

Too much news?

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I read a news report recently that discussed U.S. president Donald Trump's shoes.

Yes, his shoes.

The article questioned whether Trump was wearing 'lifts' or height-enhancing shoes. It even included close-up photos of his footwear from an event he had recently attended.

A reporter actually went to great lengths to determine whether the president had added an inch to his height.

Well, news flash, half of Hollywood is wearing heels in an attempt to look taller, but that's not really news.

Trump's shoes looked pretty normal. It wasn't like he was wearing Conquistador boots with three inch heels.

With the advent of all-news Television stations and internet sites that are nothing but 'news,' we have now gone overboard with what constitutes actual news for the public.

Television stations used to have the news typically three times day. There was the noon news, the 6:00 p.m. news, and the 11:00 p.m. (It's 11 o'clock, do you know where your children are?) broadcast.

For the most part, the news was repeated because there really wasn't that much happening in the course of a single day to have a brand new program every six hours.

If a major catastrophe happened you would hear about it. If it was a real earth-shaking event, they may cut into regular programming to let you know something was happening and additional reports would be available on the next broadcast.

The current situation with news channels has 'breaking news' constantly hitting the airwaves as if everything that happens in the world is important and should be shared.

It it really breaking news that one of the Kardashians posted a new selfie?

This extreme fascination with intimate details of the last few U.S. presidents has now crossed a boundary from news to just plain gossip.

Former wartime president Franklin D. Roosevelt was severely disabled after contracting polio at age 39 and was left paralyzed from the waist down. He could eventually stand with the help of leg braces, however a quick search reveals almost all photos of him in office are in a seated position.

The public, for the most part, didn't realize their president was disabled. However, the media which had reporters around him all the time must have known of his condition, but rarely, if ever reported anything about it.

The news reporting was about his actions and those of his government, not the fact that he used a wheelchair. However, political pressure did play a part in creating an image for the presidential office.

John F. Kennedy was usually portrayed in media as a healthy, robust, sea-loving sailor and an enthusiastic player in family touch-football games.

The truth is, Kennedy had a variety of ailments, some very serious. He also had a bad back that resulted in him requiring to wear a back brace.

On top of all that, a recent New York Times article revealed he was taking as many as eight different medications each day, at least one of which was just to keep him alive, and the constant use of these medicines did indeed affect his mental capabilities at times.

Kennedy was not a healthy man. Again the public was not aware of this. He was a young president and people just assumed he was in good shape.

However in the past few decades presidents have been asked to reveal the results of medical tests and check-ups to keep the people informed.

Neither Roosevelt nor Kennedy would have even been nominated for office by today's standards of intrusive reporting and public expectations.

The most recent example of cheap journalism was the release of a video of Justin Trudeau at the NATO summit in London.

Trudeau was speaking to several other world leaders in what was obviously some kind of post summit get-together. They looked more like a few businessmen having drinks at a pub after a day at work.

However a cameraman managed to get his lens in place and recorded the PM making a comment about Donald Trump being late for the event because he held a 40-minute news conference.

Next thing you know, this 'news' is flashed around the world. This wasn't news. It was common banter among a group of colleagues.

It would have been news if Trudeau was caught saying he approved of a secret NATO plan to invade Australia or some other innocent country.

If the media is now reporting news by eavesdropping on private conversations to fill air time we have entered a new age of news and not for the better.

We should be informed about the actions of world leaders and that of their government, not whether they are wearing chunky shoes verified by the use of zoom lens and a sneaky tabloid reporter.