



Matt Puckett

NOTE: The Florida Police Benevolent Association has its Official Florida Police Benevolent Association Facebook Group. The group is our attempt to diversify how we communicate with our membership, potential members and the public. If you are a member of Facebook, please stop by and check us out at: www.facebook.com

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A Message From Your Deputy Executive Director

“Have It Your Way” News Era

Let me start this out by explaining my bias. I do not watch cable news, or network news. I do not listen to talk radio (okay, sports talk radio during football season). I have not gotten swept up in the blogosphere. I am not following a single person on Twitter and I also do not tweet. Although I do have a Facebook page, I hide most of my friends’ comments, because I don’t care to read that they had a chicken pesto salad for lunch, or, like most everyone else, they’re at work. Seriously folks, exercise a little restraint on FB’s post your thoughts feature; a lot of you really have nothing much to say, but choose to do so anyway.

However, I do constantly gather news and I like to think it comes from diverse sources, which brings me to my point... we are living in the “Have It Your Way” news era.

I know, I know. I didn’t just crawl out from under a rock yesterday to notice the media is biased, or consumer oriented. It has always been that way, but it seems like nowadays I can order up my news the way I want it.

Here’s what I mean. If I like something, I can go out and find a story about it that paints it in the way I find appealing. *Maybe* I am cranky person (I’ll leave it to the reader to decide why the “Maybe” is italicized), so I want my news cranky. There are plenty of sites for that type of reporting. Perhaps (this is for you chat room types) I want to stay informed on the latest gossip in a particular agency... let’s face it, we all know where to go to scratch that itch. Of course, there’s talk radio – where the spinmeisters go to spin. It’s all great entertainment, but is it news? Should we trust the content of what we glean from these sources?

My take on this topic is twofold.

First, by ordering up the news the way we want it, we are receiving reports that place a label on the outlet’s preferred heroes and villains. Insert my bias here: when the news source you enjoy consistently refers to the leadership of a labor organization as the “Union Boss” (I’m partial to “Kingpin”) and does not offer the official name of the organization in a story. That, my loyal reader, is *labeling* the news. The outlet and its customers do not like the union and it is a guarantee the organization will not receive a fair story. If you are only hearing about an event from a slanted, label pushing news outlet, you’ll develop a negative feeling about the organization regardless of what

the union may be advocating for.

Consider these headlines from articles and editorials, then ask yourself who’s being painted as the villain:

Unsustainable pension pandering (*Miami Herald* 8/30/2009) – *This should be a real objective editorial.*

Rumors drive deputies to consider union (*St. Pete Times* 08/07/2009) – *Well, what else could drive a consideration to unionize.*

Florida’s state worker benefits not justified in this economy (*The Orlando Sentinel* 07/17/2009) – *Seems the Sentinel honchos think state workers have it too good.*

Hallandale Beach police union seeks merger with Broward Sheriff’s Office; city calls it a ploy (*South Florida Sun Sentinel* 07/10/2009) – *Wonder what the reporter thinks about the union’s position?*

“...it seems like nowadays I can order up my news the way I want it.”

Public Pensions Cook the Books (*The Wall Street Journal* 07/06/2009) – *An editorial printed in the WSJ about “cooking the books.” The title is only missing the word “too” at the end.*

EDITORIAL: Veto bad-cop protection (*Palm Beach Post* 06/22/2009) – *The Governor had signed the bill into law four days before they printed this smear. They used the same label “bad-cop protection” our opponents used during the session.*

Second (here’s where I get a little more preachy), do we ever ask ourselves what we are missing out on? If your favorite news outlet is a pro ham and eggs kind of operation, is there anything you may need to know that disputes that stance? What’s going on with the “no yolk and turkey bacon” crowd? How about the plain toast folks? We all need to hear some inconvenient truths about a whole range of subjects. But we don’t. This happens for a number of reasons: the outlet willfully omits it; lousy reporting; poor source material; political spin; or my personal favorite—it’s not what you say, but how loud you say it. That’s right—drown out the other side’s message.

I don’t expect things to change. I am by no means some idealist who longs to reverse course in this new news era. Heck, this editorial is exactly the kind of thing I am talking about, so I’m a practitioner. Yet, I will make this appeal. Stop for a moment and think about the news outlets you enjoy. Are they painting a slanted picture with colorful adjectives and labels? Who pays their bills? What’s the background of the reporter, blogger, tweeter, or pundit? Where can you find a different opinion? Finally, research the sources they cite to check the credibility of those sources. Just because it is labeled news does not make it true.

We all should strive to broaden our cache of news sources (really getting preachy now). Unfortunately, we have all of this information at our beck and call, but so few of us actually use it. We find a tune we like to hear then block out the rest. Don’t do that. I poked fun at some of the outlets in the opening paragraph, but these are great places to start. Smart, earnest (Is my bias coming through?) people have talk shows, write columns, blog, and tweet great information and many still do investigative reporting, or at the very least present you with both sides of an argument. Part of the new era in news reporting is the celebrity status people with expertise and informed opinions garner by publishing. Just find someone you like, see if he or she is trustworthy, and become a frequent customer of their particular product. After that, go find someone you don’t like, but still trust, and consume his or her stuff too.

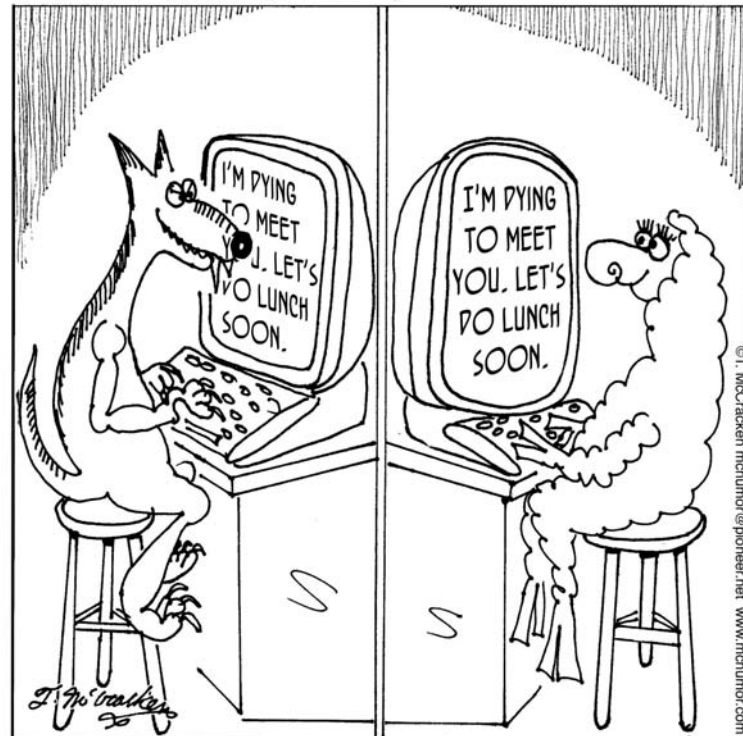
Just think, maybe with all this new found diverse information, you can write something that will prompt me to unhide your Facebook posts. ●

A professor was one day walking along a very narrow street when he came face to face with a rival. The street was too narrow for two to pass.

The rival, pulling himself up to his full height, said haughtily, “I never make way for fools!”

Smiling, the professor stepped aside and said, “I always do.”

MCHUMOR.COM by T. McCracken



The hazards of cyber dating.