

Goodbye To A Friend

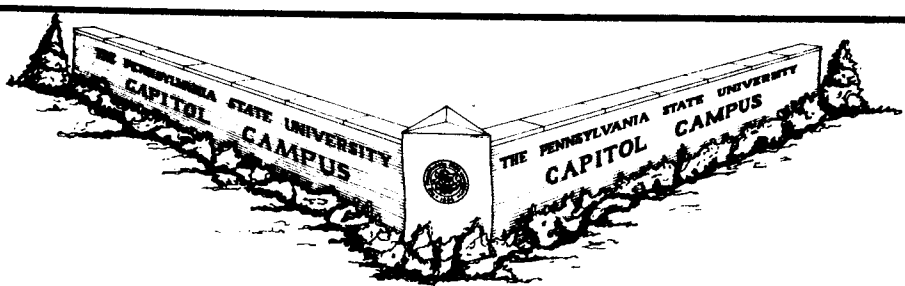
On the wall of the newsroom in the C.C. Reader's main office, there is a collection of unusual and out-of-the-ordinary headlines, pictures, and picture captions. These are clipped from various newspapers and magazines, and must be extraordinarily witty, ingenious or funny to make the collection. Some observers regard this print-gallery as something which is cleverly unique (which to our knowledge, is a correct assessment); others see it as sheer nonsense which is as pointless as it is stupid (which to our knowledge, is also a correct assessment-of the people who describe it as such).

Despite the negative comments, however, the collection continued to grow. In fact, it grew rather rapidly. From a single photograph, it had expanded to nearly half the area of the wall, and was threatening to shortly overcome the entire wall... until the fateful day of December 16, 1981.

For it was on this day that the owner and publisher of the Philadelphia Journal, Pierre Peladeau, announced that all operations concerning the publication and distribution of the daily tabloid would immediately cease.

Its ever-increasing circulation notwithstanding, the paper had been plagued by financial woes throughout its illustrious four-year-and-eleven-day history. (In fact, it had lost upwards of \$15 million.) Therefore, the announcement of its demise was not exactly unexpected and came as no great surprise to anyone. Indeed, many folks were expecting it, realizing that the paper's collapse was only a matter of time. But nevertheless, it was just as devastating when it finally did come.

When a gunman entered a Philadelphia bar and fired six shots, killing one and wounding two others, the Journal's headline for the story read, "6 Shots and a Bier."



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The C.C. Reader serves the following four-fold purpose: (1) To keep students informed about their campus community; (2) To provide editorial comment on issues facing the campus community; (3) To serve as a forum for student poetry, photographs, graphics, cartoons, and other creative endeavors; (4) To serve as a learning mechanism for all students interested in the journalistic process. This includes reporting, editing, layout, typesetting, and paste-up.

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The C.C. Reader welcomes letters from readers. Letters intended for publication should indicate the writer's college affiliation, if any. All letters MUST be signed by the writer. Unsigned letters cannot be printed. However, a writer's name may be withheld upon request. Letters should be legible (preferably typewritten, double spaced) and any material that is libelous or does not conform to the standards of good taste will be edited and/or rejected.

For the Journal was more than a newspaper. It was a paper chock-full of clever witticisms, punny and imaginative headlines, breathtaking photographs, exhaustive sports coverage, and, oh yes, a stray news item or two. It was a paper dedicated to serving the needs of the common man. It was a paper written by up-and-coming reporters and columnists. But most of all, it was a paper that dared to be different. It was not afraid to publicly embarrass those who had done wrong, be they politicians or athletes, readers or advertisers. It was not afraid to publicly embarrass prominent leaders, be they mayors or governors, presidents or shahs, and if need be, entire nations. And most importantly, it was not afraid to publicly embarrass itself, often going out on a limb with its brash predictions of upcoming events, be they bloody wars or presidential elections, ball games or Hollywood marriages. Yes, to many the Journal was more than any ordinary newspaper could ever hope to be: it was an institution.

When roofer John McCollough, who was alleged to have ties to the Philadelphia underworld, was slain in gangland fashion, the Journal announced the news, "Roofers' Boss Nailed."

Perhaps the most-read feature of the Journal which accounted for the paper's notoriety was its extensive sports coverage. Billing itself as "The Biggest Sports Section in America," and boldly boasting "Voted The Best Sports Section In Pennsylvania" (although we were never told exactly who did the voting), the Journal made it clear just where its priorities were. Devoted Journal readers religiously pored over the many columns upon columns of sports data and statistics which, admittedly, could be found nowhere else. And to these sports fans--it was the Journal's sports section or no sports section at all...

When John Lennon was murdered in New York last January, the Journal's headlines proclaimed, "John Lennon Killed By Beatle-Maniac."

Certainly the Journal had its share of detractors. In fact, it had more than its share of detractors. What was the complaint of these otherwise sane people? Why were they so critical of what to many was rapidly becoming an American way of life? In short, what was their problem?

The guess here is that they were dissatisfied with the paper's unchallenged ability to take an event of worldwide impact--often fateful--and make us laugh at it. To many, the Journal's often casual, often comic treatment of tragic events was considered irreverent. But no matter what it may have been, it was surely not that; these folks were barking up the wrong tree here.

Because in its flamboyant technique, the Journal made us see the light side of things, it made us laugh at seemingly hopeless situations. And it accomplished this not by resorting to amateur sensationalism--as some publications do, The National Enquirer coming to mind first--but by simply putting things in a different light. The Journal carried no fabricated bizarre news stories in its pages. All of its news stories were exactly that--reputable stories which were sometimes made more eye-catching by the addition of a clever headline or picture caption.

Another gripe some people had with the Journal was its writers. Granted, there were no Pulitzer Prize winners among them, but they all had one trait in common: by using an off-beat approach in their stories, they kept us interested... and reading. Names such as Stanley Green, Len Lear, Bruce Beans, and Charles Brown will not soon be forgotten. (Now ask yourself a question here: If your name were Charles Brown and you wrote for this fun-loving establishment, would you sign your name as Charles? I, for one, would find it irresistible to simply be known as "Charlie.")

Still others viewed the Journal's unique approach as arrogant and foolhardy. The point can indeed be made that, technically, the Journal was not a newspaper. It had news value--most of it being sports-related--but for the most part it was meant to entertain, rather than inform us. But why complain? If it's entertainment you were after, you bought the Journal. If it was news you wanted, then you bought a newspaper. Or, to put this in the vernacular, there were plenty of other fish in the sea...

When the United States shot down two Libyan war planes last summer, the Journal said it all in bright red letters, "U.S. Guns Down Madman's Warplanes!!"

There were many reasons for the Journal's popularity--too many to fully discuss here, in fact--but I would be remiss if I failed to mention its willingness to go out on the journalistic limb and make its now-legendary predictions. This was a paper which was not afraid to make itself look foolish. More often than not, these prognostications concerned sports, specifically the Philadelphia franchises. And more often than not, they proved to be wrong.

But there were events other than sports contests which occasionally warranted some bold predicting, and front-page ones at that.

For instance, on December 16, 1981, the Journal's entire front page screamed, "There May Be No Tomorrow For The Journal."

Unfortunately, this was one prediction which proved to be all too true.

--William J. Neil