



Media Coverage of Sago Mine Tragedy Raises Many Questions

by Lindsay Sobotka, grade 11

Weir High School

Weirton, WV

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Two days had passed, and nothing but waiting, praying, and watching had occurred in a small church outside of the Sago Mine in Tallmansville, West Virginia.

On January 2nd, thirteen miners had been trapped under ground after an unexplained explosion. After a 41-hour vigil, a miracle seemed to have happened. Church bells began to ring, and people screamed, "The miners are alive!"

Joy, celebration, and relief took over the families that had been slowly losing hope as the days and hours passed. This euphoria continued when the first miner, 27-year old Randal McCloy, was retrieved from the mine and rushed to the hospital. The crowd anticipated seeing the next miner return from the mine alive.

But these feelings did not last. Soon, grief, anger, and resentment replaced joy, celebration, and happiness. The overjoyed families soon found out that the information they had received was false.

McCloy ended up being the only miner of thirteen to survive. Ben Hatfield, chief executive of the mine's parent company, continued to allow the families to believe this lie far after he knew it to be false.

The families and citizens of Tallmansville were distressed and outraged. Viewers around the nation who had witnessed the announcement at midnight on January 3rd were relieved but awoke to the shock of the second announcement the following morning.

The families of the deceased are now considering taking legal actions against Hatfield and the communication department of the mill. However, they are not the only people who have done wrong in this horrible accident. Blame can also be put upon the media.

For example, on www.cnn.com, there is a video titled "Images of Grief". This video clip shows the families' roller coaster of emotions in those three happy and grief-filled hours. CNN shows the families overcome with joy, then mourning over their loved ones.

Is it appropriate for these raw emotions to be made so readily accessible to the public? These are people's lives and emotions, and I highly doubt they want the rest of America watching them mourn during their time of grief.

Additionally, www.cnn.com has a photo gallery titled "Family Devastation" which includes even more disturbing photos of the families' reactions to their horrifying news. On another CNN video entitled "When Joy Became Despair", John Casto (a friend of some of the miners) gave an interview to a reporter. In the background of the video, the media can be seen swarming around the crowd and the families.

Reporters' jobs are to report the news and get the facts about the story in order to inform the public, but lately the media just seems to focus on exploiting the endless angles of each story and the emotions at hand rather than the news itself. CNN.com has many photos, quotes, and articles about the families and how they are reacting to this tragedy, but isn't the real story the loss of life, the miracle of a sole survivor, and getting to the bottom of what exactly happened in that mine?

Very little is revealed about the rescue attempts and how the mill accident occurred. I'm guessing information like that does not sell the same amount of newspapers and magazines as one that displays grief, loss, and utter devastation.

Today's media is not what it used to be. Making a large profit is such a priority that the media is willing to interrupt people's lives in order to get that tear-jerking story on the front page.

Hasn't the media taken us far enough with graphic images from 9-11, suicide bombings in Iraq, 2004's devastating tsunami, and most recently the destruction of Katrina? Where is the line drawn in media?

There are some wonderful things going on in today's world, not just tragedies such as the one in Tallmansville, but you wouldn't know it unless you turned to page two.