

Tape recording sparks outrage

When the publisher of the McCurtain County Gazette left his tape recorder running after the March 6 county commissioner meeting, he thought he might catch commissioners discussing county business with people or topics not on the agenda after the meeting adjourned. That would be a violation of the state's Open Meeting Act.

Not only did he record a discussion of county business, but the conversation he allegedly caught on the tape was much worse.

When Publisher Bruce Willingham listened to the tape, he heard sheriff's officers and commissioners discussing lynching Black people, killing Willingham and his son, Chris-

topher, a Gazette reporter, and mocking a recent fire victim.

Attending the March 6 meeting were Sheriff Kevin Clardy, jail administrator Larry Hendrix, Captain Alicia Manning, and commissioners Mark Jennings and Robert Beck.

The McCurtain County Gazette broke the story in its April 16 edition, which included a QR code linking to clips of the audio.

The story went viral, sparking statewide and national outrage from citizens, journalists and public officials. Governor Kevin Stitt, Congressman Josh Brecheen and Idabel Mayor Craig Young called for the resignation of the four McCurtain County officials.

The McCurtain County Sheriff's Office issued a state-



Wednesday's forecast:

A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms before 1 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a high near 59. South wind around 15 mph, with gusts as high as 25 mph.

Single Copy 50¢ ©2023 McCurtain Gazette

Periodicals Postage Paid at Idabel, Oklahoma

McCurtain Gazette

Proudly serving McCurtain County since 1905

To read all McCurtain County Gazette articles regarding the tape recording, go to mccurtaingazettenews.com.

ment on Facebook on April 18 claiming the recording was made illegally and had been altered.

Willingham refutes the sheriff's claim, having received legal advice in the five weeks from the time of the recording and its release. OPA Executive Vice President Mark Thomas said, "These public officials, including two of three county commissioners, were meeting in a public space. There is no expectation of privacy in a public space. That's why peo-

ple are allowed to have video doorbells that show activity on a street, or dash cams in their car, or even pull out a camera and record things they see on the street."

Willingham has been publisher of the McCurtain Gazette since 1988, but began reporting on courthouse cases in 1980. His son, Chris, has been a police beat reporter at the Gazette for 18 years.

Willingham shared some background of the problems between the McCurtain

Continued on Page 3

Don't Miss Out: Register for OPA Annual Convention by May 19

You might need an alibi if you're not at the OPA Annual Convention at the Grand Casino Hotel & Resort in Shawnee on June 9-10.

With the theme "Journalists: Democracy's Detectives," events this year include a murder mystery where you'll test your sleuthing skills when you examine the evidence to find a killer.

Register to attend by May 19 so you don't miss out on the "early bird" registration rate. Hotel rooms are available at the Grand Casino Hotel & Resort for \$99 per night. For more information and to register, visit okpress.com/convention.

The convention begins at 3:30 p.m. June 9 with the annual business meeting and

election of 2023-2024 OPA Officers and Directors.

The general session, "Eye on the Future: Securing Alternative Revenue," will explore different revenue streams to increase visibility and reduce business risks. Several state publishers and revenue managers will discuss their alternative revenue methods and

opportunities they're utilizing in their individual markets.

Friday concludes with a reception and the murder mystery event.

Saturday morning Craig Garnett, publisher of the Uvalde Leader-News, will present "Covering Tragedy: One Year Later." Garnett, who grew up in Altus, Okla., will discuss

Continued on Page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

PAGE 5 OPA Nominating Committee recommendations

PAGE 7 United States Postal Service updates

PAGE 8 Sean Stephens becomes Clinton Daily News publisher

From the President

By Zonelle Rainbolt

Executive Editor, Wesner Publications • OPA President 2022-2023



Busy doesn't begin to describe the pace of life for news people as we enter this portion of the year! Spring sports, end-of-school activities, high school and college graduations, hail and tornadoes, weddings, the end of Oklahoma's legislative session – the list of events that need us to hit the ground running and then write clear, accurate articles, as well as publish perfect photos, seems endless. Then throw in a few instances of crime, a special event or two, and it could be easy to feel overwhelmed.

But, for some reason, instead of being overwhelmed by having multiple events to cover, news people are energized. We see possibilities and are willing to investigate alternate ways to get the most news to the most people. We don't balk at occasionally spending the extra time to attend one more meeting or traveling to report on a final softball tournament.

What does give us pause, however, is when hardworking people in our industry are maligned, and even threatened, for doing their job. That job often includes pointing out when people in positions of authority are not complying with the law. Sometimes our job requires us to make others uncomfortable or to acknowledge they have made a mistake. It isn't easy to report on unpleasant, or even terrifying events, especially for those of us who live in small communities where we will, at some point, meet the very people about whom we are writing in the green bean aisle of the local grocery store. What is vital, however, is that we report the truth to the very best of our ability, even when we know it will cause others to react negatively. We don't report any news from a place of malice, but rather an honest attempt to provide our readers with accurate news and to make the places where we live safer and better.

Our founding fathers recognized the importance of a free press and enshrined the specific right of freedom of the press in the first of the Bill of Rights. As with all rights, freedom of the press comes with responsibilities and our Oklahoma journalists are among the best in the world at responsible reporting. We are also among the absolute best at providing support to our fellow journalists – from those putting out a school paper twice a year to the individuals who are putting out multiple section papers every day. We know how important our job is and are willing to make the sacrifices necessary to make sure it is done correctly. What we do, and how we do it, are vital pieces of what keeps our country strong, and we will never fail to support our fellow journalists as they make the truth public.

I wish I could visit with every one of you individually to tell you how very much I respect the dedication you have to our industry. Some of you I know personally and some only by reputation or through the articles you have written. What I do know, however, even if we haven't spoken in person, is that you are hard-working, articulate, and dedicated to outstanding journalism. And what I hope you know is that I, both personally and as a member of OPA, support the work you do to report the news. Together, we are unstoppable!

OPA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For more information on upcoming events, visit okpress.com/events

Thur., May 25, 2023 OMC WEBINAR: COVERING OPIOID LAWSUIT SETTLEMENTS

In this training, journalists will be provided with a brief history of the lawsuits and the subsequent settlements from which this money is being distributed.

Fri. & Sat., June 9-10, 2023 OPA ANNUAL CONVENTION

Mark your calendar to attend the 2023 Convention at the Grand Casino Hotel & Resort in Shawnee. Register online at Okpress.com/convention

Thur., February 8, 2024 LEGISLATIVE SUMMIT AT STATE CAPITOL

Publishers and editors are encouraged to join us at the State Capitol on February 8 for the annual Legislative Summit.

ORDER YOUR 2023 PHOTO ID PRESS CARD

Make sure you add a photo ID press card to your toolkit.

These press cards are perfect for reporters, photographers and other staff members at your newspaper.



Only \$7 each!

ORDER ONLINE AT
okpress.com/press-cards

I didn't know you had this!



- PRINT & DIGITAL SPEC ADS
- ARTICLES & RECIPES
- PUZZLES & HOROSCOPES
- SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS
- CUSTOMER REQUESTS
- FREE WEBINARS

& so much more

FREE TRIAL OFFER!



METRO
CREATE. SELL. PROFIT.

800-223-1600
service@metro-email.com
metrocreativeconnection.com

Visit metrocreativeconnection.com to see all we offer!

OPA receives membership application

The OPA Board of Directors will consider one application for OPA membership during its next meeting on June 9.

Feed the Children, a non-profit organization based in Oklahoma City, has applied for Strategic Partner membership.

Written protests to the application must be received at OPA by Wednesday, June 7, 2023. Protests may be sent to the attention of OPA Executive Vice President Mark Thomas at mthomas@okpress.com or faxed to (405) 499-0048 or mailed to Mark Thomas, Oklahoma Press

Association, 3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

Information and application forms for OPA's membership classifications may be found at okpress.com/join. Lists of current members may be found at okpress.com/members.

Tape Recording

Continued from Page 1

County Sheriff's Office and the newspaper in a letter to Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond. The entire letter is available to view on the Gazette's website at mccurtaingazettenews.com/letter-03-2023.

"The McCurtain Gazette has conducted a years-long investigation into corruption, violence and illegal actions at the McCurtain County Sheriff's Office," Willingham's letter stated.

Since 2021, the McCurtain Gazette has written 34 articles about the sheriff's office. Willingham's letter says that in retaliation for the investigation, the sheriff's department began refusing to release open record reports of their cases.

In March 2023, the newspaper filed a legal action against the sheriff's office for violations of the Open Records Act.

"The Gazette is being

represented pro bono by the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press regarding the withholding of reports and body cams of the tasing and subsequent death of a hog-tied man, Bobby Dale Barrick," Willingham's letter reads.

As a result of the filing, the sheriff's office released records, logs and body cam footage requested by the Gazette nearly a year ago, the newspaper reported in an April 20 article. According to the governor's office.

District 2 Commissioner Mark Jennings submitted his resignation with a handwritten note.

The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation has opened an investigation into the situation in McCurtain County following a request from Stitt. Stitt is also examining all "legal avenues" to remove Sheriff Clardy from his office.

On May 5, Drummond in-

formed Stitt that he has asked OSBI to expand that investigation "to include wrongdoing that could trigger the application of 22 O.S. § 1181, which sets forth eight potential grounds for removal."

Threats made to the McCurtain County Sheriff's Office prompted the McCurtain Gazette to release the following statement:

"The McCurtain Gazette does not condone any threats or acts of violence, including against any elected officials or law enforcement. We understand and empathize with the frustration that has come from Sheriff Kevin Clardy, sheriff's department Captain Alicia Manning and Jail Administrator Larry Hendrix's refusal to resign despite demand from the community and the Governor. However, we also value the lives of all community members and encourage everyone to remain peaceful."

The Oklahoma Publisher

ISSN 1526-811X

Official Publication of the
OKLAHOMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

OPA OFFICERS

President

ZONELLE RAINBOLT
Wesner Publications

Vice President

SHEILA GAY
Woodward News

Treasurer

DAVID STRINGER
The Lawton Constitution

Executive Vice President

MARK THOMAS

OPA DIRECTORS

JOHN DENNY MONTGOMERY
The Purcell Register, Past President

SHAUNA BELYEY
The Eufaula Indian Journal

SUZIE CAMPBELL
Countywide & Sun

MISTI RINEHART
Tulsa World

ERIN DYER THOMPSON
El Reno Tribune

MARK CODNER
The Newcastle Pacer

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

**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. OPA members always need timely legal advice on issues related to 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!



Register for OPA Annual Convention

Continued from Page 1

the decisions he and the staff made May 24, 2022, when 19 children and two adults were killed at a local elementary school.

Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond will also speak Saturday morning. During Drummond's first few months in office, he has shown a renewed focus on government transparency and accountability.

Drummond will be followed by Oklahoma's congressional delegation, who has been invited to discuss important issues affecting Oklahoma and local communities.

The Awards Luncheon features presentations of the ONF Beachy Musselman Award, OPA Half and Quarter Century inductions, ONG Column and Editorial Sweepstakes Awards, OGE Photo of the Year Awards, Magazine Contest Awards, ONF Joseph F. Edwards Outdoor Writer of the Year Award and ONF Ray Lokey Memorial Award for Excellence in Reporting.

Speed Topics kicks off the afternoon sessions. In this fast-paced session, you'll choose which table and topic you want to join, then change tables every 20 minutes. Topics will include advertising, circulation, editorial and social media.

The event no one wants to miss is the Ice Cream Social and Blooper Show. Get ready for some laughs as OPA Executive Vice President Mark Thomas presents this year's gaffes.

Concurrent sessions feature two editorial tracks: Holly Easttom, a professor at Oklahoma Baptist University, will discuss "How to find new story ideas and write compelling features" and Richard Barron, chief photographer at The Ada News, will present "Tell

powerful stories through your photos" for the editorial track.

The two revenue tracks feature Mike Crandall, owner of Sandler Custom Growth Solutions in Oklahoma City, presenting "How to sell to the modern buyer," and Cindy Allen and Leslie Magalios from the Enid News & Eagle presenting "Could AI revolutionize sales and marketing?"

If you need a professional portrait, there will be an onsite studio available for two hours Saturday evening. While you're dressed up for the banquet, stop by and have your picture taken.

Then it's time to recognize the exceptional work you produced this year. Enjoy a complimentary drink at the reception before heading into the Awards Banquet for the presentation of the OPA Milt Phillips Award and Better Newspaper Contest Awards.

We also want to take this opportunity to thank the sponsors of this year's convention; (See list at right.)

OPA again offers a T-shirt designed to display your pride in local news publications. The front of this year's shirt features "Local News uncovers the facts." T-shirts can be ordered when you register for the convention or purchased separately. They can be picked up at the convention.

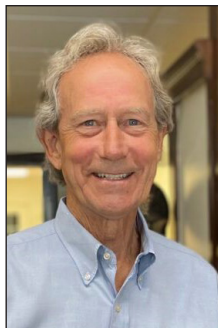
Additionally, there will be a silent auction to raise funds in support of the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation's paid internship program. Items will be on display throughout the convention with final bids due before 7 p.m. June 11. If you have an item to donate, email details including its value, a description and minimum bid to amartin@okpress.com by June 3.

Register today at okpress.com/convention and we'll see you in Shawnee on June 9-10!

2023 Convention Sponsors



2023 Convention Speakers



Craig Garnett



Mike Crandall



Gentner Drummond



Cindy Allen



Leslie Magalios



Richard Barron

OPA Nominating Committee recommends slate of officers & directors for 2023-2024

The OPA Nominating Committee met at the OPA Building on March 16 to discuss the slate of officers and directors for 2023-2024.

The seven-member committee is composed of the six most recent OPA past presidents who are still active as newspaper executives and the current OPA president.

Committee members in attendance were Chairman John Denny Montgomery, The Purcell Register; Rod Serfoss, Clinton Daily News; Jeff Mayo, Sequoyah County Times; Brian Blansett, Lincoln

County News; Ted Streuli, Oklahoma Watch; and current OPA President Zonelle Rainbolt, Wesner Publications.

Rusty Ferguson of The Cleveland American and Ray Dyer, El Reno Tribune, were unable to attend.

After reviewing the OPA By-Laws and discussing possible candidates, the committee recommended the following slate of officers and directors for the year beginning July 1, 2023.

Sheila Gay, publisher of Woodward News, was recommended to serve as presi-

dent. Shauna Belyeu, general manager of The Eufaula Indian Journal, was recommended to serve as vice president. David Stringer, publisher of The Lawton Constitution, was recommended to serve as treasurer. Zonelle Rainbolt, executive editor of Wesner Publications, was recommended to serve as past president.

The committee also recommended that current Director Suzie Campbell, publisher of the Countywide & Sun, be re-appointed to fulfill the final year of Belyeu's vacated three-year term, and that Ed Choate,

publisher of the Muskogee Phoenix, be appointed to fulfill the second and third year of the three-year term vacated by Gay.

Recommended as new directors to each serve a three-year term were Mike Sherman, executive editor of Oklahoma Watch, and Brett Wesner, owner of Wesner Publications.

A general election for new officers and directors will be held at the annual convention during the business meeting on Friday, June 9 at 3:30 p.m. at the Grand Casino Hotel & Resort in Shawnee, Okla.

Uncover the facts in Style!

Showcase the importance of your local news source with an OPA T-shirt.

The FRONT of the black shirt features "Local News Uncovers the Facts." The bottom right corner features the OPA Logo.

Order your shirt when you register for the convention or buy it now! Shirts can be picked up when you arrive at the convention. They will not be mailed. Order online at okpress.com/convention#Tshirts



**Only \$15
Each!**

**Order deadline:
May 19**



STRATEGIC PARTNERS

CHICKASAW NATION MEDIA RELATIONS

Loné Beasley
580-559-0921
loné.beasley@chickasaw.net
chickasaw.net

ETYPE SERVICES

Thad Swiderski
512-687-9055
thad@etypeservices.com
etypeservices.com

GRAND RIVER DAM AUTHORITY

Justin Alberty
918-256-5545
justin.alberty@grda.com
grda.com

METRO CREATIVE GRAPHICS

Jennifer Steiner
800-223-1600
jsteiner@metro-email.com
metrocreativeconnection.com

OGE ENERGY CORP.

Christi Woodworth
405-553-3698
woodwoco@oge.com
oge.com

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES, INC.

Chris Meyers
405-478-1455
cmeyers@oaec.coop
oaec.coop

OKLAHOMA BAR ASSOCIATION

Janet Johnson
405-416-7000
janetj@okbar.org
okbar.org

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

Jody Harlan, Comm. Director
405-203-1318
jharlan@okdrs.gov
oklahoma.gov/okdrs.html

OKLAHOMA MEDIA CENTER

Rob Collins, Project Manager
405-205-9421
rob.collins@localmedia.org
oklahomamediacenter.com

OKLAHOMA STATE SCHOOL BOARD ASSOCIATION

Christy Watson, Comm. Director
405-528-3571
christyw@ossba.org
ossba.org

ONE GAS

Jason Cleary
jason.cleary@onegas.com
oklahomanaturalgas.com

OG&E PHOTO CONTEST



Carl Albert senior Alex Sutterfield celebrates after winning the 215-pound state title at the Class 5A wrestling state championships.

Photo by JEFF HARRISON, Midwest City Beacon, March 1, 2023

MARCH 2023
DAILY, SEMI- AND
TRI-WEEKLY WINNER:
DERRICK JAMES

McAlester News-Capital

MARCH 2023
WEEKLY WINNER:
JEFF HARRISON

Midwest City Beacon

*The OGE Photo 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](http://okpress.com/oge-photo-contest)**

Members of the Tulsa
Police Honor Guard
perform a three-
volley salute during the
funeral service of fallen
McAlester Police Capt.
Richard Parker.

*Photo by DERRICK JAMES,
McAlester News-Capital,
March 23, 2023*



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

We honor our commitment to **strengthen our communities.**

OG&E

We Energize Life

© 2021 OGE Energy Corp.

Local editor receives national recognition



Allie Prater, group editor for Cimarron Valley Communications

Allie Prater, group editor for Cimarron Valley Communications, has been named Editor Extraordinaire, 2023, by Editor and Publisher Magazine. This

is an honor bestowed on just 12 individuals in the newspaper industry across the country each year.

"It is a huge honor and we

are full of pride for Allie," said Cimarron Valley Communications' owner and publisher J. D. Meisner. "There is no question that Allie is deserving of this recognition. She has shown us time and time again that tenacity, innovation and hard work pays dividends."

Cimarron Valley Communications publishes the Cushing Citizen, the Yale News and the Keystone Gusher (formerly the Drumright Gusher). According to Meisner, Allie manages the news output of all three publications, writes a column, handles most photography and covers at least one sports event a week.

"Aside from her nuts and bolts editorial duties, Allie is our best ambassador," said Meisner. "She started up a reader advisory board at each of the group's papers to collect input and suggestions from

readers on what they want their local paper to look like. She also initiated a student reporter program and has high school students stringing for the paper at sporting and academic events.

"She meticulously coaches these kids and guides them in writing, reporting and photography," said Meisner. "Strictly by Allie's suggestions, we have expanded our coverage from five communities and five schools to 18 communities and 14 school districts. This has not only provided much needed news coverage to areas long neglected by local news, but it has expanded the company's revenue opportunities."

This is not Prater's first time to be nationally recognized. In 2021, she was chosen as one of Editor and Publisher's top 25 editors under 35.

Updates from the United States Postal Service

FINAL END DATE FOR HARD-COPY ADDRESS NOTICES

The last day for Full Service and Seamless Acceptance Periodicals mailers to receive address changes in hard copy is July 9, 2023.

USPS had earlier indicated it would end the printed notice for all mailers, the National Newspaper Association reported. In its final rule, USPS announced that for Periodicals not using Full-Service Intelligent Mail or Seamless Acceptance, the hard copy notices will continue to be available. It also will keep the "Return Service Requested" as an ancillary endorsement in labels.

NNA raised numerous questions about the proposed change. The Postal Service

addressed those issues in its final rule.

Among its responses is an answer to publishers concerned about automatic address change downloads corrupting existing files. It states that automatic downloads are not required and that publishers will be able to print out hard copy address change reports to use in their updates, if desired.

It says the change is necessary to save costs. The USPS analysis suggests that 60% of the hard copy notices were produced for mailers already on automated programs like Seamless Acceptance, where electronic notices have been encouraged for several years.

For Periodicals on Full-Service, the use of the electronic Address Change Service is free. For mailers having difficulty with enrollment, USPS

invites queries to its helpline at 1-877-672-0007 or by email MSSC@usps.gov.

RATE INCREASE

July 9 is also when postage rates for Periodicals will increase. As reported last month in The Publisher, the increase will be 8.8% for Within County newspapers and 8.1% for Outside County newspapers.

The new rates also include a three-cent increase in the price of a First-Class Mail Forever stamp from 63 cents to 66 cents.

The U.S. Postal Service said the price adjustments are needed to achieve the financial stability sought by its Delivering for America 10-year plan.

HARD COPY POSTAGE STATEMENTS TO END

The U.S. Postal Service

will require electronic entry of postage statements after January 28, 2024.

Prior to that date, local Business Mail Entry Units and postmasters will meet with mailers currently filing postage statements to make sure they understand how to use free USPS online tools or explore third-party software vendors' offerings.

After the deadline, mailers will be required to enter essential mailing data directly into USPS electronic files.

In the past, some mailers have brought their paper statements or emailed copies of the statement to the BMEU for postal clerks to enter data. After the end date, postal personnel will no longer have access to mailers' records to provide that entry, according to USPS.

Sean Stephens becomes Clinton Daily News publisher



Sean Stephens with his family: Emily, Christy, Natalie and Sean. Photo Courtesy of the Clinton Daily News.

Sean Stephens has been named the new publisher of the Clinton Daily News.

He will only be the CDN's third publisher in the past 83 years.

"Sean has been preparing for this opportunity since he joined the Daily News in 1999," said current CDN Publisher Rod Serfoss. "I can't think of anyone better to be in charge of this newspaper than him."

In his more than 23 years at the Daily News, Stephens has worked his way up the chain of command.

In 2011, in addition to his duties as sports editor, he became the Assistant to the Publisher in order to begin learning the management side of the newspaper.

"As he continued to grow in that role, he was later put in charge of sales and marketing for the newspaper," said Serfoss. "Sean has done everything I asked of him, and I am excited to name him as my successor."

Stephens joined the CDN as sports editor after earning his journalism degree from Cameron University in 1999.

A graduate of Duncan High School, Stephens is a second-generation journalist, as his mother was once employed by The Lawton Constitution and his father was once a freelance photographer.

In 2001, he married a Clinton girl, Christy Johnson. They have two daughters, Emily and Natalie.

Emily, 18, is currently a

reporter for the Clinton Daily News. She plans to major in journalism this fall at the University of Oklahoma. Natalie, 8, is a second grader.

"Clinton is home – I've never wanted to go anywhere else," Stephens said. "I wasn't born or raised here, but after living here now almost half my life, I am more than proud to call Clinton my home."

"In this new capacity it will be a privilege to serve the people of Clinton by endeavoring to help direct one of the best staffs ever to continue to put out a great newspaper for a great community."

"It's a staggering responsibility to become just the third Clinton Daily News publisher since 1940. The fortunate thing is that I had the opportunity of working for the two men before me and I am thankful for all the lessons learned."

Serfoss has been in the newspaper business for nearly 58 years, with all but three of those years at the Clinton Daily News.

He began delivering newspapers here in 1965 and went on to work in and manage every department at the newspaper.

In 1988 he became the general manager of the Sand Springs Leader. He returned to Clinton in 1991 to become part owner of the Daily News.

In 2003 he succeeded

Charles Engleman as publisher of the Clinton Daily News.

Both were elected president of the Oklahoma Press Association – Engleman in 1957 and Serfoss in 2010.

They each received the newspaper association's highest honor – the H. Milt Phillips Award. The honor went to Engleman in 1982 and Serfoss in 2019.

"I believe Sean is more than capable to continue the Clinton Daily News legacy started by Engleman in 1940," said Serfoss.

While Serfoss will continue in an advisory capacity to the CDN, he has also been employed by the Oklahoma Press Association as a business consultant to its 163 member publications

"I look forward to working with newspapers across Oklahoma in my new role at the Oklahoma Press Association," said Serfoss.

"Being publisher of the Clinton Daily News for the past 20 years has been a dream come true! Now it is time to pass the torch to Sean and I look forward to watching him succeed."

"I am also excited about my new role with the OPA that allows me to be able to give back by helping others in the newspaper industry so they can also see their dreams come true."



TOP SECRET

OPA CONVENTION

JUNE 9-10 IN SHAWNEE

Journalists: Democracy's Detectives

Great content keeps readers engaged



Looking Them Over
by Rod Serfoss
rserfoss@okpress.com

The feature story package titled “Secret Ingredient is in the Pan,” on the front page of *The Marlow Review* gets an A+!

The headline, photographs, story and even the jump line lured readers into this delightful story.

The story detailed the life of Carlann Miller’s lifetime of baking and cooking. According to the story, when Miller was seven-years-old, her father had a stroke and being a little girl, she wanted to bake and cook. “My mother said if you can read it, you can cook it,” said Miller who has taught school for 52 years.

The well composed picture of an elderly lady preparing a deep-dish peach cobbler with a determined look on her face to make it perfect, red long-handle underwear hanging behind her on the clothesline and an open chuck wagon to the side brought the picture to life.

The jump line – See “Secret Ingredient” on page 2 – has the reader quickly turning the page to continue reading the story. That secret wasn’t revealed until the last words of the story – “It’s in the pan.”

Two thumbs up to the staff of the *McIntosh County Democrat* for publishing a high-quality newspaper from the front to back.

Six page one stories along with six pieces of art are accented by high quality press work.

Eight pages filled with news and photographs two opinion pages and four pages of sports that included 11 stories and 16 pictures



Front pages featured this month are The Perkins Journal, Sapulpa Herald, and The Marlow Review.

combine to make this a great NEWSpaper!

The Sapulpa Herald did a superb job covering the reopening of Tee Pee Drive-In on historic Route 66 in Sapulpa, after it had been closed for nearly 25 years. Its grand-reopening pictures – including a drone photo of cars packed in the drive-in, the lit-up iconic sign of the grand-reopening, people enjoying the event and even a surprise engagement proposal – made readers feel like they were at the event.

It takes both circulation and advertising revenue to be able to publish a good newspaper. *The Perkins Journal* has a good combination of both. It is good to see advertisements for a wide range of businesses throughout the paper. The newspaper also has a lot of local news plus great sports coverage to boost circulation revenue, and more than 50 ads from area businesses that ring the cash register on the advertising side.

The lead story in a recent edition of *The Herald-Democrat* in beaver was about

the top students at Turpin High School – a community of around 300 people located 25 miles away.

When looking at papers like it and *The Boise City News* I am reminded that how close your neighbor is has a lot to do with where you live – and in the Oklahoma Panhandle, 25 miles is like being next door.

Both are the only legal newspapers in the county they serve – *The Herald-Democrat* in Beaver County and *The Boise City News* in Cimarron County.

The Boise City News’s closest neighboring Oklahoma newspaper is the *Guymon Daily Herald* 58 miles to the east in Texas County. And for a bit of trivia, Cimarron County has the distinction of being the only county in the United States that touches five states – Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas and its own Oklahoma.

The next closest Oklahoma newspapers to *The Herald-Democrat* are *The Hooker*

Advance, 42 miles to the west, or *The Harper County Leader*, 47 miles to the east in Laverne.

In all, there are only four newspapers serving the nearly 5,700 square miles that make up the three counties in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

It is good to see these four newspapers doing their part to make sure people living in the wide-open spaces of the Panhandle have a newspaper they can rely on to keep them informed.

TOP 5 CREATIVE HEADLINES

5. “Egg-citing event” – *The Westville Reporter*
4. “Frack Monster” said to be a noisy neighbor” – *Newcastle Pacer*
3. “Victim filmed woman as she attacked him with a garden hoe” – *Broken Bow News*
2. “She tried to kill me” – *Atoka County Times*
1. “Buttocks-biting brother behind bars” – *McCurtain Gazette*

Rod Serfoss, OPA Business Consultant, looks over OPA member publications for a monthly column, “Looking Them Over.” To contact Serfoss, email rserfoss@okpress.com.

Acrobat still best, although there are alternatives



Computer Notes

from the road
by Wilma Newby
wnewby@okpress.com

With an annual price of \$239.88 for Adobe Acrobat, I'm often asked if there are alternatives to consider.

Alternatives still need to offer nearly everything Acrobat does such as OCR, making forms and signing PDFs.

Based on that criteria I went looking. What I found were attempts to copy the best program out there.

Nitro PDF has been around for a while and is being used at some newspaper offices. At a cost of \$179.99 per year, Nitro can OCR text and its PDF combining pages feature works well. It also allows you to add a signature field to a PDF.

The downfall is that it's only supported on newer Mac operating systems. This is the case with most of these alternative programs. Nitro seems to do it all for a lower cost than Acrobat and the interface is simple.

Then there's Foxit PDF Editor, a capable program with all the same features.

Its \$149 per year plan includes digital signing. There is a separate program for just signing PDFs but it doesn't include all the other features the Editor version offers. It's a simple program with lots of buttons instead of menus but it

seems to do all that we would ask of it.

Don't get the cheaper \$99 per month Foxit version if you need to have signed PDFs. It requires you to purchase an extra subscription to Foxit eSign.

Soda PDF is another PDF editor that works on Mac and PC with all the things you might want. For \$155.88 per year it's worth the time to look it over.

There is a free PDF editor but it is an online based app that works through a web browser. It can be found at <https://online.sodapdf.com/>

There's also PDFExpert that is Apple computer based. It costs \$79.99 annually or \$139 for a lifetime license. That's a great deal if you're using an Apple computer. It can be downloaded from the app store and has built-in signatures for PDFs.

You might be able to do some things with programs already on your work computer. Libra Office Draw will open PDFs and let you edit them. Google Docs will open and OCR PDFs if you have a Google account set up on the computer. Google also makes an extension for web browsers called PDF to OCR that works if a PDF needs editing. It converts the PDF to a plain text file.

ONLINE ONLY PROGRAMS

A very good description of

why big software companies are trying to take all their programs online was given to me last month. I thought I would share. One of the main reasons they're going to online-only is so they don't have to pay someone to update each version of the program for all the different platforms available today.

That means the company doesn't have to put out a different version for three Windows versions and more than four Apple versions. It costs money to hire people to do all that programming. If it's an online-only application it only has to be updated to the latest web browser.

The problem I see is that these companies have worked years to make great applications for computers — in some cases 30-plus years.

But it's like starting over for them with web versions. These versions have less features. It will take years for them to catch up, if they ever do. There are many features that just aren't on the web version but end users are being driven to use these lesser programs.

It's extremely hard to use web-based programs without fast internet. And if the internet is down, no work can be done.

I had been wondering why manufactures keep putting smaller drives in computers. It's because room for pro-

grams will no longer be needed and all files are expected to be in the cloud. Soon yearly subscriptions will be needed for all software or we'll be pressured into using web browser programs.

GIMP TUTORIAL

A photo correction program used by many newspapers is Gimp. It's free for Mac or Windows.

I'm often asked for some simple instructions for correcting a photo for web press with Gimp.

If you're missing tools, look under the Tools menu. The Control/Option key is used with Clone Stamp Tool and to select an area to be cloned.

1. The **Crop** tool works by selecting the area to be cropped then double clicking within that area.
2. **Image > Scale Image...** To resize the photo note the drop-down button next to "px" that allows viewing in inches.
3. **Levels and Curves** are under the **Colors** menu. Used for lightening the photo.
4. **Filters > Enhance > Sharpen Unsharp mask.** Change the Amount slider until the photo looks good. Leave **Radius** around 1px. The **Threshold** settings should be low, 0-1px.
5. **Image > Mode** to change photo to Black/White. There is no CMYK in this program so leave as RGB for color photos. Another program will have to convert them to CMYK or the PDF export can make them CMYK when InDesign makes the final PDF.
6. **File > Export As** to save the file with a name. Note the Select File Type button at the bottom to change to the file format for the photo.

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

Transparency is key principle of communication

By John Foust
Greensboro, NC

Joanne is an ad manager with a common-sense approach to managing her team and their goals. She believes in communication – not micro-management – but real communication on how things are going.

“For years,” she told me, “I often found out at the eleventh hour that something wasn’t going as planned. A crucial email wasn’t sent in time, a proposal was held up by research delays, or an ad deadline wasn’t met. Now, those things can happen to even the best members of an ad team at the best of publications. But it puts everyone in an awkward position and threatens to damage our credibility.

“So, I started relying on a little saying that I heard a long time ago: ‘Say what you’re going to do. Then do it, or renegotiate.’ It has become

a catchphrase around the office. Start out with a realistic commitment, by saying what you’re going to do, whether it’s to email certain information to an advertiser by the end of the week, submit a proposal by next Tuesday, or have an ad ready to run by this afternoon. Then do what you committed to do – on time. It sounds simple, but some salespeople get so excited about a sale that they have a tendency to overpromise. That’s where they can get into trouble by thinking they can double their effort and get things done on schedule. The result is often a missed deadline or sloppy proofreading.

“That’s why renegotiating is so important,” Joanne said. “As soon as they know things aren’t going as promised, it’s best to go back to the other person and say something like, ‘I’m sorry the proposal I

promised by next Tuesday has been delayed. I wanted to tell you as soon as I found out, because you have a right to know exactly what’s going on. Let’s talk about some alternatives.

Could later next week possibly work for you? That will allow us to gather more complete demographic information and give you a better view of your target audience.’ Notice how the statement ends with a benefit to the other person.

“As a manager,” Joanne explained, “this approach helps me stay up to speed with what is happening with our advertising department. Plus, it shows the team that this kind of situation does not mean failure. It’s just a speedbump along the way. This is much better than waiting until the last minute to tell me, their advertiser or their coworkers.”

There’s a big lesson in Joanne’s philosophy. Trans-

parency is a key principle of business communication. The word itself indicates “seeing through,” such as a window allows us to see what’s on the other side.

When we are transparent with other people, we eliminate the window shades of pride and embarrassment which tempt us to wait “one more day” before sharing what we fear could be interpreted as bad news.

While bad news is not happy news, this technique can help keep the lines of communication – and customer relations – open.

©Copyright 2023 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. Email for information: john@johnfoust.com

Please donate to the

OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPER FOUNDATION

Donations to the Oklahoma Newspaper Foundation will support its efforts to improve the state’s newspaper industry and quality of journalism. If you would like to make a donation, please send a check to:

OKLAHOMA NEWSPAPER FOUNDATION

3601 N. Lincoln Blvd., Oklahoma City, OK 73105-5499

Remembering our friends & colleagues who died the previous year.

Mike Owensby
April 27, 2022

Brandon Spencer Dale
April 21, 2022

Joe Worley
April 13, 2022

Sabra S. Tate
April 8, 2022

Joan Gilmore McLaughlin
May 9, 2022

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) 499-0040

ALEXIS MARTIN, Member Services
Coordinator
amartin@okpress.com, (405) 499-0035

ADVERTISING

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

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

DIGITAL NEWS TRACKING

KEITH BURGIN, Digital News Tracking Mgr.
kburgin@okpress.com, (405) 499-0026

JENNIFER CATES, News Tracking Staff
jbeatley-cates@okpress.com

SHARON BEUCHAW, News Tracking Staff
sbeuchaw@okpress.com

CREATIVE SERVICES

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

AUSTIN ANDERSON, Creative Services Assistant
aanderson@okpress.com, (405) 499-0031

COMPUTER ADVICE

WILMA NEWBY, Computer Consultant
wnewby@okpress.com, (405) 659-0596

GENERAL INQUIRIES

(405) 499-0020, Fax: (405) 499-0048
Toll-free in OK: 1-888-815-2672

OKLAHOMA NATURAL GAS CONTEST WINNERS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE MARCH WINNERS

Column: **JEFF MULLIN**, *Enid News & Eagle*

Editorial: **JOHNNY McMAHAN**, *Woodward News*

MARCH EDITORIAL WINNER (Read editorial online at okpress.com/ong-contest)

JOHNNY McMAHAN, *Woodward News*

Event Center a venue to celebrate

The Conference Center welcomes everything from weddings to conventions. Crystal Beach Stadium is as good a rodeo arena as one will find in Oklahoma. Fuller Park is a top level baseball facility that can host pretty much any level of the sport. Boomer Fieldhouse annually hosts several basketball tournaments.

Then, there is the Woodward County Event Center.

We continue to be amazed at the versatility of this venue. It hosts numerous stock shows and other events through the year like major trade shows, but let's just highlight the last couple of weeks.

From Feb. 17 through Feb. 28, the event center was the site of quite possibly the largest spring stock show in Oklahoma outside of the Oklahoma Youth Expo in Oklahoma City.

Over all the 11 days, some 1,000 exhibitors worked 1,600 animals through the show ring.

That ended with the premium auction on Feb. 28.

After one day off, the event center then hosted back-to-back regional powerlifting meets for junior high and high school athletes across Northwest Oklahoma, the Panhandle and parts of the OKC metro.

Those are two incredibly different events and the turn-around time isn't much, but it works – thanks to a lot of work from a lot of people.

Not every community has a venue to do these different types of events, nor the people to pull it off in such a rapid fashion.

Both events bring folks to Woodward which is always a goal and having a large venue capable of holding just about anything is a key.

We want to thank everyone who had a hand in making both events possible and successful.

MARCH COLUMN WINNER (Excerpts from column. Read entire column at okpress.com/ong-contest)

JEFF MULLIN, *Enid News & Eagle*

Women have gotten short shrift for too long

If you have ever used a circular saw, thank a woman.

Next time you load your dishwasher rather than washing plates and glasses by hand, thank a woman.

When it rains and you flick on your vehicle's windshield wipers to clear your view, thank a woman.

Getting a shot isn't any fun, but it is necessary to make or keep you well. Next time you face the needle, thank a woman.

Enjoy homemade ice cream? Thank a woman.

Do you savor the warm air generated by your car's heater on a frigid winter day? Yep, you can thank a woman for that, too.

All of the above were invented by women. And that's not all. Women also invented the Kevlar used in bulletproof vests, caller ID and call waiting, disposable diapers, laser cataract surgery, WiFi, GPS, Bluetooth and coffee filters, all were conceived of and designed by women.

So thank women for all these things. Oh, and if you are alive and breathing, thank a woman for that, too. There are plenty of ways to leave this old world but only one way in, and women play the major role in that process.

March is Women's History Month and Wednesday is International Women's Day. And lest you ask why there is no International Man's Day, consider this. Globally, women earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by a man, according to the United Nations. Every day, it seems, is man's day, and therein lies the problem.

As of last September, according to career website

zippia.com, women made up 58.4% of the U.S. workforce but held only 35% of senior leadership positions. Of the CEOs of Fortune 500 firms, only 8.8% are women.

And it's not like women are not highly qualified. In 2020, 41% of U.S. college graduates were women, while females earned 60% of all U.S. graduate degrees. In 2020, 53% of all doctorates went to women. But women with doctorates earned an average of \$113,858 compared to the \$155,485 earned by men. In fact men with masters' degrees earned, on average, 3% more than women with doctorates.

As far as government is concerned, there are presently 15 countries led by women. In America, which has never elected a woman president, there are a record number of women serving in the 118th Congress, but that total is only 28% of the members of both houses.

And it's not like women are a minority in this nation, men are. Females make up 51% of the U.S. population.

Perhaps it isn't women's history we should be concerned about this month and every month, but the challenges faced by women today and going forward.

Right here in the Sooner State, women aren't faring well at all. In fact personal finance website WalletHub says Oklahoma is the worst state in the nation for women. Oklahoma ranks 47th in terms of women's preventative health care, 45th in women's life expectancy at birth, 43rd in the number of women living in poverty, 38th in the high school graduation rate for women and 40th in the number of unemployed women.



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

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

1. Each month, submit your entry online at okpress.com/ong-contest. Attachments should be in PDF format.
2. Entries may also be emailed (full-page tearsheet) to amartin@okpress.com. Include the author's name, name of publication, date of publication and category entered (column or editorial).
3. All entries for the previous month must be at the OPA office by the 15th of the current month.
4. Only ONE editorial and/or ONE column per writer per month will be accepted.
5. Winners will receive a Certificate of Achievement, a \$100 check and the column or editorial may be published in The Oklahoma Publisher. Annual Sweepstakes winners will receive a plaque, a \$200 check and may have the column or editorial published in The Publisher.

Contest open to staff at OPA Legal Newspaper and General News Media members, as well as OPA Individual members.

The views expressed in winning columns and editorials are those of the writers and don't necessarily reflect Oklahoma Natural Gas Company's opinions.