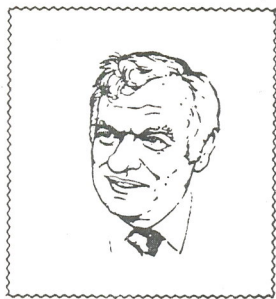


Himself

The Newsie As Hero

THOSE who follow the doings of the Tube trade tell me there is going to be a gripping telly serial this fall about "a love affair between an aging columnist and a young photographer." I assume the young photographer is of the female gender, and the columnist is male: but I have learned not to ask questions these days.

Unless I am mistaken this particular serial will be a light gloss on the widely-publicized affair between aging editor Ben Bradlee, of the Washington Post, and feisty young reporter and former telly star, Sally Quinn.



It is good that us here aging columnists and editors are beginning to be recognized for the glamor-pusses we are. And that young photographers and reporters of the opposite gender recognize and appreciate those qualities that make us veteran newsies veritable catnip to the weaker sex.

All of this is the doing of Bradlee, in a way. It was he who gave their heads to the team of "investigative" reporters that set in motion the toppling of the Nixon presidency, the Messrs. Woodward and Bernstein.

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AS IT HAPPENS, I'm not one of the people who are on my knees before the accomplishments of Woodstein. Because they were young, and presumably a little dumb, and had access to the pages of *The Post*, these fellows were brutally used by a cabal, almost surely operating out of the FBI, to overthrow the White House gang and incidentally the President.

The reporters were working on the side of the angels, as it turned out. But to give these lads a Pulitzer Prize for having participated in what was close to a criminal conspiracy, was 'way wide of the mark. Getting exclusives that are shoved at you by people with fearsome axes to grind is one way of getting exclusives, but it is hardly in the highest traditions of the reporting racket.

However, I'm the kind of guy who never much liked Mickey Mouse, and one of the few people in the world, apparently, who do not read *Peanuts* because it seems to me exploitative of children, even if Charlie Schulz has a heart of purest. All I tend to remember about Henry the Eighth is not his greatness, but the fact that he gave all his children syphilis.

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WE ARE FACED, then, with the fact that newsmen and the ladies in the ranks are now figures of glamor. We are almost as good as the criminals, lawyers and politicians and such that we associate with in our work, and who have already been apotheosized by the Genii of the Tube.

Despite the fact that it is all bunk, we will continue to enjoy our new-found status. Come Christmas, kids on the streets will look at our passing form and gasp, "That guy's a reporter." Ladies in bars will view us with unabashed libidinousness. It's enough to make a guy cry.

There was a time when the Boston Back Bay butler could announce the awaiting press corps: "A man from the *Post*, a man from the *Globe*, and a gentleman from the *Boston Evening Transcript*."

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NOW WE ARE all going to be gents from the *Transcript*. We will like it, to be sure; but if there is one lesson you learn after a decade or two as an Underwood jockey, it is that those who are made by the media are broken by the media.

The furor will die down. Fry cooks and tree surgeons will capture the public's fickle heart. The plight of the Lesbian mother remains to be properly explored and exploited, not to speak of the transvestite who makes it to the White House before she is exposed or revealed.

For our reportorial season in the sun I think I shall buy me a straw boater with a blue and white ribbon, just like Henry Mencken used to wear. The same Henry Mencken who said, "I go on working for the same reason that a hen goes on laying eggs."