

You have some nice work here -- but you need to slow down and make sure you're establishing your story line. You should also make sure you're not taking too much for granted on the part of your reader.

I made some suggested changes on the first page to give you a sense of what I'm talking about generally -- but I'd also think about starting back in 2001, when the movie starts, and describe some of that. That might help establish the tension for the rest of the piece...

Shining the Spotlight on Matt Carroll

A Coffee Meeting

The first thing you notice about Matt Carroll is the soup-bowl sized Dunkin' Donuts mug of coffee that never leaves his side— not that he's a Pulitzer-Prize winning reporter with an upcoming movie. Around campus, he's recognized for his mustache, those glasses around his neck, and if that doesn't catch your attention, he'll shout your way: *how's it goin'?*

Carroll is 61 years old, and last year he went back to school. Nearly four decades ago he had dropped out of Northeastern University to start his own paper; this time, he had dropped out of reporting, for good, to come to MIT.

Today Carroll is on the third floor of the Media Lab, a futuristic glass building full of robot parts, keeping a black-nosed puppy from nipping on his ankles. This is where his office is now, as a research scientist— a big change from his professional home for 26 years in the Boston Globe's newsroom. Still, in all his years, Carroll has only strayed across the river from his hometown.

Growing up Irish Catholic

[HOW HE GREW UP AND HOW HES DIFFERENT FROM OTHER BOSTONIAN GUYS WITH THE SAME ETHICS— HE SUBVERTED THEM... OR DID HE?]

Carroll is, in many ways, the quintessential Bostonian: Raised in Roxbury, he's from a large Irish-Catholic family (he's the oldest of 18). He loves the local coffee,

honors his father's work ethic, and draws out the long "a" in Park Street, which is where the church he attends every week is located.

Religion was a large part of his large family growing up. "Oh yea, big Catholic family, Irish Catholic family, my aunt was a nun." The Carrolls went to the neighborhood church every week, and parochial elementary and high schools. "It's a very common story for Irish kids my age." The very uncommon story was that Carroll would grow up to expose the Church in a way that it would never quite recover.

A Movie Premier

[WHAT'S SPOTLIGHT THE MOVIE?]

In the winter of 2002, Carroll and the rest of the Spotlight team—the investigative bureau at the Boston Globe—began to work on a series of stories uncovering abusive local priests that would eventually garner them a Pulitzer Prize in Public Service. Now, a dozen years later, a movie of the investigation, *Spotlight*, is opening nation-wide on November 6th with a star-studded cast (Mark Ruffalo, Rachel McAdams, and Stanley Tucci, to name a few), a timely reminder that the story is never finished.

[WHAT'S THE MOVIE LIKE?]

On the night of the premier of *Spotlight* at Kendall Square in Cambridge for MIT students, there's Carroll, in the flesh, soon to be mirrored by Brian D'Arcy James onscreen. He is, true to form, running in the opposite direction with his spectacles around his neck, and a coffee cup in hand. Students queue up to buy popcorn; in the whole theatre, he must be the only person to drink coffee instead. One of them asks him, "Fifth time?" and Carroll replies that no, it's only been the fourth time he's seen himself on screen.

The movie ends and the film rolls to the credits: but first, instead of credits, it's rows upon rows of cities and towns where coverups and sexual abuse were uncovered. The theatre is silent as the scale of the situation is shown clearly on the pages of black screen. Not by accident, of course; to target the systemic is the mantra of the movie, no matter how individualized the horrors may be.

[ADD: WHAT WAS THE EXPERIENCE OF HAVING A MOVIE ABOUT YOU LIKE??]

[HOW IS MATT ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT WITHOUT BEING ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT?]

Carroll takes this reporter's creed to heart. There's a dogged curiosity about him, so that every sentence he's handed and every sentence he forms is already being redirected into the next one, the bigger finding. Carroll doesn't fixate on the psychology of individuals, nor the psychological environment of the system. Growing up Catholic, "everyone knew that there were bad priests, because there's bad people everywhere, that's just how it is." He never uses the words "child molester," always "bad priest".

He is nonchalant about his own experiences with the Church as a child and claims there was little religious backlash against the Globe in its investigation. "The Church really did not have a response to that— they were just wrong." By the time Carroll began reporting, he'd already drifted away from Catholicism. But he was, and still is, the only member of the original Spotlight team to attend church on a weekly basis. Now he attends Park Street Church, "a real pretty white church that looks totally out of place and time."

[HOW WAS LIFE STRANGER THAN FICTION?]

Although his speech is no-nonsense, Carroll is frank about the emotional toll that the reporting took. In a case where truth was stranger and more terrifying than fiction, he discovered halfway through the investigation that one of the most notorious abusers—John Geoghan— lived around the corner from his home (in the movie, it is said to be a "rehab home"). "They thought it wasn't believable if it was his picture I put on my fridge," said Carroll, which he did, to warn his children, who were ages 6-12 at the time. It became so stressful that Carroll found outlet in an alter ego— Sean Patrix— under whose name he wrote two novels. "I would get up at five in the morning, write for half an hour and then take the kids to school." Since then, he's put down the fiction. "I got that bug out."

The Future of News

[WHAT'S HE UP TO NOW?]

Last year, Carroll left the newspaper industry after more than 30 years of service, seeking new challenges. “I wasn’t satisfied with the pace of change in a lot of places,” he said. “I thought more could be done.” In many ways, he believes that the work he did in 2002 was “the last great enterprise newspaper story,” but it was also “the first great internet newspaper story,” which used the adolescent web to launch itself from local to global importance. As a self-proclaimed geek and databases guy, pointing out his hoodie as he does so, it’s the latter he wants to emphasize.

Now, at MIT, he runs the Future of News, an initiative that seeks to use creative technologies to push newsrooms “ahead aggressively” in this era of information overload and unstable income streams. These days, instead of hunting for stories, Carroll hunts for technologies that could make stories, and make them big. Alexis Hope is a former student at the Center for Civic Media who is currently advised by Carroll for her storytelling start-up, FOLD. The publishing platform seeks to make complex ideas easy to understand with virtual, linked index cards.

[FOLD]

“He brings decades and decades of hard earned expertise from being on the ground”, said Hope. “He just *cares* so much about journalism.” She adds that Carroll also provides business insight on how to navigate the news industry in a shifting, virtual landscape. He’s been a keen observer of how the internet impacts storytelling since the early 90s.

So many of Carroll’s concerns boil down to business— specifically, the business of making money. His hopes for *Spotlight* are that it gives a new emphasis to investigative journalism, particularly that it’s worth paying for. He estimates that team of four, working on the story for five months, cost the Globe a million dollars at the time.

[HOPES & DREAMS]

Ultimately, that’s what he wants to come out of his time at MIT, now that he’s made his mark in the field. What’s the next big project for Matt Carroll, now that he’s earned his Pulitzer and likeness on the silver screen? At this question, he finally parts with his coffee cup and pounds his fist on the table. “I’d like to be

part of the project that saves the news industry across the world by finding a way of minting gold coins for newsrooms,” he says.