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**September 18, 2007**

## Harry Potter and the Taser

*By Hans Meyer*

Monday evening I watched an interesting debate unfold in an on-line blog. The topic was the Tasing of a University of Florida student by the police at an open forum with Massachusetts US Senator John Kerry. The topic was so hot that the comments section easily swelled to over 500 posts in a matter of just a few hours.

The facts seem to be these: Kerry was speaking to a gathering at the University of Florida, in Gainesville, covering the Middle East, Iraq and other topics. After his formal comments were completed the floor was opened up for general questions from the audience. One student, Andrew Meyer, took the microphone and began to ask several questions. According to some preliminary reports I've read, Meyer began to ramble on about Kerry conceding the 2004 election too soon, asking the Senator if he had read a certain book, and then starting to ask Kerry about skull and bones. From the video shown on Tuesday morning's Today Show it appeared that a single police woman approached Meyer to tell him that his time was up. It rapidly began to escalate, and at one point Kerry tried to calm the situation saying that he would "stay here as long as it takes to get the questions answered." Finally, the police began to escort Meyer away from the now turned off microphone, and he struggled while yelling "what! are you going to taser me? are you going to arrest me?!" Sometime after that Meyer was, apparently, Tasered by the police, and he was arrested.

(Author's note: I am not related to the Andrew Meyer in this story.)

Originally I was going to title this piece, "The (Un)usual suspects," as the participants in the aforementioned debate took some interesting sides in this story.

On the right side of the aisle there were those who

exclaimed “shock” at the supposed suppression of “free speech” by the police, especially with the use of a Taser. Most of these also accused Kerry of not rushing to the rescue of the speaker, asking (ordering?) that the police back off and let the questions be asked. This group was unusually quiet when I posted a dozen links to stories about hundreds of arrests at Bush rallies/speeches. The only “excuse” offered was “well, they weren’t Tasered!” Interesting how these wingers can be so upset at the treatment of this one student, yet so cavalier when it comes to evidence of hundreds of people arrested at Republican (read: Bush) events. Where’s their “shock” at the suppression of free speech by the police in all of those numerous cases? And if it were John McCain, and not John Kerry speaking, would they be applauding the actions of the Gainesville/University of Florida police instead of condemning them?

The next group of right-wingers are those who, while disdaining Kerry the politician, felt he did nothing wrong, and that, perhaps, Meyer got what was coming to him. This position is best summarized by this post: *“...the dude (Kerry) was just giving a speech. Crowd control wasn't his job. Had he interfered and said something like, 'Let the brotha speak...', he'd be slammed for telling professional law enforcement how to do their jobs. What happened here isn't a reflection on Kerry.”* Indeed. And, in many respects, this is part of how I view this situation.

On the left side of the aisle are those who condemn the police for their over-reaction in both arresting Meyer and in Tasering him. To these people this is simply a “Dog Bites Man” story, something which has been seen since Chicago 1968, and even earlier. I tend to agree with this viewpoint.

Some of those on the left also expressed disgust with Kerry in that he didn’t do more (or even something) to help the student. Others, like the right-winger I quoted above, felt that this event is not a reflection on Senator Kerry.

Normally, that would be the end of this piece; an observation on how each side of the political aisle viewed the same story, and how the usual alignments were not so usual this time around. But the Today Show included some additional information which sheds some much-needed light on this story.

Seems that Andrew Meyer is known around campus as someone who will do outrageous things to garner attention.

For example, when the last in the series of Harry Potter books, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, was released in July, Meyer made a poster with “Harry Potter Dies” written on it. He stood at the corner of a busy intersection in Gainesville with his sign and a copy of the book, taunting drivers by giving away the surprise ending. From the video shown few motorists found such a disclosure funny, and even the driver of a passing sheriff’s car yelled “shame” to this attention grabber.

So, when all is said-and-done, perhaps the police who arrested and Tasered Andrew Meyer on Monday were really just devoted, yet ticked off, Harry Potter fans.

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Authors Bio:

Hans Meyer is the host of ***Situation Awareness***, a **Free World Radio Network** program airing on BlogTalkRadio. A life-long resident of Florida, Hans has been active throughout the years in political, educational, professional and civic organizations. This includes serving as president and executive director of the **Florida Young Democrats**, serving as an officer in **Phi Rho Pi**, serving as chair for the **Florida Jaycees** Governmental Affairs Leadership Seminar, being a founding officer and president and executive director of the **North Florida Association of Networking Professionals**, and serving on the board of directors of the **Network and Systems Professional Association**. He has published articles on 49-Reasons and OpEdNews.com.

Hans' career in computers and computer networks spans over twenty-two years, from MS-DOS 3.x to Vista, from Novell to VINES to Server 2003. He is a certified (and certifiable) Webmaster, and a professionally-trained bartender.

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[Back](#)