

Franklin wronged himself; The Print did not

Since the arrest of Associated Student Government President Tony Franklin on May 16, many people have been discussing the matter at great length. There are those who say he has been wronged by the very students who elected him because of their lack of support, or that this newspaper unfairly judged Franklin before he had an opportunity for his day in court. It has been said that covering this event is actually a personal matter for the staff of **The Clackamas Print**. We strongly disagree.

This paper did not at any time say Franklin was guilty of anything other than what a court of law already convicted him of in 1988 and 1989. We wrote about the allegations Franklin is currently jailed for, and raised questions of whether he, because of the negative publicity that the college has received due to the coverage of the event by other newspapers, is the best person to represent the students at Clackamas.

Of course we felt an obligation to inform the students and staff of Franklin's convictions, parole and probation. How could we not after **The Oregonian** and **The Enterprise Courier** had run stories before we ever went to print? It is called responsible reporting of information that has an impact on this college. It is also called **FAIR COMMENT** of a public figure, something every journalist learns about.

There are several people who knew

about Franklin's criminal history, including people on the staff of this newspaper, and felt no need to bring that information to light before now. It was only after he was arrested again that we felt the time was right to share this highly emotional issue with our readers.

Certainly nobody can dispute the fact that Franklin is not fulfilling his job as president as he sits in jail pending yet another hearing. Instead, the rest of ASG is being forced to fill in for Franklin, and some have taken the position of defending him. It is support that Franklin will need to get through the rough times that lay ahead.

In the court room of Judge Charles A. Sams last Friday, Franklin was found in willful violation of his probation on three different counts. As the term "willful" implies, the court decided Franklin had a choice in whether he would follow the terms of his probation. He chose not to, and he was caught.

According to court testimony, Franklin admitted to his probation officer that he was using methamphetamine and marijuana. The attorney representing Franklin said his client was only kidding when he said he was on drugs. Maybe it wasn't a joking matter. The judge didn't think it was. He said he believed Franklin was using those drugs.

Some people are saying that a drug test

should have been taken to clear the matter up once and for all. Franklin's probation officer didn't feel the test was necessary since there was already an admission of drug use. According to deputies at the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office, at any time the attorney representing Franklin could have requested, and been granted, a drug test for his client. Certainly, if his attorney thought Franklin had not been using illegal substances, he would have made such a request.

One issue that was brought up in that same courtroom on Friday was an allegation that wasn't written by Franklin's probation officer, but very well could have been: it deals with alcohol consumption.

Do you remember the ASG sponsored Alcohol Awareness Week in April? What about the display of two students consuming alcohol on campus as policemen observed and asked the students to perform field sobriety tests? Franklin was one of the students involved. He volunteered for the job, if you recall. He was guilty then of violating the term of his parole and probation that expressly states he is to consume no alcohol while still on parole and probation. A number of students witnessed Franklin participate in the event. Nobody forced him to volunteer....

And while we are on the topic of other violations, whether they be written or not,

there is yet another one that comes to mind.

All officers and senators in ASG are given a copy of a policy called the Behavior Code. It is in each of their notebooks and an ASG advisor goes over it with all of the members so they understand what is expected of them. The applications for officers and senators all come with a list of "key job duties." Listed at the bottom of these "duties" is the sentence "Shall obey the behavior code." Number six of the behavior code states "Illegal use, possession, or distribution of drugs is not allowed anywhere." A court of law just found that Franklin was using illegal substances; what will it take for ASG to take action on the matter?

Our job as student journalists is to accurately and responsibly report the news, to ask questions instead of just going along with things and to make people think. By asking questions about Franklin we have been accused of being too personal. If we were complacent and didn't inform students and staff at this college of the news that affects us, we would not be living up to our responsibilities. You obviously don't have to agree with the positions we take, but if our sharing of opinions makes you think, one of our goals has been met.

Editor's note:

This editorial reflects the opinion of The Clackamas Print staff.

From the Editor

Sometimes the truth hurts

Writing for a newspaper is an interesting experience. If there is one thing I would have to say that I have learned over the past three years writing for **The Clackamas Print**, it is that people read what they want to read.

The most recent account I have of this is the news story written about the Franklin case and how people interpret things to mean what they want them to mean. Objectivity is a strange thing. I don't actually believe there is such a thing as objectivity. I do, however, believe in fairness.

I think that people form opinions once they are informed about something. We all have different values and those values direct the opinions we form when hearing something for the first time. Because we form first opinions, we cannot be objective. This applies to everything in life. On a smaller scale this would apply to the newspaper.

Many people know the recent events surrounding the Franklin story. This is an emotional issue to begin with, but the emotions only make the lack of objectivity

worse. We covered the accusations against Franklin in a fair manner. We ran a factual story on the front page. That news story was written from the police report and court records and contained the same information as the stories running in the **Enterprise Courier** and **The Oregonian**.

The Opinion page also treated this situation with fairness. We ran a total of four opinions: two on one side of the issue and two on the other side of the issue. We did not have to run the opposing views because they were submitted after deadline, but in light of the fact that this is a big story, we ran them to show all sides and to give different perspectives.

I believe that we have been fair in our coverage of the Franklin story. There are some who will say we haven't. That's their opinion and I value everyone's opinion even if it isn't the same as mine. The question is to the ones who think we were unfair: Do you value the opinion of others even when it conflicts with your own opinion?

-Angela Wilson
Editor in Chief

Letters to the Editor

'Scandal seeking media injurious'

To all concerned;
5-23-91

In the light of recent events, some disturbing realities have been exposed. I just read the editorial and frankly, I'm shocked and dismayed to see the paper's power misused to justify the bias of those who would consider image over integrity. M.L.K. Day was celebrated and extolled by this paper, but apparently not deeply understood by those who so loudly praised it.

"... That my children shall one day be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Image and prejudice over surface appearances are the basis for the scathing slam initiated by those who, like political figures have done for years, slide away from the responsibility to support an individual who was close to them and instead seek to wield the power of persecution on a man who, because of his many accomplished activities, has been the source of the front page highlights three weeks in a row.

If anything is obvious now, it is that in spite of whether you call it a sickness or an evil crime to have past drug problems, the evidence clearly shows Mr. Franklin to be healed or rehabilitated, again, your choice of words.

As our celebrities have increasingly pointed out, scandal-seeking media is not just injurious and demeaned, but sets an improper example of human relationships.

To see an academic institutions only media sink to the level of the Nat. Enquirer and Star, instead of looking to solve problems with in society which are not being dealt with by any agency in a successful way,..... really makes me ashamed.

Perhaps if the editor is so eager to betray our college president, (elected by a majority of folks concerned enough to vote, two years running.) We should be just as eager to express our support and appreciation for a man who has performed with the competence of Mr. Franklin, thus paving the way for others who are trying to re-enter our society and be of worth to our communities. Maybe a recall of the editor is in order, replacing him/her with one who can question and evaluate the whole problem. Perhaps our system of justice are partly at fault here in our home, and our small-minded editorial staff has deprived us of the chance to address a problem with solution-seeking in mind.

Dare to think freely, and be real.

E. Murphy

