

## Editorial

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# Black hits the parental bull's-eye

Who knew a preface could say so much. Uyles Black, a frequent and esteemed contributor to The Press, wrote his first 35 books about data communications networks and the internet. But his latest, No. 42 for those who are counting, is something else.

Fresh off the press, “Read to Me with Ears to Hear and Eyes to See” is a collection of 32 short stories about the social fabric of America. Black, who won the Navy Commendation Medal for actions in the Vietnam War, writes with sensitivity, adept scene-setting and character development that sometimes lead where you wouldn't have expected to go.

That includes the preface. Today's editorial quotes Black from his focus on one valuable reminder. On Friday, we'll share his observation (and warning) about one of the greatest threats to that which binds us as a great nation.

“My son, Tommy, and I started reading to each other early in his life. While I read, he would follow my words as I pointed to the text with my finger. This guidance helped his learning new words, even though, many years ago, my first grade teacher had forbidden her students to finger read. Nonetheless, my son would do the same for me as he read. Thus, we read with both ears and eyes.

“Each night I would put him to bed earlier than my time for sleep. His only protest, and not much of a protest, was, ‘Read a story.’ That we did ... together, often pausing to discuss a passage in the narrative.

“For a while in the evening, we would lie together on the bed, propped up on pillows, as we educated each other, slowly and casually reading short stories and novels of adventure and heroes' exploits.

“It is satisfying to learn how we can gain pleasure from reading as well as watching others recite their cadence of passages. But this experience comes about if we do not read and listen too impatiently; that we study, if only a little bit, even casually, the structure of the author's compositions...

“Watching Tommy's reading those passages helped me gain an increasing appreciation of the written word, and I hope I did the same for him.”

Reading to and with our children regularly. Perhaps there is no greater parental gift — a gift that gives back instantly and forever.

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Information: [UylesBlack.com](http://UylesBlack.com)

## Editorial

# Casualties of runaway social media

Author Uyles Black is prolific — how does 42 books and hundreds of essays posted on blog.UylesBlack.com sound? — but he owns a depth of perception that goes far beyond data communications networks, the internet and other technical areas he mastered in a long and fascinating career.

He grew up on a New Mexico ranch, became a gifted swimmer and an officer who won the Navy Commendation Medal for his actions in Vietnam. Lucky for us, he now calls Coeur d'Alene home.

Black is an adept writer, in part because he is a gifted observer. On Wednesday, we editorialized from the preface of his latest book, “Read to Me with Ears to Hear and Eyes to See.” The focus was on the strong foundation of learning and communication forged in the little effort and lot of love invested when we read to our children and grandchildren.

But as he does so well, Black finished the preface with an about-face, turning to the real and growing threat of social media dependence not just on families, but on the Family of America.

Having dinner out one night with his wife, Holly, Black noted that about one-third of all the diners, sitting with family and friends, “were involved in exercising their thumbs, all the while resting their tongues and ears, and ignoring their dinner companions.”

OK, you’ve done that too — both observed and committed the “social media” sin in a place where phones should be ignored or outlawed. But Black carries the observation further.

“I am not fond of the social media climate,” he writes. “Its emphasis on abbreviated communications, often hostile discourse to display egos, indifference to the beauty of language and our country’s traditions and history are disturbing. The system is unraveling. It discourages the glue that binds Americans together to a common purpose: The bonding to one another with the associated ties of empathy and tolerance.”

He also writes:

“When I read my ancestors’ letters, writing during the American Civil War days, I am struck by their compositional beauty, by their tolerance toward others, even their enemy at that time. Today, even within our democracy, people who have genuine but different views are excoriated in social media. They are demeaned as aliens to others’ ideologies.”

The threat is real, Black concludes.

“Forsaking reading and writing at the risk of over-using social media carries the risk of alienation. Let us attempt to communicate with empathy toward others ...”

We challenge you: Go to your favorite social media repository and see how much empathy is being communicated to others — particularly those whose views might differ.

Thought so. And that’s why we’re so glad Uyles Black is writing books like this.

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