

All journalism is inherently biased

ON LIBERTY

Devin Patton



America has a rich legacy of lively public discourse, and, along with it, a history of robust and wide-ranging journalism. Growing from the humble roots of early publications such as “Letters from a Farmer” (1767), the development of technology and the 24-hour news cycle has led to a massive shift in our culture’s expectations of, and participation in, what we collectively call “the media.” Lately, we have seen an all-out war declared on “misinformation,” with the federal government leading the charge. We must remember, however, that there is great value in opening ourselves up to the challenge of entertaining ideas that differ from our own. One misconception many Americans have is that our free press ought to be unbiased and committed solely to reporting “the facts.” We argue about which

news outlets are legitimate, and then argue about the legitimacy of the facts themselves, turning to benevolent “watchdogs” like PolitiFact, Snopes.com, and FactCheck.org to uncover the “unbiased truth.”

What’s worse, we see news outlets like NPR, CNN, and the Associated Press attempting to distinguish themselves by claiming to be impartial and wholeheartedly committed to reporting the truth. The reality is that editorial discretion and the natural limitations placed on news outlets preclude unbiased reporting. Not every available story can be published and so, inevitably, some stories will be left out — this is called selection bias. This is also to say nothing of the implicit biases each of us hold as human beings; are we so naïve to think reporters and writers are capable of transcending their own unconscious biases? It is intellectually dishonest for news outlets to claim they are completely objective and neutral. We criticize institutions and media outlets that openly disclose their biases, but they deserve respect for being the only ones honest enough to disclose their partiality. Additionally, this concept of “unbiased” news reporting is a relatively modern one. American journalism arose from

a desire to distribute ideas and opinions that would engage and challenge the minds of readers, and many of these early publications were openly biased in their interpretation of the events of the time. Newspapers and other politically charged publications invigorated the colonial rebellion, and many modern historians claim that without newspapers there would have been no American Revolution at all. The Bill of Rights speaks clearly in defense of the sacredness of such freedom of expression, and protection of this liberty made it possible for the free press to develop into one of America’s strongest watchdogs over government actions and protectors of individual rights.

Interestingly, we are now seeing the media’s most vital function being corroded. Instead of the press playing the role of watchdog on behalf of the American citizens, the federal government is now acting as the gatekeeper of truth via its use of “fact checking” and by demanding the removal of “misinformation” from the public discourse. We must acknowledge that the definition of “misinformation” is arbitrary, and these actions set a very concerning precedent. It would be wise for those who stand in support of the current administration to consider how their views

would change if a conservative administration had the option to utilize this excessive power to silence opposition under the guise of “fact checking.” We cannot support the silencing of voices, no matter how wrong we think they are.

Aristotle said, “It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.” In this culture plagued by tribalism, identity politics, “echo chambers” and deep-seated fear about discussing ideas that challenge our own, it is worth remembering that it is our own small minds and fragile egos that support silencing “misinformation.” Yes, there is objective truth, but isn’t it ironic that in a post-modern, “post-truth” world some of us have the audacity to claim we know the “facts” without acknowledging the other side of the story? We ought to consider the value of broadening our consciousness by entertaining the thoughts of those with whom we disagree, and stop relying on the government or the media to provide us a perfectly curated newsfeed that reinforces our beliefs.

Devin Patton is a third-generation Wallowa County native whose pastimes include the study of ag economics, history and free thought.

Retirement planning is not financial rocket science

LAYIN’ IT ON THE LINE

Steve Kerby



Is your goal managing or eliminating risk? The question facing most people planning for retirement is where to invest or deposit your funds. The stock market has generally performed well when looking at long-term results, but volatility can be a dangerous part of that decision. Safe and secure choices such as bank products may not offer enough return. I am just like you — I have faced these decisions with confusion and with difficulty. I finally found an avenue that for me seems to make a lot of sense. I decided to let an insurance company hold my funds that were designated as safe and secure,

funds that must be there at retirement time.

I bought a fixed indexed annuity for several reasons. The product has no market exposure, it has a guaranteed minimum return, it has the opportunity to gain above the guarantees, and every year, the gain is locked into the guarantee side. The feature that attracted me most though was income. At any time I can convert my funds to income that I can not ever outlive.

If your goal is eliminating risk and providing guaranteed retirement income for your lifetime and the life of your spouse, I can show you how to customize a portion of your current portfolio with strategies that will give you the peace of mind needed to enjoy your retirement years. Using combinations of income techniques offered in guaranteed financial products that complement each other, you may be able to achieve your specific goal. This is not financial rocket science from some unproven investment theory.

I’m talking about innovative insurance companies with products that offer the

value of safety and provide versatility. Even in the toughest times of economic downturn faced by American and global concerns, these types of companies have enjoyed steady growth and stability while perpetuating their financial strength and covering all contractual obligations. Their focus is on the long-term disciplined and conservative strategy that has instilled trust and confidence in those that depend on them to do what’s right.

This approach offers:

- Principal protection.
- No exposure to market risk.
- Accumulation potential.
- Guaranteed retirement income.
- The potential for retirement income to increase.

In the past 15 years, we have had two disastrous market drops that could have been hazardous to creating a sustainable retirement income, wouldn’t now be the best time to take a portion of your portfolio to optimize your income plan. Consider creating a plan to meet your needed retire-

ment income goals. You can do what I did, I decided to trust an insurance company and deposit my important funds in a fixed indexed annuity. Guaranteed funds and guaranteed income.

My advice is to allocate a portion of your retirement nest egg to a worry-free financial product that creates the opportunity to benefit when the markets perform well, locking in annual gains that can’t be lost and steady during years of decline. This certainly creates a solid foundation for your retirement planning.

As an avid outdoorsman, Joseph and the Wallowa area have been a big part of Steve Kerby’s life since 1964. Steve is a Syndicated Columnist member, a national organization committed to a fully transparent approach to money management. With over 50 years in the financial services industry, Steve specializes and focuses on each individual client’s goals. Visit stevekerby.retirevillage.com or call 503-936-3535 for more.

America needs a beach vacation

OTHER VIEWS

Tom Purcell



August has long been the best month of the year to escape the daily grind and forget our worries.

It’s been a great month to hit the beach or take a long road trip and forget, for just a little while, the inanities of our increasingly angry and divided politics.

But not anymore. The COVID bug, which for 18 months has decimated our economy and disrupted our daily lives, is making a “delta variant” comeback.

Just like the bad guy Jason in the “Friday the 13th” movies, the coronavirus simply will not die, keeping all of us in a state of worry, agitation and division. Our separation into warring political tribes is being both driven and highlighted by the doggone variant, which WebMD.com reports is “now the dominant strain in the U.S.”

The delta variant is a COVID-19 mutation that isn’t as deadly as the original bug, but it spreads much more quickly. “The strain has mutations on the spike protein that make it easier for it to infect human cells,” says WebMD.com. “That means people may be more contagious if they contract the virus and more easily spread it to others.” WebMD further reports that people who have not been vaccinated are more likely to be infected by this strain — that U.S. communities with low vaccination rates have seen a jump in cases.

But, in these wildly divisive times, the COVID vaccine has become another political football. Crazy conspiracy theories abound. A study by the YouGuv.com marketing company reports the Insider found that 20% of Americans believe that it is “definitely true” or “probably true” that there is a microchip implanted in the COVID-19 vaccines.

Wacky conspiracy theories are not the public’s only source of misinformation.

Our government leaders and public health experts have also sown distrust with their “evolving” advice on masks, off-and-on-again lockdowns and the danger to school kids.

New York Times columnist Brett Stephens is critical of misinformation presented by immunologist Dr. Anthony Fauci pertaining to herd immunity and other COVID truths.

“The impact of this misinformation on everyday life has been immense ...” Stephens argued. “The credibility of public-health experts depends on the understanding that the job of informing the

public means offering the whole truth, uncertainties included, rather than offering Noble Lies in the service of whatever they think the public needs to hear.”

As a result of this failure to communicate clearly and straightforwardly, 93 million Americans who are eligible to get the vaccine have not gotten it, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.

A lot of people say they are refusing to get the vaccine for reasons that have nothing to do with their politics or microchip implants, as the New York Times reports.

The top reasons, says the Times, were that they were worried about the vaccine’s side effects. They are waiting to see if it is safe and didn’t trust vaccines or the government.

Alas, gone are the days when a tragic event or crisis brings us together.

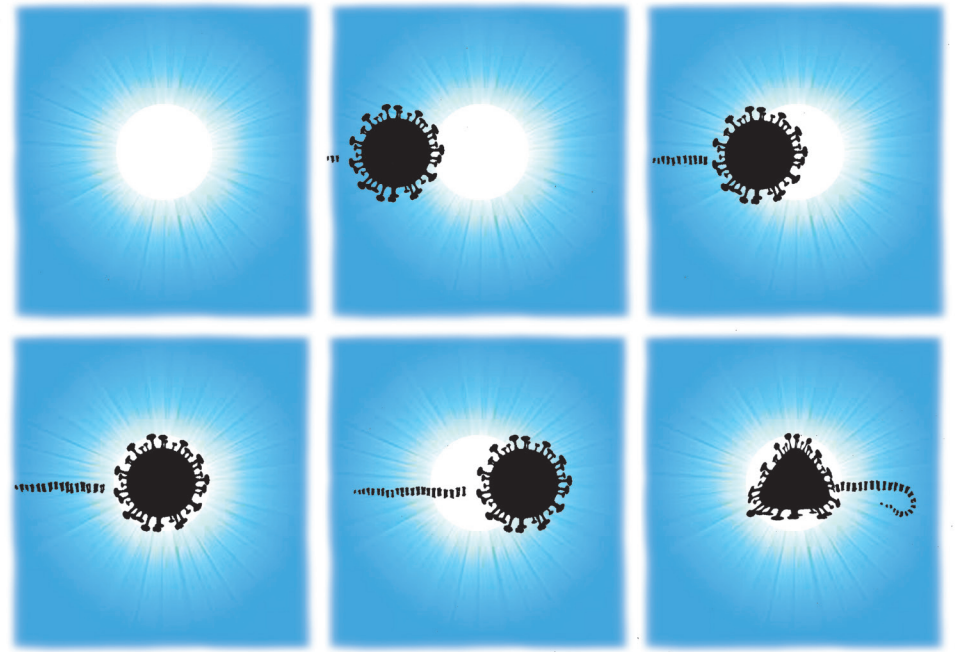
Here to stay, I worry, is the incredible political polarization with which we now respond to all of our problems.

What our country could use this August is a long week relaxing at the beach, where we can try to restore our ability to calmly and intelligently work out our challenges.

Tom Purcell is an author and humor columnist for the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review. Email him at Tom@TomPurcell.com.

BillDay FloridaPolitics.com

ECLIPSE



Taking time to think about time

OTHER VIEWS

Peter Funt



We’ve often heard that time is money, but in these stressed-out days it’s more than that. Time is increasingly a key to well-being, creatively and emotionally.

My sister, Juliet, has taken the time — a lot of it in recent years — to study the topic and has written a book with her insight and advice, called “A Minute to Think.”

The problem is real. She cites a Gallup poll showing that 23% of workers feel burnt out more often than not, with another 44% experiencing it occasionally. Deloitte, the global professional services company, found that two-thirds of today’s employees feel “overwhelmed” and 80% of men would like to work fewer hours.

In Japan, Microsoft conducted a study and found that a four-day work week resulted in 40% more productivity and, as a bonus, overhead dropped by nearly 25%.

Juliet’s conclusion: “Less can be the new more if we give it a chance.” Research shows that by putting more

pauses in our day — “white space,” as Juliet refers to these breaks — thinking improves. I was surprised to read that MRI scans during a person’s quiet pauses show complex activity in the default neural network of the brain — activity that has been linked to insight, introspection, memory and creativity.

As with every form of self-improvement — diet, exercise and such — improving our time management is no easy task.

Moreover, no matter how comprehensive, no book can provide guaranteed instructions for saving ourselves by saving time. But with compelling anecdotes and eye-opening data, “A Minute to Think” could help clear mental clutter.

Juliet suggests addressing four questions. Is there anything I can let go of? Where is “good enough,” good enough? What do I truly need to know? What deserves my attention?

I’ve heard it said that if you want something done you should ask a busy person. The point, of course, isn’t that such people have more time than the rest of us, but that they know how to make better use of their time.

Back in 1929 Coca-Cola came up with the tag line, “The pause that refreshes.” Today we’ve learned to eschew sugary drinks, but we could all benefit from a refreshing pause.

Peter Funt is a nationally syndicated columnist.