

Will Hulk Hogan's Legal Victory Reshape the Gutter-Media?



I've mentioned in previous columns that as a kid – and even in spurts as an adult – I was a pretty big fan of professional wrestling. I grew up watching the WWF in the 1980s, and have always gotten a kick out of the in-ring action and the absurdly over-the-top personalities that

accompany it. Truth be told, some of my earlier writing projects actually played out on some wrestling pay-per-view events many years ago, but that's a story for another day.

Because of that history, I've paid a bit of attention to a news item that's gotten a good amount of press over the past few days: Hulk Hogan's successful sex-tape lawsuit against the website *Gawker*.

For those of you who have as little interest in entertainment news as I typically do, here's a quick recap of the case:

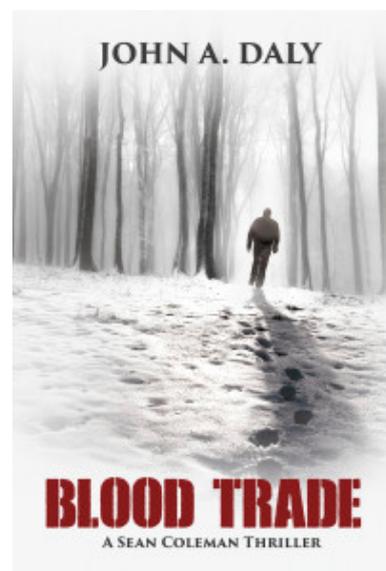
In 2012, *Gawker* received a DVD from an anonymous source showing Hogan having sex with his former best friend's wife. The friend – Bubba Clem (known to most people as radio shock-jock, "Bubba the Love Sponge") – had apparently encouraged a sexual encounter between Hogan and his wife in the past, and at some point during the court proceedings, admitted to being the one who had set up the camera that had filmed the tryst.

Even in the wild world of professional wrestling, this series of events would be considered weird. But individuals are free to be weird and do many weird, unscrupulous things in this

country. The problem from a legal standpoint was that both Hogan and Clem's wife claim not to have known that they had been filmed. Thus, after Gawker posted a portion of the video online without their permission, Hogan filed an invasion-of-privacy lawsuit against the company.

To the surprise of just about everyone, the jury ended up awarding Hogan \$145 million (\$40 million more than Hogan had asked for). That's a very serious amount – an amount that could well put Gawker out of business.

Though Gawker will certainly appeal the verdict, one has to wonder if this historic case will serve as any kind of deterrent against the gutter-media's profit-proven formula of humiliating celebrities, often at the expense of intimate moments in their private lives.



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Despite having little interest in entertainment reporting these days, the invasive inclinations of the profession is something I've long found unsettling. Whether it's

bloodthirsty members of the paparazzi chasing after a celebrity's family while they're on vacation, or something as obscene as posting the Hogan video online, it's difficult for even impassioned proponents of a free press to view such instances with any sense of esteem.

Of course, there are limits to the First Amendment in how it applies to individual rights. The jury in the Hogan/Gawker case identified one of those limits – I believe correctly. Will the stinging verdict change the way business is carried out by this branch of the media? I doubt it. There's too much money to be made, and that blame falls directly on our entertainment-obsessed culture.

At bare minimum, however, being body-slammed by Hulk Hogan in court might make the profession a bit gun-shy on such matters. I think that's a good thing.

Prioritizing Our Concerns

It seems to me that a lot of people are worrying about the wrong things these days. Instead of concentrating on an administration that aided and abetted in the murder of Ambassador Stevens and three of his colleagues in Libya; an IRS that gave up any semblance of political neutrality by targeting conservatives; and the singling out of news organizations and individuals for intimidation; they're going nuts over a computer program aimed at tracking down communications between jihadists.

Now, I grant I am an atypical case. For one thing, I rarely use a telephone. I don't like them. They're too intrusive. Unlike email, they carry on like babies yowling to be picked up. They demand your attention here and now, totally

unconcerned that you are otherwise occupied. The truth is that if it weren't for receptionists reminding me that I have a doctor's or dentist's appointment the next day, and those damn telemarketers, my phone wouldn't ring for months at a time.

For another thing, between my articles and my weekly webcast, I have no secrets when it comes to my political beliefs. What's more, I don't access porn, I don't do drugs and I'm not cheating on my wife, so what is it I'm supposed to be worried about? More to the point, what is it that the rest of you are so terrified that someone will find out about you?

The federal government, according to the Constitution, has very few actual responsibilities. But the main one is to protect this nation and its people. And in an electronic age, depriving ourselves of a way to possibly track down jihadists plotting another 9/11 or even a Boston massacre strikes me as more than a little foolhardy.

Why wouldn't we want to know if someone in Minneapolis or Fort Worth was making or receiving calls regularly from Yemen or Iran? Could there be an innocent reason for the calls? Sure. Some housewife could be calling her grandmother to get a family recipe for cookies. But I don't think it infringes on anyone's right to privacy to make sure that it's just cookies she's baking up.

The problem isn't with the surveillance. The trouble is that Obama, for political reasons, informed us that the war on terrorism was winding down a week or two before we found out that he has actually expanded surveillance in some quarters.

It also doesn't help that we have a president who lies like a rug and cares everything about image, nothing about substance. That was the reason why when Ambassador Stevens begged for additional security in Benghazi, Obama chose to reduce the little he had. How, after all, could Obama be seen acknowledging the danger from Al Qaeda at the same time he was

running for re-election as the man who had singlehandedly killed Osama bin Laden and eliminated the jihadist threat?

It doesn't help that Obama refuses to name our enemy. He even refuses to acknowledge that Major Nidal Hasan was committing an act of terrorism when he ran amok, shouting "Allah Akbar!" while shooting up Fort Hood. Instead, Obama labeled it workplace violence. The mystery is why he didn't do the same in the aftermath of the Benghazi massacre. After all, it was the ambassador's workplace.

A recent poll asked young people why they have such a high opinion of Obama even though his economic policies have kept the economy so weak that college grads often have the option of flipping burgers or staying home and walking the family pooch. Apparently, the young dullards give him high marks for trying. When I first heard that explanation, my head exploded. But upon further consideration, I realized it made perfect sense. This, after all, is a generation that grew up winning sports trophies and getting passing grades for merely showing up.

However, no sooner had my head recovered than I read that there are now 47,727,052 people collecting food stamps valued at \$132.86 a month. That adds up to about \$6.3 billion. Multiply that by 12 months and you wind up right around \$75 billion a year. Does anyone seriously believe that because of age or infirmity, the only thing keeping one out of every six Americans from starving to death are those other five strangers being forced to ante up to feed him?

Most of us understand that, as with ObamaCare and free cell phones, food stamps are simply one more way to radically transform freedom-loving Americans into a nation of parasites, worms and leeches, entirely dependent on the federal government to survive.

One would think that 205 years after Goethe wrote "Faust,"

people would finally wise up to the fact that when you bargain with Satan, you lose more than your dignity and self-respect. You lose your soul.

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Al Saxton of Hayfork, CA, is the lucky winner of the June drawing. A copy of "67 Conservatives You Should Meet Before You Die" is on its way.