

# Letters on Tim Russert

18 June 2008

*The following letters were sent to the World Socialist Web Site in response to the article, “Tim Russert and the decay of the American media”*

Thanks so much for injecting a dose of reality into the coverage of Tim Russert’s death. I could not believe that MSNBC “mourned” Russert on every available program. I was beginning to wonder when his elevation to saint would be announced! Will he lie in “state” in the lobby of NBC? Enough already!

DB

Greensburg, Pennsylvania, USA

Thanks for a fresh outlook. The misuse of the broadcast facilities to laud and mourn one of their own celebrities was tiresome when not infuriating. Of course Russert was an inspiration to them for his self-promotion, profit from the news, and lack of originality. He’s a role model for them; naturally they loved him. In the same month of June, there have been 11 deaths of soldiers in Iraq—who knows their names?—and probably more Iraqi civilians, but we can’t know since they are not important enough to notice. The news media in the US is a pathetic tool. I encourage all to read other sites available through the Internet—Middle East papers, Beirut, Ha’aretz, and organizations working for peace. Of course, including the WSWs.

VS

I feel so sorry for both of you. Your views are so skewed by your abnormal thinking that you have begun to believe them as truth. You are so “out there,” and you don’t even realize it. And to think it took two of you to write this piece. If that doesn’t say something about Tim Russert, I don’t know what does. BTW, my dad worked with Edward R. Murrow, and you sirs, are no Edward R. Murrows.

ND

I keep thinking about the murder of that television journalist Bill Stewart in Nicaragua, just before the fall of Somoza in 1979. Horrifying as the footage of that execution was, it did not rate all the attention Russert’s passing has. Talk about spectacle, alright.

MH

Seattle, Washington, USA

I’ve been reading WSWs for years to avoid falling into naivety and ignorance about world issues. Your publication is one of the few (actually, fewest!) and best that I’ve ever come across. I always recommend to my friends to read WSWs.

Anyway, I’m very glad that the WSWs today provided its analysis on Tim Russert, which is clean and honest. When it was announced that he had died, I immediately thought of the WSWs and what they would say. Lo and behold, here comes this article. I agree 110.5 percent with what you said about him and the America we live in. It’s excellently and intelligently written.

WSWS is really fuel for my brain. I’m sure the same can be said for millions around the world who subscribe to your publication.

Please share my compliments and wishes with your colleagues for the WSWs’s continued success!

Best,

LN

Maryland

I, too, was born in 1950, from a working class background—then college, military and so on—however, without going into detail, the decline in America, the culture/economy—the balkanization of America, really—of which Russert contributed his foul part—served to awaken my consciousness as to the true condition of the country—which is, of course, *never* portrayed in the media—print, electronic or otherwise. I would hate to think that such a disgusting example as this talking head would be held up as emblematic of my generation. Trust me, there are plenty of us who are quite angry, ready for change. There are lots of us, and we have not forgotten the lost promise of 1968, a year, I’m sure that the powers-that-be would just as soon forget. Another reckoning of similar or of larger proportions I feel awaits—the thing these corrupt “elites” and greedheads fear most.

You mention Eric Sevareid. I recall his commentary during the Vietnam War as insightful and honest—even at times adversarial. Russert & Company and all the other TV screamers/quislings are so far removed from these old timers as to be risible—protected in their (his) money bubble, bought commodities, lapdogs to power.

This may sound harsh—one does not wish to speak ill of the dead? Why not? It’s what we do in this life that counts, and Russert was, as you point out, really dismissible, insignificant.

Thank you for this honest and informative piece. As we go forward, we can’t allow the self-hagiography of those in power and their paid shills to cloud our analysis/vision. That they pick this empty shell to praise is indeed an insult to all American workers, particularly those from my generation.

RM

Thanks for this bracing corrective to the overblown televised fiesta of self-importance in the guise of Russert eulogies. Brokaw, et al, are merely trying to reify their own significance. But their effort rings hollow. As Alexander Cockburn once wrote (more or less): the first law of journalism is to confirm existing prejudice, not to question it. The overpaid breed of TV talking heads never attempt to question, explore or explain the assumptions and values beneath and beyond the events they retail. They have become mere interchangeable PR flacks for the imperatives of their corporate masters. They represent no independent point of view. Their arrivals offer no reason to celebrate; their departures, no reason to mourn.

JM

Thank you for this thoughtful injection of reality into a topic that has been blown all out of proportion. It is sad and difficult to deal with when anyone who seems so full of life dies suddenly. However, this excessive display has been jaw-dropping. Tom Brokaw actually said that if Tim had been a priest, he would probably have been the first American pope! Hey, and if he had been Jewish...he might have been the Messiah! I guess we better keep an eye on his grave—maybe he'll be raised from the dead.

One can only conclude that this journalistic cabal of sycophants and propagandists were shaken down to their little cores when reality managed to intrude upon their contrived sensibilities. And, since no one else will tell them what a great job they are doing (as they have managed to not cover the rise of the American Empire, the corporate takeover of the world, the depletion of resources, the grotesque animal abuse and poisoning that is the basis of our commercial food supply, the rising fascism and erosion of our liberties, and on and on...), they were compelled to subject us all to this self-serving spectacle of eulogizing Tim Russert as though he were some American Royal. There is no introspection at all regarding how inadequate has been the coverage of crucial changes that have occurred nationally and internationally. None. Their praise has been about as convincing as all those awards at an elementary school where all participants are winners and nobody loses.

This would just be simply lame if they weren't in positions of responsibility for the protection of our democratic institutions. But they aren't just pathetic; they are dangerous and complicit.

Thanks again for the great article.

PC

"...faith in God, faith in country, faith in family." It's fascinating the extent to which the mainstream media must also be the faith-based media. But then why would it be any different from the country and society it purports to serve?

DN

I respect the authors, and while I think that it is useful to critically frame Russert's public persona in a journalistic context, I think the article is shady because it whites-out an honest background of the political pressures that journalists face in this recent dark era. Russert might not have delivered Cronkitesque gravitations, but he offered many of us "protesters" the slightest glimmer of logic with generally sharp, well-prepared professional questioning of his guests. I don't think you move anything forward when you resort to the "people die every day" card while ignoring that Russert got some shreds of critical questioning across the screen while the corporate media was successfully blacking out millions marching in our streets.

PG

A penetrating perspective on Russert, as only these authors can do. Wait until Charlie Rose dies, what nonsense we will hear. Rose groveled before establishment figures, such as Charles Schultz of Bechtel and the CEO of Shell Oil.

RLB

Bradenton, Florida, USA

Well put! He seems like a nice enough fellow and sincere in his views, whatever they might be (every talking head is "objective" if

nothing else). But as a journalist he was *nothing*. He never asked a "hard-hitting" question in his life unless he misplaced a watch or a necktie. I'm not sure why the corporate media puts this stuff on television anyway. It isn't informative or entertaining. You people hit it right on the mark, but then again, hardly anybody outside the loop has much of a clue who he was anyhow.

PS

What exactly is the purpose of the first lines of the second paragraph of your article? Obviously, the purpose of the article itself is to cowardly degrade a man whose body is not yet cold. The pretense of tipping a hat to his grieving family is ridiculous. You can find nothing positive worth mentioning on the life of a man who came from a working class family to work many years as a journalist while making sure to work in close cooperation with those of other ethnic groups (hear NPR's "News and Notes" from Monday)?

The relentless, shameless, and often brutal criticism that comes from your publication is nothing but harmful to the progress of human social life. In fact, one might even get the suspicion that articles such as these are published by another group and, as they are, presented with the label "socialist" attached, thus making the reader more prone to associate such things with Chavez's government and other things with that name that they have been told not to like.

Maybe not, but you've surely done nothing to make me think otherwise.

RV

Athens, Georgia, USA

Thanks guys for your valued antidote to the gushing self-congratulations from the Olbermanns, Larry Kings, Chris Matthews, and so on, over the immeasurable loss of someone like them.

GW

Lodi, California, USA



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