

## The value of silence

BEN THORNE  
features editor



Tom Friedman

"Sometimes the story comes from the noise. And sometimes it comes from the silence." So began Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Tom Friedman's lecture Wednesday night, and the following hour was certainly loud with the hush of an enthralled audience.

Friedman came to Guilford as the first-ever distinguished professor of the arts, humanities and public affairs to deliver a lecture on the Middle East. Since 1979 he has reported news from that part of the world, and his distinguished career has seen the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the OPEC oil crisis and the end of the cold war. Since January 1995 he has been the foreign affairs columnist of the *New York Times*.

After an insightful lecture covering such broad topics as politics, religious extremists and the growing use of the internet for current affairs, Friedman met with a much smaller group the following morning in Ragsdale for a breakfast with the McNemars, the Guilfordian staff, and a few other professors and students. Here he offered more personal reflections about his life as a journalist.

"I've always been fascinated with current events," explained Friedman. "What journalism gives me is a front-row seat to see them and reflect on them. Every day is different. How many people can say that about their job?"

There have still been some times, however, when Friedman has questioned the wisdom of his career choice.

"Once I was in Beirut, in the summer of '82, when my apartment blew up. An Israeli bomber had just hit a factory. Then the plane came back for another bombing run. As that was happening, an Arab came out of the factory carrying an AK-47 in one hand and a wounded friend in the other and attempted to hi-jack my car. I managed to talk him into joining me and I drove to the hospital, but I kept thinking 'What am I doing here?' But sometimes you do things out of instinct."

That same instinct has made Friedman an internationally known and respected journalist, teaching him to look for stories not just in what people say, but in what remains unsaid.

The silence told the whole story for me, explained Friedman. Which provides a powerful lesson for all of us, as we try to understand the events unfolding around us: to take the time to notice the subtler messages instead of being deafened by often meaningless noise.

## Me and the Libertarians: or a report on radical, right wing fashion

CORY BIRDWHISTELL  
staff writer

Laurie studies education at Agnes Scott, an all-women's college outside of Atlanta. She reminds me of Shelby in Steel Magnolias. She thinks Janet Reno is such an evil bitch.

While planning my wardrobe for the 1996 Libertarian Party Convention this pasty summer, I never fathomed stumbling upon Laurie.

Floral dresses.  
Shoes with bows.

I imagined women Libertarians would be female equivalents of the scary uni-browed Anarchists who annoyed me throughout high school.

All black. Russian hats.  
Or even worse, they'd be Blossoms.  
Bandannas. Overall.

Blossom, a Libertarian from the mountains of Kentucky, drives around in her black pick-up truck with a "Fuck the Government" bumper sticker. She once accused me, in front of a very large and amused audience, of "destroying the capitalistic instincts of our children."

Behind Blossom, high school enemy number two: Caleb Orion Brown.

Now one of my best friends. Brilliant child. George Stephanopolous of the Libertarian Party.

Fatigues. Calf-high military boots.  
Caleb met me at the Capital Hill Hyatt on the Fourth of July. He had on a light blue oxford shirt, blue and white seersucker suit, red bow tie, and beige Adidas hemp shoes. He was in his element.

As the communications director for Jo Jorgenson, Caleb had insider access. And adoration from 15-year-old Californian anti-government chickadees.

Contempo Casuals head to toe.  
My warped sense of humor made me infiltrate the Libertarian Party Convention.

Caleb had invited me and stupid liberal democrat that I am, I couldn't stop laughing. Delicious irony forced me to go.

So there I was in D.C., reveling in all my giggling deceitfulness.

For three days I hung out with members of Arizona's Viper militia. I almost got on MTV News. I dodged C-Span cameras. I was bartender for a wild party for Jorgenson.

I kept to a black jeans, black t-shirt routine.

I snuck in to a \$250/plate dinner for Harry Browne,

the presidential nominee.

Black silk dress.

My fellow Libertarians couldn't believe it. I was obviously faking it.

They were most serious.

Adorable Jeremy graduated from Deerfield Academy and started MIT this fall. He's young and naive and damn he hates Janet Reno, too.

Stephen is a political science major at American University in D.C. He looks like satan, uses every drug known to man, and he wants Janet Reno dead.

Tim is a certifiable lunatic from Kansas who dreams of bombing the Justice Department.

Caleb loves these people. They are his people.

I just laughed.

Last year *USA Today* ran a front-page story about how Libertarians had overtaken college campuses. Concern about Social Security and Internet censorship, they claimed, had made the LP the party of choice among Gen-X'ers.

But alas, the story was as much of a fake as I was.

The chairman of the party, in a gloriously inebriated state, boasted about that article to me. The Libertarian reporter had struggled to find even the three students he had quoted. He then filled in the gaps with the chairman's own rhetoric.

Libertarians can make their movement of a few seem like a movement of the many.

These radicals of the far, far right are masters of media, organization, and political activism. Last week, for example, they completed their goal of getting Harry Browne on the ballot on all fifty states, surpassing the efforts of Ross Perot's Reform Party.

This party of red-suspended capitalists and tie-died hippies works to end taxes, the military, drug and gun control, Social Security, and the public school system. Its members trash the ATF and share UN and Illuminati conspiracy theories.

Unlike the leader of our two major parties, they refuse to compromise on their principles for the sake of popularity.

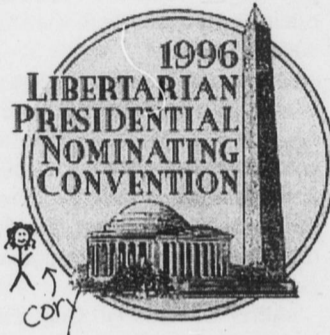
The first scene of Ayn Rand's *The Fountainhead* focuses on Howard Roark's dive from a cliff into a freezing lake below. After shooting across the lake, Roark "pulled his clothes on:

old denim trousers, sandals, a shirt with short sleeves and most of the buttons missing."

Rand's hero lives for himself, uncaring of other's opinions of him. From ballet-slipped Southern women to militia-garbed Idaho teens, Libertarians take the same attitude.

I left the convention wearing a Clinton-Gore t-shirt and proclaiming my support for welfare as we know it.

My new Libertarian friends just laughed.



*My warped sense of humor made me infiltrate the Libertarian Party Convention... Delicious irony forced me to go.*

### The Friends of the Library's Annual Book and Record Sale

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