

commentary

from other pens...

Press conferences are a careful balancing act

By Lawrence L. Knutson

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The presidential news conference, always a high-wire act, has left indelible impressions: John F. Kennedy's quick wit. Ronald Reagan's masterful stagecraft. Bill Clinton's command of facts.

The event is a high-stakes game. Most presidents treat it as they would a shark-filled pool, with caution, respect and careful preparation.

When Jimmy Carter held his first news conference as president Feb. 8, 1977, he opened by saying what many presidents have kept to themselves: "I look forward to these confrontations with the press to kind of balance up the nice and pleasant things that come to me as president."

While making himself available almost daily for a brief question or two in a variety of settings, President Bush is also approaching formal press conferences with caution.

Since assuming office in January, Bush has held just two White House news conferences, both called with less than an hour's notice in the small, workaday press room rather than the spacious glamor of the chandeliered East Room.

"The president prefers an informality about certain things," press secretary Ari Fleischer said. "He always reserves the right to come down here on short notice."

"I think probably what (Bush aides) are trying to do is to ease him into press conferences. They see the possibility of making mistakes," said Martha Joynt Kumar, a political scientist at Towson State University in Maryland and a student of the White House news operation.

In the century since Theodore Roosevelt first gathered reporters around his desk, the presidential news conference has been adjusted to exploit technology and meet the needs of each occupant of the Oval Office.

Theodore Roosevelt, an aide once said, "understood the necessity of guiding the press to suit one's own ends." He succeeded in doing just that, in part by threatening to withhold news from newspapers that published stories he did not want in print.

Woodrow Wilson convened the first formal news conference on March 15, 1913, under restrictive rules in which little or nothing the president said could be quoted without approval from the White House.

Twenty years later, Franklin D. Roosevelt made the news conference an effective policy tool. He did away with the custom of submitting questions in writing. FDR also kept tight control over the information flowing to the reporters jammed around his desk.

Kumar, in a book on the White House and the media, writes that reporters learned quickly what FDR was trying to do was not helping them get news, but rather "to get them to frame stories in ways that were favorable to him."

It was always a masterful performance, one described by author and reporter John Gunther: "In 20 minutes Mr. Roosevelt's features had expressed amazement, curiosity, mock alarm, genuine interest, worry ... and surpassing charm. Yet he SAID almost nothing. ... I never met anyone who showed greater capacity for avoiding a direct answer while giving the questioner the feeling he HAD been answered."

Harry Truman began the custom of an opening statement to frame issues the way he wanted them. And unlike Roosevelt, he provided seats.

Jim Haggerty, Dwight Eisenhower's press secretary, persuaded the president to open the doors to television.

Kennedy took television a step further, becoming the first president to have his news conferences broadcast live.

Reagan's TV advisers perfected the opening shot, with the cheerful president striding down a broad red carpet into the East Room.

Kumar said the modern presidential news conference has endured because it has proved useful. They are, she said, the closest a president gets to "having a conversation with the nation."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Lawrence L. Knutson has covered the White House, Congress and Washington's history for more than 30 years.



'This is not your country'

HANOI — The big lesson from a week's visit to Vietnam is that the past remains potent. Just as African-Americans cannot forget the legacy of slavery or the Jewish people the horror of the Holocaust, Asian nations retain a bitter memory of colonialism.

This capital, located just across the Tonkin Gulf, maintains a regular vigil to the same anti-colonial legacy as that ignited by the U.S. spy plane incident off China's Hainan island.

I refer to the old French prison in Hanoi that once housed the patriotic heroes of Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh. Here you see the torture chambers, the iron shackles and the guillotine that would be transported province to province — all remnants of a colonial government willing to do what was necessary to maintain its grip on Indo-China.

A one-room exhibit, which could be easily overlooked, notes the presence within these same walls of the notorious "Hanoi Hilton," where U.S. fliers were forced to endure years of ill treatment and torture. What the Vietnamese learned from the French they practiced on men like John McCain.

What grabs the visitor is not the cover-up of the



chris matthews

• commentary

bad treatment endured by the Americans but the celebration, a half century later, of the punishment perpetrated by the French colonialists. The people of Vietnam do not want to forget the price the West made them pay for their independence.

We in the West make no such effort, of course. We recall the era of European colonialism with nostalgia. Those fortunate to travel through Asia or Africa see the old hotels and sense the charm and elegance of the old colonial lifestyle. Over a poolside drink at the quaint old Metropole here, we see nothing and think even less of the brutal policies that supported these French, British and Dutch empires: the willingness to torture and kill those local patriots with the courage to resist.

Yet beneath the seductive surface of all the old colonial worlds was the willingness of the colonial

power to enforce its rule, to torture and to execute the colonized.

This is what we Americans need to keep in our minds in every dispute with the formerly colonized. Nationalism, the key to overthrowing Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, is the key to understanding why Asians retain their prickly sensitivity to the West. They want to trade with us, want our tourist dollars, and are willing to drive us around on their three-wheel bicycles. What they demand in return is recognition of their sovereignty.

When it comes to China, Vietnam or any other country that once felt the humiliation of colonialism, we must remember the scolding a North Vietnamese Army officer gave a complaining U.S. prisoner: "This is not your country."

We don't have to like that sentiment, but as we work our way through situations like Hainan, we darn well have to know it.

Chris Matthews, a nationally syndicated columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, is host of "Hardball" on CNBC and MSNBC cable channels. The 1999 edition of "Hardball" was published by Touchstone Books.

Making connections: Another strategy

(Last of two parts)

Last week, in the first part of this series we described how trade shows, conventions and business expos offer great business building opportunities. Many owners and managers use these events to find new customers, suppliers and business partners.

We also shared tips on exhibiting at such shows and how to get the most out of each event. In this column, we'll help you learn how to make connections while attending shows.

We call this business-building strategy "learning by walking around." You can find great ideas to adapt and use in building your own business. You can also establish great business contacts.

Successful mingling

Be prepared. It pays to be prepared when you visit shows and conventions. Take a good supply of business cards, a camera and a pen and a small note pad. When you see useful ideas, write them down.

Plan ahead. Have an idea of what you wish to accomplish and what companies you want to visit. Get an exhibitor's list, and mark those you really want to see first.

Conserve your time. Don't allow pushy people to corner you. If you have no interest, end the conversation gracefully. Say, "Thank you for the information" or "I enjoyed visiting with you, but I need to visit several other booths." Then, move on.

Initiate the approach. If someone has



don taylor

• minding your own business

something you're interested in, don't hesitate to approach and ask questions to start the conversation. Even your competitors may share information with you if you are genuinely interested.

Collect business cards. Ask for a card when you want to learn more or contact someone later. Make notes on the back of the card. Don't trust your memory.

Set goals. Have specific objectives in mind when you go. To "meet 10 potential customers," "find three new suppliers" or "find a new line" etc.

Always look for great signs, good brochures and clever logos. Collect samples and make notes on how you might use something like it.

Look for good merchandising ideas. The exhibitors want to grab your attention as you're going by their displays. If it works at the show, you may find it useful later.

Develop and use a 10-second commercial. Use it when you are introducing yourself. If you can describe your business quickly and clearly, it will help you spend your time more wisely. You will see how you can help others or vice versa.

Don't spend too much time talking to people you already know. Unless there is a specific reason to carry on a detailed discussion, keep moving. Be courteous and friendly, exchange pleasantries, but keep moving.

Arrive early and work your contact list as quickly as possible. Often the early birds avoid the busy aisles and people jams that may occur later.

Don't over do it. You can't spend all of your time going to shows and conventions. Remember, this is only one of the ways you can grow your business.

Don't neglect your present customers. Don't go to shows looking for more business unless you're serving your present customers well. If you're too busy to stay up with your present workload, you don't need more business. Use shows to gather prospects and grow your business when you have slack time.

Don't forget to evaluate the shows you attend. Some of these shows may be places you would want to go as an exhibitor. If you feel the typical attendee is your target customer, check off booth availability next year. Then go back and read part one again and get ready to make some connections.

Don Taylor is the coauthor of "Up Against the Wal-Marts." You may write to him in care of "Minding Your Own Business," PO Box 67, Amarillo, TX 79105. Column sponsored by Goodland Area Chamber of Commerce Business Development Committee.

The Goodland Daily News

(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

Member: Kansas Press Association

The Associated Press

Inland Press Association Colorado Press Association

e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com

Steve Haynes, President

Tom Betz, Editor/Editorial Page

Rachel Miscall, Managing Editor

Janet Craft, Society Editor/Reporter

Reporter/Sports

Doug Jackson, Eric Yonkey, Advertising Sales

Susanne Allaman, Adv. Production Debra Turner, Page Prod.

Sheila Smith, Office Manager Pat Schiefen Bookkeeping

Nor'west Press

Jim Bowker, General Manager

Ron VanLoenen

Judy McKnight

Richard Westfahl

Lana Westfahl

Betty Morris

Helen Dilts



nwkansas.com

N.T. Betz, Director of Internet Services (nbetz@nwkansas.com)
Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. (support@nwkansas.com)

Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: daily@nwkansas.com. Advertising questions can be sent to: gdnadv@nwkansas.com

The Goodland Daily News assumes no liability for mistakes or omissions in advertising or failure to publish beyond the actual cost of the ad.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$22; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. By mail in Kansas, Colorado: three months, \$ 28; six months, \$50; 12 months, \$95. (All tax included.) Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$25; six months, \$40; 12 months, \$75.

Incorporating:

The Sherman County Herald

Founded by Thomas McCants

1935-1989

THE SHERMAN COUNTY STAR

Founded by Eric and Roxie Yonkey

1994-2001

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



berry's world

