

COMMUNITY JOURNALISM THEN AND NOW: A COMPARISON OF
COMMUNITY-MINDED BROADCASTERS OF THE 1960S AND THE 1990S

By

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This dissertation is a historical study of three broadcast editorialists working in Florida during the tumultuous 1960s. The three editorialists were Joe Brechner, owner and general manager of WFTV-TV in Orlando; Norm Davis, editorial director of WJXT-TV in Jacksonville; and Ralph Renick, news and editorial director of WTVJ-TV in Miami. The works of Brechner and Davis examined in this study revolve around single editorial campaigns. In the case of Brechner, the topic was civil rights. Davis focused on governmental corruption and inefficiency. Renick, who editorialized first and for the longest period of time, conducted several editorial campaigns. His work

on governmental corruption, crime, restaurant sanitation, and civil rights are examined herein.

The three editorialists are compared to members of the press in the 1990s who called themselves "community journalists." The following questions are asked: (1) What is community journalism? (2) Were the three editorialists who are the focus of this dissertation community journalists? (3) Should modern journalists consider Brechner, Davis, and Renick journalists to be emulated?

In order to avoid either present-mindedness or past-mindedness, particular attention is paid to context. The regulatory climate for 1960s broadcasters who chose to editorialize is examined. The events of the decade are a major part of the context. It was those events from which the editorialists chose their topics. Lastly, motivation of editorialists and journalists studied for this work is examined. The touchstone for motivation is existential communitarianism, defined for this study as "concerned primarily with community, but drawing from the principles of existentialism to include concern for individuals within the community as well as concern for personal responsibility." It is within that framework that the efforts of the subjects of this research are measured.