CONGRESSMAN TO BE ROASTED AT JAN. 28 FOUNDATION BENEFIT

The state press association will roast Mississippi’s Third District Congressman during a benefit for its education foundation.

Rep. Gregg Harper will be the guest of honor for the Jan. 28 event at the Hilton Jackson. Proceeds from the roast are used to underwrite the scholarship and internship programs of the Mississippi Press Association Education Foundation.

Harper is serving his fourth term in Congress, having been elected first in 2008. The son of a former petroleum engineer and a mother who worked two days a week until she was 88 years old, he is graduate of Mississippi College. He earned his law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law in 1981. He practiced law for 27 years before running for Congress.

Harper is a former prosecuting attorney for the cities of Brandon and Richland. He also served on the Mississippi Oil and Gas Board. He and his wife Sidney reside in Pearl and have two children, Livington and Maggie.

Panelists at the roast include Gov. Phil Bryant, authors and political consultants Andy Taggart and Jere Nash, and Mississippi House Speaker Pro Tempore Greg Snowden (R-Meridian).

Roastmaster for the event will again be Sid Salter, director of Mississippi State University Office of Public Affairs and longtime syndicated columnist.

The 26th annual Roast will be held in conjunction with MPA’s annual Mid-Winter Conference. A reception will be held at 6 p.m.; dinner begins at 7 p.m. Tickets are $80 each, or a table of eight is $600. Tickets are on sale now at mspress.org/event/roast.

The MPA Education Foundation was established in 1983 to provide internships and scholarships for aspiring journalists.

Mid-Winter to introduce Wine Pull as part of Friday evening reception

Join us at the Mid-Winter Conference for a fun new Wine Pull fundraiser to benefit the MPA Education Foundation. Purchase a randomly numbered cork for $15 (or 2 for $25) and then match your corks to numbered bottles of wine on display at the Friday evening member reception.

Proceeds will benefit the internship and grant programs of MPAEF.

Member newspapers are asked to donate bottles or cases of wine with a minimum value of at least $10 per bottle. You can bring your donations with you to Mid-Winter when you check in at the registration desk.
SECRECY NEVER THE BEST WAY TO MAKE DECISIONS IN PUBLIC INTEREST

BRUCE

Calhoun County Supervisors, Calhoun City Mayor and Board of Aldermen, and Calhoun Health Services administration and its board of directors voted unanimously last month to accept a bid from Baptist Hospitals out of Memphis to take over operations at Calhoun Health Services, pending lease negotiations.

Who they chose is not an issue. How they chose them is incredibly disappointing, but most unfortunately, not surprising.

The three boards met together in secret for more than an hour one December morning, kicking the public out of the courthouse board room, to discuss the two bids submitted by Baptist and North Mississippi Health Services of Tupelo.

The irony was Attorney Tom Kirkland, who has represented the hospital in this process, met with the supervisors last week and, in great detail, broke down all aspects of both bids.

No secrets were kept. Both proposals were passed around the room for all to see, including myself and others present in the audience.

Among the documents shared was a breakdown of everything the county requested in the bids and how Baptist and North Mississippi responded. Baptist’s column was filled with yes after yes, suggesting they agreed to every demand.

The North Mississippi column had four “no”s with proposed alternatives to some of the stipulations outlined in the bid.

One example was a requirement for $1 million to be invested in the facilities annually. Baptist agreed, North Mississippi wanted to negotiate to spend less.

At the conclusion of his presentation, Kirkland was asked to suggest which was the “better bid.” He declined to say, citing his role was simply to present the facts, not make decisions and pointed out there could be other factors in the decision making process between the two bids beyond monetary.

BREAKTHROUGH IN MANAGEMENT SERVICES

NNA chooses Illinois Press as management firm

National Newspaper Association President Chip Hutcheson, publisher of The Times Leader in Princeton, KY, announced in October that NNA has selected Illinois Press Association to provide contract management services beginning in 2016.

NNA and IPA entered into an intent letter agreement during the 129th NNA Convention in St. Charles, MO.

NNA began a search for its new management organization in June 2015, after the board of directors determined that contract management for NNA was the ideal option. The organization has been managed since 2010 by its public policy company, American PressWorks Inc., which had expressed its desire to wind down its management contract. Tonda Rush and APW will continue to provide public policy services to NNA from its current office in Arlington, VA. After a brief transition, the Columbia, MO, office will be relocated to the IPA headquarters in Springfield, IL.

Hutcheson said comparing a number of excellent proposals had challenged an appointed NNA Transition Team.

“We were delighted that a number of organizations proposed contracts with us, and we felt we had some excellent options. IPA stood out as having not only the staff depth and expertise, but also a close working relationship with NNA in the past,” Hutcheson said. “We believe we will be in good hands.”

Enter the hospital board Tuesday morning and suddenly all these points require secret talks.

Why?

Citizens expressed many concerns at an October public hearing in the large courtroom at the courthouse prior to the bids being advertised. The most common theme in that discussion was the desire to ensure the long term viability of the hospital in Calhoun County and all its services, regardless of who is running it.

Those same concerns exist today. The supervisors, Calhoun City aldermen and hospital board had an opportunity, and more importantly, an obligation to explain to the public why they are selecting one bid over the other, but instead chose to shut the public out.

When making a decision about the public-owned hospital that will have significant impact on the future of this county, the owners of that hospital, the citizens of Calhoun County, should be privy to the debate of the pros and cons to such a monumental decision.

Negotiating the lease, which will soon begin with Baptist, is different and may require more privacy. Selecting the best bid for the county, however, is public business and should be conducted as such.
Welcome to Jackson
Nathan Edwards, new president and publisher of The Clarion-Ledger and Mississippi Media, was recently welcomed to the capital city at a luncheon hosted jointly by the Mississippi Economic Council and the Greater Jackson Chamber Partnership. Pictured are Greater Jackson Partnership President Duane O’Neill (from left), MEC Chairman David Gates, Edwards, Greater Jackson Partnership Chairman-elect Robert Gibbs and MEC President Blake Wilson.

Briefly

Public hospital openness bill took effect Jan. 1
A new law requiring public hospital boards to open their meetings to the public and media will took effect Jan. 1. Senate Bill 2407 passed during the 2015 term of the state legislature.

The bill mandates boards of public hospitals to open most of their meetings to the public. They will still be able to meet in executive session to discuss any matters related to patient information, employment contracts, litigation and competitive business matters.

Newspapers with questions about policy and procedure relating to the new law are encouraged to send a note to the MPA Legal Hotline and FOI attorney Leonard Van Slyke at any time with questions, hotline@mspress.org.

Columns on rural health available at no charge
A bi-weekly series of columns on “Thinking About Health” is now available to members for publication at no charge through a partnership with the MPA Education Foundation, Nebraska Press Association and The Commonwealth Fund.

Rural Health News Service provides eight partnering press associations with unbiased health-related information, designed to help better understand the health issues facing communities, states and the nation.

Correspondent Trudy Lieberman, a journalist for 40 years, is a fellow at the Center for Advancing Health. She served as director of the health and medical reporting program at the Graduate School of Journalism, City University of New York.

The columns are available on the MPA website by searching for “Thinking About Health.”

Time to update your MPA photo ID press credentials
MPA is offering photo ID badges for newspaper members for $12 each. All cards issued are valid for two years through Dec. 31, 2017.

These special order badges do not replace the traditional MPA press cards that are mailed to each publisher in January. For more information, contact Member Services Manager Monica Gilmer, mgilmer@mspress.org.

BYLINES

The Mississippi Link
Shanderia Posey has been named editor of The Mississippi Link. She previously worked for The Clarion-Ledger and Hattiesburg American.

The Clarion-Ledger
Longtime correspondent Hugh Kellenberger has been named sports editor of The Clarion-Ledger. He succeeds David Bean who becomes digital editor for the state’s largest newspaper.

Daily Times Leader
Daily Times Leader sports reporter Will Nations has departed the West Point paper after three years in preparation for a teaching internship this spring.

New Albany Gazette
T. Wayne Mitchell, publisher of The New Albany Gazette, retired Dec. 31. He joined the paper in 2009 and is a former member of the MPA Education Foundation Board of Directors. A Kansas City native, he has been a journalist and editor for 50 years at papers in his hometown, as well as in San Diego, Anderson, S.C., and Florence, Ala.

Delta Democrat Times
Sarah Kramer was recently named managing editor of the Greenville daily paper. She has worked as a reporter and latter lifestyles editor at the DDT since 2012. She succeeds Tom Bassing.

The Meridian Star
Bill Graham has been named city editor for the daily paper. He previously was managing editor of the Newton County Appeal. In Meridian, he succeeds Ida Brown who becomes Lifestyles and special sections editor.

Governor’s office
Clarin-Ledger business reporter Clay Chandler has joined the staff of Gov. Phil Bryant as communications director. He formerly was a reporter and latter lifestyles editor at the DDT since 2012. He succeeds Tom Bassing.

DATELINES

1/28 MPA-MPS-MPAEF Board Meetings. Jackson Hilton Hotel.
1/29 Mid-Winter Conference. Friday, Jan. 29-Saturday, Jan. 30. Jackson Hilton Hotel
3/1 Better Newspaper Contest Editorial Division entry deadline. Go to mspresscontestonline.org.
My first day on the job with MPA was a Monday 10 years ago. It was the Monday before that year’s Mid-Winter Conference, actually. In retrospect, that doesn’t seem like the best time to start a new gig. There’s a special kind of craziness that goes on around this office on the week of meetings. But our Member Services Manager Monica Gilmer reminded me it could be worse: She started a few days prior to Hurricane Katrina’s landfall in 2005. The ensuing weeks are a time period of which the long-timers around here are not very fond.

Nevertheless, my first few days, weeks and months here were unlike any of my previous – and numerous – work experiences. For one, I had always worked at newspapers. Starting at my hometown paper, my days and weeks had been a steady stream of deadlines. Some big. Some small. All important.

Coming to work for the Association required a reset of my internal chronometer. Deadlines, still very important, came much less frequently. In fact, I found myself meandering from task to task, not knowing which to complete and which to put on hold. Only the clarity of conventions and conferences seemed to put me on the ball like in the days when I was filing news stories or designing pages. Some big. Some small. All important.

CONVENTIONS HAVE been something around which my summers revolved since I was a kid. My father took my sister and me to our first MPA event at the old Broadwater Hotel way back in the 80s. I still remember falling in love with the coast. Prior to attending my first convention, I had never even been to Biloxi. Being from the “north,” my family’s preferred weekend getaway – a weekend being all the time a small town editor could afford – was to Memphis. (A city, by the way, that still calls my name from time to time.)

But there was something about the coast and MPA events that was fun and special. Later, after I got on the newspaper’s payroll, it was even more exciting to go to the press association events if I had been lucky enough to win an award in the contests.

My first “first” was for a column I wrote about the 1991 Christmas parade. I still have that plaque on the wall of my office.

This year, in a few days, actually, I celebrate 10 years at MPA. Much more significantly, this year the Association marks its 150th anniversary.

Think about that number for a moment. Not many things last for 150 years. Some naysayers would probably comment that we have defied the odds of what the last decade has thrown at us.

But persevere we have. Grown and learned much along the way.

Of all of the benefits my three decade association with this Association has afforded me, the relationship with so many great people has been the most rewarding. I wouldn’t dare try to name everyone, but I’ll certainly point out a few to whom I am deeply grateful. Lloyd Gray, for one, was president of MPA when I was hired, and Marcus Bowers was president when I was promoted to executive director. Carolyn Wilson, my predecessor, actually made it happen.

They and the board members at the time didn’t have to give me those chances. But boy am I thankful they did.

Other folks have just become some good, fine friends. As many of you know, it makes work a lot more fun when you really like the people around you. In that regard, I’m also grateful for Andrea, Monica, Sue and Lauren. They’re the dedicated crew at the office who keeps the trains running on time – and represents our organization so very well.

What hasn’t changed over the last 10 years is the need for quality community journalism. As we embark on the next chapter of this fine organization’s history, I don’t see that becoming any less true.

So, Happy Anniversary to us all!

Layne Bruce is executive director of MPA-MPS. His email address is lbruce@mspress.org.
Perry is the marketing manager for a real estate company. I had an interesting conversation with him about his experiences in dealing with different media sales people. “My all-time favorite is Brenda, who works with our local paper,” he said. “She oozes credibility.”

Perry went on to say that the strategy of most advertising sales people is to dump a bucket of data on him. “I’ve met with them all,” he said, “broadcast, print, online, outdoor, you name it. They come in here with their spreadsheets and their slick brochures. And they give their canned sales pitches on how their company is the best place in the world to advertise. Their pitches are pretty much the same.”

Brenda is not like the others, he explained. “She is a walking encyclopedia of advertising. She knows as much about her competitors’ products as she knows about her own. When we talk, I don’t feel like she is trying to make a sale. She’s just addressing my current concerns with information on how to use available resources. I trust her judgment completely.”

Brenda is like veteran sportswriters who collect details about games and athletes. Even if they don’t cover football, they can tell you who won last year’s championships. They can tell you who won back-to-back World Series in 1992-93. They can tell you the differences in the playing fields in the NFL and CFL. And they can tell how many majors Jack Nicklaus won in his career. That’s credibility.

It’s also a sign of credibility to know where to find answers. If those sportswriters don’t know an answer, they know where to look.

Perry trusts Brenda, because she “oozes credibility.” Isn’t that what advertising sales should be about? If you want to sell something, you first have to win trust. And a good way to build trust is to demonstrate that you know what you’re talking about.

Here are some things to consider:
1. Learn your company’s product. Of course, it’s important to learn all you can about your product. But don’t let it become your only topic of conversation. You don’t want the Perrys in your market to complain that you are dumping buckets of data on them.
2. Learn advertising in general. What are your prospect’s primary media choices? What are the implications of total market coverage? What is the importance of reach and frequency? What is pay-per-click advertising? By percentage breakdown, where do different age groups get their news? What is search engine optimization? What is native advertising? What benefits are your competitors selling? How does co-op advertising work?
3. Learn industry specifics. What types of campaigns work best in your client’s specific industry? Are they impacted by the thin market? Who are the marketing superstars in their industry – and why are they so highly regarded? What were the results from your client’s previous marketing efforts? How did your paper figure into those results?

Learning is the key to credibility. And credibility is a cornerstone in selling.

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Considering truth, libel and confidentiality

“What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer:”
– Sir Francis Bacon

May the recipient of a gubernatorial pardon sue a newspaper for libel after the paper correctly reports that the person is a convicted felon but after the pardon has been granted? May the recipient sue the paper for refusing to take down a story about the original conviction from the paper’s web site? Not in Connecticut or in those other states – New Jersey, Oregon, and Massachusetts – that have squarely addressed this issue.

Most recently, Lorraine Martin sued several Connecticut media outlets on her behalf and behalf of all others similarly situated alleging defamation arising from the published accounts of her 2010 arrest, which later had been nolle prossed and erased under the Connecticut Criminal Records Erasure Statute. Martin alleged that although the accounts of her arrest were factually true when published, the Connecticut legislature “contemplated erasure only in the context of the judicial and law enforcement systems” and not for any other purpose. Since “the reports of her arrest were true at the time they were published . . . , neither the Erasure Statute nor any amount of wishing can undo that historical truth. The Moving Finger has written and moved on.” Accordingly, the Second Circuit affirmed the Connecticut “statute creates legal fictions, . . . it does not and cannot undo historical facts or convert once-true facts into falsehoods [or] . . . render historically accurate news accounts of an arrest tortious” or defamatory. See Martin v. Hearst Corp., 777 F.3d 546 (2nd Cir. 2015).

Reviewing the state statute, the Second Circuit found that the Connecticut legislature “contemplated erasure only in the context of the judicial and law enforcement systems” and not for any other purpose. Since “the reports of her arrest were true at the time they were published . . . , neither the Erasure Statute nor any amount of wishing can undo that historical truth. The Moving Finger has written and moved on.” Accordingly, the Second Circuit affirmed the district court’s dismissal of Martín’s lawsuit.

What result in Mississippi? Are there any decisions of the Mississippi Supreme Court which suggest that the appellate courts of Mississippi might follow the approach and rationale employed in these other states’ rulings and dismiss a libel claim based on similar facts? While it always perilous to hazard a prediction about such matter, a series of recent Mississippi Supreme Court decisions may hold the key to the answer to this question.

In those cases, the State Supreme Court affirmed the judgments of different state circuit courts which dismissed suits filed by pardoned felons who claimed that the state courts of Mississippi had the inherent authority to expunge the records of their criminal convictions following a “full, complete and unconditional pardon” that “absolved [the pardoned felon] from all legal consequences of this crime and conviction.” See, e.g., Hentz v. State, 152 So. 3d 1139 (Miss. 2014); Robertson v. State, 158 So. 3d 280 (Miss. 2015). In rejecting the pardoned felons contention, the State Supreme Court quoted with approval language from other appellate courts across the country which concluded that a “pardon in no way reverses the legal conclusion of the court” and its “effect . . . is not to prohibit all consequences of a pardoned conviction. But to preclude future punishment for the conviction.” See Hentz, 158 So. 3d at 1141-42.

As the State Supreme Court had noted in a prior decision an unconditional pardon “does not edit history[]” it “involves forgiveness[,] . . . not forgetfulness[,] . . . it does not wipe the slate clean.”

Whether it is ever actionable for a newspaper to publish truthful information about an individual was recently addressed and answered in the affirmative in Dahlstrom v. Sun-Times, Media, LLC, 777 F.3d 937 (7th Cir. 2015). In Dahlstrom, a panel of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Sun-Times violated the statutory privacy rights of five members of the Chicago under the Federal Driver’s Privacy Protection Act, 18 U.S.C. § 2721, when it published certain truthful information that its reporters had acquired unlawfully about the five police officers from an agency of the Illinois state government. Whether the federal or state statute at issue will be upheld under a First Amendment challenge depends on whether (1) the information is confidential under a state or federal statute; (2) the information was obtained unlawfully; and (3) the prohibition against publication of the confidential information is content-neutral and narrowly tailored to the government’s interest in making the information confidential. If all three elements are present, a newspaper can be held liable for publishing truthful but nonetheless confidential information about a person.

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.

Engaging the audience

Paul Felicissimo (right) leans in to give attendees at the ArkLaMiss Conference the scoop on building reader engagement and overall audience during the November event. Over 60 newspaper professionals from the tri-state region attended the annual conference at the Ameristar Casino in Vicksburg.

Webinars set on social media, customer service

February webinars offered by the Online Media Campus through a partnership with the MPA Education Foundation will focus on social media, customer service and storytelling.

Social Journalism: The Keys to Connecting with your Audience will be offered Friday, Feb. 12, at 1 pm.

Personalizing the Customer Journey will be offered Thursday, Feb. 18, at 1 pm. It will be led by Allan Barmak of The Barmak Group.

Resisting Regurgitation: Proactive Storytelling for Today’s Reader will be offered Thursday, Feb. 25, at 1 pm. Presenter is Tim Schmitt of Gatehouse Media.

Registration is $35 per newspaper for an unlimited number of seats and can be completed at onlinemedia-campus.com.
Questions from the mailbag on ink, Macs, servers

From Lora, in Nebraska

Q. Hi Kevin: I am trying to tone down the total coverage area for our presses in one easy step. We have a process that is supposed to tone all of our photos for our press so they are consistent, but the total coverage area is still too high.

I can take each photo separately and fix the problem, but I am wondering if there is something in Distiller when converting the entire newspaper page that would fix everything all at once.

We have a very old press so we need the total ink coverage to be 220.

A. Hi, Lora. Ink coverage is a funny thing. Over the years, the perfect ink coverage will change on a press, due to changes in paper, ink and the press itself. It would be nice if all your ink issues could be handled when creating the PDF, but life never seems to work that easily. It sounds to me like you need to run some press tests (you might need someone from the outside to help with that) to determine the optimum color settings for your press. These numbers are rarely the same between two presses. Once that’s done, an action can be created in Photoshop which does most of work for you, including specifying the ink settings, when your pictures are saved.

From Steve, in Minnesota

Q. Kevin: I am thinking about getting a little Apple server, around $1,000 or so, that would serve as a drop box for all of our layout files. To my understanding, however, a server can do more than provide storage. I am wondering if you think such a move would help fix my network problems. Does that make sense?

A. Steve and I emailed back and forth a few times before I finally sent this recommendation, which Steve said he would follow: If you only need a server for file sharing, which is what the vast majority of small newspapers use them for, you might be best off to get a NAS/ Ethernet Drive. This is a stand-alone drive that plugs into your network and acts as a file-sharing server. If you get a good one, like a Synology, your cost will be around $700, and that will include a main drive and three backup drives, so you never lose your data.

From Joe, in Tennessee

Q. Hey, Kevin. There’s no telling where in the world you may be tonight, but I feel sure that you are having a good time. The last time I wrote, you taught me how to convert color to grayscale in Acrobat. Now how do I convert RGB to CMYK?

A. It’s pretty much the same process, Joe. Find your “Print Production” tools in Acrobat. Once there, check the box by “Output Intent” and select “US Web Uncoated v2.”

From Klaudia, in Wisconsin

Q. Kevin: We are in the process of checking out new computers with updated software for our business. What is your take on the iMac vs. the Mac Pro? What we see is that the iMacs can have more storage, bigger screens and are cheaper. We use the Creative Suite for most of our designing. What do you think?

A. That’s a good question, Klaudia. And the answer is simple: Go with the iMac. If you were a movie producer or videographer, you might consider the Mac Pro, but for design and production, you would probably never notice a difference in speed between the two computers. So save $1,000 or so to buy my dinner next time I’m in Wisconsin.

And let me share one last bit of advice.

Each year, I direct a program called The Institute of Newspaper Technology, held on the campus of The University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Over the years, we’ve had attendees from newspapers in just about every state and province, and we seem to grow each year.

We will be holding our 20th session October 6-8, 2016. To celebrate, we will be inviting more trainers, bringing back some of the favorites from past years, offering more classes, and hosting a 20th Anniversary Gala on Friday evening.

If you’ve been before, come celebrate our anniversary with friends from previous sessions. If you’ve always wanted to attend, this is the year to come.

Mark your calendars for October 6-8, 2016. Enjoy the beautiful weather, the Smoky Mountains, and what has come to be known internationally as the finest annual training event in the industry.

Find information at: newspaperinstitute.com.

Write to kevin@kevinslimp.com.

Mid-Winter

From Page 1

No time to shop or live in a “wineless” community? No problem! We’ll take a cash donation and make your wine purchase for you.

Cork sales will take place in advance beginning January 1 and during the Mid-Winter Conference.

Also part of the evening reception will be a Made in Mississippi products showcase.

We’re inviting product manufacturers, artisans and crafters to join us Friday evening from 5:30-8 pm in the hotel penthouse for an Anniversary Reception and Fundraiser.

Exhibitors have the opportunity to showcase products and connect with MPA members. There is space for 6-8 exhibitors.

If your newspaper has a local artisan or manufacturer who you think may be interested in participating, contact Sue Hicks with the lead, 601-981-3060, shicks@mspress.org.

For more information on the wine pull, Contact Monica Gilmer, 601- 981-3060, mgilmer@mspress.org, to make a donation or purchase corks.
Scoop has things covered
Scoop the News Cat has become the social media mascot for the Itawamba County Times in Fulton. Times reporter and Scoop’s caretaker Adam Armour says the cat, tiny and hungry, was found following a local mail carrier when the newspaper crew took her in three years ago. These days, she’s an indoor cat who dishes out regular, often acerbic commentary on the proceedings at the Times office via social media. You can follow her online at facebook.com/scoopthenewscat.

Newspaper ads buys up 16% in November
» MediaLife

What if newspaper ad spending has not just stabilized but is actually growing?

That’s the suggestion of new numbers from Sysorex, a big data company that looks at trends in advertising through its Shoom analytics.

It finds that in November newspapers saw a 16 percent gain in ad spending over October.

It was the third time in the past five months that ad spending rose month to month, and it was driven by a 38 percent gain in retail, which up until October had been cutting back on newspaper spending.

Sysorex notes the big November gain could be tied to retailer optimism about the holiday season. The category usually ramps up newspaper spending in November and December, and forecasters were calling for better holiday sales this year, which always perks up advertising.

“A month-to-month increase on the order we saw in the retail category in November is unusual; better than we’ve seen in several years,” says Michael Lynch, executive vice president for Sysorex’s Shoom services.