

JBS Timeless Tips

- **NEVER ASSUME.** Don't assume what documents may (or may not) be available to you. Don't assume who will talk to you. And don't assume that what you think you already know is accurate. "Never assume" was the first rule I was taught by my first city editor. He meant it largely in the sense that you can't assume how even the most common names are spelled, but it applies to almost everything we do. It is a rule that I learn and relearn every day in this business.
- **ALWAYS GO TO ORIGINAL SOURCES.** If possible always review personally the documents in a court case, regulatory proceeding, or some other official filing. Don't rely on the reporting of others to tell you what is in those files; you will see things they didn't that will enrich your story. The amount of information you will find in any major court case or other filing that is publicly available but never becomes publicly known is staggering.
- **READ BEFORE INTERVIEWING.** Always school yourself in the background of a subject before interviewing if there is time. Not only do you have more familiarity with your topic, but you have a better idea of whether the person you later interview knows what he/she is talking about.
- **BE WARY OF EXPERTS.** Sometimes the most ostensibly knowledgeable persons don't know what they are talking about or intentionally mislead journalists to safeguard their own agendas. No matter how well regarded the experts may be, check what they say.
- **WRITE EARLY AND OFTEN.** With major projects – either long stories or series – start writing early. Don't worry about the lead if you're not sure what it is. But rough out sections you know will be in your story. You will see what you are missing and it will also help you conceptualize more of the story. Plus it's great for your mental health to get something down on paper.