

Images of War  
Celebrations of Peace  
The Photographs and  
Collage Art of Dan Eldon



A Community Guide to accompany the traveling  
exhibit

“Once one has been to these challenging, terrible places, they’re always strangely drawn back because there’s nothing that can compare to seeing the raw reality of the basic human need for survival. It disgusts and inspires.” –Dan Eldon

**Purpose of this Guide**

The following activities and discussion questions are provided to help members of your community to better understand and enjoy the exhibit *Images of War. Celebrations of Peace: The Photographs and Collage Art of Dan Eldon*. We have put the guide on the Internet in hopes of making it available to the widest audience possible; however, a paper version will also travel with the exhibit and may be copied.

**Appropriate Audience**

The guide has been created by a team of college and high school educators and is intended for a broad audience, including school-aged students (middle school through college level), youth groups (e.g., church groups, older scout groups), and adults (e.g., members of book clubs, art groups, and retirement educational groups). Our hope is that the activities and discussion questions, which are purposely broad, can be easily adapted for various audiences and settings.

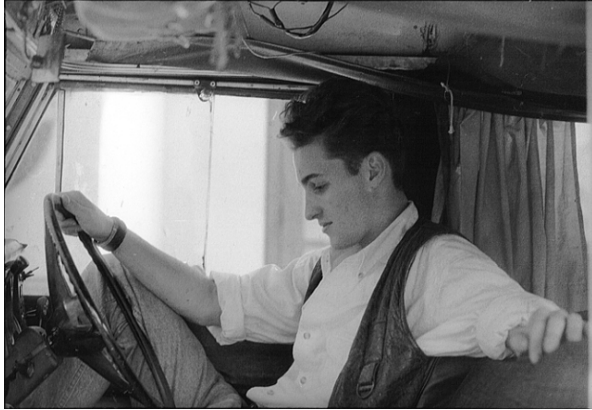
**How to Use This Guide**

The Guide is broken into five parts:

1. About Dan Eldon – a brief overview of his life
2. The Exhibit – Activities and Discussion
3. The Book – *Dan Eldon: The Art of Life*
4. The Film – *Dying to Tell the Story*
5. Resources

The questions and activities in this guide are meant to elucidate your experience of each of these three things. There are obvious overlaps between them, though, so if your group will only be studying one of three, we encourage you to read the entire guide for additional ideas.

# About Dan Eldon



Dan Eldon was born in London in 1970 to an American mother and a British father. Along with his younger sister, Amy, Dan and his family moved to Kenya in east Africa in 1977. Kenya remained Dan's home for the rest of his life, and though he traveled often – visiting more than 40 countries in 22 years – he always considered Africa home.

Dan's father led the east Africa division of a European computer company and his mother Kathy, an Iowa native, was a freelance journalist. Kenya was a popular destination in the late 1970s and 1980s; it was more politically stable and economically secure than most African nations, and the bountiful wildlife and perfect climate made it all the more appealing. Dan and Amy grew up with a constant stream of interesting visitors at their dinner table. Frog researchers, opera singers, filmmakers, reporters, and politicians were just some of the people who populated the Eldon household.

By the time Dan was in high school, he had begun to make his collage journals, something he started as an assignment for an anthropology class. Sometimes, he shared these with guests to the house. The journals were the perfect catch-all for his interests in travel, photography, and art. For the rest of his life, he would religiously keep these visual diaries-cum-art experiments.

As a high school senior, Dan told the guidance counselor that he was planning to do an internship at a magazine for a few months and then travel through southern Africa. "Oh, you're taking a year off," the counselor asked. "No," Dan replied, "I'm taking a year on." He lived by this concept for the next five years—education through travel and firsthand experience. Although he enrolled in several colleges for a semester or two, his primary activities were travel, photography, and entrepreneurial schemes. Many of the latter were philanthropic in nature.

From a young age, Dan had a knack for raising money. As a teenager, he sold the jewelry of a Maasai woman, helping her to support her family, and he held large dance parties to help a classmate fund an operation. In 1990, two years after graduating from high school, he planned his biggest adventure and fund raising effort to date. Along with 13 other young people, all of whom were under the age of 21, he raised nearly \$20,000 which the group delivered to a refugee camp in Malawi.

Two years later, Dan had an opportunity to fly to Somalia, Kenya's northern neighbor, to witness the civil war and famine. The three-day visit had a major impact on Dan. He saw that his work as a photographer could have a huge impact; few journalists were covering the story at the time and humanitarian relief was desperately needed. He also realized that he would be good at this line of work; his years of travel along with photographic skills would come together. Soon, he was a stringer for the Reuters news agency – someone whose photos are promised to one agency but who is not a permanent employee of that agency.

He spent the next year in Somalia covering the famine and the arrival of both UN and US forces to the country. He underwent depression, shocked by the horrors of war and the death of so many of his fellow Africans. But he also shined as a young correspondent, loving the people he met and the pace of the work. By spring of 1993, his photographs routinely appeared in major newspapers and magazines. When Dan was killed on July 12, 1993, at just 22 years of age, he'd achieved more success in a competitive field that many do in an entire career.

*For more information about Dan Eldon, there are several resources. **The Journey Is the Destination** is a compilation of excerpts from his collage journals with a brief introduction by Kathy Eldon. **Dan Eldon: The Art of Life** by Jennifer New is Dan's biography, complete with many more images. Both books are published by Chronicle Books. **Dying to Tell the Story** is a 2-hour documentary created by Dan's sister, Amy Eldon, about the work of journalists in war zones. And [www.daneldon.org](http://www.daneldon.org) is a web site that uses Dan as an inspiration to explore the issues he embodied: adventure, art, and activism. The above mentioned books and video, along with posters of Dan's work and other resources are available via the web site.*

## Part II

### The Exhibit: Activities for before and after your visit

#### 1. Photo Editor for a Day

*Objective: To familiarize participants with war photography, including the common themes and stories these kinds of photos express.*

In the exhibit you will see some of Dan Eldon's best photographs from the year he spent covering the civil war in Somalia for Reuters. As a photographer, his task was to take strong images, develop them, and then send the best shots to the Reuter's office via satellite fax. (Given the rudimentary facilities that most journalists work under in war zones—converting bathrooms into darkrooms and leaning out of hotel windows to get satellite hook ups to work, none of this is as easy as it sounds.) The photo editor then chose the most compelling images to print in the next day's paper. He or she looked for photos that told a story and were visually compelling, as well as images that were relevant to reporters' articles.

Because people often glance at newspaper and newsmagazine photos, these images must have a strong composition and quickly convey emotion in order to be successful. Think of them as visual shorthand; they must have universal meaning for anyone who sees them, no matter the person's nationality or cultural background. Consider, for example, one of the most famous images of the Vietnam War, a photograph of a naked girl running down a road, arms outstretched, screaming. The image is all the more poignant when we know that it was taken after South Vietnamese forces accidentally dropped napalm on their own civilians. But even without that information, it stands alone as a devastating image of suffering.

**Assignment:** Imagine that you are a photo editor looking for images that serve as a witness to certain aspects of war. Looking through newspapers, newsmagazines, and some of the online resources listed below, select a group of 5-10 photographs that you think strongly express the following aspects of war: grief, patriotism, regret, hatred, relief, absurdity, and defeat.

After you've collected a group of photographs, you might try writing about them. Pretend you are explaining their power and meaning to your superior. Or, you've organized them for an exhibit and you're writing an introduction for the public. Why did you choose these images? What do they mean to you? Share your thoughts with your fellow participants.

If you haven't yet attended the exhibit, consider what kinds of photos you expect to see there. What do you know about Somalia or Africa that informs your expectations? What have you learned about war photography that prepares you for such an exhibit? If you've already been to the exhibit, think about how Eldon's photographs compare to those you collected. Are there overlapping themes in both groups?

Here are some web sites with exemplary photographs from wars and other conflicts:

<http://exhibit.blackstar.com/editorial/index.html>

<http://www.icp.org/chim/index.html>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cwphtml/cwphome.html>

<http://pathfinder.com/photo/gallery/home.html>

<http://www.csn.net/~nulevich/vietnam.html>

<http://digitaljournalist.org>

#### 2. Understanding Your Destination

**Objective:** To learn more about a present-day conflict and to understand the complexities of a war correspondent's work.

Dan Eldon had never been to Somalia before he flew there in July 1992 to witness firsthand the growing famine. Although he had never been in a war zone before, the country, a former Italian colony with a largely Muslim population, was not completely foreign to him. Dan had grown up just to the south in Kenya and had traveled extensively throughout eastern and southern Africa. But for many other young reporters who arrived in Somalia in the early 1990s, Somalia might as well have been the moon.

The civil war there was one of if not THE most dangerous “beats” for a journalist to cover at the time. This is impressive bearing in mind that the war in Bosnia was going on concurrently. Mogadishu, the capital city, had been utterly destroyed by warring factions, making most modern conveniences impossible to come by. One needed to bribe one's way into the airport, which was alternately controlled by different clan leaders. The city's telephone wires had all been dug up. Electricity was provided by generators. Getting anywhere meant hiring a truck and armed guards from one of the clans. And then there was the incredible heat and sand of the country, which made everything more difficult.

Reporters and soldiers alike have described the many strange and off-putting aspects of the places they've served: the dense jungles of Vietnam, the blowing sand of the Gulf War, the Holiday Inn in Sarajevo where windows were a luxury. How do professional journalists prepare themselves for their destinations? Like diplomats and soldiers, they must understand the place they're traveling to in order to do a good job. History, culture, and climate are all important. Often, they must learn about these things on the fly, literally!

**Assignment:** To get a sense of what this experience is like, choose a current conflict in the world. It may be an event that is splashing across the front pages, or it may be an ongoing conflict that rarely receives headlines. If you're seeking ideas for conflicts of interest, you might try the UN's Peacekeeping site, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.shtml>, or the International Committee of the Red Cross' site, <http://www.icrc.org>.

Collect a series of reports about this conflict from different sources. In the box below, you'll find a list of reputable sources that will be helpful for this assignment. Along with recent news articles, you'll want to find an overview of the conflict to help you understand its origins and various players. As you read information, consider these questions:

- What is the cause of this conflict?
- What is currently happening in the conflict?
- Who is involved in the conflict (i.e. countries, organizations, or national factions)?
- Which news source do you prefer for its coverage of this event and why?

Now pretend that you need to get to this place in the next 48 hours. Very quickly, you'll need to answer—or at least begin to think seriously—about a series of questions. Try to find the answers to the following questions:

1. What airlines, if any, fly into this country? What will be your route from your current home to the capital city?

2. Once you get there, how is the transportation? Or, what transportation system still exists despite the war?
3. What is the country's capital? What is its climate? What is the weather like now? In other words, are you packing your parka and boots or sandals and t-shirts?
4. What is the topography of this country? Will you be in mountains, desert, jungles, or other extreme topographies?
5. How many square-miles large is the country? Will you be traveling long distances to cover your story, or will you be staying largely in one area? (Covering Somalia meant mainly staying in Mogadishu; covering the American attack of Afghanistan in 2001 entailed a much larger area.)
6. Who is the current leader of this country? How long has he/she been in power? Under what circumstances did he/she come to power (e.g., democratic elections? military coup)? Who are the opposition leaders?
7. You should learn a few words in the native tongue. What language(s) is spoken?
8. What are the major religions in this country? Are people divided by religion in this conflict?
9. Are there other major inequities in this country that might contribute to the conflict, such as ethnic minorities, extreme poverty, famine; etc?
10. How dangerous is this country for visiting Americans and for journalists of all nationalities?

Talk about your findings with your fellow participants. Take this opportunity to inform each other about different conflicts currently occurring in our world. Also, discuss the kinds of issues that journalists must consider when preparing to cover a story. What surprised you in your research?

If you're preparing to see the exhibit, what questions does this bring to mind about Somalia and Eldon's work there? If you've already been to the exhibit, do you understand Eldon's photographs in a different way?

**Resources:**

Amnesty International - <http://www.amnesty.org/>  
 Human Rights Watch - <http://www.hrw.org/>  
 INCORE - <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/home/>  
 U.S. State Department - [http://travel.state.gov/travel\\_warnings.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html)  
 Christian Science Monitor - <http://www.csmonitor.com>  
 Associated Press - <http://ap.org>  
 CNN - <http://cnn.com>  
 Reuters - <http://www.reuters.com>  
 New York Times - <http://www.nytimes.com/>  
 National Public Radio - <http://www.npr.org/>  
 The Library of Congress: Country Studies - <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html>  
 Lonely Planet On-Line - <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/>  
 CIA World Factbook - <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>  
 Committee to Protect Journalists - <http://www.cpj.org/>

### 3. Somalia Time Line

Like many wars, the events in Somalia were complex. Review the time line of the civil war in Somalia (see below) and discuss the following:

- a. How was the colonial system, under which much of Africa was controlled by European nations throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and until the 1950s and 60s, replaced by Cold War politics? What did the United States and the USSR have to gain by providing political and humanitarian aid to countries like Somalia during the Cold War?
- b. Does Somalia's clan system remind you of formal or informal political systems in other parts of the world, including the United States? How do you think it both benefited and harmed Somalia?
- c. How have ancient clan systems, such as that in Somalia or the Hutus and Tutus in Rwanda, been affected by more recent politics, such as Colonialism, the Cold War and its aftermath?
- d. What is your understanding of the UN's mission? What do you think the UN's role should be in conflicts such as that in Somalia?
- e. Was President Bush right to send troops to Somalia in late 1992 to help the UN safely deliver food? If the U.S. helped people in severe need in this case, why didn't they in other conflicts around this same time, such as in Bosnia and Rwanda? What factors must a U.S. government take into consideration before deciding to be part of a mission such as that in Somalia?
- f. What do you think is the appropriate role of the media in a conflict like Somalia? Can you identify instances from the time line when the media seemed to act appropriately or inappropriately?
- g. The UN's role in Somalia expanded to include "nation building," a term that has come to mean bringing democratic institutions to previously unstable or corrupt nations. Although the intent is good, can you imagine any drawbacks to or ill effects from nation building?
- h. What do you think went wrong July 12, 1993? Who is to blame for the four journalists' deaths?
- i. Were the US and UN right to have focused so much attention and energy on the warlord Aidid?
- j. What similarities do you see between the events in Somalia and the US's post-September 11<sup>th</sup> policies?

### Somalia Time Line

#### **A Brief Overview of Somali Political History**

Historically, Somalis were a nomadic people. They tended camels and sheep and traded with neighboring Ethiopians and Egyptians. They governed themselves through a clan system that provided minimal organization and protection. The first Europeans to dominate the region were the Portuguese who arrived in the mid-1500s and stayed more than a hundred years when power was transferred to the Ottoman Empire. In the late 1800s, the region was divided. England took the north, calling it Somaliland; Italy dominated the south, including Mogadishu; France controlled the northwest and its ports; and an internal desert zone, Ogaden, was ceded to Ethiopia.

A shaky democracy held for about a decade after Somalia gained independence in 1960. In 1969, General Siad Barre took advantage of the chaotic political state – there were 69 parties representing 64 clans or subclans – and led a coup. Barre viewed himself as part of a triumvirate along with Marx and Stalin. After a failed invasion of Soviet-allied Ethiopia in 1977, however, he lost Soviet support. During the 1960s through 1980s, many newly independent African countries were allied with either with the USSR



or the United States. Given Cold War politics, then, it was not surprising that Barre was soon getting both humanitarian and military aid from the U.S.

Early in his reign, Barre tried to eradicate the ancient and deeply rooted clan system. Somalis derive from six clans, which are further delineated by multiple subclans. Barre went so far as to outlaw clan loyalty, though he never succeeded; the system merely went underground. In 1978, when he suffered a coup attempt by another clan, it was Barre who openly reinitiated animosities. His Daarood clan was responsible for horrible atrocities throughout the 1980s. When other clans opposed the dictator, they faced severe harassment: one clan's water sources were destroyed, tens of thousands of camels and sheep were killed, young women were forced into prostitution, and in 1988, 5,000 members of a rival clan were killed. With each clan or clan alliance operating its own militia, civil war quickly spread, starting in the north and heading south.

### 1991

In January, as warlords Mohamed Farah Aidid and Ali Mahdi Mohamed fight for control of the capital city, longtime dictator Siad Barre flees to the countryside. During the rest of the year, a famine spreads. It has been caused by the destruction of farms during the three-year civil war and Barre's corrupt government. Over the next two years, at least 300,000 people will die.

### Spring 1992

*Dan returns to Nairobi after attending fall and winter college terms in the United States. Increasingly aware of the political unrest in neighboring Sudan and Somalia, he takes a trip to a northern Kenya refugee camp with a family friend and has his first glimpse of the growing crisis.*

### July 1992

Fifty unarmed United Nations military observers arrive in Mogadishu to monitor a short-lived ceasefire between the clans.

*Dan makes his first visit to Somalia. He and another reporter fly up from Nairobi with an aid organization; this is the most common and reliable way to get in and out of Somalia. Although he has agreed to show his photographs to the Nairobi newspaper The Nation and the news agency Reuters, Dan is mainly there for the experience, unsure of what he'll find. After three days in the country, he plans to return.*

### August 1992

The famine has crested, but people are still starving in large numbers. The UN begins to deliver food and supplies under the name Operation Provide Relief (a.k.a. UN Operation in Somalia, UNOSOM I).

*Dan works as a stringer for Reuters and lives at the agency's Mogadishu compound during his long stints in the country.*

### October 1992

*Having saved money from his Reuters' work, Dan travels to Norway to visit an old girlfriend and then to London to see family and friends. He is noticeably depressed to all who see him. He shows photos of Somali famine victims to an old friend, telling her there are other images, worse ones, he cannot show her.*

### December 1992

The UN mission is having an increasingly difficult time delivering food and supplies. Clan militia, mainly AK-47-toting teenagers, loot airplanes as they land, hijack food convoys, and assault aid workers. Responding to a UN request for military assistance,

President George Bush orders 25,000 U.S. troops to Somalia to lead an international UN force to ensure supplies are safely delivered. Officially called UNITAF, the US-led force is coined Operation Restore Hope.

*Dan covers the landing of the U.S. troops on the evening of December 9. As they wade ashore on the Somali coast near Mogadishu, the soldiers are met not by warring clans, but by a platoon of media. Dan spends much of the bizarre night ferrying equipment and film back and forth between the Reuters' compound and the more senior photographers who have arrived to cover the landing.*

### Holidays, 1992

*Dan returns home for Christmas and New Year's, spending much needed time with friends and family. Deciding to refocus himself, he starts several ventures, including a postcard and T-shirt business. He also produces a book of his Somalia photographs in which he writes, "After my first to Somalia, the terror of being surrounded by violence and the horrors of the famine threw me into a dark depression. ...I don't know how these experiences have changed me, but I feel different."*

### Winter 1993

UNITAF, or Operation Restore Hope, is successful in ending the famine. Initially, the forces are heralded by the Somalis. Clan warfare, chaos, and corruption continue unchecked, however, and Somalis grow impatient with the seemingly useless presence of American and UN troops.

*Dan's photographs begin to receive more widespread coverage, appearing in newspapers and magazines all over the world.*

### March – May 1993

The UN forms UNOSOM II, intending to take over from UNITAF. The new mission's expanded focus goes beyond humanitarian work and includes disarmament of the Somali people and "nation building." Twenty-eight nations send troops; the US hands over command on May 4. Only 4,200 U.S. troops remain in Somalia, including just 1,200 combat soldiers.

### June 5, 1993

Twenty-four UN-Pakistani soldiers are brutally killed and fifty more are injured while conducting a weapons search. The next day, the UN Security Council issues an emergency resolution calling for the apprehension of those responsible for the massacre. Soon after, Admiral Howe, the leader of U.S. forces, has leaflets posted around Mogadishu offering \$25,000 for Aidid's capture. The peacekeepers are at war with Aidid.

### Late June

*Dan takes an R&R break in Nairobi. One of his photos has just earned a double-page spread in Newsweek. He tells friends that he is ready to leave Somalia, and hopes that his next trip there may be his last. He is itchy to travel, and plans several safaris with friends for later in the summer. After that, he'll choose between another Reuters' assignment, perhaps Bosnia, and returning to Los Angeles to attend film school.*

### July 12

A group of elders from Aidid's clan meet in a villa. Their goal is to find a way to get Aidid to talk to the UN about a settlement. Women and children work and play in the villa and its large courtyard. At 10:15 A.M., American Cobra helicopters surround the villa and pummel it with missiles and canon fire for nearly 17 minutes.

*Journalists at a nearby hotel gather on the rooftop to watch the Cobras' attack, which is unlike anything they've witnessed in Somali. Dan is among them, although he is packed and scheduled to fly back to Nairobi that afternoon. The journalists initially decide to stay at the hotel, but when a group of Somalis arrive and promise their protection, Dan takes off in the lead truck with four other journalists: Hos Maina, Anthony Macharia, and Mohamed Shaffi, all of Reuters, and Hansi Krauss of AP. Other trucks follow, but only theirs makes it into the villa's compound. After a few minutes of documenting the bloody scene—as many as 74 people were killed, including women and children—a man picks up a stone and yells at them, accusing them of working for the Americans. The five men take off and are soon forced in different directions. An American Cobra pilot spies a white man running below. It is Dan. He radios for permission to pick the man up, but the request is denied. Dan is eventually surrounded and stoned, though the cause of death was probably a strike to the head by a rifle butt. Of the five men, only Mo Shaffi lived.*

### July 18

Hundreds of Dan's family and friends celebrate his life in a ceremony on the Ngong Hills, outside Nairobi.

### August 8

Four American military police are killed by a remote detonated land mine set off by Somalis. Two weeks later, six more US soldiers are wounded in a similar attack.

### August 26

US Special Forces arrive in Somalia with the mission to capture Aidid.

### October 3-4

Task Force Ranger's assault on the Olympic Hotel in Mogadishu, in search of Aidid, results in a 17-hour bloody battle in which 18 US soldiers are killed and 84 are wounded.

### October 7

President Clinton announces that American troops will be withdrawn by March and that the hunt for Aidid is over.

### Aftermath:

Aidid died from a bullet wound on August 1, 1995. Today, two areas of Somalia have gained relative stability. In the north, The Republic of Somaliland declared independence in 1991, and Puntland has been a self-declared autonomous state since 1998. For the rest of Somalia, a Transitional National Government was formed in 2000, although clan fighting is ongoing and Mogadishu remains in an especially chaotic and warlike state. Suspicion of Somali links to global terrorism has hindered aid efforts by other governments and humanitarian groups.

#### 4. Collage

*Objective: To become familiar with collage through making one's own collages.*

Only in the last century has the collage been viewed as a form of art. Pablo Picasso created his first collage entitled "Guitar" in 1917 and introduced an entirely new art form. Before this time, artists had hardly ever included outside elements in their drawings and paintings. With the collage, the artist could expand his/her vocabulary to use any objects and materials he/she wished.

In the early 1930's an African-American artist, Romare Bearden, became an artist after turning down a career in professional baseball. Bearden, who was light-skinned, refused to pass for white in order to play the sport and instead became an artist. For over half a century, he did his playing with pens, paintbrushes, inks, paints, scraps of paper, and old photographs. He used these "scrap" materials in a new way to deliver powerful messages about African-American life.

Collage itself is the process of combining various materials into one art work. There are many ways to approach collage both technically and aesthetically. Dan Eldon not only included his photographs, drawings, and writing into his work, but also found objects such as newspaper scraps, food labels, Christmas tinsel, rice, and snake skins.

Most of us have the basic materials to get started at home: a pair of scissors, glue or rubber cements, old magazines, newspapers and personal photographs. Other materials include exacto knife for finer cutting, colored pencils and markers to color images and various other materials that have a tactile quality. (e.g. wallpaper, felt). Other equipment that can enhance our images include access to a color copier and a computer with a color printer. Most of us learn to accommodate our work with the equipment made available to us. I'm sure Dan Eldon didn't have a photocopier with him on his travels around the world (though when he first had access to one as an intern at *Mademoiselle* magazine in New York, he used it every chance he got).

With this in mind, there are a variety of approaches to collage and how to come up with ideas for them. The following lessons are ones that students of any age may enjoy.

#### **A Basic Approach to Collage**

1. Look through old magazines, newspapers, and photos and select 25-30 images you like. Spread them out and look again. What idea or theme has developed?
2. Carefully cut out images you think you want to use. You could use all or only part of an image. They don't have to be in scale with each other.
3. Arrange and rearrange the images but do not glue them down. You can overlap, use one part, weave together, change scale and sequence. It is important to have one point of interest.
4. Use rubber cement or glue to adhere the final combination.

#### **Take it further**

- Make a number of Xerox copies of your collage. Make them dark, light, reduce or enlarge the size, make copies of the copies. Then compare them all.
- The copies will "flatten" your collage and lose the original colors. Choose new colors that express your idea. Color everything or just one area.

#### **Collage techniques to explore**

- Combine elements: Use images of different sizes, various points of view or shifting perspectives. Use overlapping shapes and jarred angles.
- Combine different textures and materials: (Fabrics, found objects, wall paper, etc..) Don't forget your own photographs
- Use different transferring and reproduction techniques: lacquer transfer, Xerox copying, scanning and printing images, nature paper images.

## **Project Ideas**

### *“A Day in the Life of...”*

This refers to the book, *A Day in the Life of America*. For this you would document a day in your life, or someone else's, through photo collage. Disposable cameras work great for someone who doesn't have their own. You could also incorporate text/images from magazines or newspapers for that day.

### *Transforming Reality*

This would be a representation of a personal memory, dream, or hope for the future. Refer to the work of Romare Bearden for ideas on depicting people and other images.

### *Juxtaposition*

Use images of varying size and viewpoint to visually communicate a sense of disorientation and alienation. This technique was often used by surrealist artists. Look to the work of Salvador Dali, Frida Kahlo, Max Ernst, Rene Magritte and the photomontage artists Hannah Hoch and Dawn Ades for ideas.

### *Political Statement*

Take an issue you feel strongly about and create a collage that expresses that view. Approach the issue from a contemporary point of view, a historical depiction, or a combination.

### *Tell a Story*

Through the use of your images, tell a personal story about an event, memory, etc... Incorporate text or personal writings to enhance the meaning of the images.

### *Self-Portrait*

Begin by doing some reflective writing. Some questions to ask yourself:

- What is important to me? Family, friends, material objects?
- What sort of places have I been to that have made an impact on my life?
- What people influence the decisions I make and how I live my life?
- How do I feel about the world? What is my role in it? Can I change it?
- How have my relationships affected my life?
- How am I different from who I was 5 years ago? What is my outlook on the future?
- What are my fears? What makes me happy?

### *Make a photomontage in Adobe Photoshop*

Take digital photos or scan the images into your computer. Using Adobe Photoshop or another comparable program, directly manipulate your images on the screen and print them out on a color copier.

Print your image on to transparency film, a light sensitive paper that is exposed to sunlight. If you want your image to print positive, make your image a negative in the computer before printing. Nature print paper can be purchased in most art stores.

For more examples of photomontage, look at the work of Jerry Uelsmann at <http://www.uelsmann.net>. His work is done entirely in the darkroom, but could be done on the computer as well. Also look at the work of digital artist Maggie Taylor at <http://www.maggietaylor.com>

## **Collage in the Classroom**

When using a collage project in the classroom, you could use one of the following approaches:

1. Have each student make one large collage. Choosing a theme or subject will help students focus their ideas and help in choosing elements that work together. This would be a great opportunity for students to do writing about their topic.
2. Have students create three smaller collages (8" x 10" or less). Have them choose from a variety of techniques and require them to try something different in each collage. For example, one collage is done using juxtaposition and is hand built, a second is done on the computer, and a third is a personal statement combining a variety of materials.
3. Have students create a series of three or more collages that are connected in some way: before, during, and after; different points of view of the same subject; Different compositions and variations on the same idea.
4. As a group project, pick a theme/topic. Depending on class size, have each student contribute one or more collage relating to the theme. Collect all collages and lay them out for students to share and discuss. From the collages, create a 'zine – making a xerox copy of the final layout for each student to have. The result is an interesting book and a lesson that helps students learn to organize and put together a small publication.

### Resources:

#### Books

- Romare Bearden: Celebrates the Victory by Myron Schwartzmann. New York: Franklin Watts, 1999. ISBN 0531113876
- Romare Bearden: His Life and Art by Myron Schwartzmann. New York: H.N. Abrams,, 1990. ISBN 0810931087
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- <http://www.collagetown.com>
- <http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/c/collage.html>

## **The Exhibit: Questions for Before, During, and After Your Visit**

### **Before attending the exhibit, consider the following questions:**

- a. What do you know about Somalia, its history and culture as well as the recent civil war and ensuing US and UN involvement there?
- b. In what ways does an exhibit of photographs from the war in Somalia seem relevant today, a decade later?
- c. Dan Eldon was 22 years old when he took the photographs of the war in Somalia that you'll see and even younger when he created most of the journal collages you'll see. Given his age, what are your expectations?
- d. Have you ever kept a journal or scrapbook? If so, can you imagine it being shared with the public, even after your death? What clues would it provide about you and the time and place in which you've lived?
- e. Look through some recent newspapers for examples of current war photography; keep these in mind as you attend the exhibit.

### **While you are at the exhibit, consider the following:**

- a. What clues can you find about Dan's personality from the collages? Find specific examples. What clues do you find about him from the photographs?
- b. If you had no biographical information about Dan but had to create a story about his life based only on the collages, what might you write?
- c. Make a list of some of the artifacts that Dan used in his collages (e.g., gum wrappers, newspaper clippings). How do you imagine he found and kept these things?
- d. Dan went through a period of depression several months after arriving in Somalia. What do you think caused it? How would you have reacted in the same situation?
- e. Find the photograph of an American marine with a gun to the head of a Somali and then find the same image in a smaller, black and white format in one of Dan's collages. This collage was probably done several years prior to Dan's time in Somalia, but he went back and pasted in his photo. Why did he do this? How might the photograph from Vietnam have effected how and why he took the Somalia photograph?
- f. The photographs of the female marines on the beach were Dan's last published photographs from Somalia, taken the day before he died and printed in many papers around the world on July 12. How do you think Dan might have described the photograph; what was his purpose in taking it? How does it strike you that this was among his final photos?
- g. Jonathan Clayton who had been Dan's Reuters' bureau chief, wrote: "As his photography matured, he grew as an individual. In the space of little more than nine months, Dan Eldon moved from being an enthusiastic young man with lots of raw talent to being a true professional." Do you see a progression in his photographs?
- h. Which photograph do you find most effecting? Why? Which one resonates most strongly with current world events?

### **After your visit to the exhibit, you might discuss these questions or use them as reflective writing prompts:**

- a. Based on the collages and photographs, how would you describe Dan's attitude toward Africa?

- b. How did Dan's years of making collages help him to excel as a photographer?
- c. How do you think Somalia changed the young man who made the collages? What might have been the eventual effect on him had he lived?
- d. After leaving the exhibit, which images stay with you and why?
- e. Given the opportunity, what would you ask Dan?



### **Part III**

#### **The Book: Discussion questions for *Dan Eldon: The Art of Life***

Following are some questions that might guide a book group or class discussion about Dan Eldon's biography.

1. Were any of your conceptions about Africa challenged, changed, or confirmed through this book?
2. Dan Eldon was not your average teenager or person in his early 20s. He traveled to more than 40 countries, helped to raise thousands of dollars to help others, and left behind an artistic legacy in the form of his journals and photographs. What do you think spurred him? What parts of his upbringing encouraged these attributes in him and allowed him to flourish?
3. What about Dan particularly compels you? Is there anything about him that you found unbelievable or unlikable?
4. From looking at some of the journal pages reproduced in the book, what do you think compelled Dan to keep the journals? In what way, if any, did they serve as a journal for him?
5. Describe Dan's relationships with his immediate family members: Amy, Kathy, and Mike. How did each of these relationships effect and support him and make him into the person he was?
6. What do you think Dan's greatest achievement was?
7. Do you think Dan took unwise risks?
8. What do Dan's experiences in Somalia make you think of in terms of more recent conflicts in our world?

## Part IV

### The Film: Activities to do in conjunction with viewing *Dying to Tell the Story*

Following are several activities that will help you understand the role of war correspondents and the work they do.

#### 1. The Impartial Observer

*"My business is to communicate facts. My instructions do not allow me to make any comments upon the facts. My dispatches are sent to papers of all manners of politics. I therefore confine myself to what I consider legitimate news and try to be truthful and impartial."* –Associated Press' editorial creed, by Lawrence Gobrigh, 1856

Discuss the work of journalists. On one hand, their job is to be impartial observers, but on the other hand, they must capture an event in a manner that will interest their potential audience. What does it mean to be "impartial"? Is the best news coverage "impartial"? Is it possible to be "impartial"?

**Assignment:** Consider this question not from the point of view of a reporter covering events in the Middle East, for example, but from your own life. Think of a conflict from your life, perhaps an argument with a friend or relative or a recent dispute in your community.

Take five or ten minutes and write down your memory of the conflict. What was it about? How did it begin? What was said or done? How did you feel? Don't worry about your writing, just get down as many details as you can recall.

Now try to remember the fight again, but pretend that you are another person who was involved, someone who had an opposing view to your own. What details do you think you'd remember if you were in her or his shoes? Did you leave something out in the first version that the other person might include? Retell the fight but in the other person's words, using the first person (i.e. *I thought, I said*, etc.). Try to be fair, answering the same questions as above and including those details that would be important to that person's perspective.

Now rewrite the fight one more time. This time, you're a journalist. You walked into the fight half way through it, so you have some first hand view as to what happened. But you've also had to rely on both people's versions of how the fight began. When you write about the fight this time, try to be "impartial."

Look at the three versions you wrote and those of your fellow participants. Consider the following questions:

- a. How does the third version compare to the other two?
- b. Is your third version truly impartial?
- c. How did you describe the beginning of the fight in the third version?
- d. What was the hardest part of this exercise?

## 2. A Matter of Cultures

In his book *War Stories: The Culture of Foreign Correspondents*, Mark Pedelty looks at the question of subjectivity versus objectivity in journalism. He notes that most European newspapers have a decided alliance to a particular political party or political ideology. In other words, you know if you're buying a liberal or conservative paper and people strongly associate with one newspaper over another. In the United States, however, most people associate the press with neutrality and don't tend to buy newspapers based on their politics. (Our talk radio programs are more obviously partisan in nature, although they rarely report hard news but rather comment on it.) To illustrate this point, Pedelty gives two reports by the same reporter of the same event but written for different newspapers—one American and the other European.

Here is the first half of the American news article:

*Leftist rebels in El Salvador have admitted that one of their units may have executed two U.S. servicemen after their helicopter was shot down last Wednesday. An official FMLN rebel statement issued yesterday said two rebel combatants had been detained, "under the charge of suspicion of assassinating wounded prisoners of war."*

*The U.S. helicopter was downed in the conflictive eastern province of San Miguel as it was flying back to its base in Honduras. One pilot was killed in the crash, but a Pentagon autopsy team concluded that the other two servicemen in the helicopter were killed execution-style afterwards. Civilians confirmed that the two servicemen had survived the crash, although no one actually saw the actual execution.*

*The FMLN has concluded that there are sufficient elements to presume that some of the three, in the condition of wounded prisoners, could have been assassinated by one or various members of our military unit," said the rebel statement. It also said that their investigations had determined that their initial information from units on the ground was false.*

Here is the first half of the European report:

*Nestled amid the steep mountains of Northern Chalatenango province, a simple wooden cross on a small hill marks the grave of a teenage guerrilla fighter. There is no name on the grave. None of the villagers from the nearby settlement of San Jose Las Flores who buried his body two years ago knew what he was called. In life the young guerrilla had little in common with three North American servicemen who were killed last month after the rebels shot down their helicopter. They were enemies on opposite sides of a bitter war. But they shared a common death. They were all killed in cold blood after being captured.*

*When the young rebel was killed two years ago, I remember taking cover behind the wall of a church of San Jose Las Flores. One moment I was watching two adolescent guerrilla fighters sipping from Coke bottles and playing with a yo-yo. Then I remember seeing soldiers running, crouching, and shooting across the square. The crack of automatic rifle fire and the explosion of grenades was deafening in the confined space. The whole incident lasted about twenty minutes. As soon as the soldiers left, whooping and yelling victory cries, we ran across the square to find the body of one of the teenage guerrillas still twitching. The villagers said that he had been wounded and surrendered. The soldiers had questioned him—and then finished him off at close range in the head. The bullet had blown off the top of his skull.*

*I remember clearly the reaction of the then U.S. ambassador when asked about the incident. "That kind of incident cannot be condoned," he said, "but I was a soldier, I can understand—it happens in a war." In a country where tens of thousands have been killed,*

*many of them civilians murdered by the U.S. backed military or by ring wing death squads, there was no suggestion of any investigation for the execution of a prisoner.*

*At the beginning of January this year a U.S. army helicopter was shot down by rebel ground fire in Eastern El Salvador. The pilot died in the crash. But two other U.S. servicemen were dragged badly wounded from the wreckage by the rebels. Before the guerrillas left they finished off the two wounded Americans execution style with a bullet in the head. The present U.S. ambassador referred to the guerrillas in this incident as "animals." The killings made front page news internationally and provided the climate needed by President Bush to release forty-two and a half million dollars of military aid, which was frozen last October by congress. U.S. lawmakers wanted to force the Salvadoran army to make concessions in peace talks and clean up its human rights record.*

**Assignment:** After reading the two accounts, discuss the following questions:

- a. What are the most striking differences between the two accounts?
- b. How does the writer's use of first person (her use of "I" and the inclusion of her own experience) change the way you read the second report?
- c. Who do you sympathize with in the first report? In the second report?
- d. What clues do you get about the reporter's own feelings about the war?
- e. Do you feel like you get a better sense of the war from the first or the second account?
- f. Would you consider both of these reports to be "fair"? If not, why?
- g. Which is more interesting to read and why?

### 3. The History of War Photography: Roger Fenton and the Crimean War

*"The camera is the eye of history." Matthew Brady*

The Crimean War (1854-1856) was the first conflict reported by war correspondents and photographers. It began as a land dispute between the Russians and the Turkish. England entered the war on the side of the Turks because Russia was seeking to control the Dardanelles, a narrow waterway separating the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea, thus threatening England's Mediterranean sea routes.

William H. Russell, a journalist for *The Times of London* who is considered the first war correspondent, wrote disturbing accounts of the conditions under which the British forces were fighting. More than 80% of the fatalities were not from battle wounds but from disease and bitter cold conditions. When Russell began to report about shabby medical facilities and the fact that British soldiers, not having even been issued with winter uniforms, were freezing to death, public opinion in England began to sway against the previously popular war.

In response to the criticism, Roger Fenton, a well known photographer in England who had traveled around Russia only a few years earlier, was commissioned by the British government in 1855 to photograph the war and record images favorable to England. Using a converted wine-wagon as both a darkroom and a way to transport his heavy, large equipment, he produced more than 350 pictures of the conflict. The images, which showed warmly-dressed soldiers sipping tea and wounded men being tenderly cared for, changed the English people's opinion of the war and quelled protests.

Discuss the following:

- a. Was Fenton justified in omitting the gruesome details of war? Considering issues such as morale, public support for the war, national security, and politics, was Fenton really lying or was he protecting both the soldiers and the public? Keep in mind that at this time in history, the Victorian era, few people outside the army had ever seen images of war.
- b. How is the English military's use of Fenton different than the US's use of press pools in the Gulf War, a practice in which journalists' movements were controlled by the military?
- c. Keeping in mind Fenton and Russell, the forefathers of today's war correspondents, discuss the role of the journalist. To whom is she foremost accountable: the public or her employer? In what ways do journalists contribute to political propaganda, consciously or unconsciously? Would lives have been saved had Fenton's camera told a more truthful story?
- d. Many journalists and critics site the footage of an American soldier being drug through the streets of Mogadishu in 1993—the events portrayed in the movie *Blackhawk Down*—as a turning point in American foreign policy. As a result of that image which was burned into the American public's imagination, future administrations ruled out sending American troops to Rwanda or Bosnia for fear of a similar episode. What are the similarities and differences between this instance of a journalistic image affecting public opinion and politics and that of Fenton?

#### 4. The Role of the Journalist in War Zones

*Before viewing Dying to Tell the Story:*

Discuss the role of a journalist in a war zone. What are his or her responsibilities? Martin Bell and David Rohde both reported on the war in Bosnia. Bell was a TV reporter who was shot in the abdomen while covering the war in 1992. He returned to Bosnia after recuperating at home in England. Since then, he has retired from journalism and in 1997 was elected to Parliament. Rohde uncovered mass graves outside the Bosnian town of Srebrenica in 1995, getting himself jailed in the process. He later won a Pulitzer Prize and wrote a book about the graves.

Here are Bell's and Rohde's own assessments of their role in the Bosnian war.

**Martin Bell:**

I believe in fairness, in partiality... Not to stand neutral between good and evil. Not—when someone is shot beside you—to say, 'I'm a journalist, I'm not going to help.' Not, when the war crime tribunal comes looking for evidence, to say, 'I'm a journalist, that's not my business.' The journalism of attachment is about all these things. We're not a part from the world of war; we're part of it.

**David Rohde:**

I'm not comfortable with testifying [before the war crimes tribunal at The Hague]. I'm a journalist. What I found is public record. If the tribunal wants to use that as evidence, that's fine. But I'm working to get information for the public, not to gain information for a court or the government.

Discuss these two statements. What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? Which do you agree with more and why?

*After viewing Dying to Tell the Story:*

A journalist's work is affected by how he or she defines the duties of the job. Consider the following quotes from two journalists in *Dying to Tell the Story*, Martin Bell and veteran war photographer Don McCullin.

*In the news business it isn't involvement but indifference that makes for bad practice.*  
—Martin Bell

*Almost without realizing it, I found myself getting involved with helping wounded and carrying stretchers and that sort of thing. And my photography started to suffer. It started to come second.*  
— Don McCullin

Discuss what these two mean by their statements. How does indifference make for bad practice? Why did McCullin's photography suffer? Consider other examples from the film of being either too involved or not involved enough.

**Assignment:**

If time allows, you might consider this scenario and the following questions both before and after watching *Dying to Tell the Story*.

Suppose you are a journalist for an American newspaper, sent to cover a recent and very violent conflict on the other side of the world. You are married and have a nice dog and a lovely house back in the States. Your grandmother is ill and you're not sure if she'll pull through before you get back from your assignment. Although you like the adventure, you're not sure whether you want to cover wars for much longer; covering the next presidential campaign doesn't sound so bad. For the moment, though, it's a chance to do good work and to get noticed by your editors.

While you're overseas covering this latest conflict, you're faced with the following situations. What you would do in each circumstance?

- You're photographing people who are standing in line to get bread when a bomb goes off. All around you, people are injured and calling out for help. Do you put down your camera and assist, or do you keep taking pictures of the carnage?
- Your editor assigns you to cover the arrival of a United Nations official at the airport instead of the destruction of a Croat village now underway. You know what the UN official will say; they all say the same thing. Do you follow orders?
- Your newspaper has given you a flak jacket (basically, a bullet proof vest) and requires you to wear it while on duty. The people who you interview on the street don't have flak jackets, of course, and are totally unprotected from attacks while they talk to you. It feels awkward to talk to them when you're relatively safe and they're not. Do you wear the jacket?
- You're in a car with several other journalists en route to what could be a very important story. The road you had planned to take is blocked and the only other route is through an area that's rumored to be widely land mined. Do you progress or turn back?
- You interview a woman whose husband was killed during the war. She has a little girl who is the same age as your niece. The girl is no longer in school (all schools are closed) and misses her friends, as well as reading (they have burnt many of their books for fuel), her dog (who ran away during a bombing), and chocolate. The next time you're home, do you get clothes, books, and chocolate to take to the girl?
- You are interviewing a man in a Red Cross camp, one of thousands of victims of a famine brought on by the conflict. As you interview him on live TV, you realize he is dying right then. How do you respond?
- You are returning home in the morning for a well-deserved month-long break. Tonight you are relaxing with friends and getting packed. Your replacement has already arrived and is officially on the job. News comes to the hotel of a major attack about a mile away. Journalists are preparing to convoy to the scene. Do you accompany them?
- You're allowed to photograph prisoners of war. The men are being held in a camp under very poor conditions. They are thin and weak looking. As you photograph one of them he is able to talk to you in English without a guard noticing. He gives you the name and address of his parents who live in the city where you are based. Will you visit them and tell them that he is alive?

**Continuing the assignment:** Read about a recent decision by the United Nations war tribunal at The Hague regarding the role of journalists in war zones. Discuss the ramifications of the decision and whether you agree or not: <http://www.cpj.org/news/2002/Hague11dec02na.html>

## 5. An Iowa Reporter's Life in War

**Assignment:** Read the interview with Roger Thurow (below) and discuss or write about the following:

- a. How does Thurow's experience compare with those of other journalists in *Dying to Tell the Story*, especially the South African journalist's?
- b. Many reporters who covered Bosnia also covered Somalia. What do you imagine would have been the differences between these two experiences? How would a journalist have had to prepare himself mentally and physically for each experience?
- c. Thurow and several correspondents in *Dying to Tell the Story* talk about their frustration at the public's lack of interest in the places and people they're covering. Do you agree that people lack interest in world events, including wars? If so, to what do you attribute this? Why do you think reporters persist despite this seeming lack of interest on the part of the public?
- d. Does this interview with Thurow change your view of the media in any way? Many people feel that war correspondents are "vultures." How does Thurow support or detract from this view of his profession?
- e. What do you think Thurow means when he says, "Because sooner or later there's a point of no return, where you're more a citizen of the world than of any one place in particular." What is the danger in this? Do you think Dan Eldon would have agreed?

### **Roger Thurow: A Foreign Correspondent's Work**

*In Dying to Tell the Story, you'll see David Guttenfelder, a recent University of Iowa graduate and native of Waukegan interviewed. Since the making of the documentary, David has become one of the Associated Press' top conflict photographers. He covered the 1992-93 US offensive against Afghanistan and is currently stationed in India*

*Another UI graduate who has covered major global conflicts is Roger Thurow. He went to work for The Wall Street Journal in 1979 and spent four years at the paper's German desk, before he and his wife moved to South Africa. Thurow was the Journal's main reporter covering the unraveling of apartheid (an event Dan Eldon witnessed during his 1989 hitch hiking trip through the country.) Thurow and his family later moved to Vienna, from which point he covered the war in the former Yugoslavia. Roger, who is now based in Europe, spoke with Jennifer New several years ago about his work in those volatile places.*

Thurow: I was literally going out the door of the office in Bonn and leaving the next day for South Africa when the operators started going nuts because some big news had come through on the wire. I was thinking of all the things that might have happened in Europe. But it turned out to be news from South Africa. The white government had just announced a state of emergency. My wife and I went ahead with our plans and moved to Johannesburg. We got there in September 1986 and stayed for four and a half years, which turned out to parallel what was happening in the country. We got there when the state of emergency was declared, just as an already tense situation was turning more and more violent. By the time we left, the ban on the African National Congress was overturned, Nelson Mandela was freed from prison, and the state of emergency was officially over.

New: Was it the most unstable situation you'd been in as a reporter?



Thurow: Yes. I'd been in Europe at the tail end of the cold war. I traveled in Poland after marshal law was declared. I'd seen the anti-missile campaigns in Germany. There was stone throwing and it seemed pretty crazy and wild at the time. But South Africa was intense by comparison. For example, there were penalties for subversive speaking—a person could be jailed for saying the “wrong” thing to a reporter—so that was something I had to keep in mind when I was interviewing someone. And there were often pitched battles in the streets between the army and residents.

New: Did you feel endangered?

Thurow: Not the same way as the South Africans, certainly. But I was definitely aware that I was in a different situation than I'd been in as a reporter in Germany or the U.S. For example, our house was bugged. We're pretty sure the bug was installed the day we came because when we arrived the phone company was there even though we already had a working phone. Also, it was weird because the white guy was doing the work and the black guys were sitting outside waiting. In South Africa, it was always the opposite. Sometimes we could hear the wires crackle and friends told us this meant that a whole-house bug was being activated, so we could be heard from any room. The very day we moved out, another crew was back and again the whites did the work; I assume they were dismantling the bug.

New: Was your work censored?

Thurow: They tried to but it wasn't very successful. They did fail to renew the visa of one reporter while we were there, in effect kicking him out of the country. And we were supposed to send our articles to the Bureau of Information, but no one ever did. I got called in by that office once and they showed me a binder they had of my work and let me know that they had a problem with it. It was meant to intimidate me. In the minds of the white government, the foreign press were the instigators. They figured if they could control the American media, there wouldn't be such a public clamoring for sanctions and divestment. But they also knew that it looked bad if they treated us too poorly. The native black reporters were under much more pressure. They could be detained, fined, and arrested. I met a lot of very brave South African reporters.

New: How did you get to Bosnia from South Africa?

Thurow: My wife and I had a chance to join the *Journal* office in Vienna. She'd gone to school there and it sounded wonderful: Our return to civilization! I planned to cover the burgeoning capitalism in the former Soviet Union, and then we'd enjoy the city—coffee houses, Mozart! But about two months after we got there, Yugoslavia started to heat up. First it was the war in Slovenia, and then it moved to Croatia and Bosnia. Eighty percent of my reporting time was in Yugoslavia.

New: So you stayed living in Vienna while covering Yugoslavia?

Thurow: Vienna was a good base. For me, and some other journalists who were based there, Bosnia became a commuting war. It was a bizarre situation—you get in your car and go to the war. Appropriately enough, we lived on Himmelstrasse, or “Heaven Street.” So I'd leave heaven—my wife and my two kids (both were born in Vienna). I'd throw my flak jacket in the back of our Volkswagen, and four and a half hours later I'd pull into the hotel parking lot in Zagreb. While I was driving along, I'd sometimes find a diaper or a baby food jar stuck under my seat.

New: So you'd just take the family car to the front?

Thurrow: Yeah, Austrian plates were a real advantage because they couldn't tell which side you were on. Also, there weren't any more rental cars to be had. After the Austrians and Italians saw their cars get blown up early in the war, they stopped renting them to anyone traveling to that area. Sometimes I'd carpool with other reporters, and I almost always took someone back with me. I'd let people know when I was heading back to Vienna and someone would catch a ride. From Zagreb, you could drive a half hour to the front line. It was about an hour into northern Bosnia. You had to take a train to get to eastern Bosnia. And usually you could only get into Sarajevo by plane with a relief agency, although some reporters had bulletproof vans and jeeps to get in and out of the city.

New: You were able to move around the country a lot?

Thurrow: There were two hubs to the war. Sarajevo was one. Most of the TV networks were there, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and wire services were pretty much always there too. Depending on the severity of the fighting, they were able get in and out of the countryside from the city. Occasionally you could drive from Sarajevo to western Croatia, but that was always a risky proposition. The other hub of the war was in Belgrade. I had the ability to go between the two theaters, although I took more trips into eastern and northern Bosnia overall.

New: I assume it was dangerous to travel?

Thurrow: One of the bigger scares I had while traveling came when I was in a car with two other reporters and a translator. It was just after a round of ethnic cleansing and villages were empty, buildings were on fire. We were trying to get as close to Srebrenica as we could. Our translator thought she knew of a short cut. There was no one around and the roads were littered with odd, random things—a shoe, a child's doll... We came to a point where there was a wire across the road. We'd heard of roads being booby trapped, so we took a vote and decided to back up and turn around. A mile or so later, we came across a Bosnian Serb peasant and we asked him for directions to the check point. He said it had been moved several miles because this whole area had been landmined. I'd gone to the Serb side of Sarajevo and seen how they'd created snipers' nests all around the city. When you were out in the country you couldn't help but remember these and wonder if they were out there, if they were asleep, or drunk, or watching you.

New: How was it different from South Africa?

Thurrow: It was much more a modern, technical war. In South Africa, you never knew what you'd come across when you turned a corner. There weren't front lines. It was a smoldering civil war. The rule of thumb for journalists was to wear tennis shoes because you never knew when you'd have to run. I'd also try to find out where the churches were because they were usually safe. In both South Africa and Bosnia, though, reporters were on their own. You weren't going with the military or the government.

New: Was it harder to cover Bosnia, to see a western nation destroy itself?

Thurrow: The despair of conflict, the strange and nonsensical logic that fuels these events, becomes numbingly second nature. I guess we've come to accept a certain level of savagery to conflicts in Africa; the number of amputees I saw when I covered the war in Angola, for instance, was staggeringly depressing. But the savagery on display in the Balkans was second to none to what people can do to one another. If you doubted any horrible story, people were ready to show you color photographs of what they'd done to the other side. When you got to Bosnia, you'd hear these awful, awful stories and think there's no way they could be true. But

as you were there longer, everything became simultaneously utterly unbelievable and believable. The kinds of stuff going on, the torture and death had a medieval quality.

New: The issue of remaining objective, of not taking sides, seems to have been tested by the press in Bosnia. Was that difficult for you?

Thurow: One good thing was that the *Journal* isn't about giving daily reports of numbers—how many casualties, how many bullets. Instead, we try to personalize what is happening. We try to help our readers grasp the bizarre motivations for a grisly event like this. So I didn't need to have this detached, statistical-oriented voice.

In South Africa, it had been a black and white issue. There was clearly a system in place that was robbing people of their dignity. Our responsibility as journalists was to explain the hideousness of what was going on. We'd describe the situation in villages and let readers draw their own conclusions. I think the story really resonated because of the civil rights movement and its place in the American memory. You'd also try to show the other side and explain how people had grown up in the system of apartheid and how hard it was for them to just change overnight. Disassembling apartheid was a gut-wrenching process. In Bosnia, as one saw these awful things happening, it was difficult to resist trying to draw a line between the good forces and the bad. That was something you'd have to fight in yourself. But it was balanced by the fact that all sides were doing crazy, bad things. The Muslim forces were not above it, especially in their fighting with the Croats. But there were moments of clarity. The siege of Sarajevo was pretty cut and dry, right and wrong.

New: Are you pleased with the quality of reporting that came out of Bosnia? Do you think it was effective?

Thurow: I think that people were served well by the coverage coming out of Bosnia, *if* they took the time to read it. It was often frustrating for us. Being there for weeks and months—in a few cases, even years—you had a compelling reason to tell this story. There were so many misreads by politicians. The lack of engagement by the western allies puzzled us. We didn't understand the lack of response or the lack of a cohesive American policy. The press in South Africa felt more effect from their work. We saw people engage with and respond to the news. In Bosnia, there was a sense that people's eyes were glazing over every time they saw another headline about it. There might be a "big" event—the bombing of a bread line or something—and people's interest would perk back up, but there was important, constant action there that attracted little interest.

New: Was there a sense of camaraderie between the reporters in Bosnia, or was it more competitive?

Thurow: As my wife says, there are always those people who would go right through you for a shortcut. And that was true. But overall there was a good sense of camaraderie and people brought together by a crappy situation. People were good about bringing in "relief" supplies whenever they were coming into the country from outside. You'd bring chocolate and beer and fresh fruit for other reporters. And you'd travel together. Especially in a place like Bosnia where you don't know what's going to happen at any time, there's strength in numbers. If there are a couple of reporters in a car, there's that much more persuasive power. And if anything happened, there would be three or four organizations to get concerned about our whereabouts as opposed to just one.

New: Did you stay at the notorious Holiday Inn in Sarajevo?

Thurrow: Yeah, I did. The front of it—it had been built for the Winter Olympics in ‘84—faced “Sniper’s Alley” and was totally scarred and disfigured. I was told to get a room on a certain side of the hotel because it was the side facing the Bosnian forces and they wouldn’t shell the rooms. Some reporters stayed on the other side any way because they had satellite fax machines and needed the reception, but it was pretty dangerous. The first time I was there, I remember getting off the elevator and a room had a big sign on it saying not to open the door under any circumstances because, basically, there wasn’t any room there any more; it had been blown away.

New: What would you take with you when you went into Bosnia?

Thurrow: Well, you never knew what the food situation would be, so you always took some high protein stuff: cashews, peanut butter, crackers. And you always took water because you couldn’t drink the water there. You take food for other reporters, and then chocolate and cigarettes to give to people you talk to and interview. Chocolate is the great persuasive tool of most war zones. Going into the country, half the weight you took was the food. I also took a roll or two of civilized toilet paper and batteries. Of course bathtub stoppers are one of the legendary items that all foreign correspondents carry. The stoppers in hotels never fit properly or they’re missing. Since there’s often not regularly running water, you need a way to collect water for bathing.

New: You’re back in the U.S. now, is that right?

Thurrow: Yes, I’m a “page one” writer for the Journal. I’m focusing on race relations in the U.S. After awhile, I was hit by the realization that here I am writing about orphans in Sarajevo, but if anything happens to me, there would be two orphans in Vienna. In the lunacy of war, a clarity hits you. Also, I’d been away so long that I was getting curious about things in the U.S. The Oklahoma City bombing and the O.J. trial were foreign to me. Most foreign correspondents have to make a decision at some point about whether to go home. Because sooner or later there’s a point of no return, where you’re more a citizen of the world than of any one place in particular.

New: Do you miss it?

Thurrow: Yes and no. I miss the adventure; I really enjoy traveling. But working at home—my office is in my home—and knowing where my kids are all the time is peace of mind. It gets in your blood though; it’s hard for me sometimes to stop living by my official rules of foreign correspondence.

New: Which are what?

Thurrow: Eat whenever you can. Use the bathroom whenever you can. Fill up with gas whenever you can. And always shake out your shoes before you put them on in the morning!

**For more lesson ideas for *Dying to Tell the Story*, visit the Learning Center at <http://www.daneldon.org> and follow the link to “Journalism.”**

## RESOURCES

### Books

*The Art of Fact: A Historical Anthology of Literary Journalism*  
Kevin Kerrane and Ben Yagoda, editors  
Scribner, 1997

*Sarajevo Daily: A City and Its Newspaper Under Siege*  
Tom Gjelten  
Harper Collins, 1995

*Me Against My Brother: At War in Somalia, Sudan, and Rwanda*  
Scott Peterson  
Routledge, 2000

*Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa*  
Keith Richburg  
Harvest Books, 1998

*War and Photography: A Cultural History*  
Caroline Brothers  
Routledge, 1997

*War Stories: the Culture of Foreign Correspondents*  
Mark Pedelty  
Routledge, 1995

*The Zanzibar Chest: A Story of Life, Love, and Death in Foreign Lands*  
Aidan Hartley  
Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003

### Films

*The Killing Fields* (1984) about Cambodia in the 1970s  
*The Year of Living Dangerously* (1983) about Indonesia in the 1960s  
*Under Fire* (1983), about Central America in the late 1970s  
*Welcome to Sarajevo* (1997), about the former Yugoslavia  
*Harrison's Flowers* (2000), about the former Yugoslavia  
*War Photographer* (2002), documentary about James Nachtwey  
*No Man's Land* (2001), about the former Yugoslavia

### Web sites

- PBS *Frontline* episode site, "Ambush in Mogadishu," and its accompanying Teachers' Guide  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ambush/>
- GlobalTribe, Amy Eldon's PBS series  
<http://www.pbs.org/kcet/globaltribe/>
- Committee to Protect Journalists  
<http://www.cpj.org/>
- Speech by Christiane Amanpour  
<http://gos.sbc.edu/a/amanpour.html>
- Memorial for Kurt Schork, a journalist killed in Sierra Leone  
<http://www.ksmemorial.com/>
- Daniel Pearl Foundation

- <http://www.danielpearl.org/>
- “Both Savior and Victim” – article about Somalia  
<http://www.commondreams.org/views02/0129-07.htm>
- Creative Visions Foundation  
<http://www.creativevisions.org>
- My Hero: Dan Eldon  
[http://www.myhero.com/hero.asp?hero=Dan\\_Eldon](http://www.myhero.com/hero.asp?hero=Dan_Eldon)

### **Articles**

Following are a series of articles that may be useful to your studies regarding Dan Eldon and war correspondence.

*We invite your feedback on this guide. Please send comments to [deziree@daneldon.org](mailto:deziree@daneldon.org) and put “Community Guide” in the subject line.*