

Call 18

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Mr. Brian Lamb ✓

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On last Friday's program on C-Span, several viewers questioned the extensive coverage the media was providing on the death of Jackie Onassis. I tried to call in but couldn't get through, so I decided to write. I don't understand the panelists overreaction to the callers, labeling the views as "hatred".

Nobody "hates" Jackie Onassis (nobody "hates" Richard Nixon). Perhaps it is simply that there are people in this country who have different priorities and different points of view. To me, Mrs. Onassis was a first lady thirty years ago, whose husband was tragically killed. She pulled herself together for the funeral and went on to lead a good life, with the support of many wonderful and influential friends and a rather large bank account. Upon her death, hour after endless hour of television coverage, and page after endless page of print, proclaim her to be the epitome of grace, dignity and courage.

Let me make a comparison from today's news. This morning, the Medal of Honor was awarded to the families of two soldiers, Randy Shughart and Gary Gordon, and coverage was minimal (I counted 45 seconds on CNN). These men willingly gave their lives to try to save the crew of a helicopter that had been shot down in Somalia, and they succeeded in saving the pilot, Michael Durant. In all, eighteen soldiers were tragically killed in a battle that should never have happened. Their families reacted with amazing grace, dignity and courage. Lorrie Durant, who did not know from one day to the next whether her husband was still alive, pulled herself together and not only comforted the widows of her husband's friends, but attended the funerals. Grace, dignity and courage.

On a local level, a young police officer was shot while trying to apprehend a burglar. Due to major incompetence by the dispatcher, faulty radio equipment and lack of back-up, he bled to death while waiting for help to arrive. Rather than let grief destroy her, his young widow is now fighting for change to make sure that the same thing does not happen to another police officer. Grace, dignity and courage.

No, nobody hates Jackie Onassis. Perhaps we merely resent the fact that, time after time, media praise and coverage is determined by celebrity status, name recognition, bank accounts, or scandal, rather than by truly inspirational acts performed by truly inspirational, average people.

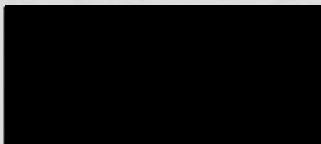
Page 2

Ask yourselves: Had one of the eighteen soldiers killed in Somalia come from a family with a "celebrity", would the families have had to push and beg to get the first Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing (barely covered by the media, might I add)? Had one of the soldiers killed in the recent friendly fire incident come from a family with a "celebrity", would we still be waiting for the official report (haven't heard the media clamoring for answers)? Had one of the soldiers sick with Gulf War Syndrome come from a family with a "celebrity", would it have taken so many years for the government to even acknowledge something was wrong (again, not much media coverage until recently)? Yes, I think our priorities are very different.

I apologize for rambling. I guess I just wanted to let you know that there is so much going on in the "real world", outside of your Washington offices. There are so many courageous people who do not get media coverage because they are simply ordinary people performing extraordinary acts. These are the people who are my role models. They will not go down in history, or make any television program and magazine "Year in Review" - they simply enrich the lives of everybody they come in contact with, and make the world a little better place to live.

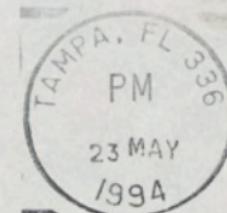
Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



P.S. Regarding Richard Nixon - I challenge any of you to go the "Wall" this Memorial Day weekend and really listen to the average people who are there. How many thousands of lives could have been saved had another man been in office? We'll never know. Mr. Nixon had many fine accomplishments throughout his life, and he should be so honored; however, he is not worthy of canonization. It's not a matter of people not being able to "let go" - it's an ache in our hearts that so many were sacrificed for the ego of one man. I overheard a comment recently that "not holding Richard Nixon responsible for the deaths that occurred during the last few years in Viet Nam would be like only remembering John Wayne Gacy as one helluva painter". Severe criticism - yes; deserved criticism - unfortunately, yes; hateful - I don't think so.

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