

# Discussion Questions

## Stories from the Rolodex

*Important Figures of Journalism  
in Their Own Words*



Ann Welch and Beverly Stoddart

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

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### Forward

“The truth is out there.” What does that mean? For Fox Mulder, the fictional FBI agent in *The X-Files* and ran for eleven seasons on the Fox Network, it was the truth about alien life and how they have visited the earth, and they had taken his sister. Another interpretation is the truth you seek *is* out there. The questions you have, the curiosities you find, the disbeliefs you encounter, the answers are out there. We don’t know if there is alien life; that is a fact. We do know we can find the truth for circumstances in life.

In, *Stories from the Rolodex*, you will discover how journalists from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, whose job was to find the truth did so when the internet hadn’t been invented, phones were anchored to desks, and social media wouldn’t begin until the 1990s. For example, in 1977, reporter Tom Foty had to report on why two Boeing 747 jets collided on a runway and killed over 580 people. The crash was on Tenerife in the Canary Islands. Foty was in New York City over 3,300 miles away.

In 1974, United Press International Boston bureau manager Jim Wieck wanted to know who set a woman on fire in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and why did a bunch of kids stone a man to death in Dorchester. These rumors were reported to the news bureau while rioting happened in South Boston due to the desegregation issue.

The truth is you can’t believe everything you read or hear and assume what you are being informed of is factual. You have to explore whether the ideas and facts you are being presented with are, in fact, wholly accurate, partially true, or totally false. You

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receive information. Your responsibility comes in to take what you are being told and to determine the factfulness of it. You, the individual, must find out on your own.

Two sources of confirmation are the minimum for journalists. The University of Missouri lists the following documents for their journalism graduate students.\*

- **Original Documents** (Diaries, letters, speeches, notes, meeting minutes, interviews, news audio or video footage, autobiographies, official records (birth/death/marriage certificates), new research findings reported in scholarly journal articles, newspaper articles, government documents (laws, reports, statistics, data).
- **Creative Works** (music, photography, film, poetry, drama, novels, works of art, architecture)

Think about the concept of verification. For example, log in to Amazon.com, and they will want an email, a password, and an OTP – a one-time six-digit code texted to your phone to get into your account. Next, try to access your bank account from a new device, and the device isn't recognized. The bank will require more specific verification that you are who you say you are.

*Discussion Questions: Stories from the Rolodex* is a guide for teachers, professors, instructors of all types to help students learn about journalism and the techniques these unique individuals used to get to the truth of the history they were covering. The chapters will provide the instructor with questions about politics, historical events, racism, nature, war and peace, the work of being a journalist, and perseverance.

Ann and I are grateful for your interest in *Discussion Questions: Stories from the Rolodex*. We invite questions, comments, and an open dialogue.

*Kind regards, Beverly Stoddart*

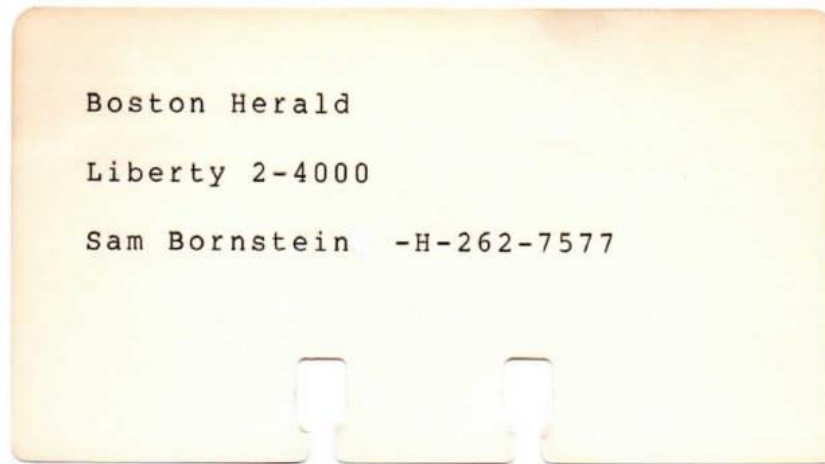
\*<https://libraryguides.missouri.edu/journalismgradstudents/primary>

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex



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### Introduction Questions



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Rolodex card for Boston Herald.

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1. What is yellow journalism?
2. What is the morgue? Create a list of ideas, things you want to accomplish. Are there any you can act on now? How would it feel to put items you have completed and other ideas in a morgue? If you could rename the morgue for your personal use, what would you call it?
3. Why does the author say she “saw history in the wheel of the Rolodex?” Support your answer with details from the book.
4. What is the author’s purpose at first? How and why did the author’s purpose for writing the book change?
5. Why was Watergate considered the Golden Age of Journalism?
6. Compare and contrast journalism tools from the 1960s and today.
7. In your own words, summarize: “Why are the Boston bureau and the notes recorded in the Rolodex so important? “

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

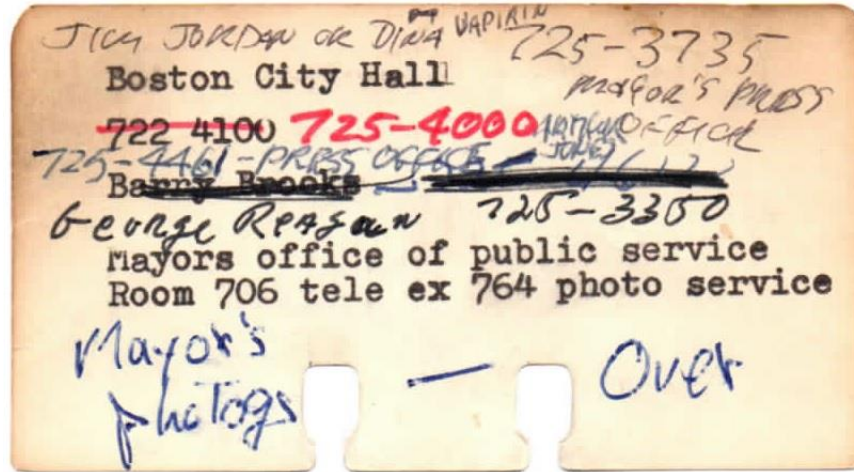
# Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex



Photo courtesy of Unsplash.com

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

### Chapter 1



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Rolodex card for George Regan. His name is misspelled.

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1. How did Kevin White get elected in 1967? How did the Boston Globe play a role in the election?
2. What are machine politicians?
3. Would you have voted for Kevin White in the 1970s? Why? Why not?
4. Why was busing a bigger story than Vietnam protests?
5. Who is George Regan? What does he think of education in Boston?
6. Summarize the Rolling Stones incident. Did Kevin White do the right thing? Explain. Write your version of the speech for the crowd.
7. Why couldn't Kevin White run for president? Do you think he could run today?
8. Should George have called Kevin White about the King papers story?

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

### Chapter 2

CONCORD... NEW HAMPSHIRE  
(City or Town) 12/28/70  
11/22/77  
(Date)

Name JOHN P. CLEMONS

Employer SELF Title photog.

Office Fone \_\_\_\_\_ Home Fone \_\_\_\_\_

If you can't reach me, call \_\_\_\_\_

Police Dept. Fone \_\_\_\_\_ Fire Dept. Fone \_\_\_\_\_

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Example of a stringer card from the Rolodex .

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1. What is the history of the Rolodex?
2. What is a Stringer? What are the pros and cons of being a Stringer?
3. How was the Rolodex instrumental in identifying fake news? What do you use to identify fake news?
4. Who is Robert Ballard? What is he doing now? What is he famous for?
5. How did Americans get news about the earthquake that struck Mexico City in 1985?
6. Why is Mark Twain's quote meaningful to Jim Wieck?

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

### Chapter 3



Photo by Beverly Stoddart.

1. Compare and contrast American soldiers' return from Vietnam, the return of American POWs from Vietnam, and American soldiers' return during more recent wars.
2. Estimate how long it took desegregation to be fully realized in Massachusetts. Justify your answer.
3. What is the Wall? What is the significance of Allen Brudno's name being put on the Wall? How many other names were added for the same reason?

## Chapter 4



Photo courtesy of Unsplash.com.

1. How long was busing an issue in Boston?
2. How did Karen Gray Houston feel in Boston? Why?
3. How did Karen get a job with UPI?
4. What was her first assignment at UPI?
5. How did she get to the day shift?
6. How did she get ahold of Father Drinan? How could you locate someone today?

## Chapter 5



Photo by Beverly Stoddart.

Empty newsstands sit in the former warehouse of the Union Leader newspaper. Giant rolls of newsprint sit in the background.

1. Why was Joe McQuaid's book about the Cog railway censored? Do you agree that it should be censored? Under what circumstances is censorship appropriate? Is it ever appropriate?
2. Describe Joe's first job at age 15. Was this job important? Why? Why not?
3. How did the Teamsters save the Union Leader? How did this affect the way stories about Hoffa were written?
4. What is the mission of the Union Leader? Explain what the mission means to you.
5. Joe McQuaid's brother reported on the war. To the best of your knowledge, which theaters did he report on during the war? What is a theater?
6. How would you describe Mrs. Loeb? What do you think her motto might be? Explain how she lived by this motto.
7. How does Joe McQuaid explain the New Hampshire spirit? How would you explain your schools', town's, or state's spirit?



## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

### Chapter 6



Photo by Beverly Stoddart.

Photo from the front porch of the home of John Harrigan. Bunnell Mountain sits in the distance renamed in 1998 from Blue Mountain in honor of Vickie Bunnell.

1. Research Colebrook. Locate Colebrook on Google Maps using the satellite view.  
Would you ever consider living in a town like Colebrook? List the pros and cons of living in Colebrook.
2. What is the language like in Colebrook? Why do you think it is that way?
3. What is a sea change? Give an example of a sea change from a book, History, or your life.
4. What does John Harrigan mean when he says, "... there's no gatekeeper on most of the stuff on the Internet"? Do you agree? Explain.
5. What are the Blue Mountain plutons, and why was the government interested in them?
6. How did the shooting affect John Harrigan's life?
7. How was the bobcat issue resolved? What side would you have supported? Why?

## Chapter 7



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Card from the Rolodex with address and phone number removed.

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1. Judy Koenig didn't care if she was called a "selectman" or a "selectwoman." Some towns want the position to be renamed as "selectperson." In your opinion, which term is best? Why?
2. How did Judy get stories? Do you think she would do things differently today? How do you think people get stories today?

## Chapter 8



Photo courtesy of Unsplash.com.

President John Kennedy gives a speech in the early 1960s. Vice President Lyndon Johnson is on the left in the picture.

In 1960, John Milne talked his way into a John Kennedy press conference when JFK was running for president. John Milne was 15 years old.

1. Describe John Milne's grandfather. Do you think his experience as a young adult was unusual?
2. How did being illiterate impact John Milne's life? How would being illiterate today impact a young adult's life?
3. John's line of work explained that you have to think carefully about every word you say. In your opinion, is this "think-before-you-speak" mindset helpful in other situations? Explain.
4. Discuss the fake news story of John Milne, where a Connecticut state trooper was allegedly driving a Good Humor truck.

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

5. What is a growth mindset? What are some examples of how John has demonstrated a growth mindset in his career?
6. John asks the question: “Is the intent part of the definition of a lie?” What do you think?
7. Trace the origins of the word “canuck” back to 1869. Create a timeline depicting what Johnny Canuck stood for and represented throughout Canadian History. Are there, and can you think of any US counterparts?
8. Explain the events surrounding the Canuck letter. Write your editorial about the events, explaining your opinion and point of view.
9. Why does John Milne compare the Russian newspaper, Pravda, to William Loeb’s Union Leader? What are the implications of this comparison? What reasons does John give for this comparison?

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

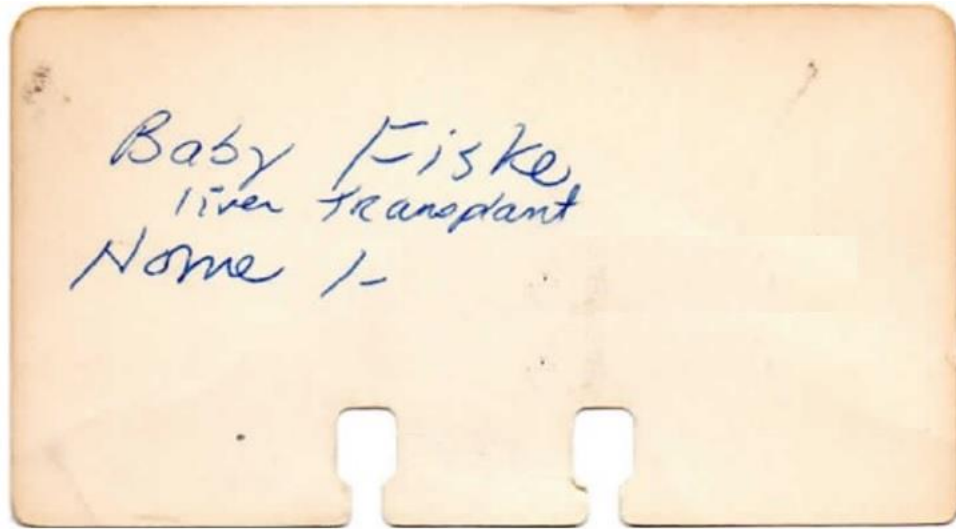
### Chapter 9



Photo courtesy of Unsplash.com.

1. Research the Chappaquiddick incident. What is its significance in US History?  
What is its significance for reporters and photographers in New England?
2. What were Sundays like at the Cape Cod Times?
3. What is the Polar Bear Plunge?
4. What is MS? How has MS impacted Sherman Landers' life?
5. In your own words, describe Linda Landers.
6. Is there anyone in your life you know well enough to write a book about? What would you want people to know about that person?

## Chapter 10



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Card from the Rolodex with address and phone number removed.

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1. Why is Baby Fiske's story important? What lasting impact did Baby Fiske have on her family, the US, and the world?
2. Why do you think the author included this story?

## Chapter 11



A roll of newsprint is about to be loaded onto a newspaper press.

Photo by Beverly Stoddart.

1. A reporter may have occasion to write an obituary. Using information from this book, write an obituary for Don Davis highlighting his achievements.
2. What was Don Davis' life like as a child?
3. What was don Davis' experience of World War II?
4. How did the Great Depression affect his family?
5. Don Davis was seemingly healthy during his college years. Why did he decide not to enroll in the Citadel? Would you have made the same choice? Explain.
6. How did Dan Davis get into journalism? What were his first experiences?
7. Describe Davis' mindset when he was fired at the start of a new job.
8. What was journalism like in the deep south during the early 1960s?

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

9. Throughout this chapter, how does Davis demonstrate a growth mindset?
10. When Davis was hiring, what did he ask of prospective employees? What qualities did he want? Why?
11. What important events did Davis report on in space exploration history? Research the significance of those events.
12. Describe the Vietnam War through Davis' eyes.
13. Why did Davis get thrown out of Vietnam? Do you think it was fair? Was he the only one kicked out?
14. Davis said, "The secret to our line of work was you had to be able to pack a lot of information into very few words." Use a current event to try out this style of writing? Did you find it easy or difficult?
15. Describe Davis' transition to Boston? How did the type of work he did change?
16. What types of books did Davis write? What kinds of books might you write if you had to write books? Explain.
17. What is the difference between journalism writing and book writing? Which would be more enjoyable for you? Explain.
18. What did Davis learn in Boston? Do you agree? Explain.



## Chapter 12



Photo courtesy of Unsplash.com.

1. How did the author conduct her interview with Richard C. Gross? Create a chart comparing and contrasting the pros and cons of the following interview methods: email, phone, Zoom, and in person.
2. How did Gross become interested in writing?
3. Research the causes of the “October War.”
4. How would you describe the October War experience for Gross?
5. Ask yourself: Before reading this chapter, did you know what significance Auschwitz had in world and US history? Should Auschwitz’s role in history be general knowledge? Explain.
6. Write a “news report” for an event in Auschwitz. Write a paragraph of explanation for every section of your report.
7. How does Gross summarize Anwar Sadat’s visit to Jerusalem? To what event does Gross compare it? Why?

## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

8. What events did Anwar Sadat's visit set into motion?
9. Using Gross' interview, create a timeline for the events happening in or influenced by the Middle East.

## Chapter 13



"Truth is Beauty" Photo courtesy of Unsplash.com.

1. What do you think might be the difference between skedded stories for the AM and PM?
2. How has the invention of cell phones impacted reporting?
3. Would you rather be a reporter or a deskier? Explain
4. According to Andra Varin, what is it really like to have a job in journalism?
5. Describe the transitions from headlines on pagers to push notifications to ".com."

## Chapter 14



Photo courtesy of Unsplash.com.

1. What was Tom Foty's life like growing up in Budapest?
2. How does the metaphor of darkness and light apply to Tom Foty's life?
3. Research Cavendish. Find ten interesting facts about his life as a spy.
4. Research the Son of Sam murders' impact on New York City.
5. Research the blackout of '65. What was its impact on New York, the Northeast, the nation?
6. How did Superman save the New York Daily News?
7. How did subsequent power outages affect UPI?
8. Research the crash on Tenerife in the Canary Islands. What happened? How did Foty get the "scoop"?
9. Did UPI share the story of the plane crash? Explain.
10. How did UPI get the People's Temple story out?

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11. Describe “the essence of wire service work before the era of cell phones and computers.”
12. What was the origin of the use of “95” in journalism.
13. What does “downhold” mean? Why was the term created? For fun, create some compound terms of your own.
14. Describe the importance of the UPI and AP in the '70s. Compare this with the news venues of today.
15. Why were radio stations interested in UPI and AP prior to deregulation in the 1980s?
16. Why did Foty consider UPI to be visionary?

## Chapter 15

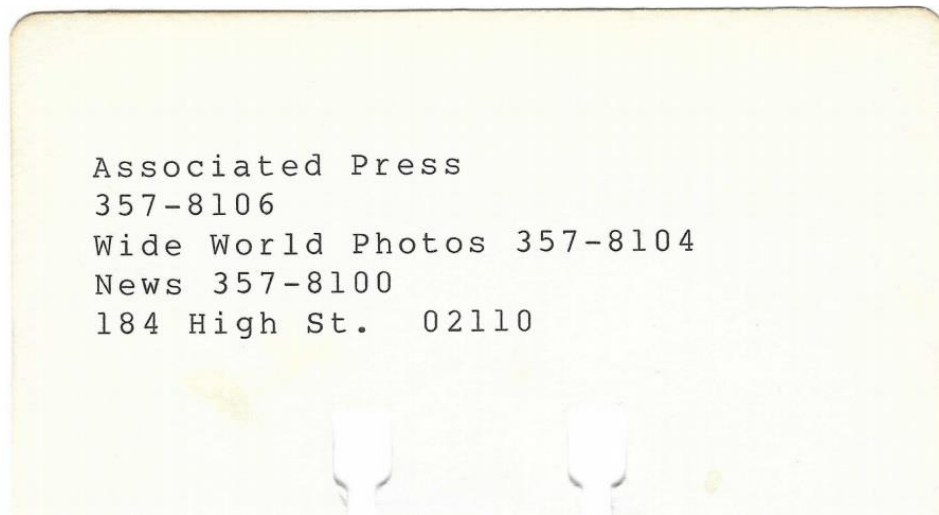
“I did it because I'm a newsman, and I wanted to make sure that we were covering an important story the best we possibly could as well as how we covered Watergate and the 1972 presidential election as well as we covered anything. I didn't want us to be a party to the bad things that were going on in our company. Silence on them would have made us complicit.”

*Ron Cohen, Stories from the Rolodex*

1. What impact did George Carlin's Supreme Court case have on media?
2. Describe the initial stages of decline for UPI from Ron Cohen's point of view.
3. Cohen said, “I said all I have to tell you is never give up the fight and reach as far as you can even when things are out of your grasp.” Explain what this quote means to you.

Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

## Chapter 16



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Card from the Rolodex.

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1. How serious was accuracy to AP? Explain.
2. David Tyrrell-Wysoki reported primarily on events in New Hampshire.

Research a current event in NH and write your own news report about it.

## Epilogue



Photo by Beverly Stoddart.

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An ink-stained wall in the Union Leader's Press Room.

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1. Describe the meaning of the press to the author.
2. What does the author mean by saying, "Progress has stolen an old press's future."?



## Discussion Questions – Stories from the Rolodex

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### Stories from the Rolodex: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



**Ann Welch, M.Ed.** is an experienced educator, curriculum specialist, and educational leader who instructs students of all ages in developing vital skills for achieving success in life. During her more than 30 years in education, Ann has guided students in developing self-motivation, confidence, and a “can-do” attitude. For the last 12 years, Ann has created and documented the curriculum for a school in central NH. Through consulting, workshops, speaking engagements, and online classes, Ann provides engaging and personalized instruction for developing goal-setting skills and fostering resilience and grit. Having worked with children, teens, and adults, in and out of special education, Ann is adept at teaching the 21st-century skills necessary for everyone to pursue their dreams! In addition to working with children, Ann is also passionate about working with educators, providing professional development and consulting services on a wide range of topics. Through professional development and mentoring teachers, Ann works to strengthen learning communities. Ann lives with her husband and son in Derry, NH. She is active in her church and in Toastmasters International.

**Beverly Stoddart** is an author, writer, and speaker. She has published her essays in NH’s largest newspaper, the Union Leader, and the Senior Beacon, and has a monthly column on InDepthNH.org and in the Windham Independent. Stoddart worked for newspapers for over 40 years, including at the Boston Herald and the Union Leader. Her new work is *Stories from the Rolodex* and tells how United Press International journalists worked in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. She and her husband own Effective Fitness, a personal training fitness facility in Londonderry, NH. She is on the Board of Trustees of the New Hampshire Writers’ Project and a member of the Ohio Writers’ Association. Stoddart is a member of her local chapter of Toastmasters International: Winning Speakers Toastmasters. She was awarded Toastmaster of the Year for 2020. A prized accomplishment was winning Carl Kassel’s voice for her voice mail when she won the National Public Radio game, Wait Wait...Don’t Tell Me! She has been married for 44 years to her husband, Michael, and has one son and two rescue dogs.

