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Ensuring UM’s reputation

A note from the new dean

The leadership of Montana’s School of Journalism is changing hands. A fresh beginning should be exciting. For me, this one is humbling, too, because I appreciate the big responsibility my new colleagues have entrusted to me. Although I spent my high school days in Wyoming and later worked in newsrooms in Oregon, Arizona and Minnesota, I am a newcomer to Montana and to much of this magnificent region, so I have plenty to learn. And because I have been based for the past 14 years on the East Coast as a writer and editor for The Wall Street Journal, I recognize that I have a lot to prove to many people in the journalism community I am joining.

This school has an uncommonly strong and rich tradition. Its builders have left a durable legacy that I feel lucky to inherit. In my travels as a visiting editor and a campus recruiter, I have never met teachers who work harder or who care more about students and their development. Nor have I seen elsewhere a program of learning with a clearer sense of purpose. The Montana approach is pure and direct, uncluttered by appendages and distractions that now dominate some schools of mass communication.

But Montana’s program could be better, and I believe it will improve—with sustained effort by my colleagues and me, and with renewed encouragement from alumni, practicing professionals and other friends.

At a recent faculty luncheon, I expressed some long-term hopes for the school. They aren’t detailed enough yet to be called goals, but they help describe a reputation I would want the school to deserve whenever and wherever people talk about the best in journalism education. That reputation would be built on five characteristics:

Purpose. The school must stay faithful to its chief purpose—preparing the next generations of journalists for the demanding life-work they have chosen.

Initiative. The school needs to strengthen its ties to the news industry throughout the state and beyond. Establishing fresh connections will inspire innovative efforts. As examples, I have in mind a national board of visitors, a series of useful conferences on such topics as the politics of water, and perhaps opportunities for advanced training for alumni and other journalists.

Diversity. The school needs and deserves a broader representation of backgrounds, experiences and interests, among both students and staff. With private support, it may be possible to expand some activities and to recruit students and faculty farther afield in pursuit of that aim.

Balance. For all the advantages of its practical offerings, the school would benefit from an expanded research component, especially to encourage and showcase work in press history, ethics and relevant media criticism.

Prominence. My discussions with working journalists all over the country and overseas convince me that Montana’s journalism school isn’t nearly as well known or understood as it should be. The lack of appreciation may exist on other campuses. A senior member of Missouri’s journalism faculty remarked smugly a few months ago, “Ah, yes, Montana. I guess they have an adequate little program there.”

We must ensure that Montana’s reputation is better than adequate. Let’s work together toward the day when journalists and journalism teachers everywhere equate Montana with purpose, initiative, diversity, balance and prominence.

Frank E. Allen, Dean
If not Saddam, why not Tonya?

_In which the J-school’s new dean bemoans the rise of voyeurism in the press and offers a way out of the quagmire_

By FRANK E. ALLEN

For the news business, this year has shaped up as another one that may be hard to live down. Most people don’t appreciate and won’t remember the efforts of reporters, editors and producers who tried to make sense of America’s health-care system and who examined proposals to fix it. Nor will most readers, listeners and viewers give much thought to the risks taken by journalists who tried to find meaning in events of such troubled places as Bosnia or Rwanda. What they will remember—and resent—is the tabloid style of overkill that has characterized coverage of too many stories that don’t matter much.

Even when deprived of sleep or aided by hallucinogens, Hollywood scriptwriters could hardly concoct a more titillating array. The accounts have ranged from police descriptions of Michael Jackson’s genitalia to lurid details of the Brothers Menendez murder trial. In the name of “the public’s right to know,” readers and viewers have been afforded ample opportunity to learn all about how the Bobbitt penis was severed and reattached. And for the sake of “pursuing the truth,” audiences have been drowned by the tale of Tonya Harding.

By mid-summer, coverage of the O.J. Simpson case probably exceeded all the others, at least as measured by levels of saturation and self-parody. News organizations even covered and critiqued each other’s coverage of the murder scene, the funeral service, the low-speed chase, the threatened suicide and the trial strategies.

The problem hasn’t been the prurient content itself, but the thoughtless zeal with which so many news organizations have chased it. In my book, such coverage isn’t journalism. It’s voyeurism.

As a defender of the First Amendment, I would never suggest that government or any other power be allowed to intervene and restrain news coverage. The stories are out there, and somebody will tell them. The question for news organizations isn’t whether these stories should be told, but how—and to what extent.

How much coverage is enough? And with news-gathering resources so scarce, how much time and money and talent should be devoted to covering these kinds of stories?

An example: Did CBS News really need to airlift Connie Chung and her entourage to an ice-skating rink in Oregon, so that viewers of her live broadcast might be treated to a glimpse of Tonya Harding during practice? Tonya wasn’t talking, but others were fair game, so the CBS crew conducted some spontaneous interviews, asking people whether they thought Tonya was innocent or guilty. I began to hope that among the respondents, Connie’s team might find the person who sat next to Tonya when they were in third grade, or maybe the man who sold Tonya her first used car.

A larger question is why so many news organizations behave this way. Why do they commit so much air time and so much space in the absence of broader sig-

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Figure skater Tonya Harding is surrounded by the news media in Beaverton, Ore., as she tries to keep her truck from getting towed.

[ASSOCIATED PRESS]

Figure skater Tonya Harding is surrounded by the news media in Beaverton, Ore., as she tries to keep her truck from getting towed.

[ASSOCIATED PRESS]
reporters as intruders, of journalists as voyeurs.

Of course, television-news crews and newspaper reporters are trained to act aggressively. That's how they “get the story.” On many occasions, the argument can be made that such behavior serves them—and their audiences—rather well. But sometimes reportorial zeal gets in the way of what many people would consider good taste and common courtesy. If prizes were awarded for rudeness, members of the media would often win.

A powerful case in point was the aftermath of the death of Christa McAuliffe. She was the schoolteacher from Concord, N.H., who lost her life in the January 1986 explosion of the space shuttle Challenger.

On the day the shuttle was launched, Concord was brimming with newspeople. Mrs. McAuliffe was scheduled to speak from space with her students, so reporters and TV crews jammed the school auditorium. When the shuttle blew up, “it was difficult for a journalist to know what to do,” recalled Michael Pride, editor of the Concord Monitor. “For the most part, the story was in people’s houses, but their doors were closed.” St. Peter’s Church, where an impromptu Mass was being said that first night, was the only place where anything was happening.

The Mass wasn’t widely advertised, and it was attended by fewer than 100 mourners. But for the media, it was the only public place to be. Witnesses estimated that 50 to 70 media people came to the church.

The press got there early and commandeered the place. They grew bolder as they saw there were no restraints on them. Reporters slid into pews to question mourners, even after the service had begun. They hounded friends of the McAuliffe family and schoolchildren for quotes. Photographers stood on the front pews, shooting back at the mourners.

The second night, at another church, a much larger Mass was said. The press was confined to two balconies. Stationed in those balconies were about 20 cameras with crews. Witnesses said the crews were extremely disruptive. Nuns asked them politely and repeatedly to keep the noise down, but it made little difference.

If the news business is truly a public trust, then newspeople have a responsibility to think long and hard about the consequences of losing the trust of the public. Reporters, editors, photographers and producers have to make hard choices all the time—about what gets covered and how and how much. In making those choices, the criteria that deserve more weight are purpose and significance. News coverage without decent purpose or durable significance may grab the public’s attention for a few moments, or even for a few months, but it will never earn the public’s respect and confidence.
When is a king not a king?

The Great Falls Tribune reopened the criminal past of a high school hero after he had paid his dues, and the town bit back

By Kathy McLoughlin

On Sept. 24, 1993, James Tribble was elected homecoming king by his fellow students at Great Falls High School. Three days later Tribble was too ashamed to go to school and face those same students. School officials were wishing they had asked him not to run for king. And the Great Falls Tribune was in the midst of an explosive story that divided the community and forced the newspaper to question its policies.

The newspaper's policy had been not to print the names of juvenile offenders in the hope of giving them a "second chance."

"There's no prohibition on our right to publish the names and details of juveniles convicted of felonies, but it's been the Tribune's policy to do so only where there is significant community awareness and interest in the crime," Editor John Hollon wrote in a column the day the first stories on Tribble were printed.

"Society and the justice system want to give some leeway and protection to youths who get into trouble during the difficult transition to adulthood," added Hollon, now the executive editor of another Gannett paper, the Honolulu Advertiser.

Factors other than giving kids leeway also played into the paper's failure to mention Tribble's criminal history. In fact, the Tribune ran a similar story about juvenile sexual abuse that same summer. The victim and child charged were not identified in the story.

The Tribune, Montana's second-largest daily newspaper with a circulation of about 34,000, had a staff of seven full-time reporters.

However, the Tribune had no full-time police reporter, despite Cascade County's distinction of having the highest crime rate in the state. General assignment reporters, with other beats to cover, checked the police reports.
Also, officers often didn’t finish reports the day a call came up on the blotter. With different reporters making the rounds every day, there was plenty of room for reports to slip through the cracks.

Apparently, that’s what happened with Tribble. When Caldwell’s letter arrived at the Tribune, Hollon wrote: “We’re reporting it because the family of the victim has come forward publicly, outraged that Tribble’s election as homecoming king makes him a role model for others.”

During news meetings on the story, there was never any question that the paper would run with it. The question was how.

Two stories ran on the bottom of page one. A sidebar dealt with whether school officials knew that Tribble was an admitted felon.

In the main story, court reporter Mike Babcock backtracked the details of the case and talked with Caldwell. He also talked with Tribble, who denied molesting the girl. Tribble’s mother said her son’s lawyer had advised him to plead guilty to the charges even though he wasn’t.

That story led to an attempt to draw Babcock into the mess. The county attorney’s office wanted him to make a sworn statement to the court about Mrs. Tribble’s accusations against her son’s public defender.

The day those first two stories were printed, about 300 people called Hollon. Half said they were sickened by Tribble. The other half said they were sickened by the Tribune.

That first week, Tribble didn’t go to school. A counselor was sent to his home. School officials worried that their star football player and student might be suicidal.

Still, the top school district administrators said there was nothing they could have done to prevent Tribble from being thrown into the spotlight.
The Iniwa accused the Tribune of "going beyond acceptable ethical journalistic standards." The school newspaper's coverage focused on how Tribune reporters damaged Tribble by not giving him fair coverage.

Superintendent Larry Williams at first said officials didn't know about the crime. Then his assistant, Karol Johnson, said they knew Tribble was in trouble, but didn't know he had been sentenced.

Later, a Great Falls High School official, who didn't want his name used, said he warned the top school officials when Tribble was nominated for king. He said he told them the whole thing could blow up in their faces.

Still, he admitted after Tribble was nominated that there was little he could do other than pull Tribble aside and ask him to withdraw his name. After Tribble was elected and the Tribune printed the story, that same school official described a strange reaction from his students.

They had rallied around an admitted felon. The Great Falls High School Iniwa, the school newspaper, dedicated almost an entire issue to the subject. Much of its coverage focused on how the Tribune had destroyed James Tribble.

"Tribune misrepresents media's role," read the headline of the paper's editorial.

The Iniwa editors said the Tribune had neither fully researched the issue nor included enough comments from Tribble.

"Tribune reporters have a tendency to report in a biased style going beyond acceptable ethical journalistic standards," the editorial continued.

Letters to the editor and phone calls flooded the Tribune that first week. Many expressed outrage that Tribble's crime was being brought to light just when he was getting his life back on track. Others thought it was wrong that he was still allowed to play football.

One caller asked reporter Paula Wilmot whether school officials were going to "dethrone" the homecoming king.

Eventually, the calls died down. Two months later, the school board killed an attempt to ban felony offenders from extracurricular activities.

School officials and probation officers said they needed to know which kids were getting into serious trouble. But there's no evidence they've taken any new steps.

The Tribune asked its readers what to do about reporting juvenile crimes. The editors backed away from changing the policy when those readers said they thought it was fair to give juveniles a second chance.

The Tribune still doesn't have a full-time police reporter. Calls that show up on the police logs as "sex offenses" are often "still under investigation."

The system that allowed James Tribble to admit sexually molesting a 3-year-old girl without attracting any attention has yet to be fixed.
The princess and the press

Japanese ideas of privacy were shaken up when a U.S. reporter broke the embargo on the royal engagement

By Clayton Jones

In early 1992, Japan’s association of newspaper publishers and editors made a simple request to the 350-odd foreign journalists in Tokyo: please do not write about any woman who is dating the Imperial Crown Prince. Censor thyself, we were told in effect, for the sake of Prince Naruhito’s privacy and that of any woman who might want to marry him and produce a male heir to a 1,600-year-old monarchy.

But this request for a gag rule rang hollow. Up to that point, the Japanese press had been acting like paparazzi, mercilessly harrying any would-be empress, splashing her face across subway posters and magazine covers, effectively shooing away any potential consort to the lonely prince, who had just turned a ripe old 32.

Nonetheless, Japanese journalists had little choice, at least in their eyes. They had been forced into a deal with the Imperial Household Agency. The secretive and powerful agency, which both guards and guides the emperor and his family, did not want any overzealous journalist to blow away the prince’s nuptial options.

Although unwritten, the grand deal set by the agency was that Japanese journalists would be ensured close access to the eventual wedding of the crown prince, a news event of historic proportions in Japan, if they backed off from covering the prince’s dating partners.

The imperial household, unlike a political party or a minority, carries special weight in Japan. The emperor is more a god-king than head of state. According to Japanese myth, his origins lie in the sun goddess of the Shinto religion, and he serves as keeper of Shinto rituals.

The press ban raised some bizarre possibilities. What if, for instance, the prince was dating no one, and Japan’s imperial lineage was threatened by lack of an heir? Shouldn’t the Japanese know this?

The Imperial Household Agency has long flexed its royal muscles against the press. In 1991, for instance, it banned a photojournalist from covering the imperial family after he took an informal shot of Naruhito’s younger brother having his tousled hair straightened by his new wife. The offense was not only that the photographer showed royalty in an informal pose, but also that he violated a rule on when and what to shoot.

The agency also gave a stern warning to a weekly magazine, Bunshun, after it ran 10 doctored photos of the crown prince with various hair styles. The magazine was suggesting that he change his coiffure to catch a mate.

Like other major institutions in Japan, the imperial agency is covered by a “club” of assigned reporters. These “kisha” (journalists’) clubs have a cozy symbiotic relationship with the institutions they cover. Car companies, for instance, must release information first to the kisha club covering the industry for fear of being boycotted for news by the club’s journalists.

Club members violating club rules can be punished by ostracism. (continued on p. 11)
The Washington Post's Tom Reid wrestles daily with what to report—and what not to report—to his readers

By Tomoko Otake

T.R. Reid, the Washington Post's Tokyo-based Far Eastern bureau chief, had a tough decision to make last year when very shocking news hit all over Japan. A 10th-grade student, bullied and picked on by classmates in a ritual known as "ijime," had suffocated and died in a wrestling mat after being rolled up in it by his classmates. As a foreign correspondent writing for an American audience, Reid thought this incident, extremely unusual for Japan, was a "pretty fascinating story."

Also, the incident seemed to reveal "a sociological kernel of truth" about Japanese society, which is extremely group-oriented and intolerant of those who look or think differently.

Every Japanese newspaper ran the story on the front page, probing the sociological background that might have led to the death of the child.

"This was huge news in Japan," said Reid, who visited the University of Montana journalism school in February. "A high school kid [in Japan] doesn't die in high school."
PRINCESS and the PRESS (continued from p. 9)

And in return for access to intimate details of an institution, club journalists do not report anything embarrassing. The result: the Japanese learn little of how bureaucrats or politicians make decisions.

"Until Japan relaxes these cartels of the mind," wrote Chalmers Johnson, a Japan expert at the University of California, San Diego, "its process of internationalization is meaningless."

The crown prince himself agreed with the agency's decision. "I think anyone would have (second) thoughts (about marrying me)," Naruhito told the agency's kisha club. "The palace is a difficult place to enter because in some ways it is still backward." But, he told the press, "I think it is extremely important to have a calm atmosphere so that progress can be made on resolving the problem of finding a bride." He thanked the reporters for their censorship of his courtship.

The problem for the Japanese press, however, was that foreign journalists were not members of the kisha clubs. In fact, members of foreign media were banned from these exclusive, cartel-like clubs.

To keep a lid on any news of whom the prince would marry before the official announcement was made, the Japanese newspaper association needed the foreign press to agree to the coverage ban. But in its approach to the Foreign Correspondence Club of Japan (FCCJ), which is nothing like a kisha club, the association was laughed off.

And guess what? T.R. Reid of the Washington Post broke the story in January 1993, that a young diplomat, Masako Owada, was the royal bride-to-be.

The scooped, red-faced barons of the newspaper association then broke their pact with the agency, reported the news of the engagement, and began a re-think of their relationship with the powers-that-be in Japan.

The kisha club "system" came under review by the association. But before long, another incident came up (continued on p. 48)

Then he thought about the United States, where 600 high school students were shot to death last year and thousands more were wounded. He worried that the incident might convey the wrong message to Americans by making the problem of violence seem universal, and thus unworthy of being seriously addressed. Even today he still wonders whether he should have written the story.

Foreign correspondents always face this problem when they write a story, Reid said. Because they are not given as much space in the paper as they want, and because they deal with countries that are so different from their own, they have the very difficult task of picking stories that depict a country accurately.

He attributed one of the difficulties facing American journalists in Japan to editors in Washington, D.C., or New York who are too "Euro-oriented" and who do not pay enough attention to Asia. "They are always looking across the Atlantic," he said. "This is a big problem for me. There is always a mindset [at the Post] that any story out of France is more important than any story out of Japan."

Yet Japan is the second-biggest economy in the world and the biggest overseas customer of American goods, buying nine times more goods from America than does France and even buying more goods than Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy combined.

"Don’t you think we can learn from this?" Reid said. "I mean isn’t this a foreign correspondent’s job (continued on p. 44)
The mountain lion in winter

From his lair on Flathead Lake, Nathaniel Blumberg peers suspiciously at the world—and vice versa

By Tara Turkington

To call Nathaniel Blumberg a gadfly would be unfair to gadflies. It would elevate their status to motor-blowing proportions. It would mean the nasty little bugs would have to buzz more energetically to emulate the Blumberg-superfly in their midst. They would have to think more quick-wittedly, bite more sharply. And rather than nipping ordinary old cattle, they’d have to seek out sacred cows like media giants and the federal government.

Nathaniel Blumberg—Montana journalist, creator of the first Montana Journalism Review, emeritus educator, writer, publisher, critic, personality extraordinaire.... Or, as some would have it, just another paranoid conspiracy freak—a bad-tempered, opinionated old fool.

Tucked away in the Flathead Valley among the pine needles and deer, guarded by a pet wolf and a Newfoundland, lies the wooden lair of Nathaniel Blumberg. The inconspicuous house where he lives with his wife, Barbara, and the adjacent print shop are from where the old fly gads. He is the critic. The world as he sees it, a lumbering herd of brainless cattle, is his topic. Beware government! Beware big business! Beware the journalism profession he both loves and loves to hate!

Blumberg is perhaps best known in Montana for his colorful deanship at the University of Montana School of Journalism from 1956 to 1968. He has since continued to influence journalism, but mostly as a critic. “I have never been busier in all my life,” he says, his dark eyes twinkling.

Blumberg was born in Colorado in 1922. “The Denver I grew up in is almost entirely gone,” he says sadly. Denver’s clean air had once provided refuge for tuberculosis patients.

But those mythical days weren’t all smoke-free. “A pack of cigarettes cost a dime,” Blumberg remembers. At the hardened age of 12, he and some pals from the “boys’ club” would sneak down to “the caves” and puff without parental knowledge. It became a ritual. Today, a football and baseball stadium replace the caves, and the only puffing done is by the Nuggets, the Broncos and the Rockies as they hurtle toward the ball.

It was through his boys’ club that Blumberg first heard journalism call his name. He started a newspaper for the club and never looked back. “I was 12 years old, and I was positive I wanted to go into journalism,” he says.

Ink and paper weren’t alien to the Blumberg household. The youngest of eight children, Nathaniel had a brother who was a printer. Emanuel Blumberg taught young Nate some of the thrills and (ink) spills of the trade. Another brother, Ben, was a city editor at the Rocky Mountain News, and got him a job as a copy boy. That meant running up and down stairs, carrying copy from reporter to editor and back.

But the newspaper industry was already being influenced by new-fangled technologies. In 1934 the Rocky Mountain News installed a vacuum tube which sucked copy from floor to
floor and stole Nathaniel’s job. “I always say I lost my first job to a hole in the floor,” he says with mock rue.

Blumberg went on to start work on a bachelor of arts degree and a certificate in journalism at the University of Colorado, where he became editor of the university newspaper. His studies however, were interrupted by wartime service, from 1943 to 1946. He spent 18 months in Europe, mostly in Germany and Austria, with a unit he later wrote about in a history called “Charlie of 666.” The group was “one hell of a unit,” Blumberg says, still with fierce pride. Blumberg himself won three battle stars and a Bronze Star.

Blumberg returned to Colorado to get a B.A. and a master of arts in history and political science. Then came the chance of a lifetime. In 1948 he was selected as a Rhodes scholar to Oxford. It was an opportunity he almost passed up.

“My professors urged me to apply for the scholarship,” Blumberg recalls. “So I went and did some research on this Rhodes. I found out Cecil Rhodes was a bloody, conscienceless, imperialist exploiter and I wanted nothing to do with his money.”

But Blumberg’s professors prevailed, pointing out some small print which stated that the scholarship should go to a man (no women back then) who expressed “sympathy for and protection of the weak.” That was Blumberg. He applied on the last day. “I didn’t think I had a chance in hell,” he says.

Up against the young men from Princeton and Harvard, Blumberg made it through the selections and set sail for England to tackle a doctor of philosophy degree in modern history. The great historian A.J.P. Taylor was his supervisor. He also got to know E.H. Carr and Hitler-expert Alan Bullock, both world-famous historians.

More important to Blumberg, though, was the friendship he started at Oxford with writer Eugene (Bud) Burdick, later to write best-sellers such as “The Ninth Wave.”

“After you’ve survived Blumberg, you can survive earthquakes and tornadoes.”

—Ed Dugan

Nathaniel Blumberg
serve his spicy teaching recipe as a professor until 1978, and then on a part-time basis until 1990.

How was Blumberg at teaching? Colorful? Controversial? Yes, of course. An old journalism school class evaluation from "Social Role of the Mass Media" reads: "Blumberg is praised for making students think and for his wide-ranging knowledge of world affairs. However, students criticized him for being narrow-minded, opinionated and preachy."

Ed Dugan, a University of Montana emeritus professor and friend of Blumberg's, recalls how Blumberg refused to settle for "C" work from a student he thought could do better.

"He and Dean Ford [his predecessor] were both strong personalities, and very demanding," says Dugan. "After you've survived Blumberg, you can survive earthquakes and tornadoes."

Like acid on an old printing plate, Blumberg's senior seminar class was etched in students' memories. Carol Van Valkenburg took the class in '71-'72.

"He was very much a taskmaster," she remembers. "He insisted on top-quality work and didn't do it in a soft voice. He was passionate about the quality of professional standards. Some students thought he was overbearing and unfair, some thought he was a god."

He was quick-witted, if not cruel. He told a student who made mistakes should have had a vasectomy to ensure his defective genes weren't passed on. He told a female student that he was trying to save her from becoming an airline stewardess.

Blumberg admits he may have intimidated people. "Of course! I often did it intentionally," he says. "If you're going to go through life as a little mouse or rabbit, you don't belong in journalism."

Stories about Blumberg and the classes he taught abound.

Blumberg hated "marshmallow writing," or writing that was "loose and gummy," Dugan recalls. Blumberg railed about "marshmallow writing" repeatedly to one graduating class. Graduation day came and Blumberg stood on the stage to bless each one as the graduates received their (well-deserved) degrees. One by one the students filed past, heartily shaking Blumberg's hand and squashing a personal marshmallow into his palm. Blumberg tried to slide each sticky offering surreptitiously into his pockets, and most of the audience never figured out what was going on. But the graduates, giggling gleefully, got their revenge.

Dugan remembers Blumberg as an outspoken and intensely loyal faculty member of the journalism school.

"It is sometimes very difficult for a man who is dean at the pleasure of the university president to do the things he must do," Dugan says. He believes there were times when Blumberg risked being fired for being too outspoken.

Blumberg became a figure in the education of journalists nationwide. Through the '50s and '60s, he served on many Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism teams. He served as vice chairman and chairman of the council, and was involved in other national journalism and education associations.

In 1958 Blumberg started the Montana Journalism Review, the first magazine in the country that critiqued journalism. Blumberg's version of the MJR petered out in 1979, but a phoenix, the Treasure State Review of Journalism and Justice (T.S.R.) arose out of his own Wood FIRE Ashes Press in Bigfork in 1991.

The T.S.R. has had mixed reviews. Blumberg has had many letters of appreciation for his opinion magazine, but there are media professionals who despise the publication. Jim Ludwick, business editor of the Missoulian, says Blumberg may have had an illustrious career, but "what he's producing now is garbage."

"What he's doing now is horrible, it's bad work," says Ludwick. "It's poorly researched and loaded with errors. He won't do the hard interviews. He just comes up with half-baked truths and bald-faced lies, some of it malicious lies. It's half-baked, crackpot, pot-calling-the-kettle-black style of journalism. His career was related to fostering professionalism. He set the standard. He is an educator. Things he would never have accepted from a student he is doing himself. He ought to know better.

"This is a classic vanity-press-type publication that he should be ashamed of.
I wish this publication was being written by the Blumberg of yesteryear and not by the old crackpot of today.”

Blumberg is shocked to hear these criticisms. He says he has received only three nasty letters regarding the T.S.R, one of them from Ludwick. “Every paragraph in that paper is researched. I do days and weeks and months of research. I regard myself as [being] of world-class proportions. Inaccurate? Ludicrous! I'm death on inaccuracy. In seven issues, there have been precisely two factual inaccuracies.

“I have scores of people (confidential sources) who talk to me. [Critics] say I don’t do research? There’s nothing but research here. I’m dedicated to this. I believe in this. Of course there are going to be people who don’t like it. [But] there are a lot of people who appreciate what I’m doing—legislators, editors and publishers, elected officials, judges.”

Blumberg says that Ludwick and others like him are mistaken. “I think they misread me real badly....They don’t understand the difference between a newspaper and a magazine of opinion.”

Blumberg’s attacks on the norms of society and the media have taken the forms of aggressive teaching, critical reviews, and (in 1984) a novel called “The Afternoon of March 30.”

The book, a mingling of investigation, reporter’s hunch and fiction, centers on the assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan by John Hinckley Jr. Blumberg believes the press covered up—or at best glossed over—the connection between the Hinckley and Bush families. The press briefly reported that Hinckley’s brother had planned to dine with Neil Bush, son of then vice president George Bush, the evening after the assassination attempt. This strange coincidence launched Blumberg into an investigation that eventually produced a “contemporary historical novel” as he calls it, with a generous dash of media criticism.

Blumberg’s dabbling in fiction is indicative of the many contradictions and paradoxes that coalesce in his unique personality. He says he wrote the book to target a wider audience than his previous writings had. But in the next dragon-like breath he says he published it himself because the commercial press “wouldn’t touch it. It was too controversial,” especially the stuff he had dug up about the CIA. “The commercial publishing industry is corrupt, venal,” he spits. “I’m not interested in best sellers.”

Blumberg proudly admits personally designing the camera-ready pages of his novel, from dust jacket to dialogue. “Through my press I controlled every aspect of it,” he says. “I crafted the whole thing. There is hardly an author alive who has crafted their own books.”

Blumberg didn’t get the wide acclaim for his novel that he perhaps hoped for. But he did get a letter from author Doris Lessing, which he describes as “beautiful,” and which he says he wouldn’t trade for all the reviews in the world.

(continued on p. 45)
Censorship through the eyes of an Indian

Native American publisher Tom McKay discovers that the truth has many shades of gray

By Jake Ellison

Newspaper owner and Blackfeet tribal member Tom McKay leaned against the cutting table in the offices of a Cut Bank print shop one morning in January and weighed his convictions against the consequences of following them: he could bow to a Blackfeet Tribal Court order and not circulate the last issue of his newspaper contained in boxes at his feet, or follow his convictions and spend time in a jail in Browning that is not known for its sanitary conditions. The tribal court had ordered McKay not to print or distribute his newspaper, *Through the Eyes of an Indian*, if it contained any articles, letters or editorials about a prominent reservation contractor, William Aubrey, his construction company or the federal housing project he runs.

Although it could not be enforced off the reservation in Cut Bank where McKay’s newspaper was printed, the order is law on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, where McKay was born and raised. In fact, the issue of *Eyes* waiting distribution did contain several articles about the contractor and his company’s work. It contained an exact copy of a letter from the Department of Housing and Urban Development saying the housing program was in danger and questioning whether $5.5 million in federal money was being mismanaged by the contractor. The letter stated that 97 percent of the funding to build 72 houses was spent but only 51 houses had been finished.

The issue also carried a copy of the tribal court order barring distribution of the paper — in itself a violation of the order. On the entire page introducing the court document, a staff member had hand-written the title: “Freedom of the Press under attack again. This is your right to know.”

The court’s distribution ban had come about as the result of a $7 million libel suit Aubrey had brought against the paper in December. Tribal Court Judge Howard Doore ordered the paper not to print any information about the contractor until the case was settled in a jury trial.

Doore said the paper had continued to print material that was potentially libelous and damaging to Aubrey and his company and had to be stopped to head off further lawsuits. Tom McKay has since filed a $17 million countersuit against Aubrey and has succeeded in getting Doore to step down from the case. Doore said he recognized all Blackfeet judges would have a conflict of interest in the case since it involved nearly everyone in tribal government. He said a tribal judge from another Montana Indian reservation would most likely be appointed to hear the case.

Nevertheless, McKay and his staff say there is a more important issue at stake in the lawsuit than libel and money. They say the court’s actions are proof that there is no freedom of the press on the reservation and that their First Amendment rights have been trampled in the name of reservation politics. They claim the courts have acted in Aubrey’s favor from the beginning of their conflict because he holds sway with seven of the nine
Blackfeet Tribal Business Council members. And, judges in the tribal court system are political appointees who serve at the pleasure of the council.

Politics, McKay says, pollutes every aspect of reservation life. The forces of politics—hearsay, blackball lists, accusations, friendships, enmities—link all Native Americans in their public and economic lives.

And while political battles are harsh everywhere in the United States, they are especially tough to fight on the reservation because of the seemingly ultimate power sovereign tribal councils wield over their members.

"To Indians the biggest fear, at least on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, is to be a victim of politics," McKay said. "Once you are branded you can do one of three things: Decide to move away; stay and fight and make the most of it while your family and loved ones suffer the consequences, or you can stick a gun to your head. That's what politics does on the reservation."

McKay says tribal politicians first flexed their might against him in the early '80s by going after his management position in a tribally owned company.

"If you have tribal members so dissatisfied with their own lives and jealous of what others have built through hard work, they will go to the politicians on the [Blackfeet Tribal Business Council] to complain and the council responds by pulling those people down who have worked hard all their lives," McKay said.

The reason tribal council members do this, McKay said, is that "most of the time elected officials get on [the council] without realizing that the tribe is a very big
"We are out of arrows," wrote Tom McKay in his last issue of *Eyes*, blaming Blackfeet tribal politicians for causing its demise.

McKay says he got his first taste of tribal politics when he was a manager of the tribe's company that made pencils and other writing-related items. He said he had to fight a new wave of political battles every two years when new council members were elected to the business council.

"Finally, I got tired of fighting every two years and said I would let whatever the good Lord had in mind happen," McKay said. In late 1980, he lost his job with the writing company.

Later, he was given the chance to manage a company that makes calendars, but in 1991, he felt politics pulling the company and its 200 workers down because of enmity against him. He publicly resigned. The calendar company later failed.

"I spent a couple of years drowning my sorrows," McKay said. "No one would hire me because I was branded as someone to stay away from. Bad politics would follow me."

In 1992, he got another chance to make something of the defunct calendar company when he leased the building housing the equipment. The idea of publishing a newspaper came to McKay as a way to subsidize the calendar company, which was still struggling to get off the ground.

"The only news to print was tribal news and the only way we could print that news was to hire people with nothing to lose," McKay said. He hired Bob Juneau, a tribal member and lifelong Browning resident, who was also a veteran of tribal politics, to edit the paper.

"Vocal reaction to the first issue was strong," McKay said. "The general public liked it and the council didn't. This was the first time in tribal history that people knew what was happening with [the council and its programs] right away rather than months or years down the road."

One contributor was Gene Dubray, a Browning resident. Dubray is the principal defendant in the $7 million lawsuit against the paper. Most of the libel charges in the suit center on his inflammatory letters, published in McKay's paper.

Dubray, also known on the reservation as "Sub-chief," wrote what came to mind about reservation politics and whoever was involved. In his letters he made accusations of bribery and criminal activity.

McKay said he printed Sub-chief's letters because "he speaks his piece. He says what's on his mind and he has a certain following. We printed what he had to say because of his honest opinions on issues."

From the beginning of his newspaper career, McKay crossed paths with Aubrey, one of the largest Native American housing contractors in the United States. Aubrey moved the headquarters of his company, Blaze Construction, from Yakima, Wash., to Browning in 1992 to pursue a new federal housing program begun by HUD.

The $15 billion program, called the HUD "Home" Program, earmarked $15 million for housing on Indian reservations.

The Blackfeet tribe's application to the program was orchestrated by Aubrey, an enrolled member of the tribe, in conjunction with council members. The tribe was awarded more Home Program money than any other reservation, receiving $5.5 million.
million in 1992. The tribe in turn contracted with Aubrey to manage the program and build 72 houses.

Since its beginning the program has been under fire from reservation foes who say Aubrey has mismanaged the funds, has chosen tenants for the homes unfairly and is possibly making an excessive profit

Among Aubrey’s critics is one-time colleague and tribal council member Joe McKay—Tom McKay’s brother. Joe McKay was once a co-director of the tribe’s program, but resigned after several months because he felt Aubrey had expanded the program’s budget to make a profit and begun making shady land deals.

_Through the Eyes of an Indian_ began carrying a steady stream of documents and editorials critical of Aubrey and the tribe’s home program. This steady diet of criticism soon led Aubrey to sue the paper. He says the paper was merely a conduit for Joe McKay to undermine the housing program. “They just wouldn’t stop,” Aubrey said.

Nevertheless, _Tom McKay_ claims that Aubrey’s influence with the council is very strong and began to surface in active resentment against the newspaper. Most notably, in December the council canceled McKay’s lease on the building where he was printing the newspaper and then locked him out of the building when he refused to vacate it.

McKay was forced to take his printing business off the reservation to _The Western Breeze_, a newspaper in Cut Bank, while his own staff sat idle.

McKay’s $17 million counter-suit claims that Aubrey intentionally interfered with his business to prevent him from exposing Aubrey’s actions to the bright light of public scrutiny.

_Tom McKay_ says he reported on Aubrey and his business for the sole reason that he was news.

“On the reservation, politics is news and Aubrey put himself right in the middle of it,” he said. “He is the only individual who could call a quorum of the business council and do business. That’s news. He is the biggest Indian contractor in the U.S. That’s news. He has been involved in every major economic development on the reservation and that’s news. We never made a special attempt to go after him. We just printed what he was doing.”

Right now the last issue of _Through the Eyes of an Indian_ is sitting in a box in an undisclosed place, McKay said. The issue has not been distributed on the reservation because he doesn’t want to defy the court injunction and face jail time or court fines.

“But people have been able to buy [copies] off the reservation,” he said. Several hundred copies of the newspaper were distributed for sale in Cut Bank, a town bordering the reservation on U.S. Highway 2.

Meanwhile the tribal court system seems to be dragging its feet. No court date has been set to resolve the issue of the injunction, nor to hear the libel case or countersuit. McKay says the court is stalling the discovery process, which he feels will bring out important evidence against Aubrey and the tribal officials supporting him.

Also, the possible violation of McKay’s civil rights by the court injunction censoring his paper cannot be addressed until the case has run its full course through the tribal courts.

One Indian law scholar, who has taught at the Blackfeet Community College in Browning and is a member of the Blackfeet Tribal Bar, recently wrote in the _Great Falls Tribune_ that the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution does apply to McKay, even though the tribe is considered a sovereign nation with full authority over its members.

_Jon Contway_ of Great Falls wrote in a guest editorial that the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act extends constitutional protection to Native Americans and protects them the same as any other U.S. citizen.

“"In this case the Blackfeet Court system and the Blackfeet tribal government are one and the same because of a lack of separation of powers,” Contway wrote. “So it would appear Judge Doore’s court is in violation of the federally protected civil rights of McKay.”

McKay vows to start publishing his newspaper again once the current court battles are resolved. He believes the paper can help take a bite out of reservation politics.

“If we’re successful enough to get politics out of the way... people will be able to have a good life here,” McKay said. _MJR_
Running down the day with Larry Frost

KECI’s news anchor plays producer, reporter and dad with just seconds to spare in the race to nail the news

By Tom Cheatham

Larry Frost remembers that day in fifth grade, Mrs. Hintz’s class. He’d just finished reading aloud from a car-racing comic book. Racing was his passion then, a window to life’s possibilities for a farm boy in Minnesota.

“Larry,” said Mrs. Hintz, “some day, you’re going to be a sportscaster.”

Little did she know.

Today, at “39 and holding,” Larry is Missoula’s longest-serving full-time TV personality, best known for his nine years as sports director at KE. So much of his life has been set to sports and seasons and teams that it’s only natural for him to hang his memories there.

“The last cigarette I had,” he says, “was when Wayne Tinkle was a senior. Must’ve been five, six years ago...Grizzly basketball.”

The last sportscast he did was August 20, 1993.

“The games and the late nights were keeping me away from my family too much,” he says. “Plus, I needed a new challenge.”

The challenge had arisen when Len Johnson resigned as co-anchor of KECl’s evening news after an unhappy two-month stint. KECl asked Larry if he wanted to anchor. He took over that Labor Day.

Now he’s both the news director and 6 o’clock anchor, a combination boss and jack-of-all-trades at an operation he says is “fighting to keep our heads above water.”

This day is no exception. It’s Monday, March 14, and Larry’s running late. It’s 9 o’clock.

After a quick apology—“dropped my daughter off at school”—it’s up the stairs into an empty newsroom, on with the lights and off with the “Your Town’s Newscenter Network” windbreaker.

The light on the answering machine is blinking. There’s a request for Larry: “Read the wires and give me a call.” It’s from Jennie Dipirizio, the new photographer/reporter in Butte.

KECl is part of Eagle Communications’ “Newscenter Network” with three other NBC-TV affiliates—KBZ Bozeman, KCFW Kalispell and KTVM Butte. All but Butte have their own news programs.

Eagle underscored the fickle reality of local news last fall when it axed the 15-member staff in Butte after years of red ink. Now KTVM’s viewers get Bozeman’s evening news. Jennie’s been hired to cover Butte for the network.

Larry scans the AP wire and tells her there’s “nothing on the wires.” She tells him she’s preparing a short “VO/SOT” for him on federal landfill regulations. She’ll provide the pictures, soundbite and script. Larry will add the voice.

Kalispell reports that Meg Oliver will
have a story about how to find child care. Bozeman's preparing something on the low snowpack and how it might lead to forest fires this summer.

There's a quick check of the Missoulian—"nothing much there today"—and a look through the Montana Business Annual.

"I used to read the paper for fun," he says. "Now it's for story ideas and what we missed."

The phone rings. It's an applicant to replace Tobby Hatley, who quit to take a job with KHQ-TV, Spokane, after eight years at KECI.

Larry says "we're looking for someone with two or three years of commercial experience" and suggests trying Kalispell.

Tobby's departure left Larry and Teresa Bell as the only full-time reporter/anchors at KECI in Missoula, a situation that Larry wants to remedy fast. Teresa anchors the late news.

A career in local TV news usually means starting in "markets" like Missoula and moving on quickly. Larry got on that track out of Winona (Minn.) State in 1977.

First there was the sports director's job at WBKB in Alpena, Mich., then the one at KNOP in North Platte, Neb. By 1984, he was applying for one job at KCFW in Kalispell and another in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

For all its on-air "happy talk," TV news is way up there when it comes to cruelty. The news director in Iowa wanted someone with the right "look," the right "feel." Larry, he said, didn't have it.

"I don't mean to sound bitter," Larry says now, "but can someone tell me what the right 'look' and 'feel' is?"

So Larry and his wife, Debbie, "decided to come to Montana and see the mountains, and here we are 11 years later. We're happy here. It's a great place to live."

Now it's 9:40 and Larry has turned on his office scanner to monitor the police and fire departments' radio transmissions. Because so much local news is crime, accidents and fires—stories that are easy and cheap to cover—no newsroom can be without a scanner.

Today it's busy with grass fires, a break-in, a hit-and-run fender-bender and a paging company that keeps intruding with "Please enter your password. For help, press the pound key."

"It's driving us nuts," he says.

Larry was monitoring the scanner on Jan. 11, 1993, when it reported a house on fire in Three Mile, south of Missoula. His house. He raced home to find his family safe, but the house destroyed. Larry, Debbie and daughter Candi, 12, moved into a new house in November.

At 10, his watch alarm tells him to record the morning NBC News feed. Then he heads for the Missoula County Courthouse to check the court docket and the sheriff's office. The newsroom's empty and the scanner's squawking behind him.

Almost everyone he sees on the three-block walk and at the courthouse greets him with "Hi, Larry." Helen at the sheriff's office compliments him on his tie.

Larry is the antithesis of the celebrity anchor. Colleagues say he's one of the few anchors they've known without what TV newpeople call an "ego problem."

Friends who have gone with him to benefit basketball games tell of fans chanting "Lar-ry, Lar-ry."

On his office wall is a yellow computer printout banner saying "Thank You, Mr. Frost," signed by the students at Lone Rock School. Larry likes to make public appearances. This one was for "Learn to Read Month."

By 10:20, he's heading back to KECI for a camera. There are a couple of court cases he wants for the 6 o'clock. He'll tape them, take what notes he can, telephone later for more details and write the stories.
The daily search for stories leads Larry to the police station.

All this and selling his daughter's Girl Scout cookies, too—"strawberry cremes this year...really good." He says he never met a cookie he didn't like.

Larry is back from the courthouse by 11:30. Cameraman Joe Mackay has arrived.

From the scanner comes a report of a grass fire south of Lolo. Larry sends Joe, then asks him to stop at Stevensville Junior High, too. Larry's arranged an interview with the principal, Jim Notaro, about how students are coping with the death of a classmate in a weekend joyride. Larry gives Joe the questions.

The 6 o'clock lineup has begun to take shape: a guilty plea and a sentencing from the courthouse, the Stevensville Junior High followup, tape of a weekend fire that police think is arson, the Lolo fire, the Bozeman snowpack story, Meg Oliver's child-care spot, something on yesterday's opening of the Target store, the weather from Jim Harmon, sports from Todd Reed and whatever "readers" Larry can cull from the AP wire.

By now, Larry has checked the incoming faxes—"What's Rob Natelson up to now?"—changed the ribbon on the printer, fielded a request from "Inside Edition" for file pictures of a local murder, made follow-up calls on three stories and apologized to a woman caller for not knowing where The Furniture Warehouse is.

"Part of that was to strengthen the other stations for the network. But Missoula's still the most competitive market in Montana."

Life in the nation's 174th market isn't easy. Not when starting salaries are about $12,000 a year for a photographer/reporter and turnover is endemic. Larry's longevity has been a plus for KECL, and for him. "The company's been good to me," he says. "I'm not getting rich, but I can pay the bills."

"For help," says the scanner, "press the pound key."

Lunch time. Larry grabs his "solar polar" mug and heads across to the Holiday convenience store—Diet Coke and, willpower crumbling, a day-old blueberry cream muffin, to go.

He eats while checking in with Debbie and—"Gotta go. I got a pile of mail the size of Mount Rushmore"—slicing open envelopes.

Todd arrives to start on his sports report. Bonny Kohrman, a newly hired photographer/editor/reporter, comes in.

At 1 p.m., another job applicant calls. Larry begs off until tomorrow—too busy now to put on his news director's hat.

By 1:40, Joe is back from Lolo and Stevensville. The fire was a bust. The interview with the principal went as planned.

Four hours to air. Larry goes through the AP wire, prints the stories he wants and begins writing his lead-ins, voiceovers, readers, tags and teases. There's a pencil behind his right ear for editing.

Then it's into an edit room to assemble the pictures and soundbites for the Stevensville Junior High item. Working the controls with both hands, he selects the accident shots from last night's program. No time to search for something new.

Larry strives for good video cuts, which require good equipment. The heavy camera gets hauled everywhere he reports. Sometimes a photographer accompanies him, but often photographers are working on other stories for the same broadcast.

I T'S NOON AND Larry's alone in the newsroom with ringing telephones and a squawking scanner. "In the last three years, due to attrition and downsizing, we have lost the equivalent of three full-time positions," he says.
It's 3:12 and the phone's ringing.

"This time of day, you'd just like to rip the phone off the wall," he says, then, sweetly: "Yes, Melissa. How can I help you?" KGW-TV, the NBC affiliate in Portland, asks if someone at KECI can do an interview in Missoula for a KGW story on Friday. No problem.

On to the arson tape. Again, no time to use anything but the pictures from last night. Bonny is editing the tape Larry shot at the courthouse. He's written 35 seconds of narration for one item, 30 for the other.

Teresa Bell has checked in and gone to do an interview for the Target "VO/SOT," another combination of yesterday's tape and today's interview.

Joe's out doing a "weather shot." The temperature hit 65 today, two degrees off the record.

THE PHONE AGAIN. IT'S KDXT RADIO FOR LARRY. Time to record the daily 30-second promo for what's on at 6. He does it—"join us"—without a script, one take, on the money.

Jim Harmon's been asking Larry for a meeting. Jim's not just the weather man. He's vice president of Eagle Communications, Larry's boss. It takes five minutes.

"It's 4:37," Larry announces. "Do you know where YOUR newscast is?"

"Larry starts talking to himself about this time of day," Todd tells a visitor.

The feeds from Bozeman, Kalispell and Butte start coming in. Larry expects the Bozeman snowpack story to be narrated by Jennifer Jolly. It isn't—"I really wanted that story"—so he scratches it. Meg Oliver's child-care spot from Kalispell and the Butte item come in as expected.

Larry shuttles between his writing to the edit room until 5:30, when the KPAX news comes on. KPAX is KECI's archrival.

"Gus, quick," he says jokingly to Gus Chambers, tonight's director. "Call KPAX and ask them if they have anything I don't."

"Jill Valley," Gus answers. Formerly with KECI, she's now a co-anchor at KPAX.

"Yeah," Larry says, "but I got Todd."

KPAX opens with one of the courthouse stories, using file tape without labeling it "file." It leads the audience to believe that KPAX was there when, in fact, Larry was the only cameraman at the courthouse today.

"That bugs me," he says, leaving to edit the pictures that go with music at the end of each segment. It's 5:47.

Larry has collected all the tapes for tonight's program. Yuki Toeda-Hood, who operates a studio camera, takes them to the control room. He checks the AP wire and goes over his script.

At 5:56, Larry runs a brush through his hair, gives it a few puffs of spray, puts on his sports jacket and heads downstairs.

He settles into the anchor chair at 5:59:15, attaches the mike to his lapel and, at 6, is on the air. Jim and Todd will join him in progress.

Larry is up against "Jeopardy" on KPAX. The ratings show "Jeopardy" is winning.
Black Friday in Butte

Eagle Communications' decision to suddenly close up shop in Butte last year puzzled some and angered others.

By Bill Knowles

Friday, Oct. 30, 1993, was one of those glorious western Montana autumn mornings. But in the modest Dewey Boulevard headquarters of KTVM, the NBC affiliate in Butte, the mood was black. All 15 full- and part-time employees had heard rumors that the station's owner, Missoula-based Eagle Communications, Inc., might close the place down.

At 10 a.m., Eagle owner Robert Precht and his vice president for finance, Jane English, gathered the staff in the lobby.

"I was busy getting ready to put a story together," recalled news director Rex Kendall. "Bob just said, 'We're sorry but we're going to have to shut the whole station down. It's just not making any money.' It was kind of a shock. It was a real emotional meeting. People were crying."

"Everybody looked extremely somber," remembered Lari Barager, who had been anchoring the 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. newscasts in Butte for six months, her first job. "Bob's there. Jim [Harmon, Eagle's vice president for news] notably is not there."

"I want you all to know that I'm sorry," Barager recalled Precht saying. "Butte hasn't been pulling any kind of numbers. It's a real drain on the company. We're closing it down."

Somebody asked whether this meant there would be no newscasts that night. Barager remembered Precht saying, "No news tonight from this station—tonight or ever."

"We were all in shock," said Barager, a University of Michigan graduate.

KTVM would not go off the air, Precht explained. It would just eliminate the local news operation and broadcast to Butte the signal from KBZ-TV42 in Bozeman.

Before deregulation, the FCC required all licensees to make some effort at local news and public affairs programming. Now that’s no longer the case. Eliminating or downsizing local news departments is not unusual now, but it happens primarily in small markets where a third station provides a channel for a network in a given market.

In Montana, at least three other stations carry no local news. Two are ABC affiliates: KTMF, Channel 23, in Missoula, which went on the air in 1990, and KSVI, Channel 8, in Billings, which started broadcasting in 1993. KTGF, Channel 16, in Great Falls broadcasts NBC programming but dropped local news last year.

Eagle had built KBZ-TV42 into a full-fledged operation. For 15 years Eagle Communications has operated KTVM, Channel 6, in Butte; KECI, Channel 13, in Missoula, KCFW, Channel 9, in Kalispell and the satellite in Bozeman. But only for the past four has Precht managed them personally. Precht, whose father-in-law was the renowned variety show host Ed Sullivan, produced Sullivan’s show at one time and later was in charge of TV’s Country Music Awards. In 1989 Precht determined it was time to manage his investment himself.

"When I came here, Butte was a topic of major concern," said Precht in a recent interview. "We talked about it for a good
two years. Simultaneously, Bozeman began to bloom. More and more of the revenue in the market was coming in from Bozeman, not Butte. So we began to think, if Bozeman is what’s happening and Butte is dormant, and indeed we’re not making the inroads and we are losing, then why don’t we begin to think about a transition that would put more emphasis and investment in the future of a growth market?

"Then we said, are we going to do it or are we not going to do it? There was a good deal of technical stuff we had to put in place before we could do that. That basically is the genesis of what happened. In the crassest way you could say ‘Yeah, we followed the money.’ The jury’s still out, by the way. We don’t know. But we believe there will be sufficient revenue to warrant our investment in Bozeman.

"In reality, it’s one market, and we look at the revenue on that basis. What has taken place is basically a flip-flop. It was Butte servicing Bozeman. Now it’s Bozeman servicing Butte. It was purely based on where we could maximize our profits. That’s the business we’re in."

When the immediate shock wore off, Barager and others thought maybe Butte ought to know what happened. So they called their—until that moment—journalistic rivals at KXLF, the local CBS affiliate.

KXLF sent a reporter and photographer. Their story focused on employees who found themselves jobless. One of them was Savannah Guthrie, a University of Arizona graduate who had just been hired by KTVM. She had reported to work just eight days earlier.

"It was my first job in commercial television," said Guthrie. "I moved everything up at my own expense and got all set up there, and a week and half later they announced that the station was closed. I was just shocked. I couldn’t believe it because they had just hired me. I said to Bob Precht, ‘I think it would be fair for you to pay for my moving expenses. To say that you didn’t know is a little disingenuous. If you really didn’t know that’s even more pathetic.’"

Said news veep Harmon of Guthrie, "Rex interviewed her, I interviewed her and she was hired because there was an opening. Up until a very short period before the close, I had no knowledge of the closure coming. This was a discussion that had gone on for literally years. We’re losing money. What do we try to do? Do we try to beef it up? Do we do a loss leader? I became very used to that conversation. It was a perennial conversation. Did I or anyone else know about this before or during the hiring of that particular employee? No. The closure was a sad moment for me, and the business decision was made, and it was made quickly."

Brent Kline was in his fourth year as sports director. "They had told us it was a decision that was made quickly. I’m no rocket scientist but I do know that decisions like that are made more than a week in advance."

Kline, Barager and Guthrie pleaded their case to KXLF reporter Cindy Perdue, who had once worked for KTVM. The

"What has taken place is basically a flip-flop. It was Butte servicing Bozeman. Now it’s Bozeman servicing Butte. It was purely based on where we could maximize our profits. That’s the business we’re in."

—Robert Precht, Owner, Eagle Communications

Anchors away: Brent Kline was in his fourth year as KTVM’s sports director when the hammer came down. News anchor Lari Barager was finishing her first six months on her first broadcasting job.
Rex Kendall has been rehired by KTVM.

“KTVM-TV office closes, staff fired at work,” blared the banner headline over reporter Dave Kirkpatrick’s story on the front page of the next morning’s Montana Standard, the Butte daily.

Most of the fallout related to how Eagle closed down its Butte station, rather than why.

“They didn’t handle it well in terms of advising the community,” said Jack Lynch, chief executive of Butte-Silver Bow Consolidated Government (in essence Butte’s mayor). “I guess if there’s any resentment that’s the one I have. And they didn’t do it well in terms of advising their employees. I think they shifted their stories after they realized they’d screwed up. There’s a better way to package bad news than to do it the way they did.”

Some advertisers were angry, too. Bob Toole, general manager of radio stations KXTL and KQUY-FM (Y95) in Butte, said the immediate reaction of many retailers who bought advertising time was “How could they give up on Butte?”

“I saw first-hand this thing called Butte pride,” Toole said.

Dennis Gross, who handles public relations and advertising for Montana Tech of the University of Montana, says he had trouble dealing with restructured KTVM.

“I don’t believe at least from our side we necessarily pulled ads. It was one of those situations where we didn’t have anybody locally to deal with.”

Gross mourned the death of a local news station. “You work with these people on a daily basis. You develop friendships. They’re involved in the community, in booster clubs, athletic events. I think as a community we were shocked.”

Precht says he considered giving the workers and the community advance notice, but decided against it. He said Eagle’s management team thought that closing the station suddenly would be better for all concerned. “The decision was made, let’s make it today, final. Everyone’s got a check. I think everyone was given a reasonably good severance. We chose to go that route. It’s like any other office. Do you keep the guy around and have him disgruntled, unhappy and infecting the others, or do we say ‘today’s the day and I think you ought to clean your stuff out and get out?’”

But Precht admits that while the substance of Eagle’s action was warranted, the form wasn’t.

“In retrospect, we probably would have been much smarter if we would have thought more about the public relations side and indeed we struggled over how to present that. I had a draft that spoke to the economic considerations, and it was the manager in Butte, Allison Ohman, who felt that it had negative connotations so she suggested that we simply indicate that the real change was that Bozeman’s news was now going to serve Butte. That was the direction we went with the press release. In retrospect was that a bad move? I guess it was because obviously we got a lot of quick and unfavorable reaction.”

PRECHT ALSO INSISTS HE DID NOT GIVE up on Butte. “I’m still rooting for Butte. It’s still an important market to us. Those households are important. I feel badly. The public relations raps that we got we really felt badly. Our poor sales people, they just had to hide for a couple months while all this blew over. But had we seen any reason to see that kind of support coming down the line for the news product, by all means we would have hung in there.”

But it’s his fellow broadcasters’ coverage of KTVM’s demise that really annoys Precht. He feels that KXLF’s reporter did not make an effort to get management’s side of the story. In fact, Precht wonders whether what happened at KTVM that day was newsworthy at all.

KXLF general manager Ron Cass had no such qualms. “I’m not sure what Bob’s problems with us were,” said Cass. “In Montana when 15 jobs or whatever it is are cut off and when one of only two TV stations pulls out, it’s news.”

KXLF news director Jay Kohn said his reporter, Cindy Perdue, did her best to get Eagle’s side of the story, but Ohman wouldn’t go on camera, referring all inquiries to Eagle’s vice president for broadcast operations, Charlie Cannaliato. Kohn and Cass insist there was no unfair treatment of their rival station. Kohn said the story that aired on KXLF’s 5:30 news-cast was cut down for 10 p.m. No other followups were done.

One other incident particularly upset Precht. Every Thursday night, Toole’s FM station and Herrington Pepsi sponsor a comedy event at a local pub, Jox Sports and Spirits. The Thursday (continued on p. 44)
The Winner of our discontent

The new owners of a South Dakota weekly found the courage to break with tradition for the public good

By SHELLI SNIFFIN-JOHNSON

As in many small towns in the Midwest, change comes hard, and often splits a community in two. In Winner, a farming and pheasant-hunting community in south-central South Dakota, there is about an even split between those who want progress and those who want to let things be. The younger, more progressive half of the town often hides behind the curtain. But when something as seemingly simple as a new hot water heater for a medical office blows up into a town debate, both sides come out fighting.

Scant months after taking over as publishers of the Winner Advocate in 1992, my husband, Jerry, and I were pulled into the rift between the two halves of town — between the city's oldest and most respected physician, Dr. Robert Stiehl, and a Winner newcomer, Dr. Jeffrey Pinter. Stiehl wanted to install a water source heat pump system in his new clinic, using city water. Pinter was concerned that a system connected to the city's water supply might contaminate city drinking water.

On July 14, 1992, editor Dan Bechtold reported that the City Council voted to allow Stiehl and partner Dr. Melanie Schramm to install a water source heat pump system that would use the city water supply in their new clinic. A water source heat pump system removes heat from the building during the summer when cooling is required and transfers the heat to the water (see diagrams). In the winter, when heating is needed, the heat pump removes heat from the water and heats the building. The pump uses un-metered water from the city water main, pumps the water through a series of heat exchangers in which heat is either added or removed, and then returns the untested drinking water to the city water line.

After the issue hit the stands, I hadn't been at my desk for more than a couple of minutes when I received a phone call from Stephen Hengst, a distribution services representative for York Water Company in Pennsylvania. Pinter, who had just arrived in town days prior to the City Council's action, had faxed him a copy of the article. At the time I had not yet met Pinter.

In a city of 3,500, people get to know each other quickly, and Pinter was making a startling entrance by protesting what he believed was a danger to the public's health. This was big news in Winner, and we were just getting situated.

When we first arrived, we had immediately missed the mountains, but we knew we would. We missed the espresso carts, bookstores, bars and college atmosphere of Missoula. We traded eagles for pheasants, environmentalists for farmers and forests for a tree here and there.

I grew up in a newspaper family. My parents own and publish the Wyoming State Journal in Lander. Over the last 25 years or so, they've owned about 15 weekly newspapers in Montana, Wyoming and South Dakota.

My first job was stuffing papers. As a family, we often spent Sunday afternoons at the office. We kids would explore things like the darkroom, the press, the wax machine, the blue photo pens, the cameras.
When I went off to the University of Montana in the fall of 1986, I planned on becoming a psychologist. Perhaps I couldn’t figure out why anyone would ever want to be a journalist. But after the first quarter I found myself sitting in the Journalism Building waiting for an appointment with an adviser.

My dad had told us of the troubles the Winner Advocate, which my parents owned, was having. For the last two years, it had suffered as a newspaper and as a business. Its future looked dim at best. The paper hadn’t changed in years from its basic 16-page, one-section format, and yet it had a circulation of 3,700.

We felt the readers and Winner deserved more from their hometown paper. One of the first things we did when we got to Winner was visit the Chamber of Commerce office. The advice we received was, “Take it slow.”

We listened to that advice, and though we added pages and color to the paper, we didn’t try to make changes overnight. During the first eight months, we added an agricultural page, a school page, local column and a few special sections a month. For eight months we had been patient. Now the town was facing a fight over public health that demanded careful scrutiny. We dove right in.

The clash began in earnest on Aug. 25 at the Winner public meeting. About 85 people attended, 80 percent being age 60 or older. At the head table were Stiehl and his attorney, Ruben Maulis. Seated next to them were a representative from Rosebud Electric Cooperative, which had provided hundreds of additional feet of pipe for the heating system to dilute the water before it re-enters the water supply, and Steve Wegman of the S.D. Public Utilities Commission. Pinter was present but seated in the crowd.

Pinter had contacted the Advocate earlier in the day to ask what the meeting was all about. He said he had called Maulis and asked if he could sit at the head table and be included in the informational meeting, but was told this wouldn’t be allowed.

Stiehl and Maulis directed the meeting and did a good job of ignoring Pinter when he raised his hand. When finally acknowledged, he was not offered a microphone and the crowd near Stiehl began mumbling among themselves, making it difficult for anyone to hear Pinter.

Pinter asked Stiehl if there was any risk to public health with such a system. Before Stiehl could answer, a retired dentist stood up, looked at Pinter and said: “What’s your name? Say your name.”

Pinter said, “I’m Jeff Pinter.”

The retired dentist said, “So you’re Dr. Pinter. The new kid in town. Thought you’d come from the city to show us how it’s all done, huh? Well, by God, welcome to Winner. It’s about time you showed your face.”

Pinter tried again, this time saying that as a taxpayer he was concerned that if such a system contaminated the drinking water, the community would have to foot the bill.

An elderly lady then stood up and said, “You can’t call yourself a taxpayer. You just got here. We’ve been here a long time, and we’ve done just fine without you.”

This same lady wrote a letter to the editor a few days later. “I don’t expect you have a clientele of your own yet and from my view you may never have one . . . are you, Dr. Pinter, and those behind you like people out in Washington, D.C., out to get each other? Dog eat dog—destroying a man’s worth, his livelihood, his name and his family. How do our doctors get started in Winner? Did we as citizens lambaste them for coming to Winner? No. You were welcomed here. We needed you and above all, you needed us as patients.”

The issue of public safety was ignored. What Jerry and I witnessed that night was a high-pressure heat pump sales presentation. Wegman, as a public utilities commission representative, should have been there to answer questions objectively and informatively. Instead, he displayed the proposed heat pump, quipping, “And it comes in white, almond or tan.”

Probably the best question of the night came from an attorney who asked Stiehl whether he could say for the record that he would personally accept liability should the drinking water be contaminated.

Stiehl responded, “Well there won’t be any contamination.”

The attorney persisted: “But can you tell us here tonight that you will take full responsibility if there is?”

Stiehl said, “Well, hell, how do I know you’re not the one contaminating the water?”

Not once did Stiehl say he would be personally liable.
A "Hold Harmless" letter was signed for the City Council in July. However, according to a case ruling by the Supreme Court of the State of Washington, Aronson vs. City of Everett, such an agreement will not release the city from any liability if the public water is contaminated. Several other cases support this claim.

After weeks of extensive reading and reviewing of information, and after talking to specialists nationwide, we ended up where we began. We were still concerned about the possible threat to public safety. We didn’t feel it was a matter of politics or new versus old. The issue was—is such a system safe?

To us, the answer was clear. There was a risk. And whether the risk to public health was remote or large, drinking water is a natural resource that belongs to the residents of the town and no chance is better than a remote chance. There was an obvious solution: a “closed loop system.” The closed loop of pipe is filled with a separate water source that continually circulates. Another kind of closed loop uses well water and returns the water to a pond or sewer.

Pinter had been pushing this option since the council approved the Stiehl’s system. The EPA, York Water Company, the AWWA and other organizations also suggested the closed loop, but nobody was listening.

It seemed odd that Stiehl and the council would not consider a closed-loop system if it could be installed at about the same cost, could still provide above-normal efficiency and, most importantly, not

(continued on p. 46)
When Edward Swanson Canterbury Jr. (above) left Seattle last December, he wasn’t just returning to Montana, his “adopted” home. “Bud” was leaving a wealthy fiancee, comfort and security to live under an overpass—to live “on the edge.” His explanation was simple: “She tried to make me into something that I’m not.”

Having messed up his unemployment by living out of state too long, and wanting nothing to do with the Poverello Center (a shelter for the homeless in Missoula), Bud decided to “go on walkabout”—in the dead of winter. It’s like Vietnam, he said. “Twenty six years ago, I was sitting outside a wall in the Citadel, waiting for some tanks... that was living on the edge.”

Individuals who live there define the edge. For example, David said, “When you don’t know where your next meal is, or where you’re going to lay your head,” that’s living on the edge. Mary Alice, an older gal who helped arrange some of these photographs, said life on the edge is like “hitching” (riding trains)—“You don’t make many mistakes and live.” Ken said it’s “a little farther than you’d rather go,” the edge being relative to a person’s stamina.

Howard drew the bottom line. “The main person you trust when you’re out there is yourself.” Bud said he wasn’t that cynical. “That’s not being cynical,” said Howard, “that’s being practical.”

For Bud, being practical means “working a sign” (top photo) when he’s broke, or catching a freight train when he’s afoot, or trusting in God when he’s alone. “Who do you think looks after me?” asked Bud. “The Lord Jesus Christ looks after me.”
Burned out after years of driving a truck and fighting DOT regulations, Mike Gann (below) left Little Rock, Ark., to find work in Montana.

Months later, flat broke and still jobless, Mike turned to life on the edge and found peace of mind. Now he lives in a custom-made "hooch," in a strip of brush, beside a river, with friends who've been pushed to the edge as well.

Mark and Linda Wood, together with Mike and Roger, fix an evening meal in their open-air kitchen (top left). With an occasional welfare check and a monthly visit to the Missoula Food Bank, this outdoor community survives on the edge—and that's fine with them.

"We're happy right where we're at, you know," said Mark. "Society can just kind of move on without us."

Zazzoo Opasha (left) and his 15-year-old dog, OD (stands for Old Dog), are spending their second winter in a camouflaged hooch near Mike's camp.

Pat joined her husband about four months ago, after injuring a shoulder and losing her job as a hotel maid.

"It's a good thing I had [the hooch] built," said Zazz. "All I had to do was a little remodeling."

Pat would rather live in town and "pull down a paycheck." Easier said than done. Even if both worked full time, the kind of jobs they find barely pay the bills.

Both Zazz and Mike sell hand-made jewelry and crafts, but $50 a month doesn't go far. After years of doing without, Zazz and Pat started drawing food stamps again.

But all has changed. Society didn't move on without them—it pushed them over the edge. In March, the cops evicted the hooch dwellers.

(Editor's note: Jon Detweiler, a 1994 graduate of the Montana School of Journalism, completed this photo story for his senior project.)
Forget compassion—give me news

When journalists champion individuals in need, they fail in their duty to tell the public the whole story

By Deni Elliott

In a world in which people complain about hard-hearted journalists and decry the lack of sensitivity that would allow a television reporter to ask a grieving mother how it felt to watch her son drown, I'm going to make an argument that ends with a potentially unpopular conclusion: Forget compassion; give me journalists who do their jobs.

Compassion, at least as it plays out in the reporting of people-in-need stories, distracts journalists from telling citizens stories they need to hear. Compassionate reporting also results in the news organizations participating in the same kind of institutional unfairness they are often seeking to expose.

Consider these recent examples:

An adorable 6-year-old girl from the suburbs of Portland, Me., Norma Lynn Peterson, was introduced to the community as she prepared for a fund-raising potluck supper on her behalf. Norma Lynn needed a liver transplant. She was a candidate at the Pittsburgh transplant center and, relatively speaking, she was in pretty good shape.

As a result of coverage by the three network affiliates and the newspaper, the Portland community opened its heart to Norma Lynn. Five months after the initial coverage, she got her liver, after collecting more than $100,000 in private donations, donated air ambulance service to and from Pittsburgh, a camcorder and a puppy.

Several hundred people showed up to be tested for the possibility of a match, each with the $75 in hand that the commercial marrow bank required for testing. No match was found for Christopher Reed, but the marrow bank had hundreds of new potential donors it could add to its computer list.

The Burlington (Vt.) Free Press covered the story of Sue Jackman, a vivacious 30-year-old wife and mother who needed a bone-marrow transplant to combat breast cancer. Finding a donor was no problem. As this was to be an autologous transplant, Sue would be both donor and recipient.

The problem was a balky insurance company. Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Vermont called the treatment “experimental” and refused to pay. Within two months of the news coverage, Sue Jackman had received $20,000 in private donations and the insurance company became the first in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield family to cover bone-marrow transplants for the treatment of breast cancer.

A Houston Chronicle reporter, Dianna Hunt, wrote an article on the problems pregnant women have in getting treatment for drug addiction. In doing the story, Dianna championed the case of "Bridget," a cocaine addict in her eighth month of pregnancy. Repeated calls by Dianna to hospital administrators, social workers and a judge resulted in an in-patient placement for "Bridget."

On the surface, these sound like success stories, the kind of stories news organizations
like to point out to prove that they do more than publish the negative news in the community. But beneath the surface, each is an example of compassion preventing journalists from doing their jobs.

The journalistic job is to fulfill the social function of the institution. All First Amendment and economic considerations aside, news media play a unique role in society. The role of news media is expressed a little differently in every textbook and in every news organization’s mission statement, but my favorite expression of it was offered to me a decade ago by veteran Washington reporter George Reedy. The news media, said Reedy, exist to tell people what they can expect from society and to tell them what society expects from them.

I like Reedy’s formulation because it is succinctly universal. This is what a news organization does regardless of whether it is privately, publicly or governmentally owned. This is what it does in its most censored, as well as in its most unregulated, interpretation.

Reedy’s definition can be refined to better describe the news media’s social function in the United States. Here, society expects citizens to take an active part in running their country. Therefore, the news media’s primary social function is to tell people what they need to know for self-governance.

News media can do many things besides meeting their social function. They can supply the comics, advice columns, human-interest stories and the sports pages. But no matter how good a job they are doing at these tasks, if they’re not telling people what they need to know for self-governance, they’re not a mass-market news publication or program. The basic moral responsibility for news media is to do this job.

Keeping in mind the journalistic social function of telling people what they need to know for self-governance, let’s consider what stories people need to hear about the examples I offered earlier.

Liver would mean life for 6-year-old

By PATRICIA McCARTHY
Staff Writer

WINDHAM — When 6-year-old Norma Lynn Peterson heard her parents talking about raising money for the liver transplant that could save her life, she emptied her piggy bank and presented them with her life savings.

"I can save money, too," she told her mother and father, Doreen and Louis Peterson. "Here, I can put this toward our fund-raising."

Transfixed during a television episode of "Care Bears," smiling through the gap where two top front teeth once were and talking about the boys in her school, Norma Lynn looks and acts like any other normal kindergartner.

She is quick to giggle, and she is a beautiful child — long, thick, almost-black hair cropped off in bangs that highlight a striking pair of bright, big, blue eyes.

But Norma Lynn’s body cannot produce a chemical that protects the liver. Last June, doctors at Children’s Hospital in Pittsburgh predicted she would die within 18 months if she doesn’t get a transplant.

The child has suffered through stomach pains since she was born, and the family pediatrician diagnosed the problem last April.

She has alpha one antitrypsin deficiency, an extremely rare disease that surfaces only when both parents carry the gene. Subsequent testing showed that her two sisters, 2-year-old Sarah and 8-year-old Jessica, also carry the gene but don’t have the disease.

The Petersons have been called to Pittsburgh twice — in December and January — with high hopes that a compatible organ was available. Both times, including one when Norma Lynn was already in surgery, doctors found the donor’s organ was defective.

"It’s very scary," 28-year-old Doreen Peterson said. "I have a beeper with me all the time. They call you and say they’ve got a liver. We always have our bags packed."

Edward H. Jandreau of Windham has helped revive See LIVER Back page this section

Citizens need to know about organ transplants, when they are needed and when they are not. They need to understand why children’s livers die, particularly because the cause is often genetic and discoverable prior to birth.

Citizens need to know how and why extraordinary health care procedures like
organ transplants are funded. They need to know why they are so expensive and why there are 164 heart transplant centers and 114 liver transplant centers—in some instances, three in the same city. They need to know that transplant centers consider financial as well as clinical factors in determining whether someone is a suitable candidate for a transplant.

Citizens need to know how and why organs are allocated as they are. They need to know what can be done to decrease their waiting time for an organ.

These weren't the stories told in Norma Lynn's case. In fact, in two and a half hours of television time and several hundred newspaper column inches, readers weren't even told that Norma Lynn's parents had insurance that paid 80 percent of her medical costs.

Nor were they told that when Norma Lynn was recovering from transplant surgery under the glow of television lights and public attention, a woman from Portland became Maine's first recipient of a heart-lung transplant. This woman died in the operating room; her husband prepared to hitchhike home to their 4-year-old daughter. He didn't have the money for bus fare.
the end of the world and all he could do was keep paying the bills.

Citizens need to know how bone-marrow donation differs from solid-organ donation. They need to know that bone-marrow donors need to be living donors and that bone marrow, like other blood products, replenishes.

Citizens need to know that unlike the single, government-regulated network relating to solid organ transplantation, there are several bone-marrow registries internationally, and at least two unrelated registries in the United States. They need to know that potential recipients are charged to search these computer indices for possible matches. They need to know that bone-marrow registries charge between $45 and $75 for potential donors to be typed and added to the computer and that most of these donations come in through media-led community appeals to help a local, needy individual. They need to know that these searches rarely turn up a donor for the local person in need.

Again, these weren't the stories that New Hampshire audiences were told. Like natural disaster stories, stories of human need tend to be one-sided and heroic rather than critically reported.

And what do citizens need to know about pregnant cocaine addicts? They need to know why treatment isn't available. They need to know how priorities in social services are determined. This isn't the story Houston Chronicle readers got.

It's obvious in each of these cases that these "policy" stories would have detracted from the human drama stories. Certainly, reporters told me just that in all of these cases. That's part of what I mean when I say that this kind of compassionate journalism distracts reporters from doing their jobs.

These death-defying medical miracle stories are the easy stories to tell. They're one-sided and narrow in scope. But they are not part of what it means for journalists to meet the primary social function of journalism.

It is possible for news organizations to do things other than meet their social function. They can run crossword puzzles and comics—as long as they also tell citizens about tax laws and zoning restrictions.

By way of analogy, then, if news organizations tell the policy stories that are generally missing, it should then be OK for them to tell the Norma Lynn story and the Christopher Reed story and the Sue Jackman story and the Bridget story. Right? Wrong.

Here the problem is not one of distraction, but one of fairness.

News organizations can't provide the same kind of coverage for every person in similar need. Even if news organizations were willing to help fund-raise for every case, it wouldn't work. Eventually, the philanthropic dollar is used up. Sooner rather than later, people tire of hearing the same story and stop shelling out.

Individuals need to be compassionate; institutions, like news organizations, need to be fair. There's a subtle irony created when news media act for the benefit of a single individual. In both the Sue Jackman vs. the insurance company story and the pregnant drug addict story, we had journalists who were appalled that institutions didn't help these individuals in need.

They were right to be outraged. It's hard to justify a government or an agency denying treatment without compelling evidence that the denied treatment differs in kind from those that are provided.

The journalists' work implicitly asks, "How can these powerful institutions care for some and leave others to die?"

But when news media do the Sue story and the Bridget story and ignore the Luther story and turn down the Nancy story, the news organization becomes just one more of those powerful institutions that care for some and leave others to die.

Disasters that affect the community at large, like earthquakes and floods, give news organizations opportunities to rally behind a community cause, to broadcast need and deliver assistance in special ways. Every person affected has an equal chance of reaping the benefits of newsroom intervention. But rallying around an individual's cause produces questionable reporting and lousy public relations. It leads the community ultimately to see that the news organization is no less unfair than the system it seeks to expose.
Publisher Marc Wilson was determined not to become roadkill on the information superhighway

By Dennis Swibold

Survival has always been a tough proposition out where the dust devils dance, out there east of Billings where range cattle outnumber people but never the grasshoppers. It is dry, lonesome country, a land of sagebrush and incessant wind, where going bust is always a pressing possibility. It's a place where, as the joke goes, people check the obituaries to make sure they're still kicking—if their town has a newspaper, that is.

Out there, as in most rural areas, the existence of a local paper is considered a measure of a community's pulse, a vital sign equalled in significance perhaps only by the existence of a high school—or, more likely, a high school able to grab an occasional statewide headline by shining in interscholastic sports.

"You have to have two things in this state to keep your identity as a town," says Milt Wester, a veteran eastern Montana publisher. "One is a basketball team and the other is a newspaper. If you don't have a newspaper in the town, you're going to lose it."

And losing it was exactly the prospect facing the good citizens of Hysham, Mont., in the spring of 1991. The Hysham Echo, the official weekly heartbeat of Treasure County since it began publication in 1911, was on the verge of fading away. Its owner, who published a string of tiny weeklies from his base in Deer Lodge, was increasingly discouraged by the returns from Hysham. Advertising revenues, never all that strong to begin with and heavily dependent on dwindling legal advertising from the county, were shrinking. The paper's owner was also tired of the cumbersome long-distance logistics of publishing even a four-page newspaper through the mail. His course seemed clear: sell the Echo or shut it down.

Although he peddled his paper to potential buyers throughout the state, no one expressed much interest, not even Milt Wester, whose own paper, the weekly Laurel Outlook, lay 75 miles upstream from Hysham in the Lower Yellowstone Valley.

"I couldn't buy another paper," Wester recalls thinking initially. It didn't make sense. Even if he could scrape together enough advertising from Hysham and surrounding communities, there was still the problem of producing the paper long-distance. Without some low-cost solution to the obstacles of time, distance and the problem of the Outlook staff duplicating work already done in Hysham, Wester wasn't interested.

And then he remembered the International News Network. "NewsNet," they called it.

The idea was simple, really, and it was hatched like so many other innovations—over beers in a bar. It was the summer of 1989 and several Montana weekly newspaper publishers were sipping drinks in a Bozeman lounge during a break in the Montana Newspaper Association's summer convention. As publishers' talk inevitably does, the conversation revolved around ways to cut costs...
and improve services. Specifically, it centered on the recent revolution in desktop publishing, in which newspapers big and small were dumping the last generation of cumbersome, expensive photo-typesetting systems in favor of small and relatively cheap personal computers capable of everything from typesetting to pagination. Innovations in relatively inexpensive software had put almost all of the sophisticated tricks of modern publishing and publication design within reach of even the tiniest paper.

Newspapers large and small appreciated the production advantages brought about by computers, but these machines were more than just better, cheaper typesetters. Thanks to a gizmo called a modem, these computers could share information over telephone lines with no more effort than a few keystroke commands. They could telecommunicate, or move massive amounts of information with incredible speed, a power previously reserved for the heavyweights of the news biz, the wire services, broadcast networks and those national publications that produce simultaneous editions at printing plants scattered throughout the country. Smaller newspapers—weekly newsprinters—had low overhead, and small dailies that can't afford wire services—had put weeklies in a tough spot. The typical response had been to cut costs, mainly by reducing what little staff the papers had, which often meant sacrificing news coverage and service, which only made matters worse.

To Wilson, it was a death spiral. The new desktop publishing technology promised to help small papers continue to cut production costs, but unless publishers of community papers could find ways to improve their papers by offering both readers and advertisers more, the jig was up. Perhaps there was a way to use the computer's powers to improve coverage at little cost. One way to do that would be to link community papers together in some sort of computer network and share information, giving small papers the strength of many.

What if, Wilson suggested, there were a central computer somewhere that could serve as an electronic bulletin board, a computerized kiosk of sorts, a clearinghouse where Montana's small newspapers, their advertisers and even news sources could share information with each other instantly, where stories, ad copy and perhaps even photographs and graphics could be exchanged and published without having to retype or otherwise reproduce the work? Wouldn't that be great?

Welcome to the International News Network, or what Wilson modestly call his "super information pathway."

Today, just five years after that barroom brainstorm, News Net links almost 200 weekly and small daily newspapers in Montana, Wyoming, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia.
and even the Yukon. And it’s growing. Newspaper associations in Washington state, North Dakota, New Jersey and six New England states are considering tapping in, as is the National Newspaper Association, the organization that represents the nation’s smaller papers. From its modest beginnings as a test project by the Montana Newspaper Association to transmit a few statewide classified ads to a handful of Montana papers, INN has become nothing less than a miniature wire service for community papers. Over the last two years, INN’s central computer in Bigfork has handled more than 25,000 requests for stories, advertising and news releases.

In Montana alone, INN has saved subscribers hundreds if not thousands of hours of typesetting costs by providing a low-cost method that allows community papers with minuscule editorial, advertising and production staffs to exchange and reproduce news stories, features, editorials, graphics, cartoons and advertising copy. INN even has its own news desk that offers feature services from National Geographic, News USA and the Maturity News Service. It can also serve as the pathway for distributing exclusive, privately produced information packages, such as local weather maps and market reports, to individual subscribers. Institutional news sources—government agencies, mostly—have been quick to see the potential, too. INN electronically delivers news releases to Montana papers from the state’s governor, its sole congressman, one of the state’s U.S. senators, the federal Soil Conservation Service, three state colleges, the Montana Education Association, and the state departments of Transportation and Fish, Wildlife & Parks. It even works an E-mail service for the Montana Newspaper Association and its members. All for the low, low price of just $12 a month per paper.

AND IT SAVED THE HYSHAM ECHO, too. “I wouldn’t have bought it if I couldn’t have used this network,” says Wester. “I realized I could work with the paper without having to take stories or ads over the phone or rely on the mail. News Net opened up the potential for me.”

So in the summer of 1991, Wester bought the Echo and sent his son with a computer and modem to Hysham to be a one-man news and advertising bureau. News and ad copy were sent through the News Net to a computer in Wester’s production room in Laurel.

“It’s like we have the reporter right here with us,” Wester says. “We just open up the story on our computer screens, edit it, and have it typeset…. I really don’t have to go to Hysham too often.”

Only photographs must still be sent from Hysham to Laurel by courier or mail, and that’s only because the technology of digital photography is still too expensive for most small papers. But Wester expects it’s only a matter of time until the only paper exchanged between Hysham and Laurel is the newspaper itself.

AT ANY RATE, THE ECHO TODAY RUNS about six pages a week and makes money, Wester says. News content is up, too, thanks to the efforts of the Hysham editor and the stories of statewide interest made available by News Net. “We carried up to four times the content from the day I bought it—and we’re doing it with the same staff,” he says. The reaction from readers and advertisers has been generally favorable, too, especially when Hyshamites learned that their paper was to be saved.

“Oh, I don’t know if I saved the paper, but I do know that it’s viable only because of INN,” Wester says. “I don’t know what would have happened to Hysham’s news. It probably would have been absorbed by the weekly in Forsyth (26 miles east of Hysham). They might have run a Hysham page, or something.”

It’s difficult to tell sometimes whether Marc Wilson is in the news business or on some religious mission. Outwardly, at least, the fact that his INN has yet to show a profit doesn’t bother him. He expects his investment in computer equipment, software development, consultants and promotion will start paying off monetarily next year. But whether he makes money or not, Wilson says the idea behind INN—to develop better newspapers, not merely provide a cheaper way to produce them—is critical for the survival of community papers.

To hear him tell it, for years now, such papers—weeklies mostly—have surrendered to the pressure from larger dailies and television by turning their coverage increasingly inward. Whereas even the tiniest rural weekly once carried exchanges
and correspondence from across the state, nation and even the world, today’s weeklies have largely surrendered that role to competitors, preferring instead to focus on what they, and only they, do best—cover local news. But good local news coverage is not enough, Wilson preaches.

“I want good local coverage for my readers, no question, but there are lots of things that happen beyond the five blocks from my office that affect my readers,” he says. “I don’t think we should concede the news that happens beyond those five blocks to the competition and sacrifice my readers’ interests. Right now is the time for community publishers to resurrect community newspapers. Their audience is changing. Rural America is not quite as insular as it used to be.”

Wilson is making converts, not the least of whom is Charles Walk, executive director of the Montana Newspaper Association, which boosted INN by helping to develop the software, providing free modems to its members and encouraging the network’s use by member newspapers and news sources alike.

Just as the MNA’s involvement has been critical to INN’s beginnings, the newspaper association has worked to find practical ways to make INN more valuable to its members. Encouraged by the success of electronic delivery of statewide classified advertising and press releases, MNA members began to consider news projects. In 1992, MNA organized its own state election coverage in which individual weekly editors agreed to provide the network with in-depth coverage of at least one statewide race in return for the exclusive right to run each other’s work.

The MNA took the idea a step further in 1993 and hired its own reporter to cover the state’s biennial legislative session via INN. For the first time in their history, Montana’s weeklies contained timely and independent legislative coverage—a marked improvement over what little coverage weeklies had once provided by writing an occasional long-distance interview with a local lawmaker or, worse, running the lawmaker’s own, often self-serving, account of events. The MNA’s efforts extended to sports as well in 1993 when MNA officials covered the state B and C track meets—the small-school championships—for member papers. The MNA has even established an INN file for stories and commentary of statewide interest written by journalism students at the University of Montana.

So far, Montana has been the inspiration for INN and its model. But Wilson envisions even more connections between Montana papers and other INN subscribers throughout the nation and western Canada. For example, he points to his paper’s coverage of a local murder of summer residents from New England. Via INN, the Bigfork Eagle was able to provide its story to the small paper in the victims’ hometown. And when a mountain lion killed a child in his readership area, Wilson was able to supplement the local story with a feature on the explosion of mountain lion populations from INN’s National Geographic service.

Such concrete connections make the electronic global village easy to imagine, and Wilson can go for days explaining why that sort of thinking is essential if community papers are going to survive into the next generation. But traditions die hard in the newspaper biz, and overcoming them, more than any technological obstacle, has been INN’s greatest frustration, according to MNA’s Walk, who thinks INN is still greatly underused, even in its home state. “I think some people in the business are pretty short-sighted and narrow-minded,” Walk says. “They’re still looking at the computer as a Compugraphic that works a little quicker. They’re going to need to pay attention just to protect themselves. There is a logic to this whole program that escapes some people. They need to be asking themselves ‘Do I want to protect my equity, my franchise, five years down the road, or even three years down the road?’ ”

And those aren’t the only questions. Who’s going to do the news in small communities if local papers disappear? And what happens to a small town that loses its paper?

Ask Hysham.

“One the town loses its paper, it’s not much of a town anymore,” says Wilson. “We’re helping the paper in Hysham stay alive. Maybe we’re just postponing the inevitable, but I’d rather go down swinging than slowly bleed to death.”

—Marc Wilson, Publisher, The Bigfork Eagle, and Founder of INN
Journalists line up behind ‘online’

Online databases and the Internet open windows of opportunity for investigative reporters

By Bob Berkman

Mike Berens, reporter for the Ohio Dispatch in Columbus, looked at the evidence he had gathered. All the dead women were from the Northeast and were known truck-stop prostitutes. Their bodies were all found on an interstate highway and each was missing a piece of clothing. No question about it. The nine women were all murdered by the same person. After hard, investigative reporting, Berens knew one thing for sure—he was on the track of a serial killer.

As experienced journalists know, pursuing the details of a good story often means finding and doggedly following a paper trail. But Berens did not need a paper trail. Instead, he pieced his story together by following an electronic trail of glowing phosphorescent electronic bits and bytes, organized into powerful systems called online databases. Two years later, Berens used another electronic trail to discover how the U.S. government was undercounting the automobile deaths attributed to high-speed police chases.

Today, a journalist’s kit of indispensable tools must include more than just a pen, a notepad and a healthy dose of curiosity. Now, journalists must be able to search electronic databases with a computer.

By way of definition, an electronic database is simply a collection of related topics that are stored in electronic format and made available for easy searching and retrieval via computers. Databases have been around since the 1970s, but not until the early 1980s have they become user-friendly to the general public.

Strangely, one information-savvy group of professionals who were quite slow to gain online proficiency were, of all people, journalists. Some lay blame for this rather embarrassing state of affairs directly on the nation’s schools of journalism. Luckily, however, the last few years have seen a concerted effort by journalists to catch up.

And not a moment too soon. The Internet has arrived.

The Internet, a gigantic electronic web linking computers in more than 120,000 sites throughout the world, is the network of networks. It’s the hottest thing to hit the computer industry since sliced data hit the spreadsheet.

Experts estimate that about 25,000 computer networks are connected to the Internet, and that about 20 million people in over 50 countries are currently linked on the “Net.”

The sheer size and global reach of Internet makes it unique. As with other traditional online systems, a reporter can search for information and send and receive e-mail. But on the Internet, journalists can search, for example, the card catalog at The National Library of Paris, or share story ideas and post queries to colleagues residing in places as near as Bozeman or as far away as Botswana.

Electronic communication around the world—the most exciting feature of Internet—allows journalists to “broadcast” a question or problem to a global
audience. Then, often within 24 hours, they could receive scores of responses from sources around the world.

Internet also serves as an open forum for special-interest groups — or, in Internet lingo, “usenets” or “listservs.” Affinity groups of like-minded people around the globe can exchange ideas on common interests. Thousands of specialty groups use the Internet to discuss topics that run the gamut from animal rights to yo-yos.

The fact that Internet is very difficult to use may be its biggest drawback. Useful directories are scarce and, unlike the popular online and compact disk (CD-ROM) systems, there is no user-friendly graphical interface. (However, a new program becoming increasingly popular, called Mosaic, allows a user to click and point). Becoming proficient on the Internet requires a lot of practice and patience. Several new books written for beginners who want to learn the Internet are now available at local bookstores.

A different type of electronic database that's becoming increasingly popular among writers and journalists is the CD-ROM. Unlike online databases that store data in remote mainframe computers accessible via phone lines and a modem, compact disks are simply inserted into a PC. A single CD-ROM holds about 550MB of information. That's the equivalent of 250,000 pages of information or a complete 20-volume set of encyclopedia! (In fact, several complete encyclopedia sets are already available on CD-ROM).

As with online databases, there are thousands of CD-ROMs covering thousands of topics. Prices of CD-ROM “readers” have plummeted from as high as $500 each to as low as $50. The latest ones incorporate “multimedia” technology, which includes music, animation, photography and video, as well as text.

However, most research doesn't require multimedia. Furthermore, it's not necessary to spend one nickel searching CD-ROMs. Why? Because public and university libraries usually have a whole bank of CD-ROM terminals available for public use at no cost.

CD-ROM systems not only contain hundreds of thousands of articles and abstracts from thousands of journals, but also are fairly easy to use. However, since each vendor has a different set of commands and methodologies, a beginner may want to ask a reference librarian for assistance and then practice to become proficient.

Do these electronic-information gold-mines seem too good to be true? Is there a catch somewhere? Well, yes and no. Database networks really do exist, and they are available to everyone—but beware.

Searching databases can be expensive. Even the lower-priced consumer services offer expensive databases. For example, one of the best bargains around is the “Knowledge Index,” a set of 100 Dialog databases available via CompuServe. Normally, searching a Dialog database costs from $50 to $150 an hour. In comparison, searching CompuServe costs only $24 an hour. But even $24 an hour adds up fast.

Another danger involves creating a good search—a skill even librarians must learn the hard way through years of experience. If a search statement is not executed properly, one may end up with the wrong information, too much information, or no information at all.

Consequently, because the ability to create good searches is so critical, some computer technicians tend to discourage reporters from going online themselves, opting instead to employ a trained staff in a news library equipped just for reporters.

A final word of caution to investigative reporters: Databases don't have the last word on research. As all-encompassing as online databases may seem, they're not omniscient. And of course, information from a computer must be checked for accuracy just like any other information.

An online database can be a powerful piece of magic in a journalist's bag of tricks, but it cannot replace the basic traits of curiosity, skepticism and diligence.
Online information samples

More than 5,000 online databases, containing hundreds of millions of items of information on topics ranging from AIDS to Zambia, await inquiring journalists. The following is a taste:
- financial records and documents filed with the SEC
- full text from scores of major papers
- thousands of trade magazine articles
- FDA drug test reports
- up-to-the-minute news from AP, Reuters and other newswires
- international market research reports
- patent and trademark filings
- biographical data on prominent people
- country profiles and analyses
- federal environmental regulations
- historical and current sports statistics
- national library documents
- millions of medicine company directories
- encyclopedia... plus much more.

Online services

CompuServe

Cost: Monthly fee for standard services is $8.95, with unlimited hours. Premium databases are extra.

Content:
- Knowledge Index: 100 professional databases from Dialog at a cut-rate price. Covers agriculture, government, law, medicine, news, arts, etc.
- IQuest: 850 in-depth databases covering business, news and more. Powerful but expensive.
- Executive News Service: Customized news clipping service from major newswires and newspapers.
- Ziff files: Business Database+, Computer Database+, Health Database+ and Magazine Database+ An excellent, powerful, low-cost compilation of articles from hundreds of journals.

Comment:
The best choice for journalists who want access to powerful, professional online databases, but cannot afford a professional service.

Cost: Monthly fee is $9.95 for five hours. Additional time costs $3.50 per hour.

Content:
- Top-notch graphical interface; intuitive, friendly and fun.
- Electronic Journals like The Atlantic Monthly, Time, Wired, New Republic, etc.
- News Search — a useful headline news and report service.

Comment:
Growing fast. Probably the most innovative online service, but has limited number of top-quality, searchable databases.

PRODIGY Service

Cost: Monthly fee of $14.95 covers unlimited hours of “core” services and two hours of “plus” services. Additional hours of “plus” services cost $3.60 each.

Content:
- Consumer Reports — the popular magazine, searchable via menus.
- Business News, as provided by Dow-Jones Inc.
- Investment and stock tracking services.

Comment:
Few powerful online databases; geared more toward family fun, games and home investment tracking.

Addresses & phone numbers

CompuServe, PO Box 20212, Columbus, OH 43220
(800) 848-8990

America Online, 8619 Westwood Center Dr., Vienna, VA
(703) 448-8700

GEnie, PO Box 6403, Rockville, MD 20850; (800) 638-9636

Delphi, 1030 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge MA 02138;
(617) 491-3393

Prodigy, PO Box 791, White Plains, NY 10601; (914) 993-8000.

Books for online beginners

Zen and the Art of the Internet, by Brenden P. Kehoe, Prentice Hall, 1994, $19.95

The Internet Companion, by Tracy LaQuey with Jeanne C. Ryer, Addison Wesley, 1993 , $12.95

Find it Online, by Bob Berkman, Windcrest/McGraw-Hill, 1994, $19.95
What does the future hold?
Possibly the most significant products of technology foreshadowed by the new electronic age may be electronic newspapers and journals. Under this scenario, readers could supplement or even replace their daily newspaper with a customized electronic version.

While electronic newspapers are still mainly under development (Knight-Ridder, Time-Warner, and several other major media companies are currently in testing), the new computer "papers" would work something like this: Each morning, an electronic newspaper would be sent via satellite or remote technology to a receiver built-in to a subscriber's laptop or handheld PC. Users could program their "newspapers" (in full graphical format) to contain only the articles and subjects they want to "read." Using a pen-like input device to "tap" on the front-page table of contents, readers could jump directly to an item of interest, zoom in and out, and move around as they like. The possibility of a reader sending messages to other readers, or to the newspaper's editors, adds an interactive dimension to the "paper."

Some early versions of an electronic paper already exist. For example, CompuServe's Executive News Service searches several major newswires and newspapers for items that match one or more predesignated keywords, and displays the headlines and/or stories. America Online has launched an innovative electronic newspaper called "Heads Up" created by a firm called Individual Inc., situated in Cambridge, Mass. Again, the Internet already contains scores of electronic journals that can be searched and read online.

Where does all this lead? Sociologists and media analysts are already debating the social ramifications of customized electronic media that permit "consumers" rather than editors to choose the content of their "news."

One intriguing thought was "overheard" on America Online's e-mail, posted by a member called "Lizard."

Date: 93-09-18 01:13:42 EDT
From: Lizard NC
The coming (this is just the warmup, folks) communications/information revolution will end the concept of an elite minority 'collecting' and then 'reporting' information to be consumed by the masses. Every individual will be able to post information to the world at large; every other individual will be able to read it, search it, analyze it, discuss it.

There's a murder on your block? Tell the world. Digitize the bloody corpse and let a thousand first-graders download it and print it ... instantly...

Five hundred channels? A pitance. In less time than any of us can imagine, there will a 'channel' for anyone who wishes one. You want your fifteen minutes of fame? You've got it.

There will no longer be 'opinion makers,' those whose job it is to pronounce the 'will of the people.' There will be no need for people to bind into groups to be heard, or be ignored because they are not a 'big enough' collective.

So what then becomes of the information professionals, those self-appointed arbiters of the truth, whose job it is to decide for us what news is relevant and what is not, who is a 'real' candidate and who is not, which opinions may be expressed in the polls and which may not? What becomes of them?

What has become of the village blacksmith?

Whether the global village's news professionals will suffer the same fate as the village blacksmith is yet to be seen. Michael Crichton, author of Jurassic Park, warned news editors at a National Press Club luncheon last year to stay alert or possibly end up like dinosaurs.

Modern technology continues to push the writing craft into the deep unknown. Can journalists adapt to their new environment, or will they become a thing of the past, buried like old bones in the sands of time?
REID (continued from p. 11)

to teach Americans lessons we can learn from another country? This is the argument I have with my bosses all the time. They say, ‘You know, there is a terrific story out of this French wine country. Too bad we can’t use your stuff.’"

For the Japanese media, on the other hand, the image of America as a violent and dangerous society is very strong, he said. The October 1992 case of the Japanese exchange student shot to death on Halloween night in Baton Rouge, La., was reported extensively in Japan, Reid said, because news like that feeds Japanese cultural stereotypes of America. The student mistakenly went to the wrong house and was shot by an ordinary citizen because he didn’t understand the word “freeze.” The jury acquitted Rodney Pearis, who automatically thought the boy was an intruder, a mindset that was even more shocking to the Japanese people.

“That case was devastating for America’s image in Japan,” Reid said. “It sort of proved all their worst stereotypes about America.” But when he faxed his editor in Washington, D.C., asking him not to run any story about the shooting because he was filing one from Japan, the editor faxed Reid back, asking what shooting he was talking about. The shooting of a high school kid in the United States has become so common that editors couldn’t tell the importance of the story.

Reid said that the American media used to report about Japan with a “wake up, America” message, warning Americans of Japan’s economic power. More relevant stories in the 1990s will be about a country not only economically but also socially successful, he said.

“Wake up, America’ is not a story any more,” Reid said. “I would say the story is the lesson of the ‘freeze’ case, that is, ‘let’s [learn from] a society as safe and peaceful and respectful of others as Japan.’ That’s what I want to write right now.”

BUTTE (continued from p. 26)

after the mass firing, a group of former KTVM employees sang a parody to the tune of “The Beverly Hillbillies.” Y95 disc jockey Robin Taylor emceed. “I hear it brought the house down,” said Toole.

Precht didn’t think it was funny. He resigned as president of the Montana Broadcasters Association. “That’s like kicking below the belt,” says Precht. “Why do you do that? It’s not that broadcasters should band together. A story is a story. But if you are supposed to have an association, it doesn’t mean you’re with the guy who is hammering you. My point to [MBA executive secretary] Bob Hoene was ‘My heart’s not in it, the wind is out of my sails, I don’t feel like I want to risk my life driving to Helena in February to attend a meeting of the broadcasters’ association when I don’t know when they’re going to come down on me again.’”

Today, Kendall is back on Eagle’s payroll in Butte. A receptionist and a salesperson have been hired. Veteran Miami anchor Art Carlson was hired as Eagle’s Bozeman news director. There is one more Eagle employee in the two cities combined than there were last October. Precht says eight of the 12 full-time employees were offered work in his organization. Some accepted it, some didn’t.

Barager is producer and anchor of overnight and morning news for WEYI, the CBS affiliate in Flint, Mich. Guthrie is a general assignment reporter for KMIZ-TV, the ABC affiliate in Columbia, Mo. Both say their time in Butte provided them strong audition tapes that helped get them their current jobs. Guthrie got $500 plus her salary for her eight-day foray into Montana broadcasting. That didn’t cover all her moving expenses, but she was denied more, Precht said, because she bad-mouthed Eagle. Kline is happy back in Denver where he’s an editor at a video production house, and thinking about returning to on-air work. “Both my wife and I have great memories of Butte,” said Kline. We really had a great time. Contrary to what a lot of people think of Butte, we actually really liked it. It’s a whole different way of life.”
As is reflected in the story line of his novel, Blumberg is deeply suspicious of the government and of the "corporate press." Mix the two together and hot Blumberg curry starts to stew. And he knows that some people view his novel as the work of a conspiracy freak.

One of those people is Michael Moore, a former UM journalism student now working for the Missoulian. Moore took a Blumberg class in the early '80s. "It was the worst journalism class I had," says Moore. "His whole thing with Neil Bush was going then. It was all we ever talked about. My problem with it was—it just detracted from the class, it monopolized discussion. Actually there was no discussion; he just ranted."

Blumberg was an "egomaniac" as a teacher, Moore says. Blumberg was right and everyone else was wrong. "There wasn't too much room for other journalism."

Opinionated, obsessive, suspicious: this is Nathaniel Blumberg. But as Dugan says, Watergate wouldn't have been exposed if it hadn't been for people like Blumberg. "His principal fault is also sometimes his principal strength," says Dugan.

Blumberg wasn't always so anti-government. His deep distrust of government, the mainstream media and the status quo, stems from the early '60s when he served as an American specialist for the State Department in Thailand, Guyana, Surinam, Jamaica and Trinidad. He was in Trinidad in 1964 when the Vietnam war intensified.

"That's when I started to turn against American foreign policy totally," he says. "If you believe in karma, and I do, I shudder at many of the things we've done throughout the world as a nation. I pray there's time to make up for it.

"In 1965, I was so incensed at the direction that our country was taking that I joined the counter-culture. I still think the '60s was the most glorious decade in this century. The media has done everything it can to disparage the '60s [because it was] a challenge to authority, selfishness, avarice, bigotry, militarism—it sent out a whole new message of what this country should be about.

"Possibly the single greatest myth of journalism is the myth of a liberal bias in the news media—it is an easily destructed myth. Far from liberal, the media is strongly for the status quo and the conservative interest."

Blumberg's criticisms have pervaded Montana journalism through his speeches, articles and books. For years, his voice has been a dissenting one to the established order. It is sharp, penetrating, but by definition, small. His is the quick but painful bite of the gadfly.

But perhaps Blumberg's greatest contribution has been through his personality rather than his writing. Once met, Blumberg is difficult to forget.

"There is no middle ground with him. People either like him or they don't. But either way, he touches their lives. "I'm as proud of those who intensely dislike me as those who love me," he boasts.

Blumberg does make strong, lasting friendships. He keeps track of favorite students. He spends a lot of time on the phone. His friends respect him and value him. McGiffert says of him, "My life is better for having known him."

He also makes enemies. Dick Wesnick, editor of the Billings Gazette, says curtly of the paper's relationship with Blumberg, "We don't have one."

But Blumberg sees productive years ahead. He wants to work at establishing the T.S.R. He is writing the second edition of "Charlie of 666," the story of his World War II unit. In the next 10 years he plans to publish at least two more books.

Tucked away in his fairy-tale Montana forest, Blumberg beavers away at his "alternative" work. His mind is sharp and restless. He loves dissecting issues, worrying at problems until they fall apart. His originality leaps and jumps over ethical dilemmas, which pop up regularly like gopher heads on an eastern Montana prairie. His needlely hideaways, the one in Montana and the one in his mind, are places that Tom Paine, William Lloyd Garrison and I.F. Stone would like to be invited to one night, to meet over a friendly (or deadly) game of philosophical poker.
WATER (continued from p. 29)

present any risk to the town’s drinking water supply.

The vote was fast approaching and we decided to raise the question with Stiehl. We wondered if one of the reasons Stiehl wasn’t willing to go with the closed loop was the higher cost. Jerry called him, and I listened on the speaker phone.

“How much is the construction of your new clinic costing?—which, by the way, is great for the community as it represents progress and expansion,” Jerry asked.

Stiehl: “I can’t release that information.”

“Pinter keeps arguing that a compromise to your system would be to install a closed-loop system. How much extra would a closed-loop system cost you?”

Stiehl: “The closed loop is a lot cheaper, but you would need to use heat banks. It would require a lot more juice. Too much juice.”

Jerry then asked how much the proposed pump system was going to cost to install, and Stiehl answered, “I can’t release that information—but it’s a lot of bucks.”

We had learned some valuable information. Number one, he definitely wasn’t planning on installing a closed-loop system. And number two, it was because it wouldn’t be as efficient for him.

Stiehl’s attorney, Maulis, wrote a letter to the editor urging the people of Winner to vote “yes” because of Stiehl’s years of service to the community.

Over the weeks, Stiehl kept defending his system, saying it was a sign of progress. “Let’s move ahead,” he wrote in his letter to the editor. “Now I know how Henry Ford felt when he introduced the Horseless Carriage.” Every time someone questioned the safety of his system, he rebutted with “progress.” If any business in this town believed in progress, it was the Winner Advocate. We consider ourselves one of the most progressive businesses in town. We are one of the few that are changing.

Our stand had nothing to do with being new or liking one doctor better than the other. It was simply a matter of safe versus unsafe. And we were more compelled to listen to the EPA, the AWWA and the South Dakota Department of Health than we were to DeMarco Energy Systems and a local doctor who would save a lot of money each month on his heating bill using such a pump system.

In its 83 years, the Winner Advocate had never taken a strong editorial stand. Perhaps a candidate endorsement here or there, but that was the extent of it. We were tired of being patient. We had been in Winner for eight months, and we were about ready to change the history of the paper.

The vote was a week away. We planned an editorial against allowing such a pump system to be installed in Winner. The facts were simple. We opened by saying how fortunate Winner was to have this new medical expansion, getting a new clinic and a new doctor. Then we took our stand (see editorial on p. 29).

W E DIDN'T SLEEP MUCH Tuesday night, knowing that come morning, the paper would be in the hands of the town. People would be surprised to see we had taken a stand.

The morning finally arrived and every time the phone rang, I jumped. I was concerned about what people were thinking. I kept picturing those people who were so rude at the public meeting.

We received only five calls regarding the water source heat pump issue that day. And they were all positive. People told us we “hit it right on.” They told us it was about time the paper took a stand and was active in issues that affect the community.

Nonetheless, the people of Winner voted to allow the pump installation. The vote was 602-535. But 535 people went to the polls Sept. 7 and said they didn’t think their drinking water supply should be run through a doctor’s furnace so he could save money. That’s a lot of people.

We lost one advertiser, an insurance agent whose wife works for Stiehl. We didn’t lose any subscribers. The Winner Advocate survived. We survived. And most importantly, I remembered why I became a journalist.
To Find Out What Our Readers Think About The Future,

We Went Straight For The Stomach.

To help build consensus on a new vision for our region, which is experiencing the most rapid growth and change it has seen in decades, we invited our readers to gather neighbors and friends for pizza — on us. In return, we asked them to tell us their hopes for the future.

More than 1,000 people participated in the Pizza Papers — the first step in the “Values for a Growth Decade” project designed to establish guiding principles to help the Inland Northwest make good decisions about its future.

Urban writer and expert Neal Peirce has now taken their input and drafted a comprehensive report assessing the area’s civic, political and social challenges and opportunities.

With the Pizza Papers, the Peirce Report and additional community forums this year, The Spokesman-Review will strengthen a sense of community among rich and poor, young and old, newcomers and lifelong residents. We think this is an essential task for newspapers today.

“Values for a Growth Decade” is just one more way we’ve found to connect The Spokesman-Review to the region it serves. Every day we’re working hard and working smart to build a newspaper for the 21st century.
that would force changes on the Japanese press.

A new American financial news agency, Bloomberg Business, sought the same kind of access to three important news sources—the Finance Ministry, Bank of Japan, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange—that the kisha clubs enjoyed. Without competitive access to up-to-the-minute financial news, Bloomberg would lose customers of its on-line services.

To make the point, two Bloomberg reporters entered the press room at the Tokyo Stock Exchange to demand equal access to the important press releases that were regularly distributed about companies listed on the exchange.

But they were shouted out of the room by Japanese journalists, especially rival Nikkei business reporters, and forced to stand in the hallway and get the releases late.

The incident sparked the FCCJ, of which I was president at the time, and the United States Embassy to decry kisha clubs as an officially sanctioned barrier to the trade of information within Japan.

The Japanese foreign ministry, worried that the United States had latched onto an explosive trade issue, quietly coaxed its own kisha club to announce that foreign journalists would be allowed to apply for membership (under certain conditions).

Working both in public and behind the scenes, I negotiated with the newspaper association in shaping new guidelines for all kisha clubs in opening up to foreign media. Over many months in early 1993, the guidelines were debated and then issued with grand fanfare, as if they were a favor to foreign journalists.

The problem, though, is that kisha clubs should not even exist. They are still exclusive, no matter who joins them, and can put a foreign journalist in a tough ethical dilemma, such as a request from a government agency for self-censorship. But, for now, that may be a price some foreign journalists are willing to pay for better access to news sources in Japan.  

Mjr
Remember when... your stories came back covered with red ink? You knew then that you were a journalism student, didn’t you? Capture that special time with this new T-shirt. Front features logo (left); back features cartoon. Shirts are white with black and red design, all cotton, pre-shrunk, available in large and extra-large. To order, send a check for $12 for each shirt to MJR, Montana School of Journalism, Missoula, MT 59812.