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The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors

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ISWNE Hotline: Papers need to stick to a regular obit policy

Do you have a tough question about editorial policy or journalism ethics? If so, send it to **Chad Stebbins** at stebbins-c@mssu.edu, and he'll email all ISWNE members. You can expect a quick and informed response from your colleagues, who may have encountered a similar situation at their newspapers.

This month's question came from **Kim McCully-Mobley**, editor of the *Aurora* (Mo.) *Advertiser*. Working on a column or story regarding her newspaper's obituary policies, she sought feedback on her fellow editors' obit format, policies, word usage, "no-nos," restrictions, and examples of what she calls "obituary trauma."

Here are some of the responses:

"Our policy on obits is simple, liberal and, some would say, old-fashioned," said **Tim Waltner**, publisher of the *Freeman Courier*, a small weekly in a rural area in southeastern South Dakota. "It works in our community. We are comfortable with it and have no plans to change at this time."

The *Courier's* policy:

- We run obituaries when they are submitted or requested by the family and with ties to the community.
- If they come from funeral homes, we confirm the family wanted it.

- We run them no charge, up to 500 words, as submitted, including "going home to Jesus," "is now a part of the cosmic sphere" or any kind of religious language they want.
- We include cause of death (cancer, AIDS) listed and survivors (husbands, wives, "special friends," partners) as submitted. If cause of death is not submitted, we don't run it.
- We include photos at no charge, provided the quality meets our standards.
- Cards of thanks, poems, tributes and more than 500 words are billed at our classified rate.
- We edit for grammar, punctuation and style — and, if the family doesn't want to pay for additional words, length.

Waltner said he doesn't believe in feature obituaries, as it's unfair to single out one "special" person and because the *Courier* doesn't have space for them.

David Cox, managing editor of *Areawide Media* in Salem, Ark., said his three weeklies have a different set of rules for different pages of the paper.

"Just like we don't worry (too much) about style rules in letters to the editor and columns, we bend the rules quite a bit for family news — marriages, anniversaries, births and especially

obits," Cox said. "We sometimes start wedding announcements, 'The parents of **Jim Johnson** and **Sue Snodgrass** have announced the engagement...' So maybe you could get around the 'gone to meet her maker' by putting, 'The children of **Agnes Anderson** have announced she has gone to meet her Maker.'



Tim Waltner

"We haven't faced that exact request, but we have used euphemisms such as 'passed away' or 'departed this life' at the request of families. I don't think anyone would accuse a community newspaper of compromising journalistic integrity for trying to accommodate — within reason — the wishes of our readers. And even if they do, it's important to remember we serve those people in the community, not other journalists."

Cox said larger newspapers are committing greater resources to writing obituaries in recognition of the high readership of the obit page.

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President's Report

By **Donna Remer**
Executive Editor
Voice Newspapers
New Baltimore, Mich.



We need to stand for an open press across borders

I used a passport for the first time to attend the ISWNE conference in Galway, Ireland, last year. Since then, stamps on the passport have accumulated as Bill and I traveled to Cornwall in September and to Lesotho in Southern Africa this spring.

The tension of going through immigration and customs was still fresh when I read an article in the *Manchester Guardian* relating the experience of writer **Elena Lappin** when she encountered U.S. Immigration and Customs officials this year.

In early May, Lappin flew from Heathrow to Los Angeles where she was detained for not having a "journalist's visa." She is a freelance writer and was on assignment for the *Guardian*.

On the plane, she filled out the green visa waiver form distributed by the flight attendants. She had flown to the States before, so the drill was familiar. She didn't know that, since March 2003, the Department of Homeland Security has been supervising the work of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Homeland Security has apparently begun to enforce a 1952 law that requires foreign journalists to apply for an "I-visa" when visiting the U.S. for professional reasons. Lappin presented her British passport at the airport in Los Angeles along with the green visa waiver, as she had done in the past. This time, a series of questions ensued. Officials wanted to know what story she was working on and the names and phone numbers of people she intended to contact.

In her article for the *Guardian*, she describes how she was interrogated for three hours then spent 26 hours in detention, part of it in a cell outfitted with two steel benches, a toilet and a video surveil-

lance camera. Her luggage was searched and she was fingerprinted. She was handcuffed and led from the airport to the detention cell.

And then, she was deported.

Lappin admits she made a mistake in filling out the visa waiver. She now knows there is a line on the waiver that says: "You may not accept unauthorized employment or attend school or represent the foreign information media during this program."

But, she said, most journalists are not familiar with the requirement and most are not detained or deported. She had made several trips here and was not questioned until the incident in Los Angeles.

"Somewhere along the way, in the process of trying to develop a foolproof system of protecting itself from genuine threats, the U.S. has lost the ability to distinguish between friend and foe," Lappin wrote in the *Guardian* after her experience. "The price this powerful country is paying for living in fear is the price of civil liberties."

The American Society of Newspaper Editors and Reporters Without Borders have spoken out on her behalf. After ASNE intervened, the State Department sent out a memo that an I-visa is still needed by working foreign journalists but immigration officials can exercise some judgment for journalists who "are clearly no threat to our security."

Certainly that would apply to all members of ISWNE.

Living here in Michigan, we have easy access to CBC, and we frequently watch the BBC news on public television. It's a much different view than we see on our

domestic news broadcasts. Foreign media representatives have not been kind to the U.S. as they have covered the war in Iraq and the administration of **President Bush**. It is not their job to be kind.

As an international society, we need to be alert to limits on press freedom worldwide.

Those of us who live in the States need to make our opinion known — to the public and to our elected representatives — that requiring a special visa for journalists is not acceptable.

As members of ISWNE, we need to stand for an open and free press across borders. The recent State Department memo may reduce the chances of a journalist being detained but, as long as this McCarthy-era law is in place, the possibility exists.

I wish all ISWNE members a safe journey to our annual conference later this month.

How exciting to get the mail each day and find more papers from the ISWNE newspaper exchange. I have enjoyed looking at the crystal-clear photos of hummingbirds in the *Hickman County Times*, the bright look of the *Sonoma Index-Tribune*, the "broad" sheet format of the *Shelton-Mason County Journal*, the straightforward editorial in the *Jackson Herald* and the lively letters in the *Yellow Spring News* and the *Eastern Graphic*. And, I'm picking up a few ideas we might borrow at some time in the future. Thanks to everyone who participated in the exchange this year.

Papers need to stick to a regular obit policy *from page 1*

"I think we cut ourselves off at the knees by making it more difficult for our readers, especially by charging for obits," he said. "But I don't think there's anything wrong with setting a reasonable word limit and charging for extra verbiage, or with charging to run those horrendous tribute poems."

Donna Remer, executive editor of *Voice Newspapers* in New Baltimore, Mich., said the five weeklies owned by the 21st Century Newspaper Group still run obits at no charge to the family.

"I'm wondering how long this will last, but so far we've been able to fly under the radar of the bean counters," Remer said. "When asked, I defend the free obit policy on the premise that obituaries are, in fact, news and we don't charge to publish news."

"The decision boils down to: Who controls the content? You, as editor, or someone else? For example, we routinely run at no charge announcements for community events. But, if the parks and rec department wants specific wording about an upcoming event and they aren't willing to take their chances on which week it will run, they can reserve space, pay for it, and word the announcement just the way they want to...in an ad. Obituaries are much the same. Readers who don't like our format can choose their own style, and pay for it."

Remer said one of the most heartbreaking experiences she encountered as an editor dealt with an obituary. The typesetter came to her because the obit for a stillborn baby said the child was "born into the arms of Jesus."

"I confirmed her suggestion that we rewrite it in our usual obituary style," Remer said. "When the obit hit the paper, the grieving mother called me in tears. I tried to tell her that it was 'newspaper policy' and we treat all obituaries in a consistent manner. I tried to point

out that we offer the service at no charge, but didn't have the heart to say she could take out an ad. It was apparent she didn't have the means to do that, or the inclination.

"I tried to tell her about journalistic style, but the words rang hollow. All she knew was that she read in our paper, for the first time, the cold words that her baby died. Her precious baby was not 'born into the arms of ...' The newspaper said the child was dead. And we told the whole community.

"If I had it to do over, I likely would still do the same thing as far as the wording. But I have learned that you can't reason with a grieving person. Now, I would just repeat to her, as often as needed, how sorry I was for her loss and for any further grief our newspaper had caused for her.

"If we had used her words, it might have delayed the realization of what happened but eventually, one way or another, she would have to acknowledge the loss.

"That's why we have journalistic style. That's why we have policies, good ones that is. So that people are treated fairly and in an even-handed manner even when emotion clouds the situation. I am in favor of a newspaper developing a standard format for free obits, one that suits the local community, and then following that format as closely as possible."

Joel Hack, publisher of the *Bodega Bay* (Calif.) *Navigator*, suggests turning the obituary style into a news account of the passing with personal memories (in quotes) of the faith expressed by the survivors.

"Instead of forcing someone to fit the journalistic fact reporting, change the voice and make the obits quotes of the survivors," Hack said. "The quotes might also bring an immediacy to the canned type of obit too often relied upon. In my experience, those personal remembrances

offer the most vivid obits. I base that on comments made by survivors and others who have read that type of obit."

Richard McCord, former editor and co-publisher of *The Santa Fe* (N.M.) *Reporter*, said many things that newspapers cover are sad, including arrests and criminal charges. He suggests that a paper needs to set a policy, mixing elements of professionalism and compassion in the best blend that the paper can determine for its own community, and then stick to the policy when under pressure.

"As a corollary, I have many times told aggrieved people that the distress they are feeling at the moment (after reading a direct account in the paper) will pass, and will pass much sooner than they expect," McCord said. "They often don't believe it at the time, but soon enough they find it to be true. And sometimes they will even tell you so, later on."

Diane Collins, editor and publisher of the *Seneca* (Mo.) *News-Dispatch*, said if a family wants additional information in the obit, such as listing the names of the grandchildren or any type of eulogizing of the deceased, the paper charges a small fee ranging from \$5 to \$20 depending on the length of the additional wording.

"Our families seem to be happy with this arrangement," Collins said. "They have the option of a free obit or they can add wording they prefer for a small fee. We publish our obit policy nearly every week. We have not had any complaints from any families with this arrangement. We submitted a list of the standard info that we will accept in a free obit to all the area funeral homes and included a letter to tell the funeral homes that there would be a charge for any additional information."

The Legacy of Lovejoy: Abolitionism and the First Amendment

By **Dr. Allen H. Merriam**
Professor of Communication
Missouri Southern State University

Those attending the ISWNE conference will visit the Elijah Lovejoy Monument on July 1.

Elijah Lovejoy's career as an antislavery journalist was brief and tumultuous. Born in Albion, Maine, on November 9, 1802, the son of a Congressional minister, Lovejoy's stern Protestant upbringing imbued him with piety, industriousness, and individualism. Graduating in 1826 at the head of his class at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, Lovejoy joined the growing migration of New England Yankees bent on spreading social reform and Protestant values to America's expanding Western frontier. Traveling via the Erie Canal he arrived in the bustling river port town of St. Louis, Missouri, in 1827 and helped establish a school modeled after the academies of New England.

In 1830 Lovejoy accepted an invitation to join **T. J. Miller** in publishing the *Saint Louis Times*. The change from classroom to newspaper suited Lovejoy's considerable literary talents while offering a wider forum for expressing social and political messages. At the urging of his pastor, Lovejoy returned East to pursue a theological education. In March 1832 he enrolled at Princeton Seminary in New Jersey where he studied for one year and obtained a license to preach. After brief pastorates in Rhode Island and New York Lovejoy returned to Missouri, arriving in St. Louis on November 12, 1833. Financed by the American Home Missionary Society he embarked on a program of evangelism by preaching and publishing a religious newspaper called the *Observer*.

Much of Lovejoy's writings in the *Observer* consisted of attacks on what he and many Protestants of the time believed to be the twin threats to the moral fiber of the United States: rum and Romanism. He vigorously condemned distilleries, drunkenness, and debauchery. Writing in the *St. Louis Observer* of June 11, 1835, Lovejoy denounced Roman Catholicism because

"We believe the cause of humanity, of freedom, of vital piety, in a word, the cause of Truth demands it." To this day a minority opinion holds that Lovejoy was run out of St. Louis and eventually killed, not due to his strong stand against slavery, but because he disrupted local politics by fomenting antipathies between Protestants and Roman Catholics.

Several conclusions about Lovejoy are warranted based on his editorials and public pronouncements as of mid-1835: he viewed himself as a divinely called social reformer whose message included a heavy dose of religious intolerance, he demonstrated a willingness to advocate unpopular ideas, and he had not made abolition a primary concern. Lovejoy never supported slavery but, prior to 1835, he did not actively oppose it, apparently assuming naively that slave owners would gradually free their captives out of a sense of Christian charity.

Several factors contributed to Lovejoy's transition from a proponent of gradual emancipation to an uncompromising advocate of immediate and total abolition. These included the influence of several antislavery clerics, the religious and social climate of the 1830s, and developments within Missouri. Having entered the Union in 1821 as a slave state, pro-slavery opinion was strong in Missouri, especially in the port city of St. Louis which derived much of its commercial activity from river trade with Southern states.

As if emboldened by an increasingly hostile environment, Lovejoy intensified his editorial assault on slavery. In February 1836 he published an issue of the *Observer* clearing stating the ethical foundation for his position: "Our creed is that slavery is a sin — now, heretofore, hereafter, and forever, a sin."

With the legal authorities on their side, Lovejoy's opponents grew more aggressive. Attacks on the *Observer* office and threats against his infant son and wife **Cecelia**, a St. Charles, Missouri, woman he had married on March 4, 1835, made Lovejoy's remaining in St. Louis untenable. Just



days after a gang of 20 men destroyed \$700 worth of his printing supplies in the summer of 1836, Lovejoy moved his press and family 25 miles north and across the Mississippi River to Alton, Illinois.

Lovejoy's life in Alton produced defenses of free expression which rank him in the vanguard of proponents of civil liberty. Typical of the Abolitionist movement nationwide, Lovejoy's crusade became intimately linked to the issue of free press. The campaign against slavery presupposed a commitment to the ideals of the First Amendment.

Lovejoy's thinking about slavery became increasingly radicalized, so that by March 1837 he was advocating, not gradual emancipation, but immediate and complete abolition. He made little attempt to dispel the growing perception that he was an outsider bent on disturbing the peace of Alton. His call in the summer of 1837 for a convention to organize a state anti-slavery society proved unbearably provocative to Alton's establishment.

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The Legacy of Lovejoy: Abolitionism and the First Amendment from page 4

Public opinion clearly placed primary emphasis on preserving order rather than on waging a moral crusade. Civic leaders met on July 11 and adopted resolutions describing the editor's beliefs as "Contrary to the disposition and will of the citizens of Alton" and suggesting that any attempt to form an antislavery society in the city would be disruptive.

Angry gangs destroyed his press twice, in August and September 1837. Prominent city leaders gathered in the Market House on November 3 and formally voted to ask Lovejoy to cease publication of the *Observer* in Alton. Asking merely for protection of the exercise of his legitimate rights, Lovejoy categorically stated that he would never stop publishing just to placate a mob. With a series of rhetorical questions he argued that to appease any group of vigilantes would undermine First Amendment freedoms everywhere:

"Why should I flee from Alton? Is not this a free state? When assailed by a mob at St. Louis I came hither, as to the home of freedom and of the laws. The mob pursued me here, and why should I retreat again? Where can I be safe is not here? Have not I a right to claim the protection of the laws? What more can I have in any other place? Sir, the very act of retreating will embolden the mob to follow me wherever I go. No, sir; there is no way to escape the mob but to abandon the path of duty; and that, God helping me, I will never do."

The fourth and final *Observer* printing press in Alton arrived on November 7 and was placed in the warehouse of wealthy businessmen who were staunch allies of Lovejoy's newspaper. Tension mounted during the day amid rumors that another attack on the press would be made. That night about 25 men, fortified with whiskey and racial epithets, approached the warehouse intent on destroying the press. Lovejoy and his supporters had meanwhile occupied the building with guns, determined this time to protect their property.

The confrontation of two armed groups proved too volatile to prevent violence. Demands became threats, windows were shattered, and shots were fired resulting in the death of one attacker. Now seeking revenge, the mob set the building ablaze as described by Alton's mayor, **John Krum**, and eyewitness:

"The firing soon became fearful and dangerous between the contending parties — so much so that the further interposition on the part of the civil authorities and citizens was believed altogether inadequate and hazardous in the extreme. No means were in my control, or that of any other officer present, by which the mob could be dispersed and the loss of life and the shedding of blood prevented. Scenes of the most daring recklessness, and infuriated madness, following each other in quick succession. The building was surrounded, and the inmates were threatened with extermination and death in the most frightful form imaginable. Every means of escape by flight were cut off.

"The scene now became one of the most appalling heartrending interest! Fifteen or twenty citizens, among whom were some of our most worthy and enterprising, were, apparently, doomed to an unenviable and inevitable death if the flames continued. About the time the fire was communicated to the building, Rev. E.P. Lovejoy, (late Editor of the *Observer*) received four balls in his breast, near the door of the warehouse, and fell a corpse in a few seconds; two others from the warehouse were severely wounded."

The death of Elijah Lovejoy sent waves of indignation throughout the nation. But not all Americans mourned Lovejoy's demise. Defenders of slavery viewed his death as the appropriate end for a misguided fanatic. In Alton itself a trial was held but no one was every convicted of either killing the editor or destroying his printing press.

Regarded as America's first martyr to freedom of the press, Lovejoy belongs in the



tradition of defenders of free speech which includes John Milton, Voltaire, and John Stuart Mill. Lovejoy's bold statement of July 25, 1836, that "I shall hold myself at liberty to speak, to write and to publish whatever I please on any subject" ranks with Milton's plea in the *Aereopagitica*: "Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience above all liberties."

The *Alton Observer* was not the first, not the most influential, Abolitionist newspaper in the United States. However, Lovejoy's willingness to die in defense of his right to publish unpopular ideas established the *Observer* controversy as one of the most significant conflicts of constitutional freedom in the history of American journalism. In the opinion of **Irving Dilliard**, former editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, the Lovejoy martyrdom eclipsed in importance even the celebrated John Peter Zenger Trial of 1735, for while "the New York printer went to court and was freed, the Illinois editor went to his death."

ISWNEWS



Cox receives \$1,000 Amy Writing Award

ISWNE member **David Cox**, managing editor of Areawide Media in Salem, Ark., received \$1,000 as one of 14 finalists in the Amy Writing Awards competition, sponsored by the Amy foundation of Lansing, Mich. The recognition was for the column "An evolving faith," published in 2003.

The Amy awards are presented for published works "representing creative, skillful writing which presents in a sensitive, thought-provoking manner, the biblical position on issues affecting the world today." Winning entries must have been published in secular newspapers or magazines.

The first-place \$10,000 award went to **Jimmy Tomlin** of the *High Point* (N.C.) *Enterprise*. Nearly 800 writers from throughout the United States submitted entries into the 2004 competition.

Areawide Media, part of Rust Communications, is a group that includes three weekly newspapers, *The News of Salem, Ark.*, *The South Missourian News of Thayer, Mo.*, and the *Villager Journal* of Cherokee Village, Ark., as well as three shoppers.

Bridgewater Bulletin brings home 20 awards

Lighthouse Publishing's *The Bridgewater Bulletin* and its staff brought home 20 awards from the Atlantic Community Newspapers Association convention held in Truro, Nova Scotia, on May 15.

Competition rules allow only one of the company's two paid newspapers and its weekend shopper to enter the competitions.

The Bridgewater Bulletin was named the best community newspaper in its circulation class in Atlantic Canada and also claimed the top award for the for best news story in its category.

Other awards included firsts for best for its use of process colour, best graphically designed ad, best overall ad, and best special section for its Lunenburg 250th anniversary supplement, *History in the Making*. Lighthouse staff also took top honours for best community service with its web site teenstogether.ca. Judges complimented the company for stepping outside the usual newspaper boundaries to reach young readers. *The Bulletin* also captured a first for its circulation promotion.

Second-place wins included best feature series, a cartoon, best in-house ad competition, best advertising program, and best in-house promotion. The Christmas section and the staff collected third-place awards for feature photo, local editorial writing, and the full-page, colour ad competition.

Lighthouse President **Lynn Hennigar** expressed her delight. "I am extremely proud of our team," she said. "They produce a consistently great product and it's gratifying to have their work recognized in all facets of the business — editorial, advertising and production — as the best in the region."

Freeman Courier wins SDNA sweepstakes

The *Freeman Courier* received 23 awards in the 2004 South Dakota Newspaper Association Better Newspaper Contest, including the sweepstakes and general excellence awards.

The *Courier* also received 12 first-place awards, seven second-place awards, one third-place award, and one honorable mention. The *Courier* was judged in the category of weeklies with circulations between 1,151 and 2,050.

This marks the 10th year in a row that the *Courier* has received first-, second-, or third-place honors in the general excellence category and the fifth consecutive year it has won the sweepstakes award.

Jeremy Waltner won first-place awards for editorial writing, feature photo, feature series, news series, news story, sports column, sports photo, sports reporting, and sports series. **Tim Waltner** won first place for feature story and local column, and the *Courier* won first for newspaper web site.

Tim Waltner and the Schweitzer Toe-Tappers of Freeman provided an hour-long performance of "A celebration of American traditional music" at the SDNA convention in Brookings.

Burke seeking travel tips

David Burke will be flying into Chicago for the ISWNE conference on June 26, with his wife **Fionnuala** and son **Colum**. They plan on renting a car Sunday and driving across the state to Iowa, and following the Mississippi down to Pere Marquette. Does anyone have any recommendations for sights to see or places to stay along the way?

David plans two overnights, Sunday and Monday, arriving at Pere Marquette Tuesday. He's thinking of Hannibal for one of the stops, because of the Mark Twain connection. Is that a good idea? You can email him at davidburke@tuamherald.ie

Also, **Colum** (aged 16 in August 2004) will be in transition year next year, which is a kind of open-curriculum year halfway through high school. Part of this year, from April to June, can be spent abroad, on a work internship or at school or a combination of both. Is there anyone with a child around **Colum's** age who would like to take him? David would be happy to return the compliment the following year, or the year after that, in Ireland. If you're interested, you could discuss it at the Pere Marquette conference.

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A travel guide to the conference

By Clyde Wills and Nancy Slepicka

What to expect

This guide will help ISWNE members answer frequently asked questions about what to bring and how to get to the conference. Guests who wish to arrive at the lodge before Wednesday, or stay after the conference, need to call Clyde or Carolyn at 618-524-2533 or e-mail wills1@shawneelink.net for a room reservation. We can hold the extra rooms but you'll need to pay the lodge at check-in for any extra rooms. The rooms at the state resort park are pricy by ISWNE standards — with tax about \$100-\$115 per night. If anyone wants a quaint, old hotel at a less expensive rate for before or after, the Ruebel Hotel and Tavern (618-786-2315) is a few miles away in the small town of Grafton. It is an interesting place to stay, eat or drink.

Pere Marquette does have a very nice indoor swimming pool and hot tub, so bring the suit. If the pool is too tame for the kids, a few miles down the road is Raging Rivers Water Park. We are trying to work out a deal for tickets.

Southern Illinois weather in mid-summer is hot and humid, so bring shorts and T-shirts. Other than the Saturday night banquet everything will be informal. Remember to bring T-shirts from prior conferences. There will be a prize for the person who has the most.

We do have summer thunderstorms, so an umbrella is a good idea. The lodge and cabins are, of course, air-conditioned, so the heat won't be a problem during meetings.

Although every room is not equipped with an iron and ironing board, they are available on request from the front desk. Hair dryers are not provided in every room, but they can be checked out at the desk. The best thing to do is bring one.

The lodge itself has a huge stone and log greatroom, with modern guest rooms in the wings. We can schedule people to be in the lodge, for less walking, or in the cabins, for a more woodsy feeling. The rooms and cabins are equally modern and comfortable. Let us know if you have a preference. Unlike some college campuses we have been on, drinking is legal at the state park. There is a bar in the lodge, which also has outside tables for drinks under the stars. But bring money to pay for your own drinks.

People who wish to utilize the park's hiking trails should bring proper shoes, sunscreen and insect repellent. There will be guided nature hikes for the young, and those who still think they are young.

On Thursday we will have a travel day, but we will not be on the buses for long periods. The Lovejoy Monument, Lewis & Clark Center and Great Rivers Museum are just a few miles apart.

Everyone on the ISWNE membership list should have

received a tourist packet from the Alton Visitors Bureau. If you did not, give them a call at 1-888-253-9358 and ask that it be sent. Of course, there are all kinds of things to do in St. Louis — from baseball, to art museums, to the Arch. There are, as our advertisers say at the bottom of auction ads, other items too numerous to mention.

For more tourism info, go to: VisitAlton.com or explorest-louis.com.

For people who cannot come and stay for the conference, but want to join us for a day, that can be arranged. There is a \$35 day-only charge which includes meals but no room. If others want to come for the whole conference, but want to camp in the park campground, that is also possible. But, the campground is popular. Reservations are needed. Call 618-786-3323.

In addition to the editorial pages you will be sending for the critique, we would like papers to put on display. We want others to learn about your community. So pick out an issue or two, maybe even throw in special sections of which you are proud, and bring them. If you wish to send them in advance to lighten your load, mail them to the *Metropolis Planet*, Box 820, Metropolis IL 62960.

There will be a silent auction of items that are unique to your community. Send or bring items that other will want to bid on. The bids won't be high, but they will be fun.

There will be no official meal at the conference at noon on Saturday, but the restaurant will be open for people who wish to eat there. The afternoon is free for people to explore the antique shops, go to the race track, try their luck at the Alton Belle Casino, visit the old French settlement of Cahokia, go to the Indian mounds, or just rest.

Getting to the area

To fly into the area, use Lambert International Airport in St. Louis. Amtrak does serve the Alton, Ill., area. Call 800-USA-RAIL or go to amtrack.com.

Getting to the park

The only shuttle service we have found is A-1 Limo at 618-254-7874. There is a \$75 charge for one person or for a carload. If you want to share a ride let us know your arrival time. We can arrange some pick-ups by private car. If you will need transportation, let us know by Friday, June 25. Don't forget to provide your arrival date and time!

Following are directions to Pere Marquette Lodge (618-786-2331). It is 15 miles north of Alton on Ill. 100 or the Great River Road.

Coming from St. Louis Airport (by ferry)

The shortest and most scenic route from the St. Louis airport is over a new ferry that crosses both the Mississippi

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A travel guide to the conference *from page 7*

and Illinois rivers. It is open until 8 p.m. Take I-70 west eight miles to Mo. 94. Turn right on 94E (also First Capitol).

94E goes to Grafton Ferry Road. It is also the Lewis and Clark Trail.

94E veers to the right 1.1 mile from I-70. Continue to 5th street and turn left. Turn right at Clark, left at Second, left at Tecumseh, and right onto Third. (Watch for the Lewis and Clark Trail signs.) You will be at the edge of town and still on 94 E. Continue 7.5 miles to Grafton Ferry Road. It's 2.5 miles to the river.

Coming from St. Louis airport (by bridge)

Take I-70 east for approximately .25 mile and you'll exit left onto I-170 north. Take I-170 until it ends. Take I-270 east (Chicago) to route 367 north to Alton, Illinois. Turn left off the Alton bridge and continue to the third stoplight and turn left onto Ill. 100. Follow Ill. 100 (Great River Road) north to Grafton (slowly). (The speed limit in Grafton is rigorously enforced.) The lodge is 5 miles past Grafton.

Coming from downtown St. Louis

Take I-70 to Goodfellow Blvd., north to Mo. 367. 367 becomes Ill. 67 and crosses the bridge into Alton. Cross the bridge. At the end of the bridge turn left, go to the third stoplight and turn left. You will see the Alton Belle Casino and grain elevators at this intersection. You are now on Ill. 100 (the Great River Road), a national scenic

byway. Follow Ill.100 through Grafton (slowly). (The speed limit in Grafton is rigorously enforced.) The lodge is 5 miles past Grafton.

Coming from I-64/East St. Louis area

From I-64 take I-255 (it becomes Ill. 255) north 13.3 miles. Turn left (west) at Exit 3 on New Poag Road. Take New Poag Road to the Lewis and Clark Center and turn right (north) on Ill.3. Take Ill. 3 north for 4 miles to Alton. Take Ill. 143 (passing the Alton Belle Casino) to Ill. 100 north (Great River Road). Follow Ill. 100 through Grafton (slowly). The lodge is 5 miles past Grafton.

Coming from Chicago or Springfield

Take I-55 south to Litchfield. Take Ill. 16 west and follow it through Jerseyville and Fieldon to the Ill. 100 junction. Turn left (south) and follow 100 for 10 miles until you reach the lodge on the left.

Problems

If anyone has a problem getting to the conference, please call. The cell numbers are:

- Clyde — 618-646-0497
- Carolyn — 618-638-3134
- Nancy — 217-546-9449

Please note that cell service is not reliable near the lodge. Leave the lodge number as your contact number instead of depending on your cell. The number is 618-786-2331.

94 have registered so far for ISWNE conference

Robert and Mary Lou Estabrook Lakeville, CT
 Don and Debbie Brod. St. Charles, IL
 Burt and Ursula Freireich Litchfield Park, AZ
 Elliott, Rachael, and Marissa Freireich Litchfield Park, AZ
 Marquita Porter Litchfield Park, AZ
 Jim and Gail Painter. Litchfield Park, AZ
 Al Seiler and Jackie Miller Pittsfield, IL
 Phoebe Baker Avondale, PA
 Jane Steinmetz Forest Park, IL
 Bob and Sandy Horowitz Bethesda, MD
 Charles Gay Shelton, WA
 Clyde and Carolyn Wills Metropolis, IL
 Nancy and Richard Slepicka Hillsboro, IL
 Tom Wills and Robin Schectman, Chapel Hill, NC
 Jeanne Pease Oberlin, OH
 Gary and Helen Sosniecki Vandalia, MO
 David and Sue Gordon Altoona, WI
 Chris and Penny Wills Springfield, IL
 Margaret Sawyer Springfield, MO
 Mary Jane Lentz Boyertown, PA
 Ralph and Margaret Henninger Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia
 Kim McCully-Mobley and Al Mobley Aurora, MO
 Dick Drysdale Randolph, VT
 Tim and Mary Waltner Freeman, SD
 Jeremy and Stacey Waltner Freeman, SD
 Carol O'Leary and Bob Whetstone Abbotsford, WI

Dottie and John Wald. Medford, WI
 Kris O'Leary and John, Kevin,
 Lucinda and Conrad Flick Medford, WI
 Goodloe Sutton Linden, AL
 J. R. Ledford Carbondale, IL
 Harry and Carol Hix Norman, OK
 Chad Stebbins Carl Junction, MO
 Nils Rosdahl Coeur d'Alene, ID
 Julian Calvert. Helensborough, Scotland
 Bob and Phyllis Karolevitz Mission Hill, SD
 Garrett and Nina Ray Fort Collins, CO
 David, Fionnuala, and Colum Burke. Tuam, Ireland
 Bill, Jan, Alex and Kevin Haupt. Lodi, WI
 Vickie Canfield Peters and Jim Graue. Valleyford, WA
 Richard and MaryJo Lee. Brookings, SD
 Frank and Pat Garred Port Townsend, WA
 Donna and Bill Remer. Armada, MI
 Chris, Judy, Ryan and Brenden Wood Green Bay, WI
 Richard and MaryJo Lee. Brookings, SD
 Peter Lesniak Whitehorse, Yukon Territory
 Guy and Marcia Wood. Angel Fire, NM
 Robert and Amy Mihalek Yellow Springs, OH
 Susan Belliveau Springhill, Nova Scotia
 Sandra George Jonesville, MI
 Brian Mazza Rocky Mountain House, Alberta
 Richard McCord Santa Fe, NM
 Tom Brooker Green Bay, WI

ISW NEWS

from page 6

Hixes move from Norman to Stillwater

Carol and Harry Hix have moved from Norman to Stillwater, Okla., which means a one-hour and 25-minute commute for Harry to the University of Oklahoma. Why the move?

"The *Reader's Digest* condensed version is that a house that just fits us (built-in office, etc.) became available at good price, the move allows us to be near Carol's family and help with her mother, and this was where we were planning to retire (Carol's family is here)," Harry says. "I work at home (lesson preparation, grading papers, etc.) and drive to campus for classes, office hours, meetings."

For the second year in a row, Harry has served as a judge for the NNA Better Newspaper Competition and as a judge for selection of the papers to be presented during the Community Building Symposium sessions.

Rays explore Europe

Garrett and Nina Ray of Fort Collins, Colo., spent two weeks in May exploring

Prague and Vienna on their first Elderhostel tour. ISWNE members who have traveled with Elderhostel know that the schedules are busy, the lectures are informative, and the company is good. All proved true.

"We had two to three hours of lecture most mornings, then walking tours in the afternoons," Garrett reports. "If we were doing it again, we'd cut a couple of classes to just wander around or go sit in a sidewalk café. But the lectures and tours were excellent, our mother-hen guides were efficient and charming, the food was good, and the hotels were spiffier than the places we'd stay on our own."

The Rays hope to have the laundry done and the lawn mowed before they leave home again to drive to the ISWNE conference.

Whalen still in hospital

John Whalen, 93, of Stevens Point, Wis., remains in the hospital after having surgery for colon cancer on April 8. Daughter Mary reports that he is having difficulty eating and that doctors are thinking of putting in a feeding tube.

"Otherwise, he is doing quite well and has amazed the doctors and nurses," Mary says. "He is reading papers again and critiquing the coverage of President Reagan's death. He will need to go to a nursing home when he is released from the hospital. But he may get back home again if he continues to improve."

Cards may be addressed to John at 5418 Woodland St., Stevens Point, WI 54481

Albanese shares *Boston Globe* item

Ellen Albanese shares this correction that ran in the *Boston Globe* on May 29 with her editor colleagues:

"Correction: Because of a reporting error, Dr. Arleigh Dygert Richardson III, former teacher at Lawrence Academy in Groton, was described in his obituary yesterday as favoring tacky pants with tweed jackets and Oxford shirts. Dr. Richardson favored khaki pants."

Macleod Gazette judged top paper in Canada

The *Macleod* (Alberta) *Gazette* has been judged the top newspaper in Canada in its circulation category.

The Gazette placed first among newspapers that circulate 1,250 to 1,999 copies in the Better Newspapers Competition sponsored by the Canadian Community Newspapers Association.

The announcement was made recently during the awards ceremony at the association's annual convention at the Hilton Lac Leamy in Gatineau, Quebec.

The judge praised *The Gazette* for its strong layout and

use of available space, the quality of photographs and headline writing.

Second place for best all-around newspaper went to the *Jasper Booster* with the *Kivalliq News* from Rankin Inlet placing third.

The Gazette also picked up a third-place award for best sports pages among newspapers that circulate up to 3,999 copies each week.

Frank McTighe, editor of *The Macleod Gazette*, placed sixth in a competition for best photo essay among papers that circulate up to 3,999 copies.

Weekly paper provides setting for John Grisham's 'Last Juror'

By Donald Q. Smith

Publisher, *Monticello* (Minn.) *Times*
May 20, 2004

Willie Traynor and I both began our weekly newspaper careers as small-town reporters at age 23. Both papers had *Times* in their flag, his in Clanton, Miss., mine in Monticello, Minn. For both of us, the day would come when editor, publisher and owner would be added to our title.

Traynor's tenure at the *Clanton Times* would last a decade; he was thrust into ownership within months of joining the small staff in 1970 after dropping out of college. *The Times* was bankrupt with just 1,200 subscribers. A wealthy grandmother helped Traynor financially.

The *Times* in Monticello had under 2,000 subscribers when I joined my parents and just three other employees in June 1971. I served as their editor for five and a half years before joining the weekly newspaper publisher ranks (like Traynor).

Enough of the parallels in com-

munity newspaper careers!

Actually, the comparison of my *Times*' tenure is with a fictional small-town newspaperman. Willie Traynor is the narrator in John Grisham's latest mystery, *The Last Juror*. How a newspaper editor reports and influences events is the backdrop for an intriguing plot surrounding a gruesome murder.

The storyline starts with a brutal rape and killing of a young Clanton mother, continues with the trial and conviction of Danny Paggitt, and reaches its climax with his parole from prison after less than a decade.

Paggitt had vowed revenge at the time of his trial. And simultaneous with his return to Ford County, jurors in the Clanton area are murdered, one at a time.

Traynor's aggressive, front-page reporting of the trial rejuvenated the *Times* as a newspaper. He introduced stories on previously shunned blacks living in Clanton to the newspaper's coverage. He took editorial positions. He compiled a profile on religion after weekly visits to 88 churches in the Clanton area (interestingly, I visited churches in Monticello and Big Lake during my first year at the *Times* and wrote features on their mission, ministers and parishioners).

While events keep *The Last Juror* moving, Grisham devotes considerable time to the history, people and changes in a Southern small town. Racial attitudes are probed, as is the impact of the Vietnam War. Desegregation and forced busing are reported in the *Times* — along with the exploits a black running back who is cheered by both white and black as the high school team becomes victorious. When Traynor has to cover the death of a local soldier in Vietnam, he also writes an editorial denouncing the military effort in Southeast Asia.

Before writing *The Last Juror*, Grisham studied weekly newspapers with a national broker, Gary Greene (Cribb and Associates), who

lent information on revenues, equipment, values, circulation, etc. Having worked as an editor in a small town during the same period, I was impressed with the accurate newspaper environment

Grisham depicted. Even the introduction of family businesses losing their down-town franchise when national firms with huge stores and discounted prices arrive seemed real to what communities began facing (and have been experiencing with great intensity in the last 15-20 years).

Grisham also realized that weekly newspaper publishers walk a tight-rope between being part of, and apart from, the communities they serve. Traynor was incredibly tied to the murder case after becoming close to an elderly black woman who served on the Paggitt jury (and thus lives under the vow of revenge). When hearing word that a hearing on Paggitt's parole was occurring miles away from Clanton, Traynor thrust himself into the proceedings to testify about the horror of the crime and the murderer's vow to the jurors ("You convict me and I'll get every damned one of you").

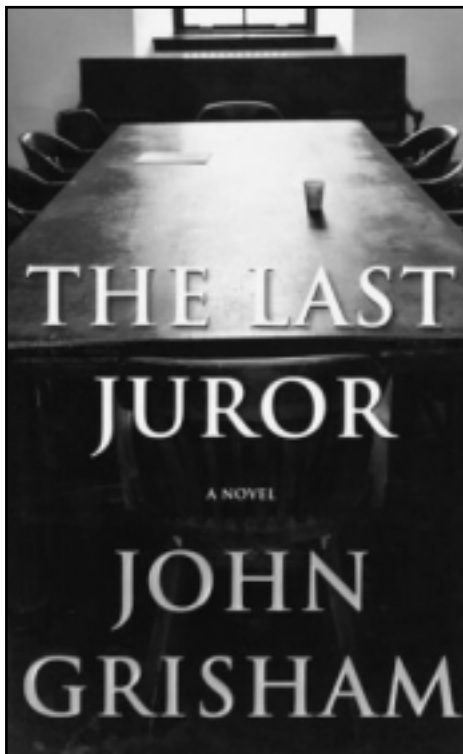
Indeed, jurors begin dying. Paggitt is quickly targeted. And a dramatic, surprising conclusion, Grisham provides.

This is a good read — and not only for newspaper types, or those who have lived in the small towns of America, or devotees of Grisham.

Clanton and the *Times* may be fictional. But it becomes real, like a Monticello, through the author — and his editor's — prose.



Donald Q. Smith



So you wanna write a book . . .

By **Bob Estabrook**

“So you wanna write a book...”

I am probably the last person in the hemisphere who ought to be dealing with that conundrum. For more than five years I've been trying to market a memoir called *Never Dull: From Washington Editor and Foreign Correspondent to Country Publisher*. It mingles experiences under **Philip** and **Katharine Graham** during 25 years on *The Washington Post* in the Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations with world travels as a foreign correspondent covering such figures as **Macmillan**, **de Gaulle**, **Khrushchev** and **Nehru** in places as far afield as Iceland, South Africa and Korea, recounts the flawed American efforts at the United Nations to end the Vietnam War and culminates in a 33-year love affair with a country weekly, *The Lakeville Journal*, including all the ups and downs, hairbreadth escapes and satisfactions pertaining thereto.

Should be fascinating, I thought modestly. Quite a few book editors have so described it. The only trouble is that seemingly no one wants to take a chance on publishing it at this time.

It started out with several friends in northwest Connecticut associated with book publishing urging me to write about my experience. I worked for a couple of years in spare time and submitted a rough manuscript to one of them, a retired vice president of Doubleday. He was so enthused he sent it to a colleague at Random House for evaluation. The colleague criticized the manuscript, thought it could be made marketable but neglected to say how. Unfortunately my friend, the retired Doubleday vice president, was killed in an automobile accident just at this time.

After revising and consolidating various parts of the book, I began trying familiar commercial publishing firms and then university presses, submitting the entire manuscript to nearly a dozen of them. I enlisted the help of friends including several experienced book editors who read the manuscript and made helpful suggestions. One university press expressed interest and suggested that I ask **Dick McCord** for suggestions. Dick was kind enough to read the manuscript and make a detailed critique. I tried to adopt many of his suggestions, substantially reorganizing the book and cutting the length by nearly half before resubmitting it. A year and a half after the initial contact, though, the final verdict was no.

At this point I acquired another editor with numerous contacts in the publishing world, **Doris Eder**. She edited the manuscript for publication, suggesting many useful changes, and pronounced the completed product a work that should command attention.

Systematically she queried her contacts, including virtually every university press in the country. She also submitted outlines of the book to various agents. I followed up numerous other suggestions from journalist friends who have published books.

The Yale University Press wrote one of the nicest rejection letters I have seen, praising *Never Dull* as “the chronicle of an extraordinary life, written in elegant prose.” This offset the experience with my own alma mater, Northwestern University, whose press did not bother to answer my letter individually but sent a form rejection postcard instead. All the replies added up to just one conclusion, though: No one thought there was a market for *Never Dull* just now.

So what can I usefully suggest to an author bursting at the pores with a story to tell? A few elementary rules may be helpful.

1. Consider the audience at which you are aiming and ask yourself whether it is large enough and/or discrete enough to warrant your efforts.
2. Outline clearly what you propose to say and the conclusion(s) you expect to reach before you start to write. Stream-of-consciousness may be appropriate for some kinds of fiction, but rarely for other kinds of writing.
3. Avoid the passive voice. Use active, positive verbs that convey a sense of movement and anticipation.
4. Dramatize your writing. If you are writing in chronological order (a technique to be used sparingly), intersperse chapters or passages that excite, amuse or enlist the reader in your problem).
5. Vary your tone. If you are or were angry, infuriated, dismayed or saddened, make the reader feel your emotions.
6. Find a sponsor, if you can, who can open doors and get you the attention of an appropriate publisher or agent.
7. Pray a lot.

If you follow these rules and others from your own experience, and if success still eludes you, move over at the crying rail and I'll buy you a beer.

Look for another installment of “So you wanna write a book...” by another published (or unpublished) ISWNE member in the next newsletter.



Bob Estabrook

Confessions of a printer's devil

By Cary Stiff

Recently one of my high school buddies — with a touch of wickedness in his heart, I suspect — sent me a couple of back issues of our hometown newspaper, *The Lowell Ledger*.

Both issues mentioned me — in the “50 years ago” column! Yikes! That was a shock. I almost had the Big Coronary, right there in my recliner.

Each of the items mentioned a long-forgotten high school accomplishment — a solo with the Spring Band Concert, a role in the first musical staged at the school in 10 years.

But one of the issues also carried something a little more serious — an obituary and appreciation for **Don MacNaughton**, long-time back shop foreman at *The Ledger*. That brought back plenty of bitter-sweet memories.

When I was a junior in high school (yes, 50 years ago), the superintendent called me into his office and told me that **Harold Jefferies**, *The Ledger* editor, was looking for a “printer's devil.” Would I be interested?

You bet.

I jumped at the chance. That was my first real job, and Jeff was willing to pay a small salary — 60 cents an hour (a whopping penny a minute, or \$24 a week — before payroll taxes came out).

At *The Ledger*, I was the kid who swept out the back shop every week, and I learned a lot of newspaper jargon.

I “killed” pages after they had been run off the old flat bed press. I threw the dead type into the “hell box,” then melted it down and poured the molten lead into heavy iron molds. Then the long, heavy, silvery bars of freshly recycled lead (“pigs,” Don called them) had to be wheeled on a dolly over to the Linotype machine, ready to be reused for the next edition of that little Michigan weekly.

The job had a lot of variety. I learned, for example, about “ems” and “ens,” “pica poles” and “make-up rules.” And I could read “galleys” of type upside down and backwards, from bottom to top — another talent of little use today.

The work could be messy and hot and dangerous. Each week the space bands from the Linotype machine had to be rubbed in graphite to lubricate them.

The proof press left the printer's devil's hands black, and that got all over his face. I used a gasoline-soaked rag to rub the old ink off the platen of the job presses before it dried. And when I washed up at the end of each day, the gritty Lava soap in the back shop sink took some skin with it down the drain.

I still have scars on my arms, caused when my sweat dripped off my brow, landed in the 700-degree molten lead and exploded while I was casting the pigs. Once I caught a forefinger in the power saw while I was trimming some lead slugs for an ad. **Mary**, the office receptionist, screamed and nearly fainted when she saw the blood, but “**Doc**” **McKay**, the local sawbones, fixed me up with a couple of quick stitches. And now I can proudly boast that, not only is newspapering in my blood, my blood also is in the newspaper business.

Jeff, the publisher, taught me how to flip single sheets of newsprint into the mechanical folder at the rear end of the flatbed press when he was printing the front pages. That required a lot of coordination, and if I missed a sheet he had to stop the press.

I learned how to make up pages, inserting blank “slugs” and “thins” between the lines of type to stretch a column out. And one time, while we were making up the paper, I had a major disaster. I forgot to tighten the “quoins,” the little steel wedges that held the type for two pages of the broadsheet together in the heavy metal “chase.” I lifted the chase and started to carry it over to the flat bed newspaper press — and the type, of course, fell out and “pied” all over the place. Don, who had been a printer's devil once, just laughed — and then made me reassemble the pages. The paper was late coming out that week.

Looking back now, I realize Don had a lot of patience, and he was a good teacher. He showed me how to use the hydraulic paper cutter to cut the stock for the job presses. (But, of course, only he was allowed to cut apart the big sheets of one-dollar bills that the U.S. Bureau of Printing shipped to the local bank.)

Eventually he let me run the old hand-fed Kluge job press. I printed business cards, auction flyers and letterheads, hand-setting some of the type myself, using the

individual letters in the “California job case.” But I never learned how to operate the more modern Heidelberg press, which used suction cups to pick up each piece of blank stock and whip it up against the type. Only Don knew how to operate that — he had spent a whole week in Chicago one year, just learning how to run that (and coming home with stories about the Windy City's night life).

Another machine I was not supposed to touch was the Linotype — a marvelous, Rube-Goldbergian contraption that produced the columns of lead type. It had been invented by a man named **Otto Mergenthaler**, who went insane after perfecting it, Don said. It was a massive, costly monster made up of cogs and gears, cams and levers that clanked and whirred and rattled as the lines of hot type came out, one by one. A good Linotype operator could produce a galley of type (about 18 inches or so) in an hour.

I was fascinated by the Linotype. I based my high school physics project on it, drawing life-sized pictures of its gears and cams on large sheets of acetate, and then overlaying them on each other to show how complicated it was. Then I used the electric motor from my old Erector set to turn a cam that converted rotary motion into vertical motion, like the Linotype did. **Mr. Thaler**, the physics teacher, thought that was great and gave me an “A.”

Less successful was my attempt to operate the Ledger's Linotype. One night, after Don and Jeff and everybody else had left the office, I painstakingly pecked out a line of type on its blue and gray keyboard (probably something like “A quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog”). I carefully elevated the brass matrices up into the Linotype's maw to be cast. The machine whirred and clanked and rattled — and then stopped cold. Something terrible had gone wrong. I had what Linotype operators feared most of all — a “squirt.” Hot 700-degree lead had oozed out around each brass matrix and then rapidly cooled into a hard, solid mass.

In a panic, I pried the mess of brass and lead out of the machine as best I could. Then, under cover of darkness, I threw the incriminating evidence into the Flat River on my way home.

continued on page 13

Confessions of a printer's devil from page 12

The next day I thought for sure I was going to get fired when Don discovered the damage caused by his new printer's devil. I tried to hide out of sight in the back shop, waiting for the ax to fall. But Don didn't say much — at least nothing I could hear. However, the air around him did seem to turn a little blue.

A couple of hours later, after a lot of muttering, he had the squirt cleaned up and the Linotype up and running again. And Jeff — who probably didn't want to bother training another printer's devil — let me keep my job.

Eventually I moved from the back shop into the front office to do some reporting. Jeff, who would print anything that came in the door, let me have my own column — a special thrill for me, if not for readers. And I kept working at *The Ledger* in the summer and during vacations home from college.

After graduation, I detoured a few years into teaching English at the university level, and then I went back to school in New York and got a master's degree in journalism. That led to nine years at *The*

Denver Post as a reporter, assistant city editor and Sunday magazine writer.

Along the way I met and married a girl whose family had been in the newspaper business, and who knew what a California job case was. We dreamed of owning a newspaper of our own some day. And finally, in 1973, we quit our jobs at *The Post* and struck out on our own. We started our own weekly, *The Clear Creek Courant*, in Clear Creek County, Colo., and published it for 26 years. We sold it 1999 so Carol could go back to school and get her Ph.D. in journalism. And today, "our" paper is owned by a large Virginia-based chain, which means it has lost its local flavor. But at least our "baby" is still coming out each week. Even though I winced when my high school buddy sent me a couple of back issues of *The Ledger*, I still look back with pleasure to my days as a printer's devil — especially the mid-morning coffee breaks, when the entire staff sat around Don's desk in the back shop for 15 minutes, sipping Mary's black rotgut, gossiping, listening to Don's stories about Chicago and Jeff's corny jokes, and stuffing ourselves

with fresh donuts from the Lowell Bakery. That was the center of our little world, and I was part of it.

It was a congenial bunch of people. I learned a lot about newspapering. And I will be forever grateful for the patience Don MacNaughton had with that new kid, the aptly named "printer's devil."

MacNeill, Graphic win awards in Canada

Eastern Graphic publisher Paul MacNeill was honoured with the Canadian Community Newspaper Association top columnist award during a gala ceremony June 5 in Ottawa.

Judges for the prestigious George Cadogan Memorial Outstanding Columnist Award commended MacNeill as being "a consistent warrior in the interests of fair play and honesty in his region for years." The award is open to any columnist writing for a member paper of the association that represents 680 English community newspapers across Canada.

In addition, *The Graphic* also earned three other national awards. MacNeill was recognized with a second-place award in the Outstanding Reporter Initiative competition for his efforts in challenging Prince

Edward Island's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation. Judges called a coupon that MacNeill created for a free freedom of information request a "stroke of genius."

Reporter Kate Peardon won second-place honours in the Best Business Writing Award for a story that detailed how the provincial government had sidestepped its own equity investment funding rules to help finance a community golf course in Murray River, home of the provincial premier.

As well *The Graphic* earned third-place honours in the Best Agriculture Edition competition. Judges cited the locally written stories and sharp, bold pictures. "It is both informative and eye-pleasing for the reader."

The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors

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E-mail: donna.remer@voicenews.com

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Book makes case for proper punctuation

By **Peter Lesniak**
Editor, *The Yukon News*
Whitehorse, Yukon Territory
May 31, 2004

The Yukon News publishes three times a week in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada. **Peter Lesniak** has been the editor there for 11 years.

There are two kinds of people in this world, those who think punctuation matters and those who don't.

If you wish to know the six main uses of the comma, for example, read on. If not, then find something else to do.

And by all means stay clear of **Lynne Truss**, a self-proclaimed stickler for proper punctuation who has written a breezy global bestseller documenting, and decrying, our descent into grammatical anarchy, thanks in large part to sliding educational standards.

(In Britain, basic vocabularies have diminished by 50 percent in the last 25 years. And the same must be true here in Canada, judging from the teen talk I keep overhearing everywhere I go.)

If you can't see the difference between the possessive its and the contraction it's, admonishes Truss, "you deserve to be struck by lightning, hacked up on the spot and buried in an unmarked grave." And she's only half joking.

The British journalist and novelist has a particularly low tolerance for misplaced apostrophes in public signs and notices, as in *Cyclist's Only*, *Mens Toilets* and *Bobs' Motors*.

"Either this will ring bells for you or it won't," she writes. "A printed banner has appeared on the concourse of a petrol station near to where I live. 'Come inside,' it says, 'for CD's, Video's, DVD's, and Book's.'"

"If this satanic sprinkling of redundant apostrophes causes no little gasp of horror or quickening of pulse, you should probably put down this book at once.

"By all means congratulate yourself that you are not a pedant or even a stickler; that you are happily equipped to live in a world of plummeting punctuation standards; but just don't bother to go any further.

"For any true stickler, you see, the sights of the plural word 'Book's' with an apostrophe in it will trigger a ghastly private emotional process

similar to the stages of bereavement, though greatly accelerated."

In her native London, she has even been spotted on occasion pointing out these signage outrages using a pole topped with an apostrophe.

Her book, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* — the title comes from the punchline of a old joke about an encyclopedia entry on the panda — is full of informed advice and opinion on not just the comma and apostrophe, but also on the dash, hyphen, colon, semicolon, bracket, question mark and exclamation mark.

Here's what she has to say on the last punctuation mark in this list. By the way, it happens to be my least favourite.

"In the family of punctuation, where the full stop is daddy, the comma is mummy, and the semicolon quietly practices the piano with crossed hands, the exclamation mark is the big attention-deficit brother who gets over-excited and breaks things and laughs too loudly," she writes. (Very angry or very happy letters-to-the-editor writers, it's been my sad experience, are among the most relentless abusers of the exclamation mark.)

So it is best avoided, unless you are absolutely sure you require such a big effect, suggests Truss.

Her primary message is that punctuation does matter, despite what some lax teachers may tell their grammatically challenged charges in these permissive times.

Without this elegant system of printers' marks that has aided the clarity of the written word for the past 500 years, meaning suffers, as even the hopelessly dim must come to appreciate after studying the panda joke.

A panda walks into a cafe. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots into the air.

"Why?" asks the confused waiter, as

the panda makes towards the exit. The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife manual and tosses it over his shoulder.

"I'm a panda," he says, at the door. "Look it up."

The waiter turns to the relevant entry and, sure enough, finds an explanation.

"Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves."

And as for the six uses of the comma I mentioned at the top of this piece, here they are:

- 1) To make lists.
- 2) To join two complete sentences.
- 3) To fill gaps left by missing words.
- 4) Before direct speech.
- 5) To set off interjections.
- 6) To use as bracketing devices.

Though Truss is much encouraged with how her little book has been received by the general public (it's been the No. 1 bestseller in seven countries, including Canada), she ends it with a dire warning.

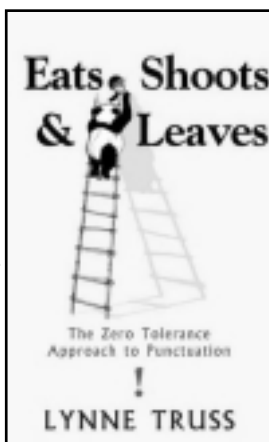
"We have a language that is full of ambiguities; we have a way of expressing ourselves that is often complex and allusive, poetic and modulated; all our thoughts can be rendered with absolute clarity if we bother to put the right dots and squiggles between the words in the right places," she writes.

"Proper punctuation is both the sign and the cause of clear thinking. If it goes, the degree of intellectual impoverishment we face is unimaginable."

I can only hope I've succeeded in making Truss' case for proper punctuation as clear as possible in this space. I also hope I've punctuated everything correctly. If not, I expect to hear from some even more dedicated sticklers out there. Anyway, her elegantly written and very entertaining book will get an honoured place on my desk here at work for years to come. I highly recommend it.



Peter Lesniak



'A view from the end of the road...'

By **Mike Buffington**
Editor, *The Jackson Herald*
Jefferson, Ga.
Feb. 25, 2004

The death this week of **Dwain R. Smith** leaves a void for readers of this newspaper. He was columnist of the "*Brockton News*," a weekly feature enjoyed by many, many loyal readers.



Dwain R. Smith

Dwain died Sunday of a heart attack while writing his column for this week's paper. That final column appears on page 3C of this edition.

Perhaps ironically, Dwain's opening sentence for this week's column was, "*A view from the end of the road....*"

I think he must be looking down today and chuckling at that. He always appreciated a good line.

Indeed, Dwain was an unusual columnist in several respects and his passing marks the end of an era for this newspaper. He was the last of what those of us in the newspaper business call "country correspondents."

For decades, rural weekly newspapers across America employed an army of writers whose job was to report on small, niche communities

within their circulation area. The goings-on in these rural hamlets were fodder for the weekly "correspondent." If you had dinner with a neighbor, it might well be written about, including details of the meal served. If you were sick, a correspondent would write about it, putting you on something akin to a community "prayer list."

But Dwain took that style to a higher level. Not only did he report on the doings in the Brockton community, but he also provided commentary on a variety of subjects of general interest to local readers. You didn't have to live in the Brockton community to appreciate what he had to say.

Dwain took his commentaries seriously and set high standards for himself. A couple weeks ago, he called me to discuss a situation he considered a professional ethical dilemma. Dwain was asked to serve on a county-wide citizens committee to study the need for a new county jail. It was a subject which interested him greatly.

But he was conflicted about serving on that committee. He felt that if he served, it could create a conflict with his writing. He wanted to have the freedom to comment on the jail issue in his column and didn't want that voice to be compromised by his serving on the committee.

Not all correspondents held their duties to such a high standard. Many years ago, we once unknowingly published a piece in another correspondent's column about a man and woman who spent a day

at the lake together — only the woman wasn't the man's wife.

It's funny today, but it wasn't too humorous at the time.

Over the decades, the use of correspondents such as Dwain has dwindled in many newspapers. As transportation improved and as rural communities moved from an agricultural-based society to a more diverse economy, the demand for rural community news softened.

In addition, a more mobile society and changing expectations has upended many traditional communities. A lot of people came to view correspondent writings as "gossip" and an invasion of their privacy. How we define neighbors and "being a neighbor" changed.

Finally, the demands on newspapers changed. Each edition has a finite amount of space and as weekly newspapers increased staff coverage in other areas, such as school news and sports, it has left less space for traditional correspondent columns.

At one time, this newspaper had 10-15 country correspondents. The death of Dwain R. Smith marks the end of that unique part of our history.

And as both a writer and a friend, he will be missed.



Mike Buffington

Reporter isn't commissioner's personal flack

By **Keith Green**
Ruidoso (N.M.) News
May 28, 2004

On the cusp of another summer season in the clichéd paradise we call Ruidoso, it occurs to me that this opening Memorial Day weekend has at least one twist worth noting for posterity.

Memorial Day this year bumps square into our June 1 primary election, which — considering the low turnout of recent elections — doesn't harbinger too much in the way of big numbers. We should be able to beat that shoddy 12 percent turnout in the municipal election, but don't hold your breath to see a breakthrough in patriotic participation.

Even those political-power-driven northern New Mexico counties are expecting little out of the primaries of 2004. The big city paper notes that our state primary is lacking some high-profile races that would perk up the populace. (Or are we holding our breaths for the November general election, presuming the country isn't blown up by terrorists before that date?)

Perhaps there'll be a little better turnout hereabouts because of some steam that seems to be rising over the District 3 county commissioner contest:

Incumbent Leo Martinez vs. Tom Battin vs. Nora Midkiff.

According to a few letters to the editor on the subject (all of them too late to run since they violate our "no partisan letters in

the edition just prior to the election" rule), some people think Martinez should be dumped. Not, it seems, because he's done a bad job representing his constituents, but because he's done too good a job of getting his name in these pages.

There have been accusations that Martinez has his own personal flack in the person of one of the paper's reporters. Never mind that said reporter is the only person covering both county (and that's Martinez's bailiwick) and village government.

Never mind that Martinez represents most of Ruidoso proper, making him a natural source for news and comment pertinent to Ruidoso.

Never mind that Martinez isn't shy about stating his opinion on almost any subject. Fact is, maybe his very verbosity is what sets off his opponents. Ah, well.

This isn't an endorsement of any of the District 3 contenders. We like 'em all. But we don't like to see people dumping on a good reporter who's under the gun for doing what a good reporter is supposed to do — getting the news and reporting it.



Keith Green

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 Houston 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 University 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 at 417-625-9736.

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