

Hundreds of Articles Tell Corruption Story

Continuing Inquiries Brought Indictments, Convictions, Reforms

An extensive series of articles on corruption and unethical conduct by city commissioners Monday brought the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for public service to The Times.

The award was in recognition of several hundred articles and editorials stemming from an investigation launched in 1966 by staff writer George Reasons.

For the last two years, Reasons has been aided by staff writer Art Berman.

Other staff members who have assisted in various phases of the investigation include Gene Blake, Robert L. Jackson and Ed Meagher.

Metropolitan Editor William F. Thomas is in overall charge of the project, which is continuing.

Wrongdoing Exposed

During 2½ years of investigations, The Times uncovered wrongdoing in such agencies as the Board of Zoning Adjustment and the Planning, Harbor and Recreation and Park commissions.

The Pulitzer-Prize-winning articles had these effects:

In the Harbor Commission, a \$12 million World Trade Center contract awarded as the result of bribes was canceled. Four city commissioners were indicted by the County Grand Jury, and three have been convicted on charges of bribery or conflict of interest. A fourth awaits trial.

The Harbor Commission has since undergone a change in personnel and has adopted a disclosure policy to curb conflict of interest.

Other Results

In the Board of Zoning Adjustment and the Planning Commission, two commissioners resigned, two others were transferred to other commissions. "spot zoning" and special interest decisions have been curtailed and agitation for reforms in planning-zoning procedures has grown. In addition, a councilman cited in the Times articles is now on trial for bribery.

In the Recreation and Park Commission, two commissioners resigned. One of them has since been indicted on bribery charges and is awaiting trial. A questionable golf course design contract—which had been awarded to a since-resigned commissioner's friend — has been canceled (with the help of the City Council's Recreation and Parks Committee), and the Recreation and Park Commission has adopted a code of ethics to prevent conflicts of interest and has eliminated a system of one-man "committees" which led to abuses.

Another article resulted in the cancellation of a questionable city emergency hospital contract.

The articles also have contributed to a favorable climate for city charter reforms, some of which already have been adopted.

In nominating the investigative series and related articles and editorials for the Pulitzer Prize, Times Editor Nick B. Williams suggested that wrongdoing in municipal government is occurring less frequently than it did before the newspaper's campaign was launched.

"We believe the tide toward better government is flowing now in the

nation's third largest city," Williams wrote. "And we think we know why."

The series of articles evolved from an assignment given 2½ years ago by Metropolitan Editor Thomas to reporter Reasons to look into planning and zoning activities.

Reasons worked six months to produce two explosive articles. He also turned up so many leads that four other reporters — Berman, Blake, Jackson and Meagher—were assigned to assist in a team investigative effort.

They worked another four months on zoning and the hospital contract stories.

Reasons, Berman, Blake and Meagher spent three months on the harbor investigation, examining more than 5,000 public documents, conducting numerous interviews and turning out a 20,000-word report.

The report contained evidence later used by the district attorney in obtaining grand jury indictments against four commissioners.

Reasons and Berman conducted the Recreation and Parks investigation over a four-month period.

Reasons, 45, who holds a master's degree from UCLA, has won a number of awards. The Times' chief investigative reporter, he has taught journalism at San Fernando Valley State College. He also is the co-author of a syndicated feature on Negro history, "They Had a Dream," which appears in numerous newspapers across the country.

Berman, 33, a graduate of Antioch College, divides his time between reporting and work as an assistant metropolitan editor. Also the winner of many awards, he was a contributor to The Times 1965 Watts riot coverage, also supervised by Metropolitan Editor Thomas, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1966.

Jackson now is a member of The Times staff in Washington, D.C. Blake is The Times specialist in legal reporting, and Meagher concentrates on special assignments.



HONORED FOR WAR COVERAGE.—William Tuohy, Times staff writer who won the Pulitzer Prize for reporting in Vietnam, is shown in The Times' Washington office after prize was announced. Tuohy was on way to Los Angeles on leave from new post in Beirut.

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