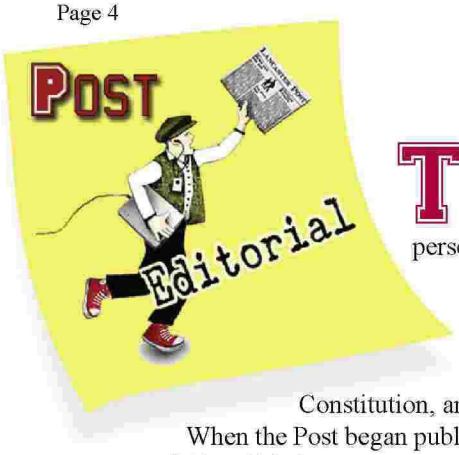

The First Amendment and the Lancaster Post

The publishers of the Post are two very different Americans.

One, Harper, is an eighth-generation Lancaster Countian, a married father of five. He is a graduate of Lancaster Bible College. And, as the many people who know him will affirm, is very much a people person. Harper is a registered Republican, with strong Libertarian leanings.

The other, Hart Nibbrig, a California born and raised pacifist, came to Lancaster County via New York City and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. A lifelong Democrat, Hart Nibbrig is decidedly private by nature.

But one thing the publishers have in common is an absolute allegiance to the United States Constitution, and particularly, as it concerns this newspaper, the First Amendment.

When the Post began publication, we believed we understood our Constitutional rights under the First Amendment, and operated our newspaper fully within its parameters.

The wholesale theft of the Post (captured on videotape) and one of our newspaper distribution boxes, and the brutal assault of one of us, and wrongful arrest of both, was intended to intimidate, punish, and scare the Post. Hart Nibbrig didn't even have a "No trespass" warning against him at all. This incident occurred across a state highway on a public road. Neither publisher was on Franklin & Marshall property that day.

It seemed exercising Constitutional rights upset Franklin & Marshall officials, and they took the Constitution into their own hands... and shredded it.

Make no mistake: It was scary. When the security forces of a private college can body slam a journalist on a public road, and arrest innocent men, you are darn right we are scared. Franklin & Marshall president John Fry viewed this incident from his front lawn across the public street.

Yet, we feel protected ultimately. The Constitution is pretty clear. It says the government "shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; ..."

That's pretty clear. Our freedom was abridged. And as long as those rules apply to every American, including Ron Harper, Jr. and Chris Hart Nibbrig, we're on firm Constitutional American soil.

You can steal it. You can beat us up for publishing it. But you will not silence us.

That is American Law.

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Contact the Post:
Email: Letters@LancasterPost.com
Phone: 717.431.8145 | Fax: 877.832.8760
Mail: 19 N. Mulberry Street, Lancaster PA 17603

The Lancaster Post

Publishers
Ronald P. Harper, Jr.
Christiaan A. Hart Nibbrig

Editor-in-Chief
Chris Hart Nibbrig

News Editor
Ron Harper, Jr.

Layout & Graphic Design
Limehat & Company

Staff Illustrator
Jordan W. Martin

Circulation/Advertising
Jesse Sweigart

Contributors
Melody Harper
Ron Harper, Sr.
Artie See

Mascot
Zeph

Landscaping Duties at F&M Expanded



Cartoon by Jordan W. Martin