

FOI



State Supreme Court upholds Ethics ruling in Open Meetings case

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The Bill Minor Prize

Journalists talk about award winning work

By LAYNE BRUCE

JACKSON

In an era when the work of journalists is often assailed as fake, five winners of the Bill Minor Journalism Prize assembled in Jackson to discuss their work on stories about true cases of murder and malfeasance.

Ray Mosby and Natalie Perkins of the *Deer Creek Pilot* in Rolling Fork and Jerry Mitchell of *The Clarion-Ledger*, winners of the Minor Prize for Investigative Journalism, and Jamie Patterson of *The Yazoo Herald* and Tim Kalich of *The Greenwood Commonwealth*, winners of the Minor Prize for General News Reporting all participated in the panel discussion as part of Millsaps College's Friday Forum series. The event was



Discussing the work that led them to be awarded the Bill Minor Prize with moderator Rick Cleveland (left) are Jerry Mitchell of *The Clarion-Ledger*, Ray Mosby and Natalie Perkins of the *Deer Creek Pilot*, Jamie Patterson of *The Yazoo Herald*, and Tim Kalich of *The Greenwood Commonwealth*.

cosponsored by the MPA Education Foundation and moderated by syndicated columnist and longtime journalist Rick Cleveland, who opened the program by discussing the challenges facing community journalists.

"The best way to combat the perception that the media is the enemy is to put our heads down and do our jobs," he said.

Kalich was honored for a 2016 jailhouse interview with Edgar Ray Killen, convicted

in murders of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner during the Freedom Summer of 1964.

Kalich said the interview took place at the behest

MINOR » Page 11

Link, C-L publishers elected to MPA-MPS board



Hampton



Edwards

The president of *The Clarion-Ledger* and the publisher of *The Mississippi Link* have been tapped to join the MPA-MPS Board of Directors.

Jackie Hampton serves as publisher of the Jackson-based weekly *Link*. She is a Jackson native and a graduate of Lincoln University.

Hampton is active in the National Newspaper Publishers Association and was recently named its "Publisher of the Year" during the NNPA Convention in Washington, D.C. She serves on the organization's operations committee and chairs its scholarship committee.

Hampton originally joined

the *Link* in the mid 1990's on a limited basis to assist with advertising sales. Over time she came to lead the newspaper and is now a co-owner.

Nathan Edwards, president of *The Clarion-Ledger* and the *Hattiesburg American*, was named to the position in late 2015.

BOARD » Page 12

4E

Fourth Estate

The official newspaper of the Mississippi Press Association

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The Fourth Estate serves as the official newspaper of the Mississippi Press Association, recording the history of the organization, its members and associates. Copies are distributed at no charge to members and are available by contacting the MPA office.

Commentary columns published herein are the opinion of their respective authors and not necessarily those of the MPA, its board of directors or staff.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Plan to attend ArkLaMiss; Do your part to protect public notice in newspapers

WAYNESBORO

Fall is approaching (I promise, at least some time soon), which means thoughts for most newspapers start turning to holiday promotions and trying to finish the year strong.

While still in the throes of football season, though, there are plenty of opportunities for members to benefit from MPA programs being scheduled for the rest of the year and into 2018.

Up next on the calendar is the ArkLaMiss Circulation Conference in Vicksburg. Scheduled for Nov. 9-10 this year at the Ameristar Resort and Casino, the program is always beneficial to members. I can't tell you the number of times I've heard attendees say that one nugget gleaned from the conference helped pay for the entire event on their end.

Whether it is new circulation promotion ideas, cost-cutting measures to save you money or just some good revenue generation programs, the ArkLaMiss is one of the hidden gems offered each year by MPA in conjunction with the Arkansas Press Association and the Louisiana Press Association. With smaller crowds than a traditional convention, there is more fellowship and "one-on-one" encounters available for attendees.

ANOTHER PROGRAM that has been ongoing for years now is the MPA public notices website. While many members support our efforts to post all public notices on this unique website, we need full participation.

Each year, our lobbyists and MPA staff battle bills introduced in the Legislature that could harm our ability to public legal and public notices in our newspapers. Time and time again, these efforts have been thwarted by our staff. The best tool we can have to battle bills when they are introduced, though, is our public notices website. Many members have a classified program that can convert and post these to the website. Other papers, including mine, have to do it by hand. That can eat into an already cramped schedule for many of us. What I've found helps me in posting to the website is simple. Once I process the public notices for the paper that week, I immediately put the coding in for the website (it's a simple copy and



Paul Keane

paste), save it down in the proper format to my desktop and then upload it later in the week after I am off deadline. That means I normally upload them to the website Wednesday afternoon, which is well ahead of my Thursday delivery date for my paper.

I know that it's tough to remember to do it, but it is vital for our Association. Some of us were in recent discussions in Collins about the companies that are offering counties the option to conduct delinquent property taxes online. Here in Wayne County, the Tax Assessor realized roughly \$42,000 in additional revenue from the online auctions.

While the legislation in place says that counties using online auctions still must publish the property list in the newspaper of record, we all know that things can change rapidly. While we don't necessarily see this as a threat to public notices, we are trying to reach out and partner with these online companies so we can make sure your interests are protected.

It's much like the Godfather movie — "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer." We don't see these companies as enemies, but we feel it would be good to nurture a relationship with them and show them the benefits of keeping the delinquent tax lists in print.

ON A TOTALLY unrelated note, Hurricanes Harvey and Irma bring home a good point that you might want to consider. We all need to have a solid plan in place in the event of an emergency. MPA has a checklist and tips on how to plan for emergencies.

Often, we all are too busy covering the actual emergency (natural or man-made) that we don't cover ourselves and our companies properly. This three-page brochure can help you develop a plan so when an emergency happens, you can protect yourself and your company. It's free to all members simply by contacting the MPA office at 601-981-3060 and asking for it to be emailed to you.

I hope to see many of you at the ArkLaMiss Conference in Vicksburg. If I don't see you then, allow me to wish you the very best during the upcoming holidays and hopefully I will see you at Mid-Winter in January in Jackson.

MPA-MPS President **Paul Keane** is publisher of The Wayne County News in Waynesboro. His email address is publisher@thewayne-countynews.com

Monroe News Star to be printed in Jackson

FROM THE CLARION-LEDGER

The Clarion-Ledger is expanding its production operations with the addition of a sister newspaper.

Printing of *The* (Monroe, La.) *News Star* is moving to *The Clarion-Ledger's* facility, the company announced Wednesday. Nathan Edwards, president of *The Clarion-Ledger*, was excited to share the news with the local organization.

"This announcement comes at a great time for our team at *The Clarion-Ledger*. By expanding production operations, we are

reinvesting in our local market and reinforcing our commitment to Jackson," Edwards said. "I am proud of the work our team has done this year to increase our audience and customer base across...platforms."

The News Star currently is produced at the regional printing facility of The (Shreveport, Louisiana) Times, which will be closed. The Times will be printed at The Longview (Texas) News-Journal. The moves are expected to take place in early October and affect all employees involved in printing and packaging at the Gannett Co.-owned plant in Shreveport.

Circulation, marketing conference Nov. 9-10

The president and publisher of the *Topeka Capital-Journal* will be the keynote presenter at the annual ArkLaMiss Circulation, Marketing and Audience Development Conference.

The event will return to the banks of the Mississippi River at Vicksburg and the Ameristar Casino Nov. 9-10.

Zach Ahrens, who has served as publisher in Topeka since Oct. 2015, previously served as publisher for Log Cabin Media in Conway, Ark. Both properties are owned by Augusta, Ga.-based Morris Publishing Group. He previously was vice president for sales at Gatehouse Media Ohio.

Ahrens is well known in the media industry and has spent much of his career leading and training advertising teams, spurring significant revenue and audience growth. He has served as a nationwide trainer and live presenter for groups including the Local Media Association, Inland Press Association, Southern Newspaper Publishers



Ahrens

Association, numerous state press associations, Wick Communications and Jones Media.

The event will also include a Hot Ideas Breakfast, during which members will share their best revenue-generating and cost-saving tips.

Veteran ArkLaMiss presenter Dennis Dunn of *The Anniston* (Ala.) *Star* will again moderate the idea exchange.

The conference will be preceded by a newspaper

managers roundtable. There is no cost to attend this portion of the program.

Publishers, general managers, editors and circulation professionals are encouraged to attend and participate in an open discussion of various topics related to promotions, marketing, expense controls and others.

Again this year the MPA Education Foundation is making available 20 education grants to attendees from Mississippi. They grants will reimburse up to \$100 of conference related expenses on a first come, first-served newspaper. Only one grant is available per newspaper.

Complete details on the grant and registration for the event is available by downloading the registration packet from the conference website at arklamissconference.com.

Nightly rate at the Ameristar is \$74. Call the hotel direct at 855-888-7281 to make reservations by referencing group code SARKLA.



ArkLaMiss CIRCULATION & MARKETING CONFERENCE

*Circulation, Audience Growth & Marketing
for tri-state newspaper professionals*

2017 Conference Agenda

Thursday, November 9, 2017

- 8:00 a.m. Vendor Setup, *Bottleneck Blues Bar*
Registration Opens, *Magnolia Lobby*
- 9:00 a.m. Newspaper Management Roundtable
Moderator: Byron Tels, President, Arkansas Press Association; Publisher, *The Sheridan Headlight*
Magnolia Room
- 11:00 a.m. Lunch Available in Casino Buffet
- 1:00 p.m. Welcome, Paul Keane, President, Mississippi Press Association; Publisher, *Wayne County News*,
Waynesboro, Miss.
Magnolia Room
- 1:30 p.m. Opening Session - Zach Ahrens, President & Publisher, *Topeka (Kans.) Capital-Journal*
Magnolia Room
- 3:00 p.m. Break with Vendors, *Bottleneck Blues Bar*
- 4:00 p.m. Zach Ahrens (Continued)
Magnolia Room
- 5:30 p.m. Hospitality Hour with Vendors, *Bottleneck Blues Bar*
- 7:00 p.m. Dinner on your Own

Friday, November 10, 2017

- 8:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast, *Magnolia Room*
- 8:45 a.m. Hot Ideas Session, Moderator: Dennis Dunn, *Anniston Star*
Magnolia Room
- 9:45 a.m. Break with Vendors, *Bottleneck Blues Bar*
- 10:30 a.m. Group Discussion on Current Issues
Magnolia Room
- 11:30 a.m. Conference Wrap-up: Tom Lanimer, Executive Director, Arkansas Press Association
Magnolia Room

Ameristar Casino & Hotel, Vicksburg, Miss.
Call 855-888-7281 and reference "arkla7" | Room Rate: \$74 | Deadline: Oct. 25, 2017
Sponsored by the Arkansas-Louisiana-Mississippi Press Associations

BYLINES & DATELINES

Columbia

Charlie Smith has been named publisher of *The Columbian-Progress*, succeeding Adam Prestridge. Smith is the former publisher of *The Enterprise-Tocsin* in Indianola. Both papers are owned by Jackson-based Emmerich Newspapers. Prestridge was recently named publisher of *The Advertiser-Glean* in Guntersville, Ala.

Indianola

In Indianola, Smith is being succeeded as publisher by **Bryan Davis**, who previously worked as sports editor of *The Yazoo Herald* and as managing editor of the *Daily Times Leader* in West Point. He most recently was research and media coordinator for the Alabama Center for Real Estate.

Starkville-West Point

Stacia King has been named publisher of the *Starkville Daily News* and the *Daily Times Leader* in West Point. She succeeds longtime publisher Don

Norman, a past president of MPA who announced his retirement this past spring. King most recently served as general manager for Lee Enterprises' River Valley Media group in La Cross, Wis. She previously was director of sales for *The Clarion-Ledger* in Jackson.

Jackson

Stewart Tennon, 62, is retiring from the pressroom at *The Clarion-Ledger* after working 43 at the Jackson newspaper. As the paper reported, when he first joined the staff Gerald Ford was president and gasoline was 55 cents a gallon. "The 43 years sure went fast," he said. "And the older I get the faster they go."

Laurel

The Chronicle, a weekly newspaper in Laurel, published its final edition June 29. The five-year-old publication was owned by Jackson-based Emmerich Newspapers and competed with the twice-weekly *Laurel Leader-Call*, for which Emmerich picked up the printing contract.

Vicksburg

Rob Sigler has been named managing editor of *The Vicksburg Post*. He recently was managing editor of *The Oxford Eagle*. Both papers are affiliated with Tuscaloosa, Ala.-based Boone Newspapers. Sigler succeeds Tim Reeves in Vicksburg.

Memphis

The Commercial Appeal in Memphis has put its Union Avenue facility up for sale. Appeal president Mike Jung said the newspaper will seek offices in the city in a "newer, more modern location that reflects our digital future."

Columbia, SC

Brian Tolley, former executive editor of *The Clarion-Ledger*, has been named executive editor of The State in Columbia, S.C. He most recently has been editor of *The Island Packet* in Hilton Head Island and *The Beaufort* (S.C.) *Gazette* and will continue in that role as a regional executive.

MARCH OF EVENTS

Court to public officials: Don't meet in private

It was a long, rainy summer across much of the state. But September brought with it cooler temperatures and lots of sunshine – both literally and metaphorically.

Just as we in Jackson started to enjoy one of the longest sustained periods of mild, sunny weather in months came news the State Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling that the Columbus City Council violated the Mississippi Open Meetings Act.

It was a unanimous 9-0 vote, no less. Talk about a win for sunshine laws.

The original complaint was filed with the Mississippi Ethics Commission in early 2014 by Nathan Gregory, a reporter at the time for *The Commercial Dispatch* in Columbus. Ethics ruled later that year against the mayor and city council for holding a series separate, private meetings intended to avoid having a quorum present.

The city opted to appeal the decision, but a chancery judge later upheld the Ethics decision. Undeterred, the city trudged forward only to be reminded once again by the state's highest court that the business of a city is also the business of its citizens.

Over the last decade, Mississippi's so-called Sunshine Laws – including the Open Meetings Act and the Public Records Act – have been strengthened by broadening the powers of the Ethics Commission to offer judgments in complaints brought before it.

Previously, a complainant was on his



Layne Bruce

own when it came to seeking relief, having to turn first to the courts. Often, those who made the complaints didn't have the means to pursue them.

The Columbus case proved to be a true test of the system when Gregory left his position at the Dispatch to take a job outside the industry. Since his name was listed by itself in the original complaint, there was some earlier doubt there would even be an avenue to offer a defense in subsequent hearings on the appeal.

The Dispatch, however, pressed forward with the representation of Mike Hurst and the Mississippi Justice Institute, the legal arm of the Mississippi Center for Public Policy based in Jackson.

Unique particulars of this case aside, elected officials wanting to conduct the public's business behind closed doors is an all-too-familiar story across the state and the nation. A similar case is still on appeal in Lauderdale County where supervisors there were found in early 2015 to be in violation of the Open Meetings Act.

Even state agencies get tripped up on

transparency.

Earlier this year, members of the Diamondhead City Council were found to be circumventing the act in a fashion similar to Columbus: Council members were meeting in pairs with State Auditor Stacey Pickering, again in an effort to avoid having a quorum present.

For his part, the auditor wrote a letter to the commission objecting to its ruling, but he did not file an appeal. Instead, he offered a rather novel defense that his office was not subject to the Open Meetings Act.

We can split hairs over whether state agencies are subject to the law, but there should be no doubt the Diamondhead City Council is.

While these are three examples of questionable judgment on the part of public officials, it bears noting that way more follow the rules than don't.

"The great majority of public officials want to follow the Open Meetings and Public Records laws, and do so," said Leonard Van Slyke, an attorney skilled in media and transparency issues who represents the Mississippi Center for Freedom of Information.

"When the law is not followed, it is a combination of those officials who truly misunderstand the law and those who, unfortunately, willfully disobey it whether the reason is convenience or an effort to hide something from the voters."

All of these cases are basically a fool's errand and, no doubt, a further waste of

taxpayer time and money.

Of the Columbus case, Ethics Commissioner Tom Hood told the Associated Press it "sends a strong message that secret, back-room deals with public boards are illegal."

Still, though the Ethics Commission and now the Supreme Court are on record saying such meetings designed to circumvent quorums are a no-no, the law itself lacks teeth in terms of enforcement. About all that can be done is to tell violators: "Don't do it again."

"The Ethics Commission is to be commended for confronting the issue," Van Slyke said. "The icing on the cake would now be for the legislature to strengthen the enforcement penalties."

What kind of penalties?

"I think it is now time for the legislature to codify a rule that would invalidate any action taken in violation of the Open Meetings Law," he said.

Now that would be a guard dog with a pretty sharp bite to it.

Meanwhile, since it was mullied by the highest court in the state, the outcome in Columbus sets a strong precedent.

It should serve as the first commandment in any public official's playbook: "Thou shalt not conduct the public's business in private."

Layne Bruce is executive director of MPA-MPS. His email address is lbruce@mspress.org. Follow the Association on Twitter @MPAnewspapers.

State supreme court upholds ruling against Columbus City Council

By **JEFF AMY**
Associated Press

JACKSON

The Mississippi Supreme Court on Thursday upheld a ruling that a government can't set up meetings of less than a majority of public officials to evade the state's Open Meetings Act.

The court ruled 9-0 that the city of Columbus was wrong to set up pairs of meetings with the mayor and three city council members apiece in 2014, avoiding the city council's quorum of four members. Those meetings were to discuss an agreement between the city and an economic development agency and maintenance of public buildings. A reporter for *The Commercial*

Dispatch newspaper found out about the meetings but was excluded. The reporter then filed an ethics complaint and the state Ethics Commission ruled that such "piecemeal" quorums were illegal. The city appealed to chancery court, and then again to the Supreme Court when Chancery Judge Kenneth Burns also ruled against the city.

The city, supported by the Mississippi Municipal League, had argued that no gathering where a quorum wasn't present could be a "meeting" under terms of the law, because the council could take no final action without a quorum present. But the court disagreed.

"The city acted with the express intent of circumventing the act,"



Imes

Associate Justice Robert Chamberlin wrote for the court. "The gatherings were preplanned. The attendees invited purposely constituted less than a quorum. The gatherings were for the express goal of discussing city business. Further, the

facts support that city business was conducted and policy formulated at the gatherings."

Dispatch General Manager Peter Imes said the decision was a "win for open government."

"This ruling reinforces the idea

that citizens should be involved in the process," Imes told his newspaper.

Mike Hurst of the Mississippi Justice Institute, which represented the Dispatch, said the case was an important precedent. The institute is representing a Lauderdale County man in a similar case against that county's supervisors.

"Whether raising taxes, spending taxpayer money or issuing regulations that affect people's lives and property, people want to know what their government is doing," Hurst said in a statement.

A city spokesman and city lawyer did not respond to emails seeking comment.

The decision does not eliminate all

LEGISLATIVE RECAP

Liquor ads, notice of special meetings focus of new laws

Two MPA laws impacting special called public meetings and liquor advertising took effect July 1.

Senate Bill 2345 removed the prohibition of advertising of alcoholic beverages in dry counties and municipalities.

“Previously, if your newspaper was published in a city where the sale of alcohol was prohibited, that newspaper was also prohibited from advertising alcohol sales of any kind,” said MPA executive director Layne Bruce. “The new law, which has been in effect a month now, changes that.

“Package store and restaurant owners are now free to advertise in any of the state’s newspapers, no matter what the local rule may be on the sale of such beverages.”

House Bill 1116 also took effect recently. The law requires public bodies to provide at least one hour’s notice in advance

of special called meetings via email to media and citizens who have opted-in to be notified.

“Newspaper reporters and editors who want to be alerted of special meetings should send a letter to the clerks of public boards in their coverage area requesting to be notified,” Bruce said.

The new law greatly improves notice requirements, which previously were limited to posting of a written notice on bulletin boards at the meeting places.

Bruce said editors and reporters should submit in writing a request to be notified of special meetings to clerks of their city, county and public school boards. A sample request can be provided by MPA if desired.

If you have questions about the new laws, contact Bruce, 601-981-3060 or lbruce@msp.org.

Minnesota papers publish blank front pages to send a message

Over 200 newspapers in Minnesota delivered blank front pages to readers the week of Aug. 13-19.

The “Whiteout” took place during Minnesota Newspaper Week, part of the Minnesota Newspaper Association’s yearlong celebration of its 150th Anniversary. The association said the Whiteout reminded Minnesotans of the important role that newspapers play, writing the first draft of history and telling the stories of their communities.

“In many communities across the State of Minnesota,

the newspaper is the main source of local news,” said MNA Executive Director Lisa Hills. “Newspaper journalists across the state attend city council and school board meetings, they cover town festivals and local sports teams, and they arrive on the scene to document history during natural disasters and other community challenges. We know newspapers play an important role.”

MNA, founded in 1867, has 25 daily and 295 non-daily newspaper members. It is one of the oldest associations of its kind in the United States.



Summer newspaper visits

MPA Executive Director Layne Bruce and Meek School of Journalism and New Media Will Norton visited member newspapers in Batesville, Senatobia, Hernando, Clarksdale, Cleveland, Oxford, New Albany, Tupelo, and Fulton during July. Above: Bruce (right) visits with reporter Bob Bakken (left) and publisher Dick Mathauer at the DeSoto Times-Tribune in Hernando. Left: Norton (right) visits with staff members from the Tate Record in Senatobia, including general manager Shirley Trimm (from left), production editor Amber Holcombe and reporter Brett Brown.

Daily Mississippian stops printing Tuesday edition

The Daily Mississippian at the University of Mississippi has eliminated its Tuesday print edition. The paper will still continue to be printed on Mondays and Wednesday-Friday.

The change was announced in an Aug. 20 letter to readers from editor Lana Ferguson, who attributed the move to changing habits of news consumers and an effort to redirect

some costs associated with the production of the newspaper to other projects.

“We want to spend more time delivering news and content in the modern ways you want to receive it,” Ferguson said.

The move follows similar changes at other universities seeking to cut costs associated with production of printed newspapers.

OBITUARY

Turner, publisher of Greene County Herald, dies at 78

LEAKESVILLE

Funeral services for Longtime *Greene County Herald* owner and publisher Leola Manasco Turner were held Aug. 19 in Leakesville. Turner passed away Aug. 17 after an extended illness. She was 78.

"I have never been around anyone who had a cross word to say about Leola," Greene County Sheriff Stanley McLeod said. "Her and John were solid members of this community."

"They each have left a strong legacy through the *Greene County Herald* and through their day-to-day interactions with the people they encountered."

Turner was born and raised in Leakesville and lived in the county seat for all but a



Turner

few months of her life. After graduating from Leakesville High School, Turner enrolled in Mississippi Southern College in Hattiesburg, where she met

her husband of 56 years, John Franklin Turner, originally from Chatom, Ala.

Turner worked at the *Herald* in many capacities during the years her parents, William E. and Clyde Manasco, were the owners. Her work at the paper became full-time when she and John purchased the newspaper company in 1974. The couple operated the weekly publication together for three decades before incorporating the business in 2006. She became publisher of the newspaper at that time and, although her day-to-day duties had decreased, remained in that capacity until her death.

"My mother was not trained as a journalist, but she had a keen understanding of the role

of a community newspaper and a deep commitment to that role for the *Herald*," Editor Russell Turner said.

"She loved her community, and like my dad, firmly subscribed to the slogan of 'Devoted to the Development of Greene County' which is published across our masthead each week. She will be sorely missed, but her legacy will continue to guide the way we do things at the newspaper for many years to come."

Mrs. Turner enjoyed her animals and bird watching, gardening, cooking, and most of all spending time with family. An avid sports fan, Mrs. Turner excelled at basketball and softball.

She was preceded in death

by her husband of 56 years, John F. Turner; son, Kenneth R. 'Randy' Turner; parents, William E. and Clyde Manasco; two sisters, Grace Manasco and Mildred Smith; and one brother, William Manasco.

She is survived by her children, Cheri Culpepper (Dennis) and George Russell Turner (Jennifer); 5 grandchildren, Joni McMillon (Chris) and Jennifer Edwards (Curt); and Perry, Jackson and Mary Grace Turner; 4 great-grandchildren, Hunter and Ryder McMillon and Lilly and Kenley Edwards; sister, Vondee Carey (Tom); brother-in-law, Bill Smith; and many nieces, nephews, and close cousins.

Burial was in McLeod Magnolia Cemetery.

Bell spent nearly 60 years reporting for gulf coast newspaper

By KATE MAGANDY
Sun Herald

BILOXI

James Lackey "Jimmie" Bell was a newspaper man.

From the time he began his career at the *Sun Herald* in 1946 at age 21, until he finally stopped all writing for the publication in 2012, he was a newspaper man.

Bell died June 26 at age 91.

He spent 42 years with the *Sun Herald* before retiring from full-time reporting Jan. 1, 1988. He continued to work as a freelance writer, however, with his byline appearing as late as 2005. He also wrote the popular "Memory Bank" feature for years, retiring from that duty in 2012.

Bell wrote his own sign-off when he stopped writing his popular "Memory Bank" vignettes that ran for years.

"I will sorely miss the thrill of writing for such an appreciative audience.

Thanks for a grand opportunity to be a living part of the community," Bell wrote. "I have written for *The Herald* since I was 21 in 1946. I can't imagine a day in which I did not work for or with

the newspaper in some capacity. My happiest days of life have been knowing my work would appear in *The Herald*."

The *Sun Herald* was also where he met his wife, Ann. They were married 53 years before she died in 2012.

Ann Whitehead Bell began as a key punch operator at the then-*Daily Herald*. She later became full-time news reporter. Jimmie and Ann Bell had five children, daughter Stacey (Steve) Huffman, Anthony Bell, Jeff (Regina) Bell, Steve (Jane) Bell and William (Linda) Bell, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Roland Weeks, who served as publisher for the *Sun Herald* during Bell's time there, remembers the reporter as top-notch.

"Number one, he was a wonderful man. There are few people I can say this about . . . he was a wonderful man in every respect," Weeks said. "Number two, he was a great person to work with. And he will be missed by a lot of people."

Sun Herald reporter Anita Lee recalled how Bell could always find a source — no matter what the hour.

"Jimmie sat across from me when



Bell

I arrived at the *Sun Herald*. I was covering Harrison County at the time," she said. "This was, of course, way before cellphones. If I needed to reach a county official in the late afternoon, Jimmie always knew where to find him or her.

"One afternoon, for example, I was

looking for the chancery clerk. Oh, Jimmie told me, 'He's probably at the Best Western hotel bar for happy hour.' With Jimmie's help, I was always able to hunt down whomever I needed."

Mike Tonos, a former managing and executive editor, said Bell already was on staff when he arrived in 1973.

"He was a throwback in the newsroom. Everybody had a beat, but everybody was general assignment, too. Jimmie knew everybody and he was willing to do whatever he was asked to do.

"Even as he became a senior member of the staff, he could write a lot of copy, fill his business page and his throwback column. He was one of the principles in the newsroom."

Tonos said when *The Sun* and the *Daily Herald* were merging, there was a lot of uncertainty among the staff about how things would go.

"Jimmie took everything in stride," Tonos said. "And he was one of the funniest people I'd ever met. He had a weird sense of humor. He laughed a lot, but he wasn't always cracking jokes. He would just make funny comments with that dry sense of humor."

SUMMER CONVENTION PHOTO ALBUM



Jeff Amy, a Jackson-based correspondent for the Associated Press, leads a session on business reporting.



MPA President Paul Keane (left) of The Wayne County News with convention keynote speaker Mike Wilson, editor of the Dallas Morning News.



Joseph and Hanna McCain of the Winston County Journal have their caricature drawn by cartoonist Ricky Nobile.



Associate members Dave and Jan Miller of C Spire enjoy the Friday night dinner party and entertainment.



Jack Ryan, publisher of the Enterprise-Journal, and editorial consultant Kathy Spurlock take part in a panel discussion on transparency in government.



Tre and Andrea Ross (from left) and Julie Darling of MPA and Kenny Shutt of the Louisiana Press Association.



The guys: Taylor Mitchell (left) of the Clarksdale Press-Register, Clay McFerrin of The Sun Sentinel, Tim Beeland of the Scott County Times, Keith Ferguson of The Winona Times, and Jason Patterson of The Yazoo Herald.



And gals: Krista McFerrin (left) of The Sun-Sentinel, Jamie Patterson of The Yazoo Herald, and Amanda Sexton Ferguson of The Winona Times.



Hall of Fame inductees Carolyn Wilson (left), retired executive director of MPA, and Dean Will Norton of the Meek School of Journalism and New Media at the University of Mississippi.

INTO THE ISSUES

Slogans back as newspapers seek to bolster credentials

Does your newspaper have a motto? Or a slogan? Do you know the difference?

Mottoes, slogans and marketing pitches were common in the days when most big newspapers had competition, as they tried to give themselves a distinguishing character. As the big newspaper markets became monopolized, there was less need for them, but now, when every information source competes for audience with every other source, even in small towns, slogans and mottoes are worth reviving, and some papers are doing it.

The Washington Post's nameplate got an underline in February: the slogan "Democracy Dies in Darkness." That's the most prominent example of newspapers adding a promotional explanation of what they do or what they stand for. Two papers from Warren Buffett's BH Media Group have similar slogans: The Bristol *Herald Courier* says it offers "Truth. Accuracy. Fairness" and the *Omaha World-Herald* says it is "Real. Fair. Accurate."

Such slogans or mottoes are needed at a time when the very idea of independent, professional journalism is under attack from the highest levels of government and partisan media. Print circulation is down, but newspapers still have broad audiences and provide most of the accountability journalism that the writers of the First Amendment had in mind. Slogans and mottoes can not only remind the public of newspapers' importance, but remind newspaper staff of ideals and principles they should follow.

Executive Editor Marty Baron's "first principle" for the *Post* staff is "Tell the truth as nearly as it may be ascertained." He said the paper started working on a slogan before the last election, "trying to come up with some words that would capture the essence of our mission in a way that you might even put it on a T-shirt. We had a lot of ideas and it was all over the place." The choice was made by new owner Jeff Bezos; Baron told me he thought the line was "a little dark." Yes, but it displays nicely in the reverse type the *Post* uses on its mobile site. The line had been used by Bob Woodward, the *Post* associate editor who as a reporter with Carl Bernstein broke open the Watergate scandal.

What's the difference? *The Post's*



Al
Cross

slogan brought to mind other newspaper mottoes or slogans, many at rural or community newspapers, and I wrote about it on The Rural Blog recently. The blog post is at <http://bit.ly/2f1cWqs>. It linked to an explanation of the difference between a motto and a slogan; here's a capsule version:

A motto contains a belief or an ideal that can serve as a guiding principle and the identity of a newspaper. *The Amarillo Globe-News* still uses a saying coined by publisher Gene Howe, who died in 1952: "A newspaper may be forgiven for lack of wisdom, but never for lack of courage."

Slogans can serve the same purpose, but tend to be simpler and catchier, and used more as marketing tools. The best are those that serve not only as a slogan for the public, but a motto, perhaps implicit, for the staff. One of my favorites is used by *The Blackshear Times*, a Georgia weekly: "Liked by many, cussed by some, read by them all."

Some slogans or mottoes are implicit, as in the simple warning of hard-nosed editorial policy at the *Aspen* (Colo.) *Daily News*: "If you don't want it printed, don't let it happen."

Whether you call it a motto or a slogan matters less than having a line that accurately describes your newspaper. The most common slogans for rural papers are like the one used by the *Mason Valley News* in Nevada: "The only newspaper in the world that gives a damn about Yerington." It's a natural; most newspapers' reason for existence is to publish news of their locality, and in most cases they own that franchise. *The Greene County Democrat* in Alabama, which competes with the *Greene County Independent*, puts it more subtly: "Serving Greene County Like No Other Newspaper."

Some mottoes are blunt and simple, like that of *The Star* in Johannesburg, South Africa: "Tell it like it is." Another conveys the same principle, but in more

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

HERALD

Truth. Accuracy. Fairness.

friendly, flowery fashion. It was written by British poet and politician Lord Byron (1788-1824): "Without or with offense to friends or foes, we sketch your world exactly as it goes." Andrew Jackson Norfleet adopted it when he founded *The Times Journal* in Russell Springs, Ky., in 1949. The weekly still posts it on its editorial page.

Another idea: Speaking of editorial pages, that's where newspapers can best explain who they are, even if they don't have regular editorials.

If I were a newspaper editor again, my paper's home page would have a button called "How We Work," taking readers to a policy statement on the editorial page, explaining our editorial philosophy, policies such as correcting errors and separating news from opinion, a call for readers to let us know when we fall short, and a link to *The Elements of Journalism* by Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, with a few examples, such as:

Our first obligation is to the truth, not in an absolute, philosophical or scientific sense, but "the truths by which we can operate on a day-to-day basis;" and the essence of journalism is a discipline of verification, using an objective method. The authors explain: "Being impartial or neutral is not a core principle of journalism. Because the journalist must make decisions, he or she is not and cannot be objective. But journalistic methods are objective." I doubt most readers understand those important distinctions, so we need to explain them at every opportunity. They need to know we're on their side, and how we work.

Al Cross edited and managed weekly newspapers before spending 26 years at The (Louisville) *Courier-Journal* and serving as president of the Society of Professional Journalists. Since 2004 he has been director of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues, based at the University of Kentucky. See www.RuralJournalism.org.

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Don't let your sales presentation sputter at the end

Alex is an ad manager who wants his sales team to be professional from start to finish. “Some sales people talk too much, especially at the end of a sales conversation,” he said. “It’s like a car that diesels when you turn off the ignition. The engine just keeps on going.”

Dieseling was common in the early days of catalytic converters. I used to have a car that had that problem. After I turned it off, it sputtered for about five seconds – even after I removed the key. It was like the car had a mind of its own.

“It can be a real challenge to bring a conversation in for a landing,” Alex said, “so we put a lot of emphasis on turning the end of an appointment into a transition to the next step. We want to leave our prospects on the top of the mountain, not let things run downhill at the end.”

That approach reminds me of the Walt Disney quote: “The way to get started is to stop talking and start



John Foust

doing.” If a sales person has had a productive meeting, it’s time to shift gears and go into action.

“I’ve heard about a helpful four-step process,” Alex explained. “Thank them, summarize what you’ve talked about, ask if there are questions, then mention the next step. That ends the discussion on a positive note with everybody on the same page.”

Here’s how it works:

1. Express appreciation. “In a lot of conversations, a simple ‘thank you’ indicates that the conversation is

nearing a close,” Alex said. “That sets things in motion for you to end the meeting the right way.”

Bullet points

2. Summarize the conversation. “Think of bullet points,” he said. “A summary should be a quick restatement of the main points you discussed. It’s usually best to cover them in chronological order. You can say something like, ‘Let me recap to make sure we’ve covered the things that are most important to you. We talked about key point A. Then we talked about key point B. And we discussed the differences between strategies C and D.’ This is the old idea of saying what you’re going to tell them, then telling them, then telling them what you’ve told them.”

3. Ask if the summary covers everything. According to Alex, asking “Does this cover all the bases?” is a

simple way to find out where things stand. “It’s important to show that you value their input. If something hasn’t been covered thoroughly – or even worse – if an important issue hasn’t been addressed, you’ve got more work to do.”

4. Specify next steps. “Every meeting should end with some kind of action plan,” he explained. “If possible, set a deadline. For example, you can say, ‘I’ll have that proposal ready for you by next Monday. Let’s set a time to go over the details.’ That’s a simple, professional way to end a presentation. It’s a clean landing with no doubts about what happens next.”

It sure beats sputtering, doesn’t it?

Copyright © 2017 by John Foust. All rights reserved. **John Foust** has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: john@johnfoust.com

RJI fellow expands work on mobile app for smaller news organizations

By **CHRISTOPHER GUESS**
Reynolds Journalism Institute

Push notifications from *The New York Times*, the *Guardian*, BuzzFeed and *The Washington Post* alert us every day to scandal, horror, scientific achievement and grief. However, this capability lies mainly in the realm of large news organizations.

Without a 24-hour news desk, smaller news outlets — especially weeklies and investigative centers — struggle to remind users to visit their websites.

If a 20,000-circulation city daily wants to break into the big ranks and build its own mobile app, the publisher can expect to spend at least \$50,000 per platform, and a minimum of six months of work, to bring one online. That’s not small change for many small-market newspapers.

A few years ago, I was discussing this problem with a friend who runs a well-known Serbian investigative center. I figured there must be, somewhere, an open-source solution for this. When WordPress was created, it was from a

similar idea — that there could be a free and open-source blogging platform that people could use instead of having to recreate the wheel every time they wanted to start a new site.

After looking around, there weren’t any options for mobile apps, so I decided to build one.

I spent two years working in conjunction with the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project developing the apps, field testing the software and deploying it to eight organizations supporting seven different languages.

MOBILE » Page 11

Newspaper for Sale

Small community weekly in central Alabama for sale. Owned since 1917 by the same family, this is a good opportunity for a young journalist or couple. Owner willing to finance.

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The sky is not falling and newspapers are still here

In 2011, the University of Southern California (USC) Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism released a study on the state of the media. Jeffrey Cole, director of the Annenberg's Center for the Digital Future, issued 10 predictions for the futures of news media.

Many of those predictions have come true. He predicted the explosion of social media and the degradation of content online. According to the study, back in 2011, 51 percent of users reported finding none or only a small portion of the information they saw on social networking sites to be reliable. Flash forward to 2017 and the war against Fake News.

Cole also predicted the slow death of the PC (ongoing), the rise of the tablet (not so much), the loss of privacy (too true), the tenuous role of the internet in politics and changing buying habits. Overall, what he describes is very close to the reality we all live in. However, he did make one major miscalculation.

"Most U.S. print newspapers will be



David Chavern

gone in five years."

Cole's future only saw the survival of the largest and smallest print newspapers. "It's likely that only four major daily newspapers with global reach will continue in print: The New York Times, USA Today, The Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal. At the other extreme, local weekly newspapers may still survive, as well as the Sunday print editions of metropolitan newspapers that otherwise may exist only in online editions."

Now, in 2017, I'm happy to report he was wrong. Last year, the estimated total U.S. daily newspaper circulation

reached 35 million Americans for weekday delivery and 38 million for Sunday. It is an audience that not only believes in the importance of journalism, but also understands that print is a pretty good technology. It is readable in all sorts of ambient light, needs no batteries and is incredibly efficient at delivering a wide array of information. (I still contend that there is nothing yet online that is as efficient at key information delivery as a scan across a front page of a print newspaper.)

Print is also still a good vehicle for high value advertising. When you advertise in a print newspaper, it ends up in the hands of a trusting and vast audience, with 74 percent of readers trusting the print newspaper compared to the 49 percent who put their trust in Twitter.

Online news articles are read for an average of 30 seconds—how much time do those flash-readers really spend looking and interacting with advertisements? Milliseconds? Compare

that to print, which sits in readers hands for an average of 40 minutes, daily.

In 2016, 56 percent of American readers still only read print newspapers. The "death of print" has been greatly exaggerated. In fact, circulation revenue has been steady over the past few years, rising from \$10.4 billion in 2012 to \$10.9 billion in 2015 and 2016.

The bottom line is that the industry we represent is, first and foremost, in the news business – and the audience for our journalism is larger than it has ever been in history. We deliver news to people in every way they want to consume it. Some want digital, some want print and a whole bunch of people want both. No one should be too quick to tell audiences how they should consume their news – and we should all expect a large segment of our audience to enjoy the ease and efficiency of a print product for some time to come.

David Chavern is CEO of the News Media Alliance (formerly Newspaper Association of America).

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Minor

From Page 1

of Killen, who previously had a not surprisingly combative relationship with the press.

“He wrote me a letter and said he liked our newspaper,” Kalich said. “I don’t know what that says about our newspaper.”

Kalich spent about four hours with Killen, but his reporting was complicated by the rambling nature of Killen’s responses and the fact the state penitentiary at Parchman where the interview was conducted does not allow any outside materials of any kind to be brought inside.

“I had no camera, pen or paper, or recording device of any kind,” Kalich said. “I tried very hard to hold on to quotes and cement them in my mind.”

Patterson’s award-winning entry saw its genesis in two local residents who turned to the newspaper for help.

“They had bought two parcels of

land deemed nuisances by the city,” she recalled. “And they later found out unpaid bills for clean up of \$17,000 for one and \$30,000 had been attached the land.

“The mayor refused to see the buyers,” said Patterson, adding the paper’s investigation found general “chaos” in the city’s record keeping.

“The entire clerk’s office was just unmanageable,” she said.

Mosby and Perkins’ investigative coverage uncovered the dire need for renovations and repairs to the jointly owned Sharkey-Issaquena Community Hospital. Officials in Issaquena had accused neighboring authorities of falling short by \$700,000 in their share of operating costs for the medical center.

“It started out as a simple story,” Mosby said. “It became a much bigger story because of the rumor mill.”

The newspaper sorted through the various claims and eventually helped bring “peace to the valley.”

A random call to Mitchell in 2012 set him out on an investigation into the



Bill Minor

1962 death of Mary Horton Vail.

Felix Vail, now 77, was finally convicted for the crime in 2016. He is also suspected in the disappearance of two other women in 1973 and 1984.

“It was the oldest conviction of a suspected serial killer in U.S. history,” said Mitchell. “It took over 50 years.”

Mitchell’s original 8,000-word piece on the case in 2012 led to Vail’s arrest six months later. Mitchell stayed with the story and the subsequent revelations about Vail’s possible connection to other crimes.

“When the trial was over, the (district

attorney) told me ‘If you know any other guilty sons-of-bitches, let me know.’”

Mitchell said all of the work recognized by the Minor Prize is an example of community service that can’t easily be replaced.

“Journalism and newspapers are really the lifeblood of communities across the county,” he said.

Established in 2003, the Bill Minor Journalism Prizes are awarded annually in concurrence with the MPA Better Newspaper Contest Editorial Division. The prizes are funded by a generous endowment through the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson. Minor died earlier this year at 94.

“He fought the good fight for over 50 years,” Cleveland said. “When you win an award with Bill Minor’s name on it, it means you’re following in his footsteps. And that’s a good thing.”

Patterson said the attention paid her story brought change to the way the city manage’s its business and proves the value of community journalism.

“It was humbling these women turned to us,” she said. “The people do have a voice, and the paper is that voice.”

Court

From Page 4

meetings among government officials before issues are discussed in open meetings. For example, the Ethics Commission ruled earlier this year that some Lowndes County supervisors had not violated the law through discussions before a vote. The commission found some of those meetings were “chance

or impromptu,” and a meeting involving two supervisors and consultants was not aimed at evading the law.

“The decision sends a strong message that secret, back-room deals with public boards are illegal,” Ethics Commission Executive Director Tom Hood wrote in an email. “This decision affirms the commission’s position and makes it law. The case is a major milestone for open government in Mississippi.”

granular analytics as well, allowing for the optimization of when, where and how to send notifications.

I’ve already begun research into building anti-circumvention tools directly and seamlessly into the apps. Even for users who have never heard of a VPN or TOR, my Push app deployment will automatically bridge the gap to the outside world, whether a repressive regime wants the reader to or not.

Over the next year I will continue my work of building a community of developers, publishers and readers around the project. With this cohort, we can establish best practices and practical best standards for newsrooms with audiences in the thousands.

Christopher Guess is a 2017-2018 RJ Fellow and creator of Push, an open-source mobile app.

Mobile

From Page 9

Now, the Reynolds Journalism Institute is graciously supporting Push, my open-source mobile news app project. I want to make it accessible to everyone, including those small- and medium-sized news organizations that could never afford, or have the time, to hire proper app developers.

Push notifications, and the itch they scratch, are just the start. Mobile apps can offer much more than a traditional mobile-optimized website. They can cache stories offline for reading when on trains or in a house with poor service. You can conduct donation drives directly in the product, using Apple Pay and PayPal. The apps provide

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Board

From Page 1

Edwards previously was general manager of the *American* and served as vice president of sales for the *Augusta Chronicle* and classifieds director at the *Chattanooga Times Free Press*.

In 2014, the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association chose Edwards as part of their NextGen program, which is designed for up-and-comers who represent what the future of newspaper media leadership.

“We are very happy to have Nate and Jackie as candidates to join our board,” said Paul Keane, MPA President. “Their talents and unique perspectives will be an important addition to our group and our mission to serve Mississippi newspaper media.”

The pair was elected during the annual convention July 7 in Biloxi.

Elected Treasurer of the Board was Stephanie Patton, publisher and editor of *The Leland Progress*.

Kevin Cooper of *The Natchez Democrat* was elected First Vice President. Jack Ryan of the *Enterprise-Journal* was elected Second Vice President.



More cowbell

MPA Executive Director Layne Bruce (right) is presented a Mississippi State University “Battle Bell” in appreciation for his term as president of Newspaper Association Managers by NAM Clerk Morley Piper, retired executive director of the New England Newspaper Association. George White, executive director of the New Jersey Press Association, was elected president of NAM for 2017-18 during the group’s recent annual conference in Philadelphia, Pa. Other officers elected were Vice President Tom Newton, California Newspaper Publishers Association and Secretary Michelle Rea, New York Press Association. New directors elected were Beth Bennett, Wisconsin Newspaper Association and Laurie Hieb, Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Continuing on the board is Steve Nixon, Saskatchewan Weekly Newspaper Association.

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