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MARKETPLACE

SHOW: Marketplace (6:30 PM ET) - SYND

June 5, 2003 Thursday

HEADLINE: Martin Kaplan discusses the resignations of two of the top editors at *The New York Times* following a reporting scandal

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BODY:

CHERYL GLASER, anchor:

One month after *The New York Times* revealed that one of its reporters, Jayson Blair, had plagiarized and faked dozens of stories, executive editor Howell Raines and managing editor Gerald Boyd resigned today. The paper's top two editors had been criticized for assigning Blair, who is African-American, to high-profile stories like the Washington sniper case after questions had been raised about his accuracy. Some critics have seen the Blair scandal through the lens of affirmative action, but Martin Kaplan, associate dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at USC, says there's more to it than that. There's also the question of Howell Raines' management style.

Mr. MARTIN KAPLAN (Director, Norman Lear Center, University of Southern California): As Shakespeare says in *Macbeth* about [the Thane of Cawdor]: 'Nothing became him in life like the leaving of it.' There's a sense in which Howell Raines not lingering and letting *The New York Times* take the slings and arrows is good for the institution. But he comes from a tradition at *The New York Times* of arrogance and of hierarchical leadership represented by his predecessor, A.M. Rosenthal, but unlike his immediate predecessor Joe Lelyveld, who's being brought in as an interim.

There was a way in which Howell Raines was a, you know, a little Ceausescu before the revolution. He was the absolute ruler, he had the apparent confidence of his boss, Arthur Sulzberger Jr., and he had his fiercely loyal lieutenants around. But unfortunately, most organizations don't flourish in those kinds of situations.

GLASER: Back in the early '80s, *The Washington Post* was rocked by revelations that reporter Janet Cook had made up a story about an eight-year-old heroin addict, a story that the paper put up for and it later won a Pulitzer Prize. But Post

editor Ben Bradlee managed to ride that one out. Why did he survive when Raines didn't?

Mr. KAPLAN: Well, it's an interesting study in contrast. Howell Raines, up from the South, behaving like an early 20th century president of Harvard, and Benjamin Crowninshield Bradlee, a New England aristocrat if ever there was one, instead acting as though he were the captain of the football team; a guy with plenty of moxie and street smarts, with his door open, wandering the newsroom picking up gossip, someone who had gusto, with dirt under his fingernails. Bradlee was a guy--is a guy who is wonderfully easy to get along with, but is ferocious in exercising his judgment. But the people who work for him respect him when he exercises his judgment. They do it because they think he's open-minded and listens.

And so when the Janet Cook case occurred, he was on the same side as the people in the newsroom. She did something bad to them and their institution. In the case of *The New York Times* and Howell Raines, the sense is that he was on a different side of the team as the grunts who were doing the daily work.

GLASER: There have been whispers, rumors of other reporters with high error counts at *The New York Times*. Do you think there's a possibility that there may be yet another shoe to drop here?

Mr. KAPLAN: Well, I don't know whether it's a shoe or a series of socks and laces. But certainly, there will be some people who were the princelings of the Raines era who are now going to evaluate what their future is like in that institution. I would be very surprised if the resume machines were not quite active.

GLASER: *The New York Times* has tapped Joseph Lelyveld to come back and take over his old job as executive editor for the time being. How does he go about limiting the fallout, protecting *The New York Times* brand?

Mr. KAPLAN: Well, I think it's a fair thing to say that *The Times* acted as quickly as a battleship or a dinosaur could to deal with its problems. Now he can announce that the bloodshed is behind them, the problems have been identified and we're going to move on.

There is a lot of residual good feeling about *The New York Times*. It is just about the classiest brand name in journalism in the US and, quite conceivably, internationally. And as long as the crime is arrogance and not deceit then it can get over this pretty easily.

GLASER: Media commentator Martin Kaplan is director of the Norman Lear Center at USC.