

Silent heroes deserve thunderous applause

Allan Fotheringham, the popular back page columnist with Maclean's Magazine, recently took exception to journalists who use quotes from unnamed sources in spilling the beans on the government of

the day. Coming from a scribe whose stock and trade lies in painting the world with the most sweeping and oft times inaccurate generalizations, this was a little like the

pot calling the kettle black. However, as I am always in search of a local angle, I thought of how my own credibility as a community newspaper correspondent would be tarnished if I were to engage in such a practice.

For instance, what would my readers think if I was to cite a nameless official of the local Ontario Hockey Association Junior team for accusing that club's coach of suggesting Don Cherry was actually a closet Francophone who enjoys watching European short films.

Or if I was to tap another source willing to speak out but not go on record, on how the mayor of this town was seen knocking back a few pints with Ontario premier Mike Harris?

In the same way, just as we columnists must attach both our name and picture to what we offer up for public consumption, the editor of *The Tribune* insists that all letters to the editor be signed and validated with a current address.

I've still got a letter pinned to my office wall chastising me for my disdain shown towards a couple of families whose vocal young offspring ruined an anniversary dinner at a local upscale dining establishment last summer. While wittily signed "A Member of Family Circus" in reference to the family circus label I hung on these patrons in my column, the letter was placed in the editor's reject basket with the words "unsigned and therefore unpublished" scribbled on top.

Which was a pity, really, because it was a most enjoyable letter, despite the obvious anger aimed my way.

After 12 years of occupying this space, I have come to appre-



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

ciate that an opinion aired in print is subject to a return salvo or two.

Anyway, having said as much, I feel there is a time when it is both advisable and essential to hold back names and sources. Especially when there is no hint of a slanderous accusation involved and the story involves a feel good confirmation of small town life.

You'll just have to take my word for it that what I'm about to relate is in fact true. And hopefully you'll feel a little better about the people in our midst who are committed to helping out those less fortunate than themselves when I'm done.

A month or so back I heard of a local family who found themselves in the position of having a rather essential utility cut off from their home due to a delinquent account. And we're not talking pennies here, rather hundreds of dollars. The family was doing the best they could with what they had to work with. Suffice it to say that lady luck has not been a friend to them through the years.

Calls were made to various agencies and organizations by a caring individual in an attempt to come up with a solution, but there was no response.

Upon hearing of the family's plight, another individual in an office here in town got right on the phone and related the situation to an official with a local service club.

Upon hanging up the phone, this individual simply smiled and said, "It's taken care of."

"You mean they're going to look into it and see what they can do," stammered one incredulous bystander. "No, it's done, you don't have to worry about it," said the individual who had sounded the Good Samaritan alarm.

The whole thing left me with a feeling of unbridled awe for the work done by service clubs in town.

It also brought on pangs of guilt for the indifference I, so often, feel upon being hailed by service club members trying to sell me something, get me to pledge money or time, or pull loose change out of my pocket while driving through town.

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