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The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors

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Texas A&M Journalism Department in limbo

By Dr. Douglas Perret Starr

ISWNE member Douglas Perret Starr, a professor of journalism at Texas A&M University, is a former newsman for The Associated Press, covering government and politics in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida.

The 55-year-old, nationally accredited Department of Journalism at Texas A&M University will cease to exist as a degree program Aug. 31, 2004.

But, beginning in Fall 2004, Journalism will emerge, Phoenix-like, as a course of study designed to prepare students for a career in journalism, presumably with a Certificate in Journalism. It won't be the same as a degree. Students bent upon a journalism career will have to major in another discipline — political science, history, economics, whatever — and take a handful of Journalism courses to satisfy their career plans.

In Fall 2003, the Department admitted its last Journalism majors — 55 of the 350 freshmen who declared Journalism as their first choice, the Class of 2007. Those 55 and all the other Journalism graduate and undergraduate majors are guaranteed an opportunity to complete the work and receive a degree in Journalism.

After that, students preparing for a career in journalism will get, at most, a minor in journalism.

The specific design of the resurrected Journalism program is still being worked out, but speculation is that the skills courses — reporting, writing, copyediting — and some of the media studies courses will remain. Some media studies courses may move to other departments: history of journalism to History, law of the press to Political Science, public relations to (Speech) Communication. There is a possibility that the skills courses may move to English.

The dismantling of the department began in 2000, when Dean **Charles A. Johnson**, of the parent College of Liberal Arts, directed the department to reduce its 950 majors and minors to 250 newspaper majors only.

At the time, the department was under an interim head, having failed in three attempts to find a replacement for Professor **Charles Self** who was promoted to Associate Dean. During the past four years, the department has operated under two interim department heads, and will have a third for its final year.

Today, the department has 450 majors and eight permanent and three visiting faculty members and a dozen part-time, temporary lecturers drawn from the professions.

The eight remaining permanent Journalism faculty members will be relocated into other departments where they will teach journalism courses and courses

in the new department. They will be given time to prepare for the new discipline because they will be assigned teaching duties in that new discipline.



Dr. Douglas Perret Starr

So, what will die next August is the administrative aspect of Journalism.

Even so, academics and professionals alike from Texas and much of the United States, led by the Former Journalism Students Association, began a movement to Save Journalism.

The Journalism faculty members held little hope for those efforts because University President Robert Gates announced early on that he would support Dean Johnson's decision.

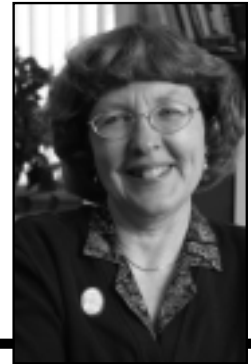
But the Save Journalism efforts produced another statement by President Gates that he would look carefully at the proposed program in Journalism before making a final decision.

In his initial announcement about the elimination of the department, Johnson

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President's Report

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



... To promote freedom of the press in all nations

It's a key part of the mission statement for the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors. What issues do we, as newspaper editors, need to address?

Freedom of the press means little without access to meetings where decisions are made and access to information that governmental bodies use.

That's where the problem comes in.

Here in Michigan, our paper is faced weekly with the challenge of reporting information that some elected officials would rather keep quiet. One city council recently began holding an "executive session" to receive opinions from its attorney. The board contends that this is permissible under the Michigan Open Meetings Act, and they are technically correct. The intent of the OMA, however, is to ensure that all meetings are open unless the public interest is better served by closing the meeting. Private discussion is needed, for example, when a board is negotiating the purchase of property and when it is engaged in union negotiations.

The board that closes a meeting to receive a written communication from its attorney may be following the letter of the law ... but not the spirit.

What can we do?

For one thing, we no longer use the euphemism "executive session" to refer to a meeting that is not open to the public. We may say the board met in private; we may call it a closed meeting. On rare occasions, we may even refer to a "secret

meeting" if a board meets privately on short notice.

But we no longer imply validity by using "executive session" to refer to discussion withheld from our readers.

Also, we speak up on our opinion pages. Elected officials are conducting the public's business, not their own. The records and discussion must be open to the people they represent. Elected officials may find it more comfortable to talk among themselves, away from public scrutiny, and they might even convince themselves that it's for the public good.

They won't convince us. And we let our readers know.

The Open Meetings Act does allow us to file suit if a local body ignores the law and we keep this option open. But first, we try to rally public opinion and that can be enough to bring the board back in compliance.

Last year, one township board held a meeting on short notice and our reporter was told to leave when discussion began. Our reporting of this incident led the county prosecutor to investigate and the board was reprimanded. Since that time, they have complied with the law.

Here in the United States, in these post 9-11 days, newspapers are caught in the middle of the public's right to know versus the public's need to feel secure. **John Ashcroft** and like-minded cohorts used a pretense of patriotism to take advantage of a frightened public and close access to

more information than necessary.

This is information we need to evaluate the actions of our government.

The demand for documentation will likely grow louder now that **President Bush** is asking for more than \$80 billion to continue his attempt to effect a "regime change" in Iraq. People will want to know why this money is needed and how it will be spent.

The supporting information for our actions in Iraq needs to be thoroughly examined and debated in the United States. It has implications worldwide since some countries are being asked to help with the war on terrorism, and others are likely to be the object of our actions if the continuing war is funded.

I firmly believe that these international issues have their roots in local government and the way our papers cover the issues at home. Weekly newspaper editors shape public opinion on access to information. If we report on a closed meeting and show our readers why it is dangerous, they understand.

If our readers understand the importance on a local level, it is easier for them to see the importance on a national and international level.

As weekly newspaper editors, we know that people can be trusted to make good judgments. We just need to give them the tools to do that at the local level, and the skills to pursue that goal on a broader scale.

Responses to suicide query helped me make a decision

By **Bradley A. Martin**
Editor, *Hickman County Times*
Centerville, Tenn.

My query to ISWNE in June asked for straightforward information on suicide reporting. How much is too much? Is this too hard, too personal, too distressful to

report alongside other forms of violent death?

The volume of responses from editors and publishers was astonishing. The comments were illuminating. And it's helped me make a decision: I'm not reporting enough about suicide. Maybe you're not, either.

The Centers for Disease Control reports that more people die in the United States from suicide than from homicide. In 2000, 29,350 U.S. citizens killed themselves. That makes it the 11th leading cause of death for Americans, and it's the third leading cause of death for people ages 15-24.

My research here led me through websites that reported Tennessee's suicide rate for 2000 as 13.04 per 100,000 residents. In my little corner — Hickman County, pop. 22,295 — our string of six suicides this past spring vaulted us up to an annual rate of about 120 per 100,000.

My research also led me to **Scott Ridgway**, director of the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network. This coalition was born a couple of years ago, at the call of now-former U.S. Surgeon General **David Satcher**, who called for a national effort to stem suicide through awareness of the situation, plus intervention training. It also seeks to "eliminate the stigma of suicide."

I told Ridgway what had happened here. He added a couple of other Hickman County specific numbers: 38 attempted suicides here in 2000; 39 in 2001.

Among Tennessee's 95 counties, it turns out, Hickman County ranked 7th for suicide deaths in 2000.

So there's a problem that no one living here really knew about, unless they were touched by one of those who killed themselves, or tried to.

Ridgway asked me if I could secure a place for a meeting to discuss the situation. On July 28, a group of folks — including the sheriff, the emergency management director, and the hospital's clinical services administrator — met to discuss what could be done.

The first step here was scheduled Sept. 9 and 10, a two-day intervention training course for those persons who were interested. Participants learned not only

potential signs of suicide, but develop the ability to move a distressed person toward help. More of these will be scheduled.

At Ridgway's suggestion, the Hickman County Suicide

Prevention Task Force also will develop ways to raise awareness. Dissemination of specific information will be discussed; a brochure and a refrigerator magnet are possibilities.

Of course, I have been writing about the statistics and the development of the task force all along, and I will continue to. I have a 2-by-3 drop-in that lists potential signs of a suicidal person, and I try to use it if and when space allows.

Our reporting will continue to include the suicide hotline number at the end of suicide stories. Call me Pollyanna, but read the following statistic: Persons bereaved by suicide are eight times more likely to commit suicide, according to the state prevention network.

I am quite happy to tell you that I have not had a suicide to report on in nearly two months now. I know no more about why that has happened than I do about why we had the springtime epidemic.

I have, however, decided to resume reporting on suicides; our practice here is to write a short news story apart from the obituary, which does not address the cause of death.

The difference between now and what I've been doing for the last 17 years is that I know more about suicide now. Mainly, I know that there is a problem here, though I don't know why and may not ever know that. But the newspaper can shed light on the problem by reporting about it, and by providing basic information about it. I intend to do that.

I don't know whether I can do it as well as **Anthony Longden**, editor-in-chief of the Berkshire Regional Newspapers of



Bradley Martin

The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors

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ISWNEWS



Sosnieckis buy weekly paper

Gary and Helen Sosniecki officially bought *The Vandalia* (Mo.) *Leader* on Sept. 1. Vandalia is in northeast Missouri. The population is 3,800, but that includes 1,500 women in the local state prison. Circulation is 2,400.

Office phone is (573) 594-2222; office mailing address is P.O. Box 239, Vandalia, MO 63382. Gary says it's a nice town, and they look forward to having some fun. And for the first time since 1979, Gary is covering high school football.

Thomsen's paper wins top honor

The Peninsula Gateway, a weekly newspaper in Gig Harbor, Wash., has been named "Newspaper of the Year" in its circulation class in the Suburban Newspaper Association's 2003 General Excellence contest.

The judges, on the staff of the American Press Institute, gave the Gateway the top honor among newspapers in the 10,001-22,500-circulation class for the second straight year.

"It draws the readers in with strong visuals, it does a good job of covering local issues — you feel as though you're in the community," the judges wrote. "The writing is above average. The dramatic use of photos is very effective. There's a healthy volume of advertising and it's pleasingly integrated into the paper. The lifestyle sections show a lot of variety. There's a solid editorial voice on local issues."

New ISWNE member **Jim Thomsen** is the editor of *The Gateway*, which is produced by Olympic Cascade Publishing, a division of the McClatchy Corp.

Garred teaching advanced reporting

Frank Garred has taken a teaching assignment with the Journalism Department at Western Washington University, Bellingham, this fall. As an adjunct instructor he's teaching an upper division reporting class.

The former publisher/editor of the *Port Townsend Jefferson County Leader* continues to act as interim director for the Washington Coalition for Open Government, the state's FOI advocacy and education group.

Burke hoping to change libel law

David Burke is a member of a three-man sub-committee of the Regional Newspapers Association of Ireland set up to make a submission to a forthcoming review of the Irish law of defamation, which is very restrictive at present.

The group will draw up its document, and probably liaise with the NNI (National Newspapers of Ireland) before the formal hearings. "Nobody is very hopeful of a quick change in the law, as Irish politicians are among the quickest to sue newspapers for alleged libels," David says. "But the independent Law Reform Commission has made recommendations for a liberalisation, so there is some hope of progress."

Burke daughters now in college

David Burke's twin daughters, **Miriam** and **Aoife**, both did well in their second-level school (equivalent to Senior High) Leaving Cert examinations.

Their father says they did better than their work rate deserved. He grudgingly admits to being proud that they both got A1 grades in English — among the top 4.3 percent nationwide in the subject.

Miriam is now beginning a four-year degree course in New Media and English at the University of Limerick, and Aoife is starting a Bachelor of Arts degree in NUI Galway, where ISWNE 2003 was held. She is studying English, History, Archaeology, and Philosophy in her first year. She will drop two subjects after that. This is the girls' first time to be separated, but they expect to see each other frequently during weekend visits home.

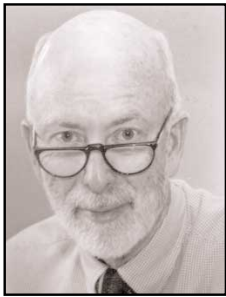
Jasper the dog dies of heart failure

Dog lovers who met **David Burke's** boxer, Jasper, at the 2003 ISWNE conference will be sorry to hear that he died on Sept. 7, of heart failure. He was only 8, but the life expectancy of his breed is short. He died in his sleep, having been treated for the previous month for congestive heart disease. You can read about him in Omnibus on the *Tuam Herald* Sept 18 edition on www.unison.ie.

ISWNE new members

George Gladney is an associate professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Wyoming. His areas of interest and specialization include mass communication law, theory, and ethics; sociology of news; social impacts of communication technology; news writing and reporting.

George has worked as a financial reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* and as an editor of the *Jackson Hole News* and *Colorado Springs Gazette*. He also owned and operated his own business/financial public relations firm in Denver. He received his Ph.D. in communication in 1991 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, his master's degree in journalism in 1988 from the University of Oregon, his B.J. degree in 1971 from the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri, and his B.A. degree (English) in 1969 from Waynesburg (Pa.) College. His email address is GGladney@uwoyo.edu.



Howard Kessinger is editor of *The Marysville Advocate*, a 5,534-circulation weekly in one of Kansas' oldest towns. He and his wife, **Sharon**, bought the paper 27 years ago.

Howard was born in Wellington, Kan., 70 years ago, attended the University of Wichita, spent two years in the Army, and worked for his brother Ed's weekly paper in Junction City while finishing up a journalism degree at Kansas State University. "I'd thought I wanted a

career in advertising and was ad manager for the *Abilene (Kan.) Reflector-Chronicle* for three years," Howard said. "A visit to an ad agency in New York City convinced me my brother had the right idea in owning a community paper.

"I went to the weekly *Oberlin (Kan.) Herald* as managing editor on a handshake deal that if everything went well I'd eventually be the owner. I'm grateful to the late Ernest Woodward for keeping his word."

The Kessengers have four children: **Hannah**, who teaches Spanish and music in a grade school; **Sarah**, who covers the Kansas legislature for the Harris group; **Mary**, who teaches and coaches girls' tennis and basketball at Marysville High School; and **Michael**, a senior in journalism at Fort Hays State University. They have four grandchildren.

Howard said he previously was a member of ISWNE, when

Norris Alfred, editor of the weekly *Polk (Neb.) Progress*, urged him to join. "He was a liberal Democrat in a really conservative, tiny Nebraska town," Howard said.

His email address is hkses@mvleadadvocate.com.



Leslie O'Donnell is managing editor of the *News-Times* in Newport, Ore. She writes editorials, news articles, and articles on the arts, as well as editing the twice-weekly newspaper and two shop-pers.

Leslie started as features editor in 1985, created the newspaper's Arts and Entertainment section, and became managing editor in 1990. She previously worked as a part-time reporter at the *Polk County Itemizer-Observer* in Dallas, Ore., and county correspondent at *Statesman Journal* in Salem, Ore.

Leslie has a bachelor of arts in English from Barnard College of Columbia University and a master's degree in social work from West Virginia University. She has two grown sons and lives in Seal Rock with her husband, **Mike**, two dogs, and three cats. She loves to travel, read, and cook.

Leslie received the Hazel Brannon Smith Award for Editorial Excellence from the National Federation of Press Women in 1995. Her email address is leslie.odonnell@lee.net.



Susan Belliveau has been with *The Record* in Springhill, Nova Scotia, for 15 years, the past nine as editor. During this time the paper has gone from a broad-sheet to a stretch tab format, and received several Atlantic Community Newspaper Association (ACNA) awards including Best Overall Newspaper in its class for 2003. It's also received six Blue Ribbons from the Canadian Community Newspaper Association (CCNA).

Susan has been the recipient of ACNA and CCNA awards for feature and editorial writing, and was one of the ISWNE's Golden Dozen for 2003. Her email address is record.editor@ns.sympatico.ca.

Jim Sawyer pursued his dreams

"Sometimes I wish life had a 'front porch,' where during our later years we could just go out and sit back with our arms contentedly crossed and watch life roll back by." These words, written by **Jim Sawyer** for one of his weekly newspaper columns, come to mind as we review his life.

He was born on Sept. 30, 1939, to **Dr. Hugh and Ruth (Dodson) Sawyer** in Springfield, Mo. He entered into a fast-paced life — full of fun, hard work, many laughs and deep loves — and continued so right up to the week before his death.

A sudden case of pneumonia ended his 18-month battle with cancer on Sept. 6. Jim was 63.

His parents were active crusaders, building churches that thrived with activity and growth. Saturday nights were reserved to attend stock-car races. His family rarely passed an airplane site without stopping to admire the planes and perhaps obtain a ride invitation.

In his "Front Porch" article, Jim wrote, "I really like the idea of growing older, which makes perfectly good sense because there's not too much I can do about it. But it really is a mark of distinction. Regardless of how we've lived our lives, we've left our marks."

He was founder and the retired editor of *Southwest Region News Service*, a public information-journalism program of University Outreach and Extension — the off-campus programs of the four-campus University of Missouri and Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Mo. He began the effort, which supplies educational news releases via the media and in other ways, in the late-1970s and retired in 2000.

Prior to Jim's work with the news service, he served University Outreach and Extension in other roles, including directing youth programs in parts of southwest Missouri beginning in 1969. In the early 1960s, he had been a high school teacher in the Waynesville and Seymour school districts, and later was a guidance coun-

selor at Miller High School and also had been employed by the then-named Missouri Department of Education in Jefferson City as school-work coordinator in its vocational rehabilitation program. He covered schools in parts of mid-Missouri and the Ozarks.

But his first love was journalism, and after starting the news service for University Outreach and Extension in the 1970s, he also operated as an independent and free-lance journalist with a wide-



Jim Sawyer (left) and Donald Smith visit at St. Mary's Cathedral in Tuam, Ireland, in July.

ly carried syndication newspaper and magazine column prior to and after his retirement, including a monthly column in the ISWNE newsletter.

Jim received his A.A. degree from Centerville Community College in Iowa in 1958, a bachelor's and master's from Drury University in Springfield in 1962 and 1966, respectively, and in 1990 he was nominated for membership in England's Royal Society of Arts, London, for his international journalism efforts. He was awarded the title of "Fellow" and letters of "FRSA" in 1991.

Jim was the author of three books and numerous publications, including his own humor autobiography, *A Hillbilly*

Journalist Out of Bounds, *Newswriting Short Course for Nonjournalists*, and *Newswriting Short Course*, the latter published by the Missouri Press Association. Jim was a former president of the Southwest Missouri Professional Chapter of the national Society of Professional Journalists, a member of SPJ's nationwide International Journalism Committee and a former consultant to the Ozark Press Association. He was honored by OPA in 1998 with one of the first three "James C. Kirkpatrick Legacy Awards for Community Journalism."

He married **Judith West** in 1960. To this union was born a daughter, **Page Allison**, in 1965; a son, **Jon Christian Thomas**, in 1968; and a daughter, **Summer Dawn** in 1976. They divorced in 1986. In 1989, Jim met **Margaret Epperson**, a co-worker in the University Extension organization. They were married in 1996 in Tuam, Ireland.

Jim often stated that he was fortunate to have "two lives." The first life of family and career. Then the second of retirement, writing columns and pursuing dreams. Those pursuits included becoming the media director for the Ozarks Area Racers' Reunion and assisting in bringing some big-name racing talent to speak at the reunions. These included **Buddy Baker, Dick Trickle, Rusty Wallace, Bobby Allison**, and **Ed Negre**. He wrote numerous stories about local racers that brought the old "glory days" of stock-car racing back to life.

Besides attending many air shows, he obtained a ride on an F-4 Phantom and flew with the Golden Knights, the Army's elite parachuting team. Many colorful stories were the outgrowth of those activities. He also photographed exclusive photos of pre-flight briefing among U.S. and Soviet aviators in 1990, the first-ever joint-formation flight over U.S. soil.

Since 1988, Jim went overseas 26 times in various capacities. In 1991, he was elected a Fellow in the London-based Royal Society of Arts as a result of his contributions to international journalism. In 1995, he was one of 28 U.S. and Canadian journalists invited to the Irish White House to meet **President Mary Robinson**. He had written a "primer" on the geopolitics of the U.K. for others in the group in advance of a trip through the British Isles.

He authored a major 1990 feature story for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* concerning Missouri astronaut **Thomas Akers**, who currently holds spacewalk records resulting from Hubble Telescope repair. He did agricultural stories based on research in Egypt in 1990 and produced a video on Irish agriculture in 1993. He did a story on Titanic victims in Lahardane, Ireland — the village with the largest loss of lives. These are highlights of his many stories and activities.

Jim was preceded in death by his father,

Dr. Hugh Sawyer, and stepfather, **Bud Houghton**. Jim is survived by his wife, Margaret; mother, **Ruth Houghton**; former wife, Judith Patrick; daughter, Page Morgan and husband, **Terry**; son, Jon Sawyer and wife, **Jessica**; daughter, Summer Davis and husband, **Jeremy**; stepson, **Matthew Epperson** and his wife, **Alesha**; and his beloved grandchildren, **Siera** and **Jordan White**, **Emilee Morgan**, **Jonathon Sawyer**, **Aubren Easton**, **Jacob Davis**, and one unborn great-grandchild, **Madylin White**.

In his “Front Porch” column, Jim stated, “In most cases, we’ve got an awful lot to be thankful for, and we need to call a halt and go back over the memories from time to time. I guess if we did that, that would be the front porch I’m talking about, and we need to go out there and sit a spell before the weather turns bad.”

A memorial service for Jim was held at Greenlawn South Funeral Home in Springfield on Sept. 13. Speakers included ISWNE’s **Goodloe Sutton**, **Gary Sosniecki** and **Chad Stebbins**.

My favorite Irishman died Saturday

By **Kim McCully**
Aurora (Mo.) Advertiser

He made a living with words and stories. But somehow words fail when I try to use them to conjure up what **Jim Sawyer** meant to the people whose lives he touched.

We had been good friends for more than a decade. I never tired of his tales and always tried to share his energy with my friends, my family and my students.

He was always coming up with ideas and projects. And he was always willing to do his part. He worked as an editor for the University Extension Service for years, retiring (sort of) a couple of years ago. He never quit writing, though. He published a manual for would-be writers and another one called: *Wind From America’s Midwest: A Hillbilly Journalist Out of Bounds*.

We taught a few classes together and he got me involved in the Ozark Press Association and the Southwest Missouri Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. We’d end up having coffee or dinner at his favorite hangout — Hamby’s or The Shady, both places with character and style. A favorite year for me was 1997-98. I was president of Ozark Press that year and Jim was president of SPJ. Due to budget concerns, educational effort, and overlapping memberships, we forged an alliance that year that’s still there to this day. Jim believed in teamwork and never wanted credit or glory for his deeds.

He would call me from Ireland or Paris or Halifax to tell me of some “bloke” with whom he had crossed paths in his travels. It might be some **Willie Nelson** look-alike from Sarcoxie, Mo., or it might be some relative of a World War II soldier with a

twist to add to the historical files.

I liked the late night phone calls from his home in Willard best. Sometimes he had stumbled across something while doing a “Google” search on his computer. Other times would find him wanting to know how I was or what my son, **Jake**, was doing.



Jim Sawyer, Kim McCully, and Goodloe Sutton toiled around Wisconsin in Jim’s “Kubelwagon” in 2001.

He spoke often about his own children, his grandchildren, his “beautiful wife, **Margaret**” and others. He often talked about his good buddy, **Goodloe Sutton**, a Linden, Ala., publisher who uncovered decades of corruption and crime within his county’s sheriff’s department.

I had the honor of hanging out with Goodloe and Jim a couple of years ago at an ISWNE conference in Madison, Wis. We toured various and sundry parts of Wisconsin in Jim’s Volkswagen “Thing.” We were a yellow blur across those highways as we told stories and laughed our way to various destinations. We had the

top down and my hair was soon standing on end. My cheeks hurt from laughing so hard and Jim leaned over and told me not to worry about my hair. “You’ll just start a new trend,” he quipped.

Often seen wearing black shirts, black pants and black jackets, I teased him about being our very own “man in black.” He once leaned across a table and pulled

out the tag from his sweater and showed me it said “Lady Bug.”

“I’m now a cross-dresser,” he said quite proudly and winked. It seems he was searching for a shirt that morning and saw that his wife had one made out of material that seemed a

little cooler than the one he was about to wear. Unabashedly, he latched onto it and told all of us he was extremely comfortable with his masculinity and was now trying to get in touch with his “feminine side.” We just shook our heads and smiled.

An avid racing fan, he always said he loved to go to the fights at the speedways as a “race might break out.” As time went by and the years passed, we found we knew a lot of the same people. He knew of my brother, **Randy**, and our former pressman, **Kevin Stocker**. We also knew many of the same highway patrolmen for reasons I’ll not divulge here.

He has always listened to my stories. He has provided needed counsel and strength through my ups and downs. A staunch supporter of my writing style and ideas, he has never judged me or said "I told you so." He always encouraged me to live my life with few regrets.

I attended a writers' conference a few years back in Atlanta where Pulitzer Prize-winning authors **Ellen Goodman** and **Patricia O' Brian** were talking about a book they co-wrote. They spoke about friends of the road and friends of the heart. You meet these people along life's travels. Friends of the road are those with whom you come in contact. You bond with them. You enjoy them. But you lose sight of them somewhere along the way — always looking back with fond memories.

Friends of the heart are your soulmates. You keep them with you forever, hold them close and know that no matter what happens to you the rest of your life — because of this person — you will never be the same.

Jim Sawyer was a friend of the heart for me from the moment I laid eyes on him. (I was on my best behavior because I thought he was a priest; but that's another story.) He often told me about a time when he first became smitten with Margaret when they both worked for University Extension. He managed to get on an elevator somewhere with her to make his move and she kept talking to him, but couldn't seem to remember his name. She called him "Buzz Sawyer" a few times and he didn't want to correct her. (He figured he had the rest of his life to get her to remember his name.)

He and Margaret attended a play with us a few months ago in Springfield. It was called "The Lion In Winter" and Jim called and said we would get together for dinner at his mother's house and then make the trek downtown to the theatre.

He said he was going to put my literary knowledge to the test and was quite certain he would "need an interpreter." Still later, we talked into the night and enjoyed a hearty laugh when we peeped into a nearby room and saw his mother and Jake sleeping while sitting straight up, heads tilted back and "fly traps set."

Jim was in love with life. He believed folks should do what made them happy. He believed that given enough time, things had a way of working themselves out. When he found out he was sick several months ago, he wanted to figure out a

way to live. He worried about the folks he might leave behind. But if that wasn't meant to be, he wanted to be a part of research that would help others. He did just that and he did it with style and grace. He always made a difference.

In closing, I'd like to offer an old Irish toast I read to him at his retirement party. He liked it then and I'm sure he'd think it appropriate now:

May the road rise before you.

*May your swing always be straight.
May the ball fly high and far.
And may God himself bring you home*

(When's he's ready for you to edit *Heaven's Times Herald*, of course).

I'm sure he's up there smiling down at us while wearing that black Lady Bug robe telling stories to the crowd around him. We'll miss him.

And another thing is certain: Heaven will never be the same.

Jim had an encyclopedic knowledge

It has been only a few weeks since **Jim** and I traveled together around Galway during the conference. It was obvious then that he was seriously ill, but he maintained the zest and enthusiasm for the profession and had an encyclopedic knowledge of articles **David [Burke]** and I had written over many years in the *Tuam Herald*.

He was a true friend of Irish journalism and alerted us to the great world of scribblers that lay beyond our shores. He will be missed. Ar Dheis De go raibh a anam (Gaelic for "May he stand forever at the right hand of God").

— Declan Varley, Editor, *Galway Advertiser*



Declan Varley

Jim's 'Tuamstone' in Tuam, Ireland

Jim Sawyer has been honored by his family with a granite memorial erected to him in Tuam Cemetery in Tuam, Ireland. The initial idea was his son **Jon's**.

"All three of my children have traveled internationally with me and even accompanied me on stories in England, Germany, Egypt and Ireland," Jim said before his death. "But they know of my special love for Ireland and the Tuam area. **Margaret**, my wife, also knew just how much I value ISWNE and how proud I am to be a member an organization of such wonderful people who are so close to my heart in terms of matching my own journalistic values, so a line about my ISWNE membership was added."

Jim and Margaret were married in St. Mary's Cathedral in Tuam in 1996, the same location as one of the ISWNE festivities during the 2003 ISWNE conference.

Jim got to see the recently completed memorial for the first time during the 2003 conference. The cemetery is just off Dublin Road near David Burke's *Tuam Herald*. Jim had several readers in the Tuam area through Burke's occasional carriage of his syndicated column.

A funny thing happened the first time I visited the memorial stone," Jim related. "An old fellow was digging a grave right next to it and inquired if I was visiting anyone I knew. I pointed to the photo and told him it was me. I think he needed a Guinness at that point."

Jim's Tuam connection to Tuam is totally coincidental to Burke and ISWNE. He first went there in 1992 to see a retired British journalist/writer friend, now deceased, who later was best man at Jim and Margaret's wedding there. He was **Dr. Phill Mottram Brown**, whom Jim had met at the *Jersey Evening Post* in Jersey, Channel Islands, while he was preparing a Battle of Britain story and one about how Jersey was occupied by the Nazis in World War II. As was Jim's custom, whenever he visited a town he would stop at the local newspaper, and in Tuam, that's how he met Burke for the first time. They were both ISWNE members!



Remembering Jim Sawyer

By **Tim Waltner**
 Publisher, *Freeman* (S.D.) *Courier*
 Sept. 10, 2003

The e-mail message in my mailbox wasn't a surprise. But it was still a shock.

"ISWNE member **Jim Sawyer** died at 10:30 this morning (Saturday) at Cox South Hospital in Springfield, Mo. Jim had been in the hospital since Monday, when he woke up and could not breathe. He had pneumonia in his left lung. He lost consciousness Wednesday, and took a further turn for the worse last night. He died peacefully in his sleep. Jim was 63."

The message came from **Chad Stebbins**, the executive director of the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors.

Other than the Waltner family, it's a safe bet no one in Freeman knew Jim Sawyer.

Your loss.

For the life of me, I can't recall the first time I met him. I do recall the last time I saw him. It was in Galway, Ireland where about 85 newspaper folks from across the U.S., Canada and Ireland gathered for our summer conference just two months ago.

I knew it would be the last time I'd see Jim. I knew he was dying. And when I said good-bye, I couldn't bring myself to tell him that I knew it was our last good-bye. My loss.

Jim was a community journalist, who hopped from one adventure to another. That's not surprising for someone who belongs to ISWNE.

But Jim was unique. He was intelligent, clever, witty, hold and gentle, with an eagle eye for a story and a disarming smile that drew you in.

We were in Joplin, Mo., for the 2002 ISWNE Conference when a mutual friend quietly told us Jim had been diagnosed with cancer. We were told he didn't want to talk about it. But **Bix** and I were walking with Jim when he matter-of-factly told us about his cancer and his optimism that he could beat it.

The Missouri conference was a highlight for him, because it provided him a chance to

share his culture and traditions with his fellow newspaper folks and friends. Each of us received commemorative plaques bestowing on us the title of "Missouri Hillbilly Journalists." The Waltners' hangs in my office.

Privately, we knew the prognosis wasn't encouraging. But it simply wasn't in Jim's nature to dwell on that.

There was always one more adventure.

The 2003 conference in Ireland was one Jim wasn't going to miss. As deeply rooted in the Ozarks as he was, Jim Sawyer had come to love Ireland in his travels. I'm convinced Jim willed himself to attend the Galway conference. Although he had to rely on a cane — he was increasingly weak — with his wife, **Margaret** at his side, he was remarkably active in our time in Galway.

And while I hoped he'd be in Illinois for our 2004 conference....well, too often, hope just isn't enough.

A handful of us traveled to Missouri and Oklahoma in mid-May of 1999 when ISWNE was searching for new headquarters. A native of Missouri, Jim was proud that we were in his neighborhood and he joined us on our search.

It was at the end of our travels that Jim and I spent a Sunday morning driving through Oklahoma City, less than two weeks after devastating tornadoes tore through the region. Jim, who drove a bright yellow VW Kübelwagon — sort of a cross between a jeep and a scaled-down Hummer — just followed his instincts and drove us directly into Midwest City, one of the areas hardest-hit in that May 5 disaster.

A police car sat at one of the two intersections that controlled access to the area. Jim gets out of the vehicle, pulls out his press credentials — which includes a press pass issued by the Missouri State Police — and explains we were journalists. The police officer gives us permission and we drive into the heart of the devastated neighborhood. Jim parks the vehicle and we walk around the streets. We see places where homes once stood, but were gone. Homes standing — seemingly intact until you turn

the corner and see half is missing. Trees twisted stripped and shattered. Books and furniture and toys and cars and dishes and clothes litter what is left of homes and places where homes once stood.



Tim Waltner

Jim and I separate and I find myself walking down SE Eighth Street where the damage seems to go from total to minimal. I see three older couples standing and visiting. They are the first people I've seen since we arrived. I make eye contact and I sense a willingness to visit. We begin to talk and they tell me their home was damaged but is structurally sound. And as we're visiting, Jim sees us and walks over and joins the conversation.

A Red Cross van pulls up and several pick up coffee and sandwiches and the group dissolves leaving Jim and me alone with **Anita** and **Eugene Nelson**. We visit a bit longer and Anita and Eugene tell us a bit more about their experience. And suddenly Anita turns to us and asks "Would you like to come inside?" Jim fires back in his rich, gravely, Ozark drawl, "Only if you'll give us lunch."

That was Jim Sawyer. We all laughed and then we went inside and Anita and Eugene give us the full tour.

They explain exactly what happened and what they did and how they survived: when the storm approached, they huddled in a broom closet along with their poodle, Chanel.

When they emerged the roof and walls of their home had holes and debris was everywhere. And while many of their neighbors lost everything, no one in their neighborhood died. "It's a miracle," Anita said.

It was a very personal story they shared with Jim and me. "You're the first people we've let inside," Anna confided.

It was one of the memorable days of my life and wouldn't have happened without Jim Sawyer.

Indebted by community's compassion

By **Paul MacNeill**

Publisher, *The Eastern Graphic*
Montague, Prince Edward Island
Sept. 3, 2003

You would think writing for a living would help me put into words all that has happened to my family in the past six weeks. It doesn't. Words, as many have said to me, are inadequate. There is no good way to describe how your world changes when the love of your life and wife of almost 14 years, dies suddenly at age 39. There is no good way to describe the pain of trying to explain to your children that their mother is an angel. There is no way to justify how one week **Jeanne**, who possessed as strong a zest for life as any person I've ever met, can be taking our daughters to Panmure Island beach for a regular play day and the next week taken from our lives forever.

Words are inadequate.

Since Jeanne's passing July 23, **Erin**, 5, **Katie**, 3, and I have each at our own level struggled to grasp the impact. It's staggeringly difficult. Fortunately, we've been surrounded by family and friends who have helped in countless ways. I'm hopeful that as time passes, and new routines are established, life will once again find some level of normalcy — whatever our new normal is.

Despite our heartache, the past six weeks have afforded an astonishing and extraordinary learning experience. I have a renewed and immense appreciation for our health care system, and in particular the nurses who are at its core.

I thought I knew what community meant. Only now do I appreciate that. I really didn't have a clue. From my forced front row seat I've been awed by the generosity of our community and the individuals within it. I will never know everything that has been done for us. But I do know that there have been literally hundreds of acts of kindness extended. No words can describe my appreciation for help given to Erin and Katie, food delivered to our home, kind words and prayers offered, or cards sent.

I count myself lucky to work with a group of people as professional and dedicated as the staff here at *Island Press*. To say they pitched

in during a difficult time is a massive understatement. Without asking, vacations were interrupted and or delayed, extra tasks were willingly taken on. They did anything and everything, including organizing a sit-down dinner for several dozen hungry people between visiting hours. Plus, like every week, they delivered the highest possible quality paper to you.

I could not be prouder.

I appreciate the patience staff and readers have shown in giving me the time necessary to gradually feel my way back to work. It's now time. Even today we don't fully appreciate how our lives have changed. We know it will never be the same without Jeanne. You can't replace the world's greatest mother. You can't replace your wife, lover and best

friend all rolled into one. You can't remove someone as vibrant, loving, compassionate, funny, smart, loyal and determined as she and not feel immense, heart-wrenching loss. That will not ease any time soon.

But I know the clock can only move forward. For Erin and Katie's sake life must go on in as positive a fashion as possible. Jeanne would demand it and they deserve nothing less.



Paul MacNeill

Pat Bliss dies at age 93

Patricia (Weingand) Bliss, 93, widow of *Montgomery County News* publisher **Bob Bliss**, died Aug. 27 at her home in Hillsboro, Ill. Bob Bliss died four months earlier, on April 29, also at home.

Pat was in apparent good health until Monday, Aug. 18, when she suffered a seizure at home in the presence of her daughter, **Nancy Slepicka**. She was admitted to Hillsboro Area Hospital, where tests revealed a brain tumor. She was discharged from the hospital and admitted to in-home hospice care. Her condition deteriorated rapidly. Both Nancy and her sister, **Betsy Bliss** of San Francisco, were with their mother at her death.

Patricia was born May 22, 1910. She graduated from Hillsboro Community High School in 1928 and attended one year of college at Stephens College in Missouri.

Patricia was working as a bookkeeper at the Ford garage in Hillsboro when she married Robert Bliss on June 30, 1934. She worked in the bookkeeping department of *The Montgomery County News* for many years and remained involved and interested in the family business throughout her long life. Bob and Pat were happily married for nearly 69 years.

She had been member of Hillsboro Presbyterian Church since 1922 and was a former member of Hillsboro Hospital Auxiliary, Hillsboro Country Club, and the Delta Handa Bridge Club.

Along with Bob she was involved in many activities of the Illinois Press Association, Southern Illinois Editorial Association and ISWNE.

In addition to her daughters, she is survived by three grandchildren, **Christian Alexander Bliss Ach** of San Francisco, **Ekaterina Marie "Kate" Slepicka** of Lexington, Ky., and **Pavel Josef Slepicka** of Hillsboro and Virginia Beach, Va., one step-grandson, **James P. Nicholls III** of Hayward, Calif., and a son-in-law, **Richard Slepicka** of Hillsboro.

Memorials are directed to Hillsboro Area Health Foundation or Hillsboro Presbyterian Church.



Pat Bliss

Newsrooms need a 'diversity of ideas'

By **David Burton**

David is a civic communications specialist and editor of the Southwest Region News Service at the University of Missouri Outreach and Extension

Walter Cronkite spoke at Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield, Mo., on Sept. 13. During the question and answer portion of his presentation, Cronkite shared his belief that most reporters and editors have a liberal bent. Cronkite then repeated the claim among the nation's journalists that they just report truth. The argument is that a person's personal political philosophy has no more effect on the work of journalists than on the work of scientists and engineers.

However, reporting on abortion, taxes, or national defense is not like calculating the amount of electricity a transmission line can carry. Journalism is inherently subjective and a journalist's approach to a story

invariably reflects his or her opinions.

For example, no one would accept the statement of a Neo-Nazi, in line for a judgeship, who would say he was capable of applying civil rights laws. Yet, members of the media advance the argument that a reporter can cover **George W. Bush** fairly even if he believes the president is stupid and a warmonger (like **Helen Thomas** does).

This line of reasoning has enough holes in it that some journalists are suggesting a need to rethink or eliminate "objective" reporting (*Columbia Journalism Review*, July 2003).

Instead of wanting the public to believe journalists cast aside their beliefs while reporting, what Walter Cronkite and others in the profession need to be talking about is the need for a "diversity of ideas" in America's newsrooms.

Surveys show those who comprise American newsrooms have many similarities in how they view issues. For example,

a 1996 American Society of Newspaper Editors survey found 61 percent of reports and editors in the nation's newspapers said they were liberal or Democrat or leaning that way. Only 15 percent identified themselves as Republican or conservative or leaning that way.

Journalism is an enterprise of ideas. That is why American journalism needs a diversity of ideas more than it needs a precisely calculated balance of races and genders.

A diversity of ideas (liberal and conservative) in the newsroom would breath new life into objective news reporting and make it possible for stories to be viewed, considered, and reported from different perspectives.

Having a diversity of ideas in the newsroom would lead to better overall objective news coverage, more insightful editorials and a renewed trust of the news media. Not taking steps to ensure that America's newsrooms have a real diversity of ideas is bad for journalism and ultimately bad for our democracy.

John Whalen writes his second book

ISWNE member **John Whalen** is the author of a second book, *Jawin': Reminiscences of a Country Editor*, published by Xlibris of Philadelphia, an online subsidiary of Random House.

Jawin' is the title of the column Whalen wrote for the front page of the newspapers he and his wife, **Gen**, published for more than 30 years. The book is a sampling of those columns, in which Whalen reminisced about days gone by, enthused, or grieved over the fortunes or misfortunes of his readers, editorialized and shared snippets of homey poetry which he liked, also prose by other columnists and family members.

The book is available online from the publisher, Xlibris.com., also

from Barnes&Noble.com, Amazon.com, and other online merchandisers. It will be registered with the Books in Print database, the resource used by bookstores to find and order books for their customers.

Whalen edited daily and weekly newspapers in Iowa, South Dakota and Minnesota for more than 20 years before

acquiring his own weekly newspaper. His editorials have won a variety of awards, including the National Conference of Christians and Jews Brotherhood award, two plaques from Sioux Lodge of B'nai B'rith of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and a Herrick Editorial Award from the National Editorial Association. Besides his membership in the ISWNE, he is a past member of the National Conference of Editorial Writers and the National Newspaper Association.

His first book, *Maverick Among the Magnolias: The Hazel Brannon Smith Story*, is a biography of the fearless member and past president of ISWNE who stood up against the forces of intolerance during the civil rights revolution in Mississippi. The book is available online.

Whalen, now retired and living in Steven Point, WI, has four children, 10 grandchildren and 10 great grandchildren.



Sparsely, sage and timely: My spur-of-the-moment wedding

By **David V. Mitchell**
Editor & publisher, *The Point Reyes Light*
Point Reyes Station, Calif.
Aug. 7, 2003

As close friends have known for some time, **Ana Carolina Monterroso** of Guatemala and I had been planning to get married sometime next month. To her surprise and mine, however, on Friday, Aug. 1, she and I found it was better not to wait. Six hours later we were husband and wife.

Exactly who we are, however, is a bit complicated. I will remain David Vokes Mitchell, but as is common in the Spanish-speaking world, Ana Carolina's full name is not so simple. In fact, the deputy county clerk who issued us a marriage license had to attach an "amendment" because not all of Ana Carolina's names would fit on the computer-generated form.

If we were to strictly follow Latin American tradition, my wife is now Ana Emma Carolina Monterroso-Hernandez de Mitchell. However, she isn't using the "Emma" or the "de" and informally will continue to be Ana Carolina Monterroso. She'll answer to Ana Carolina or Carolina but not to Ana.

This is the second marriage for Ana Carolina, 48, who has three daughters from a previous marriage: **Shaili**, 10; **Kristeli**, 14; and **Anika**, 16. Her ex-husband is a U.S. citizen, so all three girls have dual U.S.-Guatemalan citizenship and are bilingual. In the case of Ana Carolina, English is actually her third language, for she attended a German school while growing up in Guatemala. In recent years, she has been working freelance as an interpreter at international conferences: educational, medical, military, and economic.

Her father **Hector Monterroso-Gonzalez**, 85, is a retired economist, who co-founded the Central Bank of Guatemala. Her late mother, **Emma Cristina Hernández**

Anchisi, devoted herself to civic activities promoting health and education, and her writings were published in various newspapers. In her youth, she emigrated from El Salvador to Guatemala.

As for me, I'll turn 60 on Nov. 23, and this is my fourth marriage. My late father, **Herbert Houston Mitchell**, also earned his university degree in econom-



David Mitchell

ics, and for most of his working life, he was a vice president and minority partner at a medium-sized printing company in San Francisco, Kennedy-ten Bosch. My late mother, who was born **Edith Alfred Vokes**, was an immigrant from Ontario, Canada. While I was growing up, she was the advertising representative in Berkeley for *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Ana Carolina and I first met in 1982 when the old *San Francisco Examiner* sent seven of us to Central America to cover insurrections in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. At the time, she was working for an international-aid organization called Partners of the Americas.

Ana Carolina and I became friends, and she was willing to be my translator whether I was interviewing massacre survivors or prostitutes in Central America's then-best-known brothel, Club 45. She accompanied me to an interview with El

Salvador's newly installed president, **Alvaro Magaña**, and she arranged for me to travel with **Col. Francisco Gordillo**, part of a three-man, reformist junta that seized power in Guatemala in early 1982.

Unfortunately, before any reform could occur, junta leader **Gen. Efraín Ríos Montt** ousted his partners and began a widespread slaughter of Indians in the Guatemalan highlands. It was crude intimidation, a warning of what could happen to anyone merely suspected of fraternizing with the country's leftist guerrillas. (Despite his reputation for brutality, Ríos Montt is now a candidate for president — having gotten the Guatemalan Supreme Court to exempt him from a constitutional ban on coup leaders' later seeking election to the presidency.)

Three years ago, she and I worked together in Guatemala, researching articles for *The Light* and the online *Miami Herald* about Guatemala's politically perfidious new president **Alfonso Portillo**. For several months last year, Ana Carolina worked at *The Light* while daughter Shaili attended West Marin School and daughters Anika and Kristeli attended Tomales High. In recent weeks, she's been on the newsroom phone for days at a time, gathering information on the family of **Cándido García**, the Guatemalan man found near death July 5 in Bolinas. Ever since our wedding, she has been working on the story from Guatemala.

Early Monday morning, only two days after our wedding, Ana Carolina flew back to Central America. She is scheduled to return next month and spend more of each year in Point Reyes Station.

Her working trip to Guatemala is, in fact, what prompted us to get married on the spur of the moment. The last time Ana Carolina flew into San Francisco, an immigration officer grumbled that she had been out of the country too much for someone with a "green card" — ignoring the fact that she was in part traveling on newspaper business.

Since 9/11, immigration officials seem to have lost what little gentility they once showed toward foreigners entering the

United States. Not only does the Bush Administration feel free to thumb its nose at many foreign governments, its immigration officials now feel free to capriciously harass foreigners arriving for vacations, business, or family visits.

Whether or not foreigners arriving in the United States are hassled, however, seems mostly to be determined by the whim of whichever immigration official checks their papers. Ana Carolina is a legal U.S. resident who, as part of her work, has received security clearances from our government. When she returns Sept. 14, she will be traveling with three daughters who are U.S. citizens. Nonetheless, we began to worry that some airport martinet would try to prevent her from attending her own wedding.

It, therefore, seemed wise to act quickly. After completing legal arrangements for our marriage, we left attorney **Henry Froneberger's** office in Point Reyes Station at 3:15 p.m. Friday and began a fast trip over the hill to Civic Center, getting to a deputy county clerk's office just before it closed. We were allowed to stay in the office past closing time while we filled out an application for a marriage license, raised our right hands, and swore we'd told the truth. The clerk congratulated us, and on our way out the door, she presented us with a "gift" that brides and grooms receive when they take out a marriage license.

What was this gift? As we walked down the second-floor hall of Civic Center, I cut open its plastic bag expecting to find a book on family planning and a supply of condoms. Instead, the bag was filled with soap: laundry soap, hand soap, shampoo, and more. Cleanliness is the key to a happy marriage? In any case, it was a nice thought.

Ana Carolina and I sped back to Point Reyes Station and got to *The Light* just as ad representative **Sandy Duveen** was locking up for the weekend. "Do you want to come to our wedding?" I asked. Surprised, Sandy said she did and would bring her companion, **John Cook** of Woodacre.

Now we had the core of a guest list. Ana Carolina called **Susan Gonzalez** of Point

Reyes Station and asked if she and her husband **Anastacio** would act as witnesses. Their daughter **Ana** was born the same day as Ana Carolina's daughter Shaili, and all of us have begun spending time together.

The problem was finding a minister on short notice. By now it was after 6 p.m., and I left messages for friends who officiate at West Marin weddings. In addition, **Elisabeth Ptak**, a *Light* columnist, suggested we try **Carlos Porrata**, resident ranger for Tomales Bay State Park. It turns out he is a mail-order minister of the Universal Life Church. I left messages at his home and office, and awhile later he called back.

Carlos and his wife **Rebecca**, a public health nurse, were about to leave on vacation, but he could drop by for a few minutes around 9 p.m. and perform the service, he said. I thanked him profusely, and Ana Carolina quickly notified Susan and Sandy that the wedding would occur in just over two hours.

While Ana Carolina dusted the house, I rushed downtown to buy flowers, food, and beverages. I don't own a suit, but I do own a guayabera, which seemed appropriately Latin for a multi-cultural wedding. Indeed, it was more multi-cultural than I expected. The only skirt Ana Carolina had with her was Nepalese, a bright orange-and-yellow gift I'd bought her at Jayli in Point Reyes Station.

I'd no sooner gotten my guayabera on than the minister and wedding guests arrived. "Where do you want to stand for the ceremony?" asked Porrata. Neither Ana Carolina nor I had thought that far ahead. "How about out on the deck?" my bride suggested. Since it was a warm evening, the eight of us trooped outside. Porrata read a poem in English and then switched to Spanish for our wedding vows.

Ana Carolina and I kissed, and suddenly we were spouses. And just as suddenly, I had picked up three stepdaughters. We had a great time when the girls and their mother lived with me last year, but still it is a bit daunting to become a father for the first time in my 60th year. I can, however, see immediate advantages. The girls are already planning to

organize our wedding party when they arrive.

The only sad part of the story was Ana Carolina's having to leave for Guatemala early Monday. Then it was her turn to explain — in this case to a huge extended family — how we happened to get married in Point Reyes Station Friday, Aug. 1.

Postscript: Ever since our marriage, Ana Carolina has been in Guatemala sending weekly dispatches on the family of the injured Bolinas man Cándido García, who has now regained enough consciousness to tell sheriff's deputies he was injured when he fell head-first against a tree.

The blow was severe enough that his brain swelled, bones around his left eye were broken, and he suffered other injuries. After he was in a coma two weeks, the doctors took him off a life-support system. However, instead of dying he woke up a week later. However, he still is not fully alert all the time.

His family lives in rural poverty in a remote part of Guatemala and had been counting on his sending \$200 per month home from here. Ana Carolina traveled halfway across the country by bus and then hired a driver to find them. She emailed us photos, from which we made large, color prints which another reporter gave to Cándido to cheer him.

We ran a front-page picture of his looking at an album of the photos and then on inside pages ran the photos themselves.

So far all this has helped raise \$15,000 for the disaster-stricken García family. His wife **Irma** is incapacitated by a heart condition for which she needs an operation she can't afford. Besides raising eight children, the couple is raising a 14-month-old granddaughter, and in late August she had to be hospitalized for a week with a dysentery-type disease.

It's not common for a town as small as Bolinas, about 1,000 residents, to be part of an emotionally gripping international news story, and thanks to my new bride in Guatemala, we've been able to cover this story from home and abroad.

Jean Sutton loved courthouse reporting



Jean Sutton, for many years the tenacious managing editor of *The Democrat-Reporter* in Linden, Ala., died suddenly Tuesday morning, Sept. 16, at her home in Linden. She was 62.

Cause of death was attributed to a blood clot in the lung. Jean had been diagnosed with breast cancer and had just started chemotherapy, but her death was unrelated to that.

She had won many awards, beginning as a young journalist in college, first at Hinds Junior College in her native Jackson, Miss., where she received a press association journalism scholarship to attend the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

At USM she joined the staff of the *Student Printz*, the campus newspaper, where she met another staffer, **Goodloe Sutton**. Goodloe is a member of the ISWNE board of directors.

After graduating in 1963 and working for 14 months with *The Tylertown Times*, she and Goodloe were married Aug. 8, 1964, and moved to his hometown of Linden to work for the family newspaper, *The Democrat-Reporter*, published by Goodloe's father, **Robert Edmund Sutton**. They bought the paper in 1982.

Jean also taught physical education and journalism at Linden High School for two years while working for the newspaper as a reporter.

Turning to newspapering full time, county government became her beat and remained so right up until her death. She had a reputation as a tough-minded but fair investigative reporter and, with her husband, performed as a team on many major stories including a series on a corrupt county sheriff in 1998.

As a result of that teamwork Jean and Goodloe were featured in several national publications, appeared together on the *Oprah* television program, and received numerous honors from press organizations.

Jean dearly loved her courthouse routine and spent hours daily there where she pored over public records, warrants, and court proceedings. She regularly covered the sheriff's department and county commission sessions, tape recording every word in the interest of accuracy. The courthouse, fellow newspaper associates say, was her second home.

Jean Elizabeth Rodgers Sutton was born June 12, 1941, in Jackson, Miss., the daughter of **William Calhoun** and **Mary Redfearn Rodgers**, both now deceased.

She was the mother of two sons, **Howard Goodloe Sutton, Jr.** and **William Robert Sutton**. In recent times she cherished weekend crawfish and catfish cookouts with the boys and many close friends.

She is also survived by two sisters, **Billie Melton** of Clinton, Miss., and **Susan Womack** of Jackson, Miss.; one brother, **Will Rodgers** of Tampa, Fla.

Jean and Goodloe attended the 2003 ISWNE conference in Galway, Ireland.

Half of courageous couple has been silenced

By **Gary Sosniecki**
Vandalia (Mo.) Leader
 Sept. 24, 2003

Jean Sutton died last week.

Chances are you've never heard of Jean Sutton, or "Miss Jean" as she was known in Linden, Ala., a town about the size of Vandalia.

But five years ago, Jean and her husband, **Goodloe**, were the best-known small-town newspaper publishers in America.

They appeared on the *Oprah Winfrey Show* and were profiled on *Dateline NBC* and **Danny Glover's** "Courage" series on the Fox Family Channel. They were featured in the *New York Times* and *People* magazine. *Reader's Digest* carried a 25-page article about them.

What made the Suttons famous was their tenacity in exposing Marengo County Sheriff **Roger Davis** as a crook. Davis and his deputies worked both ends of the drug business. He made headlines for his apparently successful campaign to clean up drugs in

Marengo County. But behind the scenes, he was spending county money as his own and extorting money from a drug dealer and bail-bonding business.

Meanwhile, his deputies were selling confiscated crack cocaine back to dealers. One was busted buying \$8,000 in marijuana that the deputies planned to sell.

Sheriff Davis eventually served 27 months in prison and was fined \$43,000. While in prison, authorities found \$114,200 buried in his back yard and another \$54,150 inside his house.

All in all, it was a sordid tale of corruption in small-town America. And the tale was told first, in bits and pieces as it played out over nearly a decade, in *The Democrat-Reporter*, the weekly newspaper that has been in Goodloe Sutton's family since 1917.

"Jean and Goodloe Sutton's newspaper stories helped to set off a chain of events that shattered a major drug and conspiracy operation stretching from the gulf coast all the way to Los Angeles," *Reader's Digest* wrote.

As is often the case when a popular public figure is accused of wrongdoing, the news-

paper wasn't believed at first. *The Democrat-Reporter* suffered subscription and advertising boycotts that would have brought less-courageous publishers to their knees.

Even worse, the Suttons received repeated death threats. A deputy threatened to plant drugs in their house, then search it. And the sheriff offered to burn the Suttons' house with them in it.

The tide turned with Davis' conviction. The Suttons and their newspaper were vindicated, their lost business returned, and they won virtually every journalism award short of a Pulitzer.

Helen and I became friends with Goodloe Sutton after meeting him at a newspaper conference in Pennsylvania in 1998. We saw him several times after that as he traveled to Missouri to speak to newspaper groups about his and Jean's experiences. We discovered Goodloe to be as witty as he is courageous.

"We're just humble scribes," he told *People* magazine in 1998 in vowing to remain in Marengo County despite the threats. "And we have the best turkey hunting, the best deer hunting and the best-looking women in the country. Why would anybody want to go anywhere else?"

As many times as we had met Goodloe, we never saw Miss Jean. He confessed to

us once that because of the death threats, Jean was staying home in Linden with their youngest son, who still was in high school. But with their son off to college, Jean finally would be able to travel with Goodloe. We looked forward to meeting her this summer at a newspaper conference in Ireland. That didn't happen when my dad died two days before our departure and we stayed home.

When Goodloe and Jean returned from Ireland, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. But the cancer seemed like a minor bump in the road compared to what the couple had faced in the past. They mapped out a plan to whip the cancer and had every intention of doing so.

Jean's treatment was going well enough that Goodloe flew to Missouri a week and a half ago for the memorial service of our mutual friend, **Jim Sawyer**, in Springfield. Both of us spoke at the service. We shared some laughs before and after.

Three days later, as Goodloe was preparing to take Jean to the hospital for more treatment, an undiscovered blood clot broke loose, killing her instantly. She was 62.

"The legacy she left for her two sons is just amazing," Goodloe told us when he called Thursday with the bad news.

We are saddened that half of this courageous couple has been silenced.

Community journalism may get own interest group

Fifty members of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC) have signed a petition requesting that AEJMC allow the formation of a Community Journalism Interest Group. ISWNE executive director **Chad Stebbins** was among those signing the petition.

The purpose of the group would be to provide a national academic dialogue on issues relating to teaching, research, and professional freedom and responsibility relative to the subject of community journalism, defined as that kind of journalism practiced at weekly and small (sub-50,000-circulation) dailies and their online sites.

If all goes as planned, says principal organizer **Jock Lauterer** of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the group will gain approval from AEJMC this winter, and have its first business meeting and elect officers at next summer's AEJMC meeting in Toronto, Aug. 4-7, 2004. Then the following year, 2005, the interest group will be on the program for the AEJMC meeting in San Antonio.

AEJMC is a non-profit, educational association of journalism and mass communication faculty, administrators, students, and media professionals. Founded in 1912, AEJMC has some 3,500 members around the world.

Journalism Dept. in limbo from page 1

cited three reasons: The department's course offerings are out of date; the majority of Journalism majors are not interested in journalism as a career; and, because of the economy, it would be too expensive (\$250,000-\$500,000) to bring the department up to speed.

The Texas economy is in dire straits, but other departments received additional faculty. Moreover, the other two reasons are curious.

The department is as modern as possible, teaching across the media under a major modernization of its course offerings in 2001. The department's current national accreditation (by the Accrediting Council for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication since 1952) is valid until 2005.

With few exceptions — found in any department in any university — all Journalism majors are focused upon a career in Journalism. Repeated surveys of Journalism majors show that 25 percent want a career in public relations; 25 percent in television; 25 percent in advertising; 15 percent in newspapers; and the remainder in photography, teaching journalism, and pre-law.

Meanwhile, the department is carrying on; students are being advised; courses are being taught; internships are being obtained; and faculty members are wondering what department they will be assigned to next year.

Responses to suicide from page 3

England, who suggested in the ISWNE newsletter last month: Interviewing surviving family members to help "positively discourage" suicide, "either by showing people they are not alone, or by letting them witness the appalling gravity of what their death will do to those nearest them."

I don't know if I'm good enough, strong enough to do that kind of reporting. But when I wrote a column about my interest in suicide back in July, I received an e-mail from a mom whose son had taken his own life several years ago, while he was in high school. She's been a friend of mine; I reported his death in a straightforward way. There was a time not long after than I asked them if they would be willing to talk about what happened. They said yes, but I couldn't face it and backed out.

Here's what she wrote to me: "The fact that anyone is hurting enough, whether it be physically or emotionally, to even consider this route gives support that you need to report these stories to raise awareness... You may never know how many people you may help by being open with this issue. I have so many 'if onlys.' Maybe you can save some family from this heartache."

I have always believed that reporting can make a difference by providing folks with information they need to make decisions. Suicide reporting surely fits this category.

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 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 417-625-9736.

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