

We need less personality



Jumping from yesterday's post, I referenced the loss of trust that exists across too many aspects of our lives.

It goes far beyond the government or law enforcement. It's pervasive in our school systems, our workplaces and even our homes.

When trust is lacking, suspicion often fills the vacancy and nowhere is this more apparent than in the view of modern media.

Setting aside for the moment the ravings of the political parties, who tend to view the media as patently biased against their own side, this presidential election year does highlight one area worthy of attention: news reporting.

Since we're not going to talk about conservative versus liberal, we don't need to do a FOX vs. CNN conversation. In fact, what I want to talk about is their most striking similarity.

For whatever reason (and, again, as with yesterday's brush with possibilities, I leave the origins to historians), people have lost either interest or faith in the news.

Part of this is a new generation which views the world through a more compact lens. Whether its mobile devices or bottom-of-the-screen crawls, the news, if it's even accessed, is delivered in small bits.

At the same time, visual media seem to have come to a concrete

belief that the delivery system for news can only be accomplished by relatively young (and sometimes just plain young) newscasters offering as much personal commentary as actual news.

Almost every channel, from local to national, has carbon-copy twin anchors delivering sound bites and personal opinions and, occasionally, straight news. The relevant decision who mans the desk seems to be about photogenic appeal as opposed to journalistic integrity.

The main national news networks employ dozens of "talking heads" to give their opinion on what the news means, with the obligatory "slant" of the background of the "guest speaker". Through all of that, is it any wonder people can't figure out where to go to get the "truth"?

Forgive the "in my day" reference, but when I was growing up, we had a strong conviction and connection with our newscasters. Nationally, names like Cronkite, Brinkley, Reasoner, Jennings and Reynolds came into our homes and delivered the news without puffed up imagery or distracting side commentary.

Locally, we had Ann Bishop, who offered a no-nonsense style of news reporting that gave us the real facts we needed to hear without dehumanizing her or forcing her to adopt an entertainment veneer.

None of these people needed a program with their own name on it to espouse their personal beliefs. Their interest and goal was to give us the news, reported with professionalism and integrity, so that we could rely upon them to find out what we needed to know.

They all were real people. They all had their own personality and it came through. They were not, however, "personalities." They were news reporters.

As we battle our way through the mudslinging, sensationalism and competitive nonsense that labels every item on the air as "Breaking News", it would be a wonderful help if we had more true news anchors.

And less personality.