

Schadenfreude



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This morning I listened to a remarkable display of sarcastic juvenile pleasure in the misfortune of others on Laguna's KX93.5 public service community radio. The offenders were Jim Kennedy and Alan Boinus on their *Clashing Heads* Sunday morning talk show. Their clownish caricature of thoughtful public discourse should engender a profound sense of communal failure and embarrassment at the manner in which our current City Council election is being conducted. Kennedy

and Boinus have been hosting discussions with each of the candidates, and when Jon Madison failed to appear for his scheduled interview they digressed to the sort of mean-spirited taunting that is characteristic of schoolyard bullies. This meanness would be evident even in a transcript of their show, but in order to appreciate the delight that they were obviously taking in their mutual tirade you will need to listen to their podcast for the rhythm, emphasis and tone of speech that reveals what people really mean when they talk.

These two probably don't have any personal reason to hate Jon Madison or to hurt him. I doubt that they considered the interpersonal effect they were having on Jon while they held forth in their studio; isolated as they were from the human realities by infatuation with their public role and by their physical separation from the victim. Their voluminous lowbrow detective work around Jon's academic credentials was unnecessary and irrelevant since, as everyone familiar with either standard employment practices or academia will realize, the only relevant authorities are the registrars at Cornell and UCLA. Academic records at universities like these are serious business and they have spoken repeatedly in this case. Jon clearly does not hold the degrees he claims. But I like Jon and I care about the personal tragedy that he must be suffering. It is possible to be civil and kind as well as rigorous in our public discourse and also in our private relationships. This is really important. Trust me. Call me.

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