

Becky,

Since you copied me yesterday on that Spitzer interchange (still mysterious to me), let me take this opportunity to raise various issues:

- 1) Today I posted an apology on DPWatchDog directed to Conn Hallinan. I screwed up on something and felt the need to make amends. Check it out—it will be self-explanatory—and of course feel free to pass it along to Conn. You and he may have good reason to loathe me, but I hope never to give you good reason to disrespect me.
- 2) By the same token, I beg you once again to scrutinize DPWatchDog.com. If we have any facts or figures wrong, it is inadvertent. We will gladly make any necessary changes. It is important that you do this soon, before we launch our pr and marketing campaign, which we believe will largely increase our readership.
- 3) Back to Hallinan. His articles are typically filled with lots of statistics and quotes. We recently posted our preliminary results of a “stress test” we conducted on one of his columns. We chose one where we had no foreknowledge of his source material and no particular disagreement with his point of view. The column pertained to Afghanistan and our piece on the website is entitled, “So Dark the Conn of Afghanistan.” We were only interested in determining whether his numbers and quotes were accurate. What we found was frankly shocking. Every number we could source seemed wrong, and every quote was taken way out of context (much like a movie poster which proclaims, “Amazing—Newsweek,” when the full quote from the magazine would have read, “it’s amazing that anyone would have made such a horrible film”). I left two very polite voice mails for Conn (he’s listed in the phone book), asking him to give me his sources. He has declined to return the calls. Do you ever spot audit Hallinan for facts (never mind opinions)? You should; that’s suppose to be your job, not mine. Your readers have a right to assume that the numbers cited by your regular columnist are at least accurate. In any event, we plan to try this again. Our method will be to take articles where we know as little or care as little as possible about the topic, and then try to deconstruct them by seeking Conn’s sources.
- 4) We are behind schedule at DPWatchDog.com. We were planning to launch our marketing and pr campaigns in early April. The honest truth is that we have been delayed due to persistent cyber attacks on our website (you may have noticed it down or acting peculiarly from time to time). I want you to know that I genuinely do not believe that you had anything to do with this. However, if you should come into possession of information relevant to the matter anything (like maybe somebody is out there bragging about it) you need to inform the FBI. The case number is I0904131156345551. [deleted reference to a third party cyber crime expert in the interest of privacy.]
- 5) You gotta admit, I got your financial situation right. Some time ago, I posted a piece on the website entitled, “Why Does She Do It,” which estimated your annual losses at \$500,000, almost exactly what you stated in your last column. I am not only a businessman, I am also something of a philanthropist (relative to my means), and have

served on about a dozen nonprofit boards. I serve on two now. So let me give you my opinion on that score, if you'll listen. You can raise a \$500,000 a year in donations if you luck out and locate one or two very wealthy benefactors. But there is no chance, in my judgment, that you can raise this kind of money from small donors, especially in a town where you have alienated the more moneyed elements. At most, you'll raise about 20% of that, meaning that instead of a \$500,000 annual loss, you will enjoy a \$400,000 loss. If I were you, I'd think of Plan B. My plea again is that Plan B be reform. As near as I can tell, it is reform, or close, or bleed money until you are forced out of business or die broke (I am to wishing you an early death, but acknowledging that you probably have enough cash to wing it for many years to come). You really could morph into a first class local paper if you tried. Open yourself up to the possibilities.

Best,  
John

From: John Gertz <johngertz@aol.com>  
To: becky@berkeleydailyplanet.com  
Sent: Tue, 17 Feb 2009 3:17 pm  
Subject: DPWatch

Becky,

The website's content is now finished, at least in its first iteration.

Schedule:

Now to March 1, gathering comments and editing as required. Website design and layout.

March 1 (approx.), we go live. However, since there will be no PR or Marketing campaign at that point, we expect few people to notice. The main object at that time will be to gather further input and debug.

April 1 (approx.), we begin the PR and marketing campaign.

These dates differ somewhat from those given earlier. I have to leave for Europe on business on March 6, hence the date shuffles.

Although you previously declined to review an earlier draft of some of this material, I urge you to take the opportunity now. We are trying to be fair and factual. Anyone can make honest mistakes. So if we have erred in any statement of fact, please let us know. As my grandmother used to say, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Obviously, we will have difference of opinion, but as a self-professed lover of free speech, I am sure that you will welcome the spirited and open debate. You will be able to say what you will of us in the DP, and we will be able to respond on our website. Since you now decline to publish me, we will have to debate using our parallel publications.

However, no matter how heated the debate, please remember, though some in this town may seek the DP's demise, I seek its reform. Properly run, the DP could be a wonderful community asset.

Best,  
John

-----Original Message-----

From: John Gertz <johngertz@aol.com>

To: becky@berkeleydailyplanet.com

Sent: Thu, 19 Feb 2009 10:38 am

Becky,

As your pleas for salvation grow, allow me a few reflections:

1) Your newspaper is less advocacy journalism, as you would fancy, and closer to Rush Limbaugh's style of "entertainment." Good advocacy journalism gets its facts right, whereas the DP routinely publishes misstatements of facts, or highly biased opinion masquerading as news. That's why Limbaugh has to call himself an "entertainer" (which is merely a euphemism for "liar").

2) I have served on about 10 nonprofit boards, and am on three at the moment. My wife serves on another two. I am very close to the nonprofit world. Good luck trying to raise money as a nonprofit. Here's why: (a) The times could not be worse for philanthropy. For example, many philanthropists are used to giving away appreciated stock. But no one has any appreciated stock anymore. Foundations typically give away 5% of the assets away annually. But their asset base has dropped by 40% in the past year, and they don't have the means to meet current pledges, much less take on new causes. (b) You have assiduously alienated everyone to the right of the hard left in Berkeley. Although radicals can be wealthy (you are), this is exceptional. I wouldn't want to rely on the hard left as a donor base. I will repeat an example that I have used in the past. Your Jewish buddies are apparently on the hard left. Every year there is an AIPAC dinner for Oakland/Berkeley. There are always about 20 protestors standing outside from the hard left waving placards with words to the effect, "Jews Against Israel." I imagine that Herskovits and Graham are in that crowd. There's your donor base. Inside, however, there are over 1000 people, each of whom has paid about \$75 for the dinner. Then after dinner, when the pledge cards are made out, invariably the haul amounts to over \$1 million. And, because AIPAC is a lobby, those donations are not even tax deductible. I can't tell you how many I speak with who tell me that they refuse to read the DP, or have the most disparaging remarks to make about you personally. "Sick" is a descriptive that I often hear used. And I am not speaking only about Jews. You have really managed to turn off lots of other sectors of the community. The point=2 0again, is that you can't bite the hand you want to feed you.

3) I believe that reform is the only way out. Become a paper for all Berkleyans, and not just for the hard left, and you may have a chance. Unfortunately, reform will take time. The bonds of trust between you and the community have been so damaged that I do not believe that anyone is going to be giving you significant money anytime soon. But if you show good will, perhaps in time dollars can flow.

Best,  
John