

In case you hadn't heard, I am now a Blogger. Yes, I've finally been inducted into that ancient, time-honored profession (five years old, at least) to which only a few (million) writers gain acceptance.



I worked long and hard to reach this career pinnacle (seriously, it took *hours* to figure out that MyBlog software), but it was well worth the struggle. Because now, friends, I am truly living my dream. Every single day, I'm using my unique combination of gifts – my writer's craft, my finely-honed analytical skills, and, that which really sets us bloggers apart,

*my ability to cut and paste*

– all for the betterment of mankind. To help make chaos out of order... to spark debate where once there was only consensus... to force reevaluation where once there was only... evaluation.

In other words, I'm now pickin' fights every day, instead of just twice a month! Seriously, though... as I've said here before, I don't start arguments intentionally. I'm always a little surprised, in fact, when an argument ensues over something I've written (which they do, regularly, on my blog). Because, frankly... I always kind of assume you readers out there think much like I do. Or that, if you don't, you will after I'm done with you. Honestly, I'm always a bit hurt when it doesn't work out that way.

But I'm getting over it. Or used to it. Or something. And when I'm not busy feeling pitiful and persecuted, I'm really having fun!

But I need more participation, y'all. My "hit count" (that's blogger speak for "readership") is growing, but too many of you are keeping silent, not joining in the conversation. I want comments! Lots and lots of comments. I have a few loyal posters who write so well, and so regularly, I should put them on the payroll. (Alas, I'd like to put myself on the payroll, but these things take time.) Those regulars help make our website an interesting, provocative place to hang out. But they can't bear the burden alone...

Let me back up, for those who might be unfamiliar with the blogging concept. A blog (short for "web log") is an online community, a "cyber salon" of sorts, where people meet to bandy about ideas, debate issues, or, in some cases, just gossip. (Of course, we don't do gossip on my blog! Uh uh, no way, never...) A blog is typically run by a host (in my case, me), and that host's opinions – or those of others she finds interesting enough to post – serve as a springboard for group discussion. That's how it works in a perfect world, anyway. Too often, on *my* blog, my posts serve as a springboard for... complete and utter silence. Maybe that's my fault. I write about a smorgasbord of topics, most of them falling into the rather broad categories of politics and culture. This is the stuff that fascinates

*me*

, and I just assume you feel the same, especially if you've been reading this column for a while. But you know what they say about assuming...

The problem *could* be that my blog has a distinctive point of view. And yes, it's *my* point of

view, which isn't exactly mainstream. (Or maybe it's

*too*

mainstream. Who can say anymore?) But don't let that keep you away! I've got readers who regularly bring

*their*

distinctive POVs to the table, too. They take me to task, I take them to task, and a good time is had by all! Seriously, my blog guests are a pretty civil bunch, albeit opinionated. And I know for a fact I have plenty of lurkers (blog speak for "those who read but do not comment") just longing to give me what-for. In fact, sometimes they do give me what-for in the form of a private e-mail... the cyber equivalent of "taking it outside," I guess. One friend who uses this chivalrous approach told me he doesn't comment on my blog because "it would be a full time job." I wish he would, sometime, because he's very smart and thoughtful, and it takes no longer to tell me off in public than it does in private. (Plus, I control the "comment delete" button, so I'm not that worried about prolonged online humiliation.)

Anyway, what I'm doing here is inviting you, my readers, to join in this conversation we've got going on the Lowcountry Weekly website. If you're wondering what sort of conversation... well, it's all over the place, really. In the past two weeks, I've posted about "Horton Hears a Who" (the movie), "John Adams" (the mini-series), playwright David Mamet's recent repudiation of liberalism, Eliot Spitzer's fall from grace, Barack Obama's speech on racism, the politics of Easter, the Davis/Ceips senatorial campaign, Lee Iacocca's new book, and the downtown street preachers, just to name a few. Friends keep advising me to "play nice," to keep my more controversial opinions to myself, but when I do, both the hit count and the comment count go down. I'm torn between a genuine desire to maintain a civil, respectful tone on my blog – and in my "real life" – and an equally genuine desire to say what I think, put it out there with confidence and flair, and take my lumps (not to mention my hits). I'm still looking for the proper balance, and I think I'm getting closer. Somewhere between Ann Coulter and a bowl of fat-free vanilla pudding is the happy medium I seek.

The most satisfying days at the ol' blog mine happen when I post something edgy, one of my readers challenges my post from an opposite "edge," a debate ensues, and we end up meeting in the middle... each of us (and hopefully, our readers) with a better, more nuanced, understanding of the issue than we had when we started. Despite my tongue-in-cheek introductory paragraph, I believe a vigorous debate is a good and healthy thing. There are plenty of blogs out there (most of them?) that have disintegrated into online versions of nighttime cable news – just a bunch of angry people talking *at* each other, never listening, never learning, never getting anywhere... That's the last thing I want for my blog.

What do I want? Have you been watching *John Adams* on HBO? Those founding fathers really knew how to debate! They were astonishingly well-educated – versed in history, politics, science, mathematics, philosophy and religion. Upon this deep and wide foundation, they were able to construct arguments of great eloquence and conviction about things that really mattered. They knew how to persuade with equal parts passion and civility, wit and sincerity, reason and emotion. And they knew how to

*listen*

... almost like they actually

*wanted*

to learn from each other! If

*John Adams*

is any indication, their meetings were a marvel to behold. And the outcome wasn't too shabby,

either.

So, that's what I'm aiming for. A blog that operates more like a Continental Congress.

Is that too much to ask?

Okay, maybe my rhetoric here is a little high-falutin.' Perhaps, dear reader, you're having trouble seeing me as a Founding Father.

So how about a used car salesman? Does that work for you?

Check it out: *You need to be on this blog. What's it gonna take for me to put you on this blog?*

*I really want your business...*