

Wagged Out

Singleton expose ruffles feathers

By Michael Collins

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8-Ball's June feature article and sidebar on William Dean Singleton inspired a spectrum of reactions with only one common characteristic: all of it was strong. At the Greater Los Angeles Press Club banquet, one editor of a local Singleton paper complained to *8-Ball's* executive editor, Charles Rappleye, that he didn't appreciate the newly reinvigorated magazine "trashing" his boss. Apparently, this same editor didn't also relish that he and his staff were seated in a room adjoining the main hall with those rambunctious scribes from the *New Times Los Angeles*.

One veteran journalist was outraged over what *8-Ball* published, not for supposedly trashing El Diño, but for what Singleton told the magazine in our interview with the controversial mogul. Gary North is a *Variety* honcho and the president of Southern California Media Guild. North, who worked for ten years at the *Long Beach Press-Telegram*, says he was embarrassed and baffled at Singleton's remark about North's former employers in Long Beach.

"Is it the paper that some of the old editorial hacks of old would put out?" Singleton asked *8-Ball*. "No. But that paper was dying. This paper is thriving." North was baffled. "The first irony is that the same editors who ran the paper before — who chose the look and content and feel and coverage — are still in charge," writes North on the Guild's website newsletter available at <http://www.socalmedia.org>. "Are *they* the 'old editorial hacks of old'?" North wrote.

As copies of *8-Ball* were delivered at the Press Club banquet and distributed throughout the Southland, the magazine was gratified that folks throughout Singleton's eight-paper strong saw to it that their fellow scribes and co-workers were able to read about El Diño. The other excellent articles, chronicling the experiences and views of we underpaid, undervalued and possibly hell-bound purveyors of what we hope is the truth, finally saw the light of day: articles about all of us and our concerns as professionals.

But it wasn't to be at Singleton's *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*. When *8-Ball* investigated what happened to the hundred-plus issues of the glossy magazine that were delivered to the paper for staffers, we were baffled as to why no-one at the enterprise had seen the magazine, let alone had even heard of the Singleton piece. E-mail queries to everyone online at the paper produced a flood of responses.

Over twenty *Daily Bulletin* wags responded, saying that they wanted a copy of *8-Ball* mailed to them, personally. One staffer asked that the Singleton article be sent to his home for fear that it wouldn't reach him at work. "(Singleton) has certainly decimated the

Long Beach Press-Telegram,” said a *Daily Bulletin* reporter who did not request anonymity but we at *8-Ball* did for his own good. “[But] it’s a different story here.”

Apparently not, according to the executive editor of the *Daily Bulletin* and the *San Bernardino Sun*, Steve O’Sullivan. The *Daily Bulletin/Sun* boss was initially cordial to *8-Ball* and said he had “no problem” with the original Singleton expose, though he made sure to point out that he had personally guided the formation of a recent *Forbes* magazine’s business-friendly profile about Singleton.

When *8-Ball* called O’Sullivan on the apparent fact that the hard copies of the magazine were deep-sixed, the Singleton supervisor was steamed. He accused this reporter of violating a “colloquial” call since I had mentioned, at the end of our seemingly friendly conversation, possibly re-writing an expose first exposed in the *LA* and *OC Weekly* on the military-industrial giant Aerojet that resides in O’Sullivan’s neighborhood for his papers. O’Sullivan tried, in vain, to make me promise not use any of his quotes for the press club’s follow-ups.

O’Sullivan, perhaps fearful that the powers that be could spank his corporate backside for talking to me, went on to trash Mark Cromer, the editor of *8-Ball*, for supposedly “repeatedly” looking for a job at Singleton’s inland valley newspaper. Cromer was not pleased as is evidenced by his message to O’Sullivan after I told him of the executive editor's displeasure with *8-Ball*’s follow-up Singleton investigation.

“While I appreciate your professional opinion, we believe that an apparent act of such blatant censorship at a newspaper is indeed a story and an important one at that,” Cromer wrote. “I don't know, maybe it has something to do with the arcane concept that newspapers should be in the vanguard of defending the people's right to know -- not trashing publications they don't want their reporters and photographers to see.”

It is apparent that El Diño’s power is undiminished, at least amongst his minions. That is not the case at the Greater Los Angeles Press Club.