Telling the Truth – Another Letter to the Editor

Last week my newest most favorite “The Potomac News” columnist, Charles Reichley, ran a column defending Rush Limbaugh’s now infamous “Phony Soldiers” comment. Rush “ditto head” Limbaugh annoys me just by sharing the same planet, but his September 26 “Phony Soliders” crack really got to me. I’d already signed Gen Wes Clark’s petition to have Limbaugh’s show pulled from the Military Armed Forces Radio Television Stations (AFRTS) network, and Reichley’s column was one more chance to make my feelings publicity known.

I submitted my LTE Friday morning, and it was published yesterday, Sunday.

The thrust of Reichley’s column, “Phony Soliders, Fake Outrage” was that Limbaugh was a bit flippant in his choice of words but otherwise did nothing wrong. In Reichley’s world, the bad people are really all the liberals who oppose the Iraq war. Based on this column, the nexus of Reichley’s evil-doers seemed to be one Jesse Macbeth. Jesse Macbeth washed out of Army basic training, was discharged, and then lied about is service, apparently to gain VA benefits he would not otherwise be entitled to. He briefly gained notoriety by claiming to have witnessed war crimes while serving with the Army Rangers in Iraq. We’re talking shades of Robert Garwood here, only
this time Macbeth’s agenda served people opposed to the war.

Somehow, this petty conman and two-bit criminal has become the focus point of Conservatives proof that all those opposing the Iraqi war are denuded, deranged, self-serving liars who don’t deserve to even voice their opinions, let alone be heard.

In other words, it’s typical rhetoric from today’s most excellent conservatives.

So, on October 4, after reading Reichley’s latest screed, I prepared my rebuttal as follows:

Mr. Reichley’s October 4 column “Phony soldiers, fake outrage” is a marvel of half-truths and innuendos, seemingly intended to shield Rush Limbaugh, slander liberals, and insult Democrats.

During Limbaugh’s September 26 show, he did characterize service members who advocate U.S. withdrawal from Iraq as “phony soldiers.” Listening to a caller’s statement that supporters of withdrawal “like to pull these soldiers that come up out of the blue and talk to the media,” Limbaugh responded, “The phony soldiers.” There was 1 minute and 50 seconds of discussion between Limbaugh’s “phony soldiers” comment and his later reference to Jesse Macbeth.

Jesse Macbeth did falsely claim to be an Iraq War veteran after his 2004 discharge. He duped uncritical media outlets into publishing his fake claims of committing war crimes in Iraq. Macbeth joined “Iraq Veterans Against the War” in January 2006, but the group severed all ties within four months, publicly announcing “…Jesse is not what he represented himself to be.”

Last month Macbeth was sentenced to 5 months in jail for making false statements to the VA. He is a petty criminal,
and in my opinion does not rate the special attention of
denouncement from any Congressperson.

Macbeth’s lies do not negate the sad truth about Iraq. Just
since January 2006 there have been 59 military court-martials
of our troops for crimes including torture, rape and
murdering Iraqi civilians. Iraqi civilian casualty estimates
now range as high as 81,394 people killed and over 2 million
refugees, with 3,808 of our troops killed and 28,009 wounded.

This is not innuendo, slander or insults.

I am a navy veteran who volunteered in 1974, a few short
years after Rush Limbaugh used a cyst on his buttocks as
excuse to draft-dodge Vietnam. Mr. Limbaugh’s “phony
soldiers” statement, from a man too cowardly to serve our
county when he could, insults thousands of my brothers and
sisters in Iraq. Retired General Wes Clark, frequently
insulted by Limbaugh far beyond anything General Petraeus
ever received from MoveOn, is working to have Limbaugh’s show
pulled from the military AFRTS network.

The truth about Limbaugh, Macbeth, and Iraq are readily
available for those people willing to look. I would hope that
in the future Mr. Reichley spends more time looking for the
truth before writing.

I was most pleased to see that once again, “The Potomac News”
ran it on a Sunday, immediately following Reichley’s column.
I also noted that another reader wrote in to bash a recent
column by my other most favorite columnist, Ken Concannon, in
nearly the same tone I used to bash Reichley. Very
gradifying.

One would hope “The Potomac News” will recognize that their
current lineup of columnists are severly lacking, and bring in
different people. I’m not holding my breath.