

Newspapers share their coronavirus stories

For more than a year, Oklahoma newspapers have been providing readers with vital information about the pandemic.

In March 2020, the United States declared a state of emergency. Masks became mandatory in many countries and millions died.

Schools closed, events were canceled and businesses struggled to remain open.

COVID-19 had no boundaries and soon found its way through the doors of many newspaper offices.

Last month we asked OPA member newspapers to tell us how the virus had affected them. For as many as we heard back from, we're sure there are more stories out there but none may be as compelling as the one from the Kingfisher Times & Free Press.

In late January, the semi-weekly publication was prepared to issue a statement to its readers about the financial losses the newspaper had endured for the past year.

Just as many other newspapers had made the difficult decision to produce at least one issue digitally, Times & Free Press Publisher Barry Reid was

announcing that the Sunday edition would be available only in digital form.

A week before the announcement was made, eight of the nine Times & Free Press's staff members tested positive for COVID-19.

"We were closed to the public for two weeks but didn't miss a deadline (although we stretched a few quite a bit!)," said Editor Christine Reid.

A group text kept staff members connected and informed of each other's symptoms.

"We left it entirely up to each employee to determine whether they felt well enough to come in on a given day and encouraged everyone to go home before they felt tapped out," said Reid.

Some "COVID-free" time slots were designated for the lone staff member who was not infected.

"It helped that most of us have worked together for at least 20 years and some of us have been putting out papers together for 35 years or more," said Reid. "Everyone knew what had to be done and were very caring about each other's well-being. It's not an exag-



In January, eight of the nine staff members of the Kingfisher Times & Free Press tested positive for COVID-19. Although the office was closed to the public for two weeks, the paper never missed a deadline.

geration to say that we are family – we can get frustrated with each other, but when push comes to shove, we all pull together."

The staff had planned to ease readers and advertisers into the reality of a digital-only Sunday edition, but instead found itself quarantined, Reid said.

"We had to drop that

news like a bombshell while we were struggling just to get some semblance of a newspaper out and still keep everyone as healthy as possible," she said.

Reid said the staff remains aware that their health and economic challenges were not unique to them.

(See Coronavirus, Page 4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PAGE 6 Grab readers' attention and save time with ASFs

PAGE 11 Bingo and Babies are part of this month's Worth Mentioning

PAGE 14 Do you know when it's time to replace your old computer?

From the President

By Mike Strain, Tulsa World
OPA President 2020-2021



After a year of sickness, lockdowns and every other unsettling thing that comes with a pandemic, it feels like things are slowly returning to ... what exactly?

I hesitate to say normal, because things might never be the “normal” we remember in a world before terms like social distancing, mask mandate and COVID-19 became part of our everyday lives.

But we’re getting closer, and one thing that pleasantly reminded me of that was a recent planning call for the Oklahoma Press Association’s annual convention. As I mentioned in the column last month, the convention is still planned to be held – with people in the same rooms.

It’s set for June 11-12 in Oklahoma City.

Right now, it’s possible there will be capacity limits in conference rooms and there may be some social distancing involved. These kinds of things would have seemed absurd two years ago; but now, chatting with friends standing a few extra feet away sounds great.

The convention is shaping up to be a good one. Members of our congressional delegation will be there for a Q&A forum. There will be numerous educational sessions on various topics. And, of course, there will be awards night.

I almost hate to say this because I fear I will jinx it: I’m feeling optimistic about the convention. Of course, there’s also a fair amount of fear, because Mark Thomas has had two years to gather material for his bloopers show.

Looking back: I’m down to the last few months in my time as OPA president. I’d like to share a memory each month from my career, which covers about 30 years. Here’s the first:

The thunder rattled my windows and jarred me awake. I got out of bed, checked outside and found an odd surprise – the skies were clear. Maybe, I thought, something had fallen in the attic. I went back to bed.

Less than an hour later, my mother called. That’s how I learned a building blew up in downtown Oklahoma City – a blast that rattled my windows seven miles away and soon would rattle a nation as the tragic details emerged of so many killed by a bomb.

I worked nights on the sports desk at The Oklahoman back then. My instructions the night of April 19, 1995: Get the sports section done as quickly as possible. We did and what I witnessed in the newsroom covering the tragedy that night, and in the weeks ahead, was people who cared deeply about their community.

I suspect you all have covered tragedies of various kinds in your communities. I think what separates hometown newspapers from other media is the compassion. Newspapers often have reporters, editors and publishers who have lived in their communities not just for years, but for decades. The community that hurts after a tragedy is their community, their neighbors, their fellow churchgoers.

I bristle when I hear people bad-mouthing the media. I’m not saying that everyone in the media is perfect. What I am saying is that newspapers across our state care deeply about their communities and make a positive difference with their work. Even when it’s under the most trying of circumstances.

10-digit dialing in the 405 starts April 24

Starting April 24, all local calls within the 405 area code will require 10-digit dialing (area code + local number).

The move to 10-digit dialing for local 405 area

code calls is necessary to enable the addition of another area code for the area currently served only by 405. The additional area code (572), which will be added May 24, is needed to

ensure there will be enough telephone numbers available for the area.

Both 405 and 572 area codes will be within the local call boundaries.

Walters Herald receives award

The Walters Award Program has selected the Walters Herald for the 2021 Best of Walters Award in the Newspaper Publisher category.

Each year, the Walters Award Program identifies companies that have achieved exceptional marketing success in their local community.

Various sources of information are gathered and analyzed to choose winners in each category.

The program was established to recognize the best of local businesses in the community.

The organization works exclusively with local business owners, trade groups, professional associations and other business advertising and marketing groups.

OPA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, APRIL 29 – 1:00 PM

OMC Webinar: Getting Beyond The Buzzword to Engage Your Community PART 2

In this second session, Val Hoepfner will focus on 5-10 strategies and tools your newsroom can employ to cultivate the kinds of engagement you value most. \$35.

THURSDAY, MAY 6 – 10:00 AM

Academy Webinar: Kevin Slimp – Increase Your Revenue by Designing More Effective Ads

Kevin will cover the things you need to know to “up” your ad creation, meaning more effective ads and happier advertisers. This session is for both ad reps and designers! \$59.

FRIDAY, SATURDAY – JUNE 11-12

OPA Convention at the Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel
Plans are now being made for this annual event, which includes the Saturday night Awards Banquet.

For more information and links to register for webinars, visit

OkPress.com/events

OK Supreme Court sides with FOP

The Oklahoma Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Norman Fraternal Order of the Police, deciding that the City of Norman violated the state's Open Meeting Act when it approved a budget that cut the police budget by \$865,000.

The court upheld a December district court judge's ruling that language in a required notice for the June 16 meeting was insufficient.

The agenda specifically

listed the capital and operating budgets, the Norman Visitors and Convention Bureau budget and 11 amendments as an attachment, but did not list "three additional amendments, which were not listed on the attachment to the agenda, that collectively reallocated \$865,000 of the Police Department's budget for the establishment of an internal auditor and other community programs ... all

three amendments were adopted overwhelmingly."

The city appealed that ruling to the State Supreme Court, which sided with the prior ruling.

"We find that the language used in the agenda was deceptively vague and likely to mislead regarding the meeting and therefore was a willful violation of the (Open Meetings) Act," according to the opinion by Chief Justice Richard Darby.

McAlester body camera video released

The McAlester News-Capital recently obtained bodycam footage showing what happened during a Dec. 31, 2020, shooting of a man by a police officer.

The News-Capital requested the video footage in January but was denied. A second open records request for the footage and radio call logs was filed by the News-Capital on Jan. 26.

The Dec. 31, 2020, footage shows that the man

was shot by a McAlester police officer after numerous commands to drop a knife were ignored and the man advanced towards the officer.

The News-Capital was told that the body camera was given directly to the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation after the incident so there was no chance of data being lost.

Oklahoma State law exempts OSBI from the Oklahoma Open Records Act, stating that all records

relating to any investigation conducted by the bureau "shall be confidential and shall not be open to the public."

The Oklahoma Open Records Act states law enforcement agencies "shall make available for public inspection and copying" records that includes audio and video recordings from recording equipment attached to law enforcement vehicles and/or the person of a law enforcement officer.

The Oklahoma Publisher

ISSN 1526-811X

Official Publication of the
OKLAHOMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

OPA OFFICERS

President

MIKE STRAIN
Tulsa World

Vice President

JOHN DENNY MONTGOMERY
The Purcell Register

Treasurer

JEFF MAYO
Sequoyah County Times

Executive Vice President
MARK THOMAS

OPA DIRECTORS

RAY DYER, Past President
El Reno Tribune

MARK MILLSAP
The Norman Transcript

ZONELLE RAINBOLT
Wesner Publications

DON MECOY
The Oklahoman

SHAUNA BELYEU
The Eufaula Indian Journal

SHEILA GAY
Woodward News

SUZIE CAMPBELL
Countywide & Sun

OKLAHOMA PRESS ASSOCIATION
3601 N. Lincoln Blvd.,
Oklahoma City, OK 73105-5499
(405) 499-0020
Toll-Free in Oklahoma: (888) 815-2672
www.OkPress.com
news@OkPress.com
[www.Facebook.com/OKPress](https://www.facebook.com/OKPress)

**SUBSCRIBE TO
THE OKLAHOMA PUBLISHER
\$12 PER YEAR**

THE OKLAHOMA PUBLISHER (USPS 406-920) is published monthly for \$12 per year by the Oklahoma Press Association, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105-5499. Periodicals postage paid at Oklahoma City, OK.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE OKLAHOMA PUBLISHER, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105-5499.

You've Got Questions!

- Can I photograph minors without consent?
- Can police deny access to records by issuing a press release?
- Should I alter my archives when a person demands it?
- Can I report inaccurate testimony given in open court?
- What are the laws about liquor advertising?

These are questions answered by the attorneys for the OPA Legal Services Plan members in recent months. Newspapers always need timely legal advice on issues related to newspaper publishing.

You should join OPA'S LEGAL SERVICES PLAN!

See www.OkPress.com/LSP or contact Mark Thomas
at (405) 499-0033 or toll-free in Oklahoma 1-888-815-2672 today!



Coronavirus (continued from page 1)

“After nearly a year in which so many close to us had suffered so much more – including several local families who lost multiple people to COVID-19 and some businesses closed completely – we feel as if we really dodged a bullet in surviving our ‘staff infection’ with no serious repercussions for any of us,” said Reid.

THE HOOKER ADVANCE

Also hard hit by COVID-19 was The Hooker Advance. Advertising manager Billye Fischer tested positive Dec. 22 and went into the hospital for treatment on Dec. 24, said Publisher Sheila Blankenship.

The small staff did what they had to do to get the

paper published. Blankenship drove to Liberal, Kan., to pick up the printed papers, completed the report and got the papers in the mail. However, she began feeling bad over the weekend and tested positive for COVID-19 Dec. 28.

“We closed the office for two weeks, although I went in evenings,” Blankenship said. “We had the paper delivered by the printer and the two part-time employees got the paper to the post office while I continued working from home. We were all back in the office Jan. 4 and things felt normal again.”

But it didn’t last. Blankenship began coughing up blood Jan. 30, was admitted to the hospital with a pulmonary embolism from COVID pneumonia and had to remain hospitalized to be monitored while being treated with anticoagulants.

“I actually felt okay and was not weak

or sick or anything so we put out the paper with me in my hospital room on my laptop and my staff at the office,” Blankenship said. “It was slower but the pages were only a half-hour late to the printer so our press time was the same.

“I got released Feb. 3 and we’ve all been fine since,” she said. “I thank God for getting us all through a bizarre couple of months as we each had to learn a few new steps to this weekly dance routine.”

LAWTON CONSTITUTION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Lawton Constitution was closed to the public for almost two months, reopening May 26, said Constitution Publisher David Stringer.

“We’ve had two employees test positive, one of which was able to work from home during quarantine, but all recovered with no lingering effects,” said Stringer.

The bigger issue, he said, was parents that had to quarantine because the schools ordered their kids quarantined.

“None of these tested

positive, but schools being cautious meant we had to work short in a lot of departments,” said Stringer. “One employee was quarantined because of the child’s exposure three times.”

But the biggest impact was financial, forcing The Constitution to cut publication days from seven to five.

In the early days of the pandemic, when decisions were being made about closures and essential workers, Stringer received a call from a customer in Altus.

“Please don’t let them make you stop delivering the paper,” the caller said. “I have to have my paper. Every morning when I go out to pick it up it’s just... Thank you all for doing this for us every day. We really appreciate it.”

REID NEWSPAPERS

Phillip Reid, owner and publisher of Reid Newspapers, Inc., said his seven OPA member newspapers had been spared from COVID.

“With over 70 employees we had lots of exposure but

(See Coronavirus, Page 5)



Top left, office of The Hooker Advance; Bottom left, The Lawton Constitution office; Bottom right, Weatherford Daily News office, one of Reid Newspapers, Inc. publications.

Supreme Court upholds easing local media ownership limits

The Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision on April 1 that upheld federal regulators' decision to ease ownership limits on local media, rejecting a claim that the change would hurt minority and female ownership.

The court said the Federal Communications Com-

mission acted reasonably in 2017 when it modified rules that predated the internet.

The old rules banned the ownership of a newspaper and a television or radio station in the same market. They also limited how many radio and TV stations one company could own in a single market.

"The FCC considered the record evidence on competition, localism, viewpoint diversity, and minority and female ownership, and reasonably concluded that the three ownership rules no longer serve the public interest," Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote for the court.

The decision comes as newspaper and broadcasting industries say they need the changes to deal with growing competition from the internet and cable companies.

Letter from DA says charge against Duncan Council members 'not warranted'

Charges against three Duncan City Council members are unwarranted, a correspondence between the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) and District Attorney Jason Hicks indicates.

The council members were under investigation for allegedly violating the

Oklahoma Open Meeting Act.

The Duncan Banner obtained the letter from Hicks to the OSBI following an Open Records request sent to the City of Duncan on March 31.

The letter from Hicks states the three members in question, "just after a

scheduled meeting concluded, gathered and discussed the possibility of a special meeting."

Hicks' letter further states there "was no business of the Council discussed" during this time and "there was no action taken on anything that

could be perceived as business by the council."

Violations of the Act must be "willful," Hicks wrote in the letter and went on to say that there were no actions by council members that could be deemed "willful."

Coronavirus (continued from page 4)

zero positive tests," Reid said. "Our policy was that the newspaper would pay for two rapid tests after exposure and if both were negative they could come back into work after seven days from exposure."

Reid said the company has paid for around 30 tests and none have come back positive.

A year ago, Reid required all employees to put together their own game plan for being able to work from home. This included getting computers to their houses, having access to internet and the ability to complete their responsibilities from home.

"The plan has worked very well for us," Reid said. "One hundred percent of the employees said, after working from home, they all preferred to work in an office environment."

OTHER NEWSPAPERS

In Tulsa, Charles and Susan Biggs, owners and publishers of the Tulsa Beacon, both tested positive for the coronavirus.

"We had mild symptoms for a few days and some lingering fatigue but we didn't miss any work and we got our paper out on time," said Charles Biggs.

In the southwest part of the state, Todd Hancock, publisher of the Hobart Democrat-Chief, tested positive.

"We have had only one major absence because of it and that was me," Hancock said. "My wife and I both had COVID-19 and I was quarantined for 13 days in all."

Hancock missed a total of 9 days of work but was able to work remotely and get everything done.

"I was fortunate that I

was not very sick," he said. "Overall, we have been very fortunate with COVID-19."

The Lone Grove Ledger had one employee quarantined because of a son who tested positive, said Linda Hicks, publisher of the Ledger.

"We have been able to keep the office open, except in the beginning when businesses were asked to shut down by our city," Hicks said. "Since we were deemed essential, we were only closed a week, but businesses were not advertising because they were uncertain when they would open or even if they would have business if they did open."

"It is still not a good situation with advertisers."

The staff of the Johnston County Sentinel in Tishomingo, also tested positive for

the virus, said Tom Lokey, publisher of the Sentinel.

"We were very fortunate that we were able to continue publication with short staff, while some were quarantined at home. Every one of our staff have recovered," Lokey said.

The Mooreland Leader also reported cases of COVID-19. "Although we had COVID, we were able to keep working and nothing changed as far as the newspaper was concerned. We were lucky," said Tim Schnoebelen, publisher of the Mooreland Leader.

Although many newspapers were affected by COVID-19, staffs found ways to get the news to their subscribers by working remotely or on schedules at the office. As more Oklahomans are vaccinated, hopefully the worst is behind us.

Alternative Story Forms (ASF)

grab readers' attention, save you time

Local Dining SPOTLIGHT

Wildflower Baking Co.

Wildflower Baking Co. Co-owner Kacey Wilson talks about some of the nuances of the restaurant.

Location: 522 W Will Rogers Blvd (Apartment of the Historic Will Rogers Hotel)
Owner: Kacey Wilson & Devin Timmons
Hours: Mon- Sun 10:00-4:00 (Extended Springs Hours starting soon)
Price Range: Varies!
Contact info: 918-923-2216 or Wildflowerbakingsco20@yahoo.com

- 1. What's your most popular menu item?**
This is a tough one! I would say our Turkey Bacon Avocado Panini & our Mac & Cheese Bread Bowl! But we have several local favorites!
- 2. What's one item you know customers will love if they just give it a try?**
OUR SHAKES! We have crazy over the top shakes! We know they're intimidating, but totally worth it!
- 3. What are your specialties?**
We have several delicious treats everyday! And if you haven't tried our famous Chocolate Chip Cookies then swing by and try one out. We have a variety as well, and even bake for our Gluten-Free, Keto, Vegan, and Sugar free friends too! Our Gluten-free brownies are amazing, and taste like a traditional brownie!
- 4. Tell us something fun or interesting about your business that most folks don't know.**
We have a daily dance party for a minute to shake of the negativity! Sometimes having a moment to just laugh helps make everyone's day a little better! We are like a family here, so when our work family is happy, so are we.

From in the Claremore Daily Progress

If you're looking for a way to grab readers' attention and save yourself time, you might want to look at the Alternative Story Form (ASF).

Several Oklahoma newspapers are using this format but maybe none more so than those under the direction of Dale Brendel, publisher of The Joplin Globe and CNHI Senior Group Publisher of the Eastern Oklahoma group.

"I have always been a big believer and advocate in their use and value, and have employed them in pretty much every newsroom I have been in," said Brendel.

The most common and popular ASF, Brendel said, has been the Q5, which stands for questions.

"In Stillwater, we called

it the Quick 5, because we put word limits on the responses to keep it from getting too long and not having to jump off the front page," Brendel said. "In my view, that's an important element of ASFs, as they should be easy to read with lots of things to capture attention."

Other ASFs Brendel has used or currently uses include Education Spotlight (or Student of the Week), Business Spotlight, Church Spotlight, Making a Difference (basically Volunteer of the Week), Your Take (Man on the Street single question), Five Things to Know, and What's Going On (calendar event in greater detail).

Brendel said that in his view there are three great things about using ASFs:

- 1. They are relatively easy to do and add great local content** without taking as much time as traditional narrative stories on the same subjects, thus are a good solution for small staffs trying to produce hyper-local papers. "I have done many Q5s myself and a reporter or editor can usually think of five good questions in 15 minutes and fire them off in an email to your subject," said Brendel. "Once they respond you have some nice local content about something interesting in the community to mix in with all the traditional news coverage."
- 2. They make your page presentation much more enticing** with multiple entry points, different fonts, headers and head styles. "We know readers scan headlines and pages and decide which stories they are going to invest some time in reading past the lead," Brendel said. "It's not so easy for them to miss the ASFs, as they will likely look over multiple bold questions in a Q5 or each subhead in

Spotlight or other ASFs, so they might get caught up reading not just the lead, but various points in the text."

- 3. Most importantly, readers love them!** They are easy to find, easy to read, and usually interesting about somebody or something in your community. "I consistently get more positive feedback out in the community about our Q5s and other ASFs than any other kind of story," said Brendel. ASFs are usually "good news" subjects that balance out harder-edge stories elsewhere in the paper and there's never a shortage of suggestions or volunteers to be featured.

Brendel said some of the newspapers he manages try to have an ASF on the front page every day.

"Muskogee and Claremore are two of the best at striving to do this, and McAlester runs several throughout the week as well," he said.

Ed Choate, publisher of the Muskogee Phoenix, said ASFs gives newsrooms the opportunity to produce

(See ASF, Page 7)

5 THINGS TO KNOW

Election 2021: Information voters may need for the upcoming April 6 election

Primary County Election Board Secretary Terra Barnes offers the following information and tips as the April 6 municipal elections, school board races and a school board election approach.

Elections in the county include school board races in the McAlester, Hayward and Clayton school districts, municipal elections in Hartshorne and Felmey and a school board election in the Canadian School District.

- 1. When is typically the least-busiest time to vote, with the shortest wait times?**
Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 6. Lines are possible at peak voting times. Wait times will likely be shortest at mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Anyone in line to vote at 7 p.m. will be allowed to cast a ballot.
- 2. What should those voters who need to check their polling place or verify their registration information do?**
Anyone who needs to look up their polling place, verify their registration information, or view a sample ballot can do so online. The Online Voter Tool can be accessed on the Oklahoma State Election Board website: www.ok.gov/elections. Those who vote by mail can also check the status of their ballot using the Online Voter Tool. Sample ballots are also available at the County Election Board office.
- 3. Is identification required to vote in an election?**
Oklahoma law requires every voter who votes in-person at the precinct polling place or during early voting at the County Election Board to show proof of identity before receiving a ballot. There are three ways for voters to prove their identity under the law: (1) show proof of identity to an inspector; (2) show a valid photo ID issued by federal, state, or tribal government; or (3) show the five voter identification cards issued to every voter by the County Election Board, or sign an affidavit and vote a provisional ballot. If the information on the affidavit matches official voter registration records, the ballot will be counted after Election Day.
- 4. Are there any special provisions for physically disabled or illiterate voters?**
Physically disabled voters who cannot enter the polling place, avoid help, making their ballots, blind or visually disabled voters and illiterate voters may be assisted by a person the voter chooses. Ballot centers, precincts providing such assistance may not be the voter's employer or an agent of the employer or an officer or agent of the voter's union. A person providing assistance also must swear or affirm that the voter's ballots will be marked in accordance with the voter's wishes. Additionally, all blind, visually impaired, and physically disabled voters in Phillips County may use the Audio-Tactile Interface (ATI), a device offered to all Oklahoma voters, to vote privately and independently, either at Phillips County Election Board during early voting or at their assigned polling place on election day. Those who become physically incapacitated after 5 p.m. Tuesday, March 30, 2021, will be required to use an emergency absentee ballot. Those who might qualify for an emergency absentee ballot should contact the County Election Board office at 918-423-3877 as soon as possible for more information.
- 5. What should voters do if they need to change their registration information because they have moved and what can result if election laws are violated?**
Voters who have moved since the last election, but who have not transferred their voter registration to their new address, may do so on Election Day by going to vote at the polling place where their registration has been in the past. While voting, they may fill out a form instructing the County Election Board to transfer their registration to the new address before the next election. Any violation of election law will be reported to the proper law enforcement authorities. Deliberately not allowing a ballot from the polling location, placing or tampering with a ballot within a mile of a polling place or in the place where a voter voted without the election official's consent. For additional election-related information, visit: www.elections.ok.gov.

From the McAlester News-Capital

A popular ASF in The
Claremore Daily Progress is

"That way we make our advertisers happy AND try to attract new businesses to advertise," she said.

ASFs can also bring design to your front page. If you're considering ASFs, take a look at some of these samples from CNHI newspapers.

Go Ye Village
(918) 456-4542
Golf-Country 55+ Lifestyle Community
1201 West 4th St. • Tahlequah
www.goyevillage.org

Data Source: Active Disease
 System, Oklahoma State
 Department of Health
*As of Jan. March 31

local?

"Local revenue raises sales tax
 to which our county and city vote on.
 If the county and city vote yes, I
 spent in Tulsa or Fort Smith, and we
 get more revenue than that."

"They closed our economy and
 hopefully make Muskogee the
 best town we can be."

"When my baby steps, my baby
 loafs. I want to help support
 the sales tax so our state..."

WARMER	TODAY	TONIGHT	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SALES OF THE DAY	HOLLAND HOLMAN, PRICE	HOLLAND HOLMAN, PRICE	WED 123 — THU 54
	68	45	76 56	78 50		Holland's mother Alys says Holland is similar "when the SaxTimes her grandparents."	Holland is similar "when the SaxTimes her grandparents."	

The Kingfisher Times & Free Press recently launched some tools to help readers navigate its digital edition. A new Facebook group is a space where digital savvy users can offer advice and assistance to those struggling in that area. A second Facebook group provides a place for the newspaper and group members to share popular articles from the Sunday paper.

OG&E[®] PHOTO CONTEST



The top half of a man obscured by snow as he uses a snow blower to clear the sidewalks around the Garfield County courthouse.

Photo by BILLY HEFTON, *Enid News & Eagle*, Feb. 18, 2021



Hexagon-shaped ice crystals form as a bubble freezes Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021, in Shawnee, Okla. The overnight temperature was -11 degrees Fahrenheit, with a warm up to 10 degrees by Tuesday afternoon.

Photo by JENNIFER PITTS, *Countywide & Sun*, Feb. 18, 2021

FEBRUARY 2021
DAILY, SEMI- AND
TRI-WEEKLY WINNER:

**BILLY
HEFTON**
Enid News & Eagle

FEBRUARY 2021
WEEKLY WINNER:

**JENNIFER
PITTS**
Countywide & Sun

The February 2021 contest
was judged by a member of the
Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

View all winning photos and contest rules at

**OkPress.com/
OGE-Photo-Contest**

**Enter and Win
a \$100 Check from
OGE ENERGY CORP.**

For more information
about the photo contest, visit

**okpress.com/
oge-photo-contest**

A photograph of a young woman with curly hair, wearing a yellow shirt and a grey cardigan, smiling and looking at a book in a library setting with bookshelves in the background.

At OG&E, we **do more** than energize a power grid.

We energize education by providing more than \$1.8 million to fund scholarships for deserving students.

OG&E[®]

We Energize Life

© 2021 OGE Energy Corp.

CNN interviews Fairfax Chief editor



Jordan Guzzardo is behind the camera while Sara Sidner of CNN interviews The Chief's Carol Conner. Anna-Maja Rappard is adjusting the lighting. The CNN interviews about Osage Nation's efforts to get vaccines to locals aired March 24th.

Photo by Joe Conner, The Fairfax Chief. Reprinted with permission.

Joe and Carol Conner have seen several local stories turn into national stories in their five years as owners of The Fairfax Chief.

The corrupt practices of the owners of the Fairfax Community Hospital, its bankruptcy and near failure made the front page of The Washington Post as well as ABC News.

More recently, *Killers of the Flower Moon*, a book by David Grann about the story of the Osage murders in the 1920s, has brought

national attention. Soon to be a major motion picture, director Martin Scorsese, Leonardo DiCaprio and Robert DeNiro have all been spotted in town.

"But CNN hits like nothing else," said Carol Conner, editor of The Fairfax Chief.

CNN was looking for someone to interview about the story of the Osage Nation and other tribes getting vaccines to their people.

CNN's Sara Sidner and her crew, Anna-Maja Rap-

pard and Jordan Guzzardo, arrived at the newspaper office in a pouring rain-storm. After setting up their cameras, Sidner asked questions for more than an hour "that felt more like a conversation with a friend," Conner said.

"Sidner and her crew were among the nicest media people we've met, but in the midst of trying to get the newspaper done and trying not to say anything foolish, the experience all felt pretty unreal," she said.

Yukon Review, Mustang News name Pineda as editor

Michael Pineda has been named managing editor of the Yukon Review and Mustang News.



Michael Pineda

For the past five years, Pineda has worked in Baytown, Texas, as a sports editor and assistant managing editor. Prior to that, he held jobs in Ardmore and Duncan.

Pineda grew up in Comanche, Okla., and his wife, Bonne, is from the Tulsa area.

Pineda plans to focus on community journalism.

"From schools and the local teams to the new construction on the corner, reporting what takes place locally is my happy place when it comes to reporting," Pineda wrote in an introductory column for the Yukon Review and Mustang News.

ATTENTION

OPA BUSINESS MEMBERS

ORDER YOUR 2021 PHOTO ID PRESS CARD

These press cards are perfect for reporters, photographers and any other staff members at your newspaper. Only \$7 each!



ORDER ONLINE AT
okpress.Com/press-cards

Make Sales Soar Like Magic

Improve your close ratios to 70% or more with the **New MiAD**

WIZARD!

It's a fact that spec ads help close more sales— and yet spec ads are used less than 20% of the time. Now, with the real-world magic of MiAD® Wizard, personalizing and presenting spec ads for EVERY prospect is as easy as 1-2-3!

No training. No time wasted. No more tough sells.

Go to miadwizard.com and see the magic for yourself!

METRO. 800.223.1600
CREATE. SELL. PROFIT.

service@metro-email.com
www.metrocreativeconnection.com
miadwizard.com



Jill Hunt announces retirement from News Press

Stillwater News Press Publisher Jill Hunt has announced her retirement.

Hunt joined the News Press staff in April 1998. She was promoted to publisher in October of 2019. Hunt has been a practicing journalist for 39 years with the bulk of that time serving the Stillwater community.

"I've been very fortunate to work with talented people throughout my career. Leading a newspaper staff can be challenging and that's what keeps it exciting. Every day is different in the news business," Hunt said.

Editor Beau Simmons said he was glad for Hunt's leadership during a critical time for the entire industry.

"Jill took over just before the pandemic struck, and we were lucky she was in that position," he said. "She maintained a cool head during a tough time and really kept up our morale,



Stillwater News Press Publisher Jill Hunt has announced her retirement.

as well as maintaining the product's stability."

Prior to her role as publisher of the News Press, she worked in the advertising department as the ad director after years as a ad representative.

"She and her staff helped us in the sports department to produce some of the most sought after work we have produced in my 11 years at the News Press – such as the weekly Game

Day section for Oklahoma State football, the annual prep football section and special sections when OSU has hosted national events such as the golf championships," sports editor Jason Elmquist said. "During her time with the News Press, her work has allowed us to produce content our subscribers expect in a Big 12 college town, and she will be greatly missed."

CNHI, which owns the

News Press, is conducting interviews for the next publisher.

"I've never been more convinced of the crucial role that local papers play more than during this past year. It's so vitally important to have a source you can trust, and the News Press has always adhered to a high standard in that regard," Hunt said.

Hunt will continue to live in Stillwater. Future plans include time on the golf course, at Oklahoma lakes and spending more time with her family and friends.

"You'll still see me around town. I love Stillwater. My husband and I moved around quite a bit in the beginning of our marriage. After we moved to Stillwater, we decided to make it our permanent home. We'll be taking some trips, but Stillwater will always be home base," Hunt said.

Drumright, Yale editor named as one of E&P's 25 Under 35

Twenty-two-year-old Allie Prater has been named one of Editor & Publisher's 25 Under 35.

Prater, editor of the Drumright Gusher and Yale News, along with the other 24 honorees, was featured as the next generation of news professionals in the April issue of Editor & Publisher.

When asked what advice she had for other young professionals in the news industry, Prater replied:

"Build relationships with anyone and everyone they meet within their communities and not just on a business networking



Allie Prater, editor of Drumright Gusher and Yale News.

level. Actually, get to know what makes your commu-

nity thrive because that is

also what makes your news thrive."

Prater said the hardest lesson she has learned as an editor is the importance of owning up to her own mistakes.

"Nobody's perfect, and nobody should pretend to be, especially in our profession," she responded.

"It is much easier to be respected by, and have respect for, someone who admits when they are wrong."

To read about all the 25 Under 35 recipients for 2021, visit <https://editor-and-publisher.pressreader.com/editor-publisher>.

Blair retires from Duncan Banner

Paula Blair has officially retired after working at The Duncan Banner for 40 years.



Blair began working at The Banner in April 1981, joining the staff of 68 employees in the newspaper office.

She started as a receptionist, then moved to classified. Throughout the years, she's also worked closely with the business office, composing and circulation departments.

She has come to see her co-workers as family.

"I have and have had some of the best co-workers or family as we call them," she said. "I am still close with some of them."

Blair is looking forward to spending time with family and traveling.

Fort Sill Tribune stops print edition

The Fort Sill Tribune published its final issue on March 25, 2021, but plans to continue sharing information and stories with the community through social media and The Lawton Constitution.

The Lawton Constitution will begin a weekly page dedicated to military news, said David Stringer, publisher of The Constitution.

"We are sad to see any publication go out of business," Stringer said. "We are dedicating a page in the Constitution to the military."

The Fort Sill Tribune began publication sometime prior to 1958 as the Fort Sill Army News.

WORTH MENTIONING

BECKHAM COUNTY RECORD'S PANDEMIC STORIES INSPIRE

Shonda Little at the Beckham County Record has been writing a series titled "How I Got Through the Pandemic."

The series, which Little started at the first of the year, explores positive influences, people and new hobbies that are helping local people endure a historic public health and economic crisis.

How I Got Through the Pandemic:

An ongoing series with the Beckham County Record exploring positive influences, people and new hobbies that helped local people endure a historic public health and economic crisis.

By Shonda Little

In last week's Beckham County Record, Shonda Little had returned the love from downtown Elk City reader Lee Wadsworth of the Vogue Boutique. Little had inspired Wadsworth through her many acts of goodness, namely her Sunday Prayer Devotion, during the pandemic.

As Little reflected upon her inspiration during the pandemic, she reflected upon her childhood memory — her beloved Aunt Joann.

Joann is better known as Sister Joann in Virginia. Little said she was the right hand man to the same Elk City physician, Dr. Farham.

Little recounted how her aunt had been her due north in her faith in Christianity throughout all her life's uncertainties, including the outbreak of Covid-19.

"My aunt Joann and my uncle Tommy always knew how to bring me back when I was my



compass was broken," Little gushed. "Through faithful prayer and dedication, she has been the example of a Christian to me even as a talkative and curious child."

As Little began discussing who she would select, she admitted that she was nervous.

"I have never done some-

thing like this before," she laughed. Little admitted that she was really off guard when she read the coverage.

"I am so understanding of these kind words. They touched my heart. Momma has been-

Pandemic continued on page 2

TAHLEQUAH DAILY PRESS SPONSORS CUTEST BABY CONTEST

You've got the cutest little baby face — and it could win bragging rights along with some prizes in the Tahlequah Press's Cutest Baby Contest 2021.

Readers were encouraged to submit photos of their child (newborn to three years old), along with the parents' contact information.

Then it was up to the adoring public to pick the cutest baby by voting for their favorite for \$1 per vote. The first place winner (one boy and one girl) was the baby who received the most votes.

It looked like a tough choice from the four pages full of baby faces in the Feb. 18 issue.



OKMULGEE TIMES STARTS BINGO GAME

The Okmulgee Times has kicked off BINGO! An official bingo game card was available in the April 14 issue. The first bingo numbers were printed in the April 16 issue of the Okmulgee Times. Each of the sponsor's ads contain one bingo call number in every issue until all of the prizes are awarded. Players have the opportunity to cash in on a \$300 prize in the game.

"We're always looking for ways to involve our readers, and we wanted to give not only our subscribers but our single copy purchasers additional enjoyment over the next couple of months through the paper," said Anthony Nieto, general manager of the Okmulgee Times. "We chose bingo for this readership game because we know it's popular and an easy game to play."



PERRY JOURNAL AND LOCAL CHAMBER WORKING ON COMMUNITY GUIDE

The Perry Chamber of Commerce is partnering with the Perry Daily Journal to provide a renewed Chamber Community Guide.

Highlighting local businesses and chamber members, the Chamber of Commerce Community

Guide will be printed in conjunction with the chamber's 100 year anniversary.

Teresa McVay, marketing director for the Perry Daily Journal, will be marketing the directory. Promotional and spotlight ads will be available to members and non-members.



OPA Board of Directors meet March 25

The Oklahoma Press Association Board of Directors met by conference call on March 25, 2021.

Officers attending were President Mike Strain, Tulsa World; Vice President John Denny Montgomery, The Purcell Register; and Treasurer Jeff Mayo, Sequoyah County Times. Directors calling in were Mark Millsap, The Norman Transcript; Zonelle Rainbolt, Wesner Publications; Don Mecoy, The Oklahoman; Shauna Belyeu, The Eufaula Indian Journal; Sheila Gay, Woodward News; and Suzie Campbell, Countywide & Sun. Also on the conference call were Mark Thomas, OPA Executive Vice President/Secretary, and Christine Frank, Membership and Meetings Director. Ray Dyer, immediate past president, was absent.

Strain called the meeting to order at 10:01 and asked board members to review minutes of the Dec. 10, 2020, meeting. The minutes were approved as presented.

The board reviewed financial statements and investment reports for OPA and LSP. Thomas said income for OPA is lower due to the waived contest fees. Mayo asked about The Oklahoma Publisher printing expense. Thomas said The Publisher was an online-only publication from April 2020-February 2021. In March, the issue was printed and mailed to every OPA member, generating an expense in this fiscal year. Thomas also said that LSP has a strong balance sheet. However,



OKLAHOMA
PRESS

there are several ongoing LSP defense actions this fiscal year causing a loss for the year. Board members acknowledged receipt of the OPA and LSP financial statements and investment reports for the period ending Feb. 28, 2021.

In committee reports, Rainbolt said the Awards Committee met in March. Rainbolt presented the following nominees for the OPA Half Century Club and Quarter Century Club to the board:

Half Century Club: John Wylie.

Quarter Century Club: Ronnie Clay, Kristi Hayes, Rob Collins, Patrick Ford, Jessica Danker Mitchell and Scott Rains.

The board approved the slate of nominees as presented.

The board also approved a change to the divisions of the OGE-OPA Monthly Photo Contest to 1) Daily, Semi- and Tri-Weekly Newspapers, and 2) Weekly Newspapers.

Belyeu said the Education Committee is moving forward with plans for an in-person convention June 11 and 12 at the Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel. Local speakers will be utilized instead of bringing in speakers from out-of-state due to COVID-19.

In the Government Relations Committee report, Thomas said he is working

on several bills related to open records and plans to write a full report of all bills OPA is currently watching to submit to the board.

The board reviewed and approved the 2021-22 slate of nominees for OPA officers and directors to be presented during the annual business meeting on June 11, 2021, as follows:

President: John Denny Montgomery, The Purcell Register; Vice President: Mark Millsap, The Norman Transcript; Treasurer: Jeff Mayo, Sequoyah County Times; Immediate Past President: Vacant; Renewal of 3-year Director term: Shauna Belyeu, The Eufaula Indian Journal; and New Director for a 3-year term: Misti Rinehart, Tulsa World. The board acknowledged receipt of the Nominating Committee report.

Thomas asked the board to submit and review nominations for the Milt Phillips Award. Board members will vote on the recipient of the award prior to the convention.

In other business, Millsap, who is serving on the OU Publications Board, said he advised the Publications Board that OPA was disappointed that the OU Daily chose not to participate in this year's Better Newspaper Contest and hope they will participate next year.

Thomas said he would like to schedule an in-person Board retreat. Friday, May 7, was selected as the tentative date and Thomas said he would begin working on a location, topics and an agenda.

OPS BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Dec. 10, 2020, OPS Board Meeting were approved as presented.

Thomas presented the financials for OPS and said the Payroll Protection (PPP) loan from the SBA during the pandemic helped stabilize the balance sheet. Ad sales exceeded the budget for February and March and the Classified Network made its goal for the last two months. Thomas said he will revise year-end financial projections for the upcoming Board retreat.

MANAGEMENT REVIEW

After the management review session, Strain told Thomas that the board appreciates efforts made to keep financials in order by seeking Payroll Protection loans and cutting certain expenses during the pandemic when advertising curtailed nationwide.

Thomas thanked the board for the review and said he is working on a plan to have the staff return to the office in the coming weeks. He also reported that ONF selected Mark Codner as the winner of the Beachy Musselman Award.

Thomas also said ONF has more interns this year than newspapers can hire so he is working on a couple of special projects for interns to work on at the OPA central office this summer.

Thomas said OPA newspaper contest winners and award recipient letters had been mailed.

DEATHS

JOHN LINK, longtime general manager of the Vinita Daily Journal, died March 24, 2021. He was 77.

For almost three decades Link oversaw operations of the Journal, as well as several weekly newspapers including the Nowata Star, The Afton American and the Grand Laker. He also managed the Vinita Printing Company during that time.

When Link joined the Vinita Daily Journal as manager on Feb. 3, 1992, longtime publishers Phillip and Jeanne Ann Reid welcomed him.

Before joining the Journal, Link had an extensive career in newspaper advertising for two decades and served as the National Sales Manager for American Publishing Company for three years.

Link was actively involved for several years as a Vinita Rotarian, a founding member of Vinita Unlimited, and a board member of the Vinita Area Chamber of Commerce.

Phillip Reid, owner of Reid Newspapers, said Link provided the county and northeastern part of the state with a steady and reliable

source of information about the area for 30 years.

Link was born June 15, 1943, in Chickasha. After graduating from high school in Westminster, Colo., he joined the U.S. Air Force. He later worked for the Denver Post, where he learned his craft in printing, marketing, sales and management.

He is survived by his wife, Janet; children, Brandi Link Galagrad and Chad Link of Colorado; Angie Prideaux-Jones of Grand Lake; Anthony Prideaux of Claremore; five grandchildren; and one sister.

LARRY JOE MARCY, a former editor at the Durant Democrat, died March 17, 2021. He was 75.

Marcy was born in Mangum, Okla., on Jan. 1, 1946. He attended Southeastern Oklahoma State University where he later received a Bachelor of Arts degree in history. Marcy enlisted in the Oklahoma Air National Guard in 1963, retiring after 20 years

of service at the rank of Major.

Marcy worked at the Democrat in 1967-1968 before moving to Wichita Falls, Texas, where he worked for the Record News before returning to the Democrat in 1972. He wrote general news articles and eventually became the Democrat's editor. He also proudly penned an outdoor column for the Democrat titled "Out and About with Ole Scout" chronicling his

extensive involvement with the Boy Scouts of America.

In 1987, he accepted a job with the Oklahoma Historical Society at Fort Washita where he retired as site superintendent in 2012 after 25 years of service.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Ellen; four sons: Larry Joe, Christopher, Daniel and John, all of Durant; and eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

WILLIAM WHITE, who worked as a pressman at the Enid News & Eagle for many years, died March 9, 2021. He was 84.

White was born Dec. 27, 1936 in Birmingham, Ala. He enlisted in the U.S.

Marines in 1956 and was discharged from service in 1960.

In 1975, White moved to Enid and began working for the Enid News & Eagle union side of the newspaper as a pressman until

1998. He then went to work at Phillips Drug, retiring in 2006.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Elizabeth White; two sons, Brian and Kevin; one granddaughter and one sister.

Remembering our friends & colleagues who died the previous year

John L. Clabes
March 27, 2020

Sharon Ann Dean
March 16, 2020

Ron Henderson
March 6, 2020

Fred B. Hilton Jr.
March 3, 2020

Marguerite Babb
April 28, 2020

Dennie Hall
April 17, 2020

Jake Norman McDonald
April 1, 2020

Nancy Janice 'Jan' O'Leary
April 23, 2020

Frederick David Seaton
April 18, 2020

THANK YOU



to the following individuals and organizations for their recent donations to the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation:

**In memory of
Becky Mayo**
Jennifer & Steve Loper

A donation to the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation will support its efforts to improve the state's newspaper industry and quality of journalism.

ONF's programs include training and education for professional journalists, scholarship and internship programs for journalism students, and Newspaper in Education efforts.

ONF relies on donations and memorial contributions to fund these programs.

If you would like to make a donation, please send a check to:

**OKLAHOMA
NEWSPAPER
FOUNDATION**

3601 N. Lincoln Blvd.
Oklahoma City, OK
73105

How to determine if it's time to replace that old computer



Computer Notes

from the road
by Wilma Newby
wnewby@okpress.com

This month let's look at how to know when it's time to replace an extremely slow computer.

By answering the following questions, you'll be able to make an informed decision.

Can the computer be returned to normal speed by cleaning the browsers and defragmenting the hard drive? To defrag the hard drive on a Mac, use **Disk First Aid**; on Windows use **De-fragment and Optimize Drives** and **Disk Cleanup**.

Is the hard drive full? At least 20 percent of the drive space needs to be empty for the computer to run well.

Could a reinstall of the operating system fix the computer? If you answered yes, the software would have to be reinstalled.

Can the operating system be updated? How much will that cost? Should you install a new hard drive at the same time? Often a new hard drive, updating the system to Windows 10 and adding a little more RAM memory will refresh older computers.

What year was the computer created? If your com-

puter is more than seven years old, it's no longer receiving updates. Windows 10 was released in 2015.

Is your PC running Windows 7 or 8? Neither of these get updates from Microsoft, leaving them vulnerable to malware and viruses.

Do the browsers still work? See if you can get to websites your employees need to do their job, such as the county courthouse. Also make sure email programs are working and that browsers can support your email program.

Is the anti-virus working and can it still be updated? If it can, run a full scan to see if there is a problem.

Is the employee spending lots of time waiting for the computer to respond when switching applications? This is often a sign of too little RAM memory or a failing hard drive. Nowadays even 8GB of RAM memory is not enough to run the internet with several programs and documents open at the same time.

Can the existing software run on a newer operating system? Can it be moved? Are the login and serial numbers available to be reinstalled? If not, be ready to upgrade software.

Could an inexpensive

computer run side-by-side with the older machine to do tasks such as running the internet safely?

Good replacement computers can be obtained for less than \$900. Even a \$300 computer or tablet can make it possible for employees to work on the internet safely and effectively. As we move into recovery from the pandemic, good internet access is a must. A new computer/tablet can be a real boost to employee production.

The four things to look for in a new computer for graphics work are as follows. These specs help with the longevity of the computer.

1. A recent processor model I5 or I7 10th or 11th generation. If it's an AMD computer look for Ryzen 7, 4th generation or better.
2. DDR4 RAM memory – at least 12 GB. Your computer will last longer with more RAM.
3. Nowadays it's all about Solid State drives. Newspaper people create lots of files and have many years of photos on their drives. If possible, buy a one terabyte hard drive that has 1TB SSD in the specs. A 512 GB SSD will work but a backup drive may be needed to offload photos.
4. A graphics card with its own dedicated onboard memory is

great for anyone who spends lots of time in Photoshop Creative Cloud. It means they're not using the main RAM memory from the circuit board. Look for 4 to 6 GB on the card. It's sometimes listed as 6000 megabytes.

Companies running the **Creative Suite** software can get away without a dedicated graphics card but more RAM is advisable.

Look for 16GB so the computer is not using the hard drive to cache when working with lots of photos or creating large documents.

Apple computers are in transition right now. Personally, I would hold off until next year to update. Some new models just came out but more are expected and the new iMacs won't be out until later this year.

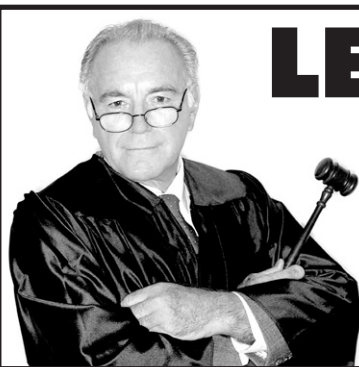
Before ordering a new Mac, make sure that your current software will run on the new model and that you order it with enough RAM memory.

Many models offer no upgrade for RAM after they're ordered and will be too slow.

Windows PCs, Chromebooks and Apple are in a mindset of creating hardware/software obsolescence into their business model. Since you need to buy a new computer every three years, get the best one you can afford.

If you buy cheap, expect to pay again sooner.

OPA Computer Consultant Wilma Newby's column is brought to you by the Oklahoma Advertising Network (OAN). For more information on the OAN program, contact Oklahoma Press Service at (405) 499-0020.



LEGAL ADVICE

is just one of the benefits of being a member of the Oklahoma Press Association's Legal Services Plan. Remove the worry of needing professional advice by enrolling today. For more information contact:

OKLAHOMA PRESS ASSOCIATION'S
LEGAL SERVICES PLAN
1-888-815-2672 or 405-499-0020

State papers win awards in CNHI nationwide contest

For the second consecutive year, the Tahlequah Daily Press has been named the 2020 Newspaper of the Year for Division III in the nationwide Best of CNHI contest.

Kim Poindexter, executive editor of the Daily

Press, received the Editorial Writer of the Year award for Division III, and also was a finalist for the Division III Columnist of the Year.

The Stillwater News Press won the Division II Public Service Award in the

Best of CNHI contest for a seven-part series of stories showing a lack of prosecution of sexual assault cases in Payne County, home of Oklahoma State University.

Also receiving honors in the Best of CNHI contest was The Norman

Transcript, which won the award for Best Breaking News in Division II.

Clay Horning from The Transcript was named Sports Writer of the Year in Division II.

Blind spots are common in the advertising business

BY JOHN FOUST

When we learned how to drive, we heard about blind spots. Those are the areas which are not visible in our rear and side view mirrors. As a result, we have to be extra careful when we change lanes.

The term “blind spots” has become popular in today’s business environment. It refers to significant things that are not acknowledged or given fair consideration by management. Outside observers are often perplexed by the fact that certain obvious factors are always ignored.

Blind spots are common in the advertising business. Let’s take a look at a few examples:

1. Family. This can be a big blind spot in family-owned businesses. It’s a clear sign if you hear something like, “My grandfather wrote our ad slogan, and if it was good enough for him,

it’s good enough for me.”

Or, “My son just finished a marketing class, and he’s got some good ad ideas.”

Or, “My niece says we need to have a bigger presence on social media.”

2. Do-it-yourself mentality. A lot of entrepreneurs and Mom-and-Pop businesses are used to doing just about everything themselves. They don’t like to delegate tasks and they resist outside help. They hire and fire, they set office policies, they select inventories, and they keep their own books.

They also maintain tight control of their marketing. In their minds, no one could know more about promoting their businesses than they do.

3. Competitor distractions. Someone told me about his experience in working for a furniture manufacturer. His company suddenly started

losing orders, because a competing company was dramatically cutting prices. His CEO called an all-staff meeting and announced that their new focus was to beat the competitor at their own game. “From that point on,” he said, “it was like Captain Ahab going after Moby Dick. But along the way, we lost our focus on quality, which had been our big selling point. It was like the CEO became blind to what we had going for us all along. It took a while to regain our balance in the market.”

Some advertisers make the same mistake. They spend so much time thinking about their competitors that they lose sight of what differentiates them in the marketplace.

4. History. We’re all products of our past experiences. It should be no surprise when we encounter otherwise savvy business

people who are wedded to old media choices – or old ad campaigns – even if those choices are no longer producing results. There may be long-standing relationships with those media outlets. Or there may be a bias against a particular newspaper or newspapers in general.

Blind spots are real, but not necessarily fatal for an ad campaign. After all, we have blind spots, too – and some of them involve our perspectives on advertising.

How should you handle an advertiser with a blind spot that is blocking the way? A good place to start is to look for common ground and bite your tongue if you are tempted to criticize.

© 2021 by John Foust. All rights reserved. John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com.

OPA STAFF DIRECTORY

ADMINISTRATION

MARK THOMAS, Executive Vice President
mthomas@okpress.com, (405) 499-0033

JEANNIE FREEMAN, Accounting Manager
jfreeman@okpress.com, (405) 499-0027

SCOTT WILKERSON, Front Office/Building Mgr.
swilkinson@okpress.com, (405) 499-0020

MEMBER SERVICES

LISA SUTLIFF, Member Services Director
lsutliff@okpress.com, (405) 499-0026

CHRISTINE FRANK, Membership & Meeting Dir.
cfrank@okpress.com, (405) 499-0040

ADVERTISING

LONDON COBB, Sales Director
lcobb@okpress.com, (405) 499-0022

CINDY SHEA, Advertising Director
cshea@okpress.com, (405) 499-0023

DIGITAL CLIPPING

KEITH BURGIN, Clipping Director
kburgin@okpress.com, (405) 499-0024

JENNIFER CATES, Digital Clipping Dept.
jbeatley-cates@okpress.com

SAMANTHA SMITH, Clipping / Advertising
ssmith@okpress.com, (405) 499-0035

CREATIVE SERVICES

JENNIFER GILLILAND, Creative Services Director
jgilliland@okpress.com, (405) 499-0028

COMPUTER ADVICE

WILMA NEWBY, Computer Consultant
wnewby@okpress.com, (405) 499-0031

GENERAL INQUIRIES

(405) 499-0020

Fax: (405) 499-0048

OKPress.com

Toll-free in OK: 1-888-815-2672

OKLAHOMA NATURAL GAS CONTEST WINNERS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FEBRUARY WINNERS

Column: **JOHN SMALL**, *Johnston County Sentinel*

Editorial: **TOM FINK**, *Oologah Lake Leader*

FEBRUARY COLUMN WINNER

JOHN SMALL, *Johnston County Sentinel*

A parable, to do with what you will... but is it really?

A parable, to do with what you will... but is it really?

It happened a long, long time ago now. I usually don't like to talk about it; as a man much wiser than I once pointed out, there is all too often a lot of pain and suffering whenever we try to dig up the past. But it was precisely because of such pain and suffering that I reached the epiphany which became the guiding force in my life.

So in spite of any reservations I may have, it falls upon me to try and set the record straight once and for all. Whether you choose to believe it is up to you, I suppose, but your failure to believe will not make it any less true.

So what really happened was this:

There was this emperor, see, and he was parading down the street buck naked. Nobody else seemed to notice... or, if they did, they were choosing for whatever reason not to say anything about it. Which struck me as incredibly odd. Not to mention incredibly silly.

So I said something about it.

Actually I said something about it more than once. Too many times, perhaps, and perhaps a wee bit too aggressively. I made no apologies for it then and I make no apologies for it now; it needed to be said, and since nobody else was apparently willing to do so I took on the mantle of responsibility for myself.

Almost immediately, however, I found myself questioning the wisdom of that decision. Any hope I might have had that society would choose to reward me for speaking the truth was quickly dashed. The people did not wish to know the truth; they were far happier maintaining their careful constructed prejudices and long-held preconceived notions.

And so I was cast out. Declared a pariah by a community that valued the illusion of comfort and security more than they did the peace of mind that comes with reality.

This saddened me for, oh, all of about five minutes... just long enough for a Messenger to come down from On High and tap me on the shoulder.

"Let not one wrinkle of apprehension furrow thy noble brow," she said. "Sometimes the simplest way to show the world it's wrong is to let it have its way."

It was difficult to argue with that kind of logic. So I willingly took my leave, tossing a swag bag in the back seat of my Volkswagen 411 hatchback and humming John Williams' main theme from Star Wars to myself as I pulled onto Interstate 57 and made my way toward the distant horizon...

Three days later I found myself in the middle of the desert and nearly out of gas, money and any sense of belief that I knew just where I was going and why. So I turned off the car engine and walked away, my path lighted only by the moon and stars hanging there in the night sky. The air was crisp and cold, and in my solitude it seemed as if I could almost taste the universe.

It reminded me of a corn dog from the state fair. I don't know why... I had walked perhaps a mile or two when, for reasons I can't explain and probably would not matter even if I could, I was reminded of an old story from the 19th century that my father had told to me when I was a lad. The story went something like this:

The Truth and the Lie meet one morning in the center of town. They nod at one another on greeting, and then the Lie says to the Truth, "Isn't it a marvelous day today?"

The Truth sighs, suspicious as always of the Lie because... well, because he was the Lie. But after a moment the Truth gives in and cautiously glances up at the sky – and sees that, yes, the morning truly is beautiful.

So the Truth smiles and shakes his head in agreement, and the two

of them begin walking together. Eventually they make their way to the local swimming hole; the Lie looks out at the water and comments to the Truth, "Gee, the water sure looks nice today. What do you say we go for a swim?"

The Truth, once again suspicious, slips off one shoe and dips her toe in to test the water... and discovers that, yes, it indeed is very nice. So the two of them slip out of their clothes and jump into the water for a quick skinny dip, swimming and splashing and generally having themselves a pretty good old time.

But suddenly, as the Truth ducks under the surface of the water, the Lie rushes out onto the shore. Once there he grabs the clothes of the Truth, quickly puts them on instead of his own and runs away, laughing at the Truth for not being more vigilant against the Lie's deceit and trickery.

Furious, the Truth makes her way out of the swimming hole and runs everywhere in an effort to find the Lie and to get her clothes back. And the World, seeing the Truth naked, turns its gaze away and reacts with contempt and rage. At which point the poor Truth returns to the water and to hide its shame.

"And ever since that day," my father concluded, "the Lie travels around the world, dressed as the Truth, satisfying the needs of society because the World seems to harbor no wish at all to meet the naked Truth."

As I thought of that story I stopped and looked up into the night sky, telling those stars what I believed and what I hoped for in life. I ruminated on the way I thought the universe ought to be, listing those things I felt were good and proper and expounding on the things that could be made better if only the rest of the world saw things the way that I did.

But the stars showed no concern for such things. They just hung there in place, fiery balls of hydrogen looking down and silently reminding me that I was nothing more than an animated valise of water riding on an infinitesimal speck of cosmic dirt spinning through an incomprehensibly vast expanse of nothingness.

I half-expected Carl Sagan – or perhaps more appropriately, Rod Serling – to step out of the shadows and launch into a monologue about how everything I believed, wanted, dreamed of and hoped for was ultimately irrelevant to the universe-at-large. And how my expectations to the contrary were in some form or fashion the ultimate act of delusional arrogance and narcissism.

And yet, in spite of this evidence laid out before me, I continued to believe otherwise. I refused to be ground beneath the heel of an unfeeling, uncaring Universe. I raised my fist and shook it before those fiery balls of hydrogen and cried out: "Blast you, sir, I exist! I matter!"

And the Universe responded, "Aye, an' so you say, laddie-buck. But your sayin' so sure doesn't instill within me any sense of obligation for your well-bein', now does it?"

And it was in that moment that I at last understood and learned to appreciate just how important this God-given gift of free will can be, if utilized properly and to the utmost of our abilities. Of the importance – to use the parlance of the science fiction and comic book geeks – of using our powers for good, and not evil. Of our partnership in the Human Adventure, working together to improve the world for the betterment of all by ending hunger and pollution, fighting disease and poverty, and making a positive difference in the lives of our fellow man.

Don Quixote called it "the impossible dream." But what is a dream, if not a blueprint for action?

The rest, as they say, is left as an exercise for the reader...



Enter and Win a \$100 Check from Oklahoma Natural Gas!

The February 2021 Oklahoma Natural Gas Column and Editorial Contest was judged by a member of the Oklahoma Journalism Hall of Fame.

1. Each month, send a tearsheet or photocopy of your best column and/or editorial to Oklahoma Natural Gas Contest, c/o OPA, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105-5499. Entries also may be emailed (full-page tearsheet) to news@okpress.com.
2. Include the author's name, name of publication, date of publication and category entered (column or editorial).
3. Only ONE editorial and/or ONE column per writer per month will be accepted.
4. All entries for the previous month must be at the OPA office by the 15th of the current month.
5. Winning entries will be reproduced on the OPA website at www.OkPress.com.

Entries must have been previously published in print.

Contest open to all OPA member newspapers.

Although Oklahoma Natural Gas Company selects representative contest winners' work for use in this monthly ad, the views expressed in winning columns and editorials are those of the writers and don't necessarily reflect the Company's opinions.