

Media Addiction: Heed Our Cry For Help

When you call us "media people," you have no idea just how right you are.

I am a hopeless media junkie. Married one, too. We're not news addicts. We do news for a living. And for the sake of our sanity and our home life, we have a rule against talking shop after we cross the Holden Beach Bridge. We have another one against watching CNN or C-Span except under the most extraordinary circumstances.

But the other kinds of media are taking control of our lives.

There are stacks of magazines beside Eric's favorite chair and my place on the couch—just about every nationally distributed periodical having to do with sailing, motorcycling, surfing and cooking. Every room in the house has a pile of books in progress or that were recently bought, completed or referred to.

There's a long line of compact discs beside the stereo—everything from the Grateful Dead to Theloniou Monk to Schubert. A half-dozen videocassettes are always atop one of the two televisions, both with VCRs, and there's a rack in the back room holding four of five dozen other tapes, from "To Have And Have Not" to "Repo Man."

There's a Walkman in my desk drawer. There's a book on tape—Sir John Gielgud reading *Brideshead*

Lynn Carlson



Revisited—in my car's cassette deck. There's a pile of catalogs on the floorboard. (Subscribing to all those magazines gets you on a lot of mailing lists.)

There's a tower of old newspapers in the guest room closet that'll be there until some winter Saturday when I shame Eric into taking them to the recycling center. There are headphones for the bedroom TV and the stereo so we can both indulge ourselves without disturbing each other.

It's an insidious thing, this media dependence. There we were, going blissfully through life, ignorant of our growing roles as human sponges. When people are coming to visit, we hide our addiction by sliding piles of printed materials to the far side of the bed so the clutter can't be seen by guests on their way to the powder room.

We continue to acquire media despite the obvious negative consequences—a home that lacks the ele-

gant order of those who possess the self-control to only receive books as gifts and not buy them by the armload at yard sales and thrift shops.

I sometimes lose control on weekends and go on a multi-media bender, attempting to read a book while watching a movie and trying out a recipe I clipped from one of my magazines.

I only pray that we get ourselves under control before we reach end-stage media addiction, whose primary symptom is attempting to read a novel while driving on an interstate highway and listening to talk radio. The other big warning sign is buying a tiny cordless television to take to the beach with you. We've all seen and scrupulously avoided these pathetic souls. Even I can't imagine being one.

You can work or be friends with a media addict for years and not have an inkling of the sickness within. Take us, for example. A scant three months ago you'd never have been able to tell if you'd come to visit us. We had only moved into the house a couple of months earlier, so we hadn't had time to accumulate too much media.

Well, not media that you could see. But had you sneaked the key to the storage room, the sad reality would have been like a slap in the face. There you'd have found dozens and dozens of boxes, jam-

med with books, packed with 25 years worth of record albums, and overflowing with audiocassettes recorded long ago and never labeled.

Of course, our disease prevents us from emptying those boxes and placing their contents on the shelves we promised ourselves we'd put up this winter. Denial is so much easier when the evidence of reality is sealed and stowed.

July Logic: "When it gets too cold to go to the beach, and on rainy weekends, we'll just spend every Saturday going through all this stuff, and we'll give away what we don't want anymore. We'll put up shelves in the spare room and organize all these books in library fashion. I'm really starting to worry that all those crickets I've seen down there might get into those boxes."

January Rationalization: "For crying out loud, we haven't had a weekend since Thanksgiving to just take it easy. There's no shopping to do, no company to entertain, no cakes to bake, and it's supposed to rain all weekend. Let's just pile up, cook a pot of soup, watch some old movies, listen to some music and catch up on our reading. Crickets aren't dormant this time of year, aren't they?"

Sad, isn't it? It makes me wonder what people do who don't suffer from this problem. They probably have great shelves.



The red-bellied woodpecker is just one of several winter woodpeckers in our area.

Winter Woodpeckers

BY BILL FAVER

Winter is a great time to look for the woodpeckers. With the bare tree limbs they are easier to see, and the lack of leaves to muffle sounds makes them easier to hear. This should make them easier to find as we look for the several species of woodpeckers in our area.

The smaller woodpeckers, the seven-inch-long downy and the larger hairy, are look-alikes except for size. Both have patterns of checkered black and white with a white back. The males have a small red patch at the back of the head. The hairy has a much larger black bill. Both birds feed primarily on insect larvae, ants, eggs, and small insects they gather from beneath the bark of trees, using the pointed bill and the chisel shaped tongue to aid in feeding.

One of our most familiar woodpeckers is the red-bellied woodpecker with its zebra back and red cap. This 9-to-10½-inch woodpecker is our only woodpecker with a zebra back. The whole crown of the male is red, but the females show red only on the nape. Young birds may not have red, but will have a brown head and a zebra back.

The red-headed woodpecker is a formal-looking bird dressed in black and white. Just smaller than the red-bellied, this woodpecker has a black back and black wings with a large white patch. Breast and underparts are white and the entire head is red.

In immature birds the red head will be brown or dusky.

Our largest winter woodpecker is the pileated, a spectacular bird as large as a crow. It is our only woodpecker with a red crest, now that the ivory-billed is considered extinct. This is the bird we hear drumming in the woods on a winter day and we can tell their nesting holes by the oblong shapes and large size. They often fly across open areas in an undulating flight and irregular wingbeats.

Other winter woodpeckers include the flicker and the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. Flickers are fairly common in our area, but the red-cockaded is found only at a few specialized sites where they dig holes in large pines, allowing the resin to ooze out and coat the opening to their nests.

Winter woodpeckers are some of our most interesting birds. They are with us all year and bear names that are descriptive and fascinating. Some woodpeckers are quiet and secretive, but most let their presence be known by loud calls and drumming on dead trees and limbs. All are productive insect eaters. Watch for the winter woodpeckers as you drive along our road; or as you take a winter walk in the woods. They are fun to watch and now is the time to learn them.



FAVER

County Literacy Council Now A United Way Member

BY SUSAN USHER

The Brunswick County Literacy Council (BCLC) has been named a member agency of the Cape Fear Area United Way, Inc.

United Way, a three-county non-profit agency, helps provide resources for delivering human services in Brunswick, New Hanover and Pender counties through a combined annual fundraising campaign.

This year's campaign raised \$1.76 million, falling short of its \$2 million goal, said spokesman Carol Deakin.

The Brunswick County Literacy Council, which is located in Supply, is one of 23 member agencies to receive allocations for 1993 and one of three new members named this year. Others are the Cape Fear Literacy Council and Food Bank of Coastal Carolina. After receiving small service development grants for the past three years, as a member agency BCLC will receive an allocation of \$11,000 that will be applied to operating expenses.

"It's going to mean that our volunteers will be more effective because this will enable them to concentrate more on what we're about, which is tutoring our students," said Gladys Wagenseil, coordinator for the council.

The council has more than 100 volunteers involved in various aspects of the program, which offers one-on-one tutoring in basic skills such as reading and writing.

Its designation brings to three the number of member agencies actually based in Brunswick County, though numerous others offer services to county residents. Also based

in Brunswick County are the Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center, which coordinates food and clothing distribution and emergency shelter services; \$31,740; and Hope Harbor Home, the local service center for victims of domestic violence, \$22,000.

Designated pledges totaling \$47,292 were distributed to 14 local and state agencies, including \$354 to Prescription for Excellence, a local foundation that promotes personal and leadership development. Another \$22,060 was distributed in the form of service development grants. The information and referral program operated by United Way received \$47,000 and its senior AIDES program, \$18,800, while partner agencies received \$67,645.

Allocations to member agencies totaled \$1,184,284 and were as follows in addition to the above: American Red Cross, \$144,969; Boy Scouts of America, \$64,839; Brigade Boys Club, \$93,000; Cape Fear Literacy Council, \$10,000; Cape Fear Substance Abuse Center, \$52,600; Child Development Center, \$43,760; Community Boys' Club, \$89,628; Domestic Violence Shelter & Services, \$20,000; Eldershaus, Inc., \$35,000; Family Services of the Lower Cape Fear, \$139,500; Food Bank of Coastal Carolina, \$10,000; Girl Scout Council, \$30,000; Girls Inc., \$100,000; Hope Harbor Home, \$22,000; Keys, Inc., \$22,920; Lower Cape Fear Hospice, \$38,000; The Salvation Army, \$75,900; Senior Citizens' Services of Pender, \$21,600; Stepping Stone Manor/Pathway House, \$26,148; Wilmington Family YMCA, \$50,000; and YWCA of Wilmington, \$51,680.

MORE LETTERS

Story Was 'Feminist Propaganda Festival'

To the editor:

Once again the use of a public position for public service and its use as a propaganda platform have been mixed together. And thusly Eric Carlson gives us another feminist propaganda festival.

Karen Acton, the new counselor at the Hope Harbor Home shelter for battered and abused women, presumes not only to help alleviate the suffering of family tragedy but to announce the cause, those bestial men who seek only to have power and control over women.

She adds the same scary, unproven, repetitious statistical rattlings feminists have been spouting for years without defining their terms of sexual abuse and assault; the cry that most crimes go unreported because of fear and failure of a victim's word against that of the attacker, etc., etc.

Really! But reporters are supposed to ask questions.

How, if at all, does Ms Acton factor in the feminist drive in the past few decades to take control over men? Or the monopoly of columnar space by women in newspapers and magazines advising women how to control and manipulate men? Or the illustrated psychological devices used to control men presented in the TV soap operas? Or the fact that the word "henpecked" hit the dictionaries long before the political emancipation of women?

Or the disrespect for men the feminist movement engenders? Or the feminist-dominated school systems where the lag in brain development of boys is 1½ years behind that of girls and the teachers can no longer compensate for the difference so that girls do not acquire an attitude of contempt toward boys? Or the destructive potential of the feminist movement?

Or the geometric growth of the single-parent "family," where boys get inferior parental guidance from incompetent mothers, and after some years of the feminist-dominated schools are unemployable, get no respect and don't matter much because their girlfriends can collect from the government and repeat the

cycle of irresponsibility?

The most loving of marriage unions break down eventually when there is no respect, and to point fingers of guilt at men in such a one-sided and narrow fashion as the feminists have done and then control the "analyses" of the end results of some tragedies is plainly dishonest.

Do reporters ever ask the men about these things?

One would hope Ms Acton can function effectively as a counselor without indulging in the broadcast of all the propaganda.

Karl E. Brandt
Shalotte

Shooting, Fire Unrelated

To the editor:

In the Jan. 7 edition of the *Beacon* you ran a front page story headlined "Shooting Victim Loses Mobile Home In Fire." Could you please explain to me what the shooting had to do with the fire and why it was considered necessary to print all this so-called information on the shooting incident again and very little on the fire?

I feel that if you wanted to run another story on the shooting incident, then maybe you should have at least asked a few questions first and presented both sides and not just taken everything at face value.

This is the third story I have read on this incident that is full of lies, half truths and omissions, and I cannot just sit silently by any longer.

Yes, it is true that my husband pleaded guilty to this crime. He has never tried to deny or run from the consequences of his actions but he has never said that it happened as Mr. Evans claims. Twice you have printed that Mr. Hughes pulled up, jumped out, and yelled, "y'all are going to die tonight" at these three men. Yet there was a sworn statement from one of these men that he didn't say that.

Not once has there ever been any mention of the other gun they found at the scene of the crime, a gun that Mr. Hughes told them Mr. Evans had. There was no mention of the fact that they were all up there drinking that night. There was only

the tale of "some man," one they didn't know, pulling up, jumping out, yelling "y'all are going to die tonight," and opening fire. I guess this makes better reading for the general public.

You went on to say that "things were looking better" as Mr. Evans had recently moved in with a friend, Jane Riley. Is this the same Jane Evans who in the Sept. 4 edition of the *Star News* is supposed to be his wife of eight years and who had to quit her job and seek welfare in order to take care of him?

It does seem strange to me that a man could leave his home and move in with a friend when he is still living where, to my knowledge, he always has.

So as you see, there are always two sides to every story. And yes, both my husband and I deeply regret what has happened. But only Mr. Evans knows in his heart if part of the blame is his.

Hazel Hughes
Ash

Good Year For Literacy

To the editor:

As a retired educator and currently a literacy volunteer, I was especially interested in reading your informative "Year '92 In Review" article on education which appeared recently. I would like to add to it just a few of the contributions that were made in this area by the Brunswick County Literacy Council.

During 1992, BCLC held six tutor training workshops and certified 57 volunteers as Laubach tutors. Free, confidential, one-on-one instruction was provided to 90 people (10 of these were in the high school) who wanted to improve their basic reading and writing skills.

In addition, 13 volunteers visited the county's Head Start centers each week, reading to the children and enriching the preschool experiences for these four-year-olds. Two of

these volunteers started a special music and art enrichment program.

A group of 15 volunteers gave individualized attention to children in one of our elementary schools, and this activity resulted in the award of a state grant to the school to extend this partnership with the literacy council volunteers.

During the year, more than 30 public awareness talks were given to civic, church and business groups in an effort to inform the community about the seriousness of the literacy problem which exists in Brunswick County and to encourage everyone to participate in the solution.

BCLC looks forward to a continuation of these activities in which volunteers are mobilized to supplement the hard work being done by Head Start, the public schools, and the community college to ensure that all Brunswick County residents receive the education needed to bring us successfully into the 21st century.

Joseph Giamalva
Calabash

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Giamalva is chairman of the Brunswick County Literacy Council.)

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