

US Media's Global Warming Denialism

Exclusive: Besides nuclear war, arguably the greatest threat to human civilization is global warming, but the U.S. news media virtually ignored the issue in 2016, bowing to economic and political pressures, writes Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

Emperor Nero may (or may not) have fiddled while Rome burned, but commercial U.S. TV networks definitely fiddled last year on climate coverage while the Earth grew dangerously hot.

An annual climate report issued this month by the World Meteorological Organization confirms that average global temperatures and global sea levels continued their inexorable rise in 2016, setting new records. Global sea ice dropped to an “unprecedented” extent. Extreme weather conditions, probably aggravated by climate disruption, displaced hundreds of thousands of people, left millions hungry, and caused “severe economic damage.”

Yet in the midst of such frightening changes, and a national presidential campaign with enormous consequences for U.S. climate policy, the four major broadcast networks – ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox News Sunday – significantly *decreased* their coverage of climate issues on evening and Sunday news programs, according to a new analysis by Media Matters. Television programs like these are the major source of news for 57 percent of adult Americans.

The four networks devoted a mere 50 minutes on their evening and Sunday news programs to climate change in all of 2016. That was a two-thirds *drop* from the meager time they gave to perhaps the most important issue of our time in 2015. (These figures reflect deliberate coverage by the networks, not incidental mentions of climate by talk show guests.)

Remarkably, ABC managed to beat even Fox for the least climate coverage last year – only six minutes (down from 13 in 2015). Fox provided a grand seven minutes of coverage. CBS topped the group with 27 minutes, but that was still a sharp drop from the 45 minutes it devoted in 2015.

The networks can hardly claim there was nothing of substance to cover. Audiences love news about political controversy, weather, and disasters – and the issue of climate disruption provided all three. The 2016 election, for example, offered a stark and highly controversial choice between Donald Trump, who dismissed global warming as a “hoax” and promised to revive dirty coal as a fuel of choice in the

United States, and Hillary Clinton, who supported major new investments in clean energy.

Yet the major TV network news programs “did not air a single segment informing viewers of what to expect on climate change and climate-related policies or issues under a Trump or Clinton administration,” according to Media Matters.

Similarly, their reporters did not ask even one question about climate change during all of last year’s presidential and vice presidential debates. Instead, they waited until *after* the election to inform viewers about how the country’s vote for Trump would affect the future of climate policy.

Media Matters notes that plenty of other climate-related stories also cried out for attention last year, including, “extreme weather events tied to climate change, like Hurricane Matthew and the record-breaking rainfall and flooding in Louisiana (which the American Red Cross described as ‘the worst natural disaster to strike the United States since Superstorm Sandy’); the signing of the Paris climate agreement and the U.N. climate summit in Morocco; the official announcement from NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration that 2015 was the hottest year on record by far; and investigations by state attorneys general into whether ExxonMobil committed fraud by misleading the public on climate change.”

Ignoring Links

Yet not once last year did NBC or Fox report on the link between climate disruption and extreme weather, such as the record rainfall in Louisiana or the devastating wildfires that consumed more than 100,000 acres across seven states in the Southeast. ABC gave the topic only one news segment.

Fox News Sunday was the only show to address the climate context for the fight by Native American tribes to block construction of the Dakota Access oil pipeline. Several networks offered slightly more coverage of the climate issues surrounding the Keystone XL pipeline, which will transport heavy tar sands oil from Canada, but ABC managed to ignore that topic as well. (The State Department previously reported that completion of Keystone could increase annual greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 27 billion metric tons per year, the equivalent of adding several million passenger vehicles to the roads.)

The Sunday shows did not invite any scientists to discuss climate issues last year. And aside from NBC *Nightly News*, no commercial network covered the link between climate change and public health, including the spread of mosquito-borne diseases like the Zika virus.

PBS *NewsHour* crushed the competition in terms of the frequency, length, and

seriousness of its climate coverage. It was the only show to inform voters about the policy impacts of a Trump or Clinton presidency *before* the election. It ran 18 segments on climate science, compared to 11 on all the other evening news shows combined. Perhaps not coincidentally, the Trump administration proposes eliminating funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which supports the *NewsHour*.

The coverage choices of America's most-watched networks have great ramifications, starting with the election of climate denier Donald Trump. His choice as EPA administrator, Scott Pruitt, is a notorious climate denier, and is surrounding himself with former aides to Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe, an even more notorious denier. His Energy Secretary, Rick Perry, notoriously favored closing that agency altogether. President Trump issued executive orders reviving the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines. He eliminated references to global warming on the White House web site.

The Trump administration also proposes killing the EPA's popular Energy Star program, which helps consumers save money by choosing more energy efficient appliances. His budget also would wipe out clean-tech research and development programs at the Department of Energy.

This week, President Trump plans to sign an executive order instructing the EPA to consider repealing the Clean Power Plan, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. His order reportedly will also encourage coal-mining leases on public lands, ease oil and gas drilling rules, and direct agencies to find ways to promote more energy production.

These actions not only fly in the face of science, they also run counter to his promises to create new jobs. A new Sierra Club analysis finds that across the nation, "clean energy jobs outnumber all fossil fuel jobs by over 2.5 to 1, and they exceed all jobs in coal and gas by 5 to 1."

In the long run, nothing the Trump administration does about health insurance, tax reform, or military spending – short of getting us into nuclear war – will matter nearly as much as its determined efforts to prevent global action on climate disruption.

"We are moving into uncharted territory at a frightening speed," warned Michel Jarraud, the secretary general of the World Meteorological Organization. "Every year we report a new record in greenhouse gas concentrations. Every year we say that time is running out. We have to act now to slash greenhouse gas emissions if we are to have a chance to keep the increase in temperatures to manageable levels."

Jarraud issued that plea nearly a year and a half ago. Time is, indeed, running out.

Jonathan Marshall is author of [“Global Warming’s Threat to Trump’s Mar-a-Lago,”](#) [“Dangerous Denial of Global Warming,”](#) [“To Fight Global Warming, Canada Ponders a Carbon Tax,”](#) and [“Global Warming Adds to Mideast Hot Zone.”](#)

Gorsuch’s Soft Style and Hard Line

After blocking President Obama’s Supreme Court nominee for the past year, the Republicans got President Trump to put up a soft-spoken but hard-line right-winger in Judge Neil Gorsuch, as Marjorie Cohn described for Truthdig.

By Marjorie Cohn

When Donald Trump’s chief of staff Reince Priebus addressed the Conservative Political Action Committee in February, he identified two priorities of the administration: the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch to the Supreme Court, and deregulation.

It turns out that elevating Gorsuch to the Supreme Court and achieving deregulation are inextricably linked. During Gorsuch’s confirmation hearing, Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee challenged him on his pro-business positions.

Minnesota Sen. Al Franken pressed him on a case – that of the now-infamous “frozen trucker” – in which the judge reached what Franken characterized as an “absurd” result. Alphonse Maddin was driving a truck for TransAm Trucking Inc. in 2009 when the brakes froze on the trailer he was hauling. The heater inside the truck wasn’t working, and the temperature outside was minus 27 below zero.

Maddin contacted his employer, who arranged for a repair unit to come to Maddin’s location. While waiting for help to arrive, Maddin nodded off.

“I awoke three hours later to discover that I could not feel my feet, my skin was burning and cracking, my speech was slurred, and I was having trouble breathing,” he said at a recent event in Washington, D.C. When Maddin stepped out of the truck, he said he “was on the verge of passing out. I feared that if I fell, I would not have the strength to stand up and would die.” Maddin was exhibiting symptoms of hypothermia. He called his employer again to report that he was leaving to seek shelter. His supervisor ordered him “to either drag the

trailer [with no brakes] or stay put.”

“In my opinion, clearly, their cargo was more important than my life,” Maddin said.

Faced with defying his employer’s order to remain with his disabled trailer or freezing to death, Maddin chose to unhitch the trailer and drive his truck to safety. TransAm fired Maddin for disobeying orders, and he filed a complaint with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, an agency of the Department of Labor. The operative statute in this case forbids employers from firing an employee who “refuses to operate a vehicle because the employee has a reasonable apprehension of serious injury to the employee or the public.”

The Labor Department found that TransAm had violated the law, concluding that the word “operate” includes not only driving, but also “other uses of a vehicle when it is within the control of the employee.” Maddin had refused to operate his vehicle in the manner his employer had ordered – with the trailer hitched to the truck.

Of the seven judges who ultimately ruled on the case, Gorsuch was the only one who voted to uphold Maddin’s firing. He decided that Maddin did “operate” his vehicle, which took him outside the statutory language that protects an employee who refuses to operate his vehicle.

What source did Gorsuch consult to construe the word “operate?” He turned to the Oxford English Dictionary, refusing to defer to the Department of Labor’s broader interpretation of the statute. Gorsuch characterized “health and safety” concerns as “ephemeral and generic,” writing, “After all, what under the sun, at least at some level of generality, *doesn’t* relate to ‘health and safety’?”

A Smooth Persona

In his dissent, Gorsuch, who displayed a smooth, compassionate persona while testifying at his hearing, described the conditions Maddin faced as merely “cold weather.” He wrote that for Maddin to sit and wait for help to arrive was an “unpleasant option.”

Maddin’s lawyer, Robert Fedder, told Democracy Now!’s Amy Goodman that during oral argument before the appellate panel, “Judge Gorsuch was incredibly hostile.” Fedder noted, “I’ve litigated many cases in appellate courts ... [Gorsuch] may have been the most hostile judge I’ve ever appeared before.”

Maddin, who is African-American, later said, “The first thing I noticed was that in his opening reference [in his dissent, Gorsuch] simply called me a trucker and didn’t use my name.” Maddin told The Guardian, “In my heart of hearts, I

felt like he willfully tried to negate the human element of my case.”

At Gorsuch’s confirmation hearing, Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin discussed Maddin’s case with Gorsuch, saying that the temperature was minus 14 that night, “but not as cold as your dissent.”

In Gorsuch’s dissenting opinion, he refused to defer to the Department of Labor’s interpretation of the statutory language regarding refusal to operate. Gorsuch was, in effect, refusing to apply the well-established “Chevron deference.”

This doctrine requires that when a law is ambiguous, courts must defer to an agency’s reasonable construction of the statute. Even the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, to whom Gorsuch is often compared, thought that agencies were in the best position to construe regulations that inform their work.

If Gorsuch had his druthers, he would do away with Chevron deference. In fact, he stated as much in his lengthy concurrence in *Gutierrez-Brizuela v. Lynch*, in which he wrote, “Maybe the time has come to face the behemoth.”

Gorsuch would substitute his own interpretation for that of an agency. But agencies are in the best position to make these determinations about matters within their purview.

Dangers of Second Guessing

In opposing Gorsuch’s nomination to the high court, the nonprofit organization Alliance for Justice wrote of the dangers of second-guessing agency experts: “It is difficult to overstate the damage [Gorsuch’s] position would cause. Judge Gorsuch would tie the hands of precisely those entities that Congress has recognized have the depth and experience to enforce critical laws, safeguard essential protections, and ensure the safety of the American people.”

Courts that have given deference to agency interpretations ensured essential protections, including:

–Deferring to the National Labor Relations Board’s reasonable determination that live-haul workers are employees entitled to protections of the National Labor Relations Act;

–Deferring to the Environmental Protection Agency’s rule requiring states to reduce emissions from power plants that travel across state lines and harm downwind states;

–Deferring to the Department of Labor’s interpretation of portions of the Black Lung Benefits Act that make it easier for coal miners afflicted with black lung

disease to receive compensation; and

–Deferring to the EPA’s revision of regulations under the Toxic Substances Control Act that provide more protection from exposure to lead paint.

But Gorsuch’s desire to neuter agency determinations dovetails nicely with Trump’s chief strategist Steve Bannon’s goal of “deconstruction of the administrative state.” The Trump administration has issued several orders that mandate deregulation:

On Jan. 20, Priebus directed agency heads to refrain from sending new regulations to the Office of the Federal Register until there are administration officials in place to approve them.

On Jan. 24, Trump signed a memo directing his Secretary of Commerce to review the ways in which federal regulations affect U.S. manufacturers in order to reduce as many of them as possible.

On Jan. 30, Trump issued an executive order requiring the mechanistic elimination of two regulations for every new one, and capping spending on new regulations during 2017 at zero.

On Feb. 3, Trump signed an executive order rolling back Dodd-Frank regulations on Wall Street. This will increase the risk of another dangerous recession.

During the confirmation hearing, Franken confronted Gorsuch with the confluence of his confirmation to the Supreme Court and the deconstruction of the administrative state (deregulation), saying,

“[F]or those who subscribe to President Trump’s extreme view, [the Chevron doctrine] is the only thing standing between them and what the President’s chief strategist Steve Bannon called the ‘deconstruction of the administrative state,’ which is shorthand for gutting any environmental or consumer protection measure that gets in the way of corporate profit margins.

“Speaking before a gathering of conservative activists last month, Mr. Bannon explained that the President’s appointees were selected to bring about that deconstruction, and I suspect that your nomination, given your views, is part of that strategy.”

Big Business Interests

Deregulation serves the interests of big business, a key conservative goal. When questioned at his hearing about what ideology he would bring to the court, Gorsuch made the disingenuous claim, “There’s no such thing as a Republican judge or a Democratic judge. We just have judges in this country.”

If that were true, why are the Heritage Foundation and the Federalist Society so keen on Gorsuch? He was on a list prepared by the two right-wing groups from which Trump dutifully selected his Supreme Court nominee.

“The president outsourced your selection to far right, big money interest groups, and they have an agenda. They’re confident you share their agenda. That’s why they called you ‘a nominee who understands things like we do,’ ” Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vermont, told Gorsuch at his hearing.

Why has \$10 million in “dark money” been spent by anonymous conservative donors to buy Gorsuch a seat on the high court, as Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-Rhode Island, charged at the hearing? And why, as Whitehouse added, was \$7 million expended on the unprecedented, but successful, campaign to deny Barack Obama’s nominee Merrick Garland a hearing?

Gorsuch is a staunch, longtime conservative judge who, in spite of his refusal to tip his hand about his ideology, has taken positions that confirm his right-wing bona fides. When Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-New York, announced he would vote against Gorsuch’s nomination, he stated that Gorsuch had ruled repeatedly for employers and against workers.

Gorsuch “almost instinctively favors the powerful over the weak,” Schumer said, adding, “We do not want judges with ice water in their veins,” an apt analogy in light of Gorsuch’s dissent in the *TransAm* case.

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Life and Death in Vietnam’s ‘Television War’

Exclusive: During the Vietnam War, American TV executives wanted the most graphic “bang bang” for their nightly news so they pushed their camera crews into danger, a culture described in a new book reviewed by Don North.

By Don North

In February 1967, Japanese cameraman Tony Hirashiki along with a Vietnamese soundman and myself – then an ABC News correspondent – jumped from a hovering Huey helicopter onto Landing Zone C for Operation Junction City. We were with 25,000 1st Infantry troops for what was billed as the largest search-and-destroy operation since American forces took up a combat role in Vietnam.

Amid the smoke of earlier bombardments, we did the required “standupper” as an introduction to our story. In those days, I was connected by a wire umbilical cord to my colleagues. We were a team bound together and acting in silent accord to document the day’s battle. But it often was Hirashiki’s footage that told the story more eloquently and dramatically than any words that I or other correspondents could muster.

In his 10 years of work in Vietnam, Yasutsune “Tony” Hirashiki would become a legend among the news media covering the war. He thought little of his own safety and had a burning desire to show war as it was. His filmic brilliance helped turn a reporter’s work into vivid and striking stories about a complex conflict.

While cameramen had recorded conflicts for generations – Matthew Brady revolutionized the public’s perception of warfare by capturing grisly Civil War scenes on his still camera a century earlier – the work of Hirashiki and others in Vietnam produced an intimacy and immediacy to the Vietnam War that had a similarly profound impact.

The Vietnam War was called “The Living Room War” because it was delivered to the televisions of Americans on a nightly basis – and the work of cameramen like Hirashiki was crucial to that extraordinary experience.

As ABC News president Elmer Lower said, “The television news cameraman is rather a new breed. There is no exact profile of the man. First of all, he is an artist, a craftsman, not just a picture taker. The camera is an extension of the man himself. ... like his bravery, his patience is congenital. Hours of waiting for something to break. The location is immaterial. A battlefield? He’ll go.

“Gunfire? Well, that makes it a little tougher for him to take his time on production values but he’s the first man in. He is really most comfortable in a place where the action is. He has a seventh sense about impending movement. He’ll tell you he lucked into a sequence, but I often feel he knew it was coming.”

Now, Tony Hirashiki has written a memoir of his years in Vietnam that is one of the most insightful tales of working for television news in Vietnam. His *On the*

Frontlines of the Television War should take a place on library shelves with the best accounts of journalists working the war, like John Laurence's *The Cat from Hue*.

Ted Koppel, who was another veteran ABC News correspondent in Vietnam, writes an introduction that is an accurate profile of the Tony his friends knew.

"Tony Hirashiki was simply the best cameraman to cover the Vietnam war. His soaring video, often acquired at great personal risk, gave wings to even the most mundane narration. For those of us who worked with him he was also a source of gentleness and joy in a place where both were in terribly short supply."

A Personal Saga

Yet, Hirashiki's personal saga of the Vietnam War began uncertainly as he arrived at Saigon airport in 1966 direct from Tokyo. He spoke little English and had a note pinned to his jacket addressed to the ABC Bureau in Saigon, like a child on his first day at summer camp.

But his personal courage and his commitment to his craft soon made him a seasoned veteran at plunging into dangerous assignments and returning with stunning footage. One day when I was working with Tony, we were advancing up a rocky cliff with a company of U.S. Marines when he disappeared for a short time. Apparently he had found a better angle from which to film the risky ascent of the Marines.

It wasn't until many months later when I viewed our finished story in a New York studio, that I was amazed to see Tony's artful film of the Marines climbing past colorful arrangements of wild flowers and orchids as Tony pulled focus on the flowers and climbing Marines, a surprising reminder during a lull in battle that a world of beauty still prevailed.

As ABC correspondent Ned Potter once wrote of Hirashiki's work, "Beautifully composed pictures, even in the most chaotic of circumstances, came naturally to him. Some of that is a matter of instinct, but more of it comes from having the soul of a poet."

During his 10 years in Vietnam, Hirashiki saved every script and dope sheet and kept a careful dairy. He never studied English, but from foul-mouthed G.I.'s and stressed-out colleagues, he amassed an impressive vocabulary of swear words.

Over his decade in Vietnam, Hirashiki worked with 35 correspondents of varied experience and temperament. The Vietnam bureau was a revolving door for journalists, with many reluctant to sign up for more than six months or a year. Tony outlasted them all and, in his book, charitably describes them, even the

prima donnas or the correspondents who shirked combat assignments when their turn came.

A Favorite Correspondent

One of Hirashiki's favorite reporters to team up with was Roger Peterson, a 6-foot-4-inch former U.S. Marine who worked the war like the backstreets of his hometown, Chicago. Peterson was a very fair and thorough journalist who carried a 50-pound pack into battle and two canteens, one for water and the other for Jack Daniels to help relax when the day's struggles were over.

One day covering a U.S. Marine operation near Con Thien, Peterson heard gunfire and – out of habit – rushed toward the sound with a hot mike. Loud and clear on the tape was the sound of a bullet smashing into his arm.

“Roger, are you interested in doing a standupper,” asked Tony to which Peterson responded with an ad-libbed description of his wound and the precarious position of the U.S. Marine unit they had accompanied into battle – until the morphine and pain overwhelmed him and he was carried unconscious onto a “Dust off” chopper.

Meanwhile, in New York at the ABC news bureau, Peterson's bravery and tenacity were cited to me, a new reporter, as how to behave, “this is how to be an ABC correspondent.”

“Did you see Peterson's report tonight, Don,” asked one of the ABC executives. “That was the ultimate on-scene report.”

My God, I thought, is that what we are expected to do to report the war? Yes, it seems it was. Roger and Tony set the bar high for those of us who followed into the dangerous rice paddies. When the bullets got close most of our ABC reporters thought about what to say on camera if they took a hit, always wondering if we would be cool enough to do it like Roger did.

Hirashiki admits in his book that although covering combat was more dangerous it was often simpler to shoot, more exciting and sure to make the air promptly. However, if a news crew missed the “bang bang” that some rival crew got, angry news executives back in New York would fire off a complaint, known ironically as a “rocket.”

Meanwhile, feature stories, although thoughtful on a complex war, without the “bang bang,” would often sit on the shelf in New York and be forgotten.

Looking for Angles

In his memoir, Tony Hirashiki describes correspondent Bill Brannigan as one who

always looked for unique angles on stories even without intense combat. In the village of Quon Loi one day, the 1st Division was gathering for a major push. Young soldiers just out of basic training were nervous as they lined up to board helicopters for the landing zone, known as an LZ.

“Bill picked out one soldier, PFC Ronnie Compton from Pinsonfork, a small Kentucky coal town, and told me to stay with him,” Hirashiki writes.

“Every once in a while Bill would ask him a question. ‘What are you thinking about or are you scared?’ Compton answered, ‘Honestly I’m scared. It’s my first combat. I want to make sure I don’t make any mistakes.’”

Hirashiki continues, “I had my doubts. Going into combat with an entirely green unit seemed dangerous. I sat next to the door so I could jump out first and kept on filming the faces of these grim and determined young men. There was gunfire at the drop zone. The pilot wasn’t going to touch down, just hover. We would all have to jump. A hot LZ is both deadly serious and often amusing at the same time. Our Kentucky boy fell on his butt, but stood up quickly and moved out briskly.

“We caught up as he reached a rubber plantation and the fire fight began. Brannigan: ‘How do you feel now?’ ... Compton stopped firing for a moment and when he answered, it was as if the young boy had somehow disappeared, and been replaced by a soldier.”

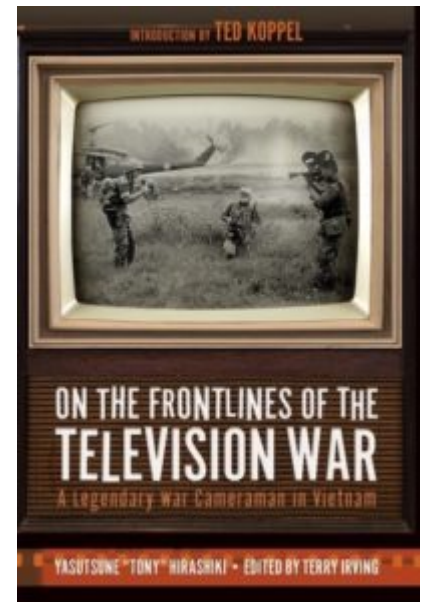
Compton: “I was tense when the helicopter landed, but I’m not scared anymore.”

Then, Hirashiki writes, the young soldier “moved forward into the trees. He walked confidently, all his training coming back to him, as step by step he disappeared into the forest. Bill said that through the story of this one boy, we could tell the story of thousands of American soldiers.”

Rocket for Tony

Con Thien was known to local missionaries as “the Hill of Angels,” but to occupying U.S. Marines it was a little piece of hell. Just two miles south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), it became a duel between North Vietnamese long-range artillery and U.S. airpower. In one week, over 3,000 rounds of mortar,

artillery and rockets landed at Con Thien.



It became the top story in Vietnam, but the U.S. military declared that TV crews had to take turns at the base, shoot for two hours and pull out as a new crew came in.

“The two hours I was in Con Thien, the North Vietnamese must have been taking a break because no shells came in,” Hirashiki writes. “It was good footage but it wasn’t ‘bang bang.’ When we left a CBS crew came in and they got slammed. The artillery barrage was intense, and they got great footage of explosions and men scrambling for cover. The next day I got my first rocket from New York.”

“Why did CBS have exciting incoming scenes at Con Thien, but ABC had only outgoing scenes? Nick Archer”

Dick Rosenbaum, our young Saigon bureau chief, wasn’t intimidated and shot back an immediate reply by telex to New York: “We can’t force our cameraman to wait and cover incoming scenes at besieged outpost Con Thien. Dick Rosenbaum.”

Rosenbaum later described his attitude, writing: “If our crew goes out the right side of a chopper, they may get no action. If the competition goes out the left side and find action how does your crew get over to that side under fire? Sometimes you can best describe getting good combat footage as luck.”

Hirashiki writes, “I appreciated Dick’s support but I was even more determined to get better footage.” The danger of pushing crews in the field was realized by most of the bosses at ABC News and they often flew in to experience the war with their employees.

Even the President of ABC News, Elmer Lower, took his turn. As he arrived in Saigon a few days after Tet, he discovered the bureau was short soundmen.

Bureau chief Rosenbaum jokingly suggested he help out as a soundman, which Lower took seriously and became a soundman for several days of dangerous street demonstrations.

Lower even agreed to fly into the U.S. Marine base at Khe Sahn, which was under siege. But as the C-123 was about to land incoming rounds hit the runway and the pilot aborted the flight. While refuelling, Rosenbaum asked if Lower was ready to try again.

"Nope, " he said. "I'll try anything once."

Most weeks the "herograms" for exceptional work outnumbered the "rockets" and many of the "rockets" were fired off for more prosaic reasons. I managed to collect a file of nasty "rockets" for being late accounting for my expenses.

But after producing a heart-breaking story at Con Thien about Marines striving to save another Marine critically wounded by an incoming North Vietnamese rocket (the real kind that explode), my cameraman Nguyen Van Qui and I received the following telex from New York:

"I would like to state that I have covered the news as a reporter and screened a great amount of film in the past twenty one years but never have I been moved as I was when I screened your marine dying in Con Thien. You all displayed great courage and great pride in your work. Nick Archer"

The Pressures

Tony Hirashiki and the other crews would often work 24-hour days in the field and when on standby play non-stop poker. Hirashiki recalls a favorite telex about that pastime:

"There were days in 1973 we had no assignments and a number of us from all three networks would gather occasionally for a friendly game of poker. A young administrator recently arrived from New York was scandalized and sent a letter to Nick Archer exposing us for our supposed transgression.

On the open telex that all bureaus could read, Archer answered: "Re your letter. When you have been where they've been, and done what they've done, you too may play poker. Regards Archer."

Regarding the dangers, there were several cases of correspondents refusing combat assignments that confronted the bosses with a dilemma. A veteran war correspondent Sam Jaffe, who had experienced both Korea and Vietnam, after three weeks in Vietnam following the Tet offensive wrote: "I won't cover Khe Sahn, and I refuse to go back to Hue. The longer you stay here, the more inevitable it is

that you're going to be hurt, maimed or killed."

In his memoir, Hirashiki writes, "What did that mean for the rest of us? Could we refuse a dangerous assignment? I had almost never said no, so I really couldn't be certain. It was always a confusing situation. New York was very concerned for our safety, but at the same time, they expected us to deliver the goods – in many ways a bit like soldiers on the frontlines.

"In the course of the Vietnam war, according to the Newseum in Washington there were sixty-seven journalists killed or missing. Our ABC News bureau suffered six wounded. Two were killed during the war and two believed experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) committed suicide after the war."

The End

Hirashiki's best friend was fellow ABC cameraman Terry Khoo, a Singaporean Chinese who had been covering the war since 1962. He was considered the doyen of cameramen, spoke four languages and was highly respected for his dignified character.

Terry Khoo was as competitive as anyone, but shared his judgments to keep friends safe. In late 1972, it was Terry's judgment that the war was ending and was no longer meaningful for him or Tony to risk everything.

In his memoir, Hirashiki writes: "What Terry said was similar to the feeling the remaining American troops had. Don't be the last to die in Vietnam for a mistake. Terry had found his true love, Winnie Ing, the Hong Kong ABC office secretary. They would be married and Terry would accept a new job with ABC News at the new bureau in Bonn, West Germany"

After finishing his last assignment, Khoo was at the Huong Giang hotel in Hue. He was packed and was briefing his replacement, a friend of his from Singapore, Sam Kai Faye. A rumor circulated that a North Vietnamese tank had been spotted west of Highway One. Terry Khoo wanted to check it out and give Sam a final lesson in the field. All his friends urged him not to go, his flight back to Saigon would leave in a few hours.

As the pair drove off amid warnings to be careful, Terry Khoo's last words were "It's all fate anyway, baby, so play it cool."

Arriving at the scene of a reported skirmish, they spotted a line of South Vietnamese troops moving into the tall grass west of the road and ran to catch up. An enemy soldier firing from ambush hit Sam Kai Faye and Terry Khoo went to aid him, but they were pinned down as the firing continued.

Troops couldn't recover their bodies for three days. Their coffins were flown back together to Singapore with a grieving Tony Hirashiki and many colleagues of the ABC bureau. They asked if it was possible to bury Terry and Sam side by side, the way they died, but Sam was a Christian and Terry a Buddhist so they were given separate funerals and buried in different cemeteries. Terry Khoo bequeathed enough of his life insurance so that today, 50 years later, medical students are still receiving scholarships.

Hirashiki remembers. "That day, it became my war. Even though I had been covering the war for many years, I had always kept a distance from it, trying to be neutral and unbiased. Whoever killed my brothers, Terry and Sam, was my enemy. I shouted and cried out for the loss of my best friends and cursed at the top of my lungs those who had taken away my hopes and dreams of the future."

On April 30, 1975, Tony Hirashiki shot his last story as Saigon fell to the advancing North Vietnamese Army. He took off in a U.S. Marine helicopter from the roof of the U.S. Embassy heading for the USS Blue Ridge in the South China Sea. He recalls:

"While our helicopter was rising I could see the airport was burning. We flew out over Saigon. I had flown over and filmed the city many times and thought it was beautiful. But now I had changed and the country had changed. I finally took the camera off my shoulder. I realized I was crying and that had been why it was so hard to focus my shots.

"I cried quietly, not as loud as I did when Terry died. Finally this was my war. As we flew I cursed silently with every swear word I knew. And cried."

As Tony Hirashiki worked on his memoir for eight years, writing first in Japanese and then in English, he enlisted the help of our ABC News colleagues to recall what he didn't have in his notes. Terry Irving, who started his career at ABC News as a motorcycle courier before becoming a producer on "Nightline," helped edit and hone Tony's tale with panache.

Don North is a veteran war correspondent who covered the Vietnam War and many other conflicts around the world. He is the author of *Inappropriate Conduct*, the story of a World War II correspondent whose career was crushed by the intrigue he uncovered.
