

*Reporter Rambles*

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I'm an action reporter. I don't live a normal life. My bed is never made and sometimes I don't get into the shower until mid-afternoon. I often have dirt under my fingernails. I like Mexican food and Italian women, fast Italian women. Like I said, I'm an action reporter; I have it rough. But don't pity me for I also happen to be humble, more humble than even Lou Grant.

While on a recent trip to Washington D.C. I talked to many holders of political office. I asked a lot of questions, questions that indicated I was aware and concerned. I didn't smile when I asked the questions, and sometimes I didn't even nod when I listened to the answers. But I did keep a constant stare planted on the person's nose.

I did that to Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.). Some people refer to the Senator as Bill or Proxi, but I call him Senator William Proxmire because I really don't know him that well. He's the fellow that has hair transplants and gives out the Golden Fleece Award, but don't think those two foils have anything to do with each other – they may or may not. I don't know.

I asked the Senator: “Is there an irony in the administration’s nuclear arms stance in that, on one hand, we’re negotiating sincerely with the Soviets in Geneva while on the other, here at home, Mr. Reagan is proposing the largest peace-time defense budget ever?”

Incidentally, that’s one of my favorite questions. I practiced it, asking it in front of the mirror many, many times. The interesting thing about asking Senator William Proxmire that question is that I didn’t get an answer to rival the responses from my mirror.

Now, I’ve attuned myself to the political jargon, as any good action reporter should, and I can usually squeeze some sort of tangible answer from the rhetoric that goes along with the answers politicians give; but Senator William Proxmire really stumped me. The guy is a master of evasion, downright hyper-elusive. Don’t get me wrong. I admire that ability in a person. He proves a theory I have concerning politicians: If you want to be consistent, you’ve got to be vague.

But one thing Senator William Proxmire didn’t do which pleased me very much was smile while answering my purposely pointed yet rehearsed question. I was pleased. I’ve asked people the nuclear question who have given me more substantial information, but have always accompanied their answers with one of those unsettling grins, the kind where the person’s lower lip stoops below their bottom teeth and their upper lip rises like a Venetian blind to reveal all their pearly whites. I seriously reserve the right to accept a sincere response concerning nuclear arms from someone who’s smiling.

There’s nothing funny about nuclear weapons.

Missiles don't smile. They can't. But if missiles were given emotional capabilities, I would hope they'd be manic depressives. Maybe they'd all commit suicide. But then missiles don't kill; the boob that pushes the button kills. I'm sorry. I've rambled. I wanted to talk about interviewing politicians, which is what an action reporter is supposed to do. But politicians ramble, too; you can't pin them down. While Senator William Proxmire's mind drifted away from my nuclear question, mine drifted closer to it. While he evaded the issue, I, like any victim, dwelled harder on it.

Now I can't keep missiles off my mind. I try to keep them off, they don't belong there, but I can't. Let's get rid of them. We can, even if Senator William Proxmire can't. We're not politicians. We don't have to be vague to be consistent.