

Program: Wallace Westfeldt on TV Campaign Coverage



Wallace Westfeldt

To understand what is happening in television or print, one has to understand the environment. Advancements in technology have changed the way we get news.

At the center of this technological shift is the Internet. That said, before booting up the Internet where up-to-the-minute world news is at our fingertips, Westfeldt still wakes in the morning preferring the newspaper. “We all want to read about our local happenings first,” said Westfeldt.

A Career in Journalism: Mr. Westfeldt commented on the shift in journalism careers. He spoke about the old ways. “We learned how to write a declarative sentence, drop all adjectives from the writing and do it quickly,” Westfeldt said. Some of the “news”, he said, is shockingly subjective and clearly unedited. In his view, there is nothing more important in the career of a good journalist than having a good editor.

Bloggers and TV: Mainstream media generally produces fair quality reporters and sends them out to capture the news. Westfeldt acknowledged the growing blog movement—a phenomenon about which he said, “Bloggers are like mosquitoes. They’re all over the place.” Though they write without filters or editors, Westfeldt said, bloggers are often very helpful in representing a full story. And, bloggers have their place in campaign elections. Who else but the late night politically-minded bloggers could have found Sarah Palin and blogged her straight to the White House? Westfeldt has little qualm with these so called citizen journalists—he only wishes they would be edited.

Accountability in Journalism: Who is accountable for the mainstream work? Westfeldt said it is a difficult question to answer, but accountability usually falls on publishers and editors.

Reporters, such as Katie Couric and Brian Williams, also have a role. Westfeldt noted that both Couric and Williams’ interviews with Governor Palin lacked basic follow up questions, which are the foundation of all quality journalism. The same issue turned the election’s debates into “fluffy talks.” Neither party wants their candidate in an unpredictable format where public scrutiny could harm their image. The scripted questions and responses leave

much to be desired. Westfeldt referred to other European countries in which a team approach is used in debates. This format allows information to be covered by those best able to accurately speak on a given topic. America may be better served if this was integrated into our own political debates.

Television Has Its Place: The past two months have seen a wonderful crossover as *Saturday Night Live* makes parodies of leading politicians. Undeniably, Westfeldt said, these entertainment skits continue to have a profound influence on the reporting and potentially the polls.

Economy and Journalism: All of the major papers are cutting back on staff, said Westfeldt. NBC in the early ’60s covered Africa with one man who was based in London. Westfeldt predicts the same will happen with all papers. Television is doing better, though some programs deserve to fail (i.e shouting talking heads). Still, Westfeldt is optimistic about the future and believes small papers have a better chance of surviving than big ones. Papers such as the New York Times, Washington Post and Chicago Tribune are all cutting back. As internet technology is more universally used, it is likely that widely read papers will be strictly online resources in the next ten years.

“Bloggers are like mosquitoes. They’re all over the place.”

— Wallace Westfeldt

Q: Can you comment on the difference between journalists and bloggers in terms of credentials and perhaps credibility?

A: There are editors on board with the large blog sites, but most bloggers are freewheeling individuals wanting to get their opinions out. They are policed by their own fear of being wrong, sued or laughed at.

Q: With the increase in early elections. How can journalism expect to effect the polls?

A: Those voters have cast their lot and cannot change their decision.

Q: With all of the “fact checking” groups out there, do you see an increase in investigative journalism?

A: Not really.

Q: Who was your favorite interview?

A: Easily Pakistani Opposition Leader Benazir Bhutto. She was one of the most beautiful people I ever met.

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Q: Why do papers choose to endorse politicians?

A: Papers have been endorsing candidates for two hundred years. However, they were relegated to the editorial pages. More and more you see quiet endorsements in the news itself, which is no place for subjectivity.

Q: BBC is taking over the world. They seem to have a person on the spot in the most remote areas. Is BBC a different kind of animal now?

A: They have always had the most far-reaching journalism. They are courageous people.

Q: Do you think McCain and Palin posed certain terms in order for Brian Williams to get his interview? Is that why he had so few follow up questions?

A: I don't know if he was denied the right to do that. It seems to me they were trying to protect her by not letting her go before the press without Mr. McCain being present.

Announcements:

President Steve is sad to announce that today is Rose Anderson's last day as a Plattsburgh Rotarian. Good luck with your new ventures.

Monday, Nov. 17, is the next board meeting at CCC Dining Hall. This can be used as a make up meeting for any club member.

Saturday, Nov. 29, is the Rotary Bell Ringing for Salvation Army. See CJ to sign up next Wednesday. Ringing site: Wal-Mart from 10am-3pm.

Wednesday, Dec 17, is the Holiday Meeting at Lake Forrest.

Trick-or-Treat on Safety Street is coming up on Friday. Thank you very much to the contributing volunteers.

As chair of the gifts committee, Carmen Carpentier received a plaque on behalf of the Club from the Clinton County School Board for contributing to their Academic Recognition Dinner.

Happy Thoughts: Ita Bullard announced that she is having all four of her grandchildren visit this weekend. President Steve put in a dollar to thank Rose Anderson for her years of service and fellowship.

Guests: Sibyl Kiroy (Paul Connley); Ronna Bosko (Rose Anderson)

Visiting Rotarians: None

DATES TO REMEMBER:

11/17 Board Meeting, Noon, CCC Dining Hall—PARC
 11/29 Bell Ringing for Salvation Army (Wal-Mart 10-3)
 12/17 Holiday Meeting at Lake Forest

2009:

6/5-7 24th Annual Fishing Classic

ON-LINE MAKEUP:

www.rotaryclubone.org

NEARBY MAKE UP LOCATIONS:

Mon.	Burlington	12:10pm	Wyndham Hotel
	Canton	12:15pm	Best Western
	Ottawa	12:30pm	Ottawa Marriott Hotel
Tues.	Plattsburgh Sunrise	7:30am	Elk's Club
	Saranac Lake	7:30am	Hotel Saranac
	Massena	12:15pm	Elk's Lodge
	St. Albans	12:15pm	Masonic Temple
	Montreal	12:30pm	Holiday Inn-Pt. Claire
	Grand Isle	6:00pm	So Hero Congregational
Wed.	Middlebury	7:15am	Rosie's Restaurant
	Albany	12:15pm	Wolferts Roost Ctry Club on Van Rensselaer Blvd.
	Tupper Lake	12:15pm	Pine Grove Restaurant
	Potsdam	12:15pm	Sergi's Banquet Hall
	Watertown	12:15pm	Best Western Carriage House
	Chateaugay	6:15pm	Leonard's Cherry Knoll Rest.
	AuSable Forks	7:00pm	Ambulance Hall (no meal)
Thurs.	Williston	7:15am	Will Federated Church
	Lake Placid	7:30am	Howard Johnson's
	Watertown AM	7:30am	Best Western Carriage House
	South Burlington	7:30am	VT National Country Club
	Champlain-Rouses Pt.	7:45am	Old Tyme Café
	Malone	Noon	Gallagher's
	Colchester-Milton	12:10pm	Hampton Inn
	Ogdensburg	12:15pm	Gran-View Restaurant
Fri.	Burlington Sunrise	7:15am	Ethan Allen Club
	Old Montreal	12:15pm	Holiday Inn Select

Fines: A dollar for everyone not wearing a pin.

50/50: The pot today was \$1,647 and Tracy Clark drew the King of Diamonds.

Another candle burning for:
 Anne Hansen (11/06)

	Nov. 5	Nov. 12	Nov. 19
Program	Ft. Ticonderoga TBA	Progress at Novabus Jim Tooley	TBA Barb Maconi
Greeters	Timothy Kononan & Angelo LaMariana	Martin Mannix & Vicki Marking	Tim McSweeney & Robert Miller
Hospitality	Sonia Long	Lori Mathieu	Donald Moore
Blessing	Peter Cadieux	Jack Dee	Kevin Killeen
Introductions	Lois Lynch	Bill McBride	Ellie Murray
Program Intro.	Howard Lowe	Bob Smith	Bob Smith
Thank Speaker	Ronald Malseptic	John McGaulley	Dave Napolitan
New Mem. Talk	—	—	Kristen Shrives
Seasoned Mem.	Cornelia Forrence	—	—
Food Shelf	—	—	—



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