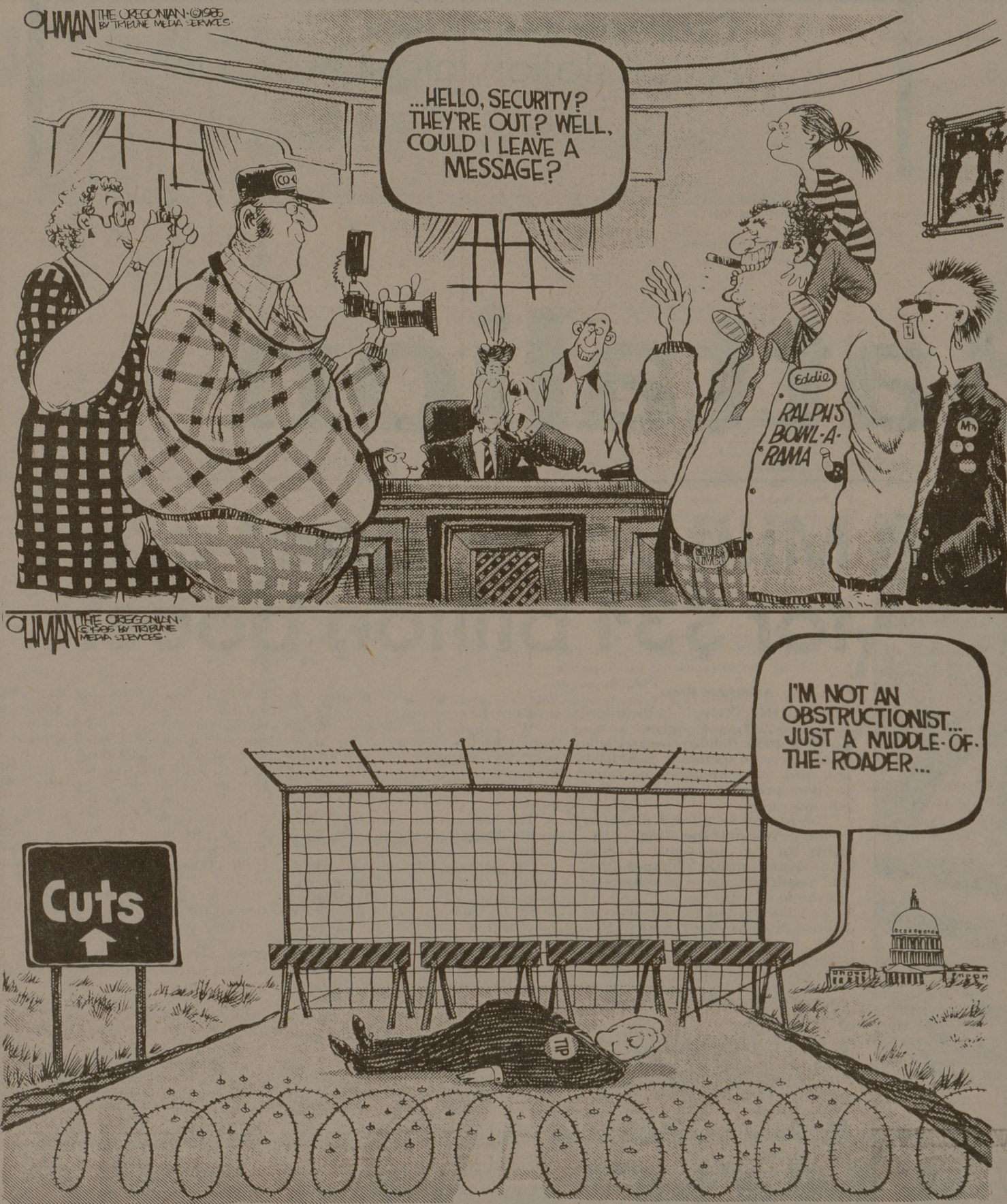


OPINION



Uncovering media conspiracy a relief

By **ART BUCHWALD**
Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

The thing I enjoy most about being a newspaperman is that the public holds me personally responsible for every sin committed by someone in my profession.

Lately I've found myself defending such varied media outlets as Time magazine, CBS and the Wall Street Journal.

What happens is that Americans tend to lump all journalists together, and when somebody goofs, anyone who carries a press card must answer to the charges.

Some years back, when I was on the road lecturing, I took the coward's way out by claiming I had nothing to do with a particular story that the public was enraged about. But I noticed how disappointed the people were when I pleaded not guilty.

So recently I decided to make people feel better by admitting I was part of the national media conspiracy to delude the American public.

My last trip to Arizona coincided with the Sharon-Time magazine libel suit verdict. While Time was found innocent of maliciously libeling General Sharon, the jury ruled it was guilty of shoddy reporting.

At a small dinner in Phoenix I was asked to explain how something like this could happen.

"We ran the story in good faith," I protested. "But the Israelis refused to let us see their secret documents. You have to realize that I write a column, and I can't read everything before it appears in Time magazine. In the past they have had a very good record about their facts, and I've accepted them. But I assure you when I get back home I'm going to make certain the Time editors get their act(s) together."

I thought this would satisfy them, but they weren't going to let me off that easily.

"Where do you stand on the moreland libel trial?" someone asked.

"I wasn't in Vietnam at the time," I replied. "But I have to assume the intelligence figures were fudged to make them acceptable to people on the front."

"You people at CBS should have checked before you libeled an American general."

"Since the trial is still going on, rather not comment any further on it, other than to say although I have nothing to do with the show, I will assume full responsibility if CBS is found in error. When it comes to TV news, buck stops here."

"Can you guarantee us," another person asked, "that it will never happen again?"

"You have my word on it," I said to the entire group. "I have given all the networks instructions that when I produce a documentary, I want to see not only what goes on the air, but what wound up on the cutting room floor."

"You people are drunk with power," a man told me.

"Not all of us," I said defensively. "Some of us are just drunk. But we have a job to do, and although we make mistakes they are never done with malice."

"One more question. Why did you permit a Wall Street Journal columnist to profit from inside information gathered on his job?"

"If he did it — and until his trial over we have to presume innocence — then I will shake up The Wall Street Journal from top to bottom to see never happens again."

I made a lot of people in Phoenix happy last weekend. Not only did they have a chance to voice their grievances to someone in the elite Eastern media establishment, but by my behavior I was able to reassure them that their perception of the arrogance and bias of the national press was justified.

A day in the life of Battalion city editor

Having talked to various leaders of different groups on campus, I think it is necessary to explain how The Battalion, as a news gathering instrument, functions.



Ed Cassavoy

As city editor, my job is to decide what should be covered on campus, by whom and the emphasis it should receive in the paper.

Obviously, the Goodrich case receives page one coverage by an experienced staff reporter. Except for these types of extreme cases, the choices become much more complex.

There are hundreds of student organizations that want coverage on the campus. The A&M faculty also has to be kept informed of issues that interest them. The Board of Regents, Faculty Senate, Student Senate, elections, and all other University meetings have to be covered.

Any special events, such as a concert

or debate, have to be covered. The Battalion has to monitor all community events and meetings to cover any issue of interest to the University community.

The choices of events and happenings on campus are endless, and equally as varied.

Now for the resources we have to utilize.

The Battalion reporting staff is composed of two separate groups of reporters — the ten paid staff writers and the 61 journalism students enrolled in Journalism 303.

Staff writers are broken up into two categories — full time reporters write three stories a week, and part time reporters do two stories a week.

The 303 students have to submit one article a week — as part of their course curriculum — for possible publication in The Battalion.

Unfortunately, like any other newspaper, we never have enough time or an adequate number of reporters in any given week. That is the nature of the beast. My job as city editor is to decide how to spread our limited resources.

In many respects, communication is

The Battalion's biggest ally and enemy. It is a two-edged sword. If organizations let us know in time, we usually can — time and space permitting — cover the event or issue. If for some reason we miss something to be covered, someone is going to be mad. With good reason.

I am never happy when something is missed on campus or in the community because it means I didn't do my job properly. Engineers don't like to see their bridges collapse and I don't like to see stories missed.

At the same time, The Battalion is a newspaper, not a University bulletin board. Something has to be newsworthy or of interest to the University before it will be printed. If you want an advertisement, buy an ad.

If you think you have a legitimate news story, don't hesitate to bring it in. The more information you can give city desk on an event or story, with a list of people we can contact to talk about the event, the more chance you have of getting your story in the paper.

Never hesitate.

Everyday I talk to all kinds of organizations and individuals. Most understand reasonably well how The Battalion works. But for those who may have questions, I offer these words of wisdom.

- Don't call and ask (or demand) to have an article on a certain date. It makes me feel like a take-out restaurant.

- Please don't ever assume The Battalion knows about an upcoming event. Always let us know.

- Send a press release or something written about the event or story as soon as you can. Advance warning can only help both sides.

- Make someone available to The Battalion who would be willing to explain and help the reporter do a more complete and accurate job of covering the story.

- And contact The Battalion if you have a question on our policies. We are always willing to listen.

Ed Cassavoy is the city editor and a weekly columnist for The Battalion.

LETTERS:

Refreshing to read different viewpoint

EDITOR:
I have been aware of a series of letters your staff has been receiving, attacking your "liberal" (is that a four-letter word?) editorials.

I am writing to express support for the courage your staff shows in continuing to share their honest opinions, whether or not they are "out of step with mainstream thought."

I find the editorials a brief moment of inspiration in a community very intense about its suppression of anything different from one's own beliefs or values.

I am also aware that an editorial is an expression of personal opinion, not a duty to reflect society's values, or to cover all sides, or even to be objective. I am also aware that your staff has the right to print "conservative" editorials,

as well as those that a liberal (oops - using profane language again!) like me likes to read.

Considering that there is certainly no lack of opportunity to hear the conservative viewpoint in Bryan/College Station, including in your paper and letters to the editor, I very much appreciate the opportunity to hear another point of view.

It is especially comforting to know that there really are people in this community who respect the rights of all human beings, including women, gay and lesbian people, and women who choose abortion.

(Yes, I know that last statement will set off a flurry of letters, admonishing me that 6-week embryos and human beings have equal rights, and that gays are not quite human beings and so don't really have the usual human rights.)

Nevertheless, please accept my expression of support and encouragement

to keep up the good work!

Cathy Wihoff
College of Medicine

Campus walkways gross and disgusting

EDITOR:

I would like to address a problem that I'm sure affects every student who has to pass between the Academic Bldg. and the Biological Sciences Bldg. In short, the conditions of the area, walkways and benches especially, are sickening. The bird droppings that are piled up make benches unusable and the air foul. Also the decomposing feces makes walking into a true art of pasture skill. I find this personally gross and disgusting and, from the wrinkled noses and shoe scraping I've observed, I'm sure others will agree.

I know that the birds are a problem that the campus has had to live with, but conditions created by them are factors that can be dealt with in some way. In conclusion, I would like to see A&M maintain its well-kept atmosphere but mainly I would like to be able to walk out of class without feeling I'm in a barn.

Amy M. Heaton
Class of '87

What is petty, rude matter of opinion

EDITOR:
In response to "Ignoring opponents petty and rude" (1-30-85).

Dear Mr. Bear,
SIT DOWN BUS DRIVER!

Sharon Jones
(accompanied by 3 signatures)

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Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the Editorial Board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holidays and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$10.75 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

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