ON OUR SHORT list

CHARLES WEBSTER '74

Oil and Water

A major oil spill creates havoc no matter what. But if it occurs near some of the world's most popular beaches, close to environmentally sensitive areas, and in the wake of the Exxon *Valdez* disaster, it can make a mess in the media as well as the water.

Chuck Webster knows. Webster, who is British Petroleum America's full-time crisis manager, spearheaded his company's media-, government-, and community-relations response during February's spill off the sandy beaches of southern California. The tanker *American Trader* hit its own anchor while mooring at a pipeline less than two miles offshore and dumped nearly 400,000 gallons of British Petroleum (BP) oil into the Pacific, threatening fragile wetlands and the animals that inhabit them.

Webster, with the help of approximately 100 members of a BP crisis team, a bevy of local authorities, and dozens of experts from other oil companies, kept the mayhem to a minimum by launching BP's well-developed contingency plan, which "allowed us to hit the beaches running," says Webster, a 1974 graduate of the Newhouse School and a 12-year veteran of oil company public affairs.

Just hours after the spill occurred, Webster, a former radio broadcaster for ABC, NBC, and the Associated Press, arrived at the site and made himself accessible to the media. "We walked into the Coast Guard at about five minutes to four on the morning of February 8," says Webster, "and we were met by a crew from the *Today* show who wanted to do an interview at 4:02, I think. I said to them, 'We'd be glad to do it. Would you give us a half hour to get briefed by the Coast Guard?' That was agreeable to them and that really was the start of a process that went on for the better part of six weeks."

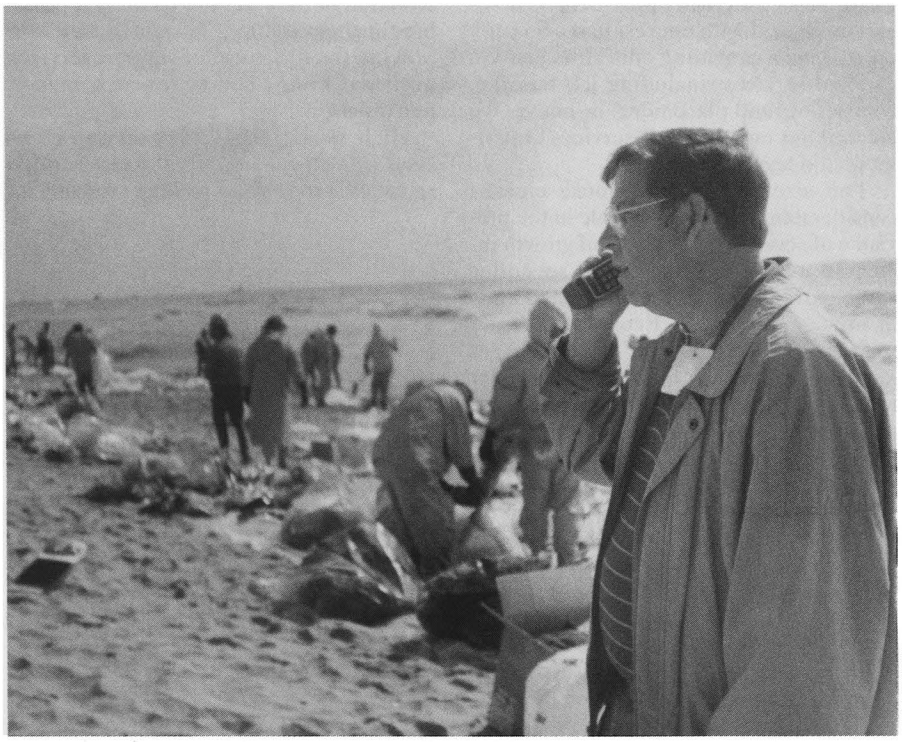
In the midst of making decisions about methods in the $30-million clean-up—booms versus oil-absorbant pompoms, thin-bladed shovels versus bulldozers—Webster and members of his team conducted 500 to 700 interviews during the seven days following the spill and responded to some 2,000 media inquiries. "Our openness, our examples—leading caravans of media to places where things were not going well, as compared with where they were going well—built our credibility," he says.

What's more, BP did its best to cooperate with the community. "We said to our people, 'Treat folks like this incident happened in your hometown. Treat them like your neighbors,'" Webster recalls. This approach worked. Webster, a resident of Cleveland, says dozens of Orange County citizens, "who had every right to be irate," offered sodas or sandwiches to members of the clean-up team. Tensions lessened even more when the owners of the ruptured tanker, which BP had leased to transport its oil, accepted full financial responsibility for the clean-up.

Five weeks after the spill, the beaches reopened. Chuck Webster and his two daughters were among the first to enjoy them. Five months after the spill, BP held a symposium for about 15 other oil companies to foster collaboration within the industry and share information about crisis management. "I'd like to think there's an evolution going on," says Webster.

—*Mary Ellen Mengucci*

COURTESY OF CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS



Charles Webster was BP's crisis manager when 400,000 gallons of oil spilled off the California coast.

GERRY BRADLEY '67

Chimney with Care

This is the season for gifts and giving, kissing under the mistletoe, and hanging stockings on the mantle. 'Tis the season for Gerry Means Bradley.

Bradley is the founder of Christmas Cove Designs, a cottage industry based in Richmond, Maine, thriving on the sale of handmade, high-end Christmas stockings. She has expanded a hobby into a $400,000 wholesale business, and her customers include Filene's in Boston, G. Fox in Connecticut, and L.L. Bean in Maine.

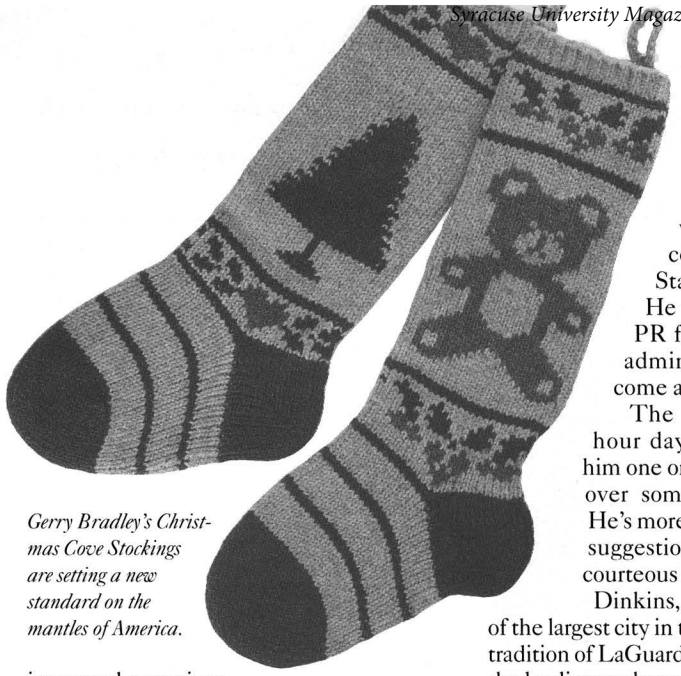
Bradley, a 1967 interior and fashion design graduate, began the business alone in the late seventies, selling in craft fairs and consignment shops. Mass production was born accidently when she turned to friends for help in completing a particularly large order.

Christmas Cove Designs employed about 40 home workers in rural Maine this year, most of them housewives. They work in their homes on their own knitting machines.

"It's a cottage industry comparable to how Harris Tweed jackets are made in Ireland," Bradley says. "It's a very rural area and it's important to have work that people can do without having to travel." Home workers don't need a car, child care, or babysitters.

From a management perspective, using home workers means that the growth of the business doesn't rely on the size of a building. As stocking sales grow, Bradley merely hires more workers. She estimates that workers produced 30,000 stockings this year.

The stocking business began slowly for Bradley until 1984, when she switched from acrylic to woolen stockings. Sales have



Gerry Bradley's Christmas Cove Stockings are setting a new standard on the mantles of America.

increased ever since.

Last year brought another turning point. "We sold to Lands' End," she says, "and once you sell to a big catalog like that you have some credibility. . . . That opened the door to other big orders."

The stockings are made from the wool of sheep raised on Christopher Farm in Bowdoinham, Maine (it's "countrified and colonial-looking," Bradley says). Stockings come in 26 designs: holly, teddy bears, snowflakes, reindeer, and toy soldiers, for example. Christmas Cove ships stockings to big American retailers, such as Eddie Bauer, Marshall Field, and Conrad's, and to stores in Japan, Austria, and Canada.

This year Bradley hired another person to create designs so she can focus on managing the business. She's looking to expand further, especially in the European market. She's content, though, to limit the production to Christmas stockings.

"When things are not selling," she says, "a Christmas item will sell, because it's more emotional. People spend money at Christmas that they wouldn't spend other times of the year." —*Stephanie English*

ROBERT HUBER '74

Speech! Speech!

When New York City Mayor David Dinkins, who makes as many as seven speeches a day, wants nimble rhetoric and *le mot juste*, he turns to Robert Huber.

Along with four other mayoral speech writers, Huber crafts speeches with panache and "juice"—often on a few hours' notice.

A typical Dinkins speech runs about 10 to 15 minutes, but a long speech may run 25 minutes. "I think there's very little that can't be said in 10 or 15 minutes," Huber says. "If you go beyond that, you're either redundant or becoming tangential, and people just stop listening."

Huber became a reporter after earning a law degree from Syracuse in 1974, then worked as director of communications for a Staten Island politician. He was about to join a large PR firm when the Dinkins administration asked him to come aboard.

The mayor often works 18-hour days, Huber says. "I see him one or two times a week to go over some material I'm doing. He's more than willing to listen to suggestions. He's a very civil, courteous kind of guy."

Dinkins, chief executive officer of the largest city in the nation, follows in the tradition of LaGuardia, Lindsay, and Koch as the leading spokesman for U.S. urban issues.

"New York has gone through a period of racial tension, and the mayor's handled that with great sensitivity," Huber says. "If he can, he will choose softer words, milder words, words with less sting but more likely to achieve what he wants, which is a sensible, nonviolent resolution to conflict.

"We had a very clear understanding that bigotry had to be condemned, and that the condemnation had to be phrased in a way so as not to fuel a fire of discontent that many people saw brewing."

Huber did some of his most precise writing when the mayor testified before the Senate Committee on the Census. New York City claims it is undercounted by the census and thereby deprived of proper federal aid and representation.

"You walk a delicate line," Huber says. "There are Republicans on the committee we are trying to convince of our position. You try to present a rational picture, cast no aspersions on their motives, and simply say, 'We think this is defective.'"

Speeches are meant for the ear, not the eye, Huber says. His challenge is to hear how one word works with another to create a desired effect.

"There's a certain amount of poetry, artistic skill, and philosophical understanding that's required in crafting a good speech," he says. "And a heavy dose of political reality." —*George Lowery*

JOAN VITALE STRONG

Robert Huber has been responsible for putting the words in David Dinkins's mouth.

JODI SEROTA '77

True Feelings

When a terminal disease overwhelms a person's physical state, emotional well-being often collapses, too. As a response, many health providers are combining traditional medical care with holistic approaches to healing. Jodi Serota is helping to pave the way.

Serota teaches healing classes at the Manhattan Center for the Living, a nonmedical facility for people with life-threatening diseases. Her clients include cancer patients consumed with the fear of dying, AIDS sufferers coming to terms with their disease, and stroke patients working to recover full use of their bodies.

In her classes, Serota uses colors, images, and sounds as tools to help clients release the frustration and anger that often accom-

Jodi Serota supplements her clients' medical recuperation with less traditional approaches to well-being.

pany terminal illness. Sonic and visual vibrations, she says, can be used to stimulate a person's energy system, release emotional blocks, and create a sense of balance.

Serota's work may sound a bit strange at first. In her group sessions, she encourages clients to meditate. Then she begins vocalizing tones or creating images on paper—not for the sake of music or art, but to prompt reactions that will help her clients confront subconscious issues affecting them.

Most of Serota's clients at the center also receive full medical attention elsewhere. They view the center—a companion to the three-year-old Los Angeles Center for the Living—as an enhancement, rather than an alternative, to traditional medicine. This metaphysical approach often accelerates the healing process. "All of my work is about teaching people how to depend more upon themselves and see that they have the ability to move themselves forward," Serota says.

She also works privately, teaching classes to individuals and organizations. Recently, the New York City Department of Health hired her to teach meditation techniques to staff psychologists and social workers, as a method of coping with job stress. She has also worked with ad agency staffs, helping them to unblock creative talents.

Her interest in healing carries over to her artwork, as well. The 1977 graduate of the College of Visual and Performing Arts regularly receives commissions to create abstract paintings for medical, residential, and commercial spaces. "It's basically about color for the purpose of healing either individual people or environments," she says.

Though metaphysical techniques have existed for centuries, Serota realizes that many people still feel uncomfortable with such approaches. "Not everyone is going to be drawn to this particular way of doing things," she says. "Some people go to therapy. Some people exercise. . . . People have different ways of getting through their days."

—*Mary Ellen Mengucci*

Scott and Cathy Zeilinger produce EarthRite environmentally conscious cleaners.

SCOTT '83 & CATHY '82 ZEILINGER

Clean Conscience

Scott and Cathy Zeilinger are out to clean up the environment. They're not tackling PCB contaminants or ocean dumpsites, but the average American home.

The Zeilingers are the force behind EarthRite products, a new line of nonchemical household cleaners made solely from natural ingredients. They are nonpolluting, nontoxic, and completely biodegradeable.

Scott is vice president of Magic American, a 56-year-old home-care and home-repair products company in Beachwood, Ohio, owned by his father. His idea for the EarthRite division grew from one of Magic American's top-selling products, Goo Gone, a citrus-based stain and adhesive remover. "It's very effective and very popular," says Scott. "We realized that people are looking for natural solutions to cleaning problems."

The Zeilingers took that concept and ran with it. "I had to go from being an international relations major to a chemist overnight," says Scott, a 1983 College of Arts and Sciences graduate. "To come up with the proper combination of all-natural ingredients, yet make the products as effective as the common cleaners they replace, was quite an undertaking."

EarthRite formulas, he says, are based on the use of naturally grown ingredients, nonpolluting food-grade additives, naturally occuring detergent builders, and treated water. Independent tests prove there are no harmful side effects to people or animals.

Cathy Zeilinger (née Christgau), who earned her degree in advertising design from the College of Visual and Performing Arts in 1982, designed the labels, packaging, corporate image, stationery, and shipping cartons while working as art director for an Akron, Ohio, advertising agency. The packaging materials are all made from recycled and recyclable substances.

EarthRite, which donates one percent of its profits to environmental organizations, supports its own products with far-reaching environmental consciousness. Around the neck of each bottle hangs an eight-page tag providing information about environmentally safe products. In addition, consumers can call the company's toll-free number for environmental information kits, which include hints on recycling in the office, organizing a school ecology club, and eliminating toxins from the home.

"What we wanted to create here was not just another product on the shelf," says Scott. "Our aim from the beginning was to eliminate the many trade-offs consumers have traditionally faced when they sought environmentally safe products."

Within four months of EarthRite's debut, the products were the fastest moving cleaners wherever they were sold. EarthRite can now be found in hardware, drug, and grocery stores from Los Angeles to New York. —*Renée Gearhart Levy*

MICHAEL SINGLETARY '72

Blue Note

The camera pans in on Denzel Washington as he sits lotus style in his loft on the set of Spike Lee's latest film, *Mo' Better Blues*. Behind him, in shadow, hangs Michael Singletary's imposing portrait of famed saxophonist Sonny Rollins in shades of blue and white, one of several Singletary paintings that dress the movie's set.

The publicist for *Mo' Better Blues* saw Singletary's "Jazz Series" at Soho's Tusbaki Gallery and approached him about including them in the film.

"At first I was hesitant about submitting the work," says Singletary. "The art show was incredibly successful and I didn't want it to turn commercial."

Singletary, an associate director at CBS Radio in New York, is a prolific painter whose work was also recently included in "The Humanist Icon" at the New York Academy of Art, an exhibition featuring 20 notable American artists. And showing this fall in Soho is his series on children and the homeless, titled "Feeding the Pigeons."

After he read the script for *Mo' Better Blues*, which chronicles the life of a jazz trumpeter, Bleek Gilliam, Singletary realized that "the movie was as close as you could get to talking about jazz musicians," he says.

Conversely, Singletary's exhibition—encompassing 87 pieces—is as close as an artist gets to visualizing jazz. The show includes a leering profile of John Coltrane and a vivid, nine-and-a-half-foot painting of Dizzy Gillespie.

Michael Singletary created the art of Mo' Better Blues. *Below:* Jammin' with Bird.

In *Jammin' with Bird*, a painting hanging above Gilliam's bed in the film, Charlie Parker is at the center of a jam session. "My appreciation of music revolves around Bird," says Singletary.

The "Jazz Series" started out in a realistic style, but as it progressed, Singletary says, the pieces became more abstract. "The purpose of the show was to depict music through art," he says.

To produce 30 or 40 paintings, Singletary, a 1972 graduate of SU's College of Visual and Performing Arts, might make 150 sketches. "I put in everything I see, even the audience, because I want that feeling, the essence of the music," he says. "It's just a very spontaneous approach.

"When I listen to music, certain images stay in my mind. My first image is something realistic, but as time goes on I can express more abstract thoughts, like love and passion. And suddenly," he says, "I start seeing color." On the canvas, colors are then transformed into images and movement and feeling.

For the portraits in the film, Singletary chose canvases of blue and white. "Blue is a passive color," he says, "symbolic of the bluesy feeling of jazz clubs."—*Theresa Litz*