

COMMENTARY

Thursday, April 3, 2003

Honest war coverage under fire

Addicts to the never-ending war coverage on NBC and its cable sister stations lost out on an honest insider's view Monday when the cocky peacock network fired journalist Peter Arnett for daring to have an opinion.

Arnett, a former correspondent for CNN during the 1991 Gulf War and Pulitzer Prize winner for his reporting in Vietnam for The Associated Press, was first defended by NBC on Sunday when news broke he gave an impromptu interview on Iraqi television regarding the success of U.S. war plans. The original NBC reaction was that the interview was granted as a "professional courtesy" and that Arnett's remarks were "analytical in nature."

But by Monday morning, after a firestorm of mostly Bush supporters vocalized their disgust with Arnett, all hell had broken loose. Sweating bullets, NBC News President Neal Shapiro reneged original comments and sacked the news veteran.

NBC started airing Arnett's reports when other network reporters left Baghdad for safety reasons. He was originally an employee of the MSNBC show "National Geographic Explorer," which also axed him Monday.

Arnett's comments weren't really so outlandish and his opinions weren't anything anti-war protesters haven't been circulating for days. In answering questions, he

said that the U.S. is delaying the battle "and rewriting the war plan. The first war plan has failed because of Iraqi resistance."

"Clearly, the American war plans misjudged the determination of the Iraqi forces," Arnett said.

Well, duh. Few anticipated plainclothes Iraqis would pretend to surrender and then ambush soldiers. And while war planners have claimed all along the war would be difficult, Americans didn't anticipate battles in An Nasiriyah and Basra would be so bloody — especially after all of the good news being filtered through during the first week of the "shock and awe" air raids.

But without solid journalists like Arnett in the field, Americans would never know what really went on to begin with. We would have to rely on information passing through the sieve of government public relations and "carefully phrased" statements by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the like, who may not be trained in the wiles of fair and balanced reporting.

Surely, Arnett would have never announced his personal views on the war in one of his news segments because it would taint his credibility. But in this instance on Iraqi television he was "off the clock," a phrase in the journalism world that some editors — and apparently NBC executives — don't particularly believe in.

Journalists face a dilemma determining when they can put down their pen and act like a regular citizen. As humans, reporters will inherently have an opinion even if they try and suppress it.

In this vein, Arnett should be commended for admitting he has a

WELL ... IN MY OPINION...



Peter Utsey Emerald

view instead of pretending he did not, further tainting his own reporting with disillusionment. Arnett was fired because he was taking questions for the enemy more than for the content of his answers.

In the end, the Arnett debacle will have a chilling effect on reporters in the field who may take his fate to heart. Journalists in Iraq

will have to tip-toe around the editing process to make sure they don't offend the Bush administration or question its war tactics.

Peter Arnett was one of the last Western television reporters remaining in Baghdad providing coverage for a U.S. network and had a working relationship with Iraqi sources that no other reporter could boast.

Perhaps for canned news junkies, Arnett was too lovey-dovey with the Iraqis to be objective, but outraged popular opinion had its way with him. Honest war coverage may never be the same.

Contact the columnist at julielauderbaugh@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

CORRECTION

Wednesday's ASUO Student Senate election story about candidates Colin Andries, Beth Overgard, Michael Sherman and Chris Sittner misidentified the race they are in.

These candidates are running for Seat 3, which is a Programs Finance Committee seat.

The Emerald regrets the error.

Everyone should show respect at walk-out on war

Guest commentary

The undersigned are members of Students for Peace. As members of this student organization, our anti-war sentiment cannot be denied. The belief expressed by President George W. Bush, that the war is in some way going to serve the cause of peace, is one that we all categorically reject. We have organized a rally for today to express our personal opposition to the Bush regime and our feelings on whatever we may think are related issues — classism, sexism, racism, feminism, environmentalism, political radicalism, humanism, objectivism, etc.

Though opinions within the organization vary, the undersigned would like to invite persons with intelligent objections to any agenda taken up by the group or by individual members on the issues of activism, information, or the war itself, to attend the rally and

make informed selections as to what they believe. Debate and doubt — be it personal or social — are an essential part of reaching certainty about many things. Among these, informed political positions are very prominent and vital areas.

Students for Peace, as an organization, has no more objection to pro-war demonstrators shouting, "Kill, kill, kill" (as has been shouted) than it has to anti-war demonstrators endorsing radical agendas unaffiliated with Students for Peace (though it is important to point out that a large percentage of dedicated activists do possess radical leanings, and are often more informed about these issues than many of the political moderates who dismiss them).

People with objections should make their opinions known in a non-insulting manner, and in a way that acknowledges their presence at a rally that was or-

ganized by anti-war demonstrators. Believe it or not, there's work that goes into these things. Disrespect is an important issue.

The walk-out will be taking place at 2:30 p.m. Those who have class at that time should leave it and congregate at the EMU Amphitheater. There will be music, slam poets, speakers and people from every walk of life at the rally. Anyone from any walk is welcome.

At 4 p.m., a Bikes Not Bombs ride and a march will be going to the Federal Building to join a larger rally that will be forming there. Community activism is an important activity, whether you intend to make specific changes or are just going on record as agreeing with whatever sane power finally comes into existence.

Bob Rademacher, Nathaniel N-T, Alexander Gonzales, Bethany Ayres and one co-signer signed on behalf of Students for Peace.

Letters to the editor

Allow non-smokers some breathing room

I have some concerns about smoking on campus. I am not a smoker, and I chose this way of life for various reasons, mainly for the sake of my health. I believe that people have their own choice in what they want to do, but when it affects me and my health, I am not so open-minded.

Every day on campus someone walks ahead of me smoking, and the smoke comes back and hits me in the face. When I leave a building I can always expect to breathe smoke. This always makes my eyes itch and turn red; sometimes it makes me cough and affects my

breathing. The most common reaction is to get a headache.

I know that some smokers are more conscience while they are smoking. They really try not to affect others around them and I thank them, but I am writing to others not so compliant. Sometimes we do not realize the effects of our actions, so maybe people will try to make an effort not to walk while smoking and to smoke in better locations around campus, away from doors.

Perhaps a solution would be to have the University make designated smoking spots protected from the weather. That way, they are able to smoke on campus, between classes or work, and the people who chose to not smoke will no longer have to deal with smoke in their face. I am only asking for smokers to be respectful of those around them.

Sarah Day
 sophomore
 sociology

Shively-Bae ticket brings 'breadth of experience'

The Christa Shively-Greg Bae ticket for ASUO Executive has the most experience and most innovative, thorough platform. They have a breadth of experience from such organizations as the Multicultural Center, Erb Memorial Union Board, Associated Students Presidential Advisory Committee, Delta Sigma Phi and more. Moreover, they are genuine, intelligent, kind, hard-working students dedicated to bettering the lives of students.

This ticket will fight for need-based grants, cut severely in recent state legislative sessions. They will fight to keep tuition down and fee increases reasonable, while helping the student

body better understand the incidental fee process. They will also advance the cause of a leadership center where students can hone their skills and learn how to get involved. And they will continue to push for a city housing code. Perhaps most importantly, Christa and Greg will collaborate with student organizations and the University to ensure that international students' rights are not infringed in these trying times.

I fully endorse Christa and Greg for ASUO Executive and hope you join me in voting for them April 9-11 on DuckWeb. Nobody is more qualified, and nobody cares more. Check out their Web site at <http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~gbae>.

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 senior
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 ASUO student senator