

# grassroots editor



*A journal  
for newspeople*

**Published by the  
International Society  
of Weekly Newspaper Editors**

## 2005 Golden Quill & Golden Dozen Awards



Editorial skills and courage exemplified by winners  
of the ISWNE contest

**and the**

## **The 30th Annual Gene Cervi Award**

**volume 46, no. 2 • summer 2005**

# 2005 Golden Quill contest and Eugene Cervi Award

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In the 45-year history of the Golden Quill competition, only three individuals have won the award twice: Robert Estabrook in 1973 and 1980, William F. Schanen III in 1985 and 2001, and Jeff McMahon in 1999 and 2000.

Make that four people. Bill Lueders, news editor of the *Isthmus* in Madison, Wis., is the 2005 Golden Quill winner. Lueders also won the award in 1990. Additionally, he claimed Golden Dozen awards in 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1996, 1998, and 1999.

Clarence Burley, editor and publisher of the *Menlo Park (Calif.) Recorder*, established the Golden Quill award in 1960 as ISWNE president. His goal was to recognize "good editorial writing in the weeklies...not necessarily to select the best editorial of the year, but simply to recognize a good piece of writing...something turned out under pressure of a deadline...in the heat of indignation or inspiration...or simply an idea the writer had to get off his chest."

Frank Wood's 20-year epic battle with Gannett was often regarded within the newspaper industry as David against Goliath. Wood, the recipient of the 2005 Eugene Cervi Award, finally ended the fight last summer, selling his papers to the nation's largest newspaper chain.

Frank embodies all that Gene Cervi represented: personal courage, a bulldog tenacity, and someone who fought the good fight.

ISWNE is dedicated to encouraging and promoting high standards of editorial writing and to facilitating the exchange of ideas. These awards, we believe, serve those purposes.

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# Golden Quill Winners

1961-2005

- 1961 Hal De Cell**  
*Deer Creek Pilot, Rolling Fork, Miss.*
- 1962 Don Pease**  
*Oberlin (Ohio) News Tribune*
- 1963 Hazel Brannon Smith**  
*Lexington (Miss.) Advertiser*
- 1964 Mrs. R.M.B. Hicks**  
*Dallas (Pa.) Post*
- 1965 Robert E. Fisher**  
*Crossett (Ark.) News Observer*
- 1966 Owen J. McNamara**  
*Brookline (Mass.) Chronicle-Citizen*
- 1967 Alvin J. Remmenga**  
*Cloverdale (Calif.) Reveille*
- 1968 Henry H. Null IV**  
*The Abington Journal, Clarks Summit, Pa.*
- 1969 Dan Hicks Jr.**  
*Monroe County Democrat, Madisonville, Tenn.*
- 1970 Richard Taylor**  
*Kennett News & Advertiser,  
Kennett Square, Pa.*
- 1971 Edward DeCourcy**  
*Newport (N.H.) Argus Champion*
- 1972 C. Peter Jorgenson**  
*The Advocate, Arlington, Mass.*
- 1973 Robert Estabrook**  
*Lakeville (Conn.) Journal*
- 1974 Phil McLaughlin**  
*The Miami Republican, Paola, Kan.*
- 1975 Betsy Cox**  
*The Madison County Newsweek,  
Richmond, Ky.*
- 1976 Peter Bodley**  
*Coon Rapids Herald, Anoka, Minn.*
- 1977 Rodney A. Smith**  
*Gretna (Va.) Gazette*
- 1978 Robert Estabrook**  
*Lakeville (Conn.) Journal*
- 1979 R. W. van de Velde**  
*The Valley Voice, Middlebury, Vt.*
- 1980 Garrett Ray**  
*Independent Newspapers, Littleton, Colo.*
- 1981 Janelou Buck**  
*Sebring (Fla.) News*
- 1982 Albert Scardino**  
*The Georgia Gazette, Savannah, Ga.*
- 1983 Francis C. Zanger**  
*Bellows Falls (Vt.) News-Review*
- 1984 John McCall**  
*The SandPaper, Ocean City, N.J.*
- 1985 William F. Schanen III**  
*Ozaukee Press, Port Washington, Wis.*
- 1986 Henry G. Gay**  
*Shelton-Mason County Journal,  
Shelton, Wash.*
- 1987 Ellen L. Albanese**  
*The Country Gazette, Franklin, Mass.*
- 1988 Michael G. Lacey**  
*The New Times, Phoenix, Ariz.*
- 1989 Tim Redmond**  
*Bay Guardian, San Francisco, Calif.*
- 1990 Bill Lueders**  
*Isthmus, Madison, Wis.*
- 1991 Stuart Taylor Jr.**  
*Legal Times, Washington, D.C.*
- 1992 Hope Aldrich**  
*The Santa Fe (N.M.) Reporter*
- 1993 Michael D. Myers**  
*Granite City (Ill.) Press-Record*
- 1994 Jim MacNeill**  
*The Eastern Graphic, Montague, PEI, Canada*
- 1995 Brian J. Hunhoff**  
*The Missouri Valley Observer, Yankton, S.D.*
- 1996 Patricia Calhoun**  
*Denver Westword, Denver, Colo.*
- 1997 Tim Giago**  
*Indian Country Today, Rapid City, S.D.*
- 1998 Gary Sosniecki**  
*Webster County Citizen, Seymour, Mo.*
- 1999 Jeff McMahan**  
*New Times, San Luis Obispo, Calif.*
- 2000 Jeff McMahan**  
*New Times, San Luis Obispo, Calif.*
- 2001 William F. Schanen III**  
*Ozaukee Press, Port Washington, Wis.*
- 2002 Paul MacNeill**  
*The Eastern Graphic, Montague, PEI, Canada*
- 2003 Jeremy Waltner**  
*Freeman Courier, Freeman, S.D.*
- 2004 Charles Gay**  
*Shelton-Mason County Journal, Shelton, Wash*
- 2005 Bill Lueders**  
*Isthmus, Madison, Wis.*

# The judge's comments

Bertrand Russell (mathematician-turned-philosopher-turned-social-activist-and-peace-protester — like many journalists, he was, assuredly, a champion of assorted causes) once was asked an interview question:

What good is philosophy, anyway?

Philosophy, replied the renowned Briton, has a vital function “in keeping alive ideas which are not yet amenable to science.”

So it may be with viewpoints expressed in the various opinion pieces which we journalist-opinioners offer, written on common newsprint, to our mass-media audiences.

What good is an editorial, anyway?

Hopefully in a clear and appealing form (remember, newspaper readership is always voluntary) we can keep alive ideas which are useful parts of the social agenda where we live and work.

There may be suitable occasions for fulmination and outrage. But much of the time, if we are honest about it, that kind of wordage mostly satisfies ourselves, as we indulge a little self-validation by “speaking out.” It won't lastingly affect many readers, because it demands little more than a “me too,” or “this idea's nuts” response from any one of them. There is seldom a deep buy-in of reader interest.

And, in our process of venting, we may inadvertently bully the readers: They may cheer our editorial position, and wish they could have said things as forcefully and well. Have we sown further seeds for thought, possibly a fresh viewpoint? Hardly — those readers' original beliefs already were similar to our own, anyway. Nothing has been changed by our utterances.

On the other hand, does a rant ever convert anyone?

That, too, seems doubtful, if we examine our personal reactions to the huckster, the zealot, the aspiring candidate who invites us to abandon any independence of thought and just accept the laid-on message. No longer need any of us carry our own intellectual baggage. All we have to do is passively listen for “the answer” — and then, of course, believe.

Contrarians that we are, most journalists would find such a process intolerable.

Contrarians that we hope they are, our readers will not be satisfied, either, with simplistic propaganda, in the place of background information, conclusive thought, logic, balance and succinct summarizing argument. Every one of our readers should be left free to agree with the editorial writer — or to disagree — in dignity.

We need not shred anyone's personal integrity and self-worth, something we risk, certainly, if we dispense a typical harangue.

What good is an editorial, anyway?

Obviously, beyond the obvious, we can seldom offer “answers” to the complexities of modern life.

Indeed, we should approach our readers with humility, as well as confidence. We appeal to emotions, and also to intellect. We may entertain, educate, seek to provoke additional thought, and even — sometimes — elicit vociferous debate and productive counter-argument. We — the journalists — don't have to be “right” all the time. We do have to remember that our mass-media audience is always variegated — each individual with a distinctive set of values, life experiences, backgrounds. In speaking to them all, we have set ourselves a difficult task.

Here are 12 editorials — one Golden Quill winner and 11 others which came close — to demonstrate that expert opinion writing is a demanding assignment, but not an impossible one.

What good is an editorial, anyway? Given the quality of these finalists, we now can judge for ourselves.

## About the judge

Weekly newspapers are where it all began for Walter Nagel, this year's judge of ISWNE's Golden Quill awards.

Along with working a lengthy assortment of journalism-related sidelines, he has been teaching journalism for more than three decades at Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary. In classrooms and labs there, many skills he first learned in small newsrooms, long ago, are as applicable as ever. He enjoys passing along those basics.

Community newspaper experience, even if not a permanent career, is something he recommends to every graduate. Over the years, a great many have taken his advice.

“You learn all the jobs. There is never enough time, it seems. But if you can scramble — think on your feet, learn by doing — you will progress very quickly.”

It seems to have happened that way since early in Nagel's own career.

Just hours before he was to start a first shift as trainee typesetter, his employer changed his mind and offered him a different job: how about a try at writing, instead?

“I was a completely inexperienced 18-year-old. I've never quite understood why I was so fortunate, but it was the lucky career break of a lifetime.”

Basic reporting — banging out stories on an ancient open-frame Underwood — soon involved news photography too. A four-by-five Speed Graphic was replaced by a Rolleiflex; cranky Linotypes were followed by off-set. Eventually the industry developed centralized printing plants, digitized typesetting and, then, full pagination.

“The modern technology is tremendous, and small-community journalism in western Canada has made the most of it,” Nagel says. “Nostalgia has its place, but the new workflows help us do our jobs, far better than we could in the past.”

Riding that tide of technology, the all-print J-school at SAIT — where Nagel at one stage was program supervisor for eight years before going back to teach full-time — now has switched completely to digital in photo classes. Across the program, all students have their own laptops, taking computers along on assignments and even to practicum postings throughout the



Walter Nagel

continued on page 5

# Golden Quill Winner



**Bill Lueders**

News Editor,  
*Isthmus*

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53703

July 2, 2004

## America the beautiful. No, really

Why we still love our country, no matter how much we hate about it

**I**n mulling the concept behind this week's cover story, the members of *Isthmus*' editorial staff took turns answering the question, "What is the quintessential American trait?" Our answers were not pretty:

"Arrogance." "Hypocrisy." "Racism." "Obesity" "Excess." "Cognitive dissonance." "Crankiness." "Intolerance." "Immaturity." "Dishonesty." "Materialism." "Contrariness." "Freedom."

Aside from freedom (just another word for nothing left to lose), and perhaps contrariness, it's a uniformly grim list, befitting the essentially sour disposition of the brain trust at Madison's weekly newspaper. But then we asked a different question: "Do you love your country?" and all but one person answered affirmatively.

This might seem, at first glance, to reflect another quintessential American trait: contradiction. "Do I contradict myself?" asked Whitman. "Very well then I contradict myself."

But there is no reason the multitudes we contain cannot both find fault with our nation and at the same time hold it dear. Most of us have similarly complicated relationships with our families and friends. And, let's face it: The nation we love has never been less likeable.

We have an incompetent, disengaged president who lies like some people breathe, a man who has dragged the nation into an unwise and unnecessary war while exacerbating the nation's vulnerabilities to terrorism. We have a national media that lets him get away with it, to where Jon Stewart of Comedy Central does a far better job than *The New York Times* of exposing the Bush administration's folly and moral corruption.

Last week, Stewart showed Vice President Dick Cheney emphatically denying in one taped interview having made a factually mendacious claim, then produced another taped interview of him making this very claim. These people are so accustomed to lying without consequence they lie even when there is rock-solid evidence they are, as Al Franken puts it, lying liars.

In Afghanistan and Iraq, we have replaced old authoritarian regimes with new ones, subjecting scores of people who have not been convicted of any crime to horrifying abuse. The most significant consequence of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal has been an edict from Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, banning cameras from U.S. military installations. Rumsfeld and others at the highest levels of the Bush administration who authorized this abuse have not been punished, and show no remorse.

A few days ago, on an inside news page, *The Capital Times* ran a small wire-service story about Sean Baker, a 37-year-old Gulf War veteran who, after the events of Sept. 11, volunteered for an additional tour of duty in the Kentucky National Guard. He was assigned to the U.S. military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he volunteered again, this time to put on an orange jumpsuit for a training exercise.

Unfortunately, the five-member military police team being trained was not told that Baker was a fake prisoner, so he got treated like a real one. They slammed him down, choked and beat him, pounding his head into the concrete floor.

"I'm a U.S. soldier! I'm a U.S. soldier!" Baker pleaded. The trainees ignored him until, in the course of this pummeling, they ripped through his jumpsuit and saw his military uniform beneath. The beating left Baker with a traumatic brain injury, leading to his honorable discharge from the military. Now, more than a year later, he is unable to work due to seizures and severe headaches, for which he takes nine prescription drugs.

The military has, of course, abandoned Baker. He has yet to receive disability payments.

This is the conduct of the nation we are asked this July 4th to celebrate — barbarous and amoral, capable of great injustice even to those who risk their lives to defend it.

And yet, I would be willing to bet my complete set of Benjamin Franklin half dollars that, if you asked him, Sean Baker would tell you that he still loves his country, no matter how badly the people who run it have betrayed him. In like vein, those of us living the good life in Madison can grasp the full foulness of our nation's political leadership and yet tear up to hear Ray Charles belt out "America the Beautiful."

What we love is not our country's politics or policies but its ideals. That all men (and women) are created equal. That we have an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That government is not to intrude on the free expression of speech, or imprison people without due process. That "when a long train of abuses and usurpations" seeks to bring about "absolute Despotism," as is surely the case with the current administration, it is the people's "right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security" To the barricades!

This is a nation founded on revolution, in resistance to oppression, in the assertion of the rights of the individual over the power of the state. It is a nation that boasts a vast bounty of natural beauty, from the redwood forests to the Gulf Stream waters, from the mountains to the valleys, to the oceans white with foam from industrial pollutants.

This is a nation built by people, and the descendants of people, drawn here by the promise of freedom. That is not to minimize the crimes they committed in stealing land from native inhabitants and exploiting resources with reckless abandon. But there is, at the heart of the American experience, something strong and noble and worthy of admiration.

The reflections in this issue about the quintessential American trait underscore that point. We see the bad as well as the good, but at the end of the day we care about the struggle to make this a better place. It is a cause worth fighting for, even if we always fall short.

## FROM THE JUDGE

Time-pegged to Independence Day, this provocative entry is a cry from the heart of a troubled land. It starts with a pitiless self-portrait of U.S. society's downside characteristics.

In general, most Americans still profess a deep love for their country. And yet, at the same time, many citizens have become deeply ashamed; they abhor what their nation is doing to others — even how it treats its own.

The writer uses quotations and anecdotes to demonstrate — up close — the way current government leaders repeatedly violate the generous and lofty principles which inspired the founding of the United States. Can the country return to a place where it will honor those admirable ideals once again?

There are, of course, profound ramifications for the entire world, as well as the U.S., in this back-to-basis reflection.

# An explanation from the winner

**T**his column — which ran in tandem with my paper's cover story, for the issue just before July 4, on what various locally prominent people deemed to be the quintessential American trait — was written mostly in anger, during a time when I was seeing my nation in a particularly harsh and ugly light. To some extent, it represents an attempt to work through those feelings.

The Abu Ghraib prison scandal had recently broken; the stated rationale for the war in Iraq (WMDs, imminent threat) had been exposed as fraudulent; and President Bush was plodding forward on his deceitful march to electoral victory. The country was divided, perhaps more sharply than any time in my life, and I was eager to plant my flag among those who saw a brief opportunity to turn national revulsion into bloodless revolution.

Like all sharply pointed editorials, this one was aimed squarely at people who are inclined to agree with what I had to say. I don't delude myself into thinking that anyone on the far opposite end of the political spectrum will be won over by a column like this, or any other. But I think the goal ought to be to present something new for people of all political persuasions to ponder — something to challenge and entice them.

I found that here in the realization that all Americans, in even those who feel contempt for our nation's leadership, are proud of its ideals. This was my way of getting past anger, to affirmation. I wanted to underscore the true patriotism and love of country

that is felt by people who are disgusted by its behavior at every turn.

To this end, I invoked a shared cultural heritage, with references to Walt Whitman and Ray Charles (and to a lesser extent Jon Stewart and Al Franken). I also quoted from the Declaration of Independence and bastardized a line from God Bless America. (That I wrote "from the mountains to the valleys" instead of "from the mountains to the prairies," though, was just a mistake.) And I tried to reinforce how the pursuit of equality and freedom are at the heart of our national experiment, even if they haven't always been borne out in our national experience.

But the part of the column that delivers the greatest emotional wallop may be the anecdote about the Gulf War veteran who was beaten during a training exercise, ending up with brain damage, fighting for his benefits. It is pure conjecture on my part that this man still loves his country — I did not track him down and ask — but most readers will intuitively agree this is likely the case. And that's because, regardless of political belief, they understand deep down the common bond that most Americans have with each other, in terms of love of country.

One final observation: I think the column is in part about respecting the opinions of those with whom we disagree, because we share this common bond. Supporters of George Bush and of the Iraq war do not love their country any less than those who express their fidelity to the nation's ideals chiefly through opposition. We really are all in this together.

## About the judge *from page 3*

country. Each issue of the program's showcase *Albertan* tabloid newspaper is composed on-campus, transmitted electronically to a commercial printer 250 miles away, then shipped back on a next-day turnaround for distribution in Calgary.

Such hands-on practicality, built into the SAIT program, was appealing in the early 1970s, a period when Nagel sought change from conventional newspaper employment. The nearby institute was looking for a part-time, temporary-employment instructor. Already a senior writer for several years at *The Calgary Herald*, Nagel resigned, with a bit of reluctance — "the paper always treated me very well, invited me back several times, I like the excitement of a working newsroom" — and went teaching.

Except for some real-world returns to journalism — including stints back at *The Herald* on two different occasions — he has been in the classroom ever since. He's never actually counted the number, but

"it's likely" that 2,000-plus students have gone through SAIT's journalism program during his tenure. Many are exemplary success stories.

"I get first rights — to brag about them to all new students," Nagel explains. Each grad becomes a potential subject for stories well told.

By extension, back out on the street, he sees everyday journalism as a socially-accepted excuse for newspaper staffers to talk to people in their community about almost anything, good news or bad.

"That's why I still like to write, consult, freelance. It 'keeps me honest,' and it's just plain interesting.

"Journalism — once you get into the business — is the best free education in the world."

According to Nagel, if you have developed a respectful curiosity about people and what they do, there is only one thing any better than being a journalist.

"That is teaching journalism."



**Melissa  
Hale-Spencer**

**Editor,  
*The Altamont Enterprise***

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**July 15, 2004**

#### **FROM THE JUDGE**

The “open letter” — thankfully — is an unusual format in editorials. In this case, the device transcends gimmickry — it becomes a personalized way to convey the editor’s heart-sick dismay about how some of the United States’ newest citizens have been treated.

Three youngsters, whose mother has been a naturalized American for 13 years, fall victim to hysterical overreaction after the 9-11 terrorist attacks. What makes them vulnerable, of course, is nothing more than Arabic names and appearances. No child, and neither parent, is ever implicated in the outrages of September 11, 2001; the father is nonetheless rounded-up and deported without any pretense of due process. The little family is shattered.

Instead of a rant, this editor chose the powerful language of restraint, dignity, reason, appeal and apology, for a touching communiqué from “your country.” It superficially goes to three children in Jordan, but the message really is directed toward just about everyone else.

# Letter to Jordan

**D**ear Zeyad, Isma’eel, and Mohammad,  
We first saw your mother at a Guilderland Town Board meeting last month. We did not know her, but we were impressed with her courage and her dignity. Her voice was filled with emotion, but she did not weep.

She told of how she came to the United States to escape war in Afghanistan. She was proud to become an American citizen. That was 13 years ago, before you were born.

Since the terrorists’ attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, our country has not treated your family well. She told the town board how her husband, your father, was among the hundreds of innocent Muslim men rounded up by the FBI and kept in prison without due process.

She told our reporter more of her story this week — how she fell in love with and married your father, who had come from Jordan, how the three of you were born here. She also told us how she tried to protect you when your father was first taken away. She did not tell you he had gone to prison. When you were just four, and six, and eight years old, it must have been very scary to have your father suddenly gone from your life.

We have children, too, and we know, when they were small, they thought prison was for the bad guys. Your mother told you your father was working in a different state but she said it was hard to lie to you. You would ask her, “Why are your eyes always red? Why are you always crying? Why are you always mad?”

Prisons should be for bad guys. But in this case, we believe people in our government were the bad guys — not your father.

Fear is a terrible thing. Sometimes it turns to hate and injustice. Many people were afraid after the terrorists attacked our country on Sept. 11 and some of them let their fear cloud their judgment while the rest of us stood by.

During World War II, when we were fighting the Japanese, a similar thing happened. Our government imprisoned in camps many American citizens who were of Japanese descent. We were afraid of the country that hurt us, that bombed Pearl Harbor, and so we did not bother to distinguish between loyal American citizens who were of Japanese origin and those who were our enemies.

Now many Americans have come to hate all Muslims because the terrorists who attacked our country were Muslim extremists. Your mother told us how people have said mean things and unfair things to her since the terrorists’ attacks just because she is Muslim. Yet she continues to wear her head scarf, her hijab, a sign of her religion, and we admire her for that.

“Go back home!” one man screamed at her when she was on her way home — to Albany.

“I wear a scarf and I need to wear it with dignity. I have people glare at me and say, ‘Look, she’s raising three little terrorists.’ But, what happened on 9-11 is not Islam,” your mother said.

She told us how your religion states clearly that, unless it is wartime on a battlefield, killing is murder. To strike someone off guard, or to behead innocent people is an ultimate sin.

Our government has done a terrible thing to your father and others like him. Your mother told us how he was imprisoned for months in solitary confinement without ever being accused of any crime, without ever seeing a judge.

This treatment is against the core values of our democracy. It needs to stop.

Just last month, the highest court in our country, the Supreme Court, ruled that even suspected terrorists, enemy combatants, must be granted access to court. This is the American way. And a state of war does not allow those in power to detain suspects in a way the law does not allow.

Because our government is a democracy — government of the people — we are all responsible for such wrong doings. We admire your mother speaking out about your father’s innocence but others must join her and they must work to see that safeguards are put in place so that such abuse does not continue.

Your mother told us how your father was punished in prison and we believe her. Just being kept alone for so long is cruel and in humane. Beyond that, she said, he was humiliated and fed so poorly he would black out. We don’t blame him for signing whatever paper was given to him.

That is how he ended up where you are now — back in Jordan. We think your mother is very generous to have sent the three of you to live with him. She said he needs you more than she does. This is true love and you are lucky to have such parents.

We are sorry our country has behaved so badly towards your family. It is inexcusable. We hope our readers and others will see this letter and read your mother’s story and work to help her. We hope your father will be allowed to return to the United States soon and that your family will be happily reunited.

We marvel that your family still wants to live here. Your mother told us, “It’s our duty as Americans — and I consider myself one — to speak out. If we give in to people like the Taliban and Al-qaida, if we give our rights away, that gives the terrorists more power.”

Those are powerful and important words.

And we have seen what has happened in countries where one group is allowed to be targeted. It has a domino effect and no one is really safe.

When the Nazis controlled Germany, Martin Niemoeller said, “In Germany, they came first for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.”

Your mother told the Guilderland Town Board, “This time, they came for the Muslims; next time they may come for you.”

Enough citizens must speak up so that you can return to your country, the United States of America. So that you can grow up in a place where the founding belief that all men are created equal allows you to live lives of liberty and pursue happiness.

# Wait — start with the jailbirds

**L**ong-time Hickman County Rescue Squad Captain Bill Henley has provided a solution for those situations when you and an acquaintance are just not sipping from the same cup of tea.

Bill's problem is Mickey Bunn, former Rescue Squad member, now a county commissioner. Bill thinks Mickey is trying to actively damage the squad, through his influence as a county commissioner, because he doesn't agree with Henley's leadership style.

"I just want him out of this county," says Henley.

There you have it: Just toss him out. No talking. No meetings. No letters, no telephone calls, no cooling-down period. Not even a bribe.

One hitch: The captain hasn't figured out how to get the commissioner to go away. While the rest of us watch to see how this will be accomplished, I'd like to make a suggestion:

There's a pretty long line of others who should be leaving before Mickey Bunn is ushered to the gate.

Let's start with the entire population of the Hickman County Jail. These guys have done more than exercise their freedom of speech; they've broken the law. We don't need 'em here. Get them out of the county and we won't have to worry about where to put a county jail, or even whether to build one: There won't be anyone to put inside it.

Savings: \$4 to \$8 million, based on current new jail estimates.

Getting rid of Mickey won't save anywhere near that, though we would have to break in another early-morning radio man . . . and there's nothing I hate more than that.

Next on my throw-'em-out list would be litterbugs. I know Bill would agree with me because he has worked as long as I have to help get rid of trash on the county's roadways; more than 85 tons so far. If we could just get those slobs to leave the county . . . now, how good would that be?

I will step out on a limb and offer that Mickey Bunn is a lot better for the public welfare than your run-of-the-mill trash-thrower. He's got a sense of humor, for one thing. He bucks the national trend toward obesity, for another. And he says what he thinks with one important feature: He thinks about it before he says it.

Regarding Bill, Mickey says he called the state about the Rescue Squad's noncompliance with the Fire Department Recognition Act because that 2003 law states that nonregistered agencies are not eligible to receive funding from governments. Mickey is an elected member of the county government and sits on the Budget Committee. He thinks eligibility for county funding is something he's supposed to be examining.

Of course, it is.

Anyway, making inquiry to state government, or any other type of government, about a particular law or situation happens all the time; I do it once every couple of weeks. Asking questions is part of The American Way.

As it turned out, Mickey's inquiry actually helped the Rescue Squad, which was not notified about the new law until Capt. Bill got a letter from the state containing 1) a copy of Mickey's inquiry and 2) a letter from the state asking him to explain why they were not in compliance. The situation was straightened out, fast. Last Monday, Rescue Squad members distributed copies of their newly-received compliance certificate to members of the Legislative Body, which helped commissioners decide to increase Rescue Squad funding for 2004-05 from \$4,500 to the traditional \$10,000.

I don't think I heard a thank-you for Mickey, who abstained on the vote.

His work on this case should it the least, be enough for him to be freed from the list of future rail-riders, which actually runs quite long.

After jailbirds and litterbugs; I would say that possums (for, their safety), drunk drivers (for our safety), wife-beaters, tax cheats, door-to-door salesmen, most political candidates, all nonvoters, some used car salesmen, every out-of-season hunter, Cruella De Ville (I've seen her here), right-handers (I'm a lefty; sorry) and anyone who doesn't admire Minnie Pearl ought to be packing their bags.

That's enough folks to fill the QE II, which ought to be pulling up to RiverPark just about the time that the entire motley crew is rounded up and ushered down to the boat ramp.

Look for me, too: I'll be off to the side, selling popcorn and cold drinks to those who show up to watch and see how this sideshow comes out.



## Bradley A. Martin

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June 28, 2004

### FROM THE JUDGE

Here's a formula for how to save millions in municipal funds: just "get rid" of all the folks who cost us money. Sounds like the goofy executioner in Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta, *The Mikado*, doesn't it?

This light-hearted piece illustrates the seductive power of logical foolishness, pricks some people who deserve a comeuppance, and gives subscribers a readable treat along the way.



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**October 27, 2004**

#### **FROM THE JUDGE**

**This editorial isn't really about discrimination. It is about neighborhood busybodies, malicious complaints, bureaucrats and police who have become too rule-ridden, too lazy or too dim to remember that most citizens are not wrong-doers, and in our culture, every person is innocent until proven otherwise.**

**An inexcusable abuse of authority put a law-abiding elderly woman to needless stress and inconvenience, in a tale well told by this entry.**

# Discrimination is alive and well in Lunenburg County

**I**n mid-July, someone complained to the police that they'd seen a car parked on a sidewalk in Mahone Bay with its door open. The licence number identified the owner as Mrs. Betty Wood.

Mrs. Wood was unaware of that complaint until mid-September when she received a letter from the Registry of Motor Vehicles advising her that she had to be re-tested or lose her driving privileges. Mrs. Wood is an active 85-year-old widow and losing her license would be a serious inconvenience. Her story appeared in these newspapers last week.

Out of simple curiosity, if not common courtesy, one would think the police would have called or visited Mrs. Wood soon after receiving the complaint. They did not. When she received the letter, she contacted the Registry, then the police. By then few people would remember what they were doing on July 15, but Mrs. Wood says she had a special family event that week and can recall her activities. But she certainly does not remember parking on a sidewalk and leaving her car door open.

The police have refused to identify the complainant, but they did tell Mrs. Wood where the infraction was supposed to have taken place. The street number is that of her former home, and had they checked, the police would know that address has no sidewalk. Mrs. Wood also says it's become a joke that she habitually locks her car as soon as she parks it.

So last week she had to submit to driver re-testing. Now, if she wants to find out who has it in for her, she has to apply under the Access to Information Act to access her RCMP file. And she says she's angry enough to go to court if she gets no satisfaction there.

But she's not alone. Since her story appeared in the newspapers, she has had calls from other seniors who have received similar letters from the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Apparently anyone wanting to anonymously annoy a senior has only to call the police with that person's licence number and some trumped-up complaint.

A spokesman for the Registry of Motor Vehicles told reporter Robert Hirtle that confidential complaints are often used by family and "friends" who want to get a senior off the road. Instead of facing the person with their concerns, these people hide behind confidential complaints to the police. The spokesman said the police check the validity of the complaint, but in Mrs. Wood's case they unquestioningly accepted the third-party complaint, even though she has a perfect driving record. Remember, this is the same system that in Halifax recently allowed an out-of-control 16 year old with a history of high-speed chases, car thefts and numerous other violations to continue driving until he killed another driver.

No one asked Mrs. Wood for her side of the story, so the whole nasty business smacks of age discrimination. We guess that when the RCMP checked her age, that was it. The Registry retests very few younger drivers, even those officially charged with violations.

Confidential third-party complaints are police-state tactics that open the door for abuse, discrimination and harassment. If seniors pose a safety problem on the highways, then re-test them all after they reach a certain age, every year or every few years. They should also have to present a positive doctor's certificate. General health and one's driving record should dictate driving status, not age, and certainly not confidential third-party complaints.

In Canada innocence is assumed until guilt is proven, so how can the police justify accepting the word of any grudge-bearing third-party while refusing to listen to a law-abiding senior citizen? This society has just presumed Betty Wood guilty of a motor vehicle violation solely because of her age, while diligently protecting the identity of her accusers and refusing to afford her any opportunity to defend herself.

We must put a stop to such disgraceful discrimination!

P.S. Betty Wood passed her re-test last Friday with "flying colours!"

# The America they fight for

**T**he soldier with his wife and two small daughters straggled into the small Midwestern airport around 5:30 a.m. He was dressed in desert tan fatigues and brown boots. His First Army insignia was on his right shoulder sleeve, his name over his right shirt pocket.

In his arms he carried one of his sleepy daughters, a little girl maybe three-years-old with long hair that stood in stark contrast to the cropped hair of her father.

He was young, mid-20's. His wife looked even younger, small and thin with dark hair and a pleasant, if reluctant smile.

After confirming his ticket at the lone ticket counter, he carried a small black bag in one arm and the child in the other. He walked about 25 feet to a plastic chair in the small area which served as the airport's terminal.

There was not a big crowd around. Maybe 15 passengers were waiting to catch the early morning flight. A few airport employees also stood around, waiting.

Without having to be told, everyone knew the soldier was off to some distant land.

Had he been home on leave? Or perhaps this was his first assignment away?

Scenes from television news reports came to mind - of American boys in similar uniforms covered with dust and sand. And blood.

The soldier's voice and that of his wife were muted and sparse.

The children struggled to stay awake.

The soldier and his wife struggled to say many things without actually speaking.

Airports are often large and impersonal. Getting lost in the crowd usually isn't a problem.

But there was no anonymity at this small terminal.

Eyes glanced at the family, but only for a second. No one wanted to intrude on what they knew was a private moment of parting.

Yet everyone felt drawn to the young man, his wife and two sleepy girls; they were a picture of quintessential America.

The soldier massaged the ticket in his hands while he waited. In a while, another young soldier wearing the same uniform entered the room. His girlfriend was with him. They met another couple who looked to be his parents.

The two soldiers nodded to each other, but didn't speak. Their worlds had suddenly become very small.

When the boarding call came, passengers moved into a line to pass through the small airport's security.

But the soldiers stayed behind.

One last hug.

One final kiss.

Holding on and being held.

The woman at the gate quietly told the soldiers to take a few more moments. The plane wasn't leaving yet and other passengers had to clear security.

When it was my turn, I piled my coat and hat into one gray plastic bin, a laptop computer into another and my shoes and carrying bag into a third. My small

overnight suitcase then followed into the mouth of the X-ray machine.

In sock feet, I walked through the lone metal detector. Nothing beeped.

I was asked to point out my bags and to step to one side. The security guard said that I had been selected. He had me sit in a hard chair while another guard took my belongings to a nearby table.

One at a time, the guard passed his hand-held metal detector up and down each leg. Then I stood, stretched out my arms, and the detector-wand was waved over my body.

It found a dime in one pocket.

It found the metal on my belt buckle.

It beeped at the metal in my glasses.

It found the aluminum wrapping around a single Tums in another pocket.

While the guard continued his search, I watched as the two soldiers left their families, passed through security and walked out of the building to the tarmac.

After I had been thoroughly checked with the wand, the guard began to pat me down.

The turtle neck collar of my shirt was searched to make sure no bomb was hidden there.

He felt under my arms.

Under my belt.

My back.

My front.

It was a small terminal and there was nowhere to hide. The other employees watched, half board, half asleep.

Finally satisfied that there was nothing of interest on my person, the guard allowed me to put on my shoes and belt and proceed a few feet to my belongings. I was asked to watch as he opened my overnight suitcase and began pulling out all my dirty underwear and scattering it about on the table.

He opened my toiletries bag, taking out a hairbrush, toothbrush and deodorant. He carefully searched the rest of the bag's contents.

Having removed my clothes from the small suitcase, he began swiping it with small round disks which were then put into a nearby machine. He flipped through all my file folders and papers. Another guard played with my laptop computer to see if it was working.

Eventually my laundry and belongings were stuffed back into the bag. My computer was returned, my hat and coat retrieved.

I was allowed to walk out the door, across the tarmac and board the plane.

As I walked down the aisle of the half-empty commuter plane, I saw that my assigned seat had been taken.

I found another empty space a few rows further back.

The two soldiers were talking to each other in hushed tones. The plane taxied to the runway and lifted off with a shudder into the pre-dawn darkness.

I looked out the window into the black sky and wondered: What kind of America are we asking those soldiers to fight for?



**Mike Buffington**

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**December 15, 2004**

## **FROM THE JUDGE**

**In an unconventional style, two seemingly-simple narratives are interwoven brilliantly to ask – in a final sentence – one of the most profound of questions.**

**Will America perhaps – and only perhaps, at that – win “the war against terrorism,” but in the process, lose its society’s precious and much-admired freedom?**



## Susan Belliveau

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October 20, 2004

### **FROM THE JUDGE**

**This editorial demonstrates a classic style: identify the issue, provide a reasoned and balanced background discussion, conclude decisively.**

**It slices through the all-too-typical spin which followed a fatal fire on a used submarine, recently purchased by Canada mainly because it was inexpensive. The official commentary was not merely predictable. It was offensive, because it entirely dodged a wider problem which had invited the catastrophe in the first place — the country has been cheaping-out on military purchases for decades, and a submariner's life was forfeit because of one such decision.**

# The ultimate sacrifice

**H**ow many people will die before the Canadian government steps up and admits it's made a mistake.

The recent death of submariner Lieut. Chris Saunders after a fire aboard the Chicoutimi has the federal government clamouring to convey their condolences to his family and proclaim what a noble purpose he served by sacrificing his life for his country. But, not one of these politicians has enough guts to admit that this death was not a case where, as Prime Minister Paul Martin put it, Saunders "gave his life saving his country..."

It wasn't that at all, it was a horrible tragedy made even worse by the knowledge it was a result of this country ignoring its responsibility to its military and its people. The Canadian Forces have been short-changed for years by a government that is not willing to provide enough funding to properly defend its people

Dilapidated Sea King Helicopters falling from the sky and submarines catching fire are the just the tip of the iceberg. The Canadian government didn't even provide our military with proper camouflage gear when it sent them to Afghanistan to back the US government in its military strike against that third-world country.

While the American soldiers easily blended into the sandy terrain, the Canadian men and women stood out like bull's-eye targets in their brilliant green camouflage uniforms.

And now, this latest incident in the cold Atlantic

waters off Ireland is just one of a string of mishaps with these four submarines. Others have included leaks and a faulty hydraulics system either of which could have sent these subs and their crews to the bottom of the ocean.

In fact, since the Canadian government picked them up at a British Navy yard sale several years ago, these rusty tubs have been nothing but trouble. They were supposed to be in operation three years ago but that hasn't happened because they've required such extensive work to make them seaworthy.

At this point it's questionable whether they'll ever truly be safe to use and how much it will cost to get them to that point. In the meantime how does our government justify risking more lives aboard these lemons?

The Liberal government of the day gambled with the lives of the brave men and woman who have stepped up to serve their country, not only by securing bargain basement submarines, but by its distinct lack of concern and regard for the military on the whole.

Our government has ignored this country's need for its own security force, instead riding on the coat-tails of our much stronger and more militant neighbors to the south and as a result people have died.

It's a slap in the face to the people of Canada and every veteran, dead or alive, who has served his or her country in an effort to protect our freedom.

No, Mr. Martin, Lieut. Saunders didn't sacrifice his life, his government did.

# Howse it possible?

**T**he Howse Pass Committee of the Town of Rocky Mountain House and Clearwater County are preparing to spend \$25,000 to \$30,000 in taxpayers' money — including \$10,000 in support from Alberta Economic Development — to study the social and economic impact of developing a highway through the mountain park pass. One of the questions the consultant must answer is how to approach governments with the proposal for the best reception.

Members of the Howse Pass Committee might have some idea about the reaction their move will generate. While there are many people, and organizations like Chambers of Commerce, in Central Alberta who like the idea, there is a large environment movement which will oppose the development.

Let's save some taxpayers' dollars here. For a lone loonie, to buy *The Mountaineer* and this editorial column, the committee will learn exactly what it wants to know . . . even if it is not what it wants to hear.

The Howse Pass is one of the few mountain accessible passes in the Canadian Rockies which has not been developed. It sits on the Alberta-British Columbia border, not far from the Banff-Jasper Highway and, more importantly, Alberta's Highway 11. The far side of the pass comes out in the Blaeberry Creek valley which tumbles down to the Columbia River, and crosses the TransCanada Highway west of Golden at Donald Junction. It is a low pass, which offers some advantages for passage through the mountains. Any who have hiked it or traveled it by horseback can tell you that the Howse River Flats in Banff National Park are easy to traverse, and the pass itself only rises 200 m or so from that point, and the top of the pass itself is a broad meadow. The engineering for a highway through this would be relatively easy. The difficulty comes on the far side of the pass where the drop is steeper and the terrain is less friendly.

Howse Pass is historically important as a trade route. David Thompson and his men used it before it became politically sensitive in relations with the Peigans who controlled the Eastern Slopes territory. Major A.B. Rogers, the railway engineer, sent noted guide and outfitter Tom Wilson, in 1882, to scout the Howse, and Wilson's report confirmed in Rogers' mind that the Kicking Horse was the preferred route across the Great Divide. The pass has been protected from development since its inclusion in Banff National Park.

Law and politics make development of the pass impossible at this time, and likely for several decades to come.

Sixteen kilometers of the route is in Banff National Park. The recently amended Parks Act precludes the

development of new roads within national parks, and there is no exception for the Howse. Don't count on the climate in Ottawa to accept new proposals. Paul Martin's minority government will steer clear of any changes to the act which would be politically difficult, especially in the party's backbenches. The Parks Act, in Canada, is as close as one can possibly find to "motherhood." Central Alberta's lobbyists will never find enough support among Ontario and Quebec MPs to allow the Act to be amended in favor of a new road. Note, please, no discussion about the condition of the TransCanada Highway and its safety issues, let alone fund its construction through the park. "Motherhood," in this case, supersedes any logical argument which can be made about relieving pressure on the TransCanada Highway.

The Alberta Government can make all the right noises about wanting the highway, but it will simply be noise. Alberta has developed its portion of any possible connection by taking Highway 11 to the Banff Park Gate. It is not responsible for roads in federal parks.

On the far side of the Pass is Golden. B.C., whose Chamber of Commerce vehemently opposes the development of the pass. There is also no interest by the British Columbia government in developing new highways. Gordon Campbell's government is struggling with an accumulated debt of \$40 billion and substantially higher priorities with upgrading the highway to Whistler for the Winter Olympics. Mountain road construction is extremely expensive, and the B.C. government is right to ask whether the development of a new corridor into Alberta offers any benefit to B.C. The economic value to such a new highway link is apparent only on the Alberta side.

Failure to have B.C. support and the impossibility of amending the Parks Act are obstacles large enough to block any effort. Spending \$30,000 to find this out is a poor use of funds.

Meanwhile, the moves to continually raise this issue brings Rocky Mountain House into disrepute. The community has worked hard to position itself as the point "Where Adventure Begins," and this includes attracting a range of people who want to enjoy a West Country experience, from those who want to hike remote pathways to those who prefer hovering in a helicopter above great scenery. A battle will always rage between those who want to further restrict access, like the Alberta Wilderness Association, and those who want to preserve West Country access such as quad and snowmobile enthusiasts. Pushing for the highway will attract unwanted attention from international environmental movements.



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**September 28, 2004**

## **FROM THE JUDGE**

**This editor has a quick and clear-cut solution to one pestilence of modern life — the profusion of studies gravely ordered-up by governments for just about every controversy, each final document at great cost to the taxpayer, of course.**

**Instead, why not just go out and buy the local newspaper, for a dollar?**

**Then, almost instantly, you can find out everything you need to know, on all sides of an issue. As this canny editor suggests, save all that time and money which surely will be wasted, in this example, to study a pipe-dream project that obviously won't happen anyway.**



## Peggy Dostie

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September 22, 2004

### FROM THE JUDGE

It's a good day when an editorial can make its point and entertain at the same time.

Everybody is in favor of volunteering, but no one ever seems to have the time, or the energy to spare. There's a valid message here, and a lively tongue-in-cheek read, besides.

# Excuses, Excuses

**I**t takes a special person to be a volunteer, and we wish we were one of them. We would be one heck-of-a volunteer! But there's the time element. Those 26 people nominated for the Duxbury Community Volunteer Award have so much time on their hands, they must know magic! How else do they squeeze so many hours in a day? If only we had more time ... but TNT is showing episodes of Law and Order back to back, 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday. USA is showing L&O: Special Victims' Unit, to fill in any gaps, and Friday, of course, is family video night. Last Friday we rented *The Last Samurai*. It was very much about sacrifice, so we could relate to these community nominees who sacrifice so much of their lives; it made us feel like a nominee, ourselves, vicariously, until Tom Cruise got killed by so many arrows. Then comes the weekend, but Saturday the lawn needs mowing, and we have to pay close attention or else the neighbor boy who we pay \$10 might run rampant through the ranunculus. Sunday is taken up by trying to relax, regroup, and read the sales circulars stuffed into the newspaper, and there is no time left after circling the best deals that is not utilized driving to the store to take advantage of special one-day-only coupons.

Another advantage those nominees have is good

genes, because helping comes naturally to them. Just as there are genes for blue eyes, there are genes for doing good. It's not as if these volunteers sometimes have to force themselves to attend yet another youth softball meeting or pack turkeys in the Thanksgiving baskets. Because they were born with the right DNA, they would never rather just let someone else take care of the Fourth of July parade.

Unfortunately, our ancestors were lacking that generosity gene; they handed down to us the selfish genes. Oh, we can remember how the selfish genes of our parents ruled supreme; maybe they tried, but they couldn't fight nature. They used to fry us fish sticks for dinner while reserving the T-bone for themselves, avec des pommes frites. Oh, they reserved the pommes frites, because they also reserved for themselves trips to the rive gauche while we got Disney World. If only we had been born with better parents, we would be starting up genealogy classes at the Senior Center or delivering meals on wheels or planting perennials at Hall's Corner. If our parents had had higher caliber deoxyribonucleic acid we'd be at the PTA this very minute. We'd be chairman and we'd be organizing fundraisers.

What a whirlwind we would have been.

# New leadership in White House

**T**he 2004 presidential election is a referendum on George W. Bush's presidency. On Nov 2 voters have a critical question to answer: does President Bush deserve to be re-elected?

The answer here could not be made clearer: no.

President Bush had four years in the White House. He does not deserve four more. Voters should support the president's Democratic rival, Senator John Kerry.

When he ran for president four years ago, George Bush said he would be a "uniter not a divider." He has broken that pledge. Indeed, after Vice President Dick Cheney, there may be no larger divider in Washington D.C. than the president. Four years ago, the president ran as a moderate with the mantra of "compassionate conservatism." But since taking office, President Bush has pursued a radical and conservative agenda.

He has rolled back environmental regulations. He turned a surplus into a record deficit. He pushed through Congress huge tax cuts that have disproportionately benefited the rich. He passed a major education bill, No Child Left Behind, without providing adequate funding to implement the legislation's mandates. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the president began eroding civil liberties and basic rights granted by the U.S. Constitution through the U.S. Patriot Act.

Then there's the ill-conceived war in Iraq and the mismanaged occupation. President Bush misled this country as he campaigned for support for the war, using bad intelligence, exaggerating links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida and using an ever-shifting rationale to justify the war. His almost unilateral

pursuit of Saddam has left the U.S. isolated around the world. Since Saddam's fall, it has become clear that the president and the Pentagon failed to adequately plan to stabilize Iraq, leading to the chaos we now see in that country.

Senator Kerry offers a new start in Iraq and a chance to rebuild alliances around the world. The Democratic candidate got it right in last Thursday's presidential debate when he said that President Bush is out of touch with what is happening on the ground in Iraq, and that four more years of a Bush presidency will bring four more years of the same arrogant policies. A new president offers America a chance to convince more partners to help the U.S. rebuild Iraq — and repair America's reputation — and get our troops out of Iraq as soon as the country is stabilized.

At home, Senator Kerry has the better plan to provide health care to more people who are uninsured and to lower soaring insurance premiums. He pledges to do more to increase homeland security. He wants to rescind some of the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, those who needed the tax cuts the least, and close corporate tax loopholes. He promises to reduce the national deficit. He has more credibility than the president when he calls for investing in new technologies aimed at finding energy alternatives. While not the perfect candidate, John Kerry offers a stark contrast to the policies and plans of President Bush.

After four years of a Bush presidency, America needs a change. The nation would be better served with a fresh start, a new leader and a new direction. Americans would be better served with Senator Kerry.



**Robert Mihalek**

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**October 7, 2004**

## **FROM THE JUDGE**

**Amid a tsunami of partisan political messages, well-written journalism can clarify alternatives from which electors may choose. This editorial exemplifies such a distillation.**

**The writer tackles the serious matter of whether George Bush should get another four-year term in office. A half-dozen paramount issues are listed, a relentless analysis follows, a judgment is rendered on the president's performance to date, and, consequently, upon his claim to future leadership.**

**Agreed, or not, with the details and conclusions, most voters would see such a painstaking evaluation as a quantum leap for freedom — especially compared to slap-dash impulsiveness, buzz-words, banal "values," or vote-the-party" simplicities.**

**Editorialists like this should keep on keeping on.**



## Richard McCord

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December 1, 2004

### FROM THE JUDGE

**Democracy is a fine thing, but should ordinary people be entrusted with it?**

**This editorial is a jolting posit that millions of voters are so slovenly, or so shallow in their thinking processes, that they can be distracted by sloganeers and spin merchants. Meanwhile, mendacious leaders go ahead and do exactly what they please. There is a point strongly made here — when a nation's voter-citizens turn superficial in their judgments, "democracy" is no longer quite what it ought to be.**

# They Knew Not What They Did: Why America Re-Elected George Bush

**S**hortly before the November election, a joke went around about a robotic bartender that was programmed to converse with patrons on any level, based upon their IQ. Thus when a man said his IQ was 160, the robot started discussing quantum physics, string theory and advanced calculus. When another guy said his IQ was 100, the robot chatted about football and hunting. And when a fellow said his IQ was 50, the robot asked, "So, gonna vote for George Bush again?"

For the anti-Bush camp, the joke was good for a chuckle. Not so funny, however, was a BBC news report at the same time. Noting that polls in Oregon, as in many other states, showed urban centers supporting John Kerry and rural areas backing Bush, the BBC sent a reporter to a county fair.

In her clipped British accent she asked people on the fairway who would get their vote. "President Bush," said one man, slowly. "I don't agree with all his policies — for instance, I don't think we should be in Iraq — but ... he's a Christian." A woman was more emphatic: "George Bush all the way)" And why? "Those Al Qaedas attacked us in New York, and now we're taking it to them in Iraq." But the 9/11 commission found no link between Al Qaeda and Iraq, the reporter pointed out. "Well, they came from over there somewhere," the woman replied. "I say just kill 'em all."

The American people have spoken, and for a majority of them, George W. Bush is their man. But do they know why?

By any yardstick that I can see, Bush's actual on-the-job performance has been dreadful. On his watch, more than a million jobs for ordinary people have been lost, while the wealthy elite have gotten huge tax cuts. The largest deficits in the nation's history are accumulating. Nothing resembling a comprehensive health plan is even on the horizon. This administration refuses to tell the American people who cooked up its so-called energy policy, which among other things now faces the highest oil prices ever.

And the war in Iraq? It surely will go down as one of the most monumental foreign-policy disasters ever. Illegal on the face of it, because Iraq had not attacked the United States and had no capability of doing so, this invasion was based on one false premise after another, all of them now disproved. It has lost America most of its friends in the world community. Its price tag is reaching into the hundreds of billions of dollars.

Already it has cost more than 1,200 American deaths plus 8,000 more casualties, everyone of which is on Bush's hands. A stated reason for the war was that Saddam Hussein had a record of slaughtering his own people, but now the war itself has killed more than 100,000 Iraqis. Before it ends, Bush will have caused more Iraqi deaths than Saddam ever did. This from a man who was a military deserter.

Nor does Bush have any coherent withdrawal strategy. My own prediction is that the U.S. will cobble together something next January and call it a democratic election,

then get the hell out and leave Iraq in chaos, the most dangerous seat of terrorism on Earth. It would be a parody of the old Vietnam line: Why not just declare victory and go home?

The job-performance analysis could go on, but that's enough for starters. So here is my burning question: With this actual record right before their eyes, how could a majority of the American people re-elect George W. Bush?

The answer is enough to make us tremble, and it was spelled out in large part by those good folks at the Oregon county fair. I fear that Americans by the millions are simply not informing themselves well enough to vote intelligently.

Instead they are being programmed by sound bites, by slick 30-second TV spots, by fundamentalist preachers, by labels and slogans such as "God-fearing" or "stay the course," by outright lies and denials. How sadly illuminating that millions of voters said that their most important election concern was "moral values" — whatever that means. I saw it as a sign that they were not well-enough informed to state a specific issue and so fell back upon the vague feeling that Bush/Cheney were pillars of righteousness while Kerry/Edwards (neither of whom has ever stirred a hint of scandal) were tools of Satan.

In the aftermath of the election I thought and thought, trying to understand why intelligent and concerned people who actually were aware of Bush's performance could vote for him. I honestly could not figure it out. So I had lunch with a Republican friend I admire greatly — a man of character and intellect, and an avowed Bush supporter — and asked him to explain. We had a spirited discussion (he said I raised my voice too high, which is probably true), and afterward I reflected upon our talk.

I realized that my friend had said almost nothing specifically in favor of Bush policies, but instead had talked about the core principles of the Republican Party — like leaving individuals and businesses free to manage their own affairs, without governmental interference. So then I blundered, by suggesting in an e-mail that it seemed his position was "I'm a Republican, and I vote Republican." This was certainly an honorable position, I said, but perhaps not very deep. I'm afraid my rude assessment offended him, which I regret.

But I am, most sincerely, still trying to figure out why a majority of Americans picked Bush. John Kerry was by no means a perfect candidate, I admit — but when weighing an unknown quantity against an obvious disaster the choice is clear, I feel. When choosing between Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, Americans overwhelmingly took a chance.

Without exaggeration, I am troubled on a deep level by the outcome of this election. When the Founders in 1776 embarked upon the astonishing Americans experiment of democracy, it was based upon the bold premise that an informed citizenry could make wise choices to govern itself wisely. Yet on November 2, 2004, I fear, a largely uninformed citizenry made a decidedly unwise choice — one that rattles the basic structure of our democracy.

# The good, the bad and the ugly

**I**n February, James Allen was hunting bison like it was 1872.

The guy, who happens to be chief of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, was out with a three buddies near Aishihik Lake.

He aimed at a herd of the animals and opened fire, squeezing off four rounds and emptying his rifle, which, by the way, wasn't powerful enough to humanely hunt bison.

He wounded a small cow.

One of his buddies, Devon Hurlburt, who had already shot a bison, put Allen's animal out of its misery.

And Hurlburt found another injured cow, limping and unable to keep up with the herd. There's a good chance it was also shot by Allen.

It was also dispatched.

A fourth animal, a large bull, was also found dead, shot by Allen.

The Nisling herd, which was transplanted to the territory in 1986 from Elk Island, Alberta, has about 500 animals, which range widely throughout south-central Yukon.

They are descendents of the great herds that were hunted to within a whisker of extinction in 1879.

Allen's shooting spree resulted in the death of two, and possibly three wood bison, which are still considered a species at risk in Canada.

He was charged with shooting too many animals and hunting with a rifle not powerful enough for the task.

After threatening to take his case to the Supreme Court of Canada, he pleaded guilty to one count of poaching. He'll be sentenced later this month.

Here's where the story turns strange.

Allen is unrepentant.

"I believe it was defensible," he said, shortly after his appearance last week in territorial court. He added he gave away the meat.

He's nettled that neither the Council for Yukon First Nations nor any individual First Nations offered to contribute to his legal defence.

"One of the things I can state is that the process, if it went any higher than this lower court, it would be expensive and there are no First Nations backing me," he said.

"I was in a conflict situation. I can't garner support myself when I'm being charged. It isn't in my principle."

And then he played his trump card, bringing First Nation culture into the equation.

He called the Haines Junction conservation office hostile to First Nation hunting practices.

"I'll say that most of the Yukon have wildlife offices and officers that try to accommodate First Nations cultural hunting practices. They show more respect, more courtesy than the Haines Junction office.

"If you ask people up that way, you will have stories that show that the Haines Junction office isn't friendly to First Nations hunters or trappers."

We found the statement amazing, considering it came on the heels of a second account of a First Nation leader abusing bison-hunt privileges in the Haines Junction region.

Robert Dickson, an elder and chief, pleaded guilty recently to wasting bison meat after a hunt at Borthwick Lake in March.

He was fined \$1,250 and ordered, along with his niece, to attend a bison-hunting workshop.

If anything, this shows Haines Junction conservation officers are doing their jobs.

If you were to look at the bright side, Allen's handling of this affair, coupled with his ludicrous statements, may have served some useful purpose.

First, it has damaged the widespread and inherently dangerous belief that aboriginal people are selfless stewards of the territory's natural resources.

And rather than expose racism within Environment, the affair has shown that people are people.

That laws exist for very good reasons.

And, finally, that aboriginal leaders must abide by them just like everyone else.



**Richard Mostyn**

Editor,  
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October 4, 2004

## FROM THE JUDGE

**Purposeful courage in editorials is a commendable thing; this powerful document tackles, head-on, the touchy issues of ethnicity and aboriginal privilege.**

**A catchy narrative style, clear explanation and excellent detail all lead readers to a logical conclusion: game-hogging and heedless cruelty while hunting have nothing at all to do with race, or aboriginal "rights."**



**Chris Thompson**

Staff Writer,  
*East Bay Express*

1335 Stanford  
Emeryville, California 94608

July 7, 2004

#### FROM THE JUDGE

Should an editorial writer merely comment?

Or does that variant within the journalistic vocations occasionally have a wider responsibility — sometimes to delve into actual story telling, and by implication, pronounce with greater subtlety upon issues of public importance?

In a fascinating entry which threatens to cross between opinion-writing and traditional feature coverage, this lengthy item provides an absorbing study of much more than a celebrity book-signing event.

# The Sun King Back in the Spotlight

**T**he Bill Clinton decade saw the unprecedented expansion of a scurrilous but age-old industry: professional populism. It began on the right, with Limbaugh and talk radio, and ballooned to comical proportions during the impeachment affair, catalyzed by communications technology that created so many Web sites and cable stations that no one ever again had to listen to a divergent point of view.

Now even liberals have learned how to play the game, as Michael Moore and Al Franken cash in by churning out invective just like right-wingers Sean Hannity and Ann Coulter did before them. The nation is awash in polemics that aim not to persuade, but reaffirm. And they all suck. Still, people eat 'em up: Every fatuous bit of populist pulp makes the best-seller list of *The New York Times*. These books are literally meant to be judged by their covers — their value lies not in the crap that lines their pages, but in their totemic shorthand for the politics of the purchaser. They're ideological fetishes, trophies that declare your values to the world — or at least to the visitors to your study.

Last Christmas, Andy Ross, the owner of Berkeley's venerable Cody's Books, did his best to exploit this trend by offering a holiday package he called "Bush in a Box," which included works by Molly Ivins, Al Franken, and Paul Krugman. But in this new era of politics as commodity fetishism, nothing beats Bill Clinton's *My Life*, which despite scathing reviews in journals across the country sold 2,200 copies at Cody's in one week alone. Of course, the former president's memoir is nothing like those other angry screeds. Aside from the white-hot passages about Kenneth Starr, his memoir is a squishy, Oprahfied reminiscence about everything from his broken family to the affair with that woman. But they have one thing in common: People buy them not to read, but to display.

Last Tuesday, thousands of people had an extra incentive to buy the book — a Cody's sales receipt could get you inside the store, where Clinton himself would shake your hand, sign your copy, and give you a chance to swoon at his feet. And so an army of Clintonistas had camped beneath the trees near the store, braving the fauna of Telegraph street life for a chance to stand before the man who dominated the 1990s, to drink him in for five seconds before someone in a suit pushed them out the door. As they rubbed their sore muscles and dislodged their eye boogers just before eight in the morning, the overcast sky mirrored the fog in their heads, and more than a few sealed themselves within their blankets and lawn chairs, keeping out the morning for a few more minutes. But most of these devotees seemed perky. The stench of urine that usually permeates this side of the store had been scrubbed away, and people blearily greeted the new friends they had made last night.

New friends like Jeff, the Filipino banker, and Bill, the Republican with a bum leg. These two sat just thirty feet from the store's front door all night, fidgety and buoyed by the camaraderie of a common purpose. Guitarists serenaded them with folk songs during the night, and they even did the Wave every few hours. Bill even boasted that he had sprung for pizzas for his new buddies, although that was clearly payment for enduring

the cheesy Catskills shtick that wouldn't stop coming out of his mouth. Nodding toward a few women to his left, Bill chortled, "This is the first time I've slept with three women on the first date!" and a young girl muttered, "Yes, we know — you've said that five times now."

Meanwhile, Jeff Elardo sat in his lawn chair, clutching a copy of the memoir that would be his ticket through the door. "I really want to see Clinton," he said. "I originally came from the Philippines, and I've never seen a president face to face. That's something I'll be able to say in my old age, that's something I'll be able to tell my relatives." But when asked about Clinton's greatest accomplishments, Elardo fumbled for words. "I love him so much. I mean, every president is good. He brought something so good for this country. The economy was good, people had jobs. Especially the young ones, they had an opportunity; they graduated from college and got a job that paid \$100,000. Nobody had ever seen something like that. When I started working, I made four dollars an hour!"

And so it went with most people in line. No one could point to, say, the earned income tax credit, or the Family Medical Leave Act — in fact, no one seemed able to remember much of anything the man had done in office. And despite the folk songs, Bill Clinton was hardly a liberal's paramour: He rose to power by repudiating the very ideas so dear to Berkeley's heart.

But that wasn't why people were here, anyway. Up and down the line, you could feel a warm, insensate nostalgia for a time when everyone had a job, terrorism was a gnat buzzing around east African embassies, and the nation's leader spoke of pulling together and lifting people up, not of crusades and war. They yearned for Clinton's boundless, palpable empathy. They wanted to be seduced all over again by his need to love and be loved by us.

"Whenever he's around, you just feel so much more secure," said Aiyana Armijo, a young Cal student who lay on an inflatable mattress near the driveway that she hoped Clinton would take to get into the building. "He's charming, not so much in a handsome way, but he knows so much it's amazing. I just remember feeling a lot more secure when he spoke. And it wasn't in a speech — it just all came out."

As the sun finally broke through the clouds and the crowd swelled to three thousand, the '90s era of good feelings, the generosity of this moment, stretched around the block. People passed food down the line. Men tried to help strangers in wheelchairs to cross the street. They looked like pilgrims on their way to Lourdes or Our Lady of Fatima. And they came in search of relics — in this case, the president's handwriting, scrawled on the books they clutched in their hands.

By 11 a.m., the festival was really getting under way. The cops blocked Telegraph Avenue and Haste Street with metal barricades, and a crowd coagulated outside the perimeter. Reporters snagged man-in-the-street interviews by intercepting people in the Porta Potti line. Hare Krishnas soft-shoed down the street, ululating their mantras. The Cal marching band showed up and broke into a brassy rendition of "Come on Eileen." A college kid dangled from the fire escape across the street, wearing a Clinton mask and flashing Churchill's victory sign.

*continued on page 20*



# The 30th annual Eugene Cervi Award

The Eugene Cervi Award was established by ISWNE in 1976 honor the memory of Eugene Cervi of the *Rocky Mountain Journal*, Denver, by recognizing a newspaper editor who has consistently acted in the conviction that "good journalism begets good government."

The award is presented not for a single brave accomplishment, however deserv-

ing, but for a career of outstanding public service through community journalism and for adhering to the highest standards of the craft with the deep reverence for the English language that was the hallmark of Gene Cervi's writing. The award also recognizes consistently aggressive reporting of government at the grassroots level and interpretation of local affairs.

Cervi died on Dec. 15, 1970, from injuries suffered in an automobile accident. He was 64. Several ISWNE members regard him as their "journalism conscience."



## This Year's Winner Is... Frank Wood

Born in St. Ignace, Michigan, Frank A. Wood earned a B.A. degree from the University of Chicago before purchasing a small weekly newspaper in 1953 called the *Denmark Press*. In 1956, while still running the newspaper, Frank earned his M.A. in his-

tory and English from Marquette University.

Brown County Publishing Company was formed by Frank in 1960 when the opportunity came up to purchase *The Green Bay Advertiser*, a local shopper's guide that was financially troubled. He changed its format and renamed it the *Brown County Chronicle*, adding opinion and some news content. Then, in 1976, Frank purchased a substantial share in the struggling *Green Bay Daily News*. He merged this newspaper with the *Brown County Chronicle* to create the *Green Bay News-Chronicle*.

In addition to the *Green Bay News-Chronicle*, Brown County Publishing produced seven paid-circulation newspapers, reaching 150,000 households in northeast Wisconsin. It also published a dozen shopper's guides and a variety of niche publications, in total, employing 260 full-time and 130 to 150 part-

time staff members. Frank sold his company to Gannett in July 2004.

Concurrently throughout his newspaper and publishing career, Frank taught a variety of international business and humanities classes at St. Norbert College, first part-time in 1957 and later as a full-time faculty member from 1966 to 1988. These achievements were recognized in May 2003 when St. Norbert College conferred upon Frank the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.

Frank also has received an award from the Bay Area Agency for the Aging for the continuing employment opportunities he offered older workers, as well as numerous awards from the Wisconsin Newspaper Association for excellence in his publications. His contributions to the community extend far beyond business and teaching; Frank has been actively involved in a number of boards and executive committees including the Association of Retarded Citizens, Wells Fargo Bank, and St. Norbert College.

Additionally, Frank and his wife, Agnes, support various community interests through the Wood Family Foundation. They have been married for 55 years and have eight children: Mary (deceased), Patrick, Christopher, Michael, Dan, Rebecca, Tom, and Megan.

# Frank Wood a model of what a community publisher should be

By Carol O'Leary  
Publisher, *Tribune-Phonograph*, Abbotsford, Wis.  
*Star News*, Medford, Wis.  
*Record-Review*, Edgar, Wis.

Soft-spoken Frank Wood has been called David, as in David and Goliath, for his more than three-decade battle with the giant Gannett Publishing Company. The battle has been chronicled in the book *The Chain Gang*, authored by Dick McCord, featured on CNN and *Forbes* magazine and presented as a 10-part series in his daily newspaper the *News-Chronicle*.

Why did Frank wage this battle year after year, losing millions of dollars? To understand his reasoning, or insanity, as some have called it, takes someone

who loves the First Amendment as fervently as Frank.

I have known Frank Wood and his family for only the last 10 years or so and have served on the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation board with him for the past seven years. In that time Frank has been a model of what a community newspaper publisher should be — honest, generous, a real asset to his community and real threat to anyone who would harm that community.

Frank and his wife Agnes brought their first weekly newspaper in Denmark, Wis., in 1953 with their savings of \$700 and a \$17,460 loan. That was the beginning of Brown County Publishing Co., based in Denmark.

The Denmark paper was the typical husband-wife operation with the couple taking off only two Saturday nights and two Sundays in the first 3-1/2 years. Frank took the photographs, sold advertising and wrote the features and also ran

the press. Agnes wrote up the weddings and obituaries and did the books. The paper grossed \$22,000 the first year and Frank and Agnes took out \$75 a week to provide for their family.

Through the years the couple purchased many more weekly newspapers and shoppers in the Green Bay area and in 1976 Frank decided to purchase the *News-Chronicle* daily in Green Bay. The *News Chronicle* had been started three years earlier by striking workers from the city's *Press-Gazette*, at that time a family owned newspaper.

Frank was determined to make the paper succeed and vowed not to cut his beard until the paper turned a profit. Seventeen months later he was able to trim his waist-length beard. Success for the paper was short-lived as the competing *Press-Gazette* was sold to Gannett in 1980. By 1987 the *News-Chronicle* had been forced to cut advertising rates by as much as 40 percent to keep pace with the Gannett rates.

In 1989 Frank hired Dick McCord to delve into the tactics Gannett was using to destroy the *News-Chronicle's* subscription and advertising revenues. McCord had been a daily journalist in New York City for four years and co-publisher of the *Santa Fe Reporter* in New Mexico from 1974 to 1988. With McCord doing the investigating, Frank was able to concentrate on putting out the paper. The complete record of the battle was published in 1996 in McCord's book, *The Chain Gang*.

As of spring 2005, the *News-Chronicle* continues to be published, 29 years after Frank bought the paper and almost a year since he made the decision to sell that paper along with his weekly newspapers, the *De Pere Journal*, *Sturgeon Bay Door County Advocate*, the *Algoma Record-Herald*, *Denmark Press*, *Kewaunee Enterprise*, *Luxemburg News* and *Oconto Reporter*, to his

nemesis Gannett. How long the *News-Chronicle* will continue to operate is certainly a matter of speculation in Wisconsin, but that it was published at all after 1980 is solely because of the determination of Frank Wood. In his farewell editorial in the *News-Chronicle* Frank stated that his time was running out and changes in leadership in the Gannett organization in Wisconsin and changes in his own family had made it the right time for him to get "his house in order." Frank is not retired, far from it.

In 1956 Frank went back to school and earned a master's degree in history and English and attended the executive MBA program at the University of Chicago. In 1966 he became an assistant professor at St. Norbert College, a small liberal arts college owned by the Norbertine Order in De Pere, Wis. There he taught humanities, international business and business policy courses.

It was through St. Norbert's College that Frank became interested in the plight of journalists in war-torn Bosnia. He has had several groups of Bosnian journalists visit Wisconsin and present their attempts to bring freedom of the press to their country. Frank worked tirelessly and tried to find sponsors to ship one of his used newspaper presses to Bosnia. He was willing to donate the press and send employees to Bosnia to train pressmen. Unfortunately his plea for government or industry help has gone unanswered, but Frank's determination to aid that country in their quest for freedom of the press is ongoing.

Frank and Agnes are the parents of eight children. Their son Chris, a member of ISWNE, operates Wisconsin Web Offset, a printer for magazines, advertising flyers and newspapers. The family has gone through a lot together. They know what newspapers mean to communities and they have won the admiration of those they have so tirelessly served

# GENE CERVI

## AWARD WINNERS

- 2005 **Frank Wood**, De Pere, Wis.
- 2004 **Frank Garred**, *The Port Townsend Leader*, Port Townsend, Wash.
- 2003 **Gary & Helen Sosniecki**, *The Lebanon Daily Record*, Lebanon, Mo.
- 2002 **Bill Meyer**, *Marion County Record*, Marion County, Kan.
- 2001 **Marg Hennigar**, *Lighthouse Publishing*, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia
- 2000 **Allan A. Seiler**, *The Pike Press*, Pittsfield, Ill.
- 1999 No award given
- 1998 **Jack Authelet**, *Foxboro (Mass.) Reporter*
- 1997 **Carol Wilcox & Cary Stiff**, *Clear Creek Courant*, Idaho Springs, Colo.
- 1996 **Charlotte & Marvin Schexnayder**, *Dumas (Ark.) Clarion*
- 1995 No award given
- 1994 **Jim MacNeill**, *The Eastern Graphic*, Montague, Prince Edward Island
- 1993 **Bob Bliss**, *The Montgomery County News*, Hillsboro, Ill.
- 1992 **Robert Trapp**, *Rio Grande Sun*, Espanola, N.M.
- 1991 **Henry Gay**, *Shelton-Mason County Journal*, Shelton, Wash.
- 1990 **Karl Monroe**, *Collinsville (Ill.) Herald*



**Garred**



**G. Sosniecki**



**H. Sosniecki**



**Meyer**

- 1989 **William Rotch**, *Milford (N.H.) Cabinet*
- 1988 **Bruce Brugmann**, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*
- 1987 **James Russell Wiggins**, *Ellsworth (Maine) American*
- 1986 **Rollin McCommons**, *Athens (Ga.) Observer*
- 1985 **McDill (Huck) Boyd**, *Phillips County Review*, Phillipsburg, Kan.
- 1984 **Richard McCord**, *Santa Fe (N.M.) Reporter*
- 1983 **Homer Marcum**, *The Martin Countian*, Inez, Ky.
- 1982 **Kieth Howard**, *Yellow Springs (Ohio) News*
- 1981 **Edward DeCourcy**, *Newport (N.H.) Argus Champion*
- 1980 **Robert Estabrook**, *Lakeville (Conn.) Journal*
- 1979 **Houstoun Waring**, *Littleton (Colo.) Independent*
- 1978 **Tom Leathers**, *The Squire*, Kansas City, Mo.
- 1977 **Charles & Virginia Russell**, *Dewitt County Observer*, Clinton, Ill.
- 1976 **Blair Macy**, *Keene Valley Sun*, Kennesburg, Colo.



**Hennigar**



**Seiler**



**Leathers**



**Estabrook**

# A few words from Frank Wood's supporters

## Frank taught me a lot about doing the right thing

It is my distinct honor to recommend Frank Wood of Wisconsin as a candidate for the Eugene Cervi Award.

I have known Frank for perhaps 15 or more years. Our relationship is rooted in the newspaper business and our collective efforts to advance the interests of our profession. Over the time of our association, Frank has become a valued role model for me and an obvious inspiration to many others. In fact, I believe it is fair to suggest that Frank is a legendary community newspaperman in our state.

Frank's commitment to newspapers, good journalism and good government is unquestioned. I trust his endless achievements and honors related to these objectives have been adequately documented in this nomination. I prefer to focus my contribution on Frank Wood's decency as a human being.

Shortly after meeting Frank, we were both serving as members of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association's board of directors. I was a young editor/publisher and relatively new to the board. I depended on the experience and wisdom of others to help guide us. With that background, one particular incident involving Frank remains prominent in my mind.

The issue concerned the retirement package for our outgoing WNA director. As I recall, about \$60,000 had accumulated in this individual's retirement account, although WNA was obligated to fund only about a third of that amount. As the association was a bit strapped for cash at that time, the prospect of adding about \$40,000 that legitimately belonged to WNA was appealing. A lengthy pause endured after the details of the situation were carefully explained to us. I was uncertain of my position. Then Frank spoke: "The man has worked diligently on our behalf for many years. I think the least we can do is to give him the full amount." With Frank's gentle prodding, the board quickly agreed. Immediately, I knew we made the correct decision.

Frank's leadership and thoughtfulness that afternoon impressed me greatly. He taught me a lot about trying to do the right thing. Many times over the years, as I dealt with similar challenges, I would reflect on the simple human decency that Frank exemplified on that occasion. He is my model. Frank is the rare individual who truly understands the deeper mission.

In my view, ISWNE would do the "right thing" by recognizing the overwhelming contributions of Frank Wood to his community and the newspaper industry. He clearly embodies the "highest standards of the craft" reflective of the Eugene Cervi Award and would be a most worthy selection.

Thank you for your consideration.

— Bill Haupt, Lodi, Wisconsin

## 'The single most courageous act I have ever witnessed'

Long-time *News-Chronicle* readers are familiar with this "State of the Newspaper" report. As part of our annual Anniversary Edition, it is a summary of the year past and a glimmer into what might be expected in the year ahead.

It is akin to a stockholders report to the people who give us the means to carry on.

\* \* \* \* \*

First, I should address the 800-pound gorilla now sitting at the head of the dinner table: As of July 23, we are a part of Gannett Co. Inc., an organization that was often a subject of this report and rarely portrayed in a flattering manner.

At this time last year (November 2003), we were in the middle of a bad year by virtually any measure. Losses kept piling up, revenues from advertising and circulation were dropping, we had cut staff and started mailing the paper to some people who had received it for years via personal delivery.

Nonetheless, I ended last year's report with a note of optimism, a belief

that a long-stagnant local economy was showing signs of perking up. I felt this rising tide would lift our ship as well.

It didn't.

Things actually got worse, not just for us at the daily newspaper but for the company at large. Our owner and the patriarch of our newspaper, Frank Wood, looked more haggard by the day. We knew the company was in its worse straits ever, and, given our tempest-tossed history, that's saying a lot.

So, in late July, when our general manager, Al Rasmussen, called me on the phone and said Wood wanted to meet with me right away at a downtown hotel room, I expected nothing good. Either I was about to be the next person to be laid off, or we were going to shut down the newspaper. I could think of nothing else that would prompt such a cloak-and-dagger powwow.

Instead, Wood asked me if I knew the woman sitting at the end of a large table in the hotel meeting room and, when I said I didn't, he introduced me to my new boss, Ellen Leifeld, publisher of the *Post-Crescent* in Appleton and the person in charge of Gannett operations in this part of the world.

It took a beat for it to sink in. "Oh, my God," I thought. "We've been sold to Gannett." I tried my best not to act as dumbstruck as I was.

Two days later, we did something unique in our history: We shut down every office of every paper we owned, and every employee came to the very same hotel to receive the news.

Managers of the company were the first to be told, meeting in a separate, earlier session. Wood tried to explain what had happened and why, but he couldn't choke back his emotions enough to speak. Leifeld graciously rescued him and explained the sale. There was a collective gasp.

Wood soon recovered and explained that Gannett had promised to leave all jobs intact for the immediate future. He said that in the course of negotiating the sale he had come to truly respect and trust Leifeld.

The same scenario was repeated at the general meeting of all employees with the same resulting gasp, only amplified by the 200-plus people in attendance.

Wood and I were besieged by media that entire day and well into the next. The story of the sale ran prominently on all local television and radio stations, in the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, almost all other daily newspapers in the state and quite a few across the country.

Goliath, they said, had defeated David.

\* \* \* \* \*

That weekend, after things subsided, I had time to reflect.

I have known Frank Wood since my college days at St. Norbert more than three decades ago. He gave me my first job out of school. He allowed me to learn a craft that would help me feed, raise and get an education for my kids.

My wife and I went to school with his daughter Mary, who died two years ago and left everyone who knew her heartbroken. I worked with Wood's eldest son, Pat, who sold advertising for the old *Brown County Chronicle*. I hired the next-in-line son, Chris, as the sports editor for this newspaper right out of college.

My spouse and I knew the Wood family well enough to understand that Frank might have been the driving force and economic engine, but his wife, Agnes, was the heart and spirit of it, a more gracious person you could never meet.

And I thought this sale to Gannett, a company he had battled for years with every fiber in his being, must gall him terribly. He had to know he would be labeled a hypocrite and a sell-out, and that, too, must have eaten at him. He certainly knew the sale would be a concession that he, an extremely and justifiably proud man, was personally at the end of a long love affair with news and newspapers.

In this moment of contemplation, I realized Wood made the ultimate sacrifice: He had put reputation and pride aside to salvage as best he could the

newspaper he had nurtured and the jobs of those who worked for him.

It was the single most courageous act I have ever witnessed.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Postscript: *The Green Bay News-Chronicle* is still publishing today. Its long-time rival, the *Green Bay Press-Gazette*, now delivers both newspapers, and printing of all of Wood's former newspapers is done at Gannett's central plant in Appleton, Wis. Most of the people displaced by these moves were offered positions with Gannett's other local holdings. Wood is still running a commercial printing business in Brookfield, Wis., called Wisconsin Web Offset, and writes a weekly column in a news supplement published by the *News-Chronicle*.)

— Tom Brooker, Editor, *Green Bay News-Chronicle*, Nov. 8, 2004

## Green Bay paper's battle ends; owner sells to Gannett

It wasn't for a lack of fight, but Frank Wood finally sold out to the enemy.

After more than 24 years of going head-to-head against the country's largest newspaper chain, Gannett Co., Wood announced Friday that he had sold his *Green Bay News-Chronicle* to the company he often accused of unfairly trying to put him out of business.

"This has been a decision that's been in the making probably for a third of the 51 years I've been in business," Wood said. "At the age of 76, I feel I'm out of step with the times and in terms of my sized operation, I'm kind of irrelevant."

Gannett, which owns the much larger *Green Bay Press-Gazette* along with 100 other daily newspapers including *USA Today*, said it purchased Wood's Brown County Publishing Co., which includes 23 community newspapers in northeast Wisconsin, for an undisclosed price.

Ultimately, the *News-Chronicle's* weekday circulation of about 6,000 was

unable to compete with the *Press-Gazette's* weekday circulation of 56,865.

*The News-Chronicle* has a 10-person editorial staff. The sale ends a battle that began in 1980 and escalated in the 1990s. Woods' story of his efforts to withstand Gannett's pressures against his advertisers was chronicled in *The Chain Gang* by Richard McCord, who published a Santa Fe newspaper during the 1970s and '80s that competed against a Gannett paper.

"This seems like a graceful and successful way for Frank to lay down his arms," McCord said. "Frank has put up an astonishing struggle to remain community based and independent in an age of media conglomerates. I told him it would be no victory at all if he had a heart attack continuing this epic battle."

Gannett spokeswoman Lynette Mack said there are no plans to shut down the *News-Chronicle* or any Brown County publication.

"Whatever issues Frank had in the past, all I can say is he's really entrusted us with the stewardship of these newspapers and we're dedicated to preserving the *News-Chronicle* as an alternative voice in the community," Mack said. Gannett owns nine other daily newspapers in Wisconsin.

The *News-Chronicle* was born in 1972 when striking workers at the *Press-Gazette*, then owned by a local family, decided to launch their own newspaper. Wood took control of the *News-Chronicle* four years later. Gannett purchased the *Press-Gazette* in 1980.

According to *News-Chronicle* editor Tom Brooker, gentlemanly competition between Gannett and Wood turned into a fiery battle in the late 1980s. That was shortly after Wood announced that for the first time in its history, Green Bay's smaller newspaper had turned a profit.

During much of its history, Brooker said, the *News-Chronicle* lost money. Its survival depended on being subsidized by Wood's other publications.

"The competition has been strong, no question about it," Brooker said. "We've had to scrap for every dollar."

— Leon Lazaroff, *Chicago Tribune* national correspondent,  
July 24, 2004

## The Sun King Back in the Spotlight from page 16

Ten years ago, a mob of rabid radicals would have burned the former president in effigy. Now, just one lone street vendor hefted a "Ralph Nader for President" sign.

Clinton's book publicists and personal advance team scurried back and forth, tying up loose ends and finalizing the motorcade route. His personal entourage consisted entirely of young interns — male ones, thank you very much — all fresh-faced and idealistic, fresh meat for life's disappointments. Their leader was a skinny, driven woman in a black business suit who spent the day giving herself an ulcer. Secret Service agents swept the crowd with their eyes. The Cody's front doors burst open, and a linebacker in a suit and earpiece escorted out a crank who somehow had snuck in the building. The nut leaned on his cane and breathlessly explained how he had learned of a sinister assassination conspiracy, while the agent crossed his arms and listened with admirable professionalism. "I'd very much like to meet him, okay?" the intruder begged. "You can check out my background."

The publicists dropped hints of our impending annunciation: "He just left San Francisco." "He's ten minutes away." "He'll go through that entrance there." Security agents herded reporters and cameramen into the "press pen," which was exactly that, a cattle car of metal barricades. Using metal wands, the Secret Service swept us for weapons, but they might as well have been checking for brucellosis.

Finally, the goons ushered five reporters at a time into the store's second floor, where we dutifully waited behind a velvet rope. The first two dozen pilgrims assembled next to us, giddy with lack of sleep. One woman kept reciting what she wanted to say: "You know, you're the first presidential candidate I voted for that actually won!" Motown dripped out of the speakers — the president signs faster to Martha and the Vandellas, we were told. A roar from the street tipped us off that the motorcade had arrived, and Clinton entered the building. Befitting his messianic itinerary, he spoke first with the disabled fans who had gathered on the first floor. No word on whether any of

the lame could walk by the time he was through.

Cody's proprietor Andy Ross stood to the side, a big, beaming smile permanently etched on his face. This was the apogee of his career, and he knew it. Then, as Clinton's advance team scrambled to customize his autograph station, the former president glided into the room, drifting over to a book-shelf and lingering on the Judaica section. Everything was in its place the coiffed silver hair, the capillared face, the immaculate suit. But when he said, "Hey, everybody," it came out timid and vulnerable. We had to strain to hear him. Everything about him was soft and warm, and the line of fans began to move forward into his amniotic orbit.

Outside, a few lefty radicals finally showed up, walking up and down the line and taunting the mushy, well-meaning liberals. Indymedia volunteer Chuck McNally hefted a loudspeaker festooned with Palestine stickers and shouted, "He fucks the world with a smile! ... Think about how you're screwing the world and yourself with your cognitive dissonance! Think. That's all we're asking!" One of his friends mockingly played the old Phil Ochs tune "Love Me, I'm a Liberal" from a boom box, and they all seemed deliciously pleased with themselves as the crowd rose to the bait: "Fuck you!" "Fascist!" "Go home!"

Moved back inside, the benediction proceeded without a hitch. Cody's staff moved each person forward, a Secret Service agent opened their books to the appropriate page, and Clinton signed with his left hand while shaking hands with his right. But that moment between patrons and the president, when his eyes crinkled and locked into those of his supplicants, and his lilting, soulful voice said how grateful he was that you came to see him — that was the eucharist they slept here overnight to receive. Roadside bombs may spill Marine entrails onto the sand a world away, and John Ashcroft may issue a terrorist alert tomorrow, but today, these wayward liberals had their moment in the sun — or, perhaps, with the Sun King.

# grassroots editor



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