

grassroots editor



*A journal
for newspeople*

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of Weekly Newspaper Editors

2000 Golden Quill & Golden Dozen awards

Editorial skills and courage
exemplified by winners
of the ISWNE contest

and the

The 25th Annual Gene Cervi Award

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Editor: Dr. Chad Stebbins

Associate Editor: Genie Undernehr

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2000 Golden Quill Contest

The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors recognizes North America's best non-daily opinion writing each year with an award named the Golden Quill.

The 12 best Golden Quill entries are gathered together as the Golden Dozen. This issue of the *Grassroots Editor* carries the Golden Dozen in weekly editorial writing. It is an opportunity to see the quality of commentary in the weekly press.

The 2000 Golden Quill will be presented to Jeff McMahon, columnist for the *New Times*, San Luis Obispo, Calif., at the summer conference of the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors in Victoria, British Columbia, July 5-9.

McMahon's editorials have been selected for the Golden Dozen in previous years, and he was also chosen as the Golden Quill winner for 1999.

He graduated from the University of Arizona in 1986 with a degree in English after serving as editor of the *Arizona Daily Wildcat*.

The Golden Dozen

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Golden Quill Winners

1961-2000

- 1961 Hal De Cell**
Deer Creek Pilot, Rolling Fork, Miss.
- 1962 Don Pease**
Oberlin (Ohio) News Tribune
- 1963 Hazel Brannon Smith**
Lexington (Miss.) Advertiser
- 1964 Mrs. R.M.B. Hicks**
Dallas (Pa.) Post
- 1965 Robert E. Fisher**
Crossett (Ark.) News Observer
- 1966 Owen J. McNamara**
Brookline (Mass.) Chronicle-Citizen
- 1967 Alvin J. Remmenga**
Cloverdale (Calif.) Reveille
- 1968 Henry H. Null IV**
The Abington Journal, Clarks Summit, Pa.
- 1969 Dan Hicks Jr.**
Monroe County Democrat, Madisonville, Tenn.
- 1970 Richard Taylor**
*Kennett News & Advertiser,
Kennett Square, Pa.*
- 1971 Edward DeCourcy**
Newport (N.H.) Argus Champion
- 1972 C. Peter Jorgenson**
The Advocate, Arlington, Mass.
- 1973 Robert Estabrook**
Lakeville (Conn.) Journal
- 1974 Phil McLaughlin**
The Miami Republican, Paola, Kan.
- 1975 Betsy Cox**
*The Madison County Newsweek,
Richmond, Ky.*
- 1976 Peter Bodley**
Coon Rapids Herald, Anoka, Minn.
- 1977 Rodney A. Smith**
Gretna (Va.) Gazette
- 1978 Robert Estabrook**
Lakeville (Conn.) Journal
- 1979 R. W. van de Velde**
The Valley Voice, Middlebury, Vt.
- 1980 Garrett Ray**
Independent Newspapers, Littleton, Colo.
- 1981 Janelou Buck**
Sebring (Fla.) News
- 1982 Albert Scardino**
The Georgia Gazette, Savannah, Ga.
- 1983 Francis C. Zanger**
Bellows Falls (Vt.) News-Review
- 1984 John McCall**
The SandPaper, Ocean City, N.J.
- 1985 William F. Schanen III**
Ozaukee Press, Port Washington, Wis.
- 1986 Henry G. Gay**
*Shelton-Mason County Journal,
Shelton, Wash.*
- 1987 Ellen L. Albanese**
The Country Gazette, Franklin, Mass.
- 1988 Michael G. Lacey**
The New Times, Phoenix, Ariz.
- 1989 Tim Redmond**
Bay Guardian, San Francisco, Calif.
- 1990 Bill Lueders**
Isthmus, Madison, Wis.
- 1991 Stuart Taylor Jr.**
Legal Times, Washington, D.C.
- 1992 Hope Aldrich**
The Santa Fe (N.M.) Reporter
- 1993 Michael D. Myers**
Granite City (Ill.) Press-Record
- 1994 Jim MacNeill**
The Eastern Graphic, Montague, PEI, Canada
- 1995 Brian J. Hunhoff**
The Missouri Valley Observer, Yankton, S.D.
- 1996 Patricia Calhoun**
Denver Westword, Denver, Colo.
- 1997 Tim Giago**
Indian Country Today, Rapid City, S.D.
- 1998 Gary Sosniecki**
Webster County Citizen, Seymour, Mo.
- 1999 Jeff McMahan**
New Times, San Luis Obispo, Calif.
- 2000 Jeff McMahan**
New Times, San Luis Obispo, Calif.

The Judge's Comments

Reading quality writing is a thrill. These editorialists submitted their best work from an entire year. I know from experience that selecting your best work from a year's worth is tough. Sometimes you break it down to about your top three, and then deciding which is the best and has the best chances (often two separate choices) is tough.

So, if you think you have a hard time choosing your entry, think how tough it is to choose among the best work of everyone. My criteria was like this:

First, I went for the best writing, the most clear as a prime divider. Then I looked for the message, how it's presented and the solution offered. Color helps. Passion helps. Sometimes the work is too long; sometimes it's too brief. Sometimes first-person ("I") and even second-person ("you") just doesn't work. The editorial "we" usually is OK.

Entries that had technical mistakes, such as misspellings and grammar or sentence structure mistakes, usually were among the early discards. Sometimes entries were more like essays, features or personal columns.

I winnowed the entries down to my final 15. Then I read them aloud, both to myself and to others. (I used my brother-in-law as a listener and commentator on a four-day road trip from Idaho to Minnesota.) I considered the audience. In small-town weeklies, the audience is the common reader. Alternative

papers appeal to a specialized audience. For these specialized readers, writing longer is often OK. Even so, some editorials have great themes and ideas but they are overdone. Only the writer's mother reads the whole thing and often won't really "get it." The writer's spouse has already heard it and won't read an epistle.

Here's a clue. Have someone who is not beholding to you read it, someone who isn't worried about job security or your friendship if he/she has constructive suggestions for improvement. If that reader has problems with it, you can bet the common reader will. Read it aloud and you'll catch "holes" or technical mistakes that you didn't see before. A reader connects sloppy writing with sloppy thinking. The message may not have been proofread in addition to the writing.

Writing in first or second person is a risk. The reader subconsciously thinks this writer is writing for himself. The reader sees this and may think "Who cares?" Usually first or

second person easily can be changed to the third person.

After I determined the top 12, I reread them and sifted them by preference. I broke them into the top five, shaved two, and put the top three in order. I was satisfied with my choices but shocked when I later read the newsletter about last year's winners. I had chosen the same No. 1.

"Oh, man! This looks fishy," I thought.

I took the delightful dozen to my journalism department. I gave copies to my department's other media instructor without telling her which winners I selected or which writer had won before. Two days later she gave me her results. She also picked Jeff McMahon.

My editing class was in its editorial writing sequence, so I did the same with my 13 students. I made copies of the final 12 choices and had them judge them individually. Seven of the students also chose McMahon's entry. I felt at ease.

We have a winner!

**Here's a clue.
Have someone who
is not beholding
to you read it,
someone who isn't
worried about job
security or your
friendship if he/she
has constructive
suggestions for
improvement. If that
reader has problems
with it, you can
bet the common
reader will.**

About the Judge

This year's Golden Quill judge is **Nils Rosdahl**, a journalism professor at North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene. Rosdahl is adviser to *The Sentinel*, regarded as one of the top 10 community college newspapers in the nation.

"I knew I wanted to be a newsman since I had a paper route as a 10-year-old in a tiny town that was in such a deep canyon in northwest Montana that we received no broadcast news, so I was the first one in town each day to know the news — and scores," Rosdahl relates.

He received a B.A. in journalism from the University of Montana, working full time all four years for the Missoulian newspaper, primarily as a sports writer. He was a public relations specialist for the Coast Guard for two years in San Francisco and two years in Chicago.

After that, Rosdahl spent 10 years as a sports editor for a chain of Seattle suburban dailies while getting a master's in communications at the University of Washington.

He's been teaching journalism courses and advising *The Sentinel* for 15 years. He also writes a weekly business column for the *Spokane Spokesman-Review*. Highlights have been *The Sentinel* winning the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award three times (beating all universities) and seeing many former students enjoy successful careers in journalism and life.

Rosdahl lives on a small farm in Coeur d'Alene with his wife, Mary, and has three children. His hobbies include singing, playing the guitar, and tennis.



Nils Rosdahl

Adviser,
The Sentinel

Journalism Professor,
North Idaho College

Coeur d'Alene, ID



Jeff McMahon

Columnist,
New Times

PO Box 163
San Luis Obispo, CA
94306-0163

May 5, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

This writing will become an example to use in journalism classes. It uses poetic, passionate reasoning that readers find a humanness with which they can identify themselves.

They discover they could know an innocent victim or the serial killer himself without being aware of it.

His message is that they beware so it does not happen again. McMahon uses detail to make the situations and places real. His readers can feel that they've seen these women. McMahon is able to personalize these crimes with the editorial "we" without reiterating any grisly details.

I first read this to myself several times; then I read it aloud to others. Each time my voice choked with emotion, an uncommon response to an editorial. Although the piece is longer than an effective editorial should be, the writing is so skilled that we want to read more.

Ripples on Our Lives

We Should Build a Memorial of Things to Remember

They vanished like pebbles in a pond. We didn't see them slip away. We didn't hear them. How we wish we had. We only felt the waves that rippled from their

absence. May they rock our boat forever. Some of us knew them better than others did, so some of us felt it all the stronger. But we all felt it, didn't we?

Who among us has not?

We live close in this village. Often we know each other's faces long before each other's names. If we each trailed a thread in our path, our comings and goings would blanket San Luis Obispo with a fine weave.

If we could backtrack along the thread we have laid, we could rediscover the moment when Rachel Newhouse showed us to our table at the restaurant on Garden Street, or when Aundria Crawford rang up our purchase in the store on Marsh. We might come upon the day that Kristin Smart sat at the next table in the sandwich shop on Higuera.

Maybe we passed these women on the sidewalk. We must have. Maybe we exchanged a smile, or maybe we didn't.

We can never again live the moments before we knew their names so well. But what if we could? Those moments seem perfect now in their quiet ignorance of what was to come.

An English sparrow attended Aundria's memorial service last week at Cuesta College. He bathed in the upper tier of the fountain, above the offerings of cut flowers people had set out for her. He drank and stretched his wings and flew to the barren branches of a jacaranda. He faced the podium and sang while the speakers cried, participating in a ceremony he was happily unable to fathom. Much like us before all this.

We will find Rex Allan Krebs somewhere back in that weave. We will find him driving past our homes in that blue pickup with the lumber company logo on the door. We will notice him sitting on a stool in a cool and quiet barroom. We will see him walking across campus. Maybe he passed us on the sidewalk, too, with his dog at the end of a leash. Maybe we exchanged a smile, or maybe we didn't.

Many want to call him a "monster" or an "animal." He has said it himself. We do that to insult him, and we do it to push him away. It helps us explain him as an anomaly, as something unlike us. He's a monster. He's an animal.

Unfortunately, he is neither. The worst monsters

of the human imagination commit one of the crimes of which he is accused, or another, but never all at once. And the only animal that does such things is the human.

He is a neighbor, this man who waits in his cell on Kansas Avenue in the long shadow of Chumash Peak. He is one of us, this living argument for the death penalty. Doesn't his mug shot have the same haunting familiarity as the smiling faces on the missing posters?

To describe him as an animal or a monster suggests we should be able to recognize him and others like him who walk among us. But they are not covered in fur or scales. They do not breathe fire. They look like us and they live among us in this village. Let us remember that.

The police probably deserve all the praise they have received, and more. They met this challenge better than anyone should have expected. But as we praise their success, let us remember that the finest police work still *follows* a tragedy. The greater challenge towers before us, huge and seemingly impossible. To catch the next one before he attacks, to stop all the new ones from being created.

We should erect a memorial to these women, the ones who died solely because they were women.

We should build it where we will see it every day. We should blanket it with roses to evoke the words of Edna St. Vincent Millay — "More precious the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world."

We should build it in remembrance of them, in sad note of the loves and losses they will never feel, the achievements they will never know, the children they will never bear. A lost woman is more than a lost woman — she is a stairway of generations vanished.

We should look at our memorial to remember how far these women had come, from their first stirrings inside their mothers' wombs. Their first breaths, their first steps, their first days at school. First teeth, first skinned knees, first loves. Prom nights, graduations, first days at college. First days away from home.

Those who loved them saw them through so many firsts, only to come to this last goodbye.

Those who loved them entrusted them to us.

We should build that memorial. We should build it in remembrance of them, and we should build it to remind ourselves — this must never happen again.

An Explanation and an Apology

I The vanishings began in 1996 when 19-year-old Kristin Smart disappeared from the Cal Poly campus. The people of San Luis Obispo thought themselves immune from urban horrors, so the fruitless search for Kristin dominated our news and thoughts for years.

When Rachel Newhouse vanished late in November 1998, leaving a pool of her blood on a pedestrian bridge, three words seemed to issue from every pair of lips: "It happened again." Fear and curiosity and horror and speculation swamped this small coastal city like murky floodwaters.

Rachel still smiled from the missing posters in downtown windows in March 1999, when Aundria Crawford's photo went up beside them.

When a crime that grips a community repeats itself three times, it becomes something like a tragic play. We knew the script so well we could recite one another's lines: The police with their withheld details and ongoing investigations and admonitions against panic; the media with its poverty of information and its many ways of saying nothing; the public with its rumors and helplessness; the silence of the perpetrator.

The silence of the victim.

Once again helicopters chopped overhead, and crime-scene inspection vans rolled through our streets. Once again men in orange vests followed leashed dogs through vacant lots and wooded places and garbage dumps, searching.

The dread, the fear and the curiosity became familiar too. We came to know these emotions so well that they threatened to become normal. They blended too easily into the mesh of life in this village among volcanoes at the brink of the sea.

How could we rise each morning and go to work or school knowing that three women among us had vanished to a fate it chilled us to imagine? How could we come home and eat and play and sleep knowing that someone among us had engineered that fate? Yet we did.

Many of us who write for weeklies serve small communities that seem safe. That seeming safe is itself a danger. People leave their doors unlocked, walk alone on unlit streets at night and trust the strangers they encounter. They graze like penned lambs, slow and easy for slaughter when some predator among us decides to pounce.

When pounce he does, the shock of such bitterness in so sweet a locale sends the media into spasms of coverage. The public devours every word, and suddenly everyone is careful. Doors are locked, women are escorted, handguns and pepper spray are purchased and readied for use.

The police found the bodies of Rachel Newhouse and Aundria Crawford in hasty graves on property rented by Rex Allen Krebs, a convicted rapist recently paroled. Kristin Smart remains missing and is believed to be the victim of another villain.

The accused was jailed and vilified as a

wept. I came to know in some small degree the suffering of the victims and those who knew them. I carried my pen and notebook, and in that swirling air of misery I wrote "Ripples on Our Lives."

Crimes like rape, torture and murder are crimes because of the suffering of the victims. Unless writers convey that suffering, we fail to impress our readers with the significance of these events. When we cloak ourselves in cool journalistic reserve, when we clinically describe events we could not ourselves endure, then we simply numb the populace. We normalize horror. But when

I had tried in several columns to penetrate the typical language of crime stories and write an editorial that would inspire change. I wanted us to rage against these happenings, to remember and fight on, not accept and live on.

monster and an animal undeserving of life. He was no longer a man, and that logic, apparently, meant men could again be trusted. A collective sigh went out, and soon people left their doors unlocked, walked unlit streets alone at night, trusted the strangers they encountered.

A curtain had closed on our tragedy, and life had become much as it was.

So what was gained by the loss? We know pretty well what those women experienced in their last moments of consciousness. Did that knowledge change us?

I had tried in several columns to penetrate the typical language of crime stories and write an editorial that would inspire change. I wanted us to rage against these happenings, to remember and fight on, not accept and live on. Nor did I wish to write the popular "Fry the Bastard" editorial, which follows the ruts of expectation, ferrying people from denial to anger and on toward acceptance and forgetting.

I did not find the words until I attended the ritual consecutive memorial services for Rachel Newhouse and Aundria Crawford. There, friends and families told of the lives that had vanished. Thousands

we let ourselves feel some echo of the pain, when we lend our readers an understanding of the victim's experience, then we may inspire compassion.

Compassion will be the source of change, if change ever comes.

I have had the honor to win two Golden Quills. Both have come to me as the result of suffering borne by someone else. The 1999 winner related to the brutal beating of a popular local character, Richard Bermine, who survived to a life forever altered. It chills the triumph of these awards to think of the victims, but think of the victims is what we must do. They are the reason we write. We write for those who have suffered, and we write that others may be spared.

I cannot say these columns found success, because they have done nothing to prevent the recurrence of their topic. I accept these Golden Quills as evidence that people live who wish they would find that success. If I may, I apologize here for my own intrusion upon lives ended too brutally and soon, and I dedicate these honors to those whose suffering inspired them.



Tim L. Waltner

**Editor/Publisher,
Freeman Courier**

PO Box 950
Freeman, SD 57029

October 13, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

Freedom of expression is especially easy on the Internet, enabling even the remotely computer-literate to create a Web site that anyone can access. The Rev. Fred Phelps of Westboro Baptist Church, Topeka, Kan., does this with his godhatesfags.com Web site.

Waltner thoroughly explores and explodes the Web site for his readers. He asks them to repel this message of intolerance and hate with a strong voice.

Troubling Theology Fosters Hate

The web site address says it all. godhatesfags.com. A news report on the trial of Aaron McKinney resulted in that sobering discovery.

McKinney is on trial for murder for beating Matthew Shepard to death in Wyoming a year ago. Shepard, a 21-year-old University of Wyoming freshman, was gay.

The news brief noted the presence of “six protesters from Kansas who waved signs with anti-gay slogans. The Rev. Fred Phelps, 69, of Topeka, Kan., said his followers wanted to ‘insert a little sanity and truth into this mad orgy.’”

That made us curious.

A search on the Internet turned up Rev. Phelps’ web site: godhatesfags.com.

The site is as troubling as the address.

Three colorful balloons float across the page. The purple one says “One million people” and the red one says “Enter the site.” The yellow one bears the words “God hates fags.”

The site notes: “‘God hates fags’ — though elliptical — is a profound theological statement which the world needs to hear more than it needs oxygen, water and bread.”

Operated by the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., the site includes Scripture which supports the position that “God hates fags,” “Fags hate God,” “AIDS cures fags,” “God gave fags up,” “Thank God for AIDS”...

Phelps calls the concepts that “God loves everyone” and “Jesus died for all” lies.

There’s more: The site includes a photo of Matthew Shepard and if you click on the photo, you’re taken to another page where flames appear from below, licking at his face.

And if you click on *that* image, you hear a voice (Matthew Shepard’s we assume) scream “For God’s sake, listen to Phelps.”

An accompanying message notes “the wicked parents of Matt Shepard must be warned lest they in the end join and curse their fag son in hell.”

The church states — for the record — that it does not support the murder of Matthew Shepard.

But through its mailings, protests, media appearances and its web site, this church is clearly fostering a message of intolerance and hate which encourages the kind of violence which took his life.

A year ago we editorialized on the need for legislation to include sexual orientation to hate crime laws.

Obviously — as demonstrated by “godhatesfags.com” — there is a wide range of opinion and attitudes on the matter of homosexuality.

But the issues of tolerance and justice must transcend the moral biases in society, including those of Rev. Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan.

And those who subscribe to a theology of love and redemption need to provide a strong voice against hate in all forms.

It seems appropriate to again reprint the powerful words of German pastor Martin Niemöller who was imprisoned by the Nazis during Hitler’s rule:

“First they came for the socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak for me.”

Schools in Need

Tast week, the Oregon Republican Party announced that it would supply flags to Oregon schools in need.

The legislature passed House Bill 2384, which requires every Oregon school to give all students the opportunity to pledge allegiance to the flag at least once a week. After the bill was approved, Republicans discovered some schools did not have flags, nor did they have the money to purchase them.

According to a press release issued by the Republican Party, the Oregon Republican Platform states, "We advocate recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in schools as a continued statement of loyalty to this Republic and as a reminder of the principles that sustain us as One Nation under God."

Party Chairman Perry Atkinson noted that providing flags to schools is not only a Republican belief, but a duty as Americans.

All well and good. The Pledge of Allegiance has been a part of American school life for years and years. We recognize the flag as a symbol for this country.

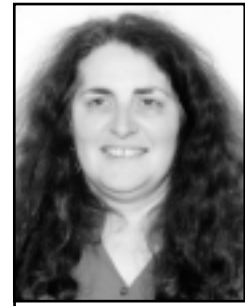
But the generosity of the Republican party in Oregon is misplaced. There's nothing wrong with patriotism, but we suggest the Republicans take a look at why some schools are without funds to purchase the flags.

And we also would like them to look at why so many schools are operating with far fewer than the desired number of teachers, supplies, books and everything else that a legislature and a party interested in education and building future good citizens should consider important.

It's hard to imagine a public school without an American flag. Unfortunately, it's also hard to imagine a public school in Oregon with adequate class offerings or enough teachers, and without overcrowded classrooms.

Maybe the same legislature that wanted all Oregon students to have the opportunity to pledge allegiance to the flag once a week should have been concerned that those same students have the opportunity to receive a quality education. Unfortunately, the Republican school funding plan prevailed.

Better luck next session.



Leslie O'Donnell

Managing Editor,
News-Times

PO Box 965
Newport, OR 97365

August 25, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

Oregon government should be more concerned that schools have adequate funding to supply a decent education rather than purchase flags. The Republican-dominated legislature passed a new law that each school should give students the opportunity to pledge allegiance to the flag at least once a week. The Republican Party announced it would supply flags to schools that don't have the funds to buy them. O'Donnell responds that instead the Republicans should recognize why the schools are without funds to buy flags, books, adequate teachers and all else that should be considered to educate good future citizens. The message is concise and clear.

Like Lambs to the Slaughter

Sometimes the Charter of Rights can be the worst enemy of society's most vulnerable — our children.

Case in point: On Jan. 15, 1998, BC Supreme Court Justice Duncan Shaw ruled that making child-porn possession illegal violates the Charter of Rights.

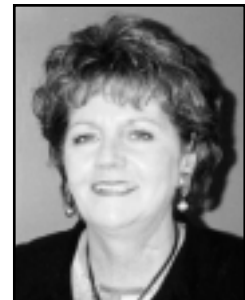
Now, like most adults I feel that what I see, do and even own is my business providing it doesn't hurt someone else. And normally I'd defend a person's right to own such trash. After all, what they view in the privacy of their own home is their business.

But child-porn is different from other porn in that it involves innocent children. Obviously children had to pose for these photos. Whether they were

willing or not doesn't matter. One can't even imagine any *normal* adult seeing a child as sexy or the object of a sexual fantasy. Although we do not have statistics proving that viewing pornographic material incites the viewer to act, the probability exists. And no child deserves to be a sacrificial lamb.

This BC judge has ruled in favor of pedophiles and other sexual deviants to the detriment of our youth. It was done in the name of the charter. Would one call this being politically correct, callous and unthinking or just plain stupid?

We must protect our children. It is our responsibility. But when the judicial system turns its back on them this is a sad commentary on the state of justice and the people who administer it.



Joan Plaxton

Editor/Publisher,
The Valleyview Valley Views

Box 787
Valleyview, Alberta
T0H 3N0

January 20, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

Plaxton uses brevity to attract and alert readers to the awkward ruling by a British Columbia Supreme Court justice that possession of child pornography is legal. She says the judicial system ruled in favor of sexual deviants to the detriment of youths who become sacrificial lambs.



Paul MacNeill

POSITION HERE
The Eastern Graphic

PO Box 790
Montague, PEI, Canada
COA 1R0

September 8, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

The difference is explored between public relations and news when a government agency foots the \$27,000 bill for Canadian press writers to visit Boston. Their cut included high airfares and \$900 each for hotel and food with no receipts required. MacNeill stressed that readers need to know about the relationship of the Canadian Community Newspapers Association and the government's Department of Foreign Affairs.

Ashamed of Media Junket

The final bill is in for a highly questionable government paid for media junket to Boston earlier this year — and it isn't pretty for Canadian taxpayers.

In late March eight community newspaper reporters from across Atlantic Canada, with the exception of PEI, were flown to Boston for four days courtesy of the Boston Consulate, an arm of the Department of Foreign Affairs. An official based at the head office of the Canadian Community Newspapers Association (CCNA) in Toronto as well as a federal government media specialist also participated.

I was asked by CCNA to send a representative from both the *West Prince Graphic* and *The Eastern Graphic*. I refused for the simple reason I don't believe journalists should accept freebies from government. And I certainly don't believe a newspaper organization should be an active participant in such a waste of taxpayers' money.

The request angered me.

In response, *The Graphic* paid Ottawa-based researcher Ken Rubin to request all documentation regarding the trip, and others similar to it, under the federal Access to Information Act. What the 100 plus page release shows is a concentrated effort by Foreign Affairs to improve the public image of the its consulates. Members of the Canadian Community Newspapers Association were simply chosen as pawns through which to groom that image.

It had nothing to do with news. It had everything to do with generating good PR for the consulates.

Generating that type of spin isn't cheap. For the Boston trip Canadian taxpayers footed the bill for everything including airfare, meals and hotel accommodation. In total the trip cost taxpayers \$27,365.32. How that money was spent simply adds to the outrageousness of the junket.

When the two *Graphic* papers refused to attend, CCNA simply found two other representatives. It didn't matter for instance that three reporters work for the same company in Newfoundland. There was no thought of saving a few bucks and sending one representative. All CCNA and Foreign Affairs wanted was warm bodies to fill the seats.

The trip was hurriedly organized with the end result being airfares far from seat sale prices. The average cost for the eight Atlantic Canadian journalists was \$1,565.20.

Upon arrival in Boston there was no attempt to minimize expenses. Sean Rowan, the federal government media specialist, handed each participant \$900US in traveler's cheques. The money went to pay the hotel bill for each participant — \$159 per night for three nights at Copley Plaza Hotel — and the majority of meals. No receipts were required. That says a lot about how government officials spend our money. Where's the control? Where's the accountability to taxpayers? Since when does the Government of Canada use traveler's cheques?

I know many of the reporters who took part. They're fine people. I also read much of what was written about the trip. With a few exceptions it was exactly the kind of stuff Foreign Affairs hoped would be written. Great PR. For instance only one reporter wrote about Consulate General Mary Clancy openly talking about running for office in Nova Scotia.

Is that not a breach of diplomatic protocol? Diplomats, even those like Clancy, who are given the job through pure

political patronage, are supposed to be non-partisan. As well no reporter wrote about her background as a defeated Liberal MP who was severely reprimanded by the Nova Scotia Bar Society for the equivalent of professional misconduct. While still sitting as a backbench MP, the bar society ordered Clancy to clear all her legal work through another lawyer. No reporter questioned her ability or qualifications for the job.

Nothing I read indicated Foreign Affairs was picking up the whole tab. Reporters used words like 'partnership' and 'jointly sponsored by' to describe the relationship between CCNA and Foreign Affairs.

Nothing I read indicated Foreign Affairs handed \$900US worth of traveler's cheques to each participant — no questions asked.

Nothing I read indicated that all journalists agreed to submit follow-up reports on their impression of the visit, and all stories generated, to Foreign Affairs via CCNA.

Readers deserved to know the exact nature of the relationship between CCNA and Foreign Affairs. By not stating the complete circumstances of the trip, reporters misrepresented the facts.

Some participants tried to justify the excursion as a thought-provoking trip that could lead to the creation of jobs in their communities. That is a bogus attempt at justifying the unjustifiable. If reporters want to create jobs they should work for the nearest economic development corporation. Their job is not to spur economic development. Their job is to report what is going on in their communities. By allowing themselves to become Foreign Affairs pawns, participants broke the first rule of journalism by becoming directly involved in the story.

Other participants simply justified the trip with a sickening "I'm just so happy I was asked" routine.

Sadly, Atlantic Canada is not alone.

Late last year, the first trip of CCNA members to an American based consulate occurred when six reporters from British Columbia traveled to Seattle, Washington. Following Boston, other trips were being planned for both Southern Ontario reporters and Quebec reporters, who were scheduled to travel to the United Nations.

Foreign Affairs did not release specific costs for any trip other than Boston, however, it's reasonable based on those costs to assume taxpayers could end up paying upwards of \$100,000 just so weekly reporters can participate in 'orientation visits.'

Everyone can think of better places for that money to be spent. Like in our local hospitals or on our local roads or in our local schools. These are the things CCNA members write about every week. Now their writing is tainted.

The saddest part personally is how easily my national association, CCNA, allowed itself to become tainted by the lure of closer ties with the federal government.

CCNA Communications Manager Robert MacKenzie signed off on a letter to Foreign Affairs with "Thank you again for this opportunity for community journalists!" It shows both how enamored CCNA was to strike a deal and a disturbing lack of journalistic ethics on the part of my national association.

As a taxpayer I'm angered the trips occurred.

As a journalist and a member of CCNA I'm ashamed.

Join the Fight

Whether Wal-Mart is allowed to expand into obscene excess is up to Taoseños.

Across the nation, other communities — Tijeras is one of them — are saying no to the corporate giant. They are saying no to big-box stores. They are saying no to the homogenization of unique communities. They are saying no to everyday low prices made possible through the exploitation of workers, both in the United States and overseas.

Taos should join them in saying no.

This proposal for an expanded Wal-Mart is one of those turning points that comes along in every town's life. We have a choice to become more like everywhere else or to stay true to our roots. We have a choice to support local people and local businesses or a national monopoly that is eroding small businesses and smalltown life across the country.

We do have a choice.

Tonight (Aug. 19) community members are gathering at 7 p.m. at the Taos Public Library to discuss how best to oppose Wal-Mart's decision to expand its present store into a Wal-Mart Supercenter of 180,000 square-feet. They want to fight, as do hundreds of Taoseños who are signing anti-Wal-Mart petitions around town. You can join them.

The key to succeeding in this fight against a well-financed, organized opponent will be whether community members unite. This is a fight that must unite newcomer and old-timer, Anglo, Hispano and Indian, rich and poor, old hippie and new yuppie — or it is a fight that is doomed to fail.

Here is why this fight must not fail.

- Money earned by local people in businesses they own and operate is money that stays in the community, to be turned over again and again to keep the town's economy healthy. Outside corporations like Wal-Mart take their profits and run. Certainly, Wal-Mart's employees spend their paychecks at home, but those dollars don't make up for the millions that go to Arkansas.
- A Wal-Mart this size can mean as many as 10,000 additional car trips daily. Our roads cannot handle that traffic — we already must deal with horrendous traffic on Paseo del Pueblo during tourist seasons. We don't need wall-to-wall cars year round.
- We don't need a 180,000 square-foot box on the main road to town. Super stores promote sprawl; they're ugly and they are architecturally worse

than mediocre. We have a history here worth preserving, a tradition of building with earth and straw, a tradition of building useful buildings that don't sprawl and don't eat up chunks of empty land. Just because we already have a Wal-Mart and other signs of modern America doesn't mean we have to give up entirely. Nothing in Taos County is as large as this super store would be. It doesn't belong here.

- Economic studies show that super stores do not add to a town's wealth. They simply suck money from other businesses, businesses operated by our friends, neighbors and relatives.
- The jobs Wal-Mart brings are not the kind of jobs we need. They are low-paying and often part-time work. Other studies show that for every job Wal-Mart creates, one-plus jobs are lost by local employers. Thus, super stores can mean a loss of jobs for the community.
- Like it or hate it, Taos depends on tourism to survive. Our Taos County Chamber of Commerce's visitor center will be right across the street from the new super store. A town promoting itself as a unique cultural experience loses its flavor by welcoming visitors with a Wal-Mart in the background. We need to remain less like Anywhere, USA, not more.

Taos is a town that knows how to fight. From the Pueblo Revolt to last century's uprising against the American invasion to the hundreds of Taos County boys who volunteered to fight U.S. wars this century to the quiet fights in households across the county to maintain language, culture and identity, this is a community that can do battle for its beliefs.

Citizens, remember that Wal-Mart will need a zoning change to build its super store. That is great leverage in this fight. It's more than many communities that have successfully fought off Wal-Mart had. And if Wal-Mart decides it is too difficult to build in the city, then citizens will have to turn their attention to fighting off a super store in the county. One way to do that is to make sure Wal-Mart can't obtain water rights it will need to operate a mega-store.

Back in the 1970s, a potent coalition of Hispanos, Indians and even the assorted hippie came together to fight off the Indian Camp Dam. Parts of that same coalition have kept an expanded airport on hold for more than a decade. Surely these groups have some fight left in them. Because make no mistake about it, we have another fight on our hands. Join in.



Inez Russell

**Editor,
The Taos News**

PO Box U
Taos, NM 87571

August 19, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

Possibly more than any of the finalist editorials, non-local readers want to know, "What happened?" Did citizens successfully fight the proposed expansion of Wal-Mart in Taos?

Russell methodically and sensibly underlined the reasons for citizens to oppose this development. Perhaps Taos can provide an example for other communities.

The 25th Annual Eugene Cervi Award

The Eugene Cervi Award was established by ISWNE to honor the memory of Eugene Cervi of the *Rocky Mountain Journal*, Denver, by recognizing a newspaper editor who has consistently acted in the conviction that “good journalism begets good government.”

The award is presented not for a single brave accomplishment, however deserving, but for a career of outstanding public service through community journalism and for adhering to the highest standards of the craft with the deep reverence for the English language that was the hallmark of Eugene Cervi’s writing.

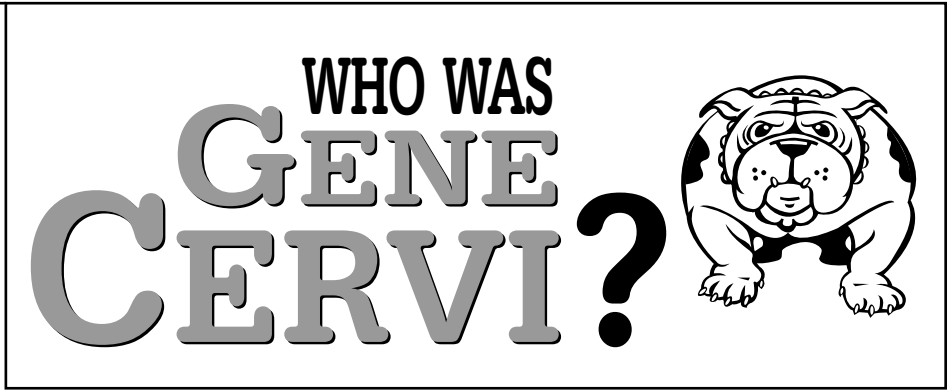
The award also recognizes consistently aggressive reporting of government at the grassroots level and interpretation of local affairs.

BY RICK FREIDMAN

The young wife of an editor put the question to me during a hospitality hour at the annual **International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors** conference last year in Halifax, Nova Scotia. My first response was, “How much time do you have?”

I was a speaker at the four-day conference, my topic the *Woburn Advocate’s* ongoing coverage of *A Civil Action*, the book and movie, the local people who made it happen and the ramification 20 years later at hazardous waste sites created by W.R. Grace Company.

ISWNE gives out a **Gene Cervi Award** to an editor for outstanding contributions



newspaper editors and everybody else. Cervi was an early member of ISWNE. The group first came together in 1954 when 13 weekly editors from 10 states met at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. The thrust was to engage ideas they could carry back to their communities in the form of editorials and columns. It formalized as a non-profit organization in 1959.

During the long, feverish decade of the 1960s and into the still-smoldering 1970s, ISWNE attracted an extraordinary group of weekly journalists to the annual meetings at the southern end of Illinois. They reflected a

time when the towns they served desperately needed to understand lynchings, ghetto riots, campus demonstrations, assassinations, the 1968 Democratic convention, the war in Vietnam, the fractured psyches of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon and Kent State.

These weekly editors were created

by their tumultuous time and rose to its challenges in extraordinary ways, sometimes through circumstances rather than choice. They were beaten up, shot at, their newspaper plants were bombed, they were boycotted by advertisers.

There have always been courageous community editors in America but I know of no other time when they had a place such as ISWNE to convene each year as a group to give each other the courage to go back and fight the battle still another day. ISWNE member Bill Rotch wrote in his *Milford* (N.H.) *Cabinet-Press* back then, they came to ISWNE, lifted their heads up over the trenches and saw there were others just like themselves in trenches on both sides.

All through the 1960s and early 1970s, the award was not the Cervi, but the **Elijah Lovejoy Courage in Journalism**, given out by Southern Illinois University. Year after year, these amazing winners showed up, almost always for the first time, to receive their

continued on page 13

Ask me who Gene Cervi was and I come at you from a far different place and time when weekly newspaper journalism mirrored a Mac Truck hood ornament and a 1960s confrontational sensibility.

to community journalism over a long period of time. There was no recipient deemed worthy last year.

Upon further responding to my young questioner I realized how much community weekly journalism has changed since I first met **Gene Cervi** 37 years ago. It was a different place and time in the United States for weekly

A few words from Al's supporters:

I first came to know and respect Al when we both served on the board of directors of the Illinois Press Association. Al's reasoned but no-nonsense outspokenness coupled with his dry wit were signals of an editor who enjoyed the responsibility of committing his opinions to ink and living with the consequences.

I've been reading Al's editorials and columns in *The Pike Press* for at least 15 years. Without fail, they are informative, to the point, analytical and compassionate — and are regularly disdainful of elected officials who try to skirt the principles of open government. Al's writings are never fluff.

— Nancy Slepicka, publisher, the *Montgomery County News*

Al participated relentlessly to keep the Illinois' Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act strong. He consistently supported the IPA efforts to fend off legislative attempts to weaken both laws, and he made himself personally available in the state capitol to persuade legislators to vote for these open government laws.

In Pittsfield, Al regularly did battle with local government officials. Woe to a county or municipal official who violated the Open Meetings Act, attempted to hide public information, or otherwise did not act in the public's best interest. Al's sharply worded editorials and columns in the Pike County Press were relentless watchdogs of the public good. And, over his lifetime of reporting, he rarely let the smallest of public meetings go unnoticed.

— David L. Bennett, executive director, Illinois Press Association

Both Al Seiler's editorials and opinion column, "Observations and Comments," have been clear and concise, with outstanding grammar, clarity, and accuracy, which to me exemplifies the passions of Eugene Cervi, who in his active years gained national renown as an editor's editor.

His zest for better government has not been dimmed by retirement. Al Seiler has been active in government, serving terms on Pike County Board and in other roles of civic leadership.

— Bob Bliss

Al Seiler probably could have worked for any newspaper, large or small. But his true calling, and his own career goal, was to work on a weekly newspaper. That's what he did, and he did it well. ... Al Seiler valued and trusted his readers. The paper was available for the taking with an open box to drop the money in at the honor of the customer. Al Seiler valued his advertisers, buying locally regardless of higher prices small town merchants sometimes need to charge. Why? Because "these people are our advertisers, and that's how we stay in business." Al Seiler valued Pike County, considering it a fine place to live and to watch children and grandchildren grow up. The causes he espoused in his editorials or particular projects were always done in the interest of Pike County and its people.

My father once said... "In my opinion, there is no life like newspaper work. Although it is a demanding job, it is also a very satisfying life with much opportunity to do something to encourage, stimulate, entertain, or somehow enrich the lives of others."

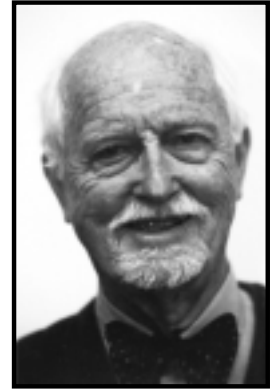
Allan A. Seiler has indeed been there, done that.

— Anne Seiler Pettygrove, daughter

This Year's Winner Is...

Allan A. Seiler

Retired Editor,
The Pike Press,
Pittsfield, Ill.



All About Al

- **Born in 1917 in Nowata, Okla. Spent boyhood in Chillicothe, Mo.**
- **Moved to Joplin, Mo., in 1929**
- **Graduated from the University of Missouri in 1939 with a degree in journalism**
- **Married Virginia Morris of Des Moines, Iowa, in 1942; she died in 1992**
- **Served 4 years in the U.S. Air Force, attained the rank of major**
- **Early 1950s: *Bee & Herald* newspaper, Jefferson, Iowa**
- **Mid-1950s: Named general manager of *Hancock County Journal* in Carthage, Ill.; the newspaper won the **Wil Loomis Award** for the best weekly newspaper in Illinois**
- **1960: Named managing editor of the *Pike County Republican***
- **1963: Bought the *Pike County Democrat Times***
- **1968: Combined with the *Pike County Republican*; the name of the merged newspaper is *The Pike Press***
- **Publisher of *The Pike Press*, Pittsfield, for 30 years, retiring in 1991**
- **1998: Named to the University of Southern Illinois Hall of Fame as a Master Editor**
- **Currently an elected member of the Pike County Board; has done substitute teaching and tutoring**
- **Al has 2 daughters, 7 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren, a dog, and a cat**

“Observation and Comment”

Following are several of Al Seiler’s editorials.

All comes from taxpayer’s pocket

Sometimes we wonder what would be the cumulative effect if we and other newspapers throughout the U.S. started putting in parenthesis “taxpayers’ dollars” behind the following words each time they appeared in print: state aid, federal aid, government assistance, government relief, government subsidy, government bail-out, revenue sharing and other disbursements of government money for one cause or another.

That’s not to say the expenditures may not be justified and in the public interest. But it would add a note of honesty as to the true source of the money.

A judicial giant

One of the high points of our visit to Washington a few years ago as part of the National Newspaper Association’s annual government affairs conference was a visit to the U.S. Supreme Court building and a short talk made to our group by Justice William O. Douglas in one of the court’s inner chambers.

It was shortly after Douglas had published his small book, “Points of Rebellion.” It was a controversial book to say the least. It still is. It is as interesting when read today in light of world events, as when it was written in 1969, a time when waves of rebellion were sweeping the nation and, indeed, the world.

Whether you agreed with his opinions and dissents, Douglas, who died last Saturday, must be regarded as one of the judicial giants of this century.

As some misguided judges of the country are presently making moves to close certain judicial proceedings to the press and public, it’s timely to ponder this 1972 Douglas opinion, “The press has a preferred position in our constitutional scheme, not to enable it to make money, not to set newsmen apart as a favored class, but to bring fulfillment to the public’s right to know.”

Worthy of praise

It isn’t every week that we have three subjects to write about worthy of commendation. And while they are totally unrelated and dissimilar in nature, they are all topics that deserve favorable comment.

The first is the word from the Illinois Department of Transportation that the long-awaited twin-bridge span of the Illinois River near Valley City is moving closer to reality. Bids will be accepted in May and by the fall of 1984 the Central Illinois Expressway should connect up with Illinois 107 near Griggsville.

The second achievement worthy of high praise is the fine showing of the Pittsfield high school Saukees in state tournament basketball. At the time of this writing, the supersectional game had not been played and we do not know the outcome. But win or lose there, the Saukees have posted a season record that deserves acclaim and congratulations.

The third bit of news that merits favorable comment is the attitude of Mayor Williams and the council toward the planting of trees in the city.

Now, this is not an earth-shaking subject and could perhaps be dismissed as one of those totally “safe” subjects of editorial comment. Maybe so, but it would also be easy for the city to ignore the subject. The mayor properly notes that a great many trees have been destroyed in recent years in the city and it’s time to start moving in the other direction by planting new ones. The mayor’s appointment of Mrs. Paul Grote to head such a move is also a wise choice.

Hot dog referendum

One of the questions cluttering up an already long ballot for Pittsfield city voters next Tuesday is a ridiculous referendum about a year-round dog leash ordinance.

This is supposedly a noble gesture of democracy. Heed the stirring declaration, “Let the people decide!”

What it really amounts to is a hasty retreat from duty by the city council.

If an alderman wants to test the feeling of his constituents on this or any other issue all he has to do is make a few phone calls or ring a few doorbells in his ward on a weekend. Then, he totes up the results and votes accordingly, safe behind a shield of righteousness: “That’s what my people want.”

He could also do the same thing about votes on sidewalks, liquor licenses, zoning variations, street repair, buying end-loaders, or any of the dozens of other questions that come before a council during the year. Whether he would then deserve his pay is another matter.

But in any event, we’re going to have a “dog-vote” next Tuesday and then probably a year-round dog confinement ordinance — a case of more of the heavy hand of government on the backs of the people and not coming this time from state or federal sources, but our own local government

Sewer musings

At first glance, a new city sewer system ranks pretty low on a scale of civic enchantment. It hardly compares with parks, paved streets, ball diamonds, swimming pools, sidewalks, airports, or a fancy new watering hole. Even a traffic light has greater charm.

But, on the other hand, what is more essential to a city’s social acceptance — its attainment of a proper place in the sun of municipal recognition.

Having a third-rate sewer system is almost as tacky as having a high school football team with an 0-9 record.

Dream no little dreams. Vote Yes.

More paper chasing

The chickens came home to roost last week.

In the mail from Springfield came our “Small Business Corporation Replacement Income Tax Return.”

You’ll remember when they took the personal property tax off corporations they replaced it with a higher state corporate income tax. Nobody got much excited about it. It’s only the business community that will be paying it and the local taxing bodies are not going to suffer any loss of revenue. Some will even get more than before.

But back to the forms: four full pages printed on two sides, plus four pages of instructions printed on two sides — all in small type. Naturally, the language is typically legal — long, convoluted sentences only another lawyer or accountant could understand.

We took a quick look at the forms and instructions and promptly sent them off to our accountant. Some day we’ll get his bill.

Sooner or later there will be cries from small businessmen complaining about the expenses of paperwork inflicted on them by the government, followed by assurances from the governing officials that they’re all in favor of reducing the paperwork burden on small business, followed by some more legislative actions that will force more paperwork on small business, followed by...

Who Was Gene Cervi?, from page 10

award, became ISWNE members and came back year after year to give strength to other **Courage** editors who had thought they were fighting lonely battles in places most of the world had never heard of. From 1962 to 69 I wrote about weekly newspapers for *Editor & Publisher* magazine, out of New York City. Each July, I journeyed to Pere Marquette State Park, near Grafton, Ill., where the conferences were held. I covered not only these **Courage in Journalism** winners, but some of the great community newspaper editorial minds the conference attracted, first among them the late **Houstoun Waring**, the *Littleton* (Colo.) *Independent*, then considered the premier weekly newspaper editor in the country. He frequently wrote for the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*.

Keep your **James Restons**. These weekly newspaper editors were my journalism heroes. Foremost was **Gene Cervi**, editor and publisher of Cervi's *Rocky Mountain Business Journal* in Denver, a highly successful weekly devoted to business, social and cultural coverage, or as he described it once to me, "a combination of the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New Yorker*."

Cervi, an imposing figure of average height, some 250 pounds, and a booming voice, was the loud conscience of ISWNE at a time when many at the annual meeting were noisy and sometimes contentious. Following his death at 64 on Dec. 15, 1970, the *New York Times* described his journal as the "muckraking weekly business newspaper" and Cervi as "one of the most outspoken voices in American journalism."

Cervi, with his successful "in your face" journalism, was the conscience of the ISWNE. **Burt Freireich**, retired editor and publisher of the *Sun City* (Arizona) *News-Sun*, told me at the Halifax conference that for years until he sold his paper he had Cervi's photo on his office door with the caption "This is what a great editor looks like."

By 1975, the United States had cooled down and far few weekly editors were being harassed. The "Lovejoy Courage in Journalism" award stayed at SIU when the conference headquarters moved to Northern Illinois University. A new award, the **Cervi** was created, be given to "someone with a career of outstanding public service through community journalism and who adhered to the highest standards of the craft with a deep reverence for the English language that that was a hallmark of Cervi's writing." For awhile, along with a plaque the recipient received a gold-plated replica of the bulldog hood ornament on the Mac truck. The bulldog resembled Cervi.






The current roster of ISWNE has many outstanding editors in its ranks today, among them sons and daughters of the early members. Their meetings are a lot more quiet than the raucous 60s sessions in Southern Illinois as editors and speakers of all political stripes went at each other. Gene Cervi often was the bulldog barking the loudest.

Ask me who Gene Cervi was and I come at you from a far different place and time when weekly newspaper journalism mirrored a Mac Truck hood ornament and a 1960s confrontational sensibility.

The Mac truck bulldog hood ornament said it all.

Rick Freidman is a Woburn resident and contributing columnist to the *Woburn Advocate*.

**GENE CERVI
AWARD WINNERS**

- 2000 **Allan A. Seiler**, *The Pike Press*, Pittsfield, Ill. 
- 1999 No award given
- 1998 **Jack Authelet**, *Foxboro* (Mass.) *Reporter*
- 1997 **Carol Wilcox & Cary Stiff**, *Clear Creek Courant*, Idaho Springs, Colo. **Seiler**
- 1996 **Charlotte & Marvin Schexnayder**, *Dumas* (Ark.) *Clarion* 
- 1995 No award given
- 1994 **Jim MacNeill**, *The Eastern Graphic*, Montague, Prince Edward Island **MacNeill**
- 1993 **Bob Bliss**, *The Montgomery County News*, Hillsboro, Ill. 
- 1992 **Robert Trapp**, *Rio Grande Sun*, Espanola, N.M. **Trapp**
- 1991 **Henry Gay**, *Shelton-Mason County Journal*, Shelton, Wash.
- 1990 **Karl Monroe**, *Collinsville* (Ill.) *Herald*
- 1989 **William Rotch**, *Milford* (N.H.) *Cabinet*
- 1988 **Bruce Brugmann**, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*
- 1987 **James Russell Wiggins**, *Ellsworth* (Maine) *American*
- 1986 **Rollin McCommons**, *Athens* (Ga.) *Observer*
- 1985 **McDill (Huck) Boyd**, *Phillips County Review*, Phillipsburg, Kan. 
- 1984 **Richard McCord**, *Santa Fe* (N.M.) *Reporter* **McCord**
- 1983 **Homer Marcum**, *The Martin Countian*, Inez, Ky.
- 1982 **Kieth Howard**, *Yellow Springs* (Ohio) *News* 
- 1981 **Edward DeCourcy**, *Newport* (N.H.) *Argus Champion* **Estabrook**
- 1980 **Robert Estabrook**, *Lakeville* (Conn.) *Journal*
- 1979 **Houstoun Waring**, *Littleton* (Colo.) *Independent*
- 1978 **Tom Leathers**, *The Squire*, Kansas City, Mo.
- 1977 **Charles & Virginia Russell**, *Dewitt County Observer*, Clinton, Ill.
- 1976 **Blair Macy**, *Keene Valley Sun*, *Kennesburg*, Colo.



Elliott Freireich

**Publisher,
West Valley View**

200 W. Wigwam Blvd.
Litchfield Park, AZ
85340-4636

June 30, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

He explores the paradox of the U.S. House of Representatives voting to allow the Ten Commandments to be displayed in schools in a country where choice of religion is one of the basics tenants of freedom. He suggests that instead schools could post a code of conduct, that religious education be off school property.

Thou Shalt Not Put Commandments on School Walls

In direct conflict with U.S. Supreme Court rulings, the U.S. House of Representatives two weeks ago voted to allow the display of the Ten Commandments in public schools.

What were the representatives thinking?

Separation of church and state has been one of the founding principles of this nation. Remember the first British immigrants — people who left England to be able to practice their own religion unfettered by the religious preferences of King George.

America is the Great Melting Pot — home to immigrants from every corner of the globe. Every color, every ethnic background, every religion is represented here in the West Valley where Europeans, Asians, Africans, South Americans and North Americans from outside the U.S. boundaries reside and freely practice their religions without fear of reprisal. Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, Taoists, atheists and others all have the right to practice their religion the way they see fit.

The House decided that it would be better for the country if children were taught religion. And in that regard they are correct.

The problem is that the government's solution is often that the government can do it better. So the House decided that the way for children to learn about the Ten Commandments is for the government to teach them in school. War after war was fought to prevent just this sort of problem from happening.

It would be good if all children had a religious upbringing. It would be good if all parents taught them right from wrong. It would be better if all parents also practiced what they preached. But that isn't happening in the real world.

The Ten Commandments are not appropriate in public schools. The Supreme Court has already ruled multiple times on this. In *Stone vs. Graham*, 1980, the court struck down a Kentucky law requiring the posting of the Ten Commandments in all classrooms.

Public schools may cooperate administratively with churches concerned for the religious education of children, but public property may not be used, public funds may not be directly appropriated, and

religion itself may not be promoted (*McCullum vs. Board of Education*, 1948, and *Zorach vs. Clauson*, 1952).

But if there is still a need to hang the Ten Commandments on the school walls, here is a possible alternative — A Code of Conduct:

1. No swearing or use of language that is offensive to others.
2. Honor and respect your parents, guardians and teachers.
3. No killing or attacking with intent to injure.
4. Be open with your relationships and don't mess up someone else's by flirting with or desiring another's boyfriend or girlfriend.
5. Don't lie about another person.
6. Honor the sanctity of marriage; do not court another person's spouse.
7. Do not desire or envy your neighbor's possessions.
8. Respect the differences among other religions and codes of conduct as your own code requires you to do.
9. Treat others the way you would like to be treated.

This code probably would not prevent a mass killing like the one which took place at Columbine High School in Colorado, but it might have some positive effect in the public schools without violating the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling (a declaration of the Constitution's intent) by endorsing a specific religious set of rules.

Lest we forget, here are the Ten Commandments:

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
10. Thou shalt not covet.

There are Pearls in This Oyster

It's not often that we're asked for advice. In fact, the *Driftwood* editorial board cannot remember a single occasion when someone sought to tap its collective wisdom.

Rather, its members have found some degree of contentment simply by dispensing advice freely on this page, week after week, in the faint hope that someone might go beyond just reading it by heeding it as well.

However, our purpose is not to change the world (in one fell swoop) but to stir the saucepan of simmering ideas, and encourage public debate of matters of public interest.

And so this week we decided to talk about those who might yet change the world, those people who marked an event on the weekend which has been the focal point of 12 years of school.

They are the 100 or so members of the graduating class of Gulf Islands Secondary School.

Those 12 years are coming to an end this month.

The graduation of those students on Saturday represented the culmination of 12 years of studies, formative years during which the wonders of the world have been presented to them, wonders that range from amazing discoveries in the field of space exploration to the marvelous progress mankind has made in the field of communication.

Also during those 12 years, members of the graduating class have been given the opportunity to learn how to think for themselves, how to solve problems.

From the primary grades through to the final, long-awaited 12th year, these students have been exposed to academia and the celebration of learning.

Now it is time for something different.

We live in an era of limited opportunity by comparison with earlier generations of island graduates.

Job opportunities are fewer as the resource-based industries continue to undergo change.

It is a time, perhaps, when goals are more difficult to formulate because the choices are fewer.

But the best advice for Gulf Islands Secondary School's graduates remains unchanged. It is the same advice we have been dispensing on this page for many years: get on a ferry and don't come back until you've seen the world.

Twelve years of schooling will pale in comparison to the learning opportunities available through travel. Those 12 years were important and necessary but learning never stops. It just becomes less structured.

And what there is to learn about oneself, about humanity, about the world is best explored through travel.

Travel brings one face to face with the people and the places that have been shaped by the events we learn about in history.

It takes us to wondrous spectacles such as the Grand Canyon, the Sahara Desert or the Swiss Alps, which until now have been glossy photographs in a geography text, or lines on paper in an atlas.

Travel introduces us to new people, and people always have stories to tell. Stories from different people of diverse backgrounds and varying interests can open our minds, shape our thinking, change our lives for the better.

Exploring the world exposes us to other ways of doing things, different ways of thinking and sometimes better ways of looking at life.

Our culture, for example, is a materialistic one that tends not to celebrate enough the value of learning.

In many countries of the Third World, the reverse is to be found: the scarcity of material goods creates a stronger desire for learning so that those goods might be obtained.

This isn't to say that either culture is good or bad, they're simply different. And through the exploration of other cultures, perhaps we can make all our cultures better.

And isn't that what education is all about? Bettering ourselves mentally, physically and spiritually?

So we suggest to this and future graduates of our high school that the world awaits them, not with open arms but more like an oyster whose shell must be pried open.

Within the shell lies not just a single pearl, but a multitude of precious jewels of knowledge.

The pearls are waiting to be gathered, and the ferry is waiting to take you there.



Susan Lundy

**Managing Editor,
*Gulf Islands Driftwood***

328 Lower Ganges Road
Salt Spring, B.C. V8U 2V3

June 9, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

In her editorial commencement address, Lundy uses a light hand to encourage students that travel may provide their best post-secondary education. They need to leave their island (in more ways than one) to learn about humanity, the world and themselves. They need to pry open this oyster for the pearls of knowledge.



**Renee
Van Der Werff**

Co-owner/Co-publisher,
Armour Chronicle

PO Box 129
Armour, SD 57313

April 20, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

Usually an editorial written in first person loses some of its effectiveness for public readers because they don't identify with a personal message. Van Der Werff, however, uses emotion and detail to tell a story and evoke responses that most readers can identify.

She wrote how her father died of lung cancer from smoking. He started as a typical thrill-seeking teenager, became addicted and smoked himself to death in 35 years. Her meaning, of course, is that teens will read her father's story and not light up.

Teens: Please Don't

So, you think smoking is cool? So did I once. I spent more than half my life living with a smoker and I just couldn't understand what all the "non-smoking" fuss was about.

I can still remember my dad going to places and homes where they asked him not to smoke — he'd have a fit. And I thought, "What's the big deal? Why should anyone care if he smokes?"

Then I found out.

I was 14 when they told my dad he had lung cancer — lung cancer that was caused by smoking.

And when they told him he only had a few months to live, do you know what he did?

He went to light up.

Being a smoker yourself, you probably understand. A smoker's natural instinct is to light up when they are stressed. What's the first thing you want to do after you fail your history test, your boyfriend dumps you or you get in trouble with your parents?

Anyway, while I was watching my dad try to light up as he was laying in that hospital bed, hooked to oxygen, I finally realized why smoking was a big deal.

With tears in my eyes, I looked at my dad. He was crying. I was crying. And I said, "Daddy, please don't."

And he said, "Honey, Daddy's already smoked too many cigarettes."

But he didn't light up. And he never smoked another cigarette.

But within the year, he was dead. He had been smoking for more than 35 years. He had already smoked too many cigarettes.

If you think my story is dramatic, you're right.

Watching your dad die a very painful death from lung cancer is dramatic.

Watching your dad dwindle from about 250 pounds to 125 pounds is dramatic.

Watching your dad puking from cancer treatments is dramatic.

And spending the last time you have with your dad unable to talk to him because he is in a coma is dramatic.

I hear that smoking is now the trend — that about 70 to 80 percent of high school students are smoking.

All I can say is "Please don't."

I know that when you're in high school, age 50 seems a long time away.

And I know that you think that this can't happen you.

But remember that my dad started smoking when he was about your age. He started by sneaking

cigarettes behind the barn and later "social smoking" at parties and dances.

At that time, the dangers of cigarettes really weren't a concern. I'm sure the only reason that he hid his cigarettes from my grandparents is because they would have tanned his hide for spending his money on them.

And I know that you think that you can quit whenever you want. Right now, you probably can. Maybe now you're just smoking to keep weight off or, because your friends are doing it.

But remember, by the time you want to quit, you will probably be addicted.

I remember my dad trying to quit several times. But nicotine produces a craving. Smokers crave the odor, the flavor and the high that comes from the cigarette.

And because my dad couldn't quit, he tried to cover up his smoking by calling it "no big deal."

But by then, doctors knew about smoking's effects. And I'm sure — especially since Dad repeatedly told my brother and I never to start smoking — that he knew too.

I realize that some of you probably know smokers who are still puffing away at 80 and are "doing fine."

But what you don't know is that they probably don't sleep at night anymore because they're sitting on the edge of their bed coughing — sometimes coughing blood — because they can't catch their breath when they lay down.

And their senses of smell and taste disappeared years ago. Flowers and rain and baby's skin all smell about the same and a slice of warm bread doesn't taste much better than cooked spinach.

Finally, what you don't realize is that almost all older smokers want to quit.

They don't want to become statistics. They want to see their children graduate from high school and college, they want to walk their daughter down the aisle and they want to hold their first grandchild in their arms.

If I can't stop you from lighting up, at least think about these things.

I would give anything if I could pick up the phone and say hello to my dad today.

— Renee Van Der Werff

Editor's note: Ironically, I couldn't sleep because I was compelled to write this (and believe me, I don't feel compelled to write much at 5 a.m.). As I reread it for the final time, I looked at the calendar and realized that not only is today (April 14) National "Kick Butt" Day, but that it would have also been my dad's 78th birthday.)

About that Photograph

Last week's front page photograph rankled more than a few of our readers. The photo showing Angelina Fernandez' lifeless body slumped forward in a smashed Hyundai prompted about 100 people to pick up a telephone and call us to express their anger, disbelief and outrage over our decision to print such a disturbing photograph.

Most callers accused us of being insensitive to the 31-year-old woman's family, and wondered if we had asked their permission to print the photo.

They called it: "horrid, disrespectful, appalling, disgusting, tacky, in poor taste, out of the comfort zone and not a people's right to know issue."

One caller said: "I can look at it. It doesn't bother me, but I can't imagine the devastation the family feels."

Another caller said: "I cried for this woman. That could have been one of my family members. My heart goes out to this family."

The greatest number of callers were women. Many of them were concerned that their children would see the photo and be upset by it.

Some intimated physical violence against us, others suggested we were racist, while a few promised to do what they could to hurt the newspaper financially.

So why did we print it?

We printed it because we want people to wake up and slow down.

We want motorists to stop driving casually and making risky maneuvers that endanger lives, all to save a few seconds or minutes.

Is the photograph a shocker? Yes.

Does it get our point across?

Apparently we achieved half of our message. We got people to wake up, but we didn't communicate the second half of our message as well.

When we explained our intentions, most callers said they can understand our point, but they still disagreed with our decision.

We stand by the photograph. We believe it was the right decision. Our intention was not to be insensitive to the family, or to be disrespectful to Fernandez. If we caused her family any grief we apologize.

The decision to run the photograph came with Fernandez in mind. She and her driver, Pablo Salazar, 27, died when Sean Parson in his Ford pickup began to pass an 18-wheel tractor-trailer. The maneuver resulted in a deadly head-on accident on Loop 303, March 9.

We also thought about 17-year-old Christina Yniguez, who died March 1 in a two-car collision at 91st and Glendale avenues.

We thought about Luis Ramon Neder, 44, who died in a Feb. 22 accident involving two trucks on Maricopa County Route 85 and Patterson Road.

We remembered 18-year-old Andre Torrez, who died in a three-car accident on Interstate 10 just west of 51st Avenue on Jan. 3.

We didn't forget Jamie Cahill, 15, who was killed in a Nov. 19, 1998 accident that injured four others along Thomas Road.

She died racing back to school from lunch. She wasn't even driving. A situation similar to the tragedy on March 7, 1997 when John Harris, 16, died in a car collision in the 8000 block of Indian School Road.

Fernandez' death happened on a narrow stretch of roadway known as Loop 303. In the last five years this route has seen an increase in accidents, including six deaths and 47 injuries in non-intersection accidents, according to Mike Dawson, Maricopa County Department of Transportation manager of community and government relations.

Loop 303 will become more heavily traveled this year, and the next, just as all roads will be in the West Valley. Driving is becoming more dangerous, and people need to be more cautious.

Our photograph may have taken people out of their comfort zone, or shown a little more reality than they wanted, but frankly, we're glad we caught people's attention with our photograph, because what's at stake is someone's life, maybe even your own.

We're trying to be sensitive, while expressing a painful and necessary message.

Drive carefully.

Your life depends on it.



John Conway

**Editor,
West Valley View**

200 W. Wigwam Blvd.
Litchfield Park, AZ
85340-4636

March 24, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

Because of an increase in fatal accidents in certain areas of Maricopa County, the West Valley View printed a graphic photo of a dead body in a wrecked car. When more than 100 readers phoned in their disapproval, Conway responded with the reasons why the photo ran — details of multiple deaths on these roads and the likelihood of more.

His bottom line: Drive carefully. Your life depends on it. The judging of this editorial was slightly affected by technical mistakes.



Tim Redmond

Executive Editor,
*The San Francisco
Bay Guardian*

520 Hampshire Street
San Francisco, CA
94110-1417

March 17, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

Sometimes lengthy editorials are effective. They especially work when the readership is specialized and interested in the journalism offered by an alternative city newspaper. Such it is for the *Guardian*, one of the original "underground" newspapers during the Vietnam War. Redmond explains in detail why voters need to approve a sunshine initiative to bring secret deals between city government and private interests into public light. His bottom line is: Secrecy begets sleaze, and sleaze begets skewed priorities that favor the rich and powerful and leave everyone else behind.

Needed: A Sunshine Initiative

Former supervisor Angela Alioto says she's never seen anything like it: "Not in my lifetime or in my studies of the history of San Francisco's mayors," she says, "short of Mayor McCarthy, and that was back in 1909, and in the end a lot of people ended up in San Quentin."

Alioto is talking about the astounding list of secret deals going on in the administration of Mayor Willie Brown. Secret deals with Bloomingdale's on Market Street. Secret deals for the future of Treasure Island. Secret deals with Pacific Gas and Electric Co. to block public power and keep its illegal monopoly intact. Secret plans to keep the Presidio in a private trust and keep public power out of San Francisco. Secret deals with AT&T and TCI to keep a lousy cable franchise in place. Secret deals with Adshel to get rid of freestanding news racks and give city hall control over the street distribution of newspapers. Secret deals to build a parking garage in Golden Gate Park. Secret deals for a stadium and mall at Candlestick Point.

Secret deals that will reshape the future of the city, for years and years and years, at a cost to the taxpayers of hundreds of millions of dollars, all with virtually no public input. In fact, as Savannah Blackwell reports on page 21, many of the deals are being done with no public records at all: Brown has made a concerted effort to avoid putting anything on paper.

Six years after San Francisco passed the nation's first municipal sunshine ordinance, secrecy has come back to haunt the city. A mayor who is actively, almost viciously averse to open government, a city attorney who operates as if the interests of private contractors doing business with the city are more important than the interests of the city, a board of supervisors stacked with loyal appointees of the mayor have combined to exploit every loophole and thwart every effort of the 1993 Sunshine Ordinance.

The effects are obvious all over the streets of San Francisco: millions upon millions for the likes of AT&T, PG&E, and Bloomingdale's while record numbers of homeless people die of exposure. Huge profits for developers while essential services at General Hospital are cut.

The bottom line is simple: secrecy begets sleaze, and sleaze begets skewed priorities that favor the rich and powerful and leave everyone else behind.

When the great progressive reformer Hiram Johnson instituted the initiative, the referendum, and the recall as the populist response to corruption in California government, he left out one essential element: sunshine. That's why citizen advocates are moving to put San Francisco once again in the forefront of progressive reform with a comprehensive sunshine initiative headed for the November ballot.

The 1993 Sunshine Ordinance was a compromise. To get the Board of Supervisors to approve it (over the opposition of much of the city hall bureaucracy), supporters of the plan had to accept a version much less stringent than they originally wanted.

And over the past six years, sunshine advocates have learned exactly how every shortcoming in the law can be exploited by secrecy-minded city officials.

The flaws and loopholes are outlined in detail by Randall Lyman on page 15. A few of the most obvious problems:

- *No effective enforcement.* The law mandates that a wide range of documents be made public but provides no penalties for city officials who violate that mandate.

The Sunshine Initiative's drafters are working on

language that gives citizens a meaningful appeal to denials of records. Already the draft language declares it official misconduct to intentionally withhold public records — and any city official who was found guilty of doing so would be removed from office and barred from ever holding future city office again.

- *Sole-source contracts.* State and local law allows certain records and meetings to remain secret — for good reason. If the city, for example, is negotiating with five different bidders who want to buy a piece of land, it wouldn't be in the public interest to reveal what each of the bidders is offering.

But dozens of big city contracts are let without any competitive bids at all — and those contracts remain secret as well. The initiative would require that the city's offers, and the bidder's counteroffers, in all sole-source negotiations be a matter of public record.

- *City attorney conflicts.* The City Attorney's Office represents the sunshine task force. The same office also represents city agencies that are charged with violations of the Sunshine Ordinance. That leads to basic conflicts that would never be allowed in any private law firm.

The initiative would allow the task force to hire independent outside counsel in situations where the City Attorney's Office has a clear conflict.

- *Nonprofits with city contracts.* Dozens of big nonprofit organizations get millions of city dollars to provide what amount to public services — but they aren't covered by sunshine laws. That means the public can't find out where public money is going.

The initiative would require that nonprofits receiving substantial city funding make public an accounting of where that money goes.

...

We've been watching the political effect of secrecy since 1969, when the *Bay Guardian* first broke the story of the Raker Act scandal, how PG&E steals San Francisco's cheap public power, in violation of federal law, to preserve its own monopoly. It was immediately apparent that this was a massive scandal — and it was also immediately apparent that the scandal could never have happened, and never have continued all these years, without embedded institutional secrecy.

Fighting that secrecy — and all its enormous effects — became a major *Bay Guardian* crusade. We've worked to set up the FOI committee of the Northern California Society of Professional Journalists, helped found the California First Amendment Coalition, helped initiate and push the state Brown Act reform legislation in the late 1980s and the early '90s, helped CFAC's general counsel, Terry Francke, draft San Francisco's first Sunshine Ordinance and helped push the law through city hall in 1993, and moved on endless fronts, journalistic, political, and legal, to shake loose secret records and open up secret meetings that protect and perpetuate the scandals at city hall (see "Walking on Sunshine," page 30). And now, we're helping initiate and push the Sunshine Initiative. And still the PG&E scandal, and all the other scandals described in this issue, continue, protected by official secrecy.

And it's clear that democracy can't function in San Francisco without a strong, effective sunshine initiative to drag PG&E, AT&T, Catellus, the 49ers, Bloomingdale's, and all the rest of the private interests that are trying to steal San Francisco, out of the back room and into the light.

Operator, Please!

This is an emergency.

Won't someone — anyone — take US West off our hands?

For the past few months, staff members at the Mercy Medical Center in Roseburg have been getting “all circuits busy” signals when they’ve tried to use the telephone. The problem, according to provider US West, is the state regulation has prevented appropriate infrastructure investments in Roseburg and other parts of rural Oregon.

Hogwash.

The fact is, US West has had both the resources and the opportunity to build all the telecommunications infrastructure rural Oregon needs.

Seven years ago, the Oregon Public Utility Commission entered into an agreement that allowed US West to earn a higher rate of return than the monopoly otherwise would have gotten. In return, Oregon was promised improvements in local phone service.

US West’s promises went mostly unkept. Rather than reinvest some of the profits where they were generated, the phone company chose to pump them into a series of less-than-spectacular investments in cable companies around the globe. It spun these investments off last summer into a new company called MediaOne.

So today, while emergency-room personnel in Roseburg find basic service dangerously unreliable, residents of Park LaBrea in Los Angeles have available what a company press release deems “the largest offering of its kind in the country where one apartment community can receive, with one phone call to their leasing office, MediaOne’s Digital Telephone Services, MediaOne’s NexTV advanced analog cable television service and MediaOne Express, a high-speed Internet access service.”

This legislative session, US West once again is asking for permission to generate higher profits, this time under the guise of promised investments in rural Oregon. Last Friday the Senate Business and

Consumer Affairs Committee passed SB 142, one of the most outrageous government giveaways ever proposed in Oregon.

In return for the promise of infrastructure investment in rural Oregon, the bill would effectively eliminate oversight of the company by the Oregon Public Utility Commission. Along the way, it would make it more difficult for serious telecommunications competitors to enter the Oregon market, end financial incentives to provide decent service and provide US West a multimillion-dollar bonanza. SB 142 would accomplish the latter result by significantly reducing the benefits to customers of a rate case currently under review by the Oregon Court of Appeals.

This is happening at a time when US West is generating an estimated \$103 million in profits on some \$560 million in revenues from its Oregon operations — a whopping 54 percent increase over its more-than-adequate financial performance in 1997. No wonder Merrill Lynch rates the company’s stock “ACCUMULATE.”

In a more sensible time, the giant phone monopoly would be laughed out of Salem on the heels of so ludicrous a proposal. Joan Smith, perhaps the most tactful and cautious of the three Oregon public-utility commissioners, is staggered by the company’s brass, as well as by the possibility SB 142 may eventually become law.

“I wish they’d admit they just don’t care about Oregon,” Smith told us last week. “All you have to do is look at the facts and look at the numbers. If they’d reinvested properly, we wouldn’t be having this conversation now. Rural Oregon is being used as a key lever to get this through.

“It’s just about profits and the art of the deal,” Smith concludes. “I wish someone would buy them.”

At this point, so do we.



Richard Meeker

**Publisher,
Willamette Week**

822 SW 10th Avenue
Portland, OR 97205

March 17, 1999

FROM THE JUDGE

Meeker employs a great deal of homework to show how the phone company US West is using profits it reaps in rural Oregon to invest in ventures in other parts of the nation. Meanwhile, its Oregon system is inadequate. One of Meeker’s key paragraphs is the word “Hogwash,” a delightful revelation many of us haven’t heard in 50 years.

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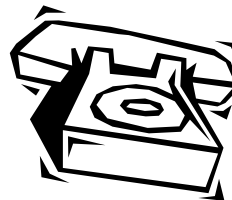
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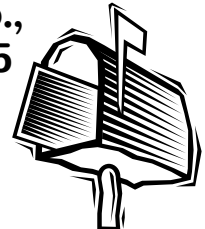
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3950 E. Newman Road
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