

Confessions of a Nightly News Junkie

By Bob Banov and Roger Ohlsen
February 14, 2012

There are always people who say they hate politics and never watch the news. At the opposite end of the spectrum are people who are obsessed with a particular party or who devour the news with a curious brand of gusto, as well as people who pay attention to what MSNBC's Ed Schultz has so appropriately called trash talk radio; its regulars, plunging themselves into someone else's distortion of the political scene.

Notwithstanding, there are a great many of us who have always been smart enough to realize that if we don't keep informed, we're the ones who will pay for it in the end, as well as members of our human tribe who are never happier or better entertained than when they are watching the nightly news.

If you've gone through such a period yourself, you know that as a nightly news junkie you can learn a lot about your country and even find that the nightly news addiction may temporarily turn you on. When it does, you find yourself watching the nightly news until all hours with vampire-like fascination. Still, somehow, during the last ten or twenty years, it's become tough for even the most savvy nightly news junkie to find out what he or she needs to know about the ongoing political circus in Washington without reading between one helluva lot of lines of plain old BS and PAC ads "paid for by you don't know who."

Maybe that's how the entrenched political establishment, the elite politically correct media outlets, and the darkest of media moguls guarantee themselves their best opportunity to own the national stage in the first place; that no matter how bland, open or narrow-minded, power-hungry or self-aggrandizing, they will be taken seriously. Because one result of their biased renditions of what's happening, even when presented as politically correct, is to perpetuate the endless spirals of brinkmanship that the rest of us are forced to endure.

Do folks in the media, specifically the most zealous partisan commentators, realize that when they hold forth, millions of us read between the lines, and that we do that regularly?

News commentators beware. Some of you need to realize that the art of figuring out what is really happening in the world of politics, and why it is happening, is far from impossible for the nightly news junkie, any more than those who are trying to stay well-informed for the sake of enlightened world interest.

In fact, if there are a substantial number of partisan media folk who realize this, you would never know it when you turn on the fifty inch plasma!

On the one hand, a healthy press is a good thing, while a press that seems to not recognize that many of its constituents are already aligned with them, or ahead of them insofar as insight and maturity goes, is doing itself a grave disservice. Overlooking this affects the eventual outcome of events, because broadcast formats affect public opinion and elections. In common terms, "talk" is a form of propaganda, whether we like it or not. Consider the difference between reporting statistics on new job growth, when you don't compare them to job losses the same month; on how many more people are employed now than they were when President Obama took office, or getting away with blaming the Democrats and the President for holding up approval of the Keystone Pipeline without filling in facts that the public would need to know to see what is happening and can only learn about by watching C-Span.

After all, most of the time, the facts are always already out there on Twitter, Facebook and many other intelligent Internet news sites, even when they are overlooked on the nightly news. So, given what it takes for us regular people to get to the bottom of the real issues facing our nation and its place in the world, there can be the unmistakable sense that the warring factions presenting nightly news intend to substantiate Canadian humorist Stephen Wright's assertion that "*42.7 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot.*"

On yet another hand, there are two sides to every issue. But maybe we should ask ourselves why we, the people, indulge just those members of our specie who thrive on being at war with their political opposites (journalists and followers alike) and let them

get away with it, instead of demanding by all available means including the Internet, that they once and for all look beyond what a mobile phone user would see as their kingdom before they open their mouths really wide.

Wouldn't doing so focus our national discourse on accomplishing the even-handed change that the majority of us believe in?

Wouldn't doing so maybe someday put the White House back in business and go a long way toward satisfying the confessed nightly news junkies among us at the same time? That would mean satisfying a lot of us whose addiction has more to do with frustration than tuning on the nightly news.