

The flow of news... Kind of replaced... If they were only one network... The birdfeeder... Utility squirrels...

All, the news used to flow along like a river. A relatively steady pace. Sometimes the level would change depending upon how much news there was. Occasionally, it would seem as though the river had run dry. But at other times we felt as though we were in the midst of a flood. We could, most of the time, count on the river gliding along free of debris. That has changed.

The river has been transformed into a rapids. Significantly, the rapids can contain dangerous, sometimes hidden, debris. My hunch is that the reason for this change in the way news reaches us is due to the Internet, coupled with the fact that everybody who wants to create and post news – true or not – has access to it.

False information, whether as a result of an error or connivance fills the rapids. This means that the good old days of Walter Cronkite vanished, without a trace, not to be heard of again.

Kind of replaced...

There are people pretending to deliver the news to us. If we listen long enough we are likely to notice that they are contradicting each other and/or giving dissimilar slants to the same fact situation.

Then we have to consider sort of people who are delivering the news. Boomers were accustomed to rather serious authoritative newscasters. They were not trying to charm us. They just wanted to get the news/events of the day across to us accurately/reliably. (Note: I spent a good amount of time working at NBC Radio in New York City. What I remember best about the experience was the seriousness/dedication of the people who were working in the newsroom. They were not interested in bits and pieces of information. Only the whole story was enough. The newscasters did not have a star status. Rather, they were intensely interested in the work that was being done by the news staff. They virtually worked alongside them shoulder to shoulder. It was an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect; a well-oiled team on a Mission.)

The heading *Kind of replaced* is intended to be ironic. None of the classical news people who broadcast on television or radio have truly been replaced. Instead, we seem to have a bunch of people who are more style conscious than news conscious. Yes, there are exceptions; they are few and far between. I sometimes wonder if I could possibly know what they're talking about.

When I listen to reports of the various stock market averages breathlessly reported I think that I am listening to sports scores. When I stop to do the math about the movement of, say, the Dow Jones industrial average, it takes only simple arithmetic to realize how minuscule the movement was. Even when it is reported like the sinking of the TITANIC.

If there were only one network...

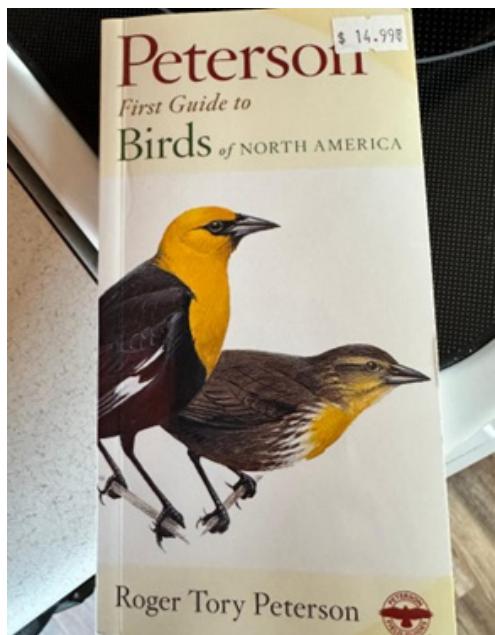
If you combined all of the news sources into one organization it would probably be called AFN (Alternative Facts Network). They could promote themselves by saying they are the News Buffet. The listener/viewer has the option to pick out what they want to believe, ignoring the rest. (Note: After I wrote the preceding it dawned on me that we already have the AFN. It is just fragmented.)

The birdfeeder...

You know, I haven't figured out whether it's birdfeeder or bird feeder. Simply writing the preceding sentence prompted me to make an AI search for the correct nomenclature. Turns out that both are correct. I think that I'll stick with birdfeeder.

Since discussing the birdfeeder in the column I have had a lot of people providing solid advice, as well as sharing their experiences. Lee Roscoe suggested that I get the Peterson First Guide to Birds of North America. I was a got step ahead of her in this because I bought it when I got the birdfeeder. (Being a step ahead of Lee does not happen very often.) It's a very handy book.

Here's what it looks like:



It's a very fine book. However, it does not provide any recipes (just kidding.)

Margie King Saphier, of the APT Group, whom I have known since she was Margie King when we were in Junior High, wrote to me about the experience that her son, Gramee, had with Black Bears. He lives in Stowe, Vermont, where Black Bears are able to hibernate less because they treat themselves to suet and birdseed.

Margie related the story of how bears were observant enough to figure out how to enter her son's home, foraging for food. They know the difference between a doorknob, which they don't mess with and a lever type handle that they can activate with the simple tap of a paw. Margie encouraged me to be cautious about Black Bears. I will be, since I already was. I have the advantage of my front door of having both a lever type handle and a deadbolt. So, unless the bear happens to be a competent locksmith, I'm safe.

Utility squirrels...

Shortly before I headed East to visit with Ciara we had a power outage for a couple of hours here in Black River Falls. Quickly rectified. During the outage I was reminded of a story told to me by an executive of Madison Gas and Electric. I was at a luncheon and there were a few other people at the table with us.

One of the fellows asked about power outages and why it seemed that they had troubles with some of the transformers. Because of squirrels climbing in. The executive bent forward conspiratorially and in a hushed tone said, "When we have a transformer failure there is one standing order. It's get another squirrel out of the freezer." I thought that was refreshing honesty. Rare these days.

First yawn...

Until tomorrow...

Ken

Ken Artis
Black River Falls, WI USA