

Sunday's

Editorials, Columns & Letters

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Paper 'n Ink: Credibility is all we have...

Lynn Brisendine

At times, trying to be funny turns out not to be so funny. The hoopla being bandied about a pair of Australian radio DJs who pulled a prank has gone in directions that are drastic and in at least one way tragic.

This from an internet site offering a report about this "prank." "They impersonated the Queen and Prince Charles, with the "monarch" making enquiries about her "granddaughter".

"Staff at a radio station behind a hoax call that led to the apparent suicide of nurse Jacinthia Saldanha have been moved to safehouses, according to reports.

"Managers at Sydney radio station 2Day FM have also recruited 24-hour bodyguards to protect employees."

The tragedy, at least one in what seems to be an ongoing nightmare, is the suicide of the nurse who relayed the call to a nurse taking care of the Duchess of Cambridge, who was being treated for acute morning sickness.

It wasn't the first fake call these two had made impersonating others to illicit what many would consider proprietary information. And from what I have read about the Australian radio business, it is a commonplace trick used to build ratings for the stations.

The tactic is at the least a lie, and at the worst a criminal activity where privacy is the victim of fraud.

I suppose many who read this item would think it a stretch for a community newspaper publisher to consider this travesty a lesson in being a better newspaper man. After all, this was radio and it was also a foreign station at that. In the case of the fake royal phone call, the joke has turned into a dangerous and hateful ordeal for the man and woman who thought their strained accents asking for the impossible were funny and would most probably result in at least a loud hang up. The call was put through and the pair decided to continue the charade to the point that they actually got through to the nurse taking care of the Duchess. The whole incident was taped.

Then the scam went viral in a world filled with multimedia and embarrassed the hospital, who in turn began making demands of their employees which turned into a lethal exercise seeing a woman take her life, rather than live with the scorn she received at no fault of her own.

The suicide of an otherwise innocent bystander, of course, is the worst of this deal. But, some other considerations should be thought through as well. The radio station concerned has lost its credibility. In this case, the "funny" stunt could also close the business down, and with that action too many people who work at this station will lose their jobs.

Or worse, death threats have been ongoing as some other less balanced individuals offer their radical fixes. So many of these threats have been received that the two radio personalities have gone into hiding and the radio station is providing guards to protect the "jokers."

Credibility is perhaps the most important attribute a newspaper, radio station, or a television station has. It is a function of common sense, decency and honesty—all big words which make an operation legitimate, especially an organization tasked with the responsibility to offer the truth.

Controversial reports are a part of any outlet reporting news. Things happen which, at times, see some people not wanting the story reported. Sometimes these news happenings are tough to deal with as too many are willing to "kill the messenger."

Still, bad news is part of the deal. So, it seems to me that to try and make up a story, or perpetrate a hoax in order to draw readers, or in this case listeners, is (for lack of a better word) stupid.

In the community newspaper world, we see tricks played on readers as rare events. One day a year, some do go beyond the bounds and prepare stories, dramatic tales of events beyond the usual scope of the news of the day in small town America.

April Fool's Day brings out some strange behavior. Most of it is simply pulling a joke, and no one is hurt, except, I think, the newspaper or any news organization that participates in making a joke of news coverage.

We live in a world where flamboyant personalities are trying to one up their competition, the 'anything goes' attitude is easy to understand. The thing that isn't so easily understood is the idea that these radio talkers' management didn't step in and end the event before harm was done.

In any event, a real lesson should be learned by one and all who use print or the air to report news or offer entertainment. Keep it honest, keep it real, and maintain the ethics required. It is a matter of credibility and in the end that's all any of us have that proves our worth.

Letter to the Editor

P.O. Box 1272 Brownfield, Texas 79316

Sign and include your address and phone number... You may also send your letter via the Internet. E-mail it to publisher@brownfieldonline.com

The News requests that letters be concise and reserves the right to edit for libelous content or inappropriate language and space. We will edit a letter to conform with the standards we use in publishing a responsible community newspaper.

Making a Difference

By Gina Kelly Ellis

As I write this, it is two weeks until Christmas. Trees are up. Gifts are wrapped. (Assume that to be true!) Cards are mailed. So now, you are ready. Or are you? Everywhere you go, store clerks, friends, anyone you meet asks the same question. "Are you ready for Christmas?" I never really know how to answer that. I never actually get everything done that I had planned. I'm never totally satisfied with the gift buying. There is always a little more cooking that I would have liked to do. So, am I ready? Hmmmm.

What does it take to be "ready" for Christmas? It takes a ready mind. A mind that remembers what was done for us so long ago. As the verse says, "For God SO loved the world (you and me) that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes on Him will be saved." (John 3:16) Is

your mind ready to accept what was done for you? And when I say you, what I really mean is YOU! The one reading this right now. God gave His son for you. He allowed this One to come to earth as a baby and be raised in human form and then to die a horrible death on the cross for you. Have you got that in your mind? Remember this, and as they did in the Old Testament days, tell it to your children, write it on your doorpost, talk about it with those you meet. Never let the story of the Savior be far from your mind.

It also takes ready hands and feet. Get busy doing for others. We have so many opportunities right here to take care of people around us. Teach your children the joy of giving to others. The idea of giving to get nothing in return is fast losing its place in our society. So get your hands and feet busy and celebrate the season by going, doing, and giving.

Lastly, it takes a ready heart to look forward to Christmas. A heart that is ready to show this amazing love of God to a lost and dying world around us. We are surrounded by people who don't know the One whose birth we celebrate. Is there anyone in your life that you don't love enough to share the love of God with them? The correct answer here should be no. We should be ready to share Christ with all those around us. We should not let another Christmas go by without letting all those within our boundaries know about the love of God that surpasses all other.

So, let me ask you now. Are you ready for Christmas? Is your family ready? Make this the Christmas that truly made the difference for those around you!



Thirty Dozen Quail...Good Eatin'

Texas Journalist...by Willis Webb

Most folks can make a pretty big deal out of "dining on quail."

Those who'd term it "dining" on quail might not like the Monk Edwards Home on the Range Recipe but as Monk would've said: "They ain't got no culture."

I've eaten Monk's quail. He's right.

First of all, let me tell you that Monk did not fry the quail. He and Dad killed almost all of 'em, certainly cleaned and dressed all. Mom cooked the quail. Monk did have a secret ingredient or two to boost Mom's culinary expertise which, as you might expect, is second to none. Monk's cooking capability was mere subsistence.

Now, you begin to understand and appreciate the great delineation of quality in this entire process.

Another factor you need to consider quickly in beginning to better discern all facets of this "tale" is that Monk was a bachelor, a carpenter-handyman, who lived alone most of his life. His abode was a ramshackle house that Monk probably cleaned

once or twice a year, for appearances, mind you. Not that it needed it or anything so likely.

So, per Mother's requirement, the quail cooking took place at our home and, I do believe, Monk took a bath in honor of the occasion.

His table manners reflected both his great desire for such a delicacy, cooked so well, and for his best awareness in whose home, Miss Ruth's (My Mom's), he was eating. I think he only burped twice ("Not bad manners, just good food!").

The dining table was a sumptuous layout that would dramatically tempt the least ravenous of appetites.

Monk was our only guest and he joined, Dad, Mom, and Sons #1, #2 and #3. I'm #1, the eldest of what finally became a quartet of boys.

He was overwhelmed to be in a home, whose patriarch and matriarch he held in high regard.

Of course, the three sons loved such a gathering, which incorporated both manhood and Mom's great cooking so strongly in one event.

Most diners would expect a menu that would, of course, stress the "featured dish," as Mom had with the quail. But, as usual, there was a second meat offered. I don't remember the "sides" for sure, but I know there were at least four, plus a couple of breads and two desserts.

It's likely the desserts were chocolate cake and coconut pie. In a country home, the breads were almost certainly homemade yeast rolls and cornbread. And, for pure cityslickers there was a stash of "light bread" in the pantry.

Peas — blackeyed, crowder of field — were a menu standard, as likely were turnip greens. Often there was a corn dish: on the cob, or cut from it and bearing a sweeter flavor. Sometimes, the peas were unshelled and Mom's recipe contained something that brought a "to-die-for" flavor.

Texas farm women of the Depression Era were pressed into cooking ingenuity with both the economic and supply limitations that period forced on them.

When "company" (guests)

came to your home for a meal, we knew to expect the best our garden, fields and livestock could provide.

Of course, it took a while for a family to build a "stock" of quail if you didn't do it at wholesale. Most likely, a couple of hunters/families pooled their resources and had one giant cook-off. It was a stroke of luck for Monk to be friends with someone like my family. While he might provide a larger share of quail and of labor in preparation, Monk benefitted by Mother's cooking capabilities and by our provision of other meal elements, not to mention facilities.

Such a spread was a huge treat for someone like Monk and, while he remained on his top behavior and maintained his manners, he obviously felt as all us country boys were wont to say — "like he'd died and gone to heaven."

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Error on Your Credit Report? Credit Bureau is on the Case

By Jason Alderman

If you've ever tried to remove inaccurate or fraudulent information from your credit report and gotten the runaround, take heart: The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is now on the case.

In July 2012, the watchdog agency, formed as a result of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010, gained authority to supervise all of the major consumer reporting agencies.

The CFPB now advocates for consumers who have complaints regarding interactions with credit bureaus and identity theft protection services. This adds to the agency's consumer grievance

oversight which already included mortgages, bank accounts, consumer loans and private student loans.

"Credit reporting companies exert great influence over the lives of consumers," said CFPB Director Richard Cordray in announcing his agency's new responsibility. "They help determine eligibility for loans, housing, and sometimes jobs. Consumers need an avenue of recourse when they feel they have been wronged."

You can seek assistance from the CFPB if you have issues with:

- Incorrect information on your credit report;
- How a consumer reporting agency is handling its investigation

of your complaint;

- The improper use of a credit report;
- Being unable to get a copy of a credit score or file; and
- Problems with credit monitoring or identity-protection services.

Here's how the new system works:

If you believe your credit report contains incorrect or fraudulent information, you should first file a dispute with and get a response directly from that credit reporting company before contacting the CFPB. The same goes if you have an issue with how the company is handling its investigation of your grievance — for example, if they don't respond in writing within 30 days.

If, after filing your grievance, you are dissatisfied with the resolution, you may file a complaint with the CFPB using any of the following methods:

- File online at www.cfpb.gov/complaint
- Call toll-free at 855-411-2372
- Fax it to 855-237-2392
- Mail to Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, P.O. Box 4503, Iowa City, Iowa, 52244.

Once your complaint has been logged, you'll be given a tracking number to check its status. Each complaint will be processed individually and sent to the credit bureau in question for response. The CFPB expects companies to respond within 15 days with information about the steps they have taken or plan to take. You'll have the option to dispute the company's response

to your complaint.

Credit reporting companies issue more than 3 billion consumer credit reports a year and maintain files on more than 200 million Americans. Among other things, they track the number and types of credit accounts you use, how long they've been open and whether you've paid your bills on time.

"The consequences of errors in a consumer report can be catastrophic for a consumer, shutting him or her out of credit markets, jeopardizing employment prospects, or significantly increasing the cost of housing," noted the CFPB's announcement.

You can order one free credit report per year from the three major credit bureaus — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. (Order through www.annualcreditreport.com; otherwise you'll pay a small fee.) Proactively ordering your reports on a regular basis can help identify bad credit behavior and spot fraudulent activity or errors before they can damage your credit.

To learn more about credit reports and scores, visit the CFPB's website, www.cfpb.gov. Another good resource is What's My Score (www.whatmyscore.org), a financial literacy program run by Visa Inc.

This article is intended to provide general information and should not be considered legal, tax or financial advice. It's always a good idea to consult a tax or financial advisor for specific information on how certain laws apply to your situation and about your individual financial situation.