

AlaPressa

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA PRESS ASSOCIATION

JULY 2023

Important Dates

Online Media Campus
Seminars

[Chat GPT Content
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1-2 p.m. August 3, 2023
Speaker: Ryan Dohrn

[The Power of Spec Ads](#)
1-2 p.m. August 10, 2023
Speaker: Laura Koch

Click [HERE](#) to register.

Whisenant buys Arab newspapers

Another APA Summer Convention in the
books

Football pass program ends due to low
participation

Summer intern learns valuable lessons at
The Decatur Daily

Jeremy Gulban says success is up to
communities

Don't sell your clients short

How Jim Lockwood weaves award-winning
journalism out of public notices

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(advertising bills)

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*(when you send dues
or convention fees)*



APA's New Address:

**Alabama Press Association
2180 Parkway Lake Drive
Hoover, AL 35244**

(old address was 600 Vestavia Parkway, Suite 219, Vestavia, AL 35216)



Alabama Press Association
Alabama Newspaper Advertising Service Inc.
2180 Parkway Lake Drive
Hoover, AL 35244
(205) 871-7737
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Whisenant buys Arab newspapers

Charles Whisenant and his wife, Amanda, purchased The Arab Tribune and the Brindlee Mountain Advertiser from Edwin Reed, who has been owner and publisher for more than 53 years.

The Tribune was founded in 1958 by Reed's uncle, Ralph Reed, who was tragically killed in a bus crash about six weeks after he started the paper.

A few weeks later, Edwin Reed's father, Ewell Reed (Ralph's brother), left a career as an FBI special agent in Virginia and returned to Marshall County to guide The Tribune through its tough, infant years, until Edwin Reed took over in 1970.

"I am extremely happy Charles has taken over, and I know he will initiate positive changes and new ideas that will benefit readers and advertisers in the Brindlee Mountain area," Reed said.

Whisenant, 55, has worked at The Tribune for 25 years, the last 10 as editor. He's a 1985 graduate of Arab High School. He went to work in the newspaper business in 1995 as a reporter, then editor of The North Jefferson News in Gardendale, before "coming home" to The Tribune in 1998.

"I sincerely appreciate Ed's confidence in me to carry on the legacy of The Tribune that has meant so much to his family, beginning with Ralph Reed and continuing with his father and himself," Whisenant said. "I will always be grateful to Ed for taking a chance on me 25 years ago and again 10 years ago when he named me editor of the paper."

He said he also very much appreciates the Reed family — Ed's wife, Catherine, his daughters Stephanie Yarbrough and Dr. Lezlie-Reed Johnson, and her husband, Marc, for their support in the sale of the newspaper.

"And I most certainly can't thank Amanda enough for her support in us purchasing the newspaper," Whisenant said. "Any success I have had or hope to have wouldn't have been possible without her."

"I also couldn't do this at all without the support and help of Donna Matuszak Hamby, The Tribune's office manager. (To be fair she also does classifieds, legal advertising, obituaries, people and event news, birthdays, anniversaries, military news and college news — and several

other jobs. She was sports editor for 29 years.)

"Donna has been here nearly 40 years and for 25 of those, she's put up with me," Whisenant joked. "But, I couldn't do half of what she does. She keeps this place running smoothly, and I know to just stay out of her way."

Whisenant said he's loved The Tribune since he was a boy living at Allens Crossroads, north of Arab.

"I especially remember, when I was a student at Arab Elementary School, running to the mailbox just before school started to get The Tribune's Back-to-School edition to find out who my teacher and classmates were going to be.

"Not many newspapers ran classroom assignments for an entire school system, but The Tribune did and still does (the July 19 edition this

year)," he continued.

Whisenant also said he remembers as a high school student, selling subscriptions to the newspaper as a fundraiser for Arab High School's FFA program, of which he was a member.

"Back then, we got to keep 50 cents of every subscription sold," he said. "I don't remember exactly how much I made, but it was more than enough to play video games for a few Fridays at Brand X convenience store and game room on Main Street. That was a big deal in the early to mid 1980s."

Whisenant said that while some changes will be made gradually, others won't change at all.

"Don't expect any major changes anytime soon and some of our readers' and advertisers' favorites will remain, such as the Back-to-School special section, Santa Letters from kids, Thanksgiving stories from kids, your favorite community columnists and more," Whisenant said.

The Tribune is now 66 years old, and Ralph Reed's dream continues thanks to its faithful readers and fine advertisers, along with some wonderful employees over the years.

The Tribune's growth and longevity obviously have been tied to the growth of Arab and the surrounding area.

"So, really, The Tribune's history over the last 66 years is the story of the people and events that have shaped this wonderful community," Ed Reed said.

Whisenant continued on next page



Charles Whisenant

Whisenant*continued from previous page*

In the editorial in the first issue of the paper in 1958, Ralph pledged that The Tribune would be dedicated to community service in Arab and to provide a newspaper that was “lively, reliable and factual.”

“The slogan under our masthead is ‘The Ledger of Community Progress,’” Ralph wrote. “A newspaper is like a historian, putting down in writing the happenings in the community, to be read at the time of publication by its subscribers

and then preserved in the files at the county courthouse for posterity.

“The files of The Arab Tribune will reflect the progress of Arab, the fastest growing little town in the state of Alabama, for we intend to be a booster – not a knocker.

“Our news stories will be factual, as accurate as we are able to make them, a mirror reflecting current events, but not distorted like the mirrors in a fun house at a carnival,” Ralph continued. “Any opinion of the editor will be expressed in the editorial column. If you do not agree with us, we will be most happy to print

your opinions, if you will just write us.”

That definitely won’t change, Whisenant said.

“While you can never tell if a story on social media is true or a scam, you can rest assured that any story in The Tribune will be factual,” he said.

Ed Reed said that he is thankful that, for the most part, The Tribune has lived up to Ralph’s vision of what a community newspaper should be.

“And I will do my very best to make sure The Tribune continues to be what a community newspaper should be,” Whisenant said.

“Informative and impressive” summer convention in the books

Delegates at the APA Summer Convention last month gave high marks to both the programs and the social events of the convention.

Those joining the dolphin cruise on Thursday evening on the Fun Boat were treated to a show by the resident dolphins in Perdido Bay. It was a great way to kick off the weekend.

Friday programs began with Richard Brown sharing his ideas for the “6 Sales Tactics You Need in 2023.” He encouraged delegates to put the advertiser in the drivers’ seat and think of yourself as a civil servant – dedicated to serving others.

Also, on Friday afternoon, Marianne Grogan from Coda Ventures shared the results of a recent market study in Alabama that showed that more than 3.2 million, or 81% of Alabama adults read print or digital

newspapers every month.

Another strong statistic is that more than 8 out of 10 or 82% of Alabamians believe that newspaper advertising is important.

Saturday morning began with a breakfast program featuring Jeremy Gulban from CherryRoad Media. Gulban described what his company of 77 newspapers in 17 states is doing to engage members of the community in their reporting efforts. (see related story by Al Cross in Columns)

The second Saturday program again featured Richard Brown who challenged delegates to recognize how they need to change as the world changes. For example, AI can be used to write emails, etc. It is a tool to help us be more efficient, not the boogie man.

Always a favorite with members, Kevin Slimp talked with delegates about creating effective ads. Later at the luncheon, Slimp gave his outlook on the future of newspapers: newspapers are not dead or dying. There is a positive future ahead for this industry.

Saturday evening was the presentation of the 2023 APA Media Awards. First place winners from 32 categories were recognized. Congratulations to all winners!

The Winners tab, a publication of all of the winners in the contest, is available online [HERE](#).

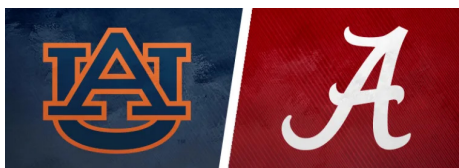
Many thanks to Katelyn Maten, who is interning at the Choctaw Sun-Advocate in Gilbertown, for being the APA photographer for the weekend. Please notice our preview picture page included on the next page and all photos [HERE](#).

Football pass program ends due to low participation

After more than 35 years, APA will no longer be coordinating football passes to Alabama and Auburn games for non-daily newspapers.

The University of Alabama informed APA last year that it would no longer make press box and sideline passes available to APA members. Auburn University continued to offer the passes but only to non-conference games and a few select conference games.

Auburn informed APA recently that



there was so little interest last season, they would not be offering any passes in the future.

“For as long as I have been here, this has been a member service APA

has provided our non-daily papers,” APA Executive Director Felicia Mason said. “We used to have a lottery for the game assignments each year and members would be screaming if they didn’t get the games they wanted.”

Mason said now it is hard to get people to go at all. “Our papers are stretched thin and don’t have people to send to cover the games.”

Contact jaclyn@alabamapress.org to be added to Auburn’s media portal.

Summer intern learns valuable lessons at The Decatur Daily

Editor’s note: Katie Steele, a student at University of Alabama at Birmingham, participated in the APA Journalism Foundation Summer Internship Program with The Decatur Daily.

This summer, I worked as an intern at The Decatur Daily newspaper. I was a

general assignment reporter and worked on a variety of stories that each helped to grow my experience.

I learned many skills during my time at The Daily. When I started in May, I had little experience writing stories and no experience working in a newsroom.

The first story I did was about a dragon boat racing event. I was eased into the interviewing process and introduced to people that were from Decatur. I am a University of Alabama at Birmingham student and do not live in Decatur, so I

summer continued on page 5

APA Summer Convention 2023



For more summer convention pictures visit the APA website [HERE!](#)

summer
continued from page 3

appreciated that my editor introduced me to so many people.

Looking back to my first story, I have made a lot of progress in my reporting. I was not exactly sure how to organize or write an article, so my editor made some changes and explained to me why and what he changed, which helped me progress when working on my next story.

The first story where I felt significant improvement was on a new, modern bank that opened downtown. I was able to find people to talk to and went to random places to try and get the public's opinion on the bank.

The bank story gave me more confidence in approaching people for interviews, which prepared me for stories about a cruise line that began stopping in Decatur this summer. I did two stories on the matter.

The first one was the most read story on the website for a while. One of my friends, who does not live in Decatur, said she was on Facebook and saw the story when she was just scrolling through her feed. This story gave me the realization that people are enjoying my articles and sharing them.

The second story on the cruise line involved me approaching tourists and asking what they think of the town, which the bank story prepared me for.

The story that I spent the most time and effort on was a story about a historic home moving from Greenbrier to Decatur. In this story, I felt like I uncovered lots of new information about the ordeal that people were interested in knowing.

Towards the end of my internship, I started to do deeper stories. In my second to last week, I did a story on two houses that got struck by lightning, and a follow-up on a murder case from January. The lightning story was my favorite story I wrote in my

time at The Daily.

These two stories taught me how to talk to people going through hardships in a sensitive way while still being able to get information for the story. I talked to the families who lived at the homes where lightning struck, and they shared with me the experience of being inside of the house when it happened.

Interviewing the father of a 27-year-old murder victim was another learning curve. I made sure he was comfortable talking to me and made sure he was okay with the questions I was asking.

Two months and about 30 stories since the start of the internship, and I have learned many valuable lessons and skills that I can use in my future career. I am very thankful to everyone at The Decatur Daily for giving me a strong foundation to build on. I also appreciate the Alabama Press Association for giving me the opportunity to work with them.

How Jim Lockwood weaves award-winning journalism out of public notices

*From Public Notice Resource Center
Learning from the master: How
Jim Lockwood weaves award-winning
journalism out of public notices*



Jim Lockwood

Public notice journalism is an art, according to Jim Lockwood, award-winning city government reporter for the Scranton Times-Tribune. But he promises that with practice, any reporter can become an expert in ferreting out important news articles from public notice advertising and keep readers in the know.

Lockwood's three Rs of public notice journalism:

Read them. They are right under your nose, in your own newspaper, and there is really no excuse not to read them.

Report on them. You will see something in public notices that will spark your curiosity. When that happens, dig a little deeper and report on what you find.

Reference them. Don't be afraid to

attribute information in your article to the public notice you are reporting on. Just treat it like any other source and write, "according to a public notice published in this newspaper." This type of attribution adds transparency to your reporting and helps readers understand the importance of publishing notices in newspapers.

Be an early bird: Lockwood advises daily newspaper reporters to read their paper's public notices first thing in the morning. Sometimes they announce meetings, hearings and other events and initiatives taking place that same day. "Don't wait until 5 p.m. or you might miss something important," he said. Weekly newspaper reporters shouldn't dally either.

Penetrate the legalese: Often lawyers write public notices using legal terms, and they are hard for readers to comprehend. "The more you read them, the better you'll get at understanding them," Lockwood says. "You'll learn the patterns and you will be able to get to the point quicker." Sometimes the "nut graph" that tells you what the notice is really about will be the third line from the bottom. "They always bury the lede."

Exercise your curiosity: Sometimes getting good public notice stories comes from old-fashioned shoe leather reporting. Lockwood recalls seeing a notice advertising a hearing on condemned and abandoned property, which consisted of

two boats and a trailer. It listed the date and time for the sale at the county courthouse and nothing else. His curiosity piqued, he dug a little deeper and discovered the notice was a poorly worded announcement that someone had a tax lien and had been required to liquidate their boat and trailer. "This is an example of bare bones info in some notices, giving no hint of why or who ran this," he says. While this public notice did not result in a story, Lockwood found it worth digging into.

Where to look for public notices. Your own newspaper is a good source for public notice advertising, but if your paper is not the newspaper of record in your town or if other newspapers in your city or county run notices, then turn to them. Often public notices are required to be posted at the courthouse or town hall and you can read them there as well. Another resource is the statewide public notice website operated by your state newspaper association.

"When you read public notices, ask yourself 'what is going on here? What is the real story?'" Lockwood says. "Keep pulling away layers, like an onion, and keep those layers stored away for reference."

Some notices seem insignificant, but one thing might lead to another until you have an important story that can be spun off into columns, editorials and even award-winning journalism packages.

Obituaries

Camille Maxwell Elebash



Camille Maxwell Elebash, age 98, died peacefully at Hospice of West of Alabama on Thursday, June 22, 2023. A memorial service was held at Christ Episcopal Church in

Tuscaloosa, Alabama on Monday, June 26, 2023.

She is survived by her four children, Camille Elebash-Hill, Karl Elebash, III (Deborah), Maxwell Elebash (Tammy) and Searcy Elebash (Jennifer); eight grandchildren, Inge Hill (Sarah Simchowitz), Camille Hill-Prewitt (Ryan), Karl Elebash, IV (Morgan Hicks), Kathleen Elebash (Ryan Lutz), Augusta Elebash, Vivian Elebash and Wiley Elebash; and four great-grandchildren, Aubrey Prewitt, Searcy Prewitt, Camille Hill and Stella Hill. She is also survived by her beloved nephews, Fred Thomas, Charles Thomas and Joe Thomas.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Frederick Richard Maxwell, Jr. and Kathleen Searcy Maxwell; her husband, Karl Savary Elebash, Jr.; her sister, Freda Maxwell Thomas; her son, George Searcy Elebash; her son-in-law, William Inge Hill, Jr.; and grandson, Searcy Anderson Elebash.

Mrs. Elebash never met a stranger and was known to always have an open door - especially during football season for "BBB" - beer, barbeque, and bathrooms. She loved to keep her social card full from her Monday Lunch Bunch to her regular table at Evangeline's on Friday nights. A founding member of the LaRocca Rockettes dance troupe, they stole the show at each Mardi Gras Club party. She loved to work a crowd, could hold down a dance floor, and is the proof that bourbon and water and chocolate may be the elixir of life.

Mrs. Elebash was born in Tuscaloosa on born March 31, 1925, and graduated from Tuscaloosa High School in 1942.

She received her Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from The University of Alabama in 1946 and in 1958 she earned a Master's in Journalism from the University. She cut her teeth in journalism as a member of The Crimson White during WWII.

During her 44-year professional career she held a wide variety of journalism jobs. In 1946 she was employed by The Tuscaloosa News as a reporter, feature writer and women's page editor. In 1948 she moved to New York and began working for The New York Times. First, as a reporter in the Garden Department, then as an assistant in the Sunday Book Review department and finally as assistant Food Editor. She remained there until 1951. She returned to Tuscaloosa and began working for The University of Alabama Alumni Magazine in 1953, eventually becoming the editor. In 1957, she and her husband Karl co-founded The Graphic, a weekly newspaper in Tuscaloosa they ran until 1977.

In 1975 she began working full time at the University of Alabama as a Professor in the College of Communication, Department of Advertising and Public Relations. She was instrumental in the organization of the department in its first year of existence. During her tenure she directed internships and masters theses, taught advertising in the Capstone Summer Honors Program and created a Political Communications course. Her innovative curriculum included developing an advertising sales course which included hands on experience selling ads for The Crimson White.

Mrs. Elebash went on to retire from the University in 1990 but continued to stay very active in the community. She lent her talents to several organizations including the Heritage Week of the Preservation Society, United Way, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, March of Dimes, Salvation Army, Girl Scouts, American Red Cross, Mental

Health Association, and the Jemison-Van de Graff mansion.

She was an active member of Colonial Dames and several other social clubs including, Sybarites, The Gaieties, The Mardi Gras Club, Carousel, Blue Stocking, Kettledrum, Chloris Club, Muses, Up to Date, Tuesday Night Supper Club, and Thursday Night Supper Club - never missing an opportunity to gather with friends.

Additionally, Mrs. Elebash served on the Bryce Hospital Historical Preservation Committee. The committee was instrumental in preserving the hospital during the negotiations with the University of Alabama to purchase the building.

Throughout her life, Mrs. Elebash received numerous honors and awards, including The University of Alabama National Alumni Association Outstanding Commitment to Teaching; a silver medal from the American Advertising Federation; the Austin Kiplinger fellowship; a fellowship by Leo Burnett Advertising Agency; The Betsy Plank Outstanding Achievement award; Distinguished Alumni Award from the National Alumni Association. Additionally, in 2015, Mrs. Elebash was inducted into The University of Alabama College of Communication and Information Sciences Hall of Fame.

The family wishes to acknowledge the excellent care provided over the last several years by Audrey Harris, Alma Tutwiler and Janice Davis. Along with the care provided during her final days by Carolyn, Tammy, Rosie, Sakeena and Hospice of West Alabama.

Honorary Pallbearers included Fred Thomas, Charles Thomas, Joe Thomas, Jimmy Sledge, Sydney Cook, Lee Busby, Frank Fitts and Lewis Fitts.

Memorial contributions may be made to Hospice of West Alabama (3851 Loop Rd., Tuscaloosa, AL 35404), Christ Episcopal Church (605 Lurleen B. Wallace N. Blvd., Tuscaloosa, AL 35401) or the Camille Elebash Endowed Scholarship at the University of Alabama.

Hanchey "Mickey" Logue Jr.



Auburn University Journalism professor Hanchey "Mickey" Logue Jr. passed away at his home in Auburn on June 3, 2023, at the age of 92.

Born in Bay Minette, Logue earned

his undergraduate and graduate degrees from Auburn University. Upon graduation he began his career in news, first with the Montgomery Advertiser and then the Atlanta Constitution. He later worked for The Birmingham News where he covered the civil rights movement.

He joined Auburn's faculty in 1965

where he served as a journalism professor for 30 years as well as a beloved faculty adviser to The Plainsman. Logue is fondly remembered as a conscientious and devoted teacher who made an indelible impact on the lives of his students.

A memorial service was held on Saturday, June 10.

Columns

Jeremy Gulban says success is up to communities



by Al Cross

This article is republished from The Rural Blog, which is published by the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky.

The owner of dozens of “ghost newspapers” bought from Gannett Co. says he is trying to revive them by returning editorial decision-making to local people while still taking advantage of the economies of scale that have led to consolidation of newspaper ownership. But he says his new chain’s fate is not in its own hands.

“The success or failure of these rural newspapers is on the local people,” CherryRoad Media CEO Jeremy Gulban said Friday, July 7, 2023, at the National Summit on Journalism in Rural America, sponsored by the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, publisher of The Rural Blog. His remark fit the Summit’s research question: “How do rural communities sustain local journalism that supports democracy?”

One example of a community sustaining rural journalism was the first paper that Gulban started, the Rainy Lake Gazette in International Falls, Minnesota, where the paper had closed, and the Chamber of Commerce reached out to him because he had recently bought his first paper in Grand Marais, also in northern Minnesota.

“They got a whole bunch of different stakeholders in town, and we all met, and it was really kind of an amazing meeting for me, because I had never seen that kind of enthusiasm, that kind of spirit, to solve a problem,” Gulban said. Three weeks later, they had a paper. “People really embraced it,” he said. “We quickly got to more subscribers than, you know, the old paper had.”

That brought the information-technology entrepreneur to the attention of the nation’s biggest newspaper company, which is trying to unload small papers that add little, if anything, to its bottom line.

“Gannett was looking for an organization that was strong enough technically to be able to do these migrations that would have to happen, and probably blissfully ignorant enough to take on this challenge of selling their worst papers, basically. So we took the leap.”

Now his company, less than three years old, has 77 papers in 17 states, more than 50 of them former Gannett papers, and many of them “ghost newspapers,” he said. [The term ghost newspaper refers to papers that do not have enough staff to provide a basic level of local news coverage. These publications have diminished to the point that they are “ghosts” of their former selves. Ed.]

Making the papers substantial and sustainable began with returning control to local people.

“When we took over, the editors would say, ‘We send in a few articles, and we don’t see the paper until it winds up coming to the office after it’s printed.’ I think the biggest thing that happened is they eliminated all the local publishers, so there is no one you can call to talk about the paper. There’s literally no one. Everything flows up in these vertical silos, which leads to a lack of integration, a lack of working together. And, as you all know, you can’t have your salespeople off doing one thing and editorial people doing another. There’s got to be that collaboration which, you know, really doesn’t exist. If people want to place an ad. They’ll call an 800 number, and they’ll go online and do it.

Gulban continued on next page

Don’t sell your clients short

Ad-libs
by John Foust

Gene told me about an experience he had when he was fundraising for the Boy Scouts. “I was young and completely sold on the value of scouting because some years earlier I had earned the designations of Eagle Scout and Order of the Arrow,” he said. “My boss asked me to visit a Mr. Jones, who had been a big contributor to scouting for a long time. I knocked on his door, and he welcomed me with a big smile. When we sat down in his living room, I thanked him for his support and asked if he would like to make a generous contribution of \$2,500 for that year. He enthusiastically agreed, pulled out his checkbook and wrote a check.

“When I got back to the office and proudly showed the check to my boss, he patted me on the back and said, ‘Gene, Mr. Jones is such a loyal supporter that he would have written a check for just about any amount you suggested, even more

than \$2,500.’”

“That was in the days before computer spreadsheets and easy access to previous years’ records,” Gene explained. “But I still felt responsible for not doing some advance research. My boss never told me what happened next, but I wouldn’t be surprised if he asked Mr. Jones to increase his contribution. It was an important lesson.”

Gene’s story applies to anyone in sales. Just about all of us have undersold our products and services at times. When you’re upselling, here are some points to keep in mind:

1. Research. As soon as his boss told him about the missed opportunity, Gene realized that he should have done some homework. In today’s world, we have lots of research tools, including in-house records on years of advertisers’ budgets and expenditures, spreadsheets, online searches of company histories and growth plans, and notes from others in your advertising department.

2. Build up to the ask. After you’ve done your research and arrived at a fair and reasonable ask – whether it’s a long-

term marketing proposal or a single ad in a special section – put some thought into how you’re going to present the idea. After all, you know it’s more than your client has spent on similar things in the past.

In your presentation, begin with sincere thanks for the client’s business in the past. Then take a minute or two to describe the specific benefits of looking at a new approach to their marketing. Next, compare the benefits of the old way to the new way.

3. Reassure. Your recommendations may be a stretch for your client. As a result, it’s important to reassure them that you – and your newspaper, which has years of experience – are confident in the plan you are presenting.

4. Be flexible. Be sure to tell them you will be happy to work with them to adjust the plan once it is underway. After all, the captain of a ship sailing across the ocean continually needs to tweak the course as it goes.

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

Columns

Gulban

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And we all know in small towns that won't happen."

The downward spiral of news, ads and circulation has left ghost papers with two kinds of subscribers and regular single-copy buyers, Gulban said: "People who just like the ritual of getting the paper and really don't care what's in it ... and people who hold a position in town where they feel like they need to get the paper. ... The people who were truly looking for news had just given up and kind of moved on."

That caused most retail advertising to vanish, and "dependence on legal [ads] and obituaries," Gulban said. "When we looked at these financials, the revenue from obits, legal and classified, was nearly double the display advertising in a lot of cases, you know, which is totally upside down. ... So really, what you have is you got a ghost newspaper, right? It really has no relevance in the community. And you know that's a vicious cycle, right? The less relevant it is. So. This is kind of the cycle that we found most of these papers to be in."

In addition to returning editorial control, "We tried to take out all of the regional or national content that was being put in there primarily as filler," Gulban said. "We still have some national content in some of the more-than-once-a-week frequencies. But anything weekly really has nothing but local content in it. We invested more in editorial positions. ... We've actually been able to find someone in every one of those markets, which has not been easy."

On the business side, "We've really tried to make sure we have a local ad rep in every market, with some success," he said.

"That's not an easy position to hire for, particularly if you've got a tough product that you're trying to sell into. So we've had a hard time getting people. ... Our biggest source of talent, believe it or not, is just people who used to work at the paper, and see that it's improved and want to come back." As staffs are rebuilt, Gulban said, "some people are going to step up and be leaders in this. And some people aren't. And so, there's a direct correlation between the leadership ability of the local usually editor, sometimes the salesperson."

But local has its limits. Local ad and page designers are "a luxury that we can't afford," Gulban said. "And we've built our

own circulation platform. That's entirely web-based so that we can have people in different locations serve circulation needs across markets." All printing is outsourced, but he said the company might build a plant because so many are closing: "We do believe that a printed product has to be part of the long-term solution" to the problems of local papers.

Just east of Stephenville on US 67 south of Fort Worth, Texas, the Glen Rose Reporter serves a town of 900 people with 320 print subscribers, "which was under 200 when we took over, and 108 digital subscribers, which was zero [before the purchase] because there was no payroll,"

Gulban said.

"This paper was absolutely horrible. It had literally nothing in it. When we took over, two really dedicated freelancers stepped up and said, 'We will make this paper be successful,' and so they produce all the content between the two of them. They take it upon themselves to go around town, try to get people to advertise, try to drive additional subscribers.

This is so much better of a paper than it was a year ago,

and the results show. And while those numbers are small, in percentage-increase terms, they're really huge. Truthfully, if we didn't take this paper over, it wouldn't be



Jeremy Gulban

"I believe strongly in distributed ownership of the news, because I don't think the country is founded on the idea that three or four groups or people would control all the information. The vision was thousands of individual people controlling the flow of information."

there anymore, because the markets, too small for anybody to really be interested in doing anything here."

One way to define a ghost newspaper is that it has no local office open to the public, or is open only a few hours a week: "That just leads to no community goodwill efforts, no sponsoring events, no joining the Rotary Club, none of that," Gulban said. "That's so essential in a small-town newspaper."

But not so essential that he has offices in some small markets. In Stephenville, Texas, rent was too high, so "we're trying to pioneer like a shared office, you know, with a Chamber of Commerce, maybe even a local restaurant, you know, we're open for lunch. Three days a week we go in there, the editor's there, the circulation person's there, you can go meet with them. We're trying to be as creative as possible just to keep that physical real estate cost down."

The Google listing for the Stephenville Empire-Tribune says it's "temporarily closed."

Gulban's other example was the Hamburg Reporter, in Iowa's southeast corner. Fremont County "had a catastrophic flood in 2019 and basically half the town's population left, so the population is now 890. We have 132 print subscribers and two digital, but we just put the payroll up two weeks ago," Gulban said. But its ad revenue averages \$9,200 a month, and "this is the best revenue per population of anything in our whole organization."

The paper's mothership is the Nebraska City News-Press, across the Missouri River; the one person "who was basically doing everything" died last month, "so we have to figure out how to handle that. But the model here still holds. We have one person who is about town, knows everybody, is able to do a lot of different things," Gulban said.

"Our vision, which is a little bit out there, is: If you want to advertise in Hamburg, Iowa, we're the place you should be doing it through, not through Facebook, not through any other technical solution. Because we know Hamburg, Iowa. We want to leverage our local staffs and their credibility to drive revenue in this new digital world."

And America's newest newspaper-chain owner had one broad thing to say about consolidation of newspaper ownership: "I believe strongly in distributed ownership of the news, because I don't think the country is founded on the idea that three or four groups or people would control all the information. The vision was thousands of individual people controlling the flow of information."

Columns

Sharing the Good News

Everywhere I turn I see healthy, growing newspapers

By Kevin Slimp

As I listen to the holiday fireworks outside my window, my thoughts revolve around the newspaper colleagues I've met over the past few weeks and the lessons I've learned. Having finished several major redesign projects in June, I've recently traveled to speak at several newspaper conventions and visit some newspapers on-site.

In Alabama, I spoke about my vision for newspapers. I told stories of things I've seen in the past that had both negative and positive effects on our industry. I shared about newspapers that are growing, as well as newspaper colleagues who are starting new papers across the U.S. Following my presentation, I visited with several publishers individually to discuss their papers. My enthusiasm about the state of our industry was once again renewed while visiting with Tommy and Dee Ann Campbell.

Just three years ago, Tommy left his publisher's position in Tennessee after he and Dee Ann purchased the Linden, Alabama, newspaper. The circulation had fallen

to 133. While Dee Ann continued to serve as publisher of the newspaper in Gilbertown, Alabama, Tommy took over as publisher of the Linden newspaper, newly named "The Leader." Today, The Leader has more than 1,500 subscribers.



Joey Young answers questions during the Kansas Press Association Convention about new ventures his newspapers have begun over the past year.

In Kansas, I was able to visit with my friend Joey Young. I've written about Joey and the success he, Lindsey Young, and their team have enjoyed several times in previous columns. While in Wichita, I sat in while Teri Finneman interviewed Joey and Lindsey about new things they've initiated over the past year at their newspapers.

Once, several years ago, Joey asked me why I was working so hard to make him famous. I explained

that I wasn't doing anything to make him famous. I just liked telling my newspaper friends about this young man in his late 20s and the success he and his wife had found beginning new newspapers in Kansas. A few years have passed, and I still beam with pride when I see Joey and Lindsey speaking in front of audiences at newspaper conventions. Joey didn't need me to make him famous. The work he and Lindsey were doing spoke for itself.

If you are a regular reader of my column, you've heard me mention Dale Gentry and his staff at the Jefferson City (Tennessee) Standard Banner several times. Dale and his team continue to make improvements at their ever-growing newspaper, discovering new ways to meet the demands of their readers. I love the newspapers Dale's staff publishes for each school in the area. Stories written by the students are featured in these papers, printed on broadsheets, distributed to the schools, and inserted into The Standard Banner. Is it any wonder that after 96 years, The Standard Banner continues to grow?



Jill Friesz' latest renewal project is the Billings County (North Dakota) Pioneer.

Having just finished several months of work with Dale's staff, we'll soon be focusing on creating a new publication. Like other growing newspapers, The Standard Banner has learned that cutting to grow doesn't work. Investing in future growth does.

While preparing to speak in Alabama, I contacted North Dakota publisher Jill Friesz to ask how things were going with her ever-growing group of community papers in North Dakota. It seems that Jill has been quite successful at creating new papers – or reviving former papers – in communities where newspapers have been closed. I was thrilled to hear things were going great at her papers, not just because that allowed me to include her example in my Alabama keynote. I was also excited to hear that Jill has recently revived another community

paper in the state.

I plan to take some time to relax, maybe two or three days, before jumping into several redesigns in July and August. I'll also visit on-site with a few newspapers from Knoxville to Chicago. I may sound like a broken record, but I don't make this stuff up. I run into healthy, growing community papers everywhere I look and wherever I go. That's one reason I love working with newspapers so much.



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Kevin Slimp is a popular consultant, advisor and trainer in the newspaper industry. From 1997-2018, Kevin directed The Newspaper Institute of The University of Tennessee. He currently serves as CEO of Market Square Publishing and Chief Guru at NewspaperAcademy.com.

People

Elizabeth (Beth) Law has been named managing editor of the Jackson County Sentinel.

Law joined the Sentinel in 2009 as a graphic designer after discovering her passion for art and design while at Auburn University. She has earned several first place awards from the APA's Alabama Media Awards in the Layout and Design category.

She went on to become the editor of Jackson magazine in 2017, bringing home the Alabama Press Association award for Magazine of the Year in 2020 along with a first place award in the best culinary feature category.

Recently Jackson won first place for best themed issue for "The Wedding Issue" in 2022, among second and third place awards in other categories.

"Print design opened my mind to other creative media outlets such as writing and photography," Law said. "I have enjoyed being the magazine editor for the past six years, and I am excited and honored to grow my role at the Sentinel."

Law is a native of Jackson County. She and her husband Chris have one daughter, Eevie.

Help Wanted

Managing Editor- Birmingham, AL

The Birmingham Business Journal is looking for a Managing Editor to help lead and grow our newsroom. This person is charged with guiding the constant programming efforts of the content team, and as such, must possess a solid news sense, an ability to make snap judgments about the proper treatment of stories, and a high level of confidence in orchestrating the many simultaneous actions of the editorial team members.

While the ME oversees and ensures the smooth flow of content from conception to publishing on all platforms, the ideal candidate is particularly adept at and has a particular passion for digital excellence.

As the newsroom's most hands-on manager and coach of reporters, the ME brings ideas, inspiration, and guidance to the staff, and actively directs the deployment of resources online, on mobile, in email, print and on social.

For more information about this position, [Click Here](#).

Editor- Savannah, GA

Long established print publication in historic Savannah, GA is looking for a digitally savvy editorial leader to help it transition into an essential digital local news platform that can serve as a model for other media properties.

We need someone who:

- Is proactive in developing strategies to grow audience and readership
- Understands the nuances of digital platforms and social media
- Is a proven reporter and editor, who also can help other reporters improve their stories
- Can oversee the development of in-depth investigative and analytical pieces
- Can breathe new life into traditional local news beat coverage
- Can comfortably represent the organization within the community and build strong relationships
- Understands the realities of a building a

successful business in the modern media landscape

We are convinced that a community journalism approach to hyperlocal digital news coverage is the future and need a news leader to join our effort as we re-vamp our existing media company into a blending of sound journalism and new technology.

If you are that person, send resume, salary expectation to erica@connect-savannah.com.

Newspaper Reporter/Writer- Moulton, AL

The Moulton Advertiser has an immediate opening for a full time news reporter staff writer. This position will cover general news assignments, local meetings, breaking news, law enforcement/court reports and special events. Will also develop web content and some page design/layout. Some photography

is required. Must be able to work on deadlines, have a degree and experience in Journalism, English, or Creative Writing.

This position also requires a valid driver's license, clean driving record, reliable transportation, and proof of insurance

The Moulton Advertiser offers a comprehensive benefits package including medical and dental coverage, paid vacation and holidays, and a 401K pension plan.

Qualified applicants should apply by mail: P. O. Box 517, Moulton, AL 35650
Or Email: teresa@moultonadvertiser.com

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