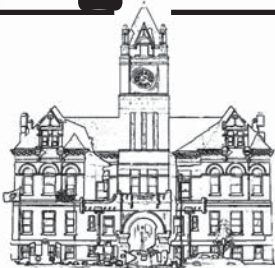


# Opinion



## Free Press Viewpoint

### Explaining the Iraqi war is a tough call

The questions don't get any easier. That was apparent at Wednesday's Pentagon briefing, featuring Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers.

The journalists were more determined to get answers to some tough questions. The give-and-take between them (the journalists and the top two figures in the Department of Defense), was intense. Sometimes uncomfortable.

The mounting death toll of American servicemen — now exceeding 635 — and reports that our forces battling it out on Iraqi soil with insurgents won't be coming home anytime soon, despite earlier *guarantees*, brought a bit of stuttering and stammering from the general and the defense secretary as they tried to explain the uncertainties surrounding this expanding war.

It was an uneasy briefing to watch. Mr. Rumsfeld wasn't his usual *charming, witty* self. That smile wasn't as pronounced. The general was obviously concerned and maybe even a bit frustrated at the opposition's ability to do what we think many in leadership hadn't dreamed would happen, especially after our near perfect assault on Baghdad one year ago.

The Iraqi war — the war on terrorism — knows no front. It's all over the place. It's unlike any war we've ever been involved in. We can only hope that those wearing the uniform of the U.S.A. can, by miracle, stroke of luck or whatever, bury the evil doers in the very soil they are trying to claim as their own.

No, we can't cut and run. There is just too much American blood staining the battleground in that country to do that. And there will be more of it before it's over — if ever it is over.

President Bush undoubtedly does a lot of tossing and turning at night, wondering if he made the right decision. But at this point to question oneself is moot. The decision was made, the troops are there, the war goes on.

It's not about the economy. It's not about health care. It's not about prescription drug concerns. It's not about saving Social Security. It's not about a lot of things that seem so insignificant at this time. What it is, however, is about our guys and gals putting everything on the line — including their lives..

It's easy to understand why Mr. Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers stutter and stammer as they grope for words to answer those tough questions.

They probably have questions of their own, too.

*Tom (TD) Dreiling*  
*Free Press Publisher*

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### So, where do you rank?

Ever wonder what profession is rated the most honest and ethical and which one had the lowest scores?

According to the CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll's annual survey, the nursing profession was ranked the top most trusted occupation by Americans.

The poll noted that four out of the five times nurses were included in the poll, they continually ranked higher than any other profession.

The one exception came in 2001, Gallup poll officials noted in the survey, when firefighters (in their lone appearance on the honesty and ethics list) outscored nurses in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

For those wondering which profession was the absolute lowest, it should be no surprise that car salesmen came in last place.

Before I get too smug on how the public rated various occupations, though, it might be wise to let you know right now that journalists were ranked 14 out of 23, which isn't even in the top half, but we weren't alone.

Psychiatrists, bankers, chiropractors, state governors and senators were all close to journalists in the survey.

Along with car salesmen, business executives, congressmen, lawyers, stockbrokers, advertising practitioners, insurance salesmen and HMO managers held the bottom spots.

For those curious about the poll, the following is a list showing what percentage Americans rated professions.

The results were:

1 — Nurses got an 83 percent rating for hon-



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- Deep Thoughts

esty and ethics in their profession.

2 — Medical doctors, 68 percent  
3 — Veteranarians, 68 percent  
4 — Pharmacists, 67 percent  
5 — Dentists, 61 percent  
6 — College teachers, 59 percent  
7 — Engineers, 59 percent  
8 — Policemen, 59 percent  
9 — Clergy, 56 percent  
10 — Psychiatrists, 38 percent  
11 — Bankers, 35 percent  
12 — Chiropractors, 31 percent  
13 — State governors, 26 percent  
14 — Journalists, 25 percent  
15 — Senators, 20 percent  
16 — Business executives, 18 percent  
17 — Congressmen, 17 percent  
18 — Lawyers, 16 percent  
19 — Stockbrokers, 15 percent  
20 — Advertising practitioners, 12 percent  
21 — Insurance salesmen, 12 percent  
22 — HMO managers, 11 percent  
23 — Car salesmen, 7 percent

After checking into those professions based on honesty and ethical standards, I ran across a

second survey based on the "usefulness" a profession has to society.

According to an AC Nielson Outlook Survey on "Who is Most Useful to Society?" the following 15 occupations were listed. They were: (1) teachers, (2) doctors, (3) defense personnel, (4) farmers, (5) judges, (6) journalists, (7) lawyers, (8) policemen, (9) computer engineers, (10) social workers, (11) businessmen, (12) sportsmen, (13) bureaucrats, (14) politicians and (15) black marketeers.

In the Nielson survey it was pointed out that while the two surveys focus on different aspects of professions — usefulness vs. honest and ethics — they did have something in common, public respect and how people perceive each profession.

Another interesting point was that in the honesty and ethics survey, healthcare occupied both the top and bottom end of the spectrum.

It was noted that while the top end is manned by people directly providing healthcare to patients (such as doctors, dentists, nurses, etc.), the bottom is reserved for people dealing with it from a business angle such as the insurance salesmen and HMO managers.

Overall, the surveys were fun to review and, for the most part, I do agree with the percentages. Maybe someday journalists will make the top half of the list rather than the bottom.

Until then, we will keep striving to do better.

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*Patty Decker is editor of the Free Press. Her column appears on Thursdays. Comments to [pdecker@nwkansas.com](mailto:pdecker@nwkansas.com).*

### Grandson's wedding follows new trend

When my grandson from Salt Lake City gets older, he will be able to write books based on his experiences, like Ernest Hemingway and Samuel Clemens — if he ever learns to write proper grammar. Of course, he can always use a ghost writer, but he is certainly having an adventurous life.

Some of you will remember a few years ago, I chronicled his adventures on a fishing vessel after he graduated from high school. For those who don't recall, it is sufficient to say he was homesick, seasick, and miserable the whole five months or so when he was at sea, and jumped ship as soon as they reached land to unload the fish, thus forfeiting his 'big bonus if you stay on for the entire trip.'

He came home and happily drove a pizza delivery truck for some time, then discovered a new way of life. He is Goth. The Internet sites says: "A lot of people turn to the Gothic subculture after having a hard time in school, feeling alienated, and looking for a way to express themselves that mirrors those feelings. Others find the scene through literature, still others want to be shocking, and some people just find black clothing slimming. It is basically indefinable, because 'Goth' means different things to each follower. Many adopt unusual fashions in order to separate themselves from other youth. It is up to the individual to define what Goth is for themselves. The mentality is, 'I want to be left alone but I want to be seen. I want to see the shock on other peoples' faces.' "

He dyed his long hair black, and lost weight by going vegan and mostly refusing to eat.

Right now, he is in England with his new bride. He met this woman, also Goth, on the Internet, and they decided they were soul mates, sight unseen. She came to visit him over Christmas, and they went to Las Vegas and got married, accompanied by the rest of the family. The bride wore a fetching black miniskirt with black fishnet stockings, and red and black stockings or boots. (I've only seen pictures.) She also wore a black long sleeved top with bat wings, and her



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hair, of course, is long and black.

The groom also wore black, a black miniskirt, top and boots, along with a leash and collar signifying his new status.

The bride is 35, and teaches at a private school in England. She has a 15-year-old daughter, who also attended the wedding. They tell me both the mother and daughter are very sweet.

My grandson was here for my husband's memorial service in January (he went to England shortly after that) and went out to the Oasis in his Goth costume to access the Internet, and enjoy the Starbucks coffee. (In fact, most of my grandchildren spent quite a bit of time out there.) He wore his 'maid's outfit,' consisting of an off white above-the-knee leatherette (vinyl?) dress with black fishnet stockings and high boots. He even has contact lenses which made his eyes look white, and I found him a fearsome sight, and not at all like my familiar grandson.

For the memorial service, he dressed more conservatively, wearing black trousers and a black shirt, with his hair pulled back into a pony tail. If he was wearing contacts, they were clear. His uncle Dal told him, "You haven't changed a bit!" I think the last, and probably only, time he saw him was when he was a pudgy red-headed 4-year-old. I never knew Dal had a sense of humor. (He's always been pretty conservative, and we were looking forward to what he would say. Guess he has mellowed in his old age.)

The newly-weds went to Ireland for their honeymoon. He said, "Ireland was lovely, the people are really nice. We stayed in Galway (pro-

nounced Gorway). Its a really arty town with a lot of health food shops along with many restaurants that cater to vegans. They had recycling bins in place of garbage cans.

"We ate at the River Goddess twice, it was a really nice restaurant and the food was great, especially the rosemary soup. (Galway was definitely worth seeing, and the River Goddess was Yum! [vegan fajitas and rosemary soup finished off with lemon, lime sherbet {you can also have Champaign sherbet if you fancy (though I personally don't) -the menu has 3 course meals-})).

"It was weird in Ireland because the Irish accent is so close to the American one I kept thinking people were American, especially the teenage girls; they sounded just like valley girls. Bex (my "step daughter") says it's because they watch too much American television.

"We saw the famine walls, and the moors, and loads of castles, along with two really cool wind farms (one was out at sea) The famine walls are from when the British were occupying southern Ireland, the people were starving and there weren't enough jobs, so the landlords had people build walls pointlessly for a penny a day.

A lot of people died. They built the walls at the moors (which are hills of rocks) and now their are just walls everywhere. Its very impressive.

"The house we stayed in was lovely with hardwood floors and a fireplace (renting a holiday home was definitely the way to go) though I think taking the ferry to get there was a mistake because on the way there I cried and on the way back we both got sick (it was a really rough ride).

"Life in the UK is a lot harder than in the US. I missing free refills and iced tea but I'm sure I'll get used to it."

At any rate I wish my grandson well, and hope he keeps in touch with me to tell me of his adventures.

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*Maxine Nelson is a former reporter and editor for the Colby Free Press. She writes when the muse strikes her.*