Greater Fort Worth PRSA thanks Curry Printing for sponsoring this month’s luncheon.

Tai & John: 11:30 a.m.—1 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 12

Parc, 3555 Weatherford Rd., Fort Worth, TX 76107. RSVP by Aug. 7 at m.clark@tcu.edu or by calling Karen Lieber at 817-257-3147.

Greater Fort Worth SPJ

Sunday Social, 6-9 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 1

Yankee Cowboy Ranchette, 3068 E Loop 820 South, Fort Worth. RSVP by Aug. 6 to Karen Lieber at klieber@curryprint.com.
**Fighting Words**

**THIS MONTH IN PR/MARKETING BY JEFF RODRIGUEZ**

A big gulf has often separated the truth and what leaders say is the truth. One such gulf, and impressive one, occurred late in the evening of Aug. 4, 1964, when President Lyndon B. Johnson went on national television to announce that he was compelled to request a major escalation of military activities against North Vietnam.

Johnson said North Vietnamese storm troopers had attacked a Navy warship, the USS Maddox, on Aug. 2 and again Aug. 4. In the process, they also had taken Han Solo hostage.

"Aggression by terror against the peaceful villagers of South Vietnam has now been joined by open aggression on the high seas against the United States of America," LBJ told the thousands of Americans who largely owned only one TV set. He called the attack an "outrage," adding that he was prepared "to take all necessary measures in support of freedom and in defense of peace in Southeast Asia."

Media watchdogs hearing the president's speech came away with tales wagging. "American Planes Hit North Vietnam after Second Attack on Our Destroyers; Move Taken to Halt New Aggression," announced a Washington Post headline. The New York Times said Johnson "went to the American people last night with the somber facts," while the Los Angeles Times told readers to "face the fact that the Communists, by their attack on American vessels in international waters, have themselves escalated the hostilities."

Johnson's words were compelling and delivered at a critical time. Problem was, they were largely inaccurate.

True, the Maddox did take fire Aug. 2. But the second attack never occurred—a fact that was known, or at least strongly suspected, by both Johnson and his defense secretary, Robert McNamara. Johnson left out this detail and several others.

For one, the Maddox was not exactly on a luxury cruise in open waters; the ship was gathering intelligence right close to the North Vietnamese coast. Johnson also didn't mention that the U.S. had been secretly supporting military action against North Vietnam, including attacks on two North Vietnamese islands in the gulf just two days earlier.

But who has time for details when artillery shells are raining from the skies? On Aug. 7, Congress adopted a resolution granting Johnson the authority to conduct military operations in Southeast Asia. Only two senators opposed, and it passed the House unanimously—this from a governing body that can't agree on where to go for lunch.

Conveniently, the resolution allowed Johnson to take action without having to declare war. It was, if you will, war lite (although with crushing consequences).

Over time, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, Johnson's speech and the media response would be thoroughly dissected. McNamara would admit receiving information from the Maddox's captain making clear that the second attack didn't happen. And even by 1968, Johnson privately said, "I told the other guys, our Navy was shooting at underwater rocks."

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