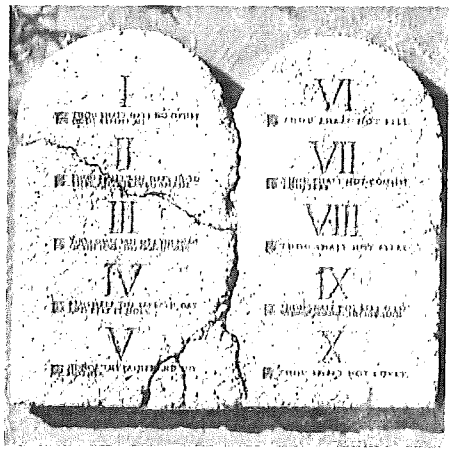

Ten Commandments
(suggestions, really)
for dealing with the press

I. ***Thou shalt not lie.*** You'll probably get caught, and you'll ruin any relationship you have with the news organization.

II. ***Thou shalt not evade.*** Dodging phone calls won't stop a story. It will only ensure that your version isn't in it.

III. ***Don't pretend to know more than you do.*** Speculation is sometimes helpful, but couch it at that.

IV. ***If you don't know, say so.*** That's all right. The reporter will thank you and move onto something else.

V. ***If you know who does know tell us.*** You can save reporters a lot of trouble chasing down blind alleys. And they'll regard you as a source for information.

VI. ***Thou can lament, "No comment."*** Reporters understand there are things you can't talk about: personnel matters, lawsuits, proprietary business information.

VII. ***Anything you say is fair game.*** A news source will occasionally call back and say, "I didn't realize that was going into the paper."' That's what reporters do, whether they're in the office or at a cocktail party. Always assume you're on the record.

VIII. ***Sometimes you can go off the record.*** Reporters will honor your confidence, and you can let them know whether they're on the right track. ***But*** ... negotiate it beforehand.

IX. ***Don't tell one reporter that you talked to another one.*** Reporters are competitors.

X. ***Don't feel hurt or angry when we ask tough questions.*** That's what reporters do. We take our watchdog role very seriously. It ain't personal.