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Founded 1970 as St. Louis Journalism Review

GJR at 50

Legacy, challenge, and vision
From St. Louis Journalism Review to GJR

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History and promise of the St. Louis Journalism Review

by Charles L. Klotzer

The birth of the modern journalism reviews in the United States by working journalists, which flourished during the late 1960s through the early 1980s, is encapsulated in one paragraph by Ron Dorfman, co-organizer of the first — the Chicago Journalism Review (CJR), now long defunct.

"The Chicago Journalism Review was a product of the local newspaper coverage of the Democratic national convention (1968) and the violence that attended it in the streets of Chicago. When the convention was over and the national press had left town local editors proceeded, deliberately and shamelessly, to rewrite history in an effort to patch up Chicago's reputation as 'the city that works'."

Mayor Daley had marshalled an army of police to confront thousands of protesting students. Newspapers reported that the confrontation resulted in a student riot. Reporters, some of whom were also beaten up by police, knew it was a police riot.

Dorfman recalls that newspapers told their readers that their own reporters had lied. Outraged, scores of reporters met, raised funds and published the first issue of the Chicago Journalism Review, the prototype for nearly 30 others which cropped up in cities and institutions around the United States. (The Chicago Journalism Review and other journalism reviews and alternative newspapers are in a searchable collection at the SIUC library in the Charles L. Klotzer Freedom of the Press collection.) It was a time of excitement, confidence and rejuvenation. There was a feeling that a better world was visible beyond.

The birth of SJR

The father of journalism reviews is George Seldes, who founded *In Fact* in 1940. He revealed, among many other exposes, that tobacco causes cancer. And he revealed that the New York Times had an understanding with the tobacco industry that it would continue advertising as long as the paper would not be critical of tobacco. His publication folded after ten years, the victim of red-baiting and blacklisting.

When I read the first issue of the Chicago Journalism Review, it struck me that here was a paper not unlike Seldes' and it had a means to influence and reform the media that controls what we knew about the world.

The media are powerful. They define, influence, and often join forces with particular interests, which may or may not serve the general public. At the time, we thought that while politicians must always keep the electorate in mind, business leaders cannot forget their stockholders and labor leaders, their members, who then calls the media to account for their treatment of news. (This perspective, in our time, must be viewed through the filter of the U.S. Supreme Court decision on *Citizens United vs. Federal*



Charles and Rose Klotzer

Election Commission. The decision opened unlimited and unchecked spending for any political cause in the media or through outside avenues.)

In 1970, I invited a number of reporters from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the St. Louis Globe-Democrat to meet. A number of local reporters, including Ted Gest then a reporter of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, had also discussed the idea of a local journalism review and had met with organizers of the Chicago Journalism Review. They joined with others in months of discussions and meetings, creating a core group of 20 members of the working press.

In September 1970, the first issue of the St. Louis Journalism Review (SJR) appeared. Because we expected a strong reaction by the Globe and Post, it was decided not to use any bylines. Nevertheless, 13 journalists — Robert E. Adams, Margaret M. Carlan, Al Delugach, Peter A. Donhowe, Ted Gest, Charles L. Klotzer, Richard Krantz, Gerald Lindhorst, Gus Lumpe, Roy Malone, John Shelton, Ellen Sweets, Fred Sweets — decided to be included on the editorial board.

Two Globe reporters did experience severe management criticism, with Lumpe seeking other employment and Shelton resigning from SJR's editorial board. The Post was more open-minded. At one of the sessions of key Post employees at the home of Joseph Pulitzer Jr., the editor and publisher asked whether any members of SJR were present and three hands went up. From what we know, they experienced no "official" reaction.

For my wife, Rose, and I taking up the cause of media criticism in 1970, was not as

impetuous as it may sound. At the end of the century, the SJR remained the sole survivor of the privately published journalism reviews. Why had it survived? We had decided many years before that there must be more to supporting good causes than simply belonging to the American Civil Liberties Union.

In 1962, we had started publishing a magazine called FOCUS/Midwest (F/M). Before commencing publication, I consulted scores of top publishers and political leaders in the Midwest. Contact was easy because I was an organizer for the Stevenson-for-President campaign. Their advice was uniform, small magazines cannot economically survive irrespective of the need they may fill.

My wife, rather than pursue her social work career, worked with me for the next three decades or more to keep all ventures afloat. Focus/Midwest, which lasted for 21 years until it was merged into SJR in 1983, took on the whole range of social, political, economic and racial concerns that dominated the 1960s. Among its columnists was Irving Dilliard, the former Post-Dispatch editorial editor, Hubert Humphrey and Paul Simon. The contents of F/M encompassed the Chicago-St. Louis-Kansas City triangle. The hope, that once F/M was self-supporting we could expand into adjacent midwestern states, remained that, a hope. F/M never did expand.

We kept expenses at a minimum, operating out of our basement and acquiring typesetting equipment, looking like a typewriter but capable of imitating sophisticated typesetting. The system, we realized, offered a separate source of income, a typesetting business.

Thus when we met with reporters to

organize SJR in 1970, the one-year-old typesetting business was profitable and we could not resist the temptation to publish a second periodical.

St. Louis journalists endorsed the concept that only the press can insure an informed public, which is needed to make democracy work. An informed public, declared the inaugural issue of SJR, requires that every segment of society knows about the needs, fears and hopes of all others, irrespective of the powers which represent the status quo.

In the early years, coverage of the media nearly exclusively concentrated on the St. Louis area. SJR's policies and coverage depended very much on volunteers who researched issues, met and discussed submissions, proofread copy and even pasted up copy for the ten-issues-per-year journal.

Over the next five decades it was co-edited by Rich Lowenstein, Steve Means, Roland Klose, Staci Kramer and Ed Bishop. Klose, who joined us in 1982, also helped edit F/M for its last four issues. A supportive community of reporters, academics and others working in media related professions evolved over the years. They met monthly to discuss the current issue and made suggestions for future issues.

In 1983, it became too difficult to maintain two deficit publications. We decided to merge F/M with SJR. Outside commentators kept critiquing SJR that it sacrificed its "media objectivity" by embracing F/M's social reform drive. They were correct.

Local coverage

While the St. Louis had a slick city magazine and an alternative weekly, the Riverfront Times, and — at the time — three black newspapers, none of these engaged in investigative journalism. At the time, Dilliard, former editorial editor of the Post, a supporter of F/M and SJR, warned, "The counting house runs far too much of American journalism today."

The issues below highlight why reporters felt that it is their ethical duty to report on shortcomings of their employer. Some were accused of biting the hand that fed them.

The first issue revealed that the Post and Globe had established in secret a Joint Operating Agency (JOA) and had joined all their departments except for news and editorial coverage thus splitting profits. A Post editor called accusing SJR of libel and threatening legal action. All SJR had done was report on Publisher Pulitzer's statement before the U.S. Subcommittee of Antitrust and Monopoly. SJR's coverage of the Globe demise by Roland Klose was the only investigation that showed that the Globe circulation exceeded that of the Post. When Pulitzer offered S.I. Newhouse, owner of the Globe, 50% of profits under the continuing JOA. Newhouse could not afford to turn it down and agreed to close the Globe. Newhouse retained part ownership until Lee Enterprises bought the Pulitzer Company.

Suburban Journals, before they were bought by the Post, banned African-Americans from being pictured on the front page above

the fold.

A student reporter at the University of Missouri School of Journalism carried a wire for the Columbia, Missouri, police with the permission of faculty in order to entrap a solicitor for providing nude dancers. When SJR's report made national news the relationship between SJR and the School of Journalism soured.

Local media ignored for years how the police dealt with young African-Americans who assembled in downtown streets late Sunday nights to socialize during the summer. Police would corral the car cruisers towards the highway and blocking all exits until they were in the suburbs. Not only the cruisers but all drivers could not exit till they were in the suburbs.

The Alton Telegraph, an Illinois daily across the river from St. Louis, fired its cartoonist and editor after local bank complained that a cartoon was critical of the bank.

In the summer of 1971, one of the Post's investigative reporters became a paid informer for the St. Louis police and testified before then US House Internal Security Committee. The reporter claimed he was not "paid" because what he was paid just covered his expenses. The Post just pressured him to quit being an informer.

The Post had information of the publisher of the then best-known local Black papers that he was an informer for the FBI. He published derogatory items about leftist groups. When the Post failed to publish this information, a Post reporter turned over the material to SJR. The Post did publish similar material about the Globe, its competitor.

SJR made a more lasting contribution when we questioned the Post sports editor why he had only white male reporters. That question never occurred to him and he agreed that women and African-Americans should be on his staff. So he hired one African-American woman, Lorraine Key, covering both fields.

Al Delugach, Pulitzer Prize winning reporter, left the Post when the paper published on page three instead on page one Delugach's scoop of Life Magazine's article by Denny Walsh — with whom he had worked when both were at the Globe — of alleged ties between St. Louis Mayor A.J. Cervantes and organized crime. Many newspapers throughout the country played it on page one. The Globe also played it on page three. Both papers downplayed the charges and called them innuendos. The Mayor was given extensive space for rebuttals.

In the 1980s, we got to know Hyman P. Minsky, who taught economics at Washington University. While we were unschooled about the intricacies of economics, his ideas were appealing, and he agreed to write a regular column. Today his "financial instability hypothesis" refined in the 1970s, is known throughout economic academia as the "Minsky's moment."

Concerned about survival

Having been involved in publishing for thirty years and having witnessed the closing of journalism reviews throughout

the country, we searched for a new home in the late 1990s. While many local universities were eager to accept it, they were unable to provide any subsidies. Don Corrigan, professor of journalism at Webster University, and a long-time supporter and writer for SJR, after many discussions and negotiations talked his university into sponsoring SJR.

At the time, Ed Bishop was co-editing SJR and had been for a number of years. He agreed to stay with SJR at Webster and also teach there. During the years at Webster from 1995 to 2005, he became an institution in his own right. When he died in 2016, his obituary stated, he was "a journalist cut from old-school cloth, a cantankerous grader, and a man of considerable wit and outspoken opinions." Ed remained a rabble-rouser through SJR and a teacher loved by many of his students. During the years at Webster, Ed had the help of Tammy Merrett-Murray, not only in bookkeeping but also in proofreading and other essential tasks.

In 2005, when Webster decided that they could not afford to continue subsidizing SJR, they offered to continue SJR as an online venue. That alternative had been suggested for many years, but we considered it unacceptable, we were addicted to the feel of paper.

At that point, the media hastened to declare the end of SJR.

But SJR had created a community of support, both financially and editorially, that kept SJR alive. Under the legal direction of Mark Sableman, a decade-long supporter and writer for SJR, a board of directors was established with Dave Garino, another veteran supporter and guide, as chair. The late Roy Malone agreed to become editor with the help of Avis Meyer and many other writers, while our search for a new home continued for the next five years.

As part of the downsizing of Post staff, William Freivogel, a Post-Dispatch editor, moved to Southern Illinois University at Carbondale as chair of its School of Journalism. With his help, SJR was adopted by the School of Journalism at SIU Carbondale in 2010 with the explicit condition—like at Webster University—that SJR will editorially remain independent.

The new owners established a free weekly online newsletter, while reducing its publishing schedule to quarterly and added the name of Gateway Journalism Review that reflected its wider geographic coverage. It is produced by Prof. William Freivogel, publisher, and Jackie Spinner, Assistant Professor of Journalism at Columbia College Chicago, as editor.

GJR has established an annual "Celebration of the First Amendment" that features prominent media personalities — such as Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein, Judy Woodruff — and solicits public support. The success of these events depend upon the labor of many supporters, such as Jessica Z. Brown, Dan Sullivan and many others.

Beyond doubt, this brief summary has left out the support contributed by hundreds of journalists and supporters over the past fifty years. My apologies.

The volume of information exploded while accuracy has diminished

by Ted Gest

The growth of the internet and the economic decline of mainstream local media have combined to give news consumers a very mixed bag.

The paradox is that the volume of information available on many important subjects has exploded while the accuracy of much of it has diminished, as many of the traditional “news gatekeepers” have lost influence or disappeared. Before I helped found the St. Louis (now Gateway) Journalism Review in 1970, I graduated from the Columbia School of Journalism.

This year, several classmates and I published, “Inside the Upheaval of Journalism,” a close look at how the news media have evolved over 50 years. It’s not a story of journalism’s decline. While the explosion of the internet has made misinformation rampant, the net has helped to revolutionize and improve news gathering and transmission.

When I joined the ranks of St. Louis journalists in 1969, the media still were stuck in the era of “The Front Page,” where reporters in Chicago’s criminal courthouse sat around a table waiting for news breaks that they could phone in to their respective offices.

In St. Louis, that meant going through the inefficient process of beat reporters calling in stories to rewrite men (virtually all were men) and losing much of the nuance and color in the process.

Perhaps my low point as one of these rewrite people was getting a call from a Post-Dispatch federal court reporter in April 1970 telling me that “one of our judges over here just was nominated to the Supreme Court.”

These were the days before there was intense national speculation about who would fill Supreme Court vacancies, so I, and apparently the newspaper’s beat reporter, were clueless.

It turned out that the nominee was Harry Blackmun, who that day was hearing cases in St. Louis as a federal appeals court judge normally based in Minnesota. Sadly, our newspaper had so little background on Blackmun that our story on his unexpected appointment was woefully inadequate, even though we had the chance to talk to him directly.

Such poor journalism would not be tolerated these days, at least on a national level, with reporters experienced in many subjects ready to tell readers and viewers the significance of news about not only court appointments but major developments in areas ranging from business to health to politics.

Internet revolution

How has journalism in the United States evolved in five decades that our journalism review has been publishing?

Overall, the changes have been driven by technology. As veteran CNN producer Kenneth Tiven writes in the Columbia class

of 1969 book, “The internet is one of the greatest change agents the world has ever experienced, not all of it good.”

The net has made the gathering and dissemination of information by journalists and by the general public much easier but so has it increased the spread of false information. Because it is so easy to gather data on just about any subject by surfing the net, the role of journalism has been both enhanced and diminished.

In 1969, most Americans got their news from a handful of major wire services, national and local newspapers, television and radio stations and a few national news magazines. Fifty years later, news still was available from most of these sources but via different delivery mechanisms known collectively as social media. Because the traditional news generators no longer held a virtual monopoly on the reporting of news, it now may come from anywhere, ranging from professional news gatherers to unreliable word of mouth.

Many smart news consumers rely on a few segments of the media to sort out truth from fiction. The Washington Post, for example, has compiled more than 20,000 misstatements by President Donald Trump in his four years in office.

By 2020, the legacy mainstream media were supplemented by any number of web-based news outlets that had demonstrated their reliability in the first 21st century’s first two decades.

An incomplete list includes The Daily Beast, Huffpost, BuzzFeed News, Vox, Slate, Politico, Axios, Five ThirtyEight and Vice, along with another long list of more specialized sites like ProPublica, Kaiser Health News, The Crime Report, and The Marshall Project. It is not unusual on any given day to see any of these sites and many others breaking news stories on significant subjects.

At the same time, the fast growth of the internet contributed to a devastating decline in local newspapers, as advertisers quickly moved online. Print advertising revenue fell from \$49.4 billion in 2005 to \$14.3 billion in 2018. About 1,800 of the 9,000 daily or weekly newspapers that were published in 2004 have merged or gone out of business, leaving 2,000 of the 3,143 counties with no daily newspapers.

Television news remains a prime source for many Americans, but a Pew Research Center study in 2018 found that TV led social media and news websites only by 49 to 43 percent as the main source for news consumers (radio and newspaper lagged far behind.)

Content

If the methods of news delivery have changed dramatically, what about the content of the news? Again, the picture is mixed. The

Columbia journalists who started 50 years ago reviewed coverage in detail in several important fields, including medicine, business, criminal justice, politics, and religion.

In most of these areas - plus several others that were not studied in the new book like education and the environment - national organizations of journalists have been formed that help keep a solid corps of reporters abreast of important trends.

Their stories may be seen both in mainstream print and broadcast outlets as well as the many online news organizations that have sprouted up in recent years. While the media cannot boast of producing comprehensive coverage of every major trend, arguably the collective impact of 21st century news reports keeps the interested public well informed on a long list of topics.

To take three of the issues most prominent in 2020 - health, politics and crime - it is clear that both national and local media have produced near-saturation coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic, the presidential election and the move to reform criminal justice prompted by the deaths of Black Americans at police hands.

Economic side-effects

At the same time, the severe economic restraints that have hit the news industry mean that while resources are poured into today’s “hot” stories, other areas are relatively neglected.

One is international coverage. Most major U.S. media have fewer foreign correspondents, and strife in many areas of the world means that the work is much more dangerous.

“An interactive world of bloggers, social media sites, and citizen journalists is now for many people, especially the young, the main provider of news,” writes Michele Montas-Dominique, a Haitian journalist and Columbia ’69 graduate.

The news that Americans get from abroad is much more likely these days to be reported by part-time “stringers.” Many of these people have more knowledge of their home regions than do U.S. correspondents who hold such positions for short periods. On the other hand, many are likely to be young, inexperienced reporters who have little professional preparation.

Local news coverage may have suffered the most

Like their national counterparts, local newspapers generally have many fewer staff members than they formerly did, and several have shut down their newsrooms permanently in the face of COVID-19.

It is impossible to quantify the losses because that would require identifying

"Obsession" takes photographer to the top

by Rick Stoff

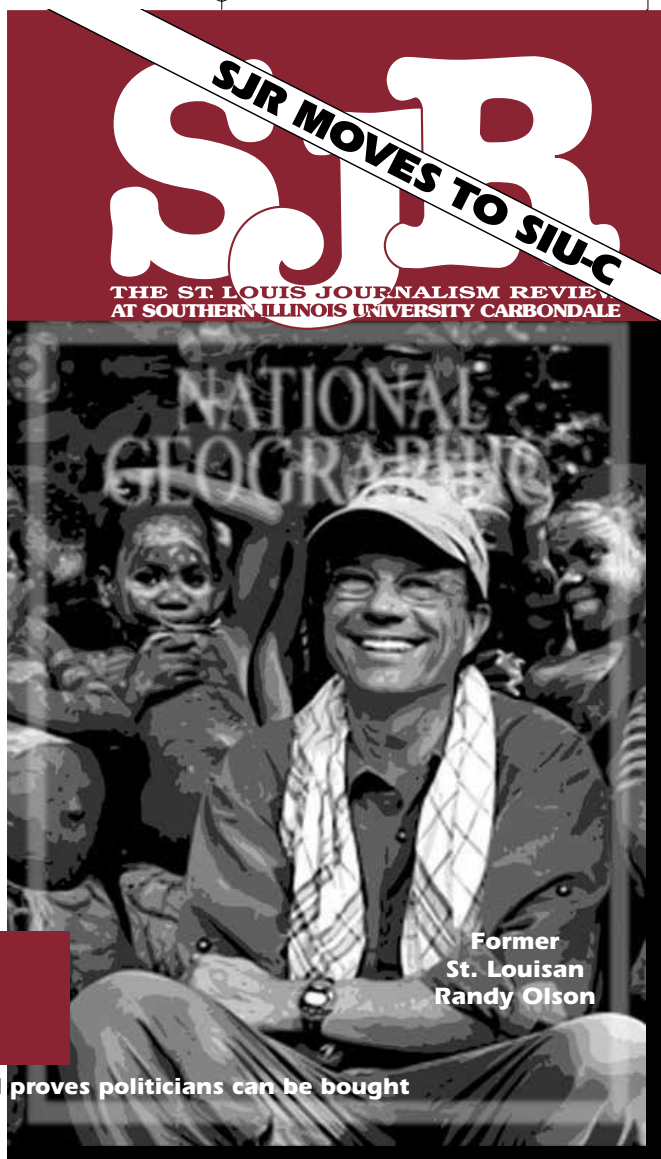
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Sinquefield proves politicians can be bought



SJR issue announcing move to SIUC.

"missing stories." Margaret Sullivan, media critic for the Washington Post and former editor of the Buffalo News, wrote about this trend in her recent book, "Ghosting the News: Local Journalism and the Crisis of American Democracy."

The decline in local journalism, Sullivan said, means that "meetings of public officials are taking place without coverage. Agency budgets and municipal contracts are going forward without scrutiny. Apparently, only a small percentage of the public sees the need to open its wallets for local newspapers or other local news sources, and as newspapers decline in staff and quality, they see even less reason to do so. Overcoming this vicious cycle is a steep climb."

For more than 17 years, I have put together a daily news digest of the nation's most important news on criminal justice, largely drawn from local media. While much investigative and award-winning coverage remains, it is clear that there are many fewer "enterprise" stories in which reporters produce investigative reports that go far beyond

describing daily events and the reactions to them by government officials, interest groups or affected citizens.

This means, for example, that until this year, there was only episodic coverage of misconduct by local police officers. Despite Sullivan's accurate laments about the shortcomings of local news reporting, the picture is not entirely bleak.

As much as the internet has helped to divert much of the advertising that had supported local newspapers, in many areas, nonprofit news organizations have sprung up on the web to report on key regional, state and local issues.

This trend is not true of the entire nation, but it includes outlets such as the Texas Tribune, the Colorado-based High Country News, Pennsylvania's PA Post, Vermont's VT Digger, and Oklahoma's The Frontier.

Report for America, a three-year-old nonprofit, has placed more than 200 journalists in local newspapers around the U.S. by raising funds to pay up to half of their salaries, with the rest funded by the hiring

newspaper and other local donations. This effort is filling only a tiny fraction of the job loss in local reporting, which the organization says plummeted from 455,000 in 1990 to 183,200 in 2016.

Another part of the picture is local television news, where stations have hired some of the laid-off newspaper reporters. Survey data from the Radio Television Digital News Association and Hofstra University show that as of 2017, local TV news employment has surpassed newspaper employment for the first time in more than two decades of research.

Despite these gains, it is evident that there is less consistent local news coverage in many areas of the U.S. than there was at many points in the last five decades.

Newsroom demographics

As far as the people actually practicing journalism in the United States are concerned, the field once consisting of almost entirely white men has become more diverse. There were very few women journalists 50 years ago save in newspapers' former "women's sections," but the percentage in all newsrooms rose to nearly 40 percent by 2017.

The 1968 Kerner Commission report said that blacks at the time constituted fewer than five percent of U.S. newsroom editorial employees. By 2018, people of color made up 22 percent of print newsroom staffers, 24 percent of online news staffers and 25 percent of television news employees.

Still, many news organizations acknowledged during the national uproar over race issues after the death of George Floyd on Memorial Day in Minneapolis that their coverage of race issues over the years had been inadequate.

Where are today's journalists coming from? Not all get formal education in journalism, but the number studying journalism and related subjects grew from about 100,000 in 1976 to more than 213,000 in 2013. The number of undergraduates in news courses dropped in the two years after that. No current data are available, but it wouldn't be surprising if the total declines again during the economic downturn during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While many news organizations are suffering economically, from the consumer's point of view there has been a "democratization of the news business that puts the power of the pen into the hands of people who never could buy ink by the barrel," writes Allan Mann, a Columbia journalism graduate who later was Vice President of Public Affairs for Kaiser Permanente health care.

Mann says the internet allows him to "create a newsfeed in the palm of my hand that delivers to me the best thinking of some of the most insightful people in the country—the men and women who write and comment on the news every day."

The splintering of the news media in the internet age has indeed created a wide variety of sources for the intelligent news consumer. Still, the news media in the Gateway Journalism Review's fifth decade face considerable challenges in their effort to give the nation an accurate, coherent account of where the nation is headed amid a health and economic crisis.

Media personalities look back

by Jack Grone

For its 50th anniversary, Gateway Journalism Review asked eight journalists from print, broadcast and online media to share memories of their careers and the stories that they remember most vividly. GJR also asked them where they get their news, where they think the news business is headed, and which reporters and editors from past decades have had the most influence on them and St. Louis journalism as a whole.

Ellen Futterman

Editor, St. Louis Jewish Light; former reporter and editor at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch

First job in journalism: General-assignment reporter at the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner in the late 1970s: "There was no getting anywhere in L.A. in a reasonable time because of the traffic. I remember the first time I ever saw a dead body; it was in a plane crash. I got to the crash site before the FAA did. The body was still strapped into the seat. That was crazy."

Memorable stories: "Not long after I got to the Post-Dispatch was when the AIDS epidemic started coming to the forefront. I knew this was going to be a big, important story, so I kind of jockeyed to get on that beat. This was in the middle or late 1980s. Nothing had really been done at the Post on the gay community before then. I wrote a three-part story about what the epidemic looked like. It was striking how many people wouldn't allow their names to be used. It was a difficult story to do; it was also hard to get it into the paper. But I had some great editors, and we got it in."

"Another was when we had an interview scheduled with Bob Dylan. I was the entertainment editor; our critic Harper Barnes was supposed to interview him on a Friday. On Tuesday the phone rang. And it was Bob Dylan. And you don't say to Bob Dylan 'sorry but this interview is scheduled for Friday, can you call back then.' So I did it. I love music. (Reporter) Paul Hampel was passing me pieces of paper with questions written on them. The funny thing was, other journalists were calling me after the story came out, asking me about Bob Dylan, because he did so few interviews."

Influential people: "Jim Millstone (Post editor) was extremely helpful, and a good voice of reason. Sally Bixby Defty was one of the first women on the news desk. She is a role model. I have a great deal of respect for (former Post reporter) Martha Shirk; she carved out a great path covering women

and children. John Brophy (Post newsroom manager) was a very even-tempered, kind person. I learned a lot from him as an editor myself."

Where I get my news: "The New York Times, Washington Post, Politico, and the 'Letters From An American' newsletter that Heather Cox Richardson (U.S. history professor) sends out every night; she researches the history behind the news. I admit I get some of my news from People magazine, too."

Where the news business is headed: "The pandemic has shown how much work we can do from our homes. The future is digital. And it will be curated. For example: You'll get your sports news from one source, world news from a different source, and Jewish news from another source. I see more publications going to a not-for-profit model."

Carol Daniel

News Anchor, KMOX Radio

First job in journalism: "A small country music station in Jefferson City. I did the weekends; there was a top hits show and I would break in and do the weather and a couple of news headlines. I had to do sports, too. I would call my mother – she's an avid sports fan – and she would tell me how to pronounce the players' names."

Most

memorable stories: "Mel Carnahan's plane crash (in 2000). I had interviewed Carnahan on several occasions. It was a surreal experience to have a man of that stature die in such a way. He was a generous interviewee. It was as if he enjoyed just talking to me. That made it more of a conversation than an interview."

"And Ferguson. From a news standpoint, it's one thing that your town's on fire. There's such pain and anger and anguish. But as the mother and wife of Black men, I reacted to it in that way as well, understanding what I knew about the polarizing points of view in our society about race. That's what was so impactful for me."

"At the time, our pastor took part in a prayer vigil at the Old Courthouse. We took our youngest son with us – he was 14 then. He was so upset. Later on, I realized he wasn't mad; he was just afraid. He said: 'I don't know why you brought me out here, when a (Black) boy who looks like me was just killed.' I could only empathize with that. For me, news has always been not only about information, but information that can change people's lives. Ferguson was personal."



Futterman



Daniel

Influential people: "Karen Foss was influential: a trusted voice and no agenda, which I think is what has always been needed. And Sharon Stevens (longtime education reporter at KSDK and KTVI). Reporters covering education – that is so important to have."

Where I get my news: "I watch network news, mostly CBS. I read the Business Journal, some of the articles in the Post, and the Washington Post. Also a couple of print publications focused on the Black community. Some Vox. And I work every day with [stories from] the Associated Press."

Where the news business is headed: "The trust factor has been so deeply impacted; we have to address that. For journalists today who are out there talking about 'fake news': Can we do some soul searching of our own? Can we look back at the example of the '50s, '60s and '70s, and the way journalism specifically portrayed the Black community then?"

"As journalists, if you don't take the job seriously, this is going to be a tough battle for you. But even if you do take the job seriously, it's still tough. Building trust and reclaiming it – this is a tough battle. But it's a battle worth fighting."

Ray Hartmann

Founder of the Riverfront Times and its current columnist; former CEO/owner of St. Louis Magazine; panelist on the Nine Network's Donnybrook; radio host for Big 550 KTRS-AM

First job in journalism: Copy boy for St. Louis Globe-Democrat Editorial Page Editor Martin Duggan in 1968

Memorable stories: "One of the defining stories for the RFT was during the mid to late '80s, when the powers that be in Civic Progress were taking a big chunk of the local tourism budget and just giving it to the VP Fair. One year it was \$650,000; they were just giving it to them, with no bid process. They were doing it to give some guy a job; it was an absolute raid on the treasury."

"Another story the RFT did was about Joe Pulitzer (Joseph Pulitzer Jr., chairman of Pulitzer Publishing Co.) and a unique arrangement he had with the Saint Louis Art Museum. He would donate millions of dollars of artwork to the museum, and then it was 'loaned' back to him so he could use it at his home. It was a singular arrangement. It was not the most important story we did, but it was one that we were known for."

Most influential people: "Bill McClellan



Hartmann

has been one of the most consistent and best writers anywhere. Certainly Bob Hyland (former KMOX-AM general manager) was impactful. And Duncan Bauman (Globe-Democrat publisher from 1967 until 1984); I think one of the first stories we did at the RFT was about how Duncan played his aces. And my old friend Martin Duggan: He was really the driving force behind Donnybrook."

Where I get my news: "I'm constantly devouring material online; I write articles for Raw Story and I throw in a little bit of work with search engines. It's always amazed me how little publications use their own morgues and story files."

Where the news business is headed: "Print media are really endangered. I would be surprised if the Post lasts too much longer in its printed format. The Post has done as good a job as it can with STLtoday and trying to save its business."

Sarah Fenske

Host of "St. Louis on the Air" on St. Louis Public Radio; former editor in chief of the Riverfront Times

First job in journalism: At the Lorain (Ohio) Morning Journal: "I covered the suburbs at first, then switched to city hall."

Most memorable stories:

"I was the editor on a story that Doyle Murphy did at the RFT called 'Seamstress for the Klan.' It was about this woman who murdered the grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan (in Leadwood, Mo. in 2017). She had been sewing the robes for the people in the KKK. It was this crazy, kind of gothic story about Missouri."

"Another thing: Back when I was managing editor of the RFT I did some stories (in 2011) about our lieutenant governor (Peter Kinder), who had gone to some 'pantsless parties' at this bar. It started with a funny blog post; from there, I started getting all these interesting tips. It ended up being six or seven blog posts. It wasn't intended to be a serious story, but it turned into one."

Influential people: Tom Finkel, the editor of the RFT who brought Fenske to St. Louis. Also Bill McClellan: "The man is a genius. The way he sees the world, and the affection he has for it, is very much a St. Louis trait. He approaches the city with sympathy; with kindness. He's a perfect St. Louis journalism avatar."

Where I get my news: "I have to give credit to the Post-Dispatch. They still set the agenda in this town; they do good work. I also think St. Louis Public Radio is increasingly doing a lot of stuff that you can't ignore. The Business Journal also does some great work."

Where the news business is headed: "It's a tough time for smaller and midsized cities. St. Louis is still doing a lot better than other



Fenske

comparably-sized places. We still have a good city magazine; we still have an alt-weekly. St. Louis journalism is hanging on in ways that are very impressive."

Ellen Sherberg

Former editor and publisher of the St. Louis Business Journal; now a consultant for American City Business Journals

First jobs in journalism: Copy desk intern at the Providence Bulletin; later city desk secretary at the Globe-Democrat

Most memorable stories:

"Probably the crash of Ozark Airlines Flight 809 right near UMSL (July 1973). An airplane crash takes precedence over everything. I was at the Globe at the time. To be fair, I didn't report the story myself; I just carried the batteries for the reporters' walkie-talkies. The destruction at the crash scene – it was overwhelming."

"Also, the first profile we did on Sam Goldstein, the chairman of Apex Oil, right at the beginning of the Business Journal. We were doing our list of the biggest private companies in St. Louis. Apex was at the top, and nobody knew anything about them, so we wrote a long profile. Mark Vittert (Business Journal co-founder) came up with the headline: 'Sam Who?'"

Influential people: William Woo (former editor at the Post); Martin Duggan at the Globe "although I didn't agree with him. They were both very clear voices, and important voices in print journalism." Sally Bixby Defty



Sherberg

"I think more news outlets will charge for subscriptions what they should be charging, and people will then make choices based on what's important to them."

— Ellen Sherberg

at the Post: "She taught me about second chances. She was a real role model for women in journalism." Mark Vittert: "His vision for covering business news impacted news coverage in general." Al Fleishman (a founder of Fleishman Hillard PR agency): "He taught me about people and power as well as people in power."

Where I get my news: "For local news about St. Louis, I read the Post online, and the Business Journal online. And then the Times and the WSJ. And Axios and Politico. And television, too."

Where the news business is headed: "It's going to be hyper-local. A lot of the big, national coverage will be industry-segmented. I think more news outlets will charge for subscriptions what they should be charging, and people will then make choices based on what's important to them."

Sylvester Brown

Former Post-Dispatch columnist; former publisher of Take Five magazine; author and not-for-profit executive

First job in journalism: "At a local black-owned publication called Tryst that was distributed at restaurants and bars. I was at community college studying art and graphic design."

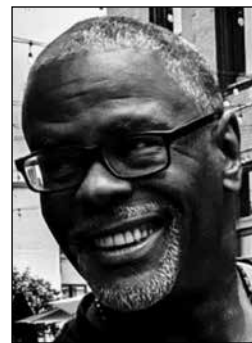
It was like an unofficial internship; I started writing stories and interviews."

Most memorable story: "In 2003 there was a group of people going to Powell Symphony Hall in a car when another car plowed into it, killing two of them. The driver of the second car went through the windshield; he woke up after the accident and ran off. He was wanted. I had an activist lawyer friend, Justin Meehan, who called me two days later and said: 'I've got the guy in my office and he wants to talk to you.' When I got there he was wailing. He wanted to tell his story before he turned himself in."

"I told his story verbatim in the paper. They held the presses for it; it was my first front-page story. I covered the trial a year later. The family members of the victims spoke about forgiveness. [Prosecutors recommended a 14-year sentence, but the judge ended up giving the defendant 120 days in jail plus five years' probation, according to Brown's story at the time.] 'The judge said the victims' families had saved his life. It was the most beautiful story of redemption and humanity that I had ever written. And it changed the outcome of that trial.'"

Influential people: "When I started Take Five, I wanted to emulate the Riverfront Times. I thought Ray Hartmann was one of the boldest journalists in St. Louis. His voice and his take on things were very influential on me."

Where I get my news: "I'm a Facebook



Brown

Continued on next page

“Everybody’s ideas are validated, no matter how wacky and crazy they are. We can use the media for good, but there’s always the threat that it can be used for bad.”

— Sylvester Brown

junkie. I’ve also got a subscription to the Post-Dispatch, and The New York Times and the Washington Post.”

Where the news business is headed: “Now anybody can go out there with a cell phone or camera and report the news. There’s this site called Real STL News; they remind me of myself back in the ’80s. They’re showing up at crime scenes; they’re talking to people in the street. But the internet is a double-edged sword. Everybody’s ideas are validated, no matter how wacky and crazy they are. We can use the media for good, but there’s always the threat that it can be used for bad.”

Jeannette Cooperman

Prolific feature writer, former staffer at the Riverfront Times and St. Louis Magazine, and staff writer at The Common Reader at Washington University

First job in journalism: Managing editor of an earlier incarnation of St. Louis Magazine in the early 1990s. “It was fun, chaotic and disorganized.”

Most memorable stories:

“Going back and researching the history that put Ferguson into context (for the magazine). That really opened my eyes and helped me gain perspective.

“Another one was writing about the River Des Peres for the Riverfront Times (in 2000). It was kind of a depressing story. I was going to community meetings; architects had ideas to clean it up and develop it and turn it into a real center for St. Louis. But you could see people’s caution and fear about trying to do something; people seemed to prefer an open ditch. It was maddening trying to cover that. It has a history of environmental toxins, but nothing ever got done. I think they should clean it up and turn it into something that’s an asset.”

Influential people: Sarah Fenske: “She brought the RFT back to what it used to be; now she’s doing an amazing job in her show on St. Louis Public Radio.” Bill McClellan: “He gives people something to hang onto that feels human and accessible.”

Where I get my news: Local news is hugely important. I get a lot of my news through online newsletters; I love the Atlantic; I also read The

New Yorker and The New York Times. We watch the local news because it’s something to talk about in the evening. I’ll read the Post, but not with the same kind of excitement I did years and years ago. St. Louis Public Radio is probably my favorite source of local news. I feel like they have the chops that used to be the purview only of the daily newspapers.”

Where the news business is headed:

“Online, for sure. I do think it’s going to be a lot more newsletterish; a lot more niche. This is to our detriment; every city needs a local version of the NYT, but we haven’t figured out a way to pay for that investigative reporting. I would love to see more public funding.”

Karen Foss

Former anchor at KSDK-TV NewsChannel 5; now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

First job in journalism: “A fill-in secretary at the CBS station in Kansas City in the mid-’70s. I couldn’t type, but my communications professor told me I should apply for the job. So I put on a skirt and went downtown. I worked my way up through the station and ended up being an anchor there – for a general manager who had said he would never have a woman anchoring the news.”

Most memorable story: “The flood of 1993. It was a local story that made international headlines. It was both professionally and



Cooperman



Foss

personally a big story. I had a little cottage on the Mississippi between Elsah and Grafton; I remember helping sandbag in Elsah. The most heartbreaking image was when our reporter Jean Jackson was standing by when this enormous farmhouse – two stories plus an attic – was swept away by the water (during a levee breach in Monroe County, Illinois).”

Influential people: Bill Bolster (former KSDK general manager): “He brought a fresh and much more aggressive tone to the station, but not in a negative way. He really believed in promoting what we were doing, and putting the money behind it.”

Where I get my news: “We have a remarkably good local newspaper, the Sante Fe New Mexican. It’s a family-owned paper. The owner sold it to Gannett, but he became so frustrated with how they were running the paper that he bought it back. And The New York Times and the Washington Post online.”

Where the news business is headed: “The most important thing lies with consumers; for them there needs to be media intelligence. We’re bombarded with so much information, and so much opinion that is labeled as news. For many people it’s hard to distinguish where the information is coming from, and whether it’s from a reliable source.”

GJR Publisher, William H. Freivogel, asked three St. Louis journalists to look back and ahead.

Don Marsh

TV and Radio reporter and longtime host of St. Louis on the Air

We’ve come a long way since my early television days in the sixties when local television news crews of three or four would haul 600 pounds of camera gear to cover stories. Then came video tape and mini cams, satellite technology,



Marsh

and now TV reporters shooting their stories themselves with cameras they can hold in their hands, and edit in the field. Not to mention Zoom interviews in these days of pandemic.

Technology has changed everything. The future will certainly include further technological advances resulting in more blogs, podcasts, and news distributed by, and consumed through, social media. Everything we need to know will continue to be at our immediate disposal on devices we hold in our hands, wear on our wrist or perhaps from chips embedded in our skin, dispensed by a wide variety of sources...including everyman journalists...with myriad motives. They will be capable of reaching us with fewer editorial firewalls and minimum fact checking while traditional print media resources drift into the shadows. Can the Post Dispatch become what it once was again? Can traditional television networks remain relevant? Can radio?

“The most important thing lies with consumers; for them there needs to be media intelligence.”

— Karen Foss

“ While it’s impossible to predict the future of journalism and how it will be produced and consumed, it is not difficult to imagine much of it as a potential threat to democracy as we have known it requiring new levels of vigilance and media literacy.”

— Don Marsh

Will they be like today’s major cable networks presenting opinion as news and play to audiences who, like Lemmings, flock only to politically comfortable sources leaving them unexposed to opposing points of view. That’s seen by many as a major source of today’s political and social polarization.

While it’s impossible to predict the future of journalism and how it will be produced and consumed, it is not difficult to imagine much of it as a potential threat to democracy as we have known it requiring new levels of vigilance and media literacy.

Don Corrigan

Webster University professor and former editor Webster-Kirkwood Times

It’s hard not to think of the 50 years that Charles Klotzer has devoted to the Journalism Review and wonder if there is not some disappointment – maybe even a bit of sadness. Let’s face it, has the situation for journalism in St. Louis and in our nation gotten any better after all those issues, all those articles and bylines? Newspapers have folded forever. Venal politicians yell “fake news.” Our city and our country is divided. We cannot even agree on basic human health measures in a 100-year pandemic. Charles Klotzer might, with good reason, feel some disillusionment in these dark days.

The truth is, however, that Klotzer has made a difference. His legacy journalism and his journalism legacy have made a difference. I saw it personally after the Hazelwood Supreme Court decision in 1988, when young people were told that free speech was a First Amendment gift that was not meant for them. Klotzer wasn’t having it. He argued otherwise. Young people were moved by what his publication had to say – and many of them became reporters and editors and parents who carried that message forward. When I see new generations of young people



Corrigan

bravely speaking out that black lives matter, that climate change is real, that the carnage of gun violence has to end – I know that the philosophy of free speech espoused by Klotzer is somehow a factor in all of this.

Klotzer’s Review has argued for many of the causes that young people have embraced today and many, many more important issues over five decades. He has criticized the press when it has looked the other way, when it has not wanted to confront and cover issues that make people uncomfortable. At the same time, Klotzer also has been a steadfast ally of the press, especially in these times when the chips are down and, frankly, the chips are in short supply to fund vibrant and much-needed media voices. Perhaps, Klotzer’s biggest accomplishment is having fostered a nucleus of concerned citizens who care about journalism. These are people who will not sit quietly when demagogues try to silence journalists and call them “enemies of the people.” These are people who have been inspired by the 50-year legacy of Charles Klotzer.

Linda Lockhart

Interim editor St. Louis American and former editor and reporter at St. Louis Public Radio and the Post-Dispatch

The media landscape in St. Louis has been changing and continues to change at a pace that makes my head spin.

I set out on my path to become a journalist in 5th grade at St. Stephen’s Lutheran School in the old Gaslight Square neighborhood, some 57 years ago. The school newsletter for which I reported was cranked out on a mimeograph machine. Not quite the hammer and chisel of the earliest scribes. But pretty primitive, still.

Fast forward through nearly a half dozen decades, I’ve gone from using manual typewriters, to electric ones; on to several generations of computers, until the convenient laptop I use today.



Lockhart

Fewer people are reading print editions that I prefer, shifting instead to getting their headlines not just on the aforementioned laptop, but on phones that fit in the palm of their hands or even on their Smart watches. They look to Twitter to see what’s happening rather than picking up a paper at their doorstep.

The methods for gathering, presenting and obtaining the news may have changed, but the mission and goals, at least for me, remain the same:

Give the audience stories that help them learn more about what’s happening

Give them something I believe they need to know

Give them something that they wouldn’t get, if not for me; something that will make them say, “hmmm, that’s interesting.”

That was my mantra when I worked as an editor on the national/international news desk at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. It remains true for me as I serve now as the interim managing editor of the St. Louis American.

None of us knows what the landscape of the future will look like. But I expect for the journalists and the audiences we serve, we’ll just keep pushing forward to do what we are called to do: educate, inform, enlighten, no matter which tools we use.

“ The methods for gathering, presenting and obtaining the news may have changed, but the mission and goals, at least for me, remain the same.”

— Linda Lockhart



Fifty years of journalism in St. Louis – a timeline

by Jack Grone

1970

In the year in which the Journalism Review was founded, here's a snapshot of the area's media scene:

St. Louis has two daily newspapers: the morning Globe-Democrat, owned by S.I. Newhouse, and the evening Post-Dispatch, owned by Pulitzer Co. They battle each other for scoops, advertisers and public influence. Each has hundreds of thousands of readers. (Under a 1961 joint operating agreement, the papers share printing and other costs, but the newsrooms remain separate.)

In sports, news and talk-show programs, CBS Radio's KMOX-AM reigns supreme as "The Voice of St. Louis." TV news operations include NBC affiliate KSD (Channel 5, later KDSK); CBS affiliate KMOX (Channel 4, later KMOV); and ABC affiliate KTVI (Channel 2). Independent station KPLR (Channel 11) also produces a newscast.

Smaller daily papers such as the Alton Evening Telegraph (later known simply as The Telegraph) and the Belleville News-Democrat serve key submarkets. Two weeklies, the St. Louis Argus and the St. Louis American, serve audiences that are primarily African-American.

Two other newspapers in the city, the South Side Journal and the Neighborhood News, merge in 1970 to form St. Louis Suburban Newspapers. (Together with other weekly suburban newspapers started by the Donnelly family in north St. Louis County, St. Charles and the Metro East, this operation will

later become the Suburban Journals.)

The Sporting News, a weekly published in St. Louis since 1886, reaches a national audience. It is best known as the "Bible of Baseball."

1972

Public radio station KWMU-FM, which will later be known as St. Louis Public Radio, begins broadcasting from the campus of the University of Missouri-St. Louis. In the Central West End, the West End Word debuts.

1973

A strike by the Teamsters union halts publication of the Globe-Democrat and the Post-Dispatch for six weeks

Mid-1970s

St. Louis Magazine emerges, having evolved from an earlier lifestyle magazine called Replay that was founded in 1969 with offices in the basement of the Cheshire Inn. (Replay itself evolved from an earlier incarnation of the magazine in the 1960s.)

1976

The Greater St. Louis Association of Black Journalists is founded by more than a dozen journalists working across print, radio and television.

1977

Ray Hartmann founds the Riverfront Times, with backing from St. Louis businessman

Mark Vittert. It eventually becomes one of the biggest alternative weeklies in the country.

1978

A 53-day strike by unions representing pressmen and others shuts down production of both the Post and the Globe. The papers begin publishing again in January 1979.

The Webster-Kirkwood Times debuts as a monthly publication. It becomes a weekly in 1984.

A young Missouri radio host named Rush Limbaugh sends his resume to KMOX General Manager Robert Hyland. Hyland scribbles his thoughts down on paper – "Not too bad" he writes – but doesn't give Limbaugh a job. (By the 1990s, Limbaugh's syndicated show will be a fixture on KMOX and hundreds of other stations around the country.)

1979

Post publisher Joseph Pulitzer Jr. and Globe publisher G. Duncan Bauman expand their papers' joint operating agreement. The Post takes over the Globe's advertising, circulation and business operations; profits are split 50-50. The papers maintain separate editorial staffs.

1980

Mark Vittert, along with Andrew E. Newman of Edison Brothers Stores, founds the St. Louis Business Journal. They go on to start similar weeklies in other cities before selling the business to American City Business Journals in 1986.

Early 1980s

St. Louis dentist Donald M. Suggs takes over as publisher of the St. Louis American, when the paid weekly has a circulation of about 4,000. He converts it to a free weekly with wider circulation, to reach more people in the St. Louis area's growing African-American population.

1981

The Gay News-Telegraph is founded by journalist Jim Thomas. It later becomes the Lesbian and Gay News-Telegraph, then simply the News-Telegraph, a free paper distributed twice a month in St. Louis and Kansas City.

1983

Duncan Bauman announces in November the Globe-Democrat will shut down at the end of the year, due to its deteriorating finances. (Both the Globe and the Post have daily circulations of around 250,000, but the Post benefits from lucrative ads in its Sunday edition.) Reports at the time say that because of their joint operating agreement, Pulitzer and Newhouse would be able to split earnings of about \$15 million each year by making St. Louis a one-newspaper town.

Separately, Pulitzer wins approval to trade KSDK (Channel 5) to Multimedia, Inc. in exchange for other television stations.

1984

The Post converts from an evening to a morning paper in February. Investor Jeffrey Gluck buys the Globe, but a lack of viable financing means he struggles to keep it afloat. (Under intense pressure from current and former employees who haven't been paid, Gluck puts the Globe into Chapter 11 bankruptcy in September 1985 and suspends publication that December.)

Ingersoll Publications, a group of dailies and weeklies primarily in the eastern U.S., buys the former Suburban Newspapers and Donnelly chains and combines them into the Suburban Journals of Greater St. Louis. Ingersoll buys the Alton Telegraph the following year.

The Belleville News-Democrat becomes a seven-day-a-week morning newspaper under its owner, Capital Cities, which had purchased the paper in 1972.

1986

The Globe closes for good in October after another group of owners fails to assemble the financing necessary to sustain it. St. Louis becomes one of a growing number of cities around the country, with a single daily newspaper.

Pulitzer has challenges of its own. Joseph and his half-brother Michael Pulitzer successfully fight off an attempt by other family members – who have no say in the operations of the business but control 43% of its stock – to force the sale of the company. Pulitzer Publishing ends up buying out the disgruntled family members; to help pay for this, the company makes its first public stock offering.

American City Business Journals buys St. Louis Magazine and the St. Louis Business Journal.

1987

"Donnybrook" premieres on public television station KETC, with former Globe-Democrat opinion editor Martin Duggan as the show's "provocateur."

Sylvester Brown founds Take Five magazine, a publication modeled on the Riverfront Times aimed at a primarily African-American audience. It will be published until 2002. In 2003 Brown becomes a columnist for the Post-Dispatch.

1989

Ralph Ingersoll launches the St. Louis Sun, the first new metropolitan daily in the U.S. in decades. He hires several former Globe-Democrat staffers and poaches Post-Dispatch sportswriter Kevin Horrigan, hoping Horrigan's new column will help attract readers. Circulation peaks at 200,000 on launch day in September, then gradually falls to 100,000. By the time the paper folds the following April, Ingersoll has burned through \$25 million.

1990

Investment company Warburg Pincus forms the Journal Register Co. to oversee the Suburban Journals. This comes after the Sun's failure and other financial troubles force Ralph Ingersoll to forfeit his interest in the weeklies to Warburg.

1992

The Post-Dispatch launches PostLink, an electronic information service that delivers news briefs, stock quotes, classified ads, sports scores and other content via personal computers for a flat fee of \$9.95 per month. Over the next decade the Post-Dispatch's online offering will go by various names until the debut of STLtoday.com in 2001.

Robert Hyland of KMOX dies of cancer at age 71. His obituary in The New York Times notes that William Paley, the founder of CBS, referred to KMOX as "the jewel in CBS's crown." (Within a few years Rush Limbaugh's syndicated midday program is on the air, breaking the station's longstanding practice of airing shows that it produces itself.)

1993

Joseph Pulitzer Jr. dies; his widow Emily Rauh Pulitzer becomes a major stockholder in Pulitzer Publishing. Michael Pulitzer, his half-brother, takes over as chairman.

Loss-plagued St. Louis Magazine folds, after a brief stint as an insert in the Business Journal. Ray Hartmann and Mark Vittert later acquire the magazine for one dollar. (Hartmann relaunches it as a quarterly in 1995; it regains monthly status in 1997.)

Newsrooms across the region stretch their resources to cover one of the biggest stories in decades: the Great Flood of 1993.

Mid to late 1990s

St. Louis becomes the center of the Bosnian community in the U.S., with up to 70,000 refugees from the war in the former Yugoslavia settling in the metro area, most

of them initially in the city. Bosnian-language newspapers spring up to serve this community. One outlet still publishing news stories is SabaH, which means "sunrise" in Bosnian.

1996

The Post-Dispatch fires Editor William Woo while he is on vacation in Europe, saying the paper needs a new direction. Later that year the paper hires Cole Campbell from a Virginia newspaper as Woo's replacement. Campbell pursues a concept called "public journalism." He reorganizes reporters and editors into teams, creates a new "Imagine St. Louis" section, and encourages direct input from readers at public meetings. (These moves meet with significant resistance in the newsroom.)

Also this year the Post launches postnet.com, its first website. It starts publishing its Saturday edition in a tabloid-sized format. This lasts until 2009, when the Post switches to a slim broadsheet format seven days a week.

Along with many other National Public Radio member stations, KWMU switches to a news/talk format. Around this time, the station's flagship talk show, "St. Louis on the Air," premieres.

1997

Koplar Communications sells KPLR to ACME Communications, ending 38 years of local family ownership.

1998

Ray Hartmann sells the Riverfront Times, with a staff of 65 people, to New Times Media, a chain of alt-weeklies.

1999

Pulitzer Publishing sells its nine television stations and five radio stations to Hearst-Argyle Television Inc. The newspaper business becomes Pulitzer Inc.

Sauce Magazine debuts as an online restaurant guide. It adds a print edition in 2001. (The magazine's success leads the Post-Dispatch to launch a competitor in 2010 called Feast.)

2000

Cole Campbell resigns abruptly as the editor of the Post-Dispatch, bringing the paper's experiment with "public journalism" to an end. (His ideas about how journalists can engage their communities will live on, however.)

Pulitzer buys the Suburban Journals from Journal Register for \$165 million. The deal includes 38 weekly papers (with distribution of 1.7 million) and the Ladue News. Pulitzer also buys the Pantagraph, the daily newspaper covering central Illinois, and the Illinois Valley Press, a chain of seven community papers, from The Chronicle Publishing Co. Pulitzer increases its interest in the Post-Dispatch from 50 percent to 95 percent by buying out the former owners of the Globe-Democrat for \$306 million.

The News-Telegraph ceases publication. Its co-founder Jim Thomas and others

Continued on next page

launch a new magazine aimed at an LGBTQ audience, *The Vital Voice*.

2001

Pulitzer Publishing launches *STLtoday.com*, designed as “the definitive online guide to living in St. Louis.” The site has its own staff of 65 and is housed outside the Post-Dispatch newsroom. (Disappointing revenue leads Pulitzer to lay off 15 staffers and combine *STLtoday*’s operations with the main newsroom the following year.)

David Drebes and Will Winter begin publishing the *Arch City Chronicle*, a newsletter covering St. Louis politics. Under Drebes’ leadership it evolves into a biweekly newspaper. Drebes folds the print edition in 2007 when he launches the *Missouri Scout*, which covers state politics. The *Chronicle* lasts online until 2011.

2002

Antonio French founds the Public Defender newspaper, which evolves into the *PubDef* blog that covers issues including politics and education. French becomes a St. Louis city alderman in 2009, serving until 2017.

Lifestyle and fashion magazine *ALIVE* debuts.

2005

In January Michael and Emily Pulitzer sell Pulitzer Publishing Co., including the *Post-Dispatch*, to Lee Enterprises of Davenport, Iowa, for \$1.46 billion. Lee takes over in June; the *Post-Dispatch* is the first metropolitan daily it has managed. The new owners redesign the paper and launch a round of buyouts (the first of several rounds of buyouts and layoffs) which are accepted by 41 employees. In November Editor Ellen Soeteber resigns. Managing Editor Arnie Robbins replaces her.

2006

Emily Pulitzer and other members of the family establish the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting in Washington, with the Post’s former Washington bureau chief Jon Sawyer as executive director. The center eventually becomes the largest single source of money for global enterprise reporting. (In St. Louis, media partners of projects that the Pulitzer Center funds have included the *Post-Dispatch*, the *RFT*, the *American* and *St. Louis Public Radio*.)

2008

The *St. Louis Beacon*, a nonprofit online publication led by former reporters and editors at the *Post*, goes live. Its backers include Emily Pulitzer and former *Post-Dispatch* Managing Editor Richard Weil. Coverage areas include politics, education, health, arts and issues of race and class. The *Beacon*’s offices are in the building owned by the Nine Network (parent of *KETC*) in Grand Center.

In TV, Fox affiliate *KTVI* (Channel 2) and CW affiliate *KPLR* (Channel 11) announce plans to combine their news operations.

The *Sporting News*, under the ownership of American City Business Journals, moves its

editorial offices to Charlotte, N.C. (In 2012 it becomes an online-only publication.)

NextSTL, a website focused on economic development, transportation, public policy and civic affairs, makes its debut under Editor Alex Ihnen.

2009

Tim Eby joins KWMU as general manager from public radio station *WOSU* in Ohio. He replaces Patty Wente, who was dismissed by UMSL administrators the previous year amid allegations of financial mismanagement.

2010

KMOX morning show host Charlie Brennan takes over as the provocateur on “Donnybrook” following Martin Duggan’s retirement.

St. Louis Alderman Antonio French begins publishing *The NorthSider*, a newsletter focused on north St. Louis. It becomes a weekly in 2018, after French has left public office.

The *St. Louis Journalism Review* becomes the *Gateway Journalism Review* and moves to a new home at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

2011

Lee Enterprises files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy to refinance nearly \$1 billion in debt, much of it taken on to buy Pulitzer Publishing. The company emerges from bankruptcy less than two months later.

Broadcasts of Cardinals games return to KMOX after five seasons on *KTRS-AM*.

Times Newspapers, the parent company of the *Webster-Kirkwood Times* and the *South County Times*, acquires the *West End Word*.

2012

KWMU, now rebranded as *St. Louis Public Radio*, moves to UMSL’s new facility in Grand Center, next door to the Nine Network of Public Media.

2013

The *Beacon* merges with *St. Louis Public Radio*, roughly doubling the size of *STLPR*’s newsroom. *Beacon* editor Margaret Wolf Freivogel becomes editor of the combined operation.

Scott Faughn, publisher of the *SEMO Times* covering southeastern Missouri, teams with former Missouri House speaker Rod Jetton to launch the *Missouri Times*, focusing on statewide politics. The following year Faughn launches a Sunday morning TV talk show, “This Week in Missouri Politics,” which airs in St. Louis on *KDNL* (ABC-30). (Faughn will become infamous in 2018 as the source of a mysterious \$50,000 payment to a lawyer in a legal case that leads to the downfall of Missouri Governor Eric Greitens.)

2014

Ferguson teenager Michael Brown is killed by police officer Darren Wilson in August; demonstrations break out across the region in response. Protests reignite in November following a *St. Louis Country* grand jury’s

decision not to charge Wilson. National and local media outlets make Ferguson the year’s most important story; the *Post-Dispatch*’s photography staff wins a Pulitzer Prize in 2015 for its work. *St. Louis Public Radio* won a national Murrow award for its multi-media coverage and the ABA Silver Gavel Award for legal news coverage.

2015

Cleveland-based *Euclid Media* acquires the *Riverfront Times*.

2017

Entercom Communications Corp. of Philadelphia acquires CBS Radio, giving KMOX a new owner.

The *St. Louis Jewish Light* celebrates the 70th anniversary of its predecessor publication, the *St. Louis Light*. (The *Jewish Light* became an independent publication in 1963.)

The *Vital Voice* moves to online-only publication; it ceases operations altogether at the end of January 2020. *Euclid Media* launches an LGBTQ-focused quarterly magazine called *Out in STL*.

Nonprofit newsroom *ProPublica* launches *ProPublica Illinois* to provide independent investigative journalism. Meanwhile, fast-growing online publication *The Athletic* expands its local sports coverage to St. Louis.

2019

The *Post*’s *Tony Messenger* wins the Pulitzer Prize for commentary, for his columns on rural Missourians being forced into modern-day debtors’ prisons. It is the newspaper’s 19th Pulitzer.

Lee Enterprises moves the *Post*’s design functions and copy desk to a facility in Munster, Ind., where Lee’s other daily newspapers are designed. Several more *Post* staff are laid off or accept buyouts.

The *NorthSider* expands to start publishing a sister paper, the weekly *SouthSider*.

2020

As the *Gateway Journalism Review* marks its 50th anniversary, local and national media outlets devote massive resources to covering COVID-19, even as the pandemic hits their bottom lines.

The *RFT* lays off most of its staff and announces plans to go online-only, but later hires some reporters back and manages to keep publishing a slimmed-down version. *Times Newspapers* suspends print editions of its three papers, including the *Webster-Kirkwood Times*. (Later, a group of employees buys the operations and revives the print edition.) The *NorthSider* and *SouthSider* also stop publishing and go online-only.

At *St. Louis Public Radio*, accusations of systemic racism become public in August. Several weeks later UMSL administrators force Tim Eby from his post; the station hires an interim general manager while it prepares a report on the station’s diversity and inclusion practices and searches for a successor.

The *Missouri Independent*, an online news outlet focused on state government, begins publishing in October.



‘Front Page’ to Ferguson — A memoir of half a century of St. Louis journalism

by William H. Freivogel

As a rookie reporter at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch five decades ago, I sat directly in front of Ted Link, a Post-Dispatch legend.

Link never said a word to me. I never said a word to Link. But I looked up to him as one of those crusty veterans who had made the Post-Dispatch great.

One thing about Link unnerved me. Each morning, he walked to his desk, opened the bottom right drawer, took his gun from his gray suit and put it in the drawer. No one questioned whether Link had a good reason to carry a gun — the man wrote about the mob.

Link seemed a little dangerous. The police chief at the time, Eugene Camp, had told me Link should have been convicted for killing his gardener, even though he beat the charge. A Jefferson County deputy added to the mystique telling me Link was so well-connected he once had filed a story on a mob killing before the killing. That’s probably apocryphal but it gave new meaning to getting a scoop.

One of my early stories was about corruption in St. Louis’ municipal court and the bail-bond system. Considering the municipal court corruption uncovered in Ferguson 40 years later, it seems big stories return every 30 or 40 years — like comets. It’s also a reminder

that injustice persists across lifetimes.

The municipal courts beat reporter, John J. Hynes, was a friend of Link’s. Hynes, an intimidating presence at 6-foot-6, had covered the mob too after a stint with the CIA. Once, upset at a young rewrite man, Dana Spitzer, Hynes stalked down 12th St. and punched him out. When I found out Hynes was accepting bribes, such as TVs, from bail bondsmen, he was removed from the court beat. Link’s friends made it clear Ted wasn’t happy with me getting his friend demoted.

There were other instances when punches flew among reporters. One famous one was when the otherwise mild-mannered political reporter Fred Lindecke punched the Globe’s John V. Colt in Jefferson City because Colt had broken the release time on a press release.

As the reader may have gathered, the Post-Dispatch newsroom of the 1970s was closer to “Front Page” than the modern newsroom with its computers and band of survivors breaking news on Twitter.

Link’s heyday was a period when he and other reporters, such as Roy J. Harris, won five Public Service Pulitzer prizes during the 15 years between 1937 and 1952. The last of those Public Service Pulitzers was for Link’s

disclosure of “widespread corruption” in Truman’s IRS.

Over a period of several decades, the paper also won Pulitzers for editorial cartoonists Daniel Fitzpatrick and Bill Mauldin, editorial writers Robert Lasch and Bart Howard and three Washington Bureau reporters — Paul Y. Anderson for his Teapot Dome disclosures, Charles G. Ross for his essay on the Great Depression, “The Plight of the Country” and Marquis Childs for his nationally published columns.

Has the Post-Dispatch of the past 50 years lived up to that heritage and to Joseph Pulitzer’s eloquent, progressive platform?

Not always, but the Post-Dispatch has done a lot of good work to make St. Louis a better community.

Some of us in the Washington Bureau joined Laszlo Domjan and other St. Louis reporters to dig deeply into dioxin contamination in Missouri. “Dioxin: Quandary for the ‘80s” may have been an exaggerated headline. But it was a big story and part of the even bigger scandal at Reagan’s EPA. Jon Sawyer dug into defense fraud at General Dynamics. He, Bob Adams, Rob

Continued on next page

“... the point is the Post-Dispatch often has lived up to the Pulitzer platform.”

Koenig, Charlotte Grimes and J.B. Forbes, a photographer from the St. Louis office, told international stories with a local sensibility. Thomas Ottenad was the first reporter to identify Jimmy Carter as an up-and-comer and my wife, Margie, wrote groundbreaking stories on women in politics — including Phyllis Schlafly.

Grimes told the tragedy of five nuns from Ruma, Illinois, who were murdered in Liberia in 1992. Koenig brought us back pieces of the Berlin Wall. And Sawyer, following in the steps of Richard Dudman and Childs, traveled the world, writing stories a reporter couldn't get from the safety of the American consulate. He was there with photographer Odell Mitchell Jr. for Nelson Mandela's triumphal election in 1994.

Lou Rose and Michael Sorkin disclosed the sexual escapades that landed the law-and-order Circuit Attorney George Peach in prison. Terry Ganey uncovered Missouri Attorney General William Webster's misuse of the Second Injury Fund. Bill Lambrecht wrote about the environmental degradation of Native American lands when no one else was paying attention. Most people still aren't.

The editorial page helped block Attorneys General John Ashcroft and Jay Nixon's attempts to kill the St. Louis school desegregation plan and crusaded for the sales tax that continued it for two decades into the 21st century. In the tradition of Irving Dilliard, Richard Dudman and Robert Lasch's pieces exposing the folly of Vietnam, Jon Sawyer and the editorial page challenged the false narrative that weapons of mass destruction justified the invasion of Iraq.

Who can forget the PD photographers' Pulitzer images of the Ferguson protests or Tony Messenger's Pulitzer winning columns that grew out of an enlightenment brought on by Ferguson. And just last year Jeremy Kohler's disclosures helped send the St. Louis County executive to prison.

Martha Shirk wrote about children as no other reporter in the country; her stories reformed Missouri's handling of child deaths. Sally Bixby Defty was the first woman to lead the City Desk and provided a model for young reporters. Jo Mannies dished political scoops at the PD and St. Louis Public Radio. And no other paper in the country was graced with the elegance of the column Editor William Woo wrote weekly to readers.

Kevin Horrigan was a terrific sports editor and editorial writer. He and I competed each year to write the most editorials; he always won. Harry Levins had a gift for making complicated things simple and Tim O'Neil for bringing St. Louis history alive. And Bill McClellan was the franchise player as the local columnist.

Dave Nicklaus and Jim Gallagher have

outlasted us all at the Post-Dispatch covering business, which also was the domain of Roland Klose and Ed Kohn.

This list leaves out many great stories and people with a big impact and is slanted toward events and people I knew best. I apologize for its egocentricity. It is a memoir not a balanced history. So it's a quirky recreation of some important events, leaving out many others — Pat Rice's coverage of the Pope's trip to St. Louis, the sports and photo staffs' great work on the World Series, Vahe Gregorian's singular Olympics coverage to say nothing of the Rams' Superbowl and Blues' Stanley Cup.

I confess my contributions to sports and business were nothing to brag about — poor coverage of the purchase of the Rams and later complicity with a terrible editorial stand favoring taxpayer support for the new Busch Stadium.

The events recounted here certainly looked different to other journalists who have their own stories to tell about events that seem much more important.

And, like a lot of what I've written over my career, this memoir is way too long.

But the point is the Post-Dispatch often has lived up to the Pulitzer platform. It and other media newcomers often have made St. Louis better.

Yet, much has been lost in 50 years. The Post-Dispatch newsroom has lost more than two-thirds of the reporters. The seven-person Washington Bureau is gone. So is the Springfield, Illinois, Bureau. The days of Fitzpatrick, Mauldin, Engelhardt, Sherffius and Matson are over — although Dan Martin and his Weatherbird hang on gamely. The Editorial page is a shadow of itself and has been out of touch with the Black community, although it recently hired Antonio French, a strong Black commentator. Still the paper blasts popular black officials and recently editorialized to keep the Workhouse open without addressing whether too many people are locked up before trial.

Other robust news organizations also have lost muscle. The robust At Your Service news programming of KMOX is a distant memory. Who remembers that Jack Bush inaugurated it in 1960 with an interview with Eleanor Roosevelt? Search for At your Service and KMOX today and you get Second Amendment Radio. And from 11-2 each day Rush Limbaugh proselytizes the faithful with fact-free propaganda.

Other important news providers were born over the past half century — St. Louis Magazine, the Business Journal and the Riverfront Times, for example. The St. Louis Beacon thrived and merged with St. Louis Public Radio, cutting its teeth with in-depth coverage of Ferguson. And Emily Rauh Pulitzer's support along with Jon Sawyer's

drive have turned the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting into one of the nation's most robust new sources of news, taking its content into schools in St. Louis and around the country.

Chapter 1 — The 1970s: Ignoring civil rights

The Link era may have been golden and the city desk a bustling place with more than a hundred reporters. But it was almost all white and male and old. Ted Wagner and the veteran rewrite men would go off to Miss Hullings for breakfast after the first edition — although others traveled a shorter distance to the Press Box bar across the street to have mid-morning drinks.

Some of the jaded rewrite reporters would laugh when Ed O'Brien, the Globe-Democrat's lone Washington reporter, beat the fancy pants crew in the Washington Bureau. Sometimes news gathering by these rewrite men devolved into calling up the cops or city hall and asking — “The story on p-1 of the Globe — is it right?” If the answer was yes, the rewrite man would just copy it.

Blacks and women were just arriving in the newsroom. Robert Joiner, Ellen Sweets, Fred Sweets, Don Franklin, Tommy Robertson, Tony Glover and Damian Obika joined the staff with Gerald Boyd, Sheila Rule, Kenneth Cooper and Linda Lockhart soon to follow. A number of the Black reporters were the product of the visionary Pulitzer scholarship at Mizzou. Cooper later won a Pulitzer prize and Boyd won three Pulitzers as managing editor of The New York Times. Carolyn Kingcade became the PD's top-ranking Black editor and Cynthia Todd the recruiter.

Most of the women, including my wife Margaret Wolf Freivogel, had to start on the Women's Page. Sally Bixby Defty, Connie Rosenbaum, Linda Eardley and Charlene Prost were among the first women on the city desk. By the time Margie and I arrived on City Desk in the spring of 1972, there was a sprinkling of women in the rear rows of the city room. Margie, Sally Thran and Karen Van Meter were among them. The brilliant, irascible E.F. Porter Jr. sat among them. That was about 12 rows back from the editors and almost out of sight.

Mike Milner, the short, gruff, military veteran who was assistant city editor, was shocked when Van Meter, in her 20s threatened to throw him out the 5th floor window for butchering her copy.

Seated in the front rows were the gray-haired or balding veteran rewrite men who took stories from legmen on the beats. They were the graying princes of the newsroom. Eardley once described them as “row after row of white men typing, smoking and screaming.”

Even though the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had outlawed sex discrimination, newsrooms weren't paying attention. This was before



Betsy Wade Boylan sued The New York Times. It was six years before the Pregnancy Discrimination Act and the same year Title IX passed.

Newspapers openly discriminated. When my wife tried to get a job at the Boston Globe in 1971, the interviewer asked why he should hire her when she would just get pregnant. He could do that. It was legal.

The Post-Dispatch didn't live up to the Platform in its coverage of civil rights. The second Joseph Pulitzer favored Brown v. Board but cautioned editorial editor Dilliard not to push for desegregation of hotels and restaurants. When Richard Dudman happened upon a civil rights sit-in in the 1950s and rushed back to the paper, he was told not to cover that kind of story for fear of riots. James C. Millstone, a mentor to many of us, filed stories on the civil rights movement in the South, but his dispatches never ran as written but were blended into wire stories — to his horror. Coverage of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a dream speech" was buried far down in the story. The liberal editorial page patronizingly advised the Jefferson Bank demonstrators in 1963 to pull back from blocking bank entrances, lecturing, "does it not owe the business efforts to end discrimination a chance to prove successful?" And in 1972, when Percy Green's ACTION group unmasked Monsanto VP Tom K. Smith Jr. as the Veiled Prophet, the Post-Dispatch joined the Globe in keeping his identity secret.

One day in 1972 Charlie Prendergast, a beloved executive city editor, assigned me to investigate the death of Joseph Lee Wilson in police custody. Wilson was white. Police said he had fallen off a barstool; Mike Royko, the witty Chicago columnist, quipped the barstool must have been on top of the John Hancock building. Prosecutors confided that the damage to Wilson's ribs was in the shape of an imprint of an officer's shoe. No officer was charged.

As Prendergast sent me off on the story he gave me a final warning. He opened the bottom left drawer of his desk and pointed to a stack of stories. He told me it was a big project on racism that never had made it into publication. Make sure you don't make the same mistake, he cautioned.

It wasn't the only time a big racism project at the Post-Dispatch that failed to make it into print. A months-long project in 1999 also never saw the light of day.

Meanwhile, the Globe-Democrat was an accomplice of J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO undercover intelligence program intended to hound King into killing himself. One 1968 document obtained by the Post-Dispatch read:

"The feeding of well chosen information to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, a local newspaper, whose editor and associate editor are extremely friendly to the Bureau and the St. Louis Office, has also been utilized in the past and it is contemplated that this technique might be used to good advantage in connection with this program."

Another read: "The St. Louis Globe-Democrat has been especially cooperative with the Bureau in the past. Its publisher [name deleted] is on the Special Correspondents List."

And just before King's assassination in Memphis, the Globe carried an FBI ghost editorial complete with a misspelling. The March 30, 1968 editorial read: "Memphis could be only the prelude to a massive bloodbath in the Nation's Capitol [sic]"

The only blood spilled was King's in Memphis.

(For a more detailed account of how the press flubbed coverage of the Civil Rights Movement go to <http://gatewayjr.org/press-flubs-first-draft-of-history-of-race/>)

The Globe, where Pat Buchanan wrote editorials before becoming a Nixon speechwriter, also attacked Dudman, the Washington Bureau Chief. Dudman reported

from Vietnam about the Pentagon's lies about the war and obtained the Post-Dispatch's copy of the Pentagon Papers on a tip from I.F. Stone.

Dudman had reported after a trip to Vietnam, "The South Vietnamese government...may be losing and the Viet Cong winning." Nixon blew up. A week before Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, Alexander P. Butterfield relayed to Henry Kissinger Nixon's view that "Dudman is a 'violent leftist' and that these statements are completely opposite from the truth."

The Globe ran an unheard of front-page editorial — "For America or For Hanoi" — essentially calling Dudman a traitor. Nixon put Dudman on the Enemies List.

On its news and editorial pages the Globe championed Juvenile Court Judge Gary Gaertner who had replaced Theodore McMillian, a splendid Black judge who went on to serve on the federal appeals court. The Globe praised Gaertner for bringing down crime after years of McMillian "coddling" young criminals. It turned out some of the court's top staffers were horrified by Gaertner's operation of the court. Gaertner and the Globe were cooking the figures on juvenile crime and Gaertner even was holding juveniles in custody to keep control of detention cells.

A court source mentioned Gaertner had appointed the publisher of the Globe, G. Duncan Bauman, to serve as "guardian ad litem" in some cases. This was a cushy, well-paid court appointment. I was having trouble confirming the tip. But Rep. Bill Clay volunteered to help get court records through his patronage employees in the circuit clerk's office. Those records proved payments of taxpayer money to Bauman.

The Post-Dispatch wouldn't run my story even after it was confirmed because it was critical of the competitor's publisher. So I went to Charles Klotzer whose St. Louis Journalism Review, which had disclosed that the Post-Dispatch and Globe were in league having signed a joint operating agreement. I had been in Klotzer's living room along with Ted Gest during one of those inaugural meetings of the Journalism Review. Klotzer gladly published the story on Bauman.

About 20 years later, when I had returned from the Washington Bureau, Rep. Richard A. Gephardt put forward Gaertner's name for a federal judgeship. I reprised my stories and women's and Black groups voiced their opposition, with Harriett Woods in the lead. The Clinton White House took the extraordinary step of rejecting Gephardt's choice and Catherine Perry was named instead.

The Wall Street Journal reacted to Clinton's action by accusing me by name of "Borking" Gaertner — in other words getting him rejected for politically unpalatable positions like Robert Bork had been rejected. A top PD executive who palled around with Gaertner complained to the publisher and I was asked to defend my reporting, which I did. It was the only time that ever happened.

Continued on next page

Perry in place of Gaertner made a difference. Recently, Perry has written groundbreaking opinions protecting peaceful protesters from police abuse during Ferguson and beyond.

Chapter 2: Getting things done

After witnessing the municipal court system and its corrupt mix of bail bondsmen, disreputable defense lawyers and prosecutors on the take, I shelved the idea of going back to law school. "Let's get something done," Prendergast, my editor would say. And I soon discovered that journalism was a force for getting things done.

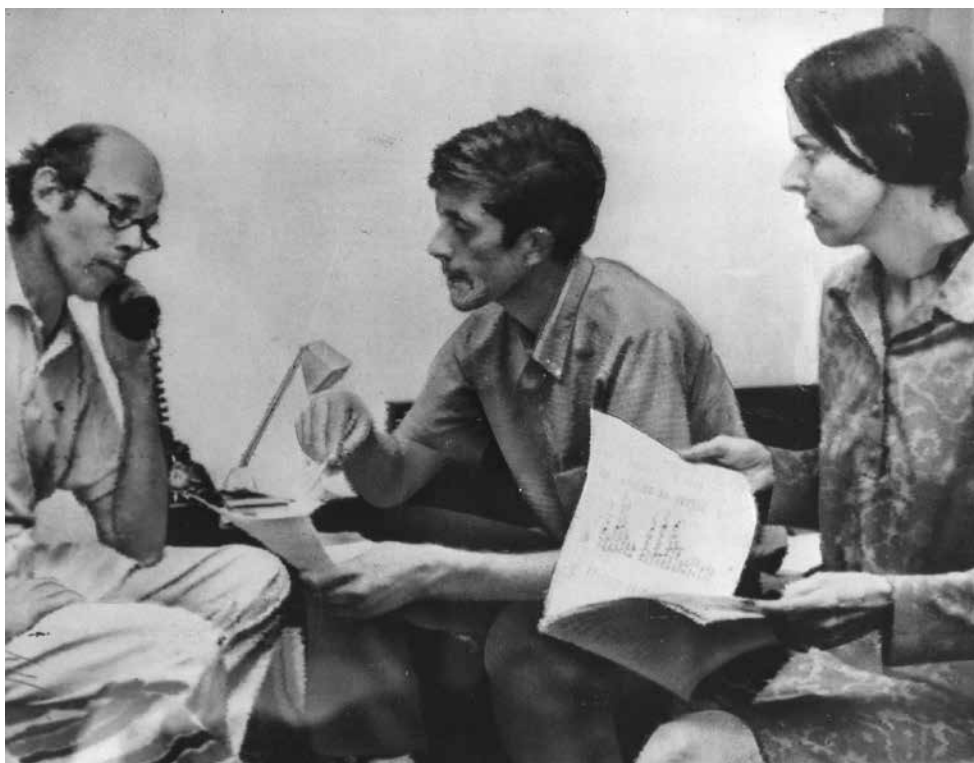
With Paul Wagman we cleaned out a brutal Maplewood police department where Thomas Brown had been shot dead in the police station in 1977 and other officers forced suspects to play Russian roulette with guns in their mouths. Gov. Christopher S. Bond sent me a pen he had used to sign a bill reforming the bail system. The head of the St. Louis pound, a color announcer on the Football Cardinals broadcasts, quit soon after a story about how he spent most of his time running his tavern — a story that required many hours of drinking beer at his bar. Monsanto Co. ended its questionable political contributions program after I met confidentially at a hotel near the airport with a top executive who provided a checkbook showing Monsanto's Washington lobbyist directed executives' donations to CREEP — the Committee to Re-elect the President.

I lucked out and spent a day in 1972 observing lax security at Lambert; it happened to be right before Martin McNally hijacked a plane and parachuted from the rear with his cash. When a judge ordered the St. Louis School Board to negotiate with the teachers union, I put my ear to the door in the Jefferson hotel room where they were negotiating and got a scoop. The judge laughed the next day that I had overheard how the mediators excoriated the School Board for a proposal "straight out of the 19th century." When the South County bomber frightened St. Louisans in 1977, a six-pack of Michelob outside the hotel door of a St. Louis County cop got me a big scoop — the boyfriend of the first victim had been seen at later bombing scenes.

There were threats along the way. I started getting calls from Franklin V. Chesnutt who announced he was a card-carrying member of the KKK — literally a card carrying member because he sent me his business card and threatened to burn a cross on the lawn. City desk got a bomb threat in connection with stories about bail bondsmen. Paul Wagman — my partner on Maplewood police stories — started getting threatening calls at home, sending him to a friend's house to spend the night. I put plastic tape on the door to our garage in Parkview because I was covering car bombings involving labor leaders connected with the mob.

So in 1980 I welcomed the idea of going to Washington and covering the Supreme Court.

But Margie and I had a new idea about how to do it. We had just had our third child, Meg, and proposed splitting a job. That way



Dudman with Elizabeth Pond of the Christian Science Monitor and Michael Morrow of the Dispatch News Service International. The three were captured together in Cambodia in 1970.

we could each have time with the children and keep our careers going.

Dudman, the bureau chief, was a liberal but had strict ideas about work. He wasn't so sure about our proposal. One night, at a dinner party on his front porch, he asked his friend, Betty Friedan, what she thought. She told Dudman it was exactly what she was writing about, the second wave of feminism.

Dudman became a believer the day Reagan was shot. Margie went to George Washington Hospital. Close to midnight I loaded our kids into a Barwood taxi and met her at the hospital. She took the kids, I took her notes. And Dudman got what he always wanted — a reporter who could work 24 hours a day without sleeping.

Joseph Pulitzer Jr. called it "our little experiment" and we thought it might pave the way for more job-sharing. A couple of other reporters tried it, but it wasn't the wave of the future. Still it was the best decision we made for our family.



Pulitzer Jr.

Chapter 3: The 1980 — Chronicling Reagan's demolition of civil rights

For the next eight years I watched as the affable movie star president charmed the American people while turning his back on civil rights, trying to kill the Legal Services Corp., ignoring toxic wastes, closing his eyes to defense fraud, campaigning against

"welfare queens" and conspiring to send arms to Iran in the Iran-Contra scandal.

Some thought the big Post-Dispatch Washington Bureau was a luxury. But it was a way to explain to readers back home how St. Louis fit into the national picture.

As soon as Reagan took office, Missouri interests began lobbying the Justice Department to abandon cases and prosecutions. The Justice Department dropped a Foreign Corrupt Practices Act prosecution against four McDonnell Douglas executives, including James McDonnell III, son of Mr. Mac, the McDonnell Douglas founder. The charges were dropped after Associate Attorney General Rudolph Giuliani met secretly with the corporation's lawyer. Yes, same Rudy Giuliani same shady practices. Line prosecutors sharply criticized the secret meeting, held without them present, and blasted dismissal of the charges that grew out of paying bribes to sell aircraft to Pakistan.

About the same time, Attorney General Ashcroft was busy getting the Justice Department to reverse the Carter Justice Department and announce opposition to the St. Louis-St. Louis County interdistrict school desegregation program. The program, crafted to remedy decades of legal segregation, was just getting underway in St. Louis.

When I walked into the office of the Justice Department lawyer handling the case, I found the documents reversing the position sitting on the desk. But the lawyer wasn't there. Having studied at the elbow of investigative reporter Lou Rose, I simply read the papers upside down on the desk and filed a story for the last edition. It wasn't the best move for a person who later became a professor of journalistic ethics. And for a while I was persona non grata at the Justice Department.

It turned out that backtracking on school desegregation in St. Louis led to a story on a much bigger Justice Department offensive against civil rights enforcement. That retrenchment, led by Assistant Attorney General Civil William Bradford Reynolds, included attempts to end affirmative action, reverse the belated desegregation of the University of Missouri, stop suing state prisons and hospitals for unconstitutional treatment and to reinstate tax breaks for segregated institutions like Bob Jones University.

The Bob Jones case blew up on Reagan. It went to the Supreme Court, which batted down Reagan's initiative. The Supreme Court also ignored the Ashcroft attempt to stop the St. Louis school desegregation program, which went on to become the largest and arguably most successful school desegregation program in the country. It was responsible for desegregating thousands of classrooms in St. Louis and St. Louis County.

The dioxin contamination of Missouri horse corrals and Times Beach soon became an all-consuming story. The mismanagement of Superfund sites like Times Beach by Assistant Administrator Rita Lavelle contributed to her conviction on perjury charges. The broader mismanagement of EPA doomed Administrator Anne Gorsuch as well.

Christmas 1982 was wrecked because the Centers for Disease Control recommended the Times Beach buyout on Dec. 23. To make matters worse, the Globe beat us to the story.

Working with Jon Sawyer on the General Dynamics defense fraud story was a lesson into the power of congressional chairmen and investigators. The General Dynamics investigation was led by Rep. John Dingell, D-Mi., — who always had "powerful" attached to his name — and his wily investigator Pete Stockton.

Reporters loved Stockton because he leaked information the committee had subpoenaed from companies. He'd usually leak the day before the hearing in order to raise interest. The day before General Dynamics Chair David Lewis was to testify, Stockton leaked juicy tidbits to us and other media.

One of those tidbits concerned General Dynamics charging the government \$155 a day kennel fees for Furston the dog at Silver Maple Farm in St. Louis.

Sawyer and I were a high-minded pair and this story about the dog seemed beneath us. Of course, none of the other reporters saw it that way. Mary McGrory, the Washington Post's great columnist, wrote a wonderful take down of Lewis all centered around Furston.

Before we left Washington to return to St. Louis there was one last big story with repercussions back home — the retirement of Thurgood Marshall and his replacement by Clarence Thomas. Sen. John Danforth, R-Mo., was Thomas' mentor and political ace, singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" with him as he prepared to denounce his "high-tech lynching" before the cameras.

Thomas had worked at Monsanto Co. and in Danforth's Missouri Attorney General's office before moving quickly up the Reagan administration until he headed the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Marshall, the legendary civil rights lawyer, had won *Brown v. Board* in the Supreme Court. I remember, him enfeebled, walking with a cane, to his retirement press conference. He didn't make it a secret that he considered the man in line to replace him to be a "snake." Thomas went on to cast the deciding vote to end the era of court ordered school desegregation in Kansas City in 1995 — bringing down the curtain on what Marshall had begun 41 years earlier.

Having interviewed Thomas when he was head of the EEOC, I knew he was nothing like the taciturn, silent judge he projects, but rather a gregarious raconteur who enjoyed telling funny stories while smoking a good cigar. And having talked to Thomas' colleagues in the Missouri Attorney General's office, I also knew his jokes could sometimes be blue enough to make one devout young colleague, John Ashcroft, stomp off indignantly.

Anita Hill could well have viewed Thomas' "humor" as sexual harassment — a phrase just beginning to take on a legal meaning as a form of sex discrimination.

The anger that our Post-Dispatch coverage of the Thomas hearings induced on the talk radio in St. Louis was an introduction to the deep partisan divide that was approaching.

Chapter 4 — Woo v. Campbell — journalism as a public trust vs. public journalism

When Joseph Pulitzer Jr. named Bill Woo as editor, many staffers hoped he would bring a new golden age. Pulitzer saw Woo as his protege and a believer in what Pulitzer called a "tradition of conscience."

Two careful, novel decisions as editor ended up backfiring. One was to offer Mayor Vince Schoemehl a front page response Woo to a tough series called "The Mayor's Money Machine," linking campaign contributions to city contracts. Schoemehl's response called the series "Half-truths, innuendo and bold faced lies ... (reminiscent of the Nazi propaganda machine of the 1930s)." Some reporters who worked on the stories never forgave Woo for giving Schoemehl a front-page platform for his diatribe.

Woo also was proud to have set up a staff committee to replace Managing Editor David Lipman, the brash, aggressive managing editor who had been chosen over our mentor Millstone. Woo's committee chose Foster Davis from the Charlotte Observer. Soon Davis and Woo were at odds over such things as the role of the Washington Bureau.

By 1995 Woo had become one of the nation's leading critics of a popular form of journalism referred to as "civic" or "public" journalism. In the 30th Press-Enterprise Lecture he delivered that year, Woo advocated

instead for journalism as a public trust.

He described public or civic journalism this way. "Editors sit on public boards or commissions or action committees. Newspapers are becoming the conveners of their community, the master of ceremonies of the new democracy. Journalists no longer serve or inform the electorate; they become it."

Woo argued that traditional values of objectivity and detachment shouldn't be dismissed so easily. "Can a paper objectively report on a burning community issue when the editor sits on the commission that is promoting a particular point of view on the matter?" he asked.

"... Damn right ... we should listen to the public. But should the consensus at the town meeting automatically become our agenda?"

As eloquently as Woo argued for journalism as a public trust, his days as editor were ending. Joseph Pulitzer Jr., had died in 1993 and Michael Pulitzer's choice of a successor was the anti-Woo. It was Cole Campbell, one the nation's champions of public journalism.

Campbell's editorship was tumultuous and short. Harry Levins likened his demise to the Caine Mutiny and sent Publisher Terry Egger a copy of that novel after Egger forced Campbell out in April, 2000.

Don Corrigan wrote in the St. Louis Journalism Review about the drastic shift from the opponent of public journalism to a leading evangelist. And Ellen Harris wrote a damaging 1998 SJR story about Campbell picking Christine Bertelson to be editorial editor at a time they had a social relationship.

Trying to head off the story, Campbell wrote Ed Bishop, then SJR's editor, "If you publish any statements alleging that [editorial page editor Christine A. Bertelson's] appointment was made for personal reasons, that will be libelous on its face — to her and to me." Campbell denied this was a threat to sue but added his legal understanding had been "confirmed ... in connection with this inquiry with counsel for the Post-Dispatch."

It didn't help Campbell's reputation that a few years later the Pulitzers had to send attorney Bob Hoemeke of Lewis Rice to apologize to a top editor of the New Orleans Times-Picayune for Campbell making a pass at his wife.

By the time Campbell arrived at the annual James C. Millstone Memorial Lecture in March, 2000 and joined a discussion with Gerald Boyd — former Post-Dispatch reporter and The New York Times managing editor — Campbell looked haggard and was deeply unpopular.

Boyd did not want to debate Campbell about public journalism. But Campbell immediately took after the Times as a paper for "elites" drinking Bombay martinis. He said elites buy the Times "so at cocktail parties they can say to each other: 'Did you see the story about such and such in The New York Times?' And then they can say: 'Yes, I did see that.' And then they give each other high fives. 'We are elite. We are elite.'"

Although Campbell bragged of having

Continued on next page



been a debating champion, it was the kid who grew up bagging groceries in North St. Louis and attending Soldan High School who won the day.

Egger, the publisher, asked for a recording of the exchange with Boyd. He also met at the Missouri Bar & Grille with Levins, the respected writing coach, McClellan, the star columnist, Carolyn Tuft, an investigative reporter, and John McGuire, a legendary feature writer. As Alicia C. Shepard reported in the *American Journalism Review*, Levins told Egger, "We are the officers from the Caine, and this time we are not going to chicken out."

A few days later, on April 5, Campbell was out.

One person who stabilized the paper during this era was Managing Editor Richard K. Weil, long a source of good judgment in the newsroom. Campbell pushed him aside toward the end of his editorship.

Chapter 5: Legacy of the Editorial Page

I spent my last 10 years at the Post-Dispatch on the editorial page, which I considered the conscience of the newspaper.

I joined under Ed Higgins, the smart, blunt, clever writer who was editor. The staff was loaded with talent — Susan Hegger, who knew the ins and outs of TIFs; Bob Joiner, an authentic Black voice; Donna Korando, who published the best op ed page in the country; and the deputy Dale Singer, who knew everything about Missouri politics and education. All four later were a core staff for St. Louis Public Radio a decade later.

I regret I didn't listen more carefully to Joiner. He was highly critical of the disparity between crack and cocaine sentencing as well as the Clinton compromise cutting back on welfare. He also immediately saw the disaster of a former Brooks Brothers executive coming in to manage the St. Louis schools. I rolled over him and later Linda Lockhart in what I now realize was a white privilege sort of way. Bob was right; I was wrong but able to control the editorial position.

Campbell threw Higgins overboard and put Bertelson in charge. He claimed the editorial page was "moribund" under Higgins. Not true. But the page was lively and had notable accomplishments during Bertelson's tenure.

An editorial campaign by the brilliant Philip Kennicott helped defeat a voter referendum to allow carrying concealed weapons — although that victory was short-lived because the Legislature overrode the people — as the Missouri Legislature is wont to do.

When Attorney General Jay Nixon came to the steps of Vashon High School and launched his effort to end the St. Louis-St. Louis County school desegregation program, the editorial page opposed him as did Rep. Clay, former Washington University Chancellor William Danforth and the NAACP. Danforth lined up Civic Progress and an editorial-a-day series urged St. Louis voters to tax themselves to keep the interdistrict program going. Miraculously, they did and it has continued to function while gradually phasing out.

We put out a special edition within hours



of the Sept. 11 attacks. "WE are living through another day of infamy. September 11, 2001, will live alongside December 7, 1941, as a day when America changed," said the editorial. "The United States will be a different, more vulnerable place. Daily life as an American will never seem as safe or as free."

And we cautioned in the third paragraph, "Inevitably, this fight will constrict our everyday freedoms. It could test our commitment to civil liberty."

It did. John Ashcroft, had been named attorney general after President George W. Bush's election and Ashcroft's loss to Mel Carnahan, who had died in a plane crash before the election.

We had opposed Ashcroft's confirmation because of his history of opposition to the St. Louis school desegregation program and his racially fraught and successful effort to block confirmation of Ronnie White as a federal judge. I had even gone to Washington D.C. to write daily editorials in opposition to Ashcroft's AG appointment, although that plan fizzled because the new editor, Ellen Soeteber, had promised Egger to tone down "red meat" editorials — or so I was told.

Soeteber was an excellent journalist and rebuilt the credibility of the paper. But this was one of a couple of run-ins I had with her. Another occurred when she forced out the talented cartoonist John Sherffius for a cartoon blaming Republicans for protecting "pork" in a spending bill. She wanted more donkeys in the cartoon; Sherffius angrily drew them in and quit.

Soeteber was supportive as we criticized Ashcroft's civil liberties abuses in the wake of 911, including rounding up 5,000 Middle Eastern men with no evidence of wrongdoing. The "enhanced interrogation techniques" — aka torture — approved by the Justice Department made a mockery of the Geneva Conventions.

A couple of things temper my criticism of Ashcroft as I look back. One is that Ashcroft stood up to White House Counsel Alberto

Gonzales and Chief of Staff Andrew Card when they pressured him to approve anti-terrorism measures that Acting Attorney General James Comey refused to approve. Comey tells of putting the flashing light on the top of his car as he and FBI Director Robert Mueller raced the White House crew to Ashcroft's hospital room. Ashcroft, his wife at his bedside, backed Comey.

In addition, when Matt Blunt was inaugurated governor in Jeff City in 2005, Ashcroft handed Ronnie White a note of apology for the way he had blocked his federal court nomination. White told Ashcroft he was too late, but in a day when no one apologizes, I thought Ashcroft deserved credit. I also remember the old days, before the bitter election of 2000, when Ashcroft was often charming when he'd pull off his suit coat to debate Post-Dispatch editorial writers around our conference table.

The legacy of Irving Dilliard and Bob Lasch was an important reminder when Bush turned the war against terrorism into the invasion of Iraq in the fall of 2002. Dilliard had warned against U.S. involvement in Vietnam as early as 1954. Lasch had won a Pulitzer in 1965 for making the Post-Dispatch among the first newspapers to oppose the Vietnam War.

There are times when newspapers outside the Washington-New York media axis can exercise greater independence from the power structure. Vietnam was one; Iraq another.

Sawyer's stories and our editorials challenged Bush's claim that Saddam's weapons of mass destruction justified an invasion of Iraq. But the Pentagon's brilliant tactic of embedding journalists with the troops in Kuwait meant that Ron Harris' stories on local troops preparing for the invasion were on page 1 and while our work was farther back in the paper.

Most editorials take an afternoon to write. This one opposing the Iraq war took two months under Soeteber's close supervision. She was nervous enough that we were talking on the phone even after the first edition of the Sunday paper had gone to the presses.



Screenshot

The first tweet about the death of Michael Brown was a minute or two after he collapsed. Local rapper Emanuel Freeman (@TheePharaoh) tweeted from inside his home a photo of Brown's body face down in the street, an officer standing over him.

The editorial — A War Too Soon — explicitly harkened back to Dilliard's and Lasch's thinking: "The echoes of Vietnam provide a clearer warning. America feared a series of threats in Asia as nations fell to communism like dominoes; Mr. Bush sees a series of evil states threatening U.S. security. America's military seemed omnipotent in 1964; it seems unstoppable today. America sought to contain the powerful idea of anti-colonialism wrapped in communist ideology; now it confronts a threatening strain of Islamic pan-nationalism that also has anti-colonialist roots. The Lyndon Johnson administration created a 'credibility gap' by stretching the facts; the Bush administration has strained its credibility by unconvincingly trying to link Iraq to bin Laden and arguing that Iraq is a more of a threat than North Korea."

Chapter 6 — Leaving the PD and entering the 21st century

When it became known that the Pulitzers were selling the Post-Dispatch, Jon Sawyer,

Bob Duffy, Margie and I had a truly bad idea — an employee buyout. Jon and I sat through a meeting one afternoon during which financiers told us how easy it would be for an employee-owned PD to take on \$400 million in mezzanine — whatever that is. Suffice it to say we didn't get too far and Pulitzer sold to Lee Enterprises. Emily Pulitzer, the chief stockholder and a friend, invited our buy-out group to lunch and nicely said this was the only sensible way to go.

Whenever we think back on our crazy idea, we breathe a huge sigh of relief that we failed. The 2005 sale date was the moment newspapers fell off a cliff. The Pulitzers walked away with \$1.46 billion, while Lee Enterprises ended up filing for bankruptcy by 2011.

The class of 2005 was what Richard Weiss called the big cohort of reporters and editors leaving the PD at the end of that year. <https://www.weisswrite.com/about/post-dispatch-class-of-05>

We joined the communications revolution and started online news operations. Many of us started the St. Louis Beacon in 2008 with Margie as editor, Weil chair and Duffy fundraiser extraordinaire. Meanwhile Sawyer had started the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting in D.C. and soon was joined in that enterprise by his wife Kem. The Pulitzer Center has become a burgeoning new media nonprofit telling untold stories from abroad and at home. They are the biggest source of funding for international reporting in the country. Emily Pulitzer was key to both startups.

Margie decided to try again to publish a race project at the Beacon. She travelled around town to line up media partners. Many said it was a good idea but all had reasons they could not participate. One media executive actually said it was "too soon" to write about race in St. Louis. The Beacon ended up publishing the project with the Missouri Historical Society as a partner. It was called: Race Frankly, which included my stories on Kirkwood's Journey.

Charles "Cookie" Thornton had killed five officials in the Kirkwood City Hall in 2008. I spent a year listening as people in my hometown described the racial hurt they still felt from racial discrimination.

I remember Harriet Patton, the strong leader of Meacham Park, tell of a junior high teacher at Nipher ripping up an English essay she had worked hard on as a child. The teacher ripped it up because it was too good — no Black child could have written it without cheating, the teacher claimed.

A few years later when Mizzou's doomed president Tim Wolfe tried to block the Beacon's merger with St. Louis Public Radio, Emily Pulitzer and other St. Louis civic leaders were again key to closing the deal.

As a result, the Beacon and St. Louis

Public Radio newsroom had merged by the time of Ferguson and provided some of the best coverage. St. Louis Public Radio devoted the entire staff to Ferguson reporting, curating a live blog to keep up with the rapid news developments, recreating what happened in One Year in Ferguson, explaining the legal investigations and launching the "We Live Here" podcast on race and class.

Now, only six years later, the newsroom is troubled by persistent complaints about discrimination against staff members of color. Tim Eby, a champion of the merger, didn't address the complaints effectively enough. After he acknowledged systemic racism last summer, he was forced out under intense pressure.

Overall, Ferguson was a journalistic revolution that marked the triumph of the citizen/activist journalist over the traditional mainstream media. Gone forever was the day when an editor at the Post-Dispatch or KMOX could decide a black kid killed by a police officer on a Ferguson street wasn't big news.

The first tweet reporting Michael Brown's death was two minutes after he crashed to the pavement on Canfield Drive. There were five million tweets in the week after Brown's death and 35 million in the months that followed. There was no putting this story back in the bottle.

Protesters with cell phones seized the national agenda, told the story from their points of view, knit together a new national civil rights movement and scratched the scabs off the nation's racial scars.

The Black Lives Matter movement came alive and journalists here and across the nation realized that what they had done to cover civil rights was not enough, just as what the nation has done to remedy the sins of slavery and segregation was not nearly enough.

In the Front Page days of Link, the police reporter on Saturday afternoon would have just called up the Ferguson police and asked, "Anything happening?" I know. It was my job. The police would almost always say, "Everything's quiet."

Police shooting a suspect from a strong-arm robbery on a Saturday afternoon in the middle of summer wouldn't have made the front page on a Sunday paper back then. The story — which would have been based entirely on what police told a reporter — might not have been published until the following week, if at all. It would have been forgotten by mid-week.

But the communications revolution had changed everything. Never before in America had a story exploded so fast from the people who were disenfranchised. Even though the Twitter story had big mistakes, it told the essential truth about white police officers killing black suspects. And it awakened journalists to the wider truth about race in America and their responsibility to finally tell the truth about it.

“ The Pulitzer Center has become a burgeoning new media nonprofit telling untold stories from abroad and at home.”



Unique KC Star, Post-Dispatch, News-Leader project on epidemic of Missouri gun deaths

by Ted Gest

It started with a maddening statistic. Missouri has ranked first or second for 11 years as the state with the nation's highest rate of African Americans who die in homicides. The Washington, D.C.-based Violence Policy Center says that 57 Missouri Blacks per 100,000 people were killed in 2017, nearly triple the national average.

Typically, news organizations mention this annual figure compiled by the center in a brief story and move on to other subjects.

For journalists at the Kansas City Star, looking for a major project that would go beyond routine daily coverage, the statistic proved to be the germ of a story idea.

Instead of merely recounting a seemingly endless stream of shootings on a daily or weekly basis, the idea was to do in-depth reporting on why Missouri ranks so high on the list, not only of deaths involving minorities but also violent crime generally.

"We wanted to go beyond daily reporting and look at a big issue – its causes and consequences," says Ian Cummings, a Star editor who is overseeing the project. "We are looking for solutions, pushing coverage beyond what we have done before."

The Star took an unusual approach, seemingly unprecedented in Missouri journalism. Instead of merely re-assigning a few staff members from their usual beats, the newspaper approached Report for America (RFA), a relatively new national program that provides funding to help local news media fill in significant coverage gaps.

With financial support from RFA, the Star hired three reporters specifically to work on the project. They are Jelani Gibson, who was a journalism teaching assistant at the University of North Texas, Humeri Lodhi, a recent master's degree recipient at Columbia University, and Kaitlin Washburn, who had been a reporter for the Sun-Gazette newspaper in central California. Lodhi and Washburn both have journalism degrees from the University of Missouri.

The Star also received help from the Missouri Foundation for Health, a 20-year old philanthropy organization one of whose purposes is to "eliminate underlying causes of health inequities."

Altogether, spending on the project from various sources may approach \$500,000.

Todd Franko, a former Ohio newspaper



Photo by Robert Cohen, rcohen@post-dispatch.com

"It's OK, let her go," yells a family member as Khalilah January sees her daughter Deosha "Princess" Purnell for a final time at her funeral, supported by her brother Cedric Huntley, right, and sister Dana Stegall on Sept. 25, 2020. Deosha, 15, was injured in a drive-by shooting Sept. 14 at a gas station in the Riverview neighborhood and later died in a hospital. A police spokeswoman said that while no arrests have been made in the case, the investigation continues.

editor who is director of local sustainability and development at Report for America, called the Star-Foundation for Health alliance "a fantastic example of two vital groups coming together during a crisis. That they were strangers to each other and united in this way is very special."

Because gun violence is a major problem in the state's three biggest cities, the Star enlisted the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Springfield News-Leader, which agreed to take part in a collaboration among news organizations that often are competing.

The result was a two-year project that went public in mid-October with the title, "Gun Violence in Missouri – Seeking Solution." The news stories and editorials published so far in the Star can be seen here.

In its first major story, the Star said it had interviewed more than 75 "residents, activists, faith leaders and survivors" about the gun violence problem generally. One initial conclusion was that local residents in high-crime areas "said law enforcement was there to police them — not to protect them."

The newspaper said that experience reflects the nation as a whole, where experts say "a lack of trust in police drives gun violence."

Police officials agree that many homicides and non-fatal shootings go unsolved because of a lack of witnesses, "but many residents

“ but many residents say police create an environment of fear in Black neighborhoods that erodes public safety.”

say police create an environment of fear in Black neighborhoods that erodes public safety," the Star said.

As its initial part of the project, the Post-Dispatch published a three-part series in mid-November. One headline said, "Gun violence in Missouri: 'There's no war going on, but if you count up the body count ... you might think there was.'"

The main story was bylined Robert Patrick and Rachel Rice and was accompanied by photos by the newspaper's Robert Cohen

of the kind not usually seen in media crime coverage. For example, one of them showed members of the Urban League's Serving Our Streets gun de-escalation initiative taking a report from a woman shot in her wrist during a domestic dispute in a nightclub.

At the time, the city had recorded 225 homicides, "putting it at risk of reaching a homicide rate not seen in decades," the newspaper said. In that story, the Post-Dispatch quoted an expert casting doubt on the U.S. Justice Department's claim that it had reduced homicides by sending federal agents into St. Louis, Kansas City and other big cities this summer.

In its own first story in the series in mid-November, the Springfield News Leader said that in Missouri's third-largest city, domestic violence "plays an outsized role in the fatal shootings of women, accounting for 80 percent of them" between 2014 and 2018. Across the state, domestic violence was responsible for just one-third of the nearly 400 women shot and killed during the period.

The newspaper said Springfield, despite its relatively small size, has been ranked the 11th most violent in the nation. The Kansas City and Springfield newspapers interviewed more than a dozen residents, officials and experts and analyzed police investigations,

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court documents and medical records in three months' reporting in the project's first phase.

The project is not limited to published newspaper stories. It includes online sessions open to the public. After sessions based in Kansas City and Springfield, St. Louis was the site of the most recent discussion, on Dec. 8. One speaker, retired St. Louis police officer Robert Jordan Jr. said many city residents believe that if they are victimized, they should "shoot first and ask questions later -- why should they call the police?"

Initial reaction to the newspapers' work has been positive.

Jessi LaRose of the Missouri Foundation for Health said, "It has been exciting to see the diversity of the stories, with the focus on domestic violence in Springfield and the public

health approaches underway in St. Louis." LaRose said she hoped the project will have "longer-term impacts on how firearms violence is covered across the state."

It is coincidental that the gun violence reporting is taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are some parallels, because a major focus of the reporting is on the public health aspects of gun violence.

Reporting by the Star in St. Louis concluded that gun violence "intersects with almost every medical specialty: emergency room physicians, trauma surgeons, psychiatrists to help address lasting PTSD, dermatologists for wounds, and pain management specialists." The newspaper quoted Kristen Mueller, a former emergency room physician at Washington University who

now is studying gun issues there, as saying, "Just like COVID, [gun violence] is touching every aspect of our medical care."

Because the project is in its early stages, it is not certain how it will evolve as reporters learn more about the scope of the violence problem.

Next year, "Gun Violence in Missouri" will concentrate more on potential solutions to violence issues, says Star editor Cummings.

Speaking in advance of the St. Louis-based community session, Cummings said, "We've seen tremendous interest and engagement. We received nearly 400 rsmps in advance of our first two events and attracted more than 11,000 viewers across all platforms. We look forward to building on this success heading into 2021."

Veteran journalist uses blogging to connect during pandemic

by Sydney Sinks

After a hiatus, longtime journalist Tom Strini has returned to the blogging world, but it's not the world that he left.

Social media and advertising have changed how bloggers engage their audience. These tools can help pull in readers, but good writing is what builds regular readership. Strini knows that he's a good writer, and now he's using social media to develop his blog's content and audience.

"Right now I'm in a mode of, okay, let's just put the copy out there and promote it as best I can on social media," said Strini, a St. Louis native who was a longtime music and dance critic at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. "And, you know, just give it six months and see what stories resonate and what stories get readership and probably bend that way in terms of content going forward."

Strini originally started his blog in 2014, buoyed by the readership that he had built during his time at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel and then later at Third Coast Digest in Wisconsin. These readers followed him to his new space; right away, Strini was surpassing 10,000 page views per month.

Blogging fell to the wayside as Strini pursued other professional projects. But his work paused amid the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting him to revamp his blog from his new base in Columbia, Missouri, where his wife, Lee Ann Garrison, is the director of the school of visual studies at the University of Missouri.

"I thought, okay, let's just see if I can rebuild my audience for this blog," Strini said. "And so my condition now is I'm trying to figure out what might play in this market, and I'm trying to figure out what I want to do."

There are an estimated 500 million blogs on the Internet, with their authors accounting for more than 2 million blog posts every day, according to one estimate.

Strini's blog posts cover music, art, food, and politics – his personal interests. He believes that successful blogs usually have a narrow focus, so he plans to see what posts resonate with readers and then focus on this content.

Barbara Iverson, a longtime blogger and former journalism professor, compares the specific focuses of blogs to traditional journalistic beats. She said journalists who start blogs can explore their interests and personal lives while also keeping a professional tone and drawing on their journalism experience.

"There are a lot of things where you can say, oh, this isn't just a personal interest, I can actually do this in a journalistic way," said Iverson, emerita at Columbia College Chicago where she co-founded the hyperlocal ChicagoTalks and taught blogging.

Iverson remembers how a lot of her colleagues scorned blogging when it first

gained popularity. But as people grow more distrustful of journalists, she regrets that journalists didn't engage with the blogging world earlier to build trust.

"I always thought that journalism really missed an opportunity...Back then, they had a chance to reach out and put ahead a better relationship," Iverson said.

Now, the blogs of journalists like Strini might help repair that relationship between journalists and readers. But blogging has changed a lot in the past few years as new forms of media take its place. With social media use increasing, one wonders if blogs, once revolutionary, are on their way out.

Julie Bates, a professor at Millikin University whose research interests include blogging, understands this view but believes that blogs still have value. She argues that writers can use blogs as a platform to publish their work and write on their own terms.

"There are so many ways for writers to promote their work, share their opinions, and make connections via social media that I think it could be easy to predict the end of blogging as we know it. I'm not ready to do that, though," Bates said. "Instead, I think what we'll continue to see are writers who carefully craft their presence across platforms."

Strini is doing just that. Rather than competing with social media, he views his accounts as critical tools. He uses Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to promote his blog posts, encouraging his followers to read and share them.

"You have to think about, okay, what are my friends interested in? I'm only going to post things that I think are going to appeal to them," Strini said. "And I would say that this is really hugely important to leverage all those personal relationships. I know it's a little bit like Amway or something, but you really absolutely have to do it...There's a certain finesse in this. How do I get people to become my brand advocates without annoying them?"

Most social media sites also offer advertising and search engine optimization tools. But while Strini hopes to eventually make money through his blog and acknowledges that these tools would help him to do so, he wants to conserve his energy for writing rather than analyzing and advertising.

For now, Strini's revamped blog is still in its early stages as he builds up his readership and narrows his focus. Social media might be impacting how bloggers connect to readers and advertise their posts, but the hallmark of a successful blog – seasoned writing – remains the same, and that's his priority. He plans to give it a year to see what happens.

"I'll see where the numbers are, and if they're trending in the right direction, I'll put more effort into it," Strini said. "And if they're not, I'll say, well, maybe I'll just take up fly fishing or something."



The Vidette, a standard-bearer of student journalism, stopping the presses

by Christopher Heimerman

Each week, John Plevka sits down with his blue gel pen and critiques the weekly edition of The Vidette.

It used to be daily. He felt like it found its sweet spot in 2015, when financial realities forced the paper to go down to twice weekly, before the screws tightened in August 2019 and it became a weekly.

On April 27, the last physical edition of the 132-year-old Vidette will be printed.

"My blue ink is going to be pretty blurry. There's going to be a bunch of tears," said



Plevka

Plevka, a former Peoria Journal-Star executive editor who's served as general manager of The Vidette since 2012.

Plevka said student managers are forming a plan to print a special commemorative edition in late April or early May. The Vidette will report exclusively on its digital platforms - its website, social media channels, newsletters and app.

Plevka said financial strains were bearing down long before COVID-19 gripped the nation.

"I've been sounding these sirens for several years," he said. "We didn't just find out we had a financial problem."

The university gave Plevka and Business Manager Madeline Jean-Charles non-renewal notices in June.

As of July 1, 2021, the traditional advertising department, run by students and

a part-time professional business adviser, will be eliminated. ISU's NPR affiliate WGLT, led by General Manager R.C. McBride and also part of the communications program, will take over business and administrative oversight.

All that's etched in stone right now is that printing operations will cease. Stephen Hunt, executive director of the School of Communications, said an adviser will be retained to oversee The Vidette, and it will be determined in spring whether that's Plevka — who's leaning toward accepting a potential offer to stay on.

"There are going to be some hellish growth pains," he said. "There's going to be a lot of talented kids coming back. I'd like to kind of hold their hand through that next year."

A committee made up of Plevka, Hunt, an administrator from the College of Arts and Sciences, McBride, faculty members,



“If they’re not going to reward those folks, that’s when the thing will really come unglued.”

— John Plevka

journalism professors, and others, formed in August and began laying out the plan for The Vidette’s future.

“They have done an incredible amount of thoughtful work in a short period of time to produce an excellent plan moving forward,” said Diane Zosky, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Vidette was actually folded into the communications department in 2011, but The Vidette still paid its own bills, Plevka said. His chief concern is that as the newsroom is tied more closely to communications curriculum, it’s going to lose access to talent.

Previously, all that was required to work for The Vidette was taking six credits at ISU. While details are being ironed out, students will be required to take communications courses.

He’s optimistic the university will find workarounds for English majors to work for The Vidette, given how closely the major dovetails with journalism. He’s more concerned about losing the poli-sci, and even the biology majors who have played important roles at the paper previously. Many of them have even shifted gears and carved out careers in journalism, Plevka said.

“With those courses being elective for them, they’ll have to ask themselves the question, can they afford to do that?” he said. “Those kind of folks are probably going to be disappearing. The Vidette has prided itself on being a big tent, and inviting to everyone.”

Hunt addressed those concerns in an email Dec. 8, stating the program can manage enrollment in key production courses by removing course blocks, which would allow English majors, for example, to continue to participate in the Vidette.

The university’s student-run news broadcast, TV-10, is entirely run through the School of Communications curriculum, but it has a registered student organization, Student Television Workshop, that is open to all majors across campus. “We’re thinking of something similar for the Vidette,” Hunt said.

When Plevka transitioned to ISU in 2012, the Vidette’s budget was \$1 million. It’s now around \$250,000. He’s cut an IT position, reduced Jean-Charles’ hours, and pared down the number of paid student employees. The once five-day-a-week newspaper dropped its Friday edition in 2013 and went down to two days in 2015, becoming a weekly in August 2019. It’s still a weekly — for this school year,

at least, and as long as campus remains open.

The last fiscal year The Vidette finished in the black was 2013. It’s projected to finish more than \$200,000 in the red when the calendar flips to July next summer.

“Looking back, I do feel we could have been a little more proactive on this, potentially as far back as 4 or 5 years ago,” Plevka said.

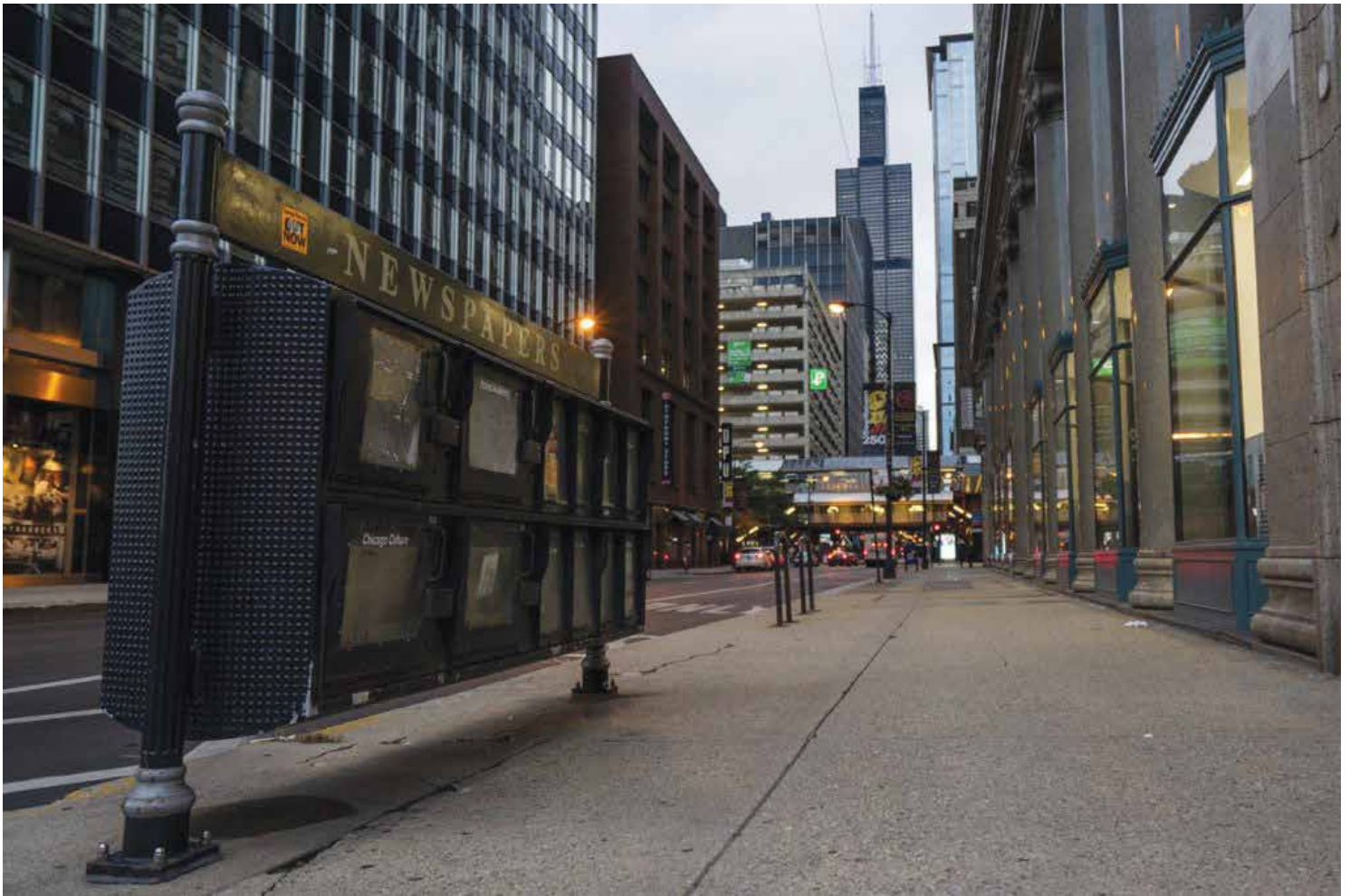
The Vidette is hardly on an island, as financial hardships led by advertising decline, exacerbated of course by the pandemic, have resulted in student newspapers throughout the Midwest reining in their print frequency.

The Daily Northwestern at Northwestern University went from printing five days a week to reporting online-only, at least for the time being. The Courier at Western Illinois University has committed to going online-only not just this school year, but for good.

The Vidette has won General Excellence in the Illinois College Press Association competition 2 out of the past 3 years.

Plevka said he’s hopeful the university will grandfather in current Vidette staff next fall, for them to not be required to take communications courses. He’s also “pushing hard” for the university to continue paying a staff of at least a half-dozen students. Currently, about a dozen are on the payroll.

“If they’re not going to reward those folks, that’s when the thing will really come unglued,” he said. “I don’t want to be around to see that. Then it becomes a class, and some students will be half-assing it. It’s a shitload of work to be an editor. It’s a great experience, and there’s value in doing it. You can’t have a student adviser as editor-in-chief. It takes away from the learning experience.”



The Chicago Reporter abruptly put 'on hiatus,' sparking vigorous protests, calls for re-opening

by Nancy Day

The year 2020 — one of massive Black Lives Matter rallies, high fatality rates in black and brown communities from Covid-19 and greater attention to income inequality as many Americans lost lives or livelihoods during the pandemic — seems an odd moment to close The Chicago Reporter, a non-profit covering issues of race and poverty since 1972.

Yet that's exactly what the executive director of the Community Renewal Society, the Reporter's parent organization, did. The Rev. Dr. Waltrina N. Middleton, who started her job on Aug. 5, 2019, dismissed Fernando Diaz, editor and publisher of the Reporter since November 2018, on Sept. 17 and put the online journal "on hiatus." The Reporter's last piece was posted Sept. 15.

"The Chicago Reporter is restructuring," according to an Oct. 4 statement from the Community Renewal Society, "which will entail a new Editor and Publisher" and an "Advisory Table."

A passionate effort to restore the Reporter was started by two former editors, Laura Washington, a columnist for the Chicago Sun-

Times and political analyst for ABC-7 Chicago, and Alden K. Lory, senior editor of the race, class and communities desk at Chicago's public radio station, WBEZ. This grassroots movement, fueled by many other Reporter alumni, now has a name (@SaveTCR) and a much broader constituency, worried about the loss of the Reporter's investigative reporting in these fraught times. Washington was Editor of the Reporter from 1990 to 1995, then had the additional title and responsibility of Publisher from 1995-2002. She also served as Interim Editor in 2012-2013.

On Oct. 5, Washington appeared on WTTW, the public television station in Chicago, with Angela Caputo, who worked at the Reporter from 2010 to 2014. Caputo is an investigative reporter for American Public Media Reports. Middleton released another statement before their live appearance. It said the future of the Reporter is "not in jeopardy" and claimed the rancor over her abrupt decision was the result of "manic hysteria" by "non-credible sources." Her proposed "Advisory Table of key stakeholders" would participate in hiring

decisions, among other duties, she wrote.

On Oct. 22, @Save TCR issued a statement including an open letter to the Rev. Dr. Middleton, signed by Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, State's Attorney Kimm Fox and many other civic, activist, religious and academic leaders, "demanding an immediate restart of The Chicago Reporter. It cited major accomplishments, among them:

Two days before the Reporter was shut down, it revealed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Chicago intercepted more than \$20 million in 2020 state income tax returns, mostly from low-income communities of color.

In 2015, the Reporter was the only media organization in the city to acquire a video of a police officer shooting into a car of unarmed African-American teenagers, one of many cases of police-involved shootings leading up the release of a video showing the fatal shooting of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald.

In addition to gathering political "clout," a famous word in Chicago, there has been one small promising step toward resolution. On

Oct. 16, @SaveTCR's founders had a meeting with Middleton, which all parties agreed would be off-the-record.

Other former editors and publishers of the Reporter include Kimbriell Kelly, a two-time Pulitzer winner, the first Black woman to be named Washington Bureau Chief of the Los Angeles Times, and Susan Smith Richardson, since April 2019, CEO of the Center for Public Integrity in Washington, D.C., the first African-American woman in that role. The announcement of Kelly's promotion noted that her Reporter investigation "into Countrywide Financial's subprime mortgage lending led to the nation's largest fair-lending settlement.

Diaz was managing editor for digital at the San Francisco Chronicle before taking the Reporter job. He declined to comment for this article.

Diaz is a well-known figure in Chicago journalism. A graduate of Columbia College Chicago, he was a Reporter intern and later worked for Chicago Tribune's Hoy, Chicago Now and the Daily Herald in Arlington Heights, Illinois. He returned to the city from the West Coast with his young family in 2018 to lead the Reporter. It seemed an excellent fit. In just his short tenure he continued, and some say, exceeded, his predecessor's prodigious fundraising. He had big ideas for the Reporter. He hired Olivia Obineme to be its first product development director, a term unfamiliar to earlier generations of journalists. Using a broad range of technologies and approaches, this specialty produces greater efficiency and often audience, revenue and/or readership growth, Obinime said. She completed stints at KQED in San Francisco and the Reporter as part of earning her master's degree in Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship from Northwestern. She said that mindset "spoke to Fernando's career path, too — digital forward."

"I was the last person on The Chicago Reporter team to find out" he was terminated, effective immediately, she said. Middleton told Diaz first, then the three (remaining) staffers, who had been working remotely since March.

Several people contacted for this piece noted that it was unusual to have a journalism entity organized as a non-profit in 1972. This century, as the fast-tanking economic model of advertising and subscriptions starves newspapers and magazines, causing many to close or be taken over by predatory hedge funds, it seems prescient.

The Reporter was founded by John McDermott, who moved to Chicago from Philadelphia to be director of the Catholic Interracial Council. As its first editor and publisher from 1972 to 1985, he immediately set its path, promising it "would go far beyond 'mere muckraking.'" He vowed it would be "dispassionate, accurate and constructive in its approach to the 'make or break' issue of race."

During much of its history, the incumbent editor selected the successor, ratified by the board. When there was no obvious internal candidate, search committees were formed. Washington served on the searches who chose Richardson in 2013 and Diaz in 2018.

Sources said the Community Renewal Society leader and board respected the

"church-state" boundaries in the past, content to bask in the Reporter's achievements, recognition and independent fundraising, and did not previously interfere with its internal operations.. That said, there are no journalists on the board who could explain the different, and only occasionally overlapping, roles and cultures of journalists and faith-centered entities. Although CRS provided support to the Reporter, including a newsroom in shared quarters, the Reporter's editor and publisher was charged with raising money — cultivating individual donors as well as foundation officers — in addition to training reporters, editing and promoting their work.

"It's a difficult job," said Charles Whitaker, Dean of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, Media, and Integrated Marketing Communications.

The Reporter has been awarded highly competitive grants from prestigious foundations such as McCormick and MacArthur. Among the other concerns of Reporter advocates is whether that funding might be withdrawn or suspended during the indefinite "hiatus."

Alysia Tate served as editor and publisher of the Reporter and subsequently was chief operating officer. Now an independent consultant who is director of strategy and organizational development for Cabrini Green Legal Aid, she told GJR that "now that everyone is responding to the disparities—structural racism, income inequality— is not the time to silence this important investigative voice."

Tate is a former student of Whitaker, who earned two degrees from Northwestern, then worked at several magazines and newspapers, including as Senior Editor of Ebony. He also taught for years at his alma mater, where, in May 2019 he was named Dean. During Washington's tenure, Whitaker served on the Reporter's editorial advisory board, created by McDermott and later disbanded.

Johnathon Briggs was hired as the Robert R. McCormick Fellow to work at the Reporter soon after his 1996 graduation from Stanford University, and has been a subscriber and monthly donor since. Now Communications Lead for the Energy Storage unit of Argonne National Laboratory, he said the Reporter "attracts a certain kind of talent and helps them develop this model of advocacy journalism," bolstered by rigorous fact-finding and checking. They not only learn investigative techniques and hone their writing skills, he said, "they take the skills and the ethos to future endeavors: "It really "becomes part of their DNA."

Its absence leaves a big hole in the media ecosystem, he emphasized. Acknowledging the rise of other, better-funded non-profits, including Pro Publica, which has a robust Chicago operation and is expanding, he said the Reporter is "unique...in a league of its own in terms of the journalism it does... unafraid to admit that it is carrying out a very lofty ambition, to investigate race and poverty issues with a social justice lens and an advocacy journalism bent."

"Especially now, during twin pandemics of racism and the corona virus," he continued,

not publishing means "not speaking truth to power when we need more data-driven, fair, clear, explanatory journalism to make us aware of the challenges we face and also offer solutions."

In addition to laying out the problems, the Reporter also offered solutions, whether it was pending legislation or similar models of success from other cities or states. "When everything seems so daunting," he said, "systemic racism, corruption in government... the Reporter gives us a clear path toward the better."

Whitaker said the Community Renewal Society's relationship with the Reporter "was always uneasy, but they made it work... unsettled around funding and oversight."

Middleton was appointed June 30, 2019, and dispatched to Nairobi, Kenya, to represent the Society at the Transatlantic Roundtable on Religion and Race. She replaced another pastor who served as interim ED for two years.

Briggs said the statements issued by Middleton in October puzzled and dismayed him. Missing was a "publicly expressed appreciation of what the Reporter truly is."

"It felt very heavy-handed," he said, where in previous years, "there always seemed to be a wall, a respect, a sphere of independence" for the Reporter.

It might be time for the Reporter to pursue an independent course, he mused:

"Break away completely and be its own nonprofit, incubated at a university or other entity so it can do what it does best and not be encumbered by the politics of CRS."

Echoing many others, and acknowledging that "none of us has all the facts," Briggs wonders, what does restructuring mean? Middleton has provided no details. She did not respond to requests for an interview, but on Sunday night, the Society's spokeswoman e-mailed a statement from Middleton supporting the Reporter. In it, she said, "Conversations around restructuring at the Chicago Reporter have been underway for months and that knowledge has been internally communicated."

She also vowed, "Once a new Editor and Publisher is in place, that person will have editorial independence in keeping with the journalistic norms the Community Renewal Society has upheld for the entire life of the Chicago Reporter." (The spokeswoman later wrote that statement was issued Oct. 8 and that more are planned.)

"I believe The Chicago Reporter is far better known than CRS," Briggs said. "If it could find another home, removed from interference, maybe a good thing could come out of this."

A veteran journalist and professor, Nancy Day's first Big City newspaper job was at the Chicago Sun-Times. She was assigned a desk next to "Parson Larson" the religion reporter. Long after Day moved to California to work for AP, Roy Larson became McDermott's hand-picked successor as editor of The Chicago Reporter. Day was a consultant to the Reporter for four months in 2017-18, after taking a buyout from Columbia College Chicago. She now lives in Massachusetts.

Throwback to another close election: Florida editor reflects on the difference between 2000 and 2020

by Jeff Kleinman

Everyone knows the famous line. It's screamed on TV and in the movies by breathless editors who have news that will change the world.

"Stop the presses!"

We felt that drama 20 years ago in the Miami Herald newsroom. Bush vs. Gore. Election Night 2000. Florida.

But first, we had to stop the trucks. They were about to hit the road with stacks of newspapers shouting "Gore wins" in the early editions bound for distant reaches of the state. The news changed, and the headline needed to change. So it became BUSH WINS IT.

A few hours later, as the final edition deadline passed, we learned Bush didn't win it. Not yet anyway.

Now we had to stop the presses.

I bolted from my desk to make sure the foreman got the word. I arrived breathless, from the whiplash of running the copy desk and running down three flights of stairs from newsroom to pressroom. I approached the press boss as the floor-to-ceiling machines rumbled. I had news that would change the world.

We quickly replaced the page with a new headline, NOT OVER YET. We could have used that one for this election, 20 years later.

Back then, it was butterfly ballots, hanging chads, days of counting, a legal assault.

Now, it's COVID-19, mail-in ballots, days of counting, a legal assault.

For journalists like me working behind the scenes, 2020 may sound all-too familiar. But it isn't. The pace and expectations are far different now in our newsroom.

Except for that mad dash to the pressroom, the 2000 election seemed to unfold in slow motion. The story plot moved glacially each day. Reporters arrived and camped out at the canvassing boards to monitor the counting. Day after day, week after week. The reporting was done on a newspaper schedule, with stories filed toward the end of the day, just in time to make the final edition. No Twitter jolts to worry about. No continually updating homepage. Digital was an afterthought in 2000, with the online team stashed away somewhere, maybe on another floor, scraping stories from the newspaper pages to post in the dead of night.

Fast-forward to this year's campaign and election.

Reporters and editors need to keep a finger on the "post" button 24/7, all while getting bombarded with conflicting information and disinformation. This is no slow-melting glacier. It's more like Niagara Falls, with tweets flying like missiles.

While we prepared for possible unrest on the streets, assigning journalists to a quick-response team just in case, we also have been told to take it slow. Our editor reminds us to

be careful with how we handle what we're hearing. That takes reporting, not just reacting.

All the while, deadline is ... well, deadline is right now. And the focus isn't on that one big headline at the end of the day. It's on the many headlines on stories and blogs posted online through the day and into the night, headlines that must grab the attention of Google searches and social scrollers.

COVID has complicated things, of course. We can't be everywhere we need to be. A local race in the Florida Keys, for instance, was so close that it needed to undergo a recount. But because of coronavirus restrictions, we couldn't be in the same room as the elections staff and canvassing board. The supervisor set up a TV, chairs and table outside the front doors, everything under a portable tent, to protect observers from the daily dousing in South Florida. And on Election Night, we didn't only send reporters to precincts to cover in-person voters, but also to mail drop-off boxes to capture those avoiding the inside of polling places.

Unlike 2000, Florida is not at the forefront of the counting drama this year. The state was called for Trump on Election Night. Most local races had clear winners and losers. Ballots didn't get lost and machines didn't break down. There were no confusing ballot designs or hanging chads, those bits of cardboard that didn't get punched all the way through 20 years ago. Floridians now fill in bubbles with a pen, just like a high school test taker, with ballots fed into machines for scanning.

Yet not everything is different. Readers are still turning to us to make sense of elections. With that comes thoughtful analysis of what is happening. In Miami, for instance, we took a step back from all the noise to look at why President Trump did as well as he did in Miami and across Florida. Another story explained how Joe Biden helped Democrats win the county mayor's race, resetting local politics. Those are stories typically not aired on local TV or cable news.

While the uptempo pace has changed for us, our purpose has not. Reporters are still digging, analyzing and breaking news. But just like that long-ago newspaper headline that almost got out of our building, one wrong move can destroy our credibility. There's pressure to be fast and first. We can no longer wait until the end of the day to publish a story. But we also need to tap the brakes as we check and confirm. It's hard. It's tiring. It's crucial.

There will be no running into the pressroom this year for a "Stop the Presses" moment. We no longer have our own pressroom, and my priority these days is digital.

But I'll always savor the chance of saying that iconic line. It sure beats, "Delete the tweet."



Community news outlets should build on high voter turnout in presidential election

by Jackie Spinner

More than 160 million people voted in the US presidential election, more than any other election in US history.

About two-thirds of eligible voters cast ballots, the most since 1900 when more than 7 in 10 eligible American voters cast ballots, according to numbers from the United States Election Project.

The youngest voters, ages 18 to 29, were key to the surge in voting. As the last votes were being counted, Gen Z and Millennials turnout topped 53 percent, besting the previous high of 51 percent, set in 2008, according to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University.

This creates an incredible opportunity for us to make the case for our own role, as journalists, in civic engagement, particularly to that young demographic we so far have been largely unsuccessful in courting as subscribers. It is our responsibility to remind our readers the importance of staying involved now that a president has been elected. After all, we will be the ones holding elected officials accountable for the promises they made as candidates. Our role as fact-checkers will continue.

It won't be easy. Our country is deeply divided along partisan lines, and people tend to remain in their own bubbles with similar viewpoints, creating echo chambers that leave them unchallenged and too often uninterested in facts that don't support previously held

beliefs. A Pew Center report this fall found that roughly four-in-ten registered voters say that they did not have a single close friend who supports the other major party candidate.

Journalists are no exception. Our readers suspect that we are in the "liberal" camp of voters, and a 2020 study from three academic researchers confirmed that indeed, a dominant majority of journalists identify as liberal or Democrats. But the study also found little evidence that our political leanings impact our journalism. We have failed to communicate the latter to our readers.

Still, even if many of our newsrooms are operating virtually at the moment because of the pandemic, we risk letting our own echo chambers reinforce how we see the world if our colleagues are the people with whom we primarily interact around the election. We have an obligation to seek out viewpoints that differ from our own and to do it purposefully, through our work and through our personal social media networks.

Since the hand-wringing of 2016, national news organizations visited our smaller communities to understand how President Trump could be elected. That continued as journalists tested his popularity in the days leading up to the election. Most published caveats about national polling for fear of getting caught again with a narrative that doesn't match a reality that we well knew in our smaller communities.

I don't need to read an op-ed in the New

York Times about why white Midwesterners voted for Trump. These are my people. I grew up with them and am friends with them on Facebook. (I worked with several at our college newspaper in Southern Illinois.) Many of my family members support Trump.

After the election ended – and when the pandemic ends, we will still send birthday greetings, gather for Thanksgiving and celebrate milestones.

Likewise, our communities will still gather. People who supported Donald Trump will share church pews and mosque carpets with those who supported President-Elect Joseph R. Biden. People who think the coronavirus is the same as the flu will share the grocery store aisles with nurses from our local emergency room. Teachers who came out for Biden will have the children of voters who cast ballots for Trump in their classroom.

These groups will speak to each other and argue and point fingers and retreat to their bubbles for reassurances.

No matter what happens, we need to be there.

A version of this story first appeared in Publisher's Auxiliary, the only national publication serving America's community newspapers. It is published by the National Newspaper Association. GJR is partnering with Pub Aux to re-print Jackie Spinner's monthly "Local Matters" column on our website. Spinner is the editor of Gateway Journalism Review. Follow her on Twitter @jackiespinner.

Pseudo news outlets push false claims around election

by Christopher Heimerman

On Nov. 4, the day after the election, the Milwaukee City Wire inaccurately reported that more votes were cast in seven wards in the city than there were registered voters. Right-wing pundits and conspiracy theorists rushed to tweet the story, and retweet those tweets. Fox's Sean Hannity weighed in. Some down-the-middle journalists also followed suit.

But USA Today found the claim was wrong.

The Milwaukee City Wire is one of more than 1,300 new sites run by noted Illinois conservatives Brian Timpone and Dan Proft. The news outlets, extending across the country, disguise right-wing political propaganda as local news.

Illinois Rep. Jeff Keicher, a Republican from Sycamore, has long since decided not to talk to a local news site that is part of the Timpone-Proft group.

Even though he hasn't talked to The DeKalb Times' website in years, Keicher's name appeared Nov. 13 in the headline of three of the five lead byline stories.

Since Keicher began declining to speak with the pseudo-local news outlet, he's winced as he's seen website quotes and social media posts appearing in Times' stories, most of them out of context.

"I'd continually see that my words were used in an incomplete way to fill a narrative that wasn't my own," said Keicher, who cruised to a 17-point victory in the recent election to secure a second term in the statehouse. "They are a thorn in my side. It does nothing but undermine quality access to good information."

This kind of misinformation is damaging, Keicher said. "When it spreads with speed and gets retweeted and quoted by others, wrong information in the wrong hands that confirms an ideology is very difficult to dislodge. It does us, as a culture, a disservice."

The DeKalb Times is one of at least 1,300 nationwide outlets run by Proft, a controversial, conservative talk-show host on 560-AM in Chicago and a former Republican gubernatorial candidate, and Brian Timpone, a former TV reporter-turned-entrepreneur. Timpone went to the University of Missouri School of Journalism and later was a spokesperson for a Republican House Minority leader Lee Daniels.

The sites go by innocuous names as The DeKalb Times, the St. Louis Reporter and Milwaukee City Wire. They create and disseminate misinformation; regurgitate unedited news releases from right-wing lawmakers, candidates, interest groups and public relation firms; and pluck quotes from legislators' sites to fit a conservative narrative.

The Times in Ottawa, Illinois, caught Timpone's operation red-handed in 2016, after his Illinois Valley Times twice plagiarized the local paper's election reporting by running direct quotes and claiming they were made to the Times.

Things seemingly haven't changed. The

DeKalb Times on Nov. 8 published a story on COVID-19 informing school districts' return to in-person learning includes quotes from three local superintendents – all lifted directly from the Daily Chronicle, a legitimate Shaw Media newspaper that covers DeKalb County.

One of the superintendents, Griff Powell from DeKalb School District 428, confirmed he'd only spoken with the Chronicle, not The DeKalb Times.

'I hang up'

Keicher first heard from The DeKalb Times in fall of 2016, when he began his first campaign to work in the statehouse.

He didn't recognize the area code. Reporters for "pink slime" pubs work from hundreds of miles away from the cities they "cover." Some even live overseas. They make about \$25 a story.

Whenever Keicher is asked for an interview, he vets the reporter and asks for credentials. When it's someone from The DeKalb Times, he declines and tells them not to call him anymore. He's not sure what their response would be.

"I don't know, because I hang up," he said.

Literal fake news has made interacting with the media an arduous task. Keicher subscribes to several publications, from The New York Times to the Daily Chronicle in DeKalb. He nearly reflexively turned down a recent interview with a reporter from the LaSalle Times, another legitimate Shaw publication, because the call came from an outside area code.

At least one of Keicher's GOP colleagues in the statehouse, State Rep. Sue Rezin (R-Morris), has regularly given interviews to another outlet in the network, the Illinois Valley Times, which in turn has painted her in a favorable light.

The New York Times pounced on that revelation and linked the operation to Proft. Also linked were two sitting Republican officeholders, including former gubernatorial candidate Jeanne Ives, who "paid Mr. Timpone's companies \$55,000 over the past three years, according to state and federal records."

Rezin did not respond to Gateway's email and phone requests for comment.

Keicher said there's nothing wrong with publications that lean left or right – as long as they report accurately and are up-front about their bias.

"That level of honesty would go a long way," he said. "It changes the conversation from being fake news to news viewed through a lens of different opinion."

"We're decimating our ranks of quality journalists – nationally and in Illinois," Keicher said. "We barely have any press reporters in the Springfield press pool."

He lamented that publications more interested in slinging mud and advancing an agenda under the guise of objectivity are as old as time. He recently read Ron Chernow's "Washington: A Life" and marveled at the

history of slanted, disingenuous journalism.

"Unfortunately, I think it's a hallmark of the human condition, to tear down people you don't agree with," he said.

But today, those attacks are instantaneous.

"While it's an issue that spreads quickly today without a check, back in the day, it would be a published broadsheet and circulate from person to person in taverns and roadside inns," Keicher said.

Election year surge

Metric Media's website lists 966 of the sites linked to Timpone and Proft in 49 states, while LGIS runs the 34 websites in Illinois, according to its website.

Metric Media states on its home page that it boasts more than 1,300 sites, nearly three times the about 450 sites that Columbia Journalism Review identified one year ago.

In 2017, Gateway Journalism Review published an expose of LGIS, for Proft was a principal, published 11 newspapers and 20 websites around the state. LGIS was a sister organization of the Illinois News Network, which boasted 60 print, digital and broadcast news outlets statewide.

At that time, Profit's Liberty Principles political PAC had received more than \$10 million from Rauner and two wealthy friends, and used it to fund pro-Rauner candidates. Profit shut down the Liberty Principles PAC in January, along with another PAC.

Metric Media's map stretched across the country. There are 57 sites in Texas, 51 in Ohio, 49 in Florida, and 48 in North Carolina, but just 23 in New York. California is home to 74 of them.

The closure of one in five newsrooms nationwide has created an ideal environment for these pseudo newsrooms to multiply.

"It's the confluence of a huge election season and news season, the decline of local news that's left an incredible vacuum, and of course, the rise of social media platforms," said Kjerstin Thorson, an associate professor and director of graduate students at Michigan State University, who specializes in online misinformation consumption. "The other piece of that is that while people might see network news as biased, they are more likely to trust local news."

That lends to the effectiveness of creating websites that, at a glance, look like perfectly reputable news sources.

Timpone's companies have changed names and rebranded multiple times over the years. He founded Journatic in 2006 and, after admitting in June 2012 to NPR's "This American Life" that Journatic used 300 freelancers writing under fake bylines, and after traditional media shops reported on plagiarism in Timpone's products, he rebranded Journatic as Locality Labs in 2013. It's now known as LocalLabs.

Neither Timpone nor Proft responded to Gateway's multiple email, phone, and social



media requests for comment.

Timpone told GJR three years ago, "You don't understand what a free press is. You have no concept of the history of media in this country. How much of a departure the last thirty years has been."

Asked why his reporters often don't live in Illinois, he responded, "Do you think it is any different than the Chicago Tribune using reporters in Chicago to call local people downstate? All they do is use the telephone."

Timpone said, "We are not beholden to anybody.... With other papers, the reporters listen to government agents. They are biased toward the government. We give voice to people who have never been heard."

WISN, an ABC affiliate in Milwaukee, was able to reach Timpone for the TV network's investigation of Milwaukee City Wire's false reporting. The City Wire had said the mistake had been caused because the city had not updated its voting records, but USA Today found that was not true. Timpone told WISN "The change in the records doesn't change the story's point materially at all."

However, records show more registered voters in each of the seven wards than votes – the opposite of what the Wire had reported.

Fighting misinformation

The lead story of the Nov. 11 edition of The New York Times was on election officials in all 50 states finding no evidence of voter fraud.

"Their lead story on A1 was about something that didn't happen," said Matt Hall, editorial and opinion director at the San Diego Union Tribune, as well as president of the Society of Professional Journalists. "News by definition is on something that did happen. That speaks to the climate we're living in."

He said decisions on whether to report on misinformation are complex, and that newsrooms should weigh the information, where it's from, and how widely it's been spread.

"There's a certain calculus that needs to

take place," Hall said. "Context and counting paragraphs matters."

Misinformation, when not put into context, thrives in the light.

"There's a real risk that in just reporting on misinformation, there are some who are going to read it not for the reporting, but for the bad information," Hall said. "One of the struggles for journalists at any time, and especially now, is when to amplify false information and in what context, and how to debunk it."

"In general, you don't want to repeat it," Thorson said. "If you have to repeat it, put it inside a truth sandwich."

Hall said some large newsrooms have actually hired and assigned reporters to the misinformation beat. In absence of that luxury, he said newsrooms should approach fact-checking holistically, and instill the importance of reporters watching for misinformation in their respective beats.

"Less important than any one particular episode of fact-checking is the entirety of your newsroom's effort and your information effort," he said.

Thorson said it's on journalists to "debundle" content from a source, then address it within the context of the facts.

"We have to give people credit. It's really hard to find out what's credible information," Thorson said. "I would not blame an 18-year-old for being confused about what's good and bad information."

So it's the journalist's burden to report the truth and debunk lies. She admits that's a challenge, with newsrooms being cut to the bone by financial hardships. "The time to do that debundling is no longer available to us," she said

Laurel White, a reporter for Wisconsin Public Radio, has been plenty busy on the Wisconsin election misinformation beat. On Nov. 12, she wrote a piece that added six more false claims to her running list, from felt tip markers disqualifying ballots to the Associated

Press' accidental report of inaccurate results proving the presence of election fraud.

Wisconsin Elections Commission head Meagan Wolfe, who did not respond to Gateway's request for an interview, conceded that the AP made an honest mistake, which was quickly corrected. Wolfe has had to refute countless false claims since Election Night.

What was conspicuously missing from White's report was Milwaukee City Wire's fraudulent report.

"I hadn't even seen [the Milwaukee City Wire] story," said her fellow WPR reporter Corri Hess, who in September began her term as president of the Milwaukee Press Club.

She said just Nov. 12, the club was discussing

the fake news epidemic, the way mainstream media is discredited, and the way journalists are vilified whenever they write something the reader doesn't agree with.

"The way these past four years have gone, with the president saying 'fake news,' it's gotten to the point I don't even think people know what they're saying when they say 'fake news,'" she said. "When they don't like something in the news, they call it fake news."

Hess said the press club is discussing hosting forums on that very topic in 2021.

"It is really hard, because I've seen things on Twitter that are wrong," she said. "It's hard as a reporter. I want to respond and say, 'Actually the fact is this.' But you don't want to appear partisan. It's really hard these days because you don't want to be labeled."

Downplaying concern

For the past 10 years, Thorson and her team at MSU have been studying young adults' social media timelines.

"The biggest thing we see is no news," she said of the 18- to 35-year-olds' feeds. "There's this misconception that everybody sees a lot of politics in their feed, but we've found people's news feeds are not awash with this content."

She conceded that most people see more than you can glean from a 90-minute review of their timeline, that many follow any number of groups. But she added that if they're local groups, they usually ban political posts.

While it obviously has great reason to make such a claim, Facebook recently said in a statement that political posts make up just 6 percent of its users' feeds.

She said she takes comfort, ironically, in the limited impact of counterfeit media.

"Most of the existing studies show it's not having a huge effect on people," she said. "In some ways, I wish it were the case that the media had huge effects."

'Domestic terrorist' better term than 'militia' for Michigan style group, experts say

by Zachary Jarrell

A local TV station's decision to describe a thwarted plot to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer as "domestic terrorism" revived a long-running debate in journalism circles about how such acts are labeled.

"After much discussion in our newsroom, we've decided that moving forward, we will be using the term 'domestic terrorism' or 'domestic terrorist,' rather than militia. We feel these words better define the subjects of the investigation," WDIV, the NBC-affiliate in Detroit, tweeted Oct. 9..

The investigation referred to one conducted by the F.B.I. on a domestic terrorist group who plotted to kidnap Whitmer. Fourteen members of the terrorist group have now been charged in the case.

WDIV's tweet has been retweeted over 31.5 thousand times, liked nearly 150 thousand times and commented on approximately 3,700 times, all of which are very high volumes for the station.

Prominent attorney and legal TV personality Adrienne Lawrence responded by saying, "Some newsrooms are getting it," and "we need more of it."

Kim Voet, the news director at WDIV, said several people in the newsroom approached her about using "domestic terrorist" instead of "militia."

To Voet, the decision was simple. The station "decided to go with what was in the federal documents," she said. "Which was an alleged domestic terrorist attack."

The issue of how to frame largely, if not entirely, white, right-wing, domestic terrorist groups has long been debated in the journalism community. How to cover terrorism, since the Sept. 11 attacks, has been up for debate in many newsrooms. But the politically charged society Americans live in today is shining a brand new light on the issue.

The Black Lives Matter protests that started in late May led to counter-protests that broke out across the country—leading to white terrorists', who call themselves patriots, reemergence in the news.

Whitmer was clear on her view on the issue, saying in a tweet, "They're not 'militias.' They're domestic terrorists endangering and intimidating their fellow Americans. Words matter."

She also has been very critical of President Trump's rhetoric for empowering these types of terrorist organizations, something the president rejected.

Voet agrees that there

shouldn't be much debate, saying, "I don't know if there are any sides."

Jeffery Blevins, head of the journalism department at the University of Cincinnati, agreed.

"News media need to do a better job minding their nomenclature in how they describe groups of people who use threats, intimidation, and unlawful violence," he said.

He continued to discuss a "double-standard" that many of the news media have.

A double-standard has led to terrorist attacks from Muslims being covered, on average, 4.5 times more than non-Muslim terrorist attacks, according to a study published in Justice Quarterly. For perspective, far-right groups were responsible for 67% of terrorist attacks in America this year, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies report.

"News outlets often seem to describe people of color who engage in that kind of activity as 'terrorists' while white people doing the same thing get the softer moniker of 'militias,'" Blevins said.

Columnist Arwa Mahdawi brought up the same point in an opinion she wrote for the Guardian.

Terrorists are often portrayed as "evil brown people" and thugs as "violent black people."

In contrast, a "militia" is defined as "misunderstood white men."

"Much of the media coverage of Whitmer's would-be kidnappers referred to them as members of a Michigan militia group called Wolverine Watchmen," she said.

Blevins also noticed this in his following of the news coverage of Whitmer's kidnapping.

"For crying out loud," he said. "New York Times headlines described the group of men who plotted to kidnap Michigan's governor as 'militia' and an 'anti-government group.'"

The headline he refers to was, "F.B.I. Says Michigan Anti-Government Group Plotted to Kidnap Gov. Gretchen Whitmer," which was the New York Times' original article reporting on the story.

They would later change their choice of words, referring to the group as "domestic terrorists," in a different story published later.

Blevins wants journalists and news organizations to treat every case of terrorism the same.

Priya Dixit, professor of political science at Virginia Tech who specializes in terrorism research, said the media should be "consistent" in how they label violent attacks while remaining "cautious about making broad claims," and "provide context regarding events under discussion."

She said journalists should be especially careful with the word "terrorist" in any context, pointing out that "labeling individuals/groups as 'terrorist' can have legal consequences that, for example, 'extremism' does not." So, she thinks seeing a "call for nuance" in the coverage of these attacks is "a good thing."

Still, consistency amongst coverage is at the forefront of the discussion.

Blevins posed the question, "Were the men who plotted to kill Americans on 9/11 'militia' or 'anti-government'?"

His answer: "Of course not, they were 'terrorists' and so were the men involved in this plot."



'When you get between your readers and a liar, the liar loses'

by James Janega

This was always going to be a close election. America is bitterly divided, and both sides were awake this year. My Facebook feed is full of friends who can't understand how fellow Americans could be so blind to the stakes of what this election means for people other than themselves.

I voted for social justice, for science and competency, for the environment, and for a chance to rebuild the economy. I voted for my neighbors, the outdoors, and my family. I voted my anger at how the Supreme Court was handled, and what that means for people on the margins of our society — many of whom are friends and neighbors who receive death threats by mail or by medical bills. No exaggeration. And I don't think a random voter in Missouri will care. I have no idea why that citizen voted the way they did. I just hope it wasn't out of shallow mean-spiritedness.

But of course, given the last four years, the last four days, and the last four hours — how could we not be blind to each other?

Polling lulls us with ever-more-sophisticated accounts of how people INTEND to behave without factoring whether they'll DO what they say. How does a 90% chance of victory become a 50-50 race? Turnout, spread across several voting options — all of which, by the way, seem to have worked smoothly.

It took each of us, massive participation. It's a buck that couldn't be passed, and clearly, it mattered now more than ever. We did it. There was record turnout, and it's a good thing: If any of us had sat this out, it would have been a blowout for the other side.

If only it felt better.

But I think the tone of this election was a symptom, not the problem. We're feeling a moment marked by simultaneous turning points. One generation with different (and divergent) memories of America's past is passing the torch to a new generation, as the demographic make-up of the United States shifts to a more diverse and urban population, and as the economy that once sustained the American Dream transitions into uncharted territory benefiting few, recommended by no one, and understood by none of us right now.

Unexamined, those moments of existential crisis create despair, desperation, frustration — all of which should sound familiar. (I liked your post about it.) But examined, the fault lines under America can provide hope and forge new connections — even spell out an exciting task list for all of us to make this divided country the place where we want to live and leave for our children.

But we have to examine them. Even before COVID isolated many of us in our homes, those forces isolated us in our communities and our experiences. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs has cruelly pushed Americans into even deeper isolation.

“ And as votes show, there is no “wave” to sweep away our problems for us. It's you. It's me. It's what we do next, and we have to triage ... ”

Will we be safe? Will there be food? Will I have a future? Will my family?

I bear no ill will to people of goodwill. As a former journalist, I was late to form “opinions,” though I hold a few very deeply now. They're informed by experiences that probably aren't yours — but that probably share a lot with everyone's.

My whole life has been about talking to everyone, and my jobs and family life drive it home. The phone calls I made to swing states the last few weeks filled in details.

My experience tells me two things: What we have now is not sustainable. And changing it will take courage and the work of a generation.

That's a hard thing to ask right now. We're exhausted.

And as votes show, there is no “wave” to sweep away our problems for us. It's you. It's me. It's what we do next, and we have to triage:

We need to count the votes and weather the immediate emotional storm, then turn quickly to critical care for COVID and our economy, and settle into the long and generational task before us to rebuild and repair the hollowed-out middle class of our society. And we need to widen the circle to include the more diverse and urban America we are becoming.

Count the votes, and learn from them. Something this close is a message. Other things shouldn't be open to interpretation: Wear masks to contain the out-of-control growth of COVID, so we can test and contact trace a more manageable and smaller infected population. And then get a vaccine, and then TAKE the vaccine. We need a consistent message.

I had a preferred candidate to accomplish that, but anyone can do it.

Congress needs to pass short-term economic relief for the eight or nine million people who haven't just lost jobs in this mess, but who have slipped below the poverty level. That was cynical; let's move on, please.

And then let's build an economy worthy of handing from one generation to another. That means investing in an education system that prepares our kids for the kinds of problems they'll have to solve, and that's not a knife-fight of privilege for the slots connected to advantage.

Old industries don't provide enough jobs; new industries will have to replace them. That's incentives and tax breaks with strings

attached. Our infrastructure was built for the 1950s. The year 2050 will look different, and it's closer at hand. Grab a shovel.

We'll have more mouths to feed than ever — let's figure out how to feed ourselves and share the bounty. The world is changing and it's worse in many places outside our borders. More people will seek opportunities from an America that's always been defined by that. (Remember, children of immigrants?) In return, they bring fresh ideas, fresh energy, great recipes, the perfect word for what you're feeling, and the kind of faith in opportunity that refreshes all of us.

And as things get more crowded, we're going to have to take much, much better care of the Earth. New power? New modes of transportation? New infrastructure? Jobs. Jobs, plus clean water to fish in.

Along the way, we might just restore our faith in institutions. If we don't trust the bank where we keep our money, the newspaper where we get our news, the neighbors who want to contribute to our community, where do we stand? Permanent uncertainty. What fixes all of that? Transparency, communication, and the courage to engage with one another. I know, because I spent 20 years in the news business, and the last and best thing I did was help connect the journalists of the Chicago Tribune with the people who read it. The result was a built-in BS detector that kept the conversation relevant and on-point. I only regret that more people don't do it, because I learned when you get between your readers and a liar, the liar loses. Every time. Institutions shouldn't be impersonal. They're us.

Can we do it? We put a man on the moon. We're Americans.

No candidate is going to do those things for us. The hero we all desperately want is us. Let's do it, and others can come with.

We'll have to agree together about how to do it, and how much to do, and where. Some of those ideas will be radical, but when we actually do it, it'll feel normal.

But where we need to go is obvious: It can't be where we're standing, right now.

Confidence in the election?

If we can do the next thing together, I'm confident.

If we allow America to be a zero-sum game, I'm confident we're in bigger trouble than it seems like now.



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