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From: Joe Pompeo - POLITICO Media
Sent: Wed 5/24/2017 10:18:15 AM
Subject: Morning Media, presented by the National Confectioners Association: Scenes from a press freedom fete — Hannity 'not discussing' Seth Rich conspiracy theory 'at this time' — Manchester coverage

By Joe Pompeo | 05/24/2017 06:16 AM EDT

With Cristiano Lima and Alex Weprin

LOTS OF MEDIA HEAVYWEIGHTS AT LAST NIGHT'S REPORTERS COMMITTEE DINNER - And as you can imagine, the Fourth Estate's fraught relationship with our current administration was heavy in the air at fancy Manhattan hotel The Pierre. "I am honored ... more than anything to be a journalist in these times," said Washington Post executive editor Marty Baron, bringing the curtain down with his closing remarks, which prompted a standing ovation. The co-writers of "Spotlight" were on-hand to present Baron with the evening's fourth and final Freedom of the Press Award. The other recipients were First Amendment law practice Davis Wright Tremaine; ProPublica executive chairman Paul Steiger; and former AP executive editor Kathleen Carroll. Steiger: "Publishing the secrets threatens the secret-keepers. It protects the public interest." Carroll: "I just can't wait to see what *holy sh-t* stories break tomorrow."

Let's see, what else? Atlantic editor in chief Jeffrey Goldberg gave a tribute to his friend, the late Gwen Ifill, who was originally supposed to be one of this year's honorees. CNN's Wolf Blitzer said a few words, including the following about the president's attacks on the press: "We must fight this, and we must fight this hard." Also, who knew that New York Times deputy general counsel David McCraw was such a comedian? (One of his zingers: "The Times vs. Sullivan," he said, referring to the landmark 1964 Supreme Court case, "doesn't just protect The New York Times. Breitbart needs it as much as we do." Punchline: "In fact, they need it more!") Charlie Gibson filled in as host for his ABC colleague David Muir, who'd made an unexpected trip to the U.K. to cover the aftermath of Monday night's Manchester bombing.

News: Washington Post owner and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos donated \$1 million to the Reporters Committee, the largest gift in the organization's 47-year history.

Spotted: Sally Quinn, Dean Baquet, Arthur Gregg Sulzberger, Bill Keller, Lydia Polgreen, Ben Smith, Margaret Sullivan, Laura Poitras, Mark Whitaker, Steve Adler, Stephen Engelberg, Tim O'Brien and many more.

TIPS AND COMMENTS: jpompeo@politico.com / [@joepompeo](https://twitter.com/joepompeo). Many thanks to **Hadas Gold** for minding the store -- from Oslo, no less! -- while I was off duty earlier in the week. **Morning Media** is edited by **Alex Weprin** ([@alexweprin](https://twitter.com/alexweprin) / aweprin@politico.com) and produced with writing/reporting help from **Cristiano Lima** ([clima@politico.com](https://twitter.com/clima@politico.com) / [@ludacristiano](https://twitter.com/ludacristiano)). **Steven Shepard** contributed to today's column. [Archives](#). [Subscribe](#).

**** A message from the National Confectioners Association - #AlwaysATreat:** Leading global chocolate and candy companies are coming together to provide more information, options,

and support as consumers enjoy their favorite treats. It's the first step on our journey to help people manage their sugar intake and ensure that they feel empowered to make informed choices. Learn more at AlwaysATreat.com. **

HANNITY IS BACKING OFF HIS SETH RICH CRUSADE (SORT OF) - Following Fox News Channel's retraction of a controversial story about the DNC staffer's unsolved murder, the 10 p.m. anchor said on his show last night: "Out of respect for the family's wishes for now, I am not discussing this matter at this time." Hannity has perhaps been the media's biggest booster of conspiratorial claims that Rich was killed because he was allegedly the person who slipped thousands of private DNC emails to Wikileaks. Speaking on his radio show earlier in the day, Hannity had initially refused to stand down. But the host said last night he'd been convinced to back off from his coverage after speaking directly with Rich's brother. "My heart, my soul, my prayer goes out to [the family] during this very difficult time." [Cristiano Lima has more](#).

FNC's full statement: "On May 16, a story was posted on the Fox News website on the investigation into the 2016 murder of DNC Staffer Seth Rich. The article was not initially subjected to the high degree of editorial scrutiny we require for all our reporting. Upon appropriate review, the article was found not to meet those standards and has since been removed. We will continue to investigate this story and will provide updates as warranted." (For what it's worth, Washington's local Fox affiliate told us they are not retracting their similar story, but rather standing by a [clarification](#) that was added to it last week.)

Margaret Sullivan: "The Seth Rich lie has become the new Comet Ping Pong -- another Washington-based conspiracy theory that ended in January with a gunman walking into a family-friendly pizza joint and firing shots as he 'self-investigated' a supposed child-molestation plot involving Hillary Clinton. Crazy, baseless and dangerous."

MUST READS:

-- "Trump Called Duterte To Congratulate Him On His Murderous Drug War: 'You Are Doing An Amazing Job'" [[The Intercept](#)]

-- "James Mattis, A Warrior In Washington" [[The New Yorker](#)]

-- "The Beleaguered Tenants of 'Kushnerville'" [[ProPublica](#)]

-- "Twin Peaks: The Return Is Riveting, Horrifying, and Patience-Taxing" [[Vulture](#)]

-- "Meet the Silver Lake shaman" [[Quartz](#)]

POLL: VOTERS SPLIT ON TRUMP'S MEDIA TREATMENT, by (POLITICO polling guru) Steven Shepard - A new [POLITICO/Morning Consult poll](#) out this morning finds voters evenly divided on whether President Donald Trump is getting a fair shake from the news media - 43% say he is being treated fairly, compared to 42% who say he's being treated unfairly. It splits, predictably, along party lines: 75% of Democratic voters say the media are treating him fairly, but 76% of Republicans say he's getting the shaft.

Also in the poll: 35% of voters say they are checking the national news (whether online, on TV or on social media) multiple times a day, and another 35% say they are checking once or twice per day. More Democrats (78%) are checking the news at least daily than Republicans (72%). [Full results here.](#)

QUESTION OF THE DAY - "[Showing Screaming Teens After a Terror Attack May Be Compelling TV. But Is It Bad Journalism ?](#)" That's Slate's Will Oremus, who writes: "As news broke Monday night of the deadly blasts at a concert in Manchester, England, you could flip to any major news network and see similar visuals: shaky cellphone videos of people on the scene -- many of them teenage girls -- screaming and running for their lives. ... [T]here's ... a ring of naiveté to suggestions that the answer is for cable news to simply stop playing such footage. TV producers aren't the ones who made the attacks scary or dramatic. That's the nature of the act, and to try to strip that dimension from the news coverage would verge on the dishonest and unjournalistic."

Speaking of which: The attack drew millions of viewers to cable news. It also reset the ratings trendlines of recent weeks, with Fox News leading CNN and MSNBC in both total viewers and viewers ages 25-54; and with MSNBC slipping to third in both categories behind CNN. Between the three channels, an average of around 6.7 million people were tuned in during primetime, according to data from Nielsen.

SOUND BITES:

-- "Freedom of the press is not a liberal value, it's an American value." [David McCraw]

-- "If a journalist can be arrested for asking a loud question in a public place, we had better be ready for much, much worse." [Kathleen Carroll]

-- "Ok TO BE CLEAR, I am closer to the TRUTH than ever. Not only am I not stopping, I am working harder. Updates when available. Stay tuned!" [[Sean Hannity](#)]

-- "The big q for Fox News: does @seanhannity have a future at the network if he covers the Seth Rich story again?" [[Matthew Garrahan](#)]

"As Fox diminishes in ratings the extreme liberalism and anti-American leftism is going to get louder." [[Rush Limbaugh](#)]

JON STEWART'S HBO SHOW A NO-GO - HBO and Jon Stewart have decided not to move forward with their planned animated current events show, originally announced more than a year ago. The program was originally expected to debut in advance of the 2016 election. The New York Times' [John Koblin reports](#) that "the project was significantly more complicated than both sides anticipated." Stewart signed a four year deal with HBO, and will develop other programs for the channel.

FCC WON'T TAKE ACTION AGAINST COLBERT - No surprise here, but the Federal

Communications Commission made it official on Tuesday: It will not be taking any punitive action against the CBS "Late Show" host over a crude joke he made about President Trump. An FCC spokesman said they "concluded that there was nothing actionable under the FCC's rules." Colbert's show airs after 10 PM, when FCC rules are more lenient, and the dirty word in his Trump-Putin joke (rhymes with "smock") was bleeped out, making any enforcement action unlikely from the start.

In other Colbert news: He has another victory under his belt. This time, the "Late Show" is poised to win the entire 2016-2017 TV season in total viewers, barely edging out "The Tonight Show starring Jimmy Fallon." Colbert has been on a resurgent winning streak in recent months, and now it's beginning to show in the longer-term ratings.

RATINGS ARE IN FOR THE 'TWIN PEAKS' REVIVAL - Sunday's two-hour, two-chapter premiere at 9 p.m. delivered 506,000 viewers for Showtime. Consider this: 34 million tuned in to ABC for the original series premiere on April 8, 1990. But then consider this: "In the world that we live in now, offering original programming that attracts new subscribers is our primary business objective," said Showtime chief David Nevins in a statement. "By that standard, the 'Twin Peaks' premiere is the biggest single-night driver we've ever had." Deadline and The New York Times have more.

Bonus: Here's a piece I did for Mental Floss magazine a few years ago, "How Twin Peaks Made Modern Art of the Soap Opera"

REVOLVING DOOR:

-- **At Esquire**, Robert P. Baird has been bumped up to features director. The Paris Review/Harper's/New Yorker alum will "work closely ... on the development and execution of ... features, including investigative pieces, as well as fiction," per a spokeswoman. "He will also work to bring new voices to the magazine."

-- **Jessica Valenti, the feminist author/writer**, has been named a contributing editor for Marie Claire's website, where she will do a weekly column.

THE NEXT FRONTIER? SNAPCHAT SHOWS - Among those getting in on the millennial social media app's video mojo is NBC News, which later this year "is expected to launch the first Snapchat Show that will offer daily news reports," according to Variety. "[T]here's a line forming ... that's made up of at least a dozen major media companies ready to place bets ... on Snapchat Shows." The list also includes ABC, CBS, the BBC, ESPN, Vice and Discovery.

CBS announced a James Corden Snapchat series yesterday: "JAMES CORDEN'S NEXT JAMES CORDEN will debut exclusively as a Snapchat Show ... in fall 2017. ... [It] will take Corden from late night to the world of a fictional reality competition show to find a young up-and-comer to be his LATE LATE SHOW successor. While Corden is by no means leaving THE LATE LATE SHOW anytime soon, he knows that someday, years and years from now, he'll have to hand over the reins to a new host, and he wants ample time to select and groom a worthy successor."

SOUNDTRACK: Joy Division, "Atmosphere"

EXTRAS:

-- "Fox News is losing its mojo." [Bloomberg]

-- Can you guess which outlets have the leakiest paywalls and which ones have the most airtight paywalls? [CJR]

-- Comedy Central has ordered more episodes of Anthony Atamanuik's Trumpersonation, "The President Show." [Variety]

-- Gay hookup app Grindr is getting into the news business. [Advertising Age]

**** A message from the National Confectioners Association - #AlwaysATreat:** We've always created transparent, fun, and great-tasting treats. By 2022, Mars, Wrigley, Nestlé USA, Ferrero, Lindt, Ghirardelli, Russell Stover, and Ferrara Candy Company will work together to make half of their individually wrapped products available in sizes that contain 200 calories or less per pack. And, 90 percent of the best-selling treats made by these companies will have calorie information printed right on the front of the pack. During the same time period, the newly established AlwaysATreat.com will evolve into a digital resource full of easy-to-use information for consumers to better understand the unique role that chocolate and candy can play in a happy, balanced lifestyle. Learn more at AlwaysATreat.com. **

To view online:

<http://www.politico.com/media/tipsheets/morning-media/2017/05/24/scenes-from-a-press-freedom-fete-hannity-not-discussing-seth-rich-conspiracy-theory-at-this-time-manchester-coverage-001278>

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