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LAKESHORE WEEKLY NEWS

MINNETONKA, MN
WEEKLY 25,000

FEB 5 2002

MINNESOTA CLIPPING SERVICE

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EDITORIAL

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A rare commodity

As I watched the Super Bowl, I couldn't help but think something that I'm sure will prove unpopular.

I thought there was too much patriotism displayed.

I turned on the television at about 4:30 p.m. this past Sunday, which was about an hour before kickoff. I estimated the pregame show probably had been raging since dawn, but I decided that was a bit more football hype than I needed.

But when I grabbed the remote, finally ready for my annual dose of Super Bowl mania, I expected to see coverage of the upcoming game.

Instead, I saw former presidents Ford, Carter, Bush and Clinton taking turns reading an essay about Abraham Lincoln.

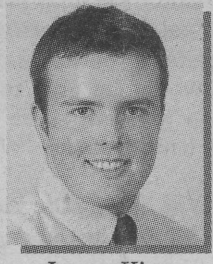
Now please, don't misconstrue my intent. I have nothing against President Lincoln, or against presidents Ford, Carter, Bush and Clinton. I thought the essay about Lincoln was somewhat interesting, and I definitely thought it was a better use of air time than most of the programs that find their way to network television.

I wondered, however, whether the Super Bowl pregame show was the proper venue for the essay.

Before I could wonder too much, though, the pregame show switched to a different segment. This one featured the Boston Pops orchestra playing a song by Aaron Copland. I enjoyed the song, and it made me feel somewhat inspired about my country. But it didn't have anything to do with football.

Until the players from the St. Louis Rams and New England Patriots were introduced, I saw virtually nothing about football on the Super Bowl pregame telecast.

I agree that a tribute to the people killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks is wholly appropriate. And I suppose that the Super Bowl pregame show is the best way to reach the largest number of Americans. But it seemed odd to me that after five months of football



Jason King
Editor

games that don't feature any special displays of patriotism, suddenly pigskin and patriotism go hand in hand.

I thought it would make more sense to save the patriotic tributes until later this week, when the Olympics start. Those competitions always seem to evoke more of a feeling of national pride and unity than a football game ever could. During an Olympic telecast, an essay about a

great former president seems more appropriate.

But the Olympics are on another network, so Fox had to use the venue available to it — the Super Bowl — for its patriotic message. Unfortunately, it looked to me like Fox did a bit too much in trying to convey that message.

These points I have raised represent something that exists too rarely today — criticism of the media. I recently attended a seminar on journalism ethics at the Minnesota Newspaper Association's annual convention. At the seminar, Gary Gilson, executive director of the Minnesota News Council, made the point that all too often, media outlets are unresponsive to criticism. He showed examples of vague corrections and clarifications that leave readers with more questions than answers about where the newspaper erred.

Gilson also cited one national newspaper that refuses to print letters that express criticism of its reporting.

As a result of that seminar, we are starting to include a new box on this week's Lakeshore Weekly News commentary page. It is the "Tell us what you think" box, and it is an invitation to readers to give us feedback about our newspaper. Since this week marks the first issue of our larger and redesigned newspaper, the timing seemed appropriate.

So give us a call or drop us an e-mail, and tell us what you think. We'll do our best to be responsive, and to explain why it is we covered a story the way we did. And we'll even print letters expressing criticism.