

**Remarks of Ann Compton
Presenting The Media Institute's Freedom of Speech Award
To Tony Snow**

**Friends & Benefactors Awards Banquet
Washington, D.C.
October 16, 2007**

Hey, Tony, great to see you –

Everyone in the press room this afternoon says Hi and

Congrats on this Freedom — From — Information Award they heard about.

There is a long tradition for White House press secretaries to make their briefings as Free From Information as possible.

I should know – I've covered a lot of these guys. When I arrived to cover Gerald Ford three months after he took office, he was already on his second press secretary. The first had said: "There will be no Nixon pardon." True story!

I don't know where The Media Institute gets its information in bestowing the prestigious Freedom of Speech Award, but Tony Snow was never White House press secretary. Look at the evidence!!

There is a protocol for anyone who briefs from that podium.

When the press asks an impossible question, which usually runs three out of four ... the press secretary responds: "Because of modalities, and of course national security considerations, I am not able to help you with that."

Tony would shrug and say: "I don't know. Put it on my bupkis list."

Press secretaries are political operatives, not thinkers.

They join the administration from the campaign, not from rock-stardom on television. They read from tightly scripted talking points. Tony Snow came to each briefing a warrior, ready to battle with an armory of words on behalf of the freedoms, principles, and beliefs of the President he served.

It has long been thought by reporters that press secretaries don't tell the truth.

No, there were never arms for hostages.

The president was never alone with that intern.

No, the First Lady is not running for higher office.

But at his farewell in the new White House briefing room, Tony Snow stood there and opened his arms wide and declared: “I love these briefings.”

You got the feeling – he really meant it.

And Tony – there is something else.

In America’s history, it is has often taken courage to defend Freedom of Speech. Courage to speak out. Courage to return day after day when you can expect scorn and repudiation.

It also takes courage to step back in front of the lights and cameras, your hair grey and thinning, your suit loose and limp, and your heart anguished about what really means the most to you – your wife Jill and your three sweet children.

In that courage Tony, you have earned and will always have not only our respect, but our affection.

The Media Institute bestows the 2007 Freedom of Speech Award ... to Tony Snow.