CONVENTION 2015

Louisiana, Mississippi associations to convene this June in Big Easy

Newspaper professionals from two states will convene in New Orleans June 18-20 for the second of two consecutive joint meetings of the Louisiana and Mississippi press associations.

The 2015 Joint Convention will be held at the Loews New Orleans Hotel. Registration is now open and hotel reservation information available at the event website lpampa2015.com.

Sessions planned for the convention include a panel discussion on the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina’s landfall, as well as a number of breakout programs on editorial, advertising and general newspaper topics.

Morley Piper, a retired newspaper executive who as a young lieutenant in the U.S. Army landed with other allied forces force at Normandy in 1944 will be the keynote speaker at Friday’s opening luncheon.

Piper, formerly a national account manager for the Boston Globe and retired executive director of the New England Newspaper Association, returned to Normandy in June 2014 for the 70th anniversary of the invasion.

Session speakers include newspaper publisher and advertising pro Peter Wagner, editorial trainer Robert Buckman and non-verbal communication expert Jan Hargrave.

The event will kick off with an opening reception at the Loews Hotel the evening of June 18.

Room rates are $149 nightly from June 17-20 and should be made by May 28 to receive the group rate. Reservations can be made online or by calling 866-211-6411.

William Winter is a statesmen of near unrivaled stature in the Magnolia State. He endured plenty of jokes and then shared good memories of his political career at the annual fundraiser for the MPA Education Foundation. Page 8.
THANKFUL FOR THOSE FOLKS WHO HAVE ‘INK IN THEIR BLOOD’

Woodville, Miss., is one of those places you just don’t pass through. Tucked away in the southwest corner of the state, you have to be going there to get there.

I visited the quaint little town with the historic newspaper in February during a two-day adventure around the Magnolia State with Layne Bruce, executive director of the MPA, and Dr. Will Norton, Dean of the Meek School of Journalism and New Media at Ole Miss.

None of us had ever been to Woodville – home of the oldest, continuously operated newspaper in Mississippi.

We knew we were in the right spot when we rounded a corner just a block off the old town square and saw a large Linotype – the line casting machine that was the industry standard for newspapers from the late 19th century up to the 1960s – sitting outside an old concrete block building nestled beneath a tall oak tree and surrounded by thick cast iron plants.

The paper’s history – it was established in 1823 by William A.A. Chisholm – was enthralling on its own, but we were even more taken by the gracious charm of publisher Andy J. Lewis and his wife Lili.

Andy is a fourth generation publisher of The Woodville Republican. His great-grandfather acquired the newspaper in 1879. Andy and Lili live next door to the paper office and he sells insurance on the side, but he was quick to point out he loves everything about the business.

Thursday morning we visited one of the hardest working men in the business in Marcus Bowers, publisher of the 167-year-old Rankin County News. We were extremely lucky to catch Marcus, an MPA past president, in his Brandon office. He stays on the go doing whatever is needed for his newspaper and community.

Tim Reeves, the new publisher of The Vicksburg Post, took us to lunch at Walnut Hills on our visit to the River City. The fried chicken, squash, cabbage and cornbread was unforgettable, as was Reeves’ stories of his experiences in Selma, Ala., and his excitement for the future of The Post.

I had driven through beautiful downtown Port Gibson many times through the years. The “golden hand pointing to heaven” atop the Presbyterian Church is worth a visit in itself.

The town’s charm is noted in the fact it was spared destruction by Gen. Ulysses S. Grant in 1863 during the Civil War because it was “too pretty to burn.”

One place best captures the allure of the town for me – the office of The Reveille. Marjorie Bufkin gave us the grand tour of the downtown office that’s worthy of charging admission for its great newspaper artifacts.

The offices of The News-Commercial in downtown Collins were very similar. Executive Editor James Arrington Goff saves everything, including an old Heidelberg press and a Linotype used by his father Jimmy Goff and grandfather James Arrington Goff Sr.

He shared stories of working at the newspaper when he was as young as 8 years old. His mother, 78-year-old Analyn Goff, is still publisher of the newspaper and was on hand to greet us when we entered and had some fun with me comparing her iPhone 6 Plus with my smaller version.

The trip also included some laughs with MPA board member Jack Ryan, publisher of the Enterprise-Journal in McComb; some of the best barbecue you will find anywhere, at Leatha’s in Hattiesburg, with The Lamar Times publisher David Gustafson; and a wonderful visit with Adam Prestridge, publisher of The Columbian-Progress in Marion County.

Jack, David and Adam, like so many other newspaper publishers across this state, play key roles in their respective communities reporting news, promoting business, documenting history, and sharing the important events in the lives of their many readers.

When you witness their zeal for their work, it’s easy to understand why 1.5 million Mississippians regularly read a newspaper and why those of us with ink in our blood are so thankful.

MPA-MPS President Joel McNeece is publisher of The Calhoun County Journal. His email address is joelmcniece@gmail.com. Follow him on Twitter @joelmcniece.
TRANSITION

Newton County publisher takes reins of Brookhaven, Prentiss newspapers

**BROOKHAVEN**

Newton County native Luke Horton has been named president of Brookhaven NewsMedia and publisher of *The Daily Leader, The Prentiss Headlight* and affiliated publications.

Horton, 31, has been serving as publisher of *The Newton County Appeal* in Union-Newton.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to serve this community,” he said. “We will build upon the strong foundation of the 133-year-old newspaper and join the great team already in place at the newspaper.”

Horton and his wife, Lauren, have five children, Ethan, 8; Beverly, 5; Levi, 3; Adah, 18 months; and Noel, 3 weeks.

“We are thrilled to have Luke join us and lead the Brookhaven and Prentiss newspapers,” said Kevin Cooper, vice president of Boone Newspapers, which is an owner of Brookhaven NewsMedia. “Luke’s unique experience, strong work ethic and family values make him the perfect, long-term newspaper leader for Brookhaven and Prentiss.”

Horton graduated from Mississippi State University and began his newspaper career at *The Star-Herald* in Kosciusko. He later served as news editor of *The Natchez Democrat* and editor of the *DeSoto Times Today* in Hernando and worked in North Carolina before taking the publisher’s job in Union. He has won numerous state and regional journalism awards for photography, reporting, design and commentary.

Horton has also served as a missionary in South Africa while in college and as a Children’s Protective Services caseworker in Houston, Texas.

“Newspapers have the power to do good in their communities,” he said. “A newspaper should not only inform and entertain, but also work to better the lives of those in the community.”

Dinner at the Press Club

MPA members recently dined at the National Press Club during the annual National Newspaper Association Leadership Summit in Washington, DC. Karson Hoagland, a senior at the Meek School of Journalism and New Media, was one of 10 news fellows who participated in a two-day editorial workshop focusing on national reporting issues. Pictured are MPA President Joel McNeese of The Calhoun County Journal in Bruce, Meek School Dean Will Norton, Hoagland, MPA past president Lisa McNeese and Executive Director Layne Bruce.

**DATELINES**

5/7 Webinar: Data Driven In-Depth Reporting. Details at onlinemediacampus.com.


5/25 Memorial Day. MPA-MPS office closed.

6/18 MPA-MPS-MPAEF Board Meetings. Loews New Orleans Hotel.

Bill increases transparency, but fight continues

The first quarter was, as predicted, short of neither hills nor valleys for us at the Association. We expected the legislative session to be relatively quiet as House and Senate members kept their eyes on re-election later this year rather than re-inventing the wheel at the Capitol.

Nevertheless, there were still challenges. An unexpected one was the resistance Senate Bill 2407 ran into in the House. The legislation was filed by Sen. Brice Wiggins of Jackson County and repealed the exemption publicly owned hospitals enjoyed from the Open Meetings Act.

One would have expected this bill to sail through to the Governor’s desk after it passed the Senate unanimously. The horror story of what happened to pensioners who once worked for Singing River Health System in Pascagoula is well documented: The Sun Herald in Biloxi and The Mississippi Press newspaper in Pascagoula had been telling the story for months.

But the bill suddenly stalled when it moved over to the House in February. It sat on Speaker Phillip Gunn’s desk waiting on a committee assignment until the shot clock nearly ran out. Only after some pressure was applied by MPA members and open government advocates was the bill feebly assigned to the House Committee on Health and Human Services.

There it was stripped of its power to enforce the Open Meetings Act at every public hospital. Instead, committee members caved to the formidable pressure of the Mississippi Hospital Association, one of the most powerful lobbies in Jackson.

And, again, only after the state press corps and, specifically, MPA member papers turned their unrelenting glare to the issue was parity restored to the bill and it passed on to the Governor for his signature.

“It’s the kind of bill that everyone wants to take credit for when it comes to pass. That is, of course, only after the hospital association was either mollified or simply realized the snowball had grown into an avalanche.

The bill is by no means perfect. It still allows for too many exceptions to the rule of openness.

But we ended the session with a stronger Open Meetings Act than when we started.

And that has to be considered a win.

ELSEWHERE, WE suffered the indignity of the whims and wishes of a mercurial and nearly almighty Board of Trustees of the state Institutions of Higher Learning.

After unceremoniously – and quite ham handedly – giving Ole Miss Chancellor Dan Jones the boot, the IHL Board rubber stamped a budget cutting proposal from Delta State University president Bill LaForge. The cuts include shuttering the campus’ 83-year-old newspaper, The Delta Statement, and ends the small but scrappy journalism program at the school.

We feel for the university, its students and alumni. There are tangible and intangible consequences to loss of a newspaper in any community, particularly ones that tend to be close-knit like school campuses.

While the paper will supposedly live on as an online-only publication, the school is also losing its lone journalism professor.

I am fairly dispassionate (primarily irreverent) about most things. But about this I am not: A student newspaper is an invaluable teaching tool. Not just for the instruction of journalism, but for its ability to teach an appreciation for the written word, for curiosity and for taking an interest in the world around us.

Delta State’s leadership effectively declared such things are not cost effective, even after MPA expressed interest in providing some funding to keep the paper in print.

For its part, the IHL Board rubber-stamped LaForge’s recommended cuts, which touched many other programs aside from journalism and the newspaper.

There was no discussion.

Proving IHL does not interfere in school affairs...except when it does.

Layne Bruce is executive director of MPA-MPS. His email address is lbruce@mspress.org.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Governor to sign bill increasing public hospital transparency

>> From the Associated Press

JACKSON

Gov. Phil Bryant was expected to sign a bill to increase public hospital transparency by the end of April.

The bill, championed by MPA and other open government advocates like the Mississippi Center for Freedom of Information, was filed in response to pension losses at Singing River Hospital in Jackson County. Financial problems existed for months before coming to light, largely because the board of the county-owned hospital routinely met in private.

“It breaks my heart to know that you find yourself in this situation,” Bryant, a Republican, told more than three dozen of the hospital’s retirees and their relatives who traveled to the state Capitol in March to push for Senate Bill 2407.

The House and Senate both passed in late March the final version of the transparency bill, which would require boards of publicly run hospitals to keep most of their meetings open to the public. Boards could close meetings to discuss employment contracts for physicians or other hospital workers. They could also close meetings to discuss competitive business matters and patient information.

“No one should ever have to go (through) what you’re going through,” Bryant told the retirees. He won a standing ovation from the group in a crowded committee room. Many wore buttons or T-shirts with the slogan: “Do the right thing.”

Sen. Brice Wiggins, R-Pascagoula, told the retirees their support for the bill pushed it through the House and Senate.

“It put a face to the issue,” Wiggins said.

Sabrina Smith of Lucedale said her mother, Jean Manning, retired after 32 years as a pediatric nurse at Singing River Hospital and was thrown into financial uncertainty because of the pension situation.

“She can’t go on any of the trips she planned. She didn’t buy any Christmas presents,” Smith said in an interview. “She’s very upset. She can’t sleep. She has anxiety. She has heart problems.”

Lt. Gov. Tate Reeves, who also spoke to the retirees, said Wiggins persistently pushed for the transparency bill.

“We think that the taxpayers ought to know what’s going to happen to their money; and that it shouldn’t be confined to cities or counties,” Reeves said. “It should be all public money.”
Department of Education refused to fill records request despite opinion it was valid

By EMILY LE COZ
The Clarion-Ledger

JACKSON

An email obtained by The Clarion-Ledger shows the Mississippi Department of Education denied a public records request even though it apparently knew its reasons weren’t valid.

The Clarion-Ledger on March 17 requested the names of vendors vying for a $122 million contract to administer statewide assessments to hundreds of thousands of elementary and secondary public school students in Mississippi.

The agency denied the newspaper’s request on March 26, saying the state Personal Services Contract Review Board rules and regulations allow it to withhold that information until awarding the contract.

But in an email sent more than a week before the agency’s denial, PSCRB Director Teselyn Melton told MDE Director Donna Hales that “the rules do not prohibit your agency from providing the names of vendors submitting proposals or the number of proposals received prior to the award.”

MDE apparently ignored that information when rejecting the newspaper’s public records request. It also ignored the Mississippi Public Records Act, which requires public bodies to release all information unless it falls under one of about two dozen exemptions. The names of vendors vying for a contract fit no such exemption.

“In our mind, the Public Records Act is always going to trump,” said Deputy State Personnel Director Shawn McGregor, whose agency oversees the contract review board, otherwise known as the PSCRB.

MDE also said in its same denial letter said it isn’t required to create a document that doesn’t already exist and that, since the agency doesn’t have a list of vendors, it doesn’t have to provide one.

But MDE’s own “Employees’ Procedures Manual” for purchasing states that “proposals received must be recorded on the established Register of Proposals,” which suggests such a list does exist.

It appears MDE worded its denial based on Funches’ email. Funches had said the Register of Proposals isn’t subject to public inspection until after the award of the contract, even though the names of the vendors can be shared publicly before that time.

If the Register of Proposals isn’t public, and if it’s the only document containing a list of vendors, then the request is denied. Or so the reasoning seemed to go.

But the Public Records Act makes no exemptions for a Register of Proposals.

“We agree that the Public Records Act governs, and that any conflict would be resolved by the Public Records Act,” McGregor said. “What the rules are trying to protect is proprietary information, which is also protected under the Public Records Act.”

Redactions allowed

The act allows agencies to redact sensitive or proprietary information from public records.

The Clarion-Ledger had appealed MDE’s denial the same day it got it and was told to expect a response. It didn’t get one, despite repeated requests for an answer over the course of more than two weeks.

MDE spokeswoman Patrice Guilfoyle informed the newspaper in mid-April that the agency has no appeals process, which prompted The Clarion-Ledger to file a complaint with the Mississippi Ethics Commission.

“… (The) agency is deliberately trying to run the clock on its obligation to release public records until after it awards the contract,” The Clarion-Ledger wrote in the complaint.

The state Board of Education awarded the contract April 16 to Questar Assessment Inc. Immediately afterward, it provided the public records originally sought nearly one month ago, along with the letter that reiterated the agency’s questionable denial.

McDavid Conference held at Craft Center

A trio of newspaper professionals (top photo) discussed the demands of the modern news cycle and news consumers with 75 collegiate journalists during the annual O.C. McDavid Conference March 26 in Ridgeland. Taking part in the discussion are David Gustafson (from left); publisher of The Lamar Times and The Petal News, Therese Apel, reporter for The Clarion-Ledger and Josh Mlot, sports editor for The Lamar Times and The Petal News. A keynote address was presented on sunshine laws by Leonard Van Slyke, attorney for the Mississippi Center for Freedom of Information. Pictured with Van Slyke (bottom photo, from left) are Chuck Cook, advisor for The Student Printz at the University of Southern Mississippi and MPA President Joel McNeice, publisher of The Calhoun County Journal in Bruce.

Radionian, Reflector hold on to General Excellence honors

The student newspapers at Jones County Junior College and Mississippi State University were recognized as the best in their classes during the Better Newspaper Contest Student Division awards handed out at March 26 at the annual O.C. McDavid Conference in Ridgeland.

The Radionian at JCJC and MSU’s Reflector took top prize in the General Excellence category for the second consecutive year. Over 70 student journalists from Mississippi took part in the event, which featured a keynote presentation on Mississippi’s Sunshine Laws by Leonard Van Slyke, attorney for the Mississippi Center for Freedom of Information.
Deaths

Claude Sitton

ATLANTA

Claude Sitton, a forceful editor who led The News & Observer in Raleigh, N.C. from 1968 to 1990, won the Pulitzer Prize as a columnist for the paper, and as a fearless reporter for The New York Times set the standard for national coverage of the civil rights movement, died March 10 in Atlanta. He was 89.

Sitton was regarded as one of the best newsmen in American history for his work as a Times’ Southern correspondent from 1958 to 1964. He crisscrossed the region, often risking his life to cover nearly every major civil rights story in those years, writing about the lunch counter sit-ins that began in North Carolina, the protests as the University of Mississippi was desegregated, the assassination of civil rights leader Medgar Evers, the church bombing that killed four schoolgirls in Birmingham, and the murder of three civil rights workers in Neshoba County.

Sitton was a Southerner, born in Atlanta on Dec. 4, 1925. He grew up on a farm near Conyers, Ga., just east of Atlanta. His father worked on railroads as a conductor and brakeman, and his mother was a schoolteacher.

He served in the U.S. Navy and Merchant Marine during World War II, and after the war entered Emory University, where he intended to major in business. He switched to journalism and became editor in chief of the student newspaper. He graduated in 1949, though not before first taking a job with International News Service, where he worked at night for his final three months of college. The next year, he joined United Press, where he worked first in the South, then for five years in New York.


Survivors include his wife, Eva Whetstone Sitton, whom he married in 1953, and four children: Lauren Lea Stanley, Clinton Whetstone Sitton, Suzanna Sitton Greene and Claude McLaurin Sitton.

Gus Harwell

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.

Former Tallahassee Democrat publisher Gus Harwell died March 6 in Port Orange, Fla. Harwell, 85, was publisher from 1973 to 1981 — becoming the first person to hold the title of publisher in the corporate era.

Harwell left the Democrat in July 1981 to move to Miami as Knight-Ridder’s vice president of operations for small and mid-sized newspapers. He retired in 1995 and moved to Port Orange in northeast Florida.

“Gus was a terrific newspaper guy. He knew his business, knew his community and knew what he wanted to accomplish,” said Mike Pate, a former Democrat publisher (1997-2005). “He came across as hard-nosed and crusty. But he had a heart as big as all outdoors.”

Harwell was a native of Tupelo and began his journalism career as business manager and reporter for his high school newspaper. He graduated from the University of Missouri’s top-ranked school of journalism and spent seven years working for newspapers in his native Mississippi before Knight-Ridder hired him in 1962. He spent several years as publisher of Knight-Ridder’s Boca Raton News before coming to Tallahassee.

Harwell and his wife, Mary Ann, were married 62 years before her death in February 2014. They had a son, who died during the 1970s, and one daughter, Suzanne.

A memorial service was held March 21 in Port Orange.

State college board OKs budget cuts at Delta State, shuttering newspaper

>> By JEFF AMY
Associated Press

The College Board has voted to eliminate Delta State University’s Journalism program, despite objections by journalism groups.

The board voted unanimously April 16 to adopt the recommendation from DSU President Bill LaForge. He says the program had too few students and says it was chosen for closure as part of a larger package of cuts aimed at saving $1 million per year. Four other undergraduate programs will be eliminated, including athletic training, communication studies and theater arts, insurance and real estate and modern foreign languages.

“There is never any gleam when there are program eliminations,” LaForge told the board Thursday.

However, he said the cuts were necessary to eliminate $1 million in spending to stabilize university finances. He said the programs were chosen because of low enrollment, not being essential to the university mission, and having low opportunities for future growth.

“As a regional university, ladies and gentlemen, we just cannot be all things to all people,” LaForge said.

The weekly Delta Statement student newspaper will cease print publication after next fall and become online-only beginning in spring 2016.

LaForge said the student government supports that decision. Some critics have claimed LaForge is shuttering the newspaper because of unflattering coverage, but he said the decision had already been made before those stories were printed.

Journalism professor Patricia Roberts is likely to be terminated as a result of the action. Roberts has said she expects to remain through next year to complete classes that some students need to graduate.

The Mississippi Press Association, Society of Professional Journalists, Southeast Journalism Conference and Student Press Law Center all have protested the plan.

“Eliminating this resource detracts from the mission of a university, which is to prepare young people to become good citizens and intelligent, trained employees,” SPJ wrote in a Thursday news release.

The press association said shuttering the print edition of the newspaper would be harmful.

“Aside from depriving students, faculty and alumni with an important publication to record the history and activities of your school, the discontinuation of The Statement, an 83-year-old newspaper, in the collective opinion of this board, fundamentally inhibits First Amendment rights of everyone associated with your fine institution,” association directors wrote in an April 13 letter.

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State must give public access to information

Mississippi boasts plenty of sunshine, but not when it comes to public bodies.

Any public body can meet in secret for such excuses as personnel, litigation, land deals, bringing in an industry, investigative proceedings, preparation of tests or extraordinary emergencies.

In practice, some bodies say they’re behind closed doors to talk about “personnel” when, in reality, they discuss that and other business that should be public.

Mississippi’s public records law bars charging more than “the actual cost of searching, reviewing and-or duplicating and, if applicable, mailing copies of public records.” Despite this requirement, some try to charge exorbitant fees, and many charge fees beyond cost.

Jennifer Fitzgerald, a Rhode Island attorney researching death row cases, has requested court records and invoices from courthouses across Mississippi.

One clerk initially asked her to pay $3,002 for what wound up being 24 pages of copies. Some demanded up to $3 a page, plus fees as high as $60 an hour. Another refused to make her copies, requiring her to come by in person (which would obviously require a 21-hour drive). The state Ethics Commission bizarrely upheld this clerk’s actions as OK.

In its public records manual, the commission suggests public bodies charge no more 15 cents a page.

Last year, The Hechinger Report asked the state Department of Health for copies of all inspection reports and complaint investigations for Mississippi’s 1,757 state-licensed child care programs over the past calendar year in hopes of putting them all online so parents could learn more about programs before enrolling their children.

Health Department officials replied they would have to conceal names and Social Security numbers of children at a cost, plus making copies of the records, of $26,527.

Not wanting to pay that much, Hechinger reduced its request to include only the most recent investigations from one of the nine districts and the complaints from the past calendar year.

Department officials said it would take them an average of 45 minutes to prepare a report of about 10 pages for each of the district’s 438 centers and would cost $40 an hour — a minimum price tag of $8,627.

Hechinger filed a complaint with the Ethics Commission, saying the cost should be lower.

The commission reduced the cost to $3,743. Hechinger has decided to pay.

The Health Department can perform a huge service if it follows the lead of 20 or more states and makes these child care records available online. At least one study shows that when this information is made public, the quality of these child care centers improve.

Parents make few more important decisions than that of child care services, which cost an average of $4,312 for a 4-year-old child. How great it would be if parents could be informed about these services before leaving their children.

The Clarion-Ledger, April 4, 2015

Execution secrecy

A House bill that would have made certain information surrounding state executions secret and allow lawsuits against anyone who discloses details eventually died in the Senate.

HB 1305 was a similar bill to others filed around the country this year to limit public disclosure of certain details related to executions.

“The problem is the identities of the execution team are being sought out,” Rep. Andy Gipson (R-Braxton) told lawmakers in February.

The bill was opposed by open government advocates, including MPA.

A similar bill also died in the Virginia legislature this session.

Definition of ‘meeting’

A bill filed at the behest of certain government bodies and would have redefined what constitutes a public meeting failed to emerge from the Senate Committee on Accountability and Transparency.

It was speculated by open government advocates that the bill was filed by Sen. Lydia Chassaniol (R-Winona) after two Ethics Commission rulings in 2014 found both the Lauderdale County Board of Supervisors and the Columbus City Council in violation of the Open Meetings Act.

A similar companion bill also failed to emerge from committee.
Winter roast earns $30K for grants, internships

One of Mississippi’s most respected statesmen was honored at a Celebrity Roast held by the state’s newspaper press corps to raise money for journalism education.

Former Gov. William Winter was roasted during the annual benefit for the Mississippi Press Association Education Foundation. The event raised over $30,000 for the internship, scholarship and grant programs of MPAEF.

Winter, 91, served as the state’s chief executive from 1980-1983. A native of Grenada County, he served in a number of elected capacities throughout his career.

Roasters included his former Chief of Staff Andy Mullins, former Clarion-Ledger executive editor Charles Overby, Tougaloo College President Dr. Beverly Hogan and longtime journalist and educator David Hampton. Clarion-Ledger editorial cartoonist Marshall Ramsey served as roastmaster for the event.

“When they called and asked me to roast Gov. Winter, I said there was no way I could do it. I respect him too much,” said Mullins. “But when they explained it was more like a ‘toast,’ I accepted.”

That didn’t except Winter from numerous jokes about his advancing years and multiple failed election campaigns he ran throughout the 1960s and 70s. All panelists agreed, however, Winter was a champion of the average citizen and the children of Mississippi, having pushed through the historic Education Reform Act of 1982.

“When I found out about this event, I called the press association and told them to tell the chef I want my roast ‘well done,’” Winter joked. “But I am relieved I got off this easy. And my roast has, indeed, been well done.”

BlueCross BlueShield of Mississippi served as Diamond Sponsor for the event. Gold sponsors included AT&T, C Spire, Community Bank and the Mississippi Economic Council.

Photos by Anthony Warren/The Northside Sun

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Former Gov. William Winter (left) turns the tables on his roasters, including Roastmaster Marshall Ramsey of The Clarion-Ledger; MPA Education Foundation Chairman Jim Prince, president of Prince Newspapers, presents the S. Gale Denley Memorial Journalism Award to Gov. Winter; former Clarion-Ledger editorial director and MPA board member David Hampton serenades the crowd and the honoree; Dr. Beverly Hogan, president of Tougaloo College, delivers heartfelt remarks about her good friend and mentor.
Deer Creek Pilot associate editor wins Ad of the Year

The associate editor of the Deer Creek Pilot in Rolling Fork picked up the top prize at MPA’s annual Better Newspaper Contest Advertising Division Jan. 31.

Natalie Perkins was singled out as the winner of the Advertisement of the Year for an ad for Sharkey-Issaquena Community Hospital. The award came with a cash prize of $500.

Newspapers in Natchez, Greenwood, Grenada, Magee and Clarksdale were also feted for Advertising Excellence in the 2014 contest.

The awards were handed out by the Mississippi Press Association at the conclusion of its Mid-Winter Conference at the Hilton Jackson.

Honored for Advertising Excellence, also known as the “Best in Show” category for newspapers overall, were The Clarksdale Press Register, Magee Courier, Grenada Star, The Greenwood Commonwealth and The Natchez Democrat.

The Clarksdale, Magee and Greenwood papers are owned by Jackson-based Emmerich Newspapers. Natchez is owned by Tuscaloosa-based Boone Newspapers, Inc., while the Grenada Star is owned by Lee Newspapers of Grenada.

Honored for distinction in the Silver Dollar Award category, which recognizes unique ideas in promotion, marketing and revenue generation were The Oxford Eagle and The Columbian-Progress, winners in the daily and weekly divisions, respectively.

Awards for editorial excellence will be handed out this summer at the 2015 Joint LPA-MPA Convention in New Orleans June 20.
Almost cut my hair. It happened just the other day.”—Quoted material by David Crosby

ROLLING FORK

Once a week for 38 years, right at 60 percent of my life, I have sat, as now, in front of some sort of device upon which one might type, in order to craft an opinion column.

In 1977, it was a manual Remington typewriter and this Sunday afternoon it is a MacIntosh computer but for all those times during all those years, the opinion column of whatever ilk—light, serious, good, bad or somewhere in between—was to be published with the in retrospect appropriate name I gave it when it began—“Different Drummer.”

That column title, as many of you know, was taken from a line penned by the American poet and thinker Henry David Thoreau: “If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music he hears, however measured or far away.”

And all of this I say not as nostalgia nor any self-promotion, but rather with a profound sense of sadness because there is some other kid, some other college-aged boy or girl I don’t yet know, who is now going to be denied the chance to do the same. Some kid right up the road. Some kid just an hour away from where I now sit.

Because you see, the very first column, long before the first Different Drummer, the very first column I wrote was for a student newspaper, a college student newspaper. And somebody liked it. An opinion of mine was in print and somebody liked it and writing columns was, from that moment forward, in my blood.

But that is not going to be possible anymore right up the road, an hour away from where I now sit. That’s not going to be possible at Delta State University, because last week, after 81 years, the student newspaper at that institution of higher learning was summarily executed. Its crime was having printed something the administration didn’t like, but that, we are told, is not cause-and-effect, but rather, merely coincidence.

“But I’m not giving in an inch to fear; cause I promised myself this year.”

So just that the record of what happened last week is clear: The president of Delta State and the college board of appointed political cronies, just gave the collective finger to the school’s student body, the Society of Professional Journalists and the Mississippi Press Association (MPA) as they all sought to stop the abolition of DSU’s really good student newspaper.

This, they claim, was done for fiscal reasons, and that is (with a wink and a nod, now) playing fast and loose with the truth.

The marginal ($10,000 max) cost of the paper’s publication could have been easily offset by its own advertising sales and through a grant, offered specifically for that purpose, by MPA’s Education Foundation, but ignored.

The professional journalists in and out of this state are not the losers, here; no “media egos” are bruised here. The losers here are the students, present and future of DSU, denied the established value of the opinion and information exchanges available only through a free and vibrant on-campus press.

And the loser is my unknown kid who will never see his first column in print and have somebody like it and tell him, and maybe even inspire him to keep writing.

“I feel like I owe it to someone.”

Ray Mosby is editor and publisher of The Deer Creek Pilot in Rolling Fork.

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Newspaper mailers still face uncertainty with 2015 postal rates, as the Postal Regulatory Commission has now twice kicked back the U.S. Postal Service request for new rates to go into effect April 26. Because the Postal Service has to provide 45 days’ notice before new rates occur, it would have needed final rates by March 12. But on March 18, the PRC indicated it still wasn’t happy with the proposal for either Periodicals or Standard Mail.

So the following is useful as a guide for the rates that may be ahead, amidst the PRC’s criticisms of USPS data. But final rates will not be known until the PRC is happy, unless USPS decides to gamble on implementing new prices without the PRC blessing. That has happened in postal history, but usually ends up in the courts.

Here is what has gone on so far.

The Postal Service re-filed parts of its 2015 price case after certain sections of it were remanded (rejected and sent back for correction) by the PRC. There were two notable changes affecting newspapers.

Most notable was the changing of Standard Mail Carrier Route Flats prices from slight increases (1-2 percent range) in the original filing to decreases (1-3 percent range, with one price, High-Density Plus minimum price, down 11.4 percent) in the second filing. This price is for 300 or more walk-sequences pieces per route. The changes occurred for several reasons, including PRC’s order to make presort discounts equal between for-profit and nonprofit rates. If these numbers stick, newspapers with shoppers would enjoy lower costs. The changes are to Part F of the 3062 R.

Periodicals rates suffer from similar uncertainty, which is complicated by the fact that in recalculating the rates, USPS wound up with a smaller increase than the law would have allowed. Because Periodicals are thought to be “under water” or failing to cover costs, USPS is required to explain any rate that does not hit the price cap ceiling. But to date, it had not.

In the second filing, there was one change in the Periodicals pricing from that originally proposed. Advertising pound prices (Part B, 3541) were decreased less than in the original proposal, but nothing else. Bundle charges would still be increasing rather sharply.

The complexity of this rate filing centers primarily on new incentives being granted for Flats Sequencing System mail, even though the machines are in high-demographic, metro areas that include only 30 percent of the flats volume in the country. (The term “Flats” includes newspapers, magazines and large envelopes). Newspapers have been mostly exempted from running on the machines because they don’t run well. But because USPS has not—to date—adequately explained to the PRC what the old prices would have been for the mail that will get the new discounts, the PRC says it cannot calculate how much the increase would be for the new FSS mail. The dispute between the two bodies, however, is primarily based on incomplete calculations in the USPS filing and not in principle disagreements about rate policy. So once the commission is satisfied with the math, the increases are likely to be approved.

Service standards

The Postal Service not only ended First-Class overnight service within the SCF (Sectional Center Facility) of entry, but the Periodicals service standard within the SCF was changed from 2-4 days to 3-4 days. This obscure shift was in a 2011 Federal Register filing, but USPS chose not to remind mailers of either change, effective January 2015 in conjunction with more planned plant closures. They refused PRC advice to re-justify the 2015 closings and revisit service standards.

The only good news so far is that the massive operational changes put in place for First-Class mail have so disrupted the system that any plant closures have been postponed to April or beyond.

ePubWatch gone

Newspapers using the electronic Publication watch, or “ePubWatch,” may have noticed that the service is no longer offered. Another system with the acronym “ADVANCE” used by Standard Mail customers was also discontinued November 2014.

Although ending the two tracking programs was blamed on the USPS cyber intrusion that same month, the truth, at least for Periodicals mailers, may lie elsewhere. (ePubWatch was championed by a task force of mailers, including NNA, more than a decade ago.)

Reductions in USPS staffing created two problems. It lacked support within USPS headquarters. Staff reductions in post offices have resulted in fewer “Delivery Unit” supervisors, or small-office postmasters, checking the system in their office computers to see whether they actually had complaints on file. Publishers reported fewer answers to their watches.

Hardcopy publication watches, PS Form 3721, are no longer available, either. But they were always a waste of time as the answer (if any) was long in coming and just verified what the publisher already knew. The paper was indeed late. No diagnostic help was received.

Copyright © 2014. Max Heath, National Newspaper Association postal chair, is a postal consultant for Athlon Media Group, publisher of Athlon Sports magazine, Parade, American Profile, Relish, Dash, and Spry newspaper supplements, and Landmark Community Newspapers LLC. E-mail maxheath@lcni.com.
I was talking to Nick, a long-time ad manager, about the nature of selling. “I agree with the theory that there are two types, transactional and relational,” he said. “As consumers, we have become increasingly transactional. We go to the store, pick out a product, take it to the register, pay for it and take it home – even if the clerk at the register doesn’t bother to say ‘hello.’ Or we shop online, find something of interest, compare prices, click ‘buy’ and wait for delivery.”

Nick explained that organizations that rely on sales – including newspapers – measure success in terms of transactions. How many ads are in the latest edition? How much revenue will those ads produce?

“It’s tempting to see all sales as transactional,” Nick said, “but that would be a huge mistake. The challenge is to be relational in a transactional world. That’s why customer loyalty, which is long term, is more valuable than customer satisfaction, which is sometimes based on single buying experiences. “It starts with rapport,” Nick said. “I encourage our sales team to find common ground and build from there. Along the way, clients learn that our folks have some marketing savvy. That gives us credibility and makes selling a lot easier.”

To expand on Nick’s observations:

1. Individual transactions don’t necessarily lead to good relationships.
   When sales people treat their advertising product as a commodity, they encourage prospects and customers to see them as anonymous people at the cash register. There’s no connection. That often leads to churn – advertisers who jump ship if their ads don’t work right away.

2. Good relationships can lead to more transactions. A smart sales person looks beyond the immediate gratification of today’s sale. He or she works to build rapport and turn that transactional advertiser into a marketing partner.

3. Leadership is relational. In many organizations, a sales person who consistently has good numbers is likely to be promoted to sales management. If his or her company has a transactional sales culture, the new manager will be poorly prepared for a management position. The duties of leading a team are relational, not transactional.

4. Individual ad sales are transactional. Think of a vending machine. Insert money into the coin slot and get an ad. It’s difficult to go any further than that, when sales people present themselves – and are seen as – order takers who sell one ad at a time.

5. Ad campaigns are relational. Properly executed, an ad campaign requires consistent contact between sales person and client. From planning to execution to periodic tweaks, there are plenty of opportunities to build strong relationships.

6. Don’t forget your clients’ relationships with consumers. On a broader scale, strong ad campaigns create relationships between advertisers and their audiences. Think of the number of times you have been drawn to certain stores or brand names because you felt connected to them. That emotional attachment is a major factor in brand identity. And that kind of campaign success can lead to – surprise! – more advertising dollars for your newspaper.

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P resident Obama has routinely promised greater transparency within the federal government. Now, Congress is making strides towards achieving this critical goal.

The House of Representatives and Senate are currently considering nearly identical bills to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which provides the general public, including journalists, with access to federal government records.

This legislation has received broad support across media organizations, including the Sunshine in Government Initiative, a coalition of which the Newspaper Association of America is a member. And here’s why:

The legislation would require agencies to release documents under a “presumption of openness,” reaffirming the principle that information should never be kept confidential to protect government interests at the expense of the public. Agencies would need to prove specific harm that could result from disclosures before withholding documents. While this policy has been in place since 2009, the legislation would ensure future administrations honor this objective for openness.

Citizens and journalists would receive requested information in a more timely fashion and would be updated on the status of their request or reason for denial. Federal agencies would be allowed to withhold information on policy deliberations for only 25 years – currently, there is no limit.

The legislation would require agencies to post frequently requested information online. This will give citizens and journalists more timely access to key information and a deeper understanding of what the government is doing – or not doing.

The Freedom of Information Act remains a powerful, though currently inefficient, tool to obtain public information. Last year, several key stories were brought to light as a result of reporters’ FOIA record requests.

The Associated Press was able to show that people accused of Nazi war crimes had continued receiving Social Security payments after leaving our country. In another instance, a reporter reviewing military ballistics tests found that the Marine Corps had issued armored vests that failed to protect against bullets – and 5,277 vests were quickly recalled, perhaps saving lives. Likewise, records obtained through FOIA revealed that some firefighter safety equipment failed to work properly when exposed to heat or moisture, rendering it ineffective in crisis situations.

Without these records and journalists’ diligent research, none of this would have been brought to public attention. Our armed forces and firefighters may have been directly harmed as a result.

The Freedom of Information Act was enacted in 1966. It remains critical for creating and preserving an open and accountable government. However, it must be updated to keep up with changing technology and a persistent mindset within federal agencies that information belongs to the government not the general public.

Congress came very close to passing FOIA reform legislation last year before the end of the 113th Congress. Now, members in both the Senate and House are working in a bi-partisan fashion to move these bills forward in the new Congress. The Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously approved its FOIA reform bill, S. 337, which is sponsored by Senators John Cornyn, Patrick Leahy, and Judiciary Committee Chairman Charles Grassley. The House bill (H.R. 653), which is sponsored by Representatives Darrell Issa and Elijah Cummings, was reported out of committee last week. We applaud the bills’ sponsors and the congressional leadership for turning their attention to this good government legislation. We hope that this momentum bodes well for bipartisan, bicameral action early in the new Congress.

Caroline Little is president and CEO of the Newspaper Association of America.
Within the aging US population is a larger than usual group of aging self-employed business people approaching retirement and the sale of their business. This group includes many smaller publishers counting on that sale as part of their retirement. The expectations of many publishers are based on a multiple of the publication’s annual revenues. In today’s market, unless the publication has extraordinary cash flow, that multiple to revenue paid will be between 50% and 100%. The weighting of the multiple is tied to several factors including revenue trends, household penetration in the market, print competition, general health of the economy in the markets served, the stage in development of a digital strategy as well as the growth potential.

More importantly, today’s buyers today place much heavier weight on the newspaper’s cash flow generation. In today’s market, buyers are typically paying 3.5x-5.5x adjusted cash flow (available cash flow after all expenses including owner compensation, with add backs for any interest, amortization, depreciation, expenses that would not accrue to a buyer, and owner perks). Weighting is tied the same factors mentioned above, with cash flow trends taking center stage. In the sale of a newspaper to a strategic buyer, operating and sales synergies may kick into place, driving cash flow upward. To a strategic buyer, a higher multiple paid at closing may translate into a much more conservative multiple once those synergies kick into place. It is always important to remember, that a newspaper will not typically sell for a price beyond what the debt service will require. And a bank is certainly not going to finance a transaction where there is not enough cash, day one, to cover the debt service.

There are several steps publishers can take to potentially increase the value of their publication in a sale. Putting these into action over a 3-5 year period should set the stage for a smooth and rewarding transaction.

1) Specify Goals And Objectives. Achieving optimal value begins by clearly articulating the seller’s goals and objectives. These will be both financial (liquidity, sale price, tax advantage/estate planning) and non-financial (succession, legacy and reputation, employee and stakeholder concerns and other special interests). Sellers need to ask questions such as: To whom do I want to sell/transfer the business (owner-operator, strategic buyer/competitor, financial investor)? How long do I want it work/be involved? Do I want to maintain some upside/risk? Are these employees or others whom I want to protect/reward?

2) And Determine The Right Time To Sell. Value is optimized when a sale is proactive rather than reactive. A three to five-year timeframe allows the company to demonstrate consistent growth that will optimize its appeal to buyers. Beyond financials, this timeframe enables the company to demonstrate long-term relationships with customers and vendors. It also provides sufficient time to ensure that an effective support team is in place long before a potential transaction, allaying buyer concerns that the business value might be too dependent on the entrepreneur.

3) Have All Records Ready Before You Go To Market. Automate your accounting systems and make sure you can provide detailed profit & loss statements and balance sheets for the past three years and as far into the present year as reasonable. Get your taxes in order and your filings up to date. Maintain detailed advertiser and subscription lists, newsstand sales.

4) If a key member of your staff has left, replace them. Especially on the advertising sales side. There’s no sympathy from buyers if your sales are down because you are under-staffed. Positive revenue trends are very important. Don’t retire before you sell, run your business as if it were “Not for Sale”. Continue to promote your business, actively pursue new advertising accounts and subscribers. Keep your circulation audits up to date. Buyers are looking for predictability and avenues for growth, not a static or declining business.

5) Implement those cost-cutting moves now. If there are some logical steps you can take to bolster your bottom line, without hurting the quality of your pub or your household penetration, implement them. These steps could include re-bidding your printing, eliminating your in-house printing operation if it is no longer-cost effective, cutting circulation to areas where you are not generating significant advertising support, further automating your operations. It may also mean partially re-vamping your staff

6) Be competitive. Consider bolstering your household penetration to a level advertisers will embrace while keeping your competition at bay. Mine your data (assuming you have collected it-never too late) and work with your advertisers to develop digital and mobile marketing campaigns that reach your subscriber base.

7) Merchandise within your pages. Are there key advertising categories you can secure by adding content within your pages (print & digital) or via special sections that will draw readers to your product and services.

8) Move Beyond the pdf. You need a digital strategy. Although you may be trading print dollars for digital dimes right now, the bottom line is your readers, ages 18-40, have fully embraced and now rely on much of their news and actionable information to be received digitally (That’s tablets, phones, lap tops, your car dashboard). And buyers have begun placing higher value on operations that have the makings of a well-rounded digital strategy in place. If the average visitor to your site is spending less than 3 minutes per visit, they’re scanning not reading. And it is time for a reset. If your ads are static and there is no merchandising within your digital pages, there’s a really good chance your advertisers are not getting much, if any, bang for their buck. Yes, you may very well need to bring in outside talent to create and implement a strategy that vaults you into the digital age. Money well spent.

9) Get your receivables and payables in order. And clean up any legal issues. You can’t deliver title to your property unless liens can be satisfied at closing, there is a plan in place to pay off that long past due printing bill, and any litigation is behind you. Want to guarantee a major price reduction? Have a large percentage of your receivables over 90 days.

10) Understand the market value of your publication. Take all your emotion out of the valuation by having an objective third party (an experienced newspaper broker like WB. Grimes & Company) assess the re-sale value of your publication.

11) Good tax planning is also essential to successful sale. Consult with your accountant, financial planner and attorney to explore the optimum way to potentially structure your transaction. But keep in mind, these advisors will have little to any knowledge of newspaper operations or comparable transaction data.

12) Use A Broker! Selling a publication requires an ever-increasing level of sophistication and a great deal of your time. Most publishers have neither, nor do they have access to established relationships with the broad range of publishing and financial buyers that an experienced broker will have. You should choose a broker as part of your exit strategy planning team (3 years before you are ready to list).
Right to be forgotten in world where everyone knows your name

“It may not be true, but it’s accurate.” – Megan Carter in Absence of Malice

The MPA Hot Line occasionally gets a call from a member paper about a request that the paper delete an old article about an arrest or an indictment that is available on the paper’s web site or shows up in response to a search engine request such as Google or Yahoo. Sometimes the explanation why the article should be deleted is based on a misunderstanding about the criminal process and the differences between an arrest and an indictment and the difference between an indictment be nolle processed or dismissed.

Occasionally the arrest charges have been dropped or the grand jury refused to return an indictment, and regardless of whether this information has been reported, the subject of the original story doesn’t want the information available to the public any longer.

As long as the information in the original story was substantially true or was based on an official public record such as a news release from the state, county, or local law enforcement office involved the original story is non-actionable. There is no state statute or common law principle that requires the paper to delete the article from its web site, and a state statute that compelled the paper to publish a notice or article that the prior charges has been dropped etc. would be ruled unconstitutional under the First Amendment which prohibits compelled speech. These principles are so ingrained in our Nation’s jurisprudence that a recent decision of the European Union Court of Justice (“EUCJ”) establishing the so-called “right to be forgotten” under European law has sent media companies and search engines located in the United States whose works are available overseas roiling.

In 2010 Mario Costeja González, a Spanish citizen, filed a complaint with the Spanish Data Protection Agency against his local Spanish newspaper, Google Spain, and Google Inc., contending that his right to privacy was being infringed due to a 1998 legal notice that his home was being foreclosed. The newspaper had published the 36-word legal notice in Spanish, and it was available on the paper’s web site and Google’s search results for Costeja’s name. Costeja contended that the foreclosure proceedings had been fully resolved for several years and the information had become entirely irrelevant. He asked, first, that the paper be compelled to alter the pages in question so that the notice no longer appeared on the paper’s web site; and second, that Google Spain or Google Inc. be compelled to remove the personal data so that it no longer appeared in search results for Costeja.

In May of 2014, the European Union Court of Justice ruled for Costeja. The EUCJ ruled: (a) the EU’s 1995 Data Protection Directive, which applies to controllers of public data, does not apply to the paper’s web site but it does apply to search engines such as Google Spain that promote the selling of advertising space even though the company’s data processing server is in the United States; and (b) individuals have - under certain conditions - the right to be forgotten and compel search engines to remove links with personal information about them without regard to the economic costs to the search engine in not being required to pull down the data at issue. The EUCJ held that its ruling applies whenever the subject information is inadequate, irrelevant or no longer relevant, or excessive in relation to the purposes for the data was processed and in the light of the time that has elapsed since the info was first published. The EUCJ concluded by noting that the right to be forgotten is not absolute, and it must be balanced on a case-by-case basis against the rights of freedom of expression and of the media. According to one paper, the day after the EUCJ’s decision, more than 840 articles about the legal notice, Costeja, and his victory appeared on the internet.

The amount of information that is available on the internet is in part directly attributable to the immunity provided by Section 230 of the Federal Communications Decency Act of 1996 to internet service providers and the strict construction that the federal courts have applied to Section 230. As a result, ISPs are essentially treated as distributors rather than re-publishers of the information that they make available, and ISPs are not liable for the content of the information on their sites. One of the paradoxes arising from the ever increasing amount of information that is available on the internet is while virtually everyone appears to enjoy reading about other people, they don’t share the same view about what the public should know about themselves. The immunity that the 1996 FCDA provides to ISPs is not available to newspapers and certain segments of their web sites. As a result of the nascent ill-defined “right to be forgotten” and its potential application to certain privacy torts, however misguided and inappropriate that may be, newspapers and other publishers can anticipate that the number of requisites that they will receive to pull down articles from their websites will only increase.

John C. Henegan is a member of Butler Snow, PLLC, and counsel to the Mississippi Press Association. Members can send general questions about libel or requests for story review to hotline@mspress.org.

NNA annual convention, trade show slated for October in Missouri

>> From NNA

Mark your calendar now and plan to join the National Newspaper Association in St. Charles, MO, Oct. 1-3, 2015, for its 129th Annual Convention and Trade Show. The committee endorsed the theme, “Show Me the Future of Newspapers.”

The planning committee, co-chaired by Dane Vernon, Vernon Publishing Inc., Eldon, MO, and Kevin Jones, The St. Louis American, along with committee members Tianna Brooks, Mountain View (MO) Standard News; Doug Crews, Missouri Press Association, Columbia, MO; Liz Erwin, Missouri Lawyer’s Media, St. Louis, MO; Tyra Johnson, Cape Girardeau, MO; Bill Miller Sr., Washington (MO) Missourian; and NNA President and First Lady—John and Jo Ann Edgecombe, Edgecombe Publishing, Geneva, NE, have been working hard to create a lively and interesting convention.

The headquarters hotel is the Embassy Suites in St. Charles, and all meetings will be held in the Convention Center that adjoins the hotel. The hotel provides a complementary shuttle to the St. Charles historic district. St. Charles was founded by Louis Blanchette, a French-Canadian fur trader, and originally named Les Petite Cotes (The Little Hills). Today, old inns and buildings still stand, and some structures date to the early 1800s when rock was chiseled by hand and delivered by mule. It was also the first state capital of Missouri, as well as the starting point for Lewis & Clark’s great expedition.

St. Charles offers first-rate accommodations and more than 150 restaurants to choose from. You may choose a walking tour of the historic main streets, for an overview of life as it was in the early days of St. Charles. The Tourism Center (located at 230 S. Main St.) is staffed by employees and volunteers with answers for your questions. Stroll along the brick-paved streets of Missouri’s oldest and largest historic district. Explore one-of-a-kind shops, sample the local cuisine, and experience the sights and sounds of the early Midwest.

More details, including the agenda and registration information can be found online at the NNA website: nnaweb.org.
Printed coupons still choice for most consumers

>> From PR Newswire

Seventy percent of consumer packaged goods coupon users still use print-based coupons such as those in free standing inserts (FSI) typically found in Sunday papers to find savings according to a study that will be presented by GfK Custom Research and News America Marketing at the Association of Coupon Professionals’ 10th annual Industry Coupon Conference April 16 in San Antonio.

The new study reveals surprising statistics about consumer coupon usage including that traditional FSI coupons are redeemed at a rate eight times that of digital coupons.

“While consumers continue to adopt digital savings tools, this study reaffirms the value of the traditional print FSI,” said Mark Peiser, VP, Marketing Research, News America Marketing. “When you look at the numbers, you can see that print coupon redemption rates still dominate consumer savings.”

So, too millennial coupon users are looking to the FSI – with 63% of this age group using traditional print coupons.

Way down in Woodville

The Woodville Republican is the oldest continuously operated newspaper in Mississippi. Founded in 1824, it has been owned by the Lewis family since the 1880s. MPA paid a visit last week on a chilly but brilliant February afternoon. Pictured are Publisher and Editor Andy Lewis (from left), MPA Executive Director Layne Bruce, Meek School of Journalism Dean Will Norton and MPA-MPS President Joel McNeece, publisher and editor of The Calhoun Country Journal in Bruce.