

The Tennessee Press

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Hustler, Journal merge to form Marion County News

SUBMITTED
South Pittsburgh Hustler
December 14, 2017

With a storied legacy, both the South Pittsburgh Hustler and the Jasper Journal have remained staples in Marion County since 1899 and 1938, respectively. Beginning January 2018, the two papers, which have shared ownership for the past twenty-two years, started being published as a single publication.

David Riley, the publisher of

the current and upcoming combined publications, stated, "When I came back to purchase the papers a little better than a year ago, it was my intention to not make any predetermined plans in the first six months." Riley

said. "As I was completing the purchase toward the end of September of (2017), I had already looked at the possi-

bility of being able to better serve the readership and the advertisers with a single news publication for the county."



Submitted photo

David Riley is publisher of what is now the Marion County News.

Recently having completed the purchase (which formally took effect Dec. 30, 2017), the 15-year Jasper resident organized a company to receive the assets of all the

publications previously published under the Marion County Newspapers business name, including the Sequatchie Valley Purchase as well as the Hustler and the Journal.

"The unfortunate truth is that this market has plenty of market for one newspaper, but not two," Riley said.

He explained some of the additional reasoning behind joining

See **MERGER** Page 2

Davis, Moats join Tennessee Press Service staff

MIKE TOWLE
Managing Editor
January 10, 2018

Shelley Davis, most recently the director of client services for the USA Today Network of Tennessee, joined the Tennessee Press Service staff in early January as director of sales and marketing.

Another new addition to the staff is Becky Moats, who in



Davis



Moats

November 2017 assumed the role as networks coordinator,

bringing with her 11 years' experience in newspaper advertising and sales.

"I am thrilled to welcome both Becky Moats and Shelley Davis to the TPS team," TPS executive vice president Carol Daniels said. "Both bring experience, enthusiasm and a true love of our industry."

"With Shelley's leadership in this sales role, our goal is to

increase our advertising sales in each of our members papers significantly, beginning this year. We have set aggressive goals to achieve, and I am confident that the team we now have in place is capable of achieving these goals."

Davis brings nearly 30 years of advertising and marketing experience to Tennessee Press,

See **TPS** Page 2

Tennessean's Hollingsworth steps down

SUBMITTED
USA Today Network - Tennessee
January 8, 2018

Laura Hollingsworth, president of The Tennessean and the USA TODAY NETWORK - Tennessee, is leaving the company, the long-time media executive announced on Monday, Jan. 8, in a newsroom address to all Tennessean employees.

A 29-year veteran of the Gannett Co., parent of The Tennessean and USA TODAY, Hollingsworth oversees business operations of Gannett organizations throughout the state. Her final day was to be Feb. 2.

"I am very grateful for my Gannett career, which has taken me so many places and given me and my family so many things," said Hollingsworth, who will contin-

ue to live in Nashville. "I simply feel this is the right time for me to explore what else I might do, where else I might have impact in new ways."



Hollingsworth

emphasis on music coverage, expanded its health care coverage, greatly increased its community engagement, and became one of the company's leaders in digital audience growth. In November, The Tennessean held a 50 percent

share of the digital audience for news in the Nashville market, three times its closest competitor, according to comScore.

"More importantly," she told staff, "we've delivered 24/7 impact."

Hollingsworth believes deeply in community leadership. She serves on numerous boards, including the Middle Tennessee United Way, the Nashville Chamber of Commerce, the Nashville Downtown Partnership and the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau. She was on the operating board for Nashville's NHL All-Star Game, is a graduate of Leadership Nashville, is a member of The Tennessean's editorial board and also is completing a term as

See **TENNESSEAN** Page 2

TPA Contests entry deadlines quickly approach

Time is running out to submit entries for the Tennessee Press Association's State Press Contests and the Ideas Contest, with submissions for both due later this month. The entry deadline for the State Press Contests is Friday, Feb. 16, and the deadline for the Ideas Contest is Friday, Feb. 23. There are five divisions in each contest based on circulations of newspapers submitting entries. This is the sixth year that the BetterBNC online contests entry and judging is being used. For more information on the Contests, to include rules changes for 2018 and Ideas categories, see page 5.

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TPAers with suggestions, questions or comments about items in The Tennessee Press are welcome to contact the managing editor. Call Mike Towle, (615) 293-5771; send a note to 117 Township Court, Hendersonville, TN 37075, or email editor@tnpress.com. The deadline for the April issue is Tuesday, March 6.

Legislators are not the enemy

As I write this, the legislature is preparing to start the upcoming session – and my anxiety, as it does every year, begins to rise. Every year I’ve been involved with the Tennessee Press Association, going back to 2013, there have been more than a few bills that would be detrimental to newspapers statewide.

Whether they are bills limiting access to public records, reducing transparency when it comes to the meetings and communications of government officials, or eliminating some form of public notice, these bills are almost always bad.

However, that’s different than saying these bills always have bad intentions. And it is definitely not the same as saying that the legislators who sponsor these bills are bad people for doing so.

There’s a constant tendency to villainize people in the public realm with whom we disagree. Readers do this to our reporters or columnists, citizens do it to politicians, politicians do it to each other.

The Tennessee Press Association and all its members, however, must always stay clear of villainizing legislators. It’s not helpful when we’re talking to legislators but, also, it’s rarely if ever fair to the legislators themselves.

I’ve been constantly struck by the willingness of most legislators to hear alternate opinions on issues. And the single best way to get a senator or representative



**YOUR
PRESIDING
REPORTER**

ERIC BARNES

or member of the administration to listen to an opposing view is to meet with them in person.

Emails are effective, as are phone calls. But meeting a legislator in person is, unequivocally, the best way to communicate with a legislator.

During the session, this often means talking to that legislator for just a very few minutes. But don’t underestimate the effectiveness of even a quick conversation, in person, in a legislator’s office or even in the hallway outside a meeting room. These quick conversations are often the lifeblood of how legislators form their opinions.

Because, in truth, many legislators don’t fully understand all the impacts and ramifications of a bill they have proposed. That might sound absurd, or irresponsible. But it’s not. While it might not be the most efficient process, the truth is that legislators rely heavily on staff members and, especially, their colleagues to shape their opinions on the many hundreds or thousands of bills and amendments they will vote on in a given session.

It’s a process not unlike how most of us put out our papers. Does the publisher read every word of every article and headline and caption in each edition of that publisher’s paper before it goes to press? Of course not. We rely on editors and reporters to get it right, especially in an era of shrinking staffs.

And so often a legislator thinks a bill is meant to do one thing – based on what they’ve heard from a staff member, constituent or staff member – when, in a very short time, we as publishers can explain that the bill does something else entirely.

I can think of many, many conversations in which, as I stood talking to a legislator in the hallway in the capital, that legislator told me he or she was voting for a bill because they knew it would do X but, were surprised to hear it would, in fact, do Y. Again and again, legislators were willing to listen, understand the full complexity of a bill, and shift their opinion and their vote.

Again, this isn’t the best or most efficient process. But it’s the one we have. There are few if any villains on the hill. But there are many, many people willing to listen.

Eric Barnes, publisher and CEO of The Daily News, Memphis, is president of the Tennessee Press Association.

TPS from Page 1

having worked for four newspaper groups, including Gannett, with whom she spent 18 years in various sales management positions.

“I am excited to be a part of The Tennessee Press Service and to grow revenue for our member newspapers,” Davis said. “The work Tennessee Press Service does is so important for our member newspapers. Finding new ways to aggressively grow



Wells

of sales, East Tennessee. Daniels will assist Davis in focusing on sales for Middle Tennessee and West Tennessee. Rounding out

new business will be key to our strategy in 2018.”

Along with the additions of Davis and Moats to the TPS staff, David Wells has taken on the role of director

the TPS advertising staff are senior media buyer Earl Goodman and sales assistant Jessica Ferguson.

“We are working hard to share the message of the strength of newspapers and the important roles each of you have in your communities,” Daniels said, addressing TPA member organizations.

“Please contact any of us if you feel there is an opportunity we should be engaging on a statewide level.”

TENNESSEAN from Page 1

a board member for the national News Media Alliance as Gannett’s representative.

“Laura is deeply respected by so many people in this city. She believes passionately in our mission, in our journalism and in our people,” said Michael A. Anastasi, vice president and editor of The Tennessean.

“And she believes in Nashville.” Hollingsworth rose from an entry-level sales representative for a

small newspaper in her home state of Wisconsin to among the highest ranks of executive leadership in the nation’s largest media company, working in markets including Michigan, Washington state and Iowa.

Prior to coming to Nashville, she was president and publisher of the Des Moines Register and served as a regional group president with responsibility over more than two dozen sites throughout the country. With Gannett’s acquisition of the Memphis Commercial

Appeal and the Knoxville News Sentinel in 2016, Hollingsworth’s regional role shifted to full responsibility for Tennessee. During the last 18 months, she led the merger and integration of those sites into a statewide network.

“Leading The Tennessean and the Tennessee Network has been an incredible experience which I’ll always look to proudly and fondly,” Hollingsworth said. “Working for this company has been a tremendous experience and opportunity, all the way around.”

Survey responses extol community relationships

Thank you for the responses to my request for your stories about what makes your newspaper unique and how that impacts the communities you serve.

I asked for those stories because we are putting together new marketing materials for the Tennessee Press Service that focus on telling your story more effectively to Tennesseans and those advertisers who want to reach them.

The members of the Tennessee Press Association are wonderfully diverse – from large corporations to small ones and the many independent newspapers serving large communities to small ones – and it is a pleasure to represent you and brag about the work you and your staffs do. Each member has unique stories to tell, and I have found that no matter who I am talking to – large potential advertisers, local business owners, legislators, or political candidates – those stories resonate, and often surprise the listener with how vibrant your newspapers are.

We have a great story to tell. I shared some of these num-



FROM THE EXECUTIVE VP

CAROL DANIELS

bers with you before and I'm certain you saw them in many places at our Winter Convention but they are worth repeating, over and over . . .

Tennessee Press members print and distribute more than 4 million newspapers weekly.

TPA member papers have more than 75 million page views monthly.

TPA member papers write more than 4,000 news stories weekly.

TPA member papers write more than 200 editorials weekly.

AND, TPA member papers employ more than 4,000 people across the state of Tennessee, which makes our members, collectively, one of the state's largest employers.

Now, if we combine the above information with how you work to make your newspaper organi-

zation unique to the communities you serve, the story becomes memorable as well as great!

Here are some highlights from the responses you sent.

"We are loaded with community news, happenings and pictures from weekly events that readers love to check out."

– Sherry Long, Advertising Manager, *Farragut Press*

"Our paper is produced by old newspaper veterans/friends, and we know our communities."

– Leigh Singleton, *The Ledger, Nashville*

"We have been serving the citizens of Decatur County for 90 years . . . we only publish local news, and we do it with pride."

– Pam McGaha, Editor-in-Chief, *The News Leader, Parsons*

"Our paper is the oldest and longest, single-owned paper in Lauderdale County. We have been in publication since 1885 and, in our history, have had about seven owners."

– Beverly Hutcherson, General Manager, *Lauderdale County Enterprise, Ripley*

"Our readers appreciate that we have turned our focus from a

paper full of even the pettiest of crimes to one more reflective of our vibrant community. It's not that we don't still report crime, but unless it's a major crime, it doesn't make the front page."

– Rick Thomason, Publisher, *Kingsport Times News*

"Our sensitivity to the individuals within the community is a cut above all others. While not compromising our ethics or our need to bring light to the truth, we consider the impact on the individuals involved and do our best to celebrate the good things."

– Jared Felkins, Editor, *Lebanon Democrat*

Please keep sending me the anecdotes and stories that illustrate the unique relationships you have with the communities you serve. Those stories bring life to the work you do.

Thank you.
Carol

Carol Daniels is executive vice president of the Tennessee Press Service. She can be reached at 615-585-0965 or cdaniels@tnpress.com.

TRACKS

Hollenhead joins farragutpress staff

Award-winning reporter Michelle Hollenhead, a Knoxville native and Farragut High School alumnus, has joined farragutpress.

Hollenhead has worked for several publications in East Tennessee during the last two decades, including Knoxville Business Journal, Harriman Record, Roane County News, Knoxville News Sentinel, and, most recently, the Morgan County News.

She has won several writing awards, including two Virginia Press Association awards for layout and design, a TPA award for Best Single Feature, and more recently shared TPA awards with fellow staff members in both business and feature-writing categories.

"I am thrilled to be working



Hollenhead

for the farragutpress – it has been a professional dream of mine for quite some time," Hollenhead said. "I am very eager to get to know the people of

Farragut and to write about what is important and interesting to them."

Also a graduate of Roane State Community College, Hollenhead lived in Rockwood for nearly 20 years before moving back "home" to Farragut eight years ago.

"We're excited to have Michelle join our family at the farragutpress," Tony Cox, farragutpress publisher, said. "She's written for a large daily newspaper, a tri-weekly and been the editor of a weekly newspaper. We were

very fortunate to find a writer with her experience."

Hollenhead began her professional writing career as a stringer for farragutpress' precursor, West Side Story, so she has literally come full circle to her new position."

*Farragutpress, Farragut
Nov. 16, 2017*

Press hires Mitchell as writer

Thad Mitchell has joined The Mountain Press, Sevierville, as a staff writer. He is an eight-year veteran of the journalism field. He earned a bachelor's degree in mass communications from Middle Tennessee State in 2007.

"Thad has good community news experience, and we think he'll fit in well with our news team," Jason Davis, editor of The Mountain Press, said.



Mitchell

Mitchell, originally from West Tennessee, spent the last seven years as the senior staff writer and photographer for Savannah Publishing. There, he oversaw

news production for Savannah's daily newspaper, The Courier.

"I am looking forward to joining an already great team here at The Mountain Press," Mitchell said at the time of his hiring. "The Smoky Mountains have always been a special place to me and my family."

While at The Courier, he was recognized by the TPA for his work in investigative journalism, photography, and community service.

*The Mountain Press, Sevierville
Nov. 29, 2017*

MERGER from Page 1

the publications.

"The functionality for the local municipalities was an important consideration," Riley said. "Public notices and other required postings will now reach a wider audience, which is especially important for bid solicitations. The more local

vendors that are able to respond, the more competitive pricing the various governments will be able to entertain." Riley also addressed some feedback that was received while "testing the waters" on the idea.

"I was a little surprised at the support the idea garnered," he said. "There were several people who said, 'We've been waiting for

ten years for that to happen' and similar comments."

Readers of the combined product will enjoy news from the entire county versus just the north and south portion of the county. All current subscriptions will be honored. For those readers who have subscriptions to both the Hustler and Journal, the subscription will be

extended for the length of both subscriptions.

For advertisers, the rates will remain the same with the exception that there will no longer be an option for the "1 paper rate." Because the publication is enhancing the readership of the individual publications, the rates for both papers will be the standard base rate for advertising.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 2018

- Jan. 31-Feb. 1: TPA Winter Convention, Nashville
- 1: Tennessee Press Association 2018 gubernatorial candidates forum, Nashville Public Library, Nashville
- 4-6: Carmage Walls Leadership Forum (for small newspapers), The Carolina Inn, Chapel Hill, N.C.
- 16: TPA State Press Contests deadline
- 23: TPA Ideas Contest deadline (advertising and circulation)
- 26-28: 2018 Key Executives Mega-Conference, Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, Manchester Grand Hyatt San Diego, San Diego, Calif.

MARCH 2018

- 7-10: Spring National College Media Convention, New York Marriott Marquis, New York City, NY.
- 14-15: National Newspaper Association Community Newspaper Leadership Summit, Crystal City Marriott at Reagan National Airport, Arlington, Va.

APRIL 2018

- 15: Deadline for TPA Foundation grant requests
- 26-28: American Copy Editors Society National Conference, Convention, The Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, IL.

JULY 2018

- 12-13: 2018 Tennessee Press Association Summer Convention and Advertising/Circulation Conference, Franklin, Tenn.
- 12: State Press Contests Awards Banquet, Franklin, Tenn.
- 13: Ideas Contest Awards, Franklin, Tenn.

OCTOBER 2018

- 10-12: Southern Newspaper Publishers Association News Industry Summit, Nashville Hilton, Nashville Tenn.
- 31: Deadline for nominations for the Tennessee Newspaper Hall of Fame for consideration for possible induction in 2019

What a daily newspaper and its parent company are learning about Amazon Alexa

JENNIFER NELSON
Reynolds Journalism Institute
July 13, 2017

Author's note: I am working on a Q&A series featuring some of the innovating and experimenting going on in newsrooms. Basically, the premise is, what are you doing in your newsroom that you weren't doing a year ago? I'm spotlighting some of those projects and what people are learning along the way.

Although news stories can be fed automatically from a CMS to Alexa-equipped devices like the Amazon Echo, Christopher Biondi, senior director of digital development at GateHouse Media, believes tailoring the content to the new platform is the best way to provide a good listening experience.

This is just one takeaway GateHouse newspaper leaders are learning as they try out the voice assistant technology. The Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch is one of the newspapers hand-picking its content.

Producers select stories they believe their audiences are interested in and then summarize them into four or five sentences for the text-to-audio briefings. Only five stories can be sent to the platform at a time, but content can be swapped out for breaking news and other stories throughout the day.

Part of helping audiences have a better listening experience includes making sure the stories are

being read clearly. For example, Dispatch staff are discovering which words are hardest for Alexa to pronounce. Using a phonetic spelling often helps alleviate this, says Gary Kiefer, managing editor of new media at the Dispatch.

I interviewed Kiefer, Biondi and Karina Pagano, director of digital products at GateHouse, to learn more about their efforts.

Why are GateHouse newspapers using this technology?

Biondi: We wanted to be an early adopter so we could experiment and adjust as the platform grows. Early on, we see this more as an audience extension platform, and are only beginning to discuss how news on an Echo or another device could be monetized.

What kinds of resources, such as extra staff and funding, did the newspapers need?

Pagano: Out of the gate, no additional staffing was needed, because we are using automated feeds for Alexa to read. However, we do want larger [newspaper] sites to curate and perhaps rewrite tops of articles to fit the platform. Ultimately, we could see some newsrooms producing audio files. These two phases would take additional resources.

Gary, how has this new task fit into your staff's workflow?

Kiefer: We have a team of eight producers who have primary responsibility for updating the



Photo courtesy of GateHouse Media

website, sending out newsletters, editing videos, doing podcasts and other tasks that don't affect the printed paper. We've just made this one of the assignments. Typically, the person who is going to pick the stories for the newsletter that day will also handle the Alexa feed.

How do you decide which five

stories to use?

Kiefer: We usually pick things we think people will be talking about, so obviously if we have a big breaking news story, we'll use that. We also use stories we consider pop culture. Last month we had a review of Twenty-One Pilots because they played a whole concert series here. Quite often we have a sports story, with this being a big sports town. We try to keep them to newsy stories as opposed to features, in part, because it's easier to write a summary for a more straightforward story.

How do you get the stories onto the Alexa platform?

Kiefer: GateHouse has provided us with an easy way to get the stories from our CMS to Amazon. We add a specific category to the story, and that creates a feed to Amazon. It runs off an RSS feed.

What kind of feedback have you heard from customers?

Pagano: The reviews in the Alexa app's Skills listings so far have been mostly positive. Though in some cases, the automated feeds

can push content in that does not work well in text to speech — lottery results, for example. This is why we want to move to at least a basic level of curation.

Kiefer: Mostly a lot of curiosity. When we launched, we ran a story in the paper and we did some promotion on the website. We had a number of people who weren't that familiar with the whole thing and they were wondering, "What's this all about?" We sent out a bunch of information about how this works. This year we have seen how the awareness has increased about these voice assistant systems. We have an Echo Dot in our office. We show it off to visitors all the time. For somebody coming into a newsroom, seeing that in action has more of a "wow" factor than looking at a bunch of people sitting at desks working on computers.

Do people have to be a paying newspaper subscriber to get this news on their device?

Kiefer: No, this is a free service.

See **REYNOLDS** Page 7

Political Advertising Reminders

- Newspapers should not create "Election pricing" - all pricing should come from regular rate cards.
- Frequency discounts can be offered to candidates just as you would a regular customer.
- Newspapers should not offer different pricing options to candidates based on their party preference or their location.
- All ads must include a notation that the ad is "paid for by xxxxxx, and authorized by (or not authorized by) xxxxxx."
- Publishers always have the right to refuse an ad.

TPA member newspapers may contact the TPA Legal Hotline with advertising law questions.

Tennessee Press Association Members

- **Print and distribute over 4 million newspapers weekly**
- **Receive over 75 million page views monthly**
- **Write over 4,000 news stories weekly**
- **Write over 200 editorials weekly**
- **Employ over 4,000 people throughout Tennessee**

Calling all TPA members: judges needed!

Your help is needed as a judge for the West Virginia Press Association editorial contest in late March.

If you can serve as a judge, please email Robyn Gentile at rgentile@tnpress.com by March 9 or sign up online at tinyurl.com/JudgeforTPA



Tennessee Press Service Advertising Placement Snapshot

	ROP:	Networks:
December 2017	\$75,275	\$19,720
Year* as of Dec. 30	\$75,275	\$19,720

*The Tennessee Press Service Inc. fiscal year runs Dec. 1 through Nov. 30

A designer's nitty-gritty Top Ten to keep in your kitty

A client recently asked me to put together a presentation for his newspapers on nitty-gritty details that can make or break a design.

I came up with just a bit more than a couple dozen. But thinking about them more, I've now narrowed them down to a top ten.

My thinking is that any one of these can make your design better, but leave one out and your design suffers.

So, let's get down to the nitty-gritty:

1. Measure in picas and points. Sure, continue to express the depth of ads and photos in inches. But for everything else, picas and points are the best way to measure elements and spacing.

2. Align text to a baseline grid. This gives your newspaper a more planned, polished and professional look. And, once your designers master use of the baseline grid, it will make editing and design go more quickly and more easily.

3. Use headline hierarchy. This helps readers navigate your pages more readily by giving them a sense of which stories are more important. And remember that headline hierarchy is more than just about size. It also goes to factors such as font, length, number of lines and placement on the page.

4. Use a dominant photo. Give readers one photo that leads the



By
DESIGN

ED HENNINGER

package. Placing a number of two-column by four-inch photos on your sports front just creates clutter.

5. Control story length. Ask readers: They'll tell you they will only read about 12 to 15 inches of a story . . . and then their attention wanes and the look for something else. Train your writers to keep stories within the 12-to 15-inch limit.

6. Segment stories. If you have a story that requires more length, look for ways to break it up.

For example, a story about five candidates running for a county judge position need not be one article that's 50 inches long. It can be five pieces, each about 10 inches, and packaged together on the page.

7. Control color use. There's a temptation to use color just because you have it. Let's not. Proper, controlled, subtle color can give your paper a refined, more credible feel. Poor use of color just makes you look cheap.

8. Control content placement.

Readers expect to find specific content in the same place from issue to issue. Obituaries, for example, should not move from page 2 in one issue to page 6 in the next and page 3 in another. Consistent placement is key.

9. Use consistent design. Consistent design also is important. Keep your design elements, such as column sigs and standing heads, reflective and consistent throughout your paper. Again, this helps to bolster your credibility.

10. Make deadline. Always. Plan, communicate and focus your efforts so that everything — everything — is done by deadline. Failure to make deadline often results in cutting corners and hurrying your design efforts. And consistent failure to make deadline will result in a design that is consistently poor.

There's my top ten. Would you add anything to the list? Submit something else for one of these? What do you think?

Want a free evaluation of your newspaper's design? Just contact Ed: edh@henningerconsulting.com | 803-327-3322

*If this column has been helpful, you may be interested in Ed's books: *Henninger on Design* and *101 Henninger Helpful Hints*. With*



Submitted

Perhaps the most important part of the nitty-gritty Top Ten: Make deadline. Always.

the help of Ed's books, you'll immediately have a better idea how to design for your readers. Find out more about Henninger on Design and 101 Henninger Helpful Hints

by visiting Ed's web site: www.henningerconsulting.com Ed Henninger is an independent newspaper consultant and the Director of Henninger Consulting.

Deadlines approach for 2018 TPA State Press Contests and Ideas Contest

STAFF REPORTS
December 11, 2017

The deadline for the 2018 Tennessee State Press Contests is Friday, Feb. 16. The entry window opened Jan. 12. For the sixth year, the BetterBNC online contests entry and judging is being used.

The categories are the same as they were in 2017; however, the Board approved Contests Committee recommendations for clarifications. Entries are being submitted as PDFs in all but three categories. Those remaining in print are Make-Up and Appearance, Best Special Issue or Section, and Sunday Editions.

Changes and clarifications effective for 2018 are:

- Only three places will be awarded in each category in Group Five.
- Regarding shared content among any group of newspapers, entries to only be entered by the newspaper where the primary reporter/photographer is based.
- A photo may only be entered in one of the three photo categories (News, Sports or Feature).
- A column may only be entered in one of the two column categories

(Best Personal Column or Best Personal Humor Column).

• A newspaper may enter work by a regular contributor. A regular contributor is someone who is not syndicated and whose work appears in the submitting newspaper a minimum of twice per year.

• Material from a niche publication may be entered into the contest if the editorial content has been created, written and prepared by the newsroom and was distributed with the newspaper to regular subscribers.

The entry fee remains \$9 per entry. Part of the fee will provide a \$25 gift card for each TPA member that completes the judging assignments for our reciprocal judging partner in 2018.

The divisions for the contests are calculated on total weekly paid circulation. They are as follows:

- Division One: Paid combined weekly circulation of 5,000 or less
- Division Two: Paid combined weekly circulation of 5,001-15,000
- Division Three: Paid combined weekly circulation of 15,001-50,000

• Division Four: Paid combined weekly circulation of 50,001-200,000

• Division Five: Paid combined weekly circulation of 200,001 and above.

The complete contests general rules and link to entry portal are available at www.tnpress.com. Please call TPA at (865) 584-5761 with any questions.

Ad/Circ Ideas Contest deadline is Feb. 23

Plan now to enter the 2018 Ideas Contest, Tennessee Press Association's contest for advertising and circulation ideas.

Entries are submitted as PDFs online. The deadline is Friday, Feb. 23. Entry information is available at tnpress.com. Fees are \$6 per entry. Proceeds support the educational programming for the advertising and circulation groups at the convention.

First through third places are awarded in five divisions of each category, and there is an overall Best of Show Award. The contest has 30 categories and five divisions based on circulation. Awards

will be presented during the summer convention Friday, July 13 in Franklin, Tenn.

The categories are as follows:

Advertising

- Best Marketing Materials
- Best Niche Publication
- Best Special Section
- Best Sales Promotion for an Advertiser

Advertiser

- Best Use of Multi-Color Ad
- Best Use of Single-Color Ad
- Best Black & White Ad
- Best Feature Page or Pages
- Best 1/4Page or Smaller Ad
- Best Food Store Ad
- Best Automotive Ad
- Best Professional Service Ad
- Best Furniture and/or Appliance Ad
- Best Internet Banner or Tile Ad for an Advertiser
- Best Classified Section
- Best Humor Ad

Circulation

- Best Subscription Promotion Idea
- Best Carrier Contest Idea
- Best Single Copy Promotion
- Best NIE Promotion
- Best Carrier Recruitment
- Best NIE Sponsorship Recruit-

ment

- Best Dealer/Vendor Promotion
- Best Bulk Promotion
- Reader Contest
- Best Subscriber Retention

Program

- Best Internet Subscription Promotion
- Best Self-Promotion of a Newspaper

Other

- Best Rack Card
 - Best Overall Website
- The divisions are as follows:
- (N-1) Non-daily with a paid circulation less than 5,000
 - (N-2) Non-daily with a paid circulation of 5,000 or above
 - (D-1) Daily with a paid circulation less than 10,000
 - (D-2) Daily with a paid circulation of 10,000 but less than 25,000

TPA needs judges to meet obligations to its reciprocal judging partner, West Virginia Press Association, in mid-March. If your newspaper enters either TPA contest, we ask that you provide a judge in March. Sign up at: tinyurl.com/JudgeforTPA

OBITUARIES

Iris Wayne Brown

Iris Wayne Brown, a street hawk for The Elk Valley Times in Fayetteville for more than three decades, passed away the day after Christmas (Tuesday, Dec. 26, 2017) at Donalson Care Center. She was 87.

"Mrs. Brown was in her late 40s when she started selling the paper in 1979 at the corner of Elk Avenue and Washington Street, just a block off the town square," said Lucy Williams, editor and publisher of The Times. "She sold papers for us for 33 years – up until the time she was 82 and just couldn't continue because of her health. I'd estimate that in all those years, based on an average of her weekly sales, she sold well over a million copies of the EVT."

In addition to being featured in the newspaper several times, her longtime dedication and loyalty to her customers drew the attention of other media to the southern Middle Tennessee town many times over the years as she was featured by Huntsville and Nashville news stations on a number of occasions, including in 2005 when she was the focus of a segment on News Channel 5's Talk of The Town.

In May, 1996, when she was featured on The Times' front page, Mrs. Brown said she had begun selling the paper to help her son, Tim, when he started – Tim was just eight years old at the time, and she was worried



The Elk Valley Times

This picture of Iris Wayne Brown, who passed away Dec. 26, 2017, was taken in March of 2010 during a heavy snowfall. As usual, Mrs. Brown was at her post at the corner of Washington and Elk, smiling and selling papers.

that he might be too young to do the job by himself.

"Granny, Aunt Jean and myself all just started helping him," she recalled at the time, chuckling and adding that as Tim grew older and got in junior high, he decided he didn't want the job anymore. "I guess they think the kids'll make fun of them, but I decided to keep it because there's too many of my friends that

come by . . . Of course, it gets me a little more spending money, too."

Williams recalls occasions over the years when some of the newspaper's readers actually stopped receiving their subscriptions in the mail just so they could buy their papers from Mrs. Brown – "She would be out there, waving papers high in the air when it was pouring rain, in

a frigid wind or in the snow," she said. "If it was newspaper day, she was there, always smiling.

". . . I think over those 33 years, she maybe missed four or five Tuesdays," Williams continued. "I know that one of those was when one of her parents passed away and another was when her husband, Pete, was laid to rest. I remember her telling me, 'Now Lucy, if I'm going to do something, I'm going to do it right – I love my customers, and they're going to be looking for me!'"

"She was loyal to those customers as long as she could be . . . In 2012, after having undergone heart surgery in December of the previous year, she finally said she couldn't continue. Initially, several of her closest friends and her sister filled in for her . . . They knew how she loved her customers."

A native of Lincoln County, Mrs. Brown was a member of the Washington Street Church of Christ. Born on April 17, 1930, she was the daughter of the late Vascar and Brownie Kathleen William Ellis.

In addition to her son, Tim (Nina Duckett) Brown of Fayetteville, she is survived by her grandson, Dalton Brown; sister, Jean Crowder; great-nephew, Jason (Ginger) Chandler; and a special friend, Helen Price. Her husband, Pete, passed away in June of 2006. She is also preceded in death by her nephew,

Ronnie Chandler.

*The Elk Valley Times,
Fayetteville,
Dec. 28, 2017*

James "Jim" Hyatt, Jr.

James "Jim" Hyatt Jr., a former publisher of the Bristol Herald Courier, died Jan. 8, 2017, at his home in Alabama.

Hyatt Jr., 54, of Oxford, Ala., served as publisher and regional vice president of the Herald Courier from 2002-2006. During that time, Media General owned the newspaper and Southwest Virginia community newspapers. He served as publisher as the paper constructed a new production facility in



Hyatt

Bristol, Tenn.

Hyatt attended Oxford High School and graduated from Donoho School and Jacksonville State University, according to an obituary from Miller Funeral Home in Oxford. He was elected to the Oxford City Council in 1984.

Hyatt also served as publisher of Highlands Today and regional vice president of Community Newspaper Holdings. He was chosen by Presstime Magazine as one of "20 under 40" newspaper executives, the obituary states.

*Bristol Herald Courier
Jan. 10, 2018*

Pickett County Press: Serving the county for 55 years

Editor's note: This is a reprint of a column that originally appeared in the Nov. 30, 2017 edition of Pickett County Press, Byrdstown.

I got to capture a special moment a while back and thought it would be good to use it in recognition of the Pickett County Press's 55th Anniversary.

The picture to the right is of my father James Hill and Bill Bowden who is the editor and publisher of the Fentress Courier. It was taken one Wednesday morning at the Herald-Citizen where the Pickett County Press is printed. Now, they had no idea that I was taking their picture, but as I stood there watching them interact, the moment just seemed so precious to me.

Before Dad had his stroke in April 2016, he had been going to pick up the newspapers on Wednesday and had done so since 1974, even when my sister Jamie Garrett owned the Press. Though he retired in 1999, it was just something he loved to do, and we



GUEST COLUMN

AMANDA HILL BOND

let him because we knew it was significant for him to still be a part of the paper in some small way.

It was difficult for him to not have that role anymore since the stroke impaired him from driving that distance, so I started asking him to come with me every week to get the papers. It not only gives us some time together, but he gets an opportunity to hang out with old newspaper friends like Bill Bowden and the press guys at the Herald-Citizen.

During our trips, I hear him tell stories of important events that occurred in the county, things he has covered - both good and bad,

and working hard to get the newspaper out no matter what. In the 55 years of publication, not once has an issue of the Press been missed. Despite fires, equipment malfunctions, severe weather, or illness, the news must get printed regardless!

At 30 years old, Dad wanted to get out of retail and move back home to raise his family. He had been living in Dayton, Ohio, and was working as a buyer for the big retail store Cain-Slone. When he purchased the Pickett County Press in 1974 from Ernie Lawson, he had done so with the idea that he and his father, Norman Hill would work together. The Pickett County Press was first published in 1962 and while Norman never owned it, he worked as the editor up until Dad bought the paper.

My grandfather had a long history of newspaper experience. He actually started the first Pickett County newspaper in 1939, called the Pickett County News, before having to close it because of World



Submitted photo

James Hill, former Pickett County Press publisher and father of this column's author, greets Bill Bowden, publisher and editor of the Fentress Courier.

War II, when he enlisted in the Air Force. After his service, he worked in Oak Ridge at Y12 during the Manhattan Project. He later worked in newspaper circulation until his retirement from Newspaper Printing Corporation, which published the Nashville Banner and the Tennessean.

Sadly, seven months after my dad

purchased the Press and was just beginning to learn about the newspaper business, my grandfather had a massive heart attack and died. If anyone in the newspaper business was self-taught, it's my dad.

He will be the first to tell you that I don't always listen to his advice, but still, I know that his position on a matter is as one coming from hard-knock experience. Dad has taught me that the success of a newspaper is largely about knowing your community and understanding what they expect of you.

I am grateful for the hard work and dedication of my grandfather, father, and sister of what they put into the Press before my time as publisher. It has created a firm foundation of integrity and knowledge that no degree could ever teach.

The blood, sweat, tears, and ink run deep into the purpose of what this newspaper represents to this community, and I am proud to be representing three generations of business that is now 55 years old.

TDEC clamps down on public records relative to radioactive waste case

DEBORAH FISHER
TCOG
November 21, 2017

The state has stopped allowing citizens access to how much low-level radioactive waste is going into landfills, according to a report by Nashville investigative journalist Anita Wadhvani that appeared in November 2017 in *The Tennessean*, Nashville.

Wadhvani reports that this clampdown on data by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation comes at the same time that waste-processing companies in Tennessee “have filed notice that they plan to import 10,000 metric tons — or more than 22 million pounds — of low-level nuclear waste from Canada for processing.”

It is not clear where that waste would go after processing. The newspaper reported that four Tennessee landfills are currently licensed to accept that type of waste — two in Shelby County and others in Anderson and Hawkins counties.

But in a package of stories that

focuses on the shrouded nature of TDEC’s actions, Wadhvani reports how at least two Tennessee communities who are fighting with landfill operators about toxic contamination are also complaining about lack of notice and public input into permit expansions that they believe put their land and residents at environmental and health risk.

A key complaint from residents and town leaders in Camden and Decatur County is that they were unaware that TDEC was expanding permits of landfill operators to accept thousands of tons of industrial “special waste.” By definition, that means the waste is difficult or dangerous to manage.

“I think the community here was left in the dark,” Decatur County Mayor Mike Creasy told *The Tennessean* (“Tennessee towns fight landfills”). “I’ve been in the timber industry all my life and I never knew anything about aluminum dross or any of the other things going on in here. We put our trust in TDEC. We put our trust in the company.”

A lack of notification about



Photo by Larry McCormack, *The Tennessean*

Decatur County Mayor Mike Creasy stands in an area where runoff from the landfill has caused vegetation to be killed and polluted a creek nearby. He is afraid it will leach into nearby wells and affect the local drinking water. Wednesday April 19, 2017, in Decaturville, Tenn.

landfill permit expansions in not new. Residents around Middle Point landfill in Murfreesboro were outraged to learn in 2007 their landfill — with no public notice or input — was accepting low-level radioactive waste. They

launched a campaign that caused the landfill to cease accepting such waste in 2008.

The new veil of secrecy by TDEC around low-level radioactive waste going into Tennessee landfills is based on a Tennessee Public Records Act exemption passed by lawmakers around the same time as the Murfreesboro controversy in 2007, S.T.C.A. 11-1-102(c)(1). But it had not been used until recently.

According to *The Tennessean*’s reporting (“Tennessee officials keep radioactive waste details from public”), the state environmental agency until

recently published that information on its website. According to cached versions of TDEC’s website accessed by *The Tennessean*, more than 5.3 million pounds had been released into Tennessee landfills

between 2014 and 2016.

Furthermore, audio from the legislative hearing in 2007 has a TDEC attorney specifically telling lawmakers who were considering the exemption that it would not apply to keeping information on low-level radioactive waste secret.

The exemption defines as confidential “radioactive materials regulated by the United States nuclear regulatory commission or by a state under an agreement with the nuclear regulatory commission pursuant to § 274(b) of the Atomic Energy Act, codified in 42 U.S.C. § 2021(b)...”

The Tennessean contacted a Nuclear Regulatory Commission spokesman to ask if such information was confidential, and he said he knew of no law or rule that would make the location or quantity of waste confidential. Also, such information is public at federal landfills.

Meanwhile, the series of stories by *The Tennessean* raise serious questions about the ability of local communities to know or have

See **TDEC** Page 11

REYNOLDS from Page 4

We consider it a sample of our work, just like a grocery store might offer shoppers samples of some foods.

Gary, what’s a challenge you’ve had and how have you overcome it?

Kiefer: Alexa is really good at a lot of basic text-to-speech things. We have a couple things here that pop up a lot that she can’t pronounce. One is the name of our governor who is John Kasich. She mispronounces that. We have taken to spelling it phonetically in our summary. We also have a river here called the Scioto and she stumbles over that.

In news stories, when we talk about a legislator we often write “Rep.” and then the name and an “R” in parentheses to indicate Republican. Those don’t really translate so we have to spell those things out. Also, a straight period after “Rep” can make her stop, if she’s near the end of the last sentence, because she sees that as the end of a sentence. We’re sort of learning her pattern. There are some other things that are really done well, surprisingly. The goalie from our hockey team here is a Russian. His name is Sergei Bobrovsky and that comes through almost exactly like he would pronounce it.

What advice would you have for other news organizations that are considering using this technology?

Biondi: To really think about

the content you are pushing to Alexa. I don’t think you will get many shots at engaging a user, and if the content isn’t written in a way that works for news radio, the poor text-to-speech user experience will make it difficult to grow your audience. I think curation will be key to writing to the platform or at least tweaking existing content so it works.

What’s next for this technology and your newspapers?

Biondi: A future phase could include some newsrooms producing true audio files, with a reader presenting from the newsroom -- a much better news experience than text-to-speech. But we expect text-to-speech technology will continue to improve as Amazon and others press ahead.

Gary, anything else you’d like to add?

Kiefer: For the staff, there’s a little bit of a fun factor for this. So much of what we do is well established. We’ve been putting together a newspaper since 1871, so there isn’t much new there. But this is new. People get to learn and they get to try these things and they get to hear Alexa read their stuff and see if she got it all right. I think it’s just a little bit of diversionary fun.

Interested in learning more about GateHouse newsrooms using Amazon Alexa? Send an email to Chris Biondi at cbiondi@gatehouse-media.com.

Spotlight submissions

Publishers and editors - here is your chance to recognize and publicize members of your staff. Periodically, *The Tennessee Press* will run short Q&A features of your employees, to include color photo, bio information (hometown, college/degree, places worked, etc.) and the Q&A’s themselves. Consider this a free opportunity to show TPA members throughout the state the pride you have for your employees, who will appreciate the publicity. In order for this to work, however, we need your submissions. Send Staff Spotlight content to editor@tnpress.com. Submissions representing various departments at your organization are encouraged. Include high-res color photo, bio, and answers to three or more of these six questions. Aim for total word count of 380-420 (to include bio): 1. How and why did you get into the newspaper business? 2. What do you like most about your job? 3. What’s been your most interesting experience on the job? 4. What can newspapers do to be successful in this competitive media environment? 5. How has the newspaper business changed in recent years. 6. Tell us about a book you read or movie you saw recently.

2018

TENNESSEE STATE PRESS CONTESTS

Sponsored by The University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Press Association

DEADLINE: FEB. 16

2018

Ideas Contest

for Advertising
& Circulation staffs

DEADLINE: FEB. 23

JUDGES NEEDED!

TPA needs judges for West Virginia Press in Mid-March. If you participate in one of our contests, we ask you to provide a judge.

Sign up at: tinyurl.com/JudgeforTPA

My farewell to arms, or at least to writing these columns

Today (meaning whatever day you're reading this) marks the end of my career in newspapers.

I actually retired in 2016, leaving the job of city editor of the Rapid City Journal. I have continued this monthly column, but today's (see above) is my last.

After 26 years of writing the column, and 40-plus years altogether in newspapers, I'm freeing myself of all obligations to the craft I have loved since childhood: writing.

I'll still write; in fact, I obsessively work on what someday may become a full book on grammar and word usage for journalists. Or, I may never finish.

The following scenes from my career may be instructive. Or not:

THE DOUGHBOYS WERE NO BOYS: Early in 1976, in my first week at The Breeze, a 5,000-circulation, five-day daily in Cape Coral, Fla., I was to take a photo of the new officers of the World War I veterans club. (Yes, World War I.) The 12 men, all at least in their mid-70s, showed up in their military uniforms. All were of about the same height, so two six-man ranks of them standing wouldn't work. I said, "OK, six of you have to kneel down in front." For a second, all was silent. Then the club president, a man of modest size but booming voice, said: "I kneel before no man."

A PAINFUL LESSON: I wasn't much of a photographer, but one time I got lucky. It was a motorcycle crash, and the seriously injured man was lying on the asphalt, being tended to by medics. I managed to get the man in the foreground and his bike tossed on its side to the right of him. Not until I developed the film did I notice, in the background, a group of elementary school pupils, waiting for their school bus, watching the drama unfold. I wonder whether any of them ever bought a motorcycle.

ANOTHER FLORIDA LAND SWINDLE? I wrote stories questioning the wisdom of Lee County's leasing, for \$1 a year, some valuable land to a couple of slick out-of-towners promising to create a national collegiate sports hall of fame in an area of the state that in those days had no four-year college. After the deal fell through, the ringleader of the local effort to bring the hall of fame to the community called to tell me I alone was responsible for the death of his dream.

TESTING, ONE . . . When a new editor arrived, he required prospective reporters to take a written test as part of the interview process. A newly hired reporter asked my colleague John Kane if he also had to take a test before being hired. John replied: "Yeah. There



WRITING COACH

JIM STASIOSKI

was one question: 'Will you work for minimum wage?'"

MY FAVORITE TWO WORDS: After seven years at The Breeze, I wanted to move to a larger newspaper, so I spent months answering want-ads, sending my résumé along with painfully long, overly earnest cover letters. In return, I got only nibbles. Desperate, I answered the "reporter wanted" ad from The Columbian, a 50,000-circulation daily in Vancouver, Wash., by writing a two-word cover letter: "I write." I got the job.

FAST FOOD ON THE FREEWAY: I'm a lifelong early riser, so I often was in The Columbian newsroom in the very early hours, before anyone else arrived. My favorite overnight story: A semi on Interstate 5 overturned, spilling all of its cargo: live chickens, which ended up racing in every direction on the roadway.

A PENMANSHIP SLIP: One election night, a reporter from The Oregonian, our much-larger rival paper, and I were scribbling in our notebooks while interviewing a winning candidate, an incumbent who easily had overcome a spirited long-shot challenge by a local woman. The winner said the woman had run "an honorable campaign." The story in The Oregonian quoted the winner as saying the woman had run "a horrible campaign."

A PAINFUL JOKE: We organized a softball team and challenged local organizations to games. Tom Vogt, the newsroom wit, dubbed us "The Bad News Bearers." In a game against the local doctors, Tom suffered a fairly serious lower-leg injury. As Tom was lying on the ground, Archie Hamilton, a physician who also was the county coroner, came rushing over to see if he could help. Tom, despite his pain, looked up and said, "Archie, I don't need you yet."

WAKE UP, MR. SPEAKER: The newly elected speaker of the Washington House of Representatives was from Vancouver. He had the authority to appoint a person to a high-paying administrative job in the House. By connecting the dots (in my head), I realized there was one very likely candidate, so I called the new speaker, even though it was before 6 a.m. He was

a good-natured fellow, so he wasn't angry that I called so early, but he was amazed that I had figured out his choice for the job.

THE TEARS WERE MINE: I was assigned a story about a bachelor schoolteacher who had adopted a youngster suffering from severe mental and physical problems. When I finished writing, I was sure it was a masterpiece, guaranteed award-winner. But after it ran, no one complimented me. Then an editor-friend, who usually praised my stuff, sent me a note listing all the problems with my story, showing me how I had overwritten to the maximum, straining to squeeze tears from readers. Furious, I went back to the story so I could prove my editor-friend wrong. Damn. He was right.

I WISH I HAD WRITTEN "PEE": I wrote a twice-weekly humor column for The Columbian. Here's my best line: The claim by tobacco companies that smoking cigarettes does not cause serious diseases is no more convincing than if the beer brewers of this nation tried to tell me their products don't make me have to urinate.

THE SADDEST FUNNY COLUMN: One of the annual features of the column was a contest: Readers submitted their own columns, and the paper published the entry that came closest to my style of humor. In 1985, the joint winners were a married couple, Gerrit and Nellie Van Tol. But Nellie was killed in a traffic accident just before their column was to be published, so we held it. Days later I talked to Gerrit, and he said he was sure Nellie would want the column to run. In a note explaining the sad circumstance, I told readers that despite Nellie's death, it was OK to laugh at her inspired humor.

ROUND ONE: In 1989 I left The Columbian to write a novel (never published) and to become a freelance writing coach. (The qualification for being a writing coach: Purchase 500 business cards and place the words "writing coach" under your name.) At one of the first newspapers that hired me to coach, my criticism of two of the reporters infuriated them to the point that they threatened to beat the hell out of me.

ROUND TWO: In 2007, I was hired as the writing coach for The Dolan Company, which published 20-some business, legal and government-affairs newspapers all over the country. When I was assigned to be interim editor of one of the papers, my editing of one reporter's stories so enraged him that he took vacation, telling the publisher he had to get out of the newsroom before he beat the

hell out of me.

MY COMEUPPANCE: I got cocky. At a Dolan legal weekly I was temporarily leading, I tried, through editing sleight-of-hand, to salvage a questionable story. What it really needed was patience – why not wait and run it next week? – and more thorough reporting. Instead, I was sure I had done miracle editing surgery, and I forced it into the paper. Many readers complained vigorously and justifiably. The publisher wrote a Page 1 apology in the next edition, saying the story did not meet the paper's high standards. My embarrassment was a small price to pay for owning up to a mistake and standing up for journalistic integrity.

A HOLE IN HIS LOGIC: Several Dolan editors would have me edit their writing. When I edit remotely, I write notes inside each piece, and I try to do two things: (1) coach the writer and (2) make my notes fun to read. In one editorial, I noticed that the editor had urged a solution early, then contradicted that solution later in the same piece. Instead of directly pointing out the contradiction, I started my note by describing an experience I once had on the golf course: I was paired with a fellow I had never met. Early in the round, he barely spoke. There were just the two of us, and I didn't want to go 18 holes without conversation, so I practically forced him to interact. In mumbles and sentence fragments, he said he was a former cop, retired on a disability because he had been shot in the head. The head wound meant that sometimes, in forming a thought, he would blurt out the opposite of what he meant. Thus, if he hit a good shot, he would say, "That's sick"; a bad shot, "Perfect." After writing probably 250 words of that anecdote, I added this to the editor: "You're saying here the opposite of what you said above. Have you recently been shot in the head?"

HEAD FOR THE (BLACK) HILLS: In early 2014, The Dolan Company, beset by financial woes, eliminated my position, so at age 66, unwilling to retire, I spent four months looking for another newsroom job. Bart Pfankuch, then-editor of the Rapid City Journal, hired me to be city editor. I had a few other possibilities, but I chose to work for Bart because in the interview process, he said that he wanted the Journal to be known for its "teaching newsroom."

OF ICE AND MEN: One day in early 2015, 100 cattle owned by a Pine Ridge Indian Reservation rancher walked onto the frozen surface of the White Clay Reservoir, plunged through the ice and drowned. A few days later, the

rancher, Mike Carlow, and some volunteers braved the ice to try to pull out carcasses. Chris Huber, then-Journal photo editor, and I went to the reservoir to document the attempt. All morning, the men struggled against unbearable conditions, chopping through thick ice, wrapping strong chains around heifers' heads or feet or anything, really, only to have them slip from the chains as they were being pulled to shore. The morning total: One heifer carcass extracted. The cold was so intense that the ink in my pen was frozen, useless. My hands were almost equally useless, but I managed to get in my notebook extremely sketchy pencil scratchings that I later turned into a 32-paragraph story: <http://bit.ly/2AqELP7>.

TO ACE THE CHASE: On Friday, April 15, 2016, the Journal had a brief, informal retirement ceremony for me. I told my colleagues that although a person leaving a job is expected to say, "Most of all, I'll miss the people I worked with," I was going against the grain. What I would miss most, I said, was the chase, which I define as the effort of making six, a dozen, even 20 phone calls (or other attempts at communication) to track down a single fact or quotation or other element that marks any story, no matter how big or small, as being mine alone. I know I'm not always the best writer in the newsroom, I told my colleagues, but I always can be the reporter who doesn't give up, no matter the odds against me.

I used the example of a Rapid City power outage. The utility's press release said the outage took place because a Mylar balloon had drifted onto power lines. I thought: The way to make this story mine was to get information about Mylar balloons. I made several calls and was rebuffed; finally, just as the owner of a party-supplies store was heading out for the day, he took my call and gave me Mylar-balloons background that I added to the story.

Did readers care?

Probably not. But I cared. I cared that I had made better what could have been a standard press-release story. That satisfaction – not money, not awards, not praise – was what kept me working for 40 years.

THE FINAL THOUGHT: Metaphorically, in every community many Mylar balloons take flight every day. Chase 'em.

Writing coach Jim Stasiowski welcomes your questions or comments. Call him at (775) 354-2872 or write to 2499 Ivory Ann Drive, Sparks, Nev. 89436.

Poll numbers on press credibility look like a seesaw

It's been a long time since I'd given much thought to the annual Gallup survey on level of trust the American people have in news media coverage.

But there it was in a 2017 year-end piece by Margaret Sullivan, media columnist for The Washington Post. She was writing about "disturbing" aspects of her job, especially in the current political landscape, the Post's aggressive coverage of the Trump administration and the special counsel investigation.

I enjoy reading Sullivan's stuff after hearing her speak at a Seigenthaler Lecture Series program at Vanderbilt last year on "Preserving Press Credibility in a Polarized Society." She has an incredible resume – former public editor at The New York Times and as chief editor of her hometown Buffalo News.

There under the headline -- "Polls show Americans distrust the media. But talk to them, and it's a very different story." – and buried deep was the context. "Only 41 percent of Americans trust the news media," she reported, taking a number from Gallup's 2017 poll of 1,000 Americans.

The number was startling until I discovered the 2017 number was



MUSINGS ON THE MEDIA

FRANK GIBSON

not the lowest it had ever been. It was 9 points above the record low of 32 percent registered in the middle of the 2016 presidential election.

With one big difference, today's debates about journalism and trust in the news media are not dissimilar from the days of Nixon and Watergate and the constitutional crisis over the Pentagon Papers and the Vietnam War scandal. The numbers are dissimilar, though.

Gallup began asking in 1972: "In general, how much trust do you have in the mass media – newspapers, TV and radio – when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly?" Pollsters give four possibilities: a great deal, a fair amount, not very much, and none at all.

The number for "great deal/fair amount" peaked at 72 percent in 1976 – the heyday of American journalism and still in the wake of high-profile investigations by the Times and the Post on the Wa-

tergate scandal and the Pentagon Papers crisis.

Gallup has repeated the survey nearly every year since 1997 and reported that "trust dipped into the 50s in the late 1990s before falling into the 40s during the mid-2000s and beyond."

I engaged in discussions of the numbers in the 1980s as they related to threats to Freedom of Information and to journalism ethics and practices as they related to press credibility. That was as a member of the Society of Professional Journalists board and in 1989-91 when I chaired SPJ's Project Watchdog.

Watchdog was a national education and national Advertising Council campaign on the importance of press freedom. SPJ and like-minded professional organizations were freaking out because press credibility had begun dropping steadily from the 72 percent high during the American bicentennial. It's fair to say no one ever imagined a 40 percent drop in 40 years – from 72 to 32 percent.

Sullivan's column was the product of advice in a reader's email that prompted her to leave her "perch" inside the Washington Beltway and go listen to "the heart of the coun-

try." She wanted to talk to people about "their media habits and trust" as she explored the depth of the "fake news," "enemy of the people," and "news media is the opposition party" mantras of the President Trump and his supporters.

"...I had long ago become used to hostile mail and phone calls from some readers, mostly those supporting (President) Trump, and to trolling on social media," she wrote. "While I have received a lot of appreciative feedback that practically demands to be printed and displayed on the fridge, I have also heard from someone who suggested that my breasts should be cut off with a butcher knife, and from someone who told me that he had a gun and people like me would soon be eliminated. I've often been called the 'c-word,' a slut and a bitch. Some writers even signed their names to these venomous notes."

Over several weeks she interviewed 35 people and chatted with dozens of others. "I found very little of what I feared most," Sullivan wrote. "And I discovered that some stereotypes about the way heartland Americans view the media don't quite hold up."

She concluded that part of the problem is defining what "media"

means. "Often, the most disparaging comments I heard were about the worst qualities of cable-TV news, with their pundit panels and need to fill time, around the clock, by pointlessly chewing over small developments."

To further understand why she "heard so much intense resentment from some readers by email or phone when that hostility didn't surface face-to-face" Sullivan discussed it with Tom Rosenstiel, director of the American Press Institute. He once worked for the Pew Research Center, which has done extensive polling on attitudes about the press.

Rosenstiel told Sullivan something that TPA members have always known about readers. For many, he said, there's "the media" (bad) and there's "my media" (fairly good). That's also the way many feel about Congress generally, compared with their local representative.

"Most Americans like their own media pretty well," said Rosenstiel. "Asked about trusting press reports, people polled are probably thinking about that first category. And who can say what "the media" means to these respondents – are they think-

See **GIBSON** Page 12

A checklist for evaluating, advocating coverage of sensitive issues

Editors are regularly challenged with making uncomfortable news decisions. To be certain, there is no universal right or wrong call on whether to publish a story. Several factors may be in play, including community norms.

The examples of tough issues are numerous, frequently surfacing in everyday coverage. Stories can range from following public employee wage negotiations or publishing salaries of public officials to reporting on labor strikes or interviewing families of homicide victims.

Other stories may ratchet your decision-making to another level. Consider these circumstances:

- A high school hockey team, picked by many to win the state title, opens its season without its starting goalie, suspended for a state high school league violation. The team still wins, thanks in part to a stellar performance by a backup goalie with no varsity experience. What do you report?

- A city dump truck collides with a motorcyclist, killing the cyclist. A clearly distraught truck driver crouches at the scene, consoled by a passer-by. Your photographer happens to pass the scene minutes after the collision, capturing the full emotions in a photo. Do you publish the photo?



COMMUNITY NEWSROOM SUCCESS

JIM PUMARLO

- An elementary-school boy commits suicide, apparently the result of excessive ribbing by classmates. The aftermath of this suicide, more so than others we have witnessed in the community, lingers in the school. How do you handle the story?

- A father in a town of 2,500 people is convicted and sentenced for incest months after the initial arrest. The victim is his only daughter. How do you report the story while trying to protect the identity of the 17-year-old daughter?

All of these incidents are being talked about in the community. They have an impact on people. They are sensitive issues. And they are news. I'm a firm believer they should be reported if newspapers are to represent themselves as a living history of their home towns. Reporting these stories in a responsible fashion is a requisite if your

newspaper is to remain relevant, especially in today's fractured media landscape.

It's natural, and healthy, for newsrooms to pause and consider whether the reporting of certain news serves readers. And, under ideal circumstances, newsrooms may have faced some of these circumstances often enough to have developed some policies. Many times, however, decisions have to be made on a quick turnaround.

Here is one checklist, and accompanying rationale, that advocates the publication of challenging stories.

Is it true? Newspapers routinely report why athletes are "missing in action" – whether due to an injury, a family emergency or a college recruiting trip. Sitting on a bench for violating school or high school league rules is equally newsworthy.

What is the impact of an event? It's standard procedure at most schools to call in counselors in the wake of an untimely death of a classmate, whether the death is due to natural causes or a suicide. The death automatically becomes conversation in homes. Can newspapers ignore the story?

Is the report fair? Teacher salary negotiations often are emotional and acrimonious. At the same time, the

salaries can represent 75 percent of a school district's budget. Newspapers are performing a vital service by keeping a community abreast of contract talks, giving equal attention to all sides of all issues.

Is it a public or strictly private issue? A closure of a major employer has a tremendous economic impact on a community. The news begs for explanation and interpretation.

Will the story make a difference? A newspaper's attention to a fatal accident, including a photo, can become a springboard for action to install traffic signals at a dangerous intersection.

Will the truth quell rumors? A newspaper receives word from an elementary school student that a high school teacher lost all his fingers in a lab experiment – the "news" clearly spreading quickly. An investigation reveals that the teacher lost a finger tip, and a story sets the record straight.

How would you justify your decision to readers? Certain stories – an individual on trial for sexual abuse, for example – are expected to generate reader reaction, and editors should be prepared to answer questions. The circumstances might provide excellent fodder for a column to readers.

How would you treat the story if

you were the subject? This question is not intended to prompt rejection of a story. Rather, it's a reminder to treat the story with sensitivity.

In the end, fairness and consistency should be guiding principles for any story. They are especially important when dealing with sensitive subjects.

Another element – discussion – is common to all of these questions in deciding whether and what to publish. All decisions are stronger if the options are talked about with as many individuals as possible – people within and outside of your newspaper family. Discussion doesn't mean consensus will be developed, but it assures that editors will get many perspectives before making a final call.

Jim Pumarlo writes, speaks and provides training on community newsroom success strategies. He is author of "Journalism Primer: A Guide to Community News Coverage," "Votes and Quotes: A Guide to Outstanding Election Coverage" and "Bad News and Good Judgment: A Guide to Reporting on Sensitive Issues in Small-Town Newspapers." He can be reached at www.pumarlo.com and welcomes comments and questions at jim@pumarlo.com.

Broadcasters group tells Open Records Counsel that blanket ban on photos of public records is unreasonable & inefficient

Editor's note: This column, which was originally posted Oct. 25, 2017 on the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government website, doesn't account for any related developments that might have occurred between then and now. Deborah Fisher is the executive director of TCOG.

The Tennessee Association of Broadcasters has added its voice to the growing number of entities who have urged the Office of Open Records Counsel to revise its Model Public Records Policy to eliminate the option of a blanket ban on taking photos of public records.

The Office of Open Records Counsel's model policy includes language that several government entities have adopted into their own policies and practices that would ban someone from taking a photo of a non-exempt public record with their cell phone or camera.

The broadcasters association, along with the League of Women Voters of Tennessee, the Tennessee Press Association and Tennessee Coalition for Open Government, have all written letters outlining for the Office why the option of a blanket ban is seemingly arbitrary, in apparent conflict with the law, and wasteful and inefficient for government and the requestor.



Pierce

Doug Pierce, counsel for the state broadcasters association, pointed out in the letter to Open Records Counsel Lee Pope that broadcast stations, as federal licensees, are required to serve the public interest and they serve as a "surrogate or proxy for the public to disseminate information on a daily basis the public does not have time to access."

He pointed out that broadcasters frequently use cameras to photograph public records to illustrate news stories to inform the public. But under the Model Policy, they would have to go through "the wasteful and inefficient practice of requesting a photocopy of the records from the records custodian simply for the purpose of photographing it for wider public dissemination."



TCOG MATTERS

DEBORAH FISHER

"A blanket ban on the use of cameras to photograph records in all circumstances is not reasonable. These cameras do not in any way harm the public records," Pierce wrote. "Accordingly, any prohibition against someone taking a photograph of the public record he or she is allowed to inspect is a wasteful and inefficient use of time and money that cannot be rationalized as being reasonable."

Here is the text of the full letter: Dear Mr. Pope, I am writing on behalf of the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters ("TAB") to request that your office update the Model Public Records Policy ("Model Policy") to reflect that government entities should allow citizens to photograph public records produced for inspection, or the Model Policy at least not prohibit such photography in all cases.

TAB is a voluntary association of radio and television broadcast stations located in Tennessee. Its purpose includes promoting a high standard of public service among Tennessee broadcast stations and fostering cooperation with governmental agencies in all matters pertaining to national defense and public welfare. Broadcasters, as federal licensees, are statutorily

required to serve the public interest. 47 U.S.C. § 5303(f); *National Broadcasting Company v. United States*, 319 U.S. 190 (1943); *McIntyre v. William Penn Broadcasting Company*, 151 F.2d. 597, 599, (3rd Cir.), cert denied, 327 U.S. 779 (1945) ("broadcasting station must operate in the public interest and must be deemed to be 'trustee' for the public"). Likewise, the Tennessee Public Records Act ("PRA") is designed to serve the public interest by allowing all citizens of Tennessee to know of how their government operates. Broadcasters, as members of the news media, serve as a surrogate or proxy for the public to disseminate information on a daily basis the public does not have time to access. We understand that chairmen of the General Assembly Joint Government Operations Committee, Senator Mike Bell and Representative Jeremy Faison, have made a similar request to TAB's request have the Model Policy modified to reflect that state government cannot ban the use of personal equipment to take photographs of other copies of public records in all cases. We agree with Chairman Bell and Faison that prohibiting the use of personal equipment to make copies in all cases is an unreasonable restriction. We respectfully request that the Model Policy be revised to provide more reasonable guidance for not only the state government offices, but all entities subject to the PRA. To comply with that obligation to inform the public and serve the public interest, broadcasters frequently use cameras to photograph records to illustrate new stories, and thereby inform the public. Under the current Model Policy,

someone, such as a broadcaster, who simply wanted to photograph a public record, would have to go through the wasteful and inefficient practice of requesting a photocopy of the records from the records custodian simply for the purpose of photographing it for wider public dissemination. Of course, there is no restrictions on the rights of Tennessee citizens to inspect (without copying) public records during regular business hours. Tenn. Code Ann. § 10-7-503(a)(2)(A). If any member of the public is required to first obtain a copy of the records that it was first entitled to inspect, simply to take a photograph of that record, this would result in the inefficient actions of having the government employee waste time and money to make a photocopy of the record simply to allow the requesting party to photograph the photocopy.

Although the Tennessee Code Annotated § 10-7-506(a) gives records custodians the right to "adopt and enforce reasonable rules" on the making of copies. A blanket ban on the use of cameras to photograph records in all circumstances is not reasonable. These cameras do not in any way harm the public records.

Accordingly, any prohibition against someone taking a photograph of the public record he or she is allowed to inspect is a wasteful and inefficient use of time and money that cannot be rationalized as being reasonable. TAB has never received any explanation as to why a blanket prohibition on allowing member of the public to photograph public records is justifiable or reasonable. Section 506 of the PRA also requires that, "In all cases where any person has the right to

inspect any public records, such persons shall have the right to take extracts or make copies thereof and to make photographs or photostats of the same while such records are in the possession, custody and control of the lawful custodian. . . ." This provision implies that the requestor has the right to use his or her own equipment to create images of the records produced for inspection. Furthermore, any blanket prohibition against allowing citizens to use their personal equipment to make images of public records appears to be at odds with Section 10-7-505(d) which requires the PRA to "be broadly construed so as to give the fullest possible access to public records." Moreover, your office is obligated to consider the practice in question here in establishing the cost of copies of records. Tennessee Code Annotated §8-4-604(a)(1)(A)(ii)(e) states that the OORC "shall consider . . . when large volume requests are involved, information shall be provided in the most efficient and cost-effective manner, including, but not limited to permitting the requestor to provide copying equipment or an electronic scanner." It therefore seems that this section is directly contrary to any policy seeking to impose a blanket ban on a citizen using his or her own equipment, including cameras, to take photographs of public records.

Thank you in advance for considering our comments on this matter. We respectfully urge your office to revise the Model Policy as requested herein. Please do not hesitate to call me if I may provide you with any other information concerning this matter. Sincerely, Douglas R. Pierce

Postal rate increase on the horizon

**SUBMITTED
National Newspaper Association
October 10, 2017**

The U.S. Postal Service has issued a warning that (as of Oct. 10, 2017) the 2018 postage increase will likely be its last modest increase confined by a 2006 law.

National Newspaper Association President Susan Rowell, publisher of the Lancaster (S.C.) News, announced to community newspapers that publishers could expect significant increases in postage rates in 2019 if Congress does not enact a postal reform law.

"Every postage payer [faced] an additional 1-cent stamp increase

on January 20, 2018, and overall mailers will pay about 1.9 percent more [in 2018]. We are gratified that the increases for within-county newspaper mail, which our newspaper members use so heavily to reach readers, will see a slightly smaller increase of 1.8 percent," Rowell said.

But, she said, NNA expected much difficulty in 2019.

"First, USPS thinks periodicals publications are generally not covering their costs, as USPS handling costs have risen faster than inflation. Second, the cost of handling mailing sacks will go up. Third, we could see a significant restructuring of postage rates for newspapers

overall because USPS is in financial trouble," Rowell said.

NNA Postal Committee Chair Max Heath said NNA was working to find solutions for newspapers.

"We expect USPS to eventually recognize that the white flats tubs used primarily by newspapers cost less to handle than mailing sacks," Heath said. "We have been asking USPS and the PRC for almost a decade to recognize a lower rate for these tubs."

"This year we learned that our request for a better rate has been heard, but USPS believes it cannot pass this discount along to publishers without authorization of its Board of Governors.



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A formula for testimonial quotes is an advertising essential

Testimonials can be convincing elements in advertising campaigns. Will Rogers once said, “Get someone else to blow your horn and the sound will carry twice as far.” It’s true that happy customers’ statements can be more credible than many of the things advertisers say about themselves.

Not all testimonials are created equal. I’m sure you’ve seen ads with testimonial quotes like this: “Golf City is a great resource for golfers. Their inventory is outstanding. They do repairs on all types of clubs. And they offer a wide selection of package deals on local courses. I recommend them highly.”

This quote represents a nice try, but it’s like a flat stone skimming across the water. It touches



AD-LIBS®

JOHN FOUST

down several times, but there’s no depth. A better strategy would be to produce three different testimonials – one for each point in the quote – and add a little more depth to each one. For example:

Quote 1: “Golf City has an outstanding inventory of golf clubs and equipment. I’ve always found exactly what I’m looking for, whether it’s a new set of irons or a pair of golf shoes.”

Quote 2: “Golf City does a great

job with repairs. They recently regripped my clubs, and it’s like having a brand-new set.”

Quote 3: “Golf City offers excellent golf packages on local courses. With their combination deals, I have been able to play some of the best courses in the area for much less than the regular cost.”

How do you get tightly focused quotes like this? It’s all in the questions you ask. Instead of asking “What’s your opinion of this company?” and hoping the subject will say something usable, it’s better to go into the interview with a strategy. In the case of Golf City, you know you want separate quotes on inventory, repairs and package deals. So, you create a progression of questions which are designed to narrow the quote to something which will support

the ad’s message. It works like this:

Question 1: “Thank you for taking a few minutes to talk to me about Golf City. What do you think of them?”

Question 2: (After a positive response to that open-ended question, ask about something specific. It helps to have advance information from your advertiser.) “I understand that you just upgraded to a new set of clubs. What was your experience with that?”

Question 3: “What would you say to people who are thinking about going to Golf City for new clubs?”

Three single-focus testimonials are better than one that covers all three areas at once. So, talk to three different people about

three different features of Golf City – and you’ll have material for a series of ads. Include a photo and a name with each quote, and the campaign will have the ring of authenticity. You can run one quote per ad and even feature all three in a larger ad.

Then “rinse and repeat” with three more customer interviews. That’s using the power of testimonials.

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The challenge ahead for newspapers and the community

PETER W. WAGNER
N’West Iowa Review
December 28, 2017

It’s no secret America’s newspapers are struggling to find their place in today’s social media society.

Many major metro dailies now only offer home delivery on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays – the days they carry an exceptional number of high-revenue inserts. The balance of the week interested readers have to buy the paper at a convenience store or other dealer.

In smaller markets that were once five or six-day-a-week dailies, publication has been cut to three times, twice or just once a week.

Community news always has been important to society. The earliest humans recorded their experiences and challenges on cave walls in France as far back as 17,000 BC.

Newspapers have survived competition from radio, television and even early forms of the Internet. So why the difficulty today?

For one thing, society has become more diverse. There is more desire to be different and separate than to be of one mind and purpose. Where a community newspaper once brought a group of people together, many residents would just as soon see it torn apart.

For another, some publishers became arrogant. High profits and soaring circulation gains blinded them to the possibility of serious competition created in the form of shared information networks such as Facebook and Snapchat.

In many communities the passion for publishing, once driven by a local owner, has been lost to directives from upper management located in distant states. Many of those chains have no knowledge or understanding of the local commu-

nity’s needs, motivation or history.

And worse, too many industry and community leaders have “drunk the Kool-Aid” and believed social media promoters are correct when they claim that freely shared individual social commentary is going to produce free, independent thinking and offer a cost-free way to advertise local businesses and create community consensus.

But nothing is free. Those same social media promoters have found ways to maximize their growing, international revenue by controlling who actually sees the message and by selling small company e-mail lists passing through their system to like larger online retailers like Amazon and Walmart. Small businesses, believing they are creating their own market, are simply helping increase the prospect list of their greatest competition.

Additionally, local and national

blogs and social messaging does little to create a united community. Such one-sided voices often broadcast unchecked and even fake news. Many of those sources cannot be trusted as balanced or even intending to share the truth. As former President Barack Obama stated on “CBS This Morning” on Wednesday, Dec. 27, those who depend on social media for their news can be “cocooned in information that (only) reinforces their current biases.”

Interestingly, the outside media that most often reports the “falling” numbers in newspaper circulation are the over-the-air non-cable television networks that have problems of their own. The large and ever-growing selection of cable channels and live-streaming networks and the consumer’s ability to watch programs commercial-free on some streaming content providers or other servers has cut deeply

into the local television station’s audience and revenue.

Are all newspapers dead or dying? Not necessarily. Some groups and many independent family-owned papers are taking steps to remain an important part of the community.

A recent comScore readership study reported 18- to 34-year-olds, long thought forever lost to print media, are spending more time reading printed newspapers than checking out the news online.

But publishing companies are going to have to work diligently at keeping their subscriber base.

That effort might include investing in a larger newsroom to write more original content. It might require investing in more computer programs and equipment. It will demand an expanded creative team capable of producing a more

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input into what is going into local landfills.

Decatur County’s landfill – which is owned by the county – was originally permitted to accept household waste, but that changed in the decade after the county contracted with a private company to manage the site and the private company began getting approval from the state to accept other types of waste.

Likewise, in Camden, according to the newspaper’s reporting, a private company that operates a landfill there has been able to privately petition – without public

notice – the state environmental agency for approval to take in special waste “from aluminum, coal and railroad industries, along with diesel fuel from a Superfund site.”

Not only does this process exclude the public, but The Tennessee reports that TDEC officials are in the process of speeding up such approvals through a streamlining process, making it even easier (and, in my opinion, harder for communities to find out and try to intervene in time): From the story:

“Obtaining a state permit to establish a new landfill requires public notice and disclosure about the types of waste that will be deposited so communities can dis-

cuss, debate or even intervene to stop a landfill before it starts. Once a landfill has gotten its initial permit, however, landfill owners and waste generators in Tennessee can privately petition the state to accept additional and potentially hazardous materials.

“Last year, TDEC approved 950 new and renewal requests for special waste to be dumped at landfills across the state. Once a request is granted, tons of an approved waste can be dumped at a site regularly. Altogether, there are 138 landfills and 87 solid waste processing facilities in Tennessee. TDEC officials this year are in the process of streamlining the special waste

process to speed up approvals.

“Environmentalists and city residents say Camden is a prime example of what can go wrong when TDEC approves special wastes without community input or notice.

TDEC in April designated the landfill as a “large quantity generator of hazardous waste,” according to an August TDEC letter sent to Environmental Waste Solutions. Routine tests of the landfill found that special waste deposited at the site had reacted to create a toxic stream that met federal hazardous waste standards.

“Camden Mayor Roger Pafford said no one from TDEC informed city officials that their town was

now home to a hazardous waste landfill. The omission was particularly galling to city officials because the leachate – or wastewater – pipe carrying hazardous waste from the landfill flows directly above a city drinking water main.”

It should be noted that a TDEC spokesman, on the eve of The Tennessean publishing its stories, told the newspaper that it is “working toward a solution” and it intends “to have the authority to soon begin providing that information (about low-level radioactive waste) again.”

Deborah Fisher is the executive director of the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government.

A look at differences between healthy and unhealthy newspapers

Whenever I get a late-evening email from Mike Towle, managing editor of The Tennessee Press, it can only mean one thing. Deadline has arrived, and I need to get a column written and to him. That's what happened tonight, as I sat in my room in Tyler, Texas.

This last time, I had known what I was going to write about for days. A week earlier, I sent out a request to publishers throughout the United States and Canada for them to complete an annual publishers' survey. Since 2014, I've been checking the pulse of publishers to see how things are going at their newspapers. We've learned a lot about the state of the industry during those years, and I'm confident we'll learn just as much from this most recent questionnaire.

With a week still left for folks to return their surveys, it's a little too early to have all the numbers crunched. With more than 500 surveys completed already, we can get an accurate picture of how things are going at our newspapers.

It's obvious there will be some noticeable differences in answers to the 2018 survey, compared to previous years. There seems to be a little less confidence, a little more worry. Still most papers report being in good shape financially and see no reason to panic.

Today, in this column, I'd like to focus on one particular group. Question No. 7: "Compared to three years ago, how is the overall health of your primary publication(s)?"

25.4 percent of respondents indicated their papers are in better health today than they were three years ago, compared to 24.5 percent that report things about the same and 47.9 that answered they are in worse overall health than three years ago. That is a



THE NEWS GURU
KEVIN SLIMP

big change from a year ago when most papers indicated being healthier than three years earlier.

What changed? It's still too early to tell. Let's wait a few weeks to look over the numbers in greater detail. However, by filtering the responses, we can see some interesting differences in papers that answered they were in better shape than three years ago, compared to those who indicated they were about the same or in worse shape than they were in 2015.

For instance, dailies were 50 percent less likely to be in better shape than non-daily papers. That's probably not a shock to most folks in our industry, but it's interesting to see such a clear-cut difference between the long-term changes in health between daily and non-daily papers.

That's not to say all daily papers are doing worse. 17 percent of daily paper publishers responded that their papers are doing better than three years ago. That compares to 26 percent of non-daily papers who are doing better during the same period.

Question No. 4 had more interesting results. Papers who reported improved overall health over the past three years were three times as likely to larger news staffs today, compared to 2015. Of these papers, 21.5 percent indicated they had increased the size of their news staffs in that period, compared to 7.4 percent of all newspapers. By the same

token, they were twice as likely to have increased the size of their sales staffs.

When discussing page count, 25 percent of papers reporting improved health report having more pages in the papers than three years ago. That compares to 9 percent of papers overall with higher page counts.

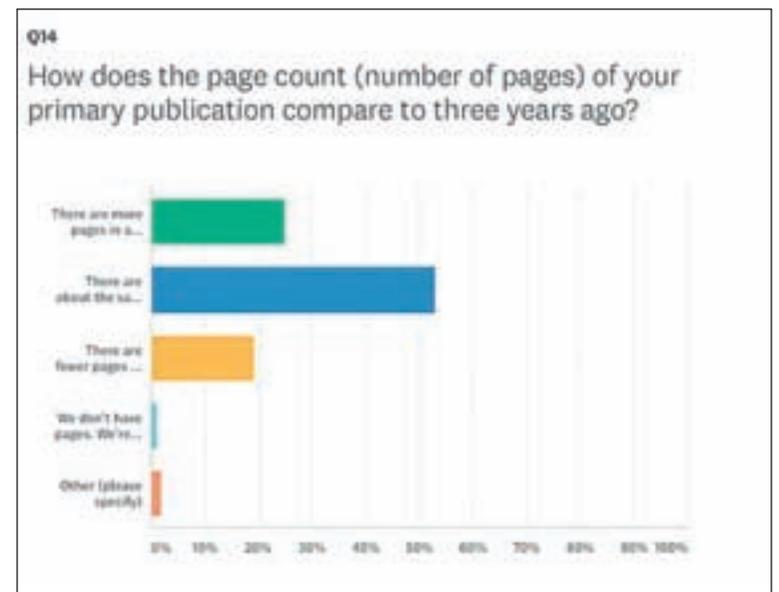
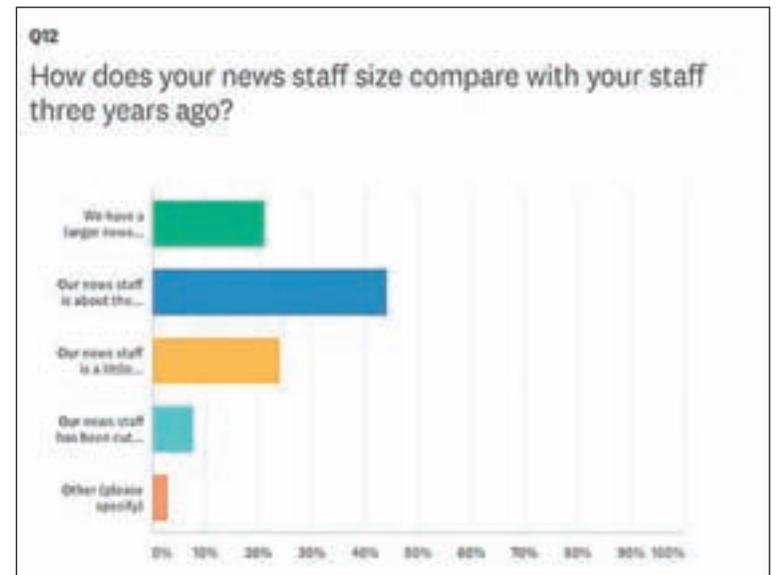
Interestingly, ownership didn't seem to make a big difference in improved overall health. Dailies were just as likely as non-dailies to have better health than three years ago.

It probably won't surprise you to learn that newspapers who report improved health since 2015 are more optimistic about the future, with a large majority indicating they expect to be printing papers – and have a printed newspaper as the primary product – well beyond 12 years from now, the highest of the multiple-choice answers.

After being involved in research for a long time, I've learned to not jump to conclusions when looking over results of a survey. Sure, papers that have increased staff and page count show improved overall health. That doesn't, however, automatically mean bigger staffs and larger numbers lead to healthier papers. It's possible papers that have shown improved health are willing to spend money on larger staffs and more pages. It's the whole "chicken or the egg" debate.

Nobody has all the answers, but by the time we assemble all the survey results, we will have a much better idea of what is going on in our industry at this point in time and, hopefully, gain some understanding of things we can do to improve the health of our papers in the future.

Each year since 2015, between 15 and 20 percent of all publish-



ers in the U.S. and Canada have completed this annual survey. That's an incredibly high response rate and promises accurate results. Anonymity helps ensure honest responses.

I look forward to crunching numbers for the next few weeks so I can share even more information with you concerning the state of newspapers in the United States and Canada in 2018.

GIBSON, from Page 9

ing of Fox News or the New York Times? Are they assessing the local TV station or their Facebook feed?"

Another piece of the puzzle that surfaces in polling is politics. Gallup attributed the 9-point rise in trust numbers from 2016 to 2017 was a 21-point rise among Democrats – from 51 percent to 72 percent.

Republicans remained at 14 per-

cent both years. Gallup noted the last time Republicans' confidence topped 50 percent was in 1998, when 52 percent expressed confidence in the mass media. That was in the midst of the Bill Clinton's scandal regarding Monica Lewinsky. Gallup attributed the high number to press coverage Republicans enjoyed.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll of 14,300 Americans reported in the fall that "America is increasingly confident

in the news media and less so in President Donald Trump's administration..." It found that the numbers in the categories of "a great deal/some confidence" rose from 39 points in November 2016 to 48 percent 10 months later.

In what can only be seen as some bizarre Karma, respondents in another Reuters/Ipsos poll last October reported that 48 percent of respondents had "a great deal/some con-

fidence" in the new president. That was down 4 points from January.

A final note on the Project Watchdog campaign that ended in 1991: I received a nasty letter from the publisher of a California gun magazine explaining why he would not run our "If the Press Didn't Tell Us, Who Would?" public service ad.

"It's the product of the eastern liberal establishment press, and I won't run it," he said.

It was a far less contentious time, but I could think of only one response. I scribbled it across the top of his letter, signed it and returned it to him: "Sir, I appreciate your position and will defend to my death your right not to run that ad."

Frank Gibson is the retired TPA public policy director and founding director of the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government. He is reachable at frank.gibson@verizon.net.

WAGNER, from Page 11

attractive, interesting design.

Keeping up with the future will surely require new forms of delivery to assure the subscriber gets dependable on-time "to the door service" as the post office's delivery days and times diminish. That printed paper will have to be augmented with new, innovative online services

and breaking news updates.

Finally, newspapers will need to offer an increased local presence in everything from being more visible reporting about all things important to the reader — the city council, college concerts, high school sports and local successes — to the sponsorship of both educational and simply enjoyable community events.

Newspapers will make it through the current storm to brighter days ahead. They are the heart of every community. They are the cheerleaders, fact checkers, community watchdogs and creators of community consensus and commitment.

Thankfully, that's the kind of challenge we committed journalists can get excited about.

* * *

GET REAL is a monthly training memo available exclusively through state and regional press associations. For Wagner's uniquely different, free PAPER DOLLARS digital newsletter for editors, publishers and sales managers, contact him at the email address shown below,

Peter W. Wagner is founder and publisher of the award winning N'West Iowa Review. He is a frequent sales trainer and presenter promoting the values of the printed paper at group and association meetings. Wagner is also available for local consultations and can be reached at his cell phone, 712-348-3550 or by emailing him at pww@iowainformation.com.