

# grassroots editor



*A journal  
for newspeople*

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# When the helicopters came to town Weekly editors talk about covering Postville, Iowa immigration raid

By **Patricia Berg**

Sharon Drahn heard the helicopters before she knew what was happening.

It was Monday, May 12, press day at the weekly *Postville Herald-Leader* in Postville, Iowa, where Drahn is the editor. Drahn's phone started ringing, and within minutes she learned that the helicopters were bringing in armed Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to round up illegal immigrants working at Postville's largest employer, Agriprocessors, Inc.

At the time of the raid, 968 people were employed at Agriprocessors. The 2000 Census gives Postville's population at 2,273.

It was the largest worker raid at a single site in United States history, and the largest raid ever in Iowa.

ICE arrived with 700 arrest warrants charging Agriprocessors workers with aggravated identity theft and Social Security fraud. Before the day was over, ICE would put nearly 400 workers, most of them from Mexico and Guatemala, on buses and take them to a makeshift processing center set up on the grounds of the Cattle Congress in Waterloo, 75 miles to the south. From there, many simply disappeared into the gigantic machinery of the U.S. government.

In the space of a few hours, Postville had lost more than a quarter of its population. Its largest employer was temporarily closed, its future in doubt. Its mayor was predicting that the town would become a ghost town. Hundreds of school children were suddenly fatherless, and some were without any parent at all.

National news media descended on Postville, and the town found itself on the front pages of national newspapers and on network news. National stories featured the immense ICE bureaucracy, often with back stories about the debate over national immigration policy.

But the *Herald-Leader* and other area newspapers, including weeklies as well as the *Waterloo Courier*, a daily, and the *Des Moines Register*, focused on the economic impact on the community, and the humanitarian crisis involving the families of the arrested workers stranded in Postville.

"Think of how hard their lives must have been in Guatemala or Mexico to risk life and limb to get here, and then be on pins and needles the whole time they're here," Drahn said.

Janell Bradley, editor of three weeklies in Fayette County just a few miles southwest of Postville, agreed that readers want to read about the humanitarian crisis that has befallen their neighbors.

"People feel a lot of compassion," she said.

Bradley and her husband, Jeff, own three weeklies, the *Fayette Leader*, *Elgin Echo*, and *Ossian Bee*. Janell edits all three from her office in Elgin.

Compelling story ideas keep sprouting up from the Agriprocessors drama, and Bradley would love to investigate every one of them.

"I went to school to be a writer," she said. "It's what I love to do."

Under the circumstances, it can be frustrating to be a weekly editor. "It would be a full-time job just to stay on top of that one story," said Drahn. "But it's a matter of priorities. There are lots of other things that we have to cover, things that are also important in the real scheme of things."

Drahn started volunteering at St. Bridget's Catholic Church, in part because she was moved

to help the families of workers. "It was also to get a better feel for what's going on," she added.

And Bradley felt at a disadvantage when she found herself relying on interpreters at some of the big stories, so she's now studying Spanish three nights a week.

What if Drahn and Bradley had time to throw themselves full-time into those tempting stories unfolding on Main Street? They would get the life stories of the Somalians brought in from Minneapolis to work the plant after the raid. They'd look into the high cost of housing in Postville, and try to find out why the slaughterhouse workers all live in Postville, paying exorbitant rent, when inexpensive apartments can be had in surrounding towns.

They'd try to unearth the truth amid the rumors of sexual abuse of workers (*Time* magazine came to town for that one), mistreatment of animals at the plant (PETA claims to have smuggled a camera into the plant and posted a gruesome video on YouTube), and violations of child labor laws. They would try to talk to the Agriprocessors rabbis who are said to have walked off the job in mid-August. They'd follow people who've been incarcerated. They'd follow up on claims like that of one worker who says he has been moved eight times since being arrested. They'd find out why ICE decided to raid now, after 20 years.

"People are interested in finding out how this system works, and what's happening to these people," Bradley said.

Still, they can find good stories at home.

Take the latest wave of workers. In an attempt to get the plant up and running again, Agriprocessors brought in workers from Texas through a staffing agency. Rumor has it that some were recruited out of homeless shelters.

Despite assurances from management that the new employees "won't cause problems in your community or with your police force," people are plenty upset about it.

Drahn quoted Postville Mayor Bob Penrod in a June 25 front page story, in which he expressed "anger and disgust" over the way the new employees "have presented themselves within the community." Penrod said that the new hires should be tested for drugs, and that they had been brought to town under misleading terms, and had no money to survive until their first payday. As a result, they had "literally cleaned out the local food pantry."

"The new people don't know anything about life in northeastern Iowa," Drahn said. "They're trying to become acclimated."

Bradley and Drahn both got front-page stories in July, when about 1,500 people rallied in Postville to protest the government's treatment

of the workers. Catholic, Protestant and Jewish religious leaders marched with protestors and addressed the crowd. For the first few weeks following the raid, readers sent letters to the *Herald-Leader* expressing outrage at the treatment of the workers, and compassion for their situation. "Our town has been invaded by our own government," wrote one.

But Bradley said that she gets letters from readers demanding stricter immigration rules, but not from the other side.

"I don't hear from supporters," she said, adding that she didn't recognize any faces among those at the rally. "The rally was people from urban areas," she said. "Small-town people don't want to be seen holding signs."

Which is not to say they don't care about the people affected by the raid.

"What they are willing to do, is be Christian, in the sense that their faith tells them to volunteer, to fill the food shelves," Bradley said.

Bradley said that it was not hard to compete with the national media for stories, even during the weeks just after the raid. And she wasn't too worried about being scooped.

"There are hundreds of stories out there about this whole thing," she said.

One of the most compelling story lines is the plight of the wives and children of detained workers.

Without legal status, their breadwinners suddenly gone, the wives of arrested workers were stranded in a bizarre legal limbo after the raid. Most of them don't speak English. They had no transportation, no legal status, no money. Hundreds of them rushed to St. Bridget's Church on the day of the raid to avoid ICE agents. They lived there for a week, unwilling to leave the premises for fear of being arrested. They were soon joined by some 40 women who had been arrested but released "on supervision" because they were sole caregivers for their children.

When you add in the men who escaped arrest and sought shelter at the church, local Catholic priest Paul Ouderkirk estimated that the church was feeding up to 1,000 people every day during the week following the raid. Ouderkirk, retired for five years after serving for 50 years as a priest at St. Bridget's, came out of retirement because of the crisis.

News reports varied regarding the precise number of women who were arrested. This created an especially urgent problem for the community: how to care for young children who had lost both parents in the raid. Immediately after the raid, the Postville Community School District pulled all Hispanic students out of class and tried to unite them with their parents. Those in elementary and middle school whose parents

could not be located were paired up with high school students.

In mid-August, Ouderkirk said 43 women were still wearing ankle monitoring bracelets, forbidden from working or leaving, most without any means of support. They could not get passports because of their illegal status. And, although their children are legal America citizens because they were born in Iowa, the women didn't dare send them to school for fear they'd be taken by ICE agents.

For Drahn and Bradley, the story quickly became that of a community circling the wagons to help its most vulnerable residents.

The *Herald-Leader's* May 21 headline read: "Postville begins the healing process following last week's immigrant raid." The story told of red ribbons wrapped around telephone poles and porch posts as symbols of solidarity with the workers and their families. And the coverage featured Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist parishes who mobilized within hours to provide food, shelter, and Spanish language information for the women and children whose men had been taken away.

"Meanwhile, the area religious leaders, especially at St. Bridget Church here, have done everything in their power to get relief to those affected by the raid," Drahn wrote.

"The immediate response...was incredible as everyone came together to assist those in need," Drahn wrote in the June 18 edition of the *Herald-Leader*. The article included a plea for the public to help, along with an email address and a phone number for the relief hotline.

To complicate things even more, the worst flooding in Iowa's history devastated towns along the Cedar River in eastern Iowa a month after the raid on Agriprocessors. Flood stories dominated the June 11 and 18 editions of the *Herald-Leader*, and the stories pointed out that by the time the floods hit, area food shelves had run empty in the aftermath of the ICE raid. Fundraisers and food drives began popping up all over the Postville area. Again, local newspapers acted as important conduits of information for the relief effort.

It has been difficult to follow the fate of many of the arrested workers. They don't speak the language, they have no money, and legal defenders are swamped by the sheer numbers involved. Bradley is currently reporting on people from area churches who go to the jail in Waterloo each Friday to conduct mass for the inmates, bringing moral support, a little money, and prepaid phone cards. Those who speak Spanish, including at least one who teaches Spanish at a nearby college, volunteer to contact the inmates' families.

Officials said at the time of the raid that 29 of those arrested would be charged with fraud

and identity theft, and the others deported. But the government surprised everyone by imposing five-month prison sentences on most of those arrested, time which must be served before the workers are deported. Many are serving their sentences outside of Iowa.

The inmates are faceless and nameless to most readers outside of Postville, but to locals, they're neighbors. That emotional impact is unique to Postville residents.

As Drahn put it, "Even a few miles down the road their perspective is different from mine, because they don't live right here."

Beyond the social and emotional shock is the economic impact.

Before the raid Agriprocessors was turning out nearly two million pounds of kosher beef, turkey, chicken and lamb each week. No one outside the plant knows for sure how much is currently being produced. General agreement seems to be that the plant is operating at less than 30 percent capacity.

The plant faces two big problems: First, father-and-son owners Aaron and Sholom Rubashkin face more than 9,000 criminal misdemeanor charges for violating state child labor laws. If convicted, the Rubashkins face millions of dollars in fines and lengthy prison sentences. They have vowed to fight the charges. At least three other senior managers have also been indicted on similar charges. All live in or around Postville.

Second, the company has had to scramble to find a labor force. The new CEO has brought in Somalian immigrants from Minneapolis to work in the plant, and from as far away as Texas and Palau, a small island country in the South Pacific.

All these changes have given people a new case of the jitters. They say they'd all gotten used to living together, and now everything is disrupted.

Bradley put it this way: "The people of the town had finally settled into a comfort zone. You had all these years together, and now that's broken."

By contrast, many of the Mexican and Guatemalan workers who vanished on May 12 had been in town for years, some dating back to the late 1980s when the plant opened. Their children were born in Iowa and were attending school in Postville.

A number of immigrants have knit themselves into the community. For example, the Postville Bakery is now called the Postville la Panaderia y Pasteleria. Its owner, Elver Herrera,

came to Postville from Guatemala to work at the plant, married a Postville woman, and bought the bakery/restaurant a few years ago. The *Des Moines Register* once named tasting his hamburger buns as "one of the 100 things you must do in Iowa."

The economic impact is by far the most important angle for Gerald Blue, editor and publisher of the *Fayette County Union* in West Union, 15 miles from Postville.

"Any time you can have an industry in northeastern Iowa, you're fortunate," Blue said.

And he's plenty worried about the future of the region if Agriprocessors closes, pointing out that area industries such as trucking and livestock production depend on the plant.

"It's endless, the ripple effect that it has," he said.

With an eye to the economic health of the region, Blue says that big dailies have given Agriprocessors a raw deal in their coverage.

"The dailies chose to ignore anything that was positive" about the plant, he said. He said that Agriprocessors has made changes for the better, such as hiring a staffing agency that guarantees it will bring in only documented workers. "We reported on that," he said, but said the dailies did not.

For local readers, the ICE raid is just the latest chapter in a larger drama that began in 1987. That was when Aaron Rubashkin, a butcher from Crown Heights, Brooklyn, bought a defunct meatpacking plant on the outskirts of Postville and turned it into a kosher meat processing plant. By 1996 Rubashkin, a Hasidic Jew, had built Agriprocessors, Inc. into the world's largest kosher slaughterhouse. Agriprocessors quickly became an important economic force in a town struggling to survive the farm crisis of the mid-1980s.

Rubashkin hired 30 rabbis to work the killing floor of the slaughterhouse, and their families and friends followed. With this influx of Hasidic Jews and an international workforce, the town came to be seen as an experiment in multicultural living. In a region almost entirely populated by Christians descended from German and Norwegian immigrants, Postville had suddenly become a mosaic of Anglo Christians, Jews, Latinos and eastern Europeans.

People outside of Postville began to take note of the town's unusual demographics. *Postville: A Clash of Cultures in Heartland America* by University of Iowa journalism professor Stephen G. Bloom, came out in 2000. Drahn worked closely with Bloom, reading gal-

ley proofs and helping him to understand the community. "I was his sounding board," Drahn said.

A year later, Iowa Public Television produced a documentary film, "Postville: When Cultures Collide." Drahn appears in this documentary, as well. And a PBS documentary on religion and ethics featuring Postville will air in early October.

Over the decades, the early cultural collision has turned into something resembling collaboration, at least between the Anglos and the Latinos, say Drahn and Bradley. But the Postville Jews keep to themselves. They don't send their children to public schools, and their religion forbids them from accepting food that may have touched anything non-kosher.

Drahn and Bradley admit that they'd like a shot at some in-depth interviews with Rubashkin and other managers at the plant. They aren't holding their breath, though.

"Talking to me, it's not part of their lifestyle," Drahn said. "Their priority is to produce kosher meat, not to talk with me."

Bradley knows her readership area will always be known as a test case for rural Midwestern multiculturalism. She intends to follow that angle in her stories.

"I think educating our readers about different cultures is an important goal for us," she said. "We're no longer a homogeneous society, even in a small town. And ignorance is not bliss."

She adds that readers gobble up all the Agriprocessors stories she can generate, both in the paper version and online. Through Google, Web readers can find her stories through Z-Wire. "In any given week our stories about Agriprocessors will get the most hits," she said.

If Drahn could devote all of her time to this story, she'd investigate U.S. immigration laws. She says the situation has raised some hard questions, such as why it is so difficult for workers to get permanent residency, why it is so expensive for them to become legal citizens, and why they are being imprisoned before being deported.

"When I tell this story to my family in Cedar Rapids or Texas, they say, 'Too bad, they broke the law.' But it's personal for me. It's personal when you know the people."

*Patricia Berg is an associate professor of journalism at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She can be contacted at patricia.berg@uwrf.edu.*

# Bob Trapp of Española: 'More fighting than writing'

By **R. Braiden Trapp**

*Editor's note: ISWNE asked the author to write an article about his father, Robert Trapp, a leader in community journalism for more than a half-century, a past president of ISWNE, and a winner of the Eugene Cervi Award for public service through community journalism.*

Despite having published a handwritten newspaper as a sixth grader, Robert Trapp wasn't sure whether he wanted to go into journalism or forestry when it was time to decide on a college major.

After two years of military duty during World War II, Trapp had the GI Bill, with which he could pay for college. He chose journalism. After his junior year at the University of Colorado in Boulder, he broke into the newspaper business landing a summer job at the *Alamosa (Colo.) Courier* selling subscriptions. After two weeks he'd sold two.

"I knew then, sales was not my calling," Trapp said in a May 2006 interview.

He was offered a job writing sports which at the end of summer morphed into a reporter position, which meant the end of school. "My GI Bill had run out and I wanted to be a reporter, so that was the end of school."

His next stop was as a reporter in New Bern, N.C., where he got his first taste of race relations. There were two high schools in the town — one white, one black. The paper didn't cover the black school, which was treated as though it didn't exist.

"I told the editor, they've got this quarterback who can throw the ball a country mile. That was sports news," Trapp said. "They wouldn't let me write about it or print what I wrote so when I got a letter from the editor of the *Rock Springs (Wyo.) Rocket* offering me a position, I packed up and left."

## More corporate lessons

The letter had come through the prompting of a friend, Bill Birkett, whom he had worked with in Alamosa and knew the

*Rocket* managing editor. Birkett told the managing editor he'd do well to hire him, and the 6,000-circulation *Rocket* was a step up in his career as he became news editor with a staff of two reporters.

While he was in Rock Springs, Ruth Souter and her friend Annette Edwards drove from Washington, D.C. to see the West and find jobs. They ran out of money in Denver and started looking for work.

Souter, a journalism graduate with news experience in Washington, D.C., was hired as a reporter at the *Rocket*. Proximity guided fate and Souter and Trapp found they shared news philosophies and world views.

Rock Springs was a company town at the time, ruled by the Union Pacific Railroad and its coal industry and Trapp said stories critical of the company were not encouraged.

"We did get a story past the managing editor about a big shot at Union Pacific who was in a late-night car accident with a woman who was not his wife," Trapp said. "If we could keep it quiet we would work on a story and get it in late night; then we could get it past the managing editor."

If questioned later, Trapp would defend his decision to run the story because it was legitimate news and that was hard for the publisher or managing editor to argue against.

When the Union Pacific converted its engines from coal to diesel, it closed its mines in the Rock Springs area and miners were laid off two weeks before Christmas. The lay-off notice was posted in the window of the company store. A front-page picture of the notice was not appreciated by *Rocket* management.

When Trapp was offered a position on the *Great Falls (Mont.) Tribune*, he accepted and moved on. He was a "slot man," working at a horseshoe-shaped desk with various editors seated side-by-side.

"There was a city editor, state editor, sports and local. I was the sports, editing copy, mostly wire, and composed about eight to 10 pages a shift."

The 40,000-circulation *Great Falls*

*Tribune* was the largest paper in the state at the time, putting out three editions a day. Trapp worked the night shift, finishing past midnight most nights.

"It wasn't a good local paper," he said. "They ran a lot of wire and had few reporters. But it was the only large daily that wasn't chain-owned. The Warden family owned it."

Trapp said he made two trips back to Rock Springs to see Ruth, who had succeeded him as editor at the *Rocket*.

"You know how far it is from Great Falls to Rock Springs?" he said. "I made that drive once from Great Falls. When I made it a second time, we decided to get married."

The two married in 1954 and Ruth moved to Great Falls where she landed her own cooking show on television.

## Española's needs

While the two were in Great Falls, Birkett and his wife, Hollie, moved to Trapp's old paper in Alamosa. Trapp and Birkett were still in touch and had the notion of starting their own paper. Birkett approached his publisher in Alamosa who suggested they look at Española, N.M., a town that needed a newspaper.

Birkett made the relatively short trip, liked what he saw, and reported back to the Trapps in Montana.

The Trapps made the trip to Colorado in May 1956 and then they and the Birketts trekked south to Española, met with a room full of local businessmen and found their response positive. Most of those present were willing to lend the four some startup capital.

At the time of closing the deal that same month, eight businessmen each loaned them \$500, three doctors added \$250 each and several smaller loans brought the total to more than \$5,000. The Trapps and Birketts had each accumulated \$3,800 through saving or by borrowing from family and friends.

Española State Bank agreed to a \$20,000 note for all the equipment. The caveat was that should the *Sun* go under,

A.E. Heihnsen, who sold the *Sun* the equipment, would buy it all back for the amount remaining on the note.

### What's in a name?

On one of the early negotiation trips from Española the name was established. The Rio Grande had to figure prominently as the river separated what was then Española and Riverside, two distinct areas. New Mexico is the sunshine state so the sun had to be in it. On their first trip to Española the partners had been captivated by Black Mesa, rising out of the river valley south of Española.

They put it all together and came up with *Rio Grande Sun*. The publication name was wrapped around the iconic mountain and an artist friend designed the logo. Over 50 years many editors have suggested changing it but it has withstood the parade. Redesign experts cringe when they view the old style. Enter a front page in any national newspaper contest and the first remark will be about the name-plate.

### Setting up shop

The equipment started to trickle in in August 1956. The 1904 Miehle hand-fed flat bed press came from Chicago in pieces, the small job printing press from Salt Lake City and a Linotype from Denver. The old bank building on Oñate Street was vacant and after the back wall was removed, the equipment took up residence where bankers' offices once stood.

Everyone shared one bathroom. "I don't know how the bank did it with one bathroom," Trapp said. "And there was no hot water. I eventually bought a little five-gallon water heater and had it installed."

The first issue came off the Miehle Oct. 5, 1956, 24 hours late. It was 16 pages with 6,000 circulation, 5,000 of which went to Los Alamos, still a closed city.

Los Alamos circulation had been promised to local advertisers who were anxious to coax the scientific community down the hill to spend money in Española. In Los Alamos at the time, there was little retail, no car dealers, one grocery store, one bank and no newspaper. Most of the Los Alamos circulation was by third-class postage.

### Valley News bought

The existing newspaper in Española, the *Valley News*, owned by Robert McKinney's *Santa Fe New Mexican*, was weak in news and the business community jumped ship with the *Sun*'s first issue. However, with his influence through the *New Mexican*, McKinney maintained the national and legal advertising and did a good job of making trouble

for the *Sun*.

The *Sun* had hired two printers and McKinney put the International Typographical Union onto them and the *Sun* reluctantly became the only union weekly in the state.

With the *Valley News*' failing revenue, McKinney offered to buy the *Sun* in early 1958. The partners declined and made a counter offer to buy the *Valley News*. Following a meeting in Pojoaque, midway between the two papers, a deal was struck.

The *Sun* bought the Española *Valley News* June 23, 1958. Through the agreement, Trapp became the sole provider of news, picked up the national and legal advertising in return for a percent of the national advertising revenues.

"That was a good deal for us because we didn't have to pay out any money," Trapp said. "He just got a small percent of the national ads for a few years. It didn't amount to much."

McKinney, a savvy business and newspaperman, sorely underestimated the *Sun* and realized his mistake almost immediately, but part of the sales agreement held McKinney to a non-compete agreement for 10 years.

### Not for sale

After some personal problems, Bill Birkett left the *Sun* July 30, 1959, and with him went one-fourth of the interest in the newspaper. The *Sun* eventually bought Birkett's share, leaving three partners, the Trapps and Hollie Birkett.

However, McKinney now felt the *Sun* was vulnerable and thought Trapp might reconsider selling and despite the non-compete contract, McKinney started another newspaper in Española, a branch of the *New Mexican*.

"I was a little concerned when I heard the news," Trapp said. "Then I saw the first issue and knew it wouldn't last long." It didn't.

McKinney would make several runs at the *Rio Grande Sun*.

He sent his business manager, Emory Bahr, to make an offer at a meeting at the Granada Restaurant, across from the *Sun*. Trapp declined the "real money" offer.

A few years later McKinney persuaded a radio station manager to come to Española and make an offer for the paper. The man later admitted McKinney had offered him the editorship of the *New Mexican* if he got the remaining partners to sell.

The next run at the *Sun* was by New Mexico author Max Evans. However, Trapp said it didn't seem like a very serious pitch, as Evans' heart wasn't really in it.

The next puppet was a Los Alamos banker who said he had a man from

Oklahoma interested in buying. He would not divulge the buyer's identity. Trapp wondered aloud why someone from Oklahoma would want a property they'd never seen. Then he turned down the offer.

Marion Khreibel, of Kansas, a major newspaper broker at the time, made the next offer on the *Sun*. Again the buyer could not be identified and Khreibel said Trapp would have to pay a 25 percent commission. Trapp said it would be easier and more lucrative to drive down the road and sell it to McKinney and get 100 percent of the deal.

McKinney finally invited Trapp to "The Farm" in Nambé. There, after a lunch of lamb chops, he made another offer, which was eventually turned down.

The next offer came with an invitation to the *New Mexican* office in Santa Fe. The dollar amounts kept getting bigger, but Trapp had no idea what he'd do if he sold the *Sun*. McKinney suggested he go buy another paper.

"But I have one now," Trapp countered.

Needless to say, 50 years have gone by and the Trapps own 100 percent of the *Sun*, having bought out Hollie (Birkett) Sowerwine's one-quarter interest, although she and the Trapps remained very close friends until her death in 1990.

### Focus on the Valley

In the meantime, the weekly *Los Alamos Monitor* was started and the *Sun* shifted its news coverage largely to Española and Rio Arriba County, although through a stringer, Gerry Machovec, it did some aggressive reporting of Los Alamos events.

Trapp realized from his experience at other newspapers that government and politics weren't properly covered. Now he had his own vehicle and he was going to do it right.

Trapp was no stranger to politics. His father had been county clerk and justice of the peace in Rio Grande County in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado, an uncle was governor of Oklahoma and another was a state senator representing the San Luis Valley.

Rio Arriba politics have always been fascinating and an important part of the *Sun*'s news coverage. The mayor in Española when the Trapps arrived was Joe E. Roybal, and Emilio Naranjo had just been chosen chairman of the Democratic party. The *Sun*'s coverage of Naranjo's rise to power and subsequent control of county government for four decades is an important part of the *Sun*'s 50-year history.

There were two Republicans elected in the November 1956 general election in Rio

Arriba County which hasn't happened since. The Democrats were firmly in control and Naranjo was leading them.

The underdog was Matias Chacon, an Española lawyer, who navigated the political waters sufficiently to get himself elected to the state senate despite Naranjo's opposition. Trapp got his political basic training in these early races and in the late 1960s had a firm grasp of the political climate. It drove the news and drove his editorial writing.

Politics aren't unique to Rio Arriba, Trapp said, "they are just more open here, but there won't be another Emilio Naranjo."

People are more educated, more enlightened and more informed now. He hopes he's played some part in the process. The leader of the group slowly replacing Naranjo's old guard is Alfredo Montoya, an experienced politician who can't seem to get everyone on the same page. "He hasn't proven himself yet," Trapp said.

### Courthouse raid

One of the biggest stories the *Sun* covered was the courthouse raid in Tierra Amarilla June 5, 1967. The raiders were attempting to regain land that they claimed had been awarded their ancestors by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. It was a Monday and Trapp and editor Milt Lowe heard a state police car speed by the office. (There was only one bridge across the Rio Grande then.) "We wondered aloud what was going on," Trapp said. "Then another went by."

He called state police central dispatch and was told "All hell's broke loose in T.A., Bob. The judge is on the roof and they're shooting people."

He and Lowe headed north and around Cebolla, just south of Tierra Amarilla, they passed deputy Dan Rivera in his car, headed south at a normal rate of speed.

"I said to Milt, 'Where is Dan going?' Later we found out Baltazar Martinez had taken Rivera and *Albuquerque Journal* writer Larry Calloway hostage, and commandeered Dan's car to flee the scene" Trapp said. The two were released unharmed later.

When Trapp and Lowe arrived in T.A. it was less chaotic than they expected. A state policeman had been shot and an ambulance arrived to take him to Española. Reies Lopez Tijerina, instigator of the raid, and his followers had scattered into the hills.

The judge in question, James Scarborough, had locked himself and his clerk in the judge's chambers. They escaped unharmed when the raiders fled. Trapp and Lowe tracked the judge down at a motel near Chama later that afternoon and interviewed

him there.

The news duo got some of the only photos of the incident including a group of people rounded up by the National Guard in the foothills near Canjilon.

### Chimayó massacre

Among other big stories that have taken place in the *Sun*'s readership area was the Chimayó massacre, the biggest killing spree in the county's history.

News editor Mike Kaemper was in his parents' home on a Sunday night, July 27, 1991, in Albuquerque watching television when a report broke in that someone had been shot in Chimayó. Kaemper jumped into his car and raced back to Española.

When it was all over Ricky Abeyta had shot and killed seven people including a state police officer, a Rio Arriba County deputy and an 18-month-old baby. A manhunt ensued. Kaemper camped out, then came to the office, organized his news team and wrote nonstop on Tuesday late into the night. The front page was all pictures of the victims and three pages of stories relating the chain of events, the hunt, capture and arraignment of Abeyta. Abeyta was tried and convicted, then sent to prison where he died a short time later.

The *Sun* sold 14,000 copies that week, an all-time record.

### New Mexico Press Association

When Trapp came to New Mexico he became active in the New Mexico Press Association.

Trapp appreciated the value in the association and the need to stick together and grow together. He served several terms on the board, culminating in his presidency in 1979, and he served another three-year term in the early 1990s. The board meets quarterly and discusses the association's financial status, its projects, educational ventures, awards and the annual fall convention.

"We had a separate convention in the spring meeting for the weeklies because we had different problems from the bigger papers," Trapp said.

The weekly newspapers didn't buy newsprint by the truck or train carload. They were buying pickup loads once a month. Ink didn't come in barrels, it came in five-gallon cans. Most national advertising got sucked up by the bigger dailies.

Commiseration among smaller papers usually took place each April and was sponsored by a member paper in its hometown. This took families to all four corners of the state.

"Today chain ownership has pretty much

eliminated that," Trapp said, and in 2000 the spring meeting was eliminated for lack of participation.

The *Sun* has won numerous press association awards over the years, many for newswriting, photography, columns and editorial writing. The first time it entered in 1957 it won second in community service, competing among dailies and weeklies. The *New Mexican* won third.

Trapp was on the board when it started a clipping bureau, which is alive today in the form of eClipping. Trapp said publishers Ned Cantwell and Ken Green were the major push behind the idea.

### Cervi Award

Dick McCord started *The Santa Fe Reporter* in 1972. A hardnosed newspaperman, McCord meant to bring an independent voice to the capitol city and cover local news. He was dissatisfied with the *Santa Fe New Mexican's* news coverage and the capitol city's lack of a second voice.

McCord found friends in the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors. As a member of the Society, McCord nominated Trapp for the Eugene Cervi Award. Cervi was an old-school journalist who published the *Rocky Mountain Journal* in Denver. Cervi lived by the credo "good journalism begets good government."

The award recognizes a lifetime achievement in the field of community journalism.

In his nomination of Trapp, McCord cited many of Trapp's journalistic achievements over the years and in 1992 Trapp was honored in Colorado Springs at the annual conference. In his acceptance speech he spoke of some of his accomplishments and his passion for the craft of writing and the accurate reporting of legitimate news.

He also told how when he was waiting to start college he had landed a job candling eggs with Safeway Stores in Monte Vista, Colo. When Trapp told his father he planned to enter the newspaper field his father tried to guide him toward the grocery store, soon to be a corporate giant. It was a union gig, sure to pay good wages, solid benefits and carry some job security. What more could you want?

Despite living in New Mexico for almost 40 years, at the time, Trapp's Spanish was minimal, at best. His accent was nonexistent. He ended his Cervi acceptance speech by admitting there may be easier ways of making a living than newspapering, but "*Es mas superior para escribir de ponle la luz a los juevos.*" It's a very rough translation of, "It's better to write than candle eggs," but he got his meaning across expertly and with patent

Trapp humor.

He went on to serve on the ISWNE board and served as president in 1995.

### Court suits

Aside from large stories covered well, The *Sun* joined in a lawsuit against the Los Alamos National Laboratory seeking the release of a report regarding pay inequities at the lab. Trapp had gotten a copy of a 168-page report prepared for the lab in 1980 by San Francisco law firm Morrison and Foerster and the lab was trying to prevent its publication.

The *Sun* obtained and published portions of the report which had been part of a grand jury investigation into women and minorities being paid less than their white male counterparts. The *Sun* was immediately hit with a gag order requested by the lab and issued by U.S. District Judge Santiago Campos. Trapp and nine other people were barred from making public the information for about four months.

Campos lifted the gag order Aug. 15, 1985, and the *Sun* then went after the salaries, which the lab refused to release.

The request prompted a major controversy. Letters to the editor releasing the salaries would allow criminals to know which houses to target in Los Alamos when planning break-in sprees.

The lab, with pressure from its operator, the University of California regents, finally gave in and provided print-outs of the salaries of more than 7,000 employees. The salaries reportedly are now available at the public library in Los Alamos.

### Libel anyone?

The *Sun* was sued several times for libel, with only one case ever going to trial. Most were frivolous in nature. The first was in 1964, when a construction firm in Albuquerque sued over a bankruptcy listing in the *Sun*. There was no inaccurate information, defamation or malice in the publication. It was among other bankruptcy listings. The suit was dismissed at summary judgment.

Another was filed by a defunct Los Alamos construction company accused by a Los Alamos resident of shoddy work. Again, it was dismissed at summary judgment.

The case that went to trial involved a local politician who claimed he was libeled when he was mistakenly identified as a man charged with beating his wife. Reporter Susan Scott-Mayer had obtained the information from a city policeman, but there was some confusion over which Arsenio Martinez (the politician named) actually was arrested. Lacking malice and having a tough

time with the defamation part of the charges, a jury found in favor of the *Sun*.

The most important libel case involved the chief of the New Mexico State Police who sued for \$160 million after the *Sun* published a series of stories involving drug dealing in the Valley, unsolved murders connected to the drug trafficking and alleged state police cover ups. The chief finally dropped his suit and retired.

At least three other libel suits against the *Sun* came to naught.

### McKinney tries again

Printing all the news, regardless of politicians' likes and dislikes, usually has dire consequences for small-town newspapers. The ongoing subtle battle between Trapp and Robert McKinney surfaced again in the 1970s when Rio Arriba County became irritated enough with the *Sun* that county officials decided to publish Rio Arriba legal notices in the Santa Fe newspaper. The *New Mexican* was glad to have the revenue and understandably wasn't eager to explain to county officials it didn't really meet the legal requirements.

Trapp took the county to court to force it to run legal notices in the *Rio Grande Sun*, arguing that the *New Mexican* lacked general circulation in Rio Arriba County as required by law. It was the *New Mexican's* circulation manager who locked it up for the *Sun*.

"Robert Rothstein, (the *Sun's* attorney) got him on the stand and asked him how many papers the *New Mexican* sold in Abiquiú," Trapp said. "The guy said something like four and that was about it."

The judge granted a writ of mandamus stating the *Sun* was a paper of general circulation in Rio Arriba and the *New Mexican* was not.

### More fighting than writing

Most people think a reporter's life is going to crime scenes or meetings, then regurgitating the facts into a typewriter or computer. In small towns all over America, reporters who are doing the job right spend a lot of their time fighting for access. They have to work at getting to speak to the right person, fight to inspect a public document or argue their way into a meeting.

*Sun* reporters spend much of their time doing that. That's because the newsroom has taken on Trapp's philosophy of news reporting and writing. That philosophy includes getting access to all government activities and telling readers exactly what is going on in their community. Not enough newspapers do this today.

Fighting for public records is one thing.

Fighting for access to records held by an electric cooperative is another. It's a special kind of entity. It's owned by the members so it's public in that sense, but it's not taxpayer money so in that regard it's not subject to the Inspection of Public Records Act.

Trapp successfully sued the Jemez Mountains Electric Cooperative in October 1987, forcing the Co-op to disclose to Co-op members all accounting aspects. That included salaries, vouchers and contracts. The Cooperative had enjoyed several decades of operating in the dark staying under everyone's radar.

When the victory was entered into the First Judicial District court records, it ensured Jemez Co-op members could ask about the fiscal well-being of their co-op.

Ten years later the *Sun* fought the same fight with Northern Rio Arriba Electric Cooperative. Then reporter Maureen Schein sued the co-op asking for similar information. Schein and the *Sun* lost in district court.

The *Sun* appealed to the state supreme court and won there, meaning that the stockholders in any corporation or co-op in New Mexico could examine the records to make sure the corporation is being properly operated. *Sun* lawyer Bill Dixon described it as a "landmark" victory.

After 50 years of fighting government at all levels, printing information that most newspapers wouldn't touch, never backing down to advertisers and leading the state press association and other journalism organizations, Trapp and the *Rio Grande Sun* are respected nationally.

Trapp and the *Sun* have been written about in many trade publications, daily newspapers and *Smithsonian* magazine. When *Sun* reporter Glenn May was threatened with jail for refusing to disclose a news source, the *Sun* received offers of help and support from news organizations throughout the country.

Trapp doesn't care about the recognition, accolades or lauding by trade publications. His entire being is driven by better writing and reporting; in general, better newspapering. That's what he and Ruth set out to do and that's what they desire most in life 50 years later.

Facing the continual corruption, poor state of the schools and broken governments at all levels, after a few months new reporters often wonder aloud if the *Sun* really makes a difference. Ruth Trapp always has the answer at the ready.

"Think of what the Valley would be like if the *Sun* weren't here," she says.

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# Comparing 1895 *Congleton Chronicle* stories to *Wisconsin Death Trip* an interesting exercise

By **Jeremy Condliffe**

Typography and photography both count as art in their own right, but the stories newspapers print would not normally be considered as “art.” But there is an exception: *Wisconsin Death Trip*, a book by Michael Lesy, later turned into a film by writer/director James Marsh. Lesy collected bizarre stories from the local newspaper for Black River Falls in Wisconsin for the years 1890 to 1900. He found the town was subject to a catalogue of murders, suicides, insanity, pyromania, diphtheria and witchcraft, as well as window smashing.

The events were recorded by Frank Cooper, an Englishman who edited the town newspaper. Equally as important was Charles Van Schaick, a photographer who took the pictures. Some are fantastic portraits of life at that time, but others are more disturbing; the fashion was to have formal portraits of dead children made, some people even coloring them in and having them blown up to life size. They’re slightly unsettling.

Lesy wrote about the strange tales in his 1973 book, *Wisconsin Death Trip*. Using the newspaper reports, photographs and asylum records, he looked at the health of America of the age. Lesy wrote it as part of his Ph.D. and set it against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and Watergate. His theory was that the bizarre deaths and weird goings on reflected America in time of change and tribulation, much as Vietnam forced the country to look at itself and not necessarily be happy with what it saw.

As a journalist the film and book are fascinating in what they report.

For example, anyone looking at old newspapers will rapidly realize that what’s acceptable now and what was acceptable 100 years ago are very different. Old chronicles show that death is reported in gory detail — not reveling, just factual — in a way that would be unacceptable today. While we complain about tabloid intrusion, we also treat death as something that happens to other people and something we don’t talk about.

Stories about train accident victims describing how the head and arms were found 20 yards away from the torso or how a man ran screaming while blood pumped out

of the holes where his arms used to be — both reports that appeared 100 years ago without complaint — would just not be acceptable. Even describing them here, the sound of irate pens being put to paper is clearly audible. Reports of death, disaster and unfortunate events are sadly also more illuminating about life in the town than happy reports.

Saying there was a Mozart concert at St Peter’s Church or that Congleton Hornets lost 3-0 reveals little about the life of the times, but the fact that someone died in a fall from a mill when there was clearly no regard for health safety and the coroner basically says “just try and be a bit more careful, eh?” reveals something about the times, as does the high infant mortality rate.

So it seemed an interesting exercise to look at the *Congleton Chronicle* from the same period and see what it reported. Was Lesy’s book really a bizarre catalogue of events from a certain period in American history or was it just a reflection of life in the 19th century, a story that would be repeated across the world? Was the only difference between Black River Falls and the rest of the world that someone was actively looked for the weird stuff?

We looked at three months from 1895, one of the years covered by *Wisconsin Death Trip*. Entries from the book from the same year have more of a frontier feel, such as: “Alexander Gardapie, aged 90 years, died at Prairie du Chien. He walked into a saloon, drank a glass of gin, asked the time of day, sat down, and died.”

However, Congleton had pretty much the same range of premature deaths, accidents and drunkenness as Wisconsin. The big difference was suicide: whereas the *Chronicle* only recorded one, *Death Trip*’s pages are littered with bizarre self-inflicted deaths, either accidental or deliberate, such as: “Ludwig Senglaub, a German resident of Manitowoc, aged 74, committed suicide Friday morning at the home of William Radins. The old man had become enamoured of Mrs Radins and had been a frequent visitor at the house. She told him not to come any more. He went to the house, however, walked into the front room, and deliberately shot himself while looking into a mirror.”

Congleton was a rum old town at times, and the bad side of life gives far more a flavour of the town than many other stories.

## September 1895

Night rowdyism on the Astbury Road near Congleton has now become so frequent and intolerable that strict measures need to be taken to deal with it. On Sunday night a gang of youths, some of them mad with drink commenced to fight and the whole neighbourhood was disturbed by these blackguards.

\* \* \* \* \*

William Copeland, collier, of Gillow Heath was charged with being drunk and disorderly and smashing a window. The prosecution said he was incapable at the time and fell into the window. John Gallimore was fined 5s for being drunk and disorderly in Thomas Street. The defendant has been eight times previously before the bench. Sarah Brayford, fustian cutter, Spring Street, was charged with being drunk and disorderly. Neighbour Edward Potts said he was having his tea when he heard the defendant using language “not fit for a dog to hear.”

\* \* \* \* \*

James Beech, labourer of Astbury, was fined 10s for being drunk and disorderly in Heywood Street.

\* \* \* \* \*

Robert Smith was summoned for being drunk in charge of a horse and cart at Scholar Green. The defendant was found unconscious. Jock Roylance, a cattle driver of Congleton, was summoned for cruelty to a cow at Sandbach. Thomas Cope, cattle dealer, said he bought the cow in Crewe and put the defendant in charge of driving it to Congleton, but said it must be milked. The next morning he found it at Brick House Farm, Sandbach, in great pain through being overstocked. The defendant said he got some drink in Sandbach and turned the cow in the farmyard, and expected some of the servants would milk it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Albert Chadwick of Lawton was charged over Edith Jeffries, a girl of 11 years. She lived at Mow Cop and used to fetch milk from him. On the day of the offence the accused came up to her out of a cornfield and put his arm round her shoulder and committed the offence. She tried to scream and he put his hand over mouth. Mr A Steele Sheldon for the defence said the least said was the best.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fred J Peach, fustian cutter of Willow Street, was summoned for assaulting his wife. She said he was a good husband until he got a drop of drink. On the Friday he came home and asked for money. When she refused he struck her with his hand. She went over the wall yard to escape and he threw a piece of broom tail at her and also a billhook, and the latter struck her. She said he had beaten her before and she had forgiven him, and forgave him this time. The defendant had promised to sign the pledge. The chairman said that five times he had been summoned for being drunk and disorderly, but as he signed the pledge he would not send him to prison.

\* \* \* \* \*

A lurry (sic) load of straw drawn by two horses belonging to Thomas Simms of Lower Heath was proceeding down Rood Hill when the shaft horse got his hind legs over the shafts and caused the lurry to swing over and come into contact with the lamppost on the corner of Derby Street, and broke it. Some children were playing but escaped injury.

\* \* \* \* \*

Deaths: Harry Bradley, Congleton, aged three months; Edward Leese, Gillow Heath, aged 15 months; Lily Rowley, Congleton, aged 12 months; Samuel Bantick, Stonehouse Green, 16 months; William Bradbury, Buglawton, five months; Ethel Burges, Congleton, aged six; Emily Jones, of Congleton, aged two; Ada Sims of Lower Heath, aged eight months; Mary Dale, Congleton, aged 16 months; Maud Moores, Congleton, aged 10 months; Georgina Swindells, of Stonehouse Green, aged 14 months; William Vawdrey of West Heath, aged three years; Albert Chell, Congleton, aged 14 months; Harry Hodgkinson of Congleton, aged eight months.

**October 1895**

An inquest recorded that a baby died of suffocation but could not prove by what. Kate Hall, of John Street, told the inquest that her husband had left her five years before and since then she had had two children and both were dead. She said she was confined on 11th September and it was as fine a child as she could wish to see. She fed it on milk and water and with the breast. After four days it developed breathing problems. On the day of its death, she said she was not drunk but had been to the Rising Sun Inn, but she was not in for five minutes. The baby was in the house on the sofa.

The coroner said he could not give her better advice than be more careful in the future. He had very good reason to believe she was not sober on the evening in question. The poor little innocent had been done to death by her neglect, he said, and if those who had told of her condition had come forward, there would have been good grounds of committing her with manslaughter.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas Warburton, an elderly man residing at Elworth, was gathering plums from a tree in his brother's garden when he slipped and fell backwards. The fall dislocated his neck and he died immediately.

\* \* \* \* \*

James Whitehurst was summoned for assaulting Samuel Dale. The defendant struck him a blow in the face without any provocation. The defendant denied that he struck the prosecutor and said he was the one assaulted. The prosecutor had annoyed him very much by asking how he got his living. He was fined 5s, or seven days imprisonment in default.

\* \* \* \* \*

James Lee and Louis Gilford, both Wheelock boatmen, were charged with cruelty to a horse by working it in an unfit state. PC Ingles said he saw Gilford lashing the horse, which had a raw wound on the top of the withers and a wound on the breast from which blood and matter was oozing.

\* \* \* \* \*

James Cottrell, farmer, Biddulph, was summoned for driving furiously at Mossley. Samuel Cawly was summoned for driving a horse and lurry furiously at Smallwood.

William Barber, farmer, Astbury was summoned for furiously driving a horse and trap in Canal Street. He ran into a milkman's dandy parked outside the Globe Inn, overturning the dandy and spilling six quarts of milk.

\* \* \* \* \*

Job Blease died from injuries he received while working at Havannah Corn Mill, an inquest was told. Blease lost his footing while hoisting bags. Witness Ernest Orme said he was on the top floor and Blease on the middle. He started the bag without receiving any warning from Blease and while it was being raised he looked down and saw Blease lying on the floor. The witness and a servant carried Blease into the house and gave him some brandy.

Orme, the son of the mill owner, said there was no communication between the one was hoisting the bags and the one operating the hoist. Orme gauged the time it would take Blease to put a chain round the neck of the sack by the time it took him to wheel the previous bag to the other end of the room. There was nothing for Blease to hold onto when pushing the bags than the hinge of the door and he had lost his footing. He had fallen ten feet.

The inquest ruled he had died of shock and recommended precautions be taken to prevent a similar accident in the future.

\* \* \* \* \*

Madam Elene Webster, a professional dancing teacher of Manchester, poisoned two of her children by administering a narcotic and then took some herself. Madam Webster, 38, died but one of the children was recovered. The little boy, Kennie, said his mother gave him something to drink for a cold. When he said he had no cold, she said it would make him sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hannah Wardle, of Rudyard, was found dead at her house at The Lodge, Cliffe Park Hall. Mrs Wardle, 36, was the wife of Enoch Wardle, a labourer, who resided at Black Bull. She was found dead at the bottom of the stairs after going by train from Rudyard to Leek for the market. An inquest ruled that she had returned from market and changed her clothes, lain down on the bed for a while and then got up and fallen down the stairs in the dark.

\* \* \* \* \*

Coun Luke Burgess displayed oafish behaviour at Congleton Council Chamber last week. His interruptions and coarse behaviour in any other town would have received the treatment they deserved: the police would have been called.

\* \* \* \* \*

Edwin Bradley and William Cartwright were charged with being drunk and disorderly and Richard Carr with committing a breach of the peace at West Heath. John Bailey, a labourer, of Brownlow said he was returning home with four other men, all sober, when they saw Bradley and Cartwright under the light at the junction of the Astbury and Sandbach roads.

The two asked the others if they wanted to fight and one, Peter Birtles, of Bent Farm, Astbury, in fun, said he wouldn't mind five minutes, whereupon Cartwright pulled his jacket off. Bailey got in between the two and was struck in the face by Cartwright, who knelt on top of him and struck him again. Bradley and Carr then had a set to.

The chief constable said the rows at West Heath were becoming excessive and he believed they had got the ringleader in Cartwright. The chairman of the magistrates said there was a strong feeling that Cartwright should go to prison but in the hope of it being a warning he was fined £1.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hannah Evans, aged nine, of Butt Lane was walking downstairs with a paraffin lamp in her hand. The lamp was not lit but she slipped and fell down the stairs, alighting on the glass tube upon the top of the lamp. The broken glass entered the deceased's throat, severing the main artery, and she expired within five minutes.

\* \* \* \* \*

A son of Frederick Stonier, of Rode Mill, aged four, was playing around the machinery attached to the chopping mill when his right hand became entangled with the machinery, his fingers being badly crushed. A portion of the middle finger was later removed. Fortunately the machine was being driven by manual instead of stem power or the result could have proved most disastrous.

\* \* \* \* \*

George Jackson, labourer, was charged

with being drunk and disorderly at the Model Lodging House, Mill Street. A PC attended after hearing screams and found the defendant drunk and assaulting his wife. He was in a violent passion and threw one his boots at her head. He said he was glad he was being locked up because he might have done something violent in his passion. Annie Jackson was also charged with being drunk. Both were sent to gaol for seven days.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bradley Green window smasher: Margaret Wrench was charged with being drunk and disorderly and breaking three squares of glass at the Castle Inn. She had a dispute with a young man and struck him. She was put out of the pub and then smashed three windows.

\* \* \* \* \*

John Smith, labourer, was charged with shocking indecency towards Minnie Rowley, aged 11 years. The prisoner had asked her to fetch a pint of beer and when she returned locked the door before she could get out again. He asked to sit on a chair and she did so, and he sat on another and then committed the offence. He offered her sixpence, and afterwards a shilling not to tell anyone. She screamed when he pulled her on his knee. The incident occurred at the girl's grandfather's house.

\* \* \* \* \*

Deaths: Annie Hall of Bradley Green, aged nine months; Caroline Harvey of Congleton, aged five months; Ernest Hall, Bradley Green, aged 11 months; Charles Lancaster, of Congleton, aged two years; Sarah Jane Wood, of Congleton, aged two years; Fred Hancock, Gillow Heath, four months; Ann Pate, Mow Cop, 23 months; William Turnock, Congleton, 18 months; Hannah Whitehurst, Bradley Green, five month; James Wood, Congleton, nine months.

### November 1895

William Copeland was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Little Street on Saturday night. There was also a summons against him for being drunk at Lawton Street end. PC Skellern said Copeland was very drunk and went into the Star Inn. The landlord refused to serve him and ordered him out, when he began to curse. He was put out of the house and became very disorderly in the street and the PC was obliged to lock him

up. The defendant was fined 5s.

\* \* \* \* \*

Joseph Pointon, landlord of the Three Horse Shoes Inn, Rood Hill, was summoned for keeping his house open after hours. PC Jones stated that at 11.15pm he saw the landlord and some 15 or 16 other people, men and women. There were glasses and jugs on the table. When witness got inside there was a rush for the door. Defendant was singing "The ship I love." As it was not the first offence, Pointon was fined £1 and the rest 15s each.

\* \* \* \* \*

On Friday evening, Mrs Davies, the wife of Mr J Davies of Ford's Yard, Mount Pleasant, Mow Cop, was approached by a man asking for water. He then placed a handkerchief, alleged to have been soaked in chloroform, on her face. After doing so he helped himself to money and left. Mrs Davies was unconscious for two hours. When spoken to, her husband said she was still in bed but added he did not see what the papers had to do with it and the reporter had to content himself with enquiries elsewhere. The stolen money belongs to a fund established to cover the expenses of renovating the chapel at the United Methodist Free Church.

\* \* \* \* \*

George Dimelow, Vale Walk, a fustian cutter, was fined for being drink and disorderly. Samarian Machin said he was working in Chapel Street when the defendant struck him. Dimelow was drunk and used bad language. Fined 10s. Thomas Bentley, fustian cutter, was fined for being drunk and disorderly on Rood Hill. William Copeland was charged with being drunk and disorderly in Little Street. He was very drunk and went into the Star Inn but the landlord refused to serve him and put him out, when he began to curse. James Dean and James Mullawny were summoned for being drunk on licensed premises, the Thatched Tavern, Sandbach. George McGarry, of Dane Street, was summoned for being drunk and disorderly. His wife said in court had been drinking with his brother and when he came home, he and another man "began to myther (sic) about politics, as drunken people did."

\* \* \* \* \*

William Goode, a boatman of Kidsgrove, was fined 5s for cruelly treating a mule. An

RSPCA inspector saw him throw stones at the beast "with all his force."

\* \* \* \* \*

In his election address, Mr Luke Burgess refers to the "spicily written" *Chronicle* and its condemnation of his behaviour. The editor would remind Mr Luke Burgess of the coarse shindy (sic) a few months back. He, the editor, was rough on Mr Burgess, but that is nothing to what yet is to follow.

\* \* \* \* \*

Joseph Towers, 65, living near the mouth of the Harecastle tunnel at Chatterley, lost his life. He was working with a number of men repairing the North Staffs Railway Company line at the south end of the tunnel. The Manchester and Stafford Express passed through and all the men with the exception of the deceased got out of the way and he sustained terrible injuries when knocked down by the engine.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas and Ellen Barber were charged with the manslaughter of their son Frank. A neighbour found Frank dead on the bed. The mother came up and behaved violently with the body. She was drunk. The child was found to weigh 4lb 4oz, the average weight of children of his age 8lb 6oz. The child died from want of sufficient feeding. The female had been in a lunatic asylum. The male prisoner was found not guilty, the female sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.

\* \* \* \* \*

Henry Brookes, John Sherratt, Thomas Ankers, Alfred Antrobus and William Turnock were indicted for the murder of John Regan in Church Lawton. The deceased and others had visited the Roebuck Inn and the Harecastle Hotel and when they left for home Regan was under the influence of drink. As the accused overtook him, for some reason he took off his belt and commenced a serious assault on Turnock, apparently with some violence, for he fell senseless.

The other prisoners ran up and asked who struck their mate and went to a place called the wooden bridges, where they cut off Regan and his friend John Morris. A stone came down and knocked Morris senseless and another struck the deceased seriously in the face. Witnesses then heard sounds of

scuffling and skirmishing, and also screams, and calls of "Let him have it" and "Dunna!". Regan's body was found in the canal the next day.

In court Morris said he was too far gone in drink to remember what happened. Collier Thomas Jones said he heard Turnock ask Regan for a pipe. Regan gave it to him and kissed Turnock but then pulled off his belt and struck Turnock. The men claimed Regan had slipped in the canal and they had not pushed him in. Brookes was sentenced to nine months hard labour, and Sherratt, Ankers and Antrobus to four months. Turnock was discharged.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thomas Jones was fined £2 for driving furiously at Astbury. Jones had crashed a wagonette while drunk. William Tunstall was fined 10s for driving furiously at Lawton. He was racing cyclists while driving a shandry and urging the horse furiously, and thrashing the animal.

\* \* \* \* \*

A boy of four burned to death after being left in charge of his sister, aged nine. He had gone to the fireplace and looked up the chimney and asked if "the bogies" were up there. His pinafore caught fire and he was quickly in blaze. A labourer heard the screams and put the flames out and took him to hospital, being stopped by a policeman who found the fire had not been totally extinguished. The coroner warned mothers to have fireguards saying the neglect of spending a shilling was the cause of a life being lost and a very bright home being made sad and dark.

\* \* \* \* \*

We regret to chronicle a melancholy series of deaths from diphtheria in the family of James Bracegirdle, one of the Capesthorne tenants. The parents had a family of five children, one of which died Monday last, another on the Wednesday following, the third the next day, the fourth on the succeeding day and the fifth on Tuesday this week. The eldest was 15, the youngest aged five.

\* \* \* \* \*

William McGarry was ordered to pay costs for being disorderly in Dane Street. John Edward Pedley, a clogger, of Wallworth's Bank, was fined 5s for being

drunk in Lawton Street.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two dogs were playing in Bridge Street as the corporation cart was proceeding along and one of them knocked the other, a young dog belonging to Mr McCorkell of Astbury Street, under the wheels. The injuries were so serious as to warrant destruction of the animal.

\* \* \* \* \*

The second smoking concert of the season was held on Monday at the Constitution- al Club.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was a rash of church breaking. Bosley Church was broken into but nothing taken. Matches were strewn about but the thief did not disturb anything. The church at Eaton was broken into, the depredator cutting himself on the glass. He took the offertory box but it is not known how much it contained. The police do not seem to have any clue. St John's Buglawton was broken into overnight, as evidenced by the number of matches lying about. The alms boxes were broken into and about 5s is supposed to be stolen.

Deaths: Dora Cartlidge of Astbury, aged 22 months; Samuel Eardley of Bradley Green, aged one month; Amy Parkinson of Whitemoor Village, aged four months; Minnie Sutton of Rock End, aged six months; Mary Connor, of Congleton, aged two years; Elsie Gibbons of Congleton, aged 10 months; Mabel Hancock, aged three months; Emma Potts of Congleton, aged 21 months; Florrie Thorrington, of Bradley Green, aged four months; Lucy Bailey of Congleton, aged 19 months; Alice Cartlidge of Astbury, aged 22 months; James Charlesworth, of Congleton, aged seven; James Jones of Biddulph, aged 20 months; Lucy Banks, Congleton, aged five months; Frank Washington, Congleton, aged four months; Noah Adderley, of Congleton, aged seven months; Edward Lawton, Congleton, aged nine months; John Sherratt, Astbury, aged nine months.

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# Hyperlocalism and *The Daily Record*

By Michael Smith

The nation's metropolitan and community newspapers are rethinking the concept of local news coverage with some of the group-owned properties urging editors to take the mantra that "all news is local" and make it "all news is hyperlocal," which sounds trendy but is the most basic of newspaper givens. Projections by billionaire investor Warren Buffett and top investment advisers are that newspaper revenues are in decline and hyperlocal and multiplatform publishing are on the rise. (Curley, 2007)

Hopes are high that disaffected readers who are unimpressed with newspapers today will reconsider their worth with a hyperlocal makeover and begin a newspaper-online combination habit. Gannett Co., the nation's largest newspaper group, is using "mobile journalists ('mojos') who work out of their cars with laptops and audio and video equipment, feeding stories and video continuously to Web sites and the newspaper." (Morton, 2007, 68) At metropolitan newspapers such as the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, more than 10 departments will be compressed into four: news and information, enterprise, digital and print with the goal of creating the richest of local content. (Morton, 2007, 68) The idea is to trim personnel to save money while giving readers more relevant news, defined as local news.

Lauren Rich Fine, managing director of Merrill Lynch, has an even more radical idea for hyperlocal. She said, "If I were covering high school sports, I would go and give a Blackberry to everybody in the audience...and I would have them just submit things throughout the game. I would have it all online; I would take the bad with the good, the hilarious with the way too serious. Then I would have somebody edit that and put it as an article in the paper that would make it so flavorful and full of local people's names that they would have to buy that paper because they would want to see their name in print." (Fine, "Should newspapers go 'hyperlocal'?" 2007)

To survive, newspapers must embrace the heartbeat of the community, or, in the words of Rob Curley, vice-president of *Washington Post Newsweek Interactive*, "I think we have to do big-J journalism and little-j journalism. My point in that quote is that I think that maybe we've forgotten how to do little-j journalism. Not all of us — I just came from a 19,000-circulation newspaper that knows how to do little-j journalism as well as the big, investigative, local-enterprise things. But I don't think we should underestimate the power of that, you know?" (Curley, "Should newspapers go 'hyperlocal'?" Frontline, 2007) Newspapers across the nation are in search of the people's newspaper.<sup>2</sup>

Among the leaders in high circulation venues with a mania for local news is *The Daily Record* in Dunn, N.C., once the nation's general circulation newspaper with the highest circulation penetration of 112 percent in 2001. The newspaper is published Monday through Friday as a broadsheet, often with two sections that usually run 30 pages. *The Daily Record* is the primary source for Harnett County news; it is also the primary source for display advertising, legal advertisements and classified advertisements. Despite criticism that community newspapers often offer lightweight fare as an answer to local news (Morton, 2007, 68), *The Daily Record* tends to show only a modest drop in circulation penetration since its zenith in 2001. The family-owned *Daily Record* serves Harnett County, a county of 106,283 people, according to the U.S. Census for 2006. About 40 miles south of Raleigh, Dunn is located in a state of 8.8

million residents. According to U.S. Census figures, in 2005 Harnett County was 74 percent Caucasian, about the same as the state, and 22 percent African American, about the same for the state.<sup>3</sup>

The newspaper circulates in most of the eastern half of Harnett, northern Sampson, southern Johnston, and portions of northern Cumberland counties. The towns included in the circulation area are Angier, Benson, Buies Creek, Bunnlevel, Coats, Dunn, Erwin, Falcon, Godwin, Lillington, Linden, and Newton Grove.<sup>4</sup> However, for circulation purposes the newspaper's home circulation zone includes the population for the cities of Dunn and Erwin, a total possible readership of 6,181 of homes in the Audit Bureau of Circulation-designated circulation area of Dunn and Erwin in southern Harnett County. In September 2006, the paid subscriptions for that area were 5,094, or 82.4 percent of the possible 6,181 homes. By March of 2007, circulation increased to 6,172, or 106.41 percent of the possible 5,800 homes in the zone. Despite the fluctuations in circulation, the newspaper still ranks among the highest in the nation, surpassing the average circulation of 30 percent penetration by most American daily newspapers, which number less than 1,600. (Morton, 2007, 68)

## Purpose of the Study

*The Daily Record* began publishing December 6, 1950, when founder Hoover Adams took on *The Dunn Dispatch*, the only other city newspaper and then purchased it 28 years later. Hoover Adams spent those early years personally recruiting readers to submit news and instilling in his staff the need to publish as many names of county residents as possible in every issue. This emphasis on names, Hoover Adams explained, built circulation on the vanity of readers who enjoyed seeing their names in print. (Personal communication, May 29, 2007) According to the first issue, *The Daily Record* printed 12,000 copies (*The Daily Record* publishes first edition, 1950, 1); today the newspaper prints approximately 9,500 issues each day, depending on the draw for that day and season, and its paid circulation is 8,556, according to publisher Bart Adams. In its 57-year history, the newspaper has maintained strong circulation and continues to attract readers as a community newspaper obsessed with local news. This newspaper can serve as a prime case study on strategies that work, strategies that anticipated the hyperlocalism phenomenon sweeping the newspaper industry today. This paper will explore *The Daily Record's* content and its audience and examine two research questions. Question: How can Campbell University students help *The Daily Record* in its news efforts?

## Background of *The Daily Record*

Perhaps the best way to understand a publication is to learn a bit about its founder, a man who began a newspaper with a \$15,000 loan from his father-in-law. Founder Hoover Adams demonstrates all the characteristics of the personal journalist, a publisher who is linked to his creation as an extension of his personality. Born March 6, 1920 in Dunn, Henry Hoover Adams is the son of Alexander Benton Adams and Lou Flora Morgan Adams. He was named in honor of Herbert Hoover, the U.S. food administrator and later president. He is married to Mellicent S. Adams and they have two sons, Brent, a lawyer with four offices in North Carolina, and Bart, editor and publisher of *The Daily Record*; and a daughter, Maere Kay Lashmit, once advertising director at the newspa-

per. Lashmit and other family members serve on the board of Record Publishing Co., owner of *The Daily Record*, the *Harnett County News* and the *Angier Independent*.

Hoover Adams and his wife along with son Bart Adams and his family attend Gospel Tabernacle in Dunn. In his lifetime, Hoover Adams has traveled to more than 60 countries and on one trip to London he and his wife met Margaret Thatcher, former British prime minister. In addition, he worked in newspapers as a reporter for *The Charlotte Observer* and a reporter and editor with the *Dunn Dispatch*. During World War II, Hoover Adams served as an aide to his friend Gen. William C. Lee and was discharged with the rank of captain.

**Literature Review**

The news media gives its audiences pictures of reality including crime and violence using the news narrative as the printed institutional storyteller. Violence occurs in television drama about 70 percent of the time. (Gerbner, 1970, 13) In television, drama can be a visual storyteller that provides “a coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is related to what, and what is right.” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, 76) According to cultivation theory, as television viewing increases, audiences increase their personal sense of fear. Gerbner calls the people who watch the most television heavy viewers and most likely to be labeled political moderates; however, Gerbner also found that heavy viewers tend to favor more police protection and stronger national defense, two cultural indicators of a more traditional conservative political position. (Gerbner et al, 1982) Building on Gerbner’s cultivation, Reber and Chang (2000) used cultivation analysis in their evaluation of crime reporting in Midwestern media including newspapers, to find that media pay too much attention to crime news and readers want newspapers to provide more context for the crime picture.

In the following sections, news coverage will be explored with particular emphasis on crime and race. Gerbner’s idea that more exposure to television leads to more fear will be explored in an application to newspaper content. This paper will use a focus group, content analysis and formal police reports to examine the news content of *The Daily Record* as it relates to its popularity as a community newspaper in a time with newspaper circulation is on the decline. The paper will conclude with an explanation for the remarkable success of *The Daily Record* and its linkage to social networks found on the Internet.

**Methodology**

**Focus group**

On October 21, 2004, *The Daily Record* circulation office selected five subscribers to participate in a focus group. Campbell University students recorded the group, which met for nearly two hours at the newspaper office to explore the two research questions:

- RQ1: What accounts for the popularity of *The Daily Record*?
- RQ2: Does *The Daily Record* model possess any pathology, or it is a model that should be duplicated?

A university professor moderated the meeting of readers, three of whom were Caucasian and two African American. Of the two African American readers, one was a woman. In general, the group attributed the newspaper’s popularity (RQ1) to its commitment to the local news, defined as reports on crime and references to area people in feature articles. The group tended to give the newspaper high marks for detached, bias-free reporting although the group found that the practice of mentioning a suspect’s family in a crime report as inappropriate. The group noted some concern with crime coverage (RQ2).

In addition, the group suggested the newspaper include more local

news. In the words of Dunn’s Kevin Nelson, a special deputy sheriff-turned-middle school teacher, “When I pick up *The Daily Record*, I want to see more local issues and local input. Print state and federal issues that affect us. Space is wasted with contributing reporters from other places and the world news section.” Nelson went on to say, “I want investigative reporters to be in the courthouse, in the governments, in the schools, concentrating heavily there.” For Nelson and others, Associated Press articles and wire columns are unnecessary for a community newspaper that provides the area’s only substantial source for news of local crime, policy initiatives and other news. The group praised the feature content of local columns including the “Sound Off” column where readers can voice reaction to articles. The group also praised the humor of a local column called “The Old Master.” These readers found Hoover Adams’s “These Little Things” column on page one to be highly rated. In general, the group thought the newspaper could provide more depth in its reporting. The focus group identified two indicators for the basis of the newspaper’s popularity (RQ1):

- 1) Its feature news, often submitted by readers, and
- 2) Its crime news that repeals and attracts readers.

**Content Analysis**

To gain a better understanding of *The Daily Record*’s crime coverage, 78 front pages were studied. The research examined crime reports from June 30, 2006 to October 18, 2006.<sup>5</sup> The variable race was recorded as part of this content analysis research to determine if any pattern exists; however, police did not record the variable race in all the arrest reports made available to the newspaper. Of the 78 back-to-back issues explored, about one-third of the issues or 25 contained no mention of crime on page one. Table 1 shows that murder and robbery were the most reported crimes during the period. In addition, Table 1 includes a column for all the cases when race was not included in the police report.

**Table 1 Most frequently occurring crimes by race in a 14-week period.**

Crimes	Caucasian	African-American	Unknown race	Totals
Murder	4	4	2	10
Robbery	3	4	3	10
Shooting	1	4	1	6
Drugs	2	2	1	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>31</b>

To determine if *The Daily Record* gave more play to one race over another race in its crime coverage, the crime news reports were compared to the reports from the police. Table 2, the table on the next page, examines race in crime news vs. race in the reports from the police department in Dunn. In nearly one third of the cases, the police did not identify the suspect by race in its police reports. Table 2 suggests that *The Daily Record* reports crime at about the same percentage as it receives the information from the police. For instance, the police reported Caucasians were arrested 37 percent of the time, the same rate at which the newspaper reported Caucasians were arrested. However, the table also shows that police arrested African-Americans 36 percent of the time but the newspaper reported African-Americans were arrested 30 percent of the time.

**Table 2 Comparison of crime reports on front page of *The Daily Record* for a 14-week period in fall 2006 vs. crime reports from the Police Department of Dunn**

	TDR numbers <sup>1</sup>	TDR percent	Police numbers	Police percent
Caucasians	20	37 percent	823	37 percent
African-Am.	16	30 percent	311	36 percent
Unknown races	17	31 percent <sup>2</sup>	202	27 percent

**Results**

The focus group noted concern with crime news. This researcher interpreted that concern to mean the quantity of crime coverage and the possibility of racial bias in news of crime. The content analysis yielded Tables 1 and 2 and they suggest that *The Daily Record* is not exhibiting any racial bias in its reporting of race in its crime reporting, although it is difficult to generalize about race and crime when so little is known about the category “unknown races.”

In addition, both races who participated in the focus group rated the newspaper as high quality and praised the newspaper for its aggressive crime reporting, a popular feature of *The Daily Record* (RQ1). Velma Freeman of Dunn, an African American woman in the focus group, provided most of the commentary on crime news. She noted that the newspaper does not always provide the context for understanding the crimes, an area where *The Daily Record* could improve (RQ2), a suggestion Reber and Chang (2000) makes for the industry as a whole.

The focus group praised *The Daily Record* for its practice of publishing so many names in each issue (RQ1). Publishing names, whether in reports of crime or weddings, is the hallmark of *The Daily Record*. “The fact is, a local newspaper can never get enough local names. I’d happily hire two more typesetters and add two more pages in every edition of each paper if we had the names to fill them up,” Hoover Adams was quoted as saying in *Made to Stick*. (Heath, C. and Heath, D., 2007) For writers Heath and Heath, Hoover Adams created a core message that is more than emphasizing the local angle; it’s the relentless inclusion of names as the foundational principle in his news strategy. “If a birth announcement appeared, that family would buy 20 papers,” explained Hoover Adams of the strategy to sell high-volume newspapers. (Personal communication, May 29, 2007) Son Bart Adams also endorses the policy. “We take advantage when we can to put names in the news,” he said and referred to that day’s newspaper, which included 40 names associated with a plan to control growth in Johnston County, south of Harnett County.

**Discussion: The secret to the newspaper’s success**

Publisher Bart Adams said Lisa Farmer, editor for nearly 20 years, makes most of those decisions. She chooses the content of page one according to her sense of what readers enjoy the most, including sex, animals and the extravagant use of wealth. (Personal communication, June 26, 2007) The inside pages are often submissions. “We make it easy for people to get their names in the paper,” she said, adding that 66 percent of the newspaper’s content is submitted by readers. (Personal communication, June 26, 2007) She often tells readers to submit information or a photograph and the newspaper will do its best to publish it.

Farmer maintains a policy of running the crime news regardless of the person’s wealth, prestige or power. Felonies are played on page one, but the newspaper practices a policy of publishing three misdemeanors: the charge of driving while intoxicated, domestic assault or anything that is unusual such as man stealing women’s underwear. (Personal communi-

cation, June 26, 2007) The focus group and the content analysis suggest that *The Daily Record* is maintaining its credibility by publishing crime reports without favoring one race over another. Bias is not evident.

While bias-free crime reports enhance the newspaper’s reputation for fairness, it’s the feature news that makes the newspaper so popular. Farmer said the efforts of founder Hoover Adams to make it easy for readers to see their names in print are still paying off. When he first began *The Daily Record*, Adams made a point of contacting the residents in his circulation area and asking them to contribute information. Today, Farmer tells readers, “Get the information to us and we’ll find a way to print it.” (Personal communication, June 26, 2007) Adams set the tone for a hard-news newspaper that printed all the crime. “He’s a tough man and he worked hard to sell papers,” Farmer said. (Personal communication, June 26, 2007) For the residents who grew up in Harnett County and now work in the area, the newspaper is a way to monitor the lives of childhood friends and others. In this sense, *The Daily Record* is a community truly talking to itself, an old adage about the function of a lively newspaper. The online version allows readers to post a comment or participate in a threaded conversation in “oursquare.com” and a regular “Sound Off” column is a way for readers to leave voice mails using a local telephone number.<sup>8</sup>

**Conclusion**

This research uses the following terms to explain the sustained popularity of *The Daily Record* (RQ1). The terms are the Media Triad of me media, menace media and myopia media.

**Table 3 The Media Triad**

Types of News	Characteristic	Type of News	Page
Me Media	“I’m great.”	Positive news	Page 3 and forward
Menace Media	“You’re scary.”	Negative news	Page 1/Obit pg.
Myopia Media	“We’re better than others.”	Positive, negative & neutral news	Throughout the newspaper

The Media Triad compares the media triad with attention to the phrase associated with each, the type of news it is using the idea of positive, negative or neutral news and the page placement. The preceding table summarizes the Media Triad concept.

The first leg in the media triad is **me media** news, which means that readers seek *The Daily Record* content to see themselves as part of their vanity quotient. It is characterized by the sentiment of “I’m great” and is positive, flattering news. While page one contains most of the gritty hard news, the inside pages are filled with more feature fare that can include submitted photographs from area groups and clubs and non-controversial content such as wedding and engagement photographs. Most of these stories are on page 3 and later.<sup>9</sup>

**Me media** is about self-serving news and it expresses itself most dramatically on social networking web sites such as myspace.com, facebook.com and other social utility sites. Facebook.com, in particular, is among the greatest platforms for self-promotion. According to *The New Yorker*, it’s “a place to boast and preen and vie for others’ attention as much as for their companionship.” (Cassidy, 2006) The allure includes accumulating friends, but not necessarily friendships. Quantity of friends is the goal. For the college-age and younger demographic, the goal is to be seen but in an aimless, casual way akin to loafing at a central location such as a shopping mall or a college quad, according to Duncan Watts, a sociologist at Columbia University. (Cassidy, 2006) “Social networks evolve over time, driven by the shared activities and affiliations of their

members, by similarity of individuals' attributes, and by the closure of short network cycles." (Kossinets & Watts, 2006, 88) This need to connect with others without the formality of old-school introductions, knowledge of a person's family background and history is the hallmark of instant somewhat purposeless relationships fueled by mass media, most of all, the Internet. As supported by Kossinets and Watts, the socially constructed community of *The Daily Record* readers is bounded by a shared history, common background and similar values.

*The Daily Record* also is profiting from a kind of vanity media with its readily accessible pages that invite all comers to submit news, often with little editing, and receive the added bonus of validation by a third-party, the community newspaper. By contrast, editors at Facebook.com and the other social utility networks do not approve the content except for bans on nudity and other legal considerations. Internet users are free to post poorly written material dripping with self-aggrandizement and odd and offbeat photographs and other art. *The Daily Record* still retains the old-fashioned component of journalism that demands that the content contain a modicum of news value. Even a report on a child's birthday must be submitted in a timely manner or its news value, as slim as it is, will be lost. Readers of *The Daily Record* profit from spotlighting themselves, their family and their pet programs and projects with the additional feature that the newspaper, unlike a web site, is making editorial decisions about article length, placement, headline and other considerations. Having a third party supervise the presentation gives the submission a veneer of respectability that is not possible when Internet users do all their own work. *The Daily Record* empowers readers to indulge in **me media** by participating in a socially-acceptable ritual that focuses attention on the reader and his or her accomplishments without appearing conceited and unduly vain. In turn, readers can enjoy the newspaper equivalent of hanging out at the mall by seeing their submitted news published. It's a kind of window shopping where the reader's submission is featured in the store display.

Hoover Adams's "These Little Things" tends to be positive and upbeat and contributes to the **me media** idea. In his column, women are described as "pretty and attractive" (Harnett industry hunter, 2007, 1) and most of the people mentioned are the best in their fields. For instance, on July 2, 2007, he wrote that two Dunn businessmen "are big in banking and both own various other business interests on a big scale." (Dunn executives home from China, 2007, 1) Some readers find Adams's use of superlatives to be charming while others criticize the content as opportunistic. They charged that the column is focused only on the wealthy and elite of the community, those with influence. Some readers even find references to a woman's attractiveness to be offensive and sexist. These readers complain that the "These Little Things" column does not routinely comment on men's attractiveness. All agree that the column is designed to flatter those who are included in it, which dilutes the mission of a general circulation newspaper to be a voice for all strata of the community.<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, editor Lisa Farmer and Bart and Hoover Adams continue Hoover Adams's strategy from 1950 to make it socially acceptable to provide self-serving news to the newspaper. Sometimes called "rah-rah" news or "Chamber of Commerce" news, this emphasis on the community submitting news about itself truly makes *The Daily Record* a newspaper that can be considered a personal newspaper. Even the Web site used by *The Daily Record* reflects this idea. It is called "mydailyrecord.com." Unlike most newspapers that use "my" in front of the publication's name to give the appearance that the newspaper is a possessive, *The Daily Record* offers its readers an actual platform to share family news or inject political and social commentary in the editorial section. Publisher Bart Adams also edits the editorial page and writes commentary. He said, "Anyone can submit a column. We run liberal columns and conservative columns." (Personal communication, June 26, 2007)

The second leg in the media triad is **menace media** news, the hard crime news about dogs attacking children, child molesters, violent crime, automobile accidents and other distressing news. It is characterized by the sentiment of "You're scary" and is unflattering of the subject of the report. The reader may say of herself, "I'm great," but "You're scary."

*The Daily Record* publishes less than a half page of crime news in a typical edition, although it receives prominent treatment depending on the severity of the crime. Gerbner's cultivation analysis theory suggests that depictions of fictional crime can influence perceptions of actual crime. In the case of *The Daily Record*, coverage of actual crime can influence perceptions that crime is rampant. However, the anxiety-producing content of crime news in *The Daily Record* is mitigated by the preponderance of family-friendly fare that usually begins on page one and jumps inside. Whether it is a "Hollerin' Contest" in Spivey's Corner or a District XI Class AAA Dixie Youth Baseball Tournament, the newspaper brims with hyperlocal content. Publisher Bart Adams said *The Daily Record* will publish scores from all age groups. "The younger, the better," he said, adding that he sells more newspapers when parents read about their children in sports. (Personal communication, June 26, 2007) These warm-hearted news reports act as a muffler to soften the crime news with all its viciousness. The soft news reports far outnumber the crime news reports and Bart Adams is quick to note that his front page is dominated by positive news stories. (Personal communication, June 26, 2007)

Both **Me Media** and **Menace Media** news are easy for the newspaper to obtain. Readers submit their self-indulgent news and a reporter can easily collect the daily crime reports as a formal account from the police department. **Me Media** news tends to flatter the source, often the submitter of the news, while the **Menace Media** is unflattering. The two combined present the best and the worst of the community, the polar opposites of the most sanitized information against the most scandalous information. Together the picture of the community can be a bit of a caricature. The table below summarizes this news and suggests the kind of in-depth news that is missing when only the easily accessible news is reported.

**Table 4** Ease of obtaining me media news vs. menace media news

The last leg in the media triad, **myopia media** news, is related to the

		Source for News Content	
		Readers	Government
Publishing Access	Easy	Me Media News Self-indulgent Not critical of the source, flattering	Menace Media News Crime news Critical of the source, unflattering
Publishing Access	Hard	In-depth Feature News <i>The Daily Record</i> does not publish this kind of content.	In-depth Government News <i>The Daily Record</i> does not publish this kind of content.

first two and helps explain RQ2. It is characterized by the sentiment of "We're better than others" and is mostly positive news tempered by some neutral or negative news. These readers see only the success of their closest family and friends. They are near-sighted about life beyond their insular world. These readers tend to evaluate the news stories from a person

al perspective. A crime story can be scary but it can also be used as a leveling device. A reader can remark, "That behavior is ugly but our family and friends don't have anyone doing that kind of activity. We're better than our neighbors." As a leveling device, the daily content provides a running total of community winners and losers. Families who grew up in Harnett County use the newspaper as yardstick to monitor the ups and downs of neighbors as the years pass. Combined, the media triad says that readers evaluate their own social, economic and contentment condition by monitoring the success or failure of others. The rising and falling fortunes and misfortunes of readers and their neighbors serve to keep the community stable. In some cases, readers gain a sense of superiority that as bad as life is, the other person had it harder, at least for one issue. This ability to feel superior to a neighbor makes life survivable, even agreeable.

### Summary

RQ1 asked, "What accounts for the popularity of *The Daily Record*?" In the average 30-page issue, about 60 percent of the content is advertising and 40 percent is news but less than a quarter page is devoted to crime news, or about 1/30 of the content. Crime news is considered unbiased. While crime news remains among the most popular type of content, the news submitted by readers, which can account for 66 percent of a day's content, provides readers with an abundance of feel-good news. The good news, often self-indulgent submissions from readers, outweighs the bad news, crime and other scandal, and this dynamic means life is sound, even healthy. *The Daily Record* straddles the public service model of providing information to maintain the community and the economic model of selling information just as another business would sell a commodity. The newspaper is popular because its news is submitted by the readers for the readers achieving the elusive goal of projecting the people's newspaper.

RQ2 asked, "Does *The Daily Record* model possess any pathology, or is it a model that should be duplicated?" *The Daily Record* is alive and well; its most crucial contribution to the community is its ability to suggest equilibrium. Since 1950, this community newspaper has been hyperlocal before the buzz-word took on its enhanced meaning. The local content, particularly the crime news, possesses the additional benefit of working as an Old Testament *jeremiah*, a warning of what can go wrong when someone breaks the law, the community standards. The newspaper remains popular because it allows community members to read the public details about neighbors as a way to read about their own personal condition, to symbolically read their own names and their own stories even when the names and narratives belong to someone else. It is a healthy way to put the tragedy of crime into perspective.

To outsiders who see small Southern towns as the familiar but unreal Mayberry R.F.D., the community portrayed by *The Daily Record* coverage is Andy Taylor's Mayberry but with a peek behind the sets where the lights, cables and props reside with a disturbing lack of order. Readers who want to see behind-the-scenes in Harnett County can monitor the hard news on page one and others who want to be comforted that small-town life is alive and well can skip to the inside pages and see images such as a woman holding giant onions in a basket.

Hoover Adams worked hard to create an inviting news landscape where readers have the liberty to contribute their own news, a hallmark of today's hyperlocalism, to make it the people's newspaper. When Hoover Adams's tenure passes and son Bart Adams takes over as the sole influence, the newspaper may shift or it may remain as it has been since 1950. At it is, the content is unlike the scary world of Gerbner's cultivation analysis; the reality presented by *The Daily Record* approaches the

world that most of the community experiences. It is job, family, church, school, and, occasionally, the law. Bad things do happen to good people, but *The Daily Record* works to keep it in perspective and, always, hyperlocal. Its drive to involve readers in publishing the people's news makes it a model for newspapers committed to hyperlocalism and the elusive goal to be the people's newspaper.

Community newspapers that want to duplicate the success of *The Daily Record* should consider Hoover Adams's idea of enlisting readers to be field reporters who submit news, even self-serving news. Future research could examine the opinions of readers using survey research. In addition, research could explore the decision-making process used in deciding the content of the community newspaper, all in the name of unlocking the mystery of content that readers need and desire to be the people's newspaper.

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### Footnotes

1. The author is grateful to librarians Ron Epps, Jennifer Carpenter and Marie Berry for bibliographic assistance.
2. The author is grateful to Dr. M. Dwaine Greene for suggesting this phrase to characterize *The Daily Record*.
3. The most recent U.S. Census figures do not report significant percent-

ages of Hispanics or other ethnic groups although the demographic segment of Hispanics is considered to be a growth population.

4. The Adams family's Record Publishing Co. owns *Harnett County News* and *Angier Independent*, both weeklies. Hoover Adams said he has had offers from the New York Times Co. and other group-owned media to purchase *The Daily Record* but he insists the newspaper is not for sale. (Broadwell, 1999, 22A)

5. Dinecia Gates selected this period as her semester-long research project for a class in Media Criticism for fall 2006. The period coincided with her fall coursework.

6. TDR is an abbreviation for *The Daily Record*.

7. One Hispanic person was identified in the 53 crime stories reported on page one. If that incident was included in the unknown race variable, the percentage would increase to 33 percent.

8. Readers can call (910) 891-4444 and leave a message. An automated message asks readers to restrict remarks to constructive comments.

9. Crime news also may be found in a section as a compressed list and it is always anchored on the obituary page.

10. One *Daily Record* reader told me that it's the cut-rate version of Garrison Keillor's *Lake Wobegon* where "the women are strong, the men are good looking, and all the children are above average."

# The community newspaper editor as servant leader

By Kevin Warneke

Call him a leader in his community. But be sure to also call him a servant of that community.

Kurt Johnson serves as co-publisher of the *Aurora News-Register*. Leaders in the central Nebraska town describe him as a man who is quick to aid a neighbor, as a staunch supporter of his community, and as a person with vision and wisdom.

"I think he always is looking to positively build Aurora," said Dr. Larry Ramaekers, superintendent of schools. "I think he wants to see physical growth in bringing jobs to the community — to make a community our graduates want to come back to."

Johnson, who purchased the Nebraska weekly with his wife, Paula, in 2000, said he has largely followed his father's example regarding community service. He said he chooses causes and projects that are important to him and his community. "I have to be selective and make sure the things I do justify time away from the newspaper."

Some of those causes include leadership roles with the Aurora Area Chamber and Development Corporation, the community's interstate development effort and Aurora's technology center. His time spent on community involvement has varied, he said, from several hours each week to 10 or more — depending on the projects that have his attention and the time each demands.

"We're (Aurora) growing right now. Things that happen are only because of volunteer leadership. I share that vision and I try to preach it loudly."

The roles newspaper editors and publishers play in small communities often go unnoticed. They typically don't hold public office and often are bypassed when community recognition is bestowed. Yet, they're likely to be included when lists of community leaders are compiled.

Allen Beermann, executive director of the Nebraska Press Association, said community newspaper editors generally are quick to lead and serve in their communities. They realize early in their careers that there are two types of people: those who work and those who take the credit for that work. "Community newspaper publishers stand in line with those who work. There's less competition in those lines."

Johnson and a core group of Aurora community leaders provided a glimpse of how small-town newspaper editors and publishers lead in their communities — and the expectations they face.

The 10 community leaders, combined, have spent more than 200 years in Aurora or the surrounding area, and nine have known Johnson since he first moved into the community. The 10 leaders, including Aurora's mayor, its school board president, its Chamber of Commerce president and several business owners, discussed the role they see Johnson — and community newspaper editors in general — filling. For his part, Johnson discussed the time he devotes to his

community, and his motivation for that involvement.

Johnson — similar to many of his peers in journalism — serves and leads in his community. The two seemingly contrasting characteristics can go hand in hand.

Leadership comes in many forms. Some leaders offer rewards to followers to enhance performance. Others motivate their followers to perform by suggesting that what's good for their organization is good for them. Finally, some leaders focus on their interactions with followers as the impetus to improve performance. Some leaders are adept at adapting their approach to leadership based on the situation. These leaders may be viewed as chameleons or simply wise and flexible.

Hermann Hesse, in *Journey to the East*, introduced the concept of servant leadership. His story focused on a man who acts as a servant on a mythical journey. The man disappears, and the group finds it cannot function without him. Members of the group didn't realize the importance of the man until he was gone. Later, one of the men from his party discovers that the servant was actually a great and noble leader.

Robert Greenleaf, a former AT&T executive, defined the philosophy of servant leadership. "The servant-leader is servant first," Greenleaf wrote in *Servant Leadership*. "...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."

Two University of Nebraska-Lincoln researchers, Drs. John Barbuto and Daniel Wheeler, further defined the concept of servant leadership. They reported that servant leaders desire to make a positive difference in others' lives and help them recover from hardship and trauma. Servant leaders also are aware of their surroundings, and anticipate the consequences of others' actions, use sound reasoning and take responsibility for the well-being of their communities.

Wheeler, professor of leadership studies at UNL, said servant leaders often may be found working as members of the clergy, for nonprofit organizations, in the medical profession, in education and in rehabilitation services.

Add community newspaper editor to the list. Beermann, who also has served as Nebraska's secretary of state, estimated that 80 percent of community newspaper editors are servant leaders. The other 20 percent work for newspaper chains, he said, and "never get the chance to get involved with band uniforms or work the soup supper" because they are moved from paper to paper before they can establish roots in their communities.

Community newspaper publishers and editors either have deep roots in their community, have tap roots or have married into the community, he said. "They understand what it takes to make it work."

All 10 Aurora community leaders included in the study said they viewed Johnson as a servant of the community. Most said they believed Johnson felt a calling to serve and eight of 10 said a com-

munity newspaper editor is expected to be involved in his or her community. The expectations to serve in the community don't necessarily extend to formally lead in the community, they said.

Marlin Seeman, Aurora's mayor and a retired educator, said Johnson's duties as newspaper publisher prevent him from serving as a fulltime servant leader in the community. At times, the two callings might collide, the mayor said, when his duties to report the news must come before community advocacy. "If he's going to be a servant leader, he does it in a context in which he can."

Seeman said he witnessed Johnson's calling to serve and then

lead while he worked to get Aurora's interstate development project kick-started. "I saw a dynamic, focused gung-ho person push the project forward." With experience, the mayor said, comes the ability to "winnow down the calling."

For Johnson, it's that calling that keeps him serving — and leading — in Aurora.

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