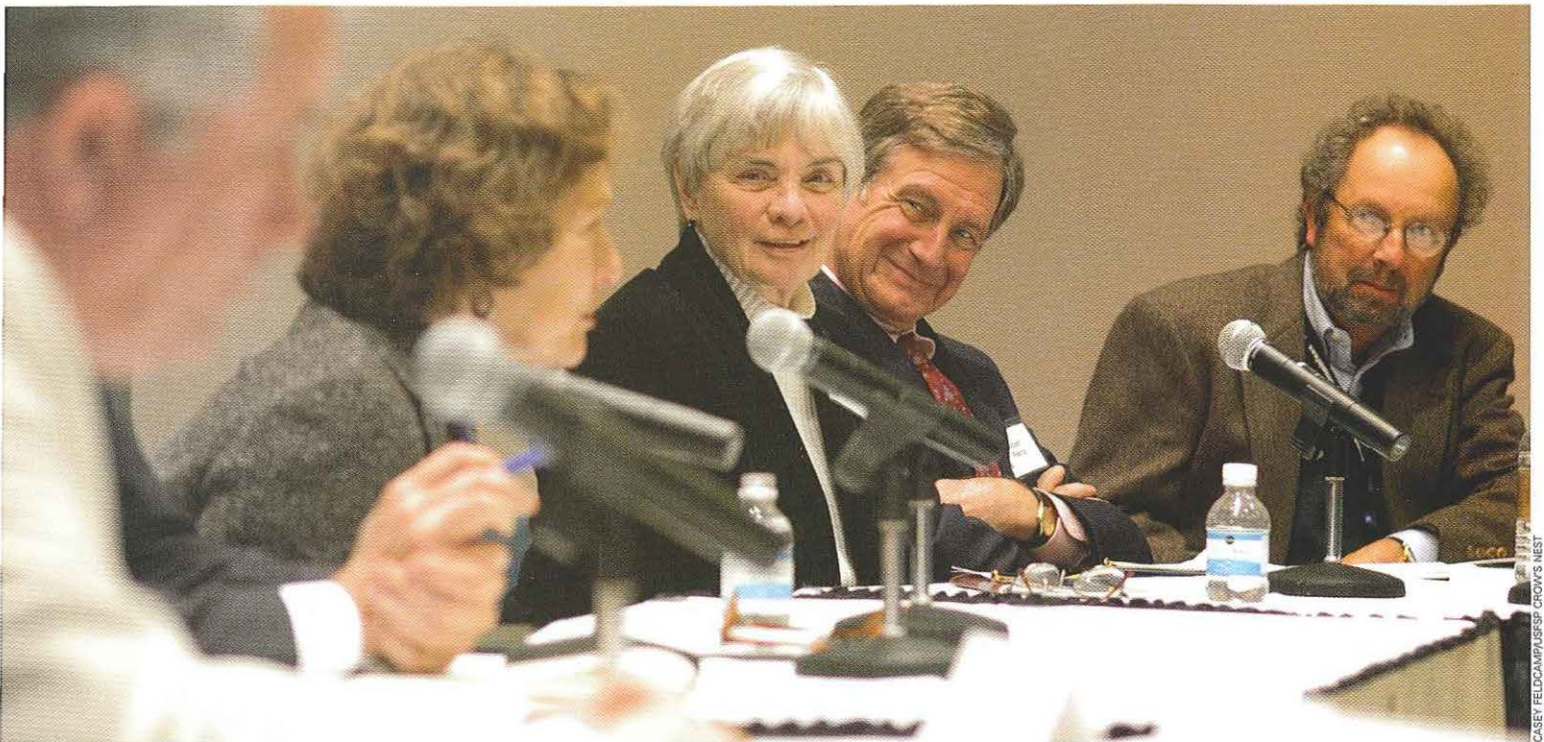
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FROM LEFT: MARTIN BELL, FORMER BBC WAR CORRESPONDENT; JUDITH LICHTENBERG, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY, USF ST. PETERSBURG; BARBARA CROSSETTE, FORMER NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT; ALBERT PIERCE, PROFESSOR OF ETHICS AND NATIONAL DEFENSE, NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D.C.; BOB STEELE, NELSON POYNTER SCHOLAR, USF ST. PETERSBURG.

Journalists on the Front Lines

"Let me dispose of the objectivity myth right now. There cannot be such a thing—all journalists are human beings. What you report comes through the filter of your senses and your memory and your experiences," said Martin Bell, former BBC correspondent, at the Journalists & War Conference at USF St. Petersburg in February.

Journalists, media critics, academics and a Pentagon spokesperson gathered for a two-day conference, organized by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, to discuss the role of journalism in war. Not surprisingly, students and participants from the community had many questions regarding the state of affairs in the war in Iraq.

Corey Flintoff, NPR newscaster and war correspondent, said that

one of the chief differences between previous wars and the war in Iraq is the fact that journalists have become targets for the opposition, making it more difficult for journalists to secure sources and seek out information.

"What it amounts to is the security situation in Iraq is now so bad that civilians of any kind—particularly reporters—can't get around in the way that Martin (Bell) or Barbara (Crossette) are used to doing," he said. "The only ways we can get around are things that will inevitably distort our perception."

Audience members were captivated by the discussion and asked questions of panelists both individually and as a group.

"Participants were eager to hear panelists' perspectives," said Deni Elliot, professor of journalism ethics and event organizer. "They painted a vivid picture of the special challenges they face when reporting on war. I'm glad that we were able to

gather panelists of this caliber to talk about such a timely topic. Corey Flintoff flew in after a tour of reporting in Baghdad."

Featured speakers included: Flintoff; Martin Bell; Barbara Crossette, former *New York Times* correspondent for South and Southeast Asia; Philip Seib, professor of journalism at Marquette University in Milwaukee and author of *Beyond the Front Lines*; Norman Solomon, author of *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death*; Bryan Whitman, senior Pentagon spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Defense.

The Journalists & War Conference was sponsored by the USF St. Petersburg Department of Journalism, Cole Chair in Ethics, Poynter Jamison Chair in Media Ethics and Policy and Poynter Institute, a school for journalists, future journalists and teachers of journalism.

—ERIKA LLENZA