

Local columnist has tough row to hoe

On June 30, 2004, I first became a regular contributor to The Gazette. Today marks my 100th column. Stop the presses! Good thing I number files on my Web site, or I probably wouldn't have noticed either.

A lot has happened in four years. We've seen a Michael Moore film about how awful America is, a Michael Moore film about how awful America is, a national story at the Air Force Academy, a national story at the Air Force Academy, a pastor resign as a result of a sex scandal, a governor resign as a result of a sex scandal and a governor resign as a result of a sex scandal. *Plus ca change*, I suppose.

On the personal front, I've played a jazz gig with Big Bad Voodoo Daddy, had a classmate win a Nobel Prize, and had another diagnosed with terminal cancer before giving a world-famous "Last Lecture." (I'm pleased to say he's still with us). I've endured the trauma of a daughter on Accutane, and sent my son off to college. Those have all been fun to share with you.

It's the e-mail, though, that's the best part. I get a ton of it, and while I can't always respond I read everything you send me. Some of you like me, some of you don't, but it's always interesting to learn what you think.

Some responses are predictable. When I suggest that government taxes too much and spends too much, I hear from liberals about fairness, the wonderful European welfare state, and how awful Republicans are. When I write that consenting adults ought to be allowed to do what they want, I hear from social conservatives about God's law, the importance of social order, and my own personal moral bankruptcy.

So it goes. Clearly, when it comes to convincing you that free markets and civil liberties are two sides of the same coin, I still have some work to do.

But other times, people surprise me. A column I wrote about apostrophes got me more feedback than anything I'd written in a long time. I had no idea people were so passionate about language. On two occasions, alert readers caught grammatical errors. That's horribly embarrassing, but much appreciated. Stick-



OPINION
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Contributing columnist

lers of the world unite!

Sometimes people will point out flaws in my reasoning or aspects of an issue I've missed. That's always gratifying, but keep in mind that I've only got about 700 words. That means I have to make tough choices. Some good points will inevitably wind up in the recycle bin.

Other times you'll just say "Right on!" "Great stuff!" "Keep it up!" After reading a particularly vitriolic e-mail or two, those are always nice.

It's a shame the number of e-mails I get, pro or con, that never make it to the letters page of The Gazette because people don't bother. Many of them could be published as is, just by adding opinion@gazette.com to the "To" field. It's a real shame. More of you should speak out! America works better with more speech, not less.

Some issues of interest to me will always be a tough sell in this town. These include mathematics education, legalization of victimless crimes and gay rights. The hardest battle here, though, is fighting for reason.

I know whenever I write something about why creationism is nonsense, ESP is bunk, ghostbusting is stupid and astrology is an embarrassment, I'm going to hear the same tired responses: I've got a worldview I can't see outside of, there are all sorts of true things that can't be proven, I can't make life in a test tube, evolution is just a theory, evolution is a religion. Come on, people, which is it?

These are, I believe, either wrong or simply miss the point. Outside of Colorado Springs, most of what I write on scientific topics wouldn't be controversial. In town, however, it's clear that I've got my work cut out for me. But as my mom and dad taught me, giving up in despair is not an option.

So I'd like to thank everyone for your responses to these last 100 columns, pro or con. I've got some interesting things planned for the next four years, so let's keep talking. Life is more interesting when it's shared.

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