

Thank you for this recognition of a life's efforts that have been achieved with the hard work, inspiration, support, and cooperation of many, many others. I am honored to join those you have recognized, many of whom taught me and exemplified for me the concept that radio stations should be of a community, not just in a community, and that last word in the old phrase "public interest, convenience, and necessity" speaks of an obligation beyond ourselves and our bottom lines.

I want to single out one person my wife: Nancy, who sometimes delivered dinner in a covered plate and grocery sack to me at the Capitol when the days were more 5 to 9 than 9 to 5. At the Missouri net we had an aggressive newsroom that could not be intimidated, or bought, or persuaded to ignore the issues and the people who deserved the spotlight. We were protected by the founder of our company and Hall of Famer, Clyde Lear, himself a journalist who understood the importance of a free, unafraid, press, and the necessity in a free society of a public---informed by that free and responsible press.

Long ago, I first heard the words of Walter Williams, the founder of the world's first School of Journalism: "I believe in the profession of Journalism. I believe that the public journal is a public trust, that all connected with it are to the full measure of their responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of a lesser service than the public service is betrayal of this trust." I had the Journalist's Creed translated into Romanian and Polish and distributed to young, idealistic, journalists when I was sent to those countries to run seminars of developing independent news operations after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

As the first of what I hope will be many news directors to receive this recognition, it seems appropriate to make a few points.

In my half-century plus as a journalist first — a broadcast journalist, second --- I never --- ever --- broadcast "fake news." The Missouri net never once did "fake news," nor did the hundreds of news people at dozens of stations throughout Missouri who provided stories to us.

Those who accuse people like me of doing fake news are accusing people like me of being liars. I don't lie. We didn't lie. The Missouri net today doesn't lie. And our affiliate news people who fed us thousands of stories never lied.

When it comes to integrity, I will stack the news people I worked with against the claimed integrity of those seeking or holding positions of power any day of the week.

It might seem that those who accuse people in my profession of doing "fake news" are only painting the national news organizations with that brush. But there is a splatter that taints all journalists, and I do not believe it is unintentional.

My good friend Dan Shelley, who has gone from sending us stories from KTTS in Springfield to being the Executive Director of the Radio Television Digital News Association, recently observed, "In today's divisive, vitriolic environment, journalists should watch their backs but not back down. The only antidote to attacks on responsible journalism is more and better journalism."

So let me put it plainly: Wherever in our industry there is fake news, it is not likely to be in newsrooms that are free from political, economic, and corporate pressure. But to the misfortune of our communities, to our state, and to our nation, there have been too many places where the independent, local, news voice has been reduced to insignificance, or has been turned into a corporate mouthpieces.

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It might be argued that our industry is complicit in undermining the work of the people in our newsrooms because of the constant and badly imbalanced drumbeat of division, derision, denigration, and distrust on our airwaves that convinces people they are victims of—rather than partners in—the American system of government.

In effect, we splatter ourselves, and in doing so, we do a disservice to the people of integrity---the reporters, news directors, and editors, the photojournalists in whose programs candidates and special interests might buy time but should never control content..

This is a time for all of us to find the courage to build or rebuild public trust in ourselves by taking more seriously our roles as trustees of the public, and being more of a “necessity” than the furniture store in the next block, the clothing store at the mall, the yogurt shop up the street.

It is time for less manipulative talk... and time for a commitment to more significant news that helps our public think for itself.

I am grateful to the Missouri Broadcasters Association for this recognition of what I have been and what I still am, and the hopes I have that our industry can be more of a necessity for more people than that the furniture store in the next block.

It is a great honor to be in company with so many people for whom I have such great regard. Thank you for this recognition.

The first draft included some additional material that was removed for time constraints:

** As I heard recently from dozens of anchors instructed to say it, “Unfortunately, some members of the media use their platforms to push their own personal bias and agenda to control ‘exactly what people think’...This is extremely dangerous to a democracy.” I marveled at the irony of that comment and its origin.

***“We must recognize---because we must care about such things---that it is not just broadcasting that faces these difficulties in acknowledging the public trust that we should carry, but it is also our colleagues in the print field who find themselves working for venture capitalists or corporate owners who hollow out newspapers, escalating local ignorance while increasing earnings---the only thing that really counts to them. This, too, is extremely dangerous to democracy.

“At a time when our country badly needs more eyes and more ears on government and those in it, our media are becoming increasingly blind and deaf. I hope that the things I have said tonight

based on living and working in the era I have known will not be dismissed as the nostalgic thoughts of someone whose time has passed. For if it is so, we are plowing our own path to insignificance.

“We must admit, however, that such things are the downsides of living in a free country that believes in free speech as well as capitalism. With capitalist privilege, however, there should come public responsibility and we must live in hope that there will be people who cannot be moved from the belief that, ‘the public journal is a public trust, that all connected with it are to the full measure of their responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of a lesser service than the public service is betrayal of this trust.’”