

8/19/94

Puffing up Simpson case

In his more than merely justified criticism of "L.A.'s D.A." over the atrocities accompanying his exploitation of the O.J. Simpson tragedy, Roy Meachum, ever making pretenses to knowledge and understanding he does not have, failed, in the entire lengthy column, to tell his readers why something should be done about that district attorney.

Meachum found time and space for recalling what he does not recall, the 1925 death of Floyd Collins in that Kentucky cave. Meachum dragged that in as an excuse for telling us that the term "media circus" was invented then. It was not. There is more that is wrong with his irrelevant invocation of Floyd Collins' innocent ghost.

The reason something should be done about district attorneys like the disgraceful one in Los Angeles is because they subvert our entire system of justice. One of the greater contributions of our Founding Fathers was the principle that we were all innocent until proven guilty by a jury of our peers.

Gil Garcetti and not he alone poisoned virtually every mind in the country against Simpson and denied him a fair trial.

It is extremely unlikely that any jury can be found that was not influenced by the official anti-Simpson propaganda in Los Angeles. This impropriety extended to the police and to others in the DA's office. And as omniscient Meachum failed to note, as of the time his column appeared it had already been established that virtually all is not true. The rest is prejudicial.

Murder is a serious crime, but how can there be justice when it is not possible to draw an uninfluenced jury?

When this is true how can the Simpsons be tried and how can government assure justice?

Also unworthy of Meachum's attention is that there is no indication at all of any investigation being made for any reason other trying to establish Simpson's guilt.

Many of the many leaks were to reflect motive and intent, but all those with motive and intent do not murder.

This is not the way the American system of justice is supposed to work. It is the way in which it cannot work.

Meachum refers to the Floyd Collins "media circus," using the phrase he says was "invented nearly 70 years ago." In 1925 we had only newspapers and a few magazines that reported news and they were not then referred to as the "media." That term came with the full development we have had from



radio and TV.

The Collins tragedy, Meachum says, "brought flocking to Kentucky radio microphones and newly invented electronic reporters." Neither is true.

In 1925 radio was just entering its infancy. There were few radio stations and remarkably few radios. The radio tube had just been invented and it was quite primitive. The tube that worked from the electric lines had not yet been invented. Also not yet invented was any system of recording such events. Leave alone transmitting them to radio stations over anything other than existing telephone lines.

And they did not extend into caves. Most of the few radios then were "crystal" sets that, with luck and with earphones, could pick up local signals only and then weakly. Those of the few radio stations that carried news then read it from wire-service tickers.

This is not to say that there was no radio reporting of the Collins tragedy. But it is to say that it was not what we now know as a "media circus" and it was not by "newly invented electronic reporters." In the entire country there were not enough real reporters who reported by radio to call them a "flock," as Meachum adds.

Meachum refers to the nonstop official propaganda against Simpson as "a stream of banal observations, accompanied by the complete lack of anything happening." That is not true, not in any sense.

Although there was much repetition, what was aired by all the media is what was

leaked to convince the nation that Simpson is guilty. It was supposed details of the crime and of the evidence, the latter supplemented daily or more often. It has since been established that virtually all that was leaked is false. The legitimate criticism of the media is that it blindly, unquestioningly repeated all that had been leaked to it without once, to my knowledge, ever telling the people that we are all innocent until proven guilty and that all that was leaked to it was wrong, very wrong, in a country under a system of justice like ours.

So, the media joined with errant officialdom in subverting our system of justice for the excitement that created, without regard to Simpson's supposedly inalienable rights and without regard for the subverting of our system of justice by it.

One as wise and understanding as Meachum wants us to believe he might well have asked what would happen if Simpson's lawyers argued in court that he cannot get a fair trial because all the alleged evidence has been tainted and because it is not possible to empanel an impartial jury.

Then Simpson would be freed even if guilty and then the crime would be unsolved. There are such precedents.

In recent years we have forgotten so much of what made us great and unique, including our radical, for the time, system of justice. Instead of writing in that context Meachum spelunks himself in his endless puffing himself up.

Harold Weisberg writes from Frederick.