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On the passing of a conservative Catholic commentator

Heidi Schlumpf | Jun. 6, 2011 NCR Today

While the NCR family was still mourning the loss of journalist Joe Feuerherd last week, I learned that a prominent Catholic commentator in Chicago had died [1]. Tom Roeser, a conservative columnist, blogger and radio talk show host, was 82 when he died May 28.

The adjective "acerbic" was used in several obituaries, and it is fitting. I regularly checked out Roeser's blog [2] to see what "the other side" thought and was up to. It's no secret that I agreed with very little of his opinions not only about the church but about secular politics.

I knew a bit about Roeser's background, but his obituaries [3]reminded me what a complex background he had. He had been a GOP publicist and worked for the Nixon administration, but left the Commerce department because he believed it wasn't doing enough to help minority businesses. His next job: communications director for the Peace Corps. For years, he worked as a lobbyist for Quaker Oats, and his pro-business attitude was evident. But he was also pro-little guy, as evidence by his support of a local program for down-and-out alcoholics and substance abusers.

I hesitate to call Roeser a "journalist," even though he started out at as a cub reporter and once interviewed Eleanor Roosevelt. While the distinction is sadly weakening, Roser was more accurately a "commentator," at least later in life. He wore his opinion on his sleeve.

His legacy, in addition to his family, will probably be two organizations he helped found: Catholic Citizens of Illinois [4] (CCI) and the Chicago Daily Observer [5]. The former is an organization dedicated to rooting out liberalism in the church; the latter an online conservative publication covering local politics.

While some progressive Catholics may not miss his criticisms, neither will many in the hierarchy for whom he didn't spare harsh words [6]. These seemingly irreconcilable aspects of Mr. Roeser remind me of so many in our church (our current pope included) who cannot be neatly summarized as either "liberal" or "conservative"--or for whom different labels may apply at different points in their lives.

Several readers at ncronline.org commented on the news of our publisher's passing [7] by noting that they may have not agreed with Joe Feuerherd but they were sad to hear of his untimely death. I echo that sentiment about Mr. Roeser. While he may have not always believed there was room for such diversity in Catholicism, he and I were part of one church. As a fellow Catholic, I wish him everlasting peace and offer my condolences to his friends and family.

Source URL (retrieved on *11/25/2015 - 06:51*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/passing-conservative-catholic-commentator

Links:
[1] http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-05-30/news/ct-met-roeser-obit-20110529_1_faith-and-politics-quaker-oats-conservative-stances

[2] http://blog.tomroeser.com/
[3] http://www.suntimes.com/5662430-417/political-voice-social-activist-thomas-roeser-dies-at-82.html
[4] http://www.catholiccitizens.org/http://www.catholiccitizens.org/
[5] http://www.cdobs.com/
[6] http://blog.tomroeser.com/2010/03/personal-aside-we-have-letter-from.html
[7] http://ncronline.org/news/people/feuerherd-ncr-editor-chief-and-publisher-dies