

AlaPressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2019

Important Dates

APA Media Awards
Contest Deadlines

Advertising: **March 22**
Magazine: **March 29**

2019 APA Summer
Convention
June 28-29
Perdido Beach Resort

Online Media Campus
March 28

[Money Beyond Money](#)

Presenter: Zach Ahrens
*Finding new revenue stream in
an industry undergoing rapid
disruption can seem overwhelming.
The presenter will provide
tips and ready-for-market
ideas that you can implement in
your weekly or daily immediately
from the perspective of a fundraiser.*

APA elects new officers

New APA office location

Democrat-Reporter in Linden suspended

Make plans to attend the 2019 APA Summer
Conference

Ask your readers: Alabama Open Records Act

Here's a tip from the 2019 Media Summit

Memories from growing up in a newspaper

Miller named publisher in Athens

TN Valley acquires three newspapers

What advertisers care about



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Alabama Newspaper Advertising
Service Inc.
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Birmingham, AL 35209
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www.alabamapress.org

Board of Directors

Kenneth Boone, Chairman of the Board
Tallapoosa Publishers, Inc.
Horace Moore, President
The Northwest Alabamian
Terry Connor, 1st Vice President
The Cullman Times
K.A. Turner, 2nd Vice President
Alabama Media Group
Dee Ann Campbell
The Choctaw Sun-Advocate
Eddie Dodd, The Abbeville Herald
Denise DuBois, The Citizen of East Alabama
Tricia Clinton-Dunne
The Fort Payne Times-Journal
James Phillips, Daily Mountain Eagle
Parks Rogers, Gulf Coast Newspapers
Steve Smith, The Dothan Eagle
Teresa Woodruff, The Moulton Advertiser
Robert Jackson, Consolidated Publishing
Michael James, The Tuscaloosa News
Michael Galvin, Montgomery Advertiser
Glenda Curl, The Wilcox Progressive Era
Dan Starnes, Starnes Publishing

APA Staff

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Jaclyn Langan, Membership Coordinator
Meegan Maxwell, Network Coordinator
Andrea Forsyth, Tearsheet & Social
Media Coordinator
Dennis R. Bailey, General Counsel
Scott Goldsmith, APA Accountant

APA elects new officers

Horace Moore, owner and publisher of Mid-South Newspapers based in Haleyville, has been elected president of the Alabama Press Association. Moore succeeds Kenneth Boone, who became chairman of the board.

Terry Connor, publisher of The Cullman Times, North Jefferson News in Gardendale, The Athens News-Courier and the St. Clair News-Aegis in Pell City, was elected first vice president. K. A. Turner, senior editor for Alabama Media Group was elected second vice president of APA.

Moore, a native of Winston County, began his newspaper career in 1964. He worked his way up through the newspaper he now owns, doing most every job in the building. Mid-South Newspapers, publishes the Northwest Alabamian in Haleyville, the Journal Record in Hamilton, the Pickens County Herald in Carrolton and The Times-Record in Fayette.

Moore has been active in community efforts to bring industry to the Winston County area, and was heavily involved in the revitalization efforts in

downtown Haleyville following a devastating tornado in 2001.

He served in the Alabama National Guard and is currently an active member of the Winston County Deputy Reserve. He received APA's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016.

New board members elected were: Teresa Woodruff, general manager of The Moulton Advertiser; Robert Jackson, executive vice president of Consolidated Publishing; Michael James, executive editor of The Tuscaloosa News; Michael Galvin, president of the Montgomery Advertiser; Glenda Curl, publisher of The Wilcox Progressive Era in Camden; and Dan Starnes, publisher of Starnes Media.

Members elected for a second two-year term are: Parks Rogers, publisher of Gulf Coast Newspapers; Tricia Clinton-Dunne, publisher of The Fort Payne Times-Journal; and Dee Ann Campbell, publisher of The Choctaw Sun-Advocate in Gilbertown.

continued on page 3

New APA office location

The APA office will lease office space in Vestavia beginning May 1, 2019. The new address is 600 Vestavia Parkway, Suite 291, Vestavia, AL 35216.

The building is the Shelby Building and is located approximately 5 miles south of our current location – just off Hwy. 31. The move will take place Thursday and Friday, May 2-3.

"We are excited to have this settled, and now will get busy preparing for the move," Executive Direc-

tor Felicia Mason said. "This move, while a bit overwhelming, will give us a chance to discard items we do

not need and to organize the office to be more efficient."

The APA Journalism Foundation purchased the current office building in 1994 and have rented space to APA/ANAS and to an outside tenant that occupied the first floor. "By selling the building, we can eliminate

the rising cost of maintenance, and invest the proceeds from the sale of the building to continue the work of the Foundation," Mason said.



Shelby Building



From left to right: Horace Moore, Anthony Cook, Kenneth Boone, Caroline Quattlebaum

new officers continued from page 2

Members remaining on the board are Denise DuBois, publisher of The Citizen of East Alabama in Phenix City; Eddie Dodd, editor and publisher of The Abbeville Herald;

of The Southeast Sun in Enterprise, who became chairman of the board.

Cook is a native of Munford and a graduate of Auburn University. His newspaper career began at The Anniston Star as an intern. He was hired full-time at the end of his internship. He also worked with the Alabama Media Group in Huntsville and Birmingham before becoming publisher

James Phillips, publisher of The Daily Mountain Eagle in Jasper; and Steve Smith, publisher of The Dothan Eagle.

The APA Journalism Foundation elected Anthony Cook, executive editor of The Anniston Star, as president. Cook succeeds Caroline Quattlebaum, publisher

of The Daily Home in Talladega. Bro Krift, executive editor of the Montgomery Advertiser, was elected vice president of the Journalism Foundation. New Foundation board members elected were: Gary Maitland, editor of the TimesDaily in Florence; Troy Turner, editor of the Opelika-Auburn News; Barnett Wright, editor of The Birmingham Times; Jeff Martin, publisher of The Montgomery Independent; and Kendra Majors, publisher of The Brewton Standard. Foundation board members remaining on the board are: Adam Prestridge, publisher of The Greenville Advocate; Kimberly Patterson, publisher of the Sand Mountain Reporter in Albertville; Ty West, editor-in-chief of the Birmingham Business Journal; Steve Baker, publisher of The Outlook in Alexander City; Sydney Cromwell, editor at Starnes Media; Stacy Graning, publisher of The Messenger in Troy; and Will Whaley, editor of The Selma Times-Journal.

Democrat-Reporter in Linden suspended from APA

In an unprecedented move, the Alabama Press Association Board of Directors suspended the membership of The Democrat-Reporter in Linden after Publisher/Editor Goodloe Sutton published an editorial on Feb. 14, 2019, calling for the "Ku Klux Klan to night ride again."

In addition, the board sent Mr. Sutton a letter of censure, which is an expression of strong disapproval of the editorial.

The APA bylaws state that members can be suspended, expelled or otherwise disciplined for any action that brings disgrace upon

the Association or the profession.

"The APA board is in no way restricting Mr. Sutton or his newspaper's First Amendment Rights," APA President Horace Moore said. "He has the absolute right to print his opinion. These rights, however, come with responsibilities and consequences. This is especially true when you belong to an association grounded in truth and decency."

The members will address the suspension at the next membership meeting which will be June 28, 2019, at the APA Summer Convention.

The week after the edito-

rial was released, Sutton stepped down as publisher and editor of the paper and named employee Elecia Dexter to replace him. Dexter joined the staff of The Democrat-Reporter earlier this year.

However, in early March, Dexter left her post at the newspaper. In an interview with the New York Times, Dexter said the continuing interference from the editor she was meant to replace led to her departure. "I would have liked it to turn out differently, but it didn't," Dexter said. "This is a hard one because it's sad – so much good could have come out of this."

Make plans to attend 2019 APA Summer Convention

Leonard Woolsey, Yvonne Mintz and Jack Mitchell are on the list of speakers for the 2019 APA Summer Convention, June 28-29.



Woolsey, publisher and president of the Galveston County (Texas) Daily News, will lead a session on "Finding New Success in Magazine Publishing," offering hints and tips on launching new supplementary products or increasing revenue in existing

magazines.

Mintz will focus on benchmarks for editorial excellence. What do all quality newspapers have in common? She will also have a "Steal the Idea" segment that will give everyone some real-world examples of things newspapers can do immediately to improve their products.

Ask your readers

The Alabama Press Association, along with the Alabama Broadcasters Association and other groups, will be seeking changes to the Alabama Open Records Act during the 2019 Regular Session. In order to move meaningful legislation that makes public records

access easier for everyone, newspapers included, we need real-world examples from newspapers and more importantly, the public. Ask your readers to tell us if they have ever had trouble accessing records from the state, county or city government? What was

the reason for denying access? There is so much talk these days about transparency in government. What better way to build a case for a new open records law than to show where citizens have been denied. We need to know! Call or email Felicia with examples.

Here's a tip from the 2019 Media Summit

In the 1920's, a doctor from Columbia University released a study showing the body's natural metabolism drops each day around 10:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

He also discovered that if a person has something to eat or drink at 10, 2, and 4, the energy slump can be avoided.

Dr. Pepper challenged its advertising agency to develop a

campaign to suggest Dr. Pepper is the answer to the energy slump. The result was: Drink a bite to eat at 10, 2, and 4.

Promotions for Dr. Pepper centered on those numbers. For example, an ad in the Dothan Eagle on July 26, 1934 announced that on Saturday, the local movie theater would interrupt the film at 10 a.m.,

2 p.m. and 4 p.m. to serve complimentary bottles of Dr. Pepper.

Jim Morgan, a speaker at the 2019 Media Summit, suggested that newspapers adopt this philosophy when updating their websites. "In order to keep the information fresh, it should be updated at 10 a.m., 2 p.m., and 4 p.m. every day.



Memories from growing up in a newspaper

The former director of Student Media at the University of Alabama has started a blog about her adventures growing up as the daughter of a weekly newspaper publisher in Missouri. Many of

you may remember her as Kathy Clancy Lawrence. Now remarried and living in Texas, she is known as Kate McCarty. Her blog can be found at countrynewspaper.com.

She also started a Facebook page

where others who grew up in the newspaper business or even in rural America can share experiences. It can be found at Country Newspaper on Facebook.

If you have a memory to add, please send it to her.

Miller named publisher in Athens

Katherine Miller, general manager and advertising director of The News Courier in Athens, has been appointed publisher of the newspaper, effective immediately.

In her new role, Miller will continue to serve as group advertising director of The News-Courier and its three sister newspapers, The Cullman Times, The North Jef-



Katherine Miller

erson News in Gardendale and The St. Clair News-Aegis in Pell City.

"Katherine has performed at a high level in her role as general manager and advertising director at The News Courier," said Terry Connor, group publisher for CNHI. "I am happy to have someone with Katherine's ability, dedication and commitment

to community newspapers in this leadership position."

Miller was named general manager of The News Courier in 2013. Prior to that, she held several advertising positions at The Joplin (Missouri) Globe starting in 1997. "I'm excited about my new role and continuing to work with the outstanding News Courier team," Miller said. "Our commitment is to remain Athens' No. 1 information source in print and online while serving the needs of our readers and advertisers."

TN Valley acquires three newspapers

TN Valley Media, owned by the Shelton family in Decatur, has purchased three weeklies in north Alabama. They are The Franklin County Times in Russellville, the Hartselle Enquirer

and the Madison County Record. The Russellville paper was owned by Boone Newspapers and the Hartselle and Madison papers were owned by Carpenter Newsmedia.

Currently TN Valley Media

owns The Decatur Daily, the TimesDaily in Florence, the Courier Journal in Florence, Moulton Advertiser, The Redstone Rocket, Advertiser-Glean in Gunterville and TNValleyStuff.com.

People

Donald Campbell has been named the lead reporter for The Wetumpka Herald. Campbell, a native of Fort Payne, joined the Alexander City Outlook, the Herald's sister paper, in April 2017.

Campbell is a graduate of UAB with a bachelor's and master's degree in history, and also has a master's degree in journalism from the University of Alabama. He worked previously at The Southern Torch in Rainsville.

Robert Edmonds has joined the staff at the Opelika-Auburn News as advertising director. He is a native of Wyoming and served four years of active and four years inactive duty in the U.S. Air Force.

Edmonds worked at The Auburn Plainsman as a student at Auburn University. He worked most recently at the Montgomery Advertiser.

Brian Hamilton is the new editor at the Pickens County Herald. He is a graduate of the University of Alabama with a degree in mass communication. He also received a master's degree in mass communication from Texas Tech University.

Hamilton also has a master's degree in Criminal Justice from the University of North Alabama and a Master of Business Administration from Florida Institute of Technology.

He has taught communication and journalism at the University of West Alabama, Stillman College, Mississippi State University and Shelton State Community College.

Gabrielle Janson has joined the staff at The Alexander City Outlook as a staff writer. She has a degree in communications studies and philosophy from St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Ind. During college she wrote for The Notre Dame-Saint Mary's Observer.

Before joining The Outlook, she was a general assignment reporter at The LaGrange Daily News in LaGrange, Ga.

Bro Krift, executive editor of the Montgomery Advertiser, has been named state editor of the Deep South for Gannett. He will continue his duties at the Advertiser, and will also work with newsrooms at Gannett's Louisiana properties Lafayette, Shreveport,

Monroe, Alexandria and Opelousas.

Josh Frye has joined the staff at the Atmore News. He is a graduate of Escambia County High School and studied at the University of West Florida and Faulkner Community College.

He will be covering sports as well as historical feature stories and other news coverage.

Chloe Langston, Dianne Mathews, and Mark Rogers, have joined the staff at Greenville Newspapers.

Langston will be working as a classified marketing consultant. She is a graduate of Lurleen B. Wallace Community College and is attending Auburn University at Montgomery.

Mathews will be working as the new administrative office assistant. She is a Greenville native and most recently worked in the human resource department at L.V. Stabler Memorial Hospital.

Rogers is the new managing editor at the paper. He comes to Greenville from The Columbian-Progress in Columbia, Miss. He is a native of Kent, Ohio, and a graduate of Kent State University.

Obituaries

Michael D. Hand, 71, of LaFayette died Thursday, Feb. 14, 2019, at his residence.

The funeral was Saturday, Feb. 16, at 11 a.m. at LaFayette First Baptist Church with the Rev. Jimmy Allen and the Rev. Scott Ferguson officiating.

He was born March 2, 1947, in LaFayette to the late Bonnie and Pearl Hughes Hand. He was a graduate of LaFayette High School and received a degree in journalism from Samford University in Birmingham where he was a member of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity.

After graduating, he served as a member of the Army Reserves dur-

ing the Vietnam War era. After college, he returned to LaFayette to help his mother, Pearl Hand, publish the weekly newspaper, The LaFayette Sun, which remained in the family for 74 years.

After her death in 1989, he became editor and publisher until it was sold in December 2014.

Hand was a member of First Baptist Church in LaFayette and had served as a deacon. He was active in the Boy Scouts, earning the rank of Eagle Scout, Silver Beaver, and was honored as Chambers County's Distinguished Citizen of the Year in 2015 by the Boy Scouts of America. He served on the LaFayette Public

Building Authority and helped oversee the expansion of the Chambers County Courthouse in downtown LaFayette. Before his health declined, he was an avid hunter and fisherman. After retiring, he enjoyed golfing with friends.

He is survived by his wife, Charline Cumbee Hand; sons, Kevin Hand and Kenneth Hand (DeAnna); four grandsons and one granddaughter.

Memorials may be made to LaFayette First Baptist Church Building Fund, 201 S. LaFayette St., LaFayette, AL 36862. Condolences may be sent to jeffjonesfuneralhome.com. Jeff Jones Funeral Home, LaFayette.

Obituaries



James E. Jacobson, 84, of Birmingham, passed away Saturday, Jan. 19, 2019. He was born in Mobile and was a graduate of Murphy High School.

He married the former Diana Tremer, also of Mobile, in 1956.

Jacobson joined The Birmingham News in 1959 after earning bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism from The University of Alabama, where he was the editor of the student newspaper, The Crimson White. During his career as a reporter and editorial writer, he covered national political conventions, presidential campaigns, civil rights, and had overseas assignments including the Middle East and was a war correspondent in Vietnam. He was editorial page editor and then managing edi-

tor before becoming editor of The News in 1978, serving in that position until his retirement in 1997.

As editor, he was responsible for both news coverage and editorial commentary in Alabama's largest newspaper. Under his editorial guidance, The News received a Pulitzer Prize in 1991 for a series of editorials on the need for tax reform in Alabama.

Jacobson received numerous journalism awards, including induction into The University of Alabama's College of Communication and Information Sciences Communication Hall of Fame in 2011. He received the Alabama Press Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005.

Jacobson was active with Leadership Birmingham, Leadership Alabama, the Salvation Army, and the United Way of Central Alabama, and was past president of the Kiwanis Club of Birmingham. He served as president of the Alabama Press Association in 1989. He also served

as president of the APA Journalism Foundation, the Alabama Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and was a member of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Diana. He is survived by children James E. Jacobson, Jr. (Laura); Jennifer Jo Jacobson (Joey Richey); Jay Alan Jacobson (Jennifer S.); and Jayna P. Lamar (Jim Busby); siblings John, Philip, Paul, Richard, and Lois Ezelle, and Frances Babb; grandchildren Leigh Jacobson; John C. Jacobson (Miho); Sarah Schaefer (Andrew); William A. Jacobson (Rebecca); Hannah Campbell (Elijah); Jackson Lamar, and Franklin Lamar; and great-grandchildren Jennifer T. Jacobson; Addison C. Schaefer; John C. Jacobson Jr.; Sebastian M. Jacobson; and Elias E. Campbell. Memorial suggestions are Alzheimer's of Central Alabama (www.alzca.org) and Alabama Press Association Journalism Foundation (www.alabamapress.org).



John Wyatt Stevenson, 70, of Roanoke passed away Thursday, February 14, 2019, at his residence.

A Roanoke native, Mr. Stevenson

was born on August 8, 1948, the son of John B. and Gwen Wyatt Stevenson. He was a member of the First United Methodist Church of Roanoke and was a United States Army veteran. Mr. Stevenson held a Bachelor's degree from Auburn University and a Master's degree from Pepperdine University. He was the owner/editor and publisher of The Randolph Leader for the past 36 years and past editor of The Randolph Press (Wedowee).

He was a past president of the Alabama Press Association and the National Newspaper Association. Mr. Stevenson was the recipient of the Alabama Press Association's Lifetime Achievement Award and Auburn University's Distinguished Alabama Community Journalist Award. He was preceded in death by his parents and one son, J. B. Stevenson. Survivors include his wife, Jennifer Chandler Stevenson of Roanoke; one brother, David Stevenson (Patricia) of St. Petersburg, FL; mother-in-law, Kay Merrill of Birmingham, AL; father-in-law, Terry Chandler of Albertville, AL; sisters-in-law, Laurie Huddleston (Bill) of Winchester, TN; and Melinda Azar (Zack) of Montgomery, AL; brothers-in-law, Thomas L. Merrill, Jr. (Susan) of Birmingham, AL; and Win Chandler of

Albertville, AL; nieces, Heather Altork of Roanoke; Larissa Ryss of Lilburn, GA; Madelyn Snow (Andrew) of Colorado Springs, CO; Emily Kay Woods of Chicago, IL; Margeaux Woods of San Francisco, CA; and Ashley Hogle (Chris) of Guntersville, AL; nephews, Dan Stevenson of St. Petersburg, FL; Michael Woods of Denver, CO; Michael Azar and Allen Azar, both of Montgomery, AL; and Trey Merrill of Birmingham; beloved dog, Mercy, and many additional furry children.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Randolph County Animal Shelter at 104 Animal Shelter Road, Wedowee, AL 36278 or to the Alabama Press Association's J. B. Stevenson Scholarship c/o Felicia Mason APA Journalism Foundation, 3324 Independence Drive

New name. Same game.

THE APA BETTER NEWSPAPER
CONTEST IS NOW THE APA MEDIA
AWARDS.

Editorial Deadline: Closed
Advertising Deadline: March 22
Magazine Deadline: March 29



Help Wanted

Reporter-Tuskegee, AL

The Tuskegee News, published since 1865, is seeking a Reporter. Based in one of the most historic cities in the nation. It is the Macon County Seat and the site of Tuskegee University! It is also home to The Tuskegee Airmen and civil rights activists (birthplace of Rosa Parks); George Washington Carver, famous researcher of polio, peanuts and sweet potatoes. If you are interested in being a reporter in a city with such a rich heritage we have a full-time position available. We will also consider part-time applicants. Full-time position offers competitive compensation with benefits including, vacation, sick leave, and insurance. Please email your resume and a sample of your writing to Guy Rhodes, publisher of The Tuskegee News at guynrhodes@bellsouth.net.

Account Representative-Demopolis, AL

The Demopolis Times has an immediate opening for an advertising account representative to fill a sales position. This position will have a strong focus on prospecting and new business development while also providing outstanding service to existing customers.

Qualifying candidates will be goal-oriented and self-motivated with strong organization and communication skills. Previous sales or marketing experience is a plus, but we will train the right candidate. The advertising representative will be tasked with selling advertising for newspapers, magazines, promotional publications and digital platforms.

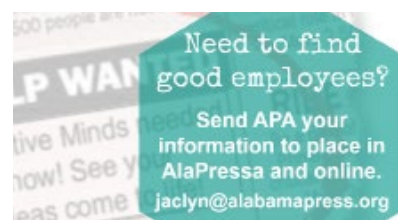
Demopolis is situated in the heart of Alabama's Black Belt Region and is centrally located between Tuscaloosa, Ala. and Meridian, Miss. The Demopolis Times is a consistent winner in the APA Better Newspaper Contest and its staff is involved in civic and community activities.

Compensation will include a base salary with commissions based on sales goals. We also offer health/dental/vision insurance, 401(k), paid life and disability insurance, retirement plan, and paid vacation and holidays. Qualified candidates are encouraged to email resumes to robert.blankenship@demopolistimes.com.

General Assignment Reporter-Selma, AL

The Selma Times-Journal, an award-winning daily newspaper in

west central Alabama, has an immediate opening for an general assignment reporter to report on a variety of beats including county/city government, cops/courts, features and more. The position offers an excellent opportunity for advancement within our parent company, Boone Newspapers, Inc. The successful candidate must be organized, have an optimistic personality, enjoy meeting new people and understand what makes a community newspaper important to its readers. They must also enjoy small town life, getting involved in the community they serve while practicing true community journalism. Interested candidates should send resume, cover letter, references, work samples and salary requirements to Will Whaley, managing editor, The Selma Times-Journal at will.whaley@selmatimesjournal.com.



Full load or half-load



Ad-libs
by John Foust

Greg used to help his uncle sell and deliver firewood on weekends. No doubt, that influenced one of his first phone calls when he started selling advertising for his local newspaper. His prospect asked, "Why are you asking so many questions?" and he said, "I'm just trying to figure out if you need a full load or a half-load."

Greg's sales manager told me it was one of the most honest things she had ever heard a salesperson say. "He was doing the right thing by asking questions to discover needs," She explained. "When the prospect wondered what was going on, Greg admitted that, yes, he was calling to talk about a possible ad campaign, but he couldn't recommend anything until he learned about the prospect's business."

"Although he no longer talks about full loads and half-loads, he still does a great job of learning about his prospects and how

they need to market their products," she said.

When you think about it, it's easy to see that firewood and advertising have a lot in common. Both serve specific purposes and both occupy measurable space. A full load of advertising is a big campaign splash with a sizable budget, while a half-load is something less than that.

Let's see where this firewood comparison leads:

1. What's in the truck? In other words, know your product. In order to help your advertisers decide between full loads, half-loads, or other options, it's important to know as much as possible about what you're selling. If your prospects know more about your newspaper's advertising products than you, you won't have much credibility.

2. What do they want? It's a waste of time to try to sell firewood to someone who doesn't have a fireplace or a woodstove. And it's just as wasteful to try to sell advertising to someone who doesn't need it.

Know your prospect. Not everyone needs everything that is being sold. That is one of the biggest lessons of selling.

3. Deliver to the right place.

At one time or another, everyone in the selling profession has made the mistake of talking to the wrong contact. While that person may be perfectly willing to spend time on the phone or in an appointment, he or she may not be in a position to make – or influence – buying decisions.

In order to find the right contact, consider saying something like, "In order to save time for you, I wonder if you can tell me who makes decisions about your company's advertising?" Then... "What is the best way to get in touch with that person?"

4. Tell the truth. Don't try to sell a full load to someone who needs a half-load. If they find out later that they bought the wrong thing, they'll feel burned. Not only will they stop advertising in your paper, they'll tell all their friends about it.

Like the old saying goes, "Honesty is the best policy." That goes for selling firewood or advertising or anything else.

*John Foust conducts training programs for newspaper advertising professionals.
E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com*

Newspapers need to explain "How We Work"



Into the Issues
by Al Cross

Newspapers cover almost every imaginable topic, but when it comes to understanding and explaining their own roles in society, many community newspapers fall short.

They keep doing business and journalism pretty much like they always did, with digital media as a sideline because they can't make much money at it. Their presence on social media is often desultory and uninspired, even though social me-

dia have become the dominant form of mass communication.

These newspapers are disengaging from their audiences – or perhaps we should say their former audiences and their potential audiences – at a time when they need to be more engaged than ever. There's a war on journalism in America, and it's not just being waged in Washington, D.C.

Today's media maelstrom has left much of the audience uncertain about what a newspaper is, or what it is supposed to be. Newspapers need to explain that clearly and consistently, through all available forms of media (more on those later).

At a time when Americans are

more dubious than ever about sources of information, newspapers remain the primary finders of fact. But for some reason they have been bashful about making that their brand, or even thinking of themselves as having a brand.

What is our brand? At last month's Ohio News Media Association convention, I said it can be built around three Rs: reliable, relevant information, delivered responsibly. The third R most needs explanation.

When I was first learning journalism and the news business, one newspaper I read regularly ran a standing box on its editorial page.

How we work continued on page 9

How we work

continued from page 8

"Daily News Platform" told readers what the paper stood for. It's been a long time since I saw such a device, but it's time to bring it back, in a different way.

If I were running a newspaper today, its home page would have a button labeled "How We Work." It would take readers to a page explaining the paper's purpose and the ways it tries to achieve it. Shorter versions of it would run in print every day, usually on the editorial page.

"How We Work" would start by explaining the different forms of information media, to help readers understand the different and special roles that newspapers play in our society, and the challenges they face. Here's the version I offered in Ohio:

This is a newspaper. It reports facts. To do that, we verify information, or we attribute it to someone else. That is called the discipline of verification, and it is the essence of a craft called journalism, which you find in news media.

There are two other types of media: social media, which have no discipline, much less verification; and strategic media, which try to sell you something: goods, services, ideas, politicians, causes, beliefs, etc.

Newspapers once relied on one form of strategic media, advertising, for most of their income. Today, social media get more of the ad money, so newspapers

must get more income from the only other reliable place they can get it: their readers, in the form of subscriptions or single-copy sales. As you might guess, we prefer subscribers, so we hope to earn your respect and loyalty.

How do we do that? By being honest and straightforward about our business.

That means we must separate fact from opinion, reserving our own views for the editorial page. Of course, our views have some influence over what news we choose to cover, so if you think we're not covering what should be covered, or have failed to separate fact from opinion, or make another mistake, we want you to tell us. You can do that privately, or publicly, in the form of a letter to the editor. If you raise an important issue that we think needs wider perspective, we may invite you to join us in a discussion on social media, and perhaps bring that discussion into the newspaper itself.

We want to hear from you. We are in the business of holding others accountable, so we must be accountable to you.

Accountability journalism is necessary if our democratic republic is to function the way the Founding Fathers intended. That's why they put the First Amendment in the Constitution. It gives us great freedom, but with that freedom comes a great responsibility. If you think we are not living up to that legacy, please tell us.

That's fewer than 350 words, about the length of a little-longer-than-usual letter to the editor in most papers. We need more letters

from the editor, not just statements of general principle, but explanations of how and why we do certain things. If we demand transparency from officials and institutions, we must practice it ourselves. And build our brand at the same time.

One good example came from Brian Hunt, publisher of the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, in a column he wrote in May 2017, titled "Community Journalism in the era of fake news." We excerpted it on The Rural Blog; you can read it at <https://bit.ly/2sQtB5k>. Hunt's best passage gave examples of the extreme without being judgmental:

"I've been challenged on why we include people of color in our newspaper. I've heard from readers who question why, when two-thirds of our region voted for Trump, the U-B would ever publish anything remotely critical of his presidency. I learn things in these conversations. Most notably, the people I speak with are not unaccomplished, not unintelligent, not uncaring. We know these people. You know these people. Fake news and the isolated intolerance that can feed it gets to us all."

After the column ran, Hunt said the paper got fewer calls, and fewer subscription stops, complaining about bias in the paper. Good journalism is good business, especially when you explain it.

Al Cross is a journalism professor at the University of Kentucky and director of its Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, which publishes The Rural Blog at <http://irjci.blogspot.com>.

APA IS ON THE MOVE!

New Address As of May 1, 2019:

Alabama Press Association

600 Vestavia Parkway, Suite 291

Vestavia, Alabama 35216

2019 APA Media Summit - February 8 - Montgomery, AL



John Archibald speaks with audience members during the morning editorial programming.



Dennis Palmer in a discussion with students from various Alabama colleges.



Gary Maitland seated with students from various Alabama colleges during the "Meet the Publisher" event.



Sales guru Jim Elsberry gives a sales presentation during the morning advertising program.



Will Whaley discusses social media journalism with students during the student meet and greet with APA newspaper leadership.



The 2019 Lifetime Achievement and Emerging Journalist Award Luncheon kicks off.

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David Stevenson accepts the 2019 Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of his brother, John W. Stevenson.



APA President Kenneth Boone makes remarks at the luncheon.



Journalism Foundation Past President, K.A. Turner addresses the luncheon attendees.



Newly elected APA Board President Horace Moore accepts the gavel from outgoing President Kenneth Boone.



2019 Emerging Journalist Ethan Van Sice and APA President Kenneth Boone.



The summit continued with a Open Records Act panel discussion, lead by (L to R) John Archibald, Brad English and Dennis Bailey.