



The Issue of the Day

By Pat Norton
Nettle Creek CC

The burning issues of these politically charged times are not those issues relating directly to golf courses or turf-grass management, as we are led to believe if we read only items concerning the golfing world. ***It is interesting to realize that we all have other non-golf facets to our personalities and lives, isn't it?***

The enduringly hot issue recently is freedom of the press...to report the truth...versus the right to individual privacy. If the press doesn't report factually or truthfully...there is a big problem. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press are fundamental to the survival and vitality of our society. The news media in all of its forms bears a great responsibility in this regard.

But, social commentary by the press is another matter. In this country, we allow and encourage social commentary...of which political satire and lampooning are an important part. This type of commentary is done everyday...and has been a part of our national history from the outset since colonial times.

It's great to be able to read or listen to the best minds in this country via newspaper, magazine, radio, or cable television. With the onset of all of the different cable news channels...a winter insomniac like myself can arise early almost every morning and listen to great newscasts, weather, economic news, and political and social commentary.

The political news and commentary is especially hot this month as "Bill and the Spin Doctors" try to explain the tawdry tale of Monica Lewinsky, Paula Jones, Gennifer Flowers, Vernon Jordan, et. al...I really have come to believe that Mr. Clinton is in really big trouble... and has a real problem with a) telling the truth, and, b) respecting his wife enough to quit having all types of extramarital affairs!!

I really believe that it's just outstanding that the American press is so strong in pursuing political corruption and sexual scandal...most recently with our very sexually active Mr. President. There are quite a few layers to his story and his past...and I've really changed my opinion of the guy...because of the power and the quality of the American press and its coverage of his situation.

It's quite interesting to hear all of the allegations, denials, half-truths, and explanations from both sides of the Clinton scandal. The facts of this whole affair are still to be found out, but rest assured that it'll be those overzealous creeps that make up the American news media that will bring the truth to light...not our American President!

And that, folks, is what is distinctly and clearly wrong with this whole tale. Not only does there have to be more to this story than we're all being told...due to all of the mountains of evidence, allegations of current misbehavior and admissions of past missteps...but we're only going to find out what's really happening due to the efforts of the press...not through any moral courage of our president who claims neverendingly that moral fortitude and courage is one of his strongest traits!

Freedom of the press stands at just about the opposite end of the spectrum from this 90's' idea of being politically correct. There are lots of publications out there...lots of printed material...ranging from the piercingly objective and investigative...to the fluffiness of the politically correct, non-substantive, nauseatingly positive type of publication.

And we all read examples of all different types...and we seldom pause to think about what type of material we are reading!

Now with the Clinton sex scandal all over the place, the issue of freedom of the press is being hotly debated all over again. Granted that there are more than a few cases of irresponsible journalism out there...but the other side of it is that we're also being fed a lot of information from the Clinton White House that just doesn't make sense! And who will dissect it all and sift out the truth that's being so earnestly kept from us? It will be the American free press...

In the world of golf that we all know and love, there is quite a variety of printed material that is published each month for the golfing public and those, like us, that are involved with golf as professional people. Much of it is really informative and fun to read...but hardly cutting edge or controversial.

Some of the commentary pieces that I've written for *The Grass Roots* have ruffled a few feathers in the GCSAA world...and I venture to say that one or two in particular would not have been printed in most other state chapter publications. And not that I am any sort of earth-shaking writer...but isn't it more stimulating to read something a little controversial...with a strong opinion to it...as opposed to the typical turfgrass literary style?

That free press quality, that lack of censorship, that seeking out of strong opinion and truth...that good journalistic quality...is precisely what makes your chapter journal...*The Grass Roots*...so great. In much the same

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way...the journalistic quality of the Chicago Tribune makes it such a great...and successful newspaper! Did the Tribune gain its national reputation by shying away from the truth and always glossing everything over in a positive way? I don't think so...

And truthfully, folks, it's just tons of fun to be able to write almost whatever comes to mind and know that it'll find its way into *The Grass Roots*. That is certainly not the case with all golf publications...as any discerning, attentive reader can attest.

And, it is certainly not the case with many local newspapers...as witnessed by the contents of our Morris Daily Herald...or the Monroe Evening Times...or almost any other small town newspaper. These publications are held back somewhat by their editors who realize all too well that angering the advertising merchants and city 'powers that be' would be all too damaging to their survival.

It's too bad, really, that some people can't tolerate or respect healthy differences of opinion in the form of the printed or spoken word.

Personally, I don't agree with much that Rush Limbaugh, for example, has to say...he's too much of a showman for me. But, I do like listening occasionally because of his ability to really say what he thinks in a controversial way...which is extremely entertaining.

And, I just loved listening to G. Gordon Liddy on Chicago radio...a bit extreme in his ideas, perhaps, but very well reasoned and intelligent... and very experienced in the ways of the FBI, the military, and the government.

I also really enjoy listening to public radio and television for the quality of programming...and radio in Chicago in general.

On the other hand, I and almost everybody I know

breezes through the local newspaper in about ten minutes time...because the journalism...if you call it that...is so lame and boring!! The same is true for local, small town radio...decent music, but so boring!! There is nothing really interesting, controversial, or outrageous. Oftentimes, they are nothing more than a censored mouthpiece of the community. They must really believe that the local populace can't understand, or doesn't want to know, what really is happening here in small town Illinois.

It's quite interesting to read the local newspapers' version of events, then read the Joliet newspapers' more biting, truthful version of events here in Grundy County. There is a huge difference between them...with less people these days preferring the sugarcoated version, I think.

Just consider the number of ways people receive news and current events information these days compared to even ten or fifteen years ago. Now we have numerous, numerous options of ways to receive information...that are so much more advanced...with it all literally at our fingertips and in our living rooms. There is no longer any reason to subscribe, listen to, or watch the journalistic fluff that still is out there.

There are still way too many 'cheerleading' type of newspapers, trade and professional journals, and radio stations. We all still probably read or watch some of them, either in our professional or personal lives. Usually, they are nothing more than a venue for advertisers...and as I get older and wiser...I find that I have no time...and certainly no respect...for them.

Freedom of the press, and more importantly, the freedom of the people to speak the truth is truly a great thing...it's just too bad that more people either don't respect that right...or take advantage of it. ♣

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