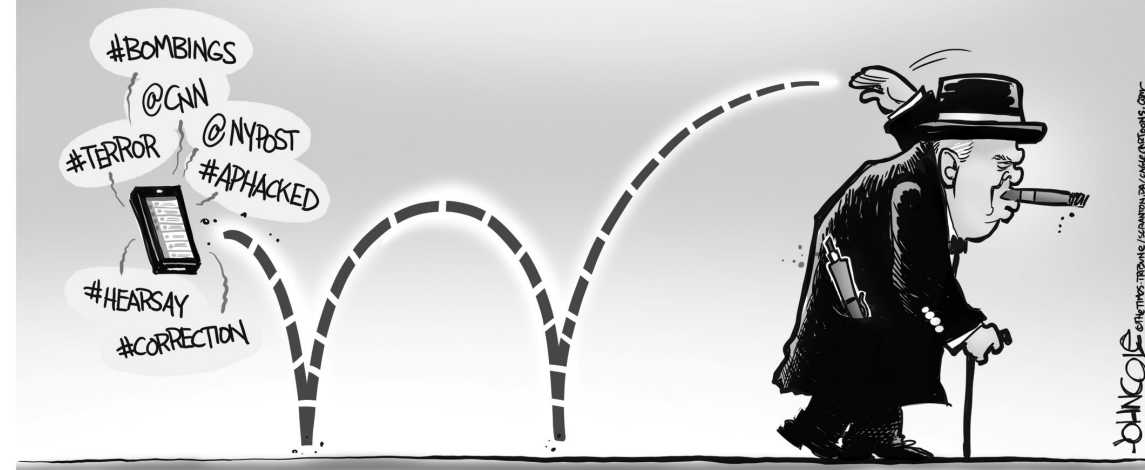


**'A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to put its pants on'**

WINSTON CHURCHILL



## Freaking Out In Real Time

BY KELLY HERTZ

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On the day of the Boston Marathon bombings, I briefly became part of a problem tied to the event. And all I did was push a button.

On that chaotic Monday, I glanced at Twitter occasionally to read the torrent of tweets emanating from the attack. At about 1 p.m., I saw a tweet from Slate passing along a rumor from the *New York Post* reporting from unspecified sources that 12 people had been killed in the incident.

Then, to add to this information maelstrom, I retweeted it — forwarding it to parts unknown and just as curious as I was.

That's about it, but in my mind, it was enough. It still bothers me because a) the *Post's* report was, as we now know, completely wrong; and b) I helped (in spirit, anyway) spread that wrongness. I should have known better. Honestly, just dissect that line of communication detailed in the paragraph above: I passed along a second-hand report of an unverified rumor from an unspecified source — information that had not been confirmed by someone more, shall we say, specified. I would never do that in any other situation (unless, I suppose, I was working in television). But on Twitter, it's just business as usual. It's reflex. And it's easy.

That's one of the nagging problems with the mushrooming popularity of social media in recent years. Ours is now a world in which unfiltered news can hit us at any instant we choose, and a lot of it is unofficial and speculative at best, complete fabrication at worst. But in those moments of calamity when any nugget of information seems like a tantalizing new piece to a mysterious puzzle, we often forget to filter ourselves and we spew out those raw items to other eager eyeballs.

The Boston Marathon tragedy may serve as an interesting case for anyone who wishes to study the role and the impact of social media during a crisis. The attack is one of the biggest events to date in which components like Twitter have played a high-profile role, albeit mostly as a social sideshow.

This was particularly true three days later when police in Boston were zeroing in on the suspects. Late on that Thursday night, I witnessed a "Twitter freakout," as people everywhere were chiming in with reports and observations on what was unfolding in the Boston suburbs. Some tweets merely passed along what people were seeing on television or from online sources, but others were

relaying what they were picking up on Boston-area police scanners. What was particularly striking was the rate at which these tweets were materializing — literally a dozen every couple of seconds. Twitter was afire with voyeuristic excitement, not to mention an inescapable share of erroneous reports and sarcastic observations.

This was not my first Twitter freakout, however. The first one was last September when the Seattle Seahawks beat the Green Bay Packers on a dubious — and, judging by the reaction, apocalyptic — last-second touchdown pass on Monday Night Football. I was working late that night and I didn't have the game on, so I gave a cursory check of Twitter. Suddenly, 12-15 new tweets began rolling in every few seconds, and almost all of them were vulgar and volcanically angry. It told me something was amiss. It was actually kind of amusing.

But here's something that isn't so funny. On Tuesday, a group calling itself the Syrian Electronic Army hacked the Associated Press's Twitter feed and launched a pernicious tweet stating that two explosions had been reported at the White House and President Obama had been injured. The Dow Jones instantly panicked, lost 143 points and erased \$136 billion in cash wealth in just three minutes. AP quickly took down its Twitter account and White House spokesman Jay Carney had to address the issue in a media briefing. Also, the market recovered ... this time.

The lack of filters that instant communication and digital rumor-mongering provide can create a Pandora's box (or account, if you will) of headaches. Spreading unconfirmed reports, innuendo, opinion masquerading as fact or lies playacting as truths isn't necessarily a harmless act; it can feed a snowball effect of confusion and, conceivably, panic. It would be like taking the 1938 War of the Worlds radio broadcast and magnifying it at least a thousand-fold, turning a spark into an instant wildfire of uncertainty and fear.

How we acclimate ourselves to this reckless age of Twitter, Facebook and other instantaneous communication tools will likely dictate how much of blessing or a curse our constant access to each other will prove to be. There are dark demons that lurk in the gleaming miraculous-ness (not to mention a plague of bad spelling and bizarre sentence structures, but that's another thought for another time), so a healthy dose of skepticism should be requisite for all of us to endure it.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter — if you dare — at [Twitter/kelly\\_hertz](https://twitter.com/kelly_hertz)



Kelly HERTZ

## The Lessons Learned In Boston

BY MICHAEL REAGAN

CagleCartoons.com

The beautiful Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Center for Public Affairs in Simi Valley, Calif., was the last place I expected to be reminded of the violence that paralyzed the city of Boston last week and turned it into a mini-Baghdad.

But I was reading my father's presidential diaries and there it was in his very first entry — the issue of terrorism and how to fight it. On Jan. 26, 1981, on his first Monday on the job, Ronald Reagan wrote that he called the FBI, the CIA and other intelligence agencies into an Oval Office meeting to find better ways of sharing information with each other on terrorists.

I read my father's entry Tuesday, the same day Sen. Lindsey Graham was being told in a hearing that the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI had not shared what they knew about dead Boston Marathon bomber Tamerlan Tsarnaev.

It's too early to know the details of who knew what or when, or if the FBI or someone else fumbled the ball. So far it looks like what is to blame is a combination of bureaucracy and the complexities and legalities of compiling and monitoring terrorist watch lists.

But we've already learned the FBI interviewed Tamerlan in 2011 after being told by Russian intelligence officials that he had recently changed into a strong believer in radical Islam and was suspected of joining underground groups in Russia.

The FBI ultimately decided Tamerlan was not a terrorist threat and did not know he went to Russia. The DHS knew he went to Russia but apparently didn't know the FBI had checked him out.

Haven't we seen this tragic sitcom plot before? Wasn't the failure of the CIA and the FBI to share what they knew about the 9/11 terrorists one of the main reasons they were never caught?

To share. Wasn't that the important kindergarten lesson our overlapping, turf-warring intelligence agencies were supposed to learn from 9/11?

We thought the intelligence-sharing problem was going to be fixed after 9/11. My father thought the same

thing after that big meeting in his office. But nothing's changed after 32 years.

Not that our intelligence agencies could have stopped the Boston Marathon bombers even if they had been sharing information the way they should.

To a large extent the Brothers Tsarnaev were under our anti-terrorist radar screens. We only knew what we knew about them beforehand because the Russians tipped us off.

It's a pretty sad state of affairs when we have to rely on the Russians for intelligence about terrorists in our own backyards. Who'll try to help us next time, the North Koreans?

There will be a next time. Everyone knows Boston was not a one-off. Other terror cells we don't know anything about yet are living among us and they're radicalized and trained to hurt us — and they will. America has millions of soft targets.

At least the state and local police in Boston did a great job, finding and capturing the bombers in less than four days.

But it was humiliating to watch a proud city be shut down and terrorized for more 24 hours, its people cowering and "sheltering in place" because of two punks with pistols and a couple of homemade pipe bombs.

Paul Revere and his fellow patriots would have been ashamed to see so many Americans afraid to even go outdoors.

It's doubtful, but maybe some of the die-hard liberals of Boston — and the rest of the country — learned a lesson from what played out so dramatically on their streets and our TVs.

Two weeks ago everyone on TV was talking or crying about the need for tougher gun control because of what happened at Newtown. Now, after Boston, everyone is talking about how we all need a gun at home to protect ourselves.

Michael Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan, a political consultant, and the author of "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press). He is the founder of the email service [reagan.com](http://reagan.com) and president of The Reagan Legacy Foundation. Visit his websites at [www.reagan.com](http://www.reagan.com) and [www.michaelreagan.com](http://www.michaelreagan.com). Send comments to [Reagan@caglecartoons.com](mailto:Reagan@caglecartoons.com).



Michael REAGAN

## THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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### OPINION | WE SAY

#### Farewell



**THUMBS UP** to the 50 years of service Lois Eli has provided to the Yankton County Auditor's Office. She will retire at the end of this month as the longest-serving employee in the county's 151-year history. By any measure, it's a rare achievement. Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed today (Friday) as Lois Eli Day in South Dakota, and we join him in thanking Eli for her service and wishing her well in her retirement years.

#### On Target



**THUMBS UP** to the City of Yankton and the National Field Archery Association (NFAA) for finding a good use for 12 acres of property that has been more or less abandoned because of its status as a former solid waste dump. The NFAA will use the land for archery ranges and parking, which is about all it can be utilized for because any digging would require costly clean-up measures. NFAA president Bruce Cull has said that the expansion of the NFAA grounds opens the door to more collaboration between community sporting entities that have an interest in using the facilities during times when the NFAA doesn't need them. We don't know with certainty, but with any luck this development will help address some of the sports facility needs in Yankton.

#### Filling Up



**THUMBS DOWN** to sedimentation, which looks to take a major toll on Lewis and Clark Lake during the coming years. The sediment, primarily from the Niobrara River, moved nearly a mile downstream during both the 1997 and 2011 floods, according to Missouri River Institute director Tim Cowman. The 4,800 feet in each of those flood years compares to the average advancement of 400 feet a year from 1978 to 2012, he told a Yankton meeting this week. However, Cowman also left the audience with hope for reducing sediment, listing three possible solutions. The Missouri River Sedimentation Action Coalition (MSAC), which hosted Cowman's presentation, continues to press for greater public awareness of the issue.

#### 30



**THUMBS DOWN** to the passing of *USA Today* founder Al Neuharth, a University of South Dakota graduate whose generosity toward the Vermillion campus will benefit generations of USD students. Neuharth also founded the Freedom Forum and the Newseum. He never forgot his roots, often returning to campus and making time for USD students, including his Neuharth Scholars. He provided funding for the Al Neuharth Media Center on campus and also brought prominent journalists to USD for the annual Al Neuharth Award for Excellence in the Media. He inspired South Dakotans, particularly young people, that one of their own can go far in the world. Celebrations of Neuharth's life are planned for May 17 in Vermillion and at Cocoa Beach, Fla.; and Washington.

### ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

#### LATEST RESULTS:

**Do you think the surviving Boston Marathon bombing suspect should be tried as an enemy combatant?**  
Yes ..... 63%  
No ..... 32%  
Not sure ..... 5%  
**TOTAL VOTES CAST** ..... **325**

*The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.*

#### CURRENT QUESTION:

**Have you ever utilized a payday loan or pawn shop?**

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

### TODAY IN HISTORY

#### By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, April 26, the 116th day of 2013. There are 249 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On April 26, 1865, John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, was surrounded by federal troops near Port Royal, Va., and killed. (Just before dying, Booth looked at his hands and gasped, "Useless, useless.")

**On this date:** In 1607, English colonists went ashore at present-day Cape Henry, Va., on an expedition to establish the first permanent English settlement in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1785, American naturalist, hunter and artist John James Audubon was born in present-day Haiti.

In 1913, Mary Phagan, a 13-year-old worker at a Georgia pencil factory, was strangled; Leo Frank, the factory superintendent, was convicted of her murder and sentenced to death. (Frank's death sentence was commuted, but he was lynched by an anti-Semitic mob in 1915.)

In 1923, Britain's Prince Albert, Duke of York (the future King George VI), married Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon at Westminster Abbey.

In 1933, Nazi Germany's infamous secret police, the Gestapo, was created.

In 1937, German and Italian warplanes raided the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War; estimates of the number of people killed vary from the hundreds to the thousands.

In 1945, Marshal Henri Philippe Petain, the head of France's Vichy government during World War II, was arrested.

In 1952, the destroyer-minesweeper *USS Hobson* sank in the central Atlantic after colliding with the aircraft carrier *USS Wasp* with the loss of 176 crew members.

In 1968, the United States exploded beneath the Nevada desert a 1.3 megaton nuclear device called "Boxcar."

In 1973, the Chicago Board Options Exchange held its first day of trading.

In 1986, a major nuclear accident occurred at the Chernobyl plant in Ukraine (then part of the Soviet Union).

In 1993, Conan O'Brien was named to succeed David Letterman as host of NBC's "Late Night" program.

**Ten years ago:** A Soyuz rocket carrying American astronaut Edward Lu and Russian cosmonaut Yuri Malchenko blasted off for the international space station. Actor Charlton Heston, diagnosed with symptoms of Alzheimer's disease, made his last appearance as president of the National Rifle Association during a con-

vention in Orlando, Fla., where he briefly thanked the membership.

**Five years ago:** Police in Austria arrested Josef Fritzl, freeing his daughter Elisabeth and her six surviving children, whom he had fathered while holding her captive in a cellar for 24 years. (Fritzl was later sentenced to life in a psychiatric ward.) Yossi Harel, the ship commander whose attempt to bring Holocaust survivors to Palestine aboard the *Exodus 1947* built support for Israel's founding, died in Tel Aviv at age 90. Avant-garde composer Henry Brant died in Santa Barbara, Calif., at age 94.

**One year ago:** Former Liberian President Charles Taylor became the first head of state since World War II to be convicted by an international war crimes court as he was found guilty of arming Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for "blood diamonds" mined by slave laborers and smuggled across the border. Pakistan's Supreme Court convicted Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani of contempt but spared him a prison term for refusing to reopen a corruption case against his boss, President Asif Ali Zardari.

**Today's Birthdays:** Movie composer Francis Lai ("Love Story") is 81. Actress-comedian Carol Burnett is 80. Rhythm-and-blues singer Maurice Williams is 75. Songwriter-musician Duane Eddy is 75. Singer Bobby Rydell is 71. Rock musician Gary Wright is 70. Actress Nancy Lenehan is 60. Actor Giancarlo Esposito is 55. Rock musician Roger Taylor (Duran Duran) is 53. Actress Joan Chen is 52. Rock musician Chris Mars is 52. Actor-singer Michael Damian is 51. Actor Jet Li (lee) is 50. Rock musician Jimmy Stafford (Train) is 49. Actor-comedian Kevin James is 48. United States Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey is 47. Actress Marianne Jean-Baptiste is 46. Country musician Joe Caverlee (Yankee Grey) is 45. Rapper T-Boz (TLC) is 43. Country musician Jay DeMarcus (Rascal Flatts) is 42. Country musician Michael Jeffers (Pimmonkey) is 41. Rock musician Jose Pasillas (Incubus) is 37. Actor Jason Earles is 36. Actor Leonard Earl Howze is 36. Actor Tom Welling is 36. Actor Pablo Schreiber is 35. Actor Nyambi Nyambi is 34. Actress Jordana Brewster is 33. Actress Stana Katic is 33. Actress Marquette Patterson is 33. Actor Channing Tatum is 33. Actor Aaron Weeks is 27.

**Thought for Today:** "Friends may come and go, but enemies accumulate." — Dr. Thomas F. Jones, Jr., American college official (1916-1981).

### FROM THE BIBLE

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above. James 1:17. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

### YOUR LETTERS

#### Remembering Loyalty Day

Yankton Lions Club

On May 1 (Loyalty Day), the Yankton Lions Club will begin their Community Flag Program. This will be

our 28th year of hanging flags at participating businesses. We hang flags 10 times between Loyalty Day and Veterans Day. We would like to take this time to thank everyone who bought a flag contract. Thank you for helping us serve others.

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