

# **THIS & THAT**

by  
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I was going to title this piece “Who’da ever thunk it?” or, “The Evolution of Free Speech.” Both work, so I kept both. Now, sit back, get comfortable, and I’ll bet you don’t make it through this without nodding off.

In the beginning a loud voice and a small crowd were arguably the beginning of free speech. The basic components consisted of a person with something to say, and one or more who were willing to listen.

Time went on. Technology entered the picture. It was found that stone walls and paint could substitute for a loud voice...thus we have the beginning the pharmaceutical industry (the idea of relieving a sore throat caused by using too much voice). Okay, poor joke. I digress. Back to the topic... Yes friends, the prehistoric images on those French caves are a form of free speech.

Then came the megaphone; a cone shaped device one used to direct sound. The first one was probably a set of cupped hands. Today we’ve electrified them and call them bull horns. Ah, progress.

After the megaphone, portable recording mediums (tablets and paper) and writing implements (scribes and sticks with ink) were invented. Thus free speech marched on.

Delivery systems that followed included

the printing press, the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, TV, and on and on.

So, we can say while the need for free speech has remained unchanged, the delivery system has changed.

Here it comes folks. Today, the Internet has become a very powerful free speech delivery system, and the latest method of using the Internet for that purpose is named...you ready...**THE BLOG!** Yep, the Blog.

Webster’s On-Line dictionary defines Blog as “a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer; also : the contents of such a site.”

I’ll expand on the word Blog here. In short (okay revive that guy who fainted when I said, “in short.”) it goes like this, a Blog owner owns a one page (potentially very long page) web site. The site owner determines what the Blog is to focus on. So let’s say that Mildred starts an Apple Pie Blog. She then uses her Blog software to create short information blurbs about Apple Pies. She adds them to her Blog page (the latest entry is always at the top). So, as the mood strikes her, she continues to grow the content shown on her Blog page.

Now, as for readers, they need to have a URL (Universal Resource Locator - Internet Web-Site address) that takes them to Mildred’s Blog page. Once there, they can read any or all of the entries she has posted there. If Mildred wants to open the site for readers to respond to what they read, she can do so by providing an email address or a response section somewhere (probably at the bottom) of the page.

Once Mildred receives these submissions, she can choose to post them on the Blog, or not.

Thus we can think of a Blog in some ways like the checkout slip at the store. It keeps growing with whatever you choose to buy. Blogs keep growing as the owner keeps writing him/herself and by adding reader submissions.

Links and pictures and all sorts of media can be added by the owner, and I'm sure there are ways to allow any reader to post, without the author editing, if that's what they want (my vote is not to do that).

So, there you have it.

I've listed two Blog addresses as examples below. Under those URLs is a list of Blog format things to look for.

If you are a Democrat, check out:

<http://www.blogobama08.blogspot.com/>

If you are a Republican, check out:

<http://www.johnmccain.com/Blog/>

If you can't make up your mind, flip a coin.

#### WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

1. Both have a title at the top of the web page.
2. Both divide the content below the title into two sections; a left and a right column.
3. Both use the left column to post individual statements (Blogs) which are titled, dated, and timed.
4. Both use the right column to advertise, and post links to things each wants you to know about.
5. Since a never ending Blog page would never be waded through, both limit the number of entries (newest always at the top) shown to a manageable few at a time,

but provide links to older and newer postings somewhere on each page segment you view.

6. Both provide ways for readers to respond to any posting via some kind of a *Comment* link. Comments are then read, and after review, may either be posted or discarded.

This Blog thing has become very popular. So popular in fact that when I Googled the word Blog, I got over three and a half billion hits.

It's easy to find a Blog. Just use a search engine like Google. Include a subject, and the word *Blog*, and/or a name in your search.

Try:

taxes blog irs

If you want to own a Blog, you can do so by using a for fee (e.g.

<http://www.typepad.com>) or a free service (e.g. <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/>).

Just think about how important free speech really is to humankind. We've gone from standing in front of several people and speaking our thoughts, to Blogging our thoughts to a whole world of people over the Internet.

Oh, I do love apple pie!