

## Rooney responds to 'attack'

Sept. 22, 1991

I was first irritated and then angered by opinion page editor [Paul McNamara's attack](#) on me (Sunday, Sept. 8). I was irritated as I began reading his article because every junior reporter who writes anything about me begins by using some cliché variation of Joe Piscopo's brilliant parody of me that began "Didja ever wonder why ..."

Mr. McNamara did not deny himself this shopworn lead although it's a phrase I have never used on "60 Minutes." Not ever.

My irritation turned to anger as I read on. Mr. McNamara's comments were about [a column I wrote](#) on Friday, Aug. 30<sup>th</sup> for publication the following week, in which I spoke of driving past a grade school on the day after Labor Day. The column made some general observations about the first days of school that we all experienced. What I wrote had nothing more to do with the opening of school on Sept. 3 than it had to do with any other opening day of school. My observations were not temporal. I was writing about the first days of school, not Labor Day.

Labor Day was Monday, Sept. 2. Mr. McNamara thought it was dishonest that I referred to "Labor Day" before Labor Day 1991 dawned. He didn't doubt my story about driving past a grade school just after the opening day of school. His complaint was that I left it for the reader to infer that it occurred this year.

Was that really dishonest or unethical for an essayist who deals not in news, but in ideas and observations? Should I have my columns signed by a notary public? Nonsense.

My conclusion is that Mr. McNamara's attack was brought on by something other than column I wrote. I suspect his negative opinion of me springs from some personal rather than professional interest.

What that interest might be, I don't know. Over the years, I've written a great many things that have angered people and it seems likely that something I said previous to that Labor Day column is what was really on Mr. McNamara's mind when he wrote so hurtful an article about me on such flimsy provocation.

*The Middlesex News* has a fine reputation. I'm proud to have my column appear in its pages but it should either run that column of mine, even at this late date, and let readers decide about its honesty or drop my column permanently if it thinks my journalistic standards are not up to its own.

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