

Investigative Tips & Techniques: THE MEDIA: LOVE 'EM OR HATE 'EM

Scott M. Grim, D-ABMDI, Lehigh County Coroner, Adjunct Instructor, NFTC

I find myself somewhat chuckling while writing this article on the media. As I titled it, "The Media, Love'em or Hate'em", because in our profession that is how most of us feel and react when it comes to dealing with the press.

I, for one, who has been sued several times by the media, have that love - hate relationship. As we all know we all have a job to do but when "they" interfere with our investigation that's when we stand our ground and resist the reporter.

I guess the dislike for the media comes from, one day a few years ago, a new and inexperienced reporter contacted me demanding to know "of anyone important had died today?" That question stopped me in my tracks. I asked him to repeat his question... again he sarcastically asked, "Did anyone important die today?" With hearing what I thought was a totally disrespectful question to ask; I lost it and went off on the reporter. I queried him as to what he meant? You know someone important, a big shot he responded. After explaining to him never to contact me again because of his lack of concern and compassion for the dead, I gave him the information of a "John Doe" individual who died. Ironically, I never heard back from that reporter. As for being sued by the media several times in the past, we'll let that go for another story....

As I said at the beginning, we all have a job to do. The media's job is to report stories to the community. Unfortunately what we all do is normally an interest to the public. Even though we may not like working, communicating or associating with the media we need too. At times, we need their services just as much they need information from us.

In the Coroner's Office, we need the media to advertise and report information when we are searching for a decedent's next of kin or trying to positively identify an individual. The same in Law Enforcement, when we are trying to locate a missing child, we use the Amber Alert System which has been very successful over the years or trying to identify a suspect in a violent crime.

Over the years, I have developed many great and trusting relationships with many reporters. Yes, it does take some time and nurturing but in the long run, the reporters do come around and will work with us. It's a respect that is developed between them and me and they know, if they "burn" me, they shouldn't call tomorrow for any information. In turn, I know that if I ignore their requests for "appropriate information" and I don't give it to them, they won't be willing to assist me when I need their assistance.

So, in closing, we need the media and the media needs us, so at the end of the day, we all need to be professional and work together for the betterment of the community.



Northampton Community College
Fowler Family Southside Center
511 East Third Street
Bethlehem, PA 18015
www.northampton.edu/cbi

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