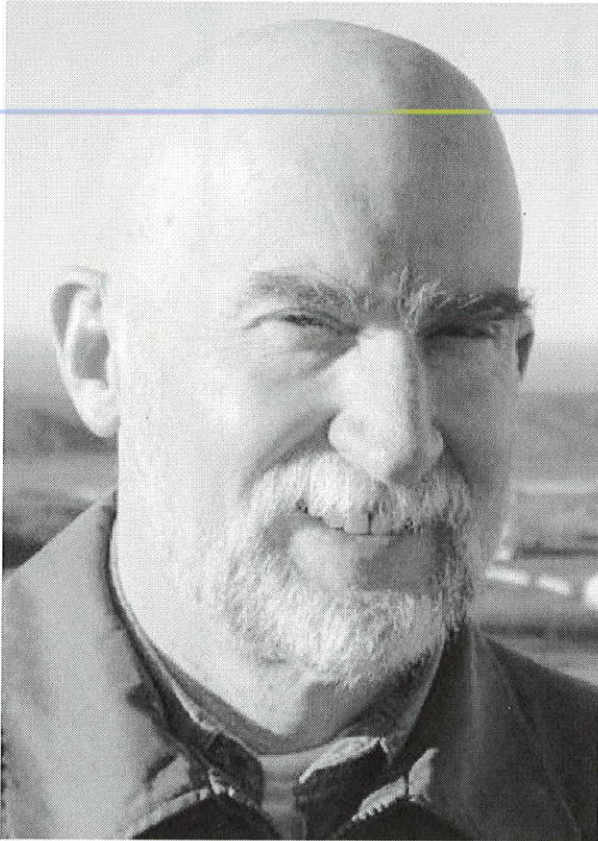


Media distrust Rather high



Michael Costello

Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune

Here's something I'll bet you didn't know. More than 70 percent of all U.S. combat deaths in Afghanistan have been suffered since President Barack Obama took office. But when was the last time that you heard a somber-faced evening news anchor memorialize a "grim milestone?" Not since Jan. 20, 2009.

That should give you a sense of why, according to a Gallup poll released Sept. 20, 60 percent of Americans no longer trust the news media. That level of distrust was the highest ever recorded in the history of the Gallup Poll. The NFL replacement referees might poll higher in Green Bay, Wis.

And if anyone cares to understand the roots of the public's distrust, one needs look no further than the week of exceptionally dishonest reporting prior to the poll's release.

Let's review what passed for fair, balanced and unbiased journalism during the week that followed the Sept. 11 assassination of our Libyan ambassador.

First of all, the Obama administration blamed the killing on overly exuberant Libyan film critics. Then they claimed that the ambassador had been provided with extra security. And finally Obama claimed that his administration had received "no actionable intelligence" that any terrorist attack was imminent.

As it turns out, each and every one of those assertions was a lie. Not an error, a lie. There was no demonstration. The assassination was a coordinated attack by up to 100 heavily armed men. The ambassador had been provided with no security whatsoever. And the Libyan government had warned the Obama administration of an impending attack three full days before it happened.

And yet, even as Obama's Middle Eastern foreign policy literally went up in flames and he was repeatedly exposed as a liar, the predominant news narrative focused on Mitt Romney. The mainstream news media insisted that Romney had his worst week of the presidential campaign and that it may have cost him the election.

Romney's sin was that he was right about everything. The previous week was the inevitable consequence of Obama's feeble foreign policy of apology and appeasement. It was absolutely reprehensible for the president of the United States of America and the United States secretary of state to grovel before the Muslim world and apologize for our constitutional liberties. And those apologies, far from appeasing Muslims, resulted in more aggressive demands that the United States criminalize criticism of Islam.

Damn the facts! Full speed ahead with the narrative!

Journalism has grown so corrupt that it celebrates its corruption. Just have a look at who Washington State University's School of Journalism honored Thursday for lifetime achievement - Dan Rather.

Instead of chronicling his whole career, let's look at the bookends. Rather made his name in 1963 when he stole a colleague's scoop and claimed credit for first reporting that President John F. Kennedy had died. Rather followed that up with a claim that Dallas schoolchildren had cheered when they learned that the president was dead. That slander became part of the mythology surrounding the Kennedy assassination and is still repeated to this day.

His career ended after he aired the dishonest claim that he had memos proving that President George W. Bush was frequently AWOL from his air national guard unit. He had been told by experts that the memos were frauds, but he ignored their warnings.

Once released for public examination, it was quickly proved that the memos were indeed forgeries, but Rather refused to concede and his career went down with his monstrous ego.

And if that weren't enough, he and his producer Mary Mapes coordinated their on-air attack against Bush with the Kerry for President Campaign.

And yet, here he is, collecting the 2012 Edward R. Murrow Award for Lifetime Achievement. And unfortunately, that's appropriate considering the current state of journalism. He, as much as anyone, contributed to the low opinion most Americans have for the mainstream news media.

Here's another example of the media rewarding dishonesty. In 2004 Lewis Latham wrote a story for Harper's Magazine chronicling his experiences at the Republican National Convention. The problem was he wrote the article before the Republicans convened. He made it all up.

The exposure of his lie did not cost him his job as editor of Harper's. He stayed on for two more years before leaving to start his own eponymous magazine.

Perhaps you can fool all of the people some of the time, but 60 percent are fooled no longer.

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