pushed their way into their territory (68), a view that has become something of a leitmotif of life in rural Papua New Guinea over the last two decades.

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Currently a professor of journalism at the University of Hawai‘i, Beverly Keever had an earlier career as a journalist for Newsweek, the New York Herald-Tribune, and the Christian Science Monitor. She covered Vietnam for seven years, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1969, and has received numerous awards for her freedom-of-information endeavors. The title for this book was suggested by “Ground Zero,” a term originally used to refer to the exact location at which a nuclear bomb is detonated.

Early in News Zero, Keever recalls how Adolph Ochs, the publisher of a small newspaper in Tennessee, purchased the near-bankrupt New York Times in 1896. On the day after he took control, Ochs published four principles that would make the Times one of the world’s most trusted and influential newspapers: Give the news, all the news. Provide a forum for considering all questions of public importance. Invite intelligent discussion from all shades of opinion. Give the news impartially, without fear or favor. However, in a letter in 1931, Ochs himself wrote that the Times “so far as possible consistent with honest journalism attempts to act and support those who are charged with responsibility for Government” (quoted in Keever, 32). Ochs died in 1935, but his daughter was later quoted as saying that her father and his two immediate successors believed that the Times should support government and that in practice they acted accordingly. Such sentiments had never otherwise been made public.

Using Ochs’s guiding principles, Keever critically examines the New York Times coverage of the US nuclear program from its very beginnings, the development and use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the postwar-era nuclear testing program in the Pacific Islands, and more recent developments. The nine chapters that make up Part 1 of News Zero are primarily concerned
with the years from 1945 to 1962, the year the Pacific tests were ended.

A pivotal figure in the story was William L. Laurence, science writer for the *Times*. As early as 1939, Laurence was privy to informal discussions of nuclear scientists who were instrumental in the creation of the atomic bomb. Beginning with his first article about the attempt to split the atom, Laurence was optimistic and enthusiastic about the potential of nuclear power to improve the world for the benefit of all humankind.

In April 1945, Laurence was hired by the US Department of War to officially chronicle the making of the A-bomb. During a four-month absence from the *Times*, he was paid by both the *Times* and the War Department, an arrangement that violated the journalists’ code of ethics of the time. Laurence witnessed Trinity (the first US test of a nuclear bomb) in New Mexico in July 1945, the bombing of Nagasaki later in the same year, and the first nuclear test at Bikini Atoll in early 1946. In an agreement between the *Times* and the military, the *Times* released to other newspapers free of charge a series of ten articles bylined by Laurence under the editorial scrutiny of the military. Laurence systematically omitted or obscured any information about the dangers of radiation. Never mentioned was the fact that the man-made plutonium, with a half-life of 24,000 years, is the most toxic element in the world for living organisms.

For Laurence, the opportunity to witness the nuclear tests took on a seemingly mystical if not religious quality. His skillful use of language embodied much that was sacred and certain to resonate with Americans. On one occasion, he described a great mushroom cloud that “for a fleeting instant took the form of the Statue of Liberty magnified many times” (quoted in Keever, 75). Laurence’s reaction to the Trinity test was cast in Biblical terms: “It was as though the earth had opened and the skies had split. One felt as though he had been privileged to witness the Birth of the World—to be present at the moment of creation when the Lord said: Let there be Light” (quoted by Keever, 74).

While the magnitude of the dangers from nuclear weapons was unknown at the time, there was ample evidence that exposure to even small levels of radiation could be harmful. Beginning in 1925, the *Times* itself had published articles on the so-called “radium girls,” young factory women who suffered serious illnesses and even death after exposure to luminous, radium-laced paint on the numbers on watches and clocks. Marie Curie, the Nobel Prize winner who discovered radium in nature, was instrumental in the development of medical x-rays, and coined the very word “radioactivity,” died in 1934 of leukemia.

The *Times* ignored reports of the enormous human suffering and death that occurred after the bombing of Hiroshima. However, Wilfred Burchett, an Australian journalist, defied a military ban and visited Hiroshima thirty days after the bombing. In addition to the thousands who had died in the blast itself, Burchett found thousands more suffering immense pain and horrible deaths. Burchett’s article “The Atomic Plague” appeared in the *London*
Daily Express on 5 September 1945. US officials denied that Hiroshima harbored dangerous levels of radiation, and stated that even if such were the case, the number of victims was small. Reports of the tragedy at Hiroshima were dismissed as Japanese propaganda, Laurence’s articles echoed the party line, and he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize, his second.

Keever argues that Laurence’s biased reporting helped defuse criticisms of nuclear testing in the post-war era. The United States conducted over eighty nuclear tests in the Pacific between 1946 and 1962, with the vast majority on or near Bikini and Enewetak Atolls in the northern Marshall Islands, then part of the US Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The people of both atolls were relocated from their ancestral homelands to make way for the nuclear tests. The sites selected for both relocations had many disadvantages, and the Bikinians were resettled three times. Keever recounts the social and psychological disruptions and many hardships that both populations have endured in the intervening years. Bikini Atoll remains unfit for human habitation. The Enewetak people have been allowed to return to home, but one half of their atoll remains off-limits.

The destructive power of nuclear weapons was dramatically increased with the detonation of the first hydrogen or thermonuclear bombs at Bikini in the early 1950s. One thousand times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb, the magnitude of the Bravo test in 1954 was twice as large as anticipated, and its radioactive cloud contaminated the downwind, inhabited atolls of Rongelap and Utirik. At best an act of negligence, this test ignored the well-being of the people, who were exposed to massive levels of radiation. Only after some delay were they evacuated to distant Majuro Atoll. Three years later and with assurances it was safe, they were returned to their ancestral homelands. Adding to the tragedy, the return to Rongelap proved premature. Much of the atoll remained unsafe for human habitation. The Rongelapese requested to be moved once again, but the United States refused. Out of fear and desperation, the Rongelapese initiated their own relocation to Kwajalein Atoll in 1985. Their sojourn on their despoiled homeland had lasted twenty-eight years. Another return to Rongelap is now in progress.

The suppression of information and management of the news continued in the post-Bravo era, with national security cited as the necessity for secrecy. In reality, the major nemesis of the United States at the time, the Soviet Union, closely monitored US activities in the islands and knew far more than the American public or most members of Congress. The administration was mainly concerned about negative publicity at home and potential legal suits. Of the more than eighty postwar tests, only four were observed by the media, and half received no coverage whatsoever. The plight of the victims of the Bravo test only came to light when a US serviceman described the events in a letter to his hometown newspaper in Cincinnati. As Keever reports, the Times was conspicuously silent. The incident was only made public and became an
international issue a short time later when it was learned that the crew of a Japanese vessel fishing near Bikini had also been exposed to Bravo’s lethal fallout.

Immediately after Bravo, the physical symptoms exhibited by the Marshallese were not unlike those observed in Japan: burns, hair loss, nausea, diarrhea, and weakness. Within a few years, more serious maladies surfaced: increased frequency of stillbirths, deformed miscarriages, and deformed and retarded children. Other effects were delayed and occurred years later. Most are thyroid disorders commonly related to a variety of cancers, and the affected Islanders now have one of the highest rates of thyroid abnormalities in the world. Today, the United States funds compensation for thirty-five types of illnesses caused by nuclear weapons testing.

Keever raises a number of issues about Bravo and its aftermath. Immediately following the incident, conflicting explanations were given as to why no precautions had been taken to protect the Marshallese. Drawing on now-declassified documents, Keever reports that months beforehand, Bravo’s research agenda included a certain “Project 4.1” with the specific purpose “to study the effects of fallout radiation on human beings” (214). Project 4.1 was implemented a week after the detonation of Bravo. Thereafter, the Rongelapese were studied annually, and when the need became apparent, the people of Utrik were included. Project 4.1 was a research program only and did not include even basic health care of the populations under study. The Rongelapese and others were used in human radiation experiments involving the injection of radioactive substances. The consent of the Islanders was neither requested nor given. They were not given access to their own medical records, and the true nature of Project 4.1 was not made public until the mid-1990s.

For decades after Bravo, the Times mainly relied on official pronouncements about the health and well-being of the Marshallese, and there were repeated assurances that the people had suffered no long-term ill effects from their exposure to radiation. By 1954 it was known that Japanese survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had begun to experience a marked increase in the frequency of thyroid disorders and cancers. Much of the research for Project 4.1 was conducted by researchers at Brookhaven National Laboratory, not far from the Times newsroom. Neither set of circumstances precipitated any investigative reporting by the Times.

The two chapters of Part 2 of News Zero cover the years 1980–2004. Keever concludes that the New York Times coverage of the health of Bravo’s victims “barely improved from the near-invisibility given them during the 1954–62 post-Bravo years” (246). Congressional hearings regarding the long-term consequences of exposure to radiation and the use of Islanders as human research projects went unreported. Keever returns to Ochs’s guiding principles to evaluate the performance of the Times over the years and offer suggestions for the future.
News Zero is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of nuclear issues in the Pacific and is a valuable addition to Pacific Islands studies. Keever writes clearly and passionately about her subject. Her research is meticulous and impressive in scope. Keever has placed a copy of News Zero in the hands of the government of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and it should be useful in its ongoing negotiations with the United States about reparations for damages done to the Marshallese people and the restoration and return of their ancestral homelands. The history of the nuclear age in Micronesia is a tragic and never-ending story.

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Howard P Willens and Deanne C Siemer are a Washington DC–based husband and wife legal team who have served the people of the Northern Marianas since the early 1970s. Most importantly, they represented the Northern Marianas in the negotiations that made the islands a commonwealth in political union with the United States. Willens and Siemer have authored two books: National Security and Self-Determination: United States Policy in Micronesia (1961–1972) in 2000 and An Honorable Accord: The Covenant between the Northern Marianas Islands and the United States in 2002. Willens is also the principal author of The Secret Guam Study. Dirk A Ballendorf is the director of the Micronesian Area Research Center at the University of Guam.

In the course of their research for An Honorable Accord, Willens and Siemer discovered evidence that in the mid-1970s, at the direction of President Gerald R Ford, a study had been made concerning Guam’s future political status and the United States was prepared to offer Guam commonwealth political status, under terms that were at least as advantageous as those for the Northern Marianas. At a meeting in 2000 with Ballendorf and his colleagues at the University of Guam, Willens and Siemer learned that no one on Guam had ever heard of the presidential initiative. They suggested that relevant information might be obtained by requests for documents under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Ballendorf served as the plaintiff, with Siemer as his lawyer. FOIA requests were submitted to the Departments of State, Interior, and Defense in late 2000. Although the requests were acknowledged, they were stonewalled. In May 2003, thirty months after the FOIA requests, Ballendorf filed complaints against the same three departments, and they quickly produced some