BEGIN WITH RESPECT FOR THE READER

A smalltown editor's perspective on newspapers, 1985

The fourth annual Carol Burnett Fund Lecture on Journalism Ethics, Tuesday, March 12, 1985, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii, by Richard D. Smyser, editor, The Oak Ridge (Tenn.) Oak Ridger and president, American Society of Newspaper Editors.

I should like to begin today with a selection from the scriptures.

This is from Luke, Chapter 19, verse 3:

"And he sought to see Jesus, who he was, but could not for the press."

So you see we have had this problem for some time.

It is a problem currently talked about mostly in terms of arrogance of newspersons, of the effects of growing centralized media ownership and of the ruboff from the ineptitudes and excesses of the still relatively new and, though oftentimes brilliant, also too often sophomoric television news establishment, whatever that is.

There is another frequently stated explanation of why the press is currently under so much criticism. It is the so-called "messengers theory"--that nobody likes the person who brings bad news and that there has been more than the usual share of upsetting news in more recent years.

(An editor friend refers to the "middle class nightmares"--the sexual and civil rights revolutions, the war protests and feminist movement of the 1960s and early 1970s.)

There are many examples of the "messenger theory" in history and literature and, though you have heard this premise many times, I reiterate it here mostly because I like so much this particular example from Shakespeare.

In "King Henry IV," Part II, Act I, Morton has just come back from the battlefield--the "War of the Roses." He is telling Northumberland, in effect, that there's some bad news and then there's some bad news. To which Northumberland

responds: "Yet the first bringer of unwelcome news hath but a losing office, and his tongue sounds ever after as a sullen bell remembered knolling a departing friend."

This pervading concern and criticism is referred to as the press "credibility problem" and my comments, as are most editors' texts these days, are centered on this theme. But I would presume to discuss all of this in, perhaps, some new ways and contexts in which I can claim, if not expertise, then at least experience--from the perspective of the daily newspaper in a smallish, if not necessarily small, city. And because I am an advocate of, whenever possible, talking--and writing--more in terms of people than things, I tend to be anecdotal.

It is interesting how certain things stay in one's mind.

Like something the late Riley Allen once said.

My brother told me about it.

Riley Allen, as many of you know, was one of my brother's predecessors as editor of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. Bud respected him highly.

Riley's admonition: When someone brings something, or sends something, or calls with something that he or she feels newsworthy, every effort should be made to somehow work mention of it into the Star-Bulletin. Or, if not, the contribution should be acknowledged warmly and with a full explanation of the reason it cannot be used.

Yes, I have, during almost 40 years in newsrooms, had my share of dear old souls who have been cleaning their attics and have run across a pile of yellowed newspapers from 1933. And so they bring them to me. Who else?

"And look there now, Mr. Editor," they say as they unload them on my already paper-smothered desk, "see that ad here for the Giant Food Market on page 23--hamburger for 27 cents a pound! Can you imagine that?"

Of course I can't imagine that, I reassure them, trying hard to appear pleased that they did, indeed, think of me--who else?

But I've tried to keep "Allen's Dictum" uppermost. Because he understood what a precious thing it is when some reader thinks of us as a place where he or she will find shared enthusiasm for something that interests or just amuses them.

Also in remembrance of Riley Allen I have been known to react quite severely when I hear a member of my staff, or myself, being short with someone who has called with a question. No matter how seemingly outlandish or irrelevant the inquiry, shouldn't we be pleased that they have thought of us as a source of information. Isn't that what we say we are?

Ok, Ok, so we don't know whether their Aunt Edna was among the 78 injured when the tornado struck Parsons, Kansas last night, but shouldn't we be flattered that they thought we might? And with all of the new technology, maybe not too far in the future we will know.

When my brother Bud and I--I will mention him several times because he is important to many of my thoughts, ideas--when Bud and I were verging on or just beyond pubescence--Bud, maybe 15, me about 12--we shared a third floor bedroom. It was a cozy garrett, the stairwell opening into the very center of the room, which stretched the full length of this twin house in South Central Pennsylvania. There were dormer windows under the eaves at front and back, and a slanted ceiling that followed the contours of the roof along one side. Where that wall was vertical and not diagnoal we hung a row of carefully-framed pictures of Petty and Varga girls clipped from Esquire, the Playboy of the 1930s, this to assure any of our contemporaries who visited that we were, of course, men about town.

On fall mornings, Bud and I would risk life, limb and parental anger as we awoke and then raced down the two flights of steep stairs to retrieve the Sunday Philadelphia Public Ledger from our front porch. We were after first crack at the comics but even more we were after the sports section.

We would grab it, spread it on the living room rug and page through it intently looking for the account of our beloved William Penn Senior High School's football game the Saturday afternoon before with McCaskey High School of Lancaster or John Harris High School of Harrisburg.

Did we want to know the score? Of course not. We had seen the game and could have recited a play by play account. What we were concerned about was the length of the story about our game, its place on the pages and the size of the headline. How did it compare to the place on the page and the size of the headline given to accounts of games of other nearby high schools?

We were not seeking information or news. We were seeking recognition. We were looking for confirmation that those big city Philadelphia sports writers knew that our high school existed and, therefore, that we existed.

In many circumstances our readers are seeking information less than they are seeking recognition--acknowledgment that they exist--in our columns. Recognition is not just a proper but a very necessary role of a newspaper.

In early 1949 in the very early months of publication of The Oak Ridger, the first daily newspaper in the newly-created "Atomic City" of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, I was confronted one morning by Alfred G. Hill, the owner and founder. Why, he wanted to know, had a certain obituary been printed with such obvious inadequacies and inaccuracies?

I replied to the effect that we were so busy with a major news story that we had to cut corners on some of the "lesser, more routine" news.

Alfred was known for "the bounce"--his tendency to become livid and prance on tiptoe when he became truly impatient with an employe's stupidity. I had no sooner offered this excuse than I noticed the early warning signs--reddened face, stammering.

"It is past time you understood something, young man," he said in a voice building to a bellow. "Your big news stories are commendable, but they are not what our readers are going to clip out and press in their family bibles or paste in their family scrapbooks."

Our mother kept her prized newspaper clippings in her top middle bureau drawer--the accounts of my sisters' weddings, the item about Bud's journalism scholarship. They smelled of apple blossoms from the sachets she scattered among her embroidered handkerchiefs kept there too.

I have thought about the "Alfred Hill dictum" many times since. Indeed, a botched obituary or fouled-up birth announcement is a good basis for a reader to conclude that we botch other things too--like those big stories I felt were more important. On the other hand, if a reader senses that we made extra efforts, took extra care to be sure the item so important to him or her personally is correct and complete, perhaps that's good reason for confidence in other things we do--like those big important stories.

It was mid-January, 1977: A Friday night.

David, 17, and Lynette, 16, were on their way home from a date. They had been to a movie and stopped afterwards at McDonalds.

At an intersection not far from where they both lived their car was rammed broadside by another and thrown 118 feet. David and Lynette were killed. Witnesses said that the car that hit them ran the red light at a high rate of speed. The driver, only slightly injured, registered far above the allowable alcohol level.

David had worked parttime in our composing room. The school year before he and his family had hosted a foreign exchange student from South Africa. Lynette had drawn attention as a poet.

Our reporters gathered the grim information from the police and hospital. Then they went personally to the homes, checked the police and hospital information, asked for additional personal facts and pictures. They had called and asked permission to visit. Both families welcomed them.

Our story was complete, particularly with personal detail about the two victims and their families.

Within two days after the services for David and Lynette, both sets of parents came to our office to thank me personally for two things: The accuracy and completeness of the stories; the fact that we had come to them directly for information.

When people are so intimately involved in what will appear in our newspapers, we owe them the consideration of making them aware that they are to be news. We owe them the opportunity to respond to that reality--that often grim reality--and to verify and add to our information.

The police, the hospital, the mortuary--they are helpful. But the information they furnish should be only the beginning of our reportage. It needs to be supplemented; it needs to be verified, commented upon, reacted to and ideally by the very person or persons most directly involved, no matter how painful the circumstances--in fact the more painful the more important this direct contact is.

And this direct, if considerate, contact will be appreciated in the vast majority of cases, even the most traumatic.

I sometimes think there should be a "non Pulitzer prize." It would be awarded annually to the newspaper that demonstrates best that it provides day-to-day incessant coverage of its local government.

Yes, it stops occasionally and looks back and ahead with an introspective feature, summing up an important situation. But its emphasis is on rat-a-tat-tat coverage of each daily development.

And because it does this--keeps its readers so very well informed of local government actions and thinking while they are in the planning and discussion stage--while there is still a chance for citizen reaction and contribution--its local government has no chance to become corrupt.

Therefore, the newspaper has no chance to expose city hall and win the Pulitzer prize.

So there is for them this "Non Pulitzer Prize," which might also be called the Turner Catledge-Montgomery Curtis Award. Both of these superb journalists were advocates of this kind of reporting, this kind of journalism. Both of them believed that it is this kind of journalism that is necessary to reach the public on significant, complicated issues over a period of time--that it takes this kind of drumbeat coverage of "government in the process" to make things sink in.

J. Edward Murray, in his talk from this podium a year ago, referred to the need for "reinforcing redundancy" in our coverage of important stories.

Pat Riordan began work for my newspaper at the age of five. Each week we awarded $5 to the reader who called in the best news tip. Pat was one of our regular contributors, reporting such big stories as a dead dog at the corner of Delaware Avenue and Darwin Road. I can still hear his voice as I took his call.

Pat came really to work for us while in high school He went on to become one of Miami Herald's top investigative reporters--almost won a Pulitzer for a police brutality expose.

I will always remember Pat one afternoon after the paper was on the street and there was a call--as there are, too many days, about 4 and 5 p.m.--calling our attention to a major error.

Pat stood there, front page in hand, angry, embarrased (he had made the error) and looked back at me and said, "You know, I guess you really know you are a

newspaper man if, when you make a mistake, no matter what it is, you hurt real bad somewhere right here." He held his hand to his stomach.

Accuracy is so important. Accuracy is so terribly difficult to achieve. Accuracy has so many aspects, nuances. It is not just a matter of getting things "right." It is putting them into proper context, perspective. It is learning never to idly extrapolate. It is learning when to, when not to trust your memory--mostly not. It is that little voice that speaks to you when you are sitting there and saying to yourself, "Oh that's probably right." It's the little voice that says, "Check it! Check it!"

A university journalism school could devise a semester or quarter-long course on nothing but accuracy. I wish some university journalism school would.

It was July, 1959. President Eisenhower was well into his second term. And there it was one morning on the Associated Press wire:

"President Eisenhower believes the chances for a summit conference have become steadily dimmer in the last ten days. He feels Russia's attitude regarding Berlin now is tougher than ever.

"The Eisenhower pessimism--based on confidential reports from the Geneva foreign ministers meeting--is known on excellent authority.---

"It also is known on high authority that Eisenhower is still dead set against any recognition of Red China.---

"It can be reported, too, on similar authority---"

And then it went on to say that Ike is still willing to go to a summit; that he doesn't rule out invoking the Taft-Hartley law to prevent a steel strike; that he won't get involved in the choice of a Republican presidential nominee at the 1960 convention unless someone he feels is grossly antagonistic to his own middle-of-the-road philosophy seems a real possibility to win the nomination. And a lot more.

Paragraph after paragraph presumed to tell us "on highest authority" what our President was thinking and planned to do.

But how did Marvin Arrowsmith, veteran Associated Press Washington correspondent, whose by-line was on the story, know that this is how the President felt, what he was planning?

I wondered as an editor. I felt my readers would--and should--wonder even more.

I called the AP bureau in Washington and asked.

Oh, they explained all too casually, the President had held a black tie dinner for a small group of White House correspondents. After dinner they got cozy over cigars and brandy (in the Red Room, maybe) and the President confided in them. As they left the White House, the ground rules were established. What the President said could be reported but attributed only to "on highest authority."

The information the story reported was interesting, but the system bothered me.

Surely if the bureau could tell me as casually as it had what had happened--the reporters had gone up to the Mayflower Hotel a few blocks away, locked themselves in a room and shared, checked, their recollections--if the bureau could tell ME this, then anyone with any sort of knowledge of how Washington works would understand or could learn the circumstances. So why shouldn't my readers know and understand too?

AP, though explaining all this to me, insisted that we could not print a full explanation. And, somewhat cowed by the thought of defying the world's largest news gathering agency, I settled for an "Editor's note," which, at least, let our readers know that we, too, were puzzled by the way the story was written and had tried to get AP to explain. And within a day or two the whole business about the dinner leaked and was published, thank goodness.

At the ASNE convention in Washington in April, 1975, Henry Kissinger was a luncheon speaker. It was just after one of those trips of his to the Middle East

during which our news columns and news broadcasts often included reports that began: "According to a senior official aboard Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's plane, etc. etc."

I asked from the floor: "Mr. Secretary, Senator (Henry) Jackson, in his remarks this morning referred to the 'high administration official' who always seems to be on the Secretary of State's plane. In all seriousness, how do you feel the comments that come from this 'high administration official' serve the Secretary of State, the press and, most of all, the public?"

The Secretary's reply in part: "Well, my experience is that that 'high official' almost always agrees with the Secretary of State. Therefore, it serves the coherence of the public presentation of American foreign policy."

A sharp reply and it got a big laugh. I had set up a quick, brilliant man with a perfect straight line.

He went on to say that this was a device used in the special circumstances of the plane when only a limited number of reporters could be present and, he concluded, "I think that this arrangement has worked reasonably well--as long as 'the senior spokesman' and the Secretary agree with each other."

Another laugh.

For those of us in the news business, there are sources and then there are "sourcerers."

Sources are good people; "sourcerers" are bad people.

Sources are very often "little people"--people down in the ranks who see wrongdoing and want to stop it; think a good newspaper reporter might report it and help stop it. So they confide in us.

"Sourcerers" are most often "big people"--people high in the ranks, and most frequently in public ranks, who have some trial balloon to float, have some dirt to fling at some adversary but don't want to take responsibility for it; have

some thought or idea to plant for reasons of negotiation or diplomacy but do not want to let on who planted it.

Sources care about informing the public.

"Sourcerers" care about themselves and will use the public and press in pursuit of their interests if they can, if we left them.

Sources should be protected, even at the risk of jail; "sourcerers" should be actively exposed for what they are.

It is interesting to speculate when this business of "sources" and "sourcerers" began. Some date it from World War II and what was then called the Lindley Rule, named for Ernest Lindley, editor of Newsweek, who authored the system of information being available for publication but not for attribution.

How might it have been centuries ago?

Paul Revere: "The British are coming, sources say."

"The world is round," said a Genovese sailor who declined to be identified by name.

"Quoth the raven, for background only, 'Nevermore!!'"

And the town crier making his rounds waving his lantern and calling, "Twelve o' clock and all is well, it can be reported on highest authority."

In December the Washington Post reported that the so-called super secret space payload would be a spy satellite that would eavesdrop on Soviet transmissions.

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger called this "the height of journalistic irresponsibility." You all remember the fuss. It stayed in the news a day or two and brought a variety of responses.

Secretary of Defense Weinberger said that Associated Press, United Press International and the television networks had been aware of this information--Aviation Week magazine too. But all had complied with Defense Department requests

not to print it. Only the Post, which had made no such agreement with the DOD, published it.

Is information really secret when it is in the hands of virtually all of the nation's major news agencies? Is it secret when it has also been part of congressional testimony, as this basic information about the spy satellite, and more, was?

Is it secret from the Soviet or anyone else not necessarily friendly with our nation? Or is it only secret from the American public? The Post explosed the sham.

But neither the Post nor the AP nor the UPI has yet reported the real story: How, if indeed this was secret information, did it come to be known by so many major news groups? Or why, if it was not really top secret, did the Secretary of Defense go to such lengths to claim that it was and to lambast one of the nation's leading newspapers?

The public needs to understand better how these things happen--how we and the government interact; how information does and does not flow and under what strange circumstances. Only then can the public make its own intelligent judgments of who's irresponsible, who's beating up on the Washington Post for effect.

There need to be more stories that report the system. There need to be more paragraphs within stories explaining puzzling contexts and attributions--or, too often, lack of attributions.

I would cite a very effective example of just this kind of story. It appeared in the Sunday, February 17 New York Times. It was written by my good friend, a former Tennessee editor, Alex Jones, now the Times' media reporter.

Alex wrote about the suit by Gen. Westmoreland against CBS. He explained some of the techniques used by CBS in presenting this documentary. He explained how sometimes a network, in preparing such a presentation, will dub in the questioner later, taking only portions of an interviewee's comments and mixing them with a questioner who really was not present at the interview; or asking a question in a

significantly different manner--tone--than it was asked when the interviewee actually responded. His was a most readable, informative story. It provided valuable insight into the circumstances of the trial.

Warren Beatty told the ASNE at its convention in Denver in May, 1983 that the press needs to report more about itself; be more critical of itself; break up its self-protective "good old boys" network. I hope he saw Alex's story.

In the 1930's in the Pennsylvania city in which Bud and I grew up, it was the custom for the local taverns that featured entertainment to advertise:

"10-Girls-10"

Or, if they were bigtime:

"15-Girls-15"

Or, if they were really bigtime--or maybe if it was New Year's Eve:

"20-Girls-20"

I read the nearby big city papers with great envy. At the Oasis Cafe in Baltimore they virtually always had:

"30-Girls-30"

And at the Troc, the legendary burlesque house at Tenth and Arch in Philadelphia:

"50-Girls-50"

All of this may seem blatantly sexist and terribly extraneous to journalism quality and ethics but it explains why I hold to what I call my "1-Editor-1" theory. It reflects my belief in the utter necessity of role playing.

Each city, each community needs within it certain role players. There must be doctors. There must be lawyers, I guess. A minister or two is helpful. Of course we need a plumber. And each city needs at least <u>one editor</u>.

One editor who is an editor and nothing else. Having chosen the role of editor, he doesn't blur that role--confuse it, complicate it, contradict it, and

most of all, take time away from it--by being an industrial promoter, a school board member, a United Way campaign chairman or even publicity advisor to the local little theatre.

In recent years there have been two trends, among many others, among newspapers.

Newsroom titles have proliferated. Where we once had a publisher, an editor, a managing editor and a city editor, we now have executive editors and publisher-editors and editor-publishers and vice presidents/news and a lot of others.

I did a count of the 1984 ASNE membership roll. Of nearly 900 members, only about 200 have the simple title "Editor."

It is good that more and more news executives are being moved up to publisher ranks. They deserve that opportunity. They bring a healthy news perspective to the very top level of newspaper management.

But I worry that the role of editor--that, to me, very pleasant sounding single word, "editor"--may be getting lost in this trend. I think we need to take care that it is not.

Publishers and vice presidents are vital to newspapers. But so are editors--just editors.

"1-editor-1"

In the spring of 1977, as Eugene Patterson, of the St. Petersburg Times, began his term as ASNE president, succeeding your own George Chaplin, of the Honolulu Advertiser, he decided that ASNE should renew its concern for minorities in the newsroom. There had been an ASNE committee for a few years after the 1968 report of the Kerner Commission, a special body appointed by President Lyndon Johnson to probe the causes of the devastating racial rioting in the cities.

In one of its sternest admonitions the Kerner Commission stated:

"Along with the country as a whole, the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white man's eyes and a white perspective.

That is no longer good enough. The painful process of readjustment that is required of the American news media must begin now. They must make a reality of integration--in both their product and personnel."

For reasons I still do not understand, ours is one of the most racially segregated businesses, professions, avocations--whatever you prefer to call it.

Our convention that spring of '77 was held here in Honolulu at the Sheraton Waikiki. I met one morning with Jay Harris, now of USA Today, then of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. President-elect Patterson had asked me to chair the newly-revived ASNE Minorities Committee. Medill had expressed interest in working with us. Jay and I were to discuss strategy.

We met at Jay's tenth floor ocean front room. He suggested we sit on the balcony and have a cup of coffee. As we seated ourselves a white pigeon flew up and perched on the railing. Moments later a black one alit beside the white one. Jay and I were sure it was a sign.

ASNE and Medill, largely through Jay's efforts, had a good working arrangement for the next several years. But the great pigeon omen did not portend any real success toward our goal, which, at the ASNE board meeting the following spring in Washington, was made official: To achieve racial parity in the newsroom--a percentage of minority employes that reflects the national population--by the year 2000.

In the first eight years of our effort the percentage has moved up from slightly more than 2 percent to 5.8 percent. You see what that leaves us to accomplish in the next 15 years. The minority percentage of the national population by the year 2000 is projected to be something over 20 percent.

I can think of no more pressing ethical challenge for the press. It is not just a matter of numbers. It is a matter of assuring that our news coverage reflects all racial perspectives.

It's a long way, culturally as well as geographically, from Emporia, Kansas to 43rd Street just west of Broadway in Times Square, Manhattan, New York, New York, from The Emporia Gazette to The New York Times.

Yet, these two cities, these two newspapers and their journalistic heritage, represent a kind of journalism to be striven for, together--Emporia the warm, homespun yet very literate journalism of William Allen White, the New York Times with its national and international expertise and thoroughness.

I suggest more of these seemingly conflicting journalistic qualities combined in our newspapers. I suggest we go these two seemingly opposite directions at once.

How many of you are fans of the public radio shows "All Things Considered" and "A Prairie Home Companion"?

I think there are lessons to be learned from both. In important respects they both combine these seemingly contradictory qualities of home, folks, yet sophistication.

I find Garrison Keillor on "A Prairie Home Companion" particularly significant. He is a "teller of gentle truths," or perhaps more accurately "a gentle teller of truths." We can learn from him.

In pondering how to write a news story, in critiquing a news story after the fact, I often tell myself and my staff members to "Be a reader."

It is often not just helpful, but sometimes vital to proper reporting and writing to conjure the person who will be reading--or who you hope will be reading--and be certain you are writing to him or her--addressing his or her concerns, answering his or her questions, respecting his or her intelligence and good taste.

Raymond Clapper, the famous World War II journalist, once said, "Readers are twice as smart as we think they are and know only half as much as we think they know."

So begin with respect for the reader.

Respect the reader as someone who may want to contribute to your paper--take part in some little way with its production. Encourage that, celebrate that possibility.

Understand that readers--people--like and expect occasional recognition from their newspaper.

Remember what it is that readers clip and save--put away, send off to relatives and friends.

Remember that sometime, under some circumstances, maybe happy--a birth, a wedding--but also maybe sad--a death, a tragedy, an arrest--you and your newspaper will share an "intimate moment" with some given reader. How will you impress that reader during this time of very personal contact? And is not how you--your newspaper--your reporters--treat this reader in this moment of journalistic intimacy a good basis for that reader to pass a broad judgment on your newspaper, on you as a journalist?

Show your readers the courtesy, when you are involving them directly in the news, of going directly to them--considerately, of course.

Give your readers fullest reporting of their government--and especially their local government--in the process; not just when they finally vote the ayes and nays, but the brainstorming and the planning and the debating. Give them this so that they, too, can participate in that planning, that brainstorming, that debating if they like.

Begin with respect for your readers and let that respect make you care so very much about accuracy. Accept that, in matters of accuracy, no matter one's own religious disposition or lack thereof, we are all "conceived in sin."

Remember that there are sources and there are "sourcerers." Protect sources; expose "sourcerers."

Explain how these strange things happen in the press--how Associated Press and UPI and NBC and CBS could all have in their possession top secret satellite payload information, if indeed they did.

Explain some of the less straightforward ways that CBS presented General Westmoreland's position in its documentary about Vietnam even though you are, as I am, immensely pleased that this important case ended with a recognition that, whatever CBS did, it was not libel--that a matter so sensitive as our national policy in Vietnam needs the most uninhibited examination by a free press.

Demonstrate a sensitivity to the role of an editor--just an editor.

Appreciate how pressing is the press' need to increase its number of minority personnel not just in the newsroom, but in all departments; increase its number of minorities so that its coverage of minority issues and people will increase and improve too.

Contemplate how even the largest newspapers might better embody some of the more homespun qualities of the small papers; how even the smallest newspaper might be, in some limited ways at least, as nationally and internationally conscious and informative as The New York Times.

Begin with respect for the reader and that respect, I believe, will suggest ways that we might dig more and snoop less--in fact not snoop at all.

Ways that we might learn to be better listeners (listening is an art)--ways to avoid what a friend calls "listening to what WE are going to say next."

How also we can better distinguish between secrecy and privacy and thus more effectively combat secrecy and more graciously respect privacy.

Begin with respect for the reader and let this respect show us how, in pursuit of the news, we need not be obsequious, but neither need we be overbearing.

How, as both reporters and editors, we might better strive for that elusive quality of becoming totally involved with the subject, or the person, about which

or whom we are reporting, writing, yet at the same time to utterly separate ourselves from what we write or edit.

Begin with respect for the reader and ponder how we can better go about our important--terribly important--business of newspapering, of informing, without apology, but also without preachment.

None of this is easy to do, but it is easier, I believe, when we begin with respect for our readers.

Thank you for granting me the privilege of making these remarks by way of a lectureship that carries the name of a person who has brought us all so much joy, so much fun, Miss Carol Burnett.

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