Turgid? Never!

Who is Micah Morrison?

*This week’s conspiracy theory*

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Editorial

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Micah Morrison is the opinionator for the Wall Street Journal's editorial page who this week boldly took its coverage of the Whitewater half-scandal, half-delirium where no journalist had gone before. It's apparently not just the jury in Tucker Trial 1 that has developed overtones of Star Trek. Mr. Morrison began his adventure on the far side of fact with one heckuva generalization: "As is the case in many small states, the Arkansas press is controlled by financial interests closely tied to the political establishment. . ." and then plunged deeper into outer space in the same half-Karl Marx, half-Jules Verne mode. (The turgid style was from Marx, the sci-fi content from Verne.) And our space-age visitor had only begun to degravitate.

Certainly this scoop from his article Tuesday will come as encouraging news to the kind of irate gliberals who supply most of our hate mail: "In editorial commentary and political cartoons, the state's largest newspaper, the Democrat-Gazette, generally portrays Mr. Starr as a GOP carpetbagger intent on an eventual Supreme Court seat."

Crazy, man. It's also a view completely unprejudiced by those of our editorials defending Kenneth Starr's integrity while, much like the Wall Street Journal's editorial stance at its saner moments, lamenting the runaway powers granted independent counsels, aka loose cannon. ("Yes, if one must have a loose cannon aboard the good ship Constitution, by all means Kenneth Starr is the one to have."—Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, May 21, 1995.)

The only documentation Micah Starwalker offers for his strange view of our editorial position is a quote from John Brummett, who is a columnist for the paper--not an editorial writer. This commentator would seem as well acquainted with some basic distinctions of journalism as he is with the Arkansas press. To him everything sort of merges together into one indistinguishable but definitely conspiratorial blob: editorials and columns, the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette and KATV, Judge Henry Woods and our editorial criticisms of the judge's ruling in Tucker Trial II .... To the more provincial of our visitors, all us Arkies must look alike.

As for those editorial cartoons Mr. Morrison mentioned, neither John Deering nor Vic Harville of our staff could remember depicting Kenneth Starr as "a GOP carpetbagger intent on a Supreme Court seat," but the description does fit a cartoon by George Fisher in the Arkansas limes last week. Anybody who can't tell the difference between that publication and the one you're now perusing needs to have not just his eyesight but his ideological bearings checked. Is this guy writing from Little Rock or Arcturus?

Not that he isn't most welcome' like all visitors to Arkansas, but his queezing all the state's press into one straitjacket of a generalization amounts to a convincing argument against the old saw about travel being broadening.

Defending his view of us as a tool of the political establishment and generally pro-Tucker in Whitewater (a credential we'll have to remember the next time the governor shouts at us) our visitor explains: "The editorials portray a ho-hum, world-weary attitude toward the whole affair. If you have an indicted governor and the charges could implicate the president of the United States, there is no room for a ho-hum attitude."

You have to admire Micah Morrison's freshness, which is not always distinguishable from naivete. Anybody who could find the paper trail being tediously unrolled at the federal Courthouse a subject of endless fascination must have the world's highest boredom threshold. Just wait till our visitor sees Arkansas grass growing; he'll be captivated for days. Or wait till he's followed various Clinton Scandals up close for 20 years or so; let's see if he's still riveted by every slick move then.

One hesitates to burst any bubbles, but with all due respect for his office, this president of the United States can be infinitely, exhaustively, volubly bo-ring. Listening to Bill Clinton strategize or just rationalize, the hours can go by like decades. Sometimes it's hard to-write about our eternally youthful—well, eternally adolescent-president without every word having to be wrung out by a deadening sense of duty. Oh, for a president as interesting as Cal Coolidge. There are times when silence would come as a relief and refreshment. But none of this seems to have penetrated Micah Morrison's gonzo journalism.

When we called to ask just what Financial Interests Closely Tied to The Political Establishment we're controlled by (it's always good to know these things) Micah Morrison's conspiracy theories grew even more convoluted. At one point, if we understood him correctly, we were supposed to be controlled by a newspaper chain with whom we are not only in competition but occasionally in litigation. If that's control, what would rivalry be? As we said, it all gets pretty surreal.

Ah well, not long ago it was Jim Guy Tucker who submitted a sealed brief accusing the Democrat-Gazette of being an arm of an insidious Republican conspiracy directed against him by Sheffield Nelson, the Darth Vader of his imaginings. This week the Wall Street Journal editorial page's man in Little Rock, or maybe in the next galaxy, depicts us as in the governor's corner-and part of a state press controlled by a sinister financial and political network. We must be doing something right.

Or maybe we just switch conspiracies every week; we've always thought the life of a double agent would be fun, if confusing. We can hardly wait till our magic decoder ring arrives. Maybe that's what we need to make some sense of Micah Morrison's description of us. Or perhaps if we held his article up to a mirror or recorded it on an old 78 rpm and tried a little backward masking . . . .