Leo Alman Gets Major Ink for Advocates Quiz

Note: Advocates supporter Leo Alman was the subject of an interview that ran in **The Pittsburgh Press** *(circulation 230,000) earlier this year. The writer was Brian O'Neill.*

Says Leo about the interview: "One item I brought up was Operation New Map where 35,000 WSPQ *cards had been distributed at the 1988 Democratic national convention. Mr. O'Neill handed the card to an adjacent co-worker (who had covered the convention) and asked, 'See any of these in Atlanta?' My heart stopped. The co-worker laughed and replied, 'They were all over the place.'*

"A wave of warmth spread over me. My credentials had just been validated. I offered a silent prayer to those hardy libertarians who wore out their sneakers and voices in the hot Atlanta sun."

The following is a condensed version of the O'Neill column:

One Sunday when Leo Z. Alman was 12 years old, he went to Forbes Field to catch a Pirates doubleheader. In the seventh inning of the second game, the umpires called the game. It wasn't raining.

It's state law, the guy next to him explained. It's 7 o'clock. It's Sunday.

It was the first time young Leo realized the people we sent to Harrisburg were nuts.

Alman, now 58 and a computer systems supervisor working Downtown, tells that story when you ask why he's a Libertarian.

...He'd sent me something called the World's Smallest Political Quiz. The 10 questions fit in your hand. I was supposed to answer yes, no or maybe on statements like these:

Repeal regulations on sex by consenting adults.

Government should not own or control TV or the press.

Minimum wage laws eliminate jobs. Repeal them.

A libertarian would say "yes" to all. I stumbled around with my answers. Sure, it's fine to leave sex to adults and God and keep Harrisburg out of it. But suppose the networks put porno instead of Pee Wee on Saturday morning TV? I guess I'd want some government control there. Yes, no.

When I plotted my score, it came out "centrist."

I was intrigued at how the little quiz had focused my thinking, had turned the old labels around. So I called Alman and asked about his lunch plans. A hard boiled egg, he said. He put that on hold and came over.

We talked for an hour, and Alman told me how he'd convinced the Advocates for Self-Government to pass out about 35,000 of the quizzes at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta last summer.

It's happening —MF

Alman had come a long way in the half-century since the game was called at Forbes Field.

He really came to libertarianism in 1957, when he read Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*, a gospel of self-governance.

Since my epiphanic book is probably *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's epic tale of a working-class family struggling through the Depression, Alman and I argued over the minimum wage.

He began with an analogy.

"Why are we talking here today? You wanted to talk and I wanted to talk. Our meeting is a voluntary transaction on both of our parts."

"If that guy," he said, pointing at political cartoonist Rob Rogers. ...

"If that guy would come in and order our answers, and order you to ask certain questions at gunpoint, then the basic essence of our transaction is destroyed."

If you want to cut grass to earn extra money over a weekend, he said, why should the government set the price if we can agree on one ourselves? Why should it set any price?

Because how else is a poor stiff going to make a lousy four and a half bucks an hour, I retorted, more or less.

We kicked other things around, tried to solve as many of the world's problems as we could in an hour, and then it was time for him to go.

This column's been all over the place, I guess. I intended to focus on the book, but then I met the man, and I thought you might want to do the same.

I may have been wrong, but hey, it's still a free country.

Leo Alman believes in Libertarians and justice for all

Brian O'Neill

ON SUNDAY when Leo Z. Alman was 12 years old, he went to Forbes Field to catch a Pirates doubleheader. In the seventh inning of the second game, the umpires called the game. It wasn't raining.

It's state law, the guy next to him explained. It's 7 o'clock. It's Sunday.

It was the first time young Leo realized the people we sent to Harrisburg were nuts.

Alman, now 58 and a computer systems supervisor working Downtown, tells that story when you ask why he's a Libertarian.

He's a short, gray building bit of a man who looks like one of the heads he reads in newspapers with a postage stamp at my release.

He's been voting since John Horgan's grease on our Lincoln page a half-dozen terms a year.

Depending on when you pick up the paper, Alman will sign himself up as the Libertarian candidate, chairman for the Libertarian Party of Western Pennsylvania (Little), president of Consumers for the Free Market (R), or vice president of Libertarians for Fair Trade Western Pennsylvania (not much).

What never changes is that he wants the government out of personal and economic affairs. That's why he's a Libertarian and why he's nervous. You might say he spends his free time trying to get people who are personal zealots like him elected.

He'd sent me something called the World's Smallest Political Quiz last week. The 10 questions fit in your hand. I was supposed to answer yes, no or maybe on statements like these:

• Repeal regulations on sex by consenting adults.

• Government should not own or control TV or the press.

• Minimum wage laws eliminate jobs. Repeal them.

A libertarian would say "yes" to all. I stumbled around with my answers. Sure, it's fine to leave sex to adults and God and keep Harrisburg out of it. That's easy. But suppose the networks put porno instead of Pee Wee on Saturday morning TV? I guess I'd want some government control there. Yes, no.

When I plotted my score, it came out "centrist."

As centrist is a person who can find the reasonable middle ground, who isn't interested in debate. It's an uncomfortable word.

I was intrigued at how the little quiz had focused my thinking, had turned the old labels around. So I called Alman and asked about his lunch plans. A hard boiled egg, he said. He put that on hold and came over.

We talked for an hour, and Alman told me he'd convinced the Advocates for Self-Government to pass out about 35,000 of the quizzes at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta last summer.

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He began with an analogy.

"Why are we talking here today? You wanted to talk and I wanted to talk. Our meeting is a voluntary transaction on both of our parts."

"If that guy," he said, pointing at political cartoonist Rob Rogers, who was just then screwing the naked congressmen you'll find on the back of this page. (I'll wait here while you check.)

"If that guy would come in and order our answers, and order you to ask certain questions at gunpoint, then the basic essence of our transaction is destroyed."

If you want to cut grass to earn extra money over a weekend, he said, why should the government set the price if we can agree on one ourselves? Why should it set any price?

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Brian O'Neill's column appears on The Pittsburgh Press every Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday.

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and tell them what to do. Bless them for coming at me with both barrels and telling me I was a bit pushy.

Time to stop writing on this funny subject. I feel better now for sharing it with you.

Apologies to the Dale Carnegie Folks

What an unpleasant surprise: a three-page letter from attorneys of the Dale Carnegie organization pointing out that my speech, "How Dale Carnegie Would Present Libertarianism" is misusing their good name. People could think I'm teaching some of their course material.

I wrote them a letter of apology and told them I won't use the name anymore. We've renamed the speech "How to Share Libertarian Ideas Without Appearing to Be A Fool." Let me suggest you buy it now (A-35, $9.95). If you order by Aug. 31, write "special" on the order form and you can have it for 1/2 price ($4.97). You'll learn many ideas for talking to people about libertarianism without scaring them.

Something for Posterity

George Washington University has asked to be the official archive point for Advocates material. I met with Bill Keller, director of their research library, and Prof. Jerry Manheim of the Political Communication department when I was in DC.

They showed me how they index materials from several other organization and make it available to researchers. I was impressed with the completeness and neatness. Our first shipment of tapes has been sent. (As you know if you've been on an Advocates teleconference, our meetings are recorded so they can be archived. This will provide a treasure trove for researchers who some day will be trying to figure out just how we won.)

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