

Mary was, unfortunately, unethical and not truthful and she refused to adhere to the ethical practices that a person working for a newspaper should. Her argument was that she wasn't a professional journalist, but I argue that any person whose works ends up in a printed publication – especially the most prominent in a town – should be held to the same ethical standards as the news staff.

A columnist should always be truthful and accurate. A columnist should be forthcoming in how they came by information. A columnist should be honest when asked questions by the public and not ignore those questions or change the subject. The point is to be transparent with the public you're communicating with and to show that what you're doing is honest and up front.

If Mary didn't have the ability to do these things, it was the responsibility of the Press editors to ensure that the content of Mary's columns were factually accurate, honest and ethical. When Mary secretly tape recorded Christie Wood, she should have been forthcoming about it, as should have the editors. And after that, the editors should have done a much more aggressive and thorough review of Mary's work with the newspaper.

I appreciate the Mary was a dissenting voice, but she went about it in an inappropriate way with no appreciate for what it means to have the power of the pen and ink barrel behind her.

I hope that the Press can find a columnist that still has that dissenting voice, one that is reasonable and engages the community and civic leaders in discussion but also one that has integrity, is open and honest and very ethical.

More than likely, however, that person will not be those things because that's not what the newspaper seeks. They seek someone who will push their partisan line in any way that will move Hagadone's perspective forward.

And if they can find someone like that, they're already tainted anyway due to the mistrust the citizens of Coeur d'Alene have toward the publication and its columnists at this point. And Mary contributed to that perception.