" PR AND PEDANTIC PEDAGOGY PERFECTED"

Someone once told me that you shouldn't carry a gun unless you're willing to use it and, if you do, be prepared to get shot at. That sorta works for Ol' Mosby too. Seems our last little bit of fun hit some people like salt on saddle sores ... if you know what I mean. Well, y'all (please note the correct PV spelling for future reference) better make sure your cinch is tight, pull your hat down, grab hold of the reins 'cause we're going for another wild ride around the dastardly deceivers and defamers of decency. And if you think some of our past raids were rough, why they were walks in the park compared to what I have in mind this time around.

All kidding aside, public relations is so important for a small business with a limited budget that I probably deserve some of the scars I've gotten lately.

The hardest thing most people have is sitting down and writing a press release, even the most simple ones (releases and people). Well, it isn't all that hard and it doesn't take a degree in Journalism or English to do it right.

Most editors look at press releases as a necessary nuisance, they have to use some of them, but they look for every opportunity to circular file as many as they can. Most of the releases that get into print follow certain fundamental rules:

- Identify a person that can be contacted for more information and include a phone number where they can be reached (it doesn't hurt to include a FAX number or a home number);

- Let them know when it can be printed (that's why they call it a "release") in capital letters in the upper right hand corner;

- Write a headline that is no more than two lines long, in capital letters, that arouses the curiosity of the editor;

- Your first paragraph is the most important, use it wisely. It should contain all of the pertinent information to be found in the release in capsule form - "who", "what", "when", "where", "why", and "how";

- Don't beat around the bush or use more words than you need to get the point across;

- Make sure there are no typographical errors;

- If you are going to send a photograph make sure it's an 8"x10" or 5"x7" glossy;

- A good press release has a structure like a pyramid, it forces the reader to each subsequent paragraph so that more of it will get read and printed - a great press release will generate a call from the editor for a feature story;

- **Attach a personal handwritten note to the person you are sending it to - it makes the editor stop and at least look at your release;**

- **Keep it simple. One page should be all you need unless what you are relating is extremely complicated or involved;**

Unlike advertising, where you are paying for the space or time for your message, a press release is "free". Remember, you are fighting every other release that an editor receives for space in the paper or magazine before it even gets an opportunity to reach the marketplace. A good editor will look at a stack of mail and sort it into stacks before opening any envelope: one stack will never get opened; one may get opened but never read beyond the letterhead or headline; one more will be read and some might be selected for "possible" use if nothing better is available (it's called "fill"); one stack - next to the smallest - will be read, red-lined, and marked for use; and the last, the smallest of all and one you want to be in, will have the editor on the phone to you to ask more questions.

Well, that's about all this old, battle weary, bumbler can handle this time around. Unless we get bushwhacked or a horse steps on my head we'll be back next time and harass the harbingers of hedonism with a hearty and heavy hand.