Superfund Boondoggle on the Clark Fork

Press Censorship in Indian Country

Brain Drain: Can You Keep Them Down on the Farm?
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In academic hiring, you play the game or play yourself. Zena Beth McGlashan
The beat goes on

A note from the acting dean

We are most pleased to announce the rebirth of the Montana Journalism Review. In 1958, it became the nation's first review of journalism, and was published regularly until it was done in by a budget crunch in 1980. For many years, journalism dean Charles Hood, who loved the Review and believed in its contribution, sought ways to bring it back to life. He succeeded just before he stepped down as dean a couple of months ago to return to the teaching faculty.

In its earlier incarnation, the Review covered topics important to journalists of that day, many of them important still, such as when to identify juvenile law-breakers, the future of Montana broadcasting, and the demise of press credibility. There was also a steady dose of journalism history, including stories on Montana's first newspaper (the Montana Post) and the state's pioneer radio stations. The Review also looked beyond the Big Sky. One special 1962 issue was devoted to mass communications and international affairs.

The Reviews of those years included contributions from Montana's most prominent journalists and broadcasters, among them Dorothy Johnson, Don Anderson, George Remington and Ed Craney. And there were excerpts of speeches delivered at the Journalism School by national figures such as Chet Huntley, Shana Alexander, John B. Oakes and Don Oliver.

The journalism faculty contributed regularly. Nathan Blumberg was dean when the Review began. He was joined on its pages by teaching legends Bob McGiffert, Ed Dugan, Phil Hess, Jerry Holloron, Olaf Bue, Warren Brier and others.

As you're about to see, the new Montana Journalism Review looks more slick than the old one, but everything does today. What remains unchanged is the goal: to be useful, provocative and insightful, and to reflect our frontier heritage.

For this edition, editor Clem Work has assembled articles about investigative reporting with computers, freedom of information in Montana, the state's TV brain drain and the incestuous relationship between environmental reporters and the people they cover. There are also pieces on Native American journalism, the struggles of publishing a country weekly, and the perilous state of high school journalism in Montana, among others.

Any publication requires help from people whose names don't always appear as bylines. Volunteers spent most of the summer helping Editor Work put the issue together. They included graduate student S. A. Snyder, the current Kim Williams Fellow, and Kelly Kelleher, who doubled as ad salesperson and layout artist. Publications designer Bill Vaughn lent his considerable expertise to the design of the new Review. And journalism secretary Karen Kaley, as always, performed many tasks for which she never received credit.

Any publication also requires help from its readers and advertisers. We hope you'll join us in our effort to make the Journalism Review self-supporting, so it never again suffers such a lengthy gap between issues.

There's one important thread of continuity from the old Review. Zena Beth Guenin, who wrote about Women's Pages in the Review of 1973, returns in 1993 (as Zena Beth McGlashan) to recall the horrors of academic hiring.

Welcome back, Zena Beth. And welcome back to the numerous readers who asked Dean Hood over the years, "What ever happened to the Montana Journalism Review?"

Joe Durso, Jr., Acting Dean

Montana Journalism Review, Number 23, October 1993

Clemens P. Work, Editor
S. A. Snyder, Assistant Editor
Bill Vaughn, Advertising & Layout
Kelly Kelleher, Design
Joe Durso, Jr., Acting Dean

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On the Cover: J. Michael Dempsey is big medicine on the Flathead Indian Reservation. A high school counselor once suggested that college would be too much for him, but today Dempsey is one of the few Indian doctors practicing in Montana. Here he conducts an eye examination. This photo by senior Dan McComb is among those produced by a Spring 1993 honors course in the UM School of Journalism that focused on Native Americans in Montana. See other photos on pages 30-32.
The great equalizer

The desktop computer has made possible the most enterprising investigative journalism in Montana

By JIM LUDWICK

The first mistake about computers is thinking that you have to like them. You don't. You don't have to like computers to use them for ambitious reporting; you don't have to think they are interesting; you don't even have to care why they work. Computer-assisted journalism is not for people who have an instinct for computers. It is for people who have an instinct for investigations. All over the country, reporters use computers as a central part of enterprising research. They study court records to figure out which judges have the highest rates of convictions and which judges give the longest prison sentences. They study traffic accidents to see which intersections are the most dangerous in town. They study hospitals—looking at survival rates, profits and the response time of ambulances. They study mortgages to find patterns of discrimination in lending. And they study environmental information, airline safety, big-game hunting and business records of every description.

A computer can be a great equalizer. With a desktop computer, a small weekly newspaper or an individual reporter can handle a project that would have been too ambitious for any but the nation's largest daily newspapers only 15 years ago.

Computer-assisted journalism is not for people who love computers. It is for people who love journalism, for reporters who want to discover things.

Desktop computers have been vital to some of the most recent enterprising newsroom research in Montana. Examples span the state, but the Missoulian serves well as a case study.

Since the mid-1980s, reporters at the Missoulian have explored possibilities for computer-assisted journalism. Some of this work has been easy and basic—such as using computers to keep track of building-permit data. Other work has been far more

JIM LUDWICK has covered business and economic issues for the Missoulian since 1986. He took night school courses to learn how to use computer databases for use in the newsroom.
difficult—sometimes involving hundreds of interviews, or substantial research of public records, to get information for computer analysis.

Many reporters around the country—perhaps most who have dabbled in computer-assisted journalism—have only used computers to read information that is stored on other computers at other locations. They have used computers to check campaign-finance reports or to read stories that have been published in other newspapers. They have used computers to get access to information in government or private-sector databases.

It can be worthwhile to use computers that way. But there is an entirely different use of computers that may be the most practical and valuable for reporters, especially those on limited budgets. Computers can help make sense out of in-depth research that is based on conventional records and interviews.

Two common types of computer programs are used for this purpose. Spreadsheet programs are good for records-keeping, tabulations and complex math. Database programs can help analyze a wide variety of information through a process similar to conducting an interview. To use a database program, you first must do your research and provide the computer with all of the knowledge that you think it should have.

Sometimes this can be hundreds or even thousands of pages of data; far more information than you could ever grasp without computer assistance. Then, you start asking questions, by typing them in lingo that the computer can understand. The computer answers you on the screen or in printouts or both. If you ask the right questions, you can make very interesting discoveries. It’s like interviewing an expert who has a photographic memory, who also can do complicated arithmetic in his head.

Both types of programs have been used at the Missoulian many times. The newspaper’s experiences illustrate some of the possibilities.

One of the first computer projects at the Missoulian took place in 1985. It involved one reporter who initially knew little about using computers. With the help of a Missoulian technician, he learned to operate a simple spreadsheet program as his work progressed.

Steve Woodruff, covering the forest products industry, had plenty of anecdotal material about timber cutting, but statistics about logging were closely guarded corporate secrets. For nearly a decade the public had heard few precise details about the overall extent of forest depletion.

Woodruff studied state records relating to a “slash disposal” program—in which private timber companies pay the state a deposit based on the amount of private timber harvested. He also reviewed old records that indicated how much timber had once been on various tracts. And he looked into the growth rate of trees.

Woodruff combined this disparate material, analyzing it with his spreadsheet program. He was able to show that two dominant timber companies were overcutting—chopping down twice as much timber as they were growing—and that the pace of their logging had increased significantly during the 1980s. His stories correctly predicted that this would soon bring a timber-supply crisis that would have a dramatic effect on western Montana and create pressure for increased cutting on federal land. A government study eventually corroborated Woodruff’s basic statistical findings.

Another early effort at the Missoulian centered on the county jail. Reporter John Stromnes was able to demonstrate that tranquilizers and other drugs were being heavily prescribed to pacify inmates. Stromnes obtained receipts for all jail drugs that were purchased during the first four months of 1986. A pharmacy professor at the University of Montana helped him identify the uses of various drugs. Stromnes—learning by doing—analyzed the information with a computer program that combined some features of spreadsheets and databases. His computer work, along with interviews, showed that drugs were being used by the authorities to reduce violence at the jail. The use of tranquilizers apparently violated American Medical Association standards for the medical care of prisoners.

Stromnes continued seeking ways to use computers as a foundation for stories, and he became increasingly proficient. His work impressed others in the newsroom, and by the late 1980s, several more reporters were experimenting with computer-assisted research. By the end of 1990, computer pro-
Elk Success Rate
16%
Five year average

Elk Harvested
Average for 1987-91

Time of Harvest
Percent average for 1987-91

Deer Success Rate
75%
Five year average

Deer Harvested
Average for 1987-91

Time of Harvest
Percent average for 1987-91

This is Page 152 of the Montana Hunting Almanac, 1993, published by the Missoulian. With the help of a computer spreadsheet program, Editorial Page Editor Steve Woodruff analyzed thousands of pages of data based on hunter interviews by state officials.
Learning to use computers takes time, and it can be tedious. But at every step along the way, you will find stories.

Much of the work was not complex, but focused on basic records-keeping that helped make sense out of material that previously had been less valuable. Information from building permits was computerized to allow us to routinely track and explain trends in home building, remodeling and other construction activity.

Data from the state Motor Vehicles Division on registration of new cars and trucks was obtained on a monthly basis. This information was analyzed with a spreadsheet program that calculated the market share of each type of car and truck. The Missoulian began running reports about auto-sales market share, explaining which cars and trucks were the big sellers in Missoula and how that compared with other cities and the rest of the state.

When the Corporation for Enterprise Development issued a report about statewide business climates, the Missoulian constructed a database to analyze information about each of the 50 states to assess whether the states that had been trying all the trendy government ideas were really faring any better than anyone else. They weren’t.

For the business section, the paper surveyed local manufacturers, and this reporter used a computer to tabulate information about profits, investment plans and various aspects of the financial condition of local industry. Other surveys followed.

High school students were asked about the Persian Gulf war; teachers were asked about the challenges facing their schools. For a Sunday feature section, the Missoulian asked readers who have driven their cars more than 100,000 miles to write to the newspaper. Several reporters spent a few evenings telephoning 100 of the roughly 150 respondents and used a computer to analyze the information.

The newspaper obtained a report showing the annual sales of every state liquor store in Montana. Using a computer, this material was combined with census data. The computer then ranked every county in Montana according to the amount of hard liquor sold per person.

A database was constructed to look at the 156 people who had been appointed to local government boards in Missoula. It shed light on who was serving on the government boards and whether those people had a personal or job-related interest in the subject matter of the boards.

Last year Steve Woodruff—who had handled the early project about logging—used a complex spreadsheet program to analyze thousands of pages of information about the experiences of hunters throughout Montana. Every year after the hunting season, the state has interviewers contact some 80,000 hunters, asking detailed questions about where they hunted, how much time was spent, what type of game was killed and so on. The information is used for wildlife management, and it may be the best of its kind in the United States. Woodruff took reams of the data—five years’ worth—and studied it with a computer, pinpointing the differences in big-game hunting in hundreds of individual areas of Montana. The Missoulian now publishes the annual Montana Hunting Almanac, loaded with charts and graphs that gave hunters a detailed picture of what they could expect (see p. 5).

Twice, in 1990 and again in 1992, the Missoulian used a computer to help make sense of the statewide results of legislative elections. In each case, during the election campaign, the newspaper conducted more than 240 interviews and obtained additional information from public records to construct a computer database about the views and background of everyone who had a chance of being in the next Legislature. On the morning after the election, the computer was told who had won seats, and the Missoulian was able to sort through a wealth of detail about the Legislature that would convene in January.

When the project was launched in 1990, 17 people worked on the research. The interviews dealt with personal back-
ground information and views on a variety of topics, such as taxes, abortion and the governor. Unlike a public-opinion poll, the project was not based on a sample. It involved conversations with every candidate in the state and all incumbents as well. The database was designed to handle not only the basic statistics, but also the reporters' direct-quotation material.

The project resulted in a series, in the days immediately following the election, that described how the new House and Senate members viewed major issues—at least as of the election. The series reviewed the differences between the winners and losers, between men and women, between newcomers to the Legislature and the old-timers and many other topics.

Each story was loaded with direct quotations straight from the database. If a reporter was working on a story about the environment, the database could provide a printout of quotations from people who had said interesting things about environmental issues. Reporters could be very specific in requesting quotations or statistics from the computer. They could get quotations about the environment from representatives from Missoula or from eastern Montana, from those who hate the governor or from admirers of the environmental group Earth First!

In the next legislative election year—1992—the project was repeated. Once again, more than 240 interviews were conducted with candidates for the House and Senate. This time the team had the benefit of experience. There was a feeling that the 1990 project had been too broad and had strayed into some areas that were insignificant. The 1992 project was more carefully focused. The technical construction of the database also was improved. Just as in 1990, a series was launched immediately after the election. It touched on a variety of topics and explained some statewide differences between the winners and the losers of the election.

Learning to use computers takes a lot of time, and it can be really quite tedious. But at every step along the way, you will find stories. As you learn to use a good database program or spreadsheet, each new feature that you master will give you new ideas about using computers in journalism.

It can be helpful to learn to use a program in advance—not to simply figure that you'll learn the technical skills if you ever launch a project. It certainly is possible to jump right into a project—with no knowledge of computers—and learn it all as you go. The experience of some of the Missoulian reporters shows this can be accomplished with positive results.

The best story ideas may not even occur to you until you have a good grasp of what can be done with a particular computer program. And if you do come up with a story idea, that's not the best time to be starting a technical education—when you could be devoting your energy to the research itself. And if you already know how to use a good computer program before you begin a project, you will make fewer mistakes in tailoring a spreadsheet or database to your specific needs. In turn, this will probably increase your efficiency and the odds of your success.

There are plenty of opportunities for learning how to use computers: Short courses, offered through many vocational schools or high school adult education classes, teach people how to use the most common spreadsheets and databases. Using computers only to read commercial and government files...is like writing stories by using an encyclopedia instead of interviews.

Many reporters settle for using computers to read information that's on other computers. This can be a useful way of getting campaign-finance material, updates on the status of legislation or background clips. But there is so much more that computers have to offer. Using computers only to read commercial and government files—instead of using them to make sense out of your own independent research—is like writing stories from an encyclopedia instead of interviews.

The first mistake about computers is thinking that you have to like them. But the second mistake is thinking that computers can make your job easier. Computers can be a valuable tool in journalism—but not because they reduce your workload. The real value of computers—especially on the most difficult projects—is that they change the limits of what is possible.
Keeping the doors and files open

Montana news groups have scored big hits in recent years, but the battle’s not over

By Clemens P. Work

Here’s a Treasure State export most people don’t know about. It won’t help the balance of trade, but it may prove priceless: Montanans’ Right to Know is being touted as a model open government law to the emerging democracies of central and eastern Europe. Jane Kirtley, director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press in Washington, D.C., told a statewide Freedom of Information conference in Great Falls in May that the state’s law is so well regarded because it is enshrined in the 1972 constitution, and thus, is much harder to change than a state statute. That the law is seen as such a safeguard of democratic access probably comes as no surprise to the news people and lawyers in Montana who have used it in recent years to successfully pry open the doors of government. As state Supreme Court justice R.C. McDonough pointed out in a 1990 case, AP v. Board of

Montana’s FOI Hotline—just a phone call away

Early in January, Billings Gazette editor Dick Wesnick picked up the phone and called Helena. He wanted to know whether Yellowstone County officials could withhold details of a settlement with a county employee based on privacy. The employee was a deputy county attorney who had been placed on administrative leave, then later agreed to resign in exchange for $30,000.

In Helena, lawyer Jim Reynolds, a partner in the firm of Reynolds, Motl, Sherwood and Wright, told Wesnick that a December 1992 state Supreme Court decision involving the mayor of Hamilton solidly backs up the claim that the settlement information is public. Reynolds then sent a letter to the Yellowstone County Attorney, pointing out the Hamilton case.

All in a day’s work for the Montana FOI Hotline, now in its sixth year. Reynolds’ firm is paid a monthly retainer of $400 to field phone calls from Hotline members with questions about access to meetings, court proceedings and public records. The lawyers also answer questions about gag orders, subpoenas and search warrants, but do not deal with libel questions. Hotline use has been averaging half a dozen consultations a month.

Most questions are answered on the phone. May a city council close an executive session to discuss contract negotiation strategy? No, the collective bargaining exemption to the state Open Meetings Law was recently struck down by the state high court (See accompanying story). Others take some digging. Are unemployment compensation claims public records? Reynolds researches the statutes and finds a handful of regulations that tend to support a reporter’s claim of access.

Occasionally, the issues become full-blown legal cases. For example, in the Yellowstone County case, an attorney for the county fired back, arguing the Hamilton case didn’t apply. That same day, television station KTVQ in Billings,
Public Education, the law is “unique, clear and unequivocal”; the sole exception is “cases where the demand of individual privacy clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure.”

Granted, the exception is big enough to drive a truck through, but the law has proved a bulwark for access. Three state Supreme Court decisions, in cases litigated by Montana press groups, have struck down statutory provisions because they conflicted with the constitution.

The 1990 case involved two state entities on opposite sides of a lawsuit. An AP reporter was shut out of a litigation strategy session held by the Board of Public Education. The board noted that the Open Meetings Law allowed closures for that purpose. The AP, daily newspapers and press trade groups sued, arguing that the constitution prevailed. The state Supreme Court unanimously agreed. The litigation strategy exception was narrowed in the amended law, but still applies when a non-government entity is a party to the lawsuit.

In 1991 the same groups sued the state in *AP v. State of Montana* to undo a new law that sealed affidavits in support of criminal charges or warrants. The law was so blatantly unconstitutional that Attorney General Marc Racicot said he would not defend it. Later the state Supreme Court endorsed his judgment with another unanimous decision. From the days of territorial government. . .” wrote Chief Justice Jean Turnage, “[criminal affidavits] have been open for public inspection. The perception of fairness in our judicial system, the ability of the criminally accused to defend themselves, and the public’s knowledge about criminal proceedings all benefit from allowing public access. . .”

Last Nov. 12 the state high court shot down the remaining exception to the Open Meetings Law, discussing collective bargaining strategy, in *Great Falls Tribune Co. v. Great Falls Public Schools*. The Tribune claimed that the school trustees had evaded open meetings provisions in discussing labor negotiations with a unit of school aides. The board claimed it had not held any secret meetings and was covered by the collective bargaining exception. A district court agreed, but the state Supreme Court reversed, in a 6-1 decision.

The court held that the case did not involve “a matter of individual privacy (the loophole in the constitution) but involves a public agency desiring privacy.”

Dissenting justice Fred (continued on p. 59)

That the law is seen as such a safeguard of democratic access probably comes as no surprise to the news people and lawyers in Montana who have used it in recent years to successfully pry open the doors of government.

seeking the same information, sued the county. The state Supreme Court ordered the county to tell a district judge precisely why it paid the attorney the $30,000.

The FOI Hotline also goes to court to enforce access rights. Last fall, Helena District Judge Thomas Honzel ruled in favor of the Hotline and other media plaintiffs in two cases. He held that a blanket ban on mining exploration information was unconstitutional, and he ordered corrections officials to release the names of seven guards disciplined after the September 1991 Deer Lodge prison riot that left five inmates dead.

In May more than 50 news people, attorneys, judges, county officials and educators attended the Hotline’s first conference, in Great Falls. Jane Kirtley, executive director of The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, warned of the “elevation of personal privacy claims to a dangerous level” to curtail public access to courthouses and to historically open government information. Panel sessions explored the status of freedom of information in the state, access to Montana courts and privacy versus the public’s right to know.

The Hotline was started on April 1, 1988, to handle a rising number of legal inquiries from journalists. Organized as a non-profit corporation, it is supported by a coalition of Montana news organizations, including all 11 daily newspapers, 15 weeklies, four broadcast stations, the Associated Press and trade groups including the Montana Newspaper Association, the Montana Broadcasters Association and Montana Press Women. In addition to members’ contributions, the Hotline has received about $4,500 from the state SPJ chapter and $4,500 in grants from First Amendment Funding, Inc. of Phoenix. Chairman of the board and sparkplug of the Hotline is John Kuglin, AP Montana bureau chief. Ian Marquand of KPAX-TV in Missoula is vice-chairman.
Montana brain drain

Small markets just can't pay enough to hold J-School broadcasting graduates in the state

By BILL KNOWLES

It’s frantic time in the WCBS-TV newsroom in New York. Channel 2 News at Five is a few minutes from air. Reporters are “crashing” last-minute stories. Anchors are going over their scripts. The weatherman is badgering the producer for more time to handle an approaching storm. It’s the producer of this hour-long “monster,” as the staff calls it, who must juggle this enormous pressure. A “show producer” in the country’s No. 1 market is one of the real power jobs in all of television news. Who is this wizard?

Is he a brash, tough-talking graduate of Columbia University’s legendary Graduate School of Journalism? No. He’s Shane Bishop from Conrad, Mont., a 1986 graduate of The University of Montana School of Journalism.

The career path of Shane Bishop is an example of a longstanding problem faced by units of higher education in sparsely populated states—particularly in broadcast news where salaries are nearly always dictated by market size. It’s a form of “brain drain.” Montana taxpayers pay more than three-quarters of the cost of a resident’s education, then often see that person go out of state to put that education to work.

In Bishop’s case, he’s already contributed something to Montana television. While seeking his broadcast journalism degree, he worked part-time at KPAX-TV, the CBS affiliate in Missoula. Upon graduation, he was hired by KPAX full-time to be one of its news anchors.

But Missoula wasn’t enough for Shane Bishop. Not enough challenge. Not enough happening. Certainly not enough money. He moved on, from anchor-reporter in Missoula to be a general-assignment reporter in Altoona, Pa., (ADI 83). Then it was on to newscast producer’s jobs in Harrisburg, Pa. (ADI 47) and WCAU-TV in Philadelphia (ADI 4). Finally, after three years in Pennsylvania, Shane made the jump to WCBS-TV in New York (ADI 1).

“When I made the decision to go to Altoona, my mother said she then knew how her parents felt when they left Norway to come to the America,” Bishop recalls. “That frightened me. I did a lot of growing up. But the station had as many employees as all of the four-station Montana Television Network. From Altoona it was a matter of geography, making contacts in Pennsylvania and moving up the market ladder.”

Of the contrast between Conrad and New York, Bishop says there are generally two kinds of people who grow up in small-town Montana:

“You grow up and you see the people who stick around town. A lot of them are wedded to the land. You know if you want to do something else you have to go somewhere else.”

Shane’s wife, Erika Colness Bishop, has a similar story. The Colness family has distinct Montana roots: an early family homestead near Bainville. Erika’s father was raised in Red Lodge, her mother in Libby. Erika’s father was a opera per-
After completing her UM course work two years ago, Kerri Lee chose to do her internship at KHQ-TV in Spokane (ADI 80). She knew right out of school that she wanted to be a TV news producer. Lee was so effective at the Spokane station that before her internship ended she was hired full-time. And again her performance was so strong at KHQ that a consultant employed by a competing station recommended her for a job with his client in Grand Rapids, Mich. (ADI 37), to get her out of the market. The Michigan station made Lee a good offer, and she took the job.

Less than a year later, a feeler came from The Jane Whitney Show in New York, a syndicated talk show seen on many stations around the country. Again, the offer was too lucrative to pass up. However, the “sleaze factor” in that kind of television was extremely distasteful to Lee. Again after a feeler, Lee was hired by KOMO-TV in Seattle as one of three producers of Northwest Afternoon, a live afternoon talk show that has been number one in its time period for nine years.

“When I started full-time in Spokane I knew I was making more money in my

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<th>Market Size</th>
<th>ADI 1-25</th>
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<th>ADI 126-150</th>
<th>ADI 151+</th>
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<td>News Anchor</td>
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SOURCE: National Association of Broadcasters, August 1993. These are average salaries; starting salaries are lower. Montana markets or Areas of Dominant Influence (ADIs) include: Billings, ADI 172; Missoula, ADI 177; Great Falls, ADI 182 and Butte/Bozeman, ADI 190.
first job than reporters and anchors make in Montana.”

Is brain drain a problem for Montana and the UM School of Journalism?

“Absolutely,” says Lee. “You look at the J-School, so well respected inside and outside the state. It’s unfortunate that more of its graduates can’t stay in Montana. I look at the newscasts they’re doing in Montana and they’re so archaic. The money isn’t there, the support isn’t there, so all these people that are trained at UM with state funds take their education out of the state and somebody else benefits. It would be great to see some of the people who come out of the J-School stay in Montana and become mentors for younger people who start in Montana’s small markets.”

Another recent UM broadcast journalism grad, Rebecca Louis of Ennis, made a difficult decision to stay in Montana, at least for now. A basketball and volleyball standout in high school, she had always wanted to be a sportscaster. Between her junior and senior year, Rebecca interned at CNN Sports Late Night. She was so successful that after graduation in 1992, CNN offered her a job on its Headline News channel.

Louis accepted and was actually in Atlanta, ready to begin work, when news director Dick Pompa of Great Falls’ KFBB-TV called and offered her a position as weekend sports anchor and weekday general assignment reporter. She took it, said goodbye to CNN before she ever started, and doesn’t regret her decision:

“KFBB offered me a chance to do what I absolutely love to do. I love the pressure. I love the hard work. I love being in it, my hands always dirty, being under pressure all day when I’m at work, and especially when I have to anchor at night, I just know that being at CNN and being on a restricted schedule and always knowing what I’m going to do each day would not challenge me enough to make me happy. If I had gone to CNN I would be pushing a camera around for a year and writing scripts for other people. Here I get to write my own scripts and do my own show. I have control and it’s me and I’m learning.”

But Rebecca knows that her next step will be to a market out of state, probably between ADI 80 and 110. She, too, has her sights set on the big time. “I want to work for ESPN someday or if not there in a top ten market.” So while this former Montana Kaimin sports editor, Sportswear reporter and KUFM intern is applying her considerable talent in Montana, it won’t be long until the state loses another brain.

What does brain drain mean to Montana broadcasters?

“We stopped thinking about (brain drain) some time ago,” says Don Bradley, general manager for more than three decades of KRTV, the CBS affiliate in Great Falls. “Our salaries are limited by the size of our markets. We understand some Montana kids yearn for other places.”

This doesn’t mean, however, that Montana’s broadcasting stations are hurting for trained reporters. What’s happening is sort of a reverse brain drain, as journalism graduates from larger universities in urban areas apply for, and get, entry-level jobs in Montana.

Word of a job opening in Montana television news brings a flood of audition tapes from nearly everywhere in the country. People come to Montana, accept payment partially in scenery, spend a year or two here, then go on to bigger salaries elsewhere.

“It would be a lot better for Montana broadcasting if we had a Spokane somewhere in the state,” says Bradley of the state’s many small markets.

Montana’s largest market, Billings (ADI 172), isn’t all that much larger than Missoula (ADI 177) or Great Falls (ADI 182). Salaries always will be smaller in Montana because markets are so small.

The national rating service Arbitron determines Areas of Dominant Influence. They include not only the immediate sur-
rounding area but nearby towns where a television station has an impact. So the Billings ADI includes Hardin and Miles City, the Great Falls ADI includes Havre and the Missoula ADI includes Kalispell.

Great Falls native Julie Walker is a recent Radio-TV graduate who had a successful internship at KRTV, but at the time there were no job openings. So when her six-week internship ended, she packed up and headed for San Francisco. She found a job in a small video production house in Oakland that does mainly legal work. But there were problems with the neighborhood ("a crack house was next door") and Walker was asked to endure uncaring management of a firm that could be generously described as marginal.

Walker now updates databases for Information Access Company of Foster City, Calif., a Ziff Communications subsidiary that publishes business directories. Somewhat out of her field, she handles that with mixed emotions. "I want to do something challenging," Julie says. "I want to use my head. But I do like working for a big company. I got benefits from first day and the job pays the bills. That part of it is terrific."

Finally, a reverse brain-drain story that suddenly reversed again. Missoula-raised Len Johnson left a reporter/weatherman job at WBFF-TV in Baltimore to come home this past summer to be an anchor/reporter at KEKI-TV in Missoula.

Johnson graduated from UM in 1985, stayed in Montana long enough to work on the High Country Independent Press in Belgrade, then left for Arizona and an editor's job on the Prescott Sun. Len switched to television as an anchor/reporter for KYMA in Yuma, then moved on to KOLO-TV in Reno before his Baltimore assignment. Through most of his out-of-state career Len yearned for the quality of life he came to love in Montana:

"I was brought up on fishing and hunting. Once you get that in your blood you can't get it out. I would save my money and race out to Montana to fly-fish for two weeks a year."

Johnson, however, will have to continue those dashes back to Montana. Just a month into his KEKI-TV stint, and in the middle of an extensive ad campaign promoting his return to Missoula, his agent called with a big-dollar offer from WFLD-TV, the Fox affiliate in Chicago (ADI 3). Johnson traded in long hours at low pay in Missoula for a weatherman's job in the "city of big shoulders."

Brain drain will always exist because Montana is what it is, a large community made up of comparatively small clusters of people separated by huge chunks of landscape. The upside, however, is that the job a University of Montana graduate may reject to go out of state will be snapped up by somebody from California or Illinois or wherever, because that person can't get an entry-level job closer to home.

The nomadic nature of broadcast news is a matter of sheer economics. For example Great Falls has 61,800 TV households, compared to Spokane where there are 310,000 TV households. New York contains 6,749,500 households and centralized media enclaves. More viewers translates into more dollars in a news worker's pocket.

How to stop brain drain? Broadcasters have about as much chance of doing that as trying to keep the weather from turning chilly in October. But KFBB-TV's Rebecca Louis says they could do something to slow it down:

"If we were paid a little bit more and if the opportunity itself were a little more attractive it would be much easier to hold people in Montana. At my station we have a lot of people who are really good. They know how to get the job done. But with equipment limitations it's very difficult to always do your best work. Especially when you are working with a staff of dedicated people, everyone gets very frustrated. If we had a little bit better equipment or a little more staff or maybe just one more photographer. . . "
Rockin’ the boat in Choteau

Nobody said it would be easy trying to make a go of it with a small-town weekly

By DAVE ZELO

The Choteau Acantha office isn’t very big, and the man’s voice was very loud. It seemed to carry down the street, past the post office and the VFW bar, two blocks away on Main Street. It was loud, shaking with anger and accusatory. “Who do you think you are?” he yelled. “You are cold, that’s all I can say. You must have a heart of stone. You obviously don’t have kids. I hope something bad happens to your family.”

Long, a burly man in his late 50s, about 5 feet 8 inches tall and more than 200 pounds, paused only to run his hand through his graying hair. He occasionally pleaded with Montana Highway Patrol Officer Roger Kelly, who was standing silently nearby.

“Can’t you stop this?” he asked, knowing the answer was no.

All anyone could do was watch. Because while the uneasy attention of the dozen or so people in the office that night was on Long, control of the situation rested with the object of his abuse: Melody Martinsen, the slender, quiet editor of the Acantha.

Last summer, when Long and his relatives took their grieving anger to the Acantha’s office, Melody (Mel to everyone who knows her, except maybe city and county officials) and husband Jeff were in their third year of owning and running Choteau’s weekly paper and the attached printing shop. They were 26.

Nothing like this had happened at the Acantha for a long time, if ever. Richard Nordhagen, who ran the paper for more than 20 years before selling it to the Martinsens, once told Mel his defining philosophy for the newspaper was “Don’t rock the boat.”

If Nordhagen ran the paper unimaginatively, the Martinsens have brought a different tone to the paper and to Choteau. The paper is no longer a “community bulletin board,” as Mel puts it. More in spirit with its name, a Greek word for a thorny type of flower, the Acantha now aggressively gives Teton County readers what they want to know (high school sports, agricultural trends and updates, property tax increases) and what Mel thinks they need to know (why those taxes are going up, dwindling medical care in Teton County and how decisions by state lawmakers in Helena affect local residents).

Mel and Jeff are locals, and the paper is often a family affair. Mel’s parents own a farm in Bynum, 13 miles north of Choteau, and there are relatives scattered between the farm and Great Falls. The family usually pitches in on Tuesdays, helping to fold, stuff and label the papers for release on Wednesday. Jeff’s mother, Sally Walker, is the paper’s part-time bookkeeper.

Mel, who wrote poetry and still reads voraciously, says she knew journalism was her true love before entering high school.


“The dedications were always cruel, saying why the boys didn’t like a certain
girl because she was fat or something. It just didn't seem right."

Mel entered the School of Journalism at the University of Montana in 1987, grabbing the school's top graduate honor from the Society of Professional Journalists in 1987. She missed a perfect 4.0 grade point average because of 'B' marks in clarinet lessons.

A summer internship at the Fairfield Times, just 17 miles south of Choteau, gave Mel an early taste of weekly journalism. At the time, she had completed only beginning reporting and photography classes at the Journalism School.

"I did everything," she says. "I took all the pictures, developed them, made PMTs, sold ads, wrote four or five stories and the editorial. "It was a great experience because it reaffirmed my belief in my major."

On Monday Mel wrote a story of the accident, planning to run it on page 5. She interviewed Kelly of the MHP, who watched McGillis die in his arms, and who told her that the blood-alcohol content for McGillis was above the legal limit of .10. Then she sent the family a draft of the Acantha story, which said that speed and alcohol were factors in the accident.

"That was my first mistake," Mel says. "I wanted to be sensitive to their grief, to prepare them if I could for the story that would run on Wednesday. I would never do that again."

About 5 p.m. Monday, McGillis family friend Tom Guthrie came to the Acantha and asked Mel to delete the reference to alcohol. Guthrie, who had written a one-quarter page eulogy for McGillis in place of an obituary, said McGillis' three children—all less than 10-years-old—would be devastated to learn their father had died because he had been drinking.

Mel was polite but firm. "I'm sorry, Tom, but it's the truth and that's how I have to tell it," she said. "It may serve as a deterrent to others, and help them somehow."

Guthrie left, but returned a short time later with Long, the father-in-law of McGillis, and several others. The confrontation,The biggest issue was whether we had the courage to do it, whether we could rise to the challenge. We gave up a lifestyle for a lifestyle.

It hadn't figured in their life plans, but Melody and Jeff Martinsen became owners and editors of the Choteau Acantha in 1989, when they were each 24 years old.

[DON LABAUGH]
mostly between Long and Melody, quickly grew ugly. By 10 p.m., eight people were wedged between the office door and the Acantha's counter, including Kelly and Teton County Sheriff George Anderson. There was shouting, and Long spent much of the night shaking his finger in Mel's face.

Later two men stopped by the office, and Jeff took them outside to talk. The men represented the paper's largest advertiser. They told Jeff there was “concern” over the McGillis story, and hoped the issue would be settled quietly.

“I told them to leave, that I didn’t want to hear anything more,” Jeff said that night. “What else could I do? If I listen, they dictate what we do.”

A

ADVERTISING DOLLARS are critical to the Acantha. Many weekly owners supplement their incomes by printing jobs, but the Acantha's 1991 figures show that advertising made up 46 percent, printing jobs 29 percent, subscriptions 18 percent and school and printing supplies 7 percent of the newspaper's income. Last year the Martinsens' gross income was about $192,000, for an average of $15,800 per month.

But add in salaries and other fixed costs and the earnings quickly disappear. The couple pays about $1,200 per month for the paper. The Martinsens bought the Acantha and the print shop from Nordhagen for about $200,000 in 1989. Of the $30,000 down payment, the Martinsens paid $10,000, borrowing the rest from family members. (Mel points out that none of the money came from her parents and says local gossip accusing the Bynum ranch of contracting firm. The Martinsens did not consider the Acantha until Nordhagen, who had suffered a heart attack, called and offered to sell the paper.

“I wasn’t too excited about moving back to Choteau,” Mel says. “It never figured in my plans. I mean, I was at the Tribune, the best paper in the state, making a decent salary with benefits.”

In the end, the challenge of owning their own business and being close to their families spurred the couple to go for it. The Martinsens were 24.

“The biggest issue was whether we had the courage to do it, whether we could rise to the challenge,” Mel says. “And we also know that if young people continue to leave small, rural towns, the towns won’t survive. We gave up a lifestyle for a lifestyle.”

The Martinsens had their work cut out for them. The paper, a broadsheet printed in a seven-column format, placed second fiddle to printing jobs. Advertising rates were an abysmally low $1.60 per column inch, and upping them immediately would have sent some customers to Fairfield or the Tribune. Worse still, the switch to six columns (the paper's current format) would actually lose money.

Mel began to use Pagemaker to design the paper, and advertising rates have crept up to $2.75 per column inch. Jeff says a 50 percent ad line generally makes money.

More important, the Acantha's coverage began to change. Mel says she had a beat system ready before she arrived in Choteau, including education, city, county and federal government, agriculture, sports, business and industry. She added a ‘People’ page, with coming events, columns from the nursing home and an infrequent feature on a local business or resident. “Grip and grin” photos were scrapped in favor of news and scenic shots to keep out-of-state subscribers happy, Mel says.

Last summer, the paper added an editorial page and last fall, a cartoonist. The page
has included columns from Gov. Marc Racicot, sales tax foe Robert Natelson and American Farm Bureau Federation Executive Director Richard Newpher.

"People love it," Mel says. "I was worried about readers confusing my opinions with my news stories, but there haven't been any real problems. I don't feel [the page] has caused me to slant my coverage in any way." The editorials have ranged from criticism of local city officials for holding meetings without public notice to a call for U.S. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt to heed ranchers' demands to not raise federal grazing fees.

"All in all, I'm satisfied with the design and the photos," Mel says. "I would be satisfied with the content if I had another reporter, which is just not financially possible right now. I think we're doing a good job of covering the area, and people have responded well to the changes."

LONG'S THREAT OF A LAWSUIT surprised everyone. The tense argument, which seemed to drag on for hours, had lasted probably less than an hour. Once the McGillis friends and relatives had left, Jeff locked the door and went back to work.

A phone call from the family—who said a counselor had told them the McGillis children would be "psychologically destroyed" if they read their father had been drunk when he died—left Mel shaking.

"I don't think I lost my composure until after they left," she says. "I guess that I let the things Mr. Long said to me that night about children affect me."

The story was now in danger of being printed without the blood-alcohol information.

Mel made several calls that night to UM journalism professors Carol Van Valkenburg and Dennis Swibold and to Tribune city editor Tom Kotynski. From Van Valkenburg she received assurances that the Acantha was on solid legal grounds in printing the blood-alcohol information. Swibold told Mel there was no decision to be made: The alcohol data was essential.

But from Kotynski, Mel heard something different. He said he understood the dilemma I was in, that it wasn't so easy to print the information and live here after I printed it," she says. "He said the Trib would have no problem printing the information—which they in fact had—but he said he would certainly understand the situation if I didn't."

WHEN MEL HUNG UP THE PHONE, it was after 11 p.m. and she had not written any of her page one stories. By his own admission, Jeff is not a journalist, and he usually defers to Mel on coverage. But he is extremely practical and is driven to put out a quality paper.

"Jeff told me that I had to make a decision and stick by it," Mel says. "We were on deadline." She deleted the information and started writing

The very next day she realized she had made the wrong choice. It didn't help when the Fairfield Times, included the information in its Wednesday story.

"My decision was based on the emotion of the moment," Mel says. "I sold my principles down the river. I didn't sleep at all that night—I just stayed up crying. If I had printed it, I would have felt bad, but not dirty."

Part of the problem, she says, was worrying about local reaction to the story. "But in the aftermath, we received so much support from the community after they heard about the confrontation that we could have survived any advertising campaign," Mel says. "In this business, you simply have to be prepared to take the heat."

"All I can do is learn and grow." Jeff and Mel are considering a vacation this fall—their first since buying the Acantha. The couple plans to move the paper into a larger building next year and Mel says there are other goals.

"At some point we would like to have a family," she says. "Two kids, I guess, and hopefully by 35. But then, we're going to be here for a while."
In remembrance of the "Captain"

Dean Warren Brier's annual pack trip to the wilderness told volumes about the man

By GREG MACDONALD

His family knew him as a kind and compassionate father. His students knew him as a caring and demanding teacher. His colleagues in the journalism business valued him as a consummate editor. His fellow faculty members at the Journalism School treasured him as a fair and dedicated leader. I knew him as all of these, but more importantly, I knew the late Warren Brier as a planner of great fishing trips—but a lousy fisherman.

Upon arriving in Missoula in early August 1974, I called to inform my new boss of my arrival. I was told to call back next week. Warren was on "the pack trip." A non-fisherman then, little did I realize what those three words "the pack trip" would come to mean to me.

Seeing him in the hallway of the Journalism building, or trudging off to another budget session in Main Hall, no one would ever mistake Warren as an outdoorsman. He was too impeccable. Even on the rare occasions when he wore a sport shirt to the office, it was starched. I never remember seeing so much as a scuff on his trademark loafers.

Yet, once a year, Warren traded in his tie for a fishing pole—it was never a "rod" with Warren—dropped the title of Dean and donned "captain's" bars to lead a group of misfits off to what is now The Great Bear Wilderness Area south of Glacier National Park for the annual "frolic in the forest."

Warren was allowed the self-proclaimed rank of "captain" by virtue of the fact that he did all of the planning for the trip. In fact, I often thought that Warren enjoyed the planning of the trip as much as the adventure itself. He attacked the trip plan the way he attacked a story in need of editing. No detail was too small. Each element received special attention.

I was afforded my first opportunity to join a special trip in 1975, my first full summer in Montana. CBS White House
correspondent Bob Pierpoint was coming to Libby with President Ford for the dedication of the Libby Dam. Bob, a fishing fanatic, had heard about the adventure from trip regular Phil Hess and asked Warren if a trip would be possible. Only too willing to oblige, Warren arranged the trip for the Labor Day weekend. Since few of the regulars, who had just come out of the woods, were able to make the Pierpoint trip, I was invited. When Warren discovered that I could build a fire with wet wood and cook, I was allotted a permanent space in the tent and never missed another trip. Because the state liquor stores were on strike, Bob brought a case of “Wild Turkey” on the presidential press plane. That assured him a spot whenever he was able to return.

Over the years the cast of characters changed, as many of the original trekkers left Montana for bigger professional challenges. Occasionally, they would come back from Texas or Washington and know that, at least for a week, Warren’s diligence would assure them what most would consider the trip of a lifetime.

Each expedition began the same way. Shortly after the first of the year, former “frolickers” would receive a memo from Captain Brier. It included a list of possible dates, personal gear required for the trip and a list of assignments for the upcoming months. Not surprisingly, Warren would take care of most of the work. He would make motel reservations for the night before the trip, first in West Glacier and then later at the Izaak Walton Inn in Essex. He sent a preliminary inquiry to our packer, Bill Wyrick, now also deceased, at the Snow Slip Inn, although we were never sure why Warren continued this futile practice because Wyrick never responded.

Warren would then proceed to make weekly phone calls to Bill through the antiquated system that served that part of the world, first finding an operator that understood what “pinnacle three through Shelby inward” meant, and then hoping someone would answer the phone in the bar and roust Bill away from the pool table. As spring approached Warren kept a watchful eye on the snowpack reports, fearing that too much runoff would make the Middle Fork impassable and too little would mean that we would miss the bull trout run. Come trip time, we always managed to ford the river and always managed to miss the bull run.

Most years the pack trip began as soon as the first out-of-towner arrived. All day long we would ferry people from the airport until the troops were all in place.

Following the traditional pre-trip dinner, Warren would go over each detail of the trip and every piece of gear. He maintained a lengthy inventory of the “pool” gear that had been acquired over the years and what each member of the party needed to contribute.

Despite his diligence, one year Warren left his own personal clothing behind in

With trademark cigar, Dean Brier supervised all the details of his annual “frolic in the forest.”
The sight of seven days of facial growth and the short-sleeved raincoat failed to make an impression on the officer who kept peering into the back of the van where a rifle and several handguns sat perched atop the duffel bags.

The pack trips themselves took on a comforting, familiar feel. The night before going "into the woods" we would play poker. The morning of the hike in we would arrive at the Snow Slip at the appointed time and begin the hunt for Bill the packer. He was never ready and, despite the heroic efforts of Warren, rarely even remembered that we had booked the trip. Generally he required copious amount of coffee to tame the effects of the previous night's drinking.

The days on the river were usually uneventful: Late breakfast, a little fishing, "the cocktail hour," dinner, perhaps a little more fishing. Only rarely did Warren bother to wet a line in the river, and in all the years I accompanied him on the trip, I never remember him actually catching a fish, although he seemed quite pleased whenever anyone else did. A particularly good fish would always earn one a promotion from, say, corporal to lieutenant or lieutenant to captain. Warren was always careful to make sure that when he handed out such promotions he promoted himself to one rank higher; at the end of each trip we all reverted to privates and he to captain.

Evenings around the campfire the discussion was as likely to center on the appropriate role of the academic vice-president in faculty hiring decisions as it was on fishing and the wonders of the Middle Fork. The former would have made splendid seminars for graduate students thinking of pursuing a career in higher education; the latter were conservation treatises worthy of Thoreau and Leopold. The conversation was always changing. The only constants around those fires were a little snort of bourbon and the ever-present cigars which ultimately contributed to his early death. I was never able to figure out how a journalist, let alone a journalist who had worked for the Associated Press in both New York and Los Angeles, could maintain such unswerving optimism about his fellow man and the human condition, yet that is exactly what Warren did. He could have run Boy's Town, as he seemingly never met a bad boy or man.

The trips continued right up to the year before Warren died. The last conversation I had with him was about our next trip. There has not been one since, although whenever two former "frolickers" get together there is talk of one.

I hiked into the Middle Fork in 1990, two years after Warren's death. The trail along Granite Creek had been changed. Instead of beginning in cool subalpine forests and meandering high above the creek and over numerous little waterfalls, it now spends its first mile in a clearcut. The captain would have been disappointed. But that night as I stood in front of the fire, the way we had done so many nights before, and watched the moon reflect off Trinity Peak, I felt a presence and raised my cup into the night air once more in remembrance of the captain.
The First Amendment in Indian Country

Native American journalists are recognizing the value of a press free of tribal censorship

By MARK TRAHANT

About a dozen years ago, I recall a speaker at the National Congress of American Indians telling tribal journalists that they were modern war correspondents. That is a telling statement: Tribal journalists are identified by Indian political leaders as part of the defense of Indian Country. And perhaps that notion is justified by the first 200 years of this country's history, because during most of that time, the existence of tribal governments has been under attack.

The first test of Indian press freedom came with the very first tribal publication. Elias Boudinot, a mixed-blood Cherokee, was editor of the Cherokee Phoenix when the tribe was torn between those who supported relocation to the Indian territory in Oklahoma and those who wanted to stay in Georgia. Boudinot was on the losing side. He was fired as editor and later murdered for his beliefs.

But most early tribal publications rallied around the theme of defense of Indian Country and pressed for reform of Indian policies at the national level. Carlos Montezuma, who published an independent national newspaper during the 1920s, continually pressed for reform of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. He called the agency a “worn-out old horse” and advocated its abolition.

Many tribal newspapers have shared
Montezuma's pleas for national reform while sidestepping internal tribal debates. One such newspaper is the Yakima Nation Review in Washington state. So that information will not be used against the Yakima government, the newspaper's circulation is limited to tribal members. Issues covered move the tribal consensus forward, irrespective of the outside world.

Tribal leaders are proud of their journalists when they serve as war correspondents in the battle against the enemy. But when journalism moves closer to home, there is trouble. When Peter MacDonald announced his bid in 1982 for re-election as Navajo Nation chairman, a young Navajo journalist estimated the crowd at less than a thousand. But MacDonald aides ordered another young Navajo journalist, Duane Beyal, to inflate that number in the Navajo Times' account. Because the order was from a superior, he complied.

But on the editorial page, Beyal apologized to the Navajo people for lying. Beyal was suspended from his job and removed as editor. Two years later, a Pueblo editor wrote that 800 community members had signed a petition to remove the Zuni Pueblo's governing body. That story was stripped from the Pueblo News, and a few weeks later the paper was told there was not enough money to continue publishing. War correspondents have to be careful.

One way we can go beyond our status as war correspondents is the path opened by the independent Indian Country Today (formerly The Lakota Times). Editor and publisher Tim Giago has shown that a multi-reservation publication can be successful.

Most tribal newspapers, however, are owned and operated by tribal governments. This probably won't change until there are more journalist-entrepreneurs with enough money and determination to challenge the system. I know this is difficult because I tried to publish an independent newspaper, the Navajo Times Today. The combination of competition from the tribal newspaper and lack of personal resources was too much. We gave up after a long year with no pay.

Nonetheless, the independent route is essential. Since most reservations face

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In the thicket of Indian law

By Woody Kipp

The "Camp Crier" was a person responsible for relating tribal information in the traditional days. Men with stentorian voices walked through Indian camps shouting the news of the day.

As Native Americans become aware of how their tribal governments are meant to function, they also realize the need for an independent tribal media. Media law, however, is a fairly recent addition to the tribal environment, one that, like other areas of Indian law, has emerged with a different flavor than mainstream media law.

Much of contemporary Indian case law rests on a 1832 legal opinion handed down by then Chief Justice John Marshall that described Indian tribes and their landholdings as "domestic dependent nations." The law that developed in Indian Country was complex and little understood. Commissioner of Indian Affairs Harold Ickes had this to say concerning the legal affairs of natives in 1940: "That Indians have legal rights is a matter of little practical consequence unless the Indians themselves and those who deal with them are aware of those rights. Such, however, is the complexity of the body of Indian law, based upon more than 4,000 treaties and statutes and upon thousands of judicial decisions and administrative rulings, rendered during a century and a half, that one can well understand the vast ignorance of the subject. . ."

Legal scholar Felix Cohen spent much of his career defining what is known as Federal Indian Law. His Handbook is still used in law schools around the country.
The staggering unemployment rates (as high as 35 percent), newspapers and other media ventures are ideal additions to reservation economies because they create a variety of jobs.

The issues of press freedom go well beyond the economic argument. The same laws that govern free press also govern other civil rights. Those issues need to be sorted out at the tribal level. Tribal governments' focus has been on survival; the notion of the rights of an individual in a tribal society have been delayed until the perceived threat is over. It's the rule during conflict versus the rule during peacetime.

I see three audiences for the message of freedom: tribal leaders, tribal judges and lawyers, and the people. I would like to build a cogent argument for freedom of press, speech and spirit based on Indian traditions, as well as those of the Western world.

Tribal leaders are already sensitive to these traditions. The Navajo local government unit, called a chapter, allows anyone the opportunity to speak. Often the chapter meetings will run into the early hours of the morning because each chapter member wants his or her say. When the Navajo Times was either censored or self-censored by an editor, the real free debate in the newspaper took place in the letters to the editor. This is nothing more than the chapter-style speech extended into the newspaper. Moreover, many tribal leaders are now working toward the protection of Indian religions through legislation. We need to make certain that tribal leaders are shown how free religion and free press are the same issue. It is an issue of free spirit.

Tribal judges and lawyers need to discuss First Amendment problems from a legal point of view. Unfortunately, the law is clear: The First Amendment itself does not extend to Indian Country. In 1968 Congress tried to extend the Bill of Rights to the tribes, but the Supreme Court ruled that tribal courts are the judges of civil liberties. Many tribal judges have accepted this challenge; others say they answer to tribal councils and therefore have a limited role.

The very nature of First Amendment rights might best be served by careful negotiation between groups of journalists and tribal governments. We can talk about the basic tenets and set out to develop them, rather than litigating these issues.

Finally, we need to express the importance of these freedoms to tribal members. I happen to believe that discourse within democracy makes government stronger, not weaker. Yet the perception remains in Indian Country that if you publish dissent, you give your enemies an advantage. Indian people need to know that free press is their right, not a right owned by those who govern.

The Indian Reorganization Act model constitution, which many tribes adopted in the mid-1930s, delineates the responsibilities of the political arm of tribal governments, but says nothing about tribal press freedom. It wasn't until 1968, with the passage of the American Indian Civil Rights Act, that language referring to press freedom was addressed.

Until that time, there were virtually no Native American lawyers representing Indian tribes. Today there is a growing number of native lawyers. A wide variety of tribal legal issues revolve around the 371 treaties signed and ratified by the U.S. Congress.

Because of the current push by tribal leaders to assert their quasi-sovereign status as "domestic dependent nations," state and federal government officials are loathe to become embroiled in issues which tribal governments claim are political tribal concerns. At the same time, tribal governments are coming under more intense scrutiny by native journalists.

Tribal governments in the past have had no trouble shutting down tribal newspapers that carried the wrong message. But as natives become more politically sophisticated in the elected representative form of government, they are facing the same challenge of mainstream politicians: How much freedom does the tribal press have in presenting social, economic and political ills to the tribal readership? The First Amendment has contemporary ramifications for native nations since sacred places are threatened with destruction.

The true panacea to this problem is for native journalists to gain enough financial acumen to operate independently of tribal political bodies.

I happen to believe that discourse within democracy makes government stronger, not weaker. Yet the perception remains in Indian Country that if you publish dissent, you give your enemies an advantage.
They teach journalism, don’t they?

Montana public schools have a haphazard approach to journalism instruction

By JIM KITTLE

Journalism instruction is the bastard child of Montana’s public secondary schools. Usually it is lumped under the banner of English class, and more than half of its instructors are English teachers who have been endorsed in the field by taking just one college-level class in the subject. Another third have no formal training in the field at all. Nearly one-fourth of journalism instructors say they do not teach ethics or libel in their classes, and half of them don’t use a text.

These findings are some of the results of a study I conducted for the University of Montana School of Journalism in the Fall of 1992. The study consisted of a two-page survey sent to the journalism instructor at each of the 172 public secondary schools in Montana. I received 112 responses—a return rate of 65.1 percent. I entered the returned data into a computer spreadsheet that calculated the totals and percentages.

The most disturbing result from the study was the minimal teacher preparation demanded by Montana's Office of Public Instruction and OPI's obvious lack of authority to enforce even this low standard. The current Montana teacher certification standard not only allows teachers who major or minor in journalism to be certified in journalism, but it also allows English majors and minors to take any one journalism class to be endorsed in journalism. Yet even with this minimal requirement, 33 percent of journalism instructors have not earned an endorsement.

If journalism is an English course—and rightly included in an English curriculum—it should be a part of an English teacher’s required preparation. However, it isn’t. Journalism is a separate field from English that happens to require a mastery of the language in which it is conducted. So, if students are best served in English class by qualified English teachers, then journalism students would be served best by qualified journalism teachers.

I found that a typical journalism class in Montana is composed of fewer than 20 junior and senior students taught by an English teacher who may have picked up, at the most, one college-level journalism course for an endorsement. Typically, teachers emphasize instruction in news gathering over creative writing. Usually there is a measure of free expression granted to students.

Though many school journalism classes exist to compile a school annual, more than three-fourths of the respondents said their schools sponsor a student newspaper. More than 84 percent of these said their newspaper was a “forum for student expression,” the legal parlance adopted by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1988 Hazelwood decision that delineates when school administrators may censor student's writings. Administrators who grant student-forum status to their student newspapers give up the right to act as publishers and, therefore, to exert control over what is printed.
Making pictures or taking pictures

News photographers set up shots all the time—but does that make it ethical?

By Dan McComb

One of the things that makes a career in photojournalism so attractive is the medium's lack of rules. In news photography, you just do what works; nobody argues with results. But bringing the world to newspaper readers is getting more complicated.

“Seeing is believing” no longer applies to photographs. The cliche question readers used to ask was, “Do you always believe everything you read?” With today’s graphic technology, it's fast becoming, “Do you always believe everything you see?”

In the as-it-happens world of photojournalism, images that appear “too good to be true” frequently are—and not just because skilled computer operators can manipulate them without a trace. Photographers have always been able to influence their pictures at a much more fundamental level: the decision to pose or not to pose a subject.

When taking a picture, a photographer can either shoot things as they unfold, or shoot things as he or she imagines them. But deciding to pose or “set up” a picture so that it appears natural is, in the view of many, a line that photographers and editors cross at their own peril.

Things can get messy.

Consider the recent case of Richard Price, a USA Today West Coast reporter. On Feb. 16, 1993 a picture arranged by Price showing armed gang members ran on the front page under the headline: “Gangs put L.A. on edge.”

But what readers saw that day was entirely set up and passed on to them as news. Gang members had met Price and freelance photographer Bob Riha Jr. under very different circumstances: They were planning on turning in their weapons under a jobs-for-guns program. But that wasn’t the picture Price had in mind for a separate mood piece he was writing on L.A.’s gangs. When the gang members arrived without their weapons, Price actually drove one of them home to retrieve an additional rifle for the picture. Two photos were posed: the gang armed, for the feature, and the gang turning in their weapons, to illustrate a news story, pegged to a press conference the following day when the actual weapon surrender would take place.

Inexplicably—USA Today now blames it on miscommunications—the mood piece with the armed-to-the-teeth photo ran first, with no mention of the jobs-for-guns program. The story ran on the very day a federal jury began deliberations on the second trial of the four L.A. police officers accused of violating Rodney King’s civil rights by beating him.

The jobs-for-guns story ran the next day, but the damage was done. Gang members said they felt betrayed and threatened a libel suit. Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley said the story contributed to racial tensions in L.A. and was “the most reprehensible and irresponsible lapse of journalistic ethics I have witnessed in a long time.” Price, accused of an “unethical lapse” by USA Today editor Peter Prichard, also threatened suit against his
British news photographers, shown at a huge London rally for striking coal miners last year, often set up photos. (Dan McCabe)

The case raises an interesting parallel with the recent ethics scandal at “Dateline: NBC” over rigged explosions in GMC pickup trucks involved in collisions. Eventually, Mike Gartner, the president of NBC News and four other staffers resigned over the affair.

The incidents raise a troubling question: Who is setting the ethical standards these days? If news professionals at national levels are involved in such ethical lapses, what’s happening down the line?

In posing pictures, it’s important to keep several things in mind. An act of photography is as much an act of isolation as it is an act of inclusion. Choosing to set up a photo makes an already distant process even more so. Most people act differently when they’re aware of being photographed. And even if they’re not aware of the camera, what the camera does is arbitrary. Press critic Thomas Griffith explains it well: “Journalism constructs momentarily arrested equilibriums and gives disorder an implied order. That is already two steps from reality.” So choosing to set something up, for whatever reason, is choosing to take yet another step from reality. And any departure from reality is a step toward unbelievability. That’s a high price in the news business, where credibility is everything.

Perhaps one way to think about it is to ask yourself: “Would I feel comfortable taking the picture this way if I had to include cutline information on how it was taken?”

The truth of the matter is that most of us set up pictures every day. From the pet of the week to the portrait of the spelling-bee champion, the biggest question is how we’ll pose it. Often it’s done with the subject smiling and looking directly into the camera—a straightforward technique that tells the reader that the shot was posed. Sometimes it’s less obvious. The subject stares vacantly off camera, as if totally unaware of the photographer.

Saying that something is “set up” implies a certain dishonesty. It’s a term lawyers might use to argue a client was framed. Most thoughtful photojournalists generally prefer to shoot things as they happen, to portray the world as it is rather than as they imagine it. But preferences aside, it’s a fact of the job that many pictures are posed in some way.

Eamonn McCabe, photo editor of the London Guardian, says gone are the days in which it could be said that “photographs don’t lie.” Today, he says, “You can’t trust what you see. Period.” According to McCabe, some British tabloids keep computer files of various sized soccer balls for insertion into photos when a photographer returns from a game with a good action shot—but the ball is missing. Editors apparently believe this computerized addition improves picture quality, but it can sometimes backfire. McCabe recalls one such incident, in
which a ball was accidentally added to an image that already clearly contained a ball.

To British readers, it was a humorous incident—they already know better than to trust what they see in the tabloids. It is quite acceptable—even expected—that photojournalists will set up feature photographs on a daily basis. Some even go so far as to value set-up photos above natural or found situations, believing it reflects more positively on the photographer when he or she can “pre-visualize” situations, rather than merely react to them.

Last fall American photographer Kevin Lamarque, who works for Reuters in London, stayed late after a wreath-laying ceremony at the National War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. He had photographed the event all morning, but wasn’t happy with what he had. Finally he noticed a lone police guard reverently rearranging some of the wreaths. It was a touching moment that evoked the spirit of the day’s events. Later, as he prepared to send his photograph over the wire, a tabloid photographer who was using the same pool machine looked over and saw his picture. “Wow,” he said. “That’s nice. I’ll have that.” The photographer dashed off, asked the police officer to repeat his earlier actions and, about an hour later, returned with a nearly identical photograph.

American readers would almost certainly have responded with outrage, at least to the soccer balls incident. Americans still like to believe that what they see on the pages of a newspaper reflects reality. That’s the belief American news editors still cling to, anyway. But how long this remains the case will depend in large part on how American photographers and editors handle the picture-altering authority that computerization has given them.

Even picture-getting tactics like the policeman and the wreath are offensive to many Americans’ sensibilities. In England, Lamarque says, to be imitated is to be complimented. Does that make it right? Lamarque doesn’t think so. Many American photographers would agree. But ultimately, where to draw the line is a decision photographers must make for themselves—and for their readers—every day.

Test your photo ethics . . .

What would you do in the following situations? On p. 60, see how Montana photographers and photo editors answered these questions.

1. Suppose your paper learns of an anti-logging demonstration in which protesters will chain themselves to some trees. The photographer (you or whomever you assign to cover it) gets lost on the way to the protest, but when he or she finally arrives, a handful of remaining protesters offer to chain themselves back to a tree, where they had been during the demonstration earlier. If the photographer agreed and took the pictures, (knowing that the paper was depending on him to come back with images), would you run the pictures if you knew how they had been taken?

2. If you think disciplinary action is appropriate for the photographer in the above instance, what would that action be?

3. Suppose you assign a photographer, or you yourself go, to take a picture of a new kind of logging machinery for a story on how changes in technology affect business. The photographer travels to the logging area to get a picture of the machine in action, but on arrival finds it has shut down for the day. The photographer asks the operator to restart the machine and operate it so the pictures can be taken, and the operator is happy to comply. Would you have any problems running pictures made under those circumstances?

4. Suppose you assign a photographer, or go yourself, to take a feature photograph at a new water slide. At the slide, the photographer envisions a picture and asks several kids to play in the water at a specific point under the slide. The kids were playing in that general location anyway, and probably (if the photographer had unlimited time, which isn’t the case) the picture could have been made without posing it. But posing it saved time. Would you have any problems running such a picture, if you knew how it had been taken?
A frozen fable

By SHARON BARRETT

N ANUS LIVES IN ANOTHER WORLD. He/she knows a little about other places and is eager to learn more. So one day, when an American comes to his/her town, Nanus starts asking questions.

Nanus — Which is farther from Another World? Miami or the United States?

American — Miami is part of the United States.

Nanus — Oh. (Thinks awhile) So, tell me this: Which is farther? Chicago or the United States?

American — Chicago is part of the United States.

Nanus — Oh. (Thinks some more) Which is farther? New York or the United States?

American — Do you mean the state of New York or the city of New York?

Nanus does not have an answer. He/she only has questions. But it doesn’t matter.

The American is the head of American Media. He is bowled over by Nanus’s ability to ask questions. He hires Nanus on the spot and sends him/her from Another World to the American Media Headquarters, as an assignment editor.

Nanus is an overnight success. The next morning, thinking about the kind of questions that got him/her hired, Nanus assigns all the reporters for American Media to answer: Which is farther, Montana or the United States?

One reporter responds with a question: Farther from what?

But Nanus, as we already know, does not have answers.

As for the rest of the reporters, most of them are philosophically opposed to Nanus’s question. In a class action memo, they tell him/her: “Despite a tendency of some in American Media toward postmodernism, we are still trying to get the hang of existentialism. As far as we’re concerned, Montana doesn’t exist.”

But several open-minded types, known as the Few, say in their minority opinion memo: “We’ll nose around, see what we can come up with.” In due time, the Few arrive in the Land of Sky Blue Waters. They quickly begin filing stories that might provide an answer to Nanus’s question. Eventually one of them gets a tip that the Real Story, along with Andie MacDowell, Glenn Close, Ted Turner, Jane Fonda, Liz Claiborne, and Tom McGuane, is not in the Land of Sky Blue Waters. It’s in Big Sky country. They publish corrections (not very big ones because after all, they were right about the Sky part) and fly to Montana.

One of the Few immediately spots the Real Story. After he reports the Real Story, he then reports that Sen. Max Baucus is interested in running for president. At American Media Headquarters, people are amused by the Baucus story. Nanus is neither amused nor impressed. He/she says the story is politics as usual.

Other reporters, along with filing the Real Story, start hunting for politics-as-unusual stories. Some, in writing such stories, show their flair for American Media style as well as American Media stylebooks:

*The Supreme Court says this state isn’t big enough for the both of them—Congressmen Ron Marlenee and Pat Williams, that is.*

*Dorothy Bradley isn’t just horsing around; she’s rounding up votes, and it’s taxing work.*

Before long, people are hearing and reading about Montana every time they change channels or turn the page. In addition to the Real Story, which is reported again and again, there are reports of: a baseball player who snorts cocaine; bears who eat hikers; writers, artists and musicians who know there’s more than one Manhattan in the world; Mr. Clinton who goes to Billings; Mrs. Quayle who goes to Bozeman; French water that’s “part of the local color” in Whitefish; revisionists who change Custer’s Last Stand to the Battle of the Little Big Horn; highwaymen who terrorize tourists; and a river that runs through it all.

Says one of the Few, I think the American Media reporters, especially considering the way we’ve gone after the Real Story, have put Montana on the map.

When the Few get back to Headquarters, Nanus asks again, Well, which is farther, Montana or the United States?

Montana is part of the United States. Look at the map. Nanus opens an atlas. He does not find Montana. At the suggestion of one of the Few, he turns to another source—to a map more beautiful than all others, clear, uncluttered, with stunning colors. And there it is, thanks to the Real Story: Montana—Coldest place in the nation.

Moral Question: Which is farther, Cut Bank or West Yellowstone?

Moral Answer: Wisdom.
Those of us who were born in Montana call ourselves natives. Our fathers were born here. Maybe even our grandfathers. We grew up in the state that we loved, camping, hiking, fishing, hunting. But we weren’t the first natives. The first natives were several tribes of Indians who moved in and out of the area, hunting, fishing, coexisting with the land. Almost 48,000 Native Americans live in Montana today. Yet today there is little understanding by Montana’s other 750,000 residents of Indian history, culture and issues.

The School of Journalism at the University of Montana has been trying to integrate into its curriculum more information on Montana’s Indians. It has had an active recruitment program for Native American journalism students. The Montana Kaimin produced a “Native News Page.” Speeches and workshops have featured Native American journalists. The past two years, an honors course has examined critical Montana Indian issues.

Last year reporters and photographers, Native Americans and whites, combined to explore education issues. This year students covering Native American health issues have found out that Indians who leave the reservation often are without health insurance.

Access to care is a major problem. In Montana nearly 50 percent of Indians do not have phones. Another 20 percent have no transportation. Many live more than 100 miles from health care centers.

Montana’s Indians suffer from a high rate of diabetes, sudden infant death syndrome, depression that leads to suicide attempts, alcoholism and substance abuse. Montana’s Indians also die younger than their white counterparts. Students have reported on how different tribes are combatting these problems. More Indians are becoming doctors and nurses and returning to their reservations. Tribes are working to establish preventative health care measures.

Students who are asked to join the honors course receive a broad education. They are required to read about Indian history, culture and current issues. They prepare research reports on assigned topics, then detail their findings to the rest of the class. Guest speakers, mostly Native Americans, are experts on a variety of issues. Teams of students, one photographer and one reporter, find the stories that relate to their topic. They establish their contacts and travel throughout the state, missing days of classes, to get their stories. As with the first issue of Indian education, this fall we are publishing and distributing a 30-page tabloid section detailing our findings.

The benefits are many. Journalism students receive a much better education about Montana’s Indians. These future journalists, many of whom will be living in states where there are Indian populations, will have some of the background and sensitivity to do a better job of reporting on Native Americans. Students learn how to work together, work on in-depth reports and improve their writing.
Heart Butte Sweethearts + One
A young unwed mother gets the help she needs.

Photos by Jay Schweitzer  Story by Elizabeth Ichizawa

It’s 7 A.M. on a school day and Kristal Davis has to get up. Above her bed hang heavy-metal posters and a picture of a unicorn. A stereo and rock albums sit in a corner, photos of friends adorn the mirror, and athletic and academic awards decorate the walls. It is a typical teenager’s room, except for one thing: the squirmy little body curled next to Kristal’s slender one.

Kristal and her 15-month-old son, Chad, are about to start their day.

For Kristal, who lives with her mother, brother and son in Heart Butte on the Blackfeet Reservation, it will be a full and carefully organized one. She will get Chad and herself dressed and fed, then drop the boy at his great-grandmother’s on her way to school. In the afternoon there might be basketball or cross-country practice and in the evening a 32-mile drive into Browning for training as a substance abuse peer counselor. In between she will tend Chad, grab time with her boyfriend, Chad’s father, Steve Bull Child, and work on maintaining straight-A grades.

For Chad, a sturdy and confident toddler, the day will be filled with the people who make up his world. Mummy, of course, but also grandma and great-grandma, who help take care of him, assorted friends and relatives of Kristal’s, and Daddy, who plays with him in the evening.

Seventeen-year-old Kristal is, as school counselor Jack Edmo says, “an exceptional young woman,” but her ability as super-mom to juggle academics, athletics and motherhood owes much to the traditional Native American extended family, where children are welcomed and valued, whatever the circumstances of their birth.

Heart Butte is a cluster of low wooden houses, dwarfed by the prairie and the awesome peaks of the Rocky Mountain Front. Its one large building is Heart Butte School, a place where Kristal’s situation is not unique. The birth rate among high school-aged Indian women in Montana is more than three times greater than the rate for all other women aged 15 to 19. And in 1990 the American Indian Health Care Association reports, more than one of every three Indian women aged 18 or 19 gave birth.

At Heart Butte School, four of the students are mothers. Nine women have become mothers in the four years since the school was built, and all have stayed in school.
to keep the girls in school, Mary Louise LittleIntegrated. I tell them, don’t forget your education, where 15 or younger, there is a chance for adoption. It’s not unusual to see babies at basketball with the baby, they’ll call it a tender side of the hat side of 19-year-old Mavis, wary of strangers. Little Dog, does not share under in jeopardy. “I she says. “I still do.” 5 was traumatic for her mother, her running coach and a family friend, Karen Davis’ anger evaporated, and today she dotes on her grandson. “Now I wouldn’t change it for the world,” she says. Kristal, who will be a senior this fall, expects to be valedictorian of her class and plans to attend Montana State University, as does Bull Child. “Kristal has a lot of dreams, and she is planning to go after them. She knows education is the name of the game,” says Edmo.

Little Dog and Kristal’s obstetrical practitioner also monitored the teenager’s pregnancy, since very young mothers are at risk of complications, including low birth weight. A 1993 study by the American Indian Health Care Association shows that complications from pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of hospitalizations among Montana Indians.

During Kristal’s labor, which was attended by her mother, her running coach and a family friend, Karen Davis’ anger evaporated, and today she dotes on her grandson. “Now I wouldn’t change it for the world,” she says. Kristal, who will be a senior this fall, expects to be valedictorian of her class and plans to attend Montana State University, as does Bull Child. “Kristal has a lot of dreams, and she is planning to go after them. She knows education is the name of the game,” says Edmo.

But it’s hard. She no longer has much time for friends or rock music, and when Chad wants Mummy, and Mummy has been on the go for 14 hours and still has to study for a French test, it is hard indeed.

As for regrets, they are not apparent when she grins at her bright-eyed boy. “It’s worth it,” she says.
Portraits from Montana

The photographs on this page, on pages 30-31 and on the cover were taken by students selected for an honors course at the UM School of Journalism during the 1992-93 school year. The course focused on health issues involving Native Americans in Montana.

Right: Babe Gopher, 83, remembers a Big Sky paradise, but the only piece of Montana she’ll ever own is staked out in her memories. Gopher is a Bear Claw Indian—one of the “landless” tribes in the state. [Jon Detweiler]

Below: The house is dark and without utilities. For some people on one eastern Montana reservation alcohol is a way of life. This group, which spends many hours in this house, is called the “Lysol Gang.” Its members discovered that when mixed with a gallon of water, Lysol makes an inexpensive and potent intoxicant. [John Youngbear]
The wasteland of bureaucracy

Investigative Report: A federal public health agency has done next to nothing in the USA's largest Superfund site

By LILLY TUHOLSKE

OUR LADY OF THE ROCKIES, a modern tribute to Mary, the mother of Christ, stands on a crest of the east ridge above Butte, Montana, near the Continental Divide. The 90-foot, white statue, financed and built by the descendants of Irish Catholic miners, presides over an unlikely dominion. Beneath the towering figure lies a 100-year legacy of mining wastes and the eastern border of the largest hazardous waste dump in the nation.

With its silhouettes of old mining rigs, virtually all of uptown Butte comprises the first of four separate but contiguous Superfund sites. Beginning there, a carpet of contaminants that include lead, arsenic, mercury, copper and zinc spreads northwest across farms and ranches along Montana's Clark Fork River. The toxic trail runs to nearby Anaconda, where much of the ore was smelted, and continues for 120 miles to the tiny community of Milltown, which borders the river where it is dammed.

Butte is a town that has lived and died for mining. During the course of a century, miners hauled $22 billion worth of gold, silver and copper from the city's mountains, with the bulk of the profits going to the Anaconda Mining Company. The mining empire dominated Montana politics, filled the state's coffers and colored the region's history until the mid-1970s, when large-scale mining was phased out after the Atlantic Richfield Company bought out Anaconda.

In 1982 a local health department worker, running routine tests on residential well water, found arsenic in the drinking water of several Milltown homes. The source of the arsenic was mining wastes that had accumulated in the reservoir behind the Milltown Dam. The discovery of the arsenic prompted the Environmental Protection Agency to eventually make all the land from Butte to Milltown eligible to be cleaned up with Superfund money. Ever since, the EPA has been conducting studies and slowly ridding the area of its wastes. To date, a fraction of the work is complete.

In the meanwhile, more than 40,000 people who live on site have never been adequately informed about the potential health threat that the region's contaminants may present. Ten years after the area was named to the Superfund program, public health receives only token acknowledgment by the agency Congress created to monitor and protect health on federal Superfund sites, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

The agency has not undertaken any comprehensive health study of the region, nor has it fulfilled its own requirements for conducting health assessments on the four Superfund sites.

This is the case even though the region is marked by a population that holds some of the worst health records in the state for death rates and incidence of cancer, and even though an unusually high number of Butte and Anaconda children suffer from learning disabilities, a problem linked with lead poisoning.
While the EPA carries the tasks of determining which sites need to be cleaned up and administering the Superfund program itself, the ATSDR is charged with specific health responsibilities on each site. Health assessments by the agency are supposed to determine the nature of the site's contaminants, the ways people could get exposed to them, and what the consequences of exposure would be.

The law stipulates two purposes for the health assessments: (1) to decide whether human exposure to contaminants on a site should be reduced; and (2) to decide whether additional health studies are warranted.

The provisions for the ATSDR were written by Curtis Moore, who throughout subtle and insidious ways in which the legal system was ill-equipped to deal with,” Moore said.

The potential for human exposure on hazardous waste sites is tremendous. The ATSDR later estimated that more than 40 million people live within four miles of a Superfund site and more than 4 million live as close as one mile from one. Nearly 2 million of these people represent those most susceptible to illness or injury: women of childbearing age, children and the elderly.

In creating the ATSDR under Superfund, Moore’s goal was to provide some measure of protection for victims. “After all, the victim’s only relationship to these incidents, ordinarily, is he’s the poor sucker who got hit by the train,” he said. “He’s an innocent bystander.”

Yet two years were to pass following Superfund’s enactment before Moore’s agency was formally established. Stephen Lester, a Harvard-trained toxicologist, who at the time was working as a consultant for the Love Canal Homeowner’s Association, recalled the early days of the fledgling agency: “What happened as far as we can tell is that the agency was given no money. They were given no specific task. They had no leader. And they had no direction other than what was laid out in
Superfund, which was very vague.” In April 1983, the Public Health Service issued a notice in the Federal Register announcing the ATSDR’s creation.

According to the Superfund law, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry was to establish a national registry of individuals exposed to toxic substances; to collect literature about the health effects of toxic substances; to maintain a list of contaminated areas closed to the public; to provide medical care to exposed individuals; and to study the relationship between toxic exposure and illness.

But in 1983 nothing along these lines had been done, except for initiating a few epidemiological studies. Nowhere was there any comprehensive effort to monitor and protect public health on federal Superfund sites. And the ATSDR was, at best, a stepchild. The agency had to share its chief administrator with the Centers for Disease Control, a situation that remains in place today. Indeed, in 1985 it was the CDC, not the ATSDR, that conducted urinary arsenic studies on children living in Anaconda. The study resulted in the eventual relocation of families who lived in Anaconda’s Mill Creek community, when their children were discovered to have extremely high levels of arsenic in their urine. (Moving these families represents the only instance on the entire Clark Fork Superfund project, where thousands of individuals live, when health studies led to the EPA’s decision to move people from their homes.)

Despite its comprehensive mandate, the ATSDR received only a token budget at birth. Although most federal agencies submit budgets directly to the Office of Management and Budget for approval, the ATSDR sends its budget to the EPA, with which it competes for Superfund dollars.

In 1983 the ATSDR proposed a $21 million budget. The EPA reduced the amount requested to $3.2 million. For the next decade, the EPA annually reduced the ATSDR’s requested budget, often by more than 20 percent. As if playing a cat-and-mouse game, Congress regularly provided the ATSDR with more funds than requested by the EPA, but never at the level originally requested by the ATSDR.

It’s no wonder, therefore, that when Congress reauthorized Superfund in 1986, Moore’s committee reported that “the

health-related authorities of [the Superfund law] have not been adequately exercised.”

The reauthorization bill substantially increased the ATSDR’s responsibilities, and the legislation provided that the agency would receive a minimum annual budget: $50 million in 1987, increasing annually until 1991. To date the ATSDR has never received the minimum budget.

One of the most important new responsibilities delegated to the agency was conducting health assessments on all 951 Superfund sites. The law required that the assessments be completed by December 1988, just 24 months after Superfund was reauthorized. The sheer volume of work required was tremendous, especially given that in 1986 the ATSDR had fewer than 100 employees. Though its annual reports claim the agency completed the health assessments, the agency did nothing of the sort. To satisfy Congress, the agency fraudulently relabeled at least 165 file reports with health assessment covers.

In August 1991, the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of Congress, discovered the re-labeled documents. Additionally, the GAO found that of the 786 health assessments that actually were conducted, many were of “uneven quality and of questionable value.” Most constituted no more than a few pages of text. Few contained any health data at all.

The so-called health assessment for Butte is a memo on whether people who swam or waded in Butte’s polluted Silver Bow Creek would incur health problems. The memo doesn’t address the widespread contamination in Butte nor does it determine whether Butte’s 34,000 residents might be exposed to lead, cadmium or any of the other contaminants that lace the streets of the town.

As with Butte, the so-called ATSDR health assessment for Anaconda was fabricated, too, and did not address the widespread arsenic contamination there nor possible human exposure.

Over the years various entities have conducted some medical tests. For example, the Atlantic Richfield Company, which may ultimately be required to pay for cleanup, has financed a University of Cincinnati study of blood lead in Butte’s children. The Centers for Disease Control conducted urinary arsenic tests in Anaconda. And the ATSDR did study arsenic...
Among the state's 21 largest high schools, Anaconda and Butte rank first and second, respectively, for rates of learning disorder and cognitive disorder.

Silver Bow Creek runs out of the mountains and through the steeply sloped town of Butte. For decades no fish have lived in the creek nor have insects nor even the various microbes one finds in a mountain stream. Life abandoned the creek when it became a dump for Butte's mines. Some 30 miles downstream in Anaconda, the Washoe Stack looms 585 feet from its base atop a densely black mountain of slag left over from the Anaconda Mining Company's smelter. Beneath the slag mountain spills forth a moonscape of barren soil—thousands of acres of brown, orange and white settling ponds filled with smelting wastes.

The EPA has found that the contaminants throughout the region vary considerably. In Butte entire neighborhoods were built atop waste rock from the mines. Soils, some oozing mercury, held upwards of 3,000 parts per million of lead. In Anaconda arsenic, that for 80 years had spewed from the Washoe Stack, permeated ranch land and residential yards. Downstream, copper spoiled the Clark Fork when summer thunderstorms occasionally washed toxic soil from the banks into the river, killing thousands of fish. Cadmium contaminated soil and threatened groundwater.

Any one of these contaminants is potentially deadly. Lead has no place in the human body. It has been shown to diminish IQ, reduce a child's growth and behave as a neurotoxin. Absorption of arsenic leads to stomach irritation and heart abnormalities. Cadmium, also a carcinogen, is linked to kidney and heart disease, lung damage and even death. Exposure to mercury can lead to fetal formations, brain and kidney damage.

This dirty little secret of beautiful Montana remains largely unrecognized. No sign tells unwary out-of-towners they'll be venturing into a hazardous waste zone simply by driving into uptown Butte or stopping to fish along the upper reaches of the Clark Fork. Only quietly is it mentioned that together the EPA and the Atlantic Richfield Company have spent upwards of $54 million over the past 10 years trying to figure out how to rid the region of its toxic wastes.

But what sits in the most deafening silence of all are the public health records. Both Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties, home to Butte and Anaconda, rank high for incidence of death and reportable disease within Montana and nationwide.

Deer Lodge County ranked first and Silver Bow County was in the top five among Montana's most populous counties in death rate from heart disease in both 1990 and 1991. For the same years, they were among the top 10 for cancer mortality.

Considering incidence of cancer (as opposed to deaths due to cancer), in the years from 1983 to 1990, Deer Lodge County ranked first for breast cancer among Montana's most populous counties. Deer Lodge and Silver Bow were among the top 10 for all other reportable cancers (colo/rectal, pancreatic, lung, prostate and bladder) during those years.

Nationally, the rate of cancer among women in Butte ranked within the top 5 percent of U.S. counties between 1970-79. And in the years between 1949 and 1971, Butte's rate of death from diseases was highest or among the highest of any of 480 ranked U.S. cities.

Perhaps much more insidious are problems which may be related to lead, namely reduced IQ. The 1991 Montana Special Education Child Count, an annual report compiled by the state Department of Public Instruction, reveals that among the state's 21 largest high schools, Anaconda and Butte rank first and second, respectively, for rates of learning disorder and cognitive disorder. In both cases, the rate is nearly twice that of the other big schools.

Whether these poor health statistics are a result of the region's environmental contaminants is anyone's guess. Linking cause and effect of environmental toxins broadly across a community requires extensive study of vital statistics and health records. It requires going out and interviewing individuals. It requires asking the right questions, questions that are supposed to be asked by the ATSDR when health assessments are completed.
The EPA's job on a Superfund site is not to determine whether anyone has become injured or ill, but rather, to prove that a potential threat exists, so that a polluter can be forced to pay for the cleanup. The agency employs a process known as risk analysis to determine the degree of pollution on a site.

In risk analysis, scientists gather data from each site's soil, air and water and make estimates concerning who might come into contact with the contaminated medium, the frequency of that contact, and the like. All of the information (including the estimates) is then processed, producing a number designating the relative risk to a specific illness, like cancer, that an individual living on the site might incur. When the EPA's standards for risk are exceeded (for instance, if the analysis points toward greater than one in 10,000 risk of an individual getting cancer), then a site must be cleaned up.

EPA staffers working on the Clark Fork sites agree that gathering data enough to force payment for cleanup (in this case, by ARCO) is the driving force behind their work. If the EPA were required to establish that exposure to hazardous chemicals is actually occurring on each site, or that physical harm has occurred, cleanup would be mired in legal battles, the staffers say. For example, how can you define physical harm when a carcinogen has a 30-year lag time before taking its toll?

What's important to understand is that the EPA's use of risk analysis and the ATSDR's mandate to gather health data have never been compatible. So focused are EPA personnel on their risk program, that they often don't see any need for the ATSDR's work. Several Montana EPA staffers admitted that they weren't sure what the ATSDR was supposed to do. Yet in the absence of the ATSDR's involvement, how adequate is the risk analysis?

Stephen Lester, now science director for the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes, Inc., points out that in some cases the industry that is ultimately responsible for cleaning up Superfund sites has influenced the risk model or analysis results.

Such was the case when an ARCO-financed blood lead study among Butte's children ultimately resulted in the EPA adjusting its cleanup standard for lead-contaminated soils in Butte. The University of Cincinnati, which conducted the research, found that the Butte children who were tested had blood lead levels lower than the national average.

While the EPA had originally proposed cleaning up soils with greater than 1,000 parts per million lead, because of the study outcome it will now most likely clean up only those soils with greater than 1,500 parts per million lead. Thus ARCO has saved itself considerable amounts of money because fewer areas in Butte will be cleaned up. In its 1991 report, (continued on Page 58)
An uncommon woman makes sense

All things considered, Kim Williams’ joie de vivre and social conscience shines through

By S. A. Snyder

It’s a rainy afternoon in the late summer of 1985, and Ian Frazier of The New Yorker is interviewing Kim Williams, a well-loved, nine-year veteran of National Public Radio commentaries. But this isn’t a traditional interview. Instead, Frazier jots down notes on a soggy notebook in the cold, August drizzle as Williams picks chokecherries from her neighbor’s trees and from the ground in the back alleys of her Missoula neighborhood. She will can preserves and serve them, along with a cup of tea or smoked fish that her husband, Mel, caught, to her friends or to miscellaneous reporters and out-of-town visitors.

“. . . I have all this fruit sitting on my conscience,” Williams says. This, she tells Frazier, is her excuse to her editor why she can’t just sit down now and finish her fourth book. And how could her editor not understand this eccentric excuse? After all, Williams’ book is about “uncommon sense,” much of it devoted to self-sufficiency.

As she collects the fruit she tells, no preaches to, Frazier about how people should learn to get along with less and with each other. She wants Americans to think about their wasteful consumption habits and their impact on the Earth: “Where else in the world does one person have four or five or six rooms all to himself with a lighting system, a heating system, a hot-water system, a food-refrigerating system—all running-purring-humming for one person?”

When the 4-foot, 10-inch Williams, hands on hips, eyes looking right up into yours, lectured, you listened. She was genuinely concerned about every social and environmental problem facing the world. Many people who knew Williams casually delight in recalling her sermons, both on and off the air. Closer friends recall her affectionately as—in the words of one—the “bossy agitator” who at times pushed the limits of friendship, until both parties had to take months-long breaks from each other.

For ten years until her death from ovarian cancer in August 1986, Williams had been a commentator for NPR’s “All Things Considered,” as well as for Missoula’s public radio station, KUFM, based at the University of Montana where she got her broadcasting start. NPR’s Susan Stamberg recalls listening to Williams’ audition tape sent by Phil Hess, then the director of the university’s department of radio and television. Stamberg and her colleagues were “immediately taken with her.” Her conversational speaking style and her high-pitched, New York accent with a hint of je ne sais quoi (kind of a Glinda the Good gone awry) couldn’t help but turn ears and radio dials either off or up.

Williams’ down-home commentaries garnered a large following throughout the country. She talked about everything from getting outdoors in spring to look for the first wildflowers to eating fried worms. Her commentaries led to her last book, “Kim Williams’ Book of Uncommon
Sense: A Practical Guide With 10 Rules
For Nearly Everything."

When NPR learned Williams was
dying, Stamberg wanted to say good-bye
on the air. Stamberg says, "It is the most
painful interview I've ever done." Both
women seemed at ease with the topic and
spoke very candidly about dying. Williams
said, "it is amazing how many letters I
have received from people who say they
are going to climb a mountain or walk
along a river or on a city street, and they
will send their thoughts and energies, and
they think that they will meet mine." Stamberg said, "I believe that." "I do
too," Williams said. They thanked each
other and said goodbye. Stamberg says the
sound of the phone hanging up was inten-
tionally left on the tape. "It was as if our
lifeline with Kim had been cut, right then.
For the first time in all my radio years, I
cried on the air and could barely get
through our traditional sign-off."

That interview prompted the largest
response to any single piece ever before aired by
NPR. More than 150 letters poured into
the station from fans across the country,
most saying they would pick berries or go for
walks and hope to meet Williams' spirit
sometime along the way. One woman summa-
rized how many listeners felt: "Kim
Williams' conversation with you almost
broke my heart; you see, I feel she is a friend I
haven't yet invited to join us for dinner."

Williams also wrote a cookbook
despite the fact that her friends say she
was a terrible cook) complete with several
of her commentaries. Most of her recipes
called for wild plants found in forests,
meadows, marshes, or your own back-
yard. One of Williams' favorite recipes,
which she also called a "spring ritual" was
dandelion salad. She was adamantly
opposed to using herbicides to kill what
most people considered weeds. She was
even able to convince some university stu-
dents to dig dandelions, by hand, on cam-
pus so that maintenance crews wouldn't
have to spray herbicides.

Williams received her master's degree in
interdisciplinary studies at the University
of Montana in 1981, combining English,
journalism and environmental studies. She
also taught a course on wild edible plants,
 wrote two books on the subject and put
together a short field guide about the wild-
flowers around Missoula. She was a mem-
ber of the scholastic honorary society Phi
Beta Kappa. "She was brilliant," says Leo
Lott, a close friend and former professor
Williams didn’t like the cocktail parties and upper-crust social life she was forced to participate in because of her husband’s position.

Williams also lectured her friends about the shoulds and should-nots of living frugally and taking care of the environment. “We used to have some wonderful arguments,” Lott says. “She wanted us to live her style of living.” Lott said that Kim once told him he would be the first one she would shoot when there was a revolution. In spite of that, Lott could never stay mad at her, although he admits that he and his wife would grow tired of her cajoling and have to cool their friendship for short periods.

Kim Williams was born Elizabeth Kandiko on Sept. 21, 1923, in upstate New York to a Hungarian immigrant couple. She was the fourth of seven children, six of whom were girls. Her oldest sister, Froni Crane, remembers Williams in her younger days as the “queen bee” who never liked to labor or do chores on the farm. “Little labors of life didn’t bother her,” Crane says. Instead, “Bets,” as they called her, “mesmerized and organized” her three younger sisters to do the work for her.

At 16 Williams graduated as valedictorian from high school. She went to Cornell on a scholarship and graduated in 1944 with a degree in home economics and a minor in botany. She struck out for California, where she became the “original hippy,” according to her husband. She was a copy girl for the Los Angeles Examiner and bragged about being fired from about 20 other jobs. Eventually she landed a job with Flower Grower magazine in New York City, and in 1951 married Mel Williams, 13 years her senior, whom she met in a nightclub. Later in life, she called Mel her oak tree and thought of herself as a raven with a nest in that tree who came and went freely.

Mel had already spent several years in South America as a mining engineer and had the opportunity to go back to work for Joy Manufacturing Company in Santiago, Chile. The couple left the States in 1952 and lived for the next 19 years in Chile.

Williams’ life in South America strongly influenced her world view. In her many journals, she wrote often of the poor.

Giving away vasectomies

Public radio fundraising, Montana style, goes to the dogs (and cats)

By Kay D. Wilson

Find the common denominator: worm bins, . . . yodelling lessons, . . . plum chutney, . . . radon testing, . . . a vasectomy, . . . pregnant onion plants.

Give up? It’s springtime in the Rockies, Montana Public Radio style, and these are some of the uncommon goods, services and treats available as premiums during KUFM/KGPR’s annual fundraiser. During Public Radio Week, people throughout western Montana get acquainted with one another and support a valued service in the process, while the station acts as a distribution point for these treasures—listeners donate them and other listeners pledge money to get them.

Folks from Butte will go bird hunting with people in the Flathead; a man from Great Falls will savor his premium of MacIntosh apples from gardeners in the Bitterroot Valley; a young man from Whitefish will escort a couple from Helena through Glacier National Park by bicycle; a woman from Missoula will receive a huckleberry cheesecake from a new neighbor. This custom of sharing, which has become the heart of Public Radio Week, began in 1977 when a woman gave KUFM some homemade bread because she could not afford to give money.

In 1993 there were more than 1,800 premiums, including blacksmithing classes, cactus gardens, a kayaking cruise, composition of an Elizabethan sonnet, dog sled rides, homemade rhubarb wine and Kahlua, live goats, hand-loomed wool...
social conditions and particularly about women. "...in Latin America when men take mistresses women take the waters." "The wife and her mother or sister went to a mineral resort and sat in mud baths, and spent money, maybe that was the main premise, the spending of money." Perhaps this prompted her first of 10 rules for marriage in "Uncommon Sense": "You need money of your own. It doesn’t have to be much—just enough to be able to, well, leave home, I guess."

High Heels in the Andes, describing Williams’ life as an American in Chile, was published in 1959. She also taught English at a Catholic university and wrote a column for the English newspaper, The South Pacific Mail. Her column, "Under The Lemon Tree," was similar to the ones she would later write for the Missoulian, the Butte Montana Standard, and the Brunswick (Md.) Citizen. Topics ranged from camping, wildlife viewing, and picnicking to using oranges for barter and making a plea for donating materials to a handicapped children’s school in Santiago.

Williams didn’t like the cocktail parties and upper-crust social life she was forced to participate in because of her husband’s position. Later she would write, “I tried to join the affluent society, but it wasn’t in me. I felt more at home in rummage-sale corduroys, attending lectures on soil erosion, protein hunger in the Third World, organic gardening.”

After Marxist President Salvador Allende came to power in 1971, riding a wave of anti-Americanism, the Williamses hurriedly sold off most of their possessions and fled for home. In letters to her family, Williams mentions selling a leopard fur coat. “Now that,” she said, “is really the end of an era.”

When the Williamses decided to settle in Missoula (a move Kim would make only because it had a university) she bought thriftshop items and rumbled through alley trash cans to complete her home—a Kim Williams trademark that led friends to believe they were poor and one friend to call her “economically inactive.”

Most of Kim Williams’ history now sits, uncatalogued and disheveled, in almost a dozen banker’s boxes at the uni-

scarves and dinner at the Drift-In-Pizzeria in Southern Cross, Montana. (Only two people live in this tiny hamlet in the southwest part of the state, and it often takes snow shoes to reach the town!)

KUFM/KGPR’s Public Radio Week distinguishes itself because people love to listen and they love being involved in it. They volunteer their time, donate their wares and then call in their pledges—often window shopping for the perfect premium, which this year was a load of manure. Special broadcasts add to the fun. People chuckle at Opera Boffo, obscure and often astonishing operatic selections, embellished by outrageous tongue-in-cheek descriptions of the composers, artists and performances. They revel in Bach To Bach, a six-hour excursion into the heart of classical music by the German master. And then they wait for Pet Wars, Public Radio Week’s fundraising finale—a call-in frenzy in which pet owners cast a vote for which is more beloved by them: dogs or cats.

During a chaotic four hours on Sunday evening, the last night of pledge week, callers promise money in the name of a favorite pet, sometimes living, often dead, occasionally imaginary. Votes for each critter are tallied at midnight, when the most popular pet is announced.

Pet Wars began as teasing between program hosts who owned dogs or cats, each believing the other’s pet was useless. Listeners joined the razzing by adding messages to their pledges, sometimes eulogizing their departed canines or kittens and always declaring their species was the best. This year cats were the most popular, followed by dogs, llamas, birds, skunks, pigs, rats, rabbits, reptiles, and two votes for pet peeves!

When the fanfare was over and the last few pledges trickled in, KUFM/KGPR had raised $229,290. Not bad for a station whose signal reaches only 40 percent of Montana’s population with 36 hours of weekly news and an eclectic selection of music and talk shows.
It is time to move on.
Out of this consciousness.
My body refusing food.
My mind already detached.
My spirit wandering—seeking oblivion—
seeking a new realm?
perhaps a meshing with
a universal spirit,
or energy.
I wrote my book.
This is my life, it says.
This is what I have to say.
Now, may I move on?

—Kim Williams

Nearly seven years after her death, I found myself sitting with a small congregation of Unitarians on a drizzly Sunday morning in Missoula. The sermon was by Kim Williams, a tape recording of herself reading excerpts from her last book. How to prevent colds: “First of all, eat real food—none of that pre-cooked, pre-digested, two-minute, three-minute stuff. So much has been done to that food you might as well eat sawdust and melt a vitamin pill on top.” How to live together: “Go to the mountains to yell. Get it out of your system.” “Make someone laugh before the sun goes down.”

Ten rules for marriage: “If he breaks your arm, shoot him.” “Don’t read women’s magazines. They are a trap. They lead to Barefoot and Pregnant, P for Perfection, and SuperMom.” Ten spring rituals: “Plan a day to Search for Spring.” “Identify one new flower or bird.” Ten ways to hold on to summer: “I shall climb a mountain. Sit on the top like a buddha, and think. At least, I’ll meditate a little.”

This was the church where Williams worshipped, not because she found it after searching for a suitable congregation. But because it was close enough to walk there.

Williams’ taped voice ends abruptly during her reading of ten ways to hold on to summer. We are jolted back to reality, the sound of the tape recording snapping off, the click of the phone hanging up, the sudden death of her voice. “To be with her was to have an enthusiastic experience about whatever it was,” Lott concludes the sermon.

Exhausted after months of physical pain, unable to eat, and perhaps still a little confused (why her?), Kim Williams died in her sleep with a smile on her face. Mel spread her ashes in a place known only to themselves and to the wild things that live there.
Tales of the postmodern frontier

The Missoula Independent capitalizes on old-fashioned point-of-view journalism

By ERIC JOHNSON

THIS, IN A NUTSHELL, IS HOW THINGS STAND IN THE daily newspaper business: We read more and more copies of fewer and fewer newspapers, and the fewer newspapers read and look more alike. Lop the flag off the papers in your journalism library, and I defy you to tell me what papers they are or where they are published. The daily competitive newspaper has gone the way of the homing pigeon and the buffalo lap robe, but now there is hope that in its place will grow the roots, trunk and branches of a sturdy grove of new, competing newspapers: the metropolitan weekly, fortnightly or monthly newspapers. This is the new frontier in American journalism.

—BRUCE B. BRUGMANN, Publisher, San Francisco Bay Guardian, April 15, 1968.

Twenty-five years ago, when Bruce Brugmann delivered his Dean Stone Address at the UM School of Journalism, his Bay Guardian was one of a handful of weeklies struggling to gain a foothold in cities around the country. Since then more than 100 alternative newspapers have sprouted up and taken root and are flourishing in markets dominated by big dailies.

As Brugmann might have predicted, these alternative newspapers don't have much in common with each other. Some are cut from the same pattern as Rolling Stone; they started in the 70s as hip music and movie rags, then moved up to more serious stuff to fill in the space around the copious ads. Others, like the Seattle Weekly, attract the sought-after yuppie reader with a focus on “bright” pieces. A few, like the Bay Guardian, keep the journalistic watchdog from going extinct.

But for all their singularities, the alternative papers developed some similar characteristics. And while the alternatives are usually still seen as renegades—scorned by straight reporters and banished from J-Schools coast to coast—most of them can be seen to represent a return to the oldest, most basic tenets of American journalism.

As the publisher and editor of one such paper, the Missoula Independent, I've checked out most of the new breed. And I've noted two ways that alternative newspapers are leading a resurgence of abandoned journalistic values. One is the colorful, irreverent and blatantly biased way the alternatives present the news—a clear harkening back to old-fashioned point-of-view journalism. The second similarity, less evident but more fundamental, lies in their business strategy.

As in all newspapers from any epoch, there is a direct link between the journalistic mission and the business set-up. While many of us in the “alternative” universe are truly on a crusade to pump life back into the once-passionate heart of American journalism, the subjective reporting found in our pages is just as firmly rooted in business as the “objective” reporting in the dailies. We must pay as much attention to the bottom line as the MBAs running most dailies; we are simply serving different, smaller markets.
In most cases the community of readers that has come to rely on the alternative press sees itself in opposition to the powers-that-be. In Missoula we use the word “progressive” to describe our readers. They are a hodgepodge of citizens from every age group and from all income brackets who are pro-environment, supportive of workers’ rights, anti-war, pro-choice, culturally broad-minded and tolerant of others’ lifestyle choices. Because most of those attitudes are not reflective of the institutions of power, the reporting in the Independent is often critical of local, state and national government, as well as big business. At the same time, we avoid strident, left-wing knee-jerk diatribes—opting instead for a friendlier, small-town style that seems to suit this friendly small town.

We have found, here in our hometown, a loyal readership that seems to share our values. So it’s a chicken-and-egg deal: We provide reporting from a progressive point of view because that’s what will sell in Missoula; or our hard-hitting reporting has luckily found a market. Either way, it puts us right back in the grand tradition of anti-authoritarian revolutionary American journalism.

We probably would have gotten around to publishing the Independent even if George Bush hadn’t invaded Iraq. But it was the propagandist, pro-government manner in which the “news” about the Gulf War was presented in the Missoulian that finally compelled us to start publishing.

From the outset, the Independent has been proudly dependent on our community—both readers and advertisers—in a complex symbiotic relationship. When we started, the Independent had very little equipment and no money. We had only one computer. One of our colleagues had a job in an office with a laser printer, so we brought our discs there after-hours to print galleys. We did most of the paste-up for the first four issues in the middle of the night in the empty offices of our printer’s newspaper. We had no phone; we took messages on a home-phone answering machine, and some friends in an office down the hall let us make calls from their phone. By the time we hit the streets on March 7, 1991, the Gulf War was history. But soon after we began publishing, another war was ignited here in town. Starting in April of 1991, several prominent Missoula residents were arrested on marijuana charges. Two were pillars of the progressive community: Cass Chinske, a leading environmental activist, and Marty Baker, an artist and arts advocate.

I wrote a series of articles that looked at the Missoula busts as a local skirmish in the Reagan/Bush War on Drugs. Interviews with local law enforcement officials and prosecutors revealed that the busts were part of a federal dragnet. The sentences the Missoula men received were based on harsh new sentencing guidelines. And it became clear that the list of indictments was expanding through the use of those same guidelines, which required the accused to testify against “accomplices”—their friends and neighbors—to avoid 20-year prison terms with no chance of parole.

In a four-part series, I spoke with numerous citizens and elected officials who condemned the federal government’s invasion of our town. The mayor and a county commissioner spoke out. The county attorney called the federal sentencing guidelines “draconian.” The sheriff allowed as how the busts reflected priorities sent down from Washington, D.C. in the form of strings attatched to funding for his financially strapped department. And a constitutional law expert (and professor emeritus from the university) demonstrated that the War on Drugs could be seen as an attack against the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution.

A few weeks later, the Missoulian responded with its own series of articles.
on the local drug war. Their reporter shied away from the political context in which the Independent had reported the story, instead describing (thoroughly and compellingly) the soap-operatic story of the individuals who had been involved.

In the two-and-a-half years since our controversial entry into the local media, there have been plenty of other examples of the same play of biases at work: the Missoulian’s pro-status quo position and the Independent’s more critical perspective. We reported on an illegal (and successful) campaign by an out-of-state pesticide industry group to defeat a right-to-know ordinance and on unionizing efforts by health care workers at a local nursing home. The Missoulian completely overlooked the pesticide story and disregarded the union story until Jesse Jackson came to town to lead a rally for the workers.

We reported on abuses at a home for developmentally-disabled adults in a series that led to fundamental changes in management at the home. Our reporters uncovered UM investments in South Africa, as well as a secret grant to the university from the National Security Agency. And we ran exposes of horrid working conditions at the local post office and the city bus company. The Missoulian ignored all these stories.

Contrary to the published dictums of journalism, I happily admit that there is, in the pages of the Missoula Independent, a noticeable bias, firmly rooted in journalistic tradition. It is a bias that leads us to cast a critical eye at the people and institutions that have power over our readers’ lives.

We are an unabashedly pro-environment newspaper. We oppose the further desecration of Montana’s forests and the pollution of Montana’s streams, rivers and lakes. We ardently support the protection of the grizzlies and grey wolves, bull trout and pileated woodpeckers threatened by resource-extracting industries.

We come to this point of view simply by exercising journalistic judgment—exactly in the same way that reporters every day must make decisions that call upon their professional judgment.

It’s a simple fact that Montana’s forests have been all but destroyed in the past 100 years—with much of the damage coming in the last decade. The two timber giants, Champion International and Plum Creek, clearcut more than 80 percent of their immense holdings of forested lands in the 1980s, contributing to a global environmental crisis, with forests worldwide being depleted, whole species disappearing and even planetary climates changing dramatically.

To pretend “objectivity” in the face of this knowledge—to arbitrarily “balance” environmental reporting by uncritically quoting paid hacks from the very industries that have unquestionably been responsible for the destruction—is to abrogate professional responsibility in the face of power. That bias also has its roots buried deeply in the business strategy that pays most reporters’ salaries and—more to the point—those of their bosses in the boardrooms of the 15 corporations that own most American dailies.

Along with monopoly ownership of a community’s free press comes an awful responsibility: Because they purport to serve every reader in town (and have constructed huge businesses reliant on billions of advertising dollars), dailies have adopted a news philosophy designed to please all the readers all the time. And that distorts their reporting. They cannot afford to alienate any readers at all, so they routinely steer clear of controversy. They stifle journalistic judgment and avoid making conclusions, instead contenting themselves with a “he said/she said” style that they call “balanced.” And they deny that any of this is economically or politically motivated, instead professing an ethical commitment to what they call “objectivity.”

...I happily admit that there is, in the pages of the Missoula Independent, a noticeable bias, firmly rooted in journalistic tradition.

Objective in journalism is rooted not in ethics, but in business. It is not a response to the demand for fairness, but a response to “the need to serve politically heterogenous audiences without alienating any significant segment of the audience.”

William Peter Hamilton, the publisher of the Wall Street Journal, forthrightly stated the perspective from which most newspapers see their ethical responsibility: “A newspaper is a private enterprise owing nothing whatever to the public, which grants it no franchise. It is therefore affected with no public interest. It is emphatically the property of the owner, who is selling a manufactured product at his own risk.”

But there is a growing body of opinion that Hamilton and his cohorts have distorted the traditional role of journalism in order to make more money. Books like
Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman’s “Manufacturing Consent” and Mark Hertsgaard’s “On Bended Knee” make a convincing case that the American media has sold out to the big corporations that run the country (and also happen to own most of the newspapers and television stations).

While claiming objectivity, corporate mouthpieces have worked the same status-quo bias into their papers that the Lee Enterprises-owned Missoulian delivers to the doorsteps of 35,000 readers in western Montana every day. But the problem isn’t that the nation’s dailies are biased. Most of us in the alternative journalism movement believe that the problem is that they are biased in the wrong direction.

When James Madison fought to add the First Amendment to the Constitution, he was not fighting for an unbiased, objective press. The free American newspaper of the time was a politicized organ serving a particular party or faction. Many of the papers of the day had served the cause of the rebellion during the years that led up to the Revolution, and some had supported the Crown in its struggles against the rebels. The famous libel lawsuit that John Peter Zenger of the New York Weekly Journal fought resulted from a one-sided attack by Zenger against New York’s Governor William Cosby.

There were some notable exceptions to the rule of open bias in early American journalism. Benjamin Franklin’s Pennsylvania Gazette was an early example of “just-the-facts” journalism. But this was not, according to Franklin biographer Carl van Dorn, due to Franklin’s deep convictions about fairness. Rather, it was a testament to his shrewdness as a businessman. In his letters to his brother, James, Ben Franklin describes a plan to increase revenues for the Gazette by selling newspapers to both Whigs and Republicans. He concedes that he would have to temper his coverage to achieve that goal.

Newspaper publishers have come a long way from Franklin’s temperance to the Wall Street Journal’s abdication of public responsibility. I believe that the Constitutional protection passed down by the Founders comes with a specific responsibility: to not shy away from reporting critically about the government.

Of course this bias against power should never preclude fairness. But in no case should journalists feel compelled to remain neutral once they have spoken to all parties and gathered the facts.

The Independent is fundamentally shaped by laws of business, not laws of journalism. We are no less aware of the fact that the news is a product—and we saw an available market. By following Franklin’s dictum, dailies like the Missoulian have left many people wanting something more from their newspapers. To a businessman, that is an abandoned niche. So we set out to capture it.

In Missoula we have had a pretty easy go of it. Our mix of critical community political news, hip arts and entertainment features, in-depth environmental reports and outdoor recreation coverage has become a weekly part of the lives of more than 10,000 readers.

As Franklin would have predicted, our progressive bias has certainly alienated some readers and advertisers. But it has also paid off in bottom-line terms. The small business community provides us with most of the money we need to operate, and our readership is deeply committed to the paper. In May 1992—after a little more than a year in business—we took a sabbatical from publishing to get our business in better order. During that time, our subscribers sent us $12,000—mostly in $25, $50 and $125 checks—to help get us back up and running.

Despite the fact that all of this work was rooted in a business, I believe it blossomed in the ethereal realm where good journalism becomes an art—the same realm that has seen the best examples of American reporting. The newspaper crusade at the turn of the century against child-labor; Fred Friendly and Edward R. Murrow’s expose of McCarthy; Woodward and Bernstein’s reports on Watergate; Michael Herr’s dispatches from Vietnam. In each of these cases and hundreds more, reporters threw off the constraints of objectivity to fully immerse themselves as professionals in the story and tell it from their subjective hearts. That tradition is alive and vital today in the independent alternative press; from the Village Voice to the Texas Observer; from the grand old Bay Guardian to the newest and smallest of all independent weeklies, the one here in Missoula.

MJR
Can’t see the story? Here’s a light!

Environmental groups in western Montana sure are helpful to overworked reporters

By MICHAEL HOWEY

Even though environmental issues are of constant concern to residents of western Montana, daily newspapers in the region lack the commitment of staff, resources and time necessary to cover them. There is very little time and newspaper space devoted to investigative journalism. Instead, environmental groups have learned how to “help” newspapers, by initiating and developing stories for reporters too swamped to adequately cover the issues themselves. At the same time, regional environmental groups routinely rearrange their agendas to acquire as much press attention as possible.

These are among the conclusions I came to in researching my master’s thesis, “Relationships Between Environmental Groups and Daily Newspapers: A Western Montana Perspective,” published in 1993. In four case studies, I examined the relationship between the largest daily newspaper in a region of western Montana and the dominant environmental group, then arrived at some conclusions:

The Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition is a grassroots alliance of roughly 1,000 citizens, organizations and businesses working to improve surface groundwater quality and quantity, wildlife populations, streamside habitat and quality of life in the Clark-Fork Pend Oreille Basin. The region includes most of western Montana, the Idaho Panhandle, and small portions of eastern Washington and southern British Columbia. The Missoulian serves nine counties and has a daily circulation of 35,000 subscribers, two-thirds of whom live in the Missoula Valley. While management is trying to make the newspaper more visually appealing and readable, it wants to keep the environment a preeminent issue and is willing to do whatever it takes to draw more people into the stories. The Missoulian staff includes an environmental reporter, two general assignment reporters who cover some natural resource subjects and an editorial page editor who worked the environmental beat.

At the headwaters of the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Basin, 120 miles southeast of Missoula, lies the historic mining city of Butte and the country’s largest Superfund site. Daily circulation for the Montana Standard is about 16,000, with most of the subscribers in Butte and Anaconda. Environmental reporting is a priority for the news staff, says editor Rick Foote, “but it isn’t designated as one person’s beat because of the complexity of the issues.” The Standard has three reporters with primary environment-related responsibilities and is adding a fourth.

The Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition has a rather close-knit relationship with the Missoulian and the Standard. Reporters at these papers rely on the Coalition to do...
some of the initial digging into and development of Clark Fork River issues, and Coalition staffers, to a certain extent, arrange their agenda with regard for the marketing philosophy of each newspaper.

Because neither the Missoulian nor the Standard have anyone who is solely dedicated to covering the environment, reporters at these papers are unable to fully cover all of the numerous wildlife, public lands and air quality issues in the area—let alone the details that are buried in the waste piles of the country’s largest Superfund site.

The Greater Yellowstone Coalition's mission is to ensure the preservation of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem—one of the largest, essentially intact ecosystems in the temperate zones of the world. It has more than 4,500 individual members and 94 member organizations across the United States. The Bozeman Daily Chronicle has a daily circulation of 13,000.

According to Bill Wilke, managing editor, the readership is mostly Bozeman and parts of southwestern Montana. The Chronicle's most important mission, he says, is "to stimulate interest and discussion of the issues and make people participate more."

The Chronicle has a reporter who covers environmental issues almost exclusively. Because of this, Chronicle readers seem to receive a more consistent and complete view of Yellowstone ecosystem issues than Missoulian or Standard readers get regarding Superfund issues. It's important to note, however, that the GYC has been examined by the press and others for decades while the Superfund sites that stretch between Butte and Missoula were only designated as such in the 1980s.

Scott McMillion at the Chronicle works solely the environmental beat. And although he does have overtime restrictions, McMillion can still manage to do some investigative work. Wilke says he's always tried to encourage his reporters to do
more independent research rather than simply ask environmental groups, for instance, what they think about a current issue. "I suggest that they become amateur scientists, do a little research on their own, lay the facts out there, let the readers draw their own conclusions and forget about what everybody else thinks."

The GYC's communications director, Bob Ekey, was a reporter for the Billings Gazette for 6 years. Now his job is to get GYC issues to the press. Their relationship with Scott McMillion is good. McMillion says that GYC staffers are always willing to give him an opinion or comment on a particular issue, and he believes they are well-informed on the issues.

Unlike the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille Coalition's relationship with local papers, Ekey says the GYC doesn't do the reporter's job for him. "... they have to do the first-hand investigation and calling around." Newspapers' responsiveness varies, Ekey says. Once he tried to illuminate some Yellowstone Park issues that appeared in a public report issued by the National Park Service. Ekey says his efforts resulted in some minor stories, but the media didn't bite on his ideas as hard as he thought they would. Ekey understands that "when Los Angeles is running amok with riots, you can't expect your story to get on the front page." So he will try to capitalize on a slow news day by getting "a little more proactive" on issues when things slow down over the holidays.

The Montana Wilderness Association's 2,000 members focus their efforts on preservation of wilderness as well as on activities outside wilderness areas that have a profound effect on wilderness. The Kalispell Daily Inter Lake has a daily circulation of 13,600 and serves Flathead and Lincoln counties and some of Lake County in northwestern Montana. While the Inter Lake has always covered the environment in some manner, managing editor Dan Black says that he has put "a little bit more emphasis on it" since becoming editor 10 years ago. Black calls his relationship with MWA "a fairly open and honest" one and believes the group is politically moderate and credible.

Steve Thompson, who represents the Flathead Chapter of the Montana Wild-
I think that they are adept at using the media, at making themselves available to the media, and at taking advantage . . . of the openings that they find in the media.

AN ORGANIZATION called Grassroots for Multiple Use formed in response to FOB. According to Laughlin, it was more than two years before any of their board members would talk with FOB. On the surface their goals appear to be diametrically opposed. The Ravalli Republic covers both groups.

To a certain extent the Republic's reporting seems to focus on the "two sides" of the environmental debate. This coverage of confrontational matters is of the kind that pits "owls against jobs" and fits issues into neat packages labeled with simplistic titles, such as "environmentalists versus loggers." Such reporting often focuses primarily on the short-term economic prospects of a given situation. It identifies human conflicts, but doesn't explore the core issues that brought these conflicts about.

To give due credit, the Republic's staff has done several pieces that depict the long-term prognosis for various environmental subjects. This coverage approach broadens the discussion to include such things as how human population growth and consumption affect the health of the land and how everyday lifestyle choices are connected to ecological dangers.

FOB is trying to foster this broader style of journalism. Their activists know the importance of taking people, including members of the press, to the areas they are concerned about and giving them the chance to connect with the issues on a personal level. By encouraging first-hand experiences, they hope to increase the public's understanding of environmental topics and to tear down the wall that divides the Bitterroot community.

FOB usually holds press conferences in Missoula because of radio and TV coverage there. Republic reporters are invited to those, but according to FOB member Donnie Laughlin, the Republic doesn't participate much. Laughlin says that often FOB will take press releases to the Republic and make themselves available to answer questions. McConnaughey says FOB's Missoula press conferences are a problem for him because he can't spare one of his already limited staff, although he understands why Missoula, 40 miles to the north, is more desirable than much-smaller Hamilton. FOB is also good about contacting the Republic with information from press conferences, but they don't always recognize deadlines very well.

Ruth Thorning, the Republic's environmental reporter at the time of this study, was not well thought of by FOB. Thorning claims FOB saw her as the enemy because her husband drives a chip truck. Laughlin says, "The reporting has been much fairer since McConnaughey has been the editor. Before, our positions were misrepresented and we were quoted out of context."

"I simply report the facts, or try very hard to report the facts, and so you wind up with people on both sides very angry at you and complaining about you," Thorning says. Over the past several years she says that she gained and lost many friends on "both sides" of the debate.
Laughlin says that media representatives aren't always on the same wavelength. "You may have said ten things that you thought were really important and they may just report one of them, and it may be what you consider to be the least important thing you said, so you really have to know what you want to get across."

Environmental reporters at the newspapers in this study have to make daily choices regarding which leads they will look into and which ones they will have to move down or off of their priority lists. Sometimes they don't even get to their lists because of other reporting assignments. The environmental issues that they manage to attend to are, for the most part, revealed through special interest soundbites. Very little time and newspaper space is devoted to investigative journalism. The result is that issues are neither covered thoroughly nor followed up on a regular basis.

While press limitations can cause problems for environmentalists, they can also be perceived as a blessing in disguise because they provide advocates with the opportunity to help reporters out and to establish themselves as dependable news sources in the process. Environmental groups in this study do independent research and investigative work, and, further, those that are willing and able to initiate and develop stories for reporters, are gaining a slight coverage edge over other advocacy groups. While papers give thorough coverage to some issues, environmental groups play politics with their agendas in order to acquire as much press attention as possible.

Newspaper managers in this study aren't committing the personnel time and resources that are needed to fully cover all of the environmental issues in western Montana. Are they doing their best to reveal environmental subjects in their entirety, or are they assigning only as many reporters as it takes to look at a few bits and pieces of the puzzle? Are they doing all they can to expose the root causes of environmental degradation, or are they giving reporters only enough time to cover the superficial aspects of issues?

Conservation advocates in this study sometimes arrange their agenda with regard for a given newspaper's commitment to environmental coverage. Their behavior calls into question the brand of advocacy that they are buying into. Are these organizations doing their best to fully present their issues of concern? Are they staying true to the goals espoused by their organizations, or are they catering to the marketing philosophies of newspaper management?

The current role of an environmental reporter ought to be broadened, says Dick Manning, former natural resources reporter for the Missoulian and author of "Last Stand," which chronicles logging practices in the Northwest and his own difficulties in covering the issue for the Missoulian.

Manning says the traditional way of doing things is to "go out and talk to the timber industry and talk to the environmental groups and maybe talk to the regulatory agencies and then write the story based on what they had to say.”

It's okay for reporters to follow the “obvious path,” for instance, going to the public hearings and reporting on what people have to say, observes Manning. But it's more important to "work the background of the story as deeply as you possibly can."

Manning tells reporters: “Be prepared to change jobs—be prepared to walk off, to be fired, to quit.” To environmental groups, he says, “Stop thinking about working effectively with the media and start thinking about working effectively. Quit worrying about your press relationships so much and just go out there and do good work, whatever that is for you. Find what that is and take action. If you take action, the press will come on its own.”
Old pals never die—they just aren’t worth a damn

In academic hiring, you play the game or play yourself. The author knows which she’d do

By ZENA BETH McGlashan

PEAKS AND VALLEYS” WAS A KEYSTONE THEORY for two of the courses I taught frequently during a nearly 20-year stint as a journalism professor. When a new semester rolled around, students who’d taken my Journalism History or Women, Minorities and the Media courses would sometimes grin and ask, “Have you led ‘em through the ‘peaks and valleys’ yet?” I would laugh because the teasing was good-natured.

Their remembering the theory demonstrated my effectiveness as a teacher. I thought they’d be better journalists, even better human beings, if they recalled what I’d said about historical change.

Bottom line is that, in the great cosmic system, the time in which we live is but a speck in the continuum. But it’s human nature to believe that we—each generation—will be the ones to change things. Realistically, change does not come either quickly or easily.

Ah, yes, self-satisfied academic, oh guider of youth. Oh dumb me. When I most needed to remember my theories, I completely forgot every truism I had taught and hit the bottom of a career valley.

First the theory, then the confession.

A “peak” is a time of social upheaval, when a previously silenced segment of society advances its aspirations. Each period of change seems always to be followed by a “valley,” a backlash to demands for social realignment. Opponents of change invoke the mythological “good old days,” while formerly fervent advocates of change seem strangely silent.

The depths of the valleys never reach the lows of the previous set-backs; each
time society peaks, greater gains are made. We never really return to those “good old days” because, when society periodically lurches forward, gains which had seemed radical have been woven into the social fabric. For example, after women won the right to vote, they still hadn’t achieved many of the suffragists’ goals. They didn’t constitute an important voting bloc for another 70 years. However, the gains women made by getting to vote seemed so significant in 1920 that it appeared, to all but a militant handful of activists, that the battle had been won.

The Civil Rights Era, which began with blacks campaigning for their rights in the 1950s, had, by the 1970s, allowed people of color, women, gays and lesbians to aspire to jobs previously closed to us. Some of us started rising through the hierarchies. However, when the sit-ins and marches ended, various equity advocates shattered into special interest groups, talking to one another about goals still not met or growing silent in our intense focus on our own careers.

We plunged into a valley, hemmed in by Phyllis Schlafly and others of the righteous right calling for motherhood and denouncing legislated equity on the one hand and, on the other, by our own lack of continued pressure for change.

Change-makers can grow tired or complacent or both. As the 1980s were drawing to a close, I was in the “both” category. Having achieved full professor rank with tenure and being a relatively respected faculty member, I was complacent. And, because I’d worked for years on women’s issues, I was tired of continually reworking the same ground.

Complacency coupled with activist exhaustion can be like a frayed rope for a mountain climber. The snap sends you plunging toward the valley when you least expect it. When I perceived myself to be an “Old Pal,” I assumed that a radical change had come. I suddenly couldn’t remember how slowly social change is accomplished.

How flattered I was late in 1989 to hear from a fellow with whom I’d gone to grad school. He urged me to apply at a well-known Midwestern journalism school where he is a senior faculty member. Because of several retirements and plans to start a Ph.D. program, they would be hiring at the full professor level. Being part of a school with journalism in its title was high on my list of “wannabes,” because my university had switched to one of those amorphous blobs called a school of communication. But the real excitement, the real rush came with being asked. I thought giddily, “I’ve made it.” I was really part of a new phenomenon, the “Old Pals network.” I had been contacted, not because I’m a woman, but because I’m a capable professor.

A n invitation to be interviewed arrived. I positively radiated. I was met at the airport by an associate professor, about my age. As we drove along, he began the questioning. “Where do you think you would fit in?” I didn’t realize it then, but “fitting in” was the question I would be asked repeatedly during my 36-hour stay.

“Well, you know I teach reporting and editing,” I began politely, “but my special area is history.”

“Oh,” he said. “I teach the history course.”

Since their history course was taught both fall and spring semesters, I suggested maybe we could trade off semesters.

He chuckled. “No, ’fraid not. I like teaching history.”

My mind was spinning, I knew I couldn’t say what I was thinking. After all, I was special; I was not just any candidate, but an Old Pal. I thought to myself, “If you’re a journalism historian, why haven’t I ever heard of you?” Fairly active in national journalism history organizations, I had never encountered this fellow or his research.

I tried another approach to the “fit-in” question. Lost in an androgynous fog of my own creation, I hadn’t yet realized these people were not asking “What can you bring to our program?” They really did mean “where do you fit in?”

“My other specialty is racism and sexism in the media,” I said hesitantly. The Women, Minorities and Media course was a radical addition to the Penn State curriculum in the 1970s. Lynn Haskins, a past national president of Women in Communications, Inc., taught the course at a PSU branch campus near Philadelphia. I was the first to teach it on the main campus at University Park. When I moved to the University of North Dakota, the journalism chairman had encouraged me to offer the course there.
“We don’t have room in our curriculum for specialty courses,” he said, adding, “but maybe you can give me some tips about how to fit them into the history course.”

Them. Yeah. I knew the news-ed department of this school was all white and male. To me, them is on a par with Ross Perot’s “you people” to the NAACP convention in the summer of 1992.

Remembering Old Pal telling me I was one of two or three people topping their "A" list, I gritted my teeth, determined not to be anything but pleasant. Of course this meant that I would not be myself, ordinarily bluntly honest and not ashamed of it. I mentally edited my response. I did not screech, “What the hell do you mean, ‘them’? I am a ‘them’!”

Them prepared me for what lay ahead down that bleak four-lane. And my polite response set a standard too. This was how I—my wimpy self—answered: I said, “It is hard when there’s so much material about mainstream journalists to cover in one semester. But there are some good articles about women and racial minorities in journalism history.”

My other self—my real self—was internally screaming: “My God, where have you been? If you’d read any of the journalism history journals and even looked at the research that’s been done in the last twenty years, you’d find lots of ways to talk about women and minorities!” Who was the greater fool? The history professor, insensitive to his sexism/racism, or me, with a despicable lack of conviction?

In the morning, I began the interview process. “Where would you fit in?” asked two female master’s degree students. I blithered an inane response then quickly asked about their research. I feigned interest in what they were saying but I wanted to ask: “Who do you consider your mentors here?” and “Have you been told that things are still very tough for women out there in the real world? Where do you think you’re going to get hired?”

Next was one of the retiring professors, a nice gentleman who talked about professional rigor and the kinds of challenges students faced in their tough, high-standards curriculum.

He reminded me of my first job at Penn State. Shortly after the fall semester began, a colleague stopped me in the hall, patted me on the shoulder and said, “We’re so glad to have a woman in tenure track. We had one once and she didn’t work out.” I smiled and thanked him, but that evening, wailed to my husband.

My husband, also an academic, wisely assessed the situation: “You can either play their game or be yourself. But, if you choose to be yourself,” he warned, “you have to be prepared to take the consequences.” I chose to be true to self: I sometimes used some of my own reporting assignments instead of selecting hoary old assignments stacked in a closet next to the third-floor men’s room. I didn’t go to the local French bistro for the term-ending wine and chumminess sessions, and my student evaluations soared to heights unheard of by the “boys,” a fact which did little to increase my popularity with them.

My husband’s early warning proved correct: Selfhood had its price. In my third year contract renewal review, the senior profs ruled that they would allow me to stay for another three years but with “serious reservations.” I was furious, of course, and even more angry when I learned that a male assistant professor, hired at the same time I was, received a vastly different peer review. (He was willing, bless his liberated heart, to testify on my behalf.) And, I was told that the committee had wanted to vote to fire me but were dissuaded by the chairman who was afraid I’d sue. His hunch was right; I did consult a lawyer.

Now here I was, 10 years later, an Old Pal listening politely as this small, grey-haired gentleman talked. I wondered if this school was interested in innovation, suggestion and experimentation. Would they welcome ideas? I began to doubt it.

The next interviewer didn’t want to know where I’d fit in because he had already decided I wouldn’t. This gruff old guy, also retiring, had obviously
read my resume with its predominance of feminist articles. “Back when I began in newspapers, women just weren’t interested in advancing,” he said. “There just weren’t a lot of them around. I always wondered why they seemed to not want to be in the news business.” On and on and on.

It was the old “blame the victim” approach. After all the articles, seminars, workshops, court challenges, negotiations at major media outlets, this guy really didn’t seem to have a clue that women had had to fight their way out of the newsroom corners they’d been trapped in.

I had two clear choices: One was to jump up, grab him by the necktie and scream, “Listen, you old fart! I was one of those women. We got shunted off to the women’s pages. Hell, I was even a society editor, for God’s sake. We dropped out like flies; of course we did. We saw doors slammed and worked in all-male newsrooms and got less pay!”

**Option Two: Keep my mouth shut and listen.** Old Pal polite. This fellow is retiring, so why alienate him? Maybe he’ll be impressed about how ladylike I am being.

I listened to this misogynist rave.

I continued to be nauseatingly polite. I didn’t sell myself or ask hard questions—too pushy, I thought. However, by mid-day, I’d turned The Question around and was asking them, “Well, where do you think I’d fit in?” After all, these people had my resume and my letters of reference. Surely Old Pal had told them about my talents. Surely they wouldn’t have invited me if they didn’t see a place for me.

Late in the day, in his tiny office, Old Pal looked me squarely in the eye and said, “What are you excited about?” My Polite Pal head did a spin: What was the real question here? Oh, dear me, I thought, is this another way to ask, “How do you fit in?” Several moments passed. All I could do was return his stare.

“Well, what research have you been doing that excites you?”

Oh, golly, research. Should I tell him about the applications I submitted in 1988 to universities offering fellowships for studying women’s issues? Oh, lordy, no. My proposal had been to research the history of newspapers’ women’s pages in the 20th century to trace the changes and the change-makers. Too feminist. Too historical. And, from what I’d seen and heard in the last 24 hours, such a study would be about as welcome at this place as a rave at a Baptist convention.

Wimp Woman to the rescue! I told him about my research on the Russian Revolution in the mid-80s, how Hearst’s and Pulitzer’s New York papers treated the 1917 Russian Revolution. Russia was a hot topic, a good thing to be excited about, a topic which might fit in.

Of course I wasn’t offered a job. Even I wouldn’t have hired me, based on my interview. But, then, I wouldn’t have interviewed me the way they did. I first thought the problem lay solely in why, as an Old Pal, I had behaved so differently from the feisty feminist who, 20 years ago in the *Montana Journalism Review* wrote, “The (women’s) liberation movement has...given women the courage to express openly the frustrations they have silently endured.” (“Women’s Pages in the 1970s”, *MJR*, No. 16, 1973, p. 31)

**In the same MJR article, I also wrote** that women can “demonstrate the social-psychological theory that adherence to group norms is a function of the importance group membership holds for the individual.” (Ibid. p. 30) In plain language, my acting like a complete ninny had been motivated by my desire to give my Old Pal and his colleagues reasons to see why I’d “fit in” because I had convinced myself of the importance of being at that university.

But what had really flummoxed me was the idea of change: I had convinced myself that the world had changed to the point where I was an Old Pal, and I didn’t have a clue how to be one.

Old Pal and company weren’t looking for diversity, only for someone who fit. I believe they sincerely thought they’d already achieved equity. After all, their associate dean was a woman; one of their departments was chaired by a woman. They, too, had
I should have known better than to retreat to politeness when confronted by people who didn’t even see diversity as essential to quality in education, journalism and every other human endeavor.

In 1975 Dr. Gertrude Jochs Robinson, a McGill University communication researcher, said true equality between the sexes will take “at least 100 years” to accomplish. Depressing as that statement was, I thought she was—and still is—right. How could I have presumed to think myself so superior to that Midwestern history professor when I’d not only suppressed most of my treasured theories, but had forgotten Dr. Robinson’s wise observation?

ABOUT SIX MONTHS AFTER I received the rejection letter, I encountered Old Pal at a journalism education convention. I walked directly up to him and said, “I finally figured out why I didn’t ‘fit in.’ I didn’t—and that’s why I would have been good for you folks.”

In those six months, I had remembered some of what I knew but had ignored: It is simply too soon to be an Old Pal. And it was clearly impossible to “fit in” to a system which had few others like me and which didn’t seem to want any more. I should have known better than to retreat to politeness when confronted by people who didn’t even see diversity as essential to quality in education, journalism and every other human endeavor.

My real epiphany came later, as it did for so many other women, with the Anita Hill hearings. Sure, I thought Clarence Thomas had done what she said he did; and, I really understood why she had kept silent. But it wasn’t smarmy good-old-boy Clarence who stiffened up my resolve to never again betray my feisty old self.

The way all those white, male senators acted did far more to convince me that seeing Old Palhood as a given, rather than a still unachieved goal, is completely unrealistic.

On that judicial committee I saw smug, white males who thought they had a finger on the pulse of society. I saw good old boys, ones who hire women and maybe even ask: “Where do you think you’d fit in?”

A free press can of course be good or bad, but, most certainly, without freedom it will never be anything but bad. -- Camus

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The Spokesman-Review

Now one of America's 100th largest newspapers, and one of the best.

This year the daily Spokesman-Review became America's 97th largest newspaper, and the Sunday Spokesman-Review became the 92nd. But size isn’t everything. Twice in the last 10 years The Spokesman-Review was a Pulitzer Prize finalist. In addition our award-winning staff recently garnered 66 awards, including the award for General Excellence in the Inland Northwest Excellence in Journalism competition. On a national level, photo editor Scott Sines has been named Photo Editor of the Year two years running.

The Spokesman-Review also cares about the environment. Every page of every day’s Spokesman-Review is printed on recycled paper. In 1992 we were honored by the Association of Washington Business with an Environmental Excellence Award for our efforts in establishing a de-inking plant and commitment to using recycled newsprint every day.

The Spokesman-Review has an abiding belief in the power of a free press to make life better and a belief in aiding and supporting the community in which it reports.

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW
Environmental Epidemiology, Public Health and Hazardous Wastes, the National Academy of Sciences's Committee on Environmental Epidemiology called risk analysis "highly speculative and almost always relying on multiple assumptions of fact—some of which are entirely untestable."

Lester said, "The people at the EPA who do risk analysis believe it is science and believe the numbers that come out of it are real, which I think is the most dangerous part of the process."

The EPA is not an agency that boasts a proficiency in public health matters among its ranks. In 1990, the American Journal of Public Health reported that of the 750 individuals employed in the EPA's division that administers the Superfund program, there were no medical personnel. Of the eight EPA employees who are principally responsible for cleaning up Montana's mining wastes, five are engineers and only one has a degree related to health—in occupational safety.

"Exposure isn't our ball game," said project manager, Russ Forba, who is responsible for cleaning up Butte's lead-laden soils. "We don't go out and look to see if there is an impact on people."

Forba is right. It's the ATSDR, not the EPA, that is supposed to determine if there is an impact on people who live on Superfund sites. Without adequate health assessments, no follow-up health studies will likely be undertaken by the ATSDR in Butte and Anaconda. That's because the so-called health assessments—the relabeled documents—give no indication that health studies are warranted.

The Committee on Environmental Epidemiology concluded that health assessments, not risk analysis, are essential in determining whether individuals who come into contact with hazardous wastes sites are in danger of becoming ill. The ATSDR needs at least $165 million annually to properly conduct health assessments, the committee said. Yet in 1989, the agency spent only $15.9 million on health assessments. So great is the emphasis on engineering over public health, the committee said, that of the $4.2 billion annually spent on hazardous waste cleanup, less than one percent has gone toward the evaluation of human health.

Caught red-handed with 165 falsified health assessments, chief administrator William Roper wrote that the ATSDR would revisit the 165 sites as a "prudent public health practice." While Anaconda and Montana Pole (a 40-acre plot contaminated with pentachlorophenol) received high priority, reviews of Butte and Milltown were postponed. Mike Greenwell, ATSDR public affairs specialist, said that Butte received the lower ranking because its original (falsified) health assessment did not classify Butte as a public health threat.

Tina Forrester, an ATSDR environmental health scientist, conducted the Anaconda and the Montana Pole site reviews last fall. She found ample evidence of trespassing (ATV tracks, human foot prints, and the like). "I can't believe people really have access to those areas," Forrester said. "Farmers were grazing cattle in Mill Creek (where families had been evacuated)."

In her report on Anaconda, Forrester described the potential for exposure to arsenic among residents and recommended that an "urgent" public health assessment be undertaken. But in March 1993, Charlie Coleman, the EPA project manager for Anaconda, could not recall what Forrester's report said or explain how it may affect his cleanup plans.

While EPA personnel gather extensive data for engineering and court battles, at an average cost of $25 million to $30 million per site, the gathering of human health data is being kept to a minimum, if it is done at all.

The Clark Fork River sites are just four among some 1,200 that are managed under the Superfund program. But what is going on there, or what isn't going on in the way of health assessments, is representative of the way Superfund sites are managed across the United States. Stephen Lester believes that the slipshod manner in which the ATSDR conducts itself will have long lasting effects: "The fact is that on the record, the decision makers who could act don't have what they need to act. The official health assessment still says there's no prob-
status is not likely to be bolstered. In
tially exposed to hazardous waste
percent reduction for the ATSDR.
EPA's proposed budget includes a 26
fact, Capitol Hill insiders say that the
elsewhere, the citizens of Butte and
Anaconda remain living on a contami­
nated land, unaware of any damage to
their health that may be occurring.
Perhaps their prayers to Our Lady of
the Rockies will protect them. They’ll
likely never know the difference. MJR

FOI (continued from p. 9)
Weber argued that the decision had
“effectively destroyed the use of collective
bargaining between school boards and
unions.”

School boards and other state enti­
ties who engage in union negotiations
are upset. “It’s going to be a lot more
expensive and time-consuming to
operate [in the open],” Montana School
Board Association executive
director Bob Anderson said at the FOI
Hotline conference this May. But
Professor Larry Elison of the University of
Montana Law School thinks the decision
will result in less posturing by
forcing government employers to
come to the table with their best offer.

The string of access victories has
been heartening. Still, journalists in
Montana are hardly ebullient. As Jim
Moore, publisher of the Carbon
County News in Red Lodge, told the
FOI conference, “On paper, the citi­
zens of Montana have one of the most
stringent freedom of information laws
in the nation. But in practice, it’s
rather constrained.” Local officials
fear that they will be sued for privacy
invasion if they let information out. For
small-town publishers, the costs of
challenging access restrictions can be
overwhelming. “It may be the publisher’s
nest egg to send his kids to college.”

Adds Montana AP bureau chief
John Kuglin, “I’m not sure that things
are that much better. There are chair­
men of major boards and commis­
sions in Montana who haven’t the
foggiest idea of what the constitution
and the law says.” Neither do some
law enforcement officials, Kuglin
noted. When Deer Lodge County
Attorney Ed Beaudette discovered in
March that records of the Southwest
Montana Drug Task Force had been
released, he acknowledged they were
public, but argued that they should only be
released “on a ‘need-to-know’ basis.”
No such limitation exists.

Of course, the 300-plus complaints
to the state’s FOI Hotline since its
establishment (see box) is testimony
enough that access problems crop up
often. In July, after AP threatened
legal action, Gov. Racicot called off a
two-day private meeting of his
Cabinet and staff. Racicot, who with­
drew an earlier invitation to reporters,
insisted the meeting would have been
purely for the purpose of “team-build­
ing.” Kuglin also notes that Racicot
met privately with Lee Enterprises
publishers on the proposed sales tax. “I sug­
gest that the governor open all such
meetings,” says Kuglin.

Despite the constitutional Right to
Know, confidentiality exceptions are
dotted throughout state statutes. UM
Professor Robert McGiffert found
more than 100 such instances. He found
that all records on the sale and use of
pesticides are deemed confidential, as are
dustion death records (although it’s hard to
see whose privacy is being protected)
and machine gun registration data.
This is Montana. Exceptions would have
to be based on individual privacy,
although many experts believe most
would not withstand a court challenge.

More troublesome may be a soci­
etal trend, noted by Kirtley. Privacy is
becoming the most frequently invoked
justification for curtailing public
access to government-held information.
Under the rubric of “victims’
rights,” privacy is being used to with­
hold records of victims’ names and
addresses, close courtrooms and bar
access to documents such as motor
vehicle and property records. Montana’s
vaunted Right to Know law will surely
lose its luster if the sole exception,
the demands of individual privacy,
becomes the rule.
Ethics answers...

Seven journalists for Montana daily newspapers, who have responsibility for editing photographs, were asked the questions in the box on p. 27. Here's how they responded:

1. No, said 6 of 7 respondents. Comments: “You’re there to document the event, not orchestrate it.” “It’s a blatant lie. Our job is to record and document, not to create it.” “That’s unethical. I’d look for another way to show it.”

2. The six photo editors who saw problems with the first situation seemed to agree that discipline would depend on the situation. Comments: “Was the photographer aware of the policy? Perhaps if they knew, you’d discipline them. If not, clarify the policy with the photographer.” “I’d explain that I didn’t think that was appropriate. I’d get a manager in on the meeting. I would give one verbal warning, and, if they did it again, I would probably fire them.”

3. No problem with this photo, according to 5 respondents. Comments: “I wouldn’t like it, but I see how it could happen.” “I’d get him to show the machine to me. But I would not have him in the machine running it.” “OK on this one, but I would say ‘is demonstrating’ so people know.”

4. Only 2 of 7 flatly would not run this set-up. Others wanted to qualify the conditions under which it would be allowed. Comments: “No. I would not do it.” “My personal preference is to wait around until something happens worth shooting, but, if I couldn’t get what I wanted, I’d be expected to get it any way I could.” “I’d get the best pictures I could, but I wouldn’t ask the kids to do anything different than they were doing anyway. I’d get what I could without interfering with the situation.” “No. Posed features are not acceptable. We’re supposed to be mirroring reality.”

A River Runs By It.

TO VISIT THE UC BOOKSTORE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA TAKE THE CLARK FORK RIVER TO THE VAN BUREN STREET FOOTBRIDGE AND TAKE OUT ON THE SOUTHERN BANK TRAVEL ABOUT ONE QUARTER MILE SOUTH ACROSS THE BEAUTIFUL CAMPUS TO THE UNIVERSITY CENTER ENTER ON THE GROUND FLOOR ATRIUM LEVEL OPEN THE FIRST DOOR ON YOUR LEFT WELCOME TO THE UC BOOKSTORE

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35 Distinguished Alumni Award winners, more than any other discipline on campus.

7 alumni awarded Pulitzer Prizes.

5 alumni recipients of honorary doctorates from The University of Montana.

3 Rhodes Scholars.

3 National Headlines Club Award winners.

2 top-10 finishers in the 1993 William Randolph Hearst College Photojournalism Competition.

Society of Professional Journalists' 1992 Mark of Excellence Award for in-depth television reporting.

1993 Student Documentary Emmy Award winner at the 16th Annual Rocky Mountain Emmy Awards.