

Houston Post editor says purpose of media is to provide knowledge

By Holly Becka
Reporter

The press is meant to provide knowledge, not to influence it, the editor of the *Houston Post* stressed Tuesday.

Sponsored by MSC Great Issues, Lynn Ashby spoke about "Media and Public Opinion: Who Influences Who?"

"When you get right down to it, Americans do not like the press, because they tend to blame it for bad news; it goes back to Roman days," Ashby said. "What bothers me, though, is Americans won't take responsibility for their own actions. They like to blame the messenger. The press doesn't create problems, it simply tells the truth."

He said the American public is lucky to depend on a "private business," the press, for their power.

"The media work to let you know what's happening," Ashby said. "It bears the responsibility of your knowledge. The public can't go out and find information, therefore, it sends the American press. You learn most of what you know from the media."

"None other has served so well as the press has served the people."

Ashby said the press in America doesn't influence opinion — the news does.

He said, however, America was influenced by the press during the Vietnam war.

"It was the first 'living room' war, and there was some influence because the press was only allowed to show one side of a two-sided event," he said. "There were some overt propagandists over there on both sides."

Ashby said the media were not allowed to publicize events such as the invasion of Granada. Therefore, no one knew about it until the end. Amazingly enough, public polls showed that the people favored the press not being there. Ashby said this relates back to the bad messenger theory.

"Journalists always have been the bearers of bad news, and we always will," he said. "We're not the most popular bunch. But I'm not here to complain. I wouldn't trade my job for anything."

Ashby said each person chooses a media form to trust and depend on. He said this is not necessarily good nor bad.

"You can trust the media to influence you (even) if you don't trust it anymore than you would someone else, like your professor or a priest," Ashby said. "We give you the facts, and you sort them out and base an opinion on that. All we can do is tell."

The editor said 108 daily newspapers, 460 weeklies and 78 TV stations operate in Texas alone, which creates a baffling source of news. But there is something for everyone, he said.

"All these sources are battling for one simple thing: you. We want your attention," he said.

Ashby said the media try to influence opinion, but if someone is informed about what is happening, this is impossible.

He said it is meaningless to argue about editorial endorsements.

"If the editorial is something you agree with you say 'right on! You want to hear an opinion like yours,'" Ashby said. "If it's something you're against, you disregard it. I can't influence you one way or the other on

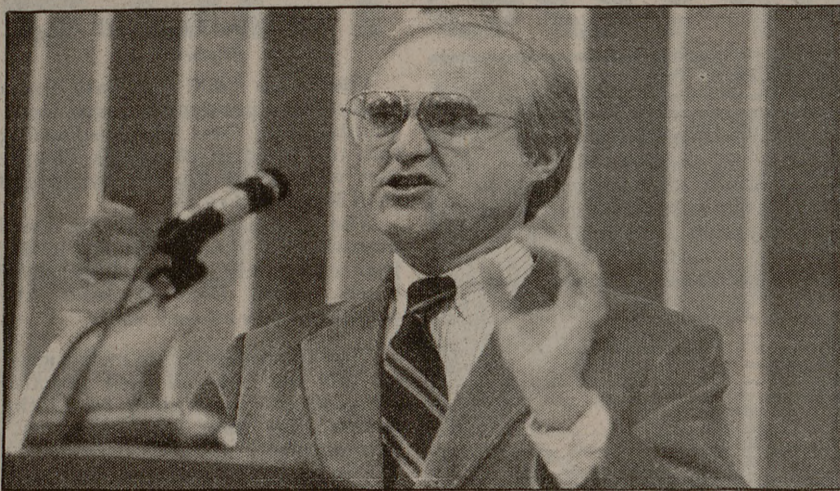


Photo by Jay Janner

Lynn Ashby, editor of the *Houston Post*, discussed the media and public opinion Tuesday at the Memorial Student Center. His presentation was sponsored by MSC Great Issues.

things you care about."

Ashby also said summit meetings were just "show business," and media events.

"Politicians are vying to influence the world, and the press is the messenger," he said. "Politicians know they can use the press to get to the people. They practice giving short, 30-second one-liners they know will be quoted."

The editor said the media and the public influence each other.

"We influence each other because we're a human endeavor," he said.

"All the press knows is what it's told. We print lies because we're told lies."

The editor closed with a few words about the mortality of the media.

"The press is not perfect, but it is as close as people working under very stressful conditions can make it," Ashby said.

"The press is a human industry. We deal with humans. We're the freest country, we have the freest people, and our press is the freest and most responsible."

Professor recommends students read classics to gain humanistic education

By Marcena Fadal
Reporter

A humanistic education is ultimately designed to prepare its students for life outside of school, an assistant professor explained Tuesday.

Craig W. Kallendorf, assistant professor in the Departments of English and Modern & Classical Languages, discussed "Ancient, Renaissance and Moderns: The Human in Humanities" at the Fourth Annual Humanities Lecture in Rudder Tower.

"When and where was the mod-

ern concept of the humanities first formed?" Kallendorf began. "The word 'humanist' is related to the Italian 'umanista,' a slang term to denote a professor or teacher of the humanistic studies."

Kallendorf explained that humanism evolved from three points

"First, when the early Italian humanists discussed their studies, they had in mind five specific fields: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy," Kallendorf said.

The second point involved the reading of classics.

"In the early Italian Renaissance, studying the humanities meant studying the classics," he said. "What led the humanists to the classics was their search for books that could teach them about human concerns and actions. The educational theorists remind us again and again to read the classics because they guide us to a richer, more fully-human life."

The third point was humanities

ultimate goal as a student's preparation for life.

Kallendorf said universities today are as conservative as they were centuries ago.

"There are only 66 institutions around today that can trace their existence back to 1530," he said. "These are the Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the parliaments of Iceland and the Isle of Man and 62 universities."

"Not even the most hidebound traditionalist would demand Greek and Latin for everyone in our little Athens on the Brazos," Kallendorf joked.

Works by blacks, women and others traditionally excluded are being read more than Shakespeare and Virgil, Kallendorf said.

"The traditional authors are not completely abandoned," Kallendorf said. "Annabel Patterson, for example, uses Shakespeare to show how 17th century society mistreated women, blacks and the working class."

Kallendorf ended his lecture by asking everyone in the room to bury themselves in the classics.

"Put the human into the humanities," he said. "Focus around that and everything else will eventually fall into place."

Jury deciding on lion owner's penalty

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Jurors entered their second day of deliberations Tuesday in the punishment phase of an animal trainer convicted of injury to a child.

Gary Durkovitz, 35, of Houston, was convicted last week of injury to a child after his pet lion "Samson" mauled Roxanne Hernandez, 8, at the Texas Flea Market on Oct. 10, 1987, in Houston.

The jury took about five hours to convict Durkovitz, but deliberated

for six hours Monday on punishment before being sequestered for the evening.

The jury returned at 9 a.m. Tuesday.

Harris County prosecutors have asked for the maximum punishment of 10 years and a \$5,000 fine, but defense attorneys have asked for probation.

Durkovitz, who had taken his 350-pound lion to previous shows at the flea market, was walking his lion out

of the building when the attack occurred.

Samson attacked the little girl when she walked in front of him.

The lion tore off part of the girl's skull when the animal tried to put the child's head in its mouth.

The girl, whose brain was exposed after the attack, was hospitalized for a month and had to have a homebound teacher before returning to school in February.

She has undergone reconstructive surgery and faces more surgery.

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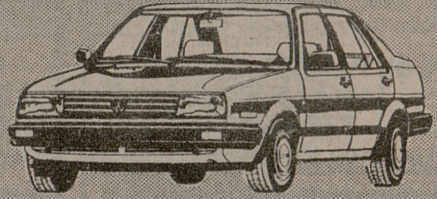
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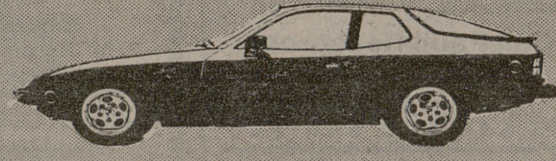
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