

DECEMBER 20

The P.U.-litzer Prizes for 2005

More than a dozen years ago, I joined with Jeff Cohen (founder of the media watch group FAIR) to establish the P.U.-litzer Prizes. Ever since then, the annual awards have given recognition to the stinkiest media performances of the year.

It is regrettable that only a few journalists can win a P.U.-litzer. In 2005, a large volume of strong competitors made the selection process very difficult.

And now, the fourteenth annual P.U.-litzer Prizes, for the foulest media performances of 2005:

"FIRST DO SOME HARM" AWARD – Radio reporter Michael Linder

Linder, a correspondent for KNX Radio in Los Angeles, was a media observer at the Dec. 13 execution of Stanley Tookie Williams by lethal injection. In a report that aired on a national NPR newscast, Linder said: "The first hint that it would be a difficult medical procedure came as they tried to insert the needle into his right arm." Medical procedure? During his brief report, Linder used the phrase twice as he described the execution. George Orwell's ears must have been burning.

SELF-PRAISE STEALTH PRIZE – William Kristol and Charles Krauthammer

Effusive with praise for George W. Bush's second inaugural address on Jan. 20, Kristol told Fox News viewers that they'd just watched "a very eloquent speech ... one of the most powerful speeches, one of the most impressive speeches, I think I've seen an American president give." Appearing on the same network, Krauthammer was no less enthusiastic as he likened Bush to John F. Kennedy and called the speech "revolutionary." But neither pundit mentioned that they'd been advisers who helped to write the speech.

PUT THEM IN CHAINS AWARD – Bill O'Reilly

"You must know the difference between dissent from the Iraq war and the war on terror and undermining it," O'Reilly told his national audience on June 20. "And any Ameri-

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can that undermines that war, with our soldiers in the field, or undermines the war on terror, with 3,000 dead on 9/11, is a traitor. Everybody got it? Dissent, fine; undermining, you're a traitor. Got it? So, all those clowns over at the liberal radio network, we could incarcerate them immediately. Will you have that done, please? Send over the FBI and just put them in chains, because they, you know, they're undermining everything and they don't care, couldn't care less."

MICKEY MOUSE JOURNALISM PRIZE – Correspondent Mike Barz and ABC

During a Sept. 12 report that aired on ABC's "Good Morning America," Barz explained: "Based on all the smiles on all the faces of the children ... it looks like the magic of Disney is taking hold in China." It was a very upbeat report about a new Disney-owned theme park – on a TV network owned by Disney.

OUTSOURCED TO THE PENTAGON AWARD – New York Times reporter Judith Miller

In October, after pressure built for Miller to explain her prewar reliance on dubious sources while frequently reporting that Saddam Hussein's regime had weapons of mass destruction, she agreed to be interviewed by the Times. The newspaper's Oct. 16 edition quoted her as saying: "WMD – I got it totally wrong. The analysts, the experts and the journalists who covered them – we were all wrong. If your sources are wrong, you are wrong." But easily available sources were not "all wrong." Many experts – including weapons inspectors Mohamed El Baradei, Hans Blix and Scott Ritter – rebutted key White House claims about WMDs month after month before the invasion.

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MAN PRIZE – Bob Woodward

During a Nov. 21 appearance on CNN's "Larry King Live," the famous Washington Post journalist struggled to explain why – for more than two years – he didn't disclose that a government official told him the wife of Bush war-policy critic Joe Wilson was undercover CIA employee Valerie Plame. Even after the Plame leaks turned into a big scandal rocking the Bush administration, Woodward failed to tell any Post editor about his own involvement – though he may have been the first journalist to receive one of those leaks. What's more, in TV and radio appearances, he disparaged the investigation by Special Counsel Patrick Fitzgerald.

PRIME SLIME NEWS AWARD – Nancy Grace and CNN Headline News

Since debuting in late February, the hour-long nightly "Nancy Grace" program has bro-

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ken new ground with salacious prime-time programming on a so-called news channel. Promoted as "one of TV's most experienced and passionate legal analysts ... drawing on her unique perspective as a former violent crimes prosecutor and as a crime victim herself," the host has taken prime-time "news" to new cesspools of prurience and exploitation of human suffering. "This is no script, no made-for-TV drama, it's the real thing," Grace promises, "real people with real stories." On a typical evening, the show led with these stories: "Tonight, breaking news. Human bones, human teeth – police come across a gruesome scene at a Wisconsin car salvage yard, where they say it looks like somebody may have burned a body. ... Plus, a husband in court today for spiking his wife's Gatorade with anti-freeze, enough to kill her."

Norman Solomon is the author of the new book "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death." For information, go to: www.WarMadeEasy.com