

November 17, 2004

THE LEGACY OF REED IRVINE

The passing of Reed Irvine on November 16, 2004 comes at a time when his war against the Big Media has achieved some notable successes. In the 35 years since he founded Accuracy in Media, the Big Media have lost much of their stature and do not seem so big anymore. Their loss of credibility is a testament to Reed's successful efforts to tell the truth about so much of what we see, read and hear. Reed was David against the media Goliath. Reed's stone was the pen.

Trained as an economist for the government, Reed used the tools of journalism to investigate and expose the journalists. They were horrified when he attended annual meetings of big media companies and questioned the top brass. But he wanted the journalists and media corporations to know that somebody was watching them—and taking notes on their conduct. Today, the twice-monthly Accuracy in Media (AIM) Report continues, along with a weekly AIM column, "Media Monitor" radio commentaries, films, and other projects. I think Reed would want to be honored by making sure that AIM continues its work. In this war, victory can only be achieved by continuing to make progress, by constantly maintaining and then elevating our standards of responsibility and accountability. That is the only way we can safeguard our freedom.

I came aboard in 1978, when I graduated from college and completed a journalism internship under conservative author M. Stanton Evans. Part of that involved doing an internship with a Washington-based group, which turned out to be AIM. I had been trained in journalism myself, but had learned in college that old-fashioned objective news reporting was a thing of the past. Indeed, my college textbook was "Interpretive Reporting." Under Reed's tutelage, I became a media analyst and assisted him at AIM in various capacities over the last 26 years, eventually being asked to come back in a more full-time capacity when Reed was talking about retirement last year. But he never really retired. Even after a heart attack, Reed was back at work. A subsequent stroke and associated health problems were too much for him, however.

As we talked with Reed during his final days, we told him about our protest against Dan Rather outside CBS offices in Washington, D.C., after the anchorman got caught using bogus documents in a broadcast designed to discredit President Bush. Reed had started the campaign to "Can Dan" 16 years ago. Now it seems only a matter of time before Rather, a disgraced and bitter partisan, is forced out. If he had only listened to

Reed Irvine and had followed his advice over the years, Rather could be retiring in honor and dignity, rather than presiding over a floundering newscast characterized by flaming liberal bias and dwindling viewers. Reed's AIM is a central reason why so many people react with skepticism to what is on CBS and the other networks today.

In order to cover journalists, Reed became a journalist—and he was much better at it than those who had been formally trained. He himself covered hearings, attended and held news conferences, and—moving into his activist mode—participated in protests. He did not hesitate to confront the rich and powerful in the media when he thought they were wrong. And while he was a staunch anti-communist with conservative beliefs and views on most issues, he did not let the conservative movement or its personalities off the hook when he found them failing to relentlessly pursue the truth. Reed's purpose in life wasn't just to get along and pass the time. He was determined to make a difference, and he did. He tackled controversial issues and scandals that both sides of the political spectrum wanted to be left alone.

A man in his position, monitoring others for misconduct and misdeeds, has to be able to withstand scrutiny as well. And he did. He practiced the conduct he expected of others. He lived up to and surpassed the standards he set for the media.

When the Gielow Family Foundation gave Reed its "Friend of Freedom Award," it described him accurately, hailing him for "his tireless dedication to the search for truth, his dogged determination to disseminate the truth...Clearly, without information that is accurate and truthful, citizens are deceived and unable to make informed and proper judgments about their leaders, the major issues of the day, and indeed, the fate of the country. Reed Irvine is an American treasure and his many years of unselfish service contribute mightily to the cause of freedom."

His service continues through AIM. The cause lives.

Cliff Kincaid is Editor of the AIM Report.