

## No investigative reporters?

A few weeks ago, a letter to the editor stated that news outlets, including print papers, no longer have investigative journalists because they can't afford it. This statement may well apply to small town newspapers like the *Messenger* who, as far as I know, does not have any reporters on staff. Major newspapers like the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times* all have experienced investigative reporting staff. The war in Ukraine has also shown the high price journalists have paid to get the facts. A number of journalists and their teams have died while reporting the news.

The person who made the statement about no more investigative reporters said it as if it were fact. Don't believe it. There are many dedicated journalists out there risking life and limb to report the truth. As a small town population, we have to show curiosity and go out of our way to verify what we hear from publications and news outlets that bring a deep bias and a certain agenda to their reporting. If you listen to one tv news channel and read only a local small town paper, you may well be cutting yourself off from knowing the depth and breadth of an issue.

Last December, I had someone ask what I thought about our last president since I had lived in NYC for 35 years. I answered I did not think he was a good president and didn't vote for him because of all the people he mistreated and cheated in New York. I also pointed out that he didn't win his home state. The gentleman answered me back by saying he didn't hear anything about underhanded dealing by the ex-president down here. I asked where he got news? His answer was the local paper and FOX News. That is the definition of a narrow view. Reach out to other sources and compare the facts for a more rounded view of reality. The motto of the *Washington Post* is "Democracy Dies in the Dark!" There is not a more true statement than that. In order to preserve a thing as fragile as Democracy, we as citizens must arm ourselves with truth to shed light and strengthen the foundations of our Democracy.

- Roseanne Napier Riddick

## Thanks for the fond memories

Dear Vicki and Staff,

Knowing this is the final issue of the *McCormick Messenger*, I just had to take this opportunity to thank you for the wonderful job you have done of keeping our community informed for so many years. With such a rich history of media coverage in the McCracken family, Vicki, you were charged with an overwhelming task of continuing the legacy of your father, grandfather and great-grandfather and you certainly rose to that occasion! I know they, and your mother and family, are very proud of the way you have kept this publication alive with such dignity and integrity. As a lifelong McCormick resident, I thank you and your family for the many fond memories I have of growing up in McCormick that have instilled in me my "McCormick pride". That pride dates way back to a yellowed clipping I have kept of me and my brother Bailey as small children standing in our family garden with our father, Garland Campbell, when our garden was named "McCormick County Garden of the Year"! And there have been so many more through the years for me and my seven siblings! We always looked forward to getting the *Messenger* each Thursday!

With a grateful heart, I wish all of you the best as you close the doors for the last time on Thursday, and I wish all the best to the new owners as well! They have some big shoes to fill!

- Linda Kidd

## Shout out of thanks to the McCormick Messenger and the McCormick Library!

I want to give a shout out of thanks to our home town newspaper, the *McCormick Messenger*, that has been around as long as I can remember. Just want to say thank you, *Messenger*; for your patience, as I rushed to meet your Monday noon deadline and, so often did not, you managed to edit my articles and get them in the paper for me anyway. Especially for My Fountain of Life Outreach Ministry articles and the articles I have posted for the various churches I have served at since moving back to McCormick. I am grateful that we will still have a newspaper, but I will so miss our original hometown newspaper. The *McCormick Messenger* will always live on in our hearts, great memories forever.

Also, in this final edition, I want to give a shout out to the great McCormick Library. We have one of the greatest libraries in the world. I say this because when I go there needing assistance with any project, especially when I need assistance with computer text matters, these people are so kind and helpful. Valerie Watt, you are an angel! You have the patience of Job, Job in the Bible that is! I am so thankful for all of our great patient people that are a part of our great Library. You folks are priceless. Yes, we have one of the greatest libraries in the world.

-Rev. Mary Ellen-Hardy Lake



Its mouthpiece missing, this relic's days of collecting quarters has passed. -Tom Poland photo

### Across the Savannah

## Rediscovering an old friend

By Tom Poland  
Walk-On Writer  
Back Road Explorer  
tompoland.net



March 3rd is a day I'll long remember. A bit earlier I had given a talk to the Kiwanis Club at the Darlington Country Club. Returning home I chose to get lost. Just drive and see where I end up. Thus did I arrive at a crossroads out in the country. I pulled up to a stop sign and looked to my right. There stood Rinda's Grill & Grocery where an old friend loitered. He looked bad. Abused even.

Your name, help me Rinda, how did it come about? And just how did my old friend, Mr. Pay Phone, escape the scrap heap? It's the first one I've seen in years. How many times did a pay phone save my day? Running late for an appointment? Find a pay phone. Lost? Find a pay phone? Missing someone special? Find a pay phone.

In 1999 some two million pay phones gobbled quarters across the USA. Since 2007 the number of payphones has fallen by 48 percent. I'd say the percentage has to be much higher. Approximately 96 percent of Americans own cell phones. Who needs a pay phone? An entire generation is out there that's never used a pay phone.

The old relic brought back memories of just how useful a pay phone was. In BC (Before Cells) there were times in my life when I knew just where to find a payphone. On my trips to and fro the Southland, a payphone was as essential as a mailbox. I kept quarters in my car. If a parking meter didn't eat them a payphone would. And many a pay phone put money in my pocket. How many times did I check the coin return in pay phones and find quarters.

I recall pay phones had a smell about them. It was metallic and a tad perfumy. For sure a pay phone housed in a booth reeked. It was a human sweat kind of odor, and you could count on seeing graffiti and obscenities, the work of dirty minds. I daresay in this era of viruses running amok the old pay phone - if one dared use it at all - would require hourly cleansings.

The old phone was an American institution that made its way into song. "Long distance information, get me Memphis, Tennessee" written by Chuck Berry and famously sung by Johnny Rivers. I don't think I'd like a song about cell phones.

The old pay phone. We used it so often even now we can hear it clanging as quarters make their way into its innards. You'd drop your coins in and there would be a click, a moment of nothing, then you'd get a dial tone. Dial tones. Remember those?

Another recollection comes to me. In the era of the pay phone you memorized people's numbers. Not so now. You enter a number in your cell phone's contacts and just touch the name or ask the phone to dial the person. If you lose your contacts somehow, good luck calling someone. You probably won't remember the actual number.

If you're in a remote place where there's no cell signal it'd be nice to come across a pay phone would it not? Wires prove reliable. I can't recall a landline call ever dropping.

The telegraph is long gone and the pay telephone for all practical purposes is gone. Well, this old friend's still around when most of its kin are missing. A wounded warrior, it's still standing as the song goes, a reminder of how life was before everyone and his brother began ringing and chatting in just about any place you can imagine.

## Trustees discuss teacher salaries, accreditation and internal procedures

By Chuck Cook

The McCormick County School Board of Trustees conducted a retreat on Saturday, March 26 to discuss a number of issues of concern. After meeting in executive session on contact matters, with no announced decisions, financial advisor David Loadholt made a presentation on education funding reform based on proposals submitted to the state legislature and approved - as amended - by the House of Representatives. If approved by the full legislature, the proposals would essentially replace the existing Educational Improvement Act that is now the basis for much of the operational funding provided by the state to individual districts.

The rationale for the proposals is that the EIA is too complicated and difficult to understand, including provisions on base student costs. Instead, the new formula is based on an estimate of the total number of elementary and secondary students in the state (752,928) divided by a targeted student ratio of 11.2 students per teacher. This would derive the number of teachers required statewide (67,223). It would also increase the state's minimum teacher salary to \$40,000 per year and estimated average total teacher costs (including fringes) to \$69,153 per year. The number of state teachers would then be multiplied by the average cost per teacher, which would total \$4,648,672,119 - the total funds required for annual teacher salaries in SC. Under the formula, the state would pay 75 percent of this total and school districts would pick up the tab for the remaining 25 percent.

The local share of the funding would be based on its share of total state funds considering its proportion of total weighted pupils and the district's Index of Paying Ability. If this amount is less than what it received under the EIA in FY 2021-22, the district would receive the higher amount. Excluded from these calculations are teacher supplies, reaching coaches, student health and fitness programs and other miscellaneous expenses, which would continue to be provided separately by the state.

Loadholt emphasized that this does not mean that all teachers are going to receive a \$4,000 pay increase for the year, as may have been reported in the media. It means that the average funding allocation by the legislature for teacher positions in the state would increase by \$4,000 and that the state minimum salary would increase to \$40,000 per year. He also iterated that this proposal has been passed by the House, but may be amended by the Senate before ratification by the full legislature. At the present time, the district's minimum teacher salary level is a little less than \$3,000 under the new minimum.

Trustees also discussed the 5-year re-accreditation process the district will undergo, beginning May 15. District staff is already working on gathering information on the 31 separate performance factors that will be measured and assessed under three major categories - leadership, learning and resources capacities. The district's assessment will be carried out by Cognia, a non-profit corporation formed from a merger of AdvancED and Measured Progress - organizations that were formerly responsible for the accreditation process. It will involve documentation reviews, and interviews with teachers, staff, the trustees and other stakeholders.

The final matter discussed by the trustees involved their procedures regarding the discussion and debate of issues at board meetings. A quite lengthy discussion at the retreat ultimately resulted in a consensus that, essentially, all trustees would be allowed unlimited time to discuss issues that were on the table for decision unless there was redundancy and protraction that were not productive. The chair would continue to moderate these discussions.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the board is scheduled for Monday, April 11 at the MHS Media Center. The public session will begin at 7 p.m.

### LAKESIDE GRILL

<p><b>Thursday, March 31</b> Bacon Wrapped Scallops with 2 Sides \$21.93</p> <p><b>Friday, April 1</b> All you can Eat Fried Shrimp with 2 Sides \$24.93</p> <p><b>Saturday, April 2</b> 1 lb. Snow Crab and 10 Boiled Shrimp and 2 Sides \$38.93</p> <p><b>Sunday, April 3</b> 6 Fried Shrimp and 1 Flounder Piece with 2 Sides \$16.93</p>	<p>193 YACHT CLUB DRIVE AT PBYC, PLUM BRANCH</p> <p><b>864-443-3004</b></p> <p><b>Summer Hours</b> Thursday and Friday 5 - 9 p.m.</p> <p>Saturday 12 - 9 p.m.</p> <p>Sunday 12 - 4p.m.</p>
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