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Feels Meachum misleads, deceives the community

There is a basic flaw in Edward B. Ogle's defense of Roy Meachum's columns, which are not limited to "opinion." Aside from opinion, which Meachum is entitled to express, what he represents as fact often is not fact.

In his letter which offended Mr. Ogle, Mayor Young referred to Meachum as an ignoramus and as lacking in integrity. In my recent letter I cited specific illustrations of both criticisms, neither an expression of opinion, from among the many inaccuracies in Meachum's columns. (Inadvertently, as published, there was an omission in my letter, which altered its meaning. The "no" was omitted in "There is no Israeli involvement in the Arab fratricide reported daily ...")

At the time of the Achille Lauro hijacking Meachum had gone out of his way to defend the murderers, particularly Mohammad Abbas, as only patriots, not pirates or terrorists. In my recent letter, which a proud and honorable columnist would have accepted as a challenge, I wrote: "Apparently to Meachum the man who is most responsible for the piracy of the Achille Lauro and the subsequent murder of an aged, ill and incapacitated American Jew is still a 'hero.'" At the very least, self-respect and journalistic integrity require an apology and retraction of this and of so much more about which he has written with less than honesty and accuracy."

Since then, as you reported July 11, the Italian court sentenced Abbas to life imprisonment for his crimes. Yet Meachum has not apologized or retracted. Most of us who write believe we owe no less to trusting readers and editors — and to our own integrity, which most of us prize.

Often Meachum's fabrications presented as fact are anti-Semitic, another challenge he has yet to confront. A recent example is his lie that Jews caused the defeat of moderate Republican Sen. Charles Percy of Illinois and our own Sen. Charles McC. Mathias' decision not to run again. More than a month after you published my criticism of him for this as "another of his anti-Semitic outbursts, a prostitution of journalism," Meachum remains silent, without honesty, decency or self-respect required for either a meaningful defense or an apology and retraction.

While Mr. Ogle is quite correct in stating that columnists, like all of us, are entitled to express their opinions, Mr. Ogle does not mention in his quotation of the mayor's letter that Meachum made threats of political retaliation in his column. Using the power of a column for threats or any other personal reason is not the expression of opinion or within the normal concepts of American journalism.

Ours is a representative society and it thrives on expressions of opinion and on controversy. My objections to Meachum's columns are not that they are controversial or biased, as too many are, but that he misleads and deceives the community. He thus frustrates the proper functioning of an informed public, and he has become the area's major preacher of race hatred — for which he has been and remains entirely unrepentant.

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