Breaking Scandal: Inside the Sexual Assault Coverage, The Jezebel Reporter's Defense

University of Montana School of Journalism

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BREAKING SCANDAL
Inside the Sexual Assault Coverage
The Jezebel Reporter's Defense
You know that life in Montana is extraordinary, varied and endlessly fascinating.

You should expect the same from your local newspaper.
Dear readers:

The objects you see in the mirror are not as close as they appear. Behold Montana, cherished for its closeness to nature and its lack of people. Outsiders know no better place to escape. Insiders value its close-knit communities.

That is until nature proves treacherous, crime separates families, and communities fracture. Once intimacy dissolves into multiple degrees of separation, closeness becomes difficult to navigate from the inside.

The sexual-assault scandal at the University of Montana stripped Missoula naked in front of national news audiences. Die-hard football fans started ripping each other apart on the Web. It was a touchy situation for local journalists, who cover a community that prides itself on a legacy of peaceful coexistence between liberals and loggers.

Even beyond the scandal, many stories in this issue examine dimensions of closeness between journalists, sources, audiences, and bosses. How close is too close? How tight is the leash, from high school journalism to a sports reporter speaking truth on social media?

The closer our writers looked at the mirror, the more contradictions appeared. Take the development of natural resources, which benefits far-flung communities, but destroys the very nature that distinguishes our state. Montana’s alliances to conserve nature reach beyond party lines and geographical borders. Yet conservation efforts can make the land itself too expensive to live on.

Among Montanans, and the people who love Montana, there’s a temptation to hark back to an imaginary time when close meant whole. There’s the hope that the media will stop looking for contradictions and start building community, glossing over differences instead of fueling debate.

In the wake of scandal, Missoulians ached to put the troubles behind them and start from scratch, like the pioneers. But as tempting as it might be to seek closure, that’s not what this magazine has ever been about. There are countless shades of closeness and separation. As journalists, it’s our job to reveal them.

Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear. We hope you enjoy the 2013 edition of Montana Journalism Review. We welcome your feedback.

Henriette Lowisch, editor-in-chief

Billie Loewen, managing editor
Led by journalism students at the University of Montana, the nation’s first journalism review is back to analyze the work of the state’s media and inform its readers about the issues that matter most to Montanans.

Featuring Watchdog, Made in Montana and Year in Review sections, MJR accentuates quality student production with media analysis. The magazine also delves into non-media oriented news and trends to showcase journalism taught and practiced in the Treasure State.

While last year’s issue focused on booms and busts, this year’s edition explores closeness in all its dimensions.

MJR covers all areas of the state, from the mountains to the prairies. Founded by dean Nathaniel Blumberg in 1958, it went into hiatus from 1979 to 1993, when professor Clem Work reinstated it. Since 2012, professor Henriette Lowisch has mentored students through MJR’s production. We’re grateful to Matt Gibson for his ongoing sponsorship of our print edition.

MJR also produces online content in an effort to be transparent and broaden perspectives, engaging readers on Facebook and Tumblr. For a free subscription, please go to our website mjr.jour.umt.edu/

Both the print and web editions are exclusively conceived, edited, designed and produced by advanced journalism students. All rights remain with the authors of the works published herein.
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School of Journalism: Breaking Scandal: Inside the Sexual Assault Coverage, The Jezebel

Published by ScholarWorks at University of Montana, 2015
Two Colorado men sit in eastern Montana jail cells awaiting trial for the murder of Sherry Arnold. The Sidney High School math teacher disappeared in January 2012 after she left her home for a morning jog.

Early on the morning of January 7, 2012, Lester Walters and Michael Spell allegedly spotted Arnold running alongside a field that was slated to become the site of a new housing subdivision for oil workers. According to an affidavit filed in Richland County District Court, Spell knocked Arnold down, choked her out, and pulled her body into a Ford Explorer. Authorities discovered Arnold’s remains two months later, buried in a field across the North Dakota border.

The two men face charges of deliberate homicide and attempted kidnapping. Their trials are set for November 2013 and January 2014. If convicted, they could face the death penalty.

Arnold’s death sent shockwaves through Sidney, a small town located at the epicenter of the Bakken oil boom in Montana. Weapons flew off the shelves at gun stores and a record number of women enrolled in self-defense classes. More than a year has passed since the day Arnold left her home for a jog. The community is still healing, but they are joined by supporters across the world – even some as far away as Spain – who have organized annual runs to honor her memory.

-Amy Sisk

BIG MAC BOOM
Oil fields bring real money for fake food

In our last issue, “Boom: Reporting on natural resources in Montana,” we debunked the claim that a fast-food gig can earn you $17 per hour in the Bakken. Still, there’s more money to be made back east than in a Montana university town. Vern Brekus, manager of the local McDonald’s in Williston, North Dakota, said he is always looking to hire more people to deal with increased traffic from the recent oil boom. Employees start at $11 an hour, but can quickly see raises of up to four dollars per hour.

“If they’re a good quality employee, we’ll move them up pretty fast,” Brekus said.

In Williston, many people take jobs at fast food restaurants or retail stores while waiting for interviews with oil companies. Cindy Sanford of Williston Job Services said her office has helped people from all 50 states, every Canadian province, and at least six different countries. In February, Jobs Services saw an average of 93 people per day. They might be spending faster than they’re making, however: Rent for a basic one-bedroom apartment in Williston can be as high as $2,300 a month, compared to an average of $787 in Bozeman and $653 in Missoula.

-Jackson Bolstad

WAITING FOR JUSTICE
Two men to stand trial for the murder of Sherry Arnold

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CLOSE QUARTERS

Missoulians quarreled for most of 2012 over a proposed ordinance that would legalize rental additions known as accessory dwelling units (ADUs) throughout the city. ADUs, which can either be interior basement and attic apartments or exterior backyard cottages, are prohibited in single-family neighborhoods like the University District and the South Hills.

Proponents argue the ordinance would increase convenient, affordable housing options in Missoula, which suffers from a rental-vacancy rate well below the national average.

Opponents have been persistent and vocal in their resistance, contending ADUs will change the character of neighborhoods. Increased parking problems, trashy yards, and noisy neighbors are some of the biggest issues opponents say ADUs will bring to already crowded neighborhoods.

Supporters of the ordinance don’t buy the gripes. They are quick to cite an owner-occupancy requirement, which they say would help keep unruly renters in check.

In addition, supporters say ADUs are prevalent throughout the city already, but many of them are illegal and not up to code. Lifting the ban could lead to significant upgrades on the existing ADUs.

Overall, the matter has consumed time and money from both sides. Public outreach programs and staff time will have cost the city about $20,000 by spring of this year. On the other side, opponents pooled more than $10,000 for a petition, hoping to force a two-thirds supermajority vote by city council to pass the ordinance.

-Montana Politicians Endorse Keystone XL

During the 2012 election campaign, every Montana politician of national ambition endorsed it. This past spring, even the local newspaper of the notoriously liberal college town of Missoula came out in favor. Based on popular sentiment in one of the least important states in the union, President Barack Obama’s final approval of the Keystone XL Pipeline seemed pretty much a given.

TransCanada’s new pipeline will cross three states – Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska — before joining the existing pipeline near Steele City, Nebraska. It would cover 875 miles of land (as opposed to an earlier proposal’s 1,384 miles) to transport crude oil from Alberta, Canada, and the Bakken Shale Formation in Montana to Cushing, Oklahoma, and the Gulf Coast region of Texas.

In December 2012, the Montana Land Board approved 50-year easements for the pipeline to cross state-owned land. Those opposed to the easements pointed out that the pipeline would cross the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers. This could lead to an environmental disaster, like on March 27, 2012, when a Canadian Pacific train derailed in Minnesota, leaking an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 gallons of crude oil onto the frozen prairie.

The opposition’s main concern regarding the pipeline is that it supports tar-sand development in neighboring Canada, thus fueling climate change.

Tony Hartshorn, an assistant professor in the Department of Land Resources and Environmental Science at Montana State University, said tar sand drilling contributes to greenhouse gasses such as carbon dioxide and water vapors, while also thinning the forest keeping those emissions in check.

Climate change, however, still isn’t an issue that has much traction in Montana. After all, Glendive isn’t New York, and the state hasn’t had any natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy — yet.

-Missoula County debates whether to allow urban neighborhood homeowners to build ‘granny flats’ to cope with Missoula’s lower-than-average housing vacancy rates

-Hanah Redman
The western United States endured one of the worst wildfire seasons in history during the summer of 2012. In Montana alone, more than one million acres went up in flames, causing the greatest damage in over 100 years.

Sharon Hood, an ecologist at the Rocky Mountain Research Station, said that despite the damage, fire might serve an essential environmental function: halting mountain pine beetle attacks on Western forests.

Like a vaccine, fire stimulates the production of resin ducts, the soldiers of tree defense. During the first year, as a tree recovers from fire, mountain pine beetles can find an easy victim. But Hood found more resin flowing inside the tree after the year was up. Increased resin flow might stem the tide of mountain pine beetle attacks on forests, forming the crux of Hood’s research.

An analysis of campaign finance records by the Associated Press showed that a record $47 million poured into the 2012 U.S. Senate race between Jon Tester, Democrat, and Denny Rehberg, Republican. That amount includes direct contributions, as well as $25 million from unions, business groups, and partisan committees. Six years earlier, the race for the same Senate seat drew just $17.5 million in spending.

The SCOTUS ruling overturned the Montana Supreme Court’s decision to uphold the state’s campaign finance regulations, which citizens voted into law in 1912 to crush the political influence of mining barons.

Corporations and unions could now make unlimited political expenditures in state elections, reminding some of the early 20th-century political landscape, when Montana copper kings bought and bribed their way into power.

The Citizens United decision is wildly unpopular in Montana. More than 70 percent demanded that it be overturned, endorsing an initiative on the November 2012 ballot.

In 2013, Montana legislators grappled with the best way to move forward, voting on a number of proposals to limit the “dark money” responsible for attack ads. Several proposals brought by both Republicans and Democrats sought to wipe out groups like the American Tradition Partnership, which they claimed hid behind a 501(c)(4) tax exempt status to avoid disclosing donations and expenditures.

—Amy Sisk

Before, we were just making a lot of comparisons and tracking how much foliage had been scorched and how many buds have been killed in the tree, but I didn’t have a good understanding of what was going on internally in the tree," Hood said.

Attitudes on wildfires and prescribed burns fluctuate like the smoke drifting down in the Missoula valley every summer. Fire exacerbates asthma and other breathing-related problems, helping shape public views on fire.

“The problem is for the last hundred years we’ve been actively fighting fires and putting them out. It’s called fire explosion where we not only suppress the fires but tell the public having fires is bad,” said Robert Keane, Hood’s supervisor.

Hood and Keane hope this research puts fire back, literally and figuratively, on the Montanan landscape as another tool to combat mountain pine beetle attacks.

—Krysti Shallenberger
To most tourists, the statue of Jesus Christ atop Whitefish’s Big Mountain is nothing more than a fun photo prop near the top of Chair 2. It’s nearly impossible to ski or snowboard by and not see someone wrapping their arm around the Son of God.

But in what was one of the more bizarre stories of 2012, the life-sized statue on Big Mountain became the topic of a lawsuit. The previous year, the U.S. Forest Service, which owns the land the statue is on, decided not to renew a permit for the statue. After hundreds of complaints, including a November 2011 rally led by former U.S. Rep. Denny Rehberg, the Forest Service withdrew its decision and announced it would renew the statue’s permit for 10 years.

Just hours later, the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation announced it was filing a lawsuit. Kalispell native and plaintiff William Cox said the statue violates the First Amendment protection of separation of church and state because the Forest Service is a government agency.

After a year of heated debate, Jesus still awaits his Judgment Day. The court case — initially scheduled for early March — had yet to begin, and as of April, the statue continued to stare down the slopes of Big Mountain.

Luckily for Cox and other atheists, we’ve designed a map to help you navigate around the Lamb of God.
THE NEW BALL AND CHAIN

People caught drinking and driving in Cascade County may find themselves shackled with an alcohol monitoring anklet. Some offenders say the devices tread on their liberties while others say they changed their lives for the better.

If only Kayla Pedersen had remembered to turn on her headlights. She was so close to home, so close to keeping her 22-year-old record clean.

She had already made it the almost 20 miles back to Great Falls after a night of drinking at American Bar in Stockett. But remembering to turn on her headlights before driving through the city would have required some degree of sobriety.

“It was all about drinking, and it was all about covering my problems,” Pedersen said.

Pedersen hasn’t had a drink for seven months, three of those months spent with a cold plastic box strapped snug to her leg. The machine she wore was a Secure Continuous Remote Alcohol Monitor (SCRAM) bracelet, which is the size of a deck of cards. It vibrates every half hour to measure vapor that excretes from the skin.

Some say it’s like having a probation officer taped to their leg. Others say it’s like a dog collar — the kind that zaps.

But Dirk Sandefur, one of four Cascade County District judges, said it is the best tool the courts have to monitor sobriety.

“I think the defendants definitely think it is an extraordinary and unreasonable burden on their liberty, and they think it’s an extraordinary and unreasonable burden financially,” Sandefur said. “We’ll consider that, but the bottom line of the court has to be that it is a problem that they created, so the court’s primary consideration has to be if we’re putting enough restrictions on them to protect the public and not have them re-offending.”

SCRAM is a device used by municipal and district courts as a condition of bond to ensure defendants are following court orders.

Sandefur said the court’s use of SCRAM is increasing, but since the system is relatively new, it’s an evolving process.

Pedersen entered the office of Arrow Bail Bonding the morning of February 21. She tried to hide...
her grin when Paul Jara, owner of the business and former Cascade County deputy sheriff, asked her if it was the day to remove the burden.

She handed over the court order and sat across from city Judge Nancy Luth.

Before Jara could remove the bracelet, he had to conduct an exit interview to gauge the program’s effectiveness. But he already knew the answers for Pedersen.

“Honestly, I think it is the best thing that’s ever happened to me,” said Pedersen, a day before her court date.

Pedersen had her first drink of alcohol when she was 15, and she began to use alcohol as a coping mechanism shortly after. She started to party in high school, and as the years added up, she found alcohol as a refuge.

Jara said people in Pederson’s situation strongly resist SCRAM at first, and the biggest issue is money.

The cost of SCRAM is $10 a day, but through the exit interviews, Jara and Danielle Waltner, a SCRAM compliance officer, have found that people spent an average of $13 a day on alcohol before being in the program.

Pedersen had the same doubts as many when the bracelet was strapped on. It was uncomfortable, both on her leg and to her wallet. She would knock it about when she walked, and it was hard on her wardrobe. “But it works,” she said. “It does its job.”

And Pedersen’s mom always reminded her, “Where would that $10 go if you didn’t wear it?”

Pedersen claims she didn’t spend a lot on alcohol. She would get her drinks for free, but the longer she thought about it, her own price tag added up.

She also said she rarely drove. But that night she decided to drive south to the rural town of Stockett, to the American Bar. It was away from the drama, away from the old high school crowd in Great Falls.

The rest of the night got blurry. She remembers dropping off a friend, and she remembers the flashing red and blue lights. She even remembers the patrolman’s question: “Have you been drinking?”

She said she had two beers. They must have been strong beers, she remembers the patrolman say, because when she blew into the breathalyzer, it registered a 0.164 BAC — two times the legal limit.

Pedersen admits she was a bit snappy with the officer. The officer told her that much alcohol would make 400-pound men slur and stumble.

“I know how to handle my alcohol,” Pedersen told the officer, but she decided to stop there.

The old Pedersen would tell the system to let people be and to get off her back. She wouldn’t wear that hunk of plastic. It took nearly three months before she noticed a difference.

The more exit surveys Jara conducts, the more he begins to see a trend.

“Thirty days is not too tough to kick a habit, but after 60 days they start seeing changes in the way they perform with their daily lives,” Jara said. “And after 90 then you’ll hear, ‘I didn’t realize how much money I was losing or days of work I was missing because I was drinking.’”

If Pedersen only had to wear that bracelet for two months, she said she wouldn’t have changed. She said she wasn’t addicted, but people need enough time to clean up and clear their head.

“People tell me that I look healthy again,” she said.

Pedersen wants to keep it that way. Her old friends are asking her to go to the bars again, but she’s staying strong.

“One drink may lead to two or three, and I don’t want to be put in that position,” she said.

She knows she can say no, but after carrying the bracelet so close to her skin for six months, she feels that this time it’s better to stay away.
TWO NATIONS
ONE VOICE
Environmental threats unite people
ACROSS THE 545-MILE BORDER
that separates Montana and Canada
On a cold January day, Bryson Myers played the flute beneath a cottonwood tree on the edge of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. He wore a wool hat and a shin-length wool Pendleton blanket decorated in Native American design. Propped next to him was a sign. It read, “Idle No More” in large, handwritten letters. The song he played was one he composed to spread awareness about what’s going on next door.

Idle No More spawned from outrage felt by Canada’s First Nations people over a bill that restricts their rights to regulate the use of their land. Though the bill was the catalyst, the movement quickly took a broader scope. Along with First Nations sovereignty, it is about protecting the environment — a fight that came to

TRIBES FIND COMMON GROUND

the forefront after tar sands exploration ravaged Alberta.

Just south of the Canadian border on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, people like Myers are making an effort to support Idle No More. Their connections to the movement are deeply rooted — many on the reservation have relatives in nearby Canada. However, the impetus to support Idle No More goes far beyond kin. Many recognize that the pillars of the movement are addressing the same struggles Native Americans face.

That includes Myers, who is attending college on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. He split his childhood between the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation, west of Fort Peck, and the Star Blanket reserve in Canada.

“The minute I knew that the majority of this movement started with my people in Canada, down to the reserve where I was at, I was like ‘Well, I’m going to join this,’” Myers said.

The movement gained momentum with the help of peaceful protests, known as flash mobs. Natives and non-natives swarm a public place to perform Cree influenced round dances and sing traditional Native songs. Myers appreciated how the gatherings accurately portrayed his people as nonviolent.

“The way I was raised, and to see what’s happening, I can honestly say it’s going about it the right way,” Myers said.

The peaceful nature of the movement also appealed to Adriann Ricker, who grew up on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. But what made her want to get involved were the issues the movement addresses — issues that parallel those affecting her people.

“A lot of what they stand for is issues that we are facing and we will face,” Ricker said, citing the Keystone XL pipeline as an example.

To show her support for the movement, Ricker organized an Idle No More gathering on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, which has a population of roughly 200. In mid-January, through posters, Facebook posts, and advertisements in the local newspaper, Ricker brought people together for two nights of protests. On the second night, 50 people showed up to dance, hold signs, or observe.

“A lot of people were intrigued by it,” Ricker said. “It got the conversation going over here.”

One person in attendance was tribal council member Tommy Christian. Christian is half Canadian; his mother is from the Wood Mountain Reserve. He showed up to represent and support his Canadian relatives.

“Up there, they legislate these laws that impose and infringe on sovereignty and so Idle No More is bringing those things to the forefront,” Christian said.

To Christian, Ricker, and Myers, Idle No More goes far beyond the Canadian-American border. And thanks to their efforts, awareness on the reservation is spreading.

“We are in a time when we have to take ownership of who we are as people and fix things on our own,” Ricker said.

To Ricker and her fellow activists, it’s no less than an awakening.
The North Fork of the Flathead River Transboundary region — a 9,000 square mile, largely undeveloped area on the western rim of Glacier National Park that stretches all the way north into British Columbia — has become the subject of an unlikely coalition between conservation groups, oil companies, and politicians from both sides of the aisle.

This winter, Montana Sens. Max Baucus and Jon Tester, both Democrats, and Republican Rep. Steve Daines, pushed for federal legislation to bar mining and energy exploration from 300,000 acres in part of the largest intact ecosystem in the lower 48 states. The acreage at stake was more than twice the size of Flathead Lake.

Tester and Baucus have already negotiated the voluntary release of 80 percent, or about 200,000 acres of energy and mining leases, from companies like ConocoPhillips, Chevron, and British Petroleum.

“We recognized it as a wild and scenic place, and that’s why we gave up our leases,” said Jim Lowry, director of communications and public affairs for ConocoPhillips Lower 48.

That leaves 20 percent of leaseholders with rights to explore for oil, gas, and precious metals in the proposed protected area. Devon Energy, an Oklahoma-based oil and gas exploration firm, is one of them. It has held on to its leases despite strong political pressure from the Montana delegation.

“All I can say is we’ve been in conversations with those delegates, and those conversations continue,” said Cindy Allen, a Devon Energy spokesperson.

Devon Energy would essentially hold leases in an area surrounded by protected
land, making federal approval for potential development unlikely.

Because the bill preserves its legal rights and a current court-ordered moratorium on mining and energy development is technically considered temporary, Devon Energy has little legal recourse to either develop its leases or seek compensation.

The federal legislation not only protects the North Fork from development, but it would also protect companies like ConocoPhillips and BP. They voluntarily gave up their options to explore and drill with the thought that future leases would not be issued to competitors.

“Those companies gave up for free something of value,” said Michael Jamison, Crown of the Continent program manager for the National Parks Conservation Association. “Well, the last thing that they want after giving up something of value is for a competitor of theirs to come in and pick it up again.”

Besides business considerations, the bill is important because it makes a point to the Canadian government that the United States is committed to protecting these ecosystems on both sides of the border.

It was initially introduced after a 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between then-Gov. Brian Schweitzer and then-British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell calling for a ban on energy and mining in the Transboundary Flathead region.

Canada has already passed legislation barring energy and mining in the Canadian Flathead. The Nature Conservancy, the Canadian government, and investors raised a total of $17 million to compensate mining companies owning leases in the Canadian Flathead for their investments.

Cline Mining, a Canadian-based company that had proposed an open pit coalmine in the headwaters of the Canadian Flathead, filed suit in Canada in 2012 for $500 million in compensation for lost future revenue. The suit is still pending.

Canadian environmental law puts fewer regulations than U.S. law on mining and energy companies for the degradation caused by development. The national and provincial governments of Canada have traditionally put development over environmental concerns.

Jamison believes it is important for the U.S. to continue to encourage more environmentally responsible action by the Canadians.

“We have spent 30 years telling Canada that this watershed is way too important to industrialize,” Jamison said. “We’re going to act in good faith and do what they have done.

The ecological importance of the North Fork, and its proximity to other important ecological areas, makes it critical for genetic exchange between animals and plants.

The region connects to not only Glacier National Park to the east, but to Waterton Lakes National Park in British Columbia to the north; to the Great Bear, Scapegoat, and Bob Marshall Wilderness areas to the south; and to the Cabinet and Selkirk Mountains to the west.

The area is considered critical for providing habitat and connectivity between animal species including grizzly bears, wolverines, and lynx. The North Fork also provides exceptionally clean water for aquatic species.

Other watersheds in the Crown of the Continent Region serve as a warning for Congress as it decides what to do with the North Fork.

The Elk River, which shares the same geological coal formation as the Canadian Flathead, has experienced extensive degradation due to open pit coal mining, said Erin Sexton, a researcher with the
University of Montana’s Flathead Lake Biological Station. Sexton won the American Fisheries Society’s 2012 Conservation Achievement Award for her work comparing the two rivers.

“We found in the Flathead water quality and an aquatic community that was nearly pristine,” Sexton said. “In the Elk, we found very degraded water quality.”

Sexton and other conservationists hope that a similar situation can be avoided in the North Fork. However, the future of the region still is not secure.

Baucus and Tester’s first two attempts at passing the North Fork Watershed Protection Act saw it die without a vote. This spring, their bill faced a partisan Congress concerned more with the nation’s financial struggles. Despite overwhelming support, many conservative lawmakers seemed unwilling to approve a bill that would take a potential source of domestic energy off the table.

But conservationists consider the progress made so far a success. They hope to continue working closely with Canada to address other areas of concern. The Elk River, which drains into the Kootenai River in Montana, could be next.
SWEAT RAN DOWN JOEY Running Crane’s face as more Dos Equis disappeared from the beer cooler on the porch. The hum of bugs and the flicker of fireflies hung over the woods around a southern Illinois cabin.

“You really threw us under the fucking bus on this one,” Running Crane said, throwing a dark look at Michael “Booster” Bustamante, his homesick drummer.

I hung my head between my knees and kept drinking. Faced with failure, I couldn’t bring myself to continue documenting the band’s intimate porch. Are we really getting interest for what we’re saying? Are we really getting interest for whether or not our songs are good, or is it just that we’re impressive because we’re three rez kids?”

JOEY RUNNING CRANE, KING ELEPHANT
conversation, part of my duty as a documentarian.

An underground pop punk band, King Elephant rose from the ashes of Goddammitboyhowdy, a hard-core punk outfit from the Blackfeet Reservation. The earlier group had been a success in the sense that three rez kids were doing something for themselves.

“We went on tours, we put out records, and we were proud of what we did,” Running Crane said.

But insecurity emerged when Goddammitboyhowdy members started questioning whether they were alienating non-native audiences.

“Are we really getting interest for what we’re saying?” Running Crane wondered. “Are we really getting interest for whether or not our songs are good, or is it just that we’re impressive because we’re three rez kids?”

Running Crane wanted to create a band that reached more people. He chose the rough, yet catchy, overdriven pop punk of King Elephant, performed with Bustamante, Ethan J. Uhl and Ryan Bilunka, as the vehicle to do so.

As I toured with the Browning band for 24 days, calling its 2005 Chevy Express home, my camera documented how the tour unraveled behind the scenes.

“After a house show in Illinois, racial slurs ignited Running Crane so much that the band had to force him back into the van. My own hands were shaking with rage, and only my commitment to film the tour kept me from lashing out at the source of the insults.”

TIM GOESSMAN, DOCUMENTARIAN
first traveled west across the Pacific Northwest, with stops in a hippy house in Spokane, Washington, a grungy basement in Olympia, and a dive bar in Portland, Oregon. The musicians thrived off new surroundings, fans, and ad-hoc bunking.

But at the start of our eastward charge, in Boise, Idaho, money started to run out. In Cheyenne, Wyoming, a fender bender weakened spirits, and a botched show in Omaha further fueled frustration. Bustamente was talking on the phone with his girlfriend for hours, rather than spending time with the others. Money problems bred relational problems as the band’s founders struggled to keep their friendship intact.

After a house show in Illinois, racial slurs ignited Running Crane so much that the band had to force him back into the van. My own hands were shaking with rage, and only my commitment to film the tour kept me from lashing out at the source of the insults. In a separate incident, band members returned to their van, only to find one of its windows broken. Nerves tore. “We’re going home,” Running Crane said.

Since the tour, King Elephant’s 2005 Chevy Express has been repossessed. Without the van, the band was planning a northwest tour in May. Bustamante, who was kicked off the roster last summer, has returned. Next up: raising funds for their first LP, “Exhaust.”

Tim Goessman’s documentary about King Elephant was released in April and is available for free on YouTube and Vimeo.
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In eastern Montana, wrestling is the king of small-town high school sports. With the help of their close-knit community, the Forsyth Dogies have risen to regional dominance.

In a blur of camouflage purple, the fans rose from their seats, some with hands over their lips, others with eyes closed and hands clasped, mouthing prayers. Roughly half the town of Forsyth was in Billings for February’s state wrestling tournament, having traveled about 100 miles.

The Forsyth High School Dogies were on the verge of a three-peat as class B-C State Wrestling Champions, but the Choteau High School Bulldogs still had a chance to snatch the team title away. Choteau’s J.J. Werdal needed either a pin or a major decision over Colstrip’s Seth Currier to swing the title for his team.

At the sound of the whistle, Werdal and Currier tussled. Through his headgear, Currier heard muffled chants from not only Colstrip fans, but also whoops and hollers from Forsyth’s section.

Soon, chants of Currier’s name echoed through the MetraPark Arena.

“We all pulled for him,” said Maddy Klapmeier, Forsyth High School’s valedictorian. “He could have rolled over just to spite us, but he gave it his all.”

Terri Brown, office manager — or as she says, “surrogate mother” — of the 181 students at Forsyth High School, could not attend the tournament, but she still felt the anxiety.

“I received constant updates,” Brown said. “Everyone here at home was just on an edge of awe.”

Forsyth is a blue-collar town of fewer than 2,000 residents, with most livelihoods dependent on the railroads and mines. It’s no coincidence that the town has come to dominate in wrestling, one of the most physically grueling high school sports.

Forsyth coach Scott Weber, whose three sons all won individual championships this year, said the “brotherhood” among the wrestlers extends outside the school. While it’s one-on-one on the mat, the town inspires the entire team during competition.

“They’ve been together since the third grade,” Weber said. “And not only do they know each other, but the town has helped and seen them grow through the years.”

The wrestling program is a great source of pride for Forsyth. The citizens and wrestlers unabashedly push over each other, but the town’s sense of self-respect extends beyond its borders. The night the Dogies won their third consecutive state title, the team’s championship picture included two athletes from neighboring Colstrip, whose efforts helped Forsyth prevail over Choteau.

“It’s the way they were raised,” Weber said. “They aren’t for themselves.”

Randy Durr, an alumnus of Forsyth High School, has dedicated a scholarship and plaque to the school, inscribed, “Once a Dogie, always a Dogie.”

And when 10 Dogies brought home the state championship for the third straight year, local police and firefighters led the motorcade down Main Street.
THE BLAME GAME

MEDIA COVERAGE OF UNIVERSITY SEXUAL ASSAULT SCANDAL PROVOKES BACKLASH AGAINST REPORTERS, AS DEBATE RIPS THE COMMUNITY APART
A timeline of events related to the sexual assault scandal at the University of Montana.

15 December 2011
First story runs on the front of the Missoulian about a possible sexual assault on campus over the weekend. The next day it is confirmed that football players were involved. University of Montana administrators announce that Diane Barz, former state Supreme Court justice, will be hired to investigate the sexual assault.

7 January 2012
Beau Donaldson is arrested on one count of sexual intercourse without consent. The Missoulian runs it on the front page under the headline "Griz football player held on rape charge."

30 January 2012
NCAA notifies University of Montana of its investigation for unspecified reasons. Public not alerted until July of 2012.
IN A SIDE ROOM ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE Missoula County Courthouse, Gwen Florio snacked on apples and scrolled through her news feed. A cops-and-courts reporter for the local newspaper, she had waited out juries before, in cases ranging from the antics of a medical marijuana dealer to heartbreaking hit-and-runs.

This trial, however, played in a league of its own. The courtroom was packed, and a dozen reporters were Tweeting, recording, and otherwise covering it, from the Associated Press and the Missoula Independent, to Good Morning America and Fox News.

So when an email notification popped up on Florio’s iPhone, announcing a verdict, she stuffed her Tupperware into her purse and sprinted to the doors of the courtroom across the hall. First in line, she claimed a middle seat with a view of the accuser’s family, as well as the accused. Florio had sat there for most of the three-week trial, under the scrutiny of University of Montana students, football players, and alumni.

As the jury’s decision was handed, on a small white piece of paper, to Judge Karen Townsend, Florio looked as if she wished she had an extra pair of eyes.

BY FEBRUARY 2013, when former Grizzly quarterback Jordan Johnson stood trial for sexual intercourse without consent, Florio had been covering the scandal surrounding the University of Montana for 14 months. A veteran reporter, recruited by the AP in her last semester at the University of Delaware, she has covered everything from big city government to foreign wars. She refers to her time overseas as challenging, but also easy, because “the stories were right there in front of me.” Via Philadelphia and Denver, she made her way west to the Great Falls Tribune before becoming the Missoulian’s city editor in 2007, a job she traded for the criminal justice beat in 2010.

Florio reminds you of a close friend’s mother. Open and willing to chat, she has an unmistakable air of authority that can be intimidating. She’s unafraid to share her opinion and, on matters of principle, she doesn’t budge. Originally from the east coast, she’s always loved Missoula — a once conservative, blue-collar town that turned liberal, with the university by far its largest employer.
THE ISSUE KNOWN around the country as the Missoula rape scandal, last year’s “situation,” and Montana’s Penn State, landed on Florio’s beat in December 2011. She and other local news reporters received an anonymous tip claiming multiple football players from the University of Montana had sexually assaulted two young women.

Florio sought out what she said were reliable sources, and became confident the story wasn’t a dud. She contacted the university’s spokesman, former vice president for external relations Jim Foley, for confirmation.

“He said right away, yes, we’re looking into two date rapes, as he put it,” Florio said. “And then he described this possible use of Rohypnol, and multiple men, and two different women, and I think at that point I was like, that’s not exactly a date rape, Jim.”

The Missoulian ran the story on December 15, 2011, under the far from provocative headline, “UM Probes Alleged Sexual Assault.” It was the first of more than 80 stories involving sexual assault cases published by the local newspaper in less than a year. The Missoulian would later submit the coverage for a Pulitzer Prize.

Editor Sherry Devlin made sure Florio had enough time to focus on every new development. “This was an important story for us, and we needed to give her the time to work,” Devlin said. Other reporters would pick up the slack on Florio’s beat, and when the Johnson trial began, city hall reporter Keila Szpaller Tweeted so Florio could concentrate on her notes.

Florio said she felt energized when she was given the time to pursue this story as far as she could. She considers that time a luxury and a gift.

Television outlets, the student newspaper, and public radio also devoted many pixels, inches, and minutes to the topic. Local TV station NBC Montana ran more than 150 stories from the
When the NCAA announced they would be investigating the University of Montana, Jayme Fraser, now reporting at the Houston Chronicle, was the editor of the Montana Kaimin, the daily paper at UM.

I was alone in the Kaimin office when news broke that the University of Montana was hiring a retired state Supreme Court justice to investigate whether campus administration properly responded to sexual assault allegations against athletes. That feeling of loneliness is familiar to many campus newspaper editors, even if they are surrounded by staff as news breaks, rather than an office emptied by a holiday break. Few outline ahead of time how best to cover events that are both “news” and “sports.” Should beat sports reporters risk damaging source relationships by asking tough questions? How will a crime reporter get caught up on NCAA complexities and convince superstars to talk to someone they think is out to get them?

Ideally, the answer is to have someone dedicated to the news and administration of college athletics, like Jill Riepenhoff at The Columbus Dispatch, who delves daily into the overlap of both worlds. I was fortunate to have met Jill a year earlier and brainstorm on this nebulous, but recurring, area of coverage.

Unfortunately, some of my sports staff were hesitant, or didn’t have the reporting skills, to dig into this story. Particularly as a small campus, we also were hyperaware of reader criticisms that we were blowing the investigation out of proportion. We decided to report the story like we would any other alleged student criminal: We assigned the crime reporter. That said, we coordinated closely with sports staff that received tips from players, some intended to misdirect.

I urge editors to outline a game plan beforehand and, more importantly, make sports news a regular part of the enterprise diet.

As with any beat, if you regularly analyze budgets, hires, and fires, it will strengthen your coverage and make it easier to convince readers that the big breaking story is just part of the routine rather than a smear campaign.

“\n
He said right away, yes, we’re looking into two date rapes, as he put it. And then he described this possible use of Rohypnol, and multiple men, and two different women, and I think at that point I was like, that’s not exactly a date rape, Jim.”

GWEN FLORIO, MISSOULIAN REPORTER

Gwen Florio covered the sexual assault scandal at the University of Montana for over a year. She covered stories ranging from the initial allegations to the final verdict in the final case. Florio’s writing and reporting drew both praise and criticism from the Missoula community.
beginning of their coverage to right before the Johnson trial in February 2013.

For many Missoulians, it was overwhelming.

Stephen Mallas, a barista at Liquid Planet, a local coffee shop, summed up numerous conversations with customers when he said: “I thought it was a bit intense.”

FOR UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS, dealing with scandal is like trying to repair a roof with one hand behind their back. All at once, none of the usual work they do seems to matter. Parents, students, and alumni want to know what’s going on; the media are clamoring for information, and all the while, the administration has to adhere to its confidentiality policy.

University of Montana President Royce Engstrom, who at the time had been in office just over a year, learned about the gang rape allegations several days before they broke in the media. His first objective, he said, was to ensure the victims were cared for. He then contacted Diane Barz, a former Montana state Supreme Court justice, to investigate.

Engstrom said he also tried to be open with reporters.

“The media was doing its job of getting on top of these stories as quickly and as thoroughly as it could, and we did our best to respond,” he said.

But Engstrom didn’t rely exclusively on the media to communicate with the public. When students returned from winter break in January 2012, he organized community forums, pledging to “aggressively educate students about sexual assaults.” He ordered reviews of policies and of the Student-Athlete Conduct Code.

Other women stepped forward to report additional incidents of sexual violence, and a dynamic unfolded that raised questions about the way the university, as well as Missoula law enforcement agencies, dealt with allegations of sexual assault.
Katie J.M. Baker, a staff writer for Jezebel.com (tagline: Celebrity, sex, fashion for women), traveled to Missoula to examine what some were calling a growing rape culture. Her story, “My Weekend In America’s So-Called ‘Rape Capital,’” caused quite a stir, to say the least. MJR reporter Ric Sanchez called her to discuss the feedback she received.

MJR: How did you get started in journalism?
KB: I worked for the San Francisco Chronicle for a year and a half, I worked at Wired, I interned at a number of publications in college. I got my first internship at 16 years old. I’ve been involved in journalism for a while.

How did you transition to working at Jezebel?
I wanted to move to New York and Jezebel was one of my favorite websites. I really like writing about — for lack of a better word — women’s issues. I moved here and met with my current boss and pitched her stuff for a while and eventually a spot opened and they hired me.

For your story “My weekend in America’s so-called rape capital,” how did you hear about it? What motivated you to write it?
I report often about rape culture on college campuses — I write about all sorts of college campuses. I have Google alerts and people send me stories. I’m constantly writing about this issue. And that week, my boss and I had been discussing it would be great to actually go to a college that was dealing with some kind of issue related to rape culture. I was kind of mulling it around in my head. After the conversation, when I got back — I forgot whether someone emailed me the link or if I just saw it online — I read about the federal investigation. Without knowing anything about it I thought, “This is

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In January 2012, Beau Donaldson, a running back on the university football team at that time and a Missoula native, was arrested on the charge of sexual intercourse without consent. Donaldson pleaded guilty. A year later he was sentenced to 30 years in prison, with 20 years suspended.

In February, the independent student newspaper, the Montana Kaimin, reported two female students said they had been sexually assaulted by an international student at UM. The man was able to flee the country before the Missoula City Police Department was informed about what had happened.

“I think what really angered people was the fact that the fellow left the country before law enforcement was in a position to do anything about this case,” Engstrom said.

Though he said the university could have done a better job communicating with Missoula police, Engstrom maintained it wouldn’t have made a difference in this particular case.

The following month, KPAX news reporter Irina Cates broke the Johnson story: A female University of Montana student accused the quarterback of raping her while they watched a movie together on February 4, 2012, a charge Johnson denied.

In statements made to a Missoulian sports reporter, former head coach of the Griz football team Robin Pflugrad praised Johnson as a man with “tremendous moral fiber.” Five days after the March 25, 2012, article, Pflugrad was fired, along with Athletic Director Jim O’Day.

Barely six weeks later, in May 2012, the U.S. Justice Department and Department of Education launched a joint investigation into the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of sexual assaults by the University of Montana, the Missoula City Police Department and the Missoula County Attorney’s office. The unprecedented investigation was what really created a buzz in national media outlets, culminating in an appearance by Florio on CNN.

As media attention escalated, fans of the University of Montana — football fans especially — grew more aggressive toward the articles coming from the Missoulian. On eGriz.com, an Internet fan forum started in February 2001, which now has more than 12,000 members, the anger soon began to focus on Florio. Members used her name as a slur, accusing her of a personal vendetta against men and Grizzly football.

“She’s got an axe to grind, and I’ll bet the pathetic hack is not done yet,” wrote one commenter. “W ouldn’t surprise me in the least if she pursues this further with the support of the boobs in the Missoulian ‘editorial’ staff.”

The site’s moderator, Brint Wahlberg, says he mostly kept up with the story through Twitter, following the feeds of the Montana Kaimin, NBC Montana reporter Emily Adamson, and KPAX. He says he doesn’t think Florio had a bias against football, but that she could have done a better job presenting both sides of the issue.
the first investigation of its kind. Why Missoula? Why this school? What’s going on there that makes Missoula specifically of interest to the federal government?” And then I found a source—a 20-year-old who had just moved back. He had moved out of Missoula because he was dealing drugs and he was doing drugs himself. He had attended the University and dropped out... and he agreed to talk to me about it. I met with him and he was describing what it was like and how the next weekend was the week before everyone graduated. He said he would take me and I could meet all his friends, that way I wouldn’t just be a reporter all on my own. My boss liked the idea.

**How did you choose your sources? Do you feel the people you met in Missoula are a fair sample of everyone you talked to?**

Something that I find interesting about people who report on college issues is that they rarely talk to the kids. They rarely talk to the students. They rarely go to the bars where the students hang out. They rarely go to the places that are supposed to be, you know, sketchy. I got incredibly positive feedback on this piece in general, but I got comments from people who said, “How dare you go to Missoula and not write about our amazing Farmer’s Market?” That was literally a comment I got. I think — sorry, this is a little bit of a tangent — my conclusion of the piece was Missoula is not any different from any college town. This is an epidemic. Rape culture is something that happens on every college campus across the country. It’s not about Missoula. That’s why the federal investigation, while it sets a precedent and it’s a good start, it’s not going to solve issues unless we stop thinking that some women deserve to be raped and others don’t. And I was very clear in my conclusion that it’s not specific to Missoula. I think people were uncomfortable with the idea of someone coming in from Manhattan and coming into a town that she doesn’t know. I talked to a few dozen people. I spent five days there, I didn’t spend months, but I do feel that the people I

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20 May 2012
Missoulian publishes story on Foley’s desire to punish a rape victim at the University of Montana who had spoken to the press.

23 May 2012
Department of Education opens investigation into the University of Montana’s handling of sexual assaults.

20 June 2012
Jim Foley steps down as vice president at University of Montana, but retains campus job and salary.

“You open the Missoulian and they leave out what, to me, seems like a lot of interesting facts, but they mention Jim O’Day was in the audience,” he said about Florio’s coverage of the Johnson trial.

Florio says Wahlberg has emailed her apologizing for some of the personal attacks against her on the site, but that there was never a collective pressure to take down the comments. Over more than a year of coverage, her “love letters,” the term she uses to describe her hate mail, grew more disgusting, from letters to the newspaper to comments on eGriz.

“It’s 99 percent bluster, but there is always that one crazy person that you’re worried about,” she said.

Other news organizations received criticism for their coverage as well.

“When you’re doing a story about an institution as popular as the university, you are going to get a lot of blow-back,” Montana Public Radio News director Sally Mauk said.

The relationship between the University and the media deteriorated long before the Johnson trial. Frustrated by the lack of access granted by the administration, Montana Public Radio began relying on interviews with Florio for its coverage. On the morning after one of the interviews, MTPR general manager William Marcus received a call from the university’s Main Hall, warning him that “a Missoula reporter” wasn’t telling the full story.

“You guys aren’t accepting our calls for interviews,” Marcus remembers replying. “We’re doing this because that’s all we have right now.”

Marcus said he didn’t feel the call crossed the line to manipulation, and that he’d rather not name the caller. Engstrom said he didn’t know who made the call, but that it certainly wasn’t made on his behest.
Meanwhile, the Missoulian upped the ante. In April of 2012, it teamed up with the Wall Street Journal to file a successful public records request for email exchanges between university administrators. When Florio received the first batch of emails, she immediately printed them out and began reading.

“I loved that,” she said. “I’m nerdy enough to really enjoy that.”

The emails that emerged from the public records request showed how concerned the administration was about its public perception. Vice President Jim Foley, in particular, made suggestions as to how the university might control the message.

One year later, Engstrom still declined to comment on the actions of individual administrators.

He did acknowledge, however, that communication between his administration and the news media left something to be desired.

“I think as spring progressed we got into just an increasingly adversarial relationship,” he said. “So we made some changes and we became more proactive about reaching out to the media and providing information to them.”

Former Missoula Independent editor Robert Meyerowitz said he got the impression from the published emails that the university was more interested in the image of its profitable football team than in taking the sexual assault scandal seriously.

“I think they traded greater safety for money. Tell that to the girl that gets raped,” Meyerowitz said.

Engstrom refutes such charges as baseless, saying the university worked diligently to meet its responsibilities toward all its students.

“As soon as we heard about any of the sexual assault cases, we immediately began dealing with them,” he said. “We at no time tried to delay running the process because of who was involved.”

Who were the people who gave you negative feedback?

They were all from Missoula. There was one man in particular who harassed me extensively. He posted my phone number on the Internet. He sent me emails calling me horrible names — I can give you his name, I think it was Peter—he really harassed me. He was very upset that I dare talk poorly about Missoula because it’s a beautiful town, a beautiful city — and it is, I loved Missoula, I thought it was incredibly beautiful. But bad things can still happen in a beautiful place. Bad things happen all over the country in beautiful places.

There are some people whose names you withheld or changed, but there were also some people who weren’t necessarily attributed. Does Jezebel have some sort of policy on that?

No. I mean I consider myself an ethical reporter and I took notes everywhere I went and I mean the (San Francisco) Chronicle — the newspaper that I worked at — didn’t have a policy like that either. I mean Jezebel’s a Gawker Media blog and we are way more lax with anonymity than newspapers are.

My piece was kind of a narrative essay as well as a reported piece. It was about observing things. It was about being at a bar and overhearing things, because that’s what makes up our culture—the things that people aren’t going to tell you on the record, the things that you overhear and seep into your consciousness. That type of environment is what I believe fosters rape culture. Obviously for the interviews, the at-length interviews, I got their names even if I kept them anonymous. I want to be clear that everyone I spoke with at length, I have their first and last name and all of their contact information.

Did you share those with your editor?

No.

LOOKING IN FROM AFAR
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talked to were definitely representative of the people that are contributing to the problem that instigated the issue.

There are some people whose
IN FALL 2012, students returned to a changed campus, with enrollment down by 700. Foley was gone, as were other administrators; a new cabinet was taking shape. The university’s online learning platform featured a mandatory tutorial on sexual violence. On bus stops and mirrors, posters and stickers sought to educate students on their responsibilities as a bystander to sexual assault.

The scandal left the community fractured — and still in the dark about the events that initiated the investigation. When the Barz report was published in February 2012, no light was shed on the original gang-rape case, as the women involved never sought justice other than through the University of Montana court system. The files from University Court are sealed for privacy reasons.

With the Johnson trial, the public’s notions about the burden of proof in cases of sexual assault were put to a test. A total of 400 citizens were summoned to the jury pool. Many were questioned about their stance toward the Griz football team.

In the public sphere, recriminations reached fever pitch when former Congressman Pat Williams was quoted in the New York Times, saying the athletics department had recruited thugs. Griz fans started a petition to have Williams removed from the Board of Regents. Engstrom sent an email to students defending the football team.

Florio said she was aware from the start that her reporting would trigger controversy in the community. She worries that the details published about the women who came forward, and the community responses to them, might have created a hostile environment for victims to report sexual assaults.

Her “love letters” kept coming, but to Florio, her censors have just as much right to free speech as she does.

“I will defend to the death their right to say those things,” she said. “No matter how disgusting they are, they have a right to say them.”

IN THE MOMENTS BEFORE the clerk read the verdict in the Johnson trial, reporters gripped cell phones, pens and paper with tense fingers.

Florio focused on the defendant, watching for reactions, as another reporter waited to Tweet for the Missoulian.

The room grew still.

Not guilty.
"I will defend to the death their right to say those things. No matter how disgusting they are, they have a right to say them."

GWEN FLORIO, MISSOULIAN REPORTER

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Did you get any feedback from anyone at the school?
Yes, off-the-record. I got a lot of feedback from administrators; a lot of people said off-the-record, “I’m so glad you wrote this story.”

If you had a message for people who you feel misunderstood your point, what would you say?
I would say the message was this was not something about Missoula. This was everywhere. Until we stop thinking of rape as something that happens in the bushes to people we don’t know, that rapists aren’t our co-workers and friends and acquaintances, then nothing’s going to change until those men and women stop thinking of differentiating between women who are “legitimately raped” and women who deserved to be raped. The federal investigation isn’t going to solve anything because it’s the mindset that is really contributing to these issues. A lot of people are writing about the issues with the police and the issues with the administration, but what I found from the dozen people I spoke to is that they weren’t as upset with the police and administration as they were about the culture.

With your report and all the coverage that Missoula got, what do you hope happens to Missoula as a city in terms of how it changes?
I wouldn’t say specifically to Missoula because, again, that’s not what it was about, but communication is really the key. College students need to be respectful of each other and of their needs. You have to listen. Consent is crucial. People have to understand what sexual assault means and what rape means. I think awareness is a really powerful thing. I hope that the national reporting on it is more cognizant of rape culture and how pervasive it is. Some of the students I talked to said, “My friends don’t believe that I was raped.” There’s just a lot of shit-talking with these women that are dealing with a lot of stuff. I hope that maybe with more conversation around it, people will look at it with a different perspective.
YOU’VE BEEN SERVED

Reporters forced university officials to hand over emails in the wake of a sexual assault scandal, despite public records requests becoming more scarce and expensive.

There were so many emails that the closest estimate is “thousands.”

When the president of the University of Montana, the vice president for external relations, the legal counsel, the athletic director, the football coach, the county attorney, the police chief of Missoula, and a couple of lawyers are discussing serious allegations of sexual assaults on UM students, some by football players — you’re going to rack up a lot of emails.

And that’s what Missoulian reporter Gwen Florio and editor Sherry Devlin had in mind in the spring of 2012 — to find out how UM officials and those they were communicating with were dealing with the problem and to confirm information that had been denied.

“We pushed for more,” Florio said, “but that big wall went right up.”

Moreover, UM counsel David Aronofsky suggested that such a request would cost “ten to twenty thousand dollars,” Florio said.

She had an ally in Wall Street Journal reporter Stu Woo. He had come to town for three days in March “to get a feel for what Missoulians thought of the issue,” UM Vice President Jim Foley “wouldn’t meet with me in person,” Woo said.

Stonewalling does not sit well with reporters.

Woo suggested a joint-records request. The Journal would foot the bill up to a certain amount, far less than Aronofsky’s sum (Woo wouldn’t be specific); the Missoulian would be the local partner.

The request landed on Aronofsky’s desk on April 3. It asked for copies of all emails containing certain terms such as “sexual assault” that had been sent from or to the five UM officials, city officials, and private attorneys.

The State Supreme Court has never ruled on whether emails are public records under the state Constitution’s guarantee of the public’s right to know, noted media attorney Mike Meloy. But the constitution and statutes are clear enough: There is “no basis for excluding emails by officials using the public email system,” Meloy said.

UM set about retrieving the emails. Information Technology security officer Adrian Irish said he and an assistant logged 50 hours between April 16 and May 16 pulling emails from servers and desktop computers. There were “thousands for each individual named in the request,” Irish recalled, and “a huge number of false positives” (hits that contain one or more terms but aren’t relevant).

Aronofsky and an aide started going through his own messages and Foley’s. They crossed out passages they thought were protected by attorney-client privilege, student information, and non-relevant material. The remainder went on a disk and was delivered to the Missoulian on May 17 — 44 days after their request.

Florio couldn’t open the disk. Technicians pried it open. On May 19, Florio reported that former Dean of Students Charles Couture had implicated four football players who had allegedly “gang-raped” a female student. A May 20 article, “UM Vice President Sought to Punish Alleged Rape Victim,” detailed how Foley had emailed Couture, wondering whether the victim, who had complained publicly about how UM had handled her rape allegations, could be punished under the Student Conduct Code.

These stories, including plenty more from the emails, led to a media scrum. Other news outlets were requesting the emails. “They were FOIA-ing our FOIA,” recalls Devlin, using a term that refers to the federal Freedom of Information Act. At least one news outlet questioned Aronofsky reviewing his own emails without oversight, said Kevin McRae, associate commissioner of higher education in Helena.
With three sets of emails unprocessed, the press pounding on his door, and Aronofsky leaving on a trip, McRae decided to “kick it in gear.” All the emails were printed out in Helena and PDFs made of each. Montana University System chief legal counsel Cathy Swift, MSU counsel Leslie Taylor, UM’s associate counsel Claudia Denker, and two other attorneys started “scrubbing” (McRae’s term) material they considered private. The job took each lawyer at least 40 hours, McRae said.

When he proposed releasing the emails to all news media at the same time, “we kinda jumped up and down, saying, ‘Excuse me, we requested it first!’” Florio recalled. McRae gave the Missoulian and the Journal a day’s head start.

The news media received a password to a Board of Regents website, giving them access to the vetted emails (they are still on the site, no password needed).

Woo at the Journal found them riddled with so many cross-outs that the information was not worth writing about.

Florio, Devlin, and reporter Betsy Cohen, publishing for readers more interested in the nitty-gritty, found plenty: emails from and to boosters demanding to know why football coach Robin Pflugrad and athletic director Jim O’Day had been fired; why O’Day seemed to treat UM football players’ racially tinged tweets lightly while cracking down on others’ as head of an NCAA committee; that a report had been altered to excise football players’ names; that Mayor John Engen, under pressure from Foley, had disciplined a police officer who had used a private email account to express dismay to UM administrators about the “spiraling PR mess.”

“If there’s some dispute that’s going on, the media will want to know.”

MEDIA ATTORNEY
MIKE MELOY

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YOU’VE BEEN SERVED

continued from previous page

The emails confirmed information that administrators had refused comment on, said Devlin, and “resulted in a lot more in-depth look at the overall situation” by allowing the paper to report what was “occurring outside the public realm, between administrators... The overriding theme... was a concern with managing and restricting the flow of information.”

Florio and others credit UM President Royce Engstrom with pushing for more transparency, along with Peggy Kuhr, the new vice-president for integrated communications. Which is good, because media requests for emails are rising—“more this year than in the past six years,” Denker said. “It’s becoming a huge burden,” said UM’s new legal counsel, Lucy France. UM’s IT department now has a software package for such requests, Irish said. At least part of the surge, however, simply reflects the fact that more business is done via emails, Meloy noted. “If there’s some dispute that’s going on, the media will want to know.”
HOW A NIGHT CAN GO WRONG

Alcohol, drugs, and false friends: Almost every sexual assault involves a loss of control.

Photos and Story
Eric Oravsky
The Heart of Missoula is seven city blocks held by a ribcage of railroad tracks and river bridges. The heart supports 30 bars, three liquor stores, two breweries, and a distillery, all within 15-minute walking distance. With a campus of nearly 15,000 students across the river and many residents working low-paying jobs just to stay in town, the drinking scene isn’t struggling.

Jennifer Ness, 20, fell off the backside of the Rhino and Montana Club building into the alley after a night of drinking and died in 2010. The same year, Brian Beaver, 23, was run over by a drunk driver. In 2011, during the weekend-long “River City Roots Festival,” Paul Busch, 24, drowned in the Clark Fork River. None of these tragedies speak to the violence drinking inspires away from the public eye. At least half of all campus rapes occur when the assailant, the victim, or both have used alcohol, a 2001 overview of peer-reviewed studies found.

Kelly McGuire, who is the Healthy Relationships Project coordinator at the Crime Victim’s Advocate Office in Missoula, was meeting with professionals at the James Bar when she noticed a highly
Two women field advances from several men at the Badlander. With slurred speech, they wait for more drinks. Finally, they press through the group of men and onto the dance floor. The men started dancing nearby.

“You have to watch out for those guys!” the taller girl says, sternly. “But they are so much fun,” her friend replies.

A man and woman make out, leaning against his truck, on a block outside the high traffic area. “I should go,” she says. He presses her up against the car and they continue for another 15 minutes before driving off together.

Two men strike up a conversation with an intoxicated woman outside of Al’s and Vic’s Bar. They repeatedly offer her drinks and more cigarettes, which she accepts.

A man follows a woman onto the dance floor, but she quickly moves away to join her friends. Sometimes those friends create additional pressure, however, when they push to “get with someone.”

An intoxicated woman at the bar. Two men started talking about the woman, then one of them walked over and struck up a conversation. McGuire said the man was clearly aware that the woman was too drunk to make coherent decisions. “Luckily she left with her friends, but it doesn’t always happen that way,” McGuire said. For her, the episode represented a sexual assault waiting to happen. “I think we have this culture where a lot of very unsettling events are normal,” she said.

Nine victims of sexual assault agreed to talk about their experiences, one male and eight female. They reported a strong sense of separation after a lot of drinking, separation from people they trusted, only to be taken in by their assailant. They struggled. Often, they’d call back after an interview, seeking reassurance that their identity wouldn’t be shared or simply to talk more about dealing with depression. Many were afraid to tell anyone about what had happened to them because they worried about what people might think and felt justice was unlikely. Perpetrators serve prison time in only 3 percent of rape cases.
“There is a lot of research on what causes sexual violence,” McGuire said, “but there aren’t a lot of answers.”

The Missoula drinking scene frequently starts at events like “Thirsty Thursday,” where already cheap mixed drinks are two for one. The crowd then flows into other venues like the “Dead Hipster Dance Party” at the Badlander or Stockman’s, two bars where a crowd of 20-somethings oscillates to hip hop, pop, and electronic hits. With standing room only from the entrance to the dance floor, there is no choice but to rub shoulders and attempt to hold a drink out of harm’s way. Abandoned drinks and cups top every flat surface including the floor; bottles of cheap liquor are passed around while people dance. Fridays and Saturdays often start with house parties that migrate downtown. Lines stretch around the block for music events that often reach maximum capacity by 10 p.m.

This is how all the victims interviewed for this story started their night. Many ended at a stranger’s house — some in a car, one in his own room. The photos intend to show the events these victims said turned their night on the town into a night they try to forget. These images aren’t staged, nor do they include known victims, but aim to convey the culture and events that some remember as a terrible turning point to a night gone wrong.
OUT OF THE ABYSS

After breaking through snow and falling 40 feet into a crevice, outdoorsman Toby van Amerongen is lucky to be alive.

WHEN HIS FOOT SUNK deep into the snowfield, Toby van Amerongen thought he had just stepped in a stream. A second later, his other foot broke through and he plunged more than 40 feet straight down into a crevice in the ground.

He reached out, trying to catch himself on the edge. But he descended too fast, and as he grasped for a handhold, the force of the fall ripped him loose, dislocating one of his shoulders. He fell into darkness.

Wet rocks slipped past his hands, the wind rushed past his ears, and van Amerongen thought this was the end: This was how he was going to die.

The University of Montana trainer thought of the student-athletes he worked with, his friends, his family.

“I remember that I wasn’t thinking of me. I was thinking, ‘Who will take care of the team? Josh, it was his idea to come here. How guilty will he feel? My mom, who once told me the worst thing as a parent would be to have a child who dies before them,’” he said.

At the end of June 2012, van Amerongen, his best friend Josh Schmidt, and Schmidt’s girlfriend, Alice Jones, went backpacking on the eastern range of the Mission Mountains. Their goal was to make camp at Glacier Lake. That early in the season, patches of snow still covered the ground. Schmidt, experienced and comfortable in the backcountry, led the way.

“I’m not in as good of shape as Josh, so I was a little bit behind him,” van Amerongen said.

It was on the way back, while crossing a snowfield, that he broke through.

Van Amerongen, who had been a gymnast in college, took a landing stance, bending his knees to take the impact before he hit the ground. When he finally touched the bottom, he felt a sharp pain in his ankle. It was broken. He reached over and felt a lump at the front of his left shoulder, the joint out of its socket.

An athletic trainer for the University of Montana’s soccer, cheer and dance teams, van Amerongen managed to reset the joint and pop it back into place before yelling up to his friends, at the height of a four-story building above him.

“I should have been dead. That fall should probably have killed me,” he said.

When they heard him, Schmidt and Jones ran back to the edge of the hole their friend had disappeared into. They then decided to fetch other campers they’d met earlier. One of the campers had an emergency beacon device, which he activated, sending a message and GPS coordinates to local search and rescue.

“It threw me,” Schmidt said. “It was such a freak occurrence. You take courses on wilderness survival and readiness, you can pack and prepare, but when it happened, all of us were sitting there going, ‘What do we do now?’”

While near-death experiences like van Amerongen’s are very rare, hiking in the backcountry requires extra precautions. This includes leaving a detailed plan of where you’re going if you’re traveling alone and packing more food, water and clothing than you require, just in case.

As the trails program coordinator of the Swan Lake Ranger District of the Forest Service, Joy Sather is in charge of maintaining the integrity of trails in the Mission Mountain Wilderness.

“We do a lot to maintain the designated trails, but if you’re going to go off of them, you do so at your own risk,” Sather said.

“We can’t patrol every square inch of the forest.”

A crevice the size van Amerongen fell into might be highly unusual. Creeks, deep depressions, or small dropoffs are not. If there is any doubt, Sather said, try to go around large patches of snow.

After more than an hour, and with snow continuing to fall, van Amerongen got cold and wet. The crevice was narrower than the width of his shoulders and ran a length of about 80 feet. At one end were two logs that had fallen in against the wall. He asked his friends if they could dig down to the top of the logs, where they might be able to get down and help him. Without being able to see the edge through the snow from above, someone else could have fallen in.

Not knowing when or if outside help would arrive, van Amerongen decided his best shot was to climb up the log himself. Jones threw down a hiking pole and van Amerongen started to inch up the fallen tree. When he reached the top, he still had almost three feet of snow between himself and the surface. Using the hiking pole, he slowly carved away.

The group began to dig down, using cooking pans and a hatchet as substitutes for a shovel.

“I have a lot of good memories, but when they broke through, I can’t explain how good it was, the feeling that you’re going to be rescued,” van Amerongen said.

When his friends pulled him out of the hole, he was shivering, hypothermic, and in no condition to hike out.

It took another hour until a helicopter, called to the area by the emergency beacon, flew into sight. But after circling the area several times, the helicopter left. It hadn’t seen them.

“So we’re there, and it’s like, now what?” van Amerongen said.

The beacon had also sent an automated message to the spouse of one of the campers, so Schmidt took all of the cell phones from the group and climbed up to the ridge. He got through to the camper’s wife, and she called the sheriff’s office, telling law enforcement to send the helicopter back.

When van Amerongen finally arrived at St. Patrick Hospital in Missoula, a doctor confirmed that he had broken both his ankle and shoulder, and was suffering from hypothermia.

Nine months later, van Amerongen was training for the Missoula Marathon.

In June, he is meeting the group of people who helped him out of the hole for an anniversary hike in the Mission Mountains. It’s his way to make sure he’s finally put the fall behind him. He won’t let it stop him from doing what he loves.
LOOKING DOWN THE BARREL

In a state where firearms are easier to get than ever, what's the price we must pay?

U.S.A.

$6,000,000,000 in revenue generated

209,750 jobs generated by U.S. firearms market

$28,605.48 in revenue per job generated...

...or $19.11 per person in the U.S.

88.9 firearms per 100 people

350,912 deer and antelope tags sold in 2009
Antelope Tags: $19
Deer Tags: $10-16

Montana does not require a license or record for the purchase or ammunition.

Does not limit the amount of firearms that can be bought at one time.

Provides no specific age restriction for purchase or possession.

Montana 4th in U.S. suicides

19.4 in 100,000 commit suicide in Montana

523 illegal firearms reclaimed in Montana in 2011
What does a police officer need to do in order to carry a firearm? How about a normal citizen?

**Police Officer**

1. Ten week law enforcement academy in Helena: classes on laws about guns, patrol tactics, and safety training (operating, disassembling and accurately firing handguns and M4 rifle). Must pass all courses to carry a weapon and be an officer.

2. Every six months, pass a compliance course demonstrating retention of all safety, tactical and legal skills associated with both the handgun and M4. Failure to comply results in a 10-day period of time to pass. Failure after that leads to suspension and possible termination from the force.

**Citizen**

1. Purchase firearm(s) and wait five-day period, or immediately at gun show.

2. Purchase ammunition. No license required.

3. To legally defend yourself, enact the Stand-Your-Ground law, where you can prove you justifiably used force in self-defense when there is reasonable belief of an unlawful threat, without an obligation to retreat first.

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**Infographic By Callan Berry James Rolph**

**39%** of murders in Montana are caused by guns.

**68%** National Average

**83%** Illinois

**14%** Hawaii

**2,318,088** rifles manufactured in USA (2011)

**3,540** manufactured in Montana

**2,598,133** pistols

- **4** in Montana
- **201** reclaimed

**1,625,665** other types

- **615** in Montana
- **136** reclaimed

**24% MORE**

**51%** of Americans said LESS

**23% NEITHER**

**19,392** U.S. gun suicides in 2011

**78.2%** of gun suicide attempts fatal

**Attempted suicides 5x more common in teens living with a gun**

**Sources**

With their mothers incarcerated, two young women find a support system for an unfamiliar situation. As roommates, they have created their own version of the modern family.
The last time Sara Palagi called her mother, a federal agent answered the phone. He said her mother was in jail.

In an instant, Palagi questioned all the things her mother had ever taught her. The woman who encouraged her to join choir and play sports was suddenly a very different person.

“It’s weird to think that you can know someone for 19 years as your mom, and then all of a sudden you have no idea who they really are,” Palagi said.

That was four years ago. Since then there have been numerous letters and phone calls from the Montana Women’s Prison, where her mother, Tina Palagi, is serving a 25-year sentence for elderly exploitation. Sara doesn’t want to call back, and has blocked the prison’s number from her phone. She hasn’t planned a visit.

“It’s been hard for Palagi, now 23, to cut ties with her mother, but she said other relationships in her life are stronger now. Especially with her roommate, Kelsey O’Keefe, 24, who has dealt with the absence of her mother for most of her life.

O’Keefe hasn’t talked to her mother in a year. Their relationship is detached, consisting of rare visits and a few phone calls on holidays from odd numbers. O’Keefe’s mother battles a drug addiction and has been in and out of jail throughout her daughter’s life.

Fears of her mother’s unpredictable moods are some of O’Keefe’s earliest memories. They have tried to patch their relationship, but it’s a tough foundation to build on. O’Keefe said there has never really been a relationship, but she still can’t shut her mother out completely.

“Part of me wants to think that no matter what, like if she’s getting in trouble and being crazy, that she is my mother, and at some point I have to respect that,” O’Keefe said. “But she’s my mom and she’s never been there for me or my brother.”

That issue weighs on both O’Keefe and Palagi’s consciences. They aren’t ready to forgive, but can’t bring themselves to completely sever ties. The two share a meaningful bond in the wake of family situations that can leave people emotionally isolated. They are motherly toward each other in a way, and lend an understanding ear during hard times.

“It’s easy to talk and know that you’re not being judged by it,” O’Keefe said. “It is kind of a relief.”

They have both seen their family names in the paper connected to a crime they were never involved in. They avert their eyes and speak strategically when somebody asks them what their parents do. The trials have affected them, but they haven’t defined them.

“It’s sad that you say you don’t want to end up like your mom. And I think about that a lot too, but that just shows who I want to be, and who I don’t want to be.” Sara Palagi

“It’s sad that you say you don’t want to end up like your mom. And I think about that a lot too, but that just shows who I want to be, and who I don’t want to be.” Sara Palagi
What inspired you to get a family to eat only local food in the middle of the winter?

I’m really into food. I think food is an important issue. You get on the Internet and you look stuff up about food and people say, ‘What is local food?’ or ‘You should eat locally.’ And I’m like, ‘OK, what does that mean? And how hard is it to eat locally?’ I mean, you go to the grocery store, and your food comes from everywhere — like, all over the world.

During harvest season, it’s really easy because there’s food — abundance of everything. Farmers are pulling everything out of the ground — you’ve got lettuce, you’ve got all different kinds of food. But in the wintertime, the sun isn’t out; it’s a lot harder. So it’s also to get a sense of what it’s like in the different seasons. That’s another part of eating locally, is eating seasonally.

Did you anticipate developing a rather intimate relationship with your sources before you started?

I guess I hadn’t really thought about it very much. I felt like an intruder at first. I was really nervous because you’re going to somebody’s house and you don’t really know what you’re doing, and you’re just there with these people. At first you just feel really weird being in their kitchen, following them around with a microphone all the time. But it turns out these people are really nice and really friendly and really funny, and you have things in common with them so you want to joke with them.

I mean, they sent me a Christmas card with a picture of their son on it. It was like, ‘Awww.’ I really like the Bledsoes, they’re really nice people. I thought they would hate me because I’m subjecting them to this project, but they agreed.

When did you realize that you had this relationship with them that surpassed your role as a journalist?

There was one time when we were just chatting about politics and I was trying to be really objective. It was before the election and I said something about the Jon Stewart-Bill O’Reilly debate. They’re openly Democratic people and so am I, and I wanted to be like, ‘Let’s talk about Democratic stuff and Jon Stewart and let’s talk about how much we love that,’ but I was like ‘Wait, you can’t.’ In my head I was like, ‘Yeah, that was a really good debate,’ but I wanted to go on and on about how much I like Jon Stewart and how smart I think he is and all this stuff. That was probably the initial time where I was like, ‘You can’t do that. You got to hold back. You can’t be who you are around your other friends right now.’

Do you think they felt similarly?

Judith was always trying to ask me if I wanted anything to drink, or trying to get me a glass of wine, or asking me to sit down with them. If they had leftover avocados that they couldn’t eat or like oranges, she was like, ‘Take these, take these.’ And I’m like, ‘I can’t.’
They wanted to treat me like a normal person and not just a journalist who’s doing a documentary about them. They wanted to be really nice to me, and it was hard for me to not accept their friendliness. I think maybe there were a few times that I did start to open up too much, and they’d be like, ‘Wait, aren’t you supposed to be objective?’ So maybe that was weird for them. They’re just such nice people; I feel like it wasn’t too hard for them, but I don’t know how they took it. That would be a good question to ask them.

How did the relationship affect your interviews?
I feel like Ben was more careful with his words. When he was speaking, he knew that this was going to be on the air someday, but Judith, I think, was more open and free to say whatever she wanted. There’s a lot of times in my transcription and all my audio that I’ve been listening to, and I’m like, ‘Ehhh, Judith,’ and it’s some really juicy content. She’s sort of speaking very subjectively, just spewing her opinions about some grocery store somewhere, or some product from some store, or this lady that she met who has no clue what local food is, but she thinks she does, and Judith’s like, ‘This lady has no idea what she’s talking about.’ It’s really good audio, and I want to use it, but — I know that a lot of their friends will hear the story when it airs and they’ll hear it. So I have to make that decision — do I want to use this quote that doesn’t make Judith really look that awesome in my story, because I don’t want her to feel like I’m betraying her. Because she trusted me and let me in her house and helped me with this project for four weeks. This family subjected themselves to eating local food for four weeks so I could have a master’s project. I feel like I owe them something, and I feel like I owe them to not make them look stupid, because they worked really hard, and they did it, and they tried their best. Eating locally isn’t always that easy. You learn a lot and there are lots of emotions coming in and out of your brain and out your mouth. Some of that stuff may not have been fully processed, but it makes for great radio.

Do you still plan to maintain a relationship with the family?
We talked a couple times and said, ‘When it’s all over, come over and eat dinner. Actually sit down and eat with us and be yourself.’ I think the fact that we’ve done this journalism project will affect any future relationship that we have, because I will forever feel like I’m the journalist that did the documentary on this family, and I won’t be able to fully let myself go. I hope I see them. I really like them. I would feel weird going over to their house, just myself, but if I saw them out at a social gathering, I would like to hang out with them and spend time with them, because they’re cool.

If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?
I think I would have been nosier. I think I was afraid to be nosy because that’s what journalists do if they ask tough questions. They really try to get the meat out. I think that because I liked them and didn’t want them to not like me, there were maybe some things that I avoided asking.

Like what?
Sometimes where Judith would say something and I would think in my head, ‘Really?’ That’s what I wanted to say and question her motives — that’s what I wanted to do — but I felt like that was a personal attack on her. And that’s ok, but I feel like she would have been like, ‘You’re questioning me?’ and I didn’t want to have that experience. I think that as journalists we should do that and I should have done that. I’m just being really honest.

How does this affect your view of yourself as a journalist?
We cherry-pick information, despite all the classes that you take that say don’t do that. As a journalist, you select the information. You have this much information, and you select a portion of that information to go into your story, and although you are still telling a story, you’re leaving out certain stuff, so I’m very aware of that now. Ultimately as a journalist, you want to tell good stories that are appealing to people, that they want to read. You don’t want it to be boring; just blah blah blah, dry information. I’ll be aware of that in myself and aware of that anytime I read a story now.
FROM HAZELWOOD TO HELLGATE HIGH

Will the voices of student journalists go the way of banned books and sex ed? Iris Olson, editor-in-chief of the Hellgate Lance in Missoula, reflects on students’ free speech rights in high school publications.

IN THREE YEARS of working on a high school paper, I have seen enough controversy over stories to make the average student journalist afraid to write again.

After the 2012 publication of the Hellgate Lance’s “Valentine’s Day Issue,” when I was editorials editor, I saw high school students’ words twisted out of context and called obscene in professional news media after they caused a few adults concern. No matter your opinion on pornography, “friends-with-benefits” relationships, or Blue Mountain Clinic’s annual condom fashion show, suggesting that those who write about these topics are in need of counseling — as outraged parents told Lance staffers during my junior year — is perhaps a bit extreme.

While many adults called our Valentine’s issue inappropriate, it received very positive feedback from our peers, without a single complaint from the student body. The Lance staff may have a liberal streak, but we strive for balance in our published content. I’ve seen lengthy public discourse sparked by a Lance pro-life editorial, including the publication of a follow-up piece about an anonymous student’s decision to have an abortion. It’s these kinds of stories that have made our award-winning student newspaper well-known in Montana and journalism circles.

By the time I reached my senior year, I was voted editor-in-chief of the only remaining biweekly student paper in Montana. I’m happy to report a distinct lack of controversy this year — though not a lack of controversial material. We have a reputation for being outspoken that I don’t plan to let go unfulfilled.

It’s our belief that a news editor should be able to report a school board story that runs the risk of making administration look bad, as was the case when we covered the Missoula County Public School decision to give MCPS Superintendent Alex Apostle an unpopular raise this year. An editor should be able to write a column on the culture of sexual-assault acceptance. And she should be able to write these stories without facing censorship from a principal who is gifted with prior review, despite having never
set foot in a newsroom. Hellgate, like most high schools, requires copies of all pages to be seen by the principal before going to print.

In the case of the sexual assault column, I sat in our principal’s office and watched my editorials editor defend her story about “Slutwalks,” a national movement to end victim blaming of women who have been raped.

“But do you have to use the word ‘slut’?,” the principal asked.

“It’s called Slutwalk,” the editor said. “It’s meant to be empowering.”

After 10 minutes of tense questioning (‘Is it promoting these... walks?’ ‘Will there be pictures?’), the principal asked, “Why do you think this story is relevant to our high school?”

The editorials editor struggled to find a defense. I stepped in.

“One in six women will be raped. That includes girls in this high school,” I said. I think it was at that point the principal realized we were going to publish exactly what we wanted to say.

We were able to run our Slutwalk story. But in many other high school papers, it would have never been allowed. Student journalism is right up there with banned books in libraries and sex education curriculums when it comes to censorship in public schools.

Of course, as high school journalists, we want rights. We want freedom of speech and freedom to print whatever it is we deem newsworthy and relevant to our community of peers. Unfortunately, Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier made clear that high school journalists do not have the right to print whatever they want. The landmark 1988 Supreme Court case declared that public high school publications are subject to a lower level of First Amendment protection than an independent (adult) paper. We may not be guaranteed our rights. But we do have the right to fight for them, and it has become increasingly important that we do so.

At nearly every budget meeting, I get asked “Can we print that?”. My answer is the same: If it isn’t obscene, defamatory, libelous, or in poor taste, and if you think it’s newsworthy, you can write it — in fact, it’s your responsibility as a student journalist to write it. Overly cautious reporters aren’t the ones creating compelling content. Let the editors deal with what is and isn’t allowed.

The Hellgate Lance is lucky. When we wanted to write about the superintendent’s pay raise, our teachers and advisers tipped us off on reporting opportunities and helped us set up interviews.

When we wanted to write about Planned Parenthood, we sent a reporter to the organization’s Teen Council meeting to interview students involved in peer-to-peer sex education.

We have a legacy of free speech to uphold. This year we’ve written about gun control and environmentalism, criticized district policy and local government, and reported on nearly every activist movement to sweep through Missoula.

As teenagers, we may not be able to announce “Bong hits for Jesus.” But we sure can publish a student survey on marijuana use. We may get censured by angry parents for writing about sexuality in progressive terms. But as long as teenagers keep having sex, we’ll keep writing about it. High school journalists deserve to write about the issues that are important to them, the stories we’d like to read. And if anyone has a problem with that, know that the American Civil Liberties Union, the Hellgate administration, the Missoula community, and the editor-in-chief of the Lance have your backs.

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TOUGH TRANSITIONS

For one small-town newspaper, changes in ownership have contributed to an evolving relationship with a close-knit community. But at the end of it all, the Hungry Horse News strives to serve Columbia Falls first.

In 1965, Mel Ruder won a Pulitzer Prize for his almost-solo coverage of a 500-year flood in the small town of Columbia Falls, Montana. In the midst of disaster, he cranked out extra issues of his weekly paper, the Hungry Horse News, and supplied other media organizations around the state and the country with a series of stories crucial to his close-knit community.

Today, the Hungry Horse News’ headlines range from a local teen who bowled a nearly-perfect game to almost constant coverage of nearby Glacier National Park.

The mission has not changed: To find and report the news that matters for the people who live the stories, closely tied to each other and the town. But more than a decade ago, the business supporting that mission began to evolve. The Hungry Horse News, along with many other Montana papers, changed hands and eventually crossed over from private to corporate ownership — a move that didn't sit well with many readers at the time, with implications still apparent today.

Mel Ruder’s model, and that of his immediate successor, Brian Kennedy, was a diverse newsroom of multiple reporters with versatile responsibilities, all under a central figure who played the multi-faceted role of publisher, manager, editor, photographer, reporter, community gatekeeper and even delivery boy.

This community-centric model is the key to successful coverage of small-town news, says Todd Mowbray, former owner of several papers in the Lake County area.

"The publishers have deliberately kept it the same. That's coming from the top. They're saying, 'Let's keep this a hometown newspaper.' Because it really is a feel-good community newspaper."

Susan Nicosia, Columbia Falls City Manager

Back in the day, Mowbray employed correspondents in St. Ignatius and Charlo, editors and reporters in Ronan and Polson, and a correspondent on the west side of Flathead Lake.

Reporters on location knew what was happening in every town, and what issues actually mattered to the people, he said. Every school board meeting, every city council meeting, every non-governmental function — someone needed to report "not a distillation of the facts but the reporter’s interpretation of the ambiance, the zeitgeist of the meeting," Mowbray said.

But that decentralized model changed under corporate ownership, both at the papers once owned by Mowbray, the Hungry Horse News and other North Valley weeklies. In 1999, Kennedy sold the Hungry Horse to Lee Enterprises, which began to consolidate the businesses of several local papers. Mowbray sold his papers to Lee at approximately the same time.

"If you run it like the MBA model, everything’s a number. In mathematics, if you have the numeral ‘2,’ and any two will fit in the spot,” Mowbray said. "If you’re running a business as a human enterprise, you have human beings in the equation."

Readers of the Horse noticed the change and responded with decreased subscriptions. After six to eight months of the corporate model, Lee gave up collectivization, ended the cross-community story sharing, and allowed the North Valley papers their independence.

In 2002, Lee sold the Hungry Horse and its sister papers to the Hagadone Corporation, a Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, based conglomerate, just just after...
figuring out how to apply a corporate-run small-town news model. Hagadone owns 19 publications across the country, nine of which are located in Montana. In the last decade, it has employed a hands-off approach based on both trust in local editors and dedication to in-depth local reporting.

Hagadone has made the effort to keep today’s Hungry Horse News as similar as possible to what it used to be. The major differences are in the relative collectivization of advertising and internal operating affairs. An editor/reporter and photographer/reporter staff the newsroom, both of whom live in the Flathead and stay plugged into community affairs. Glacier Park photography remains a significant staple that has carried over to the Web. At least four columnists also contribute, and material is shared between towns only when it is relevant — such as a sporting event involving teams from both towns.

“The publishers have deliberately kept it the same,” Columbia Falls City Manager Susan Nicosia said. “That’s coming from the top. They’re saying, ‘Let’s keep this a hometown newspaper.’ Because it really is a feel-good community newspaper.”

But to some extent, the damage has been done. The audience that began shrinking under Lee’s regional consolidation hasn’t fully recovered in the age of new media. Internet news and regional dailies like the Daily Interlake have bumped the Horse out of the main competition for the area’s main news source. Weekly circulation at the Hungry Horse News is now close to 3,000 — lower than in pre-Pulitzer times, and only half of what it was in the 1980s before the onset of cable TV and Web-based media.

Still, papers like the Hungry Horse News will always be important because they mirror what’s happening in a given community. “There’s a space that community newspapers fill that no one else can do,” Michael Jamison, former Horse reporter and editor, said.

Wade Muchlho, Flathead National Forest public affairs officer, agrees. “Weeklies are essential because they have this connection with the community,” he said. “They cover a big gap that a daily just can’t get to.”

Bowling league and senior center bridge scores, local sports, Eagle Scout projects and obituaries will have a strong following with local weekly readers no matter who is in charge.
During a romantic one-on-one date in Glacier National Park, Sean Lowe and Lindsay Yenter take some time to have a picnic and get to know each other better.

The Missoula Biomimicry 3.8 Institute is a leader in its field. It provides consulting, training, educational programming, and networking for professionals using examples from nature to provide solutions.

Even with their own computers, laptops, iPads, iPhones, notebooks, and all the latest gadgets, students still rely on university provided computer labs to get their work done.
From dates under the big sky with “The Bachelor” to a restaurant makeover at the Rising Sun Bistro in Kalispell, Montana made a splash on reality TV this year.

After Sean Lowe — the 12th bachelor on ABC’s hit dating show — touched down on Whitefish Lake to test the outdoor skills of his 12 potential brides, he exclaimed, “I love Montana and I love how beautiful it is, but I’m mostly excited to spend time with the girls.”

The Bachelor’s stop in Whitefish consisted of plenty of Montana-themed clichés, including a relay race competition amongst the women that consisted of a canoe race, hay bucking, log sawing, and goat milking — clearly normal Montana pastimes and essential skills of any future Mrs. Lowe.

Two months later and 15 miles away from the staged romance of The Bachelor’s Whitefish weekend, Chef Robert Irvine of “Restaurant Impossible” met with the three feuding owners of the Rising Sun Bistro in Kalispell. The so-called “French bistro” was in need of a serious intervention as reviews on tripadvisor.com insisted that the Rising Sun Bistro “needs updating in all areas!”

Luckily for the owners, Irvine and his crew were willing to provide those updates on national TV. In two days, Irvine’s team updated the French-themed menu, adding items like the new pasta and beef bourguignon. They also gave the interior of the building a French makeover. Online reviews for the Rising Sun Bistro are still mixed, but the national exposure has brought more business.

It’s difficult to say why Montana has become a regular on reality TV, especially considering that “The Bachelor” and “Restaurant Impossible” were not the only shows to be filmed in the Treasure State this year. “Undercover Boss” followed the chairman and CEO of KOA Campgrounds as he masqueraded as an entry-level employee at a Billings site. It may be that the allure of Montana is something yet to be explored extensively on television; it may be that Montana is “the last best place,” or maybe Hollywood was out of ideas.

However, one thing is certain: Reality TV came a little too close to actual reality when, on a visit to Montana, the host of the Sportsman Channel’s “A Rifleman’s Journal” was shot and killed by a Whitefish man over an alleged affair.

Montana’s Whitebark pine trees look as if they were beaten down by the unforgiving conditions of the mountain environment they live in. And yet, they’ve inspired a water bottle design in Portugal.

When Logoplaste, a Portuguese packaging manufacturer, asked designer Carlos Rego to invent a lightweight, but still strong and cool-looking plastic vessel, he turned to asknature.org for inspiration. Produced by Biomimicry Institute 3.8, a Missoula-based consultancy, the website features all kinds of tricks organisms use to overcome challenges posed by nature.

The Whitebark pine’s secret to withstanding heavy snow loads and incredible winds lies in its spiral growth structure. Rego gave his bottle twisted ribs, as opposed to the conventional parallel rib pattern.

To the consumer, the design has no great advantage, other than that it is a little lighter in plastic.

But Vitalis — a bottled-water brand — liked the product, not just for its recognizable design, but also because it ships very well. When full, the bottles with the twisted ribs can withstand 2,000 Newtons of pressure, which saves the company 250 tons of raw materials each year.

“If it wasn’t for Ask Nature, it would have taken much longer to do research, which would have made the project at the time unfeasible,” Rego said.

-BiMaN

Nine out of 10 students at the University of Montana’s School of Journalism own a laptop, but many still rely on computer labs to practice the craft.

A survey of 100 pre-professional program students, designed by journalism professor Lee Banville, found that 56 percent use campus computers on a regular basis, while 44 percent mostly do without them.

“Even if a lot of students have laptops, they’re still highly dependent on the computer labs,” Banville said.

Across the country, schools like Virginia Tech and the University of Florida are requiring students to own or rent a laptop. But Banville said that, for now, the J-School will refrain from following suit for two main reasons: a potential enrollment drop because of expensive new requirements, and the realization that despite the presence of mobile technology, students still rely on university-provided labs.

Journalism students often don’t own expensive software required to edit photos, web pages, or video, the survey found. They overwhelmingly use campus facilities for group projects, Banville added.

To help satisfy this need, UM is building the Learning Commons in the revamped Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library. It will have multimedia pods for creating presentations, collaborative and private work areas, as well as digital learning labs where students can access computers and university tools, and theater-style seating to allow for readings, concerts, and dissertations.

If UM’s strategy is any indication, future campus planners may focus less on the technology itself and more on creating an environment that encourages collaboration and closeness.

-Stephanie Parker

-Dustin Nelson
RISING FROM THE HASHTAGS
Fired sports reporter goes all-in for social media.

In November 2012, the Bozeman Daily Chronicle fired its sports editor, Colter Nuanez, after he had responded to a social media forum thread critiquing newspaper sports coverage statewide. With a few choice words, Nuanez said reporters were being “handcuffed” at the corporate level by newspapers, leading to a decline in coverage as a result of short staffs.

Now working as a sports journalist managing, writing, and selling ads for the website, BobcatNation.com, Nuanez sees firsthand how the online world of social media is changing the landscape of traditional reporting. He says the instantaneous nature of Twitter helps him connect and build readership in ways not conceivable before social media.

Nuanez has moved beyond newspapers and doesn’t immediately plan on coming back.

When did you want to be a sports journalist?
Sports are just so pure — it’s one of the most pure forms of life and it just reveals people’s character so much. It’s so much nonverbal communication, and I just loved that; I just wanted to make that a part of my life.”

How have social media changed local news coverage?
Particularly with the rise of Twitter, the two most influenced avenues of journalism have been cops and courts, and sports. People don’t really want to hear live updates from your feature you’re writing about the Bob Marshall Wilderness, but a live update from a court case and trial, like the Jordan Johnson trial for example, each piece of testimony is something people want to read.

Is there a personal versus professional boundary in social media interaction?
I’ve tried to keep it 100 percent professional. I don’t want myself to be in any of my stories. I just want to use it as a way to network.

Why is connecting with athletes and the community through social media more important in sports than in another section of news?
Right, wrong, or indifferent, we love athletes. We put athletes on a pedestal. I think a lot of that is because people are fascinated by other humans who can do things most cannot do. In the case of Division I or professional athletes, those people can achieve things athletically that most of us cannot achieve. So the fact that they are on this pedestal means we have to hold them accountable. When a kid is on a full-ride scholarship at the University of Montana or at Montana State University, that’s taxpayer money that’s paying money for him or her to be in school. Therefore they need to be upstanding members of the community because they are such a visible part of that.
of the program and representing such a great whole. It’s almost like representing a brand, and it’s just like the checks and balances of any journalism — you have to hold people accountable.

Communities are close in Montana. Do you think people have a right to know how newspapers are being run, and would you say that social media was the best way to tell people about the climate of the newspaper industry?

They see fewer pages; they see less content; they see less coverage and bylines. No one really knows why, so I think newspapers get a bad reputation. Somehow it’s implied that they’re trying to do a bad job, when actually it’s completely out of their control. I think that people do really have the right to know what’s going on with the industry, and I don’t know if it’s necessarily newspapers’ jobs to blow the whistle on themselves, but people do need to know why their newspaper is shrinking.

Why do you think the Chronicle took your comments on the state of the newspaper business so hard?

Because they were so true. No one likes to be called on their faults, particularly when they are true. I probably could have used a little more tact and probably could have kept the curse words out of there, but regardless, I completely stand by what I said. I had discussions similar to that with upper management and corporate management to no avail. It wasn’t just that I kept it all inside and then had an explosion. It was a year of trials, to say the least, with basically no hope on the horizon.

Looking back, how do you feel about the Chronicle now?

I think that everyone that works in the newsroom is a great journalist, and I think that everybody that works in the newsroom has similar goals: They all would love to produce a great product, but they’re handcuffed from the top down because it is all about those profit margins. That really hinders what you can do. If you are spread so thin, that really hinders what you can do as a journalist. It’s not just the Chronicle, but as long as newspapers continue to spread themselves thin, the quality of content will continue to suffer.

How do you anticipate social media growing in regard to sports coverage, and what are some of the ways you see journalists using social media today?

For me, Twitter is a lot better than Facebook. Facebook is pretty invasive, and it has a lot of personal aspects to it. It’s great to promote your stuff, but I’m not sure it’s a great way to break and communicate news. I think Twitter has changed sports journalism tremendously, and I think that’s one thing that’s not going to regress. That’s going to stay.
Conservative politics involving weed, abortion, family spending and gay rights.

(C’mon Montana, that’s not very NW.)

Reality TV  Reality
Lousy snowfall  Spring runoff
Corporations  People
Hashtags  Grammar
Being adorkable  Hipsters
Lady Griz  Grizzly football
Zombies  Emergency Alert Systems
Responsible and informed gun ownership  Collections of assault rifles
Campaign donation limits  (Seriously, which way do you want it, America?)

Androgynous Hats
THE BITTERROOT MOUNTAINS on the border of Montana and Idaho have been a longtime secret of western climbers.

Since 1970, hundreds of long climbing routes have been set in Kootenai Canyon, Blodgett Canyon, and several other canyons cutting through the range.

As both the sport and the climbing areas have grown, hundreds of amateur climbers come not just for its long routes, but also to clamber atop the boulders there.

For some, it is a growing business. For others, it is the end of an era.

"I'm not psyched about people tramping around my hood but what can you do," wrote Levi Parchen, a local boulder route setter, on his blog. "Paradise doesn't last forever. Please be respectful of the nature out there."

Bouldering does not require a harness or a rope. Pads are used to cushion falls. Strength is key to complete powerful moves over short distances.

Climbers like Parchen and his friend, Dean Towarnicki, have secretly set more than 300 routes on boulders all over Lolo Canyon. They have pulled loose rocks and scraped off lichen in areas such as Elk Rock, the Heap, and Crystal Theater. For every new route they set, they keep a note in their personal journals with a difficulty rating and a description of the location. Other climbers who know of these routes have heard by word-of-mouth.

"They've always kept to themselves about the routes," said Michael Moore, a local route setter and journalist. "But I think they have recently had a change of heart."

The number of routes Parchen and Towarnicki have set in Lolo rivals that of Western Montana’s most popular bouldering area, Lost Horse. Home of the Lost Horse Climbing Festival for five years, bouldering at Lost Horse has attracted westerners of all ages. Lost Horse received a publicity boost through Joe Josephson’s book “Lost Horse Canyon: A Climber’s Guide to Montana’s Best Cragging and Bouldering,” Moore said.

The 2011 opening of Freestone Climbing Gym in Missoula further stimulated bouldering’s popularity. Owner Walter Hailes said he has seen more than 500 people join or buy a membership.

Moore believes bouldering wouldn’t be as popular in Western Montana without Freestone or the University of Montana rock wall.
MONTANA MEMENTOS

We asked readers who used to live in Montana, but now live across the globe, to submit photos of an item they keep to remind them of their time in Big Sky Country.

EFFIE CRAVEN
MAINE

“I got this tattoo a few years ago on a visit to Missoula. Drew it in about five seconds and still my favorite.”

LEONARD CROSBY
CALIFORNIA

“Wildflowers I picked and pressed from Glacier National Park.”

EMERALD GILLERAN
WASHINGTON

“I was given this framed Steinbeck quote when I moved to Washington in January. This quote helps me to remember where I come from and to try and get back to the state I love someday.”

CEDRIC JACOBSEN
CONNECTICUT

“In my pocket I keep a vintage keychain from Frenchy’s Drive Inn in Wolf Creek. The other side of the keychain says “Keep me and never go broke.”

SHANE McMILLAN
BERLIN, GERMANY

“This is a piece of mudstone from the top of the Mission Mountains. It now lives on my windowsill in Berlin between my peppercorn and spider plants.”

MATT PODOLINSKY
GRAZ, AUSTRIA

“I studied this last semester in Graz, Austria and I missed Montana like crazy. To cope, I had a large collection of letters, stickers, and postcards from home.”