

Happy Birthday, Fox News

Big birthday this week—Fox News Channel is 13 years old. I was there on October 7, 1996, when the channel was launched with about 15 million subscribers. Now we have about 90 million. Back then, if the Factor received 50 emails a day, we were happy. Now we average about 2,000 electronic letters daily.

FNC is perhaps the biggest media success since the broadcast networks themselves were formed in the 1950s. Fox News is a billion-dollar enterprise that dominates cable news ratings and is consistently in the top five among all cable programs. Simply put, FNC is on fire, even after all these years.

There are two compelling questions on our birthday. First, why the big success? Second, why do many media people despise us?

The success part is twofold. There is no question that FNC leans to the right because it gives conservative voices a prominent place on the air. No other TV news operation does this. So, logically, conservative Americans tune in for long periods of time.

Also, Fox News is not boring! This, I believe, is the biggest reason for our success. Like us or not, we move things along. We have lively people on the air. We take chances and do things differently. In primetime, especially, Americans do not want dull programming. Many news programs simply recite the days events. That will not cut it anymore. You have to give viewers something unique and entertaining. FNC does.

That makes our competitors and the ideologues running many of the nation's newspapers furious. They don't like the traditionalism of Fox News and they seethe at our success. Thus, on any given day, you can see scathing personal attacks on FNC anchors. I mean, think about it... why the rage? Nobody is forced to watch Fox News. If you don't like Beck, Hannity, or O'Reilly, watch the Food Network.

The hysteria over Glenn Beck is a great example of why Fox News dominates. Here is a guy with an opinion. He has a television show. That's it. Glenn freely admits he's not a news guy in any sense. He's just a guy who loves his country and wants to talk about it.

Apparently, that is driving the intelligentsia insane. They can't stand a guy like Beck mouthing off. But why? Last time I looked, Glenn Beck held an American passport. So he's entitled to speak his mind. A big corporation is smart enough to pay him to do that, and millions watch. Isn't the USA a great country?

Obviously, I'm happy to be celebrating 13 years on Fox News. When I took the job, I was just looking to make a nice living and have a little fun. But now, The O'Reilly Factor is part of the American fabric, a broadcast that actually influences the debate in this country.

Way back in 1996, who knew?