

# Evolution of the News

By LENNY SIEGEL

In my November, 1976, AS THE WORLD REVOLVES column I quoted a Palo Alto Times paraphrase of remarks by Stanford President Richard Lyman. I wrongly reported that Lyman had said, "the nation is in danger of listening to moral advice from people who own nothing, have no organizational responsibilities and have no office from which to act." The Times paraphrase was inaccurate. A proper paraphrase would have been, "the nation is in danger of listening only to moral advice from . . ."

Since publication, Lyman has sent me a personal letter pointing out my error, which he attributes to a "badly garbled story in the Palo Alto Times." It is good to know that Richard Lyman reads the GRAPEVINE, but he should

note that my column is not called "As the World Turns," which is how he referred to it.

The apparent lesson of this misinterpretation is that GRAPEVINE writers -- or anyone in fact -- should not rely on the Palo Alto Times. However, one can learn much more about "news" accuracy by tracing this particular story to its source.

Sometime in September Lyman or someone on his staff prepared a speech to give in Washington on September 27. On the 24th, the Stanford University News Service -- known to many as a press release mill -- issued a press release summarizing the text. The press release, which re-arranged key points to effect a desired emphasis, was later printed in Stanford publications such as the Stanford Observer and Campus Report. Stanford distributed the press release to a long list of local media, in-

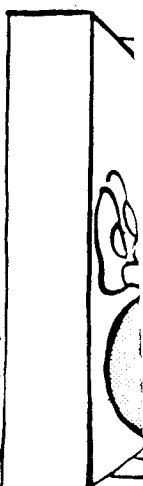
structing them not to print it until the 27th.

The Palo Alto Times decided to use the Stanford supplied story, but it rewrote the release, not to change the content, but apparently to create the impression that the story was written by a reporter at the scene of the speech.

This is not unusual, much of the Times reporting on Stanford, and a great deal of what appears in the other local media, including the Stanford Daily, is based on Stanford's self-serving press releases, not news reporting.

Thus, my unintended distortion was relatively unimportant compared to Stanford's day-to-day posturing.

In closing, I want to commend Richard Lyman for typing his own letter on a variable spaced typewriter. The GRAPEVINE needs people with such skills. Maybe....



Lenny Siegel

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