

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it[®]

Idaho Common Sense[®]



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Michael, Tiger and Ed

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Do you recognize these men? I suspect you know two of them. Michael is Michael Jackson, his death garnering more media attention than President Reagan's funeral. Tiger is Tiger Woods, his philandering capturing near continuous media attention with each new girlfriend revealed.

But who is Ed? We know every detail about Michael, the little boys, the drugs, everything. We know every detail about Tiger, even which golf club damaged his car and the name of every woman he "encountered."

But who is Ed? Do we know anything about Ed? Do we care? Should we care? How does the media decide who is newsworthy? To whom do the media answer?

Remember, the media is a business, and like any other business they must generate a profit or fail. If no one watches their shows, if no one buys their magazines or newspapers, they will go out of business. And just like any other business, they analyze what we want – and they deliver. They deliver the scandals, the gossip, almost celebrating the failures of others.

But who is Ed? Ed is Ed Freeman, a footnote on a busy news day. He died Aug. 20, 2008, his obituary briefly shared across the nation. Why even bother noting his death? Do any of us know who Ed Freeman is?

Should we be interested? What did he do wrong? Did he use drugs? Was he an adulterer?

Maybe a pedophile? Perhaps a Wall Street crook? Did he rate a federal investigation or criminal charges? What was his failure, his demise, his downfall making his death newsworthy?

Who is Ed? Capt. Ed Freeman is a Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, a hero. During the Vietnam War, he flew a non-combat lift helicopter, an unarmed helicopter, nothing glamorous.

One day he overheard radio traffic about a battle going very badly for the American infantry. An overwhelming force surrounded them and they were taking significant losses.

The enemy fire was so intense the commanding officer on the ground refused to allow any more Medi-Vac helicopters to land, no more ammunition or supplies and no more evacuations of the wounded.

Capt. Freeman knew they must be nearly out of ammunition and he knew they had critically injured soldiers. Both he and the officer giving the order knew what the outcome of the battle would be if the order was followed.

So Ed did something. He did something 14 times. He ignored the order 14 times. Fourteen times he flew his unarmed Huey into the heart of the battle, each time taking enemy fire from less than 200 yards away, delivering ammunition and evacuating the injured. He saved the lives of the soldiers he evacuated, along with many others

with the ammunition and supplies he provided.

Really think about what he did. Fourteen times he flew into enemy fire to get the wounded, each time facing probable death. Why didn't he get the same round-the-clock news coverage Michael or Tiger got?

Most people blame the media, claiming they are anti-military, anti-American and don't care about what is really important, preferring to emulate the National Enquirer. Are they right? Is the media full of nothing more than tabloid-style journalists?

Again, the media is a business, publishers and producers responsible to generate a profit. Yes, they do want to report "real" news. Nevertheless, they accept the reality of delivering what the readers and viewers want, generating the income needed for their business to survive so they can provide the small amounts of "real" news we will tolerate.

And what is it we want? We want trash. We want gossip. We want calamity. We want handcuffs and jail time. We want the dirt. We want Jerry Springer, not Walter Cronkite. Which show would get the most viewers and the best ratings, a show about the heroism of Ed Freeman or a competing show about Tiger's girlfriends?

Should the media be embarrassed? Or, should we be embarrassed? Who is Ed?