

COLUMNISTS

The pitfalls of headline writing

Earlier this year, an editor at the online edition of a U.S. daily newspaper got into hot water by affixing this headline to a story about Tara Lipinski's Olympic skating victory: "American defeats Kwan."

The minute I started reading about the case in a trade magazine, I understood what had happened. The editor was trying to highlight the fact that Michelle Kwan, favored to win the gold medal, saw that honor snatched from her grasp not by a Russian, Canadian or German skater, but by a FELLOW American. By her TEAMMATE, Lipinski.

Of course, that's not how the Asian-American community read the headline. Instead, that community's leaders inferred that the editor meant Kwan wasn't an American. Soon the unwitting editor was labeled a racist. And I'm sure that editor spent a good deal of time reflecting on his or her failure to anticipate that many people — maybe even most people — would interpret the headline that way.

In many cases, bad headlines are the product of a kind of shorthand newspapers use to make headlines fit in tight spaces. Other bad headlines derive from deadline writing that can be taken in two very different ways — one intended, the



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lines

By KAREN M. FRANZ

other painfully unintended.

Both factors played a role in what happened last week at the *Catholic Courier*. To accompany last week's cover story on the controversy surrounding Unity Health System, we ran a moral-theology perspective by our columnist Dr. Patricia Schoelles, SSJ.

In that article, Sister Pat discussed the moral goods that are preserved by the alliance between St. Mary's and Park Ridge hospitals. She also noted the disadvantages posed by the alliance, and the imperative it creates for the Catholic community to be strong in communicating its disapproval of sterilization procedures and the fact that St. Mary's is not involved in such procedures.

Referring to the preservation of quality health care for the poor, she concluded, "The benefits that will result from the alliance between St. Mary's and Park Ridge are absolutely too great to risk being derailed by our inability to communicate clearly the moral dimensions of what is actually occurring in the alliance ..."

As the messenger waited to take the paper to our printer, we struggled to write a headline for her article, and ultimately settled on "Unity advantages outweigh ethical concerns."

In using the phrase "ethical concerns" we intended to refer exclusively to those concerns Sister Pat specifically discussed in her article: i.e., the challenge of communicating clearly the precise nature of the alliance and the church's opposition to sterilization.

At the time, I thought the headline indicated only that "ethical concerns" about the church's need to communicate clearly were being "outweighed" — that the communications effort required by the alliance was a small price to pay for the moral goods to be achieved.

But others obviously have read the headline to imply that St. Mary's and the diocese may have disregarded a broad

range of ethical concerns in their desire to achieve the advantages of the Unity system — that those "advantages" outweighed ALL ethical concerns.

Although that might be a reasonable way to interpret such an ambiguous headline, it certainly is not accurate. In fact, as Sister Pat noted in a phone conversation with me last week, framers of the Unity alliance went to great lengths to ensure that the alliance upholds the broad range of ethical concerns outlined by the U.S. bishops' "Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services."

The Unity alliance has been the subject of significant confusion in recent weeks — confusion we had hoped to alleviate with last week's stories. That's why I wanted to use this column to set the record straight, and to offer my sincere apologies to Sister Pat, Bishop Matthew H. Clark, the Daughters of Charity and others involved in the alliance for causing further confusion.

NEXT TIME: I'll tell you about new policies issued by the *Courier's* Board of Directors to govern the acceptance and handling of advertisements.

God bless all fathers

Sunday's Readings (R3) Luke 9:18-24. (R1) Zechariah 12:10-11. (R2) Galatians 3:26-29.

Sunday is Father's Day. Father's Day originated with a woman back in 1910 who wanted to honor her father, who brought up a family of six after his wife had died in 1898. At the same time he ran a thousand-acre farm to support the family.

Man is the image and glory of God.

One of his great roles is to reflect the fatherhood of God. Good fathers do that.

With God, fathers share in the mystery of creation.

With God, they provide for the needs of their children.

With God, they protect their own and strengthen them to look the world in the face and take it for what it is.

Yet it is easy to take fathers for granted, as it is easy to take God for granted. It is easy to overlook their importance in the life we live, just as it is easy to overlook God's place in the scheme of life.

It is easy to overlook the reverence we owe them just as it is easy to overlook the reverence we owe God.

A girl once wrote this letter about her father: "Three things I remember about my father: his indomitable will, his constant love for my mother, and a peach-tree switch.

"At our house 'daddy' was synonymous with authority. He taught us to obey before we learned to spell 'cat.' This pre-



a word
for
sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

pared us to cope with all the STOP and GO signals we met in life.

"Then there was Father's love for Mother. In spring and early summer I noticed that he kept a watchful eye on flowers and always brought the first bouquet to mother. I remember one morning he came unnoticed into the farm kitchen carrying a beautiful, full-blown rose, first of the season. Mother was busy with the noon-day meal and humming some old tune like "Amazing Grace," while I churned. He tiptoed up behind her, held out the exquisite flower, bowed and said, "For you, my love." Mother wiped her hands took the proffered rose, and rewarded him with a tender kiss. Scenes like that make an impression on a girlish mind and heart!

"The third thing I remember was that peach-tree switch. I deserved it, for I had told an outright lie. One of my weakness-

es, as a little tot, was telling falsehoods. Mother became very alarmed over this. She would argue; she would plead; she would spank; but none of her attempts to immunize me took. Then one day my father caught me lying — how vividly I remember. I hid myself, but in vain. He found me and applied that peach-tree switch for the first time — and the last! He never had to do it again!

"My father was not perfect, who is? He had a quick temper, which he rued; but I could overlook that because he had so many fine qualities. A heartwarming love for his family and all fellowmen. A high standard of moral integrity. A great devotion to the church ..."

I think that letter sums it all up, namely, that the home needs a father. The children need his authority and his discipline. His wife needs his love and his dependability. And everyone needs his moral influence.

One of the greatest needs in America is for men who will muster the moral courage and appropriate the spiritual strength to lead their families by example and precept in the ways of God and of character building. God holds fathers responsible for the spiritual life in the home: daily prayers, Sunday Mass and monthly confession.

When God sent his Son to earth, he gave him a mother. He entrusted both Son and mother to a man — a man who

loved them both. He worked for them both and taught the Son who was the Word of God. That was all God asked St. Joseph to do; and he was the greatest father who ever lived. That is all God asks every other father to do: to live, to love, to work, to teach by word and example. May God bless all fathers: the not so good to become good, and the good to become better.

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, June 22

2 Kings 17:5-8, 13-15, 18;
Matthew 7:1-5

Tuesday, June 23

2 Kings 19:9-11, 14-21, 31-35,
36; Matthew 7:6, 12-14

Wednesday, June 24

Isaiah 49:1-6; Acts 13:22-26;
Luke 1:57-66, 80

Thursday, June 25

2 Kings 24:8-17; Matthew 7:21-29

Friday, June 26

2 Kings 25:1-12; Matthew 8:1-4;

Saturday, June 27

Lamentations 2:2, 10-14, 18-19;
Matthew 8:5-17



In our community, the Image Centre of the World, we greatly appreciate the value of memories. Pictures capture special moments, family events, and once-in-a-lifetime happenings. Our life, as with a picture, becomes a memory to family and friends. When you consider how you would like to be remembered and memorialized, think of us, we are the CRAWFORD FUNERAL HOME, where helping families share memories has been our focus since 1957.



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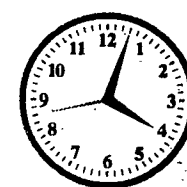
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