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December 12, 1993

Harold Weisburg  
7627 Old Receiver Road  
Frederick, MD 21701

Dear Mr. Weisburg:

With a sigh of pleasure I read your Dec. 12 op. ed. piece in the Frederick Post. Your challenge to Roy Meachum's column about JFK was needed. I was stunned when I read Meachum's shallow and nasty comments about Kennedy. Even if his analysis were genuine and thoughtful, it was an inappropriate time to publish it.

Your recounting of Kennedy's legacy was so well put together, it made clear and compelling refutation of his column.

You also noted his avowed support of Nixon in the 1960 election. I'm glad you did. His vote for Nixon is the most telling information I've had about Meachum.

Mr. Meachum is so cynical and derogatory to even those who are making sacrifices in their own lives to help others. In trying to understand why, I've assumed that his lack of stature in his later years created a bitterness that he tried to assuage by trying to bring down others.

But that a professional journalist, let alone one who claims to be a liberal, could support a public leader who built his career on Joe McCarthy tactics boggled my mind. I guess this guy has always had a screw loose. The lack of commitment to freedom of thought and belief and speech that Nixon had displayed should have been abhorrent to anyone in the free press, and remember, Meachum claims to have been involved in the entertainment business too. (You may remember his column where he gave himself credit for giving Jim Henson and his Muppets his start in show biz. I was expecting to see in his next column how he had taught this young fellow, Elvis how to swivel his hips--so we'd have Meachum to thank for Presley becoming a superstar!)

You might be interested to know about my own experience with Roy Meachum.

Many years ago Mr. Meachum wrote about me for the first time. He met me by chance at a reception and asked to interview me for a column on the Maryland school bus funding formula. This is a complex topic. The data, which may seem technical, reflect the policy issues. Accurate reporting of the numbers is crucial to accurate portrayal of the issue.

I explained this to Meachum and asked to have the interview when I had my notes. Mistakenly, I gave in to his pressure to discuss the matter standing at the reception but I did get his agreement, first, to let me call him prior to publication after I had had a chance to review my notes the next day. In fact I found I had made a serious error. I called Roy expecting no big deal--he had plenty of time before publication. When I pushed him to accept the corrected information he became belligerent, told me he had already written the column and would not bother to change it. When I tried to remind him of his commitment he started to swear and told me he was making me a hero in his story. In fact he did. But I never wanted to deal with him again because of his dishonesty. I have not spoken with him since that incident. I have always assumed the fact I didn't seem properly appreciative for that column and have not offered further information has made Meachum bitter toward me and he has therefor excoriated me at every opportunity.

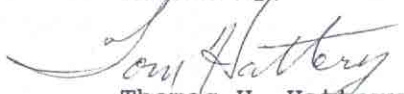
It might also interest you to know that Meachum, has written about many meetings that I've attended but, in my recollection, he has always been absent. His columns are therefor notoriously inaccurate, though written as though he had been an observer.

Though I've often been tempted to write a letter to the editor (when Meachum has gone off on one or another of his more invidious and unethical tirades), to date I've not because I'm sure it will prompt Meachum to unleash his vicious attacks again and again.

Meachum is portrayed as a wise authoritative source, but is so untruthful and hateful that he is a destructive force in our community. Therefor, columns like yours and those you've written before do provide a needed "balance".

So, I thank you for your well done and needed contribution. Keep slugging!

Sincerely,

  
Thomas H. Hattery

P.S. I would love to talk with you or hear from you sometime. Please feel free to call me (829-2861 at home) or write:  
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