

## POINTS OF VIEW

# Media bombardment of Somalia landing mistaken

There isn't a story on this planet worth the life of a soldier.

The yowling media dogs kind enough to leave a little room on the Mogadishu beach for a few thousand Marines to come ashore should be sentenced to life playing Shmup in had Three Stooges episodes, lucklessly threading through eternity on endless film loops.

I'm referring to last week's Circus Circus episode in Somalia, when U.S. Navy Seals, and, later, an advance team of U.S. Marines, tried to land quietly on the beaches for reconnaissance purposes.

Each team, thinking it was on a secret mission, went in under cover of darkness only to land and be welcomed by dozens of well-appointed journalists in freshly pressed Eddie Bauer official jungle garb, firing off flashes and firing up those hot little lights on top of TV cameras.

(It will derail my argument if I allow

for the fact that military intelligence somehow should have known their advance teams were landing in nests of journalists, so I'll save that for another time.)

Then, of course, came the main landing, well-publicized so far in advance that the criminals choking off the Mogadishu food lines had enough time to stroll into the hillsides with all their heavy artillery and wait out the invading forces.

Even National Public Radio led one Morning Edition broadcast with: "Marines land in Mogadishu — only shots fired were over the heads of journalists to back them off."

I perfectly understand the circumstances that lead to such overkill.

Had the media not been diligent in Vietnam, we wouldn't know about some of those minor annoyances like My Lai, Agent Orange and soldiers missing in action (then and now).

Had the media not been diligent in



PHILIP SHERMAN

its coverage of President Reagan's heroic, TV Western-style storming of Granada, we wouldn't have known that not only was there no real enemy available to fight, but that the rules of war don't include shooting at unarmed college students who were trying to study.

Had the media not been denied access to almost everything during the Persian Gulf war, we might know more than we do now. However, other than a

daily briefing in an air-conditioned tent in the middle of the nowhere, reporters in the gulf were kept on such a short leash that they couldn't report anything.

They were watching CNN, just like we were.

And that's the problem.

The media are making up for the shabby treatment they got at the hands of an over-protective Army in the Persian Gulf. This time, nobody's going to tell them what to do.

And they've swung too far in the wrong direction. Cover Operation Restore Hope? Certainly. Limit media access? Absolutely not — that's how untidy little details stay covered up. Implore journalists to use a little common sense? You bet.

You know things have gone too far when:

■ Marines are chugging across the beach at midnight in full gear and wiseguys in Banana Republic outfits

shouldering television cameras are keeping pace.

■ Houses that don't look like they could survive a moderate rain have been crowned with satellite dishes.

■ Journalists heap shame on the despicable, murderous, heavily armed, drugged-out-of-their-minds teenage thugs driving around Mogadishu in Jeeps with machine guns bolted to the roof, only to turn around and hire those same teens as bodyguards, guides and drivers.

The media have hurt themselves on this one. Next time — hopefully there won't be a next time, but we all know better — someone in the military will want to treat the journalists who covered Somalia as errant children, and it will be hard to argue with them.

Philip Sherman is the editor of the West Bloomfield/Lakes Eccentric and has a son who fought in the Persian Gulf war. He can be reached at 644-1100, Ext. 264.

# Santa's largess draws more attention to Satan than God

You're probably tired of reading the usual end-of-the-year diatribe about how commercialization has ruined Christmas.

OK, so how about this: Santa Claus is a benign agent of Satan.

Now, I'm nowhere near what you'd call a religious man, so this is no hard-core Bible-thumping polemic. But I enjoy drawing attention to irrational behavior. (I once referred to the fans of the Lake Fenton Blue Devils as devil worshippers.)

So let's examine the facts. The purpose of Christmas is allegedly to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

It's reasonable then to assume that anything drawing attention away from the "true" meaning of Christmas can easily benefit Satan.

Enter the eternally cherubic Santa Claus with his list of good and bad children (sounds like the IRS), bag of

toys, flying reindeer and non-union workforce of midgets.

Santa is allegedly prescient (how else could he know if your kids have been good or bad?) and possessed of magic powers that enable him to do the work of 10 billion men in one night. He can likewise make ordinary reindeer fly, slip into every house in the world through the chimney (despite his obesity) in one night and still have enough spare time to eat the milk and cookies you all leave out for him.

And I thought only God was capable of that sort of stuff.

There's only one answer that makes sense if you're religious. Santa Claus is a clever invention of Satan designed to undermine belief in God.

Granted, Santa is a happy fellow; he doesn't get drunk and bent up his wife

## RALPH ECHTINAW

or kill people or rape women or pass slower traffic on the right. His alleged

It's reasonable to assume that anything drawing attention away from the "true" meaning of Christmas can easily benefit Satan. Enter the eternally cherubic Santa Claus with his list of good and bad children (sounds like the IRS), bag of toys, flying reindeer and non-union workforce of midgets.

mission is one of altruism. He even gave Rudolph a job when no one else would hire him.

However, Santa Claus reputedly brings gifts (i.e., worldly possessions) by the ton to the Earth's children, while Jesus gives them nothing they can put their hands to. Who's a kid to trust? The friendly guy who gives away toys unconditionally, or the busybody who dictates how life should be lived?

At a time of year when little Christian boys and girls might be learning about the life and times of J.C., we've got them greedily contemplating just what sort of largess will be laid before them on Dec. 25 by that fat old man in a red suit.

No harm done, you might say, because we all learn eventually that Santa isn't real, but God and Jesus are.

But consider this: Many parents al-

low their kids to believe in not just Santa Claus and God, but the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy, too.

Then at a certain age the kids learn that three of the four are frauds, clever tricks played on them by adults.

Who's to blame the kids then if they also conclude (at least subconsciously) that God is likewise a bogus being conjured up by adults to keep them in line?

Like I said before, I don't subscribe to the Christian doctrine (or any other religion), but if I did, I wouldn't be shoving a lot of bovine excrement like Santa Claus down their throats.

Ralph Echtinaw is a county reporter for Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. You may leave a voice mail message for him by dialing 953-2112.

**We Never Charge Extra for Heavily Soiled Areas!**  
...Actually we charge less than our competition

<b>\$1200*</b>	Per Room
1 Room.....	\$29
2 Rooms.....	\$36
3 Rooms.....	\$44
4 Rooms.....	\$68
5 Rooms.....	\$80
6 Rooms.....	\$84
7 Rooms.....	\$91
8 Rooms.....	\$95

Whole House Special Up to 8 Rooms **\$95\***  
Only Less than \$12 per room (\$50 sq. ft. min. per room)

We can do this by using the most advanced cleaning equipment in the country. Our highly trained staff of professionals come directly to your home with our \$30,000 truck mounted system that extracts deeply embedded dirt like no other system and extends carpet life by as much as 50%.

**Upholstery Cleaning**  
We Specialize in Problem Fabrics  
• Cotton prints • Velvets  
• Mattress covers • Velours  
• Herculons • Corduroys  
• and more

**Modernistic**  
CARPET & UPHOLSTERY CLEANING  
589-1700

**MOVADO.**  
The Museum® Watch.

**\$395**  
THE CLASSIC  
MOVADO® MUSEUM® WATCH.

In the permanent collection of Museums around the world.  
Executed in 18 karat gold micro-mesh finish.  
Swiss-crafted. Quartz accurate. Water-resistant.

**Neiman Marcus**

**DMR**  
announces  
the return of the  
Assumable  
Mortgage.

They're back. Assumable conventional fixed-rate home mortgages are available now exclusively from DMR Financial Services, Inc. That means you can transfer your low assumable mortgage rate directly to the buyer when you are ready to sell your home. And this can make your home easier to sell — especially in a slow market. In addition, DMR assumable mortgages:

- Are hassle-free.
- Can save you money.
- Are attractive to future buyers.
- Cut down paperwork.
- Speed up loan processing.

To reach the DMR office in your area, call 1-800-DMR-1-LOAN.

**DMR**  
FINANCIAL SERVICES, INC.  
A Home Mortgage Leader for Nearly 50 Years

Mortgage must be used for primary residence only. FNMA (Fannie Mae) conventional loan limits apply. Fixed-rate 15, 20 and 30-year terms available. DMR reserves the right to limit the number of assumable rate mortgages offered.

Michigan Offices: Ann Arbor / East Lansing / Grand Rapids / Livonia / Southfield / Taylor / Warren