

# Enemy waters

*Public's view of journalism dismisses its ideals*



Nearly daily, as a testament to the dedication people have to rooting out evil in the world, I am posed a single, solitary question: "You're joining the media?"

The term *media* has come to replace *journalism* much like *ambulance-chaser* replaced *lawyer* and *quack* replaced *doctor*. It's a term lightly sprinkled with abuse and hinting at vile connotations.

After all, people tell me, the *media* killed Princess Diana, the *media* were responsible for the Lewinsky debacle, the *media* shoved the O.J. trial down the throats of unwilling victims.

Hell, you'd think it was the *media* who crucified Christ if the public had its way. Only if we had exclusive coverage, though.

As a strapping young lad, I found myself wandering into the field of *journalism* for many reasons, but the single moment that had me convinced traces back to one little movie.

It was about "Woodstein" and this little story they were working on. "Woodstein" was Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein (played by Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman), and the little story they were working on brought down President Nixon.

The movie was "All the President's Men." You should watch it sometime if you think journalists don't do anything worthwhile.

But the public has confused the *media* with *journalists*.

*Journalists* are concerned with bringing the facts to the people, a deeper search for the truth. The *media* merely want your attention so they can get paid.

And the number of people getting into *journalism* declines every year.

UNL, which has a very highly ranked journalism school, has seen enrollment in that school go down.

"I think, apparently, there is less interest in the profession," Daryl Frazell, associate professor and chairman of the news-editorial department told me. "As you notice, we don't have as much faculty."

Frazell has often struck me as a little intimidating, but after our discussion I think I've come to understand it's just a really good poker face.

The face of journalism, on the other hand, reveals a great deal about the changes of the past 10 years.

And the college has changed with

it, not entirely for the better: A smaller enrollment means fewer teachers and fewer classes offered.

But journalism is going through a paradigm shift, and the college does have to reflect that, re-evaluating the news-editorial department.

Magazines may be the print medium of the future. Or the Web could replace paper publications, eventually.

The school must prepare students to compete in the field of tomorrow. But it also has an obligation to produce responsible professionals.

Still, no school can do it all, and not even schools can be held accountable for a regrettable decline of journalistic values.

Shoddy journalism is the public's fault. In many cases, the public has stopped discriminating between good journalism and bad journalism.

This lack of support for good journalism means that any ol' schmuck can walk in and start work in the media. This means the field isn't drawing the dedicated people it once did.

"The thing that I'm finding that isn't as strong as it once was is the kind of zeal for this profession that once existed, based on the idea that journalists are out finding out as much as they can about the truth and publicizing it for the good of the society," Frazell told me.

"More frequently today, journalists appear to be seen by the public as intrusive, arrogant and rather useless — preying on society."

**DARYL FRAZELL**

chairman of the UNL news-editorial department

Over the past 10 years, I've heard the media described as too liberal, conservative, intrusive, timid, useless, outdated, unfocused, bull-headed, stubborn and foolish.

When the Lewinsky affair broke, the public saw the media as "giving it too much attention," such as one person told me. I retorted, "How should the press ignore the possible impeachment of the president? Just because we don't cover it won't make it go away."

People want to kill the messengers for the news they don't want to hear. The distrust of the media springs from people's distrust of politicians, the court system and the world in general.

Society is cynical, and they're blaming the wrong folk.

The truth hurts, babe, and there's no way around it. Good medicine stings the hardest, and this is a double-barrel blast of realism whiskey down your throat.

It's going to take efforts on the part of both the journalism school, the students and the public to get the focus of journalism back to where it needs to be, no matter what the forum.

You need to join the fight. Stick the needle in your vein. Tell people the truth. Write free or die. And tell 'em you want the truth, and that no price is too high. That'll get their attention.

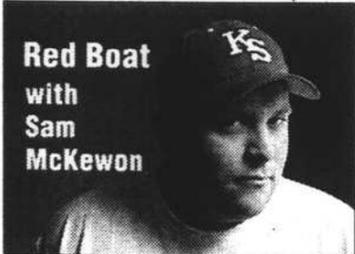
*The journalism guerrilla still encourages you to aid in the fight. All communiques should be sent to journalismwarfare@hotmail.com.*

*All pleas for mercy will be duly ignored.*

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# The sport and the fury

*Husker football's bells and whistles destroy joys of the game*



**Red Boat with Sam McKewon**

Did you know "beautiful people" is a legitimate phrase? You can actually look it up in the dictionary, and there it is: wealthy, fashionable people of the leisure class.

(There is no such phrase as "ugly people," at least according to Webster's, but there is "ugly duckling," which, of course, turns out to be beautiful.)

I'm one of the lucky and fortunate souls who gets to see those beautiful folks week in and week out strolling into Memorial Stadium, jet-setting their way up the skyboxes, which, during gameday, is off-limits to media dregs like me.

Since we all walk in the same west stadium entrance, I get to brush shoulders with some of these folks, folks I like to call the "breeze people" because they're always doing something with their hair because the breeze keeps messing it up. And to quote some lady right outside the entrance, "See those people? Those aren't clothes from Kmart they're wearing."

As I went up the elevator a second time that day, I stood with some of these fine people. Did you ever notice that beautiful people have screwed-up laughs? Where'd they get them? Not even laughs really, as they are punctuations of breath every few seconds. They're practiced laughs, of course, because they're so used to being pleased. Pleasure (plus leisure) is what it's all about.

There's no age breakdown, but I suspect this new class of skybox fellows are younger than the old crones who used to sit up there. I'm not sure

that's a good thing. Actually, I'm not sure that any of it is. Newer, younger, more expensive? Thanks, but when it comes to football, I'll take old, even older and cheap.

I'm not a sports purist. How could I be? I was born in 1977, well after Monday Night Football had started and just as college basketball was to hit the big time. But I respect simplicity. I respect the game. I respect sports unfiltered.

I wonder if that's happening at Memorial Stadium on Saturday. More and more, the game is becoming cluttered with noise pollution and the ever booming voice of the PA announcer. More beautiful, if you will, with a lot less substance.

There's the distraction they call HuskerVision, which no matter how much I might want it to disappear, never will. It manages to pollute all it comes in contact with.

Right before the game, did we get to know who won the coin toss? Hell no, because we had to "direct our attention to the field" as there was a ceremony to induct new members into the Nebraska Hall of Fame. Of course, there were many better times this could have been done, but what the hell, why not?

Then there was a commercial of sorts for Nebraska football, I think, where four guys played characters who stole Husker stuff and worshipped it before the game. It was about four minutes long. There went a couple thousand right down the drain.

"That's the stupidest thing I've ever seen," said one sportswriter. He was right.

It's always interesting to note that most photographers can't do much with the Husker players for feature portraits except take their picture somewhere in the stadium. Not too many fancy things we could do, even if we wanted to. But it's always good to see Willie Miller had time to run down to a swimming pool and do a skit for HuskerVision, which was

shown after he scored a touchdown Saturday.

The skit was called "Free Willy." HuskerVision must have forgotten how to spell Miller's first name.

All game long that thing never shuts up, updating us on Husker sports that finished play in the spring or running that commercial. Then came the "ask a Husker" session, where some baby-faced child asked quarterback Eric Crouch what to do when you had to go to the bathroom on the field. "Hold it in," Eric said. There goes another couple thousand.

Since when, I wonder, did sports become a non-stop listening barrage? Only baseball has retained some of its purity, although barely so. Basketball games represent rap concerts. Football games at Nebraska have become a continuous running commentary. I think the Huskers employ about 2,000 cheerleaders and dancers that skitter about the field week in and week out, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

And who can we thank for this diversionary affair? The same people who got their phrase in the dictionary.

The beauties love entertainment. They love having a full-stocked fridge of meats and cheeses and the occasional cocktail they've been told (nudge and wink) they're not supposed to have. They love having flowers delivered to their box.

They love having a piano player — a piano player! — at the game to soothe their emotions after a rough day of watching football. They love walking out to their Cadillac utility vehicles — there is such a thing now — and breaking out another round of meats and cheeses.

Beauties love a show. And since



SHAWN BALLARIN/DN

Athletic Director Bill Byrne got here, that's exactly what he's given them, for better or for worse.

I understand, now, why the old boosters didn't care for Byrne. They realized, as I do, that all of the pomp and circumstance was useless, pointless. They didn't want their ticket prices raised. What did they care about improvements? They liked the game just the way it was.

So did I. The games when I was younger — five times more intense. The Oklahoma games were howlers. The crowd got itself pumped up on its own, no help. They'd boo calls they thought were bad, but never really knew (there's freedom in uncertainty).

It was football, not a social event, not a display for the beautiful people to clap and enjoy, then sign up for another couple million. It's still football, but not nearly as much. There are too many people involved now; too many folks on the coattails of the Big Red Machine.

People scurry about with headsets on, coordinating things that need not be coordinated. They've made up jobs, hell, whole new departments,

just to help promote the team. Nebraska football is the sweetest of all pecan pies. Everybody wants a piece.

Friday night I went to a high school game. Wahoo vs. Fremont Bergan. Complete blowout. About a thousand fans, tiny little band at half-time, scratchy PA announcer.

It was perfect, though, because it was football. It was sports. I asked for no more and was given what I asked for. The game left me full; I didn't throw up because of all the extra sweets on the dessert tray.

At Nebraska, the course has been set already. You can't tear the skyboxes down, you can't un-install HuskerVision. Those people up in the skyboxes, it's their game now, and Kmart ain't invited.

Screw me, too. I'm in the minority here. Lord knows, the 5-year-old children like the games a lot more now. It's all well and good, as long as Nebraska keeps on winning. The Cornhuskers must do that.

Because those beautiful people, they get mighty bored, mighty fast. After all, they're used to getting entertained just about everywhere they go.

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