

# Blood in the Water

The Newsweek and Dan Rather situations are so similar it's eerie. Both got snookered because they bought scenarios that, if true, would have made President Bush look bad. Both ran with said scenarios. Both crashed and burned.

Whenever you want anything in this world too much, it is unlikely to happen. Desperately desiring a person, a job or a lifestyle just about ensures disaster. All of us must pursue our goals with our eyes wide open or else we will hit the rocks.

What is it about President Bush that causes such anger in the press that they are salivating for a story that will hurt him? Wait, I can answer that question. It's the same emotion that drove right-wingers crazy whenever they saw President Clinton acting as Commander-in-Chief: partisans just don't believe these guys deserve the title.

The left-wing print press has rallied around Newsweek, blaming the whole debacle on the Bush administration for its systematic "abuse" of prisoners in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay. If the abuse had not happened, the papers wailed, then Newsweek wouldn't be in this fix. From the Los Angeles Times to the Minneapolis Tribune to the Baltimore Sun to the Oregonian in Portland, the editorials were almost exactly the same. Talk about group-think!

To be fair, Newsweek Magazine is not even close to being the biggest Bush-basher in town. That publication is far less ideological than most of the leftwing newspapers. It also does excellent reporting on a regular basis. But its Achilles heel is the politically correct germ that infects most New York City-based media. Newsweek has a tendency to be very PC, and displays far more secular tendencies than traditional ones. It is Newsweek's prerogative to do that, but it is also risky

these days. Most Americans believe the press is unfair and unfit, and if you make a mistake that is perceived to be anti-American, you will pay a big price.

Ever since Woodward and Bernstein used an anonymous source (the so called "Deep Throat") to bring down the Nixon administration, the American press has been comfortable hiding behind phantom leakers who often hurt people for revenge. That has got to stop. Newsweek's anonymous source burned it, and what the magazine should do is put that person's picture on next week's cover. That would stop these cowardly weasels from spreading false stories.

But Newsweek will not do that, and now must rebuild its reputation. That's not going to be easy, as Dan Rather is finding out. Americans are jittery these days in the face of killer terrorists, and we are in no mood for bogus news reports that inflame our enemies. The left-wing media ignores that fact at its peril.

As with Dan Rather, I do not believe Newsweek knew what it put out there was false. It was duped. But that happened because the magazine was comfortable with a sensational item that would make the Bush administration look bad. As the old adage says: Be careful what you wish for.

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## **Don't Kid Around in the Classroom**

Think back to when you were six years old. What was your world like? Mine consisted of playing baseball, cowboys and Indians (I didn't know from Native Americans), and watching a goofy guy named Howdy Doody on TV. That filled much of my leisure

time.

In school, a glaring nun named Sister Lurana taught me to read 'Dick and Jane' stories. I had a book that said stuff like, "Look at Jane. See Jane run. Dick likes Jane." It really didn't matter to me whether Dick liked Jane or not—I wanted to climb a tree. But the nun insisted I learn to read the book, so I did.

Today, in Lexington, Massachusetts, six year-olds have another book. It is called "Who's In a Family?" This book features not only Dick and Jane but Jennifer and Lauren and Charles and Henry. The pages tell little kids about different kinds of families: mixed race, gay and lesbian, and even traditional family units. They are all discussed in very positive ways.

A father named David Parker took one look at the same sex part of the book and made an appointment to see the principal of the Estabrook Elementary School, a woman named Joni Jay. Mr. Parker asked Ms. Jay to inform him when the gay family stuff was going to be presented, because he felt his little son was too young to learn about homosexuality and he would keep him home that day. Sounds reasonable, right?

Not so fast.

Ms. Jay informed Mr. Parker that the family book had nothing to do with sexuality, and so he was not entitled under the Massachusetts sex-ed law to get a heads up. When Mr. Parker pointed out that same sex situations contain the word 'sex,' he was asked to leave the principal's office. He refused. So the Lexington police arrested him on trespassing charges.

See Dad get arrested. What does Jane think?

Very quietly all over the country, these kinds of culture war expositions are being played out in assorted public school systems. Under the banner of teaching tolerance, many school boards have okayed books that delve into social issues far

beyond the comprehension of most six-year-olds. I don't know about you, but I thought gay meant "happy" until I was eleven years old, and even then, I could not have cared less whether Lenny and Squiggy were a couple. I wanted to steal second and see monster movies, not understand what happens in Key West.

But today we have a massive mission of indoctrination going on in America, and millions of traditional parents don't like it. I am siding with that group. I don't want to tell my little kids about "alternative lifestyles" unless we're talking about the Munchkins in the "Wizard of Oz."

I think both Dick and Jane would agree that we should all back off and give the kids a break. Let's bring back childhood in America, okay? No more "diversity" books for kindergarteners. No more bare midriffs for nine-year-old girls. No more gold chains for boys going into third grade. Got it? Let's work together on this.

The world is a tough, nasty place and children will learn that soon enough. Shouldn't we make their first years fun years, free of political and social agendas? Why do some little kids these days look like Britney Spears and Kid Rock? What the deuce is wrong with us?

Summing up, Dick likes Jane and that's enough for six-year-olds. Larry and Bruce can wait a few years.

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## **Adieu, Dan Rather**

Did you see that the most trusted man in America, Walter Cronkite, disrespected Dan Rather by saying CBS News should have dumped him a long time ago? Wow, with an uncle like that, who needs extended families?

Cronkite's critique came 24 years too late. When I worked at CBS News in the early 80s, everybody knew that Walter resented Dan for pushing him out. ABC News wanted to hire Rather, and the only way CBS could keep him was to throw Cronkite out the door with a one million dollar a year stipend. Walter took the cash and shut up. Until now.

Welcome to the wonderful world of broadcast journalism, where I have toiled for nearly 30 years. It is a brutal arena, where the knives are sharp and the toughest Kevlar vest in the world will not protect you forever. A variety of CBS News people are now hammering Rather because his power is greatly diminished. And that's the way it is, with apologies to Mr. Cronkite.

So why should you care that a bunch of overpaid men and women dissect each other in the halls of network TV news buildings? Don't they all deserve what they're getting? I mean, nobody's forcing them to earn six figures assembling information.

The reason you might want to care is that TV news is now the main source of information for the Republic. Most Americans don't even watch it, but perceptions are formed by what the tube spews out. The late night comics, the bloggers, the cable guys (that's me) and the radio big mouths (me again) all pick up stuff from network news and pass it along to you. The problem is that the folks who set the agendas for TV news are not like you. In fact, many of them DON'T like you. You are groundlings, semi-barbarians who can't tell excellent sushi from the cheap stuff.

Thus, what matters to you is often ignored or slanted by the TV big shots. For example, radical Professor Ward Churchill, a traitor earning \$92,000 at the University of Colorado, was all but ignored by the network evening news broadcasts. Also, the Social Security debate is heavily weighted toward the Democratic position because, in the eyes of the network people, you're not smart enough to invest your own money. They need to protect you from yourself. Not that they really care,

but it does make the network overseers feel better knowing they can control what you can and can't do.

Regular folks don't often venture into network news employment, because it is a strange and frightening world. The competition and pressure is unrelenting and backstabbing rules the day. Only the calculated and tough survive. Most people simply don't want to live that way, leaving the network news locker rooms chock full of ambitious strivers.

Which brings us back to Walter Cronkite and Dan Rather. Both men are superstars, American icons. Both are millionaires many times over and can have pretty much anything they want.

They should be slapping each other on their respective backs. But we all now know that is not where the slaps are landing. Another defining moment in the world of network TV news.

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## Happy Birthday, Mike Wallace

Word for word, the best American broadcaster in history has to be Mike Wallace. The guy turns 87 in a few days and he's still hitting cleanup for CBS on Sunday night. Wallace must have some kind of Dorian Gray thing going on, because he looks 25 years younger than he is, and can still put your fanny on the canvas during an interview. Here's the absolute bottom line on Mike Wallace: If you see him in a restaurant, have what he's having.

For those of you without a calculator, Mike Wallace was around for Al Capone, Adolf Hitler, Hiroshima, the birth of television and all the chaos that followed. In the 1950's, he hosted a TV program called "Nightbeat" which featured confrontational interviews with the powerful and the pompous. My late father thought most TV guys were wimps and phonies but he liked Wallace. He thought the broadcaster had, well, manhood.

The New York Times reports that Mr. Wallace did his full complement of 20 stories this season on "60 Minutes." At his age, the man's public persona should be a likeness at Madame Tussaud's, not a slot in prime time. But, somehow, he continues to be the best interviewer in the business. A few weeks ago he brushed back steroid monster Jose Canseco to such

an extent that Canseco pretty much repudiated the key parts of his tell-all-book. Jose never knew what hit him. Wallace picked his pocket and left him for dead.

This whole Mike Wallace deal is downright spooky. Even Dick Clark has faltered, but Wallace just keeps humming along. When he interviewed me last fall, I had to be on guard at all times. Any inconsistency, any statement I couldn't back up, any bit of hesitation, the guy was on it. I kept repeating in my mind: "The man is 86 years old, I am much younger and stronger. The guy can't touch me." A fairy tale. Wallace controlled the interview.

To be honest, there are few television broadcasters that I respect. Most are politically correct robots driven by ego to do only what is best for them. In my 30 years of broadcasting, I have seen behind-the-scenes atrocities that would turn even Mike Wallace's hair gray. So my praise for Wallace does not come from a cheerleader.

Like most network news people, Mike Wallace is a liberal thinker, but he is not an ideologue. He's made some mistakes in his career, but everyone in the business has. Most of all, I believe Wallace is a fair man who does not go out of his way to hammer a person without cause. Maybe I'm wrong about this, but I've watched him closely for decades.

As everyone knows, the old school of broadcasters is closing down. Brokaw, Walters, Rather, Koppel, and maybe even Jennings are cutting back. In their place are some highly skilled people without much panache. Americans are incredibly distracted with all the new gadgets, and to get their attention, you almost have to break into their homes. The age of broadcast superstars is almost over. The age of "Who's that, again?" is just about here.

So, happy birthday, Mike Wallace; I hope you get some nice presents and a big cake. And, with all due respect, you know

what you can do with those 87 candles. Throw them at Morley Safer. You, sir, need just one candle, signifying your status in the broadcasting industry.