Roast earns $30K for internship program

Marshall Ramsey enjoys a joke at his expense during the Jan. 26 Roast in his honor.

By An thony Warren

JACKSON
A star-studded skewering of cartoonist and radio host Marshall Ramsey delivered over $31,000 for the benefit of the MPA Education Foundation.

Ramsey was the honoree during the annual Celebrity Roast to raise funds for the scholarship and internship programs of MPAEF.

“This was a really fun and entertaining event that will fully fund the internship program for the coming year,” said Mississippi Press Association President Don Norman, publisher of the Starkville Daily News and vice chairman of MPAEF. “The money raised will be used to fund 15 intern positions at Mississippi newspapers over 10 weeks this summer.”

The panel of roasters at the Jan. 26 program included Gov. Phil Bryant, Secretary of State Delbert Hosemann, state Rep. Steve Holland, veteran journalist and educator David Hampton, former college and pro football player and fitness trainer Paul Lacoste, and longtime emcee Sid Salter of Mississippi State University.

Ramsey, editorial cartoonist for The Clarion-Ledger who recently marked his 20th year with the state’s largest newspaper, is also host of “Now You’re Talking” on
STARKVILLE

The year started off for our Association with another successful roast to benefit the MPA Education Foundation and Mid-Winter Conference with terrific sessions on sales techniques and revenue growth.

Roasting Clarion-Ledger cartoonist Marshall Ramsey was a blast for those of us in the audience and a dream come true for some of the politicians on the panel. Gov. Phil Bryant, in particular, seemed to really enjoy the chance to turn the tables on the honoree.

Marshall, as expected, took it like a champ and gave as good as he got. He’s been a fixture on the panel for many years, and it was fun to see him in the spotlight. A couple of the roasters showed off some of their own artwork in an attempt to prove what Marshall does is actually pretty easy. But we know better.

The money raised from the event will nearly fund the entire internship program this summer. So we are very grateful to newspaper members and other sponsors who supported the event.

Meanwhile, Mid-Winter was another fine gathering. Keynote speaker Diane Ciotta was one of the best-reviewed presenters we have had in a long time. Her expertise, energy and good humor made her very popular. We look forward to welcoming her back in the future.

Early results indicate we covered our expenses on the conference thanks to keeping speaker fees down overall. But, in an effort to improve attendance, the MPA Board is considering some changes to the program next year to hopefully make it more relevant to more of our members.

Stay tuned for further details.

ANOTHER HOT TOPIC at the meeting was growing digital revenue, and MPS can now help our member papers do this.

Through a partnership with Amplified Digital, MPS is now offering digital sales options like search engine optimization, e-mail blasts, programmatic and other options member papers can sell to their local clients.

Not sure what any of those terms mean? No problem – MPS Marketing Manager Julie Darling is well-versed in these options and can help you or other sponsors who supported the event.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, our attention is now turning to the summer convention. Be sure and mark your calendars: It is a little later this year than usual, July 6-8. Those dates follow a Tuesday Fourth of July holiday, so hopefully our weekly members can get their editions out early and then join us for some good programming and R&R on the Gulf Coast.

We are returning to the Golden Nugget in Biloxi this year for another joint meeting with the Louisiana Press Association. They will join us this year in Mississippi, and we will return the favor by joining them in New Orleans next year.

Topics are still being ironed out and selected, but count on a couple that will cover the threat to public notice advertising across the nation. One session, in particular, will focus on “best practices” for public notices and some design suggestions intended to increase reader awareness and interest.

Other sessions will focus on industry trends and challenges of the news business. I bet you can expect the topic of “fake news” to come up at least once!

Meanwhile, your feedback and support is always appreciated. If you have thoughts or suggestions about MPA, MPS or the upcoming convention, have thoughts or suggestions about MPA, MPS or the upcoming convention, please call me at 662-323-1642 or email me at the address below.

MPA-MPS President Don Norman is publisher of the Starkville Daily News. His email address is sdpb@starkvilledailynews.com

SPJ seeks greater access to government

The Society of Professional Journalists and 60 other journalism organizations have requested a meeting with President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence to discuss access to government.

The coalition sent a letter today to Trump and Pence, asking for a meeting or conference call to discuss:

• the ability of reporters to directly interact with government employees who are subject matter experts, rather than interacting with Public Information Officers (or having all conversations monitored by Public Information Officers);
• access to the activities of the President;
• and ensuring that the Federal Freedom of Information Act remains as strong as possible.

“We believe strongly that journalists are the eyes and ears of the citizens of the United States,” said SPJ National President Lynn Walsh. “The average American citizen does not have the time or resources to check up on elected officials to make sure they are running the country the way they should. It is up to journalists to help hold those in power accountable.”

The letter is the latest among several sent to The White House since at least 2013, regarding concerns restrictions on photographers, transparency and public information officer restrictions.
Auditor: Open Meetings Act does not apply
» By WESLEY MULLER
SunHerald

DIAMONDHEAD
State Auditor Stacey Pickering said the Open Meetings Act does not apply to him, according to a statement issued in early February.

The statement was in response to what Mayor Tommy Schaefer told the Sun Herald last week. He said Pickering had held “an illegal meeting” with four of five Diamondhead councilmen.

Pickering’s statement said: “On Tuesday, January 31, 2017, the State Auditor met with four Diamondhead council members at city hall. The State Auditor’s purpose for this visit was to provide a copy of a recent performance review of the City of Diamondhead to these members. The mayor and another member had previously received copies of this report. While the Open Meetings Act does not apply to the State Auditor, we are always careful to ensure compliance with the Act when meeting with local officials. An Attorney General’s Opinion ... dated April 4, 2003, addressed a very similar gathering, stating ‘a meeting called by a state or federal economic development agencies whose sole purpose is to disseminate information of available grants and favorable loans for public projects, is not in violation of the Open Meetings Act.’”

Councilman-at-large Ernie Knobloch said Friday the councilmen were the ones who planned the meeting, but they originally intended to have only two councilmen at a time meet with Pickering to avoid having a quorum. A quorum, which is defined as three-fifths of a board’s members, makes a meeting called by a State Auditor illegal.

Columbia High launches paper
Staff members of the Paw Print newspaper at Columbia High School John Ezell (from left), editor Jack Deal, Amber Wascomb and Alyssa Pearce show off the second edition of the new publication. The CHS students partnered with The Columbian-Progress to start the newspaper with financial assistance from the MPA Education Foundation.

Newspaper haiku cultivates following
» By JERRY MITCHELL
The Clarion-Ledger

A Mississippi Delta newspaper has mastered the art of turning local crimes into popular haikus on Twitter.

“It’s an odd thing,” said Charlie Smith, editor for The Enterprise-Tocsin in Indianola. “I’m glad people are enjoying them. They’re fun to write.”

The newspaper has a page called “Cops and Robbers” that prints local police reports.

In December, Smith decided to break up the gray page by highlighting one of the incidents, sometimes humorous, by turning them into haikus.

The decision drew little fanfare from readers, he said. “My mom is really the only one who commented on it before.”

But that changed Wednesday when Smith decided to share them online through its Twitter account, @IndianolaMSnews.

“In an effort to reach the new era of digital-savvy, poetry-loving millennials, we have begun publishing a ‘Crime Haiku of the Week,’” the newspaper tweeted.

Then he began to share some of the haikus:

A New York Times reporter and others began to retweet them on Twitter.

“It’s gotten more attention than anything else I’ve ever tweeted,” Smith said.

The newspaper noted: “Funny what gets attention in print vs. social media. Crime haiku has created little buzz in the paper but seems a hit on Twitter.”
In media, President Trump has his cake and eats it, too

President Trump wants to have it both ways, and, for now at least, it looks like he’s getting what he wants. He excoriates the media as an “enemy” of the people, but gorges on it – even the purveyors of what he maintains as “fake news.” He clearly subscribes to the line of thought that any kind of publicity is good publicity.

What else could be behind the melodramatic move barring The New York Times, CNN, and Politico from a Feb. 24 briefing by press secretary Sean Spicer?

It accomplishes three things:
1) Rattles the press, 2) Serves a huge helping of red meat to Trump’s unswerving base, and 3) Draws plenty of attention to an attention-starved politician. (Yes, he’s a politician now.)

The sort of unflattering coverage the president has attracted in his first month on the job is by no means unique to him. He’s definitely not the first to have a tempestuous relationship with the press. That goes back to the founding of the nation.

But Thomas Jefferson was famously quoted as saying if it were left to him “to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter.”

Keep in mind he said this during the nation’s infancy and a time when newspapers were hyper-partisan.

I came of age when the drama of Watergate was much-discussed in journalism classes. The struggle of the Nixon administration to cover up and obfuscate was still very fresh.

President Clinton couldn’t possibly have been happy with the coverage of his own travails.

And, though it’s easily forgotten now, President Obama’s administration was not the friendliest to the media. When it took a strong tack against Fox News, other outlets like CNN and The New York Times stood with that network to object.

Still, none crossed the bridge Trump recently has.

It’s difficult to listen to recent remarks from President Trump painting the press broadly and with a very dirty brush, accusing the media of being an “enemy of the American people,” and not get defensive about it.

But we have to shake it off and steel ourselves to the reality that this is the president’s modus operandi: Shoot first and let the adults in the administration clean up the mess later.

Those same adults would have us believe he actually doesn’t mean the media en masse are truly nasty people – just those dirty, rotten scoundrels at CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC and The “failing” New York Times.

Political theater. I get it.

But it’s also a dangerous gambit – for us in the media business, for politicians, and for the voters who rely on the freedoms granted under the First Amendment probably much more than they realize.

Given the general disdain – genuine hate, even – many Americans harbor for the “mainstream media,” it’s hard to imagine us playing the role of the persecuted very well.

That distaste doesn’t always trickle down to the local media, but it’s undeniably a challenge for all of us to overcome. Much like how bad news that encircles the largest newspapers in the country tends to drive the conversation about the vitality of the entire industry.

But, hey, the drama may be good for business. New York Times executive editor Dean Baquet says circulation rises every time the president Tweets about the newspaper. And The Washington Post recently announced the addition of five dozen new journalists to the payroll.

If we have learned nothing else in the last 18 months, we know Donald Trump is who he is, and he’s not interested in “pivoting.”

So it’s incumbent upon us to figure out the new normal and how to navigate it. And report on it.

The nation needs the press. And the president does, too.

This isn’t a banana republic.

Not yet.

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

Bill on liquor ads advances

A bill that would repeal the prohibition of advertising liquor in dry counties and municipalities is advancing in the House of Representatives.

SB 2345, filed by Sen. Lydia Chassaniol, would allow advertisements by liquor store operators or restaurants serving alcohol to appear in newspapers that are not published in wet municipalities.

A similar bill filed in both 2015 and 2016 failed.

SB 2345, however, passed the senate last month by a vote of 39-12.

The bill is double-referred in the Senate but recently passed out of the Tourism Committee and Ways and Means Committee. It now awaits floor action in the Senate.

Special meeting notice bill alive

Language has been restored to HB 1116 that will make it applicable to all public bodies in the state and not just those situated in the most populated cities and counties.

Filed by Rep. Cory Wilson (R-Madison), the bill requires public bodies to give a list of opted-in media contacts at least one hour of notice before special called meetings.

When the bill passed the House in February on a vote of 118-3 it was amended on the floor to only apply to cities with populations of more than 25,000 and counties with populations of more than 50,000.

“The amendment significantly weakened the bill and would have made it apply to only a handful of cities and counties,” said Layne Bruce, MPA executive director.

It was amended further in the Senate Accountability, Ethics and Transparency Committee so that it applies to all cities and counties, but only requires the largest of them to post notices of special called meetings to government body websites.

“It was the web posting requirements in the bill that originally stalled it,” Bruce said. “By making that portion applicable to only large cities and counties, it hopefully clears a major hurdle for this important legislation.”

The bill recently passed the Senate and now moves to conference for further deliberation.

UMMC joint venture bill would elude FOI

MPA has voiced opposition to a house bill designed to exclude joint ventures between the University of Mississippi Medical Center and other hospitals from transparency laws.

HB 926 passed the house in early February on a vote of 89-9.

But concerns about the bill have slowed its progress in the senate as other public hospitals have voiced concerns over it.

The bill is similar to legislation passed in Alabama in 2016. The Alabama bill, however, did not include provisions for excluding such deals from FOI laws.

“Our goal going forward is to have the public records exemptions in HB 926 removed,” said MPA lobbyist Steve Browning. “Then it would be nearly identical to the 2016 law which benefitted the University of Alabama Birmingham hospital.”

The bill was filed by Rep. Jason White (R-West).

Lottery advertising bill dies in committee

A bill that would have repealed a prohibition on lottery advertising died in the Senate Finance Committee.

SB 2189, filed by Sen. Derrick Simmons (D-Greenville), was backed by MPA as an important precursor as officials continue to debate the need for a lottery, which could inject up to $75 million into state coffers.
Ray Mosby writes with the subtle charm of a bulldozer: Loud, straight ahead and willing to push through all of the muck and mud.

“I never want anyone to finish one of my (editorial) columns and not know where I stand on an issue,” he says. Which, of course, means that his editorial columns as editor and publisher of The Deer Creek Pilot weekly newspaper in Rolling Fork often make readers and those he writes about fighting mad.

So imagine Mosby’s heart rate on the gray, winter day when an extra large man parked his pickup in front of the newspaper, climbed out and said, “Boy, I want to talk to you.” He was wearing a flannel shirt and overalls.

Mosby stared at the man’s arms. “They were bigger than my waist,” he recalls.

“There are a lot of folks out there who think you ain’t nothing but a son of a b----,” the man told Mosby. “But can’t a single one of them call you a liar.”

That was all he said.

“I’d never seen him before, and I’ve never seen him since,” Mosby says. “That was about 1995, a couple of years after me and the bank bought the paper. I had come in here from the Clarksdale Press Register and applied the principles of a daily newspaper to the weekly. Every week I had a ‘real’ front page that consisted of news and a ‘real’ editorial page that offered opinion. Folks around here weren’t used to that and I was wondering if the paper was going to make it."

“For some reason, that man’s words assured me it would.”

Mississippi, a state with 82 counties, has 89 weekly newspapers.

Most do not have a wordsmith as talented as Mosby, who twice has been voted by his peers the winner of the Emmerich Award, which honors the state’s best editorial writer.

But there is a common thread among the weeklies.

“We want people to know what’s going on and how it’s going to affect their lives,” says Emma Crisler, editor and publisher of the Port Gibson Reveille. “People will come by the paper and ask, ‘What’s happened this week?’ They’re still excited about what’s coming out in the paper."

A hot topic recently has been the ever-changing route of the U.S. 61 bypass.

“That will impact a lot of people and businesses around here,” Crisler says. “It’s a story we will cover to the end.”

Crisler, a former English teacher who jokingly gives her age as 105, took over as editor when her husband, Ed, died in 1998. Her husband’s grandfather had been sole owner of the paper starting in 1898.

Scott Boyd, 58, editor and publisher of The Beacon in Macon, says his paper’s role in Noxubee County is simple: “We’re here to inform and educate the public as much as possible, and to document history as it happens.”

The Beacon, which has a circulation of 2,801, also is the place people call or email when research has left them at a dead end.

“I had a woman from St. Louis call me and say, ‘I think I’ve finally figured out why my biological dad is.’ She told me his name and asked if I’d ever heard of him. I said, ‘I sure have.’ She wanted a copy of his obituary. I called the (local) funeral home, found out when he died, looked up his obituary and sent it to her.”

It’s not all bad

Weekly papers chronicle good news, too.

“I’d like to have a positive story on my front page every week if I could,” Crisler says.

So would Boyd, who was furious after learning a subscriber said at a public forum that the biggest problem with Noxubee County was that The Beacon “prints nothing but negative news on its front page.”

Boyd confronted the woman after hearing about it. She stood by her statement.

“I went back to the office and pulled a copy of every paper from the previous 12 months,” he says. “I took a Sharpie and highlighted what I considered to be positive news. It turned out that 78 percent of the papers had a good news story on the front. I bundled them up and mailed them to her. Never heard a word, but I proved my point.”

Mosby says his readers are eager to read the local news unless it involves them. “I had a woman call and ask, ‘Why did you put my child’s name in the paper?’ I said, ‘I had a woman call and ask, ‘Why did you put my child rob the liquor store?’”

Mosby, 66, has enjoyed a long love affair with words. He starts each column with a quote that relates to his chosen subject. It might come from a Faulkner novel, a favorite poem or a rock ‘n’ roll song. He even quotes himself on occasion.

While the newspaper industry has struggled in recent years, Mosby has never fretted much about the Pilot’s well being. Its circulation is 1,450 across Sharkey and Issaquena counties, which have a combined population of approximately 6,400 and rank among the poorest counties in the state.

“But guess what? ESPN isn’t going to tell my readers the score of the high school girls basketball game. CNN is not going to tell them what happened at the board of supervisors meeting,” says Mosby, whose daughter is editor of a weekly paper just outside St. Petersburg, Florida. “To me, the smaller the community, the more vital the community newspaper is.”

After 23 years in Rolling Fork, he has earned the respect of his neighbors.

“We’re friends with him, enjoy reading him but we will tell him when we don’t agree with something he wrote,” says Melissa Thomas, 57. “But a lot of times, I’ll be reading him and think, ‘Oh, boy, he’s stirring some folks up today.’”

“I think everybody who lives here should be required to read Ray’s newspaper,” says Meg Cooper, 55. “He tells us the things going on that we need to know about. That’s the main thing I appreciate. But Ray is so much fun to read. You meet him and think ‘He doesn’t seem like the kind of guy who would really go after somebody in an article. Not Ray.’ But when he thinks it’s called for, he does.”

There was a time when Mosby’s actions were far stronger than his words.

For 12 years, the people of Rolling Fork watched him care for his wife, Phyllis, as she battled Alzheimer’s. She died in August 2013. He also buried both of his parents earlier that year.

But through it all, every single week, Mosby published The Deer Creek Pilot, with the help of associate editor Natalie Perkins.

“It’s a strange thing, but I’m pretty sure I’d only been to Rolling Fork once in my life — for a football game when I was in high school — before I bought the paper,” he says. “Somehow, I knew that if I came down here and gave them a real newspaper, things would eventually work out. “I guess you can say they have.”
Amanda Sexton Ferguson of The Winona Times and The Conservative was the winner of the MPAEF commemorative quilt raffle.

Douglas Hurd entertained the crowd during the Friday evening reception.

MPS marketing manager Julie Darling leads a round table discussion on digital sales strategies.

Jennifer and Russell Turner (left) of The Greene County Herald and Stephanie Patton of The Leland Progress.

Rep. Steve Holland and David Hampton enjoy a few of the jokes cracked at the MPA Education Foundation Roast of Marshall Ramsey.

MPA director and Silver Dollar Breakfast moderator Pat Brown presents an iPad Mini to Angela Ross of The Vicksburg Post.

State Treasurer Lynn Fitch and Gov. Phil Bryant at the Roast of Marshall Ramsey.

Andy Burleson (from left) with father Barry Burleson of The South Reporter and keynote speaker Diane Ciotta.

MPA staffers Monica Gilmer (from left), Julie Darling, Layne Bruce, Andrea Ross and Sue Hicks celebrate the end of the conference.
Dearman, editor who fought injustice, dies at 84

» The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA
Mississippi editor Stanley Dearman, who pushed for justice in the murders of three civil rights workers, died on Feb. 25 in Florida. He was 84.

Dearman wrote articles and editorials in The Neshoba Democrat that helped lead to conviction of a former Klansman in the 1964 killings.


A deputy sheriff in Philadelphia had arrested them on a traffic charge and released them, but not before alerting a mob. Their bodies were dug up 44 days later under a dam, after Mississippi’s then-governor claimed their disappearance was a hoax.

The murders inspired the 1988 film “Mississippi Burning.”

In 1967, the federal government charged 18 people with depriving the workers of their civil rights. Only seven were convicted.

Dearman purchased the Democrat in 1966 and ran it for 34 years. After his retirement, he became a founding member of the Philadelphia Coalition, a multiracial citizens’ group that pushed for further prosecutions in the killings.

“Come hell or high water, it’s time for an accounting,” Dearman wrote in a 2000 editorial in the Democrat.

Susan Glisson, former head of the University of Mississippi’s William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, said Dearman had tears in his eyes as he walked into a 2004 news conference when coalition members first called for justice in the case.

“He said ‘I never thought I would live to see this day,’” Glisson wrote in a remembrance on Facebook. “I told him how much he had done to make it happen.”

Eventually, Klansman Edgar Ray Killen, who had been charged in the 1967 trial but was acquitted, was convicted in the 1967 trial but went free after the jury couldn’t come to a verdict, was charged with murder. He was convicted of manslaughter in 2005 by a state court jury - exactly 41 years after the killings.

Killen remains confined at the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman.

Dearman told a reporter from The Globe and Mail newspaper in Canada that he was haunted by the case. At the time of the killing, he had been a reporter in nearby Meridian, where Chaney lived and Schwerner had been based.

“More than anything else, it is a personal thing,” he told the Canadian newspaper in 2001. “At some point, it entered into my psyche and started working. I don’t fully understand it. I have replayed every minute of it.”

Dearman said he took up the cause in part because he didn’t feel he initially did enough when he bought the Democrat in 1966.

Carolyn Goodman, the mother of Andrew Goodman, came to Philadelphia for Dearman’s 2001 retirement party.

“You gave to me and my family an understanding and warmth that we needed so desperately at a time when it seemed our wounds would never be healed,” she told Dearman then.

In a eulogy, James E. Prince III, the Democrat’s current editor and publisher, talked of Dearman’s fight for justice following the 1964 murders.

He compared Dearman to the biblical prophet Habakkuk, instructed by God to write plainly about the Lord’s goodness in the face of great evil, according to the Old Testament.

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“His greatest gift was words,” Prince said. “He was stern and unbinding, yet compassionate and kind.”

“If we all had a double portion of Stan Dearman’s justice and truth, the world would be a better place,” said the Rev. Dr. Dan Howard.

Dearman was inducted into the Mississippi Press Association Hall of Fame in 2005.

Services were Feb. 28 at McClain-Hays Funeral Home in Philadelphia. Burial was in Cedarlawn Cemetery.

Roast
From Page 1
over a year’s time, and honors their efforts in print newspaper, magazine and digital advertisements.”
Greenwood Commonwealth Editor and Publisher Tim Kalich

BNC
From Page 1
MPB Think Radio and author of several books and cartoon retrospectives.
Salter, Bryant, and Housemann turned the tables on Ramsey by drawing their own caricatures of him as

Auditor
From Page 3
meeting official and public.
Pickering also said, “It is the understanding of our office that this meeting was for the purpose of providing copies of the report and disseminating information relating to the report. No official action was taken in the Auditor’s presence by the board members.”

But the Open Meetings Act defines an official meeting as a gathering of a quorum of the members of a public body at which official acts “may be taken,” and the Mississippi Supreme Court in 1985 ruled that information-gathering sessions are subject to the Open Meetings Act.

Knobloch said the meeting was held to discuss a letter Schaefer sent to Pickering’s office concerning the audit report.

The 2003 opinion to Sonny Clanton has to do with more than one member of the Calhoun County Board of Supervisors meeting with members from state and federal economic development agencies. It does not address meetings in which a quorum is present.

The opinion states, “The usual nature of these meetings are that they are called by the agencies at locations away from our courthouse, are organized by those agencies and are for the purpose of disseminating information of available grants and favorable loans for public projects.”
Big changes in Washington mean changes in your community

Big changes in Washington will mean big changes in your county, and we’ve been covering them on The Rural Blog.

President Donald Trump’s pledge to deport undocumented workers could lead to a labor shortage in agriculture, in which an estimated 16 percent of the work is done by people who are in the U.S. illegally, The Associated Press and CNN reported. Our blog item is at http://bit.ly/2klGxs1.

That’s just one farm-and-food issue that could spark disputes among Trump and other Republicans, NPR reported. Those include breaking nutrition legislation out of the Farm Bill, the bill’s conservation-compliance rules, regulation of confined animal feeding operations, and protection of bees and other pollinators. See bit.ly/2jL91g3.

Trump has talked about an Obamacare replacement that would allow insurance companies to sell across state lines, but that’s more complicated than it sounds, and it might be bad for rural buyers, Jackie Farwell reported for the Bangor Daily News. We excerpted the story at bit.ly/2iYbKW9.

Repeal of Obamacare could also quash a program that is penalizing 769 hospitals this year for shortcomings on patient safety, Trudy Lieberman wrote for the Rural Health News Service at bit.ly/2kbbUX9. For our blog item with a link to the list of penalized hospitals, see bit.ly/2jLjubb.

More importantly, depending on the replacement, repeal could hurt or kill struggling rural hospitals, many in areas that Trump carried, Kaiser Health News reported, and we excerpted it at bit.ly/2jqX4Lv.

Kaiser’s main example was a hospital in Pennsylvania, a state that just started a pilot project to pay six rural hospitals a set amount each month instead of reimbursing them for federally covered care, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported. Read about it at bit.ly/2hrMg1A.

Trump’s key landslide in rural areas, and major news outlets’ failure to anticipate it and its effect on the election, prompted The Washington Post to add a reporter who will focus on the divides between rural and urban Americans. Jose DelReal, Alaska native and Harvard grad, might appreciate some competitive help from rural papers; read about his assignment at bit.ly/2jLrsRE.

One last Trump note: Jim Stasiowski is known among community journalists for his column on newspaper writing, but his latest effort warned that Trump’s success could prompt local candidates who use the “Trump approach of loud, bold, insulting statements to gain early attention for an otherwise long-shot campaign.” Read it on one of our blog pages: bit.ly/2jk6Ql2.

Drug abuse: Why is opioid addiction so rampant in rural areas? A story by Luke Runyon of Wichita Public Radio suggested that rural areas are the perfect breeding ground for opioid addiction. We paired it with a New York Times county-by-county map showing drug-overdose rates at bit.ly/2kbvlz6.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has identified 255 counties, mostly rural, that are the most vulnerable to an outbreak of HIV or hepatitis C from intravenous drug use. Many local officials have resisted establishing syringe exchanges as a way of heading off such outbreaks, but in several counties, they have changed their minds, reports Mary Meehan of Ohio Valley ReSource, a regional journalism collaborative of public broadcasters in Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia: bit.ly/2iYFePM.

In Kentucky, which has many “dry” counties, a study of meth-lab discoveries boosted the case that drug use is less prevalent in areas where alcohol sales are legal: bit.ly/2jW8gmw.

Drug use is discouraging economic development in some rural and micropolitan counties because too many prospective employees can’t pass a drug test. The Washington Post reported on that phenomenon in a story about how U.S. manufacturing has changed: bit.ly/2jkfxvD.

Newspapers: The Rural Blog is also about journalism and community newspapers, which are threatened in most states by local officials’ efforts to get legislatures to slash public-notice laws. The Public Notice Resource Center noted how the Georgetown (Ky.) News-Graphic presents public notices like news stories on a special page “designed to capture readers’ attention and promote the kind of serendipity that distinguishes newsprint from electronic formats.” We picked it up at bit.ly/2jVV0L6.

You may have seen the New York Times story about the Enid (Okla.) News & Eagle catching hell from readers and some advertisers for endorsing Hillary Clinton; we picked it...
The New York Times, whose slogan is “all the news that’s fit to print,” found itself in the news during the election for publishing some of Donald Trump’s tax documents.

Disclosed were the first page of Trump’s 1995 New York state resident income tax return, the first page of his New Jersey non-resident tax return and the first page of his Connecticut non-resident tax return. They show a $916 million loss that might have allowed Trump to legally avoid paying any income taxes for up to 18 years.

In addition to the political ramifications of the report, there’s a debate over whether the newspaper violated the law in publishing the documents. That will be probed from all sides until something else in this bizarre presidential election captures the headlines and the attention of the talking heads on the cable news networks.

For me, whenever the New York Times is in the news, I’m reminded of my friend of decades ago, Paul Pittman. Paul, who died way too young at age 52 in 1983, was editor and publisher of the weekly Tylertown Times and started a radio station in the town.

A talented journalist, humorist and after-dinner speaker, his influence extended beyond his native Walthall County.

He wrote a syndicated column that appeared in a number of state newspapers, directed public relations for William Winter’s 1967 gubernatorial campaign and once ran for Congress himself.

He finished Ole Miss before I started, but I knew of his reputation before I met him personally.

After I moved to McComb in the 1960s to work for the Enterprise-Journal, he and I became friends, since we were only about 20 miles apart.

When the Enterprise-Journal press was modernized, Paul contracted to print his newspaper with us, and we had a great relationship for the rest of his life.

On occasion, we would take a trip together to cover some event, such as a tour of the nuclear power plant in Claiborne County or what, at the time, was the new experimental winery at Mississippi State University.

I don’t know how Paul swung that deal, but MSU sent a plane down to McComb to pick us up and fly us to the campus, where we were wined and dined. Needless to say, they got some good publicity in the McComb-Tylertown area from a couple of Ole Miss graduates.

One of those trips we took was to Jackson to a press conference Richard Nixon was holding in one of the hotels on Capitol Street.

Nixon, who had lost the president’s race to John F. Kennedy in 1960, had also lost the California governor’s race to Pat Brown in 1962.

He was bitter after the 1962 loss. Appearing before 100 reporters he lashed out at the media, proclaiming “You won’t have Nixon to kick around any more, because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference.”

Obviously it wasn’t. Before his political comeback culminated in winning the presidency in 1968, Nixon held press conferences all over the country like the one Paul and I attended.

At that one, there was a room full of reporters, including a New York Times correspondent who, I think, worked out of Atlanta.

At some point Paul managed to get recognized by Nixon to ask a question. I don’t remember the question, but I do remember how it was prefaced.

“Mr. Nixon, this is Paul Pittman of the Times.”

When the New York Times reporter looked incredulous and Nixon even raised an eyebrow, Paul added, “The Tylertown Times.”

Charles Dunagin is the retired editor and publisher of the Enterprise-Journal in McComb and a past president of the Mississippi Press Association. He resides in Oxford.

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### Issues

**From Page 8**

up at bit.ly/2klYw1s.

The rise of fake news has proven, that now more than ever, quality reporting is essential to keep people informed, especially in smaller communities.

That was a key point of an article that longtime journalist Kathy Kiely wrote for (Bill) Moyers & Co., citing some local news startups: bit.ly/2kkGSKT.

The editor-publisher of the paper judged the state’s best weekly for the last nine years became president of the Kentucky Press Association and immediately challenged his colleagues to do better. We wrote it up at bit.ly/2kkEp3T.

Potpourri: One of the most republished or adapted Rural Blog items recently was one about a New York Times analysis of TV-show followers, with a neat map. It showed that television, which once unified American culture, now defines its divisions: bit.ly/2hOft47.

Portable wi-fi devices at libraries allow patrons to “borrow the Internet,” the Daily Yonder reported, and we picked it up at bit.ly/2jkaU8c.

Rural liberal-arts colleges are fighting enrollment losses by improving connections with their communities, The Wall Street Journal reported: bit.ly/2jiJPR.

Abusive teachers are able to skip from state to state as local schools cover up their misdeeds, USA Today reported: bit.ly/2jk7AGK.

If you do or see stories that resonate across rural areas, please send them to me at al.cross@uky.edu.

Al Cross edited and managed weekly newspapers before spending 26 years at The (Louisville) Courier-Journal and serving as president of the Society of Professional Journalists. Since 2004 he has been director of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, based at the University of Kentucky. See www.RuralJournalism.org.
Lori told me about some simple techniques she uses in advertising presentations. “Once the other person mentions a problem,” she said, “it’s important to slow down and show some restraint. A lot of sales people are conditioned to pounce on the slightest opening and shift the conversation. They can’t wait to talk about the ways their products can solve the problem. For example, if the prospect says, ‘My advertising is not generating enough traffic on weekends,’ the sales person is tempted to jump in with a suggestion to run more ads on weekends.

“That’s a bad move,” she said. “Although that kind of instant-answer approach may seem like good idea at the time, it’s too early to propose a solution to the problem. So instead of expressing an opinion, I encourage the other person to continue talking. That keeps them on their train of thought. The more they talk, the more I learn. And as a result, I might find out that their weekday traffic has been declining along with the weekend business. That would call for a different solution.

“To keep them talking, it helps to use a minimum number of words, sometimes just one or two,” she explained. “I’ve learned some techniques from sales seminars and books, but I’ve also picked up ideas by watching good interviewers on television.”

Lori knows the importance of looking below the surface. Here are some phrases that work:

1. Say “that’s terrible” or that’s awful,” when a problem is mentioned. Say “that’s good,” when the news is positive. These simple phrases can help you get in step with the other person. “When you agree with what they’re saying, they usually keep right on talking,” she said. “You’re sympathizing with their bad news and giving them a verbal high five for their good news.”

2. Repeat their last phrase as a question. This is a well-known technique that has been around for years. When you hear, “We’re not getting enough weekend traffic,” say “You’re not getting enough weekend traffic?” and raise your voice on the last word to emphasize the question. That’s less formal than saying, “That’s an unusual statement. I’d like to know more.”

3. Say “How do you mean?” instead of “What do you mean?” Although your old grammar teacher would scold you for using “how” in place of “what,” “how” is a friendlier way to ask for more information. “What do you mean” can sound abrupt and defensive.

4. Say “Hmm.” “Crazy as it sounds, this is one of the best ways to keep the momentum going,” Lori said. “Think of all the different things you can express with ‘Hmm.’ With different inflection, you can convey agreement, happiness, surprise, sympathy or sadness.

“All of this is intended to help them flesh out problems. As the conversation moves along, you can ask some questions to tighten the focus and help them see the long-term implications of their situation. Then you’ll be in a better position to propose a solution.”

Hmm. That’s good.
Know when to let go of older hardware, software

While in Minnesota recently, I had an assignment similar to assignments I’ve had many times during the past 20 years: to spend a day with a small community newspaper group, meet with the management and staff individually, then propose two optional plans with the same goal in mind.

The goal was to improve the editorial and production workflow, thereby improving the quality of the publication and efficiency of the operation. Sounds simple enough, and having completed similar assignments hundreds of times before, I felt up to the task.

Every newspaper is different, so I keep their particular needs in mind when offering advice. This group is in a process that many of us find ourselves in: determining whether to tweak the current workflow using the tools available, or to upgrade hardware and software throughout the organization to achieve monumental jumps in efficiency.

I understand the dilemma. Having owned several publications in the past, plus a couple of companies right now, I know what it’s like to make upfront expenditures in order to see longterm gains.

Perhaps you are in the same dilemma. Should I purchase new hardware and upgrade software at the same time, or will everything be OK if we upgrade software on our current machines? Would my staff be more efficient with training or is it a waste of time? If I train them too much, will they run off and find a higher paying job somewhere else?

The questions go on. What about camera raw? Will it improve my product or just slow down my workflow? Am I spending enough time on my digital products or am I possibly spending too much time on them?

Speaking of staff, do I have too many or too few? Are they organized in the most efficient manner? Should we create our website in-house or use an outside vendor? The questions could go on forever. It’s enough to bring on a panic attack.

Don’t panic. Let me suggest a few things to think about when faced with similar questions. Let us consider hardware and software today and I will discuss other issues in upcoming issues.

Q. Is my hardware too old? Is it all going to come crashing down?
A. Hardware is a delicate issue. One of the quickest ways to improve efficiency is to improve the tools we use. Why do you think Amazon is always investing in new robots and distribution methods? However, hardware isn’t cheap and no one wants to waste money.

I would suggest newspapers look over their current hardware and ask a few questions. How old are my computers? If you are working on machines more than six years old, chances are they are getting pretty slow and produce all kinds of delays.

Q. What can I do to get the most of my current hardware?
A. If hardware is slowing down your workflow but new computers aren’t in the budget, one of the easiest ways to get more from your machine is to maximize its RAM memory. RAM isn’t expensive these days.

I’ve noticed six years is kind of a magic point for computers. Yes, Macs can last forever, but like anything else they slow down in time. And Windows-based machines slow down more quickly than Macs. It’s just a fact of life.

I have four computers I primarily use in my work. One is an eight-year-old iMac. It still works and is fine for word processing and less intensive processes. But, I notice lately that it even slows down during simple tasks like checking email. I wouldn’t dare waste my time trying to crank out pages on that computer. Sure I could do it, but it would take three times as long as creating the same pages on my two-year-old iMac.

Q. What can I do to get the most of my current hardware?
A. If hardware is slowing down your workflow but new computers aren’t in the budget, one of the easiest ways to get more from your machine is to maximize its RAM memory. RAM isn’t expensive these days and I’ve seen machines double or even triple in speed by upgrading their current RAM to higher levels. Most computers can hold 8 to 16 gb of RAM. Check to see how much your machines currently have and how much they can hold, and make an investment (usually under $100) to maximize the memory in each machine.

Q. Is my software too old? Do I really need to pay a monthly fee to keep from falling too far behind?
A. Maybe, maybe not. Approximately a third of the newspapers I visit are using the most recent design software. If you’re an Adobe user, that means the Creative Cloud version, which requires a monthly subscription.

Does this mean you’re behind the curve if you have older software? Again, maybe or maybe not. I don’t work for Adobe or Quark, so I have no reason to mislead you.

You don’t have to have the latest version of InDesign or Quark to be efficient. I have three versions of Adobe’s software on the machine I’m using right now: CS5, CS6 and CC. I’ve noticed no big difference in speed between CS6 and CC. That’s also the case on other machines I use. So if your staff is using CS6 software, speed probably isn’t an issue. If it is, you should check the RAM memory, as mentioned earlier. You may want to upgrade to Creative Cloud for other reasons but speed probably isn’t one of them.

You might even be OK with Adobe CS5 or 5.5. If things seem to be moving along nicely and you are getting your ads and pages out in a timely manner, you might be safe for now. I wouldn’t plan to use CS5 for several more years, but your operation won’t come crashing down in the near future due to software issues.

However, if you are using really old software like CS or CS2 (even CS3), your days are numbered. One day in the not-to-distant future you might walk in to learn no one can get their pages out. Even if that weren’t a possibility - and it is - it’s taking at least twice as long as it should to get your product out the door using old software. CS3 was released just under ten years ago. Not many of us are driving the same cars we were in 2007. And if we are (I’ve had mine five years), we’re probably thinking about upgrading to a newer model.

It’s interesting we often update our cars before updating the things that provide our financial security. We forget that time is money. If it takes twice as long to get an issue designed due to older software and computers, the amount of time it would take to recoup the cost of new equipment is minimal.

As I tell my clients, I’ll be home in a couple of days. So do what you think is best. But if it were my decision, I wouldn’t wait too long before upgrading any older software and hardware.

Email Kevin Slimp, kevin@kevinslimp.com.
McDavid event joining with JSU conference

MPA’s annual workshop for collegiate journalists is this year joining with the Jackson State University School of Journalism and Media Studies Conference.

The 19th annual O.C. McDavid Journalism Conference will be held March 30 on the campus of the JSU e-Center in Jackson.

The JSU event is a day-long workshop for students in the university’s School of Journalism and Media Studies, bringing in speakers and panels to help majors prepare for post-school careers. The McDavid Conference is sponsored annually by the MPA Education Foundation for students of journalism at universities and colleges in Mississippi.

There is no cost for students or MPA members to attend the event, which will feature panels discussing careers in print, digital and broadcast journalism and public relations. The McDavid Conference will also, as is customary, feature a speaker on the arts in recognition of O.C. McDavid’s long secondary career as a sculptor and artist. The event will culminate with the presentation of the Better Newspaper Contest Student Division awards.

Winners at ArkLaMiss

Adam Prestridge (left) of The Columbian-Progress and Myra Bean of The Panolian took two of the top cash prizes for their submissions during the Hot Ideas Idea Exchange session Friday, Nov. 11 at the ArkLaMiss Conference in Vicksburg. They were presented their prizes by program moderator Dennis Dunn of The Annistar (AL) Star.