

comments from Paul Fell:

Let me try to put the events of the past few days in perspective from my point of view. I presume you've all read Kathleen Rutledge's column in the Saturday Lincoln Journal Star about my being terminated as freelance editorial cartoonist. If not, here's the web site:

<http://journalstar.com/articles/2007/06/23/opinion/columns/doc467c78aad9f27797147986.txt>.

The Journal Star is actually right in its argument that I did commit a breach of journalistic ethics in contributing to a political candidate. To be frank, last fall when I contributed to the Maxine Moul for Congress campaign, it never occurred to me that I was doing something I shouldn't. Call it a brain fart or an early onset stroke, but I did what I did.

My comments in the MSNBC.com interview were pretty angry and if I had been less truthful and snarky, pleaded ignorance and begged forgiveness from the Journal Star, I'd probably still be freelancing for them. The fact is, I had backed them into a corner where they had no choice but to give me the axe.

My anger stemmed from the fact that I had not received a per-cartoon raise from the paper for the past five or six years. Then, to add insult to injury, two years ago the paper goes and hires another freelancer to draw local cartoons. Late in the spring I met with Ms. Rutledge and my editorial page editor. At that meeting I told them that it was high time I received a raise and exactly how much I wanted. It [the raise] worked out to the princely sum of \$14 per cartoon. In exchange for this, I was willing to let them run my cartoons on their web site (something they could not do without my permission) and that I would create the cartoons in full color. If they were unable or unwilling to raise my compensation by fall, then I observed that we should probably end our long-standing business relationship. Obviously they had no intention of giving me a dime more, so my MSNBC.com comments were the perfect excuse for getting rid of me once and for all.

I'd also like to address Ms. Rutledge's remarks about "cartoons of a sexual nature" on my web site. For the past few years I have been contributing cartoons to a men's magazine. They were of the "Playboy" type, naughty, but far from most folks' definition of obscene. The Journal Star had a problem with being on the same web site as those cartoon samples. Just by coincidence, I had terminated my relationship with that magazine a few weeks before she contacted me with her concerns. I happily removed the cartoons that concerned her from my web site. I thought the matter closed, but she appears to be using this incident as some sort of red herring to further justify my termination.

I am already in conversations with some folks in this area about using my editorial cartoons either online or in print. There is an alternative paper that will start up in July to which I have already agreed to contribute cartoons. My work for the Lincoln Journal Star is only one part of my wide-ranging freelance studio business that runs the gamut from sports cartoons, to caricatures and humorous illustrations. I'm alive and well and still operating my freelance cartoon studio, Paul Fell Cartoons. I hope you'll keep me in mind when you need humorous illustrations of any kind. Stop by every so often and visit my web site at www.paulfellcartoons.com and keep an eye out for lots of changes and additions to the site in the next couple of weeks.