

Opinion

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DAF1

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Reporter welcome despite tragedy

THE TRAGEDY of the bombing in Beirut of the Marine barracks was followed by the inevitable interviewing of relatives back home.

In newspapers and on television, we were told about the anguish and sorrow being experienced by the survivors.

It is the same in most tragedies.

Soon after the bombing became the nation's No. 1 news story, an acquaintance suggested that our newspapers, at least, ought not to jump into the fray, seeking out relatives of Marines killed in the explosion.

"You watch," he said. "The first thing you'll see is some guy sticking a microphone in some poor mother's face and saying, 'How do you feel?' 'What kind of a son was your boy?'"

"People don't want to be bothered talking to reporters after something like that; they want to be left alone," the acquaintance suggested.

I recalled the sights on television of people holding back tears as they discussed the death of someone close and might have agreed.

But my own experience tells me otherwise.



Bob Wisler

THE FIRST time I was asked to get a photograph of a 17-year-old girl who died in a car accident, I was taken aback. It was with great reluctance that I called the girl's home at 7 a.m., a few hours after she was killed, and asked her mother if I could come by for a photograph.

I went to the house, rang the bell and was surprised when the girl's father asked me inside. I felt that the parents would prefer to be alone with their grief rather than talking to a stranger who happened to be a reporter.

We stood in the living room, the parents and I looking at each other, not knowing what to say. To break the silence, I timidly asked a few questions about their daughter's school activities.

The father started talking. Tears in his eyes, he told me about her, the sketchy details that not really begin to tell the story of a human life — where she went to school, what classes she took, what she had talked about doing after she left school.

AS THE GIRL's mother and father talked, they managed to convey a sense of their daughter, her hopes and dreams, her love of life, her love of family. As they talked to a stranger, they managed to crystallize some of their thoughts.

They wanted whatever newspaper story that would appear to capture at least a small part of what their daughter's life was like. They wanted what may have been the only newspaper story that would ever appear about their daughter to have some measure of dignity.

When I left, the parents seemed somewhat grateful, despite their sorrow, to have had the opportunity to talk to someone about their daughter, to let the world know, in some small way, how they treasured her and what a loss they will feel.

IN THE bewildering turn of events in which the unthinkable has happened, the newscast or news story may be an opportunity to try to put things into focus. It's as if the unreal event is somehow made, not understandable, not acceptable, but, at the least, real.

For the most part, people in the business of presenting the news try to do so in a fashion that imparts a sense of meaning, not to the death, but to the life of the person caught in the tragedy.

We who see the story, of course, feel a sense of kinship with those who are caught in the tragedy. The personalizing of the tragedy gives us a better understanding of what life holds for all of us.

Can Jane Fonda be any more revolting?

I'VE HAD it with Jane Fonda! Have you ever noticed how she always seems to insist that the rest of us do whatever it is that she's in the mood to do? She wasn't that bad during her "sex kitten" phase when she was "Barbarella."

She was taking her clothes off a lot, but at least she wasn't making video tapes in order to show us poor dunderheads the correct way to take off our clothes in public. Of course, video tapes weren't around then — that may have had something to do with it.

I GUESS it was about the time she took up politics as a second career that she decided that she would show the world what was right. She was vocal and adamant about her personal beliefs and seemed to feel compelled to enlighten the world every time someone put a microphone in front of her — which, unfortunately, was much, much too often. She was even an embarrassment to those who shared some of her views. But did that bother Jane Fonda? Of course not!

Sometimes I get the feeling that the lady is just starved for attention!

Ah, but now dear Jane has truly found the light. She has discovered the secret to all happiness and wisdom. She has discovered aerobics. Boy, has she discovered aerobics! She's practically got the whole country lying on their sides wearing body stockings trying to touch the ceiling with their navels. It's really kind of pathetic when you



Nancy Walls Smith

think about it.

We're all walking around feeling guilty because we don't look like Jane Fonda. I wonder who Jane Fonda wants to look like?

WELL, I, for one, refuse to be intimidated by this mass hysteria towards health and exercise. Jane Fonda can't tell me how to live! Some of us just weren't meant to be even remotely associated with body stockings, leg warmers, and sweat. Maybe I like the fact that my husband tells me that I run like a moose!

Just this last weekend I read in the paper that doctors have discovered a new syndrome — "fear of obesity." Aside from the fact that I found it truly amazing that doctors can find the time and/or inclination for such in-depth research, I was also sure that Jane Fonda had something to do with it!

"Ahah," I shouted across the living room to my husband as I read the article. "That's what I have struck again!" My husband just looked up from his section of the newspaper, sighed, and then went back to reading.

I think he's learned over the years that reading newspapers and/or watching the news always makes me slightly crazy. I don't think he minds as much when I yell at the T.V., but when I scream at newspaper articles he seems to think that's a little strange.

What really has me worried is I wonder what Jane will be up to next. She's told us how to think, and now how to move and what to eat. Do you think the world is ready for "The Jane Fonda Workbook On The Correct Way To Sleep?"

Yawn.

Oral quarrel not available

This week's Oral Quarrel response will not be in this edition of the Farmington Observer. Due to mechanical problems we were unable to transcribe the results. We had asked our readers where they were the day John F. Kennedy was shot.

We regret the breakdown and hope that you call to reply to next week's Oral Quarrel question.

Polling can be tough business, Gallup says

POLLS HAVE become a way of life. They are conducted about attitudes toward politics, purchases, UFOs, sex habits, drug abuse and death.

Recently a Gallup poll results showed that 51 percent of Michigan voters disapproved of the way Gov. James J. Blanchard was doing his job. Only 35 percent gave him a favorable rating.

About the same time George Gallup Jr., head of the polling organization, talked to members of the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce.

Blanchard met with journalists about the time the poll results were released. Naturally, he tried to put

the unfavorable results in the best possible light.

HE SAID the poor rating was expected; most politicians who take strong action in early days in office are not popular in the beginning.

"Look at where Ronald Reagan was in the polls 10 months after taking office," he offered.

The governor said his popularity stems from the passing of a temporary increase in the state income tax but said it was bitter but necessary medicine. "Less than 90 days after taking office, my administration set a plan to slave off bankruptcy and turn the state around," he said.



Nick Sharkey

Blanchard predicts his job rating will climb in the months ahead. After reciting an impressive list of accomplishments in his 10 months, Blanchard said, "If we've had a shortcoming, it is in not telling people what we have done."

He has since begun what appears to be a campaign to turn around public opinion.

GALLUP AGREED with Blanchard's assessment that public opinion surveys reflect only opinions at the time of the polling and said views can change quickly.

The biggest mistake his organization made in its years of polling was the 1948 prediction that Tom Dewey would defeat President Harry Truman.

"We stopped polling a few days before the election," he said. "Opinions switched just before the voting. We learned our lesson."

Polls not only present problems for politicians but also for the pollster.

Many difficulties result from the design of the question, Gallup said.

CONSIDER the question that used to be asked, "Are you a housewife or do you work?"

Then there was the survey of businessmen who were asked, "Please indicate the number of employees broken down by sex." One smart aleck answered, "None, but some have been broken down by alcohol."

Gallup's father, George Sr., was founder of the firm.

After his 1948 debacle in the Truman-Dewey race, George Sr. was driving down a one-way street the wrong way.

He was stopped by a policeman who recognized his name from his driver's license. The cop said, "So, you're going the wrong way again."

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