

From One Inquiring Mind to Another

Pilate then asked Jesus, "What is Truth?" Matt 18:38

#4 August 2011

OUR LATEST FAVE MOVIE

After the last (7/12) PBS documentary on Lyme disease, I wanted a break from all that's wrong with the world" and to view something light and fun. I assumed Patricia would agree, and was a little upset to have another documentary arrive in the mail.

It turned out that this Oscar nominated (2008) documentary called *The Most Dangerous Man in America: Daniel Ellsberg and the Pentagon Papers* was more powerful as a film 40 years later than when we lived through it. Maybe we



were too young to assimilate all that was happening, but it was most shocking to realize: a) that five US presidents had lied to the American people about our involvement in Vietnam, b) that the TOP SECRET information leaked by Ellsberg did not reveal military secrets but coverups, and c) that the Supreme Court had the wisdom to rule on the side of the First Amendment and exonerate Dr. Daniel Ellsberg from the trial (mistrial) and the prison sentence which awaited him.

Meanwhile, because of lies, exaggerations, and misinformation 59,000 Americans and 2,000, 000 (two million!) Vietnamese had died.

This 94 minute account put it all in perspective. We highly recommend this film, although I at first wanted something "entertaining." Available from Netflix *et al.*

YET WHEN I TOLD MY SON ABOUT THIS he asked me why I was watching all this stuff and getting all fired up unless I was going to do something about it. This was a very good question, one which has challenged me for years. I told him that I was building a philosophical foundation in preparation for the time when I might be called to action, large or small, whatever that might be. Not that I'm going to set myself on fire, but in small ways I will share my truth based on the truths revealed. That's my hope anyway.

TRYING TO FIND THE TRUTH IS A MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Given all the harm lies and misinformation have caused in the world, as pretexts for war, plunder and rape of our planet, financial systems, etc., I think we have a moral responsibility to consider carefully what information we pass on. This is especially crucial these days when anyone can self-publish on the internet, have an audience of millions, and/or see a truth or falsehood "go viral" in hours with oftentimes huge and far reaching consequences.

Fortunately, the same technology which can hinder us can also help us determine fact from fiction. Below are a few criteria I used to help myself and my journalism students ferret out the truth.

1. Consider the source. Know the author, his/her background, affiliations, reputation, etc., all of which is available on the internet.
2. Use the internet to corroborate the story from different sources, usually listed as "critiques of" x.
3. Use snopes.com, factchecker.org, wikipedia.com or other reliable sources to check stories.
4. Check for conflicts of interest. For example, is one selling something that he/she recommends.
5. Overly emotional or strong language, errors in logic and/or grammar often belie another agenda.
6. How does the information, opinions, or arguments, recommendations, etc., compare with your experience or that of others you trust?
7. Is the information endorsed by WebMed.com, AARP, AAA, or other solid organizations?
8. Trust your intuition and common sense, and wisdom of the ages:

All that glitters is not...

If it sounds too good to be true,...

Don't believe everything you ...

And so on. You get the picture.

SENIORS, SHARE YOUR TRUTH

As elders in the community, we have the wisdom and the experience to help others arrive at what's best for them, their families, the community, and the world. In Plato's *Republic* the best leaders were the Philosopher Kings. So let's go forth, gray panthers, and share our wisdom with those so in need. Keep seeking, keep humble, and strive for the truth. -Joe

