

# DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

He was a likable person with plenty of charisma. His superiors thought highly of him even though they realized early on there was something terribly wrong with him. Indeed, he broke his vows over and over again. Yet for this all he got was a slap on the wrist. Then came the promotions. Many of them. Then the whole thing started all over again. Eventually, he was shipped off to someplace else but his new boss was told nothing about his transgressions. Sound familiar?

This is the case of Jayson Blair, the boy wonder reporter for the *New York Times* who was forced to resign in May. The top brass, Howell Raines and Gerald Boyd (some call them his rabbis, though others call them his bishops), knew of his problems and just shuffled him along. Their tolerance for Blair's intolerant behavior is now a scandal. The newspaper had to run more than 50 corrections in four years in response to Blair's work. At least 36 of the 73 articles he wrote were laden with fabrications, plagiarism and other deceitful practices. Yet he was promoted time and again.

Blair gave himself away early on when he showed up late for work dressed like a slob. He frequented a local tavern during work hours and got plenty of parking tickets. He charged both to the *New York Times* and no one did anything about it. Oh, yes, he was counseled. And he was given time off for his personal problems. But then he started all over again.

Blair took confidential files from the office and passed them around to his colleagues. Every time he was counseled, he was promoted. Then he got even worse, lying about his work. For this he was awarded another leave of absence. When he returned, his bosses read him the riot act, telling him to get to work on time, etc. He improved for a short time but then resorted to his old tricks.

As the whole world now knows, the way some in the Catholic Church dealt with a problem priest was to ship him off to a new diocese without ever notifying the new bishop of his recklessness. That's what the *New York Times* did to Blair—they first gave him a promotion and then shipped him elsewhere (their D.C. office), and never told his new boss about his recklessness. When those who transferred him got wind of his latest escapades, they did nothing. One of these old bosses later admitted, "we do not need to stigmatize people for seeking help." Sound familiar?

So Blair continued as usual, exploiting the good will of his superiors. Not only was he not reprimanded, but a letter praising him was put in his file. He was promoted again and then he did what he always did—lied, cheated and deceived those around him. Finally, his enabling bosses had enough and asked him to resign.

What gives? Duplicity, cover-ups, cowardice, privilege—these are just some of the attributes that come to mind. What's really amazing about all of this is that those involved always thought they could get away with it. Which only goes to show that arrogance can be deadly.