

O. AmerPres

June 19, 1999
American Presidents
"Franklin Pierce"

Sirs —

I watched the show on Franklin Pierce last evening (Friday, June 18) and was most perturbed. For the most part the guests that you have included on this series have been most informative and evidently knowledgeable on the subjects on which they speak. That is, until last night.

Chips Holden was knowledgeable about the manse and the Pierce family and imparted that knowledge both informally and professionally. So I had no complaint with her presentation. However, I am sorry that I cannot say the same for Barry Parits. He was annoying and obnoxious in his responses and, possibly (cover)

possibly worst of all,
revisionist in his viewpoint.
At first I just found him
irritating. And perhaps I
just didn't like his style.
But as the show wore on,
it became more and more
obvious that he did not
have a clear grasp of the
facts about his subject.

I don't claim to be
a Pierce scholar. In fact,
I know next to nothing
about him. But it was
also clear that Mr. Paris
was not all that knowledgeable
about Mr. Pierce or else
was just ~~incapable~~ incapable
of communicating that knowledge.
Early in the show there
had been a caller who referred
to Ulysses Grant's comments
about General Pierce during
the Mexican war. Either she
or another caller had inquired as
to their relationship. Mr. Paris

replied there was none and he knew nothing about Grant's comments.

Much later in the show Mr. Paris denied that Grant had been in the Mexican war and that whatever comments he made must have come out of his knowledge of military history.

Being somewhat confused by these two diverging comments I was driven to delve back into Grant's Memoirs. Particularly since I knew that Grant had indeed been in the Mexican war and was, I believe, in the quartermaster corps there. Grant did indeed compliment Gen. Pierce on his bravery although being sure to point out that he did not agree with his politics. And went on to state that he was ~~then~~ the only one of the volunteer generals with which Grant had an intimate relationship.

Having discovered this one error I began to look at Mr. Paris with a different view and he was no longer able to conceal his ignorance or limited knowledge of President Pierce.

I learned far more about Mr. Pierce in the brief ~~show~~ interview with Professor Medford. Perhaps you had Mr. Paris on your show from Concord in the interests of variety and not wanting to use all historians. Or, perhaps no historians were available.

During the course of the discussion it appears that Mr. Paris had been a journalist and primarily wrote about film. Maybe he should have stuck to film. He may be perfectly knowledgeable about that.

Save for this one show, this ~~has~~ has generally been a fine series. Although I ~~did~~ come to it quite late. I ~~did~~ not learn of the series until the show about Andrew Jackson with, I think, Professor Simon.

Therefore, I express this plea that in future shows you stick with guests who are well informed and know how to communicate that information to the audience - some of whom are very knowledgeable about the subject while others may know next to nothing.

Thank you for your attention

