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It all began over a cup of coffee at the Maxwell House

JACK MOONEY
Submitted
November 20, 2020

In December of 1870, a new Tennessee State Constitution, which gave all male citizens 21 or older the right to vote, was nine months old; Ulysses S. Grant was serving his first term as president of the United States; and the introduction of Ottmar Mergenthaler's Linotype machine to the United States was 16 years away.

It was at this time, Dec. 13, 1870, that the merits of forming a state press association were discussed by a small group of newspapermen over coffee at the Maxwell House, a hotel in Nashville. A number of newspaper editors and publishers had been having informal and infrequent meetings for business and social reasons under the umbrella of a Tennessee press association for several years, but now some members wanted to turn the group into a more definite and permanent organization.



The December meeting was chaired by Col. Thomas Boyers, one of the founders of the Nashville American and the Gallatin Examiner. A call was sent out from this committee to the newspapers of Tennessee for a meeting to establish a permanent press association, and on Feb. 3, 1871, in Nashville, 28 editors and publishers, as charter members, signed the TPA Constitution and Bylaws.

The first elected officers of the TPA included George E. Purvis of Nashville, president; and Don Cameron of Jackson, Gen. Ira P. Jones of Nashville and W.J. Ramage of Knoxville, vice presidents. Dr. R.L.C. White of Lebanon was

elected secretary with Capt. A.S. Horsley of Columbia serving as treasurer. (At the June 1871 meeting, the TPA treasury showed receipts to be \$180, disbursements \$37.90, and the amount on hand \$152.10.)

TPA members soon petitioned TN legislature on several issues

Besides electing officers, adopting a Constitution and Bylaws, establishing a number of committees and listening to some long speeches, the members made arrangements to petition the Tennessee Legislature on several

Please join your fellow TPA members via Zoom for a quick cup of coffee (15 minutes) and an opportunity to acknowledge TPA's 150th Anniversary. Giveaways throughout the Zoom call.

Friday, Dec. 11, 2020
**9:00 a.m. Central/
10:00 a.m. Eastern**
Zoom Link:
tinyurl.com/TPACoffee150

issues, including "inadequate compensation" allowed by the state for legal advertising. A motion also was passed for the names of "known advertising swindlers" to be collected by the central TPA office and a list of the names sent to all papers in the state.

It was apparent from this very

See **TPA 150th** Page 8

Positive COVID-19 test a big negative

Editor's note: Victor Parkins, editor and publisher of The Milan Mirror-Exchange and president of the Tennessee Press Association Foundation, recently wrote two columns about his and his wife Carol's experience after being tested positive for COVID-19. His two columns were written two weeks apart in October. The first one, which starts below, was published Oct. 6.

Wow what a year 2020 has been. After slipping in under the radar like most any other new year, 2020 seemed innocent enough at first.

America's economy was booming like never before and life was rolling right along for the most part.

Then in January and February



COVID-19 EXPERIENCED FIRSTHAND

VICTOR PARKINS

we started hearing about the troubling, novel coronavirus happening in China, but we all knew it would never make it to America. Then in March, it did. And boy what a whirlwind we've all been on since.

We learned about social distancing and what we thought it meant to flatten the curve. We took sides on the mask mandates and eventu-

ally gave in if we really needed to go to Wal Mart.

We've kept up with the virus in the news and read about the death toll and thousands of others that were on respirators, clinging to dear life. But what most of us (90% according to the latest CDC statistics) haven't experienced is what it's really like to have the nasty virus.

So I'll tell you my story. And I'll also tell you I think I'm very lucky. My mild symptoms are nothing like what I've heard from so many others that suffered for days or weeks.

It all started last Sunday night. After attending an outdoor concert

See **Parkins** Page 9

Judges needed for New Jersey Press contests in January

TPA needs members to judge the New Jersey Press Association's contests the third week of January. Sign up at tinyurl.com/JudgeforNJ or email to rgentile@tnpress.com.

Gentile marks 30 years at TN Press Association



Robyn Gentile, TPA Member Services Manager, joined the association in 1990. Turn to page 5 for a Q&A with her looking back over the years.

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TPAers with suggestions, questions or comments about items in The Tennessee Press are welcome to contact the managing editor. Call Mike Towle, (615) 293-5771; or email editor@tnpress.com. The deadline for the February 2021 issue is January 5, 2021.

Your relationships with legislators remain essential during pandemic

What a month! At the point of this writing (Nov. 12) we still weren't 100 percent sure who the next president would be, we thought we might soon have a vaccine for COVID-19, and infection numbers are rising again, leading to what many believe will be another shutdown.

Our TPA Board of Directors met this morning and unanimously approved the Membership Committee's recommendation to take on the Polk County News as TPA members. This is great news as the TPA grows to 130 members! Our metro and community newspapers are the heartbeat of communities across Tennessee. The fact that TPA's membership is growing is a sign that we are after a worthy cause.

Another key takeaway for me from this morning's meeting came from our lobbyist Megan Lane. During her brief report to the board, she noted that public notices will likely be under attack during the upcoming legislative session due to local governments looking



**YOUR
PRESIDING
REPORTER**

DANIEL RICHARDSON

to save wherever they can. This is and will continue to be a very unusual year for lobbying efforts as social-distancing standards limit access to legislators.

Adding to this, due to the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no TPA winter convention or legislative reception scheduled for this winter, and the legislature has announced that legislators will not be attending any receptions.

The logical conclusion to all this is that local publishers' relationships with their legislators are more important now than they ever have been. I strongly encourage TPA's publishers and editors to reach out and schedule meetings,

lunches, etc. with your legislators in both chambers to develop your relationships and stress the value of public notices and what it means to their constituents.

There is more to this than a line on a government entity's financial statements. Public notices and freedom of information are essentially the only things that stand between a democratic republic and a dictatorship. If local governments are looking to save money by limiting or eliminating public notices, whose money are they looking to save, and at whose expense? It's the public's money, and what is saved to the public's expense is negated by the loss of their freedom to know what is going on in their local governments.

Some legislators stress that the public should not be required to buy a newspaper to see the public notices and be informed . . . that the notices should be free to all via the web.

See **RICHARDSON** Page 3

My experience getting tested for COVID-19

When my editor asked me to get tested for COVID-19 and write about the experience, I thought he was kidding. I had to play it cool when I went into his office and he told me he was serious.

He gave me the out, of course, telling me I didn't have to do anything I wasn't comfortable with, but I was determined not to let him down. "Sure," I said. "I don't mind at all."

I was nervous. Everyone has heard the horror story of a six-inch Q-Tip shoved up your nasal cavity as you lean back and have your head held by a stranger whose eyes you can barely see because of masks and face guards. It's a terrifying image. And it may be a terrifying experience, I thought, but it's also a necessary one.

On Thursday, July 16, Blount County had its biggest jump in cases to date. The Tennessee Department of Health reported that as of 3 p.m. that day, 189 people in the county actively had COVID-19. Even worse, four Blount Countians



**GUEST
COLUMN**

SHELBY HARRIS

had died of the virus. When I read those stats, I went to my editor.

"OK," I said. "I'll do it tomorrow."

I made the decision to get tested because I wanted to show people what it was like — if it was actually intrusive and painful or if it was no big deal. I wanted to offer a personal image of what the test was like to the people who have been reading the coverage of the virus for months.

So at about 11 a.m. Friday, July 17, I grabbed my mask, my ID and Daily Times photographer Scott Keller, and we drove a block over to the Blount County Health Department in Maryville.

At first, there was only one car in line. Testing at the BCHD is

from 8:30 a.m. to noon Mondays through Fridays. No appointments are necessary. You don't have to have symptoms or live in Blount County. Because of all of this, I expected a long line. Scott and I even joked that we should take a deck of cards to entertain ourselves while we waited.

But I didn't have to wait at all. I pulled up, rolled down my window and a woman holding a clipboard asked for my driver's license. She asked me to verbally confirm my address and birthday. She asked if I had any symptoms. I didn't. I'm a healthy 25-year-old woman. I wear my mask, social distance and wash my hands. This test, I told the woman with the clipboard, was just for research for our readers.

Because I am a reporter, she asked me to pull around and speak with BCHD Director Robert Schmidt. Schmidt told me and Scott that because of patient confidentiality no pictures were

See **HARRIS** Page 3

It's almost time to put 2020 in our rear-view mirrors

We made it! We are about to put 2020 in our rear-view mirrors, and I think, really, I believe, we are ready to start 2021!

To say 2020 has been an unusual year is a gross understatement, but the good news is Tennessee Press Association members were a strong component in the success of their communities pulling through 2020!

Like you, TPA and Tennessee Press Service have experienced challenges this year, but as we are ready to close our books, I am grateful that we were able to return to our members a virtual state awards program and a sales content program. With some new relationships with the Tennessee state government, we were able to place as much revenue in the papers in 2020 as we did in 2019. And, this year, our clients bought ads in all of our member newspapers!

TPA implemented a bi-weekly call with the governor for all of



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

CAROL DANIELS

our community papers to have a chance to communicate one-on-one with the governor. Since the pandemic began, we have been communicating with papers about the Payroll Protection Program (PPP), which I'm thrilled that the majority of TPA members were able to secure.

TPS contracted with CODA Ventures to do a much-needed readership survey across the state. Mini-decks with readership data specific to voting, public notice, healthcare and retail have been distributed for all members to use when talking with advertising

partners and community leaders. We just launched a program with CODA that our member newspapers can utilize to create targeted dates for their readership base. This program has been very well received and CODA is working on delivering all those decks now. To help members with these programs, we are offering a Zoom meeting with the president of CODA and myself for your sales teams to talk about the readership survey and how to use these numbers to sell more to your current customers as well as how to use the data when talking with potential customers.

December 13 will mark the date that a group of publishers got together at the Maxwell House Hotel in downtown Nashville 150 years ago to talk about forming a newspaper association. We are going to commemorate this occasion with a Zoom call with all of our members to have a cup of coffee

(or tea) with your fellow members and the TPA/TPS team.

Before I sign off, I want to thank all of our members for your dedication throughout this year. I know I've said this before, but it's worth repeating, "Your communities are stronger because of YOU." As we've weathered this year, I have noticed that many state associations have lost members, TPA has stayed strong and has actually gained a new member this year. I also want to thank the TPA/TPS team. I always say we are a small group, but one that is dedicated to all of our members, I am proud to work with each and every one of the team. Thank you to each of you!

Have a happy holiday season!

Carol

Carol Daniels is executive director of the Tennessee Press Association.

RICHARDSON from Page 2

The TPA solved this several years ago by ensuring that every newspaper carrying public notices has a website, publishes the notices for free access online, and that all public notices be placed on Tennessee's public notice website, www.publicnoticeads.com/TN. The only argument against required public notice is the financial burden that falls on the advertising entities.

Another thing to note from today's TPA board meeting is that to strengthen our position with public notices, TPA is looking to upgrade its public notices website very soon into a more user-friendly, mobile-adaptive format where-by users can subscribe to public notices that fit their interests by email or other notifications.

I humbly ask our member newspapers to work on developing a positive relationship with your

legislators if you don't already have one, and find an opportunity to bring up the topic of public notices. Ask what their opinions are and sympathize with them. If they feel that municipalities should be eased of the burden of public notices, encourage them to think of the logical conclusion of that train of thought. If a government is relieved of the burden of notifying its people of what it is doing, where does that lead us? Inform them of TPA's ef-

orts to ensure all public notices are placed online for the public to view for free, whether they subscribe to the newspaper or not, and tell them about our plans to improve that service in the near future.

Daniel Richardson, publisher of the Carroll County News Leader, Huntingdon, and group publisher of the eastern division of Music Valley Publishing, is president of the TPA for the 2020-2021 term.

HARRIS from Page 2

allowed. I told him I didn't mind having my picture taken, but he insisted. With that insistence, Scott went from staff photographer to support person.

Even after looping back around, we had to wait no more than five minutes. Once I approached the testing station, two men from the National Guard in head-to-toe personal protective equipment approached my car. One was holding a tube that already had my name and birthday on it. He asked me to confirm both.

Then he handed me a paper with information about a website I could log into with a specific serial number to see my results. He told me if my test was positive, they'd most likely call me within

three days. If I hadn't heard in three days, he said, then I should check that website.

Before I knew it, the other man was reaching in my car with the long cotton swab. I yelped a little and he backed up.

"Sorry," I said. "I'm a little nervous."

They both laughed, and the man with the Q-Tip calmly told me to lay my head on the headrest.

He stuck the swab in my left nostril, then my right. It was no longer than five seconds — not even enough for Scott to try to sneak a photo.

I've never had anything put up my nose. I got a nose piercing during a rebellious month in college, but other than that and a few blows from playing soccer and having older siblings, my nose has

never experienced pain.

And the test didn't change that.

For me, it was not painful. Rather, it just felt like I really had to sneeze. The sneezing tingles vibrated back into my throat. My eyes watered. I realized I had been holding my breath, and it was hard to catch it afterward because the tickling feeling lingered. I said thank you, and he apologized for startling me.

I blinked the tears away as Scott and I drove the two minutes back to the newsroom. My nose ran and a tickling in my nose and throat stayed for about an hour after the test.

I checked for my results the next day. Nothing was there. The following Monday, July 20, I checked again.

The website told me my results

were in and asked me to confirm my name, age and address. I did, and a webpage with that information popped up.

Just below that, the word "negative" in all caps sat below the word "results."

Three days after I was tested at BCHD, I received my results. The paper said that my test had arrived at the testing center, AEGIS Sciences Corporation in Nashville, on July 18 — meaning my test only took two days, technically, to get back.

For me, the entire experience was painless and quick — nothing to be nervous about.

Shelby Harris is a reporter for The Daily Times, Maryville. This column was originally published in The Daily Times on July 25.

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

December 2020

- 11: TPA 150th Anniversary Coffee Break celebration via Zoom. www.tinyurl.com/TPACoffee150
- 17: Webinar: Classifieds 2021 free for TPA members. onlinemediacampus.com Code: TNtraining
- 18: Webinar: Rethinking Paywalls free for TPA members. onlinemediacampus.com
- 31: DEADLINE: TPA Public Notice Journalism Contest

January 2021

- 11-12, 18-20: Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) January Data Journalism Bootcamp (Virtual via Zoom), ire.org

February 2021

- 11-25: 2021 International News Media Association (INMA) Subscription Summit. Zoom meeting. <https://www.inma.org/>
- 18: TPA Concurrent Board of Directors Meeting and Business Session via Zoom 10:00 a.m. EST/ 9:00 a.m. CST
- 19: DEADLINE: TPA Ideas Contest (Advertising/Circulation)
- 26: DEADLINE: TPA State Press Contests (Newsroom)

March 2021

- 9-14: Spring National College Media Convention 2021, New York Marriott Marquis, New York, N.Y.

April 2021

- 5-9: Women in Journalism Workshop 2021 (virtual), presented by Reynolds Journalism Institute. www.rjionline.org

June 2021

- 23-26: 2021 Tennessee • Arkansas • Mississippi Press Associations Tri-State Convention, Memphis.

September 2021

- Sept. 30-Oct. 2: National Newspaper Association's 135th Annual Convention and Trade Show, Hyatt Regency, Jacksonville, Fla.

October 2021

- 14-17: Fall National College Media Association Convention 2021, New Orleans, LA,

Lessons to pass along from other advertising sources

One of the basics of selling is to get the right kind of information from prospects. There is a big focus on asking about prospects' goals, target audiences, marketing budgets and previous campaign results. That's how we put ourselves in position to create effective ad campaigns.

Monica, a long-time sales manager for a publishing company, told me about a different kind of question. "Years ago, I heard about a technique to turn the process around and ask questions to ourselves," she said. "The objective is to create more interest in what you are selling. It all starts with the words, 'If I were in your position, I would want to know . . .'"

"For example," she explained, "let's say you're meeting with



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JOHN FOUST

someone who doesn't talk much or someone who seems to be running down rabbit trails during your presentation. Simply say something like, 'If I were in your position I would want to know how The Gazette's coverage compares to other media outlets in this market.' Then transfer ownership of the question from you to them, by asking if that is something they would like to know. That opens the door for you to answer the

question and cover an important sales point. It's a way to keep everyone on the same path."

Let's take a closer look at this technique that works so well for Monica:

1. Prepare a list of questions in advance. "As you do research on your prospect, some questions will become obvious," Monica said. "Experienced advertisers will want more detailed information, while new business owners will be most interested in fundamentals."

2. Make sure the questions are specific. She advises to avoid vague topics such as "Why is The Gazette the right choice?" or "Can The Gazette stay within my budget?"

"I've learned that it's better to concentrate on specific areas," she said, "like audience numbers,

procedures, and print and online options."

3. Avoid questions that are blatantly self-promotional. "It's not smart to ask, 'Why is advertising in The Gazette better than running TV commercials?' to someone who is advertising heavily on TV. In addition to killing your credibility, it might end the conversation."

4. Don't overdo it. "Moderation is a key," Monica said. "Resist the temptation to start every other sentence with 'If I were you.' In fact, you may not need to use this kind of question at all. Use your common sense."

5. But you can put questions in strategic groups. "This is a good way to establish a road map for your sales points. For instance, you can say, 'If I were in your po-

sition, I would want to know three things about any media choice: First, do they reach my target audience? Second, what kind of track record do they have in my industry? And third, can they produce the ads themselves? Then you can add, 'Would you want to add anything to this list, or is this a good place to start?'"

Monica's approach makes a lot of sense. There's no question about it.

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NEWS & MOVES

Short retires from Mirror-Exchange

Editor's note: The following is a piece written by journalist Steve Short upon his retirement from The Milan Mirror-Exchange, published Sept. 29 in The Tri-City Reporter, Dyer. It has been slightly edited to fit this space.

I remember walking into the Milan newspaper office of Bob Parkins, where deer heads on the wall looked over Bob's shoulder as he typed – two index fingers pecking on the round keys of a Royal typewriter – writing stories for the Milan Mirror, the paper he and wife Dorris started in the mid-1960s.

It was 1980. My wife Susan and I had moved back to our hometown, after living in Memphis. She had a pharmacy degree; I had a degree in impracticality – English. I'd done substitute teaching in Memphis city schools but liked newspapers.

My first newspaper writing had been in sixth grade at Milan's Park Avenue School. I created a short-lived, one-page paper, "The Willis Weekly" in Jeanette Willis' classroom. At home in the arsenal Area Q, I poked the keys of a Royal typewriter – with paper and carbon paper – reporting exploits of my classmates. Then at Milan High, Hillsman Williams, classmate-editor of the school Bulldog



Short

Banner, let me write smart-alecky satire and other poignant pieces.

I didn't have ink in my blood like Bob Parkins did. But my resume had my football and

basketball teams that Bob had covered. Bob loved journalism and the free press. So did I. That bond was bigger than our differences. I started with features, satire, editorials, and covered schools, sports, murder trials, politics – everything. I even developed film and printed pictures. I started covering the Gibson County Commission and did various stories for all four county newspapers, including the Humboldt Chronicle, Trenton Gazette and Tri-City Reporter.

Writing for 2,050 or so weeks of papers let me interview governors, authors, artists, pro athletes, battery-powered car inventors, educators. I heard soldiers' eye-witness accounts of Iwo Jima, Korea, nuclear missile silos, Vietnam, the 9-11 terror attacks, Baghdad. I met veterans honored on Veterans Day and learned the stories of soldiers remembered on Memorial Day.

Being on the witness stand in U.S. federal court in Jackson and Nashville showed me the vital importance of the free press and

rule of law in America's democracy. Hearing a president propagate the idea of "fake news" showed me how democracy is pushed toward autocracy.

Working for newspapers let me meet people I would've never known otherwise. It was an unforgettable privilege calling Mexico long distance to hear Milan's greatest sports star, Bill Wright, tell about his baseball days – nine Negro League all-star games, Hall of Fame years in Mexico. "Did you play with Jackie Robinson?" I asked. "No, Jackie played with me," said Bill.

After 40 years, I'm ready to miss some deadlines. Thanks, Gibson County folks, for sharing with me your aspirations, frustrations, and celebrations, and for letting me intrude on your lives, ask questions, and possibly, regrettably, misspell your name.

Covering sports let me see up close the joy of athletes and coaches celebrating championships, as well as their heartbreak at losses, proving that sports is about the human spirit, not just games.

I'm deeply grateful to all who helped me pursue journalism: my family, Susan Pillow Short, daughters, Rachel and Jessica, and nephew, Dustin; Mirror owners Bob and Dorris Parkins, Gibson County Publishing owners Victor Parkins and Scarlet Elliott; current colleagues: Melissa, Logan, Crystal, Danny, Gary, Lori, Laurin,

Cara, Lee Ann, Mindy, Stephen, Lenford; and many colleagues before, including former editors April Jackson and Danny Jones. Thanks to you all!

*The Tri-City Reporter, Dyer
Sept. 29, 2020*

News rejoins TPA

The Polk County News of Benton is TPA's newest member and a returning one. The Board of Directors approved its application on Nov. 12, giving the TPA a current membership list of 130 members. The News is owned by Walter and Candyce Bates and publishes weekly on Thursdays. Its circulation as of mid-November was 940 and growing. Contact the newspaper at thepolkcountynews@gmail.com, (423) 438-1883 or P.O. Box 129, Benton, TN 37307.

*Staff reports
Nov. 12, 2020*

Changes made to TPA State Press Contests

Changes to the Tennessee State Press Contests have been approved by the TPA Board of Directors. The recommendations were made by the Contests Committee.

Although divisions have been studied, only one change was recommended this year. The total weekly circulation for Group V

will now be 150,000. The committee will further study ideas regarding the other divisions and make recommendations on those next year.

Other changes approved include adding two categories for Coronavirus coverage. One is a news category and the other is a features category.

The category of Community Lifestyles has been eliminated from the contests.

The category of Best Website has been changed to Best Digital Presentation. It will highlight excellence in local digital coverage on a single topic.

A clarification was made to the category of Best Special Issue or Section noting that a niche publication or magazine can be the entry as long as the content was produced by the newsroom and the publication was delivered to subscribers as part of a regular edition.

The final change is to the Local Features category. The change will allow daily newspapers to enter content from any one-week period. Non-dailies will still be able to enter features from three consecutive editions.

All of these changes are effective for the 2021 Contests. Rules for the contests will be distributed in late December.

*Staff reports
Nov. 20, 2020*

Execute your strength: Put names and faces behind the stories

Nothing is more satisfying than looking at your product – whether it's the print or digital edition – and smiling in approval, "We've got it covered. We're connecting with our readers."

Developing relationships with subscribers and advertisers is imperative to success in today's fractured media landscape. The stakes are even higher as many newspapers navigate the economic impact of the pandemic.

So play to your strengths. Connect the names and faces of those involved in and affected by items in your everyday news report. Tell their stories.

As a first step, collect a half-dozen copies of your newspaper and sit down for a brainstorming session. Go beyond your newsroom. Your entire newspaper family often represents a great cross-section of your community and can contribute valuable insights. Review the editions, and pay particular attention to the names and faces of the newsmakers. Circle them in red, and make a list.

The exercise is especially helpful when examining coverage of local government meetings. Do



COMMUNITY NEWSROOM SUCCESS

JIM PUMARLO

many of the same names appear over and over? As an editor friend points out: Are you giving more attention to the folks in the front of the room versus those in the back of the room? Are you writing for the sources or for those affected by government decisions?

Circumstances and deadlines may well dictate that you report just the facts in the next edition. Then, take the next steps.

Consider these examples. A school board raises extracurricular fees to help close the gap between expenses and revenues. A city council imposes plastic bag fees on local merchants, maybe even adopts an outright ban. A county board establishes a grant program for businesses impacted by the coronavirus.

Each action presents possibilities

for second-day stories and substantive content that can distinguish you from your competitors. The follow-up reports inevitably will include individuals not normally appearing in your newspaper.

There are opportunities beyond government meetings to broaden your portfolio of newsmakers. For example:

Chambers of commerce have their annual awards banquet recognizing excellence in a variety of categories. At least a half-dozen businesses are often recognized. The list is ready-made news for the next edition. Don't stop there. Profile each of the honorees in successive editions, giving attention to additional names and faces.

Election season is past us, but here's an idea for the next cycle. Coverage, for good reason, focuses on the candidates. How about profiling the chair of a campaign committee, the person who really drives the push for votes? Highlight someone in his or her first campaign; highlight a veteran of several campaigns.

High school sports are the heart of many communities, and head coaches naturally receive a great

deal of attention. What drives assistant coaches? How are they selected, and why do they cherish their supportive roles? You'll probably find interesting stories and new faces to highlight.

Police blotters are another opportunity to link local residents to events. Consider this report. A bank foreclosed on a house, and a court order was issued to evict the family. Police surrounded the home for two hours, and all ended peacefully. It was the 35th eviction ordered that day. That fact prompts all sorts of questions and potential follow-up stories. Did the evicted families have a common profile? Where did they spend the next night, week, month? Are there community resources to assist these families? It's a sensitive story and one that will require extra effort to pursue. It also will result in a host of new voices on your pages.

Collecting and publishing the news is an imperfect endeavor at best. Connecting with individuals outside of the normal network of sources often demands more work. And everything is more challenging during the pandemic

due to the combination of greater isolation among individuals and diminished newsroom resources.

All newspapers strive to consistently produce a report that reflects a living history of their communities. That necessarily should drive you to expand the catalog of newsmakers used to tell your stories.

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Jim Pumarlo writes, speaks and provides training on community newsroom success strategies. He is author of "Journalism Primer: A Guide to Community News Coverage," "Votes and Quotes: A Guide to Outstanding Election Coverage" and "Bad News and Good Judgment: A Guide to Reporting on Sensitive Issues in Small-Town Newspapers." He can be reached at www.pumarlo.com and welcomes comments and questions at jim@pumarlo.com.

Gentile celebrates 30 years with Tennessee Press Association

MIKE TOWLE
Managing Editor
November 30, 2020

When Robyn Gentile went to work for the Tennessee Press Association in December 1990 – technically, she started out with Tennessee Press Service as a receptionist – George Bush the elder was president, Johnny Majors was head football coach of the University of Tennessee, and the internet and news talk radio with the likes of Rush Limbaugh were in their infancy.

Over the past thirty years, Gentile has steadfastly progressed up the ladder within TPA and its affiliate entities to position herself (as TPA's member services manager) as one of the steady forces always ready to lend a hand (or both) to members in need of assistance. This is in addition to her myriad prescribed duties, which include spearheading the annual state press contests and advertising/circulation contests, and playing a key role in planning, preparing and conducting the two

statewide TPA conventions every year.

"Robyn always puts the needs of our member papers first," said Carol Daniels, TPA executive director. "I've thoroughly enjoyed working with Robyn over the past 3 years. Every member of TPA should be thrilled that Robyn is Member Services Manager; she does a spectacular job!"

The Tennessee Press recently conducted a Q&A with Gentile looking back over the past 30 years:

Q: Tell us about your background – where you come from, where you went to school, and what some of your interests and hobbies are.

Gentile: I was born in Knoxville and later lived in Memphis, Texas and Kentucky before returning to Knoxville, where I now live. Along the way, I attended Berea College in Berea, Kentucky.

I enjoy reading, especially mystery/suspense although I avoid things that are dark or filled with gore. I also enjoy crafts.

Knoxville is my home. I love being near the mountains. One of



File photo/TPA

Robyn Gentile, TPA Member Services Manager

my favorite activities is picnicking at Metcalf Bottoms with my family and playing in the river. But, of course, the water is so cold that it takes until July for me to feel like the water isn't freezing.

In general, I enjoy being with my friends and especially vacationing with them at the beach.

Q: How did you get hooked up with TPA/TPS, and was it your first job? You said you started out as a receptionist and we all know now that you are member services director – what other jobs have you had mixed in there over the last 30 years?

Gentile: TPA was not my first job. I applied to TPS after college. My husband was deployed during Desert Storm, and I moved us to Knoxville to be with my family. I applied to TPS for the receptionist's position and was hired. We were still located on the UT campus then, and Don Campbell was executive director at the time. I remember being given a typing test on an original Mac. The funny thing was that the font was set to some odd symbols and it took me a few minutes to figure out how to change the font. We had used Macs some in college, but my experience with them was still extremely limited at that point.

After starting out as a receptionist, I then worked in the advertising department in order

placement. After that, I became the administrative assistant and now I serve as member services manager, a position I have held since 2002 when Greg Sherrill, who had been member services manager, was promoted to executive director. I always appreciated his confidence in promoting me to the job.

Q: How has your job evolved over the years?

Gentile: TPA used to have many more separate events, but now we combine those activities into fewer meetings. Also, TPA used to have events that spanned more days. I also used to have to travel more for duties related to judging contests in Tennessee as well as in other states. Not traveling as much has been balanced by other tasks such as setting up digital contests and the administrative assistant duties that were added to my job when our staff was cut in 2015.

Q: How has TPA changed over the years?

See **GENTILE** Page 7

TPA MEMBER COVERAGE SHOWCASE I: The Daily Times, Maryville

A revolving door: ABR returns four bears to wild but 6 more to care for

MELANIE TUCKER
The Daily Times, Maryville
May 23, 2020

Their names are Ferdinand, Dumplin', Tweetsie, Raven, Chickadee and Sparks – all current Townsend residents whose caretakers can't wait for the day when they can head for the hills.

All of them are black bears under the care of Appalachian Bear Rescue, a nonprofit that takes in injured and orphaned cubs to provide the needed attention that will give them a second chance at life in the wild.

Their stories are similar. Ferdinand came to ABR on April 24 after he was found severely malnourished, anemic and dehydrated on a Kentucky farm. He weighed in at 6 pounds and was 3 months old at the time.

Dumplin' joined Ferdinand at the facility May 6 from Elizabethton after he was also found motherless and needed assistance. A few days later, wildlife officials discovered Dumplin's sister and she was captured, joining her brother. She was given the name Tweetsie. All of these cubs are the same age.

The other set of siblings under the care of ABR curators are Raven and Chickadee. They were found May 18 by members of a mountain community in Sevier County minus their mother. ABR Executive Director Dana Dodd said members of this community had seen the mother and two cubs frequently over the spring.

"Technically, we don't know what happened to their mother," Dodd said. "They had seen the mom and her cubs a lot. They said they heard a gunshot and then didn't see her anymore. All the neighbors started seeing just the two cubs and no mother."

These residents then were able to contact Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, which then contacted ABR. TWRA waited 24 hours before setting traps to make sure mother bear wasn't coming back. She didn't.

Using traps is tricky, Dodd explained. The only food these small cubs are used to is mother's milk, so it is hard to tempt them into a cage.

"Most of them have never had a sardine or a honeybun just yet," she explained.



Submitted/The Daily Times, Maryville

Tweetsie, Dumplin and Ferdinand enjoy each other's company while in the care of Appalachian Bear Rescue. They love to wrestle and then wrestle some more before crashing.

No easy task

It was rough terrain and difficult to reach the bears, but officials were successful. Both of the cubs climbed trees and wouldn't come down. They each finally came down low enough that officials were able to nab them with a catch pole instead of a trap.

Raven and Chickadee are both females and had the usual medical issues when brought to ABR. They are taking worm medication and were covered in ticks. But one of these tested positive for ringworm, a type of fungus. Dodd said she has not seen another bear with this condition at ABR. Both are being treated and must be in quarantine for three weeks before being placed in an enclosure with Ferdinand, Dumplin' and Tweetsie.

What do bears do all day when they have been used to following momma bear around?

"They go a mile a minute every day," Dodd said. "One hundred miles a minute. It is funny to watch them. They go so hard — running, climbing, wrestling and playing. Then it's like they fall over. It's like someone turns them off. They just fall over and you can see them sleep for a while."

But only for a little while, Dodd said.

"If you watch long enough, one of them will reach out and smack the other and it all begins again."

It seems Ferdinand and Dumplin' have become besties. Tweetsie, hesitant to join the gang at first, is fitting right in. All three are recovering in Hartley House.

Raven and Chickadee are at the Red Roof Recovery Center.

ABR's facility is off-limits to all but curators and staff. There is a visitors center in Trillium Cove in Townsend.

The more mature bear

The oldest bear calling ABR home for now is Sparks; he was found in Great Smoky Mountains National Park on May 12. Despite being 15 months old, he weighed a mere 18 pounds. He will spend less time at ABR, Dodd explained. He needs to bulk up and gain strength.

It is a given, Dodd said, that the five cubs will be there until later in the year. Yearlings like Sparks are here for much shorter spans.

"A few groceries and he will be able to pack on the weight and go home," the executive director said.

Home for each of them is the area from whence they came. Raven and Chickadee will be released in the Sevier County area, while Sparks will return to GSMNP. Carter County is home for Dumplin' and Tweetsie. It will be back to Kentucky for Ferdinand.

It has been a while since ABR was bear free. Dodd said the 2018



Submitted/The Daily Times, Maryville

Ferdinand has been at Appalachian Bear Rescue for a few weeks. He was brought to the facility after turning up alone on a Kentucky farm, too young to survive on his own.

bears were released by Dec. 20 of that year. The first bear of 2019 was Hartley, who came on Feb. 14. He was furless and wouldn't have survived much longer had wildlife officials not intervened. He was from Kentucky and taken back after a miraculous recovery.

"From Dec. 20, 2018, to Feb. 14, 2019 – that is the only time we haven't had bears," Dodd said. After Hartley came the Louisiana twins, Boudreaux and Beignet, on March 1.

Beignet, Boudreaux, Balthazar and Jessamine, four yearlings who had spent months recovering from malnourishment and other maladies, were released from ABR just a few weeks ago. Three were taken back to Louisiana and the other to its native South Carolina.

If bears aren't there

It is during downtime that ABR officials work on renovating and cleaning areas. There are also plans to build an additional wild enclosure. With bears under care continuously this year and the ongoing coronavirus outbreak,

some things are put on hold.

They have renovated the recovery center, updated the flooring in Hartley House, acquired new nursery cages and framed in a shed to make it indoor instead of outdoor storage. Dodd said things are being done in phases.

"Things we could actually get done were first on the list," Dodd explained. "We didn't want to raise money with our More Room in the Den Campaign and then have to sit on it. We want to be able to show people what we are doing with their money."

The fact there is a lot of bear activity now doesn't bode well for how the season will go, Dodd predicted.

She said people have the responsibility to do the right thing when it comes to wild animals. Locking cabin doors and vehicles is a given, she said.

Dodd said she has noticed multiple incidents of bears entering homes and vehicles this spring. Many have made the local news media. Most have been in the Gatlinburg area. These bears are a threat to public safety, she said.

"Bears that become habituated to humans and human food usually do not make it," she said. "When we visit bear country, we must live responsibly. It's pretty easy to be 'BearWise.' When we are not, bears lose."

Wildlife had the benefit of not seeing humans as the coronavirus pandemic closed down state and national parks for weeks. Most parks are reopened. Dodd said the bears and other wild animals probably enjoyed their solitude.

"If people would just enjoy from a distance it would be so much better," she said. "If everyone could learn it's better to have them in your heart than in your hands."

TPA MEMBER COVERAGE SHOWCASE II: Southern Standard, McMinnville

96-year-olds form relationship after chatting on internet

CHRIS SIMONES
Southern Standard, McMinnville
August 16, 2020

Carl Vetter and Evelyn Pyles are both 96 years old. They each served their country during World War II. They both outlived their spouses. They met in a way one wouldn't expect for two people approaching 100.

On the internet.

"We were pen-pals," Vetter said, smiling. "We met on a website, and we started emailing each other every day."

Pyles smiles as Vetter tells the story.

"We're not married," she laughs. "If we got married they'd take away what my husband left me from the military. So, we're crooked."

"We don't feel guilty and we don't make it a secret," Pyles says, cheerfully.

Carl sat down at the kitchen table next to Evelyn and looked her in the eye.

"I was born on June 3, 1924 and Evelyn was born Aug. 3, 1924," Vetter says. "That's why I call her kid, because she's so much younger than me."

Vetter was drafted into the Army Air Corps when he was 19 years old in April of 1943. Vetter spent the war in Yuma, Ariz., as an aircraft sheet metal worker after training in Champaign, Ill.

"When I was 14 years old, a neighbor ran me over with his car. It broke my leg, put a hole in my head, and broke a disc in my back," said Vetter. "I couldn't pass

the physical to go overseas."

Pyles was determined to join the Army, but it took time to convince her mother.

"I went in when I was 20 years old, the day after my birthday in 1944," said Pyles. "My mother



Vetter



Pyles

didn't think that was the kind of work a woman ought to be doing, but my father talked her into it. He told her it wasn't my fault I was born a girl," Pyles said, laughing.

Carl Vetter and Evelyn Pyles, both 96, met each other on the internet and are enjoying life together in the Centertown community.

Pyles served in the Women's Army Corps for almost two years at Camp Chaffee, Ariz., before they shut the camp down in 1946. She worked with the military police as the morning report girl.

Vetter and Pyles began their penpal courtship after their spouses died.

"The first thing he asked me was what church I belonged to and I liked that. Not one other man had asked me that question and I knew right away I liked him," said Pyles. "I hadn't had a very good experience with dating, and I'd decided I wasn't going to do that anymore,



Submitted photo/Southern Standard, McMinnville

Carl Vetter and Evelyn Pyles, both 96, met each other on the internet and are enjoying life together in the Centertown community.

but he was different."

"I'm a member of Short Mountain Methodist Church and it's important to me," Vetter said.

Vetter was living in Liberty and had been for decades. Pyles was living in New Mexico. Vetter started enjoying Pyles' emails so much he decided he wanted to fly out to meet her.

"I asked her what she'd do if I showed up on her doorstep one day and she said she'd bring me

in and make me a cup of coffee," Vetter said smiling. "I flew out to see her in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico soon after that."

That was in 2009. Pyles moved to Liberty to be with Vetter shortly thereafter.

Vetter and Pyles briefly moved to Pennsylvania in 2018 to be near one of Vetter's children but moved back within four months.

"I knew within a week we'd made a mistake," Vetter said from their West Green Hill Road home. "I asked my good friend L.D. Knoke to find us a house and he did. I came down and looked at it and I liked it a lot. I bought it and we came back."

Vetter and Pyles are very happy and enjoy each other's company every day.

"Evelyn gets up between 5 and 5:15 a.m. every morning and I get up between 5:15 and 5:30 a.m. every morning," Vetter said. "I give her a chance to get up and have some coffee before I get out of bed."

Vetter and Pyles keep to a pretty

steady routine. After breakfast, Vetter reads two chapters from the Bible. Lunch is between 11 a.m. and noon, supper around 4 p.m. A movie between supper and bedtime.

"We don't watch TV at all," Vetter said. "We like movies. My favorite comedy is 'Blazing Saddles.' Mel Brooks is a loon."

After the movie, it's time for bed. Pyles gets in bed at 8 p.m. Vetter turns in 30 minutes later.

"I like to read every night," Vetter said. "I used to have over 200 books and I had read them all. Some twice."

On Sundays, Vetter and Pyles are at New Short Mountain United Methodist Church. They attribute their good health and long lives to genetics and a sensible diet.

"I believe if your grandparents lived a good, long life you're likely too, also," said Vetter. "However, you've got to eat good and lay off the fried foods. Don't eat meat every day. You've got to eat vegetables and fruit every day. That's where you get your good vitamins."

"One other thing," Vetter added. "Stay out of the rocking chair. Get up every day and accomplish something. You've got to keep going. You can't ever give up."

GENTILE from Page 5

Gentile: TPA is evolving with the industry. When I first started participating in conventions, they were like family reunions. Some papers could bring several staff members and most brought their families. Summer conventions used to see 40 or more kids come with their parents. Every paper had its own publisher, and the majority were individually owned. The Summer Convention, in particular, was like a vacation for attendees. Obviously, that has changed. Every paper has less staff. The majority of papers are corporately owned. Our Board,

committees and staff work to meet the current needs of the membership. I hope more members will get involved, especially when we can meet again once this pandemic is over. With in-person conventions, TPA members can provide a great idea-sharing, networking and help each other recharge.

Q. What memories of yours stick out involving the TPA or its members over the past thirty years?

Gentile: It is difficult to pinpoint just a few because 30 years is such a long time and TPA has had many interesting times. And, as I start thinking about conventions, I am afraid to single out just a few. All of our hosts have been so generous

to TPA. The same with people. There are and have been many wonderful people involved with TPA.

Q. The last 5-10 years, especially, have seen significant changes in the newspaper industry – such as a proliferation of types of media designed for mass consumption – forcing newspapers to fight more than ever to stay relevant and successful, even to survive. How has that shaped what your role has been in that time?

Gentile: Newspapers fill a vital role in their communities and we strive to provide opportunities to help members with training, support and fostering the exchange of

ideas. And I am proud of the work of TPS that puts ad dollars into newspapers. We certainly would like to hear from members on ways TPA can be more relevant.

Q. How would you sum up your 30 years with TPA, both on a professional level and a personal one?

Gentile: It is a privilege to be associated with TPA and Tennessee newspapers. Working for TPA has given me opportunities to meet and work with many wonderful people. I have made friends and have met a few characters and have had experiences that I would not have had otherwise.

**TPA needs
YOU
to help judge
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newsroom and ad judges are needed

TPA 150TH from Page 1

first official meeting that social activities were to play an important role in TPA conventions. One of the committees was designated to arrange an excursion for the TPA members in August of 1871 to New York, and an invitation was sent to the Mississippi Press Association to join them on the excursion.

The fortunes of the new organization waxed and waned over the years. On occasion, as with the 25th Annual Meeting in Chattanooga in 1895, the association would experience a successful year and an entertaining convention. The association always tried to hold its meetings in rotating divisions of the state to allow members equal traveling arrangements. For a number of years the TPA benefited from the generosity of railroads, which provided free passes for the members to the conventions.

By 1914, the TPA was not the only press organization in the state. The challenges of distance and communication had created regional associations. In the summer of that year, the West Tennessee Press Association was formed, joining the previously existing Middle, East and Tennessee associations. Heavy debate by association members centered on this issue. While some editors did not like the establishment of the regional associations, others thought the groups would be able to work together, and the state TPA would benefit.

Since its conception in 1870, the TPA had relied on a system of dedicated secretaries and treasurers to furnish the continuity for an organization that changed its chief officer every year. During the early years, this system worked, and some responsible individuals were persuaded to continue in office for an extended period of time. For example, R.L.C. White was TPA secretary from 1870 to 1885, and W.A. Wade served as treasurer from 1874 to 1889. In the 1920s and 1930s, such an arrangement was not efficient, and in the 1940s four changes and movements took place that pulled the press association together and made it a viable and strong organization.

Changes made TPA a strong and viable organization



File photo/TPA

Tennessee Press Association members gather at Roan Mountain in 1887, 17 years after the founding of the association.

The first change was the joining of the three divisional press associations with the TPA. In 1941, the corporate name of the East Tennessee Press Association was changed to the East Tennessee Division of the Tennessee Press Association. Eventually, the vice presidents of the TPA were representatives of the three divisions, with the president being elected on a rotating basis from among the divisions. (A practice that the Bylaws still require today.)

The second change was the formation of the Tennessee Press Service to serve as a central advertising agent for member newspapers. Revenue realized from its advertising and clipping service would eventually place the TPA in a respectable financial position.

The third was an agreement

entered into by the TPA and the University of Tennessee. The university offered assistance to the TPA in much the same way as it contributed to farmers and businesses through the Extension Services. UT furnished offices to the association and for a time shared with the TPA in paying the salary of the secretary-manager. The TPA furnished services to UT such as supplying newspaper clippings, aiding in UT journalistic activities, supplying journalism scholarships and financing research and incentives in journalism education.

Cooperative efforts between TPA and UT soon were expanded

One very successful cooperative effort between UT and TPA was the establishment of the UT-TPA

Press Institute in 1952. Originated by Roy C. Coleson, publisher of the Fayette Falcon, and Willis Tucker, director of the UT journalism program, the Institute was held at the TPA annual winter meeting.

The fourth influential change in the 1940s was the establishment of a permanent executive officer for the association. The position was first known as field manager, then secretary-manager, and eventually executive director. The groundwork for the field manager was laid with the signing of the UT-TPA contract.

John Bragg of Murfreesboro was the first TPA field manager under the UT-TPA contract. When Bragg was called into military service, Julian Harriss of the university's public relations department became field manager. Then it was Harriss that answered Uncle Sam's call and Fletcher Sweet, the

UT College of Agriculture public information director, took over.

When Harriss returned to civilian life, he again took on the responsibilities of the TPA. Harriss resigned in 1946 and was replaced by Thomas B. Greene, Jr.

Julian Harriss was very influential in helping both the UT journalism program and TPA. . . . Harriss helped organize the field manager plan of the TPA, and in 1947, he was instrumental in bringing former businessman and newspaper reporter Glenn E. McNeil to the TPA as field manager.

Active, decisive, clear-cut and a visionary, McNeil was a perfect match for the TPA. His leadership for the next three decades would help position TPA on manageable and positive objectives and turn the organization into an influen-



File photos/TPA

In 1938, members of the Tennessee Press Association gathered at the Clarion Hotel in Memphis.



File photos/TPA

Attendees at the 1960 TPA Convention gathered to have their photo taken at Clingman's Dome in Gatlinburg.

TPA 150TH from Page 8

tial political voice. . . .

McNeil and the TPA leadership; would work for and realize a number of improvements, but none were more important than the passage of three bills in the Tennessee Legislature. These are the Open Records Act of 1957, the Freedom of Information Act of 1973 and the Sunshine Law of 1974. These were perhaps the most important acts of legislation regarding freedom of information in the state since the passage of the Tennessee Constitution in 1796. TPA got the legislature to

add an enforcement mechanism in the public records law in 1983 that provided for quicker judicial review of official actions regarding records.

TPA also worked for the passage of the public notice law in 2013. The law requires newspapers to post public notices online and on a statewide site maintained by Tennessee newspapers.

Glenn McNeil retired in 1979. His son, Don McNeil, succeeded him. The title was changed to executive director in the mid-1980s. The next executive director was Don Campbell, who was named to the position in 1990.

Mr. Campbell was succeeded by Robert E. DeBusk in 1996. Greg M. Sherrill succeeded Mr. DeBusk in 2002 (until 2016) and Carol Goss Daniels was named TPS Executive Vice President in 2017. After a TPA bylaws change in 2018 she was then formally named TPA executive director.

Today, TPA has 130 member newspapers.

This article is excerpted and edited for length from "A History of Tennessee Newspapers," published in 1996, edited by Jack Mooney, Ph.D.

PARKINS from Page 1

in Jackson among friends and my 88-year old mom, I started feeling kinda woozy. The last thing I thought I had was the coronavirus. A good nights rest and I'll be good to go, I thought.

I got up early Monday morning for work and still didn't feel 100%. Monday's at the newspaper are always long ones and this one was no different. I struggled through the day not feeling well but thought if I could just make it home I'd be fine.

Monday night I registered a low grade fever and had a pounding headache. By mid-morning Tuesday my symptoms worsened, my back and shoulders felt like I'd been run over by a bus and I had a terrible sinus headache. I loaded up on Ibuprofen, Vitamin C and Gatorade and felt better for a short time.

Later Tuesday afternoon when my fever reached nearly 102, I knew it was time to get tested. A quick trip to a walk-in clinic gave me the news I dreaded hearing. I was COVID-19 positive. Later that same day, my wife Carol started showing similar symptoms and it didn't take long to find out that she too, had the virus.

The days since have been spent at home getting things done around the house or lounging on the couch with ice packs on our heads. We've had zero personal contact with anyone but ourselves and hopefully by the end of this week we'll both be symptom free and back to our normal lives.

Oddly enough, neither of us lost our sense of smell, taste or appetite like so many others with the virus do. In fact, I've probably gained 5 pounds since this whole thing started.

Lucky for us, the weather has been absolutely beautiful so we were able to enjoy our days in isolation outside.

So that's a recap of what it's like to have the contagious coronavirus. I hope none of you of pick it up out there and if you do, I sure hope your symptoms are somewhat mild like ours have been.

Carol and I are very thankful that we've got an incredible supporting cast of family and friends that have offered us everything under the sun to help us get through these trying days. Hopefully we're about out of the woods and the worst is behind us. We're both ready to get back to work and to

life as we know it. And when 2020 comes to an end, we'll be happy to tell her good riddance.

Have a great week!

Oct. 20 column: Fall is in the air but so is COVID

Now that I'm fully recovered from COVID-19 I'll give you some friendly advise. You don't want. And I'll also offer you some bad news, you're probably going to get. Since the ache's, pains and snotty nose are now gone, I have somewhat of a new perspective of the contagious coronavirus. On one hand I wish I had been much more careful to avoid picking it up. But on the other hand, I was in close proximity of way too many people that either didn't get it, or did get it and were asymptomatic.

There's still so much about this virus that I don't think we know--and I'm not sure we ever will. Questions like. . . . Exactly how does it spread? Why do some people get it and others do not? Why were my symptoms so much different than my wife's? Exactly how effective is wearing mask? Just how easily is COVID spread from one object to another? The list goes on and on.

Other than resting a sticky ice pack that smelled like 4-year old expired English peas against my pounding, hot head, the worst part about the virus for me was staying home. But lucky for me and why wife Carol, we had 5 or 6 straight days of sunny, 60-degree fall weather to enjoy during our isolation period.

Last Saturday was another beautiful, picture perfect day in West Tennessee. Friday night was perfect football weather to watch the Milan Bulldogs stomp McNairy County. It was probably even better for the Medina faithful that watched their cardiac kids beat Covington with a last minute touchdown.

And it was dreadful for all Tennessee fans to watch what we thought was a surging Big Orange team fold to Kentucky and a wet dishrag.

Winter will be here before we know so get out and enjoy this awesome fall weather. And while you're out, be sure to vote. Election Day will be here soon. If you don't vote now, you have no right to complain later.

Oh, and don't forget to stay vigilant about the crazy coronavirus.

Happy Fall!

Public Notice Journalism Contest Deadline Dec. 31
Contest details posted at tnpress.com

Biden presidency likely would change NLRB composition

As I write this column, the Presidential election has not been finally decided. Former Vice President Joe Biden appears to be in the lead.

However, President Donald Trump and his supporters have filed lawsuits contesting the voting in many states. The dust has not settled.

The President of the United States appoints the members of the National Labor Relations Board as well as the NLRB General Counsel. They are appointed for specific terms.

With the current composition of the NLRB, Management has been enjoying many good decisions, re-establishing First Amendment rights to Management and respect for the private property rights of employers.

NLRB Chairman John Ring's term expires on Dec. 16, 2022; member Marvin Kaplan's term expires on Aug. 27, 2025; member William Emmanuel's term expires on Aug. 27, 2021; member Lauren McFerran's term expires on Dec. 16, 2024. There is currently one (1) unfilled vacancy. Ring, Kaplan



LEGAL UPDATE

L. MICHAEL ZINSER

and Emmanuel are Republicans with management backgrounds. McFerran is a Democrat with a union background.

Should Joe Biden be elected the new President, he will be able to immediately fill a vacancy with another pro-union individual. He would also get to appoint replacements for Ring and Emmanuel as their terms expire.

The NLRB General Counsel is Peter Robb. He was appointed to a four (4)-year term on Nov. 17, 2017. Thus, his term expires on Nov. 17, 2021.

It is not hard to predict that President Joe Biden would appoint a very pro-union individual to the General Counsel vacancy. The stakes are high for management!

NLRB establishes standards for mail-and manual-ballot representation elections during COVID-19 pandemic

In a decision issued Nov. 9, 2020, the National Labor Relations Board sets forth the considerations Regional Directors should weigh in determining whether an election should be conducted by mail-ballot, as opposed to an in-person manual-ballot, because of the COVID-19 related conditions. The case is *Aspirus Keweenaw*, which I mentioned in my last column.

The NLRB's longstanding policy strongly favors manual elections, although since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board has permitted mail-ballot elections under an "extraordinary circumstances" exception to the manual ballot preference. Since March, approximately 90 percent of NLRB representation elections have been conducted by mail. The Board has approved the Agency's Regional Directors' decisions to conduct these elections by mail, recognizing

ing the unique concerns raised by the pandemic.

In Nov. 9 decision, the Board provides the Regional Directors with updated guidance for use in determining the appropriate election method to be used in light of the unique COVID-19 circumstances. The decision outlines six situations related to the COVID-19 pandemic that, when one or more is present, will normally suggest the propriety of conducting an election by mail, rather than manual ballot. Those circumstances are:

1. The Agency office tasked with conducting the election is operating under "mandatory telework" status.

2. Either the 14-day trend in the number of new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the county where the facility is located is increasing, or the 14-day testing positivity rate in the county where the facility is located is 5 percent or higher.

3. The proposed manual election site cannot be established in a way that avoids violating mandatory state or local health orders relating to maximum gathering size.

4. The employer fails or refuses to commit to abide by GC Memo 20-10, Suggested Manual Election Protocols.

5. There is a current COVID-19 outbreak at the facility or the employer refuses to disclose and certify its current status.

6. Other similarly compelling circumstances.

Chairman John F. Ring said, "This decision," he added, "will provide much-needed guidance to Regional Directors and parties on the circumstances in which mail-ballot elections are appropriate during this pandemic. While protecting the health and safety of all election participants, these guidelines also recognize the benefits of conducting elections in the workplace, where many of the employees we serve have continued to work during the pandemic."

Department of Labor proposes new rule on independent contractors

On Sept. 22, 2020, the U.S. De-

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OBITUARIES

Frank Roy Hawkins

Frank Roy Hawkins, 78, of Johnson City and former deputy display ad manager with the Johnson City Press, passed away peacefully at his home on Saturday, Nov. 21.

Frank was born on Oct. 27, 1942, to the late Frank Watson Hawkins and Geraldine Vines Hawkins Hyder. He called Johnson City home for his entire life.

A third-generation member of Central Baptist Church, he was saved at age nine and later in life belonged to his much-beloved William Rigel Sunday School class, and served proudly and with deep faith as a church deacon, church moderator and usher.

He served on the Johnson City Seniors Center Advisory Council as chair, then on the foundation board for more than 20 years and as treasurer. He truly valued the interactions with the seniors, staff and the twice-monthly ballroom dances with his dance partner Virginia "Ginny" Crouch. He also treasured his membership of the



Hawkins

Nativic Civitan Club for more 30 years, with one term as president and his lifetime membership of the Johnson City Elks Lodge.

Born and raised a Republican by his parents and a longtime member of the Washington County Republican Party, he served multiple terms as party chairman and treasurer. He was an affiliate member and supporter of the Washington County Tennessee Republican Women with his dear friend Wanda May.

A graduate of Science Hill High School, he continued his education at East Tennessee State University, the Northeast State Tech Quality Program and the Milligan College Adult Education Program.

Frank spent most of his working life as an advertising executive at the Johnson City Press starting in 1967, moving from a trainee to dis-

play manager, retiring in 2004. He will always be grateful to the Carl A. Jones family's stewardship and remembers fondly his time with the Tennessee Press Association and the Mid-Atlantic Newspaper Advertising Marketing Executives Association.

In addition to his parents Frank is preceded in death by his grandparents, Judge D.A. Vines and Mabel and Professor E.E. Hawkins and Margaret.

He is survived by his son, Frank Watson Hawkins, II, wife Kelly and cherished granddaughters Mathilda and Ellery of Knoxville; brother, David E. Hawkins and wife Ann; sister, Marilyn Tolliver; nieces, Tori Tolliver, Lori Jones and husband David of Virginia, Janet Phillips and husband Russ of Georgia, Heather Hawkins and husband Mike Truffa of North Carolina; Bill, Brian and Brad Price; and David Head of Chattanooga.

Johnson City Press
Nov. 26, 2020

Gallatin to review its open records policy

JOSH CROSS
Gallatin News
October 30, 2020

Gallatin officials said in late October they plan to review the city's open records policy after the Gallatin News raised questions about a \$54.53 hourly labor charge to obtain emails about construction complaints regarding the new Facebook data center project.

The newspaper was notified by the city last week that it would cost \$459.14 to obtain an electronic copy of 50 emails related to eight complaints that have been made about the ongoing construction project.

"It's certainly not the city's intent to price gouge anyone," City Attorney Susan High-McAuley said when asked about high hourly labor charges. "The city's intent is to be open and thorough in our searches. If we need to refine that, perhaps that is something the city needs to look into. I have recom-

mended that the mayor, the I.T. director and I meet to . . . determine if there is a more efficient and cost-efficient way (to fulfill open records requests)."

On Oct. 9, the Gallatin News filed a public records request with the city recorder's office seeking documents and emails related to complaints that had been made regarding construction-related activities associated with the \$800 million Facebook data center project.

James Fenton, Gallatin Economic Development Agency executive director, provided the newspaper with a spreadsheet detailing eight total complaints his office was tracking along with 22 related emails on Oct. 12. There was no labor cost charged for the request.

Two days later, the newspaper was notified by the city recorder's office that 50 additional emails

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Reporting on problems while also seeking solutions

With a few simple questions, and just a little extra effort, reporters and editors can quickly improve the quality and value of their work and raise the profile and credibility of their news organization.

And if done correctly, and regularly, this new method of reporting stories can lead to positive changes in our communities and the lives of residents.

The concept is called “solutions journalism,” and it was defined and launched by the appropriately named Solutions Journalism Network. This new form of journalism seeks to look for and cover topics of great importance by examining responses to problems, seeking out and defining solutions and sharing with readers what is working in our society and why.

As a recent devotee to SJ, let me say up front: this method is not about choosing only upbeat topics to report on or softening your reporting in any way.

That said, implementing SJ does result in more positive reporting and a slight shift away from only presenting negative information on problems, challenges or tragedies. I think we can all agree that in



**BETTER
WRITING
WITH BART**

BART PFANKUCH

today’s media world, particularly amid a pandemic and ongoing political and social division, the reporting, presenting and consuming of news can be a pretty big downer and that if there was ever a time for a new, more uplifting approach, it is now.

The group’s mission is to “spread the practice of solutions journalism: rigorous reporting on responses to social problems. We seek to rebalance the news, so that every day people are exposed to stories that help them understand problems and challenges, and stories that show potential ways to respond.”

The “response” element of that statement is critical. SJ seeks to drill in on problems and issues just like traditional reporting, but adds an element that examines how problems can be solved or ad-

dressed to improve life and society.

The process will lead reporters to do a bit more research, make a few more phone calls and add material to stories that might have been overlooked in the past. SJ does not require much more work but does require a new way of thinking about the approach to stories and the reporting on issues.

South Dakota News Watch, the non-profit journalism organization where I work, has recently received a pair of small grants from the SJN and undergone training in how SJ can be used. We’ve also embarked on efforts to implement SJ in our work.

Some stories have been born with a SJ focus in place right from the start. For instance, News Watch set out this fall to examine how the pandemic was affecting education on Native American reservations. The result was a newsy in-depth mainbar on how limited internet coverage, a lack of access to computers and other socio-economic challenges were inhibiting teaching and learning.

But we went further, and with SJ top of mind, produced a sidebar drilling in on one remote reserva-

tion that used federal grant money, assistance from a non-profit and ingenuity by local leaders to create its own local internet system to reach families for remote learning.

Somewhat to my surprise, the SJ piece fared extremely well in audience metrics. The piece received many positive comments on Facebook and attracted a new audience we hadn’t tapped into before.

News Watch has also taken an SJ approach to many stories in a more subtle way that has raised the importance and value of our work. In a story about flaws in COVID-19 contact tracing, we sought out and found some places where tracing had been effective and explained why. In a piece about pandemic electoral challenges, we highlighted innovative methods for holding a fair, safe in-person vote (one county with tight office space bought a surplus military tent and added lights and heat to provide for socially distanced early voting and ballot processing.) In a story on how isolation was causing mental and physical decline in nursing home residents, we revealed how one home had used plastic, wood

and shoulder-length agricultural insemination gloves to create a COVID-safe “hugging window” for residents and visitors. Some of that reporting may have happened anyway, but our involvement with SJN has led us to make a hunt for solutions part of every story discussion and reporting effort.

To get started now, ask some of the following questions: Where else is this problem happening and has anyone made progress? What responses to this problem have worked, where did success occur and why? What evidence is there of success and how is it measured? Can solutions from elsewhere be replicated in our community? Am I giving a full and fair picture of this problem and highlighting potential solutions?

I encourage you to learn more by visiting the network at solutionjournalism.org. You’ll feel better reporting on solutions, and your readers and community leaders will appreciate it, too.

Bart Pfankuch is content director of South Dakota News Watch; contact him at bart.pfankuch@sdnewswatch.org.

ZINSER from Page 10

partment of Labor (DOL) proposed its long-awaited proposed independent contractor rule. The new rule sets forth a new standard for determining whether a worker can be classified as an independent contractor rather than an employee for purposes of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). Under the FLSA, “employees” are subject to certain protections, such as minimum wage and overtime requirements, while “independent contractors” are not. But neither the FLSA nor current DOL regulations define, as a general rule, what makes a worker an independent contractor, giving rise to a patchwork of tests and rules across states and in federal courts.

In 2015, the DOL under President Obama issued an “Administrative Interpretation” (AI) setting forth a six-factor “economic reality” test that was widely seen as setting a demanding standard for classifying workers as independent contractors. Then, in 2017, the Trump DOL withdrew the 2015 AI, signaling a shift to a more forgiv-

ing, employer-friendly classification standard.

The new proposed rule creates a five-factor test to determine whether a worker is an independent contractor for FLSA purposes. Those factors are:

- **The Nature and Degree of the Worker’s Control Over the Work:** This includes a worker’s ability to set his or her schedule, the extent or lack of supervision over the worker, and the worker’s ability to work for competitors of the employee.

- **The worker’s opportunity for profit and loss:** This factor looks to whether the worker’s opportunity to succeed in his or her work relates to personal initiative, managerial skill, and business acumen.

- **The amount of skill required:** This includes whether the work requires specialized training or skills that the employer does not provide.

- **The permanence of the working relationship:** Under this factor, a working relationship that is definite in duration or sporadic is indicative of independent contractor status.

- **The “integrated unit”:** This

asks whether the worker is part of a “production line” (real or metaphorical) – i.e., something requiring the “coordinated function of interdependent subparts working towards a specific unified purpose” as opposed to providing “discrete, segregable services.”

No single factor controls, although the rule indicates that the most weight should be given to the first two factors, which are deemed as being most probative of a worker’s economic dependence on an employer.

Not only does the new rule provide a clear, unified federal standard on independent contractor classification, but it puts less emphasis on certain indicia that are relevant under current court-created tests, which the DOL view as less relevant under the modern economy.

Accordingly, the proposed rule de-emphasizes the importance of job tenure and worker investments, which had been factors cited in tests created by courts on the issue.

However, it is unclear whether the proposed rule will survive a

potential change in control of the White House or Congress, or even be implemented in the first place. If it does become final, the new rule will provide little comfort to employers in states like Massachusetts and California, which impose stricter tests for determining whether a worker can be classified as an independent contractor under state law.

The new proposed rule will have no impact on the newspaper industry delivery statutory exemption. Section 13(d) of the Fair Labor Standards Act states:

The provisions of Section 6, 7,

and 12 (minimum wage, overtime, and child labor) shall not apply with respect to any employee engaged in the delivery of newspapers to the consumer.

Obviously, newspaper distributors/carriers are covered by this exemption and are therefore exempt from the minimum wage, overtime and child labor provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

L. Michael Zinser is president of The Zinser Law Firm, P.C., in Nashville. He can be reached at 615.244.9700 and mzinser@zinslaw.com.



Tennessee Press Service Advertising Placement Snapshot

	ROP:	Networks:
October 2020	\$132,238	\$24,746
Year* as of Oct. 31	\$1,314,238	\$192,689

* The TPS Fiscal Year runs Dec. 1 through Nov. 30

Always attempt three closes when making sales calls

PETER W. WAGNER
N'West Iowa REVIEW
November 1, 2020

Editors note: Wagner is founder and publisher of the N'West Iowa REVIEW and 13 additional publications. His free monthly GET REAL newsletter is produced especially for publishers, editors and sales managers who, as he says, still believe in the value and importance of the PRINTED paper. He can be contacted at pww@iowainformation.com or 712-348-355 for information regarding his convention programs and webinars on publishing better papers and enjoying greater profit.

Selling newspaper and shopper advertising is more difficult today than it was just a few years ago. There's more competition online and in the traditional media. But the local market still has great potential and the possibilities for success still exist. Businesses want to advertise. They just don't know when, where, what and how. Local newspaper and shopper salespeople simply have to work smarter and harder to get their share of the business.

I have always encouraged our sales team to prepare to sell three levels of advertising every time they make an outside sales call:

First, an exciting, unique, com-

munity promotion or special section that will be offered that week only. Such an offer overcomes the "Let me think about it" objection since the promotion could be sold out and disappear at any moment.

Second, a special request for any "run of paper" or general advertising the business might be planning for that week.

And third, a low-priced "By-the-Way" quick and easy promotion that can be pitched and closed on the way out the door.

I'll clarify the process with some examples, but first I need to share a comment about the need to determine which customers might be most interested in the week's specific promotion before hitting the street.

Too often print salespeople predetermine — before calling on a slow-to-respond or physically distant advertiser — if he or she will buy the promotion. In doing so they do a disservice to the advertiser, the publication and themselves. Rather than creating lists of customers who will NOT buy the promotion, the sales representative should be brainstorming who might buy it and WHY they should.

Often that list will grow larger and more beneficial if the salesperson allows their co-workers to sug-

gest possible prospects. Too often even the most professional salesperson develops blinders when it comes to seeing the opportunities that await us on the street.

Plan specific approach for each prospect

Once the list is fairly complete — but open to additional prospects along the way — it's necessary to plan the specific approach for each prospect. One business might buy the package because it is a way to invest in the community, while another will buy because he thinks the promotion will make him look good. It's necessary to understand what features will excite the buyer before starting the call so the sales call can be centered on key closing points.

But, on the other hand, it is equally important to truly believe the package will benefit the buyer. Nothing long lasting ever comes from selling an expensive program to a client that does them no good.

I always consider the week's featured promotion or special section to be my door opener. It should be something fresh, or proven, new or expected because it is respected. But whatever it is, the "feature of the week" must be something the salespeople can really get excited about.

It has to be something — a prize

giveaway, coupon book, citywide sale, championship salute or whatever — that will grab the buyer's attention and give the salesperson the opportunity to share that story as well as two other attempts that call to close — or lose — the sale.

The first presentation needs to include information on how the promotion will benefit the community (every small-town business worries about a shrinking business district), how it will create new revenue for the business itself, what size ad would be best for that business, what to feature and include in the ad and that the salesperson is willing to gather and format the ad information for the advertiser.

Smart sales professionals might also share how the theme of the message might be spun off as part of point-of-purchase advertising as well as on the paper's website or on other local media.

Door opener presents other opportunities

But win or lose that sale, the door opener leads to other chances to succeed. Once a decision is made regarding that week's promotion, the salesperson should use the close relationship moment to ask about and obtain a share of whatever advertising is already planned for the

next few weeks. The selling process might include readership demographics, other advertiser success stories, combination and volume rates, advertising copy and design services available at the publication and any deadline details.

But whether ROP is bought or not, the salesperson has one more or third chance to close a sale.

On the way out the door, with the client believing the sales effort is over, the salesperson turns to the prospective buyers and says, "By the way, we're doing a salute to the (Boy Scouts, high school football team, new city recreational trails or whatever) and you can have your business listed among those at the bottom of the community support page for just \$50 or whatever the price. Most often, relieved to see the interview ending or perhaps embarrassed to having said no twice already, the client will respond with a positive "yes."

Building a personal relationship with the client, taking time to learn all you can about the details of the advertiser's business, making every effort to provide fresh ideas and making regular service and "friendship" calls are all good ways to connect with a prospect. Calling on that client with a ready 1, 2, 3 plan is the best way to turn that relationship in to cash in the bank.

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had been located by its information technology department and would cost \$459.14 in order to obtain an electronic copy of the documents. According to an attached "Records Request Estimate of Reasonable Charges" form, the labor cost charged was \$54.53 per hour for 8.42 hours of work. The city does not charge for the first hour of work.

"I didn't realize that's what the rate is," Mayor Paige Brown said when asked about labor charges. "That does sound ridiculous, but I guess it's based on (the employee's) rate of pay."

All requests for emails are handled by the city's Chief Information Officer Lori Smiley, who said the decision to only have her conduct the searches was made due to the potential legal liability of the work and to "ensure everything is found and there is total transparency."



Brown

"I forget how many thousands of records that particular (email search) generated," Smiley said about the Gallatin News' request. "Then I have to go through and

make sure that I get all of the ones that are responsive to the request and make sure that those do not have anything that has something (that) can't be released, like personal information. That's why those (types of) requests take so long."

While state law does allow cities to charge for labor, "one big problem" is that there is no set limit for the hourly rate or total amount of time a city can charge for public records requests, according to Deborah Fisher, executive director of the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government.

However, nothing prevents a government entity from making information available freely if it serves the public good.

"Is the hourly rate of \$55 too much?" Fisher said. "Yeah, it probably is. Most people don't make \$55 an hour, so they would actually have to work more hours than the I.T. (director) worked to be able to afford to see a public record that has already been paid for and supported by Tennessee taxpayers."

Fisher noted that state law does allow for individuals to inspect records for free, which Gallatin officials say often occurs. However, that, too, can come with some restrictions such as not allowing individuals to take photographs of documents.

According to Gallatin's open records policy, "a requestor will not be allowed to make copies of records with personal equipment" and must purchase storage devices



Fisher

from the city upon which the records will be downloaded.

The lack of a limit in state law for labor rates and how many hours a government entity can charge for

records requests can be problematic, according to Fisher.

"I'm not saying this is what Gallatin did, but . . . it sets up a system where it makes it very easy to inflate the charges by inflating the amount of time it takes to do something or by assigning someone to the task who makes a high hourly rate," Fisher said. "The second thing it does is it eliminates any incentive that a government entity might have to organize its records in a more retrievable fashion, to work efficiently or to retain records in such a way that

they don't require so much review and redaction."

While she is unsure who else could handle email records requests for the city since the person performing the search could potentially see sensitive personal information, Brown said she is "always amenable to improving the situation."

According to Fisher, individuals who request electronic records also need to be smarter about what they ask for and more communication is needed between requesters and government entities.

"There is a problem with unlimited labor charges, but on the other hand there is also a problem with records requestors who basically make such broad requests that require (dozens) of hours of labor," Fisher added. "There could be a lot done on both the custodian side and the requestor side on the email problem in terms of public records requests."