Personal POST

by Chris Hart Nibbrig, *Editor-in-Chief, Lancaster Post*

Like many journalists, I realized at a young age that I wanted to be a writer of some kind. In my case, it began with a profile of one of my childhood heroes, O.J. Simpson, when I was in the eighth grade. I recall taking time to re-write the piece several times, and even included some graphics in a magazine-type layout. (O.J.'s fall was especially devastating to me. For the record: In my view, he killed two people, and got away with it.)

Later, in college at the University of California at Santa Cruz, a professor read a paper I wrote to the class, and after the class, another student approached me and asked if I wanted to write for one of the school's papers. I enthusiastically accepted, and found my personal calling. Re-reading some of those early articles, the writing was stilted and self-important, but I knew that journalism was for me.

After one failed, and one successful newspaper launch that I edited and published in Northern California, I applied to and was accepted at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. For me, the was one of the best experiences of my life. After publishing a bi-weekly newspaper (very similar to the *Post*), I was accustomed to deadlines and editorial and feature writing, and found the entire curriculum at Columbia fascinating. I had the opportunity of covering the United Nations, among other interesting assignments. Plus, I was surrounded by some of the brightest bulbs anywhere.

One of the courses the entire class (1994) was required to take was a First Amendment course at the law school. It was during my studies in this class that I truly realized how fundamentally important the First Amendment was to my and all Americans' lives. To that point, I admit, I was rather critical of my own country, pointing out its flaws, overlooking its many virtues. But closely studying the First Amendment, and the cases that tested it, persuaded me that this was placed first in line of the Bill of Rights for a reason, and that the United States of America was definitely the greatest country in the world because of the guaranteed rights of the Constitution. It was great not because of its might, but for its explicit respect for individual freedoms. Freedom. That word, to me, more than any other, embodies the essence of this country.

The Founders of this country in this visionary Constitutional guarantee realized that the public's right to peaceably assemble, choose their religion, and freely publish were a sacred key to a free society, and they extended to all Americans. Until recently, I felt those rights were inviolable.

The recent experiences of my co-Publisher, Ron Harper, Jr. and myself have more than harmed our business; they have made me question the respect of others -- some in very powerful positions -- to the United States Constitution.

It is a fact that people have systematically stolen the *Lancaster Post*. It is a fact that Turkey Hill Minit Marts canceled our distribution contract without explanation, despite the popularity of this paper. It is a fact that the private security force of Franklin & Marshall -- witnessed and sanctioned by the college's president -- beat up my partner and illegally arrested us both. It is a fact that our newspaper boxes have been repeatedly vandalized.

This doesn't feel, as the United States Constitution promises, like the "Freedom of the Press" to me.

I am not a native of Lancaster County, and may eventually return to my home state of California. But my partner, Ron, whose wonderful family has been here going on nine generations, will undoubtedly remain. I chose to live in this beautiful and unique place, and have met some of the finest people I have ever known in Lancaster County. But I have also encountered some of the most corrupt people -- again, many in prominent offices -- I could imagine here.

What I am trying to say to our readers is this: The efforts to deny our First Amendment rights will eventually get around to you if they are not stopped now.

The Lancaster Post is your -- the public's -- newspaper. It works because we have looked and listened to you, our readers. We are supported by our advertisers. We will continue to publish as long as we can sustain it as a business. We give the paper away for free because we understand that a free and entertaining paper is likely to get read, and it is.

But there is a bottom line, like with every business. Our advertisers are the ones sustaining the *Post*, and if you would like to continue to read this paper, we ask that you pay them a visit. Let them know you saw their ad in the *Post*, and if you like what they offer -- and all of the businesses advertising with us are terrific -- buy from them. My family has personally purchased a home from Bonnie C. Miller of Cardinal Realty Services. I couldn't recommend a business more than I do Bonnie's.

The Mountville Inn has some of the friendliest folks you could want to meet. You will find exquisite jewelry at Park Hill Jewelry. Long's Construction has an excellent reputation and is run by good, honest people. Rick Atwater's Furniture that Fits has unique and affordable furniture, and is one of my favorite shops locally. Go through the paper, look at the ads. If you need something to offer, give them a chance at the sale.

If you need beer by the case or keg, stop by Wheatland Distributors. We are fans of the owner-run R.X. Hearing Aid Services. And don't get me started on the Trailer Deli. Stop by there on Monday or Thursday and there is a good chance you'll see either me or Ron inhaling one of Wayne's absolutely delicious pot roast sandwiches.

So please remember that it takes funding to print this paper each week, and unless our advertisers are supported from you, our readers, then we can't afford to keep this bad boy going.

Thank you for reading our paper.



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