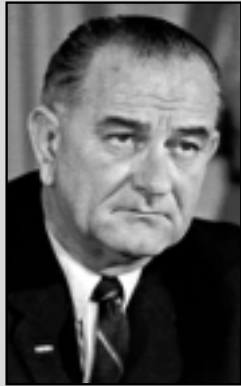


QUOTE OF THE MONTH



"I believe that the country weekly acts as a form of social cement in holding the community together."

— Lyndon B. Johnson
1908-1973

The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors

Visit the ISWNE's Web site:
www.iswne.org

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Take time to plan the editorial page

By **Jim Pumarlo**

News content is strongest when editors and reporters routinely identify those stories and events that will warrant their attention. The value of an editorial calendar is twofold.

Some events occur every year and this gives opportunity to look for fresh angles for coverage. City festivals, local government budget hearings and United Way campaigns fall into this category. Plus, by having this coverage in hand, newsrooms are better prepared to handle the unexpected issues and events certain to surface.

Absent from planning in many newsrooms, however, is the role of the editorial page. As a result, many newspapers fall short on writing editorials on local issues. Among the most common reasons cited by editors: "I don't have the time," or "I can't think of anything to write about."

Generating ideas is the first step in writing editorials. Researching the subject is step two, and crafting the words is almost the easiest part of the process. Though many editors struggle with identifying ideas, it shouldn't be that difficult.

Think of the many items that cross your desk that provide fodder for commentary.

Here's one checklist of ideas:

Set the agenda: Craft resolutions for your community. Identify the challenges and suggest actions. This can be done for local government bodies. It might be appropriate as well for certain civic organizations, such as the United Way, that are integral to local quality of life. Or identify communitywide issues that invite cooperation by the public and private sectors. Some of these editorials can run in the spirit of New Year's resolutions; others can be published in conjunction with goal-setting by various groups.

Follow the agenda: Monitor the agendas of governing bodies. A periodic check-up is fodder for news stories. Editorials might applaud and acknowledge the accomplishments, or ask why the lack of progress on some initiatives.

Scrutinize budgets: Governing bodies put immense time into developing budgets, and newspapers routinely report the numbers. An editorial can further analyze budgets. Where is spending increasing the most, and is it appropriate? Are some interests getting shortchanged? What is the tax impact and are the arguments for or against more spending persuasive?

Citizen recognition: Organizations often

recognize citizens.

A news story will identify the standard accomplishments, and an editorial might spotlight a particular achievement that will have long-lasting impact on a community. Use the editorial page at any time of year to highlight extraordinary and noteworthy achievements.

Fresh perspectives on regular events: Most editors feel obligated to acknowledge recurring events such as high school graduation. Including this in editorial calendars is a reminder to look for fresh angles. For example, for high school commencement, chronicle the academic and athletic achievements of a particular class. College graduation is an opportunity to praise the students but also remind them of the challenges of competing in a global economy. And what better way to observe the nation's birthday by encouraging individuals to step forward for public service.



Jim Pumarlo

continued on page 3

President's Report

By Don Brod
St. Charles, Ill.



Secrets to weeklies' success?

We were informed by the August issue of the ISWNE newsletter (remember, that's pronounced Ice-Wine!) that ISWNE member **Goodloe Sutton** has raised the price of his *Linden (Ala.) Democrat-Reporter* to a dollar a copy, possibly the only paper — daily or weekly — in the state to charge \$1 on weekdays. "I set trends; I don't follow them," Goodloe told the *Montgomery Adviser*. He must be doing something right.

Yet it's no secret that daily newspapers, on the other hand, are struggling. Some have ceased publication, and many of the larger ones have reduced staff — sometimes several times. Others are taking drastic steps, moves that could be called innovative or perhaps desperate. For example:

The Morning Call of Allentown, Pennsylvania, has gone from a two-page opinion spread every day to just three editorials a week. Cutbacks in pages and in staff appear to be the reason.

The Star Tribune of Minneapolis, Minnesota, has given the Associated Press notice that it intends to cancel its AP membership. (*The Strib*, as it is called in the Twin Cities, isn't alone in this action.

Other papers around the country, including the *New York Daily News*, have given such notice.) But surely the biggest paper in the Twin Cities, with only a two-person Washington bureau and no international desk, won't completely give up national and world coverage. Perhaps it will look for a less expensive supplier.

The *Capital Times* of Madison, Wisconsin, has shifted to an online format and has reduced its print publication to two inserts

a week in the other Madison paper, the *Wisconsin State Journal*. The change might bulk up the *Journal* a little since a redesign has dropped it to only two sections.

Hard economic times have also produced strange bedfellows in Florida. *The Gainesville Sun* and the *Ocala Star-Banner* are merging news operations. News and copy desk functions, design, layout, and pagination will be done in Gainesville. The papers will retain their individual identities, according to a posting on Gainesville.com.

The spirit of cooperation has shifted farther south in the state, too. South Florida's three major newspapers, the *Miami Herald*, the *Sun-Sentinel*, and the *Palm Beach Post*, are sharing what the editors call "basic news stories." They say, according to a posting on miamiherald.com, that investigative pieces, columns, and feature stories will not be included. The experiment will last three months, and then the situation will be evaluated.

Alan Mutter, a veteran media executive who holds forth regularly on his blog, "Reflections of a Newsosaur," sees the South Florida move as "the high price of skinflint journalism." In fact, he says, "That's not just bad journalism. It's bad business, too." Commenting on the "basic" news, he says, "If the papers have no secrets from each other, then the lack of competition stands a good chance of turning the reporting from 'basic' to 'routine' to 'boring.'"

So daily newspapers are going through hard times. Yet weeklies seem to be doing

a better job of navigating these troubled waters. Paul Davis, publisher of the weekly *Tuskegee (Ala.) News*, notes that "(l)arge newspapers, particularly those owned by major newspaper chains are hurting. A few are attempting suicide." But, he continues:

"Community newspapers are doing quite nicely, thank you, because they have not forgotten their mission, their responsibility to their readers, the service they must provide to their advertisers, their duty to report the good and the bad; to expose corrupt public servants who betray the public trust and seek to serve themselves first at the expense of the taxpayers." Yes, he certainly is waving the flag for the community press.

But there's more. Granted, Goodloe Sutton's paper exposed a crooked law enforcement department and eventually landed the sheriff and two deputies in prison. But, as the *Montgomery Advertiser* pointed out: "Weekly newspapers like the *Democrat-Reporter* have a leg up over bigger papers because they love to print photos of boys holding up dead snakes or old farmers showing off huge vegetables."

ISWNE member **Pat Berg**, a faculty member at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls who is doing research for a book on small-town newspapers, says in the May issue of the ISWNE newsletter: "Papers in small communities give voice to ordinary people, chronicling their lives and their ideas. In news articles, sports stories, team photos, obituaries, letters, and editorial columns, papers in small towns document life in a way that is becoming rare."

continued on page 17

Take time to plan the editorial page from page 1

Localize state, national reports: Myriad state and national reports provide fodder to localize the statistics and talk to community leaders about the issues. What does the report from *Kids Count Data Book* produced by the Annie E. Casey Found-

ation mean for community vitality? The Tax Foundation releases a report on Tax Freedom Day, a state-by-state accounting on the day when Americans have earned enough money to pay off their total tax bill for all levels of government. Seize the opportunity to remind citizens to monitor government spending.

Elections: Politics at all levels — from local to state to national — offer ample opportunities for commentary. What's at stake for your region in terms of issues at the state legislature or U.S. Congress? Check in periodically with lawmakers; have they delivered on their promises? Lobbying has reached the extremes where local government is lobbying state and federal government; what is the return on the investment? Every election is an opportunity to give a "thumbs up" to those individuals

who you believe will best advance the interests of a community.

Year in review: Select the top local stories of the year and state their importance.

This list is by no means exhaustive, and many newsrooms already pursue news stories on these topics. Editorials can provide additional interpretation and be the springboard for a lively exchange of ideas by readers.

Jim Pumarlo regularly writes, speaks and provides training on Community Newsroom Success Strategies. He is author of "Votes and Quotes: A Guide to Outstanding Election Coverage" and "Bad News and Good Judgment: A Guide to Reporting on Sensitive Issues in a Small-Town Newspaper." He can be contacted at www.pumarlo.com.

The International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors

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Freireich inspires Kevlin to start new paper

Inspired by **Elliott Freireich's** experience with the *West Valley View*, **Jim Kevlin**, editor and publisher of *The Freeman's Journal*, in Cooperstown, N.Y., launched *Hometown Oneonta*, a free-distribution, full-service newspaper in the city of 14,000 people that's the commercial hub of Otsego County, on Sept. 19.

Hometown Oneonta will be mailed to 8,000 families in the Oneonta zip code; another 5,000 will be distributed through quick-stops, supermarkets and other outlets in northern Delaware and southern Otsego counties.

The undertaking is a collaboration of Kevlin and Bill Reeves, former advertising director of *The Daily Star*, the Oneonta-based CNHI (former Ottaway) newspaper.

"Our goal is to create a community-based publication that is a friend to the community," said Reeves. "In looking into *Hometown Oneonta*, Jim and I discovered we can publish that kind of paper very cost-effectively, and share the savings with our advertisers."

"*The Freeman's Journal* is such a local

success story — the penetration in Cooperstown is 110 percent — that we're very excited about publishing the same kind of newspaper in our county's commercial center," Kevlin added. "Bill's experience and knowledge of the Oneonta market made *Hometown Oneonta* a natural."

Kevlin said the spark for the undertaking was a conversation he and Freireich had one evening in the hospitality suite during the recent ISWNE conference in Detroit.

The plan is to open an office in Oneonta shortly, but for now the business and production functions are being handled out of *The Freeman's Journal* headquarters at 21 Railroad Ave., Cooperstown.



Jim Kevlin

ISWNEWS



Drumheller Valley Times moves to new office

After two months of renovations, *The Drumheller Valley Times* has moved into a new office in downtown Drumheller, Alberta. Publisher and business owner **Isabell Redding** enjoyed her first day in her new office on Sept. 5 and is quite excited to be located at #80 3rd Ave. West in Drumheller.

"After nine and a half years tucked away down a hallway in the back of a building, we finally have moved onto the front street," Redding said. "We have a new large window which we can use to display office supplies we sell, and we are closer to our clients who are our new neighbours.

"The new building is modern and bright. We're quite happy and the staff is looking forward to serving customers in the new building."

Isabell's husband, Mark, joined her at the business in July and is the business manager for the company. With Mark's business background and Isabell's editorial background, the husband and wife team are looking forward to enjoying many happy years in the new location together with all of their staff.

In addition to doing most of the renovations themselves, the Reddings have invested in a new Web site that Isabell is updating regularly as well at www.drumhellervalleytimes.com. The new Web site ties in the print publication, along with videos and blogs.

"We're finally getting up to the 20th century with new modern technology and information," Redding added. "It's a steep learning curve for myself, but it has been great."

All of *The Drumheller Valley Times* friends from the ISWNE are invited to come to Drumheller, stop in for a coffee and visit with the Reddings in the new home of *The Drumheller Valley Times*.

Martin wins award for feature story

Bradley A. Martin, editor of the *Hickman County Times*, has won the best feature story award among nondaily newspapers in the annual Tennessee School Boards Association competition.

It's the seventh time that Martin, editor of the newspaper since 1985, has earned a TSBA award for education writing.

The *Times* won three awards in the 2008 University of Tennessee-Tennessee Press Association competition: first place for best humorous column, by writer Donna S. Wallace; second place for best news photograph, by the editor; and fourth place for public service, for a

series about a Centerville soldier's service as lead defense attorney in the Dachau war Trials.

Martin serves as chairman of Historic Downtown Centerville, Inc., a nonprofit organization that is driving the refurbishment of the town's Public Square, and is a board member of the Hickman County Chamber of Commerce, which he has served twice previously as president. He also is an assistant scoutmaster of Boy Scout Troop 772, where his son, Tommy, is a Life Scout and assistant senior patrol leader.

O'Donnell does phone interview with Biden

Leslie O'Donnell was a speaker at workshops on the importance of news content in free Newspapers at the Community Papers of New England conference in Westford, Mass., Sept. 14-15.

Also, Nutfield Publishing (O'Donnell's employer) was approached to do the only phone interview with Joe Biden in the state during his visit to New Hampshire, and O'Donnell did the interview. It was published in the Sept. 18 editions of Nutfield Publishing's three papers — *Nutfield News* (Derry, NH), *Londonderry Times* (Londonderry, NH) and *Tri-Town Times* (covering Sandown, Chester and Hampstead, NH).

The reason Nutfield Publishing got the interview? "Our campaign knows that many Granite Staters rely on their local weekly papers to stay informed on the issues impacting their families and communities," New Hampshire Obama Campaign for Change Press Secretary Larkin Barker said. "Speaking with Nutfield Publishing was a unique opportunity to reach out to the residents of Londonderry, Derry, Chester, Sandown, and Hampstead."

Former member Henry Overduin dies in Canada

Henry Overduin, a member of ISWNE until his retirement in 2005, died Feb. 10 of lung cancer. He was 65.

Overduin was head of the journalism department at McNeese State University in Louisiana at the time he belonged to ISWNE. Upon his retirement from McNeese State, he served as an adjunct journalism professor at the University of Western Ontario. He died in London, Ontario.

"Henry made several contributions to the ISWNE newsletter and also to the ISWNE Hotline," said **Chad Stebbins**, ISWNE executive director.

My historical context of a historical moment

By **Tim L. Waltner**
 Publisher
Freeman Courier
 Freeman, S.D.
 Sept. 3, 2008

I can't escape my age and I can't escape the era in which I came of age. And because of that, I found what happened in Denver last week — the nomination of Barack Obama as the nominee of the Democratic Party to be president of the United States — to be profoundly moving. The reality that an African American had reached this milestone is remarkable.

That's my perspective.

That is not, however, the exact perspective of my children.

AnnaMarie, our daughter born in 1979 and now living in Kentucky, brought that to my attention early this year as the Democratic Primary field was narrowing to Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. I commented to her just how remarkable it was that a woman and a person of color had ascended to become the front-runners in a campaign to become the nominee of their party to be president of the United States.

AnnaMarie said she understood why I would see it in those terms. But, she went on to say, for her and the young people she works with at the Lexington Public Library, it was much more about two viable candidates who, incidentally, are a woman and an African American. Describing them — defining them — by their gender and race simply wasn't part of her thinking in the way it was for me.

Jeremy sees it in the same way his sister does.

"This election has never been about race or gender. It's been about which person is best suited to get this country back on a course of diplomacy, economic strength, infrastructure stability and care for those who cannot care for themselves. That that person happens to be African American is irrelevant." In many respects that's exactly what I was hoping for as a youth coming of age four decades ago.

Growing up in this small rural isolated community in the 1950s, I was quite removed from the issue of race. My first vivid personal memory of race is when I was five or six years old and I saw several

dark-skinned children about my age who visited the community for several weeks as part of a church-sponsored program called "Fresh Air." It brought African American youth from the South to spend a week or two to the Freeman community as an effort to expand cultural awareness — for them and for us.

My family never participated in the program but it provided me with my first face-to-face contact with an African American person and it is a vivid memory that remains with me today.

While my family wasn't part of the program, my parents had instilled in me from the very beginning the notion that all children are God's children. "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world," was more than just a childhood Sunday school song; it was an ethic that my parents taught, nurtured and set by example.

My mother was a Brooklyn Dodgers fan, she told me, because Branch Rickey allowed Jackie Robinson — "a negro" she explained — to play Major League Baseball. And it was only after my father died and we were going through boxes of his papers that I discovered literature dated in the early 1960s from the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an ecumenical organization that seeks to replace violence, war, racism and economic injustice with nonviolence, peace and justice. I didn't know it at the time, but my father was part of "the movement" long before me.

My parents' deep faith-based beliefs about peace and justice shaped who I was and what I believed from early on. And so as the civil rights movement gained momentum in my early teenage years, I was sympathetic to the cause. And as a "child of the 60s" it was logical that I would find myself drawn even more deeply into that movement.

From a distance, of course.

Other than a few students attending Freeman Junior College from outside the Freeman community, I still had limited personal contact with people of color. In reality, there really wasn't a civil rights movement close enough for me to be part of in those years and there was virtually no venue in which to march or carry a sign. But the images of what was happening else-

where in the country had a profound impact on me and shaped my perspectives and views.

By the time I was a college student, those perspectives and views pushed me toward activism, although in the larger context, even then calling me an activist would be a stretch.

Nevertheless, my views and occasional public comments were enough to engender sufficient negative community response toward me to encourage me and prove to me that I was doing the right thing.

The decade spanning the mid-1960s to mid-1970s — with its antiwar marches, civil rights demonstrations and the women's liberation movement — established a perspective that remains with me today. It helps define who I am, what I believe and what I think. It's why I still see Barack Obama as an African American who earned the nomination to be the Democratic Party candidate for president and Hillary Clinton as a woman who nearly did. And now we can add Sarah Palin to the dynamic as well.

For AnnaMarie, Jeremy and their contemporaries, candidates are not defined by gender or race. They recognize the historical significance of what happened last week but not with the emotional and personal dimension that my contemporaries and I share.

The approach I see in my children is exactly what my parents wanted for me and what I wanted for my children.

And that is what makes what happened last week so profound and an important part of my continuing life experience.

Tim L. Waltner can be contacted at courier@gwtc.net. The first presidential election he was able to vote in was in 1972; he was living in Cincinnati at the time. It will likely not come as a surprise that he cast his ballot for George McGovern rather than Richard Nixon, nor the fact that he was a volunteer for the McGovern campaign in Cincinnati that year.



Tim Waltner

Who will be our new watchdog?

By **Mike Conley**
Editor
The Trenton Sun
Trenton, Ill.
Aug. 20, 2008

Like a lot of my small-town newspaper brethren, I am neither a journalist nor a businessman. I exist in purgatory. I am a newspaperperson.

I'm not trained in journalism. In fact, I can't recall ever having taken a journalism course. Not one.

I am trained in business, but I'm a very sorry businessman. I'm not very well-organized, I don't "maximize" profit potential, and I'm not much of a negotiator.

Well, you may ask, what good are you?

I'm still trying to figure out the answer to that one.

A newspaperperson has a multi-purpose career by necessity. At a small-town weekly like this one, it isn't possible to have a news reporter, a sports reporter, a photographer, a columnist, a graphic artist, an editor, a copy editor, an assistant copy editor, a proofreader, and a publisher. Not to mention delivery people and mailroom staff and cleaning crews. And accountants, technical support personnel, marketing gurus and a sales force. And security guards. And executives who do nothing more than be executives. There just isn't enough money to go around.

In small-town newspaper operations, a few people have to fulfill all those purposes, and more. That is newspapering, as I define it. Being involved with every aspect of getting the product completed, then doing it all again. Newspaperpeople aren't experts at anything. We know, as the old saying goes, just enough to be dangerous.

So what you find in the weekly newspaper business are the wretched refuse, people who are smart and capable enough, but might have some sort of personality disorder that impedes their ability to conduct a reasonable employment interview.

Some stick around the weekly business because they don't have the confidence nor the initiative to seek more gainful employment. For some, it's simply in their blood. They are the children and grandchildren of newspaper publishers past, inheriting the "family business" in their hearts as well as their careers. They are lifers.

Sure, some have journalism degrees, and many have enough experience to offset their educational shortcomings. There's a balancing act between theory and reality, and weekly newspaperpeople make their living walking the tightrope.

I fall somewhere into one of those loosely-defined categories. I guess I've had my share of big dreams, but at this point I've spent too many years in the sticks to ever feel comfortable anyplace else.

I think the case could be made that, before the Internet, we small-town newspaperpeople were what bloggers are today, people who always wanted to be journalists, writers, reporters, but due to circumstance or choice, never got there.

People like me grabbed for what I guess most people consider the lowest rung on the media ladder, weekly newspapers. It was a place where — qualifications and experience and education aside — we could say the things we wanted to say. That's all there really is to us. We think we understand certain things in a unique way, and we want to share our understanding with others.

In drawing parallels between weekly newspaperpeople 20 or 30 years ago and bloggers today, there are also important distinctions, like anonymity. The bloggers have it. Weekly newspaperpeople don't. Our accountability comes not from theoretical principles, but from that transparency.

So as death toll after death toll is sounded for the newspaper industry, as print media rush like a herd of buffalo for the internet frontier, I wonder who speaks for credibility and trustworthiness.

I wonder who speaks for the public service

of journalism, for the notion that providing a full, factual, and contextual accounting of public affairs to our consumers is more important than the profit margin.

Who will be our new watchdog?

I've customarily believed that

there is room for several different media in consuming news and information. Television and radio tended to present news in digestible little bits, somewhat light on detail and context, but a good way to get a glimpse of lots of different things. For a more nuanced treatment of a given issue, the newspaper was always the better place to turn. Whenever I have been too dimwitted to understand the depth of a particular news item, I have been comforted by the newspaper, where I can read the same sentence nine times over if it helps.

The Internet is an entirely different animal. It combines the visual and auditory capabilities of the electronic media with the advantages of written communication. Mind-blowing is what it is. For heretofore print publications, here is a way to speed the news to consumers in real time, and much less expensively than traditional print-and-distribute models.

All of which represents a great opportunity. It also means that "everyone is in." You too can be a social critic. And while it seems pretty obvious that newspapers are going to have to establish a new way of doing business in a financial sense, I think it's important that they remember the old ways of providing the news in a journalistic sense. I hope someone, somewhere along the way, speaks up for that.

Mike Conley can be contacted at mike@trentonsun.net.



Mike Conley

Recalling Obama's two visits to Metropolis

By **Clyde Wills**
The Metropolis Planet
 Metropolis, Ill.
 Sept. 10, 2008

Did Superman help?

Did Barack Obama win the Democratic nomination for president because he is really Superman?

He is Superman you know — at least a Superman of Metropolis.

If Obama does go on to be president, lots of local folks can say, "I remember when he came to town and I told that young whipper-snapper a head-full."

Not many people who even run for president visit Metropolis, but Obama has been here twice.

He was here in 2004 as a candidate for the U.S. Senate, and in 2006 as our senator. The visits were very different.

The first visit was very, very laid back, even by Massac County standards. Obama, along with U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, greeted people on the lawn of the courthouse on a warm April day.

They did make speeches, but mostly they chatted with about 60 local people who came and went during the afternoon.

At that time very few people in Massac County knew much about Obama. He had served in the Illinois Senate, but since he was from Chicago, most southern Illinoisans had not paid much attention to him.

The people who came to meet Obama that day all seemed to enjoy talking with him about issues while in a very relaxed setting. Obama seemed to appreciate that also.

When Obama came back in 2006, the feeling was a bit different.

Obama seemed much the same, still relaxed and happy to be here. But the second visit brought a standing room only crowd to the Metropolis Community Center. With Obama already being mentioned as a possible presidential candidate, people from several states joined Massac Countians at the town meeting.

After being introduced and presented a Superman of Metropolis Award, the senator spoke for about 10 minutes, then answered numerous questions.

The questions included the topics of global warming, educational funding, the war in Iraq and conservation of fuel.

One question the audience seemed especially interested in was, "Who do you think will be the candidates for president?"

Obama said McCain would probably be the Republican nominee and Hillary Clinton appeared to be the front-runner for the Democrats.

We will never know exactly what Obama was thinking about his possibilities at that time. But the way people flocked around him after the meeting ended, it was evident that they were excited to shake his hand and get their pictures taken with him.

After working his way through all the crowd, and talking to several press people, the senator jogged across the street for pictures at the Superman statue.

Will one of those ever make it to the wall of the Oval Office?

We will have to wait a while to see. But it would be great publicity.

* * *

Several people have asked if our son, Chris, is covering the presidential conventions for Associated Press.

Chris, while continuing to be the AP correspondent in Springfield, has also been working in recent months on background pieces on Obama.

He has traveled some on the campaign trail, but only for short periods. Right after Obama made his last visit to Metropolis, Chris flew to Africa to cover the senator's visit to the homeland of his father's family.

And, Chris was at the Democratic Convention. He lucked out on the last day and was assigned to travel around town as Obama made last-minute visits. And that put Chris near the podium when Obama made his acceptance speech.

He is certainly witnessing history.

Clyde Wills can be contacted at clydewills@gmail.com.



Clyde Wills

2008 Sustaining Members

In addition to paying their \$50 ISWNE membership dues, these individuals have donated \$50 more to the Society. We appreciate their generosity!

Stella Trapp
Colleen Truelsen
Mary Lou and Bob Estabrook
Larry Atkinson
Guy and Marcia Wood
Paul MacNeill
Robert B. Trapp
Chris Wood
Jeremy Condliffe
Derek Kilbourn
Julian Calvert

Frank Garred
Phoebe Baker
David Burke
Steve Thurston
Richard (Dick) Lee
Robert E. Trapp
Lawrence Graf
Jon Flatland
Roger Holmes
Kelly Clemmer
Lori Evans

Palin fought with her local paper, which now voices pride in her candidacy for VP

The Rural Blog
Sept. 8, 2008

Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin got off to a rocky start as mayor of Wasilla, Alaska, with her subordinates, some citizens and the local newspaper, *The Frontiersman*, Ken Armstrong and Hal Bernton report in *The Seattle Times* today.

Palin's firing of the police chief "was only part of the drama that unfolded in her first months as mayor" in late 1996 and early 1997, Armstrong and Bernton write. "*The Frontiersman* and *Anchorage Daily News* wrote one story after another about the turmoil. After notifying the librarian that she was fired, Palin backtracked and decided to keep her on. Palin had twice asked this librarian what she thought about banning books, to which the librarian responded it was a lousy idea, one she wouldn't go along with. Later, Palin told the local paper that any questions she'd raised about censorship were only 'rhetorical.' Palin put in place what the local paper called a gag order, prohibiting top city employees from talking to reporters unless she cleared it first."

After Palin tried to fill two city-council vacancies without the authority to do so, "*The Frontiersman* ran blistering editorials," the *Times* reports, saying Palin's operating philosophy was "either we are with

her or against her...Palin promised to change the status quo, but at every turn we find hints of cronyism and political maneuvering. We see a woman who has long since surrendered her ideals to a political machine."

But Palin gradually "won folks over" and was re-elected, Armstrong and Bernton write. "Vicki Naegele, the former managing editor who wrote the editorial, defended Palin: "As a community newspaper, we held her feet to the fire... The need for such harsh words diminished as the months wore on." At the time, Palin said, "If nothing else, the old *Frontiersman* editorial points out the importance of administrative experience at the chief executive level. I grew tremendously in my early months as mayor, managing the fastest-growing city in the state, and I turned my critics around."

Because of widespread interest in the book-banning discussions, *The Frontiersman* retyped its December 1996 story on the subject and posted it on its Web site, where it reports that many in the Wasilla area "are experiencing an influx of revenue from local efforts of national media" to research Palin. "The take-out business seems to be exploding as reporters eat while they work in their hotel rooms," writes reporter Michael Rovito.

In an editorial titled "We know Sarah Palin," *The Frontiersman* says, "We've

known her as a governor tough enough to successfully take on the Last Frontier's good old boy network" and voices hope that her nomination could turn attention from a rash of government scandals in the state.

"Truth and transparency have been bywords for Palin. As she enters the national arena where she'll be tugged and tormented, vilified and denigrated, we hope she sticks to her guns — metaphorically and literally. Because no matter the politics, for Wasilla, Alaska, to send its commercial-fishing, gun-toting, hockey-mom former mayor toward the White House, that's history. And we're proud of it."

The nomination is obviously driving traffic to *The Frontiersman's* site. An unscientific, self-selected "reader's poll" asking whether Palin was a good choice for Sen. John McCain's running mate had gleaned more than 5,000 replies as of 4 p.m. Monday. There was no way for us to tell where the votes were coming from, but the results were Yes, 2,894; No, 2,403; and "Too early to tell," 291.



Sarah Palin

Future Conferences

Save the dates...upcoming ISWNE conferences

2009: June 24-28

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

2010: June 23-27

Richmond, Kentucky

County residents suffer from our misplaced priorities

By **David Giffey**
Home News
 Spring Green, Wis.
 Aug. 27, 2008

The 2008 River Valley flood disaster — a tragedy for many people — will remain with us for years to come, if we are paying attention. Theories about the flood's cause and effect are already plentiful and growing with each week's mail.

With so many people facing uncertainty and frustration as they deal with devastating losses of homes, property, and crops, I wish my father were alive so I could ask him for some insights into what it meant to lose a farm during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Who, if anyone, did he blame, I wonder, for the hardships that followed. I was born a few years later in 1941, and grew up on a different farm owned by the family. There wasn't a lot of discussion about the Depression.

However, I was very much alive after World War II as U.S. consumers and our war-effort mindsets were invited and encouraged to take part in the largely unregulated development of rural and suburban land, much of which should have been left untouched as wetlands and wilderness.

Previously sustainable systems of farming, commerce, transportation, and education, were influenced by a pell-mell rush in pursuit of growth and "progress" as defined by corporations, scholars, units of government, and individuals who may have had motives other than the "general welfare" in mind. The farm of my youth included wetlands. So did many others. With the advent of underground tile drainage, I was conscious at an early age of the disappearance of marshes and swamps in the neighbor-

hood.

Those years represented a sea change in rural American culture. One-room country schools, like the one which I attended and loved, were consolidated into sprawling rural districts. Decisions made about school districts 50 years ago were said to be driven by economic need. It seemed that buying in bulk, whether textbooks or busses, was the efficient thing to do. Schools became the taxing focus of local economies covering regions rather than neighborhoods.

It isn't too much a stretch of imagination to compare the needs of River Valley flood victims today with the perceived inability, 50 years ago, of one-room country schools to sustain themselves. Perhaps new units of cooperation are in store as we look for aid for flood victims and responses to future floods. But the economic impact of our choices will remain front and center.

The flood also causes me to reconsider an impulse I've usually maintained in favor of part-time politicians. Now I'm forced to ask, who among us is prepared to serve on a town board that requires 50 or 60 or more hours of a trustee's time per week? That's what Benny Stenner, Jerry Schmidt, and Irv Snyder have been doing in the Town of Spring Green. Does this emergency mean that only retired, self-sufficient citizens are qualified to run for what amount to largely unpaid and certainly much-criticized jobs? Or is it time for larger townships and villages, or groups of towns and villages, to consider hiring trained administrators to work through the intricate demands of survival in the 21st century?

We are acutely aware that the local levels of township, village and county government are priceless and must be maintained because they embody democracy

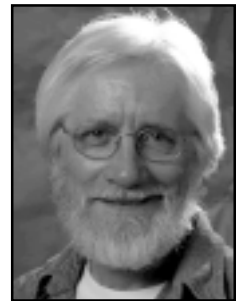
at the grassroots.

While the 2008 flood disaster wasn't a direct result of a foundering economy, the assistance which individual victims, their families, and communities will or will not receive is directly related to the economy. Unaffected River Valley neighbors of flood victims have occasionally expressed an unwillingness to shoulder a share of the tax burden. That unwillingness extends all the way up the economic ladder to the federal rung where borrowing for war expands budget deficits while we at home quibble about property taxes going up to help people devastated by the flood.

It's a matter of priorities, and the most obviously misplaced priority is the \$550 billion spent on the bloody behemoth in our midst: the war in Iraq. According to the National Priorities Project, and based on data from the IRS and the U.S. budget, taxpayers in Sauk County will pay \$103.2 million for Iraq war spending approved to date. For the same amount of money, 861 affordable housing units could have been provided.

The flood in Spring Green Township displaced about 30 families. It would take approximately 3.5 percent of the Sauk County tax money spent on war in Iraq to provide housing units for the flood victims. Our priorities are another story.

David Giffey can be contacted at giffeyhomenews@yahoo.com.



David Giffey

My favorite ISWNE memory

By **Richard McCord**
Santa Fe, N.M.

*Author's note: When **Vickie Canfield Peters** asked me at the 2008 conference in Detroit to give my favorite ISWNE memory, for inclusion in the history book she is writing, I could not at once come up with an answer. The problem was, I realized, that I had been showing up too long to immediately put my finger on any one thing. I said I'd think about it and get back. Now I have done that. But instead of a one-liner, which is probably what Vickie wanted, I sent an entire essay full of memories. I told her to trim as needed. But in case these reflections are of interest to others in our small, close band, they are presented below.*

My favorite ISWNE memory is the entire 1986 conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia. For me, it was the conference where everything just really came together.

Halifax was my fourth conference. At the first, Denver in 1982, everybody was a stranger to me — but nice strangers, to be sure. At the second, Durham, N.H., in 1984, I was getting to know folks a bit, but was not yet a regular. In Washington, D.C., in 1985, I made the mistake of staying with friends instead of in the dorm — it saved a little money, I guess, but consumed lots of time in the congested D.C. traffic. I did attend all the events in the terrific program put together by **Bob** and **Sandy Horowitz**, and tapped into some growing friendships, but missed out on late-evening, after-hours schmoozing.

And then came Halifax. I had crossed over into Canada a time or two before, but had never been to the Maritime Provinces — or Atlantic Canada, as the locals seemed to say. Halifax was a long, long way from New Mexico, and I was determined to get the most out of the trip. So I flew to Boston, rented a car, drove to Portland, Maine, and boarded a seagoing overnight ferry to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. The voyage was kind of a big deal, with little boats accompanying the ship out of the harbor at dusk, fireworks popping, horns blaring. Casino gambling started when we hit the 12-mile international-water limit, food was excellent, and I had booked a cabin for sleeping. From Yarmouth I drove 200 miles to Halifax, and hooked up with the group shortly

after things started.

Many of the faces were familiar by now, and I plugged right in. The conference was held in the appropriately old-gray-stone University of Kings College, and the program was excellent, as always, with fascinating sessions on things specifically Canadian. We touched on trade wars between the U.S. and Canada involving cedar-shake shingles and fishing, and also upon polar bears and the World War I explosion of an ammunition ship in Halifax Harbor — the largest man-made blast in history until the atomic bomb. Field trips included the Citadel, a magnificent British-era fortress that had saved Halifax from ever being invaded, and a day at lovely Peggy's Cove, with rocks, lighthouses and ocean.

But as always the best part was people. I'll make no attempt to remember or list them all here, but some memorable ones include:

Landon and **Ilene Wills** and family, who had actually driven to Halifax from Kentucky. **Jim** and **Shirley MacNeill**, from Prince Edward Island, who coaxed their friend Denis Ryan, the lead singer in Canada's most popular musical group, to join us in late-night sing-alongs. **Albert** and **Marjorie Scardino** and children, before they moved across the water to England and to great things there. A bright-eyed and fresh-faced **Brian Mazza**, then a young intern at Jim MacNeill's *Eastern Graphic*, at his first of many conferences. **Len** and **Carol Dudley**. **The Freireichs**.

And also the iconoclastic and already-legendary editor **Henry Gay**, from Shelton, Wash., who won the Golden Quill Award that year in Halifax, and who late one night in the social hours gave me perhaps the single best piece of advice I have ever received as a newspaper editor. "In every town, no matter how large and no matter how small, there is a local power structure," Henry said. "And if you're the newspaper editor, they will try to pull you into that power structure. It's the chamber of commerce, the Rotary Club, the Kiwanis, city politicians, bank presidents, real-estate developers, lawyers. They want to get you in to use the newspaper for their purposes. And if you do go in, no matter how complimentary it might feel, your paper will not be able to act freely anymore. You'll start worrying about friendships, about shared confidences, about personal pressures, about hurt feelings, and

then your role as a journalist will be compromised. The only way to avoid this is to not go in at all." My personal inclination had already been along these lines, but never before had I heard this spelled out so clearly. Over the years, I never did blend into the local power structure in Santa Fe, and as a result gained many descriptions: "maverick," "loner," "loose cannon," "oddball," "unpredictable," "undependable," "weirdo." But I do think I was always considered a "journalist."

After the conference ended, I had scheduled several more days in Atlantic Canada. So I jumped in my car and started seeing everything I could. To my delight a couple of days later, I ran into some other ISWNE leftovers at the old French Fortress of Louisburg National Historic Park. They included **Phoebe Baker**, **Ursula Freireich** (I don't recall **Burt** being with her — maybe he had found a horse-racing track), perhaps **M.J. Schneider**. I wish I could remember everyone, but now, 22 years later, I just cannot. Anyway, for the next day or two we traveled together through the magnificent Cape Breton region of Nova Scotia and had fun. On a tiny twisting peninsula in a dark forest, I seem to remember that we saw the sun set in the east, not the west — but now I can't figure out how that could be.

When we all parted, I hit the road for the port of Sidney Mines, Nova Scotia, for that was where the ocean-going ferry to Newfoundland embarked. A telephone call had told me that the ferry was fully booked, but that there were almost always cancellations, and my chances of getting a last-minute berth were good. So I waited a long time in a huge ferry-loading parking lot, and when they started taking last-minute cars, I made the cut. The overnight voyage lasted seven or eight hours, and I slept in a reclining chair. For the most part of the next day I buzzed through wonderful fjords and mountains and fishing villages, and when evening came I was back on the boat to return



Richard McCord

to Nova Scotia.

Time was closing in, but an essential remaining stop in Atlantic Canada was Prince Edward Island, called PEI by everyone up there, where Jim and Shirley MacNeill had emphatically insisted I come — no excuses accepted. So without a reservation I waited several more hours in a ferry parking lot — but this time, the boat filled up without me. Full of apologies, I called the MacNeills, but Shirley calmed me by saying: “Don’t worry, Dick. If there’s one thing that living on an island teaches you, it’s patience. Just come on over tomorrow morning.” So that’s what I did, for a marvelous visit. To the MacNeills, the most remarkable thing was that I had made it over to Newfoundland. To me, the most remarkable thing was their friend who broke out in step-dancing, which I had never seen.

After another ferry ride from PEI, I had many, many miles to cover, for this time I was going to get back to my plane reservation in Boston overland, with no more voyages. So at a fast clip I headed westward through the province of New Brunswick, less striking than Nova Scotia. Then I hit Maine, and went down its rugged, rockbound coast. The scenery was great, but I had to make time. I got to Boston and connected with my plane.

Back home in Santa Fe, I reflected on the ISWNE conference in Halifax. All of it had been good, most of it superb. Old and new friends, new geography, new places, new knowledge, new things. A great reason to go. Except for travel costs, everything was less expensive than such a trip would be any other way. And legitimately tax-deductible, at that. This is the best deal coming down in journalism, I thought — daily or weekly or whatever. ISWNE doesn’t spend time talking about postal regulations, or computer programs, or advertising trends, or other things that would not apply in many of our towns. Or interest us. We do talk about editorials — which do apply, in every community.

Yeah, I told myself, I’ll keep coming back. For all these reasons. And I *have* kept coming back. To Olympia, Wash. To Atlanta. To Reading, Pa. To Colorado Springs. To Calgary, Alberta. To Boston. To Flagstaff, Ariz. To Erie, Pa. To Madison, Wis. To Joplin, Mo. To Galway, Ireland. To Pere Marquette, Ill. To Edmonton, Alberta. To Norman, Okla. To Rapid City, S.D. And now to Detroit. I regret missing Danville, Ky.; Brookings, S.D.; St. Louis; Victoria, Vancouver; and most especially the spectacular conference in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Dublin in 1995. I just

couldn’t make it.

So anyway, through this group I have seen remarkable geography, learned remarkable things, spent time with remarkable people, and done it all on the cheap.

It doesn’t get any better than that, I think — and it all came together for me in 1986, at ISWNE, in Halifax, Nova Scotia. And as a final bonus, I decided during this trip that Atlantic Canada was my favorite place in all the world — except for Santa Fe, of course.

Footnote: In 1986, I was trying to lure **Bob Trapp Sr.**, editor and founder of the *Rio Grande Sun* in Española, N.M., into ISWNE, which I felt would be a perfect fit. He even signed up for the Halifax conference. But then he didn’t show. When I got back to New Mexico, I called him to ask why. The reason was simple, he said. He and his wife, **Ruth**, were late for their airline connection in Albuquerque. And then things didn’t fit. But the story ends happily. They did later climb aboard, Bob served as ISWNE president, and my instincts were not wrong. But Bob and Ruth sure missed a good time in Halifax.

Richard McCord can be contacted at richardmccord@msn.com.

1987 Bursary recalls ISWNE stalwarts

Editor’s note: Roy Hancock, ISWNE’s 1987 Greenslade Bursary recipient, sent the following letter to ISWNE president Don Brod. Hancock attended the ISWNE conference that year in Santa Fe, N.M.

Hi Don,

How are you? Judging by your photograph in your newsletter you are doing just grand!

It is now more than 20 years since I had the honour of receiving a Greenslade Bursary to attend the ISWNE conference in Santa Fe. I am pleased to report that I haven’t forgotten — and never will forget — the wonderful hospitality that was afforded me by my host **Dick McCord** and so many other ISWNE members.

I still enjoy logging on to your website from time to time and reading your newsletter to see what your members are up to. When I did so today, however, I was saddened to read of the untimely passing of **Brian Mazza**. During my stay in Santa Fe Brian went out of his way to make my stay so enjoyable and I was delighted to meet him again in 1995 when your conference came to London. Brian hadn’t changed a bit — he was so friendly and wel-

coming.

I was delighted to read the deserved tributes to Brian and also to learn that a scholarship has been set up in his memory. He was an undoubted true ambassador for the ISWNE and will be greatly missed by everyone.

On a happier note, I enjoy looking up the pictures that you publish of your conferences and seeing people that I still remember with great affection, including of course your good self. It is great to see **Burt Freireich** still going strong. I’ll never forget the day he took me in his big limo to the Downs at Santa Fe. I lost a lot of money that day but the experience made it all worthwhile.

The deaths of **Al Simon** and **Jim MacNeill** particularly saddened me as we had become such good friends. I recall meeting Jim at a conference in Scotland and getting drunk in his wonderful company. I am still envious of a wonderful cowboy bust that Jim bought for his lovely wife Shirley in Santa Fe. I am sure that she still treasures it.

As for myself, I am long out of weekly newspapers. I left the *Cambrian News* about 17 years ago to run my own pub. It was great for five

years but the long hours took their toll. I sold up and worked as a regional reporter for Wales’ morning daily, the *Western Mail*, for nearly five years until I was invited, in 2001, to launch on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government a new specialist monthly magazine for farmers in Wales. It has been one of my most enjoyable jobs. The magazine has a circulation of almost 40,000 and is mailed to farmers, landowners, vets etc. The web link to it is <http://www.countryside.wales.gov.uk/fe/master.asp?n1=554>

I am getting a bit old in the tooth nowadays but, good health permitting, I plan to carry on as Editor until about 2011, when I will be 65.

My wife and I have holidayed in the USA now more than 15 times — it must be the American blood in me. My grandmother was born near New York, though she was from Welsh “stock.”

Very best wishes to you and my friends at the ISWNE and sincere sympathy to Brian’s family.

Roy Hancock can be contacted at royhancock@btinternet.com.

National political apathy not a surprise

By **Anthony Kovats**
County Market
Leduc, Alberta
Sept. 10, 2008

Canada is once again a battleground.

A multi-layered, two-toned game board of blue and red with flecks of green upon which you, the voter, will be told to perform.

Why? Because the prime minister wills it.

The prime minister of a minority government with a tenuous hold on power deems that he is no longer able to govern, hence, a snap election and the possibility of another Tory minority government. This from a government that touted democratic reforms and implemented fixed election dates to "level the playing fields for all parties."

However, when this grandiose statement was made, the neophyte prime minister convinced the nation, maybe more so himself, that a minority government could work and would not degenerate into the "dysfunctional" seat of power that it has unequivocally become.

The prime minister alludes that fixed election dates should not apply to minority governments because of their perceived "dysfunctional" nature and we, as the pawns of this national conflict, will once again be charged with the solemn task of casting our ballots and ensuring our own waning belief in this — the democratic process.

His 127-seat government has maintained this balancing act, not through political cunning and suave co-operation, but by the simple truth that perhaps, for the first time in our nation's history, the opposition is far, far weaker than the government it opposes.

In fact, it may be because of that weakness that the government has actually been able to govern and it seems that this call to arms — this impending election — is only because the prime minister doesn't always get his way.

It's childish and taxes a nation growing weary of this blatant disregard of the very legislation that this minority party implemented. And now we come to this moment.

The question within the question is why

does this growing national political apathy come as any surprise to anyone?

Mired in civic, provincial and federal elections on an almost annual basis, the very process we so espouse is a mockery of what it was once envisioned as.

The very principles of democracy that which we teach our children to defend, are noble pursuits.

The concept, nay the global perspective, that fairness, justice and freedom are more than just mere words bandied about in political camps. That they have meaning. Soul.

To once again be thrust into an election cheapens it. Cheapens the process. Cheapens the outcome.

This is why the voter is apathetic.

Instead of a process that creates leaders who truly hold the interests of the nation first, we are reduced to partisan shopkeepers only

trying to balance their own books.

If the prime minister truly believed in his course of action, right or wrong, he would have carried on until his government was defeated in a vote of non-confidence. When an issue of such grave importance was so compelling that even a weakened opposition would finally find its own courage to make a stand.

Calling an election now on an apathetic public is in itself — weak.

Anthony Kovats can be contacted at editor-wdf-caf@webcoleduc.com.



Anthony Kovats



Gloria Freeland, director of the Huck Boyd National Center for Community Media at Kansas State University, stopped by the *Tuam Herald* in June to visit editor **David Burke**, former ISWNE president. Freeland was in Ireland to do some sightseeing with her husband and two daughters. She and her husband also did some family history research in Northern Ireland.

Power outage results in a walk around town

By **Bradley A. Martin**

Editor

Hickman County Times

Centerville, Tenn.

Aug. 18, 2008

We nearly had this thing wrapped up Thursday when, about 12:20, the power blinked out.

Not a lot you can do at a computer-reliant newspaper office when the juice is cut off. Fortunately, we had a bucket of guacamole, Claudette's homemade (partially hot) salsa and some chips.

But there was no air conditioning, and if you eat enough guacamole a nap tends to close in, which is not good when you still have three more stories to write.

So, knowing that the entire Square was out, I took a hike.

Around on the northeast corner, Jimmy Reece was in a familiar perch, seated just across from his shop. It's a quiet place, though at this particular time Ronnie Gilbert of Modern Cleaners was visiting. You won't believe what he was doing.

As Ronnie bounced what he said was his ball on the sidewalk, we conversed about the current turn of events. A light breeze blew the heat through the alley, and none of us seemed to be in a big hurry to get back in business.

Feeling somnolence setting in again, I was the first to leave. Up and around I went — no power at Snappy's or at Breece's. I thought about getting a cold drink at the gas station, but...the side doors were hanging wide open at the Farmhouse Cellar.

In went my head. There was Clay Harris and part of his current cast and crew — Larry Baird, Laura Aydelott, even Donnie Brackins — putting out the brand-new chairs on the brand-up raised platform that's designed to improve sightlines for everyone.

Conversing about the current turn of events, we learned that an air conditioner run already

was underway to Columbia (David Dansby), so all that would be needed for "Motor Hotel" on this night would be...electricity. Fortunately, the ladies upstairs at The Farmhouse had cooked the main course for the pre-play dinner before the power went out.

Work continued the entire time I was there, so as I felt more out of place in its presence I backed out and headed down the way to Dye and Vander Horst.

Inside, the overworked office support team was performing quite an important task: reading newspapers. They agreed that I could enter, since no attorneys were present to assess me a fee for the visit.

They confirmed my main question of the afternoon: that one Dana Lloyd Dye is among the nine candidates for the vacant judgeship in the 21st Judicial District. We agreed that temperamentally no one could be better suited. We didn't have to discuss the intellectual side: No one in this region is more capable or a better student of the law.

Also important is this: Dana is the only candidate in the running who is from anywhere outside of Williamson County. Did you know that Williamson County traditionally holds all the circuit-level judgeships in the four-county region that includes Hickman, Perry and Lewis counties?

A public hearing in front of the Judicial Selection commission is scheduled August 27, in Franklin of course. Then, three names will be submitted to the governor, who will fill the seat vacated by R.E. Lee Davies for the next two years.

Go Dana!

Then the power popped back on, I parted ways with the overworked office support team and headed back to the office. After replacing a blown surge protector — computer survived, thankfully — here we are.

Nothing like a walk around the Square while on deadline. Outage?

In the mist

Not too long ago, this newspaper's weekly delivery schedule began on Sundays at 6 a.m. Several folks tried their hand at it; when I did it, I tried to be on time, or even a little early, because my hope was to get done in time for Sunday school at 9:45. (Never did get a ticket.)

I remember one darkish morning when I turned the corner and headed toward the van, ready to get started, only to see a man on a bicycle trying to peer inside. I worried for less than a half-second.

George Dotson couldn't wait, and he was concerned if I was even a minute late.

Dependable as a clock was Mr. Dotson, who died August 10 at age 81. Probably, he rode more bicycle miles than anyone in Hickman County's history. Probably, he picked up more aluminum cans than anyone while doing it. Probably, the great Lance Armstrong will wear out long before he reaches Mr. Dotson's age.

After that one day in the early morning mist, my effort to start a little before 6 was redoubled, and Mr. Dotson was more than happy to meet me up at Breece's Cafe, the first stop. Usually, he purchased three newspapers — one for him, one for a friend and one for, I think, his son.

For the record, I know of only two folks in 25 years who regularly traveled uptown to buy the *Times* at the earliest possible moment. One was a young girl, years ago. The other was Mr. Dotson.

I watched him ride off into the rising morning light more than once. Nice way to start a day.

Bradley Martin can be contacted at hctimes@centerville.net.



Brad Martin

Lower the drinking age from 21?

By **Al Seiler**
Pittsfield Press
Pittsfield, Ill.
Sept. 10, 2008

Let's put politics aside this week and turn to another issue: Should the legal drinking age be lowered from the present 21?

A national debate has started on the subject, led not by the booze industry, the saloon owners, or the young people, but by 100 college presidents. It should be said at the outset the educators are not advocating an immediate change. But they do want the issue studied, disturbed as they are by the prevalence of campus binge drinking.

A bit of history should be noted. There was a national movement to lower the voting age to 18. The argument was, "If they're old enough to drive a car, marry, and go to war, they're old enough to vote." The result was adoption of the 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1971.

In 1984 the "nanny" federal government passed legislation limiting a state's access to federal highway funds if it set a drink-

ing age lower than 21. The states' arms were effectively twisted, and the youthful elbows remained unbent (presumably).

Drinking rules are different all over the world, but the U.S. is one of only four countries with a legal drinking age as high as 21. Foreign students under 21 come here and ask with amazement, "You mean we can't buy a beer?"

Anyone who believes binge drinking is not common on most college campuses is wearing blinders. But should a law be changed simply because it is being violated? Certainly not. But neither can it be argued that the present law has achieved its desired end. If it has, then why not raise the legal age to 25 or 35? How close are we then to a revival of national prohibition and its disastrous record?

The present age limit is the quintessence of hypocrisy. Retaining it is a contradiction of the laudable national effort to instill teen-age responsibility and leadership in all aspects of their lives, alongside parental encouragement.

Let's add one more sensible test of maturity: If a man or woman is old enough to drive a car, vote, marry, fight in a war,

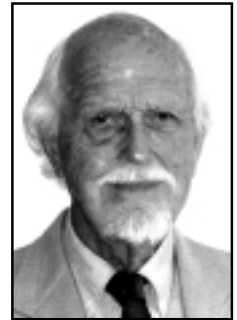
raise children, he or she is old enough to drink responsibly. They should be granted that privilege.

At the same time, drunken driving, regardless of age, should carry a far more stringent penalty, capped by the most effective measure: take away their car

keys. To the argument of the offender, "but I need my car to get to work," the judge should say, "ride a bicycle; it will give you time to think."

The entire issue of a lower drinking age, introduced by the college presidents, should be continued with further public participation. And is anybody going to ask the political candidates their stand on the issue? Don't count on it.

Al Seiler can be contacted at poobah1002@msn.com.



Al Seiler

Need Answers to Tough Questions?

Do you have a tough question about editorial policy or journalism ethics? If so, send it to ISWNE executive director **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 newspaper.

Some of the silly things people say

By **Jeremy Condliffe**

Editor

Congleton Chronicle

Congleton, Chesire, England

Editor's note: Jeremy Condliffe takes a look at some of the things people say — and wish they hadn't.

Many ISWNE members work in small offices, often with close family members and miss out on the banter of a bigger newspaper office. They might miss the office politics, true, but they also miss out on the some of the deeply stupid things that colleagues can say.

After training, my first senior job was at a newspaper called the *Accrington Observer*. It's in north Lancashire and a former mill-town, famous because the spinning jenny, a key development in the textile industry, was invented there around 1764 by local man James Hargreaves. (Rock fans might like to know that Jon Anderson of Yes was born there. On the whole it's one of these places no-one goes to; it's not a town you pass through or arrive at unintentionally.)

Every Christmas the newest reporter had to make a speech at the office party, and sadly for me I did it twice. The first year exhausted my creative abilities, so for the next 12 months I kept a list of all the stupid things people said. It was a long list.

Most of them, it has to be said, came from the editor, Mervyn. Here are some of the best — if you work on your own, you don't know what you're missing.

On divorce: "How can she be a single mother and a Mrs?"

On sexuality: "If he's 22 and single he must be gay".

Investigating the police: "What's Sergeant Hopwood's first name? And what's his rank?"

On prison: "Is a jailbird someone who's escaped?"

On self sacrifice: "Why don't you give

blood, Merv?" "It hurts".

On colour schemes: "Is lilac a colour as well as a plant?"

On health reporting: "So you're saying that one of the symptoms is stiffness? Oh sorry, deafness".

On copy flow: "We definitely need that story, though I doubt it will get in".

On Hollywood: "Jean Harlow? Wasn't that Marilyn Monroe's real name?"

On geography: "Is New Zealand hundreds of miles away or thousands?"

Interviewing the organiser of a wine and cheese evening: "And will there be refreshments?"

Interviewing the coroner's officer after an inquest: "And was that alcohol in the blood or in his breath?" (The reply: "They don't breathe when they're dead you know".)

Then there were the baffling conversations: "John, do you live next to the new houses?"

John (puzzled): "No, they're all quite old near us".

"No, the family — the Newhouses".

But it wasn't just colleagues who opened their mouths and put both feet straight in. Local councillors were pretty good, too.

On building terms: "I've just had an extension — I've had a dormobile put on the roof".

On health: "I'm worried about sewerage — I think we ought to look into it".

On hygiene: "The dog muck in the park is terrible, there are fetuses all over the place".

On chronological exactitude: "I would say, off the top of my head, that this was last used...a long time ago" and "This has been an eyesore getting on for...a very long time".

And in a council press release: "Have you ever fancied trying your hand at orienteering and didn't know where to go?"

Back at the office, the customer wasn't always right.

"I've come to complain about this misleading ad. It said there would be wallpaper at 75p a roll".

"And wasn't there any?"

"Well yes, but it was a small roll and I want a big one".

Nowadays I sit in an office on my own and miss all this. My subs however keep a record of the things the reporters write, in a file tellingly called "I'm sorry I haven't a clue", the name of a popular radio comedy show in the UK.

In the reporters' defence, they're all trainees we take from college, though admittedly with some of these there is no defence.

Eye-saw

3-range eggs

very tight nit

A burglar smashed a window and ransacked a property using stolen upholstery

four coarse lunch

a desert trolley

it won't leave a whole in your pocket

A breach of human rights

(He got) another job in Manchester Airport for Hurts Car Hire

And finally, from a funeral report sent in to us and written by the family. The deceased had a twin sister: "Indeed so alike were they that following Ruth's death last year it was learned that they could even swap false teeth".

Jeremy Condliffe can be contacted at Jerowork@aol.com.



Jeremy Condliffe

Lost Bomber Brings Closure to Family

By **Carl Conley**
Publisher
The Island Sand Paper
Fort Myers Beach, Fla.
July 4, 2008

Editor's note: Carl Conley and his staff scooped the daily Fort Myers News-Press and NBC News by three days on this story. On November 22, 1942, a B-26 Army Air Corp Bomber crew took off from Page Field on Route 41 in Fort Myers, Florida on a routine mission, little suspecting it would be the last time they would ever see their loved ones.

Two crew members were later found with parachutes on their backs, but Staff Sergeant William Gerrad Kittiko, the plane's turret gunner, was not one of them. Though Kittiko's plane was long suspected to have crashed into the Gulf of Mexico, the sea holds her mysteries well, but those who ply her depths in search of treasure, through persistence and hard work, often uncover the things Mother Ocean has swept into her secret bosom. This is just what happened when a small group of divers hunting for spoils 20 miles off our coast found Kittiko's lost aircraft, bringing closure to a family who has lived in the dark for 66 years.

According to one of our local captains, Ramsey Drummond of the Sea Quest, NBC, the *News-Press* and the family chartered his boat to go out to the underwater site last Sunday. "I took them out about 28 miles and even though they didn't have any equipment with them — I think out of respect for the religious ceremony — one of the family members, Mark Casey, is an important person at NBC. He told us this story was going to go national Sunday. It should be in all the major papers and on TV. I also heard there's going to be a Navy ship out at the plane site this weekend, either Saturday or Sunday."

According to www.broadcastingcable.com, Mark Casey, Kittiko's nephew, is the VP/News Director of Gannett's NBC affiliate KPNX in Phoenix, Arizona. Gannett also owns the *News-Press* locally. Capt.

Drummond said he thought the whole discovery and follow-up was "kinda cool" and that the family was very nice while he had them on the water. "They just flowed with the whole day though we were really only at the site of the downed plane 15-20 minutes."

While the story really started when the plane was discovered a month and a half ago, the *Sand Paper's* involvement started around the docks on San Carlos Island when word filtered back to us from sources who had heard of a family going out to sea with the media on a local boat, Capt. Drummond's Sea Quest. When we also discovered that an ordained deacon from our local Catholic church was brought along to officiate at a ceremony at sea for the loved ones entombed in the Gulf, we tracked down Deacon "Scoop" Kiesel, a well respected member of our Island community and former shrimp boat captain to tell us a little about his role in this remarkable adventure.

"The group, which included nieces Clareanne Casey, Christine Casey, Victoria Tomcik and nephew Mark Casey, headed to sea on the boat the Sea Quest Sunday morning at 8 a.m.," said the Deacon. "We went out about 20 miles off the coast of Sanibel. When we got near an area the shrimpers call 'Big Bottom' because it's so flat, the captain said that we were above the plane," he told us. "It was moderately rough when we got out there, so we did the liturgical part of the ceremony — about 20 minutes — in the cabin. "Then we went out into the cockpit, and tossed three wreaths over the side. As we tossed the wreaths, we called out the names of the men we were there to honor. Then, as the wreaths floated in the Gulf, I said an 'Our Father', a 'Hail Mary' and a 'Glory Be.'"

Scoop said the family seemed moved by the service. "It was very special and I was honored to be part of it," he said. "The family seemed very happy to have closure, and I put my arm around Bill's sister at one point because she was crying."

We asked Scoop how he got involved in the first place and he told us he got a call

from the salvage divers who had found the bomber — Tom O'Brian and his friend, Bo Stengel.

"I've been a treasure diver for two years," O'Brian told us at the Surf Club Tuesday afternoon. "I was out looking for Battista's treasure when I came across the plane."

Tom was sitting with Bo, who said, "This whole thing is so exciting. I was the one who called *Deacon Scoop*." "This is a much bigger story than you realize," O'Brian told us but when prompted to go into more detail, he wanted to know if we were going to publish the story. When we told him we intended to release it in this issue, he refused further comment, saying, "I promised the story to the *News-Press*."

Leaving the divers at The Surf Club, we called Abigail Casey, Sgt. Kittiko's sister in Pennsylvania. She was happy to fill us in and started by telling us what it was like when the phone call came in that her brother's mystery was finally solved, and how it took her back in time over half a century.

"Well, they called me after they found the plane and checked the radio and the tag number with the Air Force," she told us on the phone from her home in White Oak, Pennsylvania. "You know, there are a lot of young men missing from that time, and the others on Bill's plane — I think they're still looking for their families."

Abigail said her brother was the turret gunner on the B-26 Bomber that simply never returned that day. "Bill was supposed to have leave that weekend and he called home — Pennsylvania — to tell my mom that it was cancelled because he had to go out on maneuvers," Abigail recalled. "I was still in high school, and I remember it was a beautiful day here in



Carl Conley

Pennsylvania — I don't know what it was like there — and there were other planes that went out with my brother's."

She said the family received a telegram saying that the plane had been lost and her mother was upset because the Air Force only searched for four days. "The pilot — I think his name was Vail — and the co-pilot, they must have parachuted out as the plane was going down because they found their parachutes and their bodies," she told us. "But we had no idea what happened to Bill."

Searching the Page Field Association Web site Archives, we were unable to find details on that fateful day or the extent of inquiries, if any, that were made to resolve the mystery of the plane's disappearance. But according to Mike Stowe, a spokesman for a site maintained for information on military incidents, "a 32-page report is maintained by the military at accidentreports.com" listing Kittiko and pilot Vail as flying a B-26B airplane, #41-17966, over the Gulf of Mexico and being reported as missing.

Apparently this information either never reached the Caseys or they found it insufficient since Abigail said her mother "repeatedly called for more information" but the family continued to feel they were "in limbo" all these years.

"I'm still in shock that someone finally found the plane. It's so wonderful now that we have closure." Abigail told us she really enjoyed Sunday's ceremony. "The Deacon was just wonderful — he was

very nice and gave such a beautiful sermon. I think that Bill would have been embarrassed by all the fuss, though. He was such a quiet person."

To this point, the Kittiko tale would suggest an isolated incident, but a close examination of records from the war years and conversations with a local military plane buff reveals that the B-26 Bomber program was rife with problems.

"Page Field was used in 1942 primarily for advanced training of pilots and their crew, after which they would possibly move on to another base or to the Pacific," according to Jim Cawthard, chief pilot and "unofficial historian" of the Lee County Port Authority. "They flew training missions every day," he told us. "Some of them flew B-24s, and those guys would fly over the Gulf looking for German U-boats. There were a lot of German U-boats in the Gulf of Mexico during WWII."

B-26 Bombers, thought to be the height of aviation technology at the time, quickly earned the nicknames "The Widow Maker" and "The Flying Prostitute" due to the frequency of crashes. Jim told us that this was likely because inexperienced pilots were flying them.

"Some of these kids were only 19 or 20 years old with few flying hours," he told us. "There was no standardization of pilot training at the beginning of the war; everybody was just in a big hurry to get them off to fight."

The question of why this particular plane went down still needs to be answered and further investigation is likely as news of this discovery spreads. But for the family of William G. Kittiko, it now only matters that his final resting place has been found. In the end, this is a larger tale than we can tell and readers can expect to see more on the discovery of this B-26 Bomber just off our coast. But for those of us who live on islands, mysteries of the sea hold their own, particular fascination.

For decades, local families have seen their sons (and daughters too) leave our shores to put bread on the family table. This is why our annual Blessing of the Fleet carries a 68-year tradition. And while we all gather annually to have fun at the Shrimp Festival, we should pause to remember its humble beginnings: a simple ceremony by church leaders to invoke the protection of the Almighty. Perhaps this was in the mind of the Kittiko family when they came to our humble island and called the Deacon to accompany them to sea where they could find peace with their long lost kinsmen. To see this closure for their family allows us to feel it for ourselves as well. It's a tale of loss, recovery and affirmation. It's close to home. It's spiritually powerful. It's profound. It touches us all.

Keri Hendry also contributed to this story. Carl Conley can be contacted at island-sandpaper@earthlink.net.

President's Report from page 2

But leave it to a city slicker to pour cold water on any self-congratulating community journalists. Justin Fox, business and economics columnist for *Time* magazine, uses Time-blog.com to answer Davis' high-sounding diagnosis of weekly papers' success.

"A few community newspapers do a great job of serving their readers and exposing corrupt public servants," he says. "Many more do a great job of publishing photos of their readers, but generally shy away from any exposing of corruption. And some are complete crap." All, however,

benefit because (1) "their communities are too small for Craigslist to have gotten to (yet)," (2) "in most cases they serve populations less transient and less Internet-addicted than those of big metropolitan areas," and (3) "nobody ever looked to them for national or international news, so the fact that you can get all that on the Internet now is irrelevant."

Fox's article attracted a number of comments. One sums up the situation nicely: "The hometown paper should thrive. I want to see my kids on the honor roll. I want to see who had the biggest tomato at

the fair. I want to know who smacked who outside the Dairy Queen. That stuff will never be on the net."

What do you think? Are weeklies doing better than dailies? If so, why? Let me know what you think. With your cooperation, I should be able to milk this topic for another column. My e-mail address is at the bottom of this column.

Cheers.

Don Brod can be contacted at donbrod@earthlink.net.

You're not a whore if you give it away

By **Tom Mullen**
Wyoming Press Bulletin

The irony of a lowly 2x2 thank-you ad from Cynthia Lummis in my hometown Sheridan Press was not lost on this paperboy.

Last month's WPA bulletin noted that she had not spent dime one in newspaper advertisements while her opponent in the Republican primary, Mark Gordon, was outspending all other candidates in newspaper advertising.

Regardless of your political affiliation or your favorite horse in that race, if you are a publisher you have to feel a little deflated at the news of your best advertiser losing to your worst.

Or should you?

Think back at what you saw of the Lummis

campaign against Gordon. It painted him as a Democrat in Republican clothing and did so in the letters to the editor pages of this state's newspapers.

Lummis won the primary because of her name recognition, yes. She won because of her consistent work as a state official and Republican, yes. She won because the newspapers in this state gave her more free publicity, through those letters to the editor, than her opponent paid for in real dollars, yes, yes, yes.

Even in my own *Newcastle News Letter Journal* I read of our hometown state senator's ringing endorsement of our would-be congresswoman.

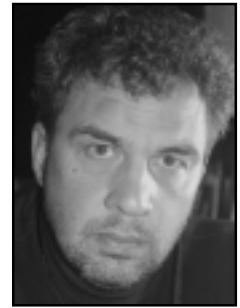
It's hard to pass up all those political letters, pro or con, and the press releases that provide some relief when our writing staffs are overworked or underperform. We do have holes to

fill.

But maybe it's time we all take a hard look at our policy toward printing political endorsements and letters to the editor.

In the race between Gordon and Lummis no one can accuse the newspapers of this state as being whores. We gave it away.

Tom Mullen can be contacted at paperboy@vcn.com.



Tom Mullen

ISWNE Foundation Contributors

since Dec. 1, 2007

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Les Anderson
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Ellen Albanese
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Tom Wills

Publisher (\$1,000)

Burt & Ursula Freireich

Named scholarship (\$10,000)

Total raised: \$10,883.30

Garred uses award event to challenge media

By **Scott Wilson**

Port Townsend & Jefferson County Leader
Port Townsend, Wash.
June 11, 2008

Frank Garred, former publisher of the *Port Townsend & Jefferson County Leader*, was in the packed ballroom in Bellevue to receive a lifetime achievement award.

But he used his remarks before 300 journalists, editors, broadcasters and Web site operators to challenge them on the lack of independence and skepticism in today's media.

Garred was given the June Anderson Almquist Award for Distinguished Service to Journalism at the Western Washington Chapter of the Society for Professional Journalism annual awards banquet in Bellevue on May 31. The award, named for a longtime *Seattle Times* journalist, recognizes a lifetime of journalistic achievement and is the highest award given by the SPJ chapter. Garred has been a journalist for almost 50 years, starting in 1960. From 1967 to 2001, he was publisher and co-owner of *The Leader*, where **Pat**, his wife of almost 50 years, was also employed as circulation manager.

But before an audience of top staff of the Seattle and regional dailies and the Northwest's television broadcasters, Garred did not simply accept the award with thanks. He used his speech to present a specific challenge to the assembled crowd to re-engage their sense of skepticism and critical thinking.

Referring to a recent book published by Scott McClelland, the former spokesperson for President George Bush, Garred noted that McClelland claims not only that Bush misled the nation in the run-up to the war in Iraq, but also that most

major media outlets went along without asking tough questions and presenting an independent view of White House claims.

It is, he said, evidence of media complicity in state propaganda. "Remember the clamor of reporters seeking those embedded assignments with the military in 2003 as we invaded Iraq?" he asked. "We whimpered over our journalist-wounded, but we failed to examine the purpose and outcome of the mission. We failed to make the connections with our readers and viewers. The war was just another true lie, and we aided and abetted our government's commitment to perception management. We used to call it propaganda, crafting truth out of fiction and convincing us it was the truth. We became the deputy propagandists for our federal government."

He particularly challenged the broadcast media to quell its fascination with car wrecks and other visual but shallow stories.

"The people involved in the wreck are not watching television," he said, "and the rest of us don't give a damn."

At times the crowd was silent, but at other times they applauded. "You tell them, Frank!" yelled one woman.

Garred received a standing ovation both before and after his remarks.

The Almquist award is the latest recognition given Garred in recent years. In 1994 he was given the first-ever Miles Turnbull Master Editor and Publisher Award from the Washington State Newspaper Publishers Association. In 2007 he was presented with the first-ever James Andersen Award for his volunteer work as the first director of the Washington Coalition for Open Government, which he helped launch in 2002. Garred served as unpaid director for the new organiza-

tion for two years.

He was named to the University of Washington Department of Communications Hall of Fame last year, and was appointed by Gov. Chris Gregoire to the Sunshine Committee,

reviewing unnecessary exemptions to the state's open government laws, in 2007.

Garred graduated from the UW in 1958, served in the U.S. Army in Korea, and worked for both the *Aberdeen Daily World* and the *Suburban Times of Lakewood* before acquiring *The Leader* from Richard McCurdy in 1967. He served in leadership roles in three community-newspaper organizations — as president of WNPA in 1973, as president of the International Society of Weekly Newspaper Editors in 1990, and as president of the National Newspaper Association in 1993.

In Port Townsend, he helped launch the Rhody Run and was a stalwart of the Port Townsend Tennis Club. He was president of the Port Townsend Chamber of Commerce and involved in other civic organizations. But his primary mark was his unbending belief in independent community journalism of high standards — the attitude most often mentioned by those celebrating him in his retirement.

After his publishing career, Garred taught journalism at Western Washington University and is currently teaching at Peninsula College in Port Angeles.



Frank Garred

Hix serving as interim adviser for OSU paper

Harry Hix, a recent ISWNE president, is back in the newsroom — temporarily.

For fall semester, he is serving as interim newsroom adviser for the *Daily O'Collegian*, the student newspaper at Oklahoma State University.

The previous adviser retired last year and a decision on his replacement has not been made due to a reorganization and restructuring of the campus newspaper and its board of directors now in process.

Dr. Derina Holtzhausen, who became director of the School of Journalism and Broadcasting at OSU July 1, asked Hix to serve as interim adviser. The goal is to have a permanent adviser in place by Jan. 1.

"I guess you would say that I am back in the saddle — sorta," Hix said.

Hix is continuing as a visiting assistant professor at OSU, teaching the Reporting class. Two of the three lab classes he was teaching were assigned to another faculty member to allow Hix more time for the newsroom adviser responsibilities.

"I was honored to be asked to do the job," he said. "It's not often that an old fossil (is there any other kind?) like me is called back into the action. I can tell you that it didn't take long for me to recall how busy and unpredictable days can be in the newsroom."

He said that working with students in the newsroom rather than just in class is an interesting challenge.

"We don't see the world through the same glasses and our different perspectives makes things challenging," Hix said. "I probably could use a shot of their youthful enthusiasm and energy."

Hix, who was ISWNE president in 2006-07, is a former managing editor of a daily newspaper and publisher/editor of an award-winning weekly newspaper in Tennessee for 16 years. He was the Engleman/Livermore Professor of Community Journalism at the University of Oklahoma before retiring in 2006 and accepting the visiting professor position at OSU.

The interim adviser position is not his first association with campus publications. As a

graduate student years ago at Southern Illinois University, home base of ISWNE for many years, Hix was managing editor of the *Daily Egyptian*, the campus newspaper.

At OU, he served on the Student Publications board of directors, including five years as chair.

Holtzhausen said Hix was asked to be interim adviser because of his professional experience and his familiarity with campus newspapers.

Hix noted that his bachelor's degree in journalism is from OSU and that he worked for the *Daily O'Collegian*, known on campus as The O'Colly. For a time, he was news editor.

"I guess you could say I have come full circle," Hix said.



Harry Hix

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 417-625-9736.

Dr. Chad Stebbins

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