

**IN THIS ISSUE**

President's Report .....	Page 2
ISWNE Minutes.....	Page 3-4
Soccer mom, teacher, politician or priest: If arrested, name them in police blotter .....	Page 5
ISWNEWS .....	Page 6
Writer deception prompts scene, need for apologies .....	Page 7
Some interesting concepts from community journalist.....	Page 8
Ramblings from a high-tech sleepless night.....	Page 9
The right to know .....	Page 9-10
Two years of fuzzy math.....	Page 10
ISWNE new members.....	Page 11

# The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors

Visit the ISWNE's Web site: [www.iswne.org](http://www.iswne.org)

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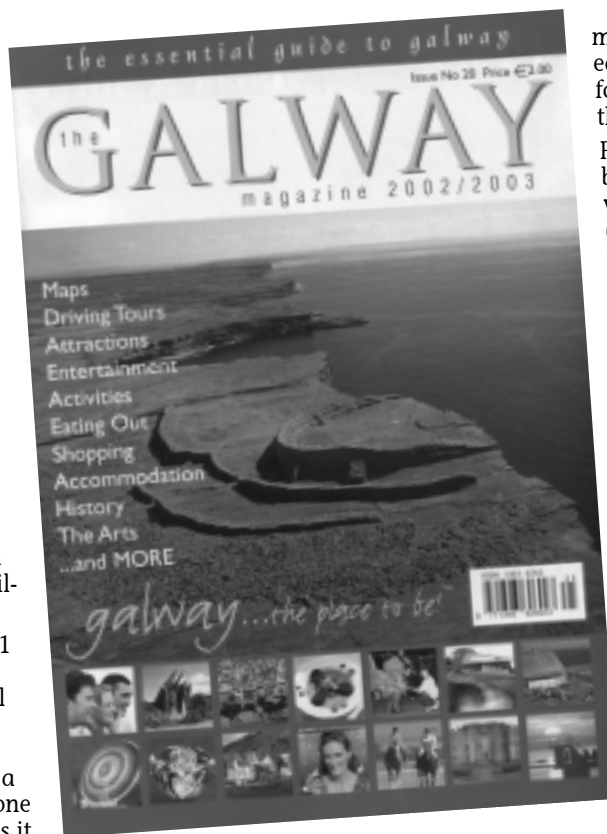
## Galway, Ireland...the place to be July 2-6

Here's the latest news about the 2003 ISWNE conference in County Galway, Ireland, July 2-6. **David Burke** has spent countless hours planning the agenda and crunching numbers to ensure that we have a stimulating and enjoyable time.

The conference fees have been set: 425 Euro for adults and 350 Euro for children, if paid by May 1. After that, the rate increases by 50 Euro. The final deadline to register is June 1. David says payment must be in Euro, but he will accept Visa or MasterCard (sorry, no American Express).

As of Feb. 3, one American dollar was worth 1.07 Euro. At that rate, the early-bird conference fee would be \$456 for adults and \$375 for children.

The conference officially begins at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, July 2, with lunch provided. That evening, we'll gather at a local art gallery and bookshop and be greeted by the mayor of Galway. We'll then walk a short distance to the King's Head, one of the city's oldest pubs. Legend has it that the building was given to a Galwegian for beheading England's King Charles I in 1649. Want to read more? Visit <http://www.thekingshead.ie>.



On Thursday, we'll travel to a medieval hall in David's hometown of Tuam for an evening of Irish stew and traditional

music, song and dance from a talented young local group who has performed to acclaim in Italy, Spain and the United States.

Friday will be a touring day. We'll board two coaches and head for the vast mountainy land of Connemara (<http://www.connemara.net>) to the west of Galway, accompanied by an archeologist. David promises plenty of sheep and a lovely countryside of mountains, lakes, bays and beaches. Lunch will be at Kylemore Abbey, the only Irish home of the Benedictine Nuns. Built originally as a castle in 1868, the estate features a Victorian walled garden, restored Abbey reception rooms, a miniature Gothic church, tranquil walks, craft shop, pottery, and restaurant. Visit <http://www.kylemoreabbey.com> for more details.

As far as the conference proper is concerned, there will be a good mix of topics, many of which will have resonance on both sides of the Atlantic. We'll probably discuss the Northern Irish peace process, the Irish economy which is just now coming down after a record boom, and the growing problem of binge drinking among young people. On the lighter side, we'll have a presentation on two sports unique to Ireland,

*continued on page 12*

# President's Report

By **Nancy Slepicka**  
*Montgomery County News,*  
Hillsboro, Ill.



## Board always looking for more work to take on

Let me tell you about the ISWNE board. Readers of this column are well versed in attending and observing meetings of city councils, county boards, village boards, school boards, boring boards.

You've seen how often these elected, appointed or volunteer boards veer off the agenda or overtalk a particular topic to death.

The ISWNE board is a refreshing exception. In my years as a board member, and this year president, I've enjoyed our twice-a-year meetings, one in January and one during the summer conference.

We start on time, move through the agenda with enough but not too much debate, and finish usually by mid-afternoon, in time for a nap or sight-seeing before having dinner together.

The quality of the society is reflected in its leadership. All 10 directors and officers, plus two former board members, attended our winter meeting in Savannah, Ga. Everyone pays their own expenses, so it's not cheap and sometimes not easy to get to a meeting in late January.

**David Burke** flew from Ireland to Atlanta on Wednesday with plans to drive around the coastal areas, but the surprise snow and ice on Thursday changed his route. The weather also caused some travel delays for **Brian Mazza** as he made his way from Alberta, Canada.

**Donna Remer** flew in from Michigan, **Harry Hix** from Oklahoma, **Goodloe Sutton** from Alabama, **Chad Stebbins** from Missouri,

**Carol O'Leary**, **Chris Woods** and **Bill Haupt** from Wisconsin, **Bob Trapp Jr.** from New Mexico, **Clyde Wills** and me from Illinois.

None of us were prepared for Georgia temperatures at freezing and below. Both Friday and Saturday nights we dined in downtown restaurants.

Il Pasticcio ([www.ilpasticcio.com](http://www.ilpasticcio.com)) is in a corner building that once was a JC Penney store. The wine room is downstairs in what was probably the bargain basement (no more!) and the main floor dining area is still surrounded by large department store windows. The building's second floor has been converted into a night club.

Back to the board meeting. A chunk of the morning was spent discussing this year's and future conferences. What I enjoy most about ISWNE is the chance to spend a few days in places I probably wouldn't visit otherwise and learn about regional interests and issues as defined by the conference host, a fellow editor.

Hearing David Burke describe what he's already locked down for Galway was a wake-up call for Clyde and me. Less than a year from now we need to be just as organized for the 2004 conference we're hosting at Pere Marquette State Park.

So, Clyde and Carolyn, Richard and I are meeting at the park's lodge this coming weekend to brainstorm and start writing down our to-do lists. The park is just north of the new Lewis & Clark State Historic Site visitors' center at Hartford and across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. Since 2004 is the 200th anniversary of the start of the L&C expedition, the 100th anniversary of the St. Louis World's Fair, and the 50th annual conference of ISWNE — plus other topics related to the river and to Illinois politics — we won't be short on subjects for the conference.

Brian Mazza said he and **Joan Plaxton**



The Lady & Sons was a packed house. We waited in the bitter cold for 15 minutes before our table for 12 was ready. Others stood outside for nearly an hour. The menu was that good.

When our group exited the restaurant, we were greeted by cheers and applause from the frozen crowd still waiting to be seated. Saturday night the board was treated to an elegant dinner in the wine room of Il Pasticcio. We were the guests of **Michael Sunderman**, president/COO of Morris Newspaper Corp., which recently bought a small group of Wisconsin newspapers from a friend of Bill Haupt.

have already started talking about logistics and topics for their 2005 conference in Alberta, and Donna Remer is exploring the possibilities for 2006 in Detroit.

See what I mean? The ISWNE board is a group of volunteers whose desks at home are probably stacked high, yet, like Brian and Donna, are looking years ahead for more work to do.

I'll close with a precautionary tale.

I went through two airport security checkpoints, in St. Louis and Savannah, and was pulled aside at Lambert International for one of those random frisks. The federal security guards were obviously doing a good job keeping the airplanes safe.

Then as I was driving home from St. Louis, I reached into the front pocket of my small backpack, one of my two carry-ons, and grabbed a grapefruit knife that Mom gave

me and I'd forgotten to remove. It's good that the feds missed finding its 4-inch serrated blade. On my last flight, the Santa Barbara airport guards emptied the same backpack and found, way down in the bottom, a large metal corkscrew I'd forgotten I owned.

This is probably how you get on Ashcroft's list.

President **Nancy Slepicka** called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

1. The minutes of the June 26, 2002, board meeting in Joplin, Missouri, were approved (Sutton/Burke).

2. Stebbins reported ISWNE had \$26,727.98 in its checking account. He distributed a profit and loss statement showing that ISWNE had \$12,520.04 in income during 2002 and \$14,445.89 in expenses, for a loss of \$1,925.85. He explained that if the \$2,500 payment to **Rick Friedman** for writing the history of ISWNE were removed, the Society would have been \$574.15 in the black for 2002. Burke said ISWNE should decide what kind of a financial cushion it wanted to maintain. Stebbins reported that the ISWNE Foundation had a balance of \$1,560.78. The financial statement was approved (Hix/Burke).

3. Stebbins reported that ISWNE has 185 paid members, plus 58 complimentary members, for a total membership of 243. ISWNE had 229 members a year ago. *Grassroots Editor* has an additional 98 subscribers, for a total circulation of 341. A year ago, *Grassroots Editor* had 335 subscribers. Remer suggested that Stebbins email all ISWNE board members before dropping someone for non-payment of membership dues.

4. Stebbins reported that **Dr. Ray Laakaniemi**, a retired journalism professor from Bowling Green State University, would be the 2003 Golden Quill judge. Dr. Laakaniemi attended the 2002 conference in Joplin. Dr. Laakaniemi will receive a conference scholarship for Galway, but in lieu of receiving airfare to Ireland, would like a conference scholarship for his wife. The board discussed ways of using the Golden Quill contest to increase member-

ship in ISWNE. Stebbins said he mailed the Summer issue of *Grassroots Editor* that contained all the Golden Quill winners to everyone who had entered the contest and invited them to join ISWNE. Trapp said he called many of the entrants in 2001 and gave them further encouragement to join, but some were unaware they had even entered the contest. The problem, he said, was that some of the chains had a designated person to submit entries to newspaper contests. The board approved a motion (Remer/Hix) that starting in 2004, there will be a \$20 per person Golden Quill entry fee for non-members that includes a complimentary ISWNE membership expiring Dec. 31, 2004.

## Minutes

International Society  
of Weekly Newspaper Editors

Board of Directors Meeting,  
January 25, 2003  
Savannah, Georgia

### In Attendance:

Nancy Slepicka  
Chad Stebbins  
Donna Remer  
David Burke  
Carol O'Leary  
Brian Mazza  
Chris Wood  
Harry Hix  
Goodloe Sutton  
Bill Haupt  
Clyde Wills (*non-board member*)  
Bob Trapp Jr. (*non-board member*)  
Bob Whetstone (*non-board member*)

5. Stebbins reported that the Missouri Secretary of State's office finally had approved the ISWNE Foundation's articles of incorporation as a nonprofit corporation. The Internal Revenue Service, however, has not recognized the Foundation as being exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The board paid Gerry Horowitz, a CPA in Flagstaff, Ariz., \$1,750 in January 2001 for the completion of the task. The board approved a motion (Burke/O'Leary) for Stebbins to send a formal letter to Horowitz expressing its disappointment at the delay in getting approval from the IRS and asking how likely it would be to have IRS approval by the time of the Galway conference. If Horowitz fails to respond within 30 days, Stebbins is to send a second letter asking him for a full accounting of the time he has spent working on the project, the steps he has taken, and a refund of the balance. The board will consider other options at the Galway conference.

6. Haupt reported that he and **Tim Waltner** will present an editorial critique session at the Wisconsin Newspaper Association's annual convention on Feb. 7 in conjunction with the National Conference of Editorial Writers. He said ISWNE's editorial critiques are "very valuable — it's outreach work." Remer said ISWNE should develop a promotional piece that included what the aim and concept were. Wood suggested using testimonials from past workshop participants. The board asked Haupt to develop the promotional piece, which will be posted on the ISWNE web site and mailed to press associations and newspaper groups.

7. Stebbins reported that the 2002 Joplin conference had income from the following sources: \$20,980 from registrations; \$1,200

from the Ozark Press Association; \$1,000 from the Missouri Press Association; and \$24.15 in checking account interest. Expenses totaled \$24,216.91. Stebbins pointed out that some expenses, such as \$1,416 for the Greenslade Bursary recipient's travel to Joplin, should have been paid by ISWNE rather than the Joplin conference.

8. Burke reported on his plans for the 2003 Galway conference (see story, page one). The board voted to suspend the Greenslade Bursary scholarship program this year and instead invite past recipients to the Galway conference

(Mazza/Remer). Burke asked Stebbins for a list of the past recipients; Stebbins said a list is not readily available but will have to be compiled from old ISWNE newsletters. The board passed a motion to allocate Burke \$1,000 in "seed money" for the Galway conference (Sutton/Wood). Haupt's suggestion at the June 26, 2002, board meeting that a Canadian editor be added to those receiving scholarships was tabled until the January 2004 board meeting.

9. Wills and Slepicka reported on initial plans for the June 30-July 3, 2004, conference at Pere Marquette State Park in Grafton, Ill. They plan to take advantage of the nearby Lewis and Clark Visitors Center, a 14,000-square-foot building that opened in December and will be the focus of worldwide attention at the beginning of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial in May 2004. Children will enjoy the Raging Rivers Waterpark in Grafton, Ill. Wills pointed out that St. Louis is only 40 miles away and that some activities for children may take place there.

10. The board approved the 2005 conference to be held in Alberta July 6-9 (Hix/O'Leary). Mazza said the conference will likely be split between Fort McMurray, which has more oil locked up than Saudi Arabia, and Edmonton.

11. Remer gave possible program ideas if

Detroit SPJ chapter may provide assistance. Attendees would stay at Wayne State University, Oakland University, or the University of Windsor.

The board adjourned for lunch at noon and reconvened at 1:30 p.m.

12. The board considered Rick Friedman's proposal to amend the June 2002 agreement between the two parties. Friedman would like to publish a volume one and a volume two of ISWNE's history rather than a single work. Volume one would include the H.R. Long/Southern Illinois University years and end in 1974. Volume two would cover the post-SIU years, beginning in 1975 and ending in 2005. Friedman has completed 12 chapters of his manuscript and has written ISWNE's history through 1968. He said he has written nearly 75,000 words. After considerable discussion, the board reaffirmed the original agreement with Friedman. It was suggested that he interview ISWNE's "old-timers" before it's too late.

13. The board voted to award **Laurel Stebbins** a conference scholarship for Galway in appreciation of her efforts during the 2002 Joplin conference.

14. Mazza reported that his term and Burke's are expiring this year. He suggested that the board be prepared to recommend a slate of officers at the Galway conference.

15. Whetstone said he can still order ISWNE denim shirts for anyone and that those going to Ireland may want one. The price is still \$36 if mailed within the United States.

He can be contacted at [carolo@dwave.net](mailto:carolo@dwave.net). After suggestions that the board meet in Charleston, S.C., next year, the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.



*Goodloe Sutton and Bill Haupt engage Michael Sunderman in conversation while Clyde Wills visits with Mary Sunderman at a dinner sponsored by the Morris Newspaper Corporation in Savannah on Jan. 25.*



*Michael Sunderman (left) engages Bob Trapp Jr. and Clyde Wills in conversation prior to dinner on Jan. 25.*

the 2006 conference is held in Detroit, including the auto industry, the labor movement, international boundaries, cultural diversity, and a tour of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. The

# Soccer mom, teacher, politician or priest: If arrested, name them in police blotter

By Carolyn James

*[Editor's note: James is the publisher of three weekly newspapers on the South Shore of Long Island, circulation 18,000. She's been in the business of reporting police blotters for 22 years.]*

It's 7:20 a.m. on a Monday morning and you've arrived in the office a little early to catch up on some work. The telephone rings and after putting aside your first instinct to ignore it, your reporter's curiosity kicks in and you pick it up.

It's a reader.

She's a teacher and was out celebrating with a friend over the weekend and was arrested for drunk driving. She's embarrassed and upset and she is pleading with you not to print her name. "I'll never be able to face a class again," she said. "And I will lose all my credibility as a teacher, and as a role model."

It's a toughie, undoubtedly. What do you do?

At our family of local community newspapers we listen, take a deep breath and explain in as understanding a tone as possible that we never remove the name of an individual who has been arrested from our weekly police blotter upon that individual's request. We then add that it would be unfair and unethical to do so.

More than often, the caller then asks why we print any names. The objections run from "it's an invasion of privacy" to "you're just trying to capitalize on my pain to sell newspapers."

Obviously neither is true. It is and has been our belief for many years that official police news that advises our readers about burglaries and assaults and arrests that have taken place in their neighborhoods informs and empowers. While there may be some morbid curiosity attached to the popularity of this column in our newspapers, the bottom line is that it helps to protect our readers.

One group of neighbors concerned about the number of burglaries taking place in their community established a neighborhood watch program, dramatically reducing the number of incidents within a month.

One man who read his name under arrests for drunk driving was able to clear himself after proving to police that someone had used his identity.

The pressure of listing the names and addresses of the men in another community who were patronizing prostitutes led to a dramatic decline in this activity, which was seriously disrupting businesses in the area. Believe it or not, the police told us that many of those charged were more concerned that their name was going to be in the newspaper than with the fact that they had been arrested.

Newspapers have the legal right to access and print this information, and we take it seriously. We also take seriously the responsibilities that go along with those rights, ensuring that our blotter is complete, accurate and timely. Over the past 20 years, we have established some hard and fast rules that help to ensure we meet those ethical demands:

- Do not print the name of an individual who has been arrested unless you have an address. If one is not listed on the police report, we contact police to try and get it. If we can't, the name is eliminated to avoid the possibly of confusing that individual with someone of the same or similar name within the same community.
- We include a disclaimer at the end of every blotter reminding readers that arrests are only allegations and that the individual named has not been found guilty in a court of law. We also state that anyone who has been arrested and whose name appears and is later found innocent, or has the charges against them dropped, can contact us and we will print that update. Of course, we ask for and verify court documentation showing that to be true.

- Under the category of burglaries, we print the street and town of the incident, but not the house number. Leaving out the number provides the victims with some level of privacy but does not impact on the quality of information we believe the reader needs to know.

- We also alert the public to what was stolen. It's not unusual for a youngster to come home after school with an item or two that he bought from another student, and, as a result, for an alert parent as a result to be able to assist police in solving the crime.

- We are more careful when listing the theft of a large or valuable collection of antique coins, stamps etc., recognizing that not all of our readers are honest, law-abiding citizens. Whenever we believe the item stolen could place the owner in jeopardy of a second or third burglary, we do not emphasize the loss of all or part of a valuable collection.

- We courteously discontinue discussions with callers who threaten lawsuits, advising them that they should have their attorney call us. We do this first because we don't want the conversation to degenerate into a shouting match and second because we've been advised by counsel to do so. If and when an attorney calls (which is very rare), we refer them to our attorney.

- Finally, we impress upon every police reporter that while this may be their weekly beat, that for the people involved — victims and defendants — these are frightening, embarrassing and difficult times. We respond to all complaints about blotter items quickly and respectfully while maintaining a focus on what we believe is its higher purpose.

And, we never, no matter how tempted, remove the name of an individual who has been arrested from our police blotter. Soccer mom, teacher, politician or priest, they've all been named.

# ISWNEWS



## Alice DeCourcy dies at age 91

**Alice DeCourcy**, wife of former ISWNE president **Edward DeCourcy**, died Jan. 21 in Newport, N.H. She was 91.

Ed is the retired editor and publisher of the *Newport Argus-Champion*. Alice and Ed attended many ISWNE conferences at Pere Marquette State Park and the Oregon campus of Illinois Northern University and more recently at Calgary and Brookings.

## Kudos for *Grassroots Editor* issue

The Fall/Winter 2002 issue of *Grassroots Editor* that focused on community journalism ethics has been getting good reviews. The Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association and the Quebec Community Newspapers Association are among the press associations that have been reprinting many of the articles, and the American Press Institute distributed the articles at a recent seminar for community newspaper editors.

"I can't think of another trade publication that has ever done a better job of addressing these issues," says **Bill Schanen**, editor and publisher of the *Ozaukee Press* in Port Washington, Wis. "Most, of course, don't address them at all. I didn't agree with all of the essays, but they were all thought-provoking and illuminating and focused attention on issues we editors should be thinking about. Besides that, they showed members of the ISWNE having more grit than your average small town editor."

Numerous ISWNE members were interviewed by **Chad Stebbins'** Community Journalism class at Missouri Southern State College for the 12 articles in *Grassroots Editor*.

"I sometimes despair at the lack of journalistic moxie among some of our weekly newspaper brethren, well-meaning folks who seem more concerned with business success than with going to the mat over ethical challenges," Schanen said. "Thank you for providing a showcase for editors who are willing to face them."

Schanen said the *Ozaukee Press* prints unsigned letters to the editor despite the extra work involved in checking them out. "They should be published because they contribute to the marketplace of ideas that a newspaper op-ed page is supposed to be," he said. "Some folks have important things to say but are afraid to say them over their name (fear of job loss is frequently cited). Call them wimps if you want, but they contribute to the public discourse that is our job to nurture."

## Jim Sawyer begins treatment in N.C.

**Jim Sawyer** began the first phase of a cancer T-cell clinical trial at Duke University in Durham, N.C., in early February. The visit was for blood work to make a vaccine. He goes back in late March or early April for six weeks of treatment, following radiation treatments in Springfield, Mo.

"At Duke, all I have to do is to get one weekly injection, which reportedly has few — if any — side effects," Jim says. "So we're driving up for the long stint and will have lots of free time. Margaret and I have rented a Homestead Suites unit, and we'll probably fly home at the third-week mark for a few days. We may even fly to London and mess around for five days during one of the weeks."

## Award-winning Minnesota weeklies

ISWNE members in Minnesota fared very well in the 2001-2002 Better Newspaper Contest. The staff of the *Mille Lacs Messenger*, the *Monticello Times* and the *Pine River Journal* took home several awards presented at the annual Minnesota Newspaper Association conference on Jan. 31.

The *Pine River Journal* won first place for General Excellence among weeklies with a circulation between 1,501 to 2,500. The Journal also won second place for Typography and Design.

Journal writer **Betty Ryan's** story "Problem gamblers lose" won Best Social Issues Feature Story. A three-member team of Journal reporters won second place for Best Local News Story for their coverage of all-terrain vehicle use in the newspaper's coverage area.

The *Mille Lacs Messenger* won second place for Typography and Design and second place for Advertising Excellence among newspapers with a circulation between 2,501 to 5,000.

*Messenger* writer **Mary Rains'** story "Worm Wars; The question: to spray or not to spray" won first place for Best Social Issues Feature Story.

The *Messenger's* sister paper, the *Aitkin Independent Age*, won first place for Best Use of Color in Advertising. *Age* writer **Kathleen Pakarinen** won Best Columnist for a weekly with a circulation over 5,000.

The *Monticello Times* won first place for Use of Photography as a Whole among weeklies 2,501 to 5,000.

*Times* writer **Laurie Dennis** won first place for Best Human Interest Feature Story and *Times* writer **Heather Douglas** won first place for Best Sports Feature Story.

# Publishing a phony letter: How one editor handled it

The following column, written in October by Joel Patenaude, editor of *The Mille Lacs Messenger* in Isle, Minn., received the Minnesota News Council's 2002 Public Accountability Award. The award was presented on Jan. 31 at the annual Minnesota Newspaper Association conference in Bloomington.

The column, while self explanatory, deals Patenaude's response to learning that a

letter to the editor was contrived and the name attached was not the person who wrote it — a situation many weekly newspaper editors may have or can expect to face at some point.

"I'm not saying what I wrote was the best possible way to respond, because it was prompted in part by my wanting to save face for having lost my cool in public," Patenaude said. "But the recognition of

the council provides me with some reassurance that I recovered and did the right thing in the end."

**Gary Gilson**, executive director of the Minnesota News Council, noted that the column furthered what the council believes: that "interaction between the public and the news media demystifies journalistic practices, creates mutual understanding and promotes trust."

## Writer deception prompts scene, need for apologies

By **Joel Patenaude**

*The Mille Lacs Messenger*  
Isle, Minn.

I regret to inform readers of the *Messenger* that a fraud appears to have been perpetrated in this newspaper by a letter writer I can only conclude was politically motivated to hoodwink all of us.

An area resident, not honest enough to attach her own name to a letter she presumably wrote, apparently persuaded another individual into signing the letter with the name of yet a third person whose permission was not obtained. The individual whose name appeared in print as the author of the letter told me she neither wrote it nor holds the opinion expressed by it. The other person who actually signed the letter told me he deeply regrets having done so.

I agreed not to identify the individuals who said they were taken advantage of and do not wish to be dragged further into this unfortunate affair. To grant their wish, I will not expose here the truly responsible ghost writer.

Nevertheless, I had good reason to want to speak privately with the person I understood to have manufactured the letter in question. On short notice, however, this person backed out of a meeting that was to take place in my office and postponed it for

at least a week. But upon encountering the individual in public urging others to write letters to legislators, I couldn't help but confront this person about the hypocrisy I felt was on display.

Unfortunately, I lost my composure and yelled at this person who yelled back and, to my astonishment, briefly clamped a hand over my mouth. Except to push this person's arm away from my face, I made no physical move to threaten or touch this person.

To the many people who had to witness the altercation and to the owners of the establishment where it occurred, please accept my sincere apology. I could have and should have handled the situation more calmly or avoided it altogether. Since that ugly public display, I'm told the individual I confronted apologized to the person to whom the letter was falsely attributed. I'm sure everyone concerned, including myself, would like the whole matter to end there.

But I have a responsibility to inform readers when a source of information appearing in this newspaper comes into serious question. I work hard to maintain readers' trust that the facts and opinions expressed in this newspaper come from the sources identified. Readers should have no reason to doubt that the name attached to a published letter is indeed the author of that letter.

Regrettably, I cannot identify the specific

letter that was exposed as fraudulent and avoid casting doubt on the many well reasoned, insightful and political letters we are fortunate to publish every week.

I just hope this limited disclosure will not have a chilling effect on anyone with an urge to write a letter to this newspaper. People who are not confident in their own writing abilities should not be afraid to seek assistance. All I ask is that every letter be signed by someone willing to take responsibility for its truthfulness.

Among the reasonable guidelines for letter writers found on page 6, you will see that the *Messenger* has long required an address and daytime telephone number for verification of authorship prior to publication. Publication of the particular letter described here, and the embarrassment and discord it caused, could have been avoided with one phone call we failed to make.

To the responsible party: Such trickery only threatens to discredit you, me and this newspaper. I pledge to act in a more civilized manner, both in print and in public. I hope you will do the same.



**Joel Patenaude**

# Some interesting concepts from community journalists

By **Chad Stebbins**  
ISWNE Executive Secretary-Treasurer

I recently taught a class called Community Journalism that involved a number of guest speakers. They included a vice president and regional manager for Liberty Group Publishing, the president of the Missouri Press Association, three ISWNE members, an editor of a new Hispanic publication, three husband-and-wife teams, and three former students. Many of their ideas reinforced what the class already knew, but others were quite novel. Here's what we heard:

- Advertising pays for the production of a newspaper, subscriptions pay for the delivery. Reporters earn between \$8 and \$9 per hour. Everyone on the editorial staff does reporting, photography, and page design. The publisher "runs interference" between the editors and the corporate owners.
- One editor has stopped taking anonymous phone calls. She did listen to these unidentified callers for a number of years, but went on too many "wild goose chases."
- One former newspaper owner insisted that beginning reporters write eight stories per week and improve to 12. His weekly used a "good news" format and refused to print any negative news, such as homicides, meth busts, or car accidents. Those stories were left to the local daily.
- Those involved in community journalism have the opportunity to learn the entire business. Although salaries are low, you can make a substantial amount of money when you sell your newspaper.
- Reporters are encouraged to "take their vices out of town." If a reporter wants to drink, he or she should do it in another community. "A policeman may be looking to bust you," says the editor.
- Newspapers shouldn't publish letters to the editor that praise or bash local businesses. "It's between the person and the business," says the editor.
- A good local bank and a good local paper are the backbone of any community. Teachers are a community journalist's peers in a community, although teachers can expect a starting salary of around \$25,000, compared to \$17,000 for a beginning reporter.
- Some publishing groups do not care about the long-term health of the papers they own. Some would not approve a long-term investment, such as building a new printing plant that would take 30 years to recoup.
- Publishers at small dailies should be hands-on in one area, such as calling on advertisers. If they're not that involved, how would they spend their time — just sitting behind a desk?
- Publishers and department heads at small dailies have to set a good example for their employees — wearing ties and coming to work on time, for example. One publisher sets a poor example by playing golf every Thursday.
- Thanks to personal computers, one weekly editor now gets to do most of his work at home.
- A community newspaper helps the old-timers in town become acquainted with the newcomers. The paper helps the newcomers learn about the town's traditions. "We're the commonality," says the publisher.
- Real estate companies are now one paper's largest advertisers.
- The No. 1 request one editor doesn't grant is to withhold speeding tickets from police reports. Other people will threaten to commit suicide if their shoplifting or bad check charge is published.
- The new Hispanic newspaper is having difficulty finding distribution places. Simply leaving the paper at local Mexican restaurants wasn't working. Wal-Mart was approached, but said no. Ramey's Supermarket agreed, and even committed to a half-page of advertising for a year. The paper is also available at libraries, schools, churches, and workplaces.
- "If you care about newspapers at all, don't shop Wal-Mart," one publisher advised the students. "They're Public Enemy No. 1." This publisher refuses to allow his college-aged daughter to spend the family's money at Wal-Mart. The daughter didn't even set foot in a Wal-Mart until the age of 12.
- Community Newspaper Holdings, Inc.'s (CNHI) favorite book is *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*, by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman. CNHI also uses the self-assessment test in *Now, Discover Your Strengths* by Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton.
- Newspapers are the only industry that puts negative customer reviews on its "window," through letters to the editor.
- One daily paper employs a "mystery customer" to evaluate all facets of its operation, including the publisher.
- Special sections are excellent revenue builders. One twice-weekly paper publishes a special section every month. Its "progress edition" brings in \$15,000 alone.
- A weekly paper typically sells for six to eight times its cash flow. A small daily sells for 12 to 15 times its cash flow.
- Newspaper pilferage can be a problem, but 20 percent or less is acceptable.
- Advertising an opening for a reporter doesn't always work; one weekly publisher received only one application the last time he went this route.
- If you don't have to worry about the money, there's no better job than working at a small-town paper because of all the variety.



**Chad Stebbins**

# Ramblings from a high-tech sleepless night

By **Jim Sawyer**

2 a.m. Can't sleep.

Fire up the computer.

Let's see now. Maybe I'll go high-tech and check an Irish web site once again to see what columns of mine may have run in the *Tuam Herald* over the past several weeks. My always-busy newspaper-editor friend **David Burke**, a colleague in the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors, has had some problems in posting the editions.

I never know what tickles David's funny bone and what he'll choose to share with his readers — many of them friends of mine. Therefore, I'm always curious.

But no luck.

Hmm. Still sleepless, I know what I'll do next to entertain myself. Gotta go to Tulsa day after tomorrow and be back home two days later. Tulsa's only 185 miles down the road in Oklahoma, but why drive? I check one of those cheap-ticket outfits to see what it will cost me to fly out of my Missouri Ozarks city of Springfield.

The best price is \$750, although it ranges all the way up to \$1,167. With the bargain-basement price, I get to leave at 6 a.m. and change planes in Tennessee and Texas before I land at Tulsa at 1 in the afternoon. Then a stop at another Texas airport on the way back. It's amazing how little it costs to fly on short notice these days.

While I'm at it, I check a Springfield-to-London trip for a couple of weeks later. It's \$733. Lordy, it costs an arm and a leg to fly international anymore. Apparently, when the pencil is put to it, everybody goes to Tulsa.

So much for sleepless travel plans. Now it's time to surf the Net for health concerns.

I find that being a tad overweight can take years off the lifespan — in my case perhaps 7. And cigarette smoking — besides my going broke in buying them and paying taxes which are supposed to go for programs to help people like me stop smoking but which instead are paying catch-up expenses for what goofus politicians have been squandering — can take another bunch of years off a person's average allotted time on this planet.

I also find that what I've been eating at fast-food joints can rob me of a few more

years. I do some math, and it looks like I can figure I've already lost at least another 10 years.

Then I stumble into auto safety and accident rates. When my earlier-years stint in sports-car racing is added to the safety records of some of the cars I've driven on America's highways, it makes birth control look retroactive.

Another web site tells me that poisons are circulating in my own house. Molds and you name it. Critters are everywhere, and some of the resulting conditions I probably already have but don't know about have taken even more years off my life.

I add it all up, and I find out that I actually died 17 years before I was born. Maybe even earlier. I suddenly have the desire to learn more about some of my actuarial contemporaries — **Woodrow Wilson** and **Calvin Coolidge**.

Finally, I've worn myself out with all this Internet surfing. I'm finally getting sleepy, but first I e-mail this column to the *Tuam Herald*.

Then I attempt to shut down the computer. It won't respond. I'm through, but it isn't. I do a "dirty shut-down" by simply pulling the plug, since it seems the same thing has been happening to me all my life in various and sundry ways.

And to heck with Tulsa. I'm going to London.

Once there, I'll get a cheap 45-minute flight to Ireland to see if David Burke actually printed this column.

*ISWNE member Jim Sawyer writes a widely carried column for weeklies. It's issued by e-mail. For details, contact him at [jimsaw@msn.com](mailto:jimsaw@msn.com) or (417) 742-5211. Or write him at 711 South Main Street, Willard, MO 65781, USA.*



**Jim Sawyer**

## The right to know

By **George McCormick**  
Editor, *The Forks* (Wash.) *Forum*  
Dec. 25, 2002

*[Editor's note: Charles Gay, publisher of the Shelton-Mason County Journal in Shelton, Wash., submitted this editorial to ISWNE. He says it directly contradicts his editorial of Sept. 27, 2001, that was reprinted in the December 2002 ISWNE newsletter. "In fact, it confirms that some people's lives are more important than others," Gay said.*

One of the most agonizing ethical questions that arise in a newspaper's newsroom is the public's right to know.

Critics have pointed at the media circuses and the clamor of reporters badgering people under the guise of the public's right to know as an abasement of the Freedom of the Press.

So some newspapers believe the public has a right to know anything and everything about everybody.

In a recent case in Vancouver, B.C., the court was asked to shut out media from the

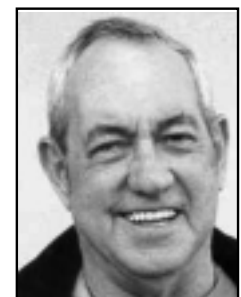
United States. The desire to not have U.S. media at the preliminary hearings for the pig farmer accused of killing prostitutes underlined the fact that the U.S. media has a broader definition of the public's right to know than does the Canadian media.

Some newspapers seem to follow the philosophy that if it will sell papers, the public has the right to know about most anything. Fortunately most community weeklies don't subscribe to that idea.

We certainly don't.

We've drawn a line on the right to know about certain tragic occurrences.

When we came out here, we made the decision not to run accident photos or people



**George McCormick**

# Two years of fuzzy math

By Robert Linnell

President Bush has been in office for two years. He has made a lot of changes in the nation and the world. Midterm he was successful in campaigning and winning seats in Congress. Republicans now control both the House and the Senate. Big changes can be expected in the next two years as he works to secure reelection in 2004. Candidate Bush accused Gore of "fuzzy math." Now, two years later, let's review the math.

Candidate Bush talked of a massive \$5.6 trillion surplus insisting that some of those extra tax dollars go back to those who paid them, assuring us that these cuts left plenty of surplus funds for other purposes. He vowed not to touch the Social Security surplus. After his election he had to settle for lower tax cuts than he requested but Congress, in spring 2001, gave him a \$1.3 trillion tax cut. What has been the result? That \$5.6 trillion surplus is gone. We are giving tax dollars back but we are obtaining the funds by piling on government debt and leaving it to future generations to pay off.

The Public Debt Outstanding on Dec. 31, 2000, just prior to Bush's inauguration, was \$5.776 trillion. Two years later, on Dec. 31, 2002, this debt was \$6.406 trillion, an increase of \$630 billion. Not only are the Social Security surplus and other surpluses gone but additional borrowings have been necessary. This big debt build-up has been caused by three factors: the Bush tax cut of spring 2001, the recession, and the terrorist

attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Without any new tax cuts or additional expensive new programs, the Public Debt Outstanding would increase by well over one trillion dollars by the end of Bush's current four-year term. However, the president has proposed large new tax cuts, and additional major expenses loom on the horizon. The cost of war with Iraq (\$40 billion according to Bush, up to \$200 billion according to Lawrence Lindsey, recently fired as Bush's economic advisor). Missile defense, already under construction in Alaska, is not included, which adds \$100 billion or more.

The Administration says its new "growth package" reduces taxes by \$670 billion over the next 10 years. Since the federal budget is already operating in the red, any new tax cuts will simply increase debt by the amount of the tax cut (unless, as claimed by the Administration, the tax cuts cause new economic activity that produces additional taxes). When we add debt we must pay more interest. If we add this interest, the cost of the proposed new reductions in taxes increases to about \$925 billion.

Bush has frequently used the "illusion of the average" to mislead the public. Consider Bob, who is a "shorty" at only 5 feet but his two best friends, Tom and Dick, star basketball players, tower 6 1/2 feet. When they went to lunch together Dick (hoping to make Bob feel more comfortable) told Bob, "our average height is 6 feet." My question is, "did this make Bob any taller"?

President Bush says 23 million "small businesses stand to gain a great deal" from his proposed new tax cuts; he tells us that on average they would receive \$2,042 in benefits. Truth is that over half (52%) would get less than \$500, 79% would get less than that average \$2,042, and almost one-fourth (22%) would receive a zero tax cut. Distorting the averages is that minuscule 0.3% at the top who would receive an average of \$146,000 in tax reductions.

The "double taxation" of dividends would be eliminated by Bush. The Tax Policy Center calculates that \$40,000 to \$50,000 earners would save on average \$31 per year, the \$100,000 to \$200,000 earners would save \$306, but millionaires would save \$22,700. Unfortunately, as with most of the Bush proposals, the benefits are highly skewed toward the wealthy.

The earlier Bush tax cuts expire in 2010, but he is strongly supporting extension on a permanent basis. Further, "fixing" the Alternative Minimum Tax (with a huge cost), another Bush goal, will drastically cut federal income. Adding up all the lost revenue through 2013, including interest on the new federal debt, comes to a colossal \$2.2 trillion. Coming at a time when the baby boomers are starting to retire, the nation would be faced with drastically reduced revenues, unmanageable debt and interest rates so high as to discourage new investments.

There is simply no evidence that the Bush "stimulation" package would so dramatically increase economic activity that revenues would increase sufficiently to offset these losses. In the best interest of this nation and its future, the Bush tax cuts should be vigorously opposed.

*The author acknowledges, with thanks, data from The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities ([www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)) and the Tax Policy Center ([www.taxpolicycenter.org](http://www.taxpolicycenter.org)).*

*Robert Linnell has been writing a weekly oped for [www.my-oped.com](http://www.my-oped.com) since December 1999. He invites ISWNE editors to take a look at his web site and use any of the opeds. Permission is granted to reproduce with the following statement: "Reproduced with permission from: [www.my-oped.com](http://www.my-oped.com)." Please notify editor at [editor@my-oped.com](mailto:editor@my-oped.com) when reprinting.*

## The right to know from page 9

on a stretcher photos in *The Forks Forum*.

We also choose not to report on suicides, unless the person involved is a prominent member of the community — especially if the victim is a juvenile. This is the private affair of the victim and the victim's family and is not something the public has a right to know.

Deciding when a suicide is newsworthy is one of an editor's most sensitive decisions. We have to pay attention to the extreme sensitivity of the subject matter and how it would affect survivors.

In any issue of the public's right to know we have to be cognizant of the effect our coverage would have on the readers.

We hope you understand and appreciate why we take this position on the public's right to know.

# ISWNE new members



**Carl Conley** started *The Island Sand Paper* three years ago to bring flavor and local representation to Ft. Myers, Beach, Fla., a newly formed community. "We have achieved an incredible amount of growth and community respect in a short period of time," Carl says. "*The Sand Paper* is dedicated to freedom of the press and representing every well-expressed view whether it squares with our own opinions or not. We publish weekly and distribute throughout the barrier islands we call

home."

Carl, originally a high school dropout, used the G.I. Bill to resume his studies at Ohio University, where he was able to eventually teach a year in the English department. His early interest, chiefly poetry and creative writing, resulted in him being published in several journals and magazines. He later attended law school and was editor of a law review.

Carl's email address is [islandsandpaper@earthlink.net](mailto:islandsandpaper@earthlink.net). *The Island Sand Paper's* web site can be found at <http://islandsandpaper.fortmyersbeach.net>.

**Carol Picard** is editor of the *Rocky Mountain Outlook* in Canmore, Alberta. In September 2001, she and publisher **Larry Marshall** founded the *Outlook*, a free circulation weekly. In just one year, they have increased their circulation to almost double that of the two



chain-owned papers in Banff and Canmore, Alberta.

Carol joined the *Canmore Leader* in 1991, and under her editorship the paper won a string of editorial and journalism awards. Since 1998, she has written for a number of corporate clients in the region and served as a trustee for the Canadian Rockies School Division.

Carol's email address is [cpicard@rockymountainoutlook.ca](mailto:cpicard@rockymountainoutlook.ca). Larry Marshall's email address is [lmarshall@rockymountainoutlook.ca](mailto:lmarshall@rockymountainoutlook.ca). *The Rocky Mountain Outlook's* web site is [www.rockymountainoutlook.ca](http://www.rockymountainoutlook.ca).

**Michael Sunderman** is president and chief operating officer of Morris Newspaper Corporation, based in Savannah, Ga. Morris Multimedia owns five daily newspapers, 24 weeklies, two tourist magazines, and 24 specialty publications. Michael is a former publisher of weeklies in Nevada and Arizona, along with specialty publications and tourist guides.

Michael's email address is [msunderman@morrismultimedia.com](mailto:msunderman@morrismultimedia.com). The company web site is <http://www.morrismultimedia.com>.

**Stacy Chastain** is associate publisher and editor of *The News Observer* in Blue Ridge, Ga., a twice-weekly publication about 90 miles north of Atlanta. She joined the paper in February 1998 as editor. *The News Observer* is owned by Community Newspapers Inc., based in Athens, Ga. The company currently owns or is affiliated with 39 newspapers in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Florida.



Stacy began working at her hometown weekly newspaper when she was 15. She graduated from the University of Georgia's Henry W. Grady College of Mass Communication in 1993 with a major in newspapers and minor in Italian.

"As my peers banged on the doors at dailies, I went to work at a weekly," Stacy said. "I have never left. I get great satisfaction from being a journalist for a weekly newspaper. I use the same skills that the daily reporters and editors use, but I feel like it makes a difference — one that I can see, feel and live — in our community.

"At *The News Observer*, I have continued a strong editorial tradition. I enjoy writing editorials whether prodding county and state officials or giving local programs a nod of support."

Stacy's email address is [stacyssc@tds.net](mailto:stacyssc@tds.net).

# Galway, Ireland...the place to be from page 1

Gaelic football and hurling. There will be lots more, and details will gradually be leaked to keep your interest whetted.

ISWNE's editorial critiques will take place Saturday morning, with a possible talk by **Tony Sutton** to follow. Sutton was the chief design consultant for Thomson Newspapers for several years before starting his own company, News Design Inc. He is the editor of *Design*, the monthly magazine of the Society for News Design. In September, Sutton completed a redesign of David Burke's paper, *The Tuam Herald*.

Saturday afternoon is free for exploring Galway. The city centre is a 15- to 20-minute walk from the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), where we'll be housed in four-bedroom apartments. The awards banquet will take place at the university Saturday evening.

David advises against having a rental car in Galway for the conference, because of the gridlock and congestion. But for touring Ireland, he says any competent driver should have no fears. A sample car-hire rate from Thrifty at Shannon airport is 305 Euro per week for a (small) Fiat Punto or Toyota Yaris. This includes all insurances and taxes, but there is an insurance excess of 450 Euro (you pay the first 450 of any claim). A Toyota Avensis (similar to the Toyota Camry) would cost 400 Euro with 700 Euro excess. These rates are for stick shift; auto transmission Punto is 412 Euro, auto Avensis is 584 Euro.



Check [www.thrifty.ie](http://www.thrifty.ie) or the sales manager at Shannon (sydney.moorhead@thrifty.ie).

David says if enough ISWNE members are arriving in Shannon at the same time, he could arrange a bus pickup for a small fee. Shannon is 70 miles from Galway. He'll have more travel suggestions for the next newsletter. In the meantime, if you're fairly sure you'll be able to attend, let him know. The university conference office is anxious to have an indication of numbers as soon as possible. David can be emailed at [davidburke@tuamherald.ie](mailto:davidburke@tuamherald.ie).

ISWNE member **Jim Sawyer** says RyanAir no longer has the edge on low-cost travel between England and Ireland. In addition to a much-friendlier web site, Aer Lingus ([aerlingus.com](http://aerlingus.com)) has some great rates.

Sawyer says he checked out several Aer Lingus flights to Dublin and Shannon for late June and early July out of London Gatwick, London Heathrow and London City Airport. Fares were around \$125 round trip, and approximately 15 percent less for children 2-11.

"You still may be able to get a bargain with RyanAir, but you may well have to go to the trouble of getting to one of the other London-area airports to take advantage of it," Sawyer says. "If you're arriving at Gatwick or Heathrow, it may be lots easier to proceed onward from that point."

## ABOUT THE ISWNE

The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors (ISWNE) was founded in 1955 at Southern Illinois University (SIU) by Howard R. Long, then chair of SIU's Department of Journalism at Carbondale, and Houstoun Waring, then editor of the *Littleton (Colo.) Independent*. ISWNE headquarters were at Northern Illinois University at Dekalb from 1976 to 1992, at South Dakota State University in Brookings from 1992 to 1999. Missouri Southern State College in Joplin became the headquarters in 1999.

ISWNE's purpose is to help those involved in the weekly press to improve standards of editorial writing and news reporting and to encourage strong, independent editorial voices. The society seeks to fulfill its purpose by holding annual conferences, presenting awards, issuing publications, and encouraging international exchanges. There are ISWNE members in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. There are subscribers to *Grassroots Editor*, the society's quarterly journal, in still more countries.

This publication will be made available in alternative formats upon request to Chad Stebbins 417-625-9736.

### Dr. Chad Stebbins

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