



**Your On the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**Dick Cheney at the National Press Club**

## Preface

Hello and welcome. I thank you for taking the time to examine some of my work. Additional information can be found at [www.UylessBlack.com](http://www.UylessBlack.com) and [blog.UylessBlack.com](http://blog.UylessBlack.com)

This material represents a work in progress. As readers provide feedback, as I uncover new information, if I uncover errors, I will update or correct the text of this manuscript. That stated, I hope my initial efforts have led to a fairly stable offering.

On-line publishing is a new experience for me. Most of my work has been produced in books from my publishers. They are fine companies, but I wanted to try something new. I find I now have more control over my work. Not the content, as my publishers have never asked me to include or exclude anything of significance. Rather, I find I can now more easily integrate, separate, or merge pieces of work. Hard copy does not lend itself to such flexibility.

Most of the writings you will find at my Web site and my blog are available free of charge. Some material is on a fee basis, but not much.

I ask you to honor the copyrights on this material. Unless the book, essay, or report is priced, I am creating this work for our personal use. It is not intended for commercial consumption. Please note the footnotes and obtain permission from the sources if you wish to re-use any of the text, tables, or photos for commercial purposes. If I later decide to sell any of this work, I too will go through the copyright procedures. You are welcome to cite my work; I ask you to provide attribution.

I have used hundreds of sources for my work and I am keen to credit others' help. It only takes a footnote, and I hope other writers do the same for me. If I have missed citing a source, it is without intent.

I use comments and conversations that are inside quotes in one of three ways: As verbatim reconstructions (from recordings); as nearly accurate reflections (from my notes); or as more distant remembrances (which I usually paraphrase). I take Mark Twain's approach to quotations: I strive for accuracy; if I do not have exact notes, I strive to convey the spirit and meaning of the quote.

I hope to hear from you about my work. I hope you enjoy it. I hope you will find some of it edifying. I hope you get a few laughs along the way.

## Vice President Cheney at The National Press Club Report One

**June 13, 2005**

Hello from Your On the Street Reporter, reporting from the streets of Washington, DC once again. Earlier today, I was at the National Press Club on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. I attended a luncheon where Vice President Dick Cheney was the main speaker. The occasion was the presentation of the annual Gerald R. Ford Prizes for Distinguished Reporting on the Presidency.

As you may recall, Vice President Cheney was President Ford's Chief of Staff. Today, he presented awards to Jackie Calmes, a correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, and Linda Robinson, a writer for the *U.S. News & World Report*.

The purpose of this report is to fill you in on this event in order for your Reporter to write-off the lunch. Also, the first part of this report has nothing to do with the VP, but about several observations pertaining to the audience for this assembly. If you logged-on to this link on Cheney to actually learn about Cheney, skip to page 4 of this report.

### **The National Press Club and Looking for Bob Woodward**

As you may recall from my first On the Street Reporter report, I am a recent member of the National Press Club. During the eating part of the lunch, one of my table partners (seated by me by a first-come, first-seated protocol) was a guest of another member. As we struck up a conversation, he asked, "For whom do you write?"

Recognizing my writing output in these later years of my life is not exactly on the *NY Times* Best Sellers List, I replied, "Mostly myself."

Guest, "I mean, do you have an affiliation with the press? Who publishes your writings?"

Reporter, "I used to work with Prentice Hall, McGraw Hill, and the IEEE Computer Society; they were my publishers. I wrote books about computer networks. Nowadays, I just write about what comes to mind and where I happen to be when I wake-up in the morning. Today, I woke-up in Northern Virginia. So, I drove into the District to listen to the Vice President and file a report to my readers."

Guest, who appeared a bit disappointed with your Reporter's answer, "Ah, your readers. You have a newspaper column?"

Reporter, "Nope, I use the Internet. Email. Some of my readers don't do the Net, so I mail them my reports."

Guest, ".....I see. Uh, what are your subscription fees if I wished to subscribe?"

Reporter, "No fees at all. I doubt if anyone would pay me for my columns."

The guest was underwhelmed by his luncheon companion. He was probably hoping to clink water glasses with Bob Woodward, “I thought the National Press Club members were press people.”

Reporter, “I guess not. I was admitted because of my books. Plus, a candidate has to be sponsored by an active member. I submitted a list of my work, and eventually received a membership card.”

My luncheon companion to my right was an attorney, also a guest of another member. She noticed my taking notes...and the speakers were still eating, “Mind if I ask what you are writing?”

Reporter (who was recording the cost of a glass of recently-imbibed Merlot for his expense report), “Oh. Nothing much.”

Attorney, “Are you a reporter?”

Reporter, “Eh, well yes. I write a report called ‘Your On the Street Reporter.’ ”

Attorney, “Really! For whom?”

Reporter, “For a very select group of readers. Actually, writing is a hobby. It keeps me off the streets in my retirement years.”

Attorney, “Ha! You write a column called ‘Your On the Street Reporter’ in order to keep you off the streets! That’s a good one. Come on, who do you really write for?”

As luck would have it, it appeared I was seated between *two* Bob Woodward groupies.

Reporter, “No. Honestly. I’m sort of passing time. I might write a report and I might not. Depends on if I have another glass of wine.”

Attorney, who began to realize her luncheon mate was not even Carl Bernstein, “Well, must be nice. Writing if you want to. Not writing if you don’t.”

Reporter, “You put it perfectly.”

### **Secret Service Making no Secret of their Presence.**

The main dining room of the National Press Club is a place you likely see a lot on C-SPAN. Today it had almost as many Secret Service Agents as diners. How did I know they were Secret Service Agents? (1) They frowned a lot. (2) They wore ugly shoes. (3) They stared a lot. (4) They never sat down. (5) They didn’t eat anything. (6) And the clincher; they had Secret Service Pins on their labels. You’re welcome; we reporters are observant. That’s how we get our scoops.

## Enter the VP

As yet more Agents entered the room, in came the Vice President. As he sat at the main table, he chatted with his lunch companions. I snapped this picture of him during this time.



**Figure 1. The Vice President.**

I didn't notice if the VP took the same meal as us. If he did, I did not see a person around to taste his food and die of poisoning if the food were indeed poisoned. In the old days, I suspect a job of the King's dining table befeater was an impossible task. Just consider: You would be eating the best food in the world with the chance that it might kill you. I'll wager the typical befeater suffered from stomach ulcers.

Anyway, before long, all diners were finished with the meal (Rock Fish... should have had white wine...), and the presentations and speeches began. We'll pick up here in the next report.

Your On the Street Reporter.

## Vice President Cheney at The National Press Club Report Two

**June 13, 2005**

Hello again from Your On the Street Reporter. I'm continuing the report on Vice President Cheney presenting the Gerald R. Ford Prizes for Distinguished Reporting on the Presidency at the June 13, 2005 luncheon at the National Press Club.

### **Decorum?**

After an hour or so of a fine meal and interesting repartee with my luncheon companions, the waiters cleared the tables, and the audience turned its attention to the speakers' podium at the front of the room.

As we were rearranging ourselves and our chairs to gain a better view of the speakers' table, one of the women at my table took-out her lipstick and mirror, and undertook a facial rehabilitation. She applied huge hunks of deep, dark lipstick on and around her lips. After which, using her National Press Club cloth napkin, she removed any residual lipstick that had accumulated on and around these lips. My dining mate then proceeded to examine her mouth, opening it wide as if to detect any stray Rock Fish residue deposited near her esophagus. Next, she performed a quick brushing of her teeth with her forefinger. Eventually, she put away her purse, and turned her attention to the VP.

I watched her ritual...and said to myself, "Uyless, you've been residing in a cultural cocoon for the past twenty years. You've been skipping along in life, assuming---among other antiquated niceties--- that people leave the table to 'remake their face'...not to mention their teeth."

In the context of serious issues such as genocide, pestilence, and Michael Jackson's sleeping habits, doing lipstick at a dining room table should be no big deal. I suppose the practice of women applying their makeup at the dining table is now *in*. I don't know for certain, and I look forward to your comments to help me fill-in my cultural Black Holes.

I'll now leave my dining mates and focus on Vice President Cheney. But let's do a survey. Who's in favor of women (and increasingly, men) doing their faces at public dining tables? Vote now and I'll return the results in an email.

### **The VP Speaks**

The host of the luncheon, whose name escapes me, announced the format for the event, "...Vice President Cheney will offer a few remarks, but our focus will be on questions and answers. On your table are pads of paper. Feel free to write down a question. Bring them to me at anytime. I'll read them to the Vice President."

Next, the awards were presented to the journalists; they offered a few comments, and the podium was then occupied by Vice President Cheney, shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Vice President Cheney at the Podium.**

Cheney spoke of his past work in the Ford Administration. He spoke of his affection for President Ford. His words to describe Ford were, “considerate...kind...humble...no self-importance.”

Most of the remaining time (as I recall, well over 40 minutes) was devoted to Vice President Cheney fielding (written) questions from the audience. Say what you will about this man. Political opinions aside, he is an articulate speaker, clearly an intelligent man who has a grasp of the issues. He is a formidable foe to the Democrats. I disagreed with some of the VP’s statements. I agreed with others. The following is paraphrased from my notes (indicated in italics).

### **On Guantanamo**

Question: *Because of the negative symbol of Guantanamo, should it be disbanded?*

Vice President: *We need some kind of facility for this kind of war. If not there, it would have to be placed somewhere else.*

Good point. But the image of Guantanamo Bay has become, rightly or wrongly, very negative.

Solution! During this exchange, your Reporter is thinking: “I’ve a better idea. Just re-name Guantanamo, and leave everything in place. It’s a proven technique. If something is not working, either do a study of it, rename it, or both.”

I continued thinking, “Better yet, to confuse the masses and frustrate the press, rename Guantanamo Bay the Pearl Harbor Bay. How can anyone think of Pearl Harbor Bay as a negative symbol? How can the press write about Pearl Harbor Bay in a negative way and still expect to sell newspapers in affluent places like Orange County?”

After all, we have a model to emulate. For several decades, General Motors continued to re-name the same stuff. And for decades, GM got away with it....for a while... until the managers of these policies retired with Golden Parachutes.

OK, seriously---if just for a few sentences. I have enough confidence in our Republic, in our way of life, to grant the Geneva Accords and/or the Bill of Rights and *Habeas corpus* to all those who are potentially affected by these laws/rules. For certain, this approach will back-fire on us occasionally. As Vice President Cheney said at the luncheon, 10-12 of the Guantanamo Bay prisoners who were released showed-up on an anti-U.S. battlefield.

I know little about these matters. But I do think, in the long run, we are better served by holding to the letters of our laws.

### **Deep Throat and Watergate**

Question: *Your views on the recent revelations on Mark Felt and Deep Throat?*

Mr. Cheney said he was fascinated by these revelations. He then said, *By Vice President Ford becoming the President of the United States, my career was enhanced!*

### **The Patriot Act**

Question: *If the Patriot Act is not renewed, will its demise have an effect on fighting terrorism?*

Answer: *The Act has been successful and needs to be renewed.*

Reporter: As stated a moment ago, I think our country, in the long run, is better served by keeping to our laws.

### **Multilateralism/Unilaterlism**

Question: *Have the bad relations with France, Germany, and Russia hurt our efforts to combat terrorism?*

Answer: *The debate on Iraq is behind us.....The degree of cooperation (among us) is better than indicated.*

Reporter: I salute the new efforts of this administration to re-engage with the rest of the world. The first four years of "In Your Face!" diplomacy was one of the more stupid (and unnecessary) political of recent time.

### **My Question!**

As the Q and A unfolded, it occurred to me I had heard most of the questions and their answers in the Sunday morning talk shows, and in the newspapers and news magazines. I decided to try to liven things up a bit with a different question. I wrote one down on the furnished pad, and as Mr. Cheney was talking, took my paper to the head table to present to the host.

Perhaps my back was on national television. After all, C-SPAN's cameras were active. If so, the TV viewer witnessed your Reporter being rebuffed by the host as I offered my question to him. The difficulty was a rope that had been placed in front of the main table. It prevented me from passing the paper to the host. After holding my hand out for what seemed like a long time, the host looked at me and nodded his head, "No."

"What?" I said to myself (and to him with my best indignant look), *"Less than twenty minutes ago, you gave us specific instructions on how to submit a question."*

If I couldn't submit a question to the main table, as directed by the main table host, who could? Were the questions planted? Is that why the Vice President answered them with such competence and flair?

Rejected on national television. And I didn't even sing.

I turned away to tramp back to my table. But I decided to try another approach. I began a cumbersome walk through and around tables and people to the right side of the room. There, I hoped to pass the question to a person at the end of the speakers' table.

Nope. Two Secret Service agents were standing at the end of the table. As I attempted to---ever so slightly---place my body over the rope, they came to life: Stepping forward, frowning even more than before, they placed their hands in front of them to indicate to me to "go away."

So, what to do? An intelligent response would have been to go back to my table and finish my Merlot and chocolate cake. No. I held out my right hand and offered my question to one of the agents. My gesture said, "*Please relay this piece of paper to that table located 24 inches to your right. Thank you kind sir.*" I even smiled as I presented my question to the agent.

Fat chance. Passing papers to podiums was not in this man's job description. He reacted as if I had mooned him. As Vice President Cheney continued to answer what I suspected to be canned questions,<sup>1</sup> I once again thought of my Merlot. But instead of heading back to my point of origin, I decided to try the other end of the table....which required walking through the entire room around more crowded tables and people.

I thought, "*Maybe the other side will be more receptive.*" In hindsight, how could I have possibly come to that conclusion? On this *other* side was a mirror image of the side that had just rebuked me: Two Secret Service Agents.

Off I went again, making my way through folks' feet and legs; Folks who were not all that receptive to see me coming their way. Anyway, I made it to the other side of the room and the main table. And guess what? I encountered the same response as before. One can only wish our national borders were as secure and nonporous as the speakers' table at the National Press Club.

How were all those questions delivered to the VP? Maybe before he began talking. No, the host issued his instructions regarding questions just seconds before Dick began his speech. Who knows? Where is Bob Woodward when you really need him?

### **End of Q and A**

My question was never posed to the Vice President. At exactly 2 PM the event was over. And I had returned to my table to polish-off my desert. During which one of my table mates asked,

- "Looks like you were trying to deliver a question."
- Reporter, "Yep. I guess I looked pretty stupid."
- Table mate, "No. But you looked pretty persistent."
- Reporter, "One of my less enduring traits."
- Table mate, "May I ask, what was the question?"

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<sup>1</sup> In fairness to this event, I had noticed some papers being passed from the audience to the head table earlier. Most likely, they were legitimate questions.

- Reporter, “Sure. It was, ‘Do you know you look a lot better on TV than in person?’ ”
- Table mate, “Hmm,” as he bid goodbye and left the room.

OK, I admit I’m new at being a Reporter and I don’t know how to ask deep, penetrating questions. But I’m learning. And I am sure we will have more reports from the National Press Club, where I will, as a budding questioner, hone my questions to cut to the heart of a subject and rip the heart out of the questionee.

Your On the Street Reporter.