
THE CAPITAL TIMES

PO Box 8060 Madison, Wis. 53708 608-252-6400

Dave Zweifel, editor

30 Sept 88

Dear Bill:

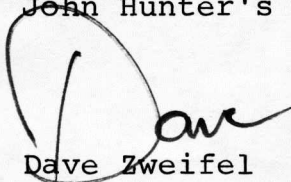
Here's a copy of the Deerfield stories, judge for yourself.

What I found amazing is that you knew about these cribbed quotes before your piece lambasting John Hunter this week. But, to each his own.

Journalist extraordinaire Joe Beck is still fuming because we wrote about his great investigative skills in discovering that Ald. McFarland wasn't gay--about two weeks before McFarland came out of the closet.

Obviously none of us condones lifting quotes from the other unless there is attribution. The bottom line, though, is that because both Madison papers are members of the AP, the news of one is property of the other (nothing to do incidentally with the the MNI corporate set-up, but then I'd never expect you to understand that simple fact). Nevertheless, quotes should be credited or, at the very least, attributed to the AP.

But what I really wanted to convey to you is one simple fact--neither you nor Joe Beck have the journalistic skills to make a pimple on John Hunter's ass.



Dave Zweifel

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Dave Zweifel
The Capital Times
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Oct. 3, 1988

Dear Dave,

Come off it. The articles you sent contain two lousy quote sentences, a total of 14 words, that appear exactly in both stories. And even then, these quotes--the words, "We're getting pounded into the turf. Safety has to be uppermost at this point"--could easily have been said to both reporters.

Of course there's every indication the State Journal story was inspired, at least, by what the Capital Times printed the day before. But no way is your example anywhere near as egregious as the one I focused on. At least the State Journal did a substantial bit of original reporting. Hunter's piece was almost wholly dependent on what his supposed competitor uncovered. If it wasn't for Beck's Haney quotes, there would have been no story.

I have no idea what you mean to accomplish by your unnecessary explanation of the workings of the Associated Press. If the Capital Times had wanted legitimate AP access, it would have asked the AP to process the story, and then credited the AP. This was not done. Anyway you slice it, the quotes were snatched. Of course this is a breach of journalistic ethics.

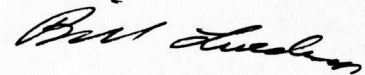
The fact is you are simply being dishonest. My little story last week was solid and legitimate, as you would no doubt agree if it were written by McMedia concerning Isthmus. Your crude remark about my not having the journalistic skills "to make a pimple on John Hunter's ass," is likewise disingenious, if not patently absurd. Earlier you said my series on MNI was one of the best pieces of investigative reporting you've ever seen (When was the last time anybody said that about something Hunter penned?). Now I've been reduced in your estimation to less than a pimple on an old man's ass. Sure, that hurts, but it should hurt you worse to have to go around concocting baseless insults to save some modicum of face.

Contrary to another foolish assertion on your part, I do understand a great deal about the corporate set-up at MNI--how else could you have learned some things for the first time from reading my series?--and my reporting last week did nothing to belie this understanding. It wasn't me but Beck who argued that this set-up has something to do with tolerance of activities genuinely competing newspapers would never stand

for; I think it is a point well-taken.

Face it, Dave: Your lashing back at me has nothing to do with my shortcomings as a journalist, and everything to do with your own substantial shortcomings as a representative of a paper that supposedly puts a premium on truth. I notice your letter is scrawled "Personal," and I will treat it as such. But I wonder, if my reporting in this matter was so errant, why don't you take public issue with it, either in your pages or mine? Perhaps because you know who has the stronger case.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bill Lueders".

Bill Lueders