

Introduction of Diana Henriques for the Elliott Bell Award — June 1, 2007

I'm Glenn Kramon, Diana Henriques's editor. But I'd like to think I speak tonight on behalf of the young sergeant from Kentucky who gave his life in Iraq to save his buddies from a bomb. Before he shipped, out a life insurance agent sold him a policy for \$100 a month that he could have bought from the government for two dollars a month.

And I speak on behalf of the Ohio woman training to be a nun who, upon learning she had breast cancer, was dismissed by her church. And on behalf of the September 11 widows left high and dry by unresponsive businesses and charities.

What do these people have in common? They were all victims of unsavory business practices exposed by Diana Henriques, investigative reporter for The New York Times.

Elliott Bell, who 70 years ago was disturbed that so many journalists had become handmaidens of scandalous businessmen and helped form the New York Financial Writers Association, would be proud of Diana.

In her 20 years as an investigative reporter at The Times, Diana has uncovered all kinds of mischief.

She has showed how insurance companies, investment firms and lenders have fleeced thousands of financially unsophisticated soldiers fighting for their country.

She has showed how, even as many politicians are decrying a nationwide war on religion, lawmakers and judges have handed religious organizations hundreds of exemptions from laws and taxes, like one that prevented that nun with breast cancer from suing for her job.

Long before Elliot Spitzer and others began their own investigations, Diana pointed regulators to abuses on Wall Street and in the executive suite. She has examined questionable practices of charities helping families of Sept. 11 victims. She has exposed high-cost home equity lenders preying on the elderly.

I love it when critics who know Diana's work but don't know Diana decide to stereotype her.

“She hates religion!” Wrong. In fact, she's been a devout Christian all her life, and is an officer in her own church across the river from here.

“She hates the military!” Wrong. She's proud to say her parents both served in the armed forces.

“She's a limousine liberal.” Uh, no ... she's an Appalachian coal miner's granddaughter, and proud of that, too.

“She's a cranky enemy of capitalism.” Wrong again. Well, all right, sometimes she's cranky. But like so many journalists in this room, Diana cherishes the American way of business and only wants to make it better.

Diana's work has been the unanimous choice of two Pulitzer Prize juries and received more awards than I can name here. But I think the most pleased I ever saw Diana was after a ceremony at which her stories on the financial exploitation of American soldiers were honored. A burly security guard came up to her, nervously, and said he had listened to the description of her work at the ceremony. “I just wanted to say thank you,” he told her, “on behalf of all of us in uniform.”

On behalf of all of us in a different sort of uniform, I'm honored to introduce Diana Henriques, winner of the 2007 Elliott V. Bell Award, and, on behalf of the New York Financial Writers Association, to present her with this plaque.